

Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society

Pointers for policy development

MAIN CHALLENGES IN TERTIARY EDUCATION

- Articulating clearly the nation's expectations of the tertiary education system and aligning priorities of individual institutions with the nation's economic and social goals. Creating coherent systems of tertiary education, finding the proper balance between governmental steering and institutional autonomy and developing institutional governance arrangements to respond to external expectations.
- Ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of tertiary education, devising a funding strategy consistent with the goals of the tertiary education system and using public funds efficiently.
- Strengthening quality of tertiary education by developing quality assurance mechanisms for accountability and improvement, generating a culture of quality and transparency and adapting quality assurance to diversity of offerings.
- Ensuring equality of opportunities in tertiary education, devising cost-sharing arrangements which do not harm equity of access and improving the participation of the least represented groups.
- Fostering research excellence and its relevance, building links with other research organisations, the private sector and industry and improving the ability of tertiary education to disseminate the knowledge it creates.
- Ensuring an adequate supply of academics, increasing flexibility in the management of human resources and helping academics to cope with the new demands.
- Including labour market perspectives and actors in tertiary education policy, ensuring the responsiveness of institutions to graduate labour market outcomes and providing study opportunities for flexible, work-oriented study.
- Designing a comprehensive internationalisation strategy in accordance with country's needs, ensuring quality across borders and enhancing the international comparability of tertiary education.

MAIN POLICY DIRECTIONS FOR TERTIARY EDUCATION

Across OECD countries some main policy directions emerge to address the above challenges. In some countries, many of these policy directions are already being pursued. In other countries they may be less relevant because of different social, economic and educational structures and traditions.

Many of these policy directions are inter-related. Tackling one area without taking account of this will lead to only partial results. Even so, it is difficult to address all areas at once and resource constraints mean that trade-offs are inevitable.

Main policy directions are:

- Steering tertiary education: setting the right course
 - Develop a coherent strategic vision for tertiary education
 - Establish sound instruments for steering tertiary education
 - Ensure the coherence of the tertiary education system with extensive diversification
 - Build system linkages
 - Strengthen the ability of institutions to align with the national tertiary education strategy
 - Build consensus over tertiary education policy
- Matching funding strategies with national priorities
 - Develop a funding strategy that facilitates the contribution of the tertiary system to society and the economy
 - Use cost-sharing between the State and students as the principle to shape the funding of tertiary education
 - Publicly subsidise tertiary programmes in relation to the benefits they bring to society
 - Make institutional funding for instruction formula-driven, related to both input and output indicators and including strategically targeted components
 - Improve cost-effectiveness
 - Back the overall funding approach with a comprehensive student support system

- Assuring and improving quality
 - Design a quality assurance framework consistent with the goals of tertiary education
 - Develop a strong quality culture in the system and put more stress on internal quality assurance mechanisms
 - Commit external quality assurance to an advisory role as the system gains maturity but retain strong external components in certain contexts
 - Align quality assurance processes to the particular profile of TEIs
 - Avoid fragmentation of the quality assurance organisational structure
- Achieving Equity
 - Assess extent and origin of equity issues
 - Strengthen the integration of planning between secondary and tertiary education systems
 - Consider positive discrimination policies for groups whose prior educational disadvantage is well identified
 - Provide incentives for TEIs to widen participation and provide extra support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Enhancing the role of tertiary education in research and innovation
 - Improve knowledge diffusion rather than strengthening commercialisation via stronger IPRs
 - Improve and widen channels of interaction and encourage inter-institutional collaboration
 - Use the tertiary education sector to foster the internationalisation of R&D
 - Broaden the criteria used in research assessments
 - Ensure the shift towards project-based funding is monitored and provide a mix of funding mechanisms
- Academic career: adapting to change
 - Give institutions ample autonomy over the management of human resources
 - Reconcile academic freedom with institutions' contributions to society
 - Improve the entrance conditions of young academics
 - Develop mechanisms to support the work of academics
- Strengthening ties with the labour market
 - Coordinate labour market and education policies
 - Improve data and analysis about graduate labour market outcomes
 - Strengthen career services at secondary and tertiary educational levels
 - Enhance provision with a labour market orientation
 - Include labour market perspectives and actors in policy development and institutional governance
- Shaping internationalisation strategies in the national context
 - Develop a national strategy and comprehensive policy framework for internationalisation
 - Improve national policy coordination
 - Encourage TEIs to become proactive actors of internationalisation
 - Create structures to promote the national tertiary education system
 - Develop on-campus internationalisation
- Implementing tertiary education policy
 - Establish ad-hoc independent committees to initiate tertiary education reforms and involve stakeholders
 - Allow for bottom-up policy initiatives to be developed into proposals by independent committees
 - Recognise the different views of stakeholders through iterative policy development
 - Favour incremental reforms over comprehensive overhauls unless there is wide public support for change

FURTHER READING

These general pointers for policy development are drawn from the Thematic Review of Tertiary Education, which covered tertiary education policies in 24 countries. The findings of this review are presented in *Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society*, published in September 2008. Background reports prepared by 21 countries, *Reviews of Tertiary Education* in 14 countries and other documents of the review are also available on the OECD website www.oecd.org/edu/tertiary/review.