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THE WEEK**

Globalization implies increased information sharing, capital investment and communication among the countries of the world. In other words, it's a greater integration of economies and labour markets. But when it comes to science, globalization's reach has been less than global.

At the meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Boston earlier this month, several sessions examined the effects of globalization. For instance, Mark Fishman, president of the Novartis Institutes for BioMedical Research, explained why the Swiss company seeks scientists in India and China and why it has moved its research headquarters to Boston: it follows the talent. In the case of Boston, it wanted an entrepreneurial talent base that was not too risk averse, which is harder to find in Switzerland, said Fishman.

Several speakers noted the rising prevalence of branches of US universities overseas where funds are plentiful and nations are looking to diversify their economies. In the Qatari desert, for example, Cornell University has set up a medical school, Texas A&M teaches engineering and Georgetown University holds classes on foreign services.

But from Nigeria to Mexico, and Indonesia to Chile, globalization is less obvious. One potentially disappointing, even damaging, trend in these nations is an increased prevalence of private universities — schools that are often unaccredited and that tend to favour more profitable business-administration classes over a basic-science curriculum. This was the thesis of Wayne Patterson, a programme manager for developing countries at the US National Science Foundation. Patterson canvassed representatives from 19 countries and found that most shared his concerns, citing a lack of money, a shift in students' careers away from science, and a continued loss of scientific talent to regions such as Europe and the United States.

So far, science's spread is more of a regionalization or a concentration than a globalization. This is quite a shame, as developing nations could stand to benefit most from research talent and innovation.

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