

査読論文

Curriculum Reform in the Corporate University: From the Disciplines to Transferrable Skills

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Abstract

This paper contributes to current debates in higher education curriculum reform by outlining the emergence of the corporate university and evaluating the insistence of business interests that universities prepare workers by teaching transferrable skills instead of the disciplines. It considers the relationship between academic and vocational knowledge, suggesting that they may be integrated rather than polarized, and further suggests ways to redress the imbalance between quantity and quality inherent in the corporate university. The paper concludes by looking at the impact of these issues on the theory and practice of the social sciences.

Keywords

Higher education, corporate university, transferrable skills, curriculum reform.

Given the economic climate of the late twentieth and early twenty first century, particularly where state funding and public commitment to higher education has dwindled, many universities are facing a financial crisis. This crisis has encouraged university administrators to think and act more like managers of corporations, focusing on bottom line financial issues as a survival tactic, often paying more attention to style over substance in order to attract more students, who are conceived of as customers. Discussions on curriculum reform in this climate often become polarized around issues of academic versus vocational knowledge and the related question of the quantity versus the quality of students. Concurrently, corporations since the 1980s have been urging universities to undertake curricular shifts toward teaching transferrable skills as a way to

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maintain viability and prepare workers for the global marketplace. These features of university management and curriculum reform have raised concerns among the traditional academic disciplines and departments, particularly in that quantitative reasoning and instrumental rationality have compromised the quality of students and the mission of the university. This paper will consider these issues in terms of what Readings (1997) has identified as a shift away from the traditional research university to the ‘university of excellence,’ with excellence taken here to be a vapid concept devoid of referential value. For Readings, the university of excellence has lost track of ‘modernity’s encounter with culture.’ Others describe this shift in terms of universities increasingly embracing an ethos of entrepreneurialism (Barnett 2003). In consideration of these points, this paper will use the term ‘corporate university,’ as employed by Aronowitz (2001), to refer to a university that has adopted the ‘framework and ideology of the large corporation’ and which has prioritized the ‘application of accounting principles to academic employment and planning.’ Distinct from a university run by a corporation (Allen 2002) the corporate university is run as a corporation. Regarding the term transferrable skills, this paper will follow Holmes (2000) and others in its suggestion that transferrable skills can be of a higher order and more broadly applicable than traditional job and vocational skills, and that they include ways of knowing as well as ways of doing. In light of this, the paper will attempt to re-assess the relationship between academic and vocational knowledge in the corporate university and explore transferrable skills as a potentially generative, rather than degenerative, development. It contends that a window of opportunity has opened that may enable curriculum reforms that take into account the quality and quantity issues by integrating the discourse of the academic disciplines with that of transferrable skills. The paper concludes with a reflection on the place of the social sciences in these discussions.

The managers of institutions of higher education are increasingly influenced by the proposition that in order to maintain their institutions’ viability and relevance in a globalizing world driven by business interests, they must re-align their curricula with the world of work. Although there is not yet unanimous consensus on what will be required of future workers, or what kinds of jobs they will hold, or even how this work oriented curriculum will differ from traditional vocational education, there are some tentative points of agreement in certain quarters of the business-driven academic world that are worth reviewing here. Much of this discourse emanated from the United States, beginning in the 1980s and gaining momentum toward the end of the 1990s. For instance, according

to Molly Corbett Broad, former president of the University of North Carolina System and current president of the American Council on Education (ACD), business managers, executives and human resource professionals are consistently seeking specific skills in the college graduates they hire. These include the ‘ability to think critically and communicate effectively, both verbally and in writing.’ Moreover, she contends, graduates ought to be ‘comfortable working in teams, both within their areas and cross-functionally; proficient in information and telecommunications technologies; and knowledgeable about the global environment in which they must function and facilitate in the cultural diversity it entails’ (cited in Oblinger & Verville 1998, p. vi.). The Business-Higher Education Forum (1999) has called for similar skills, including ‘leadership, teamwork, problem solving, time management, self-management, adaptability, analytical thinking, global consciousness, and basic communication including listening, speaking, reading, and writing.’ The Wingspread Group, a research foundation with interests in business and higher education, defined a quality education of the twenty first century as having several essential components. According to its 1993 report ‘An American Imperative: Higher Expectations for Higher Education,’ graduates for the new global economy must have ‘technical competence in the field; high-level communications, computational and technological literacy, and information abilities enabling individuals to apply new knowledge as needed; ability to arrive at informed judgments; ability to function in a global community; attitudes such as flexibility, ease with diversity, initiative, motivation, and teamwork; ability to address complex, real-world problems under “enterprise conditions”’ (cited in Oblinger & Verville 1998, p. 126). More succinctly, Edward T. Clark, an educational consultant working for American businesses and public interest groups, projected that workers and citizens of the future will require three interlocking skills: language proficiency, cybernetic literacy, and entrepreneurial audacity (Clark 1997). Muller (2007) updates and further characterizes this ongoing trend in terms of education moving from ‘knowledge production to knowledge configuration’ with a ‘shift from discipline-based learning to problem-based learning.’ It should be noted here that many of these business oriented proposals in the American context reflect the controversial neo-liberal economic ideology that ascended during the 1980s and 1990s, but which has recently faced significant challenges (e.g., Stiglitz 2010). However, despite these challenges to neo-liberalism the discourse of transferrable skills continues to be cited in efforts at curriculum reform, because it has to a certain extent raised important questions about the meaning and purpose of a university education in the late modern era.

Perhaps this can be brought into better focus by referring to examples outside the American context. Although curriculum reform based on transferrable skills emerged in the United States during the 1980s and 1990s and remains a contested issue there, the trend has more recently made its way to Japan. The Central Council on Education (CCoE 2005 and 2007) has called for ‘knowledge and ways of thinking that transcend the standard limits of majors’ and for fostering academic skills such as creative thinking, problem solving, improved usage of ICT and foreign language proficiency, while the Japan Association of Corporate Executives (JACE 2007) envisions the skills needed for the society of the future as ‘highly ethical outlook, intent, motivation, problem defining and solving, problem solving methods, teamwork, ability to judge current systems, global view, individual talent/strong points,’ and that the Liberal Arts in particular should develop an ‘ability to see the big picture.’ The Council on Competitiveness Nippon (CoCN 2007) lists its ‘skills for a globalizing world’ as ‘strong communications skills for interacting with the people of the world, highly ethical outlook, cultural and historical knowledge, understanding of diverse cultures and values, strong insight into actual situations, practical skills for creative thought and new values, working/thinking in a team, people skills, drive and intellect.’ These and similar reports have consistently surfaced in discussions of curriculum reform in Japanese universities, particularly after the 2004 ‘big bang’ of privatization and reform (Eades, Goodman & Hada 2005). Such proposals suggest that while transferrable skills may be a contested discourse, it is nevertheless being taken seriously by those concerned with university reform in Japan.

An argument can also be made that the discourse of transferrable skills is relevant to university reform in the developing world, where higher education is facing a dilemma related to the question of what is commonly referred to as ‘brain drain.’ In the wake of decolonization and nationalist liberation movements, state subsidized or even free higher education served a primary purpose in the national development agenda of providing a locally educated elite for technical and managerial positions. However, with an increasing demand for higher education among a broader spectrum of society being unmet by a similar increase in job opportunities for degree holders, a system has developed in many places that rewards the few at the expense of the many. This problem is further exacerbated when increasing numbers of graduates leave their home countries with their subsidized educations to seek employment or other opportunities abroad, calling into question the financial policies based on subsidized education (Kianinejad 2007). Several ways to address this problem might be envisioned, such as making entry examinations

more stringent or requiring graduates to remain in their home countries as a stipulation of receiving their subsidized degrees. As these responses may not effectively address the imbalance between supply and demand for higher education, which is at the core of the dilemma in the developing world, one possible route would involve forging a closer link between higher education and the world of work, at which point the skills discourse would become relevant in the developing world as well.

Although this is an ongoing story and there are variations on these themes, all appear to be asking the same basic question, ‘What should students learn in universities?’ This question consistently receives attention in the literature on higher education (e.g. Nussbaum 1997 and 2010, Cole 2010, and Goodhall 2009), although there is a tendency to dichotomize the debate along rather rigid academic and vocational lines (McLean 2006, p. 65). A problem with this dichotomy arises, however, when we factor in the question of quality and quantity. With declines in state funding for universities, or with state finances being misspent, higher education has had to grapple with the question of funding. Bracketing off the ultra elite institutions that can survive on endowments and donations, this need for funding has made the corporate discourse appealing to many university managers, who are concerned with survival of their institutions. One easy, though probably untenable, solution is to close down a requisite percentage of universities according to demographics and finances. More often than not, however, one sees issues of recruitment and retention taking precedence over closure, proceeding from the belief that more ‘customers’ are needed to balance the books, which in turn has led in some cases to a lowering of standards to enroll and retain more students but which has raised fears about universities ‘declining by degrees’ (Hersh & Merrow 2006). University faculty, especially those who see the task of the university as being primarily research, often feel threatened by a management apparatus and culture of auditing that is willing to compromise on standards to attract more ‘lower quality’ students so as to pay the bills. Perhaps a middle way would be to meet the fiscal needs of the corporate university by allowing in more students and then changing the more or less elite and conservative values of the academic disciplines through developing curricula that are not geared solely toward reproducing the next generation of researchers but which would also take seriously the question of transferrable skills, not as mere vocational education in the traditional sense but as equally valuable for citizenship and survival in the late modern world (Kincheloe 1995 and 1999). With this in mind, I want to examine the discourse of transferrable skills by disassociating it from the polarizing debate on the value of academic versus vocational

education. In other words, the question I'd like to address here is whether or not there is any value to the skills discourse in and of itself, not only in terms of preparing a flexible labor force, and if there are any ways to find a workable compromise between the academic disciplines and transferrable skills.

The need for integrating transferrable skills into university curricula was identified by Donald Schön, a social scientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in a series of important books and articles dating back to the early 1980s. Schön urged educational institutions to train what he called 'reflective practitioners,' people who can treat their jobs the way an academic would treat a research project, taking ownership of tasks, skills and decisions, becoming adept at 'problem-posing' as a necessary prerequisite for effective problem solving, and being able to critically reflect on one's own performance with an eye toward continuous learning and adjusting this performance in light of practical experience (Schön 1983). For Schön, this differs from instrumental rationality, which is a form of technical knowledge that results from nineteenth century discipline specificity in academic learning and job specificity in vocational training, where workers and academics are unable to operate outside a narrow, pre-defined set of practical techniques and methods. Instrumental rationality, which often leads to a false sense of superiority due to narrow technical expertise, but which may also lead to dependency on others to define problems and set priorities, may be less relevant in the corporate university, which requires flexibility, context-specific knowledge and customization of skills according to ever evolving situations. Instrumental rationality, still fairly common in many modern professions, prioritizes 'experience.' However, without reflection, Schön insisted, experience can be misleading and may simply reproduce outmoded ways of thinking and acting. Reflective practitioners can integrate academic reflection and research with experience, keeping fresh in the debates and knowledge related to their fields, but also continuously examining their own practices in light of evolving concerns of the workplace and society. This can be applied to the preparation of academics and researchers as much as it can to creating responsible workers and critically engaged citizens.

Other studies have reached similar conclusions, but disagree on exactly how a curriculum based on this outlook would operate. While some speak of post-modernity, a condition in which old norms are breaking down and losing their meaning, others insist that what is really happening is a form of 'late modernity' in which the norms and systems of modernity remain more or less intact, or 'hypermodernity' in which modernity is simply operating faster and more intensely than during the 19th and 20th centuries (see,

for example, Best & Kellner 1997, Harvey 1990). Similarly, Currie and Newson (1998) have discussed the late modern world as characterized by Fordism giving way to post-Fordism and neo-Fordism. There are many variations on these themes. Whether post-modernity, late-modernity, hyper-modernity, post-Fordism, or neo-Fordism, one point appears to be consistent: the old order is morphing. Business interests seem to have realized this sooner and the emergence of the transferrable skills discourse could be read as an attempt to gain the upper hand by entrenching part and parcel the corporate discourse in higher education, which has rightly raised the ire of Nussbaum and other defenders of the research university cited above. However, it is also possible to suggest that higher education is lagging behind in forming viable responses to the business mounted challenge, other than retrenching the research university with a more or less conservative recourse to the classical humanities. What may be needed on both sides of the academic-vocation divide is a form of what Kincheloe (1995) has termed as ‘post-formal thinking,’ which he argues is necessary in both the research as well as the corporate university as the formalities of the modern world lose relevance or are reconfigured. Formalism, like instrumental rationality, reifies and valorizes established practice at the expense of flexibility, and tends to reproduce outmoded systems of thought and action, while post-formal thought as envisioned by Kincheloe is self-reflective, realizing that systems are ever-changing and require problem posing as well as problem solving skills, and that the established formalities may be hindrances to effective and flexible problem posing. This sounds entirely reasonable, and might even form a bridge over the presumed chasm separating vocational and academic learning.

Beyond discussions of curriculum, an aspect of the corporate university that seems to have caused the most concern is in the challenges that it poses to the structure of higher education. This challenge is sometimes framed in terms of the impact on current assumptions about how academic institutions ought to be managed and what they ought to achieve, with commentators recommending a new focus in several key areas of transformation. These were outlined by Oblinger and Verville (1998), who asked, ‘What does business want from higher education?’ Many of the themes previously discussed emerge from this proposed transformation, including an increased emphasis on processes and outcomes, customization rather than standardization, and cooperative rather than individualistic methods of teaching and learning. The transformation affects many areas of higher education, from theory and practice to structure and budget, and have been characterized along the following lines. Instructional missions are shifting away from

teaching toward learning, while the task of human resources has moved toward developing skills and talents rather than simply selecting them. Institutional strategies are no longer solely driven by the budget but also now include a focus on goals. Taking cues from the business world and the waves of privatization, the corporate university is beginning to conceptualize students as customers, with graduates being evaluated in terms of outcomes rather than accumulated hours. Organizationally, the corporate university is de-emphasizing hierarchical structures in favor of networks, while management tends to be performed by teams with rewards shifting from seniority to performance. Resources are moving away from physical assets and into human capital, including ideas, while governance is shifting into collective responsibility and away from faculty autonomy. As university managers increasingly see their institutions as competing in a global marketplace, indicators of successful performance are emphasizing student achievement, while reputations are forged in terms of delivery according to budgetary priorities. However, at present it is important to see these as the projections of business leaders and business friendly academics, since the corporate university, like the global economy, is highly volatile and no one is quite sure exactly how the corporate university will look if and when the old order is completely dismantled, which suggests that flexibility and mobility will become its defining attributes. This is already evident in job recruitment ads for professors, which have become more oriented toward contract labor and flexibility, which in turn has undermined a hiring system once dominated by tenure.

While many of these issues are discussed among corporate executives and university administrators, some of the traditional academic disciplines are also beginning to reflect the challenges as brought forward with the emergence of the corporate university. Although they diverge on issues related to economic equity and political governance, many social scientists are ironically, and from a different vantage point, arriving at conclusions similar to those of the business minded interests that are driving the corporate university forward. Sociologist Zygmunt Bauman (2001), for example, tracks the emergence of a new global ruling elite, the power of which is derived from mobility. In the nineteenth century, he observes, power was defined by stability, with the power elite building vast edifices celebrating themselves and their nations, investing capital, labor and intellect in long-term projects, industries and governing structures. Subordinates in this system, whether they were factory workers, students or colonial functionaries, were bound to the same system as their overlords, both parties intertwined in elaborate regimes of law, regulation and inspection. But power in the age of ‘liquid modernity,’ as seen by Bauman, has

eschewed this solidity of the past and now seeks to be utterly free of all constraints. In such a scheme, Bauman finds the ‘devaluation of order as such’ and that ‘order becomes the index of powerlessness and subordination.’ He describes ‘the revenge of the nomads,’ overturning orthodox sociological and historical assumptions that sedentary peoples subjugate mobile peoples. It is now the mobile who rule, and the new global order (perhaps ‘disorder’ is a more apt term) can be seen as a way of eliminating all constraints of time and space to free up the global ruling elite (with its intellect and capital) from all boundaries, conceptual as well as national. This new ‘cyber-elite’ consists of individuals who have developed, Bauman observes, the ‘confidence to dwell in disorder’ and the ability to ‘flourish in the midst of dislocation.’ They have mastered the art of ‘positioning oneself in a network of possibilities rather than paralyzing oneself in one particular job,’ and their works are indicated by the ‘willingness to destroy what one has made’ and then ‘to let go, if not to give.’ For Bauman, ‘identity in the globalizing world’ is distinguished by a process of ‘individualization’ that carries with it ‘the emancipation of the individual from the ascribed, inherited and inborn determination of his or her social character.’ He links this individualized freedom to create and re-create oneself with the emerging media-fed global consumer culture, in which ‘shopping’ (for products, identities, moralities) becomes the defining feature. Such an individual has little or no need for lifelong commitments, whether they be commitments to religion, marriage or nation, and instead becomes part of a class of drifting and rootless ‘free-agents’ continually in search of the latest trend, fad or fashion, never needing to settle for very long.

In elaborating on the features of this emerging global (dis)order, Bauman brings this to bear on his discussion of ‘education ... in spite of postmodernity.’ While in the modernizing countries, universities ‘may still play the traditional role of factories supplying a heretofore missing educated elite’ (although this is contentious, as noted above, due to brain drain), universities in the West will need to ‘rethink their role in a world that has no use for their traditional services, sets new rules for the game of prestige and influence, and views with growing suspicion the values they stood for.’ Bauman suggests that universities have become slow to respond to the unpredictable and hyper-changing worlds of liquid modernity, as indicated, for instance, by the fact that by the time graduates finish a degree, the knowledge they gain may already be obsolete. Meanwhile, after the ‘scientifically assisted horrors’ of the twentieth century, faith in the humanizing potential of modern Western science, he laments, ‘seems laughably, perhaps even criminally, naïve.’ While many nineteenth and twentieth century traditions used to be

coveted assets for creating meaning in modern research universities, they are quickly becoming liabilities in a more fluid and tentative world. Bauman suggests that universities can develop responses to the emerging global (dis)order so as to maintain their sense of meaning and purpose, and sees the diversity of opinions, methodologies and curricula as necessary survival features. If Bauman's observations as a highly respected and influential sociologist are taken seriously in conjunction with the above cited and equally influential policy reports urging particular curricular shifts in the corporate university, then it seems compelling to at least consider switching gears out of the nineteenth century model of knowledge construction and maintenance and perhaps move toward some sort of hybrid curricular structure that would integrate the academic disciplines with transferrable skills.

In light of these questions, the emergence of the corporate university has several important implications for higher education. As has been consistently stated by academic consultants and business leaders, and as many university managers have also noted, most of what we consider to be higher education is coming to be seen as uncertain in the late (or post) modern world. Still based on nineteenth century models of knowledge production and maintenance, and embodying the structures and metaphors of the industrial age, the current discipline-based degree-by-course system of many colleges and universities may need to be reworked, not by retrenching its inherent elitism through siphoning off the best students and relegating the rest to 'teaching only institutions that will concentrate on an impoverished curriculum of skills' (McLean 2006, p. 65), but by integrating the most salient features of the transferrable skills discourse with those of the academic disciplines. While no one has the best answer to the question of how this integration might work, there are professors who have responded to these pressures (McLean & Barker 2004). Generally, however, in the absence of coherent and functioning models on the ground, the universities of the future are being designed and reworked on the fly, now, in process, and according to ever-evolving and variable networks of criteria and expediencies. This itself is a characteristic of the late/post/hyper modern world, which emphasizes production-on-demand, especially what can be formulated 'just-in-time,' instead of relying on mass production in advance, which again points to a connection between the situation faced by universities today and the concerns of globalizing business interests. In both cases, institutional reformulation appears to be the order of the day.

The social sciences can in many ways be central to this reformulation. The corporate challenge to higher education is urging educational institutions to answer fundamental

questions about their meaning and purpose: ‘What is your business? What is your top priority? Who must you please? What is your relationship to the community? Who are you going to reward and how? What is the long term vision of the organization?’ (as posed by Oblinger and Verville, 1998, p. 136; cf. Kerr 2001). These issues were less crassly formulated by social scientists during the 1980s and 1990s (e.g., Schön 1983; Beck 1992), and perhaps picked up by business leaders entranced by neo-liberalism, and then in turn re-integrated into social science and educational policy circles. In other words, social scientists figured what might be called a ‘new work order,’ and as that order has come into being, they have reconfigured their thinking to remain part of what is now seen to be an ever evolving system of thought and action, blurring the distinctions between academics and vocation, for which the emergence of the corporate university and the discourse of transferrable skills has become one of the main sites of activity. Ironically, this may have sparked a rethinking of the nineteenth century disciplinary base of social science knowledge, with some of the most influential contemporary sociologists, such as Wallerstein (2001), calling for a reformulation of the social science disciplines to meet the demands of the twenty first century, which (perhaps unintentionally) draws a parallel with the business discourse adopted by managers of the corporate university. The curricular implications for this line of thought are potentially profound. While graduate programs might operate for the time being within the nineteenth century model and emphasize disciplined research and training the next generation of researchers, it seems clear that a traditional undergraduate degree in sociology, history, psychology or any of the other modernist social science disciplines has lost much of its relevance in the emerging corporate university, where students are more or less expecting a degree to lead to employment. One solution, as noted above, is to prise off these students and ship them to vocational schools, but another more challenging (and perhaps responsible) option, which resonates with the modern democratic inclinations of higher education since the 1960s but which also takes meaningful steps toward meeting the needs of a corporate university that is concerned with recruitment and retention, is to give these students what they want (and what employers say they need) not through segregating the two forms of knowledge but by integrating them. In other words, rather than pure disciplinary knowledge, workers and citizens of the future, as suggested by Kincheloe (1999), may require an overlapping set of skills, some (but not all) of which can be learned in a modified disciplinary structure. What seems necessary is an education that focuses on ways of thinking and acting, within or without or among the disciplines, that fosters reflection and flexibility, and that

encourages lifelong learning and adaptability within ever changing networks. This does not abandon the disciplines, nor are these bad outcomes to expect of undergraduates, but they have perhaps been tainted by their vociferous promotion along with the more questionable parts of the business driven reform efforts gradually taking hold in the corporate university.

Granted, many of the transferrable skills discussed herein are generic, having to do with language literacy, technological proficiency and teamwork, and could perhaps be relegated to general education or foundation programs and may at first glance seem irrelevant to the disciplines. But more effective than segregation might perhaps be a program of integration. Transferrable skills are relevant as much to the world of work as they are to academic inquiry. Beyond these language and technical skills, which are important to academics and workers alike, the concerns related to 'cultural diversity' and those emanating under the rubric 'global awareness' seem to be a natural domain for the social sciences. Some form of cultural diversity has been part of higher education since at least the 1960s, often found in the form of multicultural education and various ethnic studies programs in Europe and America. The trend is emerging more recently in Japan, with an increasing emphasis on internationalization of higher education and recruitment and integration of foreign and domestic students. But rather than merely focusing on defining and celebrating ethnic or other kinds of fixed identities, the cultural diversity of the future may be more about how local cultures interact with and respond to global cultures. There is often a palpable tension between globalism and localism, and many social science programs can highlight and analyze this tension, not necessarily to resolve it definitively, but to normalize it as an ethos into its curricular structure. This is already evident in programs of study that emphasize, for example, migration, flows and hybridity. The same tension can be detected as a form of academic nationalism and retrenchment, as evidenced by, for example, Nussbaum (1997), who has criticized ethnic studies programs for being nationalistic, and therefore divisive, while at the same time promoting the classics in the humanities, which from a Third World perspective could be seen as another form of nationalism informed by what Churchill (1981) has called 'white studies.' Similarly, challenging the nineteenth century disciplines to rework their criteria according to twenty first century projections by developing an interdisciplinary agenda often leads to calls for retrenching the traditional disciplines. Nationalism of all sorts, not just the ethnic variety, is a product of outmoded nineteenth century thinking, and while it may remain a part of the twenty first century world scene, the key issue will be how various national and

institutional identities are created and experienced in relationship to competing identities and within complex, ever-changing global networks. With this general framework in mind, let us now take a brief look at some specific implications for the social sciences, which I have organized in terms of areas of transformation and with observations about how current assumptions might give way to new points of focus.

Currently organized on more or less disciplinary models, with each discipline guarding its own discursive territory, most academic departments are still operating on nineteenth century norms of epistemology and hermeneutics. While many of the tools and questions of the former disciplines are still relevant in the emerging hyper/post/late modern world, knowledge is tending to be organized more in terms of networked processes and methods of inquiry and less in terms of linear norms and assumptions about content. In other words, allegiance to, and maintenance of, the prevailing academic discourse may no longer be enough to claim viability in the corporate university. The prevailing discourses may have to be reworked and the academic disciplines of the emerging twenty first century may look quite different in form and content than those based on the nineteenth century model, leaving the ‘disciplines in ruins’ (Lal 2002). What is already happening is a recombination of some prevailing disciplines, which are re-organizing themselves in terms of the themes, questions and processes that are relevant to their particular contexts. This may include questions related, but not limited, to national identity in relation to globalization, peace and justice issues in relation to conflict, environmentalism and its relationship to economic development, cultural and physical migrations across fluid boundaries, and different forms of hybridity and border-crossing, to name just a few. In fact, a cursory glance at university catalogues and academic conference programs suggests that these themes are already in the ascendency. Similarly, knowledge organization might proceed along thematic lines and will therefore, by necessity, become more interdisciplinary, at least as long as the prevailing disciplinary discourses maintains some limited viability. But eventually, new disciplines may emerge with new names and foci, the way they always have in the course of academic history. They might come to be defined less in terms of their evolved linear content and more in terms of the networked processes they employ to understand emerging and increasingly intertwined social and cultural realities, especially those of immediate relevance to a particular socio-cultural-political context.

Rather than relying on nineteenth century research methods that are still in many ways rooted in positivism and notions of certainty, research methods of the twenty first century may become more reflective and take into consideration their own negotiated

reality by embracing uncertainty (Wallerstein 2004). This may be necessary for research to remain relevant to emerging social and cultural currents. Research for its own sake may also become less important in the corporate university, not only because of goal oriented research grants, but also due to a perceptible shift toward ‘reflection in action,’ or what is sometimes called ‘action research.’ This has already happened in the fields that have traditionally had a close relationship with the world of work, such as education. Similarly, traditionally incremental quantitative and qualitative approaches to research may lessen in importance, since by the time studies are published they may be outdated and irrelevant. Instead, research may need to consider the ‘just-in-time’ nature of late modernity and ways might have to be devised to keep research rigorous but above all socially, economically and politically relevant. Drawing upon the development of reflective practitioners, as conceived by Schön (1987) in terms of more conventional definitions of labor and work, academic departments may find that the idea of researcher as a profession will lessen, with workers and citizens taking on many of the components of what might be called situational research projects. In other words, research may come to pervade the corporate university, and not be left to an elite class known as ‘researchers.’ This would suggest that graduates of the corporate university ought to be trained in the latest research methods, especially those based on reflection in action. Action research, as well as research frameworks based on grounded theory, may become necessary on the undergraduate level, where increasing numbers of workers and citizens will receive an education. However, one danger of this emphasis on research derives from the already creeping monetization of scholarship that has begun to colonize the corporate university, and which has already turned many academic departments into entrepreneurial markets, with professors already willing to compete for grants much the way companies compete for profits. In fact, it seems cynical to decry the managerial ethos and auditing culture of the corporate university on the one hand while gleefully competing for research grants, even if they are not justifiable or necessary, on the other. The point here is not to ridicule or denounce this practice, but rather to suggest how business values have already (perhaps necessarily and maybe even irreversibly) pervaded the research university.

Since it is no longer self evident that programs in the social sciences are necessary in the accountant driven climate of the corporate university, such programs may also be thrust into a competitive marketplace for students. At present, most students seem to like what they know, and they do not know much about the social sciences, opting instead for majors that appear more self-evident, like business or information technology, or faddish,

such as media and design. As noted above, much of what is done in the social sciences today is still based on nineteenth century Western paradigms of knowledge construction, maintenance and transmission. However, recent thinking by some of the most important contemporary social scientists working in the West suggests that this paradigm has outlived its usefulness, and that a new paradigm and practice of the social sciences is emerging for the twenty first century. Wallerstein, in his role as President of the International Sociological Association from 1994-1998, proposed in a series of keynote addresses an outline of social science for the twenty first century (2001). While the nineteenth century model is based on compartmentalization of thought with a rigid separation between theory and practice and a false sense of certainty, he contends that the twenty first century model will necessarily rely on more fluidity, with theory and practice more unified and certainty being more realistically tentative. Further challenges to the nineteenth century model are mounted by scholars positioned outside of Western academia, such as those working in various places in Asia and the developing world who have taken seriously the challenges of post-colonial scholarship (e.g. Alatas 2006), or those who have taken stock of indigenous and/or feminist research methods (e.g. Smith 1999).

The corporate university is in many ways a response to the changing landscapes of globalization and hyper-modernity, and this response has brought numerous challenges to higher education. Many of these challenges are emerging from the global business interests that have linked university reform with neo-liberal financial concerns. While the economic paradigms remain contested, the business discourse has introduced the question of relevance that cannot be as easily written off as controversial on ideological grounds, owing largely to the decline in state funding and the need for universities to see themselves at least partially in terms of finances. Many will find this unfortunate, or even dangerous. This could result in a retrenchment of academic nationalism and elitism, much the way globalization has often led to a retrenchment of ethnic nationalism and racism. But at its best, the corporate university could be the place to explore new paradigms for creating knowledge, and new ways of integrating education and work, and new ways to serve a citizenry that has already been convinced of the benefits of mass education. For students, in particular undergraduates, this might be most palpable in general education and foundations programs, but may also be felt in the more adventuresome (or desperate, as the case may be) academic departments. In what might be called ‘the new work order,’ instrumental rationality can be replaced by reflection-in-practice; Cartesian-Newtonian norms of thought and action that are based on linearity and compartmentalization can be

revised through those revolving around quantum mechanics and cybernetics; fact memorization can be displaced by data selection and analysis; mass production and standardization may give way to production-on-demand and customization; didactic managing and teaching styles could step aside for dialectical forms of consultation and cooperation; leadership criteria may shift from status-based to performance-based; critical thinking could expand beyond problem solving to include an emphasis on problem posing and recognition; fixed and rigid hierarchies can make room for flexible and collaborative networks; bureaucracies may merge into meritocracies and decision making processes could become increasingly transparent; certainty can be re-defined in terms of complexity; and mind and matter may come to be seen as no longer distinct and separate from one another. That the global business interests are supporting some of these trends seems ironic, since recent events in the global economy suggest that these interests are incapable of following their own advice and have often devolved their proposals into slogans as they become mired in their own greed. But from the standpoint of teaching and learning, and given the precarious nature of funding in universities today, altering the curriculum along the lines noted above may help to redress the imbalance between quality and quantity in a way that will maintain intellectual standards but also open doors to more students, thus potentially solving a very real economic crisis faced by higher education.

Universities ought to be able to produce graduates who will have the necessary knowledge skills and outlook to understand the emerging late (or post) modern world, in addition to functioning comfortably with adaptability for life in a demanding, yet uncertain, employment market. And they should be able to gain these skills while also learning how to be responsible and critically engaged citizens. They may even appreciate gaining the specialized skills needed to address the needs of organizations involved with initiating, developing, implementing and evaluating programs and projects in the area of social and cultural policy, in sectors that are interpreted broadly to include health, welfare, education, employment, crime control, youth, sports and others. Because such sectors are increasingly intersecting, actively concerned with work and employment, family issues, youth and community development, graduates may therefore require the flexible skills and perspectives to work optimally in more complex and changing organizations. We may even owe this to our university graduates, to insure that they have the ability to apply diverse knowledge skills and tools to help identify, define and manage social issues and problems in real world contexts. University graduates can also be prepared to assume leadership positions in the public and private sectors of the developed as well as the

modernizing nations, and some may also wish to be prepared for pursuing graduate and post-graduate educations at other universities throughout the developed as well as the developing world. The overlapping sets of skills necessary for this outlook might even co-exist in the university. Such an ambitious prospectus will not only serve the immediate needs of a nation or region in a specific time and place; it can also pave the way for a rejuvenation of academic meaning and purpose in the twenty first century that may involve a balance between the quality issues raised by the research university and the quantity issues raised by the corporate university. Exploring the potential of transferrable skills seems like a viable way to achieve that balance and ought to be taken seriously on both sides of the debate.

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