

The Forefront of International Higher Education

A Festschrift in Honor of Philip G. Altbach

This book honours the academic trajectory and global impact of Philip G. Altbach, one of the most important education comparativists worldwide for over forty years. From his early writings on India and student activism to his recent work on research universities, Altbach has served as a key developer of the expansion of the field to include comparative higher education. His capacity to find, support, and gather the best minds around the world, to organize research teams in order to explore the most relevant issues on comparative higher education has earned him international recognition. His service to the field of comparative higher education is invaluable and incomparable. This festschrift contains original pieces from colleagues and former students following a twofold discussion: the most relevant topics on comparative higher education and particular Altbach's contributions to this field of work.

Education

ISBN 978-94-007-7084-3



9 789400 770843

www.springer.com



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Philip G. Altbach

 Springer

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ISSN 1571-0378
ISBN 978-94-007-7084-3 ISBN 978-94-007-7085-0 (eBook)
DOI 10.1007/978-94-007-7085-0
Springer Dordrecht Heidelberg New York London

Library of Congress Control Number: 2013949495

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Printed on acid-free paper

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Alma Maldonado-Maldonado and Roberta Malee Bassett

(O)ne person can be a change catalyst, a "transformer" in any situation, any organization. Such an individual is yeast that can leaven an entire loaf. It requires vision, initiative, patience, respect, persistence, courage, and faith to be a transforming leader.

Stephen R. Covey (1992)



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This book is a celebration of a man's life and career. In early 2011, Phil Altbach told us that he was transitioning toward retirement. We say transitioning because retirement does not appear to be a fixed idea for Phil. Instead, it is a mere redistribution of his efforts as they span between teaching, research, consulting, and service to the field of international higher education. His imminent retirement, however he was defining it, drove us to envision a volume that would showcase Phil as the scholar, mentor, and peer that he is for colleagues around the world. The level of loyalty that Phil engenders from his broad circle of friends was evident throughout the planning of this volume.

Since the chapters to come will examine Phil's myriad contributions to an astonishing breadth of areas of higher education policy and practice, we will use this chapter to discuss the life of our friend and mentor.

Phil grew up in Chicago and spent his formative years there, attending primary, secondary, and tertiary education there and meeting his lifelong work and life partner, his wife Edith Hoshino Altbach, there. It was at the University of Chicago where Phil completed, at age 25, his PhD in Comparative Education, with his thesis "Students, Politics, and Higher Education in a Developing Society: The Case of Bombay, India," which also launched a lifelong connection with and commitment to India, a defining element of his academic work.

From the University of Chicago, Phil went on to serve as a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard University from 1965 to 1967. His subsequent move in 1967 to the University of Wisconsin–Madison marked his first academic job, and he remained in the academic staff at Madison until 1975, when he moved east to the State University of New York at Buffalo where he was professor from 1975 to 1994. Then, in 1994, Phil moved to Boston College, where he founded the Center for International Higher Education, the first and, arguably, best known international higher education research center in the United States.

We can talk in several ways about Philip Altbach's career. Quantitatively, he has authored and coauthored 21 books, edited and coedited 23 books, written 16 book chapters, and published more than 50 articles. He has written 92 articles in his influential newsletter *International Higher Education* and 32 blog posts in *The World View*, and his works have been translated into more than a dozen languages. Finally, he has served as an editor of eight (8) journals and book series. But, discussing Phil's career quantitatively misses the real essence of Phil's contribution to the field of international higher education. Qualitatively, Phil's reach in this field is almost unparalleled. We believe it is fair to say that in his 47 years in this field, Philip Altbach has been everywhere in the world of international and comparative education and higher education, and no scholar or practitioner in this field has been untouched by his contributions.

Phil has both officially and unofficially mentored three generations of higher education scholars from every region of the globe. For the two of us, he has been our biggest fan and advocate, harshest and most useful critic, and great, great friend. We could not have asked for more as we embarked on our careers, and we know full well how lucky we are to be on "team Phil." Our collaborators in this book feel the same way.

Therefore, this book seeks to honor Philip G. Altbach by asking an array of higher education scholars and practitioners, all of whom have either directly worked with Phil or have utilized his research and who have enjoyed serving either

as collaborators in projects, as former students, or as scholars whose work has been influenced by Altbach's contributions. The result is what follows. A remarkably diverse group of 29 scholars discuss in 22 chapters the issues that Philip Altbach has studied through his storied career. Moreover, we purposefully included Phil's first PhD student, Patti McGill Peterson (now a presidential advisor at the American Council on Education), and his likely last one, current Boston College student, David Stanfield. Having included both in the book could work as a metaphor, but we prefer to think it is more as an indication of the affection and appreciation, as well as lifelong connection, that Phil's students have for him.

The organization of the chapters is as follows: The first chapter was written by the man himself. Phil had originally written this a piece for Michael Paulsen's *Higher Education Handbook* (also soon to be published by Springer) as a reflection on his career over the past forty-plus years. He shared this with us in April 2013, on the occasion of a high profile symposium in honor of his career. We knew immediately that his chapter would be a perfect complement to the contents of this *Festschrift*, so we received permissions from Dr. Paulsen and Spring to include it here, as the ultimate introduction to Phil and his work.

The following 12 chapters present some of the main issues that Phil has dedicated his life to exploring: the academic profession, internationalization of higher education, academic mobility, and, more recently, linking academic research to policy practice.

The subsequent group of nine chapters are divided into two groups: one on regional- and country-based approaches and the other on worldwide views. Phil has always been a strong proponent of both comparative studies and promoting specific country- and regional-based studies. And, finally, the book concludes with an epilogue that celebrates the trajectory of Phil Altbach as a professor and dissertation adviser, a dimension of his career that may be less visible than his published work but has had no less of an impact on the field of international higher education.

One of the main challenges of putting together a book like this one has been limiting the selection of contributors from the breadth of possible authors around the world. Not only was there no shortage of individuals willing to contribute, we had to make very painful choices in order to contain the scope and size of the volume. Indeed, page limitations were the only barriers to extending this work beyond what follows. We express our heartfelt thanks to those whose chapters follow and our equally heartfelt gratitude and apologies to those who sincerely wished to contribute but were unable to be included in this work.

Finally, we would like to thank all the authors for their contribution to this *Festschrift*. A special thanks goes to Yoka Janssen and Anne Marie Keur (at Springer) for their support to this project and, especially, Edith Altbach, for years of constant kindnesses and for providing us with the pictures included in this book.

Reference

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Chapter 10

Academic Mobility as Social Mobility or the Point of No Return

Alma Maldonado-Maldonado

I was in primary school and I came with my mother, she was a single mother and we crossed over the border, the *migra* caught us in San Isidro and sent us back and I think we didn't try it again.... It is curious they didn't want me here and sent me back to Mexico. I studied and did well in school and now the *gringo* government pays me to be here.... (Graduate student, UCLA-4)

...I thought that a PhD was like high school, that one has to do it because otherwise you are nobody in this life. My parents always told me: when you're finished with your PhD you'll be able to do this and that, it was what was always expected...the CONACYT scholarship was <<normal>>. (Graduate student, MIT-1)

This chapter addresses to what extent it is possible to talk about how student degree-seeking mobility impacts the social mobility of individuals. This is done from a discussion of cases of Mexican students currently registered in graduate programs in prestigious universities in the United States. Traditionally, when discussing international mobility, the physical deployment of the person was the focus: academics and students from one university moved to another located in a different country. The complexities of technology and the processes of regional integration notably affected the way we define mobility. For example, the current technologies and their wide connectivity promote the idea of “virtual” mobility, where it is no longer necessary that students or academics geographically relocate to collaborate, study, or even obtain a degree. Another exemplary case has occurred with European integration, when the definition of a domestic student vis-à-vis an international student changed: students who are citizens of a country of the European Union go on student exchanges in another EU country as domestic students, not international ones. These two cases are illustrative of the challenges that current times present for the definition of international student mobility.

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Thus, while this chapter does not deny the challenges that appear in the present, it discusses the topic of academic mobility from a more classical (in its definition) point of view: as the physical deployment that individuals undertake to obtain some kind of academic experience in a higher education institution of another country (Altbach 1998c). We start from the idea that mobility cannot be understood outside space, and we consider that space can be physical (mobility to another country) or symbolic (social mobility).

As has been discussed in the extensive literature on the subject, academic mobility is one more expression of migration, albeit one of the migratory flows with the least volume, especially if we consider the amount of the global population that deploys. The global number of migrants in 1990 was 155 million; within 10 years it became 214 million, representing a growth of 38 % in 10 years. According to reports of the World Population Prospects, the global population has grown nearly 30 % in the same decade (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2010). That is, the growth of migrants slightly surpasses the demographic growth rhythm, albeit every country and region has their own tendencies. Nevertheless, even though migration is a very important phenomenon of increasing impact, it is worth situating it within its fair dimensions. In 1990 the number of migrants represented 3.4 % of the world population, while in 2012 its proportion reached 3.2 %. In sum, migration is crucial to understand current social phenomena, yet proportionally migrants do not even represent 5 % of the global population. Certainly, every case must be reviewed, especially taking into consideration different countries, regions, and population segments, among others.

On the other hand, practically 60 % of worldwide migrants have moved to a more developed country than their own, while 10 years ago that percentage was 53 % (United Nations Secretary-General 2012, pp. 3–4). Unfortunately, we do not have more exact numbers on the global tendencies of international academic mobility: however, from the existing data, especially that coming from the OECD or the Atlas of Student Mobility (by the Institute of International Education IIE), we know that international student mobility would reproduce the same tendencies.

Academic Mobility: Centers, Peripheries, and Semi-peripheries or What Is the Same—Producers of Knowledge, Consumers, and the Isolated

Philip Altbach (2004) has posited that academic mobility has existed since the birth of European universities in the Middle Ages. While it is a characteristic that has accompanied these institutions, it is not exempt from controversies. Academic mobility is oftentimes simply another mirror of the enormous gaps existing between countries in terms of economic and social development and thus regarding the production of knowledge.

Wallerstein's (1987) approach to world systems (Luhmann 1982), from where Altbach (1998d) takes his quoted classification of countries and their systems of higher education, also makes sense in other divisions such as the OECD's proposal (2006) to classify countries into "producers of knowledge," "consumers," and the "technologically isolated." Before the OECD (2006) report, Altbach (1998d) suggested referring to the centers and peripheries in terms of the importance of the worldwide systems of higher education. While Altbach is not the only author to have developed this idea, he was one of the pioneers. To date, the field of higher education accounts for multiple interpretations in this regard and new contributions which are important to highlight, although it is not the objective of this chapter to account for each one of them (just to quote some examples: Chen and Barnett 1995; Marginson and Sawir 2005; Robertson 2006; Solimano and Pollack 2004).

These ideas are central to this chapter because the preliminary results of 22 interviews of Mexican students studying for a graduate degree in prestigious universities in the United States, in Boston and Los Angeles, are used, that is, students who come from a country that must be considered semi-peripheral or a consumer of knowledge (Mexico) and who go to the United States, a country considered a "center" (it is the country that still attracts the biggest number of international students in the world) and is also the main producer of knowledge (Maldonado 2010). Thus, the location of the space that these two countries occupy in the international context is central to the discussion of this chapter. The social mobility that is experienced by Mexican students who go to the United States is discussed, assuming to great measure that if the students' destination had been different or the institutions not so prestigious, then the conditions of social mobility could have also been different for said students.

Starting Point

DiPrete (2000, p. 2711) explains that "social mobility typically is conceptualized in terms of quantity of movement and the distribution of its direction and distance," for which it is essential to locate a starting point. According to Lipset and Bendix (1966), the dimensions that must be included to understand social mobility are:

1. Study of social mobility involves several analytic steps: 1. Study of the relationship between the starting point of a person's career and the point the person has reached at the time of the analysis. Essentially this is a comparison of the position which an individual inherited (or his status on entering the labor market) [...] 2. A second major question involves the relationships between social inheritance (or starting position) and the means of mobility. Here we may be concerned with the degree to which given backgrounds determine the level of education, the acquisition of skills, access to people at different levels in the social structure, intelligence, and motivation to seek higher positions [...]. 3. As yet we have little knowledge concerning the process of mobility. That is, most studies have dealt with the present and initial position of individuals, ignoring the degree to which there are patterned variations careers [...]. The ultimate reason for our interest in this subject is the study of the consequences of social mobility. (Lipset and Bendix 1966)

One of the first things to be done with the 22 interviewees was to classify them in three groups according to two of the most frequently used categories in the literature on social mobility: occupation and level of completed studies of the parents (DiPrete 2000). Three groups of students were formed, which are described below:

Group 1 Students whose parents did not pursue a university degree. These are individuals whose socioeconomic origin has been more complicated compared with the other students. When the students in this group referred to family support for their graduate studies, they are really talking about emotional support. Almost all the students in this group feel the need to help their families financially. Additionally, practically all studied in public schools and did not have much contact with the English language in childhood. The majority have received several scholarships throughout their lives (six interviewees).

Regarding their parents' occupation, the students in this group state as their fathers' occupation in one case "a baker, now retired, small-business owner, construction worker, he did it all and my mother was a secretary in the government" (Graduate student, UCLA-2); another mentions he had an absent father (Graduate student, UCLA-4), while another says that her mother studied for a profession in commerce (Graduate student, Harvard-2). In the following case, in addition to referring to their parents' occupation, this student directly links the topic with the importance of scholarships:

In my father's case, he is a worker in a factory and that is why all my studies were possible with scholarships, also in Monterrey, since high school everything with scholarships. Practically all the expense my parents had was the money for transportation, and the tuition was paid with scholarships until I started to work and that's it. (Graduate student, UCLA-3)

In fact, the importance that students give to obtaining scholarships and grants as a secure financial mechanism is quite remarkable. Here is an excellent example:

... I identified that could be a way of life: I study a lot, I said this could be my job. I applied for all kinds of scholarships, among them scholarships from the Mexican Academy of Sciences, they were called Summers of Sciences and they would give me 5,000 pesos. I applied two summers, the first one I didn't get, but the Universidad Veracruzana said my application was good and since the Academy didn't have the resources to fund me because they financed others, they financed me, they gave me 5,000 pesos. I went to Colima with a researcher and that for me... I had to pay two months' rent and transportation all the way to Colima with very little money. It was an excellent motivation, they are excellent programs, I did two summers: one in Colima and the other at the UNAM my last year of university. The Universidad Veracruzana was also starting exchange programs with the United States.... (Graduate Student, UCLA-1)

While we do not intend to automatically link the theme of socioeconomic standing with the field of cultural capital, it is possible to assume that the six interviewees in this group did not have a wide cultural capital either. Here is a significant example narrated by one of the students: "When I got into university I had only read one book that helped me write an essay or composition. *Twenty Thousand Leagues*

Under the Sea, and I didn't even finish it, well, I got to the middle" (Graduate student, Harvard-2). In another case, a graduate student at Harvard comments on the family reaction during the application process and mentions "my father's perception that I wasn't investing my time in something concrete but I was: I was looking for opportunities... My father did not think I was going to be accepted and his reaction was very cool, surprise" (Graduate student, Harvard-1).

Group 2 Students whose parents have an undergraduate degree at least and whose families offered several of them emotional and financial support. The socioeconomic levels of this group clearly vary, but their parents' studies unify them somewhat. Their first contact with the English language started, in the majority of the cases, since childhood. It is worth noting that since this group is the biggest, the variety of experiences is also more varied. Within it are several students who managed their entire academic trajectory with scholarships, some who never had one or several of them that pursued their studies in bilingual schools, just like others had no contact with the English language until high school or later (twelve interviewees). Nevertheless, it will not be possible to analyze this group in this chapter due to space constrictions; we will only analyze Groups 1 and 3.

Group 3 Students who come from a very privileged background compared to the rest of the interviewees. Some of their parents had a PhD and have worked as high-level university administrators or academics. The four interviewees in this group lived in another country at some point in their lives. In addition to the emotional and financial support, some of these students received academic orientation from their parents during the application process for graduate school. All of them attended a bilingual school since childhood and none mention the English language as an obstacle (four interviewees).

One of the students, whose father earned a PhD in England, lived for 4 years in that country:

I didn't suffer much on that end [regarding English]. My father did a PhD in England so I did my first through fourth year of grade school there and learned it, and it was the first language I learned to write even though I spoke Spanish well. I have never taken formal English classes or any other language, and I didn't forget it and besides in my undergraduate and Master's degree in terms of reading I didn't suffer a lot because everything is in English: modern algebra, etc.... How much did my father's PhD influence me? I think a lot, that is, even when I was six years old I would accompany him into an academic environment, my mother worked in the Chemistry Department and it was only natural for me to dedicate myself like that. About leaving... it also influenced me and I didn't see myself after the Master's stuck in an institution I'd been in for seven years already in Mexico if I had stayed but I wanted to see what was out there. (Graduate student, Harvard-3)

In another case, a student narrates that due to sickness and given he was going to lose a year of high school, he took the opportunity that his father "was studying a PhD in California at Davis and I stayed with him, I went with him and finished high

school in California, since I was already at university here I applied to two well-known schools" (Graduate student, Harvard-4). Finally, the following quote albeit long clearly explains the importance of the role his parents played in the application process for graduate school abroad:

...and I thought they were going to give it to me [the CONACYT scholarship] because I was always an excellent student. In the university I left with honors and everything, now, being here, I realize I'm nobody, I don't know how I did it.... I was so sure, I came from the UNAM and did very well, and since I spent a semester at the Ibero because of the strike, my parents told me since you went to the Ibero they are not going to give you a CONACYT scholarship and *everything was planned*. I then said I'm going back to the UNAM.... For the admission process for the Master's programs, I started looking, *I was guiding myself with my parents help*....and then the recommendation letters, without my parents' help I wouldn't even have made it to the corner because my university teachers...I didn't even know who to ask for a letter, and one of my professors I did well with wrote: I recommend.... *And I took it to my mother and she said no, no, no*, we need a strategy, we need a letter that highlights your qualities as a student, another that highlights your qualities as a researcher, another that highlights your qualities as an event planner... and my blessed parents told me look at the letter, it should have three parts: first you introduce who you are, they talk about who knows what and do this and send them to fill out their part but you sing your praises about the languages you speak, what a good student you are, etc. (Graduate student, MIT-1) [my emphasis]

It is important to note that any study on social mobility is subject to the context in which it transpires (Devos 2003; Lipset and Zetterberg 1974). As Sorokin (1974) states, "the intensity, same as the generality of the vertical social mobility, varies from one society to another" or what he calls the "fluctuation of social mobility in space" (Sorokin 1974, p. 107).

There are two themes that concern the discussion of academic mobility and social mobility in this chapter. The first is the role of education and the second is migration. It is important to acknowledge that studies of a very diverse nature have widely discussed the link between social mobility and education (Smelser and Lipset 1966; in the Mexican environment, Muñoz García et al. 1977; Muñoz Izquierdo 2009). In fact, Blau and Duncan point out that intergenerational mobility is divided in three segments: the first of which is "the process of educational attainment," while the second and last, respectively, are "the transition from school to work and "the mobility that occurs over the working life" (DiPrete 2000, p. 2713). However, it is also worth mentioning that the research on this matter is still insufficient given the complexity of the theme. In the case of this chapter, the role of the educational points in two directions: first, it focuses on the topic of the parents' education and, second, on the object of the students' mobility itself: degree-seeking mobility.

The other important axis for this study is migration. Forty years ago, Balán and Jelin had already reported on the existing connection between social mobility and migration in a very assertive manner:

If the migrants tend to head from relatively stagnant localities or regions in economic terms, in which the possibilities for advancement are very limited and the relative quality of life is low, towards other regions or localities with the opposite characteristics, **it should not be**

surprising that they tend to experience ascending social mobility more often than those who stay in the same localities of origin. Further, if we accept that in general migrants are positively selective in factors that facilitate the occupational achievement, such as educational level, age and psychological characteristics like ambition, **we have another reason to consider that their probabilities of advancement will be greater than those who do not migrate.** (Balán and Jelin 1973, p. 233)[my emphasis]

In an important recent review of the literature on social mobility, Patricio Solís confirms the importance of the migratory issue for a country like Mexico:

Finally, studies on social mobility in Mexico cannot ignore the growing importance of international migration to the United States. According to recent estimations, in 2005 there were 9.5 million Mexicans between ages 15 and 64 in the US, a figure equivalent to 15.6 % of the total working population of the country (Giorguli, Gaspar and Leite 2007) [...]. Clearly, the exit of migrants from the Mexican labor market alleviates pressures "from below" to the social stratification system, not only because the stock of individuals seeking to escalate positions decreases, but also because migrants transfer significant amounts of money to their families in Mexico, thus alleviating social and economic demands. In this sense, future studies of social stratification and mobility in Mexico must advance into an integrated perspective of the Mexico-US labor market in order to better understand what is rapidly developing into a transnational system of social stratification. (Solís 2008, pp. 17–18)

Discussion of the Different Areas of Mobility

Altbach (1970, 1998) opened this line of analysis when he discussed, while working on the topic of student movements, the fact that the leaders of these movements, especially in Asia, had previously been international students. The examples range from Mahatma Gandhi to Ho Chi Minh, passing by who would later become a dictator, the Indonesian Sukarno. Altbach's reflections on this matter have undoubtedly been a great motivation to continue with his line of research on social mobility (and in this case, politics) of certain international students (Altbach 1998a).

The geographical mobility of graduate students in another country consists of changing and expanding their space of reference, independently of the socio-economic situation they start from. While it is possible to affirm that the gaps shorten between the students from a higher economic level and those from a lower level, those gaps are not eliminated although they do get smaller because academic mobility opens up spaces and possibilities for certain students that would otherwise be more complicated or even unthinkable. They all move from their original place, but we can establish that the most noticeable advances happen to those who traveled the farthest. In fact, this chapter only makes reference to Groups 1 and 3; the analysis and comparisons with the second group, where the parents have university degrees or the equivalent, have been left aside for another moment.

We subsequently show some examples of mobility that appeared very clearly in the interviews and that speak of the complexity that dealing with social mobility represents,

That is, all these areas reflect social mobility but from their various possible dimensions. Obviously, no interviewee textually referred to their social mobility; instead, they referred to very concrete examples of the ways the initial place they found themselves in before starting their graduate studies has transformed. Here are some of the most representative:

(a) Economic Mobility:

He's now doing a postdoc and he is about 50 years old but, well, for me he was, wow, the guy that studied at the University of California and now he's coming, he was at the UNAM, he had a post and then he left. I didn't see that, I saw like everybody was offering him a job, I remember his salary was 35,000 pesos and I thought it was a huge amount and now I make that as a student. (Graduate student, UCLA-1)

(b) Academic Mobility:

I love it because suddenly I am an expert in Mexico. I go and explain very complicated things in terms that people can understand, so I have made contacts and friendships. I went first as a student and then every year as a professor [he speaks of trips to Mexico, invitations]. (Graduate student, UCLA-1)

(c) Definitive Geographical Mobility:

I want to live a bit longer here in the USA. When I finish my PhD I want to live here another while. Imagine, the initial plan was academics in the US, but as the time approaches I start getting doubtful, I've worked hard but I don't know, there are days when I wake up and I say another thing, I don't know. If it's not the gringo academy I would search for some private or international bank that has some sort of interest in Latin America. Of course, I'd enter the business division with Latin America or I'd get into an international organization to do things that have to do with Latin America. (Graduate student, Harvard-2)

(d) Vocational Mobility:

I am up to here of the academy, I don't want to be a professor, even if I love teaching that, I haven't been a TA because it distracts me a lot and it would take me all semester but I would like to work, I want to do some consulting. What we do in my lab is consulting designed for architects, for example, what to do so the building is more efficient and that we already do at the lab. We have a couple of projects and do consulting and it's really fun.... (Graduate student, MIT-1)

(e) Social Mobility:

...and I can have access to lots of things: Calderón's government, important businessmen and you get to know a lot of areas, the rewards and those experiences give you a lot, being able to interact with people of different levels, no to see them as untouchables but being able to reach them. The good thing about being here is that you can have a conversation with a Nobel Prize secretary of state and that's a lot, but it's very important to me. (Graduate student, Harvard-1)

(f) Personal Mobility:

Without a doubt, in professional terms I've had something major, now that I'm returning to Mexico next year I'm coming back with a wide network of very important contacts, the projects I have done I've done thanks to having been here at this university and also because I am a researcher, that has also allowed me to do more things, I think by having strong links with research in Mexico as well as here, it has been incredibly useful to advance in my career. In personal terms it has been incredibly costly, the PhD cost me a marriage, but well, it was a cost, I don't know what else I'd put in the balance. (Graduate student, Harvard-5)

A central theme that has not been approached in the chapter but that has been important to this study is the prestige of the selected American universities, among them Harvard, MIT, Tufts, and the University of California-Los Angeles. All of them are considered very prestigious institutions of higher education. The selection of these institutions was done with the intention of addressing the fact that reputation clearly influences the mobility of students who successfully conclude their studies. In fact, it will not be possible to stop on the topic of prestige, but authors like Marginson (2007) have very efficiently discussed the elements the idea of prestige is based on and how it manages to position the universities worldwide and the individuals related with them.

Conclusions

There are numerous topics to explore regarding the way the social mobility of the students who move to another country is disrupted. For the purpose of this chapter, we only emphasized Groups 1 and 3, which happen to be the two extremes (of lowest and highest social and cultural capital, according to the parents' occupation and schooling), but the comparison with Group 2 remains open.

Another topic that remains to be more fully addressed is related to the legacies and trajectories and the role they play in the mobility of individuals: the trajectories students make as well as family, institutional, work, or academic legacies that help them position themselves in their new institutions or to simply get to them.

One of the main conclusions of this chapter is that of all the cases studied, not one student identified planned not to return nor believes themselves to be in a better position from where they were before they left their home country to study. Mobility, which must be carefully studied, is progressive in all of the cases of this study (at least starting from the parents' schooling and occupation). Although this paper does not intend to make generalizations, it does appear to be a situation that is shared by the 22 interviewees. Another conclusion was previously mentioned that while all seem to move, mobility is more evident in Group 1 (with the least social and cultural capital),

and while the gap between that group and Group 3 (with the most social and cultural capital) never quite disappears, the distance is shortened. In a country like Mexico with marked problems of social inequality, this issue is not a minor one.

The Tribute

Finally, this chapter is a tribute to the work and influence of Philip G. Altbach, who is above all a scholar and author whose work has contributed to many of my reflections in my research. I could say many things about Phil to celebrate him in this volume, but to focus in the issues presented in this chapter, I would be remiss not to note how much I identify with the students included in this research. Indeed, years ago I was one of them. I was able to study for my PhD at a prestigious US institution—in my case, because of Phil Altbach's support. With such a powerful and supportive ally, I have benefitted from a career mobility in that includes social and geographical mobility. Phil's generosity enabled my experience professional trajectory to be as satisfying as it has been first by supporting me as an international student, then in assisting in my obtaining a tenure track post at the University of Arizona, and even more importantly, he was completely supportive of my idea to come back to Mexico, something I finally did, and I thank him for being there for me in every step of the way.

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Conclusion

Students often first approach Phil with hesitation in light of his reputation but quickly discover that this internationally distinguished scholar is remarkably unassuming and authentic. He has a wonderful, sometimes quirky, sense of humor. Despite his dedication to extraordinary productivity, he has time to engage with the people around him and often enjoys chatting about issues ranging from the challenges of riding a bike in urban traffic to the best restaurant bargains. He is rarely what anyone expects him to be—an aloof, detached, haughty scholar with a capital “S.” No, Phil is a sometimes abrupt, often warm and caring, funny, and brilliant man. He is the real deal—a genuine, complex, and always interesting human being. And as mentioned earlier, he is always uncomfortable as the focus of the much-deserved praise thrown his way, but his former students are happy to keep him on his toes—well, at least maybe just this once.

Acknowledgments A Special thanks to Liz Reisberg for her editorial assistance and thoughtful comments on this essay and to all the current and former students who contributed anecdotes.

Chapter 25 Final Remarks

Roberta Malee Bassett and Alma Maldonado-Maldonado

The chapters that precede this one give ample evidence of the breadth and influence of the academic leadership shown and the contributions made by Philip Altbach to the field of international higher education. He has spent his entire career as a member of the academic profession (Part I), promoting analysis of higher education in comparative and international contexts (Parts II, III, IV, and V), examining the rise of the world class university, as a global marker of national competitiveness (Part VI), and, finally, serving as an exceptional teacher and mentor to nearly 90 doctoral students (Part VII). But, even with this extensive sweep across his myriad areas of scholarship and professional expertise, this book has merely scratched the surface of Phil’s range in this field.

One particular lifelong academically and personally important area of interest for Phil is that of student activism. Phil was, himself, deeply engaged in student movements as an undergraduate at the University of Chicago in the 1960s. That experience profoundly shaped his education and life. As a genuine significant point of pride, Phil is known to have imported the peace symbol from the UK to the USA and promote its use across the myriad student activist organizations—for civil rights, for an end of war, etc.—that defined the unstable but dynamic student environment across university campuses during the 1960s. Anyone who has been involved in a student movement knows that the way these movements change your views and experiences are irreversible, and it was just so for Phil. And while we strove to include in this festschrift some updated perspectives on comparative

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student movements across the globe today, we will have to wait and hope that Phil himself will continue to engage on this issue and share his knowledge with us in the future.

Another topic we would have welcomed for inclusion here in this book is the significance of academic publishing on the “circulation and distribution of knowledge.” Whether in the context of the methodological challenges of ascribing too much authority to global university rankings (due to their weighting of academic publications in English) or the importance of expanding academic publishing opportunities to developing countries, Phil has spent his career deepening his understanding of the role and importance of academic publications to both universities and individual academic faculty members. He remains one of the best known, most prolific, and most respected authorities on the subject.

More than that, in his efforts to expand accessibility to his and others’ works in the field of higher education, he created one of the best publications on international higher education, the quarterly journal, *International Higher Education*, produced by the Center for International Higher Education at Boston College. The Center, of which Phil is the founding and continuing Director, also self-publishes, with funds provided through grants from outside sources, as many of the Center’s publications as it can, in order to ship directly to research centers and individuals in developing countries. Knowing the cost of such publications can be prohibitive for many in the poorest countries, where so much of this work can be so immediately useful, Phil has made it among his most committed professional endeavors to get high-quality academic work available at the lowest possible costs. He both walks the walk and talks the talk on academic publishing and international development, at the point where those realms intersect.

In terms of national and regional works, a longer book (or encyclopedia on Phil’s works) would certainly need to include more chapters on Africa, since Phil has been a lifelong advocate of the development of higher education in across the African continent. Indeed entire books could be written on Altbach’s contributions to African or Indian higher education, but, of course, this is not possible in an all-inclusive festschrift. In balancing the breadth of his interests with the array of contributors and the limitations of the publication form, we had to make some very challenging and, at times, painful decisions.

To Phil and to those many authors who we could not include in this one book, we acknowledge how much more we could have included in order to fully represent Phil’s comprehensive influence, and we apologize for the limitations that are apparent in this work. Nonetheless, we are very proud of the fantastic work that is included here and deeply grateful to the amazing authors who contributed their thoughtful work and time in producing their chapters for this book. It goes without saying that without them, there would be no book.

Finally, we want to close this examination of his works with a projection of the challenges that Phil leaves us to continue examining in the field of higher education. Phil’s most recent works have focused on expanding some areas where he has previously worked such as academic salaries (previously he has worked on academic profession characteristics) or the role of research universities, now adding the most

current addition of the “popular” concept of “world class universities.” In fact, we identified three main challenges: First, we need to keep discussing on the unsolved methodological challenges to produce *coherent, pertinent, sensitive, feasible, comparative, and international higher education research*. How to solve the paradox on when comparisons transcend the reproduction of positivist attempts to contrast mechanically two or more very different contexts or when comparisons do not to end in an extremely relativist view as the opposite answer to the challenge of comparison. Or how avoiding international studies either becoming a non-harmonic symphony made of singles disconnected soloists or the impossible symphony unable to mix sounds produced by unlike instruments just because of that difference.

The second challenge has to do with building theories as a result of comparative work. If there is something we could define as the “Altbach’s method,” it is putting together groups of well-known representative researchers, from several countries, to work on the same topic. This way to work has been extremely effective and it produced most of the comparative books coauthored (authored) by Phil; however, it always has complicated the next step: How to construct similar theoretical basis since the priority is to establish similar contextual bases to make feasible comparisons? This is something we need to continue debating.

A third challenge has to do with how to continue convincing developed countries, especially in the USA, in the importance of promoting comparative studies that include developing countries as points of comparison and contrast. The support to produce comparative and international higher education research has to do not only with convincing international, national, and regional agencies to continue sponsoring such studies but also with convincing in the importance of increasingly being part of Master’s and Ph.D. in higher education programs everywhere. In that sense, the challenge is not only how to pursue these studies that includes to make them part of the content of graduate programs but how to convince key actors about the relevance of promoting developing-developed countries dialogue. Phil Altbach has been always a major promoter of this and perhaps one of his most effective ambassadors worldwide speaking.

Meanwhile, we will continue to celebrate Philip Altbach’s legacy, his enormous contributions to understanding better the expansive opportunities afforded by studying the fields of comparative and international higher education and, especially, to providing ever-increasing legitimacy to this field of study. Whether continuing as academic researcher or moving into the many realms of higher education practitioners, Phil’s “disciples”—his many doctoral students and other students who have been fortunate enough to learn from him—along with his peers, his colleagues, and the policymakers who continue to seek his counsel as they reform their systems have the great good fortune to have Phil as a critical and ever-thoughtful partner in their journey to make higher education better.

So, this book is, more than anything, an enormous “thank you” to our mentor, friend, and colleague Philip G. Altbach. We are better at what we do because he is so immensely gifted at what he does. And, without question or exaggeration, the world is, literally, a better place because of him.