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Table of Contents

Fair Access to Higher Education: Analysis of a Targeted Incentive Educational Policy
Charlotte Le Chapelain 9

Assessment of Higher Education Personnel: Comparative Study of France and Finland
Emmanuel Salmon. 25

Long-term Human Outcomes of a "Shotgun" Marriage in Higher Education: Anatomy of a Merger, Two Decades Later
Rosalind M.O. Pritchard and Arthur P. Williamson 47

From Public University Dominance to Private University Policy Initiatives in Nigeria: The Push and Pull Factors
Gboyega Ilusanya and S.A. Oyebade. 71

Accessibility and Equity, Market Forces and Entrepreneurship: Developments in Higher Education in Central and Eastern Europe
Marek Kwiek 89

Internationalisation of Higher Education and Language Policy: Questions of Quality and Equity
Rebecca Hughes 111

Strategic Enrolment Management: Improving Student Satisfaction and Success in Portugal
James S. Taylor, Rui Brites, Fernanda Correia, Minoo Farhangmehr, Brites Ferreira, Maria de Lourdes Machado, Cláudia Sarrico and Maria José Sá 129

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Fair Access to Higher Education: Analysis of a Targeted Incentive Educational Policy

by
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Social inequality with regard to education seems to be mainly the result of two factors: the reduced success of certain socio-economic categories within the education system and distinct educational requirements once the compulsory education period is over. In this article, we shall focus on the inequality stemming from the choices and personal decisions of individuals by highlighting the influence of social origins as a factor capable of inducing an under-investment in education. Thus, we shall examine how an auto-selection process contributes to the iniquity of the education system. This analysis is based on the theoretical framework of human capital investment developed by Gary Becker (1964) and principally underlines the effects of expectations, uncertainty and cost perception in the differences in evaluations of the profitability of education according to social background. It brings to light reflections on the educational policy.

Introduction

Many countries are concerned about the iniquity of their education system (Wössmann, 2004), although not many are actually capable of putting a stop to this phenomenon. The French education system, for example, is currently showing blatant signs of social inequality and experiencing serious difficulties in limiting the impact of specific socio-economic situations on the educational achievements of individuals.

Thus, social disadvantages have an effect from the first school years and, following a cumulative process, continue to exert their influence throughout the educational career (Duru-Bellat, 2002). Part of the inequalities in education is, therefore, explained by discrepancies in school results due to the influence of social background. The origins of this phenomenon remain, however, relatively vague, although factors such as the unequal command of the spoken language or the differences in cultural awareness have often been pointed out. On top of inequalities in results, school opportunity ratios according to socio-economic backgrounds also seem to stem from orientation decisions or choices of educational institutions of varying quality (Hoxby, 2003). Indeed, the strategy adopted by families seems largely conditioned by their social background. This fact seems to be partly explained by a difference in access to information. The factors mentioned previously often tend to combine and lead to an education system in which not all individuals have the same opportunities to succeed. Beyond these factors primarily affecting the compulsory education period, the auto-selection phenomenon, which appears once the compulsory period is completed, represents a second aspect explaining the inequality of educational opportunities. We shall focus more specifically on this particular aspect by trying to shed light on the issue of distinct opportunity ratios according to social background: these are not due to the institution itself or its organisation but to the personal behaviour of individuals during the period following compulsory education, principally higher education.

Our study is structured as follows. We shall look into the assumption of an equity concept applied to education by proposing an analysis of texts by Condorcet. Then we shall examine to what extent the social origins of an individual influence his level of educational investment by highlighting the role of expectations, uncertainty and the perception of costs in personal educational choices. Finally, once our conclusions have been defined, we shall

research the most appropriate means to counteract the auto-selection phenomenon.

Education: the assumption of an equity concept

We shall initially survey the definition of the equity concept applied to the education system. We shall conduct this survey based on Condorcet's public education project. Through his memoirs on public education (1994) and the "Report and Decree Project on the General Organisation of Public Education" (1792), which represents the institutional results of his memoirs, Condorcet set out a resolutely modern and comprehensive theory on Republican education. Due to its perfect coherence and comprehensiveness, Condorcet's project can be considered as an essential part of educational philosophy, dealing with the political, social and economic dimensions of education. In addition, and this seems to be a crucial aspect, Condorcet's project is relevant today because of its surprisingly modern aspect. Standing out amongst the numerous education projects of the revolutionary period, Condorcet's plan goes against education plans inspired by the Spartan model – its main "rival" at the time – by proposing a type of education designed for modern societies, *i.e.* taking into account everyone's individuality. This modernity is the link between our author's thoughts and the objectives and challenges of a social institution which, over two centuries later, is still finding it difficult to meet the ideal it assigned itself. Deeply rooted in the historical context of the French Revolution and the Declaration of Human Rights, the education project naturally devotes a large part to the issue of equality. However, Condorcet advocates a notion of equality close to the modern concept of equal opportunities. We, therefore, believe that Condorcet's analysis is particularly appropriate to enlighten us with regard to this issue, which is one of the major modern-day challenges of education.

Condorcet defined the principles of his project as follows: it is the State's responsibility to provide all citizens with a common, non-religious and free public education. Thus, by defining the Republican school system, Condorcet was expressing the need for the entire population, irrespective of gender, social or financial background, to have access to education. This proposal is based on two recurrent notions in Condorcet's body of work: liberty and equality, envisaged in a complementary manner and conditional upon an education which "renders reason popular".

Public education objectives: liberty and equality

The liberating power of education

The concept of liberty is one of the fundamental themes around which the first of Condorcet's memoirs is structured. His thoughts were built around

defining education as "a way to make equal rights a reality" (Condorcet, 2002, p. 1). The laws put in place by the state grant the same rights to everyone, but this principle of justice, so as not to be simply theoretical but truly a reality, supposes the compensation of certain people's ignorance. Indeed, how can one assert one's rights if unaware of them? Consequently, only common and universal education can remedy any form of dependency resulting from the lack of education. Thus, the issue of liberty is perfectly correlated with that of equality, as the dependency to which Condorcet refers is borne of inequality in education. Only basic education equally extended to all citizens could abolish any form of dependency between these citizens. Therefore, we shall realise that the notion of equality, which we shall focus on more specifically, constitutes the focal point around which the author's vision is constructed, with all its inherent ambiguities.

Education as a means to reduce inequality among people

We have mentioned how Condorcet believed that public education was a way for people to actually benefit from the liberty guaranteed to them by law. However, the condition which assures that education meets this objective lies in the universal aspect of this education. Universality, in this instance, must be understood as equality: equality in the face of access to knowledge and self-fulfilment. Thus, equal access to education enables liberty but also makes it possible to reduce inequalities among people so that these inequalities are no longer part of an intangible order.

> There is also another inequality which an equally distributed general education can remedy. When the law has made all men equal, the only difference separating them into several classes is that born of their education; it is not only due to the difference in enlightenment but to the difference in opinions, tastes, feelings, which is the inevitable consequence. The rich man's son will not belong to the same class as the poor man's son if no public institution brings them closer together by education … (Condorcet, 2002, p. 10)

Consequently, in addition to supporting equal rights, public education is capable of upsetting the social determinism weighing upon individuals. Access to knowledge therefore offers the possibility for individuals to liberate themselves from their initial condition.

The importance of the role that Condorcet devotes to public education is obvious. By assigning to it objectives such as liberty or the reduction in inequality between men, Condorcet clearly highlights the fundamental benefits that society can derive from properly conducted public education. The condition of universality is, however, necessary to effectively meet the objectives assigned to education, which is why Condorcet regularly insisted

upon equal access to education. Nevertheless, does equal access constitute a sufficient condition for the construction of a less unequal society?

We shall see how Condorcet quickly proposed measures extending beyond mere equal access to education.

Equity and equal opportunities

The rejection of egalitarianism

By proposing that education be equally accessible to all, Condorcet realised that he was generating a paradox, as common education devoted to the generous principle of equality evidently reveals the inequality of abilities among people. In response, Condorcet stated that if this inequality generated no form of dependency between the less and the more gifted, then this inequality was not a form of injustice.

> It is impossible for education, albeit equal, not to increase the superiority of those that nature has favoured with a happier constitution. However, all it takes for equal rights to be maintained is for this superiority not to result in actual dependency, and for everyone to be sufficiently educated to exercise, without blindly submitting to the reason of others, their rights guaranteed by law. (Condorcet, 2002, p. 8)

Therefore, egalitarian convictions are not part of Condorcet's ideas. It is far more reasonable and less dangerous to accept that the sum of abilities is not equally distributed among human beings. Rather than wanting to counteract this inalienable natural injustice, it is better to try and make the abilities of some a chance of progress for all. The rejection of egalitarianism demonstrated by Condorcet clearly reveals that he envisaged the concept of justice from the point of view of equal opportunities. This characteristic is reflected, in his texts on public education, by a marked desire to adapt the means and methods to the specific situation of individuals so that the type of compensation might reduce initial inequalities.

The paradox in Condorcet's social concern

Condorcet's modernity and concern for justice remain, however, somewhat marred by social determinism, largely accepted by the author. By proposing that education adapt to the more or less limited time devoted to school permitted by the wealth of the parents, social determinism constitutes a force that the author finds difficult to overcome.

> A large number of children are destined for difficult occupations, for which they must begin to train early and which will occupy all their time ... ; whereas a large number of children benefiting from their parents' affluence shall have more time, as well as means to devote to a

> more extensive education and shall prepare, through this education, for more lucrative trades … It is therefore impossible to submit men with such a different destiny to a rigorously identical education. (Condorcet, 2002, pp. 34-35)

We should, however, point out that the paradox opposing Condorcet's passion for equality and the social determinism, which he seems to accept, may not be as profound as it appears. By proposing that education adapt to the time available to individuals, he proclaimed the desire to make up for certain people's lack of time so that the objective assigned to education could be met nonetheless. Consequently, it is unacceptable that certain people's lack of time should be considered as an element of compromise for the author. However, the fundamental, underlying idea corroborates the assumption that Condorcet's public education project is rooted more in a desire for equality than mere equal access, which in turn becomes only a theoretical equality. Thus, while the proposition made by Condorcet seems debatable in many ways, the idea introduced by the author, *i.e.* adapting the education system to the specific resources of the individuals, shows great pertinence and calls for our unreserved attention.

The use of differentiated means

We have pointed out that the proposition to adapt education to the time available to the individuals seems paradoxical within Condorcet's public education project, designed to build society upon fairer foundations. This proposition included in the memoir is surprising, as we have mentioned before, all the more so as it coexists with the idea of a liberating education, which would enable the individuals to "realise their own potential" and free themselves from prejudices and ideologies as well as from their condition and dependency, linking them to their environment and family background.

In contradiction to the social determinism that he seems to accept, Condorcet clearly expressed the idea that one of the objectives of education must be to leave no ability undiscovered. He asserted that the financial condition of an individual should under no circumstances be an obstacle to the realisation of their abilities and that the public must compensate for this injustice: "It would, therefore, be important to have a form of public education which lets no talent go unnoticed and provides it with all the help thus far reserved for rich people's children" (Condorcet, 2002, p. 16).

Condorcet clearly answers the question raised above: is equal access to education sufficient to reduce inequality among people? By proposing specific help to individuals who, by virtue of their talents, could continue their education but cannot do so, given their financial situation or rather that of

their family, he confirms the insufficiency of equal access to education alone as a criterion of justice.

> Thus, while a part of education would enable ordinary men to benefit from engineering works and employ them in accordance with their needs or aspirations, another part of this education would aim to foster the talents given by nature, overcome obstacles and help them in their progress. (Condorcet, 2002, p. 18)

Thus, despite certain paradoxes in the author's thoughts, a fundamental principle stands out from the author's texts on public education: the necessity to adapt educational means to specific situations so that talents may be cultivated. By proposing equal access to education, Condorcet demonstrates that this equal access alone is not sufficient to guarantee equal opportunities to all individuals due to the diversity of social origins. Consequently – and we shall focus our analysis more specifically on this proposition – unequal individual resources require, in order to promote equal opportunities, the use of differentiated means so that the initial inequalities can be offset.

We shall examine this very principle in the proposition of a system promoting fair access to higher education.

The theory of educational investment

The rational individual model

The emergence of the human capital theory (Becker, 1964) was crucial for the economy of education, inasmuch as it offers a theory of educational investment interpreting the formation mechanisms of educational demand. Thus, according to the assessment that education provides advantages in terms of wages, an assessment which is still valid today (Harmon *et al.*, 2003; Brunello and Comi, 2004), the principle of the educational investment theory consists of comparing the expected gain differential provided by the educational investment (G_t) with the costs related to education (C), which break down into opportunity costs and direct costs, in order to assess the internal rate of return (r) of an additional year of education. Consequently, the investment decision will be determined according to the value of this rate and its position with regard to the interest rate of the market.

$$C = \sum_{t=1}^{n} G_t /(1 + r^*)$$

Similarly, Mincer's equation (Mincer, 1974), which includes the professional experience variable *(E)*, provides an indicator, in terms of wages *(Y)*, with regard to the profitability of educational investment *(S)*:

$$LogY = a_0 + a_1 S + a_2 E - a_3 E^2 + v$$

These models offer an interpretation of the mechanisms ruling the human capital investment decisions by developing the hypothesis of a rational individual looking to maximise his worth by making optimal educational choices. Although still largely used in literature, these approaches were subject to many criticisms. For example, individuals continue to make educational investment decisions throughout their education, although the human capital theory suggests that the investment decision should be formulated uniquely at the beginning of the educational career. Thus, more recent approaches consider that sequential models constitute more appropriate tools for analysing investment decisions (Heckman *et al*., 2001). Similarly, and this is what we shall focus on more specifically, doubts have been raised over the possibility of assessing future gain profiles due to the lack of information available. Therefore, as individuals are only capable of anticipating gain profiles, a level of uncertainty should be introduced into the analysis.

As a result, numerous adjustments seem necessary to explain the choices of individuals in terms of education. However, the very essence of the traditional human capital investment approaches, *i.e*. the decision between the gains resulting from the educational investment and the costs related to this investment, constitutes a perfectly adequate framework for understanding the influence of origins on educational investment choices. We shall therefore consider that this influence tends to be reflected in distinct preferences, expectations and attitudes with regard to risks.

Distinct preferences, expectations and attitudes with regard to risks according to origins

We previously examined the notion of internal rate of return as explained by Gary Becker (1964), which offers an interpretation of the determining factors of educational demand. However, this notion does not take into account the distinct preferences of individuals with regard to education. Individuals have different preferences in terms of education, and the role of social origins in the formation of these distinct preferences should be pointed out (Boudon, 1973). We shall offer a few remarks relative to the influence exerted by social origins, both in terms of the perception of costs generated by

the educational investment and the expectations of individuals when they assess the gain differential that higher education is likely to provide.

Several arguments speak in favour of redefining the determining factors of educational investment in order to take into account the influence of social origins.

Social origins and perceived education costs

> It is clear that the lower the family's position on the social ladder, the higher the cost for a child to reach a given education level. (Boudon, 1973, p. 66)

Becker's model, by comparing educational gains and costs, takes into account the direct costs incurred by education and opportunity costs represented by the wages that individuals turn down in order to educate themselves. Yet, in light of families' situation with regard to income distribution, education clearly does not represent the same burden for all families. The heterogeneous perception of costs, depending on the social background, can be understood fairly easily when considering the value of the costs related to education compared with families' income. Therefore the relative weight of the costs on the total income of families should be considered in the analysis so that the investment model takes into account a perceived costs element.

Social origins and gain expectations

> The expected benefit that corresponds to two consecutive degrees of the system of education levels … is all the higher as an individual is closer, by virtue of his social position, to the higher levels of the social stratification system, and all the lower as he is closer to the lower degrees. (Boudon, 1973, p. 67)

The educational investment decision requires an effort of anticipation, in light of the assessment of future gains it implies. Yet, surveys show that, on average, individuals from underprivileged backgrounds tend to have more pessimistic expectations with regard to the gains generated by an additional year of education. This observation could be mainly explained by the fact that different social origins do not have the same level of information, the same representation of reality or the same perception of the labour market.

We shall examine a survey from the programming and development division of the French Ministry of National Education (Chausseron, 2001), which underlines the existence of distinct ambitions according to families. The survey observes that the estimated usefulness of education depends on social origins, to the extent that "for a comparable schooling situation, managers and more qualified parents express higher expectations". Thus, it

seems that the distinct "expectations" according to social origins can be explained by different gain expectations in such a way that, when investment choices concern higher levels of education, these expectations are lower for individuals from underprivileged backgrounds. It is therefore clearer how the "under-representation" of less privileged social classes is partly the result of an auto-selection phenomenon.

The heterogeneity of expectations seems to constitute an initial factor of auto-selection. This initial threat to equal access to higher education is aggravated by a second trend reinforcing that of pessimistic expectations: the uncertainty with regard to gains, which in turn seems to act as a deterrent to educational investment in certain backgrounds.

The process individuals face when choosing whether to continue their education or enter the labour market requires making a decision in an uncertain environment. This uncertainty characterises the choice made by these individuals in the sense that they perceive a risk in terms of their confidence in the labour market (risk of unemployment). This risk, associated with academic failure, also affects gain expectations. It should be pointed out that the influence of the social background is particularly decisive in this context, as the perception of risks is exacerbated among individuals from underprivileged backgrounds. As the gains are only probable, the judgments and beliefs of individuals tend to express themselves through the degree of probability of the expected gains. The origins of individuals affect these beliefs and therefore the resulting subjective probabilities associated with gains, in such a way that the degree of certainty assigned to the gains of this investment is lower for certain environments, less confident in the benefits of education.

Thus, within the uncertain framework of the investment decision, could the education demand result from a previous question in these terms: according to the level of probability that I associate with the gains generated by education, what level of education must I choose so that I can consider the investment profitable? The optimal decision schema based on rationality remains valid, but the optimum is measured based on the individuals' own preferences, which are heterogeneous and more or less in favour of pursuing education.

Therefore, uncertainty, which is seldom taken into consideration in traditional models of human capital investment, seems to constitute a crucial element in the educational decision, and the role played by individuals' beliefs in this decision, via the degree of certainty that they assign to the gains resulting from education, tends to explain the auto-selection phenomenon of individuals from underprivileged backgrounds.

It may therefore be more relevant to define the educational choice of individuals so that it includes the perceived costs according to families' level of income, the heterogeneous nature of expectations and the distinct attitudes in the face of risks.

Using Gary Becker's human capital theory (1964), we shall consider that the internal rate of return (r_i^*) expected by the individual *i* determines its incentive to invest and therefore constitutes the determining factor of the educational demand (DE_i): ∂

$$DE_i = DE\ (r_i^*) \text{ whith } \partial DE_i / \partial r_i^* > 0$$

We shall reiterate the formulation of the internal rate of return as explained by the human capital theory:

$$C = \sum_{t=1}^{n} G_t /(1+r^*)$$

where G_t reflects the gain expectation that the individual formulates when confronted with the investment decision, *C* the sum of direct costs and opportunity costs associated with the investment, and r^* the internal rate of return.

In accordance with the arguments developed above, we propose the following assessment of the internal rate of return, in order to put the heterogeneous preferences of individuals into perspective:

$$C\frac{C}{R_i} = \theta_i \sum_{t=1}^{n} (G_t \mid I_i)/(1+r_i^*)$$

where $\frac{C}{R_i}$ reflects the relative weight of the cost of education on the total income of the individual i's family, ($G_t \backslash I_i$) the expected gains of individual *i* given the level of information I_i available to them and θ_i the degree of likelihood assigned to the expectations expressed, which reflects a risk assessment. The expected internal rate of return is then formulated as follows:

$$r_i^* = \frac{\theta_i \sum_{t=1}^{n} (G_t \mid I_i)}{C\frac{C}{R_i}} - 1$$

If we consider the sum of individuals $i = \{1,2\}$, so that $\theta_1 < \theta_2$, $R_1 < R_2$ and $I_1 \neq I_2$, implying: $\sum_{t=1}^{n}(G_t | I_1) < \sum_{t=1}^{n}(G_t | I_2)$, then

$$r_1^* < r_2^*,$$

and

$$DE_1 < DE_2.$$

Consequently, supposing individual 1 and individual 2 have the same abilities, we observe that the socio-economic background, via the influence it exerts over expectations, risk and cost perception, acts as a deterrent to the educational investment, thereby resulting in an auto-selection phenomenon. It should be pointed out that, with regard to risk perception, the works of Belzil and Leonardi (2005) confirm the auto-selection phenomenon highlighted, by demonstrating empirically that the individuals most averse to risk tend to opt for lower levels of education.

The underlined auto-selection phenomenon concerns the decision relative to the level of studies but also affects the choice of curriculum. Once again, student distribution in the different curricula confirms the social differences in the sense that, in prestigious curricula, the children from underprivileged backgrounds are largely underrepresented. The auto-selection interpretation seems equally able to explain this "under-representation".

The cumulated effects of the socio-economic background on gain expectations, uncertainty and perceived costs are therefore capable of partially explaining the reduced educational demand from certain social backgrounds, so that for equivalent results, equal access to education is only a theoretical equality, largely hindered by the ambiguous phenomenon of iniquity based on autonomous choices. Solutions in the form of incentives seem particularly appropriate to deal with this auto-selection behaviour.

Incentive systems against auto-selection in higher education

We have thus far been able to designate the auto-selection phenomenon of individuals from underprivileged backgrounds as a factor contributing to unequal educational opportunities and, more specifically, inequality in higher education. This assessment, therefore, leads us to determine the means to put a stop to this phenomenon by examining which type of public policy is most likely to enhance theoretical equal access to higher education.

Numerous solutions are frequently suggested to meet this objective. Based on the recognition of the financial constraint imposed by the pursuit of higher education, public loan propositions, which in fact already exist in certain countries, are frequently made. In an article proposing an increase in enrolment fees in higher education to enhance efficiency, Gary-Bobo and

Trannoy (2005) advocate instituting a loan system granted by the state, interest-free and under certain conditions relative to resources, which would take the form of a "professional project voucher". This proposal is in line with the American school voucher propositions (Friedman and Friedman, 1980).

However, while the public loan system may be capable of "lightening" the cost perceived by students from modest backgrounds, it has little impact on the reduced confidence in educational profitability. Distinct expectations and the attitude towards risks remain, even with the implementation of a public loan system, which is therefore not sufficient to thwart the auto-selection phenomenon alone.

Let us return to our study of Condorcet's work. The author recommended the use of differentiated means to level out initial inequalities. In accordance with the observed influence of the socio-economic background on educational investment choices, it seems that the implementation of a public loan system should be accompanied by a specific incentive system, targeting individuals from underprivileged backgrounds, in order to reduce the auto-selection phenomenon highlighted above. The granting of a monetary allocation aimed at individuals from underprivileged backgrounds who enter higher education would be likely to reduce variations in expected profitability, thereby paving the way for a more homogeneous educational demand between different social backgrounds. It should be noted that this proposal would correspond with the conclusions of a report by the French Council for Employment, Revenue and Social Cohesion (CERC, 2003) indicating the relevance of reinforcing measures in favour of students from modest backgrounds in order to extend access to higher education.

Conclusion

By focusing on the issue of the equity of the education system, we were able to highlight the auto-selection phenomenon as a factor contributing to the inequality of educational opportunities. By identifying the heterogeneity of gain expectations, of the perception of uncertainty and costs depending on the different socio-economic backgrounds, we were able to point out the role of these factors in the formation of unequal educational demands, largely correlated with social origins. As a result, access to higher education is only equal in theory, and genuinely equal opportunities require voluntary actions targeting less privileged individuals.

It should, however, be noted that the idea is not to encourage individuals to "over-educate" themselves. As the selection process operated by school grades must enable the regulation of the demand, it is important that each individual be encouraged to develop all their abilities in an optimal manner, so

that the equity principle feeds on both equality and elitism. Economic efficiency considerations should lead towards this principle.

Finally, it seems that an incentive system targeting individuals from modest backgrounds cannot suffice alone to curb the issue of inequity with regard to access to higher education. Efforts should focus simultaneously on the compulsory schooling period as well as the labour market.

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Assessment of Higher Education Personnel: Comparative Study of France and Finland

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The requirement to assess public employees is increasing within European public services. Dictated by budgetary imperatives and performance improvement concerns, it is becoming the norm in all administrations. One of the most sensitive areas of application is undoubtedly higher education. The traditional independence and autonomy of the academic personnel tends to clash with the state's desire to revamp its human resources management using the assessment tool.

This study relates to the implementation of a procedure designed to assess higher education public employees in France and Finland, based on the observation of two institutions. It focuses in particular on the role of trade unions in this reform. The behaviour of the different players is analysed in relation to several traditional sociological approaches.

"In accordance with the spirit of the times, it seems that everything in this world can be assessed. [...] Work is no exception to this logic and its objective assessment is the foundation of the new management and work organisation methods" (Dejours, 2003). In response to Christophe Dejours, one may acknowledge that the notion of assessment has become deeply rooted in the professional life of many employees, notably in the competitive sector. This trend is now spreading to the public service sector in most Western countries that are more or less adopting the methods of the private sector to assess their civil servants.

Largely implemented in the French private sector since the early 1980's (Trépo, 2002), assessment spread to the public sector in the late 1980's. The idea at the time was only to assess public policies, but it only took a few years for a *Préfet de la République* to claim, during a conference on the assessment of the administrative sector: "The necessary condition, the pre-requisite for the modernisation [of the public service] is the implementation of a satisfactory assessment of civil servants" (Rouanet, 1993). The "vigorous assessment requirement" proclaimed by the Viveret report (Viveret, 1989) was all the more urgent as public finances of European states were subject to stringent constraints in the 1990's, in particular due to the preparation for the euro. At a time when fear of unemployment was a growing concern, the public opinion intended to make its civil servants accountable in exchange for their job security.

In April 2002, the French government published a decree reforming the civil servant grading procedure, which had been in place for over 40 years, and instituting the assessment-grading of public employees. An evaluation interview is now instituted for all state civil servants, based on which the employee's "professional worth" is assessed. The assessment is taken into account in the grading, which itself leads to the allocation of reductions or increases in relation to the average seniority required to change one's grade. Therefore, the assessment process, in certain cases, provides the possibility of accelerating or slowing down the advancement of the civil servant. The decree specifies that each ministerial department should organise its own assessment process, adapted to the reality of its sector, and issue the appropriate ministerial orders before 1 January 2004.

At the other end of Europe, in the mid 1990's, Finland, strongly affected by an unprecedented economic crisis, also initiated an in-depth state reform. It

reduced the scope of the state, transferring most non-strategic activities to the private sector (transport, postal services, etc.), and decided at the same time to revamp its management by applying a new remuneration system to its public employees (*Uusi palkkausjärjestelmä*, UPJ). The new salary of the civil servant should eventually be divided into three parts: the first one linked to the requirements of the position held, the second to the personal success achieved in this position and the third to the overall results of the entity to which the position belongs (team bonus). This reform initially focused on the first two phases of the system (implementation of a salary including a part referred to as *VAATI-osa* related to the position and another called *HENKI-osa* for the individual). The personal part is based on the employees' assessment and, in particular, on whether or not they met the objectives assigned to them at the beginning of the assessment period considered.

A decade later, the end of 2004 saw a particular conjunction of circumstances, which is the basis of this study. The assessment-grading procedure of French civil servants, which was already applied in certain administrations, was the object of an order issued by the Ministry of National Education on 17 November 2004, stipulating its application to higher education in 2005. On 14 December 2004, in Finland, the department in charge of managing all Finnish civil servants in the Finance Ministry (*Valtion työmarkkinalaitos*, VTML) signed an agreement with the three trade union confederations authorised to negotiate at national level, aimed at completing the implementation of the UPJ in 2005. Finnish universities, with over 30 000 employees, were the largest civil servant contingent as well as one of the last administrations to be affected by the reform. This was a decisive challenge for the Finnish state.

Thus, both countries envisaged an evaluation of their higher education personnel simultaneously. It should however be pointed out that the initial reactions were drastically different. In France, the announcement of the reform caused an outcry in universities and other higher education institutions throughout the autumn of 2004. Numerous administrative boards, notably under the pressure of trade unionists, voted against implementing the assessment process. Teacher-researchers joined the movement, indicating that they would refuse to participate in the evaluation interviews of the employees under their responsibility and calling their colleagues to boycott. In Finland, once the agreement was signed, joint working groups (administration – trade unions) were set up and, within a tight schedule, steered the job classification phase (assessing the level of requirements for the job, corresponding to the basic salary) as well as the first batch of evaluation interviews, designed to determine the objectives and assess the performance of employees with regard to the personal part of the remuneration. This initial batch had to be completed by the end of April 2005 so that the Finnish Ministry

of National Education could adjust the scale of new salaries at national level, in accordance with the level of the first assessments. The objective was to reach a new agreement by the end of 2005, specifying the practical application procedures in each university.

Our study relates to the implementation procedures of this assessment process in both countries and the diverging reactions observed. Two higher education institutions have been selected for our study. We focused on the role of trade unions in the process, as significant differences appear in the type of professional relationships in each country, as well as in the social relationships specific to both institutions. The principal material consisted of 15 interviews and exchanges carried out during the first semester of 2005 with the leaders of all trade unions involved and the directors of both institutions, as well as state representatives. The study highlighted the following points.

A multitude of objectives

Whether announced by the advocates of the reform, expected by the managers, hoped for or feared by the "beneficiaries" of the reform, the objectives of the personnel assessment process are manifold. One of the primary claims is the employees' motivation, which seems to be a shared objective. It can naturally take a financial form, as we shall see further on. However, everyone agrees that carrying out an assessment process is motivating mainly because it can give (or restore) meaning to the employee's work. One of the people we interviewed explained it like this: "All of us, in both the private and public sectors, work only to reach our goals. And I think it is the same in the public sector, it is the key issue. I haven't met many people who do not want to be a part of this performance and have the feeling that 'my work has something to do with this'. And we must capitalise on these feelings." Notwithstanding the financial aspect, the responses of the people interviewed clearly linked motivation and recognition. Civil servants are motivated in their work if what they do is recognised by their superiors, colleagues, users, etc. This recognition is judged on two levels: the relevance judgment, related to the technical, social or economic relevance of the employee's contribution, and the beauty judgment, expressed by peers and related to working in accordance with the code of practice (Dejours, 2003). In any case, civil servants expect positive feedback from their assessment, both with regard to their role within the organisation and the quality of their work. This greatly influences their motivation and is the reason why the position of numerous employees on the subject of assessment is often ambivalent. Even though they feel it may endanger them by revealing their flaws or weaknesses, they are still partly in favour of it because it can result in the recognition of their capabilities.

Some of them even expect to be singled out by an efficient assessment, by demonstrating that they must legitimately get better treatment than their colleagues. This element is a concern to most trade unions, as they perceive that this may lead to unhealthy competition amongst employees. The French feel more strongly about this, probably because of the egalitarian tradition of the career system in the public service, which strongly emphasises length of service and tends to iron out individual achievements. The tradition of access to the public sector via a competitive examination and the separation of the grades and the jobs reinforce this feeling, as Marcel Pochard points out: "There is still no genuine differentiation according to the way the work is accomplished, and this egalitarian spirit weighs much more than people think, [notably] on the running of the administration, leading to individual and collective demotivation and demobilisation [...]" (Pochard, 2003). In contrast, the employment system in place in Finland implies that the employees' access to public service and career advancement are more linked to the demonstration of their skills for the relevant position.

Another declared objective of the assessment process is its influence on remuneration, whether in the form of a direct link with the salary, like in Finland, or a vaguer link such as with the French reform. In Finland, the UPJ reform clearly aims at enabling an increase in the employees' salaries. The pre-requisite for the negotiation consisted of instituting a "guaranteed salary" (*takuupalkka*), *i.e.* financial compensation ensuring that no employee's remuneration will diminish following the implementation of the UPJ. This salary improvement is mostly designed for the younger employees, compensating more equitably the reality of their work and commitment. Its objective is therefore to reinforce the competitiveness of the public service compared with the private sector. In anticipation of the recruitment difficulties related to the demographic shock expected to hit all European countries within the next ten years, the Finns want to ensure that jobs with attractive remuneration packages are available to young talented people in universities. In France, the link between assessment and remuneration is not as direct but exists nonetheless: the new procedure specifies that the assessment process, via its influence on the grading of civil servants, has an effect on their career, which itself is linked to salary evolution. In all likelihood, the state was reluctant to wave the red flag of the "merit-based" salary in front of civil servant trade unions and chose to go down this somewhat tortuous path in order to "compensate" their employees' performance.

However, the study reveals that no one was fooled. In both cases, it is surprising to observe that, while the persons interviewed have all integrated the financial aspect of the assessment process, nobody seems to believe it is real. Both in France and Finland, all trade union or management representatives interviewed doubt that implementing the assessment process

will eventually result in a significant improvement in salaries, except for newly hired youth. This feeling is even stronger in France, where even the management points out: "[With the assessment-grading], promotions will be dished out differently, but we should not fool ourselves in thinking that there will be more." French trade unions highlight the link – which is not, however, specified in the texts – which could exist between the employees' assessment and the bonus they receive. Yet, this logic, which is contested by certain trade unions, objecting to the very principle of bonuses or bonus scalability, would require a complete overhaul of the additional remuneration system, under which multiple bonuses co-exist, different bonuses depending on the status of each employee. In any case, the objective linking assessment and remuneration is a sensitive element, subject to the close scrutiny – if not outright suspicion – of all parties involved.

In the course of the study, we also detected what we called the hidden objectives of the assessment process. These elements, which should underpin the implementation of the assessment process, are not clearly expressed by the stakeholders or are marginally noted. Yet, they play a significant part, in particular with regard to the way the stakeholders perceive the relevance of the assessment approach. The principal hidden objective is to increase the employees' productivity to improve public service efficiency. Totally absent from the Finnish trade unions' arguments (although not from those of state representatives, VTML or Ministry of Education), this objective is perceived in France as an underhand design of the state, a corollary of the reduction in the civil servant contingent. Reform opponents as well as, to a lesser extent, its advocates suspect that the state wants to make its employees more efficient and more "profitable" in order to limit their number after the massive retirements related to the demographic shock. This concern seemed less acute in Finland at the time of our study. As the Finnish public sector had already undergone severe restructuring in the 1990's, most civil servants were no longer worried, the main issue being how to replace those who retire rather than how not to replace them, as is the case in France. However, recent projects (Liiten, 2005) implied that, beyond the expected retirements, Finnish universities may be affected by another staff cutback, linked to expected productivity gains. This "threat" probably weighed on the negotiations carried out in higher education at the end of 2005.

Despite the different contexts and multiple and sometimes uncertain challenges involved in carrying out the assessment process, our study has highlighted a number of broad areas of consensus between both countries as well as both parties, trade unions and managers.

Areas of consensus

The relevance of the individual evaluation interview between the civil servant and his superior is unquestionably the item rallying the strongest support. With the exception of the CGT-FO union (*Confédération générale du travail – Force ouvrière*) in France, none of the people we interviewed contested the relevance of a regular approach under which both parties assess the work accomplished, its specific content, possible improvements, the employees' requirements in terms of resources or training, and the subsequent evolution of the job and the employee. Among the benefits mentioned by the people we interviewed: the "privileged" nature of the interview ("The assessment is a time when the department head must consider and *respect* the *person* sitting opposite him"), the exchanges and arguing between both parties ("Employees can justify the fact that, if they failed to meet the target assigned by the manager, the blame also lies with the resources provided"), clarifying expectations ("The point is, we had to discuss why we are there, what we do and what we should do to improve things, to achieve better performance. It's good, it's *really* good; we should have done it ages ago"), the preventive aspect ("This helps prevent conflicts, resentments, it prevents making the wrong decisions, it prevents a lot of things!"), etc. Regardless of the atmosphere surrounding the interview, it is always possible to derive productive elements from it: "Focus, whether positive or negative, is always positive in the end, because at least people *search* for a solution." And everyone realises that the information collected during the interview is necessary to improve human resources management. This is particularly true in France, where the current management is perceived as administrative, bureaucratic and impersonal.

Another point is systematically highlighted by the persons interviewed, employees or managers: the necessary involvement of the hierarchy to ensure the success of the assessment process. "At universities and in the academic world, everyone does as they please and, you know, we are currently in need of strong leadership in universities, you see, we need steering." The hierarchical link is strongly challenged by the assessment process, more so in the public service than the private sector. The bureaucratic and, therefore, impersonal nature of the employment relationship within the administration goes against the bilateral commitment implied by an assessment procedure. The employee must offer an in-depth explanation of his work to highlight the salient points, sometimes justify his shortcomings, while the superior must accept to be challenged and must judge or even grade the work accomplished by the employees under his responsibility. All the people we interviewed are aware of the importance of the hierarchy in the success of the reform. As noted by Christine Gavini in her publications, modern job management "allocates a particularly important role to supervisory staff" (Gavini, 1997).

While everybody acknowledges that the hierarchy is an essential condition for the success of the assessment process, they very much doubt that, in its current state, it is capable of playing this part. The main reason given is that the people playing the role of evaluator are often teachers or teacher-researchers and are not naturally cut out for it. The comments collected during the interviews ("They weren't always recruited for that, to supervise staff" or "For a teacher, the initial vocation […] of course they were recruited to do administrative tasks, but mostly to teach and do research") are in accordance with the work of researchers: "Supervisory staff have little real competence in terms of personnel skill assessment" (Gavini, 1997). The trade unions representing non-teaching staff, as well as the directors of institutions, stress the necessity to train department heads in their new assessment role and to encourage them to play their part. Teachers' trade unions underline the necessity to take into account this additional task. Teachers point out that the academic system is constantly asking them to take on new functions: administration, management, search for financing, etc., without extra compensation or recognition.

This is where the specific nature of the higher education sector emerges most clearly. A well-known argument in universities tends to consider that, while personnel assessment is possible in industrial or bureaucratic contexts, it proves to be impossible when production relates to intangible goods such as knowledge or education. Thus, we were told on several occasions that the system put in place in certain sectors such as the customs or finance administrations was unsuitable for higher education. This opinion, largely held by teachers, is often the basis for the refusal of any of the managers' vague assessment attempts. Without supporting this opinion, our study however seems to indicate that implementing an assessment system in universities is genuinely difficult, not only because of its inherent difficulties but also due to the specific context of higher education. The diversity (and sometimes status) and often highly specialised nature of the jobs, and the mutual misunderstanding between teachers and administrative and technical staff make universities a complex place to carry out the assessment process. As acknowledged by the Finnish state itself, in its quarterly publication *Valtiotyönantaja* of December 2005, the UPJ reform, while "necessary", is also "very challenging".

This is particularly the case in higher education, due to the crucial part devoted to the hierarchy, which poses specific problems in professional bureaucratic organisations such as universities, where two different structures co-exist (Mintzberg, 1996). Both French and Finnish managers categorically reject the notion that this specific characteristic can prevent the implementation of personnel assessment. On the other hand, the people we interviewed highlight the existence of teachers and their specific status more

so than the nature of the activity or the intangible nature of the product. The academic tradition is a largely integrated and shared element in France as well as Finland, despite the differences between the two institutions. Independence, freedom and sometimes resistance to the rules are characteristics spontaneously mentioned by all the people we interviewed to define teachers. However, it should be noted that this shared analysis – the work of the teachers is specific and requires specific assessment procedures – leads to two radically different systems in the two countries. Finland chose to impose the assessment of all higher education staff but designed two different assessment systems depending on whether or not the employee is a teacher, taking into account the specific characteristics of the job and guaranteeing fair treatment for all. In France, the Ministry of National Education opted to restrict the assessment procedure exclusively to non-teaching staff, and the protest which ensued resulted in the exclusion of yet more staff categories (research and training bodies) in the spring of 2005. The resulting situation is that a small number of French civil servants are currently assessed in higher education institutions, while only 7 out of the 7 500 staff of the Finnish university studied were exempt from assessment, since they were considered as representing the employer.

In light of the interviews carried out, the distinction made in France between the different personnel categories, between teachers and non-teaching staff on the one hand and, within this category, between permanent staff and staff under contract, who are not subject to assessment, is a cause for resentment by trade unions, perceived as attacks against the collective identity of civil servants. One of the points highlighted by all the people we interviewed, in both fields of study, is that the success of the reform requires the preservation of social peace and therefore the necessity to ensure equal treatment regardless of staff status. This is one of the reasons why the differentiated treatment in France is perceived as a problem. Finnish representatives are in agreement, insisting that implementing the UPJ was based on the absolute requirement that everybody be assessed.

In the course of the study, a number of differences in treatment or appreciation were detected between France and Finland. We focused more particularly on the differences which can be linked to the role of the trade unions.

Differences

Despite their similarities (role of public employment, academic tradition, etc.), the main difference between France and Finland relates to the power of the trade unions and the running of industrial relations systems at national level. The Finnish system, based on three-party negotiations between the

state, employers' representatives and employees' representatives, is present at all levels of the Finnish society. Thus, the implementation of the UPJ reform was a result of the agreement signed at national level in December 2004, and the year of preparation led to another agreement, signed for universities after our study was completed, on 16 December 2005. Under this agreement, a second batch of assessments was carried out in the spring of 2006 to determine the requirement level of the jobs and the individual performance based upon which the revised salary should be paid as of 1 January 2006.

Conversely, the enforcement of the ministerial order of November 2004 in the French institution studied was subject to no discussion between the management and trade unions. Worse yet, the personnel were informed of the assessment process via an internal newsletter before the trade unions were even officially informed. The information on the launch of the procedure and the creation of training sessions for the assessing as well as assessed staff, was only revealed subsequently, by way of the monthly meeting between the administration and the trade unions. And it was not even part of the agenda, which reinforced the trade unions' feeling of being ostracised from the reform. This situation is probably due to the deterioration of local social relationships and failures of the joint bodies (the joint institution committee, boycotted by the trade unions, was made up of randomly selected staff representatives). However, it seems, judging from the information coming from other French higher education institutions, that there are similar situations in several other universities, albeit to a lesser extent. This is hardly surprising in principle, as the French tradition in the public sector is not negotiation in the strict sense of the word but only consultation. It appears however, and this is confirmed by the interviews conducted with the people in charge of the trade unions, that a reform of this scale, bringing massive changes to the running of the institutions, would have been worthy of an internal discussion phase in order to locally determine the best application conditions.

Instead, it seems that the management of the French institution chose to follow the letter of the text rather than its spirit. To explain what personnel representatives consider as serious dysfunctions, the management refers to the lack of information provided by the ministry in charge of higher education during the national negotiation period (between May 2002, when the decree was published, and November 2004, when the order was published), which explains why the personnel and their representatives could not be informed earlier. The management also underlines the fact that the timeframe between the publication of the last text and its enforcement required rapid implementation. It seems however that these arguments can be challenged, as certain universities carried out in-depth work (from the moment the decree was published) to prepare for the reform in order to limit or anticipate difficulties.

The people we interviewed also point to a difference in process steering in the context of our study. Although conducted at a steady pace, the management of the change made by the Finnish state, duplicated by the Ministry of Education, universities and the institution studied in particular, appears exemplary in comparison with France. In contrast, the persons interviewed at the Cnam, including the management, stress the lack of visibility and clarity of the objectives, the exceedingly short and opaque national consultation phase, the hasty implementation and, above all, the procrastination of the Ministry of National Education. The 31 months between the publication of the decree and that of the order relative to higher education were followed by 3 months of protests after which the ministry abandoned part of the reform. It declared on 17 February 2005 that it would modify the assessment conditions and brought together a joint ministerial technical committee on 31 March (CTPM), adopting the draft of the amended order (with the abstention of Unsa [*Union nationale des syndicats autonomes*] and CFDT [*Confédération française démocratique du travail*], and the other trade unions voting against it). This order was finally enforced on 29 September 2005, following two decrees amending the procedure for higher education. These hesitations can only give credence to the idea, in the collective mind of civil servants, that the reform is not really necessary since it can be abandoned, albeit partially.

These differences further highlight the fact that the role of the trade unions is essential in the way the state's reform is managed. As stakeholders in Finland, they have an influence on the very definition of the rule, which becomes, subsequent to an agreement, the common rule supporting the state and its divisions. In France, notably due to their declining numbers, they are more perceived as obstacles that the state is trying to overcome, beyond the ritualised running of joint bodies. However, the trade unions themselves sometimes have an ulterior motive, and certain authors point out that systematic opposition is a fruitful strategy in the French context of trade unions (Amadieu, 1999). The French public service remains a relative stronghold for trade unions, within a largely deunionised country, contrary to Finland. One should, therefore, keep in mind that trade unions represent their constituents but also themselves. They feel, rightly or wrongly, that their power is threatened on several levels by the implementation of the assessment process. We tried to identify and analyse this perceived threat as well as the behaviour of the people concerned, in light of certain organisational sociology theories. We focused on the obstacles seemingly impeding the institution of the assessment process in higher education, in order to understand what logic they are based on and how they can be overcome or by-passed. We primarily selected three approaches: strategic

analysis (Crozier, 1963; Crozier and Friedberg, 1977), social regulation (Reynaud, 1989) and the economies of worth (Boltanski and Thévenot, 1991).

An attempt at sociological analysis

Personnel assessment deeply challenges the working relationship. This is particularly the case within the administration, which is characterised by a "fear of one-to-one relationships" (Crozier, 1963), and where personalising hierarchical relations is prohibited in favour of applying impersonal rules. The strategic analysis postulates that all the players of the system studied (in this case the French and Finnish institutions) have room for manoeuvre, a certain freedom which enables them to act so that their interests can prevail. The way the player achieves his objectives by trying to adapt the required resources constitutes his strategy. Observing behaviour therefore reveals the players' strategy, which mostly aims at preserving or enhancing what this theory refers to as uncertainty areas, *i.e.* the unforeseen aspects making the players powerful within the organisation. There are several sources of uncertainty. It can result from the expertise or control of a domain crucial to the organisation. It can also stem from the exclusive possession of strategic information for the company. Or it can be related to the ability to create a rule, which will weigh on the other players and therefore reduce their own uncertainty area.

The behavioural analysis we carried out by studying in particular what the players revealed in interviews or in their publications, or through direct observation (especially in the French institution), led us to go beyond justifications to understand what were the uncertainty areas that everyone was seeking to preserve or enhance through their actions. For example, when the management of the French institution hides behind the strict application of the regulatory texts, justifies the absence of consultation by delayed ministerial instructions or the hasty implementation of the assessment process by the tight schedule imposed by the ministry, we can assume that they carry out these actions so that their interests can prevail. These interests seem to be to "negotiate" nothing with the other players (assessing and assessed staff or their union representatives), which is equivalent to abandoning part of this uncertainty area represented by the control of the rule. Department heads and immediate superiors (notably the teachers) are not in favour of assessment because interviewing is time consuming, because it is not within their competence or because they derive no gratification from it. Their strategy seems however based on the desire to maintain the *status quo* among their teams by not choosing sides, which would put them at risk of being likened to the management should they accept to enforce the assessment process, or of opposing the management should they refuse. In all cases, the preservation of their independence encourages them to reject

interviews, for which they are essential, as they are supposed to conduct them, analyse them and report the information to the management in the form of a comprehensive and properly written report. Therefore, they control a crucial area for the success of the assessment process. The personnel are hostile to interviews and put forward sometimes contradictory arguments. Either the assessment process is useless because the employee is in daily contact with his immediate superior, the superior is perfectly aware of the work and adjustments are made in real time; or it is useless because the department head is not interested in the employees' activities, of which the superior knows nothing anyway. The personnel's interests seem to lie in the optimal preservation of the knowledge of strategic information: the reality of their work. Several authors point it out (Dejours, 2003; Trépo, 2002): only the workers know the work and the trade, only they know how to proceed to solve a problem. This is particularly true of a world with few formalities and procedures such as universities. Therefore, the assessment process, by revealing the content of the activity and linking it to the results, leads to dispossessing the assessed employee of a "weapon" which enables him to face up to the demands of his immediate superior.

Within this context, trade unions, at first glance, seem to have only a limited uncertainty area of their own. In the French example in particular, while their impact on the administration's decisions is fairly limited, due to their low numbers, their capacity to resist is however real. Their decision to support or reject the assessment reform may well determine the actions of the personnel in a more or less favourable direction, which makes them significantly more powerful. The main problem in this case seems to be that, if each player controls a different uncertainty area, the success of the reform requires everyone's co-operation, and therefore the simultaneous reduction in all uncertainty areas. The employee agrees to reveal the reality of his work, so that he can get full recognition of his worth, make his superior aware of the extent of his commitment and receive compensation. However, as a result, he also agrees to be subject to potential criticism from his department head on certain aspects of his work, in exchange for which he can, through his own suggestions, expect the organisation of his department to evolve or even improve his working conditions. The department head agrees to "play the game" by devoting the time and energy (training, preparation, etc.) required to complete the interview, even if it means being challenged with regard to his management methods or work organisation, in exchange for which he acquires better knowledge of his team's work, can improve its efficiency and obtain better results. The management agrees to share the power to create the rule, by accepting to a certain extent to negotiate with the trade unions and department heads, in order to apply the rule in coherence with the reality in the field, in exchange for which the success of the reform is made easier and

it gains genuine knowledge of its personnel, which gives it the means to develop real human resources management. Finally, the trade unions agree to negotiate (which presupposes, and we shall develop this further, that they acknowledge the legitimacy of the assessment approach), which enables them to obtain the best possible application conditions in light of the reality in the field, as well as a promotion to the status of recognised spokesperson by the management, which will open new areas of negotiation in other domains.

The strategic analysis of the situation therefore seems to indicate that the power of all the players is greatly challenged by the introduction of a personnel assessment policy. If the solution to the problem requires that each of the players partially relinquish their power, it is very likely that this will not happen without some difficulties and, in any case, without examining the compensation to be made to each of them in exchange for this loss of power. This is why the progress of the reform seems more efficient in Finland, as we believe that negotiations are the only way out of the conflict, making it possible to balance the pros and cons that everyone attributes to the assessment process. Thus, we thought it would be interesting to tackle our study from another analytical perspective, that of social regulation. Personnel assessment can be considered as the introduction of a new rule – or the amendment of an old one – into the social game of public service, and we shall now focus on the negotiations which can take place on the creation and management of this rule.

We have already mentioned that the Finnish industrial relations system was strongly based on collective negotiations, generally between the state, the employer and the trade unions. This is also true of the Finnish public service, where the employer is the state, while in France, as civil servants are in a statutory and regulatory position, there are strictly speaking no negotiations. The two cases examined in our study are unquestionably least alike in this domain. However, it is possible to benefit from this very difference to analyse the extent of its influence on the implementation of the assessment process. The social regulation approach postulates that there are two principal types of regulation (Reynaud, 1989): the control regulation refers to all the social rules of the games being set by a higher authority, part of the hierarchy, which imposes them and controls their enforcement. Conversely, with the autonomous regulation, the individuals in the field make the control rule their own and adapt it locally to fit their own objectives and strategies. The connection between these two regulations constitutes a third type of regulation, called joint regulation. This regulation is in place when the creation and preservation of the rule are carried out through negotiations between the top entity issuing the rule and the player in the field who makes it his own (or not). The joint regulation is the result of a search for balance by both parties, to the extent that it can never be spontaneous. Negotiations with

the state that issues the control regulation (implementation of the assessment process) are, in France like in Finland, the exclusive responsibility of the trade unions. This is also why we have chosen to focus this study on them.

Like any other organisation, the university is based on a balance of the different levels of regulation: the rules issued by the state, their adoption by the management and personnel arrangements, often in agreement with the department head. The emergence of the assessment process therefore represents the introduction of a new control regulation, which disrupts the balance and calls for new adjustments. This is reinforced by the fact that, as we have noted, the objectives of the assessment process are not the same at all levels. The transfer from the state to the management of the institution creates the first bias, as we have pointed out in the study, where the management of the institutions is keen to use the employee assessment process for their own purposes, sometimes not in line with the state's objectives. Failing to use the joint regulation – in other words the negotiation of an agreement between the two extreme levels of regulation – results in the progressive development of a new autonomous regulation, which may well be mostly based on by-passing or avoidance strategies, if not on the rejection of the rule. We have observed the results of this type of behaviour in both fields of our study.

The only way to avoid these petty arrangements likely to completely distort the spirit of the text seems to lie in constructing a genuine joint regulation. The people we interviewed in Finland tried to do this, notably via different joint working groups *(arviointiryhmät)* aimed at harmonising the conditions for carrying out the assessment process and tackling contentious cases. The trade union representatives interviewed in France also stressed the necessity to work together towards adapting the procedure locally, in order to take into account the inevitable specific characteristics of each institution. The recourses available are often cited as a suitable option for creating joint regulations, which should be explored before proceeding with the assessment. Naturally, this presupposes that industrial relations are perceived through a contractual framework within the public sector, which is far from the norm in France. The fact that the parties do not trust each other to comply with a potential contract or agreement adds to the difficulty of the process. Nevertheless, negotiations seem the only way to partly overcome the pitfalls inherent in the assessment process.

The difficulty in implementing this joint regulation lies in a prerequisite of negotiations, which we have mentioned previously. Negotiating supposes that the parties share the absolute conviction that negotiations are essential, and therefore the object of the negotiation is legitimate. If the trade unions reject the very principle of assessment, how can we envisage the possibility of finding common ground for carrying it out? We are therefore faced with

seemingly irreconcilable differences and it is interesting to attempt to analyse them in terms of references to different worlds, as suggested by the economies of worth.

This theory, by observing that individuals, in spite of diverging interests, are able to co-operate and reach agreements to solve their conflicts, seeks to understand how these agreements are established. It seems appropriate in our study, as we are potentially confronted with the search for an agreement between parties (the representatives of the state and the management on one side and the personnel on the other) who have a different view of the same action (the implementation of the assessment process). As underlined by Henri Amblard *et al*. in their publication, "the relationships between employers and employees have been closely studied by the economy of agreements. In this context, we have a situation which is both conflicting (divergence of interests) and co-operative (the necessity to co-operate so that the employer can obtain the work expected of the employee and the employee the expected benefits from his work)" (Amblard *et al.,* 2005). This sociological approach postulates that constructing an agreement is possible if the parties of this agreement share certain equivalence systems or values, enabling each one to find their mark. These values, these equivalence systems are deployed in what is referred to by the authors as "worlds". Each of these worlds is characterised by a number of defining elements: a higher common principle, which is the ultimate reference; a scale of values, defining what in this world is considered as valuable; word indexes or registers referring to the "residents", who are the subjects and objects of this world; a model test that a potential conflict will be subject to in order to determine whether it is compliant with the scale of values; and a harmonious figure, which best embodies the world in question.

We need to analyse and improve our knowledge of the worlds in which the different players of our study live in order to understand how the assessment process disrupts them, provokes a "controversy", and how it can be resolved. The public service clearly matches what the authors of the economies of worth call the civic world. In this world, the higher common principle is the public interest. The scale of values is applied to everything that embodies this higher collective interest, and the semantic indexes used mainly refer to the "public service", the "law", etc. However, just like professional bureaucracies where two structures co-exist, a mechanistic one and a professional one (Mintzberg, 1996), higher education is traditionally a sector where several worlds cohabit. A higher education institution can be summarily described as the juxtaposition of a bureaucratic structure principally deployed in the civic world and a professional structure (the teachers) more focused on the inspiration-driven world. This world is embodied in the figure of the creative genius, who cares little about criticism or the market value of his work. Higher

education teachers, partly because they are by definition teacher-researchers, are part of this world: the only important thing is the beauty of their research, the scientific value of their publications, the accuracy of their work, regardless of whether or not these activities result in practical, potentially marketable applications. Universities are therefore often described as a place where two worlds co-exist, which of course does not mean that teachers are without a sense of public interest. A situation is rarely anchored in a single world. However, our study clearly reveals the existence of two worlds, which the players refer to according to their need for justification. Depending on the situation, the same person may justify his action by locating it within different worlds.

Implementing the assessment procedure somewhat revives the latent conflict between these worlds, and the specific nature of higher education probably appears most clearly in light of this analysis. As we have observed, the first difficulty pinpointed in this context is the (assumed or stated) impossibility of assessing the teachers. It is largely in the name of the underlying principles of the inspiration-driven world that the assessment process is deemed impossible. The artist only values the recognition of his masters, sometimes his peers. For the other personnel categories, the non-teaching categories, the principal shock caused by carrying out the assessment process lies in the sudden emergence of a third world in their universe, the market-driven world. The appearance of justifications associated with this world conflicting with the civic world is the consequence of the in-depth changes in the higher education environment in general. Education has undergone multiple upheavals in the last few decades. Large-scale reforms such as the transformation of the educational offer to fit the European format (Bologna Process), the budgetary difficulties requiring external funding and competition with private educational establishments, or among public institutions themselves (international ranking of universities), have profoundly upset the situation. The state and the management of the institution, whether they like it or not, hold the values of this market-driven world, which stresses the necessity to be competitive, reduce costs and attract customers. In this world, values consist of conquering market shares, and the market-driven world clashes with the inspiration-driven one, held in high regard by teacher-researchers by virtue of their unproductiveness, as well as the civic world of the other personnel on account of its rigidity and outmoded opposition to change.

Thus, implementing a reform (personnel assessment) is highly likely to revive what we call the war of the worlds within the higher education sector. It ruptures the connection between these worlds. Interpreted by the different player categories, it will incite justifications related to the world which they are mostly part of. Therefore, the assessment process will be strongly

promoted by the management in the name of the values of the market-driven world (it will improve quality and therefore market competitiveness). On the other hand, it will clash with the teachers who appeal to the inspiration-driven world to deny the capacity to assess (in the sense of giving value to) their work and the right to curb their creativity. The other personnel categories, part of the civic world, will reject it, as they perceive it as a solution promoting the interests of the individual to the detriment of the public interest and serving the interests of the private sector before those of the public service.

Therefore, it is hardly surprising that carrying out the assessment process provokes what the authors of the theory call a controversy, the confrontation of several worlds. There are three different ways to resolve this controversy. The first consists of simplifying a world: one of the higher principles overcomes the others and the players adopt this principle, accepting the fact that the controversy will be resolved in one world rather than another. The second solution is to search for what is called an arrangement, *i.e.* a local agreement, similar to bargaining, which cannot be generalised on a larger scale and can only be temporary. The third way to resolve a controversy is to aim for a compromise: a more sustainable agreement, exceeding the "values" involved, by establishing a certain dosage of the mix and genuinely combining the ranges of actions of all the players. To end the controversy stage, it is necessary to create this agreement based on the essential elements of the worlds involved.

In our case, this solution is probably the only one available. Since implementing the assessment process in higher education provokes the confrontation of several worlds, the only outcome seems to be the search for a compromise. Yet again, the comparison between the Finnish case and the French case makes perfect sense. Finland, as we have noted, has vast experience in collective negotiations. Furthermore, it has broadly established the public interest, the interests of society or the country as a higher common principle as opposed to individual interests. Therefore, the problem posed by implementing the assessment process in higher education was solved according to a format which we believe is more in line with simplifying one of the worlds. The importance of the civic world and the acceptance by all, including teachers, of the reform's necessity as a way to solve by anticipation the country's problems, added to the legitimacy of the management supporting the reform, have made it possible to reach a compromise on the new remuneration system. The Finnish case also demonstrates that this agreement was not reached spontaneously: without resolute pressure from the state (via the Ministry of Finance and the VTML), the co-existence of several worlds, with a local arrangement system explaining the apparent differences between Finnish universities, would have continued. By

overturning precarious arrangements, the state managed to reactivate the conflict, which was the starting point of a search for compromise.

In the French case, it is possible to analyse what we observed in light of this theory. In particular, the most interesting issue is the criticism of the link between assessment and grading. It seems that this aspect of the French assessment reform is almost unanimously criticised by the trade unions because it embodies the sticking point between two worlds. If the majority of the players can agree to the assessment process, it is because it is in fact based on a premise acceptable by all: in the name of public interest, each employee has a duty to do his utmost to provide society with an optimal service. This is what the people we spoke with expressed in different forms. Assessment is therefore acceptable by all provided the objective is to improve the quality of the public service. Conversely, the grading process and its connection with promotion is an excessively obvious reference to the market-driven world and therefore cannot be tolerated. Competition between civil servants, as with commercial representatives who compete with each other to make sales, pushing oneself for career advancement purposes and other elements expressed in the interviews (such as when bonuses are mentioned) are overtly explicit references to an execrated world.

Similarly, the rejection of an assessment procedure, which leaves out several personnel categories along the way (teachers initially, followed by the staff under contract, and finally research and training staff) can be explained by the attack launched against one of the founding elements of the civic world: fairness. This notion is primarily evoked in this world; anything that cannot guarantee fairness is inevitably rejected for this reason. By comparison, this is what is also clearly observed in the Finnish case. In the institution we studied, the higher common principle of the civic world, *i.e.* the public interest, seems so powerful that it results in numerous references shared by all stakeholders, including the state and the management, to fairness, democracy and justice.

In all likelihood, the reason the hierarchy is deemed so important by all is because it also represents the boundary between the worlds. In his capacity as a responsible authority, the civil servant is an element of the management, and the other players suppose he shares its values and references. Therefore, they suspect him of supporting the values of the market-driven world, regardless of the category to which he belongs. And this world is naturally conflicting with that in which he usually lives. French teachers, who have already claimed that they would refuse to implement the assessment process in their teams, have probably perceived this potential confrontation and chose to "remain in their world" so that they do not have to deal with the contradiction.

Several analytical grids can be used to try and comprehend why personnel assessment is so complex to implement in higher education. Each grid provides interesting elements of comprehension and, while we tend to favour the analysis carried out using the economies of worth, this is only in harmony with the other approaches. The strategic analysis indicates that the assessment process obliges each player to reduce their uncertainty areas and that this renunciation requires negotiation. The regulation theory seems to demonstrate that the assessment process results in the development of the joint regulation, which makes it possible to avoid the direct clash of the control regulations and autonomous regulations. Finally, the approach using the economies of worth indicates that the assessment process provokes a conflict between several worlds, making the search for compromise necessary.

Conclusion

Our study highlighted the following elements, which can be used as a means to improve the reform. Firstly, it appears, whether by examining literature or relating to our own experience, that the development of the personnel assessment process currently in place in the French public sector is a largely generalised trend in Europe and the western world. The reforms carried out in most countries focus on the connection between human resources management (HRM) and assessment in their effort to modernise public services. The evaluation interview is crucial to HRM initiatives and this consideration of the individual is called for by the employees. It is essential, regardless of the procedures chosen to implement the assessment process, to retain this element which is unquestionably its most positive item.

However, setting up an assessment procedure always appears difficult, because the reality assessment of the work is always complex, if not impossible, and above all because the notions of measurement and judgment accompanying the assessment approach inevitably arouse fears and justifications in all the players. In this respect, the comparison we have made between the situation in France and in Finland demonstrated that, on numerous points, the same reactions were observed, whether positive or negative. This aspect must therefore be examined more closely and, to do this, a sustained effort to support, explain and inform is required.

Our study also showed that the higher education sector is a particularly difficult one in which to enforce the assessment process. Its specific characteristics, multiplicity of staff positions – and status in the French case – the very history of the academic institution, with its traditions of independence and free spirit, make higher education a real challenge for implementing a personnel assessment process. However, contrary to what some people claim, these specific characteristics do not make the assessment

approach impossible, only specific. The Finnish example shows this, even though it must prove itself in the long term. Provided the stakeholders are willing, a reform can be achieved.

We realised in the course of our study that the solution to these difficulties lies in enhancing the dialogue and negotiations between the parties. As we tried to demonstrate in our analysis, implementing the assessment process supposes that each player gives up part of his power within the organisation, which is only conceivable through constructing a compromise acceptable by all. The necessity of such a compromise is reinforced by the antagonism, sometimes only apparent, of the justifications pointed out by the players.

The trade unions play a legitimate part in this search for compromise, and their legitimacy as spokespersons in the negotiations cannot be contested. Nevertheless, the assessment process is also a challenge for them, obliging them to put greater emphasis on the individual logic of civil servants within their collective strategies. As it seems difficult to reject the assessment principle *per se*, the trade unions have an important role to play with regard to the assessment procedure, its practical application procedures and its consequences on the professional life of the employees.

The assessment process also represents a challenge for the state and the managers, unused to negotiating, which requires a restriction in their unilateral power. However, this is probably the necessary concession for efficiency, as an accepted reform is always more efficient than an attempt at modernisation rejected by the personnel. Above all, we believe that developing negotiations would improve the partners' knowledge of one another, lead to the consideration of each other's concerns and improve their negotiating skills. We are well aware that negotiations are an unusual practice in the French public sector, but the implementation of the assessment process, because of its impact and the fact that it constitutes the first step towards revamping HRM, seems to be an ideal opportunity to move towards this objective, to the benefit of all.

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Long-term Human Outcomes of a "Shotgun" Marriage in Higher Education: Anatomy of a Merger, Two Decades Later

by
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This article addresses a gap in the research literature on mergers in higher education by giving special consideration to the human resource dimension. It focuses on the forced merger of two higher education institutions that was implemented in Northern Ireland over 20 years ago and from which the University of Ulster was established. The authors draw upon the views of the university staff who experienced this merger and who were still employed by the university in 2006. The article emphasises how the merge affected staff and influenced their subsequent experiences, as academics and administrators.

Background and aims of the study

The volume and quality of international research concerning mergers in the non-profit and public sectors has grown considerably in the past decade, and mergers in higher education have been the subject of a number of recent studies (Rowley, 1997a, 1997b; Fielden and Markham, 1997; Pritchard, 1998; Harman, 2000; Eastman and Lang, 2001; Brown and Humphries, 2003; Harman and Harman, 2003; Schoole, 2005; Locke, 2007). Much attention has been focused on the causes of mergers, of which the economic is usually the most prominent, and important work has been done on the consequences of mergers. Research suggests that many features of the conceptual framework are applicable to both business-based mergers and academic mergers. Cartwright and Cooper (1996) argue that *people* are the forgotten, or hidden, factor in merger success or failure. Employees often have strong feelings of attachment to their institutions, and the aura of "failure" that one of the parties may attach to a merger, or takeover, may cause stress that is similar to that experienced in bereavement. Thus, Harshbarger (1987, p. 340) likened his own job loss from Sealy, Inc. to the stages of grief and bereavement described by Kübler-Ross in dealing with death: shock, disbelief, anger, bargaining and finally acceptance. He described it as "a wrenching experience" (*ibid*., p. 343).

This paper draws upon the contemporary retrospective views and experiences of 116 academic teachers, researchers and administrators who lived though a merger of two higher education institutions in 1984 and who were still employed by the University of Ulster in the spring of 2006. Our primary emphasis is on the experience of people who were affected by that merger and their subsequent experiences, as academics and administrators, over more than 20 years. Echoing Cartwright and Cooper's observation, we address a gap in the research literature on mergers in higher education by giving special consideration to the human resource dimension. We do not attempt here to provide an exhaustive account of the process of the merger or of its origins (for which the reader is referred to Birley, 1991 and Williamson, 1988).

Our research concerns the forced merger that was implemented in 1984 and resulted in the establishment of the University of Ulster which has since grown to become the largest university on the island of Ireland. That merger was a trans-binary amalgamation of the New University of Ulster and the Ulster Polytechnic. It was a landmark in higher education policy in the United Kingdom because it anticipated by eight years the abolition of the binary

divide in higher education throughout the United Kingdom as a whole in 1992. The Ulster merger is also of interest for other reasons. It is an absorbing case study of power relations in a neo-colonial setting. Essential to its achievement was the fact that, because of the failure of constitutional government in Northern Ireland (and because of the absence of a local parliament), Margaret Thatcher's English ministers of state were able to impose their will and designs upon a province of the United Kingdom in a manner that would have been impossible elsewhere in that jurisdiction (Williamson, 1988, 1993).

The primary purpose of the present research is to investigate staff perceptions of this merger and of the institution that resulted from it. Central to our work is a retrospective analysis of the values, attitudes and institutional experience of academic staff and senior administrators. These individuals, along with others who are no longer employed by the university, formed the core of the human, intellectual and social capital of the new institution. As the university has expanded during the last 22 years, they have been a diminishing, if still highly important, cohort within an enlarged academic staff group. In 2006 those who had been employed prior to the merger made up 24% of the academic staff of the university. We aim to investigate the extent to which they consider that a unified corporate culture has evolved. Have the parent institutions that were merged in 1984 indeed become a coherent, integrated entity after 20 years? How do those staff members (as distinct from others who joined the university later, and after the merger) now regard their pre-merged institutions and their cultures? How do they regard the process through which they were compelled to go and how worthwhile has it turned out to be? What are their current attitudes towards the University of Ulster, the institution that was formed from the merger?

Merger theories

Types of merger and reasons for merging. The Shorter Oxford Dictionary provides precise definitions of the words "merger" and "to merge". It defines the noun "merger" as "the extinguishment of an estate … by absorption into another" and the verb "to merge" as "to sink a lesser estate into a greater one". In terms of possible reasons for a merger, Pritchett (1985) puts forward four categories that are based on a co-operative-adversarial continuum. First, there is *organisation rescue* in which one body seeks to rescue another from failure whilst extending its own influence; secondly, there is *collaborative merger* in which both firms show goodwill and diplomacy; thirdly, there is *contested combination* in which the "bride" is reluctant to consent to the "marriage"; and finally there is the notion of "*raid*" in which one firm brutally takes over another with concomitant asset-stripping. This last-mentioned type is the most likely to produce prolonged levels of opposition during the post-merger period.

The extent of integration. Locke, in a recent study of the merger of two English colleges, warns that "organisational cultures are critical to the successful integration of staff, students and other stakeholders within a newly combined higher education institution" (Locke, 2007, p. 83). The length of time needed for a merged institution to achieve a new corporate culture has been variously estimated as three to five years (Walter, 1985), five to seven years (Stybel, 1986) and even as long as ten years (Buono and Bowditch, 1989). The present research suggests that a much longer time may be required. The time needed will depend upon many factors, and indeed, with regard to the existing staff cohort, a complete acculturation may never be reached. Nahavandi and Malekzadeh (1988) analyse adaptation on a continuum ranging through stages of assimilation, cultural pluralism, separation and deculturation. Disaffected individuals may develop a counter-culture into which they withdraw or in some cases they may even attempt to subvert the values of the new institution by aggressive and/or non-compliant behaviour. A counter-culture may intensify because individuals feel insecure about their jobs. A frequent rationale for merger is the desire for operating efficiencies and/or cost savings and these imperatives may lead to overwork, or in some cases to redundancy. Tension within the institution may be increased by the exigencies of rationalising courses and/or by the difficulty of achieving solvency and success. These difficulties will be exacerbated where, as in the case of the Ulster merger, there are considerable distances between campus locations.

The problem of making mergers deliver financial benefits is often pointed out (*e.g.* HEFCE, 2004). Cartwright and Cooper (1996, p. 24) suggest that more than half of all corporate mergers are financially unsuccessful or have an unfavourable impact upon productivity. Furthermore, during the actual merger process much energy is absorbed by institutional uncertainty and "trauma" leading to lost work hours, absenteeism and high turnover rates (Wishard, 1985). Nikandrou and colleagues insist that an important factor affecting the successful outcome of a merger is the ability of management to gain employee trust, and they stress the need for good human resources policies and procedures if morale and staff trust are to be conserved and maintained (Nikandrou *et al.*, 2000). Shattock (2003, p. 170), however, points out that the drivers for corporate mergers are very different from those usually found in universities. He quotes certain key factors in higher education mergers adumbrated by the Council for Industry and Higher Education (CIHE, 2001): a common vision at the top, cultural compatibility, speedy implementation, not accepting fudges, a clear managerial model, good internal and external implementation, the elimination of non-performing units, focusing staff on critical success factors, and cutting overhead costs. He notes two important points (Shattock, 2003, p. 171): first, the pressure for university mergers is more from internal than external sources, and the idea of merger tends to enthuse management at the top of the institution more than academics because

it has fewer obvious advantages for the latter, and some definable disadvantages for those working in departments; secondly, it is the staff who bear the brunt of changes and who have a considerable capacity to derail a merger. Moreover, he notes with some prescience, as regards the University of Ulster, that "where a university is spread over several sites it may increase a sense of alienation between the centre and the academic community" (*ibid*., p. 172).

The degree of integration achieved by mergers is highly variable. Sometimes the merger of institutions will lead to a genuinely unitary culture with a shared ethos, whereas in other cases it will result only in a "pseudo-culture" or in conflicting subcultures. Whether a merger is deep or shallow will depend upon two main factors: *a)* cultural compatibility; and *b)* management skills. A previously successful management approach may not be as effective within the emerging institution. Senior managers may be less effective than they think they are. In their research Cartwright and Cooper (1996, p. 145) found that senior managers were less accessible to employees than they themselves believed to be the case, and that the managers tended to be more convinced of the success of the merger in which they were involved than the evidence suggested. They found that in 81% of failed organisational mergers, reporting relationships were unclear (*ibid*., p. 29), and that underestimation of difficulties by managers is a frequent cause of failure. Even a strong management may be less than effective in creating a culture that people want to "buy into". Buono and Bowditch (1989, p. 163) state: "[T]here are limits to the amount and rate of change people are able to assimilate. … [W]hile we may like to think of culture as a managerial tool that can be used to create 'strong' organisations, culture may manage us much more than we can manage it." Some elements of the culture are characterised by different rates of change (giving rise to the phenomenon of "culture lag" [*ibid*., p. 175]), and it is likely that the greater the collective grief at the "failure" of a merged institution, the harder it will become to achieve a corporate integration. Symbols such as a coat of arms and the location of the head office have a role in contributing to a real organisational unity with a shared culture. Reflecting apprehension about change, there is often a deep covert psychological resistance to merger that may be accompanied by nostalgia for the "old" institution which may be idealised to facilitate continued attachment to the past with its securities and memories.

Person-organisation fit. Staff involved in any merger help to shape a new corporate culture, albeit one that may, or may not, be to their taste. And it must be remembered that perspectives will differ. For some staff the "new and merged" setting, with its unfamiliar values and norms, working practices and expectations, may be preferable in some respects to their previous employment and working conditions. In each case a new corporate culture develops, involving new systems of power and control as well as new norms and working relationships. Cultural transitions will be more difficult for those who have been

involuntarily subjected to merger (Buono and Bowditch, 1989, pp. 249-250). Small institutions tend to have a strong organisational culture, and though no culture is totally unitary (because each consists of many different subcultures), there are likely to be problems with the fit between persons previously employed in the parent organisations and the new merged institution.

Harrison (1972) identifies four distinct organisation ideologies: power, role, task and person. Power orientation "attempts to dominate its environment", "vanquish opposition" and "maintain control over subordinates". Role orientation "aspires to be as rational and orderly as possible" and has a "preoccupation with legality, legitimacy and responsibility". Task orientation aims to achieve a superordinate goal, even if this involves breaking rules, changing personnel or modifying organisational structures. Person orientation "exists primarily to serve the needs of its members" and encourages them to be helpful and caring. Opportunities to learn and grow are usually more important than organisational advancement (*ibid*., pp. 122-123). After a merger, these orientations are often challenged, and the conflict or tension between them may result in a lack of person-organisation fit with possible stress to the individual, arising from maladaptation or aggression towards institutional authority figures. Those who disagree with other people's value systems tend to perceive them as "wrong-headed" rather than as "a self-consistent and internally coherent way of thinking and explaining their organisational world" (*ibid*., p. 120).

The University of Ulster Merger as a case study

Higher education in Northern Ireland during the last third of the 20th century was fundamentally shaped by the work of the Lockwood Committee that reported in 1965 (Government of Northern Ireland, 1965). The committee, appointed by the Northern Ireland Government, recommended the establishment of a second university, (later to be called the New University of Ulster [NUU]), and an Ulster College. Queen's University, Belfast, (established in 1908 and tracing its beginnings to the middle of the 19th century) was little affected by Lockwood's recommendations. By 1970 both the New University of Ulster and the Ulster College were enrolling their early cohorts of students and the map of higher education was beginning to change. The new Ulster College (which soon elevated its status by changing its name in 1975, without permission from the government so to do, to the Ulster Polytechnic [UP]) was located on a spacious campus at Newtownabbey near Belfast. It also incorporated the former College of Art in Belfast. Contrary to Lockwood's recommendations, the nascent New University of Ulster was forced to accept the incorporation of Magee College, a struggling theological and liberal arts college situated some 35 miles from Coleraine in the western city of Londonderry (also known as Derry) that was founded in 1865. Many of Derry's citizens, on both sides of the sectarian divide, were furious that Coleraine rather

than Derry was chosen as the future location of NUU. Coleraine was a small, mainly Protestant, market town on the north Antrim coast some 55 miles north of Belfast, whereas Derry was the second city of Northern Ireland, mainly Catholic, and situated close to the border with the Republic of Ireland. Universities bring prestige and prosperity and many Derry people, both Catholic and Protestant, regarded the decision to locate NUU at Coleraine rather than at Derry as a pro-Unionist, anti-nationalist, even anti-Catholic, stratagem to deprive their city of the economic and social benefits that a university institution would have brought.

NUU admitted its first students in early October 1968. It may be noted that the same week marked the outbreak, in Derry, of political and sectarian violence that soon engulfed the whole of Northern Ireland and lasted until 1994. During the turbulent years of the 1970s and early 1980s, when Northern Ireland was plagued by violence and sectarian strife, the Ulster College expanded greatly while the New University of Ulster consistently failed to meet its targets for student numbers both at Coleraine and at Derry. In 1984 NUU had about one-third of the student numbers that had been set for its 1980 target. By contrast, UP was offering degrees through the aegis of the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) and was experiencing strong and consistent growth. CNAA was described by Derek Birley, its first principal, as the Polytechnic's "early benefactor" (Birley, 1991, p. 141). Northern Ireland now had three (rather than two) degree-granting institutions – something that could not have been anticipated by Lockwood – and the Department for Education had no policy to guide the development of the higher education sector. By the mid to late 1970s it was becoming clear that Lockwood's conception had been congenitally flawed, and that it had been overtaken both by other higher educational policies that were framed shortly after the ink had dried on its report, and by social trends exacerbated by sectarian violence and by constitutional turbulence.

The following table shows the numbers of staff and students at the various institutions in 1979/80.

Table 1. **Staffing and student loads at higher education institutions in Northern Ireland in 1979/80**

	Full time academic staff	Student load	Staff/student ratios
New University of Ulster (Coleraine and Derry)	216	1 809	8.4
Ulster Polytechnic (Newtownabbey and Belfast)	575	5 780	10.1
Queen's University (Belfast)	732	6 229	8.5

Source: Academic Services Officer, Ulster Polytechnic.

In the view of some leading commentators, and of several influential journalists, NUU's viability and future were in doubt. In 1978 the government appointed a Review Group with Sir Henry Chilver as its chairman to consider the future of higher education. This committee produced an interim report on the restructuring of teacher training colleges, and issued its main report in late March 1982 more than three years after its establishment (McMinn and Phoenix, 2005). Chilver recommended to the government that the university should be "encouraged and assisted to develop a new role", a role which envisaged a *reduction* [sic.] in conventional undergraduate numbers and an increase in provision for mature students and for continuing education. It was considered by government that this would have led to a significant reduction in the range and academic level of the university and to a further scaling down of operations at Coleraine and Derry and that Chilver's prescription was highly unlikely to offer a more sustainable future to higher education in Northern Ireland. Later on the same day the government announced its plan for the future of higher education in Northern Ireland in the form of a White Paper, *Higher Education in Northern Ireland: The Future Structure*. That document rejected the prescription set out in the main Chilver Report, though it accepted Chilver's analysis of NUU's problems and vulnerability. It has subsequently been confirmed that Derek Birley was influential in the formulation of the White Paper (Birley, 2006; Williamson, 1988, pp. 305-308). On 22 February 1982, having spent a weekend considering an advance copy of Chilver's report, he sent an eight-page memorandum to the permanent secretary of the Department of Education in which he said: "Having now seen the [Chilver] Report … I believe the creation of a single new institution, complementary to Queen's, to be far the best solution for the province. Any technical difficulties pale into insignificance by comparison with the futile proposals offered by Chilver" (Birley, 1982, quoted in Williamson, 1988).

Birley was adamant that the polytechnic should not be damaged in a merger and that the hierarchical superiority bestowed on NUU by its possession of a charter would not be permitted to confer undue advantage upon it. He feared for the loss of the UP ethos which was to render service to students and the wider community: privately he felt great grief at the ending of the polytechnic (Birley, 2006). But he was a strategic thinker who cared about the big picture, and believed that the White Paper was the best way forward for the province. Events took their course: surrender of the NUU charter followed by a joint petition to the Queen and Privy Council in the names of both institutions was the only acceptable way forward. Birley wrote about what he termed "the best of NUU", believing that it should be conserved and developed and that it should be "put into a context (of purposeful planning, self-analysis and partnership) that would give it a good chance of achieving distinction" (Birley, 1982, quoted in Williamson, 1988).

The White Paper advised that the government had identified two "most important and most urgent issues" in relation to higher education in Northern Ireland. These were: *a)* the future of the New University of Ulster; and *b)* future arrangements for co-ordination and planning of higher education in Northern Ireland. The Chilver Report had shown that NUU "faces major problems of financial and academic viability which are likely to increase in time and which … are such as *to rule out the possibility of the University continuing in existence in its present form* […] The Report shows that the problems facing NUU are such that closure might be necessary". The government hoped that a "worthwhile and durable role" could be found for NUU by "pooling the resources of NUU and the Ulster Polytechnic and that together they would form the basis of a new split site university. […] This combination would produce a strong and efficient institution with a distinctive role which would complement the traditional academic emphasis of Queen's University of Belfast". NUU would surrender its university charter, and NUU and UP would together petition the Queen and the Privy Council for a new charter and, having done this, would cease to exist.

The space restrictions of this paper and its focus do not permit us to discuss the details of the merger process and how it was effected. The government established a steering group chaired by Sir Peter Swinnerton-Dyer, Master of St. Catharine's College, Cambridge. That group had the challenging task of engaging NUU, (which was bitterly resisting the government's plans and rebutting its analysis), and of reassuring the staff of UP, who feared that the considerable achievements of that institution might be dissipated in an unsuccessful merger. One foundational matter, among many others, on which NUU was resolved not to give way, was the matter of elected (as distinct from appointed), deans, as was the case at NUU. Dispute over this matter threatened to scupper the merger, but it was summarily resolved after Sir Peter convened a high-level emergency meeting at Coleraine one Sunday morning, to which he was transported by helicopter (Jones, 2006). NUU's reservations were swept aside: deans in the new institution would be appointed (by a committee chaired by the vice-chancellor). The Steering Group oversaw the various streams of planning (constitutional, academic, administrative, etc.) and the appointment of senior staff including the vice-chancellor. This post of vice-chancellor was accepted by the rector of UP, Derek Birley, in an appointment process which was not open to candidates outside of the two institutions. Professor Wilfred Cockcroft, vice-chancellor of NUU, did not present himself for interview and was granted early retirement shortly after Birley's appointment. He was knighted in January 1983.

The foundation document of NUU was its charter that was granted in 1970 by the Queen and the Privy Council "in perpetuity and forever". The custodian of the charter was the University's Court, a body whose members

consisted of several hundred leading citizens of Northern Ireland. For the merger to proceed, it would be necessary for the Court to vote (by a majority of 75% and on two occasions separated by not less than three months) to surrender the charter. On several occasions the Court refused to do this, eventually yielding in September 1983 but only after the government had indicated that, should the Court refuse to give way, *no further financial support* would be provided by the government to the university. Its earlier statement about NUU was repeated in a hand delivered letter from the government stating in effect: "Merge or close." The University of Ulster came into being at midnight on 30 September 1984.

The negotiations carried forward by the Steering Group gradually produced some assurances and decisions that had greatly facilitated the merger process during 1982 and 1983 and that went some way to assuage the anxieties of staff. Among the most significant of these were: that were would be no compulsory redundancies as a result of the merger; that the standing of the graduate degrees of the two institutions would be protected; that the pension arrangements of all staff would be protected; that the money necessary to upgrade the salaries and pensions of UP staff would be provided; that the headquarters of the university would be at Coleraine; and that some of the symbols of NUU, including its academic colours and its coat of arms, would be carried forward into the new institution. The latter were described by the NUU chancellor, Lord Grey, as "outward and visible signs of the spirit, and the ethos of the New University of Ulster and of its continuance" (Grey, 1983).

The government's statement in its White Paper, *Higher Education in Northern Ireland: The Future Structure*, was positive and robust, and even rhetorical in places, as it sketched out the blueprint for a new "innovative and energetic", "practical and technological", merged second university for Northern Ireland, that would combine the best qualities of the two parent institutions and extend higher education opportunities widely across Northern Ireland from its campus at Magee College in the north-west at Derry, from the former NUU at Coleraine, from the former UP at Jordanstown near Belfast, and from the College of Art in the centre of Belfast. "The new institution … would be expected to maintain the practical and vocational emphasis of the Polytechnic, and to incorporate into this the strongest academic aspects of NUU. The separate campuses *could* […] *be regarded* as an opportunity to pursue and achieve a geographical spread of provision *rather than as a burden*" [*sic.*], (para. 3.22) (emphasis added).

Whereas the White Paper contained much prescription, it gave scant attention to likely challenges, problems or obstacles. It did, however, acknowledge, if only in passing, that there "would be genuine administrative difficulties in the running of a split site institution" but these were quickly dismissed in an optimistic statement: "[It] seems much too pessimistic to conclude, without much more detailed examination, that these difficulties are

insuperable." Clearly, if these difficulties were to be overcome much would depend on the skill and energy of the leadership of the new institution, and on the motivation and goodwill of the staff of each of the existing institutions. The authors of the White Paper were prescient in anticipating these administrative difficulties, even if they were unwilling to give due weight to them. Planning for the new institution began in earnest in 1983, the year before the appointed day for the merger (1 October 1984). An early and highly significant event was the unannounced tabling, at the Steering Group, of a document authored by Derek Birley, *A University with a Difference*. This 40-page paper was a comprehensive blueprint for the new merged institution. At Coleraine its appearance was greeted by NUU's senior management with dismay and consternation. The polytechnic had seized the initiative and had produced a template for the merger. From the beginning NUU was at a disadvantage arising from its reluctance to accept or engage with the idea of merger. It was pushed and dragged into the merger by governmental *force majeur*.

From its beginnings with *A University with a Difference*, the planning and development of the new institution was posited on achieving integration of the existing human and physical resources across its main sites. It would be a unitary and not a federal institution. Some faculties and departments (later reorganised as schools) would have staff on two or three campuses. The work of pro-vice-chancellors and senior professional officers would span the entire university and would be guided by rigorous strategic planning in the ensuing period. The university's development has taken place against a background of constant change, of declining real resources, of increasing participation rates and of imposed external arrangements for assessing quality both with regard to research and to teaching. In parallel with these changes were on-going developments in curricula and in research, and the ebb or flow in popularity of various subjects.

By the year 2004/05, the University of Ulster had 24 389 full-time equivalent students, and its course provision was the largest and most diverse on the island of Ireland. Many of its courses were franchised to colleges of further and higher education, thus extending its outreach across Northern Ireland, and further afield. It had 1 061 academic staff, and a total of 3 516 academic and non-academic staff distributed across its campuses as follows: Belfast (The College of Art), 155; Coleraine, 1 213; Portrush (Hotel Management and Tourism), 97; Jordanstown, 1 556; Magee College (Derry), 495 (University of Ulster, 2005). It was therefore almost four-and-a-half times larger than its combined parent institutions in 1979/80, and was the eighth most popular university in the United Kingdom in terms of undergraduate applications through UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service) (*ibid*., para. 4.6). It will be noted that the Magee College campus at Derry has experienced significant growth, doing much to remove the sense of grievance, discussed above, that arose from

the decision to locate NUU at Coleraine. The huge expansion of educational opportunities at Magee, along with the redressing of educational disadvantage in the north-west, is one of the most positive outcomes of the merger and it is difficult to see how this could have been achieved apart from the involvement of the polytechnic.

We shall now present the findings of our analysis of the views of 116 members of the academic and administrative staff who were employed by the parent institutions prior to the merger and who continue to be employed at the University of Ulster, 22 years later. Our focus will be on the effects of the merger on the staff of the new institution and on their participation in its processes. It is never possible to eliminate all subjectivities in research, and perhaps it should be repeated that the present authors were members of the academic staff of NUU prior to the merger.

Methodology

In April and May 2006 a survey was administered to all academic and senior administrative staff who had been members of the pre-merger institutions across all campuses of the university. Retired members were excluded from the main study, but their experience was used to develop the questionnaire at the pilot stage. The questionnaire consisted of statements to which answers were given on a five-point Likert scale and were grouped in sections that explored: *a)* the extent to which the merger resulted in an integrated culture; and *b)* the fit between the respondents and the organisation. At the end of the questionnaire, there was a space for free comments that was utilised by 45 of the respondents to express their views. These responses were analysed to extract themes and show the relative weight of the various views that emerged. In addition, 12 semi-structured interviews were carried out with staff who had 30 years, or more, of service thus ensuring that those interviewed had 7 or more years of service in one of the original institutions. Responses were received from all campuses.

In the following section, comments from these interviews will be used selectively to illustrate the quantitative findings. In the reporting of the survey results, the response options are presented as "strongly agree/agree", "uncertain", "disagree/strongly disagree"; percentages have been rounded, and missing responses are disregarded in the calculations. Some key statements are presented in tabular form and are supplemented by other non-tabulated quantitative data in the discussion, as well as by free-text and interview data.

Presentation and discussion of the results

The total population surveyed was 250, and the number of completed questionnaires returned was 116, giving a response rate of 46.4%. Details of their campus location are given in Table 2.

Table 2. **Campus location of respondents to the survey and of those providing free text responses**

Campus	Number of respondents from this campus	Percentage of valid responses	Numbers of staff providing free text responses
Belfast	5	5	3
Coleraine	49	45	14
Jordanstown	50	46	26
Magee	6	5	2
Total	**110**	**101**[1]	**45**

Note: Number of respondents = 116. Six respondents did not identify their campus.
1. Percentages do not add to 100 due to rounding.

Predictably, most respondents were in their 50s or older; 82% of the respondents were academics and 18% were senior administrators; 78% were male and 22% female. Each of the five faculties of the university was represented by the responses as was each of the four main campuses. Forty-two per cent of those responding were lecturers; 31% were senior lecturers and 27% were professors. Twenty per cent had formerly been employed at a different campus to their present location, but their move was not necessarily as a result of the merger. Ten per cent indicated that they had been subjected to involuntary relocation, after the merger.

The extent of integration

Some attitudes towards the merger are shown in Table 3 below. Two-thirds of the respondents indicated that they thought that NUU was unviable at the time of the merger. A similar proportion now fully support the merged institution – leaving about one quarter who do not. A substantial minority (44%) believe that the merger was a takeover by the Ulster Polytechnic, and over one-third still harbour regrets about the merger. It is apparent that feelings about the merger are still mixed, and that by no means all the respondents support the merged institution, even though they have been members of it for more than 20 years. A large majority (83%) believe that there are still perceptible differences of culture between campuses, and almost two-thirds consider that their pre-merger institution was "a happier place" than the present institution. According to additional untabulated responses, 60% believe that NUU should have been located in Derry, reflecting the deep controversy in the 1960s about

Table 3. **Retrospective attitudes towards the merger**

	Strongly agree/ agree (%)	Uncertain (%)	Disagree/strongly disagree (%)
I was opposed to the merger at the time	41	20	39
I now fully support the merged institution	62	14	24
The merger was a takeover by the Ulster Polytechnic	44	17	39
NUU was unviable at the time of the merger	66	18	16
I have no regrets about the merger	42	24	34
I am nostalgic about my pre-merger institution	33	30	37
My pre-merger institution was a much happier place than the University of Ulster	62	22	16
There are perceptible differences of culture between campuses	83	11	6

Number of respondents = 116.

the location of the New University of Ulster. Asked which campus has gained most from the merger, the rank order emerges as Magee, Coleraine, Jordanstown and Belfast.

In the open-ended comments at the end of the questionnaire, there was a wide range of views about the implementation of the merger. Most of those who provided these optional responses were based at Jordanstown (UUJ). Several themes emerged from the comments of Jordanstown-based respondents whereas the comments of Coleraine-based respondents were general and divergent. Several respondents suggested that the main reason for the merger was to resolve the problem that NUU had been "built in the wrong place" and expressed the view that "the merger was a successful rescue for Coleraine". Some Jordanstown respondents said that the Ulster Polytechnic had "bailed out Coleraine and continues to do so by teaching more students with the result that [Jordanstown] staff have less opportunity to do research". It was suggested that the policy of sustaining Coleraine might be difficult in the long term, and that in the interim, it had held back some aspects of the development of the University of Ulster (UU). There were also suggestions of asset-stripping: "Jordanstown courses were discontinued to support Coleraine courses; science was removed from Jordanstown to support Coleraine." There was a view from Jordanstown that that campus had suffered over the years because of the merger: "We are the 'cash cow' and seem to be getting little benefit from major departmental initiatives." A number of respondents claimed that the merger had been to the detriment of UP and some believed that if the merger had not taken place "the Poly would now be a university anyway". In fact, in 1992, all British polytechnics in Great Britain were upgraded to university status, and allowed to grant degrees. Some respondents drew attention to what they saw as detrimental implications of the merger from the standpoint of their career progression and in particular for "staff previously successful in the Ulster Polytechnic but who

were not, or have not since been, heavily involved in research": "If I had not already achieved a [principal] senior lectureship I might not have achieved it in UU." Another commented: "The matching of senior lecturer to senior lecturer in the two systems was not equal to the responsibilities that existed."

The free responses, as with the quantitative data, reveal the lack of a sense of corporate identity among this group of long-serving academic and administrative staff. Comments were made to the effect that "UU is a hybrid but the two cultures have never assimilated. It is still an arrangement of convenience and is under performing because the mechanisms for motivating, rewarding and engaging with staff are lacking. Its potential is still not realised." This view was echoed by a respondent who said that the merger was "potentially positive for both institutions, but this potential was not fully achieved. The integration of the former NUU and UP cultures proved more difficult than might have been anticipated at the time".

The person-organisation fit

Each of the parent institutions had its own culture at the time of merger, a culture that would be impacted by the many radical changes flowing from the absorption of that institution into the University of Ulster. Table 4 below illustrates staff opinion on various matters in relation to management, the teaching-research balance and the implications of being a multi-campus institution covering a wide geographic area. It should be remembered that the period since 1984 has seen the introduction of many new approaches into the British university system, and in particular to governance and to research selectivity, referred to below. Those changes have also impacted on the University of Ulster and will, inevitably have made it difficult for respondents to

Table 4. **Management, research and logistics within the "new" institution**

	Strongly agree/ agree (%)	Uncertain (%)	Disagree/strongly disagree (%)
The management style of the Ulster Polytechnic was transferred to the University of Ulster	62	12	26
Management has to be tough because of neo-liberal trends	16	29	55
There is too much emphasis on research in UU	48	22	30
Research was relatively unimportant in my subject pre-merger	35	26	39
Being a multi-campus institution enables the UU to achieve economies of scale	8	21	71
The UU is inefficient because it is a multi-campus institution	67	17	16
Travelling between campuses is tiring and stressful	84	9	7

Number of respondents = 116.

make comparisons between their former institution and their present working setting. Most respondents considered that the Ulster Polytechnic's management style was transferred to the University of Ulster. Many respondents perceived the present management style of the university to be more top-down and less participative than is necessary within the current neo-liberal scenario. The research literature on mergers argues that firm management techniques and clear reporting relationships, as well as enlightened personnel policies and good communication channels between management and staff, are necessary for the implementation of a successful merger.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the contrasting contributions of its four vice-chancellors to the development of the University of Ulster and to its ambiance during their tenure, though they differed significantly. Sir Derek Birley was followed in 1991 by Sir Trevor Smith who was succeeded in 1999 by Professor Gerry McKenna. He, in turn, was followed in 2006 by Professor Richard Barnett. Each vice-chancellor has interpreted the mission of the university in his own way, within the context of prevailing government policy, resource constraints and opportunities. Two national higher education policy initiatives, among many lesser ones, were to have a formative and continuing influence on the university. The first of these was the Jarratt Report (CVCP, 1985), published the year after the merger. The second was the new approach to research selectivity foreshadowed by Sir Keith Joseph's enthusiasm for selectivity, as interpreted by the University Grants Committee. The Jarratt Report impelled radical management change across the entire higher education landscape of the United Kingdom, and indeed it could be argued that some features of the University of Ulster would have developed in any case even without the merger. It advocated increased power for the chief executive, the use of output measures, and decreased reliance on informal processes and consensus management. Referring to research selectivity, the vice-chancellor's *Report to Court* for 1985/86 expressed Sir Derek's apprehensions about "the possible distortion of our destined role when we had hardly begun to implement our development plan … [We were] somewhat apprehensive about being delivered into the hands of well-meaning metropolitan dilettantes trying out a new gimmick" (Birley, 1991, p. 141). From these early beginnings the influence of the Research Assessment Exercice (RAE) increased inexorably, particularly during the decade from 1996 to 2006, and shaped the research policy and priorities of the university. For some Jordanstown staff, who had never aspired to be active researchers, the RAE would be a baneful policy driver that would distort the development of the university and deny them the promotion that they would otherwise have expected. At Coleraine a higher proportion of staff were research active and the university's strong impetus towards high profile RAE submissions provided them with a highly supportive environment in which to develop their research interests. Slightly over one-third of the respondents considered that research was not very important in their

pre-merger institution, (perhaps not surprising in pre-RAE days), and almost half thought that there is an over-emphasis upon research within the University of Ulster. These points will be discussed further below.

Henceforth in the 1980s and 1990s, the direction of national higher education policy led towards increasingly tough management, to cope with the demands of audit, regulation and financial stringency. In light of the changes precipitated by Jarratt it is impossible to distinguish between developments that arose as a result of the merger and those that reflected national policy for higher education; but many respondents in the present study nevertheless appear to attribute the new style of management to the merger even though it has long since become a nation-wide trend.

Among our respondents there was widespread rejection of the proposition that the University of Ulster, with its widely dispersed campuses, can deliver economies of scale: in fact, the merger is blamed for inefficiency, and inter-campus travel is experienced as exhausting and stressful. The authors of the 1982 *Future Structure* White Paper therefore stand accused of having been unjustifiably sanguine, and patently unrealistic, in their comments about the difficulties that would arise from providing a wide geographical spread of course provision. Undoubtedly, the university does provide, and has greatly extended, educational opportunities, and it is particularly well-known for its work in recruiting students from disadvantaged social backgrounds. It would have been impossible to build up the Magee campus without the involvement of staff from other campuses. However, this imposes a heavy cost upon staff. The need to travel between campuses, and the fragmented nature of dispersed academic and administrative staff groups has been, and remains, a burden and a serious impediment to the development of the university's mission.

In the open-ended responses, several staff recorded comments about the change of emphasis in the polytechnic from teaching, where research had been largely optional, to the new world of the University of Ulster where "it is more the other way round". They applied this to their career chances: "Promotion is much easier, it seems to me, if you spend your time doing research rather than, say, developing your teaching or working as a course director." Another wrote: "In UU, no research, no promotion." One respondent considered that promotion at Jordanstown was "negligible" following the merger. Many expressed very positive views about the work done at the former UP. A representative comment is: "The Poly was excellent at catering for what it was designed to accomplish." With regard to institutional vision and management, the view was expressed that "Jordanstown had a more sharply defined sense of vision and strategic direction than has been evident [at UU] for most of the last 22 years". There was a shared view that the merger had been for the benefit of Coleraine and had resulted in significant costs for Jordanstown. "We went from being an excellent poly[technic] focussed on vocational education to a mediocre university which

pays lip-service to teaching and learning and only rewards research." "The relevance we had been proud of on educational grounds went out the window." In respect, then, of the teaching-research balance, many respondents felt that the person-organisation fit no longer suited them after the merger, and this feeling had increased even after two decades.

Some respondents commented on NUU. The view was expressed that it was "built on a classical university ethos" and, referring to the fact that NUU deans were elected by academic staff, that there was "no stability in management – a feature that led to amateurism". The first vice-chancellor, Professor Alan Burges, a renowned biologist and an Australian, was "quiet, shy and unobtrusive", but "a scholar and a gentleman". At first NUU "did very well: in the early 1970s, 30-40% of the students came from Great Britain, but this contingent disappeared largely as a result of the Troubles". Then NUU "trod water and finally went backwards". Its tone was characterised as "collegial and pleasant with an excellent social life which never totally picked up again after the merger". The employers were "caring and friendly", but after the merger a "collegial administration was replaced by managerial professors and deans appointed by the Vice-Chancellor, which was not necessarily cost-saving because of the extra layers of bureaucracy". Some departments, like History, found an excellent match between colleagues on each campus, a synergy which was maintained in the merger as evidenced by the fact that they achieved a 5 in the 1996 Research Assessment Exercise. This goodness of fit, however, was unusual. Though some Jordanstown schools, such as Built Environment, achieved considerable salience within their field, these schools were usually located only on one campus, and many cross-campus schools remained unevenly balanced in terms of their research capability.

The Ulster Polytechnic was characterised as a mainly teaching, "technical" institution with a service approach. One respondent reported that the government's decision that the location of the university's headquarters and the vice-chancellor's office were to be at Coleraine "upset colleagues [at Jordanstown] enormously – the symbolism was distasteful to them". However, the University of Ulster "had a pioneering zeal – a 'new world' feel – about it", and a vice-chancellor [Sir Derek Birley] who "had a knack of getting down among the troops and encouraging or thanking them". One respondent recounted the astonishment of a hierarchically-minded dean from Coleraine who came to visit him when he was a young member of staff in Jordanstown, and found Derek Birley comfortably ensconced in his office having an informal chat with him. But the founding vice-chancellor was also "a strong firm leader with a standing committee of senior colleagues who formed a constant presence with a style of management that was already 'modern'. … The VC had to approve you and support you and regard you as effective, as demonstrating managerial competence and supporting the chief executive."

Conclusion

In an earlier section of this paper, four categories of merger were presented (Pritchett, 1985). It could be argued that at various levels, they all apply to the merger under discussion. The concept of *organisational rescue* is clearly relevant to the NUU which had failed to achieve its growth targets, in part because of its peripheral location, the onset of the "Troubles" which discouraged applicants from outside Northern Ireland, and the inhibitions to course planning and innovation that resulted from the quinquennial planning system operated by the University Grants Committee. *Collaborative merger* is exemplified by departments like History where successful research synergy came about. The whole merger was initially a *contested combination* so far as the NUU Court was concerned, and this was manifested in its reluctance to surrender its royal charter. The notion of *raid* certainly applied to courses that were moved from one campus to another in order to shore up weak recruitment or to consolidate departments. The merger was a conglomerate one (Pritchard, 1998), in which some highly disparate fields of study were involved. There was only partial cultural compatibility between the two institutions, and the main fault line lay in the importance attributed to research. Some academic staff whose training and interests may not have been conducive to research continued to believe that they were at an insuperable disadvantage in a promotion scenario where research had become centre-stage. As is the case in most universities, management had failed to develop and implement promotion policies to reward excellence in teaching commensurate with excellence in research. This has, however, been done in recent promotion rounds, and may lead to more equity.

One could argue that the pre-merger polytechnic demonstrated all four elements of Harrison's organisation ideology. There was certainly a striking *power orientation* in which it assiduously cultivated relationships with the government Department of Education, pumped it for money and worked its way up the "academic ladder", moving from "college" to "polytechnic", and eventually to "university". There was a *role orientation* in which senior managers were appointed rather than elected, and were forged together into a tightly managed, stable and highly focused team. There was a *task orientation* in that academic managers were flexible and entrepreneurial in seizing opportunities (*e.g.* by moving towards providing degrees) to develop new courses and to respond constructively to organisational threats. And there was a *person orientation* that inhered particularly in the polytechnic's rector, Derek Birley. Several respondents spoke of his outstanding management skills and shared anecdotes that illustrated his ability to make staff feel valued. This personal aspect of the "Gifted Leader" is often neglected in merger analysis. It is, however, considered by Cartwright and Cooper (1996, pp. 20-21) who cite

the following as one of several motives for merger: "to satisfy the needs of an individual or small group of individuals, […] to enhance or renew credibility, […] to exercise power and flex their muscles by empire building".

Respondents from both institutions spoke positively about management-staff relations in their former settings but it is possible that the elapsed time, like distance, has "lent enchantment to the view". It appears, however, that these positive memories may stem, at least in part, from different sources: in UP from the personality and management style of Derek Birley, and at NUU from "horizontal" collegiality, reflecting its smaller, more intimate scale and its consensus-building structures. The enormous effort required to develop the University of Ulster has perhaps led to a loss of the person orientation, but attempts are now being made to recreate this. As retiring staff are replaced, and as national policies seem set to restore a more appropriate balance between teaching and research, the teaching-research fault line may become less sharp than of recent times.

The present study, with its 22-year retrospective view, shows that a much longer time is needed for a merger to achieve a corporate unity than the merger's architects, the civil servants and politicians of the Department of Education could have anticipated. As indicated above, they acknowledged that there "would be genuine administrative difficulties in the running of a split site institution" but cautioned that "[it] seems much too pessimistic to conclude… that these difficulties are insuperable". The track record includes factors such as the steady development of the university over more than 20 years; its significant expansion at Magee College in Derry; its established role as a major higher educational institution; and the strength of its contribution to the educational, social, cultural and economic life of Northern Ireland. These have well-justified the ambitions of its planners, and reflect the commitment of its academic, administrative and support staff, and the achievements of its students. The difficulties and challenges have proved not to be *insuperable*. But, inevitably, some difficulties and challenges remain *intractable*. The workaday realities of its distant campuses, its split sites and fragmented academic groupings impose heavy financial costs, reduce synergies, erode job satisfaction, and impose additional burdens and costs on staff.

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From Public University Dominance to Private University Policy Initiatives in Nigeria: The Push and Pull Factors

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This study evaluated the precipitating and debilitating factors that occurred in the emergence and growth of the private university system in Nigeria. Three research questions guided the analysis and examined enrolment patterns in seven pre-2003 private universities, students' preferences for enrolment and the factors that encouraged and discouraged their emergence and growth in Nigeria. Data was gathered from published documents, research reports, government releases, memos, newspapers and the Internet and then analysed qualitatively, using tables and simple percentage computations. The study found that the private university system, having suffered an initial setback in the 1980s, has renewed success today because of the obvious failure of the public university system to adequately address multiple problems such as access, quality, funding, strikes, cultism and stability of the academic calendar – which the private system has been able to overcome more effectively. However, it was noted that the private system is prohibitively expensive for the majority of qualified but indigent prospective applicants. The study recommends, in addition to special scholarship programmes, the design of a special student aid programme, accompanied by a traceable and institutionalised repayment system based on models found in certain developed countries.

Introduction

A glance at the African scene

The emergence of private universities in Africa is a relatively new phenomenon. In Africa, until recently, all higher institutions were publicly owned (Ajayi, 1990). This was linked to the ethos inherited from the Colonial Government after World War II that social services were the responsibilities of the state and that private higher education could be very expensive and could not compete effectively with the public sector.

However, things began to change across Africa in the 1990s. Sanyal (1998) reported governments encouraging recognition of the private sector's role in providing higher education in Tunisia in the following words: "The encouragement of the participation of the private sector is becoming indispensable, along with the preparation of a legal framework for private higher education so as to respond to the need for pedagogical and financial diversification."

From non-existence in the late 1980s, private university education has continued to spread across Africa since the 1990s. Altbach and Teffera's (2003) study showed that private universities have emerged in many countries in Africa. Subostzky (2003) also reported a rapid proliferation of universities in South Africa as a result of the activities of both local and international providers, mainly from Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

In Tunisia, legal recognition was given to private higher education and in 2000, the total enrolment in higher educational institutions stood at 207 000, of which 3 500 were enrolled in 6 private higher institutions (licensed).

In Zimbabwe, private universities started in March 1992 and by 2001, 1 681 students were enrolled in the 4 private universities. These included Africa University (owned by the United Methodist Church). Solusi University (sponsored by the Seventh-Day Adventist Church), the Catholic University in Zimbabwe and Arrupe College (an exclusively Jesuit College affiliated to the University of Zimbabwe). All these universities are mission-supported, as is the case in Kenya where, apart from 7 national universities and 17 private universities with either a full or an interim charter, all are backed by religious organisations. A single exception is the United States International University.

The Nigerian scene

The Nigerian Constitution (1979) demarcates certain issues into the exclusive and concurrent legislative lists (the exclusive legislative list applies exclusively to the federal government and the concurrent legislative list is shared by the federal and state governments). During the 13 years of military rule in Nigeria (1966-1979), the establishment of universities was the exclusive right of the Federal Military Government which had taken over all universities in 1975. The policy decision to take over universities was validated by Military Decree No. 46 (1977). The decree prohibited the establishment and ownership of universities by any state government, voluntary agencies or private persons. It explained further the constitutional transfer of education from the exclusive legislative to the concurrent legislative list by which state governments and private individuals (or groups) were allowed to establish universities. A change came after a suit at the Supreme Court in 1983 ruled in favour of private interests' rights to establish universities in Nigeria. Within 6 months, 26 private universities emerged on the scene. However issues of quality, planning and funding were not addressed (Aliyu, quoting Beaver, 2004).

The proliferation of private universities in the early 1980s and the possibility of adverse implications for the quality of education prompted a series of government interventions. This culminated in the promulgation of the Private Universities Abolition and Prohibition Decree No. 14 of 1984 which abolished all existing private universities in order to restore some order in the then chaotic university education sub-sector. We view the banning of these private universities (including the nearly nascent National Open University) as a retrograde step for the system in Nigeria. The system, although suspended by military decree in 1984, was restored by another military regime in May 1999 which licensed the first set of three private universities. From 1999 to the writing of this report, many more private universities have emerged (24 by 2006) but enrolment in them has been slower than enrolment in the public universities probably because of cost, space, and paucity of accredited programmes and staffing situations.

In this study we intend to examine the "push" factors (that have encouraged) and the "pull" factors (that have discouraged) the growth of private university education in Nigeria. We shall also review the enrolment situation in these universities with regard to their carrying capacities, preference patterns in University Matriculation Examinations (UME) applicants or candidates and various factors that have created unique opportunities for the growth of private universities in the education sub-sector in contemporary Nigeria. Finally, the study projects into the immediate future and recommends the way forward.

Table 1. **List of approved private universities in Nigeria, 2006**

No.	University	Registration no.	Date of licensing
1	Igbinedion University, Okada	01	10 May 1999
2	Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo	02	10 May 1999
3	Madonna University, Okija	03	10 May 1999
4	Bowen University, Iwo	04	31 July 2001
5	Covenant University, Ota	05	12 February 2002
6	Pan-African University, Lagos	06	12 February 2002
7	Benson Idahosa University, Benin	07	12 February 2002
8	ABTI-American University, Yola	08	28 May 2003
9	Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo	09	7 January 2005
10	Al-Hikmah University, Ilorin	10	7 January 2005
11	Bingham University, Enugu	11	7 January 2005
12	Caritas University, Enugu	12	7 January 2005
13	CETEP City University, Lagos	13	7 January 2005
14	Katsina University Katsina	14	7 January 2005
15	Redeemers University, Mowe	15	7 January 2005
16	Lead-City University, Ibadan	16	9 June 2005
17	Bells University of Technology, Badagry	17	9 June 2005
18	Crawford University, Igbesa	18	9 June 2005
19	Wukari Jubilee University, Wukari	19	9 June 2005
20	Crescent University, Abeokuta	20	9 June 2005
21	Novena University, Ogume	21	9 June 2005
22	Renaissance University, Enugu	22	9 June 2005
23	University of Mkar, Mkar	23	9 June 2005
24	Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji Arakeji	24	6 March 2006

Source: National Universities Commission, published in *The Guardian* (2006a).

Data presentation

Research question 1: What is the enrolment structure of private universities in Nigeria?

Table 2 shows enrolment in the first seven universities that started up prior to the October/November 2005 academic session. The total capacity for all 7 universities was 28 539 students, and the 2006 total enrolment in these universities was 19 740 students. Therefore during this period, only 68.8% of the available projected spaces were filled, leaving the remaining 31.2% vacant.

Also, the analysis of the enrolment pattern of each of these 7 institutions reveals that 3 universities (numbers 1, 4 and 5) enrolled less than half of their capacity while numbers 2, 3 and 6 were close to full enrolment, and number 7 exceeded its enrolment target.

Table 2. **Enrolment structure in private universities in Nigeria, 2006**

No.	Name	Current enrolment	Date of establishment	Capacity[1]	% enrolment	Difference	% under enrolment/ over- enrolments
1	Madonna University, Okija	4 824	10 May 1999	9 853	48.9	–5 029	
	–51.0						
2	Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo	3 609	12 May 2002	4 075	88.5	–466	–11.4
3	Igbinedion University, Okada	3 313	10 May 1999	3 465	95.8	–152	–4.1
4	Benson Idahosa University, Benin	1 916	12 February 2002	4 175	45.9	–2 259	–54.1
5	Pan-African University, Lagos	121	12 February 2002	870	13.9	–7.49	–86.0
6	Bowen University, Iwo	1 759	31 July 2001	2 090	84.1	–331	–15.8
7	Covenant University, Ota	4 198	12 February 2002	4 020	104.4	+178	+4.4
	Total	19 740		28 539	68.8	8 244	

1. Capacity is the total number of students that a university can conveniently accept with regard to the human and material resources available.

Source: NUC (2005a).

Research question 2: What were the selection criteria and the preference pattern of UME candidates for these private universities in the 2005 admission season?

Table 3. **Preference pattern of University Matriculation Examination (UME) candidates for private universities, 2005**

Rank	Name of University	% Share	No. of UME applicants to university
1	Covenant University, Otta	30.78	1 125
2	Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo	24.38	891
3	Madonna University, Okija	22.38	818
4	Igbinedion University, Okada	8.80	323
5	Bowen University, Iwo	6.13	238
6	Benson Idahosa University, Benin	6.05	221
7	Redeemers University Lagos	1.12	37
8	Ajayi Crowther University, Oyo	0.03	1
9	ABTI-American University, Yola	–	Nil
10	Caritas University, Enugu	–	Nil
11	Al-Hikmat University, Kastina	–	Nil
12	CETEP University, Yaba	–	Nil
13	Bells University of Technology, Badagry	–	Nil
14	Crawford University, Igbesa	–	Nil

Source: NUC (2005b).

From Table 3, only one university (Covenant) had full subscription to date and the largest number of UME applicants with 1 125 students (or 30.8% of the total). This was followed by Babcock University with 891 students (or 24.4% of the total) and then Madonna University with 818 applicants (or 22.4%). In all, for 2005, only 3 654 candidates (just 0.4%) opted for a private university out of 913 862 that applied for admission to all Nigerian universities, even though there were only 147 323 places for the academic year. This may be due to the public perception of the quality of infrastructure, equipment, personnel policy and discipline in the institutions.

Research question 3: What were the "push" and "pull" factors in the development of private sector participation in higher education in Nigeria?

Generally, two factors account for the necessity for private sector participation in university education, and these are listed by James (Sanyal, 1998) as follows:

- excess demand for higher education when the absorptive capacity of the public system (free or subscribed) is less than the demand for places;
- diversity of learning needs to satify, and heterogeneity in candidates' preferences for content and method because of religious, linguistic, cultural and ethnic reasons on one hand, and their need for special skills among enterprises on the other.

As far as Nigeria is concerned, the "push" factors include absorptive capacity of the public university system that is further burdened with too frequent policy changes, high secondary level output, declining funding patterns, frequent staff and student strikes, increasing student cultism (clashes, often extremely violent, between secret cults throughout the tertiary educational sector), and many other difficulties that have paralysed the public system.

The "pull" factors include, among others, the generally high level of poverty in Nigeria and the high cost of private university education. Yet bursary or loan facilities for those qualified and able prospective students seeking to acquire quality university education are limited.

These "push" and "pull" factors are more closely examined below.

The "push" factors

Absorptive capacity of the Nigerian university system and opportunities created for private universities

The shortfall in the capacity of public universities in Nigeria in the last 15 years has reached 25%. This is not a problem peculiar to Nigeria; in

Colombia, Hernandez and Revelo (2003) reported that the number of applicants stood at 236 000 during the early 1980s and by 2000, it had increased to 582 000. The insufficiency in available places in state-owned higher education institutions led to a considerable growth in the private sector. By 1997 in Colombia, enrolment in private higher education reached 67.8%. In Nigeria also, the yearly accumulation of unabsorbed university-age candidates became a problem. By the 1995/96 academic session, the public university system could admit only 7.3% of the total applicants. This happened to be the lowest rate of admission into the university system as a proportion of applications since the establishment of the Joint Admissions and Matriculation Board in 1978. This massive denial of spaces increased the need to establish private universities, which began in 1999.

Table 4 shows the pattern of demand and supply of places in Nigerian Universities.

Table 4. **Demand and supply of university places in Nigeria, 1990-2005**

Session	UME applications	UME admissions	% admissions	% unmet demand
1990/91	287 572	48 504	16.9	83.1
1991/92	388 270	61 479	15.4	84.6
1992/93	357 950	57 685	16.1	83.9
1993/94	420 681	59 378	14.1	85.9
1994/95	–	–	–	–
1995/96	412 797	37 498	7.3	92.7
1996/97	376 829	79 904	16.8	83.2
1997/98	419 807	72 791	17.3	82.7
1998/99	321 368	78 550	24.4	81.2
1999/2000	418 928	78 550	18.8	81.2
2000/01	467 490	50 277	10.7	89.3
2001/02	842 072	95 199	11.3	88.7
2002/03	994 380	51 845	5.21	94.79
2003/04	1 046 950	105 157	10.04	89.96
2004/05	893 000	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
2005/06	913 862	147 323	16.12	83.88

Sources: FOS (various years), JAMB (various years), NUC (2005b), Oyebade (2005).

Policy changes in higher education and opportunities created for private universities

The *National Policy on Education* (NPE) was first published in 1977 and later revised in 1981; the publication was further revised twice, in 1998 and 2004. From 1981 to 1997, university education was solely directed and administered by the government. Only federal and state governments established and ran universities. A shift in policy became noticeable in 1998. The NPE (Federal

Republic of Nigeria, 1998), Section 6, subsection 53 stated that "voluntary agencies, individuals and groups shall be allowed to establish universities provided they comply with minimum standards laid down by the Federal Government of Nigeria". Hence the NPE reflected constitutional provisions that first appeared in 1979 and the component of Decree 9 of 1993 on private sector involvement in the establishment of universities and other levels of higher education.

The National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS), which the Obasanjo administration (1999-May 2007) established for the purpose of reforming all sectors of the economy, identified education as one of the sectors that had to be reformed. One of the policy thrusts of NEEDS was to "provide an enabling environment and stimulate active participation of the private sector, civil society organisations, communities and development partners in educational development". The National Universities Commission (NUC) has vigorously pursued this to the extent that it has over 100 applications with its Standing Committee for the establishment of Private Universities (SCOPU). This committee verifies the level of preparedness of institutions and organisations that have shown interest in establishing private universities. It also verifies claims of proposing organisations/bodies with reference to benchmarks and guidelines used in establishing institutions. SCOPU then conducts on-the-spot assessments of facilities and evaluates the level of preparedness based on visual evidence. The NUC (2005a) approved seven additional private universities, having awarded them the following readiness scores in terms of programme and facilities:

1. Bells University of Technology, 82.8%;
2. Crawford University, 81.6%;
3. Joseph Ayo Babalola University, 80.4%;
4. Renaissance University, 80.8%;
5. Crescent University, 77.1%;
6. University of Mkar, 73.2%;
7. Wukari Jubilee University, 62.7%.

In granting licenses to these universities, the NUC management closely examined SCOPU's report. NUC (2005a) noted: "The proposed universities were the top of the list of over 100 applications currently undergoing processing; the most advanced in terms of readiness for take-off, the most aligned to the priority needs of Nigerians in terms of programme offering and are those that have met the conditions for licensing. It is worth stating that the upper limit of the number of private universities that the National Universities Commission (NUC) is able to cope with in terms of quality assurance is being approached."

Secondary level output and opportunities for private universities

The unprecedented increase in the number of secondary level leavers has created unusual pressure on higher education, in particular, on universities. The enrolment figures in terminal classes, *i.e.* at senior secondary level between 1999 and 2002, increased at varying rates. The total absorptive capacity of the universities was put at 160 000 in 2004 and 147 303 in 2005 (Okebukola 2004, 2005). The statistics of secondary level output from 1999 to 2003 are presented below.

Table 5. **National enrolment statistics of terminal class and applications**

Year	Enrolment in terminal class	% annual increase	Applications
1999	511 328	–	–
2000	571 089	11.68	418 928
2001	622 248	8.95	467 490
2002	648 123	4.15	842 072
2003	791 123	22.06	893 000

Sources: FOS (2001), Federal Ministry of Education (2003a, 2003b).

Table 5 shows that there has been an annual increase in the number of students graduating from secondary level. When we compared the figures of prospective applicants to the universities between the years 1999 and 2003 and the number of actual applications for university education, they showed that the number of applicants doubled between the 2001 academic session and the 2002 session, when the total was 842 079 applications. This implies that those who were not admitted the first year re-applied massively for admission to the universities the following year. Also, in 2005, the Joint Admissions and Matriculations Board (JAMB) record of applications to the country's 150 polytechnics, monotechnics and colleges of education was just 150 000, thus increasing the number of applications for UME courses or programmes. The percentage increases in the output pattern of secondary level graduates have been steady and also significant. These increases constitute one of the factors that have encouraged the growth of private university education, as parents who have the means switch automatically to the private university alternative instead of waiting fruitlessly for spaces in the vastly oversubscribed public system.

Decline in public funding of education

The education system in Nigeria (from primary to tertiary) has experienced unprecedented growth over the years. In fact, the growth and expansion at tertiary level has defied all projections. The NUC (Saint, Hartnett and Strassner, 2003) reported that the Nigerian Federal University System

grew by 12% annually during the 1990s and totalled 325 299 students by 2000. Ilusanya (2007), computing from NUC records, reported that the total number of students in 25 federally funded universities (excluding the National Open University) had risen to 442 864 and that of state universities to 265 166 at the end of 2005. With expansion uncontrolled, the cost of running the federal university system totalled USD 210 million in 1999. The recurrent allocation per university student in the federal system fell from USD 610 to USD 360 between 1990 and 1999 (Saint, Hartnett and Strassner, 2003). Balami (2004) reported that unlike other federal subsystems, the education sector tends to be allocated a small proportion at sub-national government (state and local) budget level. The federal government's continued inability to fund the educational system, which it had allowed to expand freely, began to show in the amount of funds made available to a rapidly expanding sector over successive years.

Table 6. **Education sector share of federal budget, 1989-2003 in NGN millions**

Year	Annual budget	Allocation to education	% total
1989	30 107 .0	1 941.7	6.45
1990	40 660. 7	2 204 .7	5.45
1991	38 665. 9	1 787.6	4.62
1992	52 036 .4	2 392.9	4.00
1993	111 616.5	7 999.1	7.20
1994	69 200. 0	10 283.8	14.86
1995	111 457.5	12 816.4	11.50
1996	121 221.9	15 351.7	10.81
1997	188 089.3	16 841.2	11.53
1998	246 342.4	23 668.1	9.61
1999	249 000.0	27 710.0	11.13
2000	677 510.0	50 660.0	8.36
2001	894 200.0	626 000.0	7.0
2002	n.d.	n.d.	–
2003	765 000.0	13 500.0	1.81

Sources: Federal Ministry of Education (2003b), Arikewuyo (2004), Central Bank of Nigeria (various years).

Table 6 shows that the allocation for education in the federal budget fluctuated greatly between 1989 and 2003. The percentage allocation was at an extreme low in 2003 when the government budgeted 1.81% to education, which was far below the UNESCO recommendation of 26% for developing countries. These decreasing sectorial allocations for education in the national budget also had implications for decreased funding of the higher education sub-sector. As a result, university facilities and infrastructure eventually declined in quality and quantity while appropriate staff could not be hired and

overall system efficiency dropped sharply. Saint, Hartnett and Strassner (2003) noted that efforts to expand enrolments and improve educational quality were severely constrained by shortages of qualified academic staff. Between 1997 and 1999, academic staff numbers declined by 12%, while enrolments expanded by 13%. The NUC's *Monday Memo* of 9 January 2006 confirmed that the universities were still under-funded at this point.

All 26 state universities had a total state government grant of about NGN 35 billion, which compared unfavourably with the NGN 50 billion received by 26 federal universities. The amount for federal universities was still a long way from that required to maintain institutional quality. The government's inability to fund even the existing higher education system and the increasing social demand for university education caused government to re-focus its policy on higher education.

Similarly, in Colombia, the inability of the government to sufficiently fund the existing higher education system was behind the growth of private sector higher education and the proliferation of numerous private programmes and institutions that offer higher education with different levels of quality and relevance (Hernadez and Revelo, 2003). The Government of Nigeria, in its reform efforts and policy thrust, encouraged private sector participation in university education and licensed 24 private universities from the inception of the administration in 1999. This excludes the three that were licensed by the military government toward the end of their tenure in 1999.

The federal government expenditure on education between 1997 and 2003 was below 12% of its overall budgets, the trend being largely downward. The funding predicament of these institutions, which adversely affected their quality, led to the establishment of private universities with the focus on qualitative university education. As funding declined, university environments deteriorated, thus losing public confidence and patronage. The situation was comparable to what happened at lower levels such as basic primary and secondary education; there the erosion of the system's quality and an unfavourable school environment reduced patronage of state schools and opened the way for private institutions to thrive and in some Nigerian states out-number public schools.

Strikes in public universities and opportunities created for private university development

Nigerian universities have become notorious around the world for frequent staff strikes. Ilusanya (2005b) reported on the multiplicity of labour Unions in the university system, which often engage in what might be described as strike competition arising from parity and disparity' in issues relating to wages, salaries, allowances and conditions of service within the

system. Okebukola (2003) lamented the strike situation in Nigerian Universities when he said that for 36 months of closure due to strikes in the period 1993-2005, the country can earn an ignoble gold medal for strikes in universities and a dishonourable mention in the *Guinness Books of Records* perhaps, as the country with the highest cases of university strikes in the world.

The Education Sector Status Report (2003) also confirmed the opinion of Okebukola when it noted that universities were closed for 36 months between 1993 and 2003. This translates to almost four academic sessions. Also, Ilusanya (2005b) reported that in Nigeria, between December 2002 and May 2003, all the public universities were closed by strikes and only privately-owned universities opened for academic activities. Due to the strikes, students in public universities could not know when they would graduate. Many families began to send their dependents to neighbouring countries, where academic calendars were more stable, to acquire university degrees. Okebukola (2003) noted that the strikes that took place in Nigerian universities in 2003 represented a significant loss to the country. Besides the financial setback, the NUC identified the devaluation of the academic qualification, the knowledge and skills deficits, and the loss of overseas scholarships. The social costs included an increase in the rate of student involvement in anti-social activities since the students were otherwise unoccupied, an increase in reported cases of both unwanted pregnancies and deaths of students in motor accidents. The economic cost was paid by the students, the parents, the institutions and the country. Some individuals chose to avoid these costs by moving to private universities. This created a favourable climate in which private universities could flourish.

The strike situation in public universities precluded all admissions to Nigerian universities in the 1993/94 academic session nationwide. In September 2005, when universities should have commenced the 2005/2006 academic session, some universities merged two admission years. The University of Benin did this in 2000 (Ilusanya, 2005b), and the University of Ibadan would not admit candidates for 2005/06 because it had a backlog of 2004/05 students to admit.

Cultism

Cultism is another plague that has created a credibility problem for public universities in Nigeria. This is a situation in which some unofficial, secret student groups unleash terror by killing, raping and maiming innocent students, staff and members of rival groups. The first clubs started in the 1950s and developed into violent secret societies by the 1990's. Olugbile (2005) reported that the situation was so bad that hardly a semester would pass without reports of cult clashes, leaving in their trail shocking tales of

violence, death, maiming, rape, destruction of property and permanent scars on the people's psyche. Ilusanya (2005a) reported that over 33 students' lives were taken between 1986-1996 while at least 7 higher education staff were killed. The analysis carried out by Olugbile (2005) based on 4 newspaper reports of students deaths as a result of cultism showed that between March 2003 and August 2004, 47 students were killed in 13 higher institutions in Nigeria (this figure included deaths occurring in polytechnics). Table 7 shows the names of institutions, period and number of students killed in cult clashes between March 2003 and August 2004.

Table 7. **Deaths from cult clashes in Nigerian higher education institutions, 2003-04**

S/N	Institution	Period	Ownership	No. of students killed
1	Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki	July 2003	Public	6
2	Lagos State University, Ojo	August 2003-2004	Public	5
3	Kwara State Polytechnic, Ilorin	March-August 2003	Public	5
4	Federal Polytechnic, Ilaro	June 2003-January 2004	Public	3
5	University of Ilorin, Ilorin	March 2003	Public	1
6	Osun State College of Technology, Iree	February 2004	Public	2
7	Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Enugu	April 2004	Public	1
8	Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye	June 2004	Public	2
9	The Polytechnic, Ibadan	2003-2004	Public	7
10	University of Ibadan, Ibadan	July 2004	Public	4
11	Federal Polytechnic Kaura Namoda, Zamfara	June 2004	Public	2
12	Lagos State Polytechnic, Isolo	April-May 2004	Public	4
13	University of Port-Harcourt, Port-Harcourt	2003	Public	5
				47 total

Source: Olugbile (2005).

The statistics shows that 47 students were killed within the 18-month period from March 2003 to July 2004. All these happened in public higher education institutions. The intensity of this menace in public higher institutions in Nigeria over the last decade and the seeming failure to find a lasting solution despite strenuous efforts have made many parents deliberately avoid public universities and opt for the better-supervised private system where controls are more stringent.

The "pull" factors

Poverty

There are, however, constraints to the growth of private universities in Nigeria. Despite the presence of university applicants seeking admission, the amount of disposable income available to university education subscribers may have a severe bearing on the choice that parents and students make. From the primary to higher education level, poverty has had a significant influence on school enrolment and patronage. Ekaguere (quoted in Ehiametalor, 2005) reported that when the enrolment data of six-year-olds in school was segregated by level of family income, 83.1% from middle class households and only 21.1% from poor households were enrolled in primary schools. Ehiametalor (2005) investigated factors that might prevent pupils from attending secondary education and 50.3% of the pupils cited financial problems as the major factor. *The Guardian* of 19 August 2004 reported that 89 million Nigerians live on below one US dollar a day and consequently 70.2% cannot afford to send their children to primary school. This leaves 29.8% of families living on above one US dollar a day (NGN 140), according to the Minister of Labour and Productivity. In Nigeria, with its population of 126 million, this translates into about 89 million people living in abject poverty, thereby making Nigeria a country with one of the highest concentrations of poor people on earth.

The poverty factor was also evidenced in the 2005 Country Report of the UK Department for International Development on the state of poverty in Nigeria which showed that 90 million people were living in absolute poverty having access to less than NGN 127 per day (less than one US dollar) (DIFD Nigeria, 2005). This poverty challenge does not affect basic and secondary level enrolments alone but is also affecting the trend of enrolment in private universities. Out of the seven private universities that were operational in October 2005, only one of them was fully subscribed; the remaining six were undersubscribed despite existing for six years. When this situation was compared to the high percentage of unmet demand (see Table 4) in public universities, one might wonder why these applicants did not apply to private universities that were not full. The inevitable conclusion is that the poverty level of the majority of the applicants had made the choice impossible. The policy initiative of the government in licensing more universities is rendered ineffectual; without a corresponding fight against poverty and ensuring economic empowerment for its citizens, measures to address the enrolment and demand crises will fail.

The cost of private university education

Related to the issue of poverty is the cost of private university education. If its cost is far beyond the income level of prospective subscribers, then it becomes a hindrance to the development of private university education. The cost of private university education has been left primarily for market forces to determine and this compares unfavourably with situations in places like the Philippines which has many private universities. Arcelo (2003) reported that in the Philippines there are restrictions on student fee increases in private higher educational institutions. Only 10% of any increase in fees can be retained by private owners of educational institutions. Student bodies must be consulted before increases are announced. Also, 70% of the increase must be allocated for salary increases, while 20% goes towards maintenance and operating expenses and 10% toward investment by the owners. The system in the Philippines allows more students to enrol in private higher education whereas, in Nigeria, some private proprietors of universities are said to exploit prospective applicants, making heavy profits at their expense. The non-regulated fee structures may eventually defeat the purpose of deregulation of university education which was designed to increase access to prospective students. The high cost of private university education, which at present varies between NGN 250 000 and NGN 800 000 per session, may be responsible for the under-subscription noted in the private universities that have opened.

Conclusion

Private university education in Nigeria has been growing steadily from 3 establishments in 1999, to 24 in 2006. It appears that there may be more private than public universities in the near future. Private universities have continued to emerge and grow, benefiting from some of the difficulties experienced by both state and federal universities. The social structure that has continuously placed demand of places far above supply, the changes in government policy, the decline in funding, and the rise in strikes and cultism have created far-reaching opportunities for private universities.

The cost of private university education and the poverty level of the people may eventually become a stumbling block in the growth and consolidation of government efforts. It is therefore necessary for a more effective and workable student aid programme to be designed for those who wish to attend private universities, allowing them to utilise a type of loan facility which has a traceable and institutionalised repayment system. Though some argue against this because of the way the Students' Loans Board became moribund in the 1980s, the lessons learnt from this experience could be used to develop a student aid system that does not suffer from the defects of the former programme. Otherwise, government efforts at widening access

will be a mirage with the combination of the high cost of private education and poverty threatening not only higher education, but also primary and secondary education.

Some modern, though expensive, institutions now operating in Nigeria, such as the ABTI-American University of Nigeria, Yola, have introduced scholarship programmes for the top ten performers both in UME scores entering the institution and in promotion examinations (*The Guardian*, 2006b). We regard this as good practice that should be adopted by other institutions to further improve the already enhanced image of private higher education in Nigeria.

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Accessibility and Equity, Market Forces and Entrepreneurship: Developments in Higher Education in Central and Eastern Europe

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This paper explores four interrelated issues: access and equity, the role and the legitimacy of the emergent, market-driven private sector in higher education, the relationships between reforming public services in general and changing public and private higher education, and entrepreneurialism of the emergent private sector in higher education. The four issues are closely related in those transition countries in which the market orientation of public institutions is strong, and in which new private institutions have considerable share in student enrolments.

Introduction

This paper explores recent developments in Central and Eastern European (CEE) higher education systems from the perspective of four interrelated issues, dealt with in four separate sections.[1] The first issue is access and equity, and the exceptionality of the Polish educational experiences in the last 15 years. Poland is viewed as one of few transition countries where efforts to achieve equitable, accessible higher education in practice have been successful and where actual decrease in inequality of access was achieved. Several hypotheses about why this is an equity success story are discussed. The second issue, closely related to the first one, is the role and the legitimacy of the emergent market-driven private sector in higher education, again with the example of the most dramatic growth of the sector in Poland. Its growth is presented as one avenue to considerably increase access to higher education under conditions of permanent financial austerity at public universities in transition economies. The third issue explored here is the relationship between reforming public services (or between the crisis of the welfare state in CEE countries) and changing public and private higher education, in the context of increasing competition for the scarce public resources available. The social agenda of post-1989 Central and Eastern Europe is discussed, and the various roads to privatisation in education are viewed together with wider global thinking about the privatisation of other social services, including health care and pensions. And the fourth issue is entrepreneurialism of the emergent private sector in higher education, as viewed through the lens of the European Commission's EUEREK project on academic entrepreneurship. It is discussed briefly with reference to Burton Clark's five elements of the "entrepreneurial university" (Clark, 1998, 2004). The four issues are closely related in those CEE countries in which market orientation of public institutions is strong, and in which new private institutions have considerable share in student enrolments. Finally, some tentative conclusions are presented.

Access and equity in Central and Eastern European higher education

This section of the paper focuses on equitable access: the ability of people from various backgrounds to access higher education on a relatively equal basis (Usher and Cervenan, 2005, p. 2). Post-communist transition countries are confronting challenges well-known to affluent OECD countries (related for

example to globalisation and/or Europeanisation, expansion, market forces, financial austerity, public sector reforms, accountability pressures, and new quality assurance mechanisms; see World Bank, 2002; Johnstone, 2003; Johnstone and Bain, 2001; Kwiek, 2003a, 2003b). But they are also, perhaps even more dramatically, confronting a combination of challenges specific to former communist countries in Europe: challenges brought about by an unprecedented passage from elite to mass, and in several instances even to universal higher education, with gross enrolment ratio exceeding 50% for example in Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Slovenia and Ukraine (UNESCO, 2006, p. 120), under conditions of permanent financial austerity; and challenges resulting from the ongoing political and economic transformations toward market economies.

From an international perspective, current efforts to achieve equitable higher education in most former communist countries in practice have not been successful (as the World Bank noted on the countries in Central and Eastern Europe and in Central Asia in general, "since the transition, inequities in learning opportunities have increased" and "enrolment rates are going in the wrong direction", especially below the tertiary level [World Bank, 2000a, pp. 28-30]). Inequities do persist, and inhibitors do exist, some are deeply embedded in social and institutional structures inherited from the communist era; others are organisational and procedural, related to changeable policies and procedures, and can be influenced more easily (see Skilbeck, 2000, p. 3). There are also some new activators, as well as new policy roads leading to more accessible and equitable educational systems. Transition economies are in need of a "knowledge-rich" workforce, and the systems are currently expanding. Despite dramatic changes, however, the enrolment gap between major Western OECD economies and most transition countries has not diminished Within OECD, entry rates into tertiary education are already reaching 70% in Australia, Norway and the United States, and between 70% and 80% in Finland, New Zealand and Sweden; Hungary and Poland are doing exceptionally well with 69% and 70% respectively, but the Czech and Slovak Republics are doing considerably worse, with 33% and 40% respectively (OECD, 2005, p. 242; UNESCO, 2006, pp. 120-124). The question of how to substantially widen access in a relatively equitable manner under conditions of financial austerity in transition economies has been under-researched in the global literature.[2]

The question is why in Poland, in contrast to most other Central and Eastern European and Central Asian transition countries, the post-communist transformation period brought about a significant *decrease* in inequality of access to higher education, in terms of the type I access (*how many*) and, perhaps especially, the type II access (*who*; in equitable systems, the composition of the student body "looks like" society as a whole; see the notion of "educational equity index" as developed by Usher and Cervenan [2005,

p. 14ff])? In Poland, the number of students from disadvantaged, especially rural, communities rose from 2% in 1990, to 10% in 2002 and to 20% in 2005; the total number of students rose from almost 400 000 in 1990 to almost 2 000 000 in 2006 (see OECD, 2006a, 2006b, Youth 2005, 2005).[3] What was at the heart of the Polish educational policy success?

The main hypothesis about the Polish case (which can also be tested in other transition countries) is that the crucial role in these unprecedented access- and equity-related developments was played by market forces, academic entrepreneurialism (mostly teaching-related) and the competition introduced to the Polish educational arena in 1990 and beyond (Kwiek, 2005). The competition has grown tough between private and public providers, between private providers, and between public providers themselves; and the spirit of academic entrepreneurialism has been permeating at least some segments of top public and occasionally private institutions (as Kwiek, 2006b, institutional case studies of Polish universities show). Instead of the enormous competition for free (tax paid) places at public universities, there had appeared in the 1990s new private (initially mostly lower-level) universities and fee-paying places available at public universities for part-time students. Increasingly, there were more students, and especially in the 2000s, they came from disadvantaged social backgrounds. The widening of access and growing equity were accompanied by fee-paying mechanisms, which in 1998 were supplemented by the introduction of student loans, more widespread in the 2000s. Between 1998 and 2005, the total cumulative number of student loans was 268 000, starting with 100 000 in 1998/99, 152 000 in 2000/01 and 198 000 in 2002/03. The rate of increase seems smaller in 2006/07; at the same time, the number of scholarships – which between 1990 and 1998 was in the range of 150 000-180 000 – had increased in 2005 to 573 000, including 348 000 for regular students (GUS, 2006, p. 268; to contrast with the United States, see on loans Johnstone, 2005; and globally, Salmi and Hauptman, 2006). Surprisingly, and importantly, the phenomenon did not occur in other transition countries studied, or its scope was substantially smaller. Poland also witnessed exceptionally high returns from higher education (about 160% of the average earnings in 1998-2004)[4] and relatively small unemployment rates among its higher education graduates (7.9% in 2005, UNDP, 2007, p. 141).[5] However, there were significant costs to these developments which need careful examination: lacking quality control and problems of financing (O'Brien, 2006, p. 18; OECD, 2006b, p. 105ff), and growing conflict between quantitative development/expansion of the system and quality standards, especially in the mid 1990s (OECD, 2006a, p. 14). The Polish expansion should thus be viewed in a comparative context of major OECD economies and selected transition countries to see its successes and limitations. Clearly in terms of growing access in the last 15 years (5 times more students), and the social composition of the student body (10 times more students from traditionally socially disadvantaged, especially

rural, families), Polish higher education has been an interesting case. From a more economic point of view, we realise that the highest returns on investment in human capital are at early childhood and school levels; the rate of return then declines with the age of a person of any background, and for the higher education and lifelong learning levels it declines more sharply for children from low socio-economic backgrounds (see a report for the European Commission by Wößmann and Schütz, 2006, p. 11). The Polish private sector and fee-paying studies in the public sector, in general, open higher education to new populations of students who invest themselves in their education.

The main hypotheses about the Polish equity (and accessibility) "success story", exceptional among other transition countries, include the following:[6]

1. The key factor determining a substantial increase in equitable access to higher education in the 2000s was *the liberal attitude of the state and its agencies* towards the emergent private sector back in the 1990s. Its dramatic growth and then consolidation was substantial owing to this "policy of non-policy". Case studies from other transition countries show Poland's exceptionality: elsewhere strict laws and regulations quite often abounded. The expansion was also enabled by the exceptional diversification of the system (two-tier degree system, new modes of studies, large sector of vocational higher education), rare in other transition countries where the "elite" ideas seemed to have prevailed.
2. The accompanying crucial factor was the liberal quality assurance mechanisms and licensing and accreditation procedures, as applied to the new private sector at the time of its inception and in the first decade of its operation (1990s). Some deterioration of quality, in the short run, should be viewed as a considerable limitation, however. But it can also be viewed as a temporary cost of opening up the whole system to new segments of society, previously under-represented in higher education.
3. Growing social legitimacy and public recognition of private higher education was another crucial factor: the state has provided no subsidies, and the sector has been fully self-reliant financially. Its growth corresponded to the economic transition to a market economy and the social transition to a market-oriented way of thinking about services (both public and private).
4. A specific form of entrepreneurialism, mostly teaching-oriented, of public higher education was another crucial factor:[7] liberal educational policies allowed introducing large-scale fee-paying studies (and cost-recovery mechanisms) in the underfunded public sector. This limited state intervention – guidance only through an "enabling framework" (Steier, 2003; World Bank, 2002, p. 83) – contributed to the 400% increase in the number of students in the public sector between 1990 and 2005.[8]

5. The structural reform of all levels of education which started in 1997 also played a crucial role in strengthening the trend of increasing equitable access. By 2006 the reform had reached higher education, with an objective standardised "new matura exam" (Polish SAT, upper secondary education certificate) whose results are directly applied by universities in their selection processes.

Poland, contrary to most other Central and East European and Central Asian transition countries, is an *equity "success story"* and can be viewed as an example of good practice for other transition economies in which the enrolment gap with major OECD economies is not decreasing: both the total number of students and the percentage of them with a disadvantaged background (especially in the last five years) have increased in Poland substantially (OECD, 2006a, p. 55).[9]

The decade of biggest changes in enrolments in CEE countries was the 1990s, immediately following the collapse of communism: the increase in access in most transition countries at that time was phenomenal. The starting point in 1989 in terms of gross enrolment rates was below 10% in Albania and Romania, between 10% and 15% in Hungary, Slovakia and most post-Soviet Central Asian republics (Kyrgiz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan), between 15% and 20% in Croatia, the Czech Republic, Macedonia, Moldova and Poland, (as well as Armenia and Georgia), between 20% and 25% in Belarus, Bulgaria, Latvia, Russia, Slovenia and Ukraine – and highest rates were in the two small Baltic countries – Estonia (36%) and Lithuania (28%). After a decade, in 1999, some transition countries already had gross enrolment rates higher than 40%: Estonia (45%), Latvia (46%), Lithuania (40%), Poland (43%) and Slovenia (51%) (Pachuashvili, 2006).

The modes limiting the number of places available in public higher education differ strikingly between Central and Eastern Europe and Scandinavia (plus Ireland, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom) on the one hand, where the selection is done freely by the institutions (in accordance with their capacity or national criteria), and the rest of Continental Europe, including Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands, where there is free access to places in most branches of studies. In new European Union (EU) member countries, the number of places available is limited for all courses through state funding – and increased access (and equity) can be achieved, as in Poland, via private higher education and fee-paying part-time studies in the public sector. Poland and Romania (the two countries with biggest share of private enrolments in Europe) and the new EU Baltic countries have attained the most rapid growth in the number of higher education students in recent years in Europe: between 1998 and 2002, the number of students in the EU25 grew by 16%, while in Romania it was 61%, in Poland 60%, in the three Baltic countries 40% and 57%, and in the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary between 32% and 46% (see Eurydice database, *www.eurydice.org*).

The chronic underfunding of public higher education in transition economies means permanently seeking temporary solutions; some of these market-oriented solutions – *e.g.* cost-sharing in the public sector for fee-paying part-time students, following a full-cost recovery model in the private sector, or the state authorities giving the green light for expending the accredited private sector – subsequently become parts of national policies and legislation.[10] Seeking non-core non-state income on the part of public universities is only beginning to guide institutional policies, and only in some top institutions (see Kwiek, 2006b, institutional reviews for the EUEREK project).[11] At the same time, as education costs have become increasingly shared between governments and students/parents, several transition countries, Poland included, have been successfully experimenting with student loans (see Johnstone, 2003, for an international perspective; and for the World Bank activities in the area in Bulgaria, Hungary and Poland, see Salmi, 2006).

The radical expansion of educational systems has been accompanied by financial austerity, the emergence of market mechanisms in the public sector (previously immune to market forces) and the arrival of private providers. From a global perspective, the transition countries provide relevant insights into ongoing and much wider welfare state reforms, including those towards multi-pillar pension schemes and partially privatised health care, as well as insights into policies of dealing with private providers under conditions of huge social demand for their services.

Higher education systems in countries such as Poland needed deep institutional and structural, changes, accompanied by liberal government policies which could quickly accommodate the increasingly diverse (and previously socially under-represented) student body. In expanding systems, the burden of costs of education was increasingly being shifted from governments to students and parents, leading to sharp national debates on fees, equity and efficiency; this was the case in Poland (globally, see especially Teixeira *et al*., 2006; Salmi and Hauptman, 2006; Marcucci, 2006; Pennel and West, 2005; for the EU views, see EC, 2005b, 2006). The changing relationships between higher education and the state, under conditions of fiscal austerity (see Kwiek, 2006a), have been directing policy choices in education and have provided rationale behind changing educational laws towards more academic entrepreneurialism, more financial self-reliance of public institutions and more private provision of higher education. Public revenues have been too scarce to accommodate the needs of expanding and underfunded public systems (see Williams, 2003; Shattock, 2004, 2005), and systems were "responding to austerity" through partial "cost-sharing" – as in Poland, Russia and Ukraine – (see Johnstone and Bain, 2001; Johnstone, 2003).

Private higher education in transition countries: its role and legitimacy

The role of the private sector in higher education in the countries of Western Europe, in general, remains marginal (for a fuller picture, see Kwiek, 2006e, from which this section draws). Major EU economies, including France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom, do not have significant private sectors. In Central and Eastern Europe, in contrast, private higher education figures prominently, exceeding 10% of total enrolments in Belarus, Bulgaria, Hungary and Ukraine, 20% of enrolments in Latvia, Moldova and Romania, and 30% of enrolments in Estonia and Poland. In 2004, over 700 private institutions (including 300 in Poland, 200 in Ukraine and 70 in Romania) functioned across Central and Eastern Europe. In Russia, private enrolments exceeded 13% and the number of private institutions reached almost 400 (for full data, see UNESCO-CEPES, 2004).

Poland is an excellent example of the successful development of the private sector: both from the equity and access perspective, and, to a large extent and after an initial period until the mid 1990s, that of the quality of teaching. Until the collapse of communism in Poland in 1989, higher education there was fully controlled by the state. The Higher Education Act of 1990 paved the way to developing the private sector in general and the Vocational Higher Education Schools Act of 1997 provided legal grounds for the lower-level vocational private sector. The number of private institutions rose from 3 in 1991 to 250 in 2002, 301 in 2005 and 315 in 2006 (GUS, 2006, p. 20). Since the beginning of the 1990s, the private sector has changed the educational landscape in Poland beyond recognition: in the academic year 2006/07 almost one-third of the 2 million student body (32%) went to private higher education institutions. In recent years they have been developing smoothly but under the increasingly close supervision of the Ministry of Education. They have become a real challenge to public institutions for a variety of reasons, their easy access ranking perhaps highest among the factors (no competitive entrance exams prior to 2005, no competition based on the "new matura" results after 2005). Their increasing number has improved access to the higher education system as a whole. Consequently, gross entry rates into tertiary education in Poland reached 70% in 2003, ranking fifth among the OECD countries (OECD, 2005, p. 242).

Private institutions in transition countries serve a number of functions, some of them positive, and some, unfortunately, negative. Depending on the country, private institutions may provide fair access to affordable higher education but may also lead to the disintegration of the whole sector, especially if tight licensing and accrediting measures are not in place. These institutions continue to be grappling for legitimacy. The initial social acceptance was strongly impacted by the emergence of many of these institutions in a legal vacuum. Their search for social recognition – reflecting the acceptance by the society, the labour market and their state peers – continues. Private institutions

presented the simplest venue towards the expansion of educational systems, which under communist rule were elite. In Poland, the road to the universalisation of higher education was the following: the number of students was 252 000 in 1965, 331 000 in 1970, 470 000 in 1975, 454 000 in 1980 and then dropped to 341 000 in 1985 and 377 000 in 1989 – compared with 1 941 000 in 2006. Owing to the rapid development of the private sector (and the corresponding parallel expansion of the public sector, in both free and fee-paying modes, following suit), in some CEE countries higher education became an affordable product, somehow unexpectedly but in tune with Western European trends towards massification and universalisation. The issue of legitimacy of the private sector, in many cases, boils down to the social acceptance of the fact that it is providing affordable higher education to young people who would have never had a chance to receive it in the closed elite and fully public systems of the former communist countries: this is clearly an equity and access argument. Initially, private institutions found social recognition by opening the door of education to those who under previous conditions were cut off from it. And in knowledge-based societies, being cut off from affordable education can easily lead to social exclusion and marginalisation.

Private institutions are not subsidised by the state in transition economies, except, in some countries, in cases such as subsidised student loans or student stipends, and – to a very limited extent – research.[12] There are also country cases of public subsidies to private universities, *e.g.* Hungary; also some religious private institutions receive public funding, *e.g.* in Poland. In general, private institutions are almost fully subsidised by students who purchase their teaching services. Therefore, unfortunately, the private sector is mostly a teaching sector, and carries out almost no accompanying research, which has tremendous negative impact on the research-related entrepreneurship of the private sector in transition countries (to be discussed below in a separate section).

To a large extent, private institutions derive a strong degree of their legitimacy from their students and families who are willing to pay for their services. In most cases in Poland, being market-driven and consumer-driven in their orientation, private institutions are more flexible to adapt their curricula according to demand, open short-term courses, offer Master of Business Administration programmes, liaise with foreign institutions and offer dual degrees, and provide distance education, part-time weekend education and other modes of learning convenient to the student. Often private institutions monitor the labour market, open career centres for their graduates and introduce explicit internal quality assurance mechanisms. Many follow market mechanisms in their functioning as business units, use public relations and marketing tools to have significant portions of local, regional or national educational "markets", and finally prepare their graduates for living and working in market realities. They also exert a huge impact on academics themselves.

The role of the private sector in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe is bound to grow – considering its ability to adapt to the new societal needs and new market conditions combined with the drastically underfunded and still unreformed public institutions with limited capacities to enroll larger numbers of students. Private institutions represent a wide variety of missions, organisational frameworks, legal status and relations to the established institutional order. Needed are the disinterested analysis of the current (in-transition) state of affairs, largely unexplored so far in international educational research, and conclusions as to how to deal, in theory and in practice, with growing market forces in education, how to regulate privatisation and corporatisation of educational institutions and research activities within ongoing reform attempts, and finally how to accommodate principles of the Bologna Process to local conditions of new EU countries (see Kwiek, 2004).

In Central and East European transition countries, educational business is increasingly private, teaching-focused and market-driven. There is a strong market-driven competition for students among private institutions, and a strong competition for faculty (especially full professors in economics-related areas) between private and public institutions. Transition countries, generally, have to start or continue coping with the rapid massification of their systems, with the number of students being on the rise. At the same time, major Bologna-related documents do not seem to take into account the problem of both the private sector and the market forces in higher education. The overall "revitalisation" of the European integration project through education, and the accompanying production of the new European citizenship through education (see Lawn, 2003), may bring about unexpected effects in transition countries in which welfare state regimes are different, higher education systems and labour markets have their own traditions and which generally are at slightly different stages of economic development. Strong private sector and powerful market forces can be viewed as good examples of significant (but so far neglected) differences between the countries where the Bologna ideas were born and the countries in which these ideas are currently, almost unanimously, implemented. They can also be viewed, as the Polish equity and access success story shows, as examples of how to open up higher education systems to an ever larger and previously under-represented student body, how to reform public education by exposing it to market competition with private education and how to regulate the system under conditions of permanent financial austerity experienced in public education.

Higher education and the public sector in Central and Eastern Europe: increasing competition for scarce resources

The picture of recent transformations in Central and East European higher education systems needs to be complemented with a brief reflection on

reforming the public sector as a whole in these countries (see Kwiek, 2006a, pp. 227-271, chapter on "The University and the Welfare State", and Kwiek, 2008). To put it in a nutshell, state funding for higher education depends on the overall outlook for state finances. Higher education funding in CEE countries, compared with the former EU15, is relatively low: while in major higher education systems (France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom) total private and public expenditure per tertiary student in purchasing power standard in thousand euro units is between 8 and 10 (and for Norway reaching 12, Denmark reaching 13.6, Sweden 14 and Switzerland even 19) – for most CEE countries it is about 3 (Latvia 3.0, Lithuania 3.1, Bulgaria 3.2, Romania 3.4, Poland 3.9) and reaches higher levels only for Slovakia (4.9), the Czech Republic (5.2) and Hungary (7.0). In short, total expenditure per student in most CEE countries is three times lower than in the biggest EU15 economies, except for the Czech Republic, Hungary and Slovakia where it is two times lower (see data for 2001 in EC, 2005a, p. 35). In terms of funding for research and development, CEE countries look considerably much worse; especially in the case where business is funding research.[13] The projections for the future suggest that the tight fiscal environment will continue, if not intensify, in the coming years (as the World Bank realistically observed, "austere budget constraints are not temporary. Ministries of education will face serious fiscal constraints relative to spending pressures for the forseeable future", World Bank, 2000a, p. 43).

Basically, the situation faced by governments in transition economies is that of a zero-sum game: gains in share by one programme (*e.g.* higher education) have to come at the expense of other programmes (see Hovey, 1999). This lose-lose situation is clear in most post-communist transition countries: there are priorities in the transformation processes. The pie to be distributed is very small indeed and it is largely current politics – rather than explicitly formulated long-term government policies – that determine how the pie is cut. Concerning welfare policies in European transition countries (and, by extension, about public universities in government priorities) Bob Deacon notes that "what became immediately evident … was that debates of any kind about social policy became relegated to almost last place in the priority of many of the new governments" (Deacon *et al.*, 1997, p. 92).

Higher education in CEE countries (as elsewhere) has to compete with other forms of state spending, and the costs of other forms of social needs are growing rapidly; the statistics concerning unemployment rates, access to public health care systems, the level of funding accessible to the elderly through existing pension schemes, etc. are alarming. And higher education has not been competing successfully with other programmes over the last decade in most CEE countries; suffice it to see the data on the generally low public support for higher education and often low and still declining funding for research and development, compared with EU15 countries. Higher education, to gain a bigger

share of government funds, would have to compete successfully against other state-funded programmes, regardless of whether taxes are raised (a rather difficult, if not impossible option). As expressed by Giuliano Bonoli and his colleagues researching the welfare state in a European context, "a basic premise of current welfare policy-making is that taxes cannot be raised" (Bonoli *et al.*, 2000, p. 72). Future prospects for increasing public funding on public higher education, including public universities and research and development, are very low indeed.

After the policies of the golden age of expansion (1950-75), European welfare states have been shaped by what Paul Pierson, a Berkeley-based political scientist, termed *politics of austerity* (Pierson, 2001). And the social agenda in post-1989 Central and Eastern Europe, of major interest to us here, changed even more radically: suddenly, the region was exposed to new economic pressures, but also to new market-oriented opportunities which in many cases required better skills and higher competencies from its citizens, often provided by new, vocationally-focused private institutions. While in Western Europe the emergence of the private sector in education is marginal and sometimes seems revolutionary, in most CEE countries it might be even considered as one of the more realistic options available – in the situation of the chronic underfunding of public institutions and, in many instances, their structural inability to face new challenges (with the huge social need to raise the enrolment levels at the forefront).

It is important, I believe, to see higher education policies in the context of larger welfare state policies: higher education is a significant (and most often significantly fund-consuming) part of the public sector and a part of the traditional welfare state that is now under severe pressure, though perhaps under less pressure than its two main parts, healthcare and pensions. In more theoretical than practical terms, these phenomena had their powerful impact on *thinking* about public services, including public higher education, in Central Eastern Europe. The theoretical impact was already translated into changed national legislation in the case of the pensions reform and health care reforms at the end of the 1990s in Poland. To discuss transformations of higher education in CEE countries certainly means to discuss a much wider political and economic process of transformations towards market economies; the accompanying reforms of the public sector seem unavoidable, and higher education figures prominently in this sector. In Poland, bold reforms of the public sector began in the second half of the 1990s, starting with pensions (the introduction of a World Bank-supported multipillar system), healthcare (decentralisation of funding and partial privatisation), and primary and secondary education (decentralisation of funding). Public higher education still remains unreformed, despite changes introduced in a new law on higher education in 2005. Fortunately, without a new law, in the last 15 years, the

dramatic growth of the private sector and the natural competition between private and public sectors in education have changed public universities beyond recognition, and have led to phenomenal growth in accessibility and equity. Despite the lack of structural reforms (and reforms in funding formulas), the "policy of non-policy" in the first decade of the operation of private higher education has led to a regional success.

Academic entrepreneurship in the private sector in Central and Eastern Europe: reflections from the EUEREK project

Concerning the "equity and access" success story of Polish higher education, one might naturally wonder about its entrepreneurialism, especially the entrepreneurialism of new private institutions in connection with apparently notoriously old-style and unreformed public institutions. The results of research in this direction are somewhat surprising: overall, in CEE countries, and in Poland in particular, it is in the public sector of education where islands of academic entrepreneurialism can be found. The private sector is entrepreneurial almost exclusively in teaching, which is just one of several dimensions, and certainly a less important one compared with developments at most entrepreneurial universities in the Netherlands, Spain or the United Kingdom. However, overall, the one-dimensionality of the private institutions (their mostly teaching role) does not have any immediate negative impact on equitable access to them. They are as open to new students as public universities through their part-time fee-paying modes of studies. Let us try to summarise briefly the conclusions about academic entrepreneurialism of private institutions as they have emerged from the EUEREK project (see Kwiek, 2006c, for a theme paper).[14]

Private institutions view themselves as less entrepreneurial than public ones. Their access to research funds (especially public) – which most often determines the appearance of the entrepreneurial culture – is limited. But they are often successful teaching institutions. Their major concern is to survive as they are heavily dependent on student fees and they experience fluctuations in enrolments. Their mission and strategy are self-determined rather than influenced by state policies. The major source of non-core/non-state funding in almost all cases is student fees; no major changes in income structures have been reported in recent years. No major academic risks are taken by staff and institutions, but often financial risks are taken by institutions. Compared with the public sector, few examples of the development of new knowledge from entrepreneurial activities are reported. Likewise, apart from teaching, few examples of other major kinds of dissemination of knowledge are reported. In addition, the number of mechanisms of knowledge transfer/knowledge exploitation is limited. Generally, there is a non-supportive climate for developing knowledge exploitation. But as Shattock and Temple remarked recently, "the contribution of entrepreneurialism to the knowledge society through the

transmission of education to students *financed on a non-core funding basis* should be accorded equal status to that of research" (2006, emphasis mine). The problem with the private sector is that almost all funding (100% in Poland) is non-recurrent non-core funding, and this is where Burton Clark's and Michael Shattock's ideas need to be revisited from a different angle, so that the concept of entrepeneurialism could be fairly attributed, or refused, to private sector institutions (see Kwiek, 2006c, 2006d).

In general, having a "diversified funding base" (the first of Burton Clark's five "pathways of transformation" [Clark, 1998]) does not seem to work for private institutions. Their abilities (and opportunities) to use the "third source" of income, especially (perhaps most welcome) "university-generated" income, are limited. Their high degree of financial dependence on a single source of income (namely, student fees) makes them easily prone to financial problems. In general, being largely teaching institutions, they are not able in practice to compete with public universities for public research funds. Separate units are rarely rewarded (or punished) for their entrepreneurialism and rarely act as separate business units, as is often the case with most successful public entrepreneurial universities. They do not seem to have incentive policies to support their staff in seeking non-core source of income – the income other than student fees. The share of their income from alumni fund-raising, research contracts, patents, endowments or campus operations is negligible. Also there is no major need to keep complicated resource allocation formulas in funding particular departments, or to keep a fair balance between the centre and the units through elaborate top-slicing and cross-subsidising techniques.

The role of the "strengthened steering core" in entrepreneurialism of the private institutions is important. In contrast to public entrepreneurial institutions, the role of faculty participation in central councils is severely reduced. Collegial management is rare, and connections between academics and administrators/management/founders/owners are limited. The centre is constantly dealing with risk whose management and understanding is crucial; and *the* risk, to manage on a daily basis, is the financial one. The role of bringing in resources (through maintaining or increasing the number of students) seems more important than the role of creating a reputation for the private institutions studied. In terms of management structures, as in public entrepreneurial universities, private institutions have powerful centres, strong management groups, usually comprising few administrators. Most private institutions do not use resource allocation procedures to make strategic choices about their future direction. Also no major impact of a new bureaucracy is reported: both the number and the role of development officers, technology transfer experts, special staff managers and fundraising officers are small. The role of strategic committees, so fundamental for managing entrepreneurial universities, seems

minimal. In CEE countries a unique feature is that management in the private sector is dealing, to a large extent, with academics working (in a parallel manner) in the public sector.

The role of "extended developmental peripheries" in private institutions is marginal; new transdisciplinary research centres are sometimes reported but they do not change the character of these institutions, and their existence does not lead to introducing new management styles or new internal resource allocation procedures. They do not form parallel, increasingly powerful university structures. They do not seem to attract new sources of funding; they are not engaged in aggressively seeking new research areas. Also the role of new administrative units, so crucial to the public entrepreneurial institutions studied is marginal by comparison. Most new posts and new units in the public sector are related to new opportunities of research funding, the exploitation of research results, innovation, international off-campus teaching, royalty rights, etc. In the private institutions studied, the need for these units remains small. The balance of power in management is not changed by new peripheral research (or teaching) units. Consequently, at the moment, the extended developmental periphery seems almost absent from the private sector.

Almost all private institutions studied are only marginally involved in research. The competition with public institutions, in the context of the general lack of access (in theory or in practice) to public research funds and to business research funds, means competition for students and their fees. The vast majority of case studies imply that, without competition for funds, entrepreneurial universities would not become entrepreneurial, even though they could be top in their respective disciplines and excellent in research and teaching. Private institutions do not take part in this race for external funding, however. But they can play a pivotal role in providing equitable, accessible higher education to previously under-represented segments of transition societies, if both reasonable quality assurance mechanisms and fair rules of market competition are in place (again, as in Poland).

Tentative conclusions

It seems fruitful to approach recent developments in higher education in Central and Eastern Europe from the cluster of several interrelated concepts, at least with respect to those biggest systems where private providers have successfully emerged. These concepts include access and equity, market forces and private institutions, public sector reforms, and academic entrepreneurship. They indicate huge diversification in the region today: substantial differences exist between the directions of system changes in Central Europe, Eastern Europe (and Central Asian post-Soviet republics, not discussed here), and the Western (former Yugoslavia) and Eastern Balkans (Bulgaria). Most of these

transition countries are either already in the EU, or heading towards it in the coming decade. From the perspective of equitable access, the success stories (*e.g.* Poland and Romania) were made possible by the emergence of the powerful private sector in education; from the perspective of reforming public services, this powerful move towards privatisation has been most welcome, somehow off-loading the state (and its stressed budgets) and turning to charging consumers of education instead of the state. In transition countries, market forces in higher education seem to be on the rise; unfortunately, higher investment in private research and development (in contrast to private investment in education), so crucial for public universities in most developed OECD economies, cannot be easily achieved in the coming decade in most bigger transition countries. This drawback, together with the prospect of living with "permanent austerity" in terms of access to more public funding for education and for research and development, leads to a rather pessimistic conclusion about a growing gap between increasingly teaching-oriented higher education in most CEE countries and increasingly knowledge-intensive, research-funded higher education in Western Europe. If the idea of the "Europe of Knowledge" is to be taken seriously, this picture seems quite bleak indeed.

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Notes

1. This paper is a revised version of a guest lecture I gave in a series of lectures organised by the CHES (Centre for Higher Education Studies) of the Institute of Education, University of London, on 5 December 2006. I would like to thank warmly Dr. Paul Temple for the invitation and the participants for their extensive comments. Some revisions to the paper were done while I was a Fulbright New Century Scholar 2007-08, under the Distinguished New Century Scholar Leader Dr. Bruce Johnstone. Let me express my gratitude for the wonderful opportunities provided by the Fulbright NCS Program.
2. For other case studies of widening access, see for example Bastedo and Gumport, 2003, for the United States; Deer, 2005, for France; Ertl, 2005, for Germany; Kaiser and Vossensteyn, 2005, for the Netherlands; Mateju *et al.*, 2003, for the Czech Republic; HEA, 2004, for Ireland; Kearney, 2001, for global; and Osborne, 2003a, 2003b, for Europe-wide developments.

3. In Poland, the radical educational differentiation between the rural communities and the cities, to an extent unknown in Western Europe, has been of critical importance; Poland also has the highest share of employment in agriculture in the EU27, reaching 18% in 2004 (UNDP, 2007, p. 91).

4. The highest rate of return from tertiary-type A and advanced research programmes in OECD countries is found in Hungary (274%), followed by the United States and Finland (198% and 188%, respectively) (OECD, 2005, p. 130).

5. In a European perspective, this rate is still above the EU25 average of 4.2%. Poland has had the highest unemployment rate in EU25, though, decreasing from almost 20% in 2003 down to 12% in 2007. By comparison, the unemployment rate among the population with higher education is 5.0 in France, 4.3 in Germany, 5.3 in Italy, 7.4 in Spain and 2.4 in the United Kingdom (data for 2002; EC, 2005a, p. 29).

6. On a broader plane, directions for research include a combination of several topics: for instance, affordability and accessibility of education in an international comparative perspective (*e.g.* Usher and Cervenan 2005; Usher, 2004; Skilbeck, 2000; Kearney, 2001; Johnstone, 2003) and in a European perspective (*e.g.* Eurostudent, 2005; Osborne, 2003a, 2003b; Davies, 2003; Guille, 2002; European Commission, 2000); international higher education finance and accessibility literature (*e.g.* D. Bruce Johnstone's ICHEFAP project on finance and accessibility; Teixeira *et al.*, 2006); World Bank literature on reforms of public sector services in general, *e.g.* World Bank, 1997; Holzmann, 2004; Holzmann, *et al.*, 2003; on Polish public sector reforms, see Golinowska, 2002; Gomulka, 2000; Orenstein and Haas, 2002); the growth of demand-driven private higher education on a global scale and in transition countries (Levy, 2004; Slantcheva and Levy, 2007; Daniel C. Levy's PROPHE literature and databases); "academic entrepreneurialism" theme, from both global perspective and that of the transition countries (*e.g.* Slaughter and Leslie, 1997; Shattock, 2003, 2004, 2005; Williams, 2003; OECD, 2005); the general literature on transformations of higher education in transition countries by the World Bank (1999, 2000a, 2000b, 2004), OECD (especially *Thematic Reviews* of specific transition countries) and the European Commission; and the literature on access and equity from mostly national perspectives.

7. A brief note of caution is needed here: entrepreneurialism does not necessarily have to be confined to research. As Michael Shattock and Paul Temple put it recently in their presentation at the 2006 EAIR Forum, "we should not see entrepreneurialism simply or even necessarily in relation to research, or in the exploitation of research findings. As we shall see from [the EUEREK] case study evidence entrepreneurialism involving innovation and academic and financial risk, can be found in regional outreach programmes, in economic regeneration activities, and in distance learning ventures, as well as in investment in spin out companies, the establishment of overseas campuses and the creation of holding companies to house different sets of income generating activities" (Shattock and Temple, 2006, p. 2).

8. The structure of the student body in Poland in 2005 was the following: total enrolments 1 954 000, divided almost equally between two major modes of studies: regular (950 000) and part time (920 000) studies; public sector 1 333 000 and private sector 621 000 (32%), of which 443 000 part time and 148 000 regular students (GUS, 2006, p. 34).

9. The equity success story can be measured by the increase in the number of students with low socio-economic backgrounds: in Poland between 2002 and 2005 the share of students whose mothers had only primary education increased from 7% to 18%, while those whose mothers had secondary vocational education

increased from 13% to 23%. In the case of mothers with postsecondary and higher education, the increase, quite expectedly, was marginal (from 53% to 55%) (see Youth 2005, 2005, chapter on the perception of the role of education).

10. Public funding for higher education in Poland in 1990-2003 was generally between 0.75% and 0.89% of gross domestic product (GDP), except for the year 1990 (when it was highest and reached 1.11%); and in 2004 and 2005 it reached the level of 1% (GUS, 2006, p. 308). From a comparative perspective, Polish public higher education is financed with public funds at a slightly lower level than in major EU economies but equal to the EU25 average (1.0%). In 2001, in selected EU countries public funding as a percentage of their GDP varied from 0.8% in Italy and the United Kingdom, and 1.0% in France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain, to 1.1% in Ireland, and 1.2% in Austria, and was the highest in Sweden at 1.5% and in Denmark at 1.8% (combined with private funding, the percentage of GDP for education in these countries was 1.0% in Italy; 1.1% in France, Germany and the United Kingdom; 1.3% in Ireland, the Netherlands and Spain; and 1.8% in Denmark). Ireland, Spain and the United Kingdom spent the highest percentage of GDP (0.3%) from private funds on higher education (EC, 2005a, p. 35).

11. Kwiek, 2006b, is heavily drawn from a research project for the European Commission (EUEREK) on various dimensions of "academic entrepreneurialism" from a comparative perspective of six countries, with an in-depth institutional case studies of three Polish universities (see *www.euerek.info*); and from a Ford Foundation project on the growth of private higher education, "PROPHE: Program for Research on Private Higher Education" (see *www.albany.edu/dept/eaps/prophe/*).

12. State funding for research and development in Poland is low indeed (and has been decreasing systematically in the last 10 years – from 0.55% of GDP in 1994, to 0.43 in 2000 to 0.34 in 2003) and is not supplemented by private funding for research.

13. The business sector is probably the most important sector in which research and development (R&D) is performed. Business research and development is market-driven and accounts for most expenditure on innovation, as recent figures from the European Commission argue (EC, 2003, p. 27). The business expenditure on R&D as a percentage of R&D intensity is 65.6 in the EU15 (with the highest levels in Sweden and Switzerland, at 78 and 74, respectively) – as opposed to Hungary and Latvia (40), Poland (35), and Bulgaria and Lithuania (21).

14. The EUEREK case studies involved 27 universities from Finland, Moldova, Poland, Russia, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The project "European Universities for Entrepreneurship – Their Role in the Europe of Knowledge", 6th Framework Programme of the European Union (2004-07), was co-ordinated by the Institute of Education, University of London (Michael Shattock, Gareth Williams and Paul Temple), and most case studies and theme papers are publicly available from *www.euerek.info*.

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Internationalisation of Higher Education and Language Policy: Questions of Quality and Equity

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Three major drivers of internationalisation in higher education are student mobility, staff mobility and offshore delivery. All have increased rapidly over the last 20 years and a high-end estimate suggests that 6 million students will be studying abroad by 2020. Anglophone countries have dominated this process: four English-speaking countries deliver more than 50% of programmes involving students studying abroad. English-medium universities also have a strong influence in particular geographical regions: 70% of all Asian students studying abroad are received by three main English-speaking countries (Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States).

This leads to questions of equity and quality at national, institutional and individual levels. At national level, non-Anglophone countries may be unable to attract and retain the "brightest and best". For institutions, the skewing of the market by language affects both intellectual property capacity and financial health. Finally, for the individual, educational achievement may be constrained by the capacity to function in an alien language and academic culture. Institutions without a robust language policy, adequate preparatory training and ongoing support may, therefore, damage more than the quality of teaching or their own global brand.

Building on the work of Hatakenaka (2004) this paper discusses the issues involved in the Anglophone asymmetry outlined above. In particular, the implications of the move towards teaching in the medium of English in non-Anglophone countries are outlined. The paper draws on work carried out at the University of Nottingham, Ningbo, China, by the Centre for English Language Education

Introduction

> Around the world higher education is under pressure to change. It is growing fast and its contribution to economic success is seen as vital. The universities and other institutions are expected to create knowledge; to improve equity; and to respond to student needs – and to do so more efficiently. They are increasingly competing ... both with the private sector and internationally. (OECD, 2003, p. 60)

> The presence of international students and faculty is no longer an optional, mildly exotic, welcome ingredient of campus life. It is quite simply what makes it possible for the academic enterprise to continue. (Crewe, 2004)

> The proportion of foreign students[1] in tertiary enrolments provides a good indication of the magnitude of internationalisation in different countries and key trends in this respect. (OECD, 2005, p. 250)

There is little doubt that the internationalisation of higher education is increasing pace, shifting its geographical spread, and that it is a phenomenon bringing benefits and immense new challenges to governments and institutional policy makers worldwide. Aside from the local financial imperatives highlighted in the second quotation above (Professor Ivor Crewe at a *Universities UK* conference in 2004) the benefits and challenges attached to cross-border mobility of students, and, more recently, mobility of institutions and programmes, include not only those for individuals, but for institutions and countries.

Incentives for countries to internationalise are generally categorised under four broad areas (OECD, 2004):

- growth in mutual understanding;
- the migration of skilled labour;
- revenue generation;
- capacity building.

Different countries facing different domestic issues are drawn to participate differently in the internationalisation process and the incentives above play out in contrasting ways accordingly. Small OECD members such as Iceland or Luxembourg and larger developing countries such as China may see internationalisation as a means of adding capacity to limited higher education availability in their own country. In small OECD countries this may be in a

particular sector, for instance postgraduate provision; in emerging countries it may be that programmes at all levels are unable to match provision to the growth in demand in their societies. On the other hand, Anglophone countries with established records of higher education provision have long been able to capitalise on an influential *lingua franca*, capacity and reputation. This in turn has naturally facilitated the benefits of revenue generation, migration of skilled labour and, this paper will suggest, the unconscious, or at least under-debated, promotion of particular cultural norms and expectations, rather than "mutual understanding".

Therefore, while theoretically all the incentives to internationalise are available to all countries, the actual ability to act on them takes place on a far from level playing field. In addition, in terms of the four-way taxonomy outlined above, it could be argued that the benefits of mutual understanding and of the migration of skilled labour can be subsumed under, and cannot be de-coupled from, the powerful drivers of national policy that can be calculated and built into plans more objectively *viz* capacity building and revenue generation.

However, whether as net senders or receivers, capacity builders or revenue generators, the remarkable increases in mass student mobility are a fact for life for countries in the 21st century. A few highlights will show the size of the phenomenon.

In 2001, 2.1 million students were studying outside their home countries, and some forecasts take this number as high as 6 million by 2020. Between 1995 and 1999, numbers of foreign students in OECD countries grew at nearly twice the rate of domestic students, and has doubled in total in the last 20 years. The OECD (2006) estimates that between 2000 and 2004 the number of foreign students enrolled outside their own country rose over 40%, and that raw totals have grown from around 0.6 million in 1975 to 2.7 million in 2004, worldwide.

As a group, OECD countries have in recent years received over 85% of students studying abroad (91% in 2004 [OECD, 2006]). In Britain, the early adoption of a strategy to market the higher education opportunities and engage in a broadly revenue generating policy had immediate effects. Numbers of international students in UK higher education rose dramatically from the mid 1990s. Over 30 000 more international students were being accepted into the UK system by 2002, a sharp rise of around one third since 1997. The industry in the United Kindgom is estimated to be worth GBP 23 billion annually.

While these headline figures are indicative of the scale of internationalisation in higher education, the impact of internationalisation on an educational system cannot always be measured in raw numbers and tangible costs and benefits. The United States, for instance, continues to rank highest

internationally in terms of raw totals of students going there, but in terms of these numbers as a total of the higher education sector nationally it ranks 15th (OECD, 2004). In debates on the impact of internationalisation on an education system, the suddenness of change and the increase in numbers in relation to existing domestic capacity may be more significant than raw totals. In New Zealand, for example, the situation was particularly dramatic and the effects greater than could have been predicted. Between 1994 and 2001, numbers of foreign fee paying students in tertiary education rose 290%. Although the raw numbers were low, moving from 6 176 in 1994 to 24 140 in 2001 (New Zealand Ministry of Education, 2007), the impact on the relatively smaller overall student population was powerful and led to some problems of integration on the part of international students, particularly young Chinese. In a small country that is proud of its warm hospitality, the situation was a painful and alarming one, and headlines resonated with this feeling: for instance *Exodus from the Land of Disillusion* (Dye, 2004) and *Lack of Kiwi Friendships Depresses Asian Students* (Walsh, 2004).

Like New Zealand, Canada, Germany, Iceland, Norway and Sweden are noteworthy in that they rank above the United States in terms of proportion of international students in their systems and also saw rapid upward movement between 1998 and 2001. Further investigation of the impact of rapid absorption of relatively high numbers of international students in these countries, proportionally speaking, would be interesting, particularly if policy makers are to learn how this absorption can be achieved without negative and sometimes unforeseen effects.

This paper will suggest that, whereas fee level is often cited as a factor in student mobility, reputation/perceived quality, established capacity and systems, and teaching in an influential *lingua franca* may outweigh straightforward cost-driven choices.

While capacity building and reputation establishment are long term processes, changing the medium of instruction can take place relatively rapidly and can have rapid effects. It has been suggested, for instance, that the large increases between 1998 and 2003 of international student enrolments in Iceland, Norway and Sweden may, in part, be ascribed to their adoption of a policy of greater English-medium instruction (OECD, 2005, p. 255). This being the case, and in the light of the potential impact on quality of provision, a careful examination of the trade-offs between fee level, language of instruction, and capacity to welcome and communicate with a diverse student body (as opposed to capacity to accommodate as expressed in sheer places) needs to be carried out in cost-benefit analyses.

The internationalisation of higher education has far reaching consequences for curriculum development, teaching and learning expectations, and access

policies, and this paper argues that these are under-debated in the face of the realities of mass inter-country student, programme and institutional mobility. The paper takes issues around the language of the medium of instruction as a particular aspect of the complexities faced by the internationalising education provider, and suggests that these bring into sharp focus questions of equity, access and quality. The discussion offers a brief review of the state of play for the most influential medium of instruction, English, and the potential effects of the dominance of the higher education field in internationalisation of the Anglophone countries.

The dominance of Anglophone institutions

With certain notable exceptions, such as the 400 plus member *Université Virtuelle Francophone* launched in 1998, English-speaking countries have tended to dominate both student and programme/institutional cross-border mobility and to have a growing market share in the international scene. One reason for the importance of the English language in this market can be summed up as follows:

> The growing global markets are constituted above all by two factors: on one hand, the economic and cultural weight of the United States; on the other hand, the economic/demographic weight of China, India and the rest of South Asia, and Southeast Asia. The United States pulls the world towards it, taking in a growing number of the rising generation and those who can invest in their own mobility and for whom an English-language and American education represents an entry to the global labour market. In the wake of the United States, the other English-speaking countries also benefit from the demand for English-language education. The largest concentrations of this demand are found in the Asia-Pacific countries, where there is also a growing capacity for private investment. (OECD, 2004, p. 148)

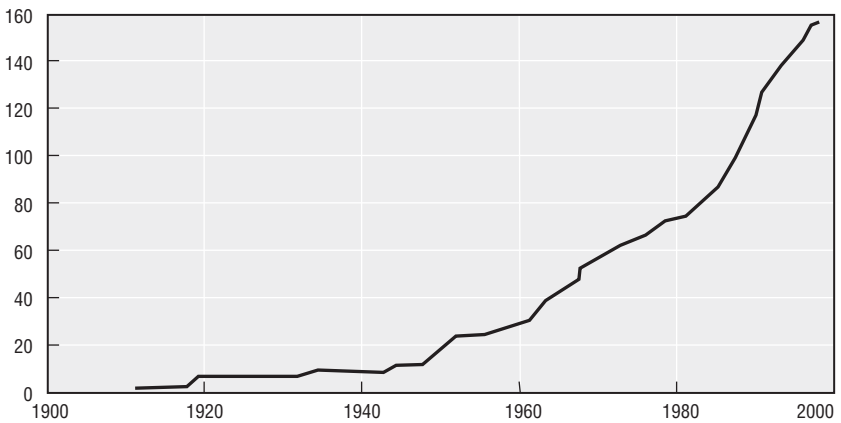
What are the effects, then, in terms of the choices made by parents and sponsors of the "pull" of English-medium programmes? Indicative statistics lend support to the picture of a market in international education in which it is massively advantageous to be Anglophone (data from OECD, 2004, unless otherwise stated):

- Despite revenue generating approaches to fee setting in the receiving countries, 70% of all Asian/Oceanian students studying abroad are in three main English-speaking countries (Australia, United Kingdom and United States).
- Four English-speaking countries (Australia, Canada, United Kingdom and United States) account for over 50% of the students studying abroad.

- 40% of European students studying abroad go to English-speaking countries.
- The United Kingdom has the highest number of international postgraduates in Europe.
- The United States recruits more PhD students than the rest of the OECD put together.
- Research-led universities in the United Kingdom attract the highest number of international researchers in Europe, with the English language being cited as one reason for attractiveness (European Commission, 2001).
- About 50% of skilled migrants live in the United States (Docquier and Marfouk, 2005).

A feature dominating the rapidly evolving international higher education scene is that of offshore delivery. For example, all of Australia's 38 public universities are involved in this, and one estimate suggests that in 2000 approximately 4% of the world's universities were explicitly involved in international delivery (Denman, 2002). Anglophone countries again dominate the process with the Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States tending to be leaders in this field. Some estimates suggest that 200 000 students are following UK programmes in countries other than Britain (OECD, 2004). In 2002, IDP Australia estimated that over 45 000 students were being taught under programme or institutional mobility arrangements and forecasts a significant increase in this mode (to around 300 000) by 2025.

Figure 1. **Cumulative number of international university organisations per year by founding date (consortia, alliances and agencies)**



Source: Denman, 2002.

Offshore delivery, or "programme and institutional mobility" (PIM) to use the OECD terminology, adds complexity to the analysis of relationships between language of instruction, equitable access to programmes, and the quality of the teaching and learning environment. Earlier sections noted the historic dominance of Anglophone institutions and their attractiveness to the internationally mobile student. What effect will the increased delivery of programmes in the medium of English, but in a non-Anglophone country, have on the perceived desirability of the courses? Will this process create global citizens with highly desirable and marketable communicative abilities and high levels of inter-cultural understanding? On the one hand, this development should, theoretically, foster truly "international Englishes" (*i.e.* forms of the language that develop between speakers of the language who may never have contact with a native speaker, nor spend time immersed in Anglo-Saxon cultures). On the other, questions of the range, depth, nuance, accuracy and comprehensibility in the highest levels of academic debate may emerge where the language has to be constrained by mutual intelligibility among a range of language proficiencies in the *lingua franca*. Ability to communicate sophisticated ideas to a range of peers lies at the heart of academic discourse, and the debates about the medium of instruction sometimes mask this, presenting it as a simple matter of basic proficiency on the part of students (and, increasingly, faculty) – something perhaps on a par with information technology skills.

Very often the institutional policy or regulations address the minimum requirement for study (often expressed on the internationally benchmarked tests of English, such as "IELTS 6.0" or "TOEFL 550"), but these levels were developed for a different international educational landscape and may be seriously challenged when, for instance, a student is working towards an award taught in English, offered partly or wholly by a non-Anglophone institution, where the first language of the faculty is not English, and the teaching is physically located in an Asian country. This is the situation in the German Institute of Science and Technology, a link up between *Technische Universität München* and the National University of Singapore, one of several links that allow Singapore to "hit above its weight" internationally and play off the historic strength of English in the country.

In a variation on the theme, language and educational context are also unusually mixed in my own university (University of Nottingham, United Kingdom) on the campus in Ningbo, China. Here, as on the UK campus, faculty are recruited internationally and there are lecturers from a range of first language backgrounds (Canada, Germany, Ireland, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand and the United Kingdom to name but a few) delivering teaching in English to Chinese students. The patterns that are emerging of novel educational mobility, of countries and institutions facilitating the entry of students from a

range of countries, and of countries welcoming partnerships or links with international providers is adding new permutations to the "mix" and which need to be taken into consideration by policy makers. While the dominant national group in the student body may be local, the spirit of internationalisation and other factors mean that the offering institution will welcome students from a range of countries. Thus, in the University of Nottingham, Ningbo, there is a target of 25% "international" students which, in this context, means non-Chinese students – and we already see small numbers of British, North Koreans, Russians and Thai studying for a UK award in the medium of English in Southern China.

In some cases, where blended, face-to-face and distance teaching can combine with linguistically diverse faculty and students, these emerging contexts truly are new teaching and learning environments, and ones where it is imperative that the communicative ability does not fall towards the "lowest common denominator". In addition, while a move towards instruction in an international language or provision by an international partner can bring benefits, these need to be considered in the light of a complex set of effects and unforeseen costs that can emerge when bringing together students, an "alien" language and a learning culture that has not evolved hand in hand with the secondary education system. Issues will be both practical and ideological and include:

- questions around the quality of provision of adequate language preparation, and resources during degree integration and support;
- the need for explicit links between the higher education medium of instruction and the teaching of this language in schools;
- the need to foster and maintain first language development, both oral and written;
- an increased need for awareness of possible mis-matches of teaching and learning expectations among different academic communities (for instance the value placed on creativity *versus* the display of knowledge);
- the need to ensure that internationally educated nationals of a country remain able to integrate and are employable in local contexts;
- awareness of the potential for Anglophone tuition to be a medium, unconsciously, for the promotion of "Anglo-Saxon values";
- awareness of the potential for the commoditisation of teaching as it becomes disengaged from established academic communities;
- awareness of the potential for "maximal inclusivity" in academic discourse to drive down the quality of that discourse.

The "Anglophone asymmetry": questions of equity and quality

The above situation leads to practical and ethical questions at a variety of levels. At country level it can be argued that non-English-speaking countries find it difficult to compete in terms of the benefits of higher education internationalisation – the market is simply skewed against them. A fundamental effect of the dominance of English as a language of instruction is neatly summed up by Sachi Hatakenaka: [O]ne critical factor that separates the two approaches may be the language of instruction. Non-English speaking countries have much greater difficulties in competing against English speaking countries, which dominate the scene (Hatakenaka, 2004, p. 22).

Anglophone countries have had a 20-year advantage in developing policies around revenue generation. They dominate the list of OECD countries that charge a higher rate for international student fees (see Table 1) and yet still tend to be massively net receivers rather than senders of students. The United Kingdom sends only 1 student for education abroad for around every 9 students incoming, the United States 1 for each 16 incoming, and Australia leading the field with a ratio of 1:23 (OECD, 2004, p. 26).

Table 1. **Level of tuition fees in public universities for international students compared to domestic students, 2003**

Tuition fee structure	Countries
Higher tuition fees for international students than for domestic students.	Australia, Austria,[1] Belgium,[1] Canada, Ireland,[1] Netherlands,[1] New Zealand, Slovak Republic, United Kingdom,[1] United States.[2]
Same tuition fees for international and domestic students.	France, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico,[3] Portugal, Spain, Switzerland.[3]
No tuition fees for either international or domestic students.	Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, Poland, Sweden.

1. For non-European Union or non-European Economic Area students.
2. In public institutions in the United States, foreign students pay the same fees as domestic out-of-state students. However since most out-of-state students enrolled by public institutions are foreigners, it can be considered that foreign students pay higher tuition fees than most domestic students in practice.
3. A few institutions charge higher tuition fees for international students.

Source: OECD, 2005a, p. 273.

It would seem at first sight that mass flows of students would bring benefits of mutual understanding. However, as the statistics suggest that Anglo-Saxon cultures dominate the receiving market and are weak "senders", the relationship is not a reciprocal one in terms of cultural contact. An implication of the student flows outlined elsewhere in this article is that Anglo-Saxon societies and education systems generally play the role of "host" and the incoming students "guests". While the guests may feel the need to adjust culturally to the hosts as they live and study in a country for perhaps

three or more years, the hosts have little incentive to accommodate their social norms to the guests or attempt to understand *their* culture.

Furthermore, even the numbers of students flowing from Anglophone countries may not indicate extensive contact with a new culture as, for example, 90% of US students who study abroad actually do so for only one semester, or a shorter time (OECD, 2004, p. 52). Statistics suggest that, all things being equal, students would choose culturally and linguistically similar home and educational contexts. For example, Nordic countries and Anglophone countries are, respectively, the top choices for Nordic and Anglophone students.

This latter fact reinforces how powerful the incentives must seem to, for instance, the parents of a Chinese postgraduate who send her across the world to an alien culture and to study in a language that is linguistically "distant", and pay three times what they would to a local provider for the privilege.

In terms of the migration of skilled labour, again, and perhaps unsurprisingly, the process favours countries with established capacity and reputation. Highlights again will show this (Docquier and Marfouk, 2005, p. 28):

- Eighty-five per cent of the world's skilled migrants are located in a small group of developed countries – Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States – with 50% living in America.
- Grenada, Guyana, Haiti and Jamaica have outflows of skilled workers running at over 80% and five African countries see it at over 50%.

The picture is, however, a complex one, as the choices made by individuals to leave their country of origin permanently depend on many factors. Despite being a large player in student mobility, for instance, China does not have a large "brain drain" and neither does India, the former USSR, nor the main Islamic and Arab countries.

The effects of the flows outlined above affect not only countries, but higher education providers. Both in terms of potentially being able to gain higher fee income and attracting the "brightest and best", a university may be disadvantaged, however strong the intellectual capacity or the teaching, if it is isolated from the processes of internationalisation in education. It is in this area that we can see "hybrid" learning contexts emerging.

> In this perspective, it is worth noting that in addition to student mobility across borders, the cross-border electronic delivery of flexible educational programmes and campuses abroad are also relevant to the internationalisation and cross-border dimension of higher education, although no comparable data exist yet. (OECD, 2005, p. 252)

> While many families are interested in an English language education offshore for its own sake, foreign education is needed in most countries to augment local provision, not just to substitute for it. (OECD, 2004, p. 146)

However, education providers and policy makers in non-Anglophone countries are coming to realise the leverage that delivery in an influential international language that is taught in many schools worldwide can bring.

> *Developed or intermediate nations with inadequate domestic capacity, active as both importers and exporters*. This group includes Singapore and Hong Kong, China, Chinese Taipei and Malaysia, which falls between groups 3 and 4.[2] India has an export role but is closer to group 4. (China and others in group 4 may become exporters in future.) All of these nations are relatively competent in English, especially Singapore and Hong Kong, China, and this helps them to be active cross-border players. Chinese Taipei is building a domestic capacity in English-language education and can export English teaching to China. (OECD, 2004, p. 147)

Of particular interest in relation to the discussion in this paper and as outlined above is a move towards "home" institutions disengaging the medium of instruction from the language of the country. While historically the tendency has been for PIM to be dominated by Anglophone institutions delivering in non-Anglophone countries, a variation on this is rapidly emerging: non-Anglophone institutions delivering in the medium of English in non-Anglophone countries. Table 2 gives details for OECD counties delivering courses in English.

One of the major sending countries, China, is also moving towards English-medium instruction. In 2004, around 34 Chinese universities were delivering programmes at postgraduate level in English. At the elite university Fu Dan, in 2005, 13 out of 92 undergraduate programmes were being taught in English. The target expressed by the Chinese government is for 10-20% of undergraduate programmes to be eventually taught in English at Chinese universities.

The effects of these changes are difficult to tease out from other developments, but in some cases where clear national statements have been made in this area, there appear to be related changes in, for instance, student flows. For example, after a policy change in 2000, the German government launched a set of programmes taught in English to be attractive to the international market and now stands as the second highest receiving country in Europe, behind the United Kingdom. France, in third position, also has a nationally unified approach towards attracting international students and researchers, and is developing programmes focusing on fostering bilingual level communication skills in French and English and English-medium delivery.

Table 2. **OECD countries offering tertiary programmes in English, 2003**

Use of English language in instruction	Countries
All or nearly all education programmes in the country are offered in English.	Australia, Ireland, New Zealand, United Kingdom, United States.
Many education programmes in the country are offered in English.	Canada, Finland (about 400 programmes), Netherlands (over 1 000 programmes), Sweden (about 200 master programmes).
Some education programmes in the country are offered in English.	Czech Republic (about 50 programmes), Denmark (about 150 programmes), France (about 250 programmes), Germany (about 300 programmes), Hungary (about 160 programmes), Iceland (about 270 courses), Japan (about 80 programmes), Korea (about 10 English-only universities), Norway (about 100 programmes), Poland (about 55 universities and tertiary institutions), Slovak Republic, Switzerland, Turkey (about 45 universities).
None or nearly no education programmes in the country are offered in English.	Austria, Belgium, Greece, Italy, Luxembourg, Mexico, Portugal, Spain.

Note: Assessing the extent to which a country offers a few or many programmes in English is subjective. In doing so, the size of the countries of destination has been taken into account, hence the classification of France and Germany among countries with comparatively few English programmes, despite having more English programmes than Sweden in absolute terms.
Source: OECD, compiled from brochures for prospective international students by OAD (Austria), CHES and NARIC (Czech Republic), Cirius (Denmark), CIMO (Finland), EduFrance (France), DAAD (Germany), Campus Hungary (Hungary), University of Iceland (Iceland), JPSS (Japan), NIIED (Korea), NUFFIC (Netherlands), SIU (Norway), CRASP (Poland), Swedish Institute (Sweden) and Middle East Technical University (Turkey).

The previous sections have focused on the national and institutional effects of the medium of instruction and the "levelness of the playing field". There are also effects, inevitably, for individuals. These include barriers to choice of receiving institution and questions of parity of access. They also lead us to the issue of whether there should be more debate about the potential effect on quality and equity where the language of instruction is not the language of the majority of the population, or where the learning environment is different to that which students are prepared for by the school system. As well as the lack of two-way development of mutual understanding, on a practical level students may be disadvantaged if they are not well prepared for the experience of being taught in a foreign language or helped to understand the learning expectations of the receiving academic culture.

Among students from OECD countries who study abroad, Japanese and Korean students systematically enter foreign language environments. In 1998, 92.2% of Japanese students and 63.1% of Koreans studied in English. The majority from Australia (78.3% in 1998) and New Zealand (96.4%) enter other English-speaking systems. Of the 21.7% of Australians going to other linguistic environments nearly all enter French (9.4%) or

> German (7.0%) universities. Only a handful of Australians study in Asia-Pacific universities where Chinese languages, Japanese or Bahasa are spoken. However, this may change in the future as it becomes more common for Asian languages to be studied in Australian schools. This pattern is similar for the United States and the United Kingdom, where more than half the students studying abroad enter English-speaking institutions, and the rest mostly speak French or German, particularly American students. This may limit the English-speaking universities' current capacity for internationalisation in the Asia-Pacific region. (OECD, 2004, p. 154)

Setting aside individual language proficiencies and intellectual capacity, one may imagine that the Australians entering English-speaking systems are in a better position, as a group, to study and succeed than are the high percentages of Koreans and Japanese entering the same systems. This is a fundamental issue of equity which flows, inevitably, from the processes of widespread internationalisation of higher education, but which is under debated and worthy of further analysis.

Is there, for instance, a "tipping point", at which the institution, for reasons of maintaining quality and protecting brand, must adjust to the internationalised student body? How can we calculate the costs of this adjustment, and will the benefits outweigh these? These issues have been raised before, but are rarely linked to the specifics of teaching and learning environments or calculated in terms of actual changes which may need to occur:

> Internationalisation of tertiary education also yields costs and benefits at the level of institutions. From the perspective of institutions, foreign enrolments constrain the instructional settings and processes insofar as the curriculum and teaching methods may have to be adapted to a culturally and linguistically diverse student body. These constraints are, however, outweighed by the numerous benefits to host institutions. (OECD, 2005, p. 252)

Discussion and conclusion

The last 20 years has seen the market in international students provide massive flows towards high tuition fee charging, Anglophone countries. The data for student flows suggest that the higher education playing field is rather uneven for those in countries and cultures that are "distant" from the Anglophone countries. This matters not only for the individual, but also produces a market that may be skewed by the language advantage/barrier. Excellent non-English-speaking institutions cannot compete to train "global citizens" and this works to exclude their educational and national values as a potent force for promoting international understanding.

The value of these educational experiences and outcomes is (or was) high enough for families and sponsors to feel that it outweighed costs. Therefore, these countries, and particularly the three which have dominated the "receiver" countries lists (Australia, United Kingdom and United States) have not had much pressure to change the nature of their teaching and learning, despite the fact that some programmes regularly contain more international students these days than "home" students. Key to this dominant position is perceived quality.

> The students [Chinese students studying abroad] separated English-language countries into two tiers. The first tier, the United States and the United Kingdom, was associated with institutions of high reputation. Australia, Canada and New Zealand constituted the second tier, providing attractive environments and a cheaper English-language education. Australia also benefited from geographic proximity to Asia. Selection of the United States, especially at postgraduate level, was strongly affected by reputation despite perceptions that the environment was not fully safe. There was a widespread assumption that a US education was the optimum choice. (OECD, 2004, p. 173)

With the flows of students go major economic and socio-cultural advantages, not least the attraction into a society with a successfully internationalising higher education system of highly skilled labour and the spread of cultural values through influence on individuals who participate in education. This paper has, however, sounded a note of caution as confident new players such as Singapore enter the market and, sometimes with European partners, begin to challenge the notion that Anglophone tuition and Anglo-Saxon programmes equate to the most desirable combination for a degree. It may be the case that it is the non-Anglophone institutions that have an advantage here. That is to say, despite the long history and dominance of programme or institutional mobility in Anglophone countries, there is some evidence to suggest that the broader adjustments necessary may not be easy to achieve in institutions that are used to the student accommodating to the system, rather than *vice versa*

> Transnational initiatives … are almost without exception dominated by the partner institution in the north – in terms of curriculum, orientation, and sometimes the teaching staff. … There is often little effort to adapt offshore programs to the needs or traditions of the country in which the programs are offered – they are simply exported intact. A McDonald's hamburger in Malaysia is the same as one in Chicago, even if the beef is Halal to meet Muslim religious requirements. (Altbach, 2004, pp. 8-9)

The paper has also suggested that caution is called for on the part of those engaging in developing curricula that cross borders and step outside

established systems of provision: "Academic staff and personnel may become reluctant or unable to adapt to the changing tide of curricula development, to a cross-fertilisation of ideas, concepts, and theories, as well as to a new student body" (Denman, 2002).

It is difficult to tease out the effects of language policy from others, for instance the reputation of a programme, the cost of living in the receiving country or the fee level of the receiving institution. However, some key areas might be considered for further investigation by those engaged in higher education policy making. First, institutions may wish to bear in mind the interplay between two key attractiveness factors: low or zero fee levels for incoming students and delivery of programmes in an internationally recognised language. This may be particularly relevant if providers are to avoid sudden influxes of international students with possible problems of adjustment which can damage brand unless carefully handled.

While it has been argued that issues of equity and access should be tackled at a national level with improved financial support, or better information about the benefits and costs of student mobility (OECD, 2004, p. 14), consideration should also be given to the actualities of experience of the student and the receiving institution in the face of mass student migration. A curriculum may be extremely high quality in terms of the teaching culture and communicative norms of the country in which it originates. It may be highly inaccessible to a diverse student body with very different expectations and language abilities. The question then is where should the changes be made? Should the institution adapt to the student body, or should the student body adapt to the institution? What are the implications of these changes for an academic community, and who should take a lead in making them?

There is evidence that both developed and developing countries are starting to move towards the adoption of an international language as a medium of instruction. This appears to be going ahead without a great deal of debate of possible effects. As well as the academic issues described in this paper, there are a range of complex social considerations which may flow from an apparently neutral change such as this. These are due to the influential role and standing which higher education retains in a country's culture. In Germany, for instance, where there has been a move towards increased provision in the medium of English, it has been noted that this may lead to problems of social exclusion as the university "elite" are educated in a language that is not the mother tongue, that the requirement for English at university may affect the further development of students' first language skills, and that English becomes a key skill, even for academics who are not good linguists (Gnutzmann, 2005).

Most of the problems, however, could begin to be addressed if there were a greater understanding and acknowledgment of the potential risks and if further work at national and institutional level on the impact of hybrid teaching environments, PIM, and the interplay of language and culture was undertaken. For example, an internationalised institution receiving students from a range of linguistic backgrounds and teaching in English could be encouraged to:

- develop an explicit language policy that covers first and second language users, ensures adequate proficiency, and debates what level this should be set at for access to higher education;
- ensure that language entry policies are decided consistently and in separation from marketing and recruitment pressures;
- acknowledge that language proficiency in the medium of instruction is a key, not an incidental, criterion for admission to a programme of study;
- provide pre-degree training and acclimatisation programmes to help students adjust to the learning environment;
- where a non-native language is adopted for provision in a country, give opportunities of high quality first and second language support;
- promote debate on and research into the nature of teaching a diverse international community and the implications for the curriculum that this may have.

Further work in this area is needed in general. In particular, since the original version of this paper was written, the 2006 and 2007 editions of the OECD's *Education at a Glance* have been published. Some headline facts from the 2006 edition have been incorporated into this paper. However, since the definitions of the categories of students counted in data on international mobility have been changed, care should be taken in drawing direct comparisons between the figures in this paper which draws on OECD, 2005, and this volume. In particular, a new analysis is required on the basis of the redefined data to attempt to investigate future trends in issues outlined in this article around the "Anglophone asymmetry".

As a coda to this paper and for those who fear the dominance of English in academe, we might consider the case of the brilliant German mathematician Burkhard Heim, whose theories lie at the foundation of the recent American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics prize-winning paper on hyperdrive technology featured in *New Scientist*, January, 2006: "He [Burkhard Heim] never learned English because he did not want his work to leave the country. As a result, very few people knew about his work and no one came up with the necessary research funding" (New Scientist, 2006, p. 24).

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Notes

1. After the original version of this paper was written, in the 2006 edition of *Education at a Glance* a re-definition of "international student" and "foreign student" was instituted. This was to allow differentiation between those who cross borders to study (the former in the new definition) as opposed to those who may settle in a country and, incidentally, study there. This means that comparisons between data in OECD (2005) and the later edition should be drawn with care. In this paper the earlier, interchangeable, definition is used unless explicit reference to OECD (2006) is made.
2. "In relation to cross-border education, the nations of the Asia-Pacific region fall into five broad groups … though some overlap more than one group" (OECD, 2004, p. 146). Group 3 refers to developed or intermediate nations with inadequate domestic capacity, active as both importers and exporters, and group 4 to intermediate nations with inadequate domestic capacity active as importers while relatively undeveloped as exporters.

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Strategic Enrolment Management: Improving Student Satisfaction and Success in Portugal

by

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To improve student satisfaction and success, higher education institutions (HEIs) need to find their niche, establish their own identity and get on with doing what they do best. Strategic enrolment management (SEM) is a comprehensive process that requires understanding markets, supply and demand, programme development, and student recruitment and retention. SEM involves the entire institution, relies heavily on institutional research and ultimately establishes strategic goals that are placed within the framework of the overall institutional planning model. In this process, the HEI also creates a mission that distinguishes it from other institutions. This paper will examine the key components to a SEM model and discuss how this process is interfaced with institutional planning. It will also present a research project to gather data on HEIs throughout Portugal in an effort to show what must be done to create a SEM process in institutions there.

* Dr. Taylor died while this manuscript was being prepared for publication.

Introduction

Many factors are changing the relationship between higher education institutions (HEIs) and their students. Meeting student needs has become much more complex and, out of necessity for many HEIs, has moved into the mainstream of institutional management and strategic planning. Students (and student markets) at the undergraduate level are older, are more mature and have full lives beyond their involvement with higher education. Their needs are far different than those of the traditional secondary school graduate that defined the typical student in the past. Today's student population wants convenience, a standardised curriculum and good value for their money. Students have become customers for which HEIs must compete. The massification and marketisation of higher education have created a competitive environment that must be addressed in ways many HEIs have not done before. This is especially challenging when one recognises that students do not use a completely rational approach to making institutional choices (see Keen and Higgins, 1991, 1992; Allen and Higgins, 1994; Roberts and Higgins, 1992). Institutions need to have a clear understanding of their clientele, what they want, what they expect and how they view what they get. The challenges of attracting, retaining, educating, satisfying and graduating a student create a complex process. Strategic enrolment management (SEM) is a proven method for increasing the satisfaction and graduation rates of students.

Theoretical underpinnings

Strategic enrolment management

Strategic enrolment management is an established concept in higher education with a respectable body of literature supporting it that involves marketing, recruitment, support, retention, satisfaction and placement of students. SEM has been a staple in US higher education for many years (Hossler and Bean, 1990), but has not yet been fully embraced in Europe. SEM is defined as "a comprehensive process designed to help an institution achieve and maintain optimum recruitment, retention and graduation rates of students, where 'optimum' is defined within the academic context of the institution" (Dolence, 1996). Prior to the introduction of the current SEM terminology, authors referred to student completion, departure, retention, attrition and related issues, but the general arena of interest and research was the overall success of the student academically, aesthetically, ethically,

interpersonally and physically. It is our belief that "student success" in fact best describes this area. If one simply looks at the myriad questions an institution might ask itself in order to better understand the broad area of student success, it becomes clearer that the term enrolment is probably insufficient. Examples are shown below:

- Why do students come to us? Why do others choose not to?
- What kinds of students are we interested in attracting? Is this what we get?
- Where can we find these students? How many of them are there?
- Are our preferred students applying? Are they enrolling?
- What must we do to attract them? What are they seeking in an education?
- Do we offer what they want? Do they know this? How are we telling them?
- What percentage of our students complete their degrees? What percentage of our competitors' students complete their degrees?
- How can we retain and graduate a higher percentage of our students?
- How many more students do we have the resources to support?
- What are the perceptions of current students about their experience here?
- What is our image? Does it match our strengths and weaknesses?
- How do our programmes align themselves with future market trends?
- What recruitment strategies are effective with different student groups?
- How do we compare with our competitors? What can we learn from them?

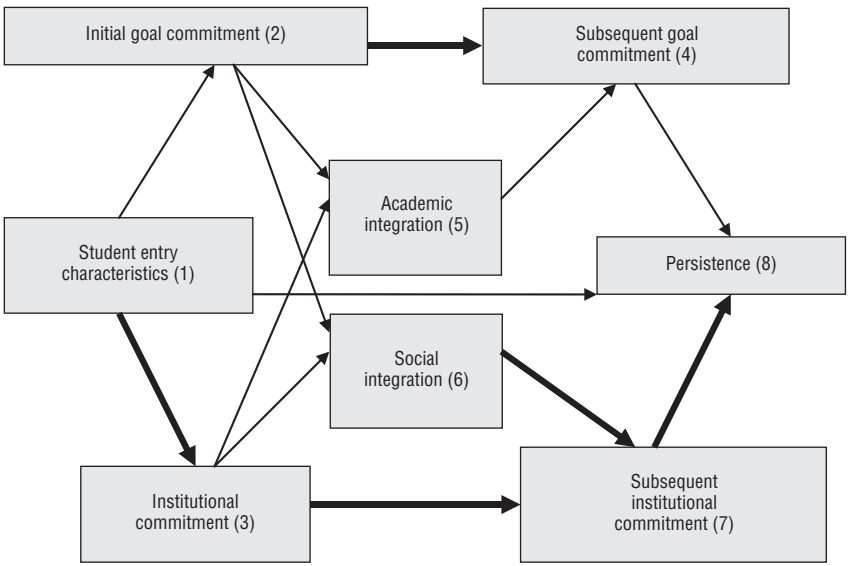
Student success

As was suggested above, the expansive concept of student success is indeed multifaceted and difficult to embrace. Its sheer scope makes the likelihood of finding a meta-theory to explain all of it highly remote (Yorke and Longden, 2004). One is left then with the task of identifying respectable models that address important concepts, if not the entire spectrum of possibilities. Prominent scholars that have dealt with various aspects of student success are Astin, Bean, Black, Dolence, Hossler, Metzner and Sandler, among others. For an excellent discussion of the psychological and sociological theories surrounding student success, the reader is referred to Yorke and Longden (2004). Braxton and Hirschy (2004) suggest that the theory with longevity which remains most cited and relevant for further research is Tinto's interactionist theory of student departure.

Tinto's model suggests that students succeed or fail (stay or leave) as a result of their interactions with the institution as an organisation. He further points out that this is based on what the student ascribes to these interactions. The model is essentially a sequential one wherein one dimension interacts with and influences a subsequent dimension in a longitudinal process that is

represented by eight dimensions. The possible interactions between these dimensions total 13, however research tends to support only 5 (Yorke and Longden, 2004). See Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. **A path diagram of Tinto's model and research-supported propositions**



Note: Arrows show research-supported propositions.
Source: Adapted from Yorke and Longden (2004).

Tinto's model has eight major components that influence students' persistence sequentially through their higher education experiences. Each is briefly described below with reference to the numbered boxes in the figure.

Students begin their higher education experience carrying a large quantity of unknown but highly influential baggage (1). They have expectations, opinions, biases, viewpoints from significant others and past experiences that mould their complex and idiosyncratic attributes and characteristics. These predispositions have a direct impact on initial tendencies to stay or leave (2), their overall commitment to the HEI generally (3) and the intensity of their goal commitment to ultimately graduate from the institution (4). The level of these commitments, in turn, impacts the students' level of integration into the academic (5) and social (6) fabrics of the HEI. Subsequently, academic integration influences the goal of graduation (4) and social integration influences later commitment to the institution itself (7). Initial levels of commitment alter subsequent levels of commitment. Finally, those levels of subsequent commitment toward the

institution and graduation influence the likelihood of persistence and success (8).

According to Braxton *et al.* (1997), only 5 of the 13 propositions illustrated in Figure 1 with arrows show sustainable empirical support wherein at least two-thirds of the studies confirm findings. These relationships are emphasised with bold arrows. In a comprehensive analysis of 62 studies, Yorke and Longden (2004) inductively reduced Tinto's model to three theoretical constructs: 1) commitment of the HEI to student welfare, 2) HEI integrity and 3) communal potential. The first construct suggests a student-first philosophy for the institution. This is fairly self-explanatory in general terms. The HEI would attempt to identify student needs and its own deficiencies in that regard and make appropriate changes and adjustments to rectify problems and accommodate the students. The construct of institutional integrity is far-reaching and somewhat difficult to corral in the context of student success. We will suggest with respect to SEM that it encompasses institutional mission, marketing and planning integrity. In simple terms, the HEI is what it wants and needs to be, what it purports and promises to be, and what it is investing resources in and hoping to continue to be. The third construct is communal potential. This suggests the degree to which the institutional community includes a sub-set of students with whom a given individual can identify. We believe the first two constructs have theoretical and practical merit. We believe the third one may have less relevance. Our thoughts follow.

HEI commitment to student welfare. As mentioned earlier, this can be referred to as a student-first philosophy on the part of the institution. This must be more than rhetoric or good intentions. The HEI must, in fact, know what students want and need (not necessarily the same thing) by inquiring and otherwise gathering the necessary information.

Institutional integrity. As market competition becomes more of a reality for higher education, HEIs are finding themselves by necessity more immersed in public relations, promotion, marketing and student recruitment. "Institutional excellence" has become common rhetoric not only in mission statements, but also in promotional materials. In what has become a high-stakes competition for students for many HEIs, the pressure to present themselves in the strongest possible light has blurred the line between fact and fiction. Institutions have an obligation to do the research necessary to identify their legitimate strengths and distinctive advantages for promotional purposes.

Communal potential. For many HEIs throughout the world, the longstanding definition of the traditional undergraduate student is no longer applicable. Institutions in tune with the current reality are often no longer

focused on single, 18-year-old, full-time, male students. Today's student population is more likely to be older, predominantly female and more inclined to part-time studies. These factors are often coupled with lives complicated by employment, families and commutes to classes. Residential HEIs are redefining their priorities, especially in terms of scheduling, student support facilities and student services personnel. Thus, the suggestion that today's students must find a sub-group within the student population with whom they can identify and bond may be misguided. However the new types of student may still have a need for some sort of socialisation and support in a peer group, albeit different from the residential groupings of old.

Student success and institutional planning

Student success and enrolment management must be planned as an ongoing process of adaptation and change. This process encompasses functions and individuals throughout the HEI and is thus best orchestrated as a component of an overall institutional planning process. Of particular relevance, SEM directly affects resources. Student numbers and their continued presence (retention) generate tuition revenues and impact enrolment-based allocations of funds to the HEI. Beyond that, the very presence of students has a defining effect on institutional culture and, in fact, is its reason for being. Additionally, some offices (and their associated budgets and personnel requirements) are directly attributable to students. Depending on where you are, these can include the offices of admissions, orientation, retention, recruitment and marketing, financial assistance, international and/or multicultural student services and career services, among others. Another indispensable office for the support of planning and student success is that of institutional research.

HEIs need a structure that provides for adaptability based on agreed upon strategies and priorities. The organisation needs to interface its internal operations with the external realities that impact it. It needs to know its strengths and weaknesses in light of existing and potential environmental threats and opportunities. With all of this can emerge a mission to justify the institution and a vision to point the institution toward its future aspirations. The vehicle to move the HEI from its current mission to a future vision is a planning process. A vital component of that process can and should be enrolment management.

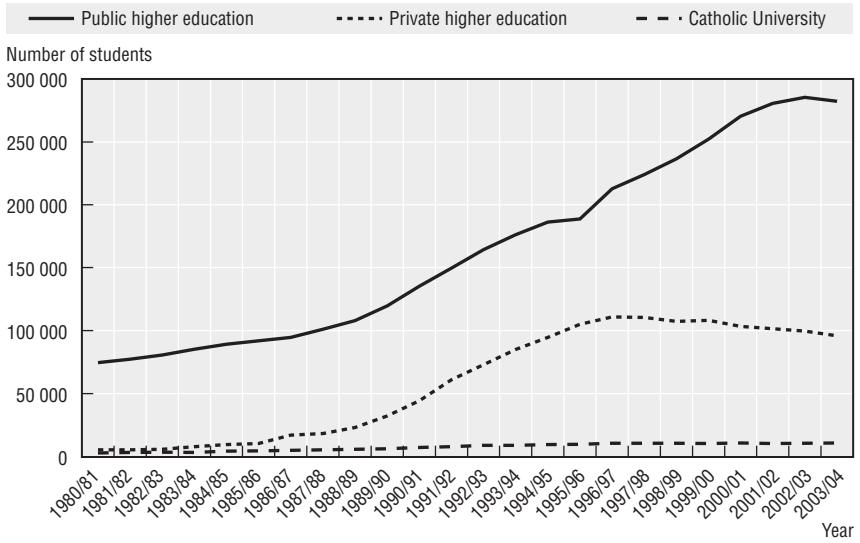
A national study in Portugal

While not unique to Portugal, growing market competition is a fact of life for higher education there. With 164 HEIs comprised of public and private

universities, polytechnics and specialised schools in a country of 10 million people, the phenomenon is real and growing.

The number of students in higher education has increased significantly in recent years. Cerdeira (2003) analysed the growth of enrolled students for the period of 1960/61 to 1997/98 in Portugal, and concluded the growth for this limited period was 1 133% for public higher education and 5 031% for private higher education. According to EUROSTAT (2002) and OCES (2004, p. 10), "In the European context since 1975 to 2000, the number of students in higher education grew significantly. But while in Europe the number duplicated, in Portugal the number grew five times. In this context, Portugal was the country with bigger growth." Figure 2 shows the evolution of growth in the number of students in higher education in Portugal.

Figure 2. **Evolution of enrolled students in Portugal from 1980 to 2004**



The number of students in Portuguese higher education according to OCES (2004, p. 10) "grew all along between 1993 and 2003. The annual growth of non-public higher education was minimally impressive (1.3%), while the growth in public higher education was 4.8% per year". Today, the number of students in public higher education is larger. Public higher education enrols 72.6% of the students, private higher education 24.7% and the Catholic University 2.7%. In 1971/72, there were 49 461 students enrolled in all of Portuguese higher education. In 2004/05, that number was 373 891 (Taylor *et al.*, 2006).

This study is an attempt to gather some initial data on a national level that can be used to articulate how HEIs can address this situation in a productive manner through enrolment management. The objectives of this study are to:

1. create a comprehensive database on undergraduate student satisfaction within the Portuguese higher education system;
2. provide insights and analyses of the data that will focus attention on the strengths and weaknesses within the system;
3. produce written documentation that can be widely disseminated for the use and benefit of the HEIs in Portugal;
4. provide a professional venue that will allow the Portuguese HEIs to share and learn about strategic methods of improving student recruitment, satisfaction, retention and graduation;
5. build a frame of reference and provide guidance that brings the collective thinking within the Portuguese HEIs in line with a proven process of strategic enrolment management.

The subject of student success must be confronted as much from the applied end of the inquiry continuum as from the theoretical end. Abstraction and theory, when substantiated empirically, provide the underpinnings that *validate* our interest and further investigation of a phenomenon. Without this badge of authenticity, we should and usually do relegate the construct to the proverbial intellectual graveyard. At the same time, topics such as this that we hope will contribute in a meaningful way to important outcomes must be grounded in the real world of institutional life. We must demand to see repeated evidence that this construct makes a legitimate difference and is *reliable*. As this is repeated in differing institutional settings and circumstances, the concept of *generalisability* is legitimised. Validity, reliability and generalisability are the pillars we need to recognise and demand. We must always strive to bridge the theory-application continuum.

One of the first requirements for SEM is to provide HEIs with the needed information on student satisfaction so they can address improved recruitment, retention, satisfaction and graduation of students (Rautopuro and Vaisanen, 2000). Student satisfaction surveys are not a frequent form of evaluation in Europe according to Wiers-Jenssen, Stensaker and Grogaard (2002), although that has been changing recently, with some notable experiences in the United Kingdom (see Harvey and Newton, 2007). Even in the United States, where SEM originates, the literature shows relatively few studies focusing specifically on student satisfaction (Bean and Vesper, 1994). SEM requires an assessment of all aspects of the student's experience, and goes far beyond the classroom. Theoretical conceptualisations such as the quality of student life (QSL) model are in line with the requirements of SEM.

QSL views student satisfaction as a multi-dimensional construct involving the interaction of personal, interpersonal, sociological and contextual factors and processes (Benjamin and Hollings, 1995). It can also be argued that terms such as ratings and evaluations are misguided since students are not necessarily knowledgeable about the realities of the issues to which they are reacting. Whether valid or not, what a student perceives will guide his or her decision-making. Thus, these subjective viewpoints are what must be measured and dealt with (Taylor, 1981). Instruments employ a developmental perspective and focus broadly on many aspects of the student's overall educational experience (Wiers-Jenssen *et al.,* 2002). Among the most notable is the Student Satisfaction Inventory (Elliott and Shinn, 1999). An important component of the Noel/Levitz Student Satisfaction Inventory (SSI) is the use of a multiple attributes rating scale, which measures the student's varying degrees of satisfaction with each attribute as well as the relative importance of each attribute (Elliott and Shin, 2002). This instrument is an application of the gap model developed by Parasuraman *et al.* (1985), in the context of general consumer satisfaction, where the perceived quality results from the comparison between the perception of the service delivered (satisfaction in the SSI) and the customer's prior expectations (importance in the SSI). Thus there may be a mismatch between students' expectations and their perception of the service provided. This mismatch could be the result of either a mismatch between expectation and delivery and/or a mismatch between delivery and perceptions. The SSI is, however, culturally biased outside the United States. For this study, a shorter instrument utilising the multiple attributes rating scale methodology and designed for the culture under study was developed.

Design of the study

The methodology will involve three main issues:

- the status of student satisfaction in Portuguese higher education;
- analysis of variables impacting student satisfaction;
- strategic enrolment management strategies.

The status of student satisfaction in Portuguese higher education

The first task will be to build a comprehensive database on student satisfaction based on a questionnaire to be distributed nationally to approximately 15 000 undergraduate students. A multi-faceted stratified random sampling methodology, as shown in Table 1, will be implemented across all of continental Portugal, Madeira and the Azores.

The survey will sample students in their last year in each area of study for all HEI types. The questionnaire will gather information on student

Table 1. **Estimated number of students to be surveyed by HEI type**

Institutions	Student numbers
Public universities*	6 945
Public polytechnics	3 825
Other public polytechnic schools	525
Private universities	1 455
Other establishments	2 250
Total	15 000

* For anonymity, the Catholic University is subsumed in the public universities sub-group.

demographics; personal choices and expectations; satisfaction and importance of factors in the areas of academics, academic support, personal growth, and institutional processes and services; finances and financial support; and overall perceptions of the HEI. Additional comments will also be possible. Confidential findings for each participating HEI with explanatory text will be returned to them for their information and use. It is hoped this will also raise interest levels and encourage many to attend the project conference.

It is important to put these measures of student satisfaction in proper perspective. Student satisfaction is an essential ingredient for student retention, which is the ultimate factor in student success and graduation. This study is not simply about what makes students happy. It is about what factors are important and necessary for them to succeed at their HEI of choice. This then logically leads to what the HEI can do to meet those needs and provide a learning environment that will promote success. Strategic enrolment management provides the intermediate steps leading from student satisfaction measures to a better educated population.

A stratified random sample of the population of public and private Portuguese higher education institutions (excluding some specialised HEIs) will be employed. The sample will comprise a proportionally weighted group of public universities and polytechnic institutes, private universities and other establishments. One randomly selected campus of the Catholic University will also be included; to mask its unique identity, it will be incorporated into the public universities.

The projected total sample will be sub-grouped by using the weightings above based on a minimum of 15 000 students. Proportional weighting will place each institutional type within the sample based on its percentage of the total number of students in the population (see Table 1). Within each institution sampled, all areas of study offered will be included (see Table 2); within each area, one class of students in their final year of undergraduate studies will be surveyed. Such a sampling procedure will result in a weighted and representative group of students for each institutional type across subject

Table 2. **Areas of study**

Education Sciences
Arts and Humanities
Social Sciences, Commerce and Law
Sciences, Mathematics and Informatics
Engineering, Transforming Industries and Construction
Agriculture
Health and Social Protection
Services

Source: Ministério das Actividades Económicas e do Trabalho (2005), Diário da República – I Série-B, No. 53, Portaria No. 256/2005 of 16 March, pp. 2281-2313.

areas. This will make it possible to generalise, for the overall undergraduate population, both student satisfaction and the importance they give to their experiences in the Portuguese higher education system.

Analysis of variables impacting student satisfaction

Many factors will be measured on the questionnaire, and numerous issues will be identified by analysing the responses. As the variables will have multiple interactions and relationships, the analysis is expected to be in-depth and multi-faceted. The analysis will examine many student characteristics, differences between areas of study, and perceptions of the importance and degree of satisfaction associated with their specific overall experiences in higher education. The analysis will ultimately focus on internal strengths and weaknesses by institutional types, and external opportunities and threats that can and should be taken advantage of or confronted. This task will comprehensively characterise and define the current situation on undergraduate student satisfaction within Portuguese higher education. It is important to emphasise that these measures are at the core of institutional vitality. Complacency is no longer a method to maintain the *status quo*. HEIs will have to confront the market-driven realities that exist and adjust their managerial operations appropriately. Knowing the needs, wants and expectations of the students is paramount to this task. It is the key first step in enhancing student success.

The data from the questionnaires will be analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The expertise and insights of the members of the research team will also factor into the overall analyses. A simplistic approach that adopts the traditional .05 alpha level of statistical reliability will not be the sole criterion for identifying meaningful findings. Experience, knowledge of the Portuguese higher education system and an understanding of higher education in general will provide other avenues of insight and speculation from the research team. This approach will allow the

project to transcend software logic and enter the more creative arena of intellectual reasoning and creativity.

Strategic enrolment management strategies

The overriding purpose for this project is to provide the higher education community with the information, understanding and capabilities to improve student success rates. The key to this is to apply the principles of SEM to the factors identified as problematic. SEM has long been successfully used in New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States at many institutions under the broader umbrella structure of institutional strategic planning. Overall, evidence of SEM implementation in Europe is extremely scarce. The researchers are not aware of any HEI in Portugal that has applied an SEM model. This process is clearly, if not desperately, needed and a national survey of students represents the pivotal, first data source that must be collected and analysed. This data will provide the foundation for all future SEM initiatives.

SEM can have many goals for the institution (Taylor *et al.*, 1995). Among them are the following:

- Stabilise enrolments. This could involve creating growth, but it could also deal with slowing growth or stopping a decline.
- Connect with academics. SEM provides for academic unit enrolment management, rather than allowing enrolments to be driven and controlled by chance.
- Stabilise finances. The link between enrolments and revenues is clear.
- Improve services. Many services are misguided, redundant or not valued by the students. Identifying the right services, creating shorter response times, and providing greater satisfaction and a more efficient workflow would be addressed here.
- Reduce vulnerability. SEM monitors the external environment so the HEI can be proactive, rather than reactive, in the face of local and regional events that impact its well-being.
- Monitor and evaluate. SEM must monitor itself and the HEI by comparing initiatives to expected results. SEM helps the institution identify what works and change what does not.

Ultimately, the researchers will articulate a comprehensive step-by-step process for implementing strategic enrolment management. The model will be focused on the specific concerns in Portugal identified from the database analysis. The key attributes of the model will be to:

- Establish a comprehensive institutional research function. The ability to gather valid and reliable institutional data, transform it into meaningful information and use it to improve decision making is a weakness in

Portuguese higher education. The process of developing and utilising institutional research will be explained in depth.

- Conduct a situational analysis using institutional research. Institutions must engage in a probing self-examination. They must identify their strengths and weaknesses, examine market conditions, do forecasts and probe their external environment to find opportunities and threats. Until they know where they stand, they cannot know where they need to be headed.
- Establish goals and objectives. HEIs must decide, based on the situational analysis and their mission, where enrolment management should lead them. How should enrolments change, retention be improved, graduation rates raised, etc.?
- Define marketing strategies. This involves specific initiatives to meet the broader goals and objectives developed above.
- Build action plans. These are the full plans of engagement to meet each goal and objective. They include a timeline, identification of responsible individuals, necessary human, physical, technological and financial resources, and key performance indicators to monitor progress.

Results and repercussions

It is our belief that convincing evidence will be discovered that points to the need for decisive action on the part of HEIs in Portugal to raise student success rates based on the perceptions of students sampled. Important insights should be realised for individual HEIs based on their personalised reports of the findings, for the broader institutional types within the system that will be able to realise the status of their sector as a part of the overall enterprise, and by the national leadership which will be able to visualise a country-wide tapestry of strengths and weaknesses that point to attributes of student success or failure. Student satisfaction measures will be the realm of inquiry, but broad-based enrolment management strategies to promote student success will be the ultimate output from this project.

Recognising the need for action and having the expertise to implement effective action plans are different matters. It is probably safe to say that Portuguese higher education has the former, but lacks the latter. Our intent is to mobilise the system for proactive efforts to improve student satisfaction and, far more importantly, student success. The major impact of this project will result from the efforts of HEIs that want to implement the findings and recommendations for strategic enrolment management on their campuses. We view this project as providing the empirical underpinnings and practical recommendations for effective action. The ultimate benefits from this project will come from the individual institutions that put the strategies into practice.

An educated workforce is important to a thriving economy. Knowledge, not money or land, is now the coin of the realm in our emerging knowledge economy. Countries that have people with the skilled expertise to enter that arena are competitive. Those that do not are left behind. One would find little dispute in stating that when a country increases the proportion of its population that is fully educated, it will prosper from it. This project will see results at the institutional level in a few years. But, the true positive impact for Portugal will come when the population is more educated and contributing in more significant ways to the country's livelihood. Currently, the economy and market-competitiveness are not a particular strength of Portugal. Demographics show a declining population base; this projects a smaller workforce in the future that must productively sustain a growing elderly population and at the same time maintain economic growth. It is worth repeating that every country in the world that has increased the proportion of its population that is fully educated has prospered from it. Portugal can do the same. A first step is to increase the percentage of entering students that graduate and enter the workforce with the skills to make a meaningful economic and social contribution. The impact of our research will produce an important first part to the equation, and it is an important part. We have to build the country's educational strength from scaffold to scaffold – one step at a time. One of the first steps needed is a systematic process for better graduating our young people and placing them in society in worthwhile, contributing, wage-earning roles.

All of this requires a visionary perspective. Vision is long-term. Results take time, as all visionaries understand. When you plant a tree, you do not expect fruit in the near term, but you know the effort will produce long-term benefits on a larger scale.

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Contents

Fair Access to Higher Education: Analysis of a Targeted Incentive Educational Policy
Charlotte Le Chapelain 9

Assessment of Higher Education Personnel: Comparative Study of France and Finland
Emmanuel Salmon 25

Long-term Human Outcomes of a "Shotgun" Marriage in Higher Education: Anatomy of a Merger, Two Decades Later
Rosalind M.O. Pritchard and Arthur P. Williamson 47

From Public University Dominance to Private University Policy Initiatives in Nigeria: The Push and Pull Factors
Gboyega Ilusanya and S.A. Oyebade 71

Accessibility and Equity, Market Forces, and Entrepreneurship: Developments in Higher Education in Central and Eastern Europe
Marek Kwiek 89

Internationalisation of Higher Education and Language Policy: Questions of Quality and Equity
Rebecca Hughes 111

Strategic Enrolment Management: Improving Student Satisfaction and Success in Portugal
James Taylor, Rui Brites, Fernanda Correia, Minoo Farhangmehr, Brites Ferreira, Maria de Lourdes Machado, Cláudia Sarrico and Maria José Sá 129

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