

Pedro Teixeira



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In your view, what is the most probable or desirable future scenario regarding differentiation in higher education?

I think the foreseeable strengthening of market forces, namely competition and privatization, will tend to stimulate increasing institutional differentiation. Although many governments, especially in Europe, have previously resisted to that, there are many signs suggesting a shift in this respect, with governments willing to promote it. There is nevertheless that we will see increasing segmentation, rather than just differentiation, in the coming years.

In your opinion, what is or should be the most important objective for higher education in the future? Why?

I think higher education should be primarily about giving more and better opportunities to individuals. These opportunities should not be restricted to better future income and employment opportunities, though these are very important, but also to opportunities regarding intellectual, cultural and artistic development and fulfilment. This requires that we think about long-term relevance and broad intellectual training.

What do you consider to be the main future challenge(s) for higher education systems? Why?

I think the main challenge in the coming years will be to ensure its financial sustainability. Although we all preach about higher education's contribution, we seem to be less willing to contribute to it. All stakeholders, including government, students, families and businesses, should refrain from free-riding the various, enduring and significant benefits provided by higher learning.

A related challenge in the coming decades will be how to balance economic and social relevance, especially in the short-term, with longer and broader purposes of scientific and intellectual development.

In your opinion, what would be the worst, but possible, way to tackle these future challenges? Why?

I think there is a significant risk that many HEIs will become trapped in a under-funding situation, because governments face significant limitations and the other stakeholders are not willing to contribute or to increase significantly their contribution. This is more likely if we avoid reforms and just try to stretch an insufficient budget to increasing necessities.

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What do you consider to be the best possible way to tackle the above mentioned future challenges? Why?

I think there is a political and social argument to be tackled. If we think that we all benefit from higher education, we all should contribute more. This argument needs to insist more on the pragmatism rather than on the idealism tone that thinks that government funding is endless.