

WHAT IS AN 'ELITE' OR A 'TOP', 'GLOBAL' UNIVERSITY?

When discussing the concept of the 'elite', 'top', 'global', 'global brand', or 'world-class' university the focus is almost inevitably and invariably on the level of the research output of a particular institution, rather than on, say, its teaching quality or the ratio of highly qualified applicants for the limited number of undergraduate places or the socio-economic background of its students. In practice, of course, the 'top' research university will probably also be deemed to have high-quality teaching, and it almost certainly will be occupied by high-scoring school-leaver students carefully selected from among the many well-qualified applicants who come disproportionately from the upper end of the socio-economic scale (as in the case of Oxbridge and the Ivy League). These higher education institutions (HEIs) will also probably be the older/oldest ones in the national system higher education (HE), and will often occupy attractive sites replete with quadrangles as well as possessing imposing ivy-clad stone buildings with towers (Rothblatt, 2008; and Berquist & Pawlak, 2008, pp 193-201 on 'The Tangibility of Space and Residency'). Moreover, such HEIs will, usually, be located in economically vibrant, culturally interesting, and socially progressive parts of the relevant country, and often this means the capital – for instance, Tokyo University, Sydney University, Peking University and Tsinghua in Beijing, UCL and Imperial in London (but not Oxford nor Cambridge, although, interestingly, each is only some fifty miles from London and each was connected to London early in the 1960s UK motorway building phase). In the case of the USA, clearly Washington is an exception, but Harvard, MIT, Yale and Princeton cluster around New York–Boston, while Berkeley and Stanford grace San Francisco – see Florida (2005 & 2008) for discussion of the geography and sociology of creativity (can a Government 'buy' through extra taxpayer funding such world-class status for one of its HEIs if the HEI is located in a dreary part of the world?!). The research output will usually be extensive and spread across a broad academic range, but an institution can achieve 'top' status on a fairly narrow span of intensive academic research activity (for example, the concentration on science at MIT, CalTech, or Imperial; the focus on the social sciences at LSE; the fact that Princeton has neither medicine nor engineering).

The only exceptions to this profile of a 'top' or 'leading' university in global terms are the French grandes écoles and the US prestigious liberal arts colleges such as Williams and Vassar, where the teaching is usually deemed excellent and the students are academically (and socio-economically) elite but the overall research reputation of the institution is not ranked as leading. Moreover, whereas historically there may once have been a time when 'top' universities catered for a socio-economically elite student intake that was not necessarily and automatically also hugely academically distinguished in terms of school-leaver entry scores (nor, indeed, in terms of degree output – the Oxford 'Gentleman's Fourth'!) and when such HEIs were not always 'research-led' in modern terms, it seems that now, in the context of academic meritocracy, no elite HEIs in any

national system (still less if such HEIs have pretensions to be ‘global-players’) are simply and merely some kind of socio-cultural finishing-school where admission can be gained on the basis of rather modest academic performance in secondary education: see Tapper & Palfreyman, 2000 (ch 4), and Soares, 1999, on Oxford (and, by implicit extension, Cambridge); along with Keller & Keller (2001) on Harvard, Axtell (2006) on Princeton, and Karabel (2005) on admissions policy at Harvard, Yale and Princeton, plus Soares (2007) on admissions to Yale and other elites; plus Golden, 2006, on access to US elite HEIs and Duke, 1996, on educating ‘The Whole Man and the Gentleman Scholar’ as US Ivy League HEIs tried to import the Oxbridge residential and tutorial teaching model (Tapper & Palfreyman, 2000, chs 3 & 5; Palfreyman, 2001).

So, the elite university is academically elite, at least certainly in terms of the educational qualifications of its undergraduate student intake (and these students are almost certainly from the higher socio-economic groups), and it is very likely indeed that the elite university’s teaching will be highly rated along with its research (but research is central to this HE elitism: Lang, 2005). The HEI may well, in addition, be seen as culturally significant and prestigious in terms of its location and buildings, as having historic presence in the wider society in terms of educating political leaders, and as being worthy of much media attention relative to other HEIs – even to the extent of serving as the setting for many novels and their related films: Dougill (1998) on Oxford specifically; Proctor (1957) on the English university novel generally but especially within that genre on ‘The Cult of Oxford’ (ch IX); and Carter (1990) on the campus novel (also Showalter, 2005). Such novels were once often written by Oxford Dons (notably, as ‘the exemplar’, J.I.M. Stewart, aka Michael Innes) and focused on how the Oxbridge ivory towers were being besieged by proletarians, women, foreigners, and scientists seeking to gain access to the sacred cloisters and hallowed quadrangles – happily, all have since been welcomed in. Another strand of the genre is the crime novel set in Oxford: Colin Dexter’s ‘Inspector Morse’ novels and spin-off TV series (now followed by ‘Lewis’) have given Oxford University and its colleges a higher murder rate than New York, Los Angeles or Chicago suffer in their worst years!

Here David Watson (Watson & Maddison, 2005; Watson, 2007) provides an amusing aside: in an email exchange with David Palfreyman he listed the varying HEIs featuring in a collection of UK ‘Top Tens’ according to a range of wildly differing criteria (inter alia research, number of overseas students, graduate employability, student satisfaction, proportion of students earning a first-class or upper-second degree, and even ‘gay friendly’ locations!). The Shanghai Jiao Tong University ranking referred to below puts Cambridge first and Oxford second amongst HEIs, then Imperial-UCL-Manchester-Edinburgh-Bristol-Sheffield-Nottingham-KCL. The *Times Higher* list puts Oxford first, then Cambridge-Imperial-LSE-St Andrew’s-UCL-Warwick-Bristol-Durham-KCL. The ten HEIs with the largest number of overseas students include Warwick, Manchester, UCL, Oxford and LSE; the ten HEIs scoring highest in the National Student Survey include only Oxford and St Andrew’s from amongst the fourteen mentioned so far; the ones with the highest proportion of ‘top’ degrees includes Oxford, Cambridge, Bristol and St Andrew’s from these fourteen; the Top Ten HEIs with the highest percentage of students from the lowest socio-economic groups includes none of the fourteen; and the

ten most ‘gay friendly’ HEIs includes only Durham and Edinburgh from the fourteen dominating the SJTU, THES and the overseas students rankings. In short, there are many ways of calculating a Top Ten; but rankings based on research (SJTU), on reputation (THES), on popularity with overseas students, and (to a lesser extent) on degree results do seem to have some overlap... As Watson comments elsewhere (Watson, 2007:38) ‘Institutions need to know if they are entering one competition or several. It is tactically important to know whether there is a single set of rules, or several; and, if the latter, how far we [the HEI] can afford to fall behind in any one of them while ‘winning’ in others.’ He goes on to ask whether HEIs should curb their enthusiasm for this competition, especially if the ranking methodology is ‘neither rational nor scholarly’ (‘an inexact science’, p 40).

What academic literature is there on the ‘elite’ university? One strand of study explores the methodology used by the various rankings of such HEIs: notably the league tables issued by the *Times Higher Education Supplement*, by Shanghai Jiao Tong University, by *US News and World Report*, and by *Newsweek International*, as analysed and critiqued by Marginson (2007a, ch 3), by Usher & Savino (2007), and by Watson (2007, 24-46) – see also Roberts & Thompson (2007) who explore the link between the research score of UK HEIs and their ability to recruit top-performing school-leavers, and who review the literature about the various US, UK, German and global rankings (citing, inter alia, Dill & Soo, 2005; Michael, 2005; and Turner, 2005); and Salmi & Saroyan (2007), along with Taylor & Braddock (2007). A key issue for the methodology behind all such rankings is the almost exclusive emphasis on research output, and citations of it, in English as the lingua franca of academe, leaving universities that do not routinely function in English arguably at a disadvantage (as discussed in detail in Marginson and van der Wende, 2007a; hence the former in Marginson, 2007b, cites with approval the system for comparing universities developed by the German Centre for Higher Educational Development). The (mis)use of such ‘highly condensed indicators of quality’ by employers recruiting graduates from supposedly ‘Top 20’ UK universities by way of perceived ‘reputation’ is explored in Morley & Aynsley (2007), who see such employment practices as leading to ‘a reinforcement of a graduate elite, with the labour market playing a vital role in social reproduction processes and threatening to produce a reified higher education economy’: in essence, ‘employers are reinforcing the steepening of university hierarchies by the authority they give to league tables compiled by newspapers and perceptions of reputation’. Another strand of study looks at the measurement and management of research generally within higher education: in the UK context, Shattock (2003, 5-7) comments that ‘high quality research, once established, tends to reinforce itself’ and notes ‘the extent to which [top] universities, irrespective of size and subject spread, perform well in research across the range of disciplines they profess’; see also Bushaway (2003) on the macro issues of managing research across the institution and Leisyte (2007) on the micro aspects at departmental/research unit level.

Others look at the competition for research funding as one of many markets within higher education: Teixeira et al (2004) across a range of countries (see also Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), and Geiger (2004) on research universities in the USA. The latter sees the research market as ‘beautifully efficient’, and one that has

‘shaped American universities’ in terms of how they have responded to ‘the academic research marketplace’ that encourages their expansion of research activity ‘because the payoffs are greater to those who do it best’ (249-254). Kirp (2003) also analyses the US HE market, including a case-study of Berkeley that explores its links with industry over science research; while Marginson & Considine (2000, ch 6) consider the commercialization of science research in Australia. More polemical material on HE and the marketplace is Washbourne (2005), who argues that market forces do not mix happily with the carrying out of disinterested science/medical research; but Bok (2003, chs 4 & 8) provides a more measured review of the possible risks to academic integrity and the potential conflicts of interest arising from the commercial funding of science research and related technology transfer. See also Marginson (2007a) on market competition in HE; Marginson’s work is discussed below.

Similarly, and again in a US context, Brewer et al (2002) explore the strategic positioning of HEIs using an industrial economics model and where strategy is determined according to the particular institution’s focus either on recruiting students by offering customer-oriented vocational teaching and by being firmly embedded within their locality/region (Watson, 2007) as a way of developing *reputation*, or alternatively on research funding and research output as a means of enhancing institutional *prestige* as measured by the rankings and tables referred to above. They comment: ‘Prestige is costly to build and maintain [89]... the pursuit of prestige is expensive and risky [134]’; and add that such ‘prestige-seeking’ can force ‘a reduction in resources allocated to other uses’, citing as a prime example those for teaching undergraduates (135). All in all, they conclude that pursuing a prestige strategy ‘requires substantial and successful investment for an uncertain payoff [135]’, not least because it is zero-sum game (‘when one institution gains, another loses [144]’). Kirp (2003, 4) refers to prestige as ‘the coin of the realm among the leading universities and liberal arts colleges’, and comments that such prestige-seeking means ‘more than bragging rights for trustees and alumni’ since it brings ‘tangible benefits’. Gilbert (2007) offers a case-study in prestige-building: the University of Manchester and its ‘transformational agenda’ aimed at getting it to ‘the first rank of international research-led universities by 2015’ (within the ‘Top 25’ globally). Stensaker (2007) usefully reminds us that achieving a successful brand as an HEI is far more than merely hatching a good marketing plan; it is a much deeper and long-term exercise in developing the HEI’s own unique and distinctive organisational identity and culture, and certainly not doing so simply by copying other HEIs in, say, building a shiny new student learning centre in an infrastructure arms-race.

Given the cost of becoming and remaining a ‘world-class’ university, it is not surprising that such institutions are at present concentrated in the wealthier nations of the USA, the UK, Japan, Australia, Canada, and to a much lesser extent in a few European countries beyond the UK. Nor is it at all odd that public policy (even in some such wealthy nations and certainly in those countries that aspire to develop one or more ‘global players’) increasingly seeks to concentrate the taxpayer financing of research in fewer better-funded and larger critical-mass institutions, explicitly or implicitly differentiating them from less research active or teaching-only HEIs within the national system. Watson (2007, 45), however, warns that ‘even the most powerful institutions cannot really go it

alone' since 'the dialectic between competition, collaboration and complementarity in HE is a complex one': and hence the apex needs the pyramid for support, just as the pyramid needs the apex to set it off architecturally. Altbach & Balan (2007) consider the research university in terms of such public policy-making in China, India, South Korea, Brazil, Chile and Mexico. They note that everywhere the research university 'is a central institution of the 21st century' as being 'at the nexus of science, scholarship, and the new knowledge economies' (1), and also how over the past two or three decades 'policymakers engaged almost exclusively with meeting mass higher education demand, largely ignoring the research role of universities' (3). Now, however, Altbach & Balan argue that 'research universities generate growing enthusiasm worldwide' (2) and hence the key policy issue is how does the national higher education system incorporate, and more generously finance, one or more of these complex, specialized and costly research universities within its differentiated range of HEIs. Moreover, the question will also arise as to whether the nation is politically comfortable with an explicit recognition that HEIs should have 'diverse missions, structures, and patterns of funding' and that there will be at the pinnacle or apex of the system one or more of these institutions as flagships. They comment that such national systems 'often evolve during the massification of higher education' (6), and indeed the very theme of a forthcoming book (Palfreyman & Tapper, 2009) is how mass HE systems across the globe are interacting with the concept of the elite university given that in order nationally 'to allow research universities to flourish requires a way to differentiate them from other types of postsecondary institutions, provide funding at a higher level, and legitimize the idea that these institutions are indeed special and serve a crucial role in society' (6).

That said, the definition of a research university used by Altbach & Balan does not mean that all such HEIs are or need to be world-class: 'All world-class universities are research universities, without exception. But not all research universities are world-class, nor should they be.' (7): and, might one add, nor could they be? Nor are the research or flagship universities within a national system the only HEIs, or indeed institutes or agencies, at which research will be conducted. But research universities all around the world, whether also world-class universities or not, have certain features in common according to Altbach & Balan:

they are very largely government-funded (other than the likes of Harvard, Yale, Princeton and Stanford in the USA, and Waseda in Japan);

they are complex with a range of subject areas, although they are not necessarily the largest HEIs in their respective systems;

they are 'multiversities' (Kerr, 2001), having a multitude of missions within which research and graduate degrees dominate;

they are expensively resource intensive; and

they recruit students and faculty nationally and, if also world-class, internationally.

And they face similar challenges: of sustaining and increasing their income, of wrestling with the pressures of privatization, of balancing pure research with commercial research (of their public good mission with the private market that may reward them better but also constrain their academic freedom), of maintaining their autonomy while being accountable for their use of taxpayer monies, of functioning in the ever-more global and

competitive science environment, and of offering their academics both academic freedom and job security within ‘a cosmopolitan academic environment’ (Altbach & Balan, 2007: 26) and doing so in the potentially threatening context of constant appraisal of the individual’s research contribution to institutional earnings and prestige (Hall, 2003, ch 4, where the point is well made that in the culture of HE university traditions of ‘collegiality’ fit uncomfortably with the idea of ‘managing for performance’ and ‘give rise to tensions at a conceptual and practical level [77]’). Similarly, Watson (2007, 42) is clear that, at macro-level, the State is not able simply to ‘manage’ some of its HEIs to world-class status; instead it is necessary to *trust* the academic community ‘to do the right thing (that is, to pursue its core mission of knowledge creation, testing and use, without fear or favour)’: creating a world-class HEI is ‘a long-haul proposition’ where taxpayer money helps but HEI autonomy and faculty academic freedom is crucial.

Mohrman et al (2007) discuss the Emerging Global Model (EGM) of the research university, arguing that the really elite universities around the world have more in common with each other than they do with most of the HEIs in their national system in terms of the recruitment packages and research infrastructure they need to offer to prospective graduate students and to academic staff whom they compete for internationally: ‘These top universities look beyond the boundaries of the countries in which they are located to define a transnational scope. Their peers span the globe... there may be only a few dozen fully developed EGM universities but they are the institutions that head virtually every list of leading universities worldwide.’ (146). These EGMs are even more concentrated in even fewer countries, and, of course, overwhelmingly in the USA and to a lesser extent the UK.

Such EGM universities are characterized by eight key features that they all have in common (although other research universities within national systems may have a few of these features, but not all):

- they have a truly global mission transcending the nation-state in which they are located, with highly mobile and international student and faculty populations;
- they are increasingly research intensive, especially in ‘Big Science’ and also in the context of being ‘a knowledge conglomerate’ (Geiger, 2004), but where the prime emphasis is on research activity rather than the teaching and wider service/civic-engagement missions;
- their academics are more team-oriented, cross-disciplinary and internationally-networked, working on research contract projects and consulting for business (‘They are busy commercializing their knowledge... on EGM campuses, entrepreneurial activities have been institutionalized’, 151/2 – see Etzkowitz (2007) for a case-study of MIT and Stanford, Good (2007) on the Cambridge-MIT link-up, and Clark (1998) on entrepreneurial universities generally);
- they have massive and hugely diversified funding streams, needed to finance the heavy cost of competing globally;
- there are constantly shifting relationships among these universities and government agencies and business;
- they recruit students and academics on a global basis from a highly mobile international talent pool;

they evolve ever-more complex mechanisms for managing their research activity, such as interdisciplinary centres, science parks and incubator units, technology transfer, patenting, spin-out companies, joint venture funding; and they collaborate on a global basis and operate within, and through, various international university associations that offer ‘a form of validation of international stature, providing significant prestige to member universities’ (158).

The EGM is a response to the process of internationalisation and globalization that was increasingly to be found throughout late-twentieth century economic activity of every kind, including HE which, at the elite end, is now increasingly subject to global-referencing (Marginson, 2007a; Marginson & van der Wende, 2007b). This leads to ‘new policy dilemmas for national governments’ (159) in the context: of the expansion (‘massification’) of HE; of the privatization of HE as the taxpayer retreats and governments introduce and hike student tuition fees as a cost-sharing strategy, and as some countries encourage the proliferation of private, commercial HE to meet demand; and of the increased diversification of HE systems (‘The EGM can be described as a super-research university at one end of a continuum of institutional types reflecting different missions and different emphases on research, teaching, application, and service to the area in which the institution is geographically located.’ p164).

Thus, ‘there are tensions between the EGM and other priorities within higher education [166] ... the EGM can pit international research prestige against mass education demands [168] ... the worldwide reach of the EGM forces uncomfortable, even impossible, situations as nations and universities want it all: playing in the international knowledge game while at the same time providing tertiary education for as many people as want and can benefit from a college degree [169].’ Indeed, as Mohrman et al conclude and advise: ‘Before deciding to develop an internationally competitive research university, policy makers should be clear about why they wish to make this investment... [since] allocation of resources to high-level research could detract from more general educational goals of the higher education system... there are other models of excellence in higher education’ (173/4). They predict, however, that ‘more and more institutions will become full-fledged EGM universities’ (adding, ‘although not every institution can be or should be an EGM institution’), where these global universities will form ‘an elite subset in a larger universe of higher education institutions’ (175).

Marginson (2006) considers the dynamics of national and global competition in HE, seeing the two areas as distinct but feeding each other. The research university aims to maximize its prestige as the producer of positional goods, here research performance and the education of highly employable students who then achieve high social status and high earnings (and often donate or bequeath generously to their alma mater!). The ‘elite research university’ within the national market can carefully select highly qualified students since applicant demand exceeds the supply of student places, not least because expansion of the institution is deliberately constrained to maximize status and to avoid brand-dilution. Given the growing global role of some of these elites, there is the issue of the ‘disembedding’ of such elites from their national system, of them becoming ‘global

player' universities that are in the business of producing 'global public goods' (Marginson, 2007a, ch 2; and Marginson, 2007c). Other HEIs operate within their national market as public or for-profit/commercial 'teaching-focused' place-fillers and expanders that are student-volume and student-revenue driven, with a tendency to indulge in hyper-marketing while shaving costs/quality. A third group of HEIs are intermediate between the two ends of the HEI spectrum as 'aspirant research universities' (but with little chance of breaking into the charmed circle of the 'elite research universities').

The elite university within the global positional market relies on the prestige of its research output and the high-value brand of its degree: Marginson sees this 'world market of elite universities' as being essentially the US top twenty centred on the Ivy League, and the UK's Oxbridge. Next are 'exporting national research universities' in the UK, Canada, Australia, Europe and Japan that are prestige-driven at national level, but may also operate foreign campuses as a profit-making business. Then, also within this global HE market, there are 'teaching-focused export institutions' that offer a lower cost/quality product to foreign students; and, next, there are 'nationally-bound research universities' that have local prestige and are competitive with 'exporting national research universities' in recruiting students nationally, but have insufficient status to do much by way of cross-border activity. The last group within, or segment of, the global market are 'lesser status national/local institutions' that are almost entirely confined within their national borders.

Finally, reference was made above to the complexity of managing, or rather facilitating, research in the EGM (Mohrman et al, 2007) or the Super Research University, SRU (Baker, 2007). This has been explored by Taylor (2006), who studied institutions in Canada, Australia, the UK, and the USA; all of which 'would be immediately recognizable as among the leading research-led universities in the world'. While conceding that research 'does not lend itself to control and management' (citing Hogan & Clark, 1996), he argues, as they and others do, that it can certainly be facilitated: 'The key issue is how to manage effectively in such a way as to maintain an appropriate working environment within which research can thrive.' Taylor sees the key characteristics of 'leading research universities' as: the presence of pure and applied research; the delivery of research-led teaching; a breadth of academic disciplines; a high proportion of graduate research degree programmes; high levels of external income; and an international perspective.

From his case-studies he seeks to identify common features of research management in these EGM/SRU institutions:

they all follow a management style of 'encouraging, supporting and monitoring' rather than 'directing and controlling' (*but* 'There was, in reality, no question of "laissez faire"...' – on 'leadership' in HE governance/management see Palfreyman (2008) and the references within that Paper);

their aim is 'to release the drive and imagination of talented, ambitious members of staff', in that they are collegial rather than managerial institutions as Shattock (2006 & 2007) would view it (the concept of HE collegiality is explored broadly in Tapper &

Palfreyman, forthcoming; and in relation to Oxford specifically in Tapper & Palfreyman, 2000 – second edition forthcoming); their organizational structures vary, and ‘there is clearly not a right or wrong model’ providing the management support to the research mission gives speed of response and flexibility on funding opportunities, on costing and pricing procedures, on legal and intellectual property issues, and on a code of best practice for conducting research (half the sample even provided ‘professional application writers’ to assist academics in bidding for research funds!); all these HEIs have financial incentives on offer to departments/schools and individual academics for encouraging research; all have a diversity of funding sources; all possess a tolerance of risk when investing in new research areas; all give access to central funds from which new ventures could be pump-primed; and all have developed ‘a deep awareness of cost’, and especially recognize the need for research bids to cover indirect costs if the sheer success of research activity is not to bankrupt the entire university.

And all these ‘leading research universities’ are, in varying degrees, skeptical about the value of detailed institution-wide research plans and of a ‘University Research Committee’, as opposed to having such plans at the level of the academic units where the research action is to be found: Bolton, 2000; and Bushaway, 2003, ch 5, who stresses the importance of ensuring ‘resources for research are allocated directly to the research groups or units where successful research is carried out as measured by objective and externally referenced benchmarks...’ (145). Hence they all also carefully monitor research performance at departmental/unit level to achieve constant and rigorous self-assessment (Watson & Maddison, 2005), systematically using a range of metrics and indicators that provided benchmarking against competitor institutions nationally and internationally.

These HEIs aim at ‘fostering an intensely competitive ethos’ and at creating ‘managed internal peer pressure’ that together will ensure research targets are met across the HEI (with the threat in most of the sample of ‘external peer review’ of any under-performing unit). The group puts a strong emphasis on human resource development, with highly selective recruitment policies and a wide range of staff development programmes linked to research (Partington & Stainton, 2003, ch 5; Bushaway, 2003, ch 7). Incidentally, not one had an employment contract that specified hours of work for academic staff, recognizing that active research faculty are self-motivators. Interestingly, given the tension in allocating academic staff time between the competing demands of teaching and research, all these EGMs/SRUs emphasized both undergraduate and graduate teaching alongside research and there was, in theory, ‘a strong philosophical commitment to the integration of teaching and research in the institution to the mutual benefit of both activities’. Partington & Stainton (2003) make the related point that ‘managing staff development for research and scholarship entails recognizing the tensions that exist between teaching and research, in particular in relation to the primacy afforded research and its currency in the context of promotion’ (102).

In conclusion, the elite universities that are the focus of the forthcoming book (Palfreyman & Tapper, 2009) are certainly all of those that would belong to the EGM or SRU category referred to above; they incorporate Taylor's 'leading research universities' and also Marginson's 'world market of elite universities' together with many of his next segment of 'exporting national research universities'. They are as a group for study in this book also, at the very least, the ones, as Altbach & Balan would express it, that are the flagships at the pinnacle or apex of the national systems that are discussed in the book (the USA, the UK, the Scandinavian countries, Germany, The Netherlands, Latin America, India, South Africa, Australia, Japan, France, China). Moreover, given that quite a few of those systems have yet to generate an EGM/SRU institution (but will surely soon do so in the case of Germany and China – as noted above, Watson (2007, 42), however, is skeptical that the State can just 'buy' world-class states for a few of its HEIs), there are within the group from this selection of countries some that will perhaps be only in Marginson's lesser segment of 'nationally-bound research universities'. And, of course, our concept of elite HEIs for the purposes of this study will include, for example, the French grandes ecoles and the US top liberal arts colleges that do not appear on the landscape of the research-oriented taxonomies discussed above (Cowen, 2007, provides another interesting typology). In all the national case-studies, however, the value of the comparative research exercise that is the theme of the book lies in exploring whether these different mass and diverse HE systems recognize (explicitly or implicitly) and accommodate (especially by way of additional funding) their own, relatively elite HEIs. The OECD (2008) Report on HE globally calls for, inter alia, nations to 'ensure the coherence of the tertiary education system where there is extensive diversification', while stopping short of recommending just how diversified the system should be, still less where elite HEIs might fit within a policy of 'extensive and flexible diversification'. In the UK, for example, there was once talk of imposing an explicit R-X-T (Research, Mixed, Teaching) categorization of HEIs, and there is currently talk of HEIs being either 'research-intensive' (and probably liberal arts oriented) or 'business-facing' (and presumably focused both on vocational degrees that involve 'employer engagement' and also on the 'widening participation' agenda); often, however, such a seemingly attractive neat stratification of HEIs leaves rather too many wallowing around within 'the squeezed middle'! Or whether their national systems find the existence of elite HEIs politically embarrassing in egalitarian terms while also being attractive for their contribution to the knowledge-based economy, as well as perhaps being commercially useful as flagships whose wake of prestige other reputation-oriented HEIs in the national system (as Marginson's segment of 'teaching-focused export institutions') can utilize to recruit lucrative fee-paying overseas students...

One further, and final, thought on the character of global-player elite HEIs: in considering the league tables and rankings referred to at the start of this piece and while recognizing the various weaknesses in their methodologies, it has to be acknowledged that, currently, the top end of such international tables is uniformly and absolutely dominated by a dozen or so US universities, most of which are private institutions. The key characteristics of such institutions are: first, relative freedom from Government interference in the form of, say, an equivalent of the UK's HEFCE, RAE and QAA where ever-increasing central bureaucracy is driven by a damaging fixation with a new national

zeitgeist of audit, accountability and risk management (Power, 1999 & 2007; Amann, 2003) - instead these US private 'elites of the elite' have merely a mild form of accreditation that vets their overall credibility and an audit trail that monitors their use of Federal research grants. Secondly, openly fierce rivalry and competition for the best faculty and graduate research students, with no pretence that there is, or can be, a comforting homogeneity across the wide range of institutions now loosely labeled 'university' within massified HE systems; and, thirdly, not only vast but also greatly diversified funding, notably, compared with public HEIs, by way of the ability to levy high tuition fees and to command continuous substantial alumni donations to already huge endowments. Indeed, it is this widening gap between the financial wealth of the private Ivy League (now reinforced by Stanford and MIT) and of certain historically well-funded public research-intensive elites, such as Berkeley, Michigan and Virginia, that gives rise to recent talk of the 'privatisation' or 'floating-off' of such state HE flagships as 'charter' institutions and to a debate about 'the crisis of the public university in America' (Duderstadt & Womack, 2003; Ehrenberg, 2006; Priest & St John, 2006). It will be interesting, therefore, to see if, over time, the enhanced public funding of now explicitly identified and labeled 'top' HEIs in China, Korea, Japan and Germany (similarly Norway and Finland are currently pondering plans to encourage national elite HEIs, as indeed Denmark is actually implementing such a plan...) can create any true global competition for the likes of Harvard, Yale, Stanford, MIT and Princeton given that the former will still remain essentially public universities more readily subject to the vagaries of political interference. (Such intervention also, of course, occurs indirectly, depending on what are the Government targets for research councils or similar entities centrally disbursing taxpayer monies to individual researchers at HEIs: the HEI possessing its own sizeable endowment *might* be willing to, and able to, itself fund long-term research that does not fit the shorter horizon expected by a publicly-funded research body under pressure from Government to demonstrate a contribution to the Knowledge Based Economy.) And it will be equally interesting to monitor whether the UK's global-players can continue to compete with their US counterparts, given that, while also they are theoretically private legal entities (Farrington & Palfreyman, 2006, ch 2), they are in practice public-funded universities subject to increasing political and bureaucratic interference and micro-management in the name of 'best practice' (Tapper, 2007; on the relative funding of Harvard, Princeton, Berkeley and Oxford see the OxCHEPS/Ulanov Partnership Paper, 2004; on the hopelessly misguided attempts by HEFCE to 'reform' Oxford and Cambridge by obliging them as collegial organizations to conform to an inappropriate and crude governance code unimaginatively plagiarized from the commercial sector see: Shattock, 2006, 51-55 & 153 and Palfreyman, 2007; and, on HEI governance generally, Farrington & Palfreyman, 2007, para. 5.02/fn 3 and as expanded at the HE Law Updates page of the OxCHEPS website).

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