

GLOBALIZATION AND DUAL MODES OF HIGHER EDUCATION POLICYMAKING IN FRANCE:
JE T'AIME MOI NON PLUS¹

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ABSTRACT

The French Government has had a paradoxical relationship with globalization. Globalization is perceived as both a threat to react against and a cradle for new policy ideas. French policymakers have a love-hate relationship with the European higher education reforms that started in the 1990s, a mixed sentiment that French singer Serge Gainsbourg spoke of in his popular song, '*Je t'aime moi non plus*'. At the outset, most of higher education reforms, such as the Bologna declaration, were framed as a way to build Europe and fight against international competition. Yet, the mode of governance of these reforms mirrored the one recommended by international organizations and led to the precise outcome criticized in globalization, i.e. greater competition. This paper explores the relationship between international, European and domestic discourses and modes of governance. It uses insights from the literature on policy transfer to investigate such relationship and questions the sustainability of such ambivalent discourse. The French government should concentrate on the policy it started developing from 2007 consisting in opening French higher education to globalization. Such global openness requires a change in the academic culture that could be triggered by a reform of academic training.

Why copy policy ideas that one presents as a threat? The French Government's ambition to become the champion of anti-globalization is well known (Meunier, 1999). The discourse accompanying the reforms in higher education that started in 1999 (which included no less than an overhaul of the management of universities, levels of qualifications and quality assurance) presented globalization mostly as a threat because it promised to lead to increased international competition – for students, for research impact, and for building a competitive French economy. European integration, namely the creation of a European higher education area, was seen as a savior in such hostile international environment; in essence, a way to preserve what was best about French higher education.

Yet the mode of governance underlying French reforms since the late 1990s actually paralleled developments recommended by the international community, e.g. the OECD. This mode of governance shifted the relationship away from government-led a priori control toward the managerial autonomy of higher education institutions, institutions that benchmarks and indicators encouraged to compare themselves against each other and eventually compete, leading to a paradoxical love-hate relationship with globalization.

This paper looks at the relationship between the European higher education area, long-term trends defined by international organizations and French reforms from the late 1990s until 2007, the year of the adoption of a law aiming at increasing the managerial autonomy of universities. It investigates this relationship both in terms of discourse and mode of governance. Discourse includes policy ideas and values (Radaelli and Schmidt, 2004: 184). Modes of governance consist in policy instruments, the way through which these ideas and values are implemented. And globalization relates to the process of increasing convergence, interdependence and liberalization of markets and trade among other aspects of life, e.g. social and

¹ '*Je t'aime moi non plus*', translated as 'I love you me neither' is mostly known as the title of a song released by French singer Serge Gainsbourg in 1969. Its idiomatic French meaning refers to push and pull dynamics in relationships. An earlier version of this paper is under publication at the University of Toronto journal *Time and Mind*. I am grateful to Anne Corbett, John Douglass, Ase Gornitzka, Claire Marzo, Waltraud Schaulke, Manuel Souto-Outero and Erwin van Rijswood for their comments, as well as the participants of the UACES panel 'Can Europeanists learn from higher education scholarship and vice versa?' of 6-8 September 2010 in Bruges where this paper was presented.

cultural (Friedman & Ramonet, 1999). Globalization comes with its own set of actors, namely international epistemic communities (i) and international organizations.

The literature on policy transfer (Dolowitz et al., 2000; Radaelli, 2000) inspires the paper's explanation regarding the dual role of international trends. The French Government's references to European recommendations in its discourse provide legitimacy for state actors to implement their reforms as well as policy inspiration in a world of bounded rationality (Radaelli, 2000). But adherence to European integration and reform needs a stimulus, which takes the form of a position against globalization. The French government has admittedly had a more open attitude toward globalization since 2007, aware that the ability to sustain an ambivalent perception of globalization may be questionable in an environment of increasing international flow of people and capital. But this openness requires a broad-based commitment of academia, beyond the ones of academies in a few elite and dynamic institutions, to have any impact on the higher education landscape. This paper concludes by suggesting that reforming the training of early career researchers would facilitate the opening up of France to global higher education.

1. POLICY TRANSFER

The literature on policy transfer originally developed in the US to explain the spread of policy and diffusion (Walker, 1969; Gray, 1973) and was later applied to the European Union (Radaelli, 2000). Policy transfer is a helpful concept to understand the relationship between different levels of governance, i.e. international, European and domestic. Policy transfer mostly refers to the process whereby one policy setting uses one or many elements from another policy setting. These elements incorporate "*knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions and ideas*" (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996). Policy transfer goes beyond Bennett and Howlett (1992)'s social learning in the field of public policy, in which actors within and outside the government challenge the cognitive dimension underlying a policy and shift paradigms - a paradigm being an accepted dominant view.

Policy transfer includes administrative change, in this paper akin to changes in modes of governance, on top of cognitive ones, in this paper referred to as changes in discourse, rhetoric or paradigm. An important feature of modes of governance in European higher education is their non-binding character, hence the appellation of *soft* governance. These modes of governance include policy instruments such as the adoption of a circular letter encouraging implementation for example. They also include the commissioning of comparative studies and the choice of indicators aiming at underlying the costs and outcomes of public institutions. Indicators can be a powerful *soft* governance tool. Indicators are not objective measures. The choice of an indicator over another steers policy in a particular direction. For example, measuring the performance of universities based on their ability to attract external funding over student satisfaction survey results will encourage universities to think about their funding strategy above their teaching. The same reasoning applies to benchmarking. Choosing a relatively high ranking US private university as a case study during an international conference will lead other attendees to think of the features of this university (high level of autonomy, endowments etc.), something attendees may actually not do if the benchmark was a different university.

These indicators and benchmarks are less likely as laws to create opposition since they are not binding. Indicators make actors realize the need for reforms using their own deductive capacity. This mode of governance plays on actors' reasoning. And after actors become convinced of reforms, they cannot oppose it.

Although indicators have a cognitive dimension, like discourse, the two are different. Discourse includes the arguments and ideas put forward to justify the implementation of particular indicators (Radaelli and Schmidt, 2004: 184). Policy discourse can incorporate motivational values, with the American rhetoric deep anchored in citizens' memories (*'yes we can'*). In France, a common policy discourse includes integrationist values articulated around the need to build Europe to resist globalization.

This distinction between cognitive and administrative dimensions is reflected by Trondal (2009) identifies two types of *fusion*, Type I fusion where national levels of administration adopt similar structures to European ones as well as Type II fusion where actors adopt similar normative and cognitive notions (Type II fusion).

Institutional policy transfer also comes close to DiMaggio and Powell (1991: 69)'s notion of isomorphism, whereby one institution adopts the features of another. DiMaggio et al. (1991) argue that isomorphism can either be coercive (if the institution is forced to adopt such features), normative (if the institution changes through a process of socialization) or mimetic (if the institution imitates a previous one).

The main motivation for mimetism relates to the need to preserve legitimacy in conditions of uncertainty: when the environment is uncertain, institutions respond by imitating other organizations which are perceived to have more legitimacy. This theoretical framework for policy transfer implies that actors make fully conscious choices to transfer a certain policy and favor a logic of choice over a logic of appropriateness. Moreover, as Radaelli (2000) argued, copying removes the perceived interest of the

designer and hence makes opposition against him less likely, an argument similar to the logic of blame shifting according to which national policy-makers justify domestic reforms by explaining that supranational institutions, and not themselves, are the masters of these reforms.

Policy transfer, in its simplest form, is a *single-stage* process. Transfer can take place from top to bottom when applied to European Union policy-making, from European institutions to one or several member state governments, or from one member state to one or several others. Radaelli (2000) for example applied the idea of policy transfer to the interaction between European institutions and member states in three case studies (the single currency, tax policy and media ownership policy). Various implementation and convergence studies from the higher education literature are similar to analyses of a single-stage policy transfer from the European to the national and/or institutional level (European Journal of Education, special issue 'The Bologna process', 2004; Fägerlind and Strömqvist, 2004; Barraud & Mignot, 2005; Krücken *et al.*, 2005; Mangset, 2005; Mignot Gérard and Musselin, 2005; Musselin, 2006; Witte, 2006; Amaral and Veiga, 2009). The transfer of cognitive elements is documented in the literature on the creation of the European higher education area, also called the Bologna process. Witte (2006), who provided an exhaustive comparative study of the implementation of the Bologna process in France, England, Germany and the Netherlands, explains how domestic actors in France, Italy and Germany used the arguments of the Bologna process strategically to justify reforms and increase their legitimacy *vis-à-vis* resistant non-state actors.

2. THE INFLUENCE OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Policy transfer can also involve more stages, a variety of institutions and be by nature more complex than a single-stage process. Other international organizations may actually inspire the European Union and its member states. The notion of having several global institutions involved in inspiring the policies and institutional layout of a member state bears some connections to ideas of global economic field (Bourdieu, 2003) and international epistemic communities (Haas, 1992).

Table 1: Discourse and modes of governance in international organizations

Modes of governance	Discourse
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International benchmark and indicators: OECD Education at a Glance from 1992 • Creation of the CERI to stimulate long-term thinking based on international comparison and university-centered perspective from the 1970s • These instruments stimulate international comparison and hence competition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International competition is increasing • An international knowledge economy is emerging (OECD, World Bank) • Massification of higher education

In education, Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry (1997) argued that international organizations created a global policy community which located policy processes beyond the nation in education. They also suggested that this international community framed national educational discourse. And international organizations transfer policy discourses to one another. Jones (2007: 256) argued that the World Bank adopted the policy talk of the OECD regarding the knowledge economy as part of its policy ideas in the 1990s. The Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) of the OECD emerged in the 1970s to explore ideas regarding the shape of higher education and its modes of governance. The CERI built upon inputs from scholars such as Martin Trow (1973) who showed how higher education was changing from elite to mass system. Table 1 summarizes the discourse on which international organizations concentrated at that period.

Table 2: discourse and mode of governance in international organizations

Mode of governance	Discourse
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-binding European agreements and the open method of coordination (OMC) encourage comparison, benchmarking and the exchange and best practices • These agreements and OMC include university representatives to make policy developments university-centered (as opposed to Government controlled) • These instruments aim at stimulating greater European competition <i>intra muros</i>. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International competition is developing • An international knowledge economy is emerging (Bologna process, Lisbon strategy) • European integration is needed to face this international competition. • Creation of the European higher education area • Bologna process from 1998

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lisbon strategy from 2000
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Lingard and Grek (2008: 5) showed how this idea shaped OECD's approach to the governance of education. The OECD perceived such governance as relying on autonomous educational institutions motivated to perform through a competitive mechanism of a posteriori comparison through indicators and benchmarking. Lingard et al. (2008) underlined how the choice of indicators and benchmarks by the Centre for Educational Reform and Innovation (CERI) of the OECD were used as subjective indicators to help shape a "new European identity of competitive advantage and responsible individualism".

Data on changes in international higher education accumulated with the publication of international comparisons through the annual report *Education at a Glance* in 1992 and became an international governance tool. These comparative indicators raised awareness on the performance of students by country, the progression in the number of students and their movements. According to Lingard et al. (2008: 11), "there is a broader politics of change associated with the indicators' project, based as it is on a particular view about the policy directions and approaches needed to reform education".

The discourse of international changes and competition as well as the logic of steering through indicators transferred to the European Union from the late 1990s (Van Vught, 2004; Martens, Rusconi and Leuze, 2007). The rhetoric of the Bologna process articulated around socio-economic changes related to the increase in the number of students, i.e. the massification of higher education, international competition and changing needs of the labor market (MEN, 1998; Witte, 2006; interview IT1, 05 September 2007). The Lisbon strategy of 2000, which anchored the EU in the logic of competitive knowledge economy, followed a similar rhetoric, as well as recommendations issued by the European Council (2001: 14) and the European Commission (2003:3), as represented in Table 1.

And European higher education policy started to rely on similar governance tools as the OECD to steer higher education reform. The open method of coordination in education, formalized with the Lisbon strategy, relied on the exchange of good practice, benchmarks and indicator monitoring across European member states to reform higher education.

3. THE DISCOURSE OF REFORMS IN FRANCE

This discourse also trickled down to justify reforms in higher education in France from the end of the 1990s. This discourse remained constant in France despite six changes of ministers and four changes of prime ministers over 1997–2007, including different political majorities (socialist from 1997 until 2002, rightwing thereafter). This discourse aimed at positioning France as a key actor of European integration to be protected against the growing threat of international competition.

Table 3: Discourse and mode of governance in France until 2007

Mode of governance	Discourse
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International comparisons <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attali 1998 • Aghion and Cohen 2004 • Development of indicators <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increasing including on the costs of higher education from 2007 • University-centered perspective through voluntary implementation of reforms • 1999 'LMD' and end of the <i>maquettes nationales</i> • 2007 voluntary implementation of the law on university autonomy • This delegation of powers to universities and greater comparison between them encourages competition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International competition is developing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allègre, 1993 • Attali, 1998 • Sarkozy, 2007 • Need for European construction to respond to international competition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Idem</i> • European integration implies that French universities need reform <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Idem</i>

A report commissioned by the French Government to Jacques Attali entitled *Pour un modèle européen d'enseignement supérieur* (For a European model of higher education, 1998, called Attali report below) laid down this discourse. It underlined that the number of students increased from 310, 000 in 1960 to 1.2 million in 1980, leading to a growth of the student population far

superior to the growth in public contribution. The Attali report (annex 16) also subsequently concentrated on a criticism of the performance of higher education related to this massification, by looking at high failure rates. National data, produced for the CNESER (ii) in 1999 showed that non-success rates for the academic year 1996-1997 ranged from 44.27% in sports to 90.53% in medicine after the first year of studies. And the access rate to the second cycle suggested that between 36% and 50% of the student population did not complete their first degrees in France in 1996/97 (CNESER, 1999).

The Attali (1998) used international comparisons to flag the poor performance of French indicators. The report finished with comparisons with other European countries which underlined the comparatively high failure rates in France, in comparison to the 30% non-success rate in Italy.

Government officials also justified domestic reforms with the threat of globalization. Students were becoming more and more willing to travel to receive a degree. And knowledge became a comparative advantage in a global economy. The French Minister for Higher Education and Research at the time, Claude Allègre, explained that he became concerned about the growing influence of India, China, Brazil and Australia (Allègre, 1993; interviews FF1, 02 May 2007, FCM1 28 April 2007). This discourse of globalization as a threat appears in several documents and reports. In his letter to request that Jacques Attali set up an investigative commission, he wrote that he aimed at "*preparing France for the brain competition that the 21st century will constitute*". The Attali report (1998: annex 8) condemned the declining proportion of foreign students in French higher education from 12% in 1976-77 to 8.6% in 1996-97.

Later on, a report from the influential think tank Institut Montaigne, Mérieux (2001:11) wrote: "*Our higher education system is not fit to face international competition, i.e. to attract and train the best students*". The report advised to increase the managerial autonomy of universities, in order to give those institutions the tools to become more competitive internationally.

Aghion and Cohen (2004:63) from the French Council of economic analysis reported that: "*the common discourse to depict French universities is one of crisis, impossible reforms, even decline*" after they analyzed international competition. Attali (1998) recommended the creation of the European higher education area as an answer to this decline. He envisaged that a harmonized European higher education system would allow French higher education institutions to provide more internationally visible degrees, and to become more competitive.

But the data presented by Attali and later on by Aghion and Cohen was clearly part of a constructed discourse to legitimate reforms. Many academics admittedly acknowledged the strain put on the welfare state over the past two decades (Castles, Obinger and Starke; 2008: 975) and socio-economic changes in the higher education landscape were undeniable. The number of students increased. Students were becoming more and more mobile. Businesses adopted a growing culture of risk and enterprise in Europe, in addition to becoming indissociable with new technologies and business. However, these socio-economic changes were progressive, and started well before the end of the 1990s, sometimes as early as the 1960s (Neave, 1976).

To some academics, the use of data is always subjective, and corresponds to a political rhetoric with managerial aims (Grek and Lawn, forthcoming; Politt, 1993; Thatcher, 2007). Grek et al. (forthcoming: 3) explain how European ministers have used indicators to move European higher education policy away from a traditional perception of education as an aspect of culture to a paradigm on education which is more managerial and outcome oriented. The data presented above on the massification of higher education, failure rates, international competitiveness and ability to match the needs of the labour market, by setting up subjective performance targets, helped to fulfill this aim.

Official reports could have provided alternative explanations to the data presented, or other indicator. For example, instead of a constraint, the figures on the growth of university students could also have been interpreted as the achievement of earlier political objectives aiming at widening participation in higher education. Moreover, the massification of higher education only became a problem because funding did not increase proportionally to the increase in the number of students. The growth of the student population was also far superior to the growth in public contribution in France. Investment in higher education was below the OCDE average by 0.1 percentage point in 1995 (OECD, 2007).

Hence, restrictive government policies, and not the increase in the number of students as such, led to the higher education system working over its capacity. And the international standing of French higher education depended on the indicators and benchmarks used. France was the fourth most attractive country for international students, particularly those from Africa and was the fifth country with the highest number of world citations of scientific publications per country (UUK, 2006). France also ranked among the top half countries in the world regarding the percentage of the labour force with a tertiary education degree in 1998, according to World Bank indicators, a testimony of the ability of graduates to integrate in the labor force contradicting the worries underlined in the Attali report (ESDS, 2008).

Presenting globalization as a threat was necessary to justify European cooperation. In trivial terms, the French Government justified domestic reforms by the need to build European integration from the late 1990s. European integration provided a legitimating function, by allowing to shift the blame of reforms toward another level of governance. But European integration itself needed a justification to motivate actors to contribute to it. This justification was the threat engendered by international competition in a context of growing student mobility. Infinitely repeated non-cooperative games in game theory provide a more theoretical take on such trivial insight. When actors are in a suboptimal non-cooperative equilibrium, only two strategies can encourage cooperation and secure higher payoffs: the threat of future punishments or a promise on future rewards. So far the French Government had used the first option, playing on threats of future punishments.

4. GOVERNING BY INDICATORS

The multiplication of international comparisons and indicators was coupled with a change in the mode of governance of higher education that started in the late 1990s. This change concentrated on steering higher education by setting (international) benchmarks and monitoring their performance a posteriori rather than central a priori regulation. In a somewhat tautological narrative, the French Government aimed at resisting against international competition by stimulating competition between its universities.

The first step of such trend was taken in 1999 with the implementation of the reforms of qualifications of the Bologna process. This reform aimed at harmonizing the output of higher education training by simplifying the levels of qualifications. Claude Allègre chose to let universities implement this reform voluntarily, and provided them with more freedom to choose their own curricula, by abolishing the *maquettes nationales* (government controlled guidelines for the curricula). The original idea was to steer higher education institutions toward this implementation by making them realise the need to do so through international comparisons (iii). This mode of implementation was particularly new to French higher education, which used to be steered a priori and centrally through a series of ministerial decrees and circulars to preserve the notion of equality in the provision of service across the French territory.

This mode of governance and associated discourse were efficient in the sense that French trade union representatives hardly contradicted the rhetoric of socio-economic changes and European integration put forward by the Government with the Bologna process, despite opposing reforms as a matter of principle and seeing them as linked to a 'threatening' neo-liberal plan (Lauton, Lecaille and Monteux, 1998; SNESUP, 1998; UNEF, 2000/2003). This led an interviewee to conclude that:

"The Bologna process reform was rather clever. When we want to reform in France, there are two solutions; either we have a strong political commitment which helps to make reforms go through. For example, during the preceding Government, there was the reform of pensions. There were people on the street, but well, the Government had a strong political commitment so it went through. But you also need the political situation which makes it possible to go for it. Or you set up a softer process which allows to progressively let actors implement the reform". (Interview FF4, 7 June 2007)

The law of the 11th of August 2007 followed this soft mode of governance. This law transferred power away from the Government to universities in various managerial aspects such as the recruitment of staff, the ability to manage assets and raise money by establishing foundations.

The mode of governance related to this law is perhaps more telling than the law itself. Universities had to voluntarily apply for a transfer to increase competencies and autonomy, a mode of implementation very removed from the days when the Ministry controlled nearly every aspect of university life. Twenty universities out of eighty five became autonomous from the 1st of January 2009. The Ministry did not adopt a series of framework circulars and decrees as it traditionally would have. Its main concession was to set a deadline for implementation, i.e. 2012, following the request from the CPU iv (interview FCM8, 24 and 25 September 2009). France therefore continued to adopt a more university-centred mode of governance based on higher education institutions' voluntary involvement.

The Ministry's efforts to produce comparisons through indicators also increased at that period. The French Government started introducing measurements on the costs of higher education (which did not exist before). The Government stimulated the debate on the financing of higher education and student contribution after European deliberations urged member states to do so. This effort corresponded to the recommendation issued by European Council (2001) to produce comparative data on education efficiency, including the costs of higher education, advice endorsed by the Berlin communiqué of 19 September 2003.

In the late 1990s, financial data was largely absent in France and appeared as missing in international studies and governmental publications. The French Ministry used to publish some general statistics through its annual *Repères et références statistiques*, but these statistics merged higher education data to data on primary and secondary education. Two official reasons were put

forward to explain this lack of data. First, it was difficult to know what the overall budget of universities was, because funding came from different ministries. Second, even if the Ministry had this data, it was not willing to make it public: *'we look at those numbers every day in the Ministry but they are not made available to the public'* (interview FF9, 12 June 2007).

An awareness of the need for financial data increased in the mid-2000s (Aghion et al., 2004: 83; Witte, 2006: 269). According to an interviewee:

"These are figures [on financing] on which we work all the time. But they are not public. They are not public institution by institution. They are not public. We do not say to Lyon I what Lyon II has received as financing, and the same with evaluations. But the set-up of the AERES starts from the principle of transparency, because on this principle, these are public funds which go to public institutions. Public funds come from taxes from all citizens so there is no reason for not having a minimum of transparency on this subject. It was not the case until now." (Interview FF9, 12 June 2007)

In 2007, the Directorate for the Evaluation of Prospects and Performance (*Direction de l'Évaluation de la Prospective et de la Performance*, DEPP) of the Ministry prepared and published *The State of higher education and research (l'État de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche)*, the first publicly available summary of how much money went into higher education as a whole. Providing information on the costs of higher education was the first step to publicly addressing the issue of the financial contribution of different actors including students (v). This concentration on financial indicators continued with the creation of a sub-directorate on performance and the financing of higher education.

The use of international comparisons facilitated the adoption and implementation of the law on the freedom and responsibilities of universities in 2007. This law was not the first attempt to allocate more managerial autonomy to French universities.

A project of law on the autonomy of higher education institutions, which contained very similar elements to the 2007 bill, had already been attempted in 2003 by the Minister of the time Luc Ferry but was removed from the political agenda a few months after its introduction after signs of student opposition (vi). The 2003 legislative project may also not have gotten through because the new discourse based on international comparisons had not yet become a dominant paradigm in the domestic arena:

"There were two electroshocks, which were firstly the Shanghai ranking, and secondly the report of the Economic Analysis Council (...) which showed that the economic future of a country was a function of the training level of its children, and that in particular if we were not able to have at least 50% of a generation at the level of a bachelor we would not pass the technological barrier and we would be reduced to an economy of imitation, but without being able to cross the barrier to become an economy of innovation. (...) I think that after that minds matured and mentalities have changed and everyone was aware over all the territory that if we do not agree on what we should do, in any case we cannot leave the system like this". (Interview FCM 3, 15 June 2007)

According to this interviewee, the cognitive shift regarding university autonomy occurred after the 2003 legislative project. This shift started to have an effect on domestic actors from 2004 according to him, with the report from Aghion et al. (2004) and the first Shanghai ranking. The Shanghai ranking classified the first 500 universities in the world and stressed international competition (Shanghai Jiao Tong University, 2004). The first French higher education institution in the ranking came in 65th position, mostly behind American universities and a few British ones (Compagnon, 2004) vii. Aghion et al.'s report also referred to international competition, but mostly acknowledged the role of European integration to help with the reforms.

The 2007 legislative reforms benefited from this paradigm shift, which meant that the public opinion was requesting and supportive of more autonomy (interviews FCM6, 24 September 2009; FCM8, 24 and 25 September 2009). The opposition to the law, leading to demonstrations from November 2007, was actually led by the most radical left-wing trade unions such as the Communist Revolutionary League (*Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire* LCR), the National Confederation for Work (*Confédération Nationale du Travail* CNT) and South-Students (SUD-Etudiants). Most students did not support blockages and actually voted against blockages (interviews FCM6, 24 September 2009; FCM8, 24 and 25 September 2009; Jacqué, 2009) (viii).

The presentation of international indicators facilitated the adoption of difficult and long-planned domestic reforms between the late 1990s and 2007. It also supported a paradigm which perceived globalization, where international competition was growing, as a threat that European integration would protect France against. Yet, the mode of governance by indicators used to address the threat of globalization was actually inspired by international organizations (Table 1). Even more paradoxically, the Government's solution to this increasing international competition was to stimulate competition between universities by making them more autonomous, harmonizing their outputs through the reform of degrees and increasing comparative indicators.

5. A NECESSARY ACADEMIC COMMITMENT TO THE OPPORTUNITY OF GLOBALIZATION

But the sustainability of a reactionary discourse regarding globalization is questionable. Schmidt (2007) went as far as to argue that in fact this discourse had already been exhausted. She referred to the 'no' vote to the Constitutional treaty at the referendum of the 29th of May 2005 as a testimony of citizens' frustration with such discourse and explained that politicians still used the European Union to legitimate domestic reforms out of lack of alternative.

A reformulation of the discourse to place it in line with global trends and the reforms implemented provides an alternative. Such discourse embraces globalization as the bearer of future rewards (instead of threats).

This discourse has started to emerge since 2007. "*Putting higher education and research at the level of the best in the world*" (which is to some extent different from constructing Europe to prevent brain drain and globalization) was a key priority in the program of the President for the elections (Sarkozy, 2007; see also Fillon and Péresse, 2007). This discourse concentrates on two main justifications: first that embracing globalization is necessary for France to remain one of the main global players in higher education and second that globalization is also necessary for France to remain an economy of innovation. An economy of innovation is crucial to give France an economic advantage over fast growing developing countries and ensure the sustainable development of the French economy. Such discourse also parallels the logic underlined in the EU's ten year plan for Education and Training ET2020.

The French Government has engaged in major reforms to support such discourse. On top of the above mentioned reform of the autonomy of universities, it also invested five billion euros to support the creation of internationally visible higher education centers (Labi, 2010; MEN, 2009). Top-down reforms and major investments create the structures in place to anchor France in a global higher education environment.

But embracing globalization will not happen without a broad-based commitment of academia. Academic communities in some elite and a few dynamic institutions are no doubt very open to the rest of the world and competitive internationally (see for example De la Baume, 2011). But a nation-wide cultural shift is essential to open up the entire landscape of French higher education and help French higher education institutions train and retain French talents who increasingly migrate abroad. A recent report by French think-tank *Institut Montaigne* (Kohler, 2010) underlined that France had the highest and fastest increasing rate of scientific expatriation toward the US than other European countries. This phenomenon of 'brain drain' has more than doubled between the 1970s and 1996-2006. Although still constituting a minority, Kohler (2010) explains this migration targets the most talented scholars. According to Kohler (2010), academics do not move to the US solely because of higher income premiums or international reputation. They also move because of the academic culture, which favors individual autonomy in research, allowing academics to develop their own research programs from the early stages of their career. Fostering individual responsibility and autonomy in academia would contribute to increase academic flows between France and other parts of the world and hence more international competitiveness and openness toward globalization.

Researchers' training plays a key part in creating such alternative university culture based on individual responsibility. The reform of doctoral training to allow international doctoral co-supervision and opportunities set up by the French National Research Agency (*Agence Nationale de la Recherche*) to encourage the return of postdoctoral researchers stresses the French Government's awareness on this matter (ANR, 2010; order of the 24th of August 2006, article 4).

Further measures could include the option to be allocated a doctorate upon completion of a number of papers of publishable standards as opposed to the current long thesis model. This option would stimulate research production at the early stages of researchers' careers by encouraging the doctoral student to become responsible for his research as well as increase the research output of French universities.

Opening up French research by encouraging recruitment based on publications written in English as well as taking into account international publications and their international impact could also become a more widespread criterion for academic recruitment.

The training of early career academics could finally incorporate a course designed to make them think of student-centered teaching methods to favor a university culture based on fostering individual engagement and responsibility. This cultural alternative being based on individual empowerment, changes need to come from higher education institutions and academic staff themselves. The French Government can only nudge these changes by continuing to govern by indicators. For example, the Government could release a ranking of the publication output (including impact and international publications) of higher education institutions in France which would parallel the recent employment ranking of universities (MEN, 2010).

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper laid down the French love-hate relationship with globalization, alternating between a political and cultural rejection of globalization and a stimulation of international competition as well as the replication of modes of governance and policy ideas inspired by international organizations which underpinned the reforms from the late 1990s. The Government in power since 2007 has admittedly started to be more consistently open toward perceiving globalization as an opportunity. Aware that higher education needs international openness to generate competitive ideas and eventually economic growth, it has launched a large investment program to open up French higher education. Financial investments, indicators and benchmarks and other central measures definitely put structures in place to facilitate the entry of France on the global higher education scene.

But global openness also requires a cultural shift to embrace individual responsibility and autonomy. Such cultural change requires a broad-based commitment of academia beyond communities in a handful of elite and dynamic institutions. Reforming the training of early career researchers is necessary to foster such cultural commitment to open up to globalization.

NOTES

(i) An epistemic community is 'a network of professionals with recognized expertise and competence in a particular domain and an authoritative claim to policy-relevant knowledge within that domain or issue area. Epistemic communities have: 1) a shared set of normative and principled beliefs, which provide a value-based rationale for the social action of community members; 2) shared causal beliefs, which are derived from their analysis of practices leading or contributing to a central set of problems in their domain and which then serve as the basis for elucidating multiple linkages between possible policy actions and desired outcomes; 3) shared notions of validity, that is, intersubjective internally defined, weighing and validating knowledge in the domain of their expertise; and 4) a common policy enterprise – that is a set of common practices associated with a set of problems to which their professional competence is directed, presumably out of conviction that human welfare will be enhanced as a consequence' (Haas, 1992: 3).

(ii) The CNESER (*Conseil National de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche*) is a consultative body gathering all higher education representatives to debate on higher education decrees.

(iii) Some trade union members were not in favor of such autonomy in implementation, estimating that it increased the workload for university staff members (interview FTUA1, 05 May 2007). Jack Lang, Claude Allègre's successor (Garrick, 2000; Interview, FCM2, 22 May 2007), allegedly bowed to their requests for more regulation after consultations in early 2001 (MEN, 2001/2001b). He recognized the need for the Government to provide more orientation to universities and the need for a framework text (Lang, 2001). And he issued such a framework in a series of decrees in April 2002 (interview FCM2, 22 May 2007). These decrees transformed the higher education levels which dated from the Napoleonic times (called *grades*) into actual levels of diplomas. In addition to decrees, Jack Lang issued some orders which gave more details regarding the reforms to implement.

(iv) CPU is the Conference of University Presidents (*Conférence des Présidents d'Universités*).

(v) Although beyond the timeframe of this research, it is worth mentioning that in 2009, the General Directorate for Higher Education and Professional Insertion *Direction générale de l'enseignement supérieur et de l'insertion professionnelle* (DGSIP) published the global budget received by each French university for teaching and research.

(vi) And before that in 1986 by Alain Devaquet.

(vii) The Shanghai ranking got a larger public coverage in France than in England, which was already used to universities rankings, for example with the *Good University Guide* published by *the Times* since 1992 (Woolcock, 2008). Moreover, the British Government and higher education sector was at the time busy debating the reform of tuition fees.

(viii) Other factors admittedly contributed to the rejection of the 2003 law project. The proposal did not obtain as a strong political support as the 2007 proposal. In 2007, the French president Nicolas Sarkozy had made higher education one of the key reform points of his campaign manifesto, and he chose a previous education minister, Francois Fillon as Prime Minister. The 2003 project created internal splits within the party. Francois Bayrou, yet from the same party as Luc Ferry, took a public stand against the project for the autonomy of universities (Interview FCM3, 15 June 2007). The French President and Prime Minister did not strongly support the 2003 law project for two reasons. The first one was that the "*boat was full*" (interview FCM 3, 15 June 2007). The Government was already pushing for pensions reforms (Musselin, 2003). The second reason was the memory of the 1986 unrest created by the previous attempt to give more autonomy and freedom for universities to diversify their sources of finances remained. Alain Devaquet was presidential advisor for higher education in 2003, and, fearful of a repetition of the upheavals that his project had created seven years before, advised not to support the reforms:

Interviewee: 'Luc Ferry (...) wasn't a politician himself. He came from civil society so he didn't have a core of deputies to put pressure on the Government. He didn't have much political support. [...] And may I add to that a reason according to me important is that close to Jacques Chirac, the higher education advisor, do you know who he was?

Interviewer: No, not at all.

Interviewee: It was Alain Devaquet. He was State Minister to universities and had himself wiped some unrest and very important student demonstrations in 1986. Someone died during those demonstrations. So there was from the Elysée... as soon as we had demonstrations, we were begged, saying are you really sure? Universities look upside down. Isn't it going to spread? So there was always a kind of ... fear of an insurrectional climate which means we have not been supported. We were told go for it, but if it blows never mind, we'll get rid of the Minister. That was never said like this, but overall that's what we felt. And at the end we finally heard the speech". (Interview FCM3, 15 June 2007)

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