

# **Ethics, Values and Higher Education: the power of globalisation**



by  
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# The Argument

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The universities have lost any distinctive ethics since they have been colonised by the global capitalist system and that they now reflect the values of global capitalism



## The Argument (2)

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- The values of capitalism are non-moral goods and as such they reflect the relativity of the contemporary world whereas the moral good is unchanging and unchangeable
- My argument on what has occurred in parts of the Western world



# The Structure of the Paper

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- This paper has three parts:
- the first constructs an ideal type university based on ethical and educational principles
- the second explains fairly fully the workings of global capitalism,
- the third examines the effects of this process on the university
  
- conclusion - the implications of this argument



# *Part 1*

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## *Constructing an Ethical University*



# The section has four parts

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- the nature of ethics,
- an ethics of education,
- further and higher education institutions,
- the ideal type.



# *The Nature of Ethics*

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- Fundamentally, we can argue that at **the heart of ethical relationship is always concern for the other but that concern cannot be coercive in any way since that will impinge upon the freedom, autonomy and authenticity of the other.** Exercising that concern means that we act always in the best interests of the other without ever seeking to impose our will because we think that we know what is in the other's best interest.



## *The Nature of Ethics*

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Since universities are communities, it is incumbent for them to be based on a moral theory of social relationships.



## *The Nature of Ethics*

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This is an idealistic and quite irrational approach to social living: no wonder Weber distinguished instrumental rationality from value rationality!

**The only rational for ethics is the presence of the Other**



# *The Ethics of Education*

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Education, especially teaching and learning, is one manifestation of human relationships and consequently the concern for the other should underlie all relationships and whilst ideally this concern should be manifest from teacher to student and also from student to teacher, it is maintained here that the teachers are the initiators of the relationship should be the ones who set its ethos and values



# *The Ethics of Education*

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- Education 'implies that something worthwhile is being or has been transmitted in a morally acceptable manner'. (Peters1966, p.25)
- Such a definition is not confined to school education and for him education should reflect these values for it is a moral process – that is in a moral relationship in which the participants' humanity is both part of the process and its enrichment the end-product.



# *The Ethics of Education*

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- Peters maintained that the outcome of teaching and learning should be an 'educated man', and by this he meant one who had had a rounded education covering all the areas of knowledge and who was aware that the learning journey was one which had begun but for which there is no end within this life at which the process was completed. In other words, lifelong learning is a human process and the aim of education is humanistic, developing individuals and setting them off on a lifetime journey of discovery and the main purpose of education itself is the enrichment of humanity as a whole.



## *Further and Higher Education:*

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- Traditionally the university was separated from the remainder of the further and higher education by its distinctive emphases – but with the emergence of the knowledge economy these distinctions have disappeared – higher education institutions have become universities or universities have been merged into the further and higher education system



## *Further and Higher Education*

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- In this expanded higher education system research has assumed a prominent role – but it is sponsored research as opposed to the pursuit of truth that scholars in traditional universities followed – ‘blue skies research’.



# *The Ethical University*

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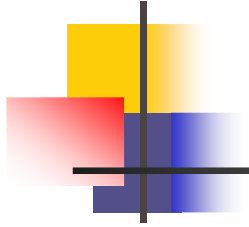
- The university is where we seek to transcend that which is – transcend the boundaries, even those of visionary worlds. For many of those individuals who draw boundaries seek limit freedom and offer a world of control- to exercise a totalizing function (Levinas, 1991[1969]) but what they seek to impose has to be transcended. The university then is a community of scholars who seek to teach, learn and research in a relationship of moral goodness



# *The Ethical University - realistically*

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- However, the contemporary world is not one in which the university is free to function in isolation from the social and global pressures and so now it is necessary to understand how these pressures act upon today's university.
- Consequently, it is not possible to discuss the actual moral processes of higher education realistically today without locating the universities within the global power structures.



## *Part 2*

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### *The Process of Globalisation*



# The structure

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- the concept of globalisation,
- the global process
- the nature of the state within the global system.



# *Globalisation:*

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- Beck (2000,p.11) suggests that globalisation is 'the *processes* through which sovereign national states are criss-crossed and undermined by transnational actors with varying prospects of power, orientations, identities and networks' (*italics* in original).
- Friedman (1999, p.7) makes the point that Globalization is not a phenomenon. It is not just some passing trend. Today it is the overarching international system shaping the domestic politics and foreign relations of virtually every country.



## *Globalisation:*

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Sklair (1991, pp.27-36) classified the theories of globalisation into five:

- imperialist and neo-imperialist;
- modernization and neo-evolutionist;
- neo-Marxist (including dependency theories);
- world system (and the new international division of labour theory);
- modes of production theory.



# *Globalisation:*

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- The **imperialist** theory argues that the major powers have struggled for new markets and opportunities to extend their political, cultural and economic influence (see Galtung, 1971) – this could be seen either as Westernisation or perhaps more significantly, Americanisation.
- The **modernisation** approach suggests that those under-developed societies are constrained by their traditions whereas modern societies are able to reach beyond the tradition and this latter perspective has probably emerged as a result of the Industrial Revolution.
- The most prominent form of **neo-Marxist theory** is dependency theory. Sklair suggests that there are theories of dependent under-development, dependent development and dependency reversal (see Bornschier, 1980).
- Wallenstein's (1974) **world system** is one in which he argued for an international division of labour based upon a centre-periphery model of the world and we see this both in transnational corporations and in international migration, but like the modernisation theory the significance of power is played down in the analysis.
- Finally, **the mode of production** theories argue that the reasons for under-development lie in the countries themselves rather than the position that the countries are in relation to the global structures.



## *Globalisation:*

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- All of these recognise the centrality of the economic institution of society although **it is only the imperialist and Marxist models that focus on the power of those who control the institution** and it is a combination of these that we now see as explaining adequately global power in contemporary society.

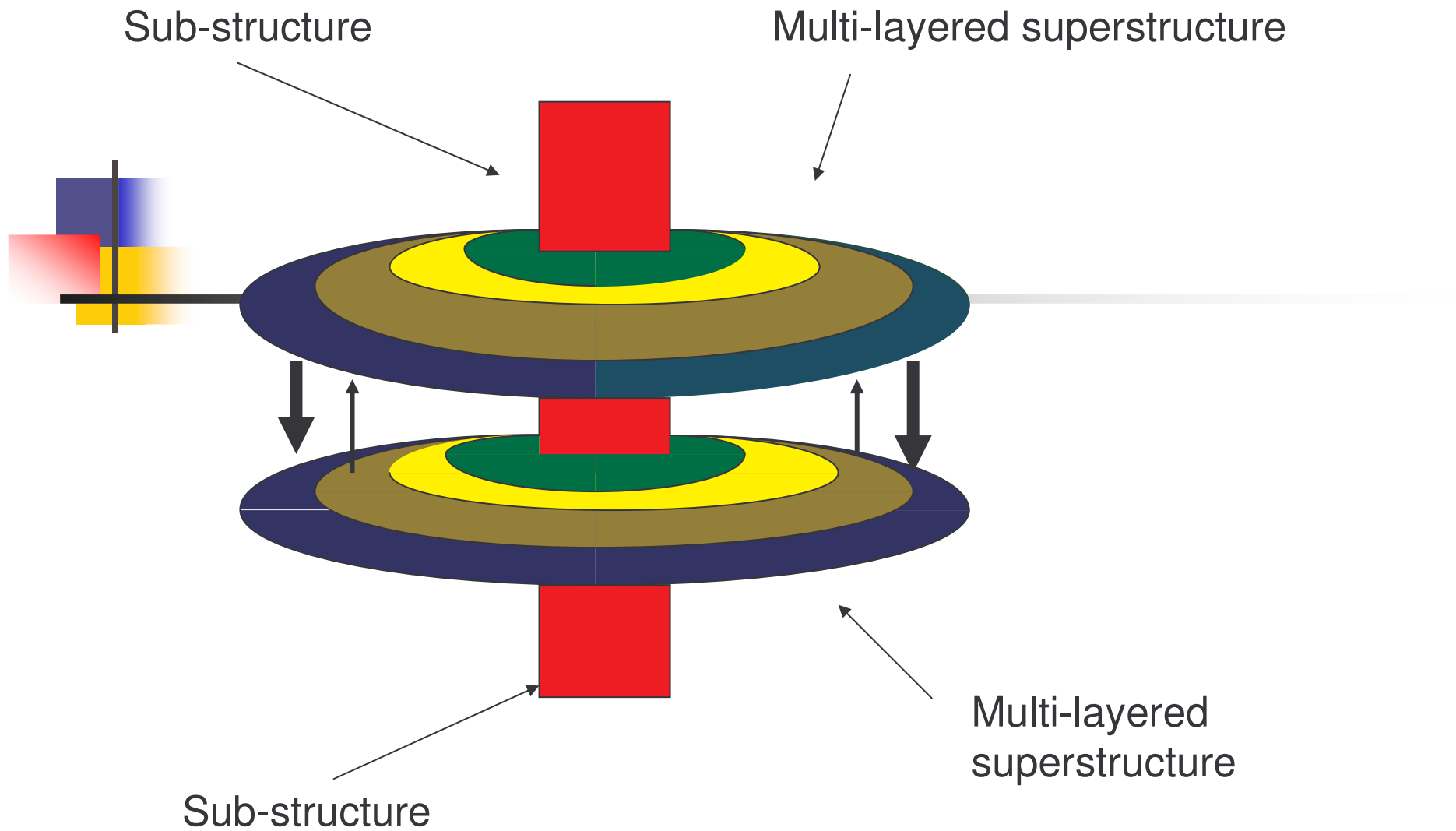


## *The Process of Globalisation:*

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- Starting from a neo-Marxian perspective, we would want to argue that the economic institution alone no longer lies at the heart of globalisation since technology and information technology are now part of that core. Indeed, information technology has enabled the re-alignment of space and time. Together they form the major elements of the global sub-structure.

*Figure 1. A Global Model of Societies*





# Global Sub-structure

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- The red core running through all the different countries  
It consists of the economic system  
The technological system, especially information technology.
- Those who control it exercise global power and that control rests with large transnational corporations whose directors are un-elected and very powerful throughout the world through the power they exercise in controlling their countries.
- But these forces are supported by the one super-power, the USA, and so it would be possible to place the USA at the top of the hierarchy of countries, represented by the hierarchical multi-coloured discs or as part of the sub-structure. I personally regard the USA as part of the global sub-structure, at this moment in history, although its position could change.
- Power, then, resides in the global sub-structure but it can also be exercised between countries through political, trade, aid and other inter-national mechanisms.



## *The Process of Globalisation:*

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# *The Process of Globalisation*

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- Lukes (2005, p.29) has proposed a three dimensional view of power. Basically he recognises that in earlier social conditions the operation of power occurred in different ways, so that in the first instance **it was direct, coercive and behavioural**, then theorists qualified their understanding as society became more complex and the theories caught up with the social structures and finally in his analysis, **the third dimension focuses upon four points:**
  - **decision-making and control over the political agenda;**
  - **issues and potential issues;**
  - **observable (overt or covert), and latent conflict;**
  - **subjective and real interests.**

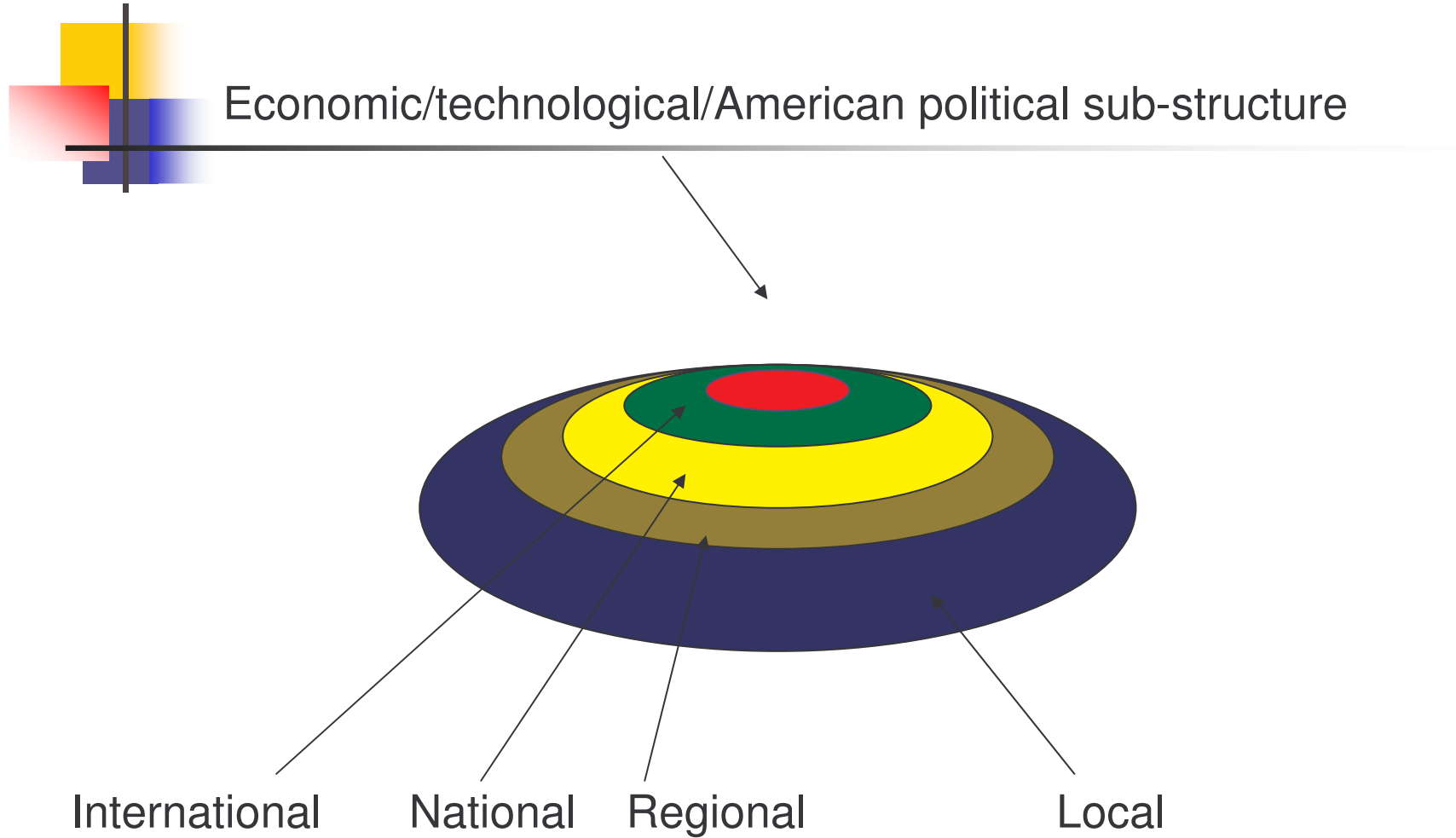


# *The State within the Global System:*

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- It is significant from the outset to note **that the state revolves around the core and that it is, therefore, not a sovereign entity.** Indeed, it is not only the sub-structure that exercises external pressures on the state, it is also international political and cultural bodies, such as the United Nations, the World Bank, OECD, UNESCO and, in Europe, the European Union. Power is exercised externally but there are also all the power debates of democratic society within, so that we can now depict a multi-layered society.

**Figure.2 Multi-Layered Model of Society.**





# *The State within the Global System:*

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- For our purposes it is the constitution of the global core that is significant: **the corporations that comprise the sub-structure control a great deal of the economy and technology (including information technology) in the world but they compete with each other for a market. Consequently, they have both to produce new products that they can sell and be efficiently organised so that they can produce the commodities cheaply and efficiently. The bottom line for the capitalist core is profit and in order to get it, it needs to new knowledge, an educated work force, cheap labour and efficient production processes**



# *The State within the Global System*

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The universities are instruments in knowledge production at the cheapest possible cost and both they and further education provide the education and training for the work force



# *The State within the Global System*

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Since both products and production processes need to respond to the demands of the market, the work force must be educated to keep abreast with these changes and so lifelong learning has become part of the global scene and universities have to change to keep abreast with the rapidly changing demands of **the global sub-structure**, many seeking contracts with these corporations to insure their own survival since most governments have deliberately decreased educational funding in order to remove some of the universities' independence.



*Part 3*

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*The Commercialisation of the  
Universities*



## Structure to Part 3

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- We will first of all explore the way in which the process of commercialisation of universities
- The effects of this process on universities will be noted
- A discussion of the values of the global system within education.



# *The process of Commercialisation:*

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- The present global structural changes began soon after the Second World War, Kerr *et al* (1973, p.47), writing from an American perspective, predicted certain major changes in the way that higher education would operate and they envisaged higher education as the handmaiden of industrialism:
  - The higher educational of industrial society stresses the natural sciences, engineering, medicine, managerial training – whether private or public – and administrative law. It must steadily adapt to new disciplines and new fields of specialization. There is a relatively smaller place for the humanities and the arts, while the social sciences are strongly related to the training of managerial groups and technicians for the enterprise and the government. The increased leisure time of industrialism, however, can afford a broader public appreciation of the humanities and the arts.



# *The process of Commercialisation*

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- Of course, they were wrong about the nature of society but they were right about the emphasis being placed on scientific and useful subjects, albeit in a post-industrial society. **The dominant discourse about knowledge in the knowledge economy is that it is scientific, or at least social scientific, so that it can be seen to be really useful knowledge.**



# Useful Knowledge

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- This means that those forms of knowledge that are not considered useful – e.g., the humanities, adult education – take second place in many university programmes
- **Why should capitalist societies sponsor such programmes when they do not feed into the sector?**



# *The value of Universities*

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- Scott (1984, p. 92) could still reflect upon the value of the universities:
  - The university is the key knowledge institution in modern society. It is the producer of much theoretical knowledge which our society increasingly used as an organising technology. It is the home territory of the most influential component of the new intelligentsia. Because of its long tradition it is a formidable instrument of cultural preservation and renewal. Finally, of course, it is the commanding institution of the educational systems, educating directly society's political, administrative and scientific elites and influencing substantially the values of schools in which the entire population is educated.



# *The process of Commercialisation*

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- Scott (1984.p.92) could also write:

Perhaps one of the most important and ominous of these characteristics (of mass higher education) **is that the university may atrophy not just as a liberal institution but also as an effective and autonomous one.** Under present conditions both its bureaucratic and intellectual authority are being drained away



# *The Effects of Commercialisation:*

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- Readings (1996) was among the first to explore the effects of what was occurring: he recognised that the position of the nation state was changing. Like many theorists at that time he suggested that the nation state was declining, rather than relocating itself within the global structures. Nevertheless, he was one of the first to see the emerging power of the European Union and its effects on higher education but his central concern may be summed up in this sentence from the introduction:
  - The current crisis of the University in the West proceeds from a fundamental shift in its social role and internal systems, one which means that the centrality of the traditional humanistic disciplines of the life of the University is no longer assured.

(Readings, 1996, p.3):



# *The Effects of Commercialisation*

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- Sponsored research of the type typically conducted by the sciences and applied technologies offer a different set of considerations. Considering the funding sources – corporate business, industry, and above all government agencies – most of it can hardly be called disinterested...Basic or “pure” research needs a university base. “Applied” research within a university may be appropriate, though possibly to a lesser degree. **What arouses the ire of critics is not that universities sponsor so much research activity, but that they do so to such an extent that some academic institutions to all intents and purposes are converted into R & D arms of sponsoring agencies.**
- Lucas (1996, p.87):



# *The Effects of Commercialisation*

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- Commercialism threatens to impair the university's reputation for objective, disinterested teaching and research. As medical schools grow careless in stopping pharmaceutical companies from manipulating the results of clinical tests, as professors keep writing articles on controversial subjects without disclosing their ties to interested companies, as deans allow advertising to accompany their teaching materials, the question may question the independence and impartiality of the institution and its faculty. (Bok, 2003, p.117)



# *The Effects of Commercialisation*

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- Perhaps Aronowitz's (2000) description of the university as 'the knowledge factory' best sums up this situation.
- But we have to add – only some types of knowledge
- **We can see in recent years the power of the sub-structure**



# *The Values of the Global System within Education:*

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However, these are not merely structural changes, they are changes in the ethos of the social institution itself. Indeed, it is less than fifty years ago that **Peters (1966, p.126)** could write that 'Education is not a commodity like food. Problems of its distribution are, therefore, much more complex'.

**But, as we have seen, now it is a commodity!**



# *The Values of the Global System within Education*

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- The universities, being part of the global production system, have to produce their 'commodities' at the lowest possible price and so research is expected to produce immediately relevant knowledge and teaching and learning is increasingly restricted to specific subjects taught to an increasing number of students. Since the products must be seen to have high quality the curricula are more controlled, assessment procedures frequent and rigid and records carefully kept and frequently checked – both for quality control and quality assurance. In order to do this, the universities have to be managed as Scott (1984) so accurately predicted in the most rational manner.



# *The Values of the Global System within Education*

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- The values of this approach to education are the values of the capitalist system, which may be summed up as instrumental rationality:  
the ultimate end being to make a profit for those who control the global system rather than the enrichment of humanity.
- In order to do this, workers and knowledge play different roles in the production process, and the work is more controlled/managed.
- People become means rather than ends and the significance of inter-personal relationships disappear almost entirely as emphasis is placed upon individualism and the responsibility to learn is placed upon the learner and the responsibility of the lecturer/teacher is to produce the academic teaching and learning materials and ensure the quality of the teaching materials rather than the ethical quality of the transmission process – be it face-to-face or distance.



# *The Values of the Global System within Education*

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- Without anyone much noticing it, a great deal of professional development and skills updating occurs not because anyone wants to learn, but because they are required to learn. Contract compliance, regulatory frameworks and statutory requirements are the three main culprits.
- Field (1999, cited Coffield 2000, vol 1 p,18):



# *The Values of the Global System within Education*

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- The worthwhileness of what is transmitted (or researched) is now evaluated by its contribution to the overall aim of the system rather than by its contribution to humanity or the enrichment of the learner and this is demonstrated by the learners being awarded a certificate to demonstrate that they have received a specified amount of education – learning has been downgraded from a process intrinsic to our humanity (Jarvis, 2006) to that of working for a certificate – the difference between being and having (Jarvis, 1992, 1997).



# *The Values of the Global System within Education*

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- The universities are ceasing to be universities in either the ideal or even the traditional sense and **are becoming part of the further and continuing (or recurrent) education sector of lifelong learning which is the servant of the global economic system.** The sector has lost many of its educational values as it takes its place within a global capitalist world.
- **Fundamentally, the unchanging ethical value of the concern for the other in relationship has been displaced by the cultural values of global capitalism.**



# *The Values of the Global System within Education*

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- The question remains as to whether the universities have lost out or sold out to global capitalism, or whether they have bowed to what they perceive to be an inevitable social situation in order to survive?



## *Conclusion - the implications*

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Life-long learning has become work-life learning

The nature of the University has changed – it never was the ideal community of scholars but now it has become an instrument of production - not producing educated persons but better qualified workers to fill the places in an ever-growing knowledge economy

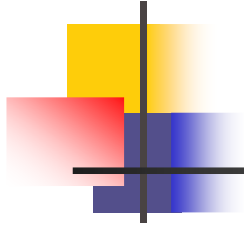
The values of the university are now counted in terms of wealth and production – not people and the pursuit of truth



## *Conclusion- ethics*

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- The values implicit in the globalisation may not be of the highest ethical standards
- But globalisation has not destroyed those values and it is incumbent on universities to rediscover them for their own good and for the good of humanity as a whole.



**Thank you for listening to me**