



## The OECD Thematic Review of Tertiary Education

### The main policy directions

Presentation by Paulo Santiago, Directorate for  
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Outcomes of Higher Education: Quality, Relevance and Impact  
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### Outline of Presentation

**Part 1:** Key features of the *OECD Thematic Review of Tertiary Education*

**Part 2:** Broad directions for policy development

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**Part 1:** Key features of the  
*OECD Thematic Review of  
Tertiary Education*

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## The OECD project's contribution

### Objective

Recommend policies that ensure that capabilities of tertiary education contribute to countries' economic and social goals

### A collaborative, cross-national process to:

- Synthesise research-based evidence on the impact of tertiary education policies and disseminate this knowledge among participating countries
- Identify innovative and successful policy initiatives and practices
- Facilitate exchanges of lessons and experiences among countries
- Identify policy options and the conditions under which they are successfully implemented

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## Key features of Review

- **A broad range of areas covered**
  - Governance
  - Funding
  - Quality assurance
  - Equity
  - Role in research and innovation
  - Academic career
  - Links with the labour market
  - Internationalisation
  - Policy development and implementation
- **24 participating countries** (14 of which hosted a country review visit)
- **A wide range of outputs**
- **Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society** (Final synthesis report)  
Brings together the evidence collected and materials produced through the OECD Review and presents the key findings and policy messages

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## Part 2: Broad directions for policy development

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## Establish a grand vision for tertiary education

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### Policy priorities

#### Strategy

##### Develop a coherent strategic vision for tertiary education:

- Devise a statement of strategic aims for tertiary education  
*Coherent vision in harmony with national social and economic objectives*
- Draw on a comprehensive advisory body to establish strategic aims for tertiary education

#### Structure, diversification and coherence

##### Ensure the coherence of the tertiary education system within extensive diversification:

- Grasp the benefits of wider and more flexible diversification among tertiary institutions
- In systems with vocationally-oriented sectors, ensure that mechanisms exist to discourage academic drift
- Define the mission and profile of individual institutions
- Avoid the fragmentation of the tertiary education system

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## Ensure that the capabilities of tertiary education contribute to countries' economic and social objectives

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## Policy priorities

### Outward focus

Ensure an outward focus of the tertiary system and institutions:

- Strong educational links to employers, communities and labour markets
- Effective university-industry links for research and innovation  
*Support the diffusion capabilities and interactive support activities of institutions*
- Participation of external stakeholders in system and institutional governance and in quality assurance

### System linkages

Build system linkages:

- Review whether the tertiary education system is contributing effectively to lifelong learning
- Build linkages between different types of tertiary education institutions
- Foster the engagement of institutions with surrounding regions and communities  
*Part of mission statement; engagement of regional stakeholders*

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## Devise sound instruments for steering tertiary education

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## Policy priorities

Establish sound instruments for steering tertiary education:

- Ensure that the capabilities of Ministries/Agencies keep pace with changing responsibilities  
*From administration to policy steering and performance evaluation*
- Develop steering instruments to establish a balance between institutional autonomy and public accountability  
*Instruments for steering that achieve accountability and link institutional performance to national purposes while also permitting a wide scope for institutional autonomy*
- Use student choice as a means by which to improve quality and efficiency
- Distribute resources on the basis of transparent formulas, related to both input and output indicators and including strategically targeted components
- Devise mechanisms to improve cost-effectiveness

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## Develop a funding strategy that facilitates the contribution of the tertiary education system to society and economy

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### Policy priorities

#### The principle of cost-sharing

Use cost-sharing between the State and students as the principle to shape the funding of tertiary education:

- Provide public subsidies for tertiary education, regardless of sector of provision
- Change tuition fees to students, especially if limited public funding either:
  - rations the number of students;
  - jeopardizes levels of spending per student; or
  - restricts financial support for disadvantaged groups.

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### Policy priorities

#### Basis to allocate public subsidies

Publicly subsidise tertiary programmes in relation to the benefits they bring to society

- Differentiate by type of programme (shortage areas, if it responds to labour market needs, foster innovation or serve communities' aspirations)
- Approval of new programmes to be preceded by an assessment of relevance
- Interconnectedness with quality assurance

#### Student Support

Back the overall funding approach with a comprehensive student support system:

- Aim for a universal student support system with two major components:
- A loan system with income-contingent repayments;
  - A means-tested grants scheme.

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## Emphasise quality and relevance

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## Policy priorities

- Build consensus on clear goals and expectations of the QA system**
  - Expectations from QA aligned to overall tertiary education strategy
  - Reconcile different perceptions of quality to build national commitment to QA
  - Distinguish accountability and improvement to build consensus
- Ensure that QA serves both improvement and accountability purposes**
  - Find the right balance between them
  - Revisit this balance periodically → move to audit once baseline standards are met
- Combine internal and external quality assurance mechanisms**
  - Most effective to address the different purposes of QA
  - Specific mechanisms according to traditions and stage of QA development
- Build capacity and secure legitimacy**
  - QA agency: independent from Ministry, trust of TEIs
  - Involve academic community in external teams

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## Policy priorities

- Increase focus on student outcomes**
  - Shift focus from inputs to learning and labour market outcomes
  - Develop and publish indicators of teaching quality, cognitive outcomes
  - National qualification frameworks, LM indicators, graduate perspectives in QA
- Develop a strong quality culture in the system**
  - Make internal QA systems mandatory, incentives (e.g. publish quality-related info)
  - Builds-up over time
- Put more stress on internal QA mechanisms**
  - Less costly and more effective than periodic and comprehensive external reviews
  - Role of QA agency: technical assistance, promote dialogue and best-practice

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## Raise the profile of equity within the national tertiary policy agenda

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### Policy priorities

- Assess extent and origin of equity issues:  
*Systematic collection of data.*
- Making tertiary education more equitable requires policy to intervene much earlier
- Career guidance and counselling services at the school level are instrumental in improving equity of access
- Provide opportunities for tertiary education study from any track in upper secondary school
- Strengthen the integration of planning, policy and analysis between secondary and tertiary education systems
- Diversify the supply of tertiary education to accommodate a more diverse set of learners

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### Policy priorities

- Consider alternative types of provision to account for the cultural diversity of the population  
*Development of institutions with diverse cultural foundations*
- Improve the access to tertiary education in remote areas by expanding distance learning and regional learning centres
- Diversify criteria for admission and give a say to institutions in entrance procedures
- Consider positive discrimination policies for particular groups whose prior educational disadvantage is well identified
- Provide incentives for tertiary education institutions to widen participation and provide extra support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds

*Special financial incentive for institutions to attract less represented groups; positive discrimination; studies progression support (e.g. tutoring services); adapting the learning environment to account for the diversity of the student body.*

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# Position the national system in the international arena

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## Policy priorities

Develop a national strategy and comprehensive policy framework for internationalisation

- Build on country-specific advantages/constraints

Improve national policy coordination

- Inter-governmental committee to maximise synergies among policies  
→ Immigration, S&T, Labour, Foreign Affairs

Encourage institutions to become proactive actors of internationalisation

- Framework conditions to make TEIs more responsive to internat. envt  
→ int° strategy in annual negotiations, remove blockages, incentives

Encourage the mobility of domestic academic staff and students

- *Students* → inform on benefits of study abroad, credit transfer schemes, means-tested mobility grants/loans, portable public financing
- *Academics* → include mobility in promotion criteria

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## Policy priorities

Create structures to promote the national tertiary education system

- e.g. 'marketing' agency, capitalise on diplomatic missions abroad

Enhance the international comparability of tertiary education

- e.g. Bologna-compatible degree structures, credit transfer schemes

Develop alternatives to current global rankings

- e.g. instruments accommodating the diversity of TE, measuring value-added and allowing tailored rankings

Foster centres of excellence at postgraduate level

- To showcase research achievements in areas of strength

Develop on-campus internationalisation

- From equity perspective, efforts should focus on internat° on campus
- e.g. revisit HR & pensions policy to ease recruitment of foreign academics

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# Thank you

## Final Report

*Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society*

Distributed at the Conference

To be released as an official OECD publication on 16 September

For further information and other documentation:

[www.oecd.org/edu/tertiary/review](http://www.oecd.org/edu/tertiary/review)

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