

SELF EVALUATION REVIEWS

Some comments

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INTRODUCTION

- Increasing significance of HEI in supporting regional competitiveness
- New framework conditions for Universities and Polytechnics: Change of focus from regionally equal coverage to quality and international competitiveness; Increasing autonomy; Quest for better training productivity; Larger units and cost cutting process, Decrease of students intake in a number of countries
- Increasing expectations on HEI (e.g. DIUS)
- Need for HEI (self) review and reinvention

THE SELF EVALUATION PROCESS

- A process based on the responses to a questionnaire
- Compliance to the set of guidelines
- Focus on specific questions
- Not a separate mission. An integrated part of the local learning process including other relevant process and program in the past present and future.
- Example from the OECD point of view: links with territorial reviews; in Finland close connection with the mutual strategy work of the HEI.
- Stakeholders need to incorporate the findings into their quality insurance policies and systems

PITFALLS

- Being descriptive rather than evaluative
- Insufficient analysis of impact and lack of metrics
- Downplaying tensions (overoptimistic presentation)
- Neglecting issues (e.g. in certain cases: lifelong learning)
- Overly academic approaches

CHALLENGES AND TRADEOFFS

- *The region under study?* (as close as possible to the functional region)
- *Which HEIs?* Focus on few of them (e.g. only research based institutions) or targeting all higher education institutions?
- Collaboration between different HEIs and /or tensions (different mandates between polytechnics and U, different interpretation of their role in regional development: horizontal/central).
- Cooperation with stakeholders. Sometimes inflated perceptions of the role of HEIs. (seen sometimes as « threats » by local politicians) but more generally as assets. Contribution of intermediary organization *Quality of collaboration?*
- Strategy building. Profiling and prioritizing activities. Clarify strategy jungle
- Commitment of HEI to sub-regional alliances and governance system

ECONOMIC ISSUES TO BE STRESSED

- Transfer of technology (TT) and commercialization of academic research (fostering entrepreneurship, establishing regional innovation fund, Cooperative Industry University research Centre). Ports of knowledge functions of HEI. *Is TT professionalized?*
- Bridging the gap between HEI and SME (e.g. knowledge vouchers, lectors and knowledge circles). *Access to VC and HEI products?*
- HK training and further education. *Relevance?*

ADDITIONAL ISSUES

- Gender issues; Interaction between people as a precondition for regional growth; part of regional policy process (Regional growth program in Sweden);
- International competition of universities; Links with open innovation or international division of labor.
- New sectors: climate change, new source of energy, biotech, nanotech, internet, mobile and portable

CONDITIONS FOR A GOOD DIAGNOSIS

- Establishing partnerships with main stakeholders (not only Ministries, Regional and local authorities but also Research councils, Science Parks, Chamber of commerce, Federation of enterprises). Leadership
- Mobilizing the personnel of HEI . An “engaged” process.
- Systematically assessing asset strengths and weaknesses of the region and the engagement of HEI. Need for critical evaluation (and brave choices)
- Building on past experience, reflecting upon the experience of previous projects aimed at designing efficient mechanisms for collaboration and unused potential
- Awareness of the need to be well placed in the international competition
- Striking a balance and avoiding university staff dominance in the Regional Steering Committee

METHODOLOGY AND ORGANIZATION

- Not simply processing the questionnaire but going beyond it
- Need for diversified working parties, focus group and a steering Committee to handle the project and manage main issues
- Involving intermediaries or facilitators to liaise between the Universities and the team in charge of drawing the report to find the appropriate experts for the questionnaire
- Getting comments from employers of the region
- Use of other instruments: interviews, specific questionnaire, collecting thematic expertise
- Recruitment of statisticians
- Involvement of City and Regional authorities
- Contributions in cash and in kind

CONCLUSIONS

- A starting point (not the beginning of the end but the end of the beginning)
- Improve the positioning of HEIs within the regionally chosen focus
- Opening new lines of communications between HEIs and stakeholders
- Incorporating further the regional agenda in HEI strategies
- Help to promote a development ethos
- Knowledge mobilization and common learning process
- Disseminate the result (conference to distill lessons beyond Valencia, other concluding or input reports to be made public)
- Potential of federation of interests (the project has often a life of its own)
- Post evaluation heuristic and benefit (forum, strategic planning, regional vision, awareness)