INTERNATIONALISATION AND QUALITY: TWO TRENDS IN ONE

The rapid and continuous transformation of the landscape of higher education raises many questions and challenges for higher education institutions. These changes are being felt at all levels. Higher education has taken on new responsibilities and must not only transmit knowledge for its own sake, but also provide skilled labour and produce new knowledge. Moreover, demand for education is continuing to rise at a time of ever tighter budget constraints, and the emergence of for-profit providers and new learning systems (often based on information technologies) is broadening the provision and type of education programmes. Lastly, the international dimension of this trade in education services, which has been included in the GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services), transcends geographic boundaries and raises questions about the relevance of existing models. All these factors are prompting institutions to rethink their role and objectives and undertake reform, and also raise doubts as to whether any regulation or standard-setting in this field can be provided through national frameworks.

Although institutions and governments are able to respond to some changes, the existing structures provide them with relatively few means of assuring the quality of higher education at a time when it is undergoing rapid internationalisation. The international mobility of students, the creation of branch campuses in foreign countries and e-learning are all factors that make quality assessment difficult. The OECD Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI), is conducting a study on existing systems and quality assurance and accreditation trends in post-secondary education. This study shows that in many cases, quality evaluation systems are not sufficiently geared to cross-border and private education programmes. It is not a foregone conclusion that internationalisation and high-quality education and diplomas necessarily go hand in hand. Although curricula with an international component should be viewed as a positive development, it does not follow that all programmes that are not covered by traditional accreditation systems are of high quality.

Quality assurance in internationalisation: a necessary approach...

This raises the issue of whether quality assurance in this field is really necessary: do accreditation agencies still meet a need in light of these new education providers and services? In fact, the continual increase in the number of parameters makes it even more important to have stable and reliable reference standards. Students, businesses and governments all wish to be able to assess the quality of the services being proposed. Quality assurance also makes it possible to prevent problems and abusive practices. As international trade in higher education services develops, quality assurance constitutes a way of regulating this rapidly expanding market. It protects learners as consumers, and defends academic values in the broad sense.

...not easy to define...

Many questions have arisen regarding both the evaluation methods that should be used and the form that evaluating agencies should take. In particular, debate is focused on what should be evaluated, in the light of the new trends: the quality of institutions, of curricula or of individual disciplines? Who will do this monitoring, and how? Although a consensus seems to be emerging about how the tasks of evaluation should be distributed, in particular as regards the respective roles of governments and universities, many questions are still unanswered as to what should be monitored and how the results of these evaluations should be processed. The more universities diversify their missions and the greater the number of providers, the more complex the implementation of quality assurance systems will become.

For example, the use of new technologies and student mobility will require quality assurance agencies to move away from the traditional approach focused
on the institutional capacity and reputation of schools and to shift towards an approach geared to measuring teaching capacity and effectiveness. A final question remains, i.e. what can be done to solve the problems that stem from this disparity of national structures and methodologies? What models should be adopted? Many initiatives have emerged to try to meet this need to set standards and they are taking a variety of forms. They have been sponsored by international networks of quality assurance institutions, international associations, consortia, networks of higher education institutions and professional organisations. For example, UNESCO and the OECD have been asked to work on the development of guidelines on «Quality provision in cross-border higher education».

2. For more information: www.oecd.org/edu/internationalisation/guidelines


As each system has advantages and disadvantages, the author suggests that a predominant model will only emerge over time as the market develops. This will entail two key stages:

> Institutions will have to develop clear institutional strategies for internationalisation in order to create a sense of ownership and accountability

> There will have to be greater co-ordination between the agencies in charge of assuring quality in higher education and the promoters of internationalisation.

An example: the Internationalisation Quality Review (IQR)

An important element of the response to these issues is institutional self improvement. To assist this process, an internationalisation quality review project has been set up jointly by IMHE, the European University Association (EUA), the Academic Co-operation Association (ACA), in co-operation with the International Network for Quality Assurance (INQAAHE). The project is designed to assist institutions in evaluating their international activities and planning strategic action to meet the challenges of globalisation. Many institutions have already participated in this project, which was managed by the EUA until 2002. The following questions are asked at the outset of these reviews:

> Does the institution have an internationalisation strategy?

> To what extent is this strategy integrated into the institution’s key mission and activities?

> Has this strategy been successful and how can it be improved?

> How adaptable are decision-making processes to the rapidly changing international environment?

For further information, contact: Jan.Karlsson@oecd.org

A new area for study: Latin America

In addition, IMHE, in co-operation with the World Bank, is taking an interest in changes in higher education and internationalisation in certain Latin American countries. This study led by a team4 is aimed at a number of objectives: identifying trends, analysing risks and opportunities, analysing the context and promoting interest in this topic. A publication will be released soon on this subject.

For further information, contact: Jan.Karlsson@oecd.org

For more information on the OECD’s work on the internationalisation and quality of education:

IMHE info No. 1 2002 and No. 1 2003 http://www.oecd.org/edu/higher


Some links

http://www.esib.org : The National Unions of Students in Europe
http://www.chea.org/index-irq.htm : Council for Higher Education Accreditation
http://www.enqa.net/ : European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
http://www.acenet.edu/ : American Council on Education
The IMHE welcomes the following new members:

➤ Agence de mutualisation des universités et établissements d’enseignement supérieur (AMUE), France.
➤ Korean Educational Development Institute, Korea.

ACUCA-IMHE seminar on governance and accountability, Hong Kong Baptist University, 24-25 October 2003

Hosted by Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU), the two-day seminar on «Governance and Accountability» jointly sponsored by Association of Christian Universities and Colleges in Asia (ACUCA) and Institutional Management in Higher Education (IMHE) was a great success. Among the 37 participants from ACUCA and IMHE member institutions in Australia, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Korea, Philippines, Sweden, Taiwan and Thailand were 25 vice-presidents, presidents or members of boards of governors. The challenges in governing a modern university and the different reform strategies were the main subject debated.

Elsewhere in OECD

➤ Conference on Skills Upgrading, Copenhagen, Denmark, 16 June 2004

Despite a growing need to train the workforce and general support being vowed to lifelong learning, industrialised countries may have paid insufficient attention to the low-skilled. A key question therefore is whether a more strategic approach should now be taken. A major OECD conference will take place in Copenhagen on 16 June 2004 to discuss this issue and the preliminary findings of an OECD LEED (Local Economic and Employment Development) study will be made available as a background for discussion.

➤ A conference on «School Safety and Security»

was held in Paris from 12-14 November 2003. The event was organised by the OECD Programme on Educational Building and the United States Department of Education. The meeting focused on safety and security risks assessment in schools; crisis planning and management; infrastructural approaches to school safety; collaborative approaches to school safety; and education, training and support.

➤ Educational Facilities and Risk Management: Natural Disasters

This publication addresses the implications and effects of natural disasters, and notably earthquakes, on educational buildings and the appropriate design and use of facilities, both in their role as protection for their everyday users and in their role as emergency shelter for potential survivors.

ISBN 92-64-10144-6, books@turpinltd.com

➤ New issues of the Journal of the OECD Programme on Educational Building (PEB)

A new library for Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (Ireland) and a building development plan at Laval University (Quebec, Canada) are presented in the latest issue of «PEB Exchange». These and other articles devoted to the design, use and management of school and university facilities appear in the February issue of this journal.

ISSN 1018-9327, subscriptions@turpinltd.com

For more information, contact Corinne.nativel@oecd.org
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<tr>
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**General Conference 2004**

The 2004 IMHE General Conference will focus on some of the challenges faced by higher education in today’s “knowledge society”. These challenges are regrouped under 5 themes:
1. New funding and governance mechanisms
2. Access and equity, impact on the management of the institution
3. New missions and strategies for institutions
4. New knowledge, research and knowledge creation
5. Human resources issues

The participants are invited to bring forward their findings and ideas on various sub-themes. Proposals are invited from policy makers and institutional leaders and managers as well as from experts studying these issues.

For more information and enrolment
www.oecd.org/edu/imhegeneralconference2004

**Address change? Please inform IMHE.**

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### "What works" in using the institutional image to promote access

How universities and other HEIs communicate with their various stakeholders is the theme of the seminar that IMHE is organising on 26-27 August in Paris. The seminar, **Communicating in Higher Education: Image and Reality**, will examine how the image projected by institutions can contribute to the shaping and fulfilling their mission. External relations and communication strategies nowadays are important for achieving many institutional goals, be it for widening of their admission base, for recruiting students internationally, in the competition for funding – or even for good placement on ranking lists.

Registration form at: www.oecd.org/edu/higher

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