

Steering Tertiary Education

Pointers for policy development

DEVELOP A COHERENT STRATEGIC VISION FOR TERTIARY EDUCATION

- Undertake a systematic national strategic review of tertiary education and produce a clear statement of its strategic aims
- Communicate vision for tertiary education clearly and effectively so that all relevant parties see the role that they should play within the broader policy framework
- Draw on a comprehensive advisory body to establish strategic aims for tertiary education
 - create a body, e.g. a National Council or Forum of Tertiary Education, to assist with the integration of strategic leadership, policy planning and co-ordination among the main actors
 - strengthen this body by involving international experts to provide an international perspective on problems faced by tertiary education and examine ways of addressing them

ESTABLISH SOUND INSTRUMENTS FOR STEERING TERTIARY EDUCATION

- Ensure that the capabilities of tertiary education authorities keep pace with changing responsibilities
 - strengthen tertiary education authorities' capacities in data collection and analysis, policy experimentation and policy analysis
 - reinforce the steering capacity of tertiary education authorities through the development and administration of financing instruments and the review and monitoring of outcomes
- Develop steering instruments to establish a balance between institutional autonomy and public accountability
 - Possible ways are performance contracts, performance-related funding or targeted funding
 - avoid detailed annual reporting requirements in favour of tailor-made strategic forms of accountability
- Use institutional competition and student choice to help improve quality and efficiency and to achieve stronger performance from the tertiary system

ENSURE COHERENCE OF THE TERTIARY EDUCATION SYSTEM WITH EXTENSIVE DIVERSIFICATION

- Grasp the benefits of wider and more flexible diversification among tertiary institutions
 - clearly define the mission and profile of individual institutions in accordance with this diversification strategy
 - establish a clear and positive vision of professional/vocational tertiary education either as a distinct sector or as a specialisation of some institutions within a unitary system
 - establish a set of supporting changes to accreditation, quality assurance, human resource management and governance structures and policies to reflect the distinct mission of individual institutions
- Avoid the fragmentation of the tertiary education system
 - ensure co-ordination mechanisms between tertiary education institutions
 - improve the ways in which institutions collaborate to create a more coherent system
- In systems with vocationally-oriented sectors, ensure that mechanisms exist to discourage academic drift
 - ensure sufficient rewards to discourage academic drift
 - ensure that vocational institutions understand that they are expected to stick to their vocational mission
 - grant accreditation to award degrees when education provision meets labour market demand
- Limit barriers to entry, assess contribution of individual institutions through quality assurance arrangements and remove burdensome administrative requirements that discourage entry by either public or private institutions

BUILD SYSTEM LINKAGES

- Ensure appropriate co-ordination between secondary and tertiary education systems
- Strengthen links between vocational secondary education and tertiary education by developing tracks from vocational pathways to tertiary-level study
- Review whether the tertiary education system is contributing effectively to lifelong learning and assess whether flexibility of the system, relevance of provision and funding arrangements are suited to lifelong learners
- Build linkages between different types of tertiary education institutions (TEIs)
 - provide opportunities for students to move across the vocational-academic divide
 - encourage research networks, centres of excellence and collaborative initiatives
- Foster the engagement of institutions with surrounding regions and communities

STRENGTHEN ABILITY OF INSTITUTIONS TO ALIGN WITH THE NATIONAL TERTIARY EDUCATION STRATEGY

- Ensure the outward focus of institutions through:
 - strong educational links to employers, regions and labour markets
 - effective university-industry links for research and innovation
 - participation of external stakeholders in system and institutional governance and in quality assurance
 - a significant share of external funds in institutional budgets
 - a broad internationalisation policy portfolio
- Require institutions to establish strategic plans aligned with the national tertiary education strategy
- Examine how best to widen the scope of institutional autonomy by:
 - permitting TEIs to be established as legal persons (foundations, not-for-profit corporations) or
 - identifying ways of widening institutional autonomy within the framework of State agency
- Create a national policy framework towards institutional governance that allows institutions to effectively manage their wider responsibilities
 - Establish a legal framework that provides institutions with the opportunity to establish a governing body
 - consider external membership in institutional governing bodies
 - give voice to students in areas such as quality assurance processes and student services

BUILD CONSENSUS OVER TERTIARY EDUCATION POLICY

- Develop an evidence basis to inform policy making, develop a comprehensive information strategy and monitor the success (or otherwise) of national tertiary education policies and their implementation
- Widen consultation within government to ensure coherence across policies to support national tertiary goals
- Widen consultation with those outside government to include graduates, employers, labour organisations and relevant not-for-profit organisations so voices other than those of “producers” are heard

FURTHER READING

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