



American Academic Cultures: A History of Higher Education

By Paul H. Mattingly

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In his book, *American Academic Cultures*, Paul H. Mattingly elaborates on the history of American higher education by emphasising certain periods in a broadly chronological order from the 18th century to present to show the distinct characteristics of 'generational cultures' shaping the American 'higher learning'.

In every generation, some influential ideas gain power and shape a culture of distinctive assumptions in academia, namely, evangelical/denominational, Jeffersonian, republican/non-denominational, industrially driven, progressive pragmatism, international academic discourse and lastly a corporate multiversity culture. However, it is stated that such a chronology is only utilised to examine the social and institutional forces in a certain period, but there could be several generational cultures at any time of history.

In each chapter, several cases of emerging institutional practices shaped by the general culture of the society in a given period were discussed by representing the thoughts and practices of administrators in several higher education institutions based on an extensive literature review. In other words, the generational cultures are constructed upon the prominent figures of a given institution who took important visionary decisions regarding the role and mission of their institutions in the public and academic sphere for the survival of their respective institutions in a changing society. According to Mattingly, these different cultures in a given moment may produce different individuals and institutions from our time, but 'their approaches and solutions to the problems of their time are connected to our current issues'. In this regard, the main argument of the book is that "culture drives politics and societies, resultingly a school can't be understood by studying data on that school alone, but a historical habit of thought could become a powerful resource to reconsider and comprehend the issues of higher education today".

Considering this general classification of generational cultures in American higher education based on broad societal changes in the history of the United States, the book gives original examples of how higher education institutions adopt these changes and transform their organisational culture and structure. The below items represent a summary of these changes (general cultures) and the new functions adopted by the higher education institutions:

- The Great Awakening and the rise of denominational colleges
- The dominance of southern patriciate culture, the need for the practical knowledge for agriculture and medicine in the plantations over denominational indoctrination, and the establishment of the University of Virginia representing the ideas and arguments of Thomas Jefferson favouring science, state role and a less denominational culture in the college
- The emergence of a new generation of denominational higher education institutions having non-sectarian aspirations for servicing larger and diverse societies, pioneering a new republican civic virtue during the Antebellum years
- The rise of science and corporate mentality in the American society after the Civil War, and the establishment of 'generic' universities with campuses (socially useful, but distinctly self-contained learning environments including faculties or departments), building external professional associations among faculty, designing state and philanthropic fiscal regulations for the financing of higher education institutions, setting clearer divisions between collegiate instruction and university research, and the transformation in the role of president from pedagogue to manager
- The rise of urbanisation and progressivism after World War 1 and the universities have a new role in societal development by scientific research, acting as 'cultural resources' for the public sphere
- Immigration of scholars from Germany during the rise of Hitler and Nazism and the emergence of international discourse in the American academy
- The emergence of federal policies prioritising national security in the midst of the Cold War and the rise of universities focusing on acquiring federal funds: A new type of corporate university that can merge government service, industrial service, and scientific research

In this regard, each generational culture adds a new or an updated function to the higher education institutions and also constitutes a basis for the legitimisation of the functions of higher education institutions in a

given period. This could be the most effective contribution of the book to the scholarship of higher education, not only for the United States but also for other countries.

Different scholars could find similarities related to the advancement of higher education in their respective countries when compared to the US. Accordingly, these scholars could start to question the role and claim of higher education institutions in shaping their society, or how societal changes could affect the organisational structures and processes of the higher education institutions in their own countries: To what extent is the higher education system taking its roots from their countries' history, society and culture, or higher education institution in that country simply follow the current trends in global higher education? What is the contribution of their higher education institutions to their countries' societal, scientific, or economic problems? Are their higher education institutions instruments for the reproduction of the wealth of a general elite or are they needed for the general development of all people?

Despite bringing a broad understanding of academic cultures in the history of higher education institutions in the US context, the book could be richer and more contentful if several other points were addressed.

Firstly, the book follows the development of generational cultures in different periods based on cases that are composed of the ideas and practices of administrators in a group of elite universities such as Yale, Brown, Stanford, University of Chicago, Harvard, MIT, John Hopkins or UC Berkeley. But how societal or political pressures lead higher education institutions to change and adopt a given generational culture is not broadly exemplified by using the cases or practices of other higher education institutions. In other words, the author only focuses on the examples of surviving, and thus, the powerful and wealthy institutions during the turbulent times of change. But what about the other institutions that did not/could not adopt these generational cultures. Did they find another way to survive? Were their cultures or mission continued or did they simply fail?

Another aspect that could have been discussed in more detail is related to the development of the international academic discourse in American higher education. Based on the book, the development of

international discourse in American higher education during the 19th and 20th centuries is initially related to the impact of the British *École*. Later in that period, the impact of the German higher education system, prioritising scientific research rather than teaching in universities becomes more dominant. The author elaborates on the development of international discourse in American academia by giving examples of different German scholars' impacts on their fields in American higher education. However, the development of an international discourse could be discussed in a more structured way and classified by different scientific fields rather than giving individual examples of different scholars. Besides, figuring out the internationalisation process in higher education worldwide beginning intensively from the last half of the 20th century, the changes in the international discourse could also have been discussed by focusing on the internationalisation process and by giving examples of the recent trends. However, the development of the international discourse in American higher education is mostly discussed by focusing on the impact of German higher education *École* until the 1970s.

In conclusion, the book is really important for academics not only in history but also in educational sciences, especially those whose work is related to higher education administration. Classifying American academic culture under different themes based on the societal and political changes facilitates the painting of a broad picture of the system and the concomitant macro-level changes. Considering the above-mentioned points on how the book could have been improved, the structure and the way of discussion in the book nonetheless provides a useful model for the undertaking of other works to understand the development of the academic cultures and their current situation in the higher education systems in different countries around the world.