Governing the Discourse of Internationalization in the USA: The Influence of Higher Education Professional Associations

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Abstract

Higher education professional associations (HEPAs) are well-established agents of knowledge production and have been influential in shaping higher education policies and practices. In the context of US international higher education, HEPAs have contributed to the rise of ‘internationalization’ as a discursive practice. Proposing an analytical framework that takes up Foucauldian analysis of discourse and studies in governmentality, this paper examines a corpus of ACE and NAFSA reports in order to trace the emergence of internationalization and its lines of transformation as both a regime of truth and a regime of practice in the context of US higher education over the last 30 or so years. The findings of this study illustrate that since its emergence in the 1980s, HEPAs have participated in the transformation of internationalization from a discourse of exchange to a discourse of competition.

Keywords higher education · internationalization · Foucault · governmentality · discourse

Introduction

While the practice of international education is centuries old (Altbach and Knight, 2007), *internationalization*, as a term used to signify the practices and strategies related to international higher education, only began to emerge in the context of US higher education in the late-1980s and early-1990s (de Wit, 2002). At the center of this rise in internationalization discourse in the USA are two higher education professional associations (HEPAs) — the American Council on Education (ACE) and NAFSA: Association of International Educators. Both organizations have actively participated in giving rise to and shaping the discursive regularities and normative

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practices of international education for decades, often through the production of positioning papers and policy recommendations (Barker, 1970; Buckner and Stein, 2020). While other HEPAs, including the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), also have played a significant role in shaping international education practices in the USA (Harclerod and Eaton, 2011), this investigation will focus specifically on ACE and NAFSA.

Internationalization has been — and continues to be — applied to the growing international dimensions of higher education. Once the focus of curricular development and exchange (Knight, 2004), it increasingly has come to signify international student mobility (Brooks and Waters, 2011), the recruitment of fee-paying international students (Robertson, 2011), and graduate education to expand science and technology workforces (Hill *et al.*, 2016). The discourse of internationalization often gets swept up and associated with the discourse of globalization (Knight, 2004) and the notion of knowledge economy, both of which have gained in economic and political importance, particularly at the international level (Dale, 2005). Globalization and knowledge economy are often viewed as inextricably linked to the rise of a neoliberal governing rationality, which can be viewed as both a permanent critique of state governmental overreach and the extension of market logic to non-economic social domains (Foucault, 2008; Olssen and Peters, 2005).

While there exists an abundance of academic literature analyzing education policies and internationalization discourse, much less has analyzed the ways in which HEPAs govern higher education policies and practices through the production of discourse and knowledge formation (Bacchi and Bonham, 2014; Roberts, 2016). This paper aims to partially fill this gap in internationalization studies by asking two interrelated questions. First, “How have ACE and NAFSA taken up, articulated, and transformed internationalization discourse within US higher education?” Second, “How have HEPA conceptualizations of internationalization governed international education practices in particular ways?”

Drawing from both discourse and governmentality studies, this study links together the Foucauldian concepts of power-knowledge “regimes of truth” with governing “regimes of practices” as its genealogical method (Dean, 1994, 2010; Lemke, 2011, 2019). As an instrument of power, discursive practices constitute, organize, and regulate the “matrices of possible bodies of knowledge” and various forms of truth in society (Foucault, 2010, 5). To govern, meanwhile, is to exercise power through a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge in order to structure the field of possible actions of individuals and collectives (Dean, 2010; Foucault, 1982). Government, in the broadest sense, includes both ways of knowing and activities that shape conduct (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016). While an analysis of discourse examines the exercise of power-knowledge (Hook, 2001), an analysis of government recognizes the manifold authorities that govern in different sites and toward different objectives while seeking to identify the conditions for the knowledges they generate and practices they carry out (Rose *et al.*, 2006).

To trace the articulation and transformation of internationalization discourse over the last three decades, this paper begins by providing an overview of international higher education in the USA over the last century. It also examines the role of ACE and NAFSA in problematizing the American population’s growing isolation and

ethnocentrism in a post-Cold War, globalizing world. (Dale, 2005; Peters, 2002). This author then proposes an analytical framework for examining a corpus of ACE and NAFA texts produced over the last three decades, which are then analyzed. The final section offers a discussion of the results of the analysis and concludes with suggestions for future research.

The Role of HEPAs in US International Higher Education

Higher education in the USA is a highly complex and decentralized system of public and private, not-for-profit and for-profit institutions governed differently by each of the 50 states (Hawkins, 1992; U.S. Network for Education Information, 2008). The US federal government both directly and indirectly oversees multiple aspects of higher education. This includes the US Department of Education, which was created in 1979 to consolidate federal programs and funding (Mumper *et al.*, 2011) as well as various federal policies that span the spectrum from issues of equity (Valentin, 1997) to intellectual property rights (National Research Council, 2003) to the immigration of international students (Bista *et al.*, 2018). Higher education institutions (HEIs) are also governed by an agglomeration of regional and professional accrediting bodies and, in some instances, local communities.

Referred to as both intermediary and intermediating organizations (Metcalf, 2004), HEPAs exist in the USA, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, the European Union, and elsewhere. Their purpose is to both advocate on behalf of higher education and to shape government policies that benefit individual HEIs (Metcalf, 2006; Metcalfe and Fenwick, 2009; Roberts, 2016). In the decentralized and complex higher education system found in the USA, HEPAs perform a unique role in producing truth and knowledge from a position of power.

Beginning in the late-nineteenth century with the Association of American Agricultural Colleges and the National Association of State Universities, HEPAs, often led by university presidents and chancellors, served to influence a variety of government policies (Hawkins, 1992). By 1918, there became a need for an “association for associations,” an umbrella organization with a central office, constitution, and an annual budget to which all national associations of institutions of higher education were members. That association became the American Council on Education (Ibid., 23–24).

International higher education, meanwhile, emerged gradually in the USA. Until the late-nineteenth century, it mainly consisted of privileged individuals traveling to Europe to complete their higher education credentialing (de Wit and Merckx, 2012). Following World War I, international studies were primarily a focus of European institutions due in part to the US refusal to join the League of Nations. De Wit and Merckx (2012) argue that World War II caused a radical change in the practice of internationalization in the USA. While the period between world wars focused on peace and mutual understanding, the rapid expansion of international education following World War II came to focus on national security and foreign policy along with government funding and regulations (Ibid.). In 1946, the US Congress established the Fulbright exchange program, which continues to exist today under the

US State Department's Bureau of Educational Cultural Affairs (Dolby and Rahman, 2008). Later consolidated in 1961, the Fulbright-Hays Act would become known as the Mutual Educational and Cultural Exchange Program, which helped clear a path for international students to study at colleges and universities in the USA (Smithee, 2012).

In 1948, the National Association of Foreign Student Advisers (NASFA) was founded to promote the professional development of US college and university officials responsible for assisting and advising the 25,000 international students studying in the USA (Buckner and Stein, 2020). ACE and NAFSA both helped shape the National Defense Education Act in 1958 and the Higher Education Act of 1965, which marked the beginning of modern federal higher education policy in the USA (Barker, 1970). These acts further increased funding for international education (Forest and Kinser, 2002), including the Department of Education's Title VI area studies centers and Fulbright-Hays programs (Dolby and Rahman, 2008). By the 1970s, ACE had become an effective policy actor, advocating for and dissenting against policies at both the federal and state levels (Forest and Kinser, 2002), supporting Title VI programming (CIE, 2013), opposing cuts to the federal Pell Grant program (ACE, 2016), and, more recently, joining international higher education associations in rallying against the inclusion of higher education as a globally protected tradable service (ACE, AUCC, EUA and CHEA, 2001).

As the Cold War was coming to an end in the late 1980s, HEPAs began to speak to a new problem emerging in US higher education. "Using their bully pulpit," ACE warned that the American populace was falling behind in the new world order of "globalization" (Engberg and Green, 2002, 8). With support from major corporate foundations, ACE generated a series of reports, which mapped international education efforts (or the lack thereof) at colleges and universities across the nation. It found that, while there was often public support for international learning, participation in second language learning and study abroad were in decline (Green, 2003). Following the events of September 11, 2001, concern over American isolation became even more acute:

In the age of globalization after September 11, U.S. colleges and universities face an urgent and perplexing set of questions about how to educate students for this new world. We cannot claim to have the best system of higher education in the world unless our graduates can free themselves of ethnocentrism bred of ignorance and can navigate the difficult terrain of cultural complexity (Engberg and Green, 2002, 9).

ACE and NAFSA placed the blame for the US's unpreparedness on state and federal governments: "The events of September 11, 2001, constituted a wake-up call — a warning that America's ignorance of the world is now a national liability" (NAFSA, 2003, iv).

While the term *internationalization* had been used for decades in economics, political science, and governmental relations (Knight, 2003), its usage in the context of US higher education emerges gradually. The first use of internationalization in US academia can be attributed to Harari (1977) in a report for AASCU. In the late-1980s, it would come to address growing economic and security concerns (Altbach

and Knight, 2007; de Wit, 2002; Lambert, 1989). As a discursive formation, its meanings and significations have shifted over time (de Wit, 2002). Knight (2004) has defined internationalization as essentially a non-economically aligned “process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education” (11). However, Knight (2004) has also argued that globalization was “changing the world of internationalization” (5). Neoliberal discourses of privatization, marketization, commodification, and competition have crept into the higher education vernacular as desirable manifestations of globalization (Matthews and Sidhu, 2005, 55). As a result of this neoliberal political rationality, Marginson and van der Wende (2007) argue that higher education has become “swept up in global marketization” (7).

Once considered a separate and benign force focused on intercultural learning, internationalization discourse has become “much entwined with ‘globalization’” (Kim, 2009, 395). Internationalization has come to represent not just academic elements but also economic elements for students and institutions (Sidhu, 2006). It has moved from the “fringe” of institutional interests to its very core (Brandenburg and de Wit, 2011), even while its purpose and processes remain under critical scrutiny (Wihlborg and Robson, 2018). To better understand the rise in importance of internationalization in US higher education, this paper pays particular attention to the role of ACE and NAFSA in giving rise to particular knowledges and truths regarding internationalization, their role in shaping the practices that aim to align higher education with greater political and economic objectives, and the ways in which ACE and NAFSA have transformed these knowledges and practices over time.

Analytical Framework

This paper takes as its methodological approach an analytics of discourse together with an analytics of government in order to investigate the specific knowledges and regimes of practices that have come to constitute a discourse of internationalization. First, an analytics of discourse examines the ways in which power and knowledge combine and work together to form a particular regime of truth (Deacon, 2002). Foucault’s conception of discourse is situated more closely to knowledge, materiality, and power relations rather than to language (Hook, 2001). Rather than “discourse analysis” as linguistic analysis, a genealogical approach sees the analysis of discourse as intertwined with a broader analysis of power (Ibid.). The task of the genealogist, therefore, is to reveal the “inventedness of our world” (Burchell, 1993, 277) by explicating statements that function to place a discursive frame around a particular position, and to form rhetorical constructions that present a particular reading of social texts (Graham, 2011).

Second, governmentality studies suggests an analytics of government, which calls into question the assemblage of political apparatuses, rationalities, and technologies (understood as regimes of practices) that shape economic and social life as well as the management of human conduct and specific local practices (Dean, 2010; Foucault, 1991b; Lemke, 2009; Rose, 1999). Foucault referred to governmentality as a dispersed form of governing power that harnesses the consent and productive

capacities of individuals in order to shape the conduct of the greater population (Foucault, 1991a). Analytics of modern government pays particular attention to the mechanisms that align economic, social, and individual conduct with socio-political objectives (Miller and Rose, 1990). While the broader Foucauldian notion of an analytics of power defines “the specific domain formed by relations of power” (Foucault, 1978, 82), an analytics of government defines a discursive field in which the exercise of power is conceptualized and rationalized (Lemke, 2009; Rose and Miller, 1992).

As an analytical approach, governmentality helps to identify historical transformations and discontinuities of government and power relations by identifying the technologies of power that are situated within a wide range of political, social, and economic institutions (Gordon, 1991; Rose *et al.*, 2006). Foucault’s detailed genealogy of the rise of neoliberalism in his 1978–1979 lectures *Birth of Biopolitics* (Foucault, 2008) provides an analytic for the ways in which neoliberalism represents a modern “governmental rationality” (Peters, 2007, 138). According to Foucault, neoliberalism should be understood as the exercise of political power based on market principles used to govern social, political, and economic relations of power (Foucault, 2008). As neoliberal governmentality extends economy into social domains that were previously considered non-economic (Foucault, 2008; Peters, 2007), the higher education sector has also become the site of market-driven policies and practices implemented by states, international capital, and HEIs themselves (Olssen and Peters, 2005; Sidhu, 2006).

Methods and data sources

Developing a genealogy of internationalization discourse complements an analytics of government by drawing attention to the lines of fracture and transformations that indicate a particular regime of truth and regime of government (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016; Dean, 2010). An important step in developing a genealogy of internationalization is identifying its emergence in the late 1980s as a discursive formation that problematized the specificity of America’s perceived isolation, discussed further below. To problematize is to transform “the difficulties and obstacles of a practice into a general problem for which one proposes diverse practical solutions” (Foucault and Rabinow, 1998, 118). Problems, however, “[A]re not pre-given, lying there waiting to be revealed; problems must be constructed and made visible” (Miller and Rose, 2008, 14). As discourses do not remain fixed, a genealogical approach allows the analyst to seek out discontinuities rather than try to prove a continuous and uninterrupted progression (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983).

As such, genealogy takes account of the constitution of knowledge, discourses, and the domain of objects (Dreyfus and Rabinow, 1983; Foucault, 1979) while tracing linkages between discourses and technologies of power (Olssen, 1999). First, a search for descent identifies the reversals, discontinuities, specificities, and exteriorities that are found within discourse and aims to disturb what was previously considered immobile (Foucault, 1984). The search for reversal is used to subvert, or invert, notions of a single origin or a creation and instead look to discourse as event (Hook,

2001). The search for discontinuity pays attention to the competing and changing constructions of discursive formations (Bowman *et al.*, 2019). Specificity extends beyond text in order to identify the conditions that allowed for the formation of discourse, while exteriority looks for the elements which both enable and limit discourse (Ibid.). Second, reading for emergence locates the historical conditions that allowed for the formation of new objects and struggles within discourse (Bowman *et al.*, 2019; Hook, 2005).

Meanwhile, an analytics of government views power relations as forms of knowledge accompanied by the various technologies and forms of thinking that guide and shape how governing actually takes place (Bacchi and Goodwin, 2016; Lemke, 2011). Dean (2010), for example, identifies four dimensions for conducting an analytics of government along the axes of visibility, techniques of government, forms of knowledge, and forms of identification. This study applies Dean's grid to analyze the discourses used to govern internationalization practices. Taking an approach that combines genealogy together with an analytics of government aims to satisfy the "strong demand for interdisciplinary research" by focusing on both governmentality studies and discursive analysis that allows for investigation of "the forms, practices, modes, programmes and rationalities of the conduct of conduct today" (McIlvenny *et al.*, 2016, 3).

This study concentrates on a series of surveys, reports, and working papers developed by ACE and NAFSA between the period 1988 and 2017 (Table 1). As indicated above, this temporal frame was selected as it correlates with the emergence of a discourse of internationalization, which was applied to the growing international dimensions of higher education as well as how the sector responded to the discourse of globalization and notions of knowledge economy. I began with a thorough review of ACE and NAFSA websites in an effort to locate landing pages, working papers, and communications with members that discuss internationalization.¹ Working backward, I traced the use of internationalization to its earliest usage among ACE and NAFSA, bringing me to the late 1980s. From there, I identified ACE and NAFSA positioning papers that took up international studies and international education and examined the ways in which internationalization was conceptualized, discussed, and ultimately shaped by HEPA's up to the present.

Analysis and Discussion

The analysis of ACE and NAFSA reports makes visible three central moments related to the knowledge and practices of internationalization: The first relates to American higher education falling behind. This specificity was developed through a series of ACE reports from the late-1980s and early-1990s, which problematized US higher education's global positioning in light of the fall of communism and rise of globalization. The second relates to shaping the discourse of internationalization

¹ Several websites have subsequently changed since I originally began my study and analysis of HEPA reports.

Table 1: Higher Education Professional Association Reports Analyzed, 1989–2017

Higher Education Association	Title	Author	Year	Sponsoring Agency or Commissioned By
American Council on Education	“International Studies and the Undergraduate”	Lambert, R.	1989	Ford Foundation; Exxon Education Foundation; Pew Charitable Trusts
	“Educating Americans for a World in Flux: Ten Ground Rules for Internationalizing Higher Education”	ACE’s Commission on International Education	1995	
	“Promising Practices: Spotlighting Excellence in Comprehensive Internationalization”	Engberg, D. & Green, M., eds.	2002	Carnegie Corporation
	“Building a Strategic Framework for Comprehensive Internationalization”	Olson, C., Green, M., & Hill, B.	2005	Ford Foundation
	<i>Part of the Global Learning for All working papers series</i>			
	“At Home in the World: Bridging the Gap between Internationalization and Multicultural Education”	Olson, C., Evans, R., & Schoenberg, R.	2007	Ford Foundation
	<i>Part of the Global Learning for All working papers series</i>			
	“Strength Through Global Leadership and Engagement: US Higher Education in the 21st Century”	Blue Ribbon Panel on Global Engagement	2011	
	“Mapping Internationalization on US Campuses”	Multiple	2003 edition 2008 edition 2012 edition 2017 edition	Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement

Table 1: (continued)

Higher Education Association	Title	Author	Year	Sponsoring Agency or Commissioned By
NAFSA: Association of International Educators	"Securing America's Future: Global Education for a Global Age"	Strategic Task Force on Education Abroad	2003	
	"Comprehensive Internationalization: From Concept to Action"	Hudzik, J.	2011	Internationalization Dialog Task Force of NAFSA

around calls for greater state and federal governments to support foreign language learning, increasing study abroad and exchange programming, and the promotion of intercultural competence among US tertiary students. The last and more recent moment signifies a growing discontinuity in internationalization discourse, particularly arising from two ACE and NAFSA reports published in 2011. The specificity of internationalization located in the 2011 reports indicates a rationalization and normalization of discourse around the competitive dimensions of neoliberalism, signifying a reversal from previous notions of internationalization as a discourse of exchange.

American higher education falls behind

ACE's 1989 report, titled "International Studies and the Undergraduate," was written by Richard Lambert, former director of the National Foreign Language Center at Johns Hopkins University. The report was the result of a two-year study that included a review of previous literature, site visits, and multiple surveys of HEIs. It sampled more than 500 HEIs on foreign languages and international studies programs, which included language and culture courses and study abroad programs. It should be noted the ACE report was funded by the Ford Foundation, Exxon Education Foundation, and the Pew Charitable Trusts. These foundations with ties to large American corporations have long participated in shaping educational policy through corporate philanthropy and lobbying efforts (Moeller, 2020).

The ACE report seemingly sounds an initial alarm to educators, administrators, and policy makers. It claims American higher education was leaving its population in "woeful ignorance" concerning languages and cultures compared to a world with "fewer boundaries" and a rising "global society" (Lambert, 1989, 3). The importance of study abroad seemed to be of great interest to ACE at this time, especially given that China and the Soviet Union had for the first time begun allowing American students to study where they had previously been prohibited. "In view of its current growth and momentum, it is likely that study abroad will expand, both in terms of student participation and in the types of institutions providing study abroad opportunities" (Lambert, 1989, 12).

ACE's 1989 report specifies that the USA was also facing competition, namely from the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia. In Europe, ERASMUS (European Action Schemes for the Mobility of University Students) was poised to dramatically change international education and foreign student exchange. In 1987, the European Economic Community (EEC) introduced ERASMUS in order to expand study abroad arrangements and exchanges between HEIs in members countries, with the goal of ten percent postsecondary students studying for at least 3 months in another EEC country (Ibid, 13). ERASMUS, thus, raises another alarm for ACE: While about five percent of US students studied abroad for a year or less (a high-estimate depending on how the percentage is measured), the US tertiary student population would fall further behind its European peers if the ERASMUS ten percent goal were achieved (Ibid.).

Despite the neoliberal rhetoric of privatization and deregulation associated with the Thatcher-Reagan era (Jessop, 2008), ACE appeals to state and federal governments to expand their influence in higher education (Lambert, 1989). As an acclaimed scholar of foreign languages, Lambert called for the greater funding of Title VI programs, especially in area studies (Lambert, 1991). The 1989 report advocates for massive public investment in study abroad programming to both increase “participation rates” and to “remove barriers to underrepresented student groups” in order to foster greater exchange (Ibid., 160). It also calls for national, state, and institutional indicators of progress in foreign language instruction as well as a national program to extend instruction of non-European languages (Ibid., 163–164). Finally, the report calls upon HEIs to develop ways to prioritize international studies and to hold national discussions on developing instructional models of teaching (Ibid., 165–166). ACE’s proto-Keynesian strategy was in many ways out of step with the growing neoliberal rationality.

More than a decade later, ACE again turned the spotlight onto the lack of government funding support for international education in the early 2000s with “Promising Practices: Spotlighting Excellence in Comprehensive Internationalization.” Funded by the Carnegie Foundation, the report details the experiences of eight US HEIs that ACE had selected to participate in its Promising Practices project, that it had identified as both “adopting comprehensive approach to internationalizing,” and that had developed an “international self-assessment instrument” (Engberg and Green, 2002, 3).

“Promising Practices” drew specific attention to globalization and how — particularly through mobility and communication — the phenomenon was reshaping societies. “[A] world in which national borders are permeable; information and ideas flow at lightning speed; and communities and workplaces reflect a growing diversity of culture, attitudes, and values” (Ibid., 7). Moreover, ACE viewed US ethnocentrism as an even greater threat to global stability following the events of September 11, 2001: “To the extent that national priorities are reflected in federal programs and spending, international education has been low on the list” (Ibid.). ACE was sustaining a truth similar to its 1989 report, viewing international education practices as a means for emphasizing cultural awareness, contributing to a diversity of languages, knowledge of international issues, and increased civic engagement. The responsibility for developing policies that would achieve these goals seemingly lay not only with HEIs, but in partnership with government: “There is reason to hope that internationalization will become a central part of the U.S. reform agenda” (Ibid.).

(Re)Shaping the discourse of internationalization

The term internationalization — as a specific discursive formation signifying various international components and practices in US higher education — emerges gradually in the late 1980s and early 1990s in HEPA positioning papers. In 1995, ACE’s Commission on International Education, a group of more than 40 college and university presidents and heads of other major HEPAs that advised ACE on the development of policies and programs in international education, published

“Educating Americans for a World in Flux: Ten Ground Rules for Internationalizing Higher Education” (ACE, 1995, 1).

The 1995 report promotes a regime of practice that focuses on infusing international competence into the educational experience, including study abroad, second language learning, and drawing on experiences of international students (Ibid., 13–14). It argues that, without proper recognition, “The nation’s standard of living is threatened and its competitive difficulties will increase” (Ibid., 1). The Commission’s report also presents the problem of economic competitiveness as a central theme for higher education and internationalization, and a problem for American cultural insularity: “Despite its influence on every other region, ethnic group, and race, its domestic culture is insular, provincial, and parochial” (Ibid., 3). Rather than seeking any decoupling of state and federal government involvement in higher education policy making, it calls upon institutions, state, and local governments, as well as the private sector, to make commitments toward a “national agenda” of internationalization (Ibid., 9).

ACE’s 2002 “Promising Practices” employs many of the same truths and practices promoted in its 1989 report, namely second-language learning, study abroad opportunities, and internationally-focused coursework. “America’s future hinges on its ability to educate a globally competent citizenry” (Engberg and Green, 2002, 5). This, according to the report, can only be accomplished with increased federal policy support: “Financial constraints, competing reform agendas, the absence of public and student insistence, and the paucity of government funding make the work all the more difficult. It’s no wonder that progress has been slow” (Ibid., 9).

NAFSA’s Strategic Task Force on Education Abroad, co-chaired by former US Sen. Paul Simon and Former Secretary of Education Richard Riley, developed its own report in 2003, titled “Securing America’s Future: Global Education for a Global Age.” Published soon after September 11, 2001, the report refers to the event as another “Sputnik moment,” which, in 1957, had served “a blow to American pride and confidence in the superiority of capitalism and free markets over communism and the dictates of the state” (NAFSA, 2003, 3). For the task force, September 11 “constituted a wake-up call — a warning that America’s ignorance of the world is now a national liability” (NAFSA, 2003, iv). NAFSA calls for massive federal spending to support study abroad opportunities for American students to combat American ignorance. One of the two co-chairs wrote:

In the 2002–03 academic year, we had 584,000 international students on our campuses — great for them and for us. Unfortunately, only slightly more than 1 percent of our students ever study abroad for a summer or a semester — and two-thirds of them study in Western Europe (Ibid., ii).

The other co-chair argued: “Democrats and Republicans alike recognize that our nation’s future hinges significantly on the international competence of our citizens and that, in this day and age, to be fully educated is to be educated internationally” (Ibid., iii).

Similar to ACE’s 2002 “Promising Practices,” the 2003 NAFSA report does not ignore practices related to globalization. “It is now cliché to talk about how small the world has become, and to note how the globalization of communications and

commerce affects everyday life. But it is true” (Ibid., 1). However, as seen in earlier ACE reports, NAFSA defines internationalization as the need to increase intercultural competencies for American students:

Our colleges and universities must respond to this reality by better equipping students to live and work in the interconnected world of the twenty-first century. We desperately need to understand other countries and other cultures — friend and foe alike (Ibid.).

NAFSA also echoes ACE’s calls for greater public sector investment and strategic involvement. “The federal government must set a direction and provide leadership and funding” (Ibid., 11).

While study abroad (or the lack thereof among US tertiary students) is a frequent concern in early reports on internationalization, there is little, if any, discussion on international student recruitment as a priority in the early 2000s. While the USA continued to be a top destination for international students (Altbach, 2004), it appears as if ACE and NAFSA were almost naïve to the changing global landscape in which nations including Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and even China, had aggressively begun recruiting international students. Meanwhile, scholars in the USA, U.K., and Australia, in particular, had begun calling into question neoliberal policies implemented at an international level that were contributing to a globalized education marketplace, which included a growing dependence on revenue related to increasing international student mobilities (Altbach, 2004; Marginson and Rhoades, 2002; Rhoades and Liu, 2009; Rizvi and Lingard, 2000; Sidhu, 2003; Torres and Rhoades, 2006). Whether purposefully ignoring the neoliberal pressures or woefully unaware of a changing global landscape in higher education, ACE and NAFSA at this time continued to focus on obtaining governmental support to get more Americans to study abroad.

An emerging discontinuity

The transformation of internationalization in the 2000s from a discourse of exchange to a discourse of competition can be traced somewhat throughout ACE’s “Mapping Internationalization on U.S. Campuses” series. ACE released its first report in 2003, following a 2002 survey of selected colleges and universities that measured various metrics of internationalization, internationalization policies and strategic goals, assessment efforts, foreign language requirements, study abroad participation, and funding for faculty as well as international travel (Siaya and Hayward, 2003). While ACE reaffirmed its commitment to policies focusing on practices of developing intercultural competencies and furthering exchange, it began to shift the onus of responsibility away from state and federal governments. Rather, it called upon individual colleges and universities to use their own financial and human resources to further their internationalization efforts: “Colleges and universities should ... clearly articulate their commitment to internationalization, and create conditions to increase the level of international learning on campus” (Ibid., 6).

By 2012, the discourse of internationalization promoted by ACE and NAFSA had come to reflect a rational-economic model, reversing what had been previously considered a social sphere into an economic domain. The new truth propagated by HEPAs centered on neoliberal policy recommendations that limited government action, universalized competition, and invented market-shaped systems of action (Lemke, 2001). This new neoliberal rationality of internationalization as competition was applied to all levels of the higher education complex, from state and national policies, to HEIs, and to domestic and international students themselves. Campuses reported in the 2017 ACE survey that “improving student preparedness for a global era” was the top reason for internationalizing, followed by diversifying students, and becoming more attractive to prospective students (Helms and Brajkovic, 2017). Revenue generation had become the number four priority for internationalizing, while recruiting international students was number two, just behind increasing study abroad for US students (Ibid.).

Practices of competition, mobility, and revenue generation related to internationalization were in stark contrast to ACE’s 2007 working paper, “At Home in the World: Bridging the Gap between Internationalization and Multicultural Education,” part of its *Global Learning for All* series. At the time, international student recruitment was seen as a “potential flashpoint” for administrators, due to financial resources and conflating international students with domestic diversity goals (Olson *et al.*, 2007, 21). However, following the financial crisis of 2008, both ACE and NAFSA would abandon these earlier concerns with two influential reports in 2011 that effectively reversed the discourse of internationalization from that of exchange to that of competition.

The first was ACE’s Blue Ribbon Panel on Global Engagement, titled “Strength through Global Leadership and Engagement.” The second was NAFSA’s “Comprehensive Internationalization: From Concept to Action.” In both, the discursive practice of internationalization moves away from the concerns of isolationism, egocentrism, and calls for public investment in international studies. Instead, both articulate a neoliberal rationality by taking up and promulgating concepts of global competition, marketization, commodification, and managerialism. Priorities for internationalization now included international student recruitment and entrepreneurialism as a means for maintaining American dominance in the international higher education domain. Competition had become the new regime of truth: “There now is a global marketplace that did not exist until recent years” (ACE, 2011, 11).

The Blue Ribbon Panel’s executive summary begins by calling higher education in the 21st century a “global enterprise” and makes several references to the “excellence” of American universities, compared to other nations (ACE, 2011, 5). The document boasts the number of international students studying in the USA compared to other OECD nations. Yet, it also identifies several areas in which the USA now lags its peers, including the percentage of the population with a college degree compared to Canada, Japan, and South Korea (Ibid., 11). The Blue Ribbon Panel report acknowledges the trend of several Western nations setting international student recruitment targets and “aggressive efforts by countries to market their higher education systems as destinations for mobile students” (Ibid., 11). It calls upon HEIs

to develop “their own strategies for global engagement” and to align internationalization strategies with “local and global interests” (Ibid., 5).

Three prominent discursive practices emerge here. First, the “globalization of higher education” is discussed as a truth that has already happened. As such, American colleges and universities must accept this change and embrace the panel’s recommendations in order to “compete” in this new global landscape (Ibid., 14, 23). Second, state and federal governments are no longer called upon to support internationalization efforts, re-centering authority with HEPAs and universities themselves. The panel recommends that ACE (not the federal government) “guide American colleges and universities in working strategically and substantively in a globalized higher education environment and interconnected world” (Ibid., 7). Third, HEIs must independently enhance their “global engagement” in order to remain competitive in the global higher education marketplace. Thus, on the one hand, the Blue Ribbon Panel argues that globalization “offers new opportunities” (Ibid., 6) to American higher education. Yet, despite those opportunities, ACE aims to govern US higher education practices toward a particular competitive response: “American higher education is a preeminent global force. That preeminence is being challenged” (Ibid., 10).

NAFSA’s “Comprehensive Internationalization” was commissioned by the Internationalization Dialogue Task Force of NAFSA. The report was written by John Hudzik, past president and chair of the Board of Directors for NAFSA, and past president of the Association of International Education Administrators (Buckner and Stein, 2020). Hudzik argues that *not* committing to competitive internationalization would accelerate the decline of American higher education’s world standing: “The need to effectively participate within a global reconfiguration of markets, systems of trade, research and discovery, communications, and quality of life dramatically expands the rationale for internationalization” (Hudzik, 2011, 17).

Like ACE’s Blue Ribbon Panel report, “Comprehensive Internationalization” takes up a discourse of neoliberal globalization. Hudzik argues: “The globalization of commerce, social forces, idea exchange, and growth in student mobility drive further significant internationalization of education” (Ibid., 7). The term “comprehensive internationalization” denotes both a discursive transformation and new technique of government. Not only does it signify practices beyond previously conceived notions of international studies, it also signifies a new approach based on competitive market-oriented practices. “Comprehensive Internationalization” repeats the term “globalization of higher education,” as something that must be accepted as a new truth. It also signifies the notion that American higher education must come to terms with this new reality, a new economic truth, in which globalization and higher education are inextricably linked:

The development of a global higher education system is recognition of a paradigm shift underway in that higher education institutions are not only a local, regional, or national resources but also are global resources — globally connected (Ibid., 9).

Similar to ACE’s Blue Ribbon Panel report, “Comprehensive Internationalization” frames higher education as an entity that lies beyond state and federal

government, a sector that is both self-defined and self-governed: “The globalization of higher education provides a non-campus-based frame of reference or context for internationalization” (Ibid.). No longer do ACE and NAFSA appeal for federal investment. ACE and NAFSA have transformed the discourse of internationalization into a market-shaped strategy that acts economically, lies beyond state control, operates across national borders, and engages in global competitive practices.

Discussion and Conclusion

The emergence of internationalization discourse in the 1980s and 1990s which originally called for greater national government leadership and funding, greater exchange of scholarship, and greater exchange of students would not remain its final historical development. Even while some US HEIs — as well as higher education systems in nations such as Australia — had applied neoliberal practices of competition, marketization, commodification since the early 2000s, ACE and NAFSA continued to pursue state-centered solutions for higher education, perhaps even longer due to the events of September 11. However, the financial crisis of 2008 seemed to reorient ACE and NAFSAs conceptualization of internationalization. Internationalization was reconceptualized and taken up almost synonymously with what ACE called the “globalization of higher education” (ACE, 2011, 5) and NAFSA referred to as “higher education globalization” (Hudzik, 2011, 17). ACE and NAFSA in 2011 were now appealing directly to HEI leaders to become more competitive in an “interconnected global environment” (ACE, 2011, 6) and to develop “global engagement strategies” (Ibid., 15), such as promoting greater global student mobility. “The business of universities,” NAFSA argued, “is ... not just in the free flow of ideas but in the global flow of students and scholars who generate them” (Hudzik, 2011, 7).

This paper finds that HEPAs had established a certain regime of truth in earlier definitions of internationalization that related to practices of exchange. Yet, as neoliberal governing rationality continued its expansion into non-economic social spheres, HEPAs, in their governing capacity, participated in the transformation of internationalization from a discourse of exchange to that of competition, disqualifying previous iterations. The search for descent demonstrates that this transformed iteration of internationalization in the 2010s, which reflected a neoliberal governing rationality, was not merely a continuous development of internationalization. Rather, it was the result of a “multiplicity of events” that came to constitute it (Foucault, 2013, 198).

Future studies would be necessary to explore the relationship between the production of discourse by HEPAs and the official policy making that takes place in state and federal government. Future studies should also explore the internationalization practices taken up by HEIs at a local level in relation to the production of discourse and regimes of practices by ACE, NAFSA and other HEPAs.

Arguably, a great deal has changed in international higher education since 2011. US HEIs had already seen international student enrollments plateau and begin to wane over the last several years (IIE, 2019). Covid-19 has added another layer of complexity to internationalization practices. In addition to existing and

compounding financial challenges due to the pandemic (Hubler, 2020), Covid-19 has led to a precipitous drop in international students returning to US HEIs (ICEF Monitor, 2020; NAFSA, 2020), with a reported drop of 43 percent in new international student enrollments (Korn, 2020). Meanwhile, countries such as Australia and Canada, which have the second and third highest numbers of international students, respectively, are poised to gain a greater number of international student enrollments and challenge American supremacy in the practice of internationalization (Semo-tiuk, 2020).

Brandenburg and de Wit (2011) warned of an end to internationalization as the result its devaluation in light of its increasing commercialization. The crisis of internationalization has also been brought about by a complexity of health, economic, and political factors within the higher education sector, which portends new discontinuities within discourse and practice. While they argued the future of internationalization is certainly global, new imaginaries are necessary to ensure meaningful and sustainable practices (Ibid.). It may, in fact, be more possible to envision a post-commercialized internationalization age now than it was even a decade ago. Despite ongoing pressure for higher education to participate in a competitive neoliberal space, internationalization as academic collaboration and capacity building remains paramount among critical international educators and administrators (Knight, 2014; Stein, 2017). Thus, critical scholars should direct attention to the regimes of practices of state and non-state actors, such as HEPAs, in the governing of internationalization through their ongoing production of knowledge and truth.

Declarations

Conflict of interest The Author is unaware of any conflicts of interest in regard to this study or the journal to which this study has been submitted.

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