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Supra-national Accreditation, Trust and Institutional Autonomy

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European demands for increasing autonomy of higher education institutions exist for some years now. They have been counterbalanced by demands for increasing accountability and a European quality assurance system.

In London the ministers have decided to implement a European register of accredited quality agencies, and defined the standards for registration. Being part of the register needs “substantial compliance with all standards” instead of “full-compliance”. This might take into consideration the context of the national higher education system, the role of the agency in the quality assurance system and even the national culture and traditions, allowing for different interpretations, some imprecision and diverse degrees of flexibility and compliance.

News from the US indicate an emerging desire of the federal level to play a more visible role in regulating higher education by intervention in the accreditation system for ensuring increasing institutional accountability, which may strike a parallel with the European situation.

While in the US the attempts at increased federal control have so far apparently failed, in Europe quality systems linked to higher education institutions were replaced with “independent” accrediting agencies. We analyse these changes and offer a possible interpretation for the differences on the two sides of the Atlantic.

Introduction

At European level we observe the emergence of a supra-national policy level following the implementation of the Bologna process. Other factors have contributed to this development such as the Lisbon strategy and the “creeping competence” of the European Commission (Amaral and Neave 2008).

Quality assurance has been on the agenda of Bologna since its very beginning, and it has evolved from a mere recommendation that quality agencies of nation-states should cooperate to develop comparable criteria and methodologies to the establishment of a European system and a register of accredited agencies. To be in the register, agencies need to be independent of higher education institutions, which would exclude the U.S. regional accrediting agencies.

Meanwhile, in the US there were failed attempts to promote the role of the federal government in the higher education accrediting system that has been criticised for not promoting institutional quality and accountability.

In this paper the developments in Europe and the US are compared to understand how far they are converging and to analyse the reasons for their different behaviour.

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European developments

National quality assurance systems

In Europe the development of quality assurance activities has started much later than in the U.S. The emergence of the “Evaluative State” (Neave 1988: 7) was observed in the late 1980s, with increasing public relevance given to quality. A number of factors contributed to this emergence, such as the massification of higher education, creating very heterogeneous systems (Trow 1996); the increasing role of the private sector in replacing the state as the main employer of graduates (Neave 1996) and the increasing use of markets as instruments of public policy (Dill et al. 2004). Instead of equality of provision to ensure a fair competition of graduates for public positions, institutions had to adapt to a more heterogeneous and less regulated private labour market while market regulation made urgent a higher degree of autonomy to adjust to market competition.

Higher education systems have become more complex and were forced to be more flexible and adjustable to change, which was incompatible with centralised systems of detailed oversight and control. The rise of the Evaluative state corresponded to an “alternative to regulation by bureaucratic fiat” (Neave 1988: 11), by looking for more flexible, less heavy and faster guidance mechanisms that would allow for increased capacity for institutional adaptation to change and shorter “administrative time” (Neave 1998: 273). Instead of the traditional \textit{a priori} authorization the state awarded institutions more autonomy while creating \textit{a posteriori} control mechanisms via quality assessment.

The development of quality assurance in Europe has been fast. Schwarz and Westerheijden (2004) report that in the early 1990s less than 50% of the European countries had initiated quality assessment activities at supra-institutional level, while in 2003 all countries except Greece entered into some form of supra-institutional assessment.

The European quality assurance systems share important procedural elements – internal self-evaluation, visit by an external expert review panel, external evaluation and public reporting (Thune 2002). However, there are important differences in political discourses (Neave 1998, 2004) that range from a mainly European and political discourse, with universities assumed as a public service (e.g. France and Sweden) to a mainly economic discourse, market-based and inspired in the U.S. (e.g. UK and the Netherlands) with the role of the state seen as excessive (Neave 2004). There are also differences in the ownership of the system and in the consequences of quality assessment – with or without direct influence on funding.

There were even cases where trust between government and institutions allowed for the ownership of the quality agencies to be entrusted to organisations linked to the universities (the Vlaamse Interuniversitaire Raad – VLIR – in Flanders, the Vereniging van Universiteiten – VSNU – in the Netherlands, and the Fundação das Universidades Portuguesas – FUP – in Portugal). These agencies were similar to the US accrediting organisations, in that they also had a guild character.

Loss of trust, new public management and changes in evaluation systems

Recent literature shows a decline of trust in public institutions in general, and in higher education institutions in particular, as well as in professionals. Academics have been facing a gradual proletarisation of their professional status – an erosion of their relative class and
status advantages (Halsey 1992), and the academy no longer enjoys the prestige on which higher education can build a successful claim to political autonomy (Scott 1989).

One of the causes for the loss of trust has been the emergence of New Public Management and related concepts, such as new managerialism and reinventing government (Osborne and Gaebler 1992), which dominated public sector reform over the last decades. New public management aims at replacing the slow, inefficient decision making processes of academic collegiality by fast, aggressive and efficient management processes imported from the private sector (Ball 1998). Under new public management, students became customers or clients, and systems quality assurance and accountability measures were put in place to ensure that academic provision meets client needs and expectations.

The attack on public services has destroyed the trust of society on institutions and increased demands for more accountability while new micromanagement mechanisms were put in place that contributed to the proletarianisation of the academia, progressively pushed from a position of professionals into that of employees, the new professionals being the managers, academic or not.

Other factor decreasing trust was the massification of higher education which created a large quality heterogeneity of both students and professors, and the emergence of new institutional forms, much different from the elite university (Trow 1996).

All this resulted in declining trust in the higher education systems, their institutions and their professionals. The loss of trust had obvious consequences for quality assurance. Comparing state approval versus accreditation schemes, in the years 1998 and 2003, reveals an overwhelming movement from state approval towards accreditation schemes (Schwarz and Westerheijden 2004). All recently implemented quality systems are also based on accreditation rather than on quality assessment (e.g. Germany, Austria and Norway). This might reflect an increased lack of trust in higher education institutions to satisfy the government and society about their capacity to ensure adequate standards of quality.

In the Netherlands, a meta-evaluation system run by the Inspectorate for Higher Education was supposed to ensure that the assessment procedures were properly run. In Portugal, a commission was set up to coordinate the quality assessment process and to issue recommendations for the rationalisation and improvement of the higher education system; i.e. to meta-evaluate the system. However, this has not been sufficient to protect the quality assurance agencies. In Flanders “…policy makers, employers and journalists questioned the vagueness of the visitation reports and the lack of a clear overall conclusion” (Van Damme 2004: 144) and in Portugal “…the Minister has publicly complained …that the conclusions of the reports of quality evaluation agencies were quite obscure…” (Amaral and Rosa 2004: 415-416). These three national quality assurance agencies were extinguished by government and replaced with “independent” accrediting agencies (Amaral 2007).

**Supra-national developments**

The early 1990s saw a development of quality assessment initiatives at the level of the European Union. Under the Dutch presidency, the Ministers of Education and the Council initiated steps to create a European quality assessment system. The conclusions of the 25 November 1991 meeting of the Ministers of Education with the Council proposed that “arrangements for quality assessment in higher education on a national level could be
examined at Community level, with a view to reinforcing national quality assessment systems…” (Council 1991).

The Ministers and the Council further proposed that the Commission should undertake steps to strengthen the evaluation of higher education in Europe, including a comparative study of the evaluation methods used in the Member States, the development of a limited number of co-operative pilot projects in this area and the creation of mechanisms for strengthening European co-operation, taking into account the concrete evaluation experience that had already been established. The comparative study was published in October 1993 and a European Pilot Project on quality evaluation was carried out in 1995, including 17 countries and 46 institutions.

On 24 September 1998 the Council has agreed on recommending that Member States establish transparent quality evaluation systems and that the Commission promotes cooperation amongst the authorities responsible for quality in higher education and promotes networking (Council 1998). This resulted in the establishment of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA).

The Bologna Declaration (1999) has contributed to encourage European cooperation in quality assurance of higher education with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies. Schwartz and Westerheijden (2004: 36) refer to the Bologna process as an important “driver for change with regard to quality in steering mechanisms”. The EU discourse supporting a European system of quality assurance is mainly economic and market-based, a neo-liberal model that occasionally becomes visible in European policies that emphasise the importance of the efficiency of the systems.

Although none of the successive communiqués from the biannual meetings of the European Ministers of Education (Prague, Berlin, Bergen, London) has given primacy to accreditation, the fact is that accreditation was pushed forward against the opposition of a large number of European universities, as documented by Amaral and Magalhães (2004). In 2004 the Commission presented a proposal for a recommendation of the Council and of the European Parliament proposing, “Institutions must set up rigorous internal quality management and develop an accreditation strategy”. The Commission suggested the implementation of multiple quality assurance and accrediting agencies, public and private, national and international, and a European Register of accredited agencies. Higher education institutions should be allowed by their governments to choose any agency listed in the European Register. This is consistent with a stratified European Area of Higher Education, as some agencies will address excellence at an international level, others will be more appropriate to regional or local institutions, some will accredit research universities, while others will specialise in teaching-only institutions.

The efforts of the Commission in the area of accreditation may be interpreted as aiming at making visible an array of European higher education institutions with different missions and quality, emphasising the importance of efficiency and mimicking the American higher education model.

The European Ministers of Education have adopted in 2005 the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG), drafted by the ENQA (2005), in co-operation and consultation with its member agencies and the other members of the “E4 Group” – ENQA, European University Association (EUA), European Association of Institutions in Higher Education (EURASHE) and European Students’ Union (ESU).
The European Ministers of Education established the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR) based on a proposal drafted by the E4 (ENQA 2007):

The register will be voluntary, self-financing, independent and transparent. Applications for inclusion on the register should be evaluated on the basis of substantial compliance with the ESG, evidenced through an independent review process endorsed by national authorities, where this endorsement is required by those authorities. (European Ministers of Education 2007)

The Register was set up on 4 March 2008 as the first legal entity to emerge from the Bologna Process. The register provides information on quality assurance agencies that are in substantial compliance with this common European framework. One of the criteria set in the European Standards and Guidelines for accredited agencies is their independence “to the extent both that they have autonomous responsibility for their operations and that the conclusions and recommendations made in their reports cannot be influenced by third parties such as higher education institutions, ministries or other stakeholders.” (ENQA 2005: 24) This would exclude the former quality agencies in Flanders, Portugal and the Netherlands as recognised in the ENQA’s review report of the Portuguese Quality Assurance system (ENQA 2006), as well as the US Regional Accrediting Agencies.

The case of the United States

In the US there has been a long tradition of accreditation on higher education institutions by private, non-profit organisations. The first agency, the New England Association of Schools and Colleges, has been established in 1885 using an organisational model possibly inspired on the industrial sector trade associations. These organisations are voluntary, non-governmental membership associations of higher education institutions.

This system of self-governance and self-regulation by institutions and accrediting organisations, with quality being assured without government intervention, was regulated in the 1965 Higher Education Act and its features have remained without much change until today (Eaton 2007). This arrangement is known as the Triad, based on the principle of distinct and mutually exclusive roles of its components:

*States were responsible for establishing requirements for and granting institutional licensure. Accreditation agencies were responsible for making judgments about institutional quality. And the federal government was responsible for allocating and ensuring that federal funds for student aid were used for their intended purpose.*

(Rainwater 2006: 108)

On the whole, the States are the weakest leg of the triad, since they limit themselves to the licensing of (state) institutions; nevertheless they have gradually increased their oversight of for-profit schools (vocational and technical schools).

The Higher Education Act goes through a reauthorisation process every five years. This has created the opportunity for strong criticism of the accreditation system, which was seen as not responding to demands for increasing accountability, as “…the symbolism of assessment increasingly has moved from instructional improvement to institutional accountability” (Ewell 1987).
Several authors have questioned the effectiveness of the system and its independence. McGhee (2007) refers that almost 40 years ago “J.J. Collins found a significant ‘accountability gap’ existed between the rhetoric that touted the ‘benefits of accreditation,’ and how these supposed ‘benefits’ or claims for accreditation were actually perceived in the field”. William Trout (1979), after analysing publications of the six regional accrediting associations could not find evidence that the criteria used would assure institutional quality.

There were also critical views on the self-evaluation process, described by Doerr as “ritualistic chores” (1983), or as “burdensome, descriptive, mechanical efforts, largely unrelated both to the real problems and to the major successes and opportunities of the institution or program in question” by Kells (1988), or as “not very analytical; they describe but they do little to evaluate, compare or judge a program” (El-Khawas 1993).

David Dill (1996), questions the adequacy of the current processes and standards of the U.S. academic accreditation, and refers to the failure of voluntary accreditation in improving the inadequacy of collegial mechanisms of educational quality assurance, while for Martin Trow:

... accreditation has been irrelevant to the improvement of higher education; in some cases it has acted more to shield institutions from effective monitoring of their own educational performance than to provide it; in still other cases it distinctly hampers the efforts of institutions to improve themselves. It encourages institutions to report their strengths rather than their weaknesses, their successes rather than their failures - and even to conceal their weaknesses and failures from view. (Martin Trow: 1996: XX).

A major difficulty of the system is its “accommodationalist” approach to accreditation (El-Khawas 1993). Accreditation is based on a fitness for purpose approach, related to each institution’s declared mission, which precludes the use of common standards. This aims to protect diversity and to “accommodate” a wide range of institutional differences within the same regional agency.

**Attacks on the accreditation system – Part I: The 1992 reauthorization**

The accreditation system has been under strong fire at the time of the 1992 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, following reports of fraud and abuse in federal student aid programmes and a large number of institutions with high default rates. As only students enrolled in accredited institutions are entitled to federal student support, the regional accrediting agencies are the gatekeepers to federal funds by ensuring that students have a good opportunity to complete their studies. In the words of Steven Crow “… accreditation decisions on institutions have been accepted by the federal government as sufficient evidence of educational quality to warrant disbursement of federal student financial aid and other federal grants to those institutions”. (2004)

With accrediting agencies seen as having failed in their gate-keeping role, the 1992 reauthorization established stronger federal control over the accreditation process. Congress authorised the establishment of State Postsecondary Review Entities (SPREs) to deal with institutions with high default rates, reinforcing the state and the federal components of the Triad. Plans and standards defined by the states had to be submitted to the Department of Education (DEO) for review and approval and the DEO was to require that all accrediting agencies should assess a number of specific criteria in their reviews, including default rates in
student loan programmes and curricula, admission practices and student success (Rainwater 2006: 110). The new legislation for the first time disturbed the equilibrium of the Triad by allowing for federal interference in postsecondary education and led to an overlap that “violated the long-standing principle that roles should be distinct and mutually exclusive” (ibid.).

The problem of standards has been a matter of debate as “accrediting associations suggest that imposing any common measure of institutional quality would destroy institutional diversity” (Troutt 1979: 202). States felt that SPREs were a federal interference impinging on their roles of coordinating, planning and policy setting (Morril and Adamson (1977), referred by Rainwater (2006: 113)). Some people were critical of the accreditation system, such as Kay McClennen who stated “…people from the outside have always perceived accreditation as being a closed circle of good old boys winking and nodding – a mutual back-scratching society” (1995). However, the academic community was in general against the provisions of the law. The strongest contribution for killing the SPREs came from the accrediting agencies that viewed this as an affront and an attack on their monopolies and from the outcry of the institutions themselves. The independent sector was against the SPREs, as they extended the intervention of the federal level to curricula, faculty and tuition (Warren 1993). The proprietary sector, initially in favour, soon became concerned that it “could be faced with more stricter standards than the other sectors” (Rainwater 2006: 114).

The higher education community has imputed blame both to the Council on Postsecondary Accreditation (COPA), responsible for recognising and coordinating accrediting activities, and to the proprietary sector responsible for most defaults. COPA was considered unable to present a credible version of accreditation to Congress and was dissolved in 1993 (Gliden 1996). Heads of major college associations and leaders of the accrediting agencies formed the National Policy Board on Higher Education Institutional Accreditation (NPB), to examine how accreditation could be improved to re-establish its credibility and avoid governmental control. The NPB proposed reforms to make accreditation a more uniform process with a predominantly public involvement, including rigorous standards for the assessment of quality to be used consistently throughout the system, a reinforced attention paid to measuring students’ achievements and the public disclosure of relevant information on the effectiveness of affiliated institutions and certified accrediting agencies (David Dill 1996).

These proposals were received with strong opposition by the academic community and were abandoned in 1995. The proposals were defeated because they raised fears about a loss of autonomy. Robert H. Atwell (1995), president of the American Council on Education and a supporter of the proposals claimed “People saw this thing as national, Washington, bad”, and Peter Wood, associate provost at Boston University, explained “The substance of the proposals was to create another Washington-based agency that would have far-reaching powers over the institutions of this country”. (Wood 1995)

A more moderate proposal has finally been endorsed in a national referendum of college presidents; a new national board, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), replaced the former COPA in the task of recognising and co-ordinating accrediting agencies. Instead of a set of rigorous common standards to be used by all the regional accreditors, the new board merely required they adopt the same “threshold” standards.

The 1992 reauthorisation has been an almost complete fiasco due to strong opposition to the new legislation. McGee recognises “the institutions and the accrediting guilds they support yield massive political clout, and will be able to fend threats such as this almost
effortlessly”. Political change also played a role. Republicans assumed a dominant position in the House of Representatives after the elections and Newt Gingrich, leader of the Republicans in the House, introduced the “Contract with America” promising to reduce government regulation and this included the SPREs. “In March 1995, Congress withdrew funding and ended implementation, thereby eliminating SPRE.” (Rainwater 2006: 112). And the Secretary of Education backed away from 34 CFR 602 (12 actual standards of HEA 1992), leaving only “minimalist” (i.e., process-based) accrediting agency standards (see Federal Register, Nov 1992). This left institutions with the responsibility for establishing and policing their own standards – which is still the case today.

Five years later, when a new reauthorisation of the Higher Education Act was due, the number of fraud and abuse cases had dropped significantly which reduced federal pressure over the accrediting associations. “The 1998 reauthorization of the Higher Education Act reversed some of the 1992 requirements, thereby returning some control and administrative discretion to the accrediting associations” (Education Encyclopaedia 2008). All the actors of the US higher education system were then tired of the intense debates and assumed these lukewarm measures would be sufficient to protect institutional autonomy from more federal and state interference.

**Attacks on the accreditation system – Part II: The 2007 reauthorization**

Stephen Weiner, head of the college commission of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges had a very accurate vision of what was waiting in the future:

> A lot of college and university presidents believe, with the election of the Republican Congress that the threat of federal intrusion into higher education is over. I think that is a very superficial reading of history. (Weiner 1995)

As Weiner had prophesised, the present reauthorization of the Higher Education Act reopened the debate on accreditation. In September 2005 Margaret Spellings, US Secretary of Education established a Commission on the Future of Higher Education. The Commission’s final report is again critical of the accreditation system considered to have significant shortcomings: inadequate transparency and accountability for measuring institutional performance; no comprehensive strategy to provide either adequate internal accountability systems or effective public information; can impede innovation (Commission on the Future of Higher Education 2006: 14-16). The Commission further recommended the transformation of the system; accreditation decisions should be more based on evidence of student achievement and institutional performance, the final reports should be made public and comparisons of institutions or groups of institutions should be made available.

The DEO has reacted at different levels. It used the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI), a body established in the law to advise the secretary of State on which accrediting associations should be recognized at federal level. NACIQI pressured the accrediting associations to make public all information gathered in the reviews, eliminating the confidentiality discretion area allowing for details of the reviews to be withheld to avoid adversarial relationships and, thus, to protect data acquisition. NACIQI also demanded that accreditors submit to its approval a set of minimum standards for student achievement to be applied to all institutions, thus replacing the traditional “fitness for purpose” methodology based on each institution’s mission.
The DOE also initiated a process known as “negotiated rulemaking” that “convenes individuals from the department and the higher education community to address changes that the government would like to see in current regulations” (Eaton 2007: 20):

*The department proposed rule changes that would position accreditors to replace quality indicators developed by colleges and universities with ones developed by accreditors and, most important, subject to federal control through NACIQI. (Eaton 2007: 20)*

...If successful, this effort will fundamentally undermine key features of higher education, especially its long history of self-governance and self-regulation. (ibid. 23)

However, the lobbying capacity of higher education institutions and accrediting agencies seems apparently to have once more won the fight. In the reauthorization process the Congress introduced amendments that limit the powers of the federal administration. In 6 February 2008 the White House released a statement criticising the College Opportunity and Affordability Act of 2007 (H.R. 4137, House of representatives) “because it would restrict the Department of Education’s authority to regulate on accreditation… In particular, the Administration strongly opposes provisions that prohibit the Department of Education from promulgating regulations affecting postsecondary accreditation”. (White House 2008)

The State Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, was more acid in her comments claiming that Congress had dug a moat around the “ivory tower”.

*In a blatant infringement of executive branch authority, Congress is proposing to strip U.S. Department of Education of its authority to issue regulations holding accrediting agencies accountable for ensuring the quality of programs and instruction at higher education institutions… (Spellings 2008)*

Glen McGhee recognises “…federal agencies often find numerous ways to get around congressional mandates if they want to. The propensity for ‘agency capture’ by powerful special interest groups is the main reason behind congressional oversight committees as well as a growing judicial presence in negotiated regulatory schemes” (2006: 8). It is possible there will be an ongoing fight in the future, as “the federal government will continue to place greater emphasis on evidence of student learning and institutional performance, improved information for the public, comparability among institutions, and learning standards” (Eaton 2007: 23).

**Analysis and Conclusions**

In the US there is a long tradition of distinct and mutually exclusive roles of the federal government, the states and the accrediting associations that are private membership associations of higher education institutions. This is presented as an independent system of self-evaluation and peer review without government intervention and is the basis of self-governance and self-regulation by institutions and accrediting organisations. This system has been under fire due to increasing demands for public accountability and a shift from quality improvement to accountability. As stated by McGhee, “now the shift is away from self-regulation, which tends toward the interests of the member institutions and not those of the public, and this shift may simply indicate that a new approach to quality assurance in higher education is needed” (McGhee 2006: 6).
The system has been the target of fierce criticism, including its behaviour as institutional guilds (not very different from the medieval guilds) protecting the privileged market positions of their members (McGhee 2006), irrelevant to the improvement of higher education (Trow 1996), failure for improving the inadequacy of collegial mechanisms of educational quality assurance (Dill 1996), a mutual back-scratching society (McClenney 1995), inadequate transparency and accountability, impeding innovation (Commission on the Future of Higher Education 2006), etc.

Several attempts have been made to change this situation by sifting the balance of power of the Triad in favour of the federal level. So far all of them failed, although it is difficult to clearly ascertain its causes due to the extreme complexity of the network of interests, influences and cultures. Some refer to “agency capture” by powerful special interest groups (McGhee 2006), others point to states disliking increased federal control on their traditional roles of coordinating, planning and policy (Rainwater 2006), others consider that an eventual federal movement to take on the accrediting role would not survive institutional, state and constitutional challenges (Education Encyclopaedia 2008).

In Europe the situation is quite different, even if some European policies apparently aim at emulating the US. The European Union is very far from a federation of states, each nation-state still keeps strong power despite the creeping competence of the Commission, and the level of European funding of higher education is not comparable with the level of US federal funding. However, there is a democratic deficit in the Eurolandia, with increasing separation between Brussels and the European citizens. The decision to ratify the Lisbon treaty (a failed European Constitution in disguise) by parliamentary vote to avoid consultation of national citizens through a referendum is a telling example of such deficit.

Therefore, despite the opposition of many university leaders, the EU steamroller advanced towards a system where accrediting agencies similar to those in the US would not be recognised as bona fide institutions. The quality agencies that had some relation with universities (cases of Flanders, Portugal and the Netherlands) did not resist the shift in the emphasis of quality assurance from improvement to accountability and were dismissed under public accusations of lack of efficiency and irrelevance, being replaced with “independent” accrediting agencies complying with the European standards and guidelines.

Not being a seer makes impossible to guess what will be the future. In the US the Education Encyclopaedia suggests “the federal government will continue to use the associations as part of the triad but will continue to try to intervene in the accreditation process to ensure that federal interests are protected” (2008: 4).

In Europe the emphasis has shifted from the social and cultural towards the economic function of the university. The new knowledge society might offer a new opportunity to universities, by assuming knowledge and innovation as an indispensable ingredient for economic competitiveness and social progress. But to seize this opportunity the academia needs to draw a new contract with society, and academics need to put forward a new case in favour of higher education.

The recent rhetoric of the Commission favouring an increased autonomy of European universities should be met with caution. The OECD Thematic Review of Tertiary Education (2008) recommends strengthening the ability of institutions to align with the national tertiary education strategy and reconciling academic freedom with institutions’ contribution to
society. Unfortunately, these recommendations remind us of the words of Mahony (1994: 125) “The ‘new’ autonomy is then a paradox: it is the autonomy to be free to conform”.
REFERENCES


