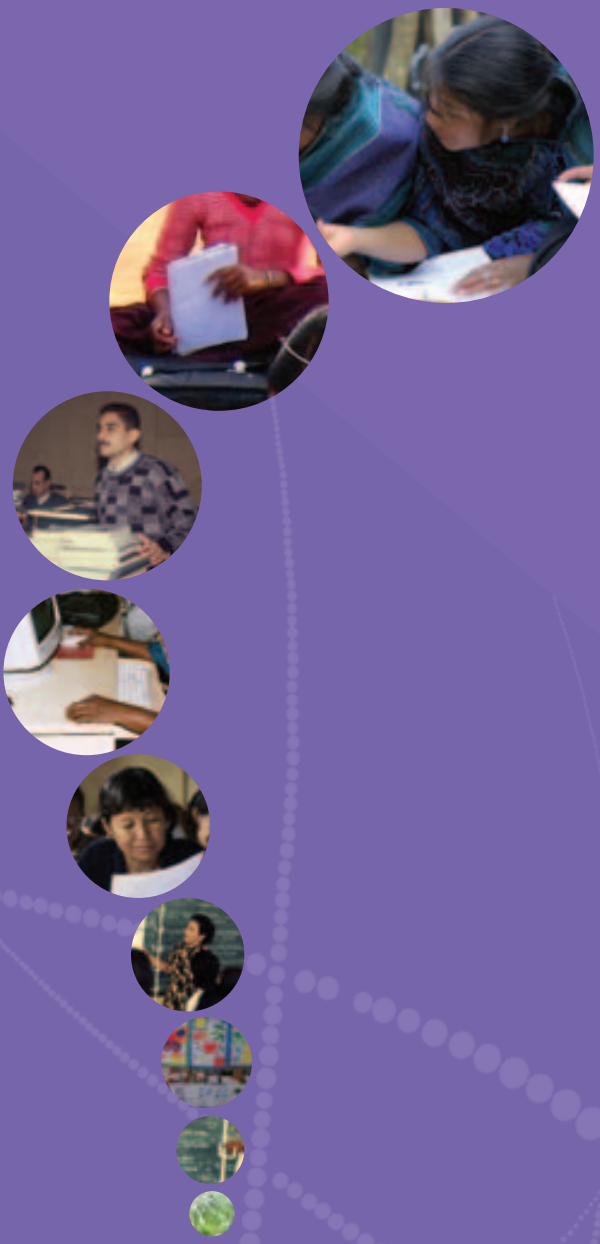

Public Responsibility for Higher Education

Sjur Bergan
Rafael Guarga
Eva Egron Polak
José Dias Sobrinho
Rajesh Tandon
Jandhyala B. G. Tilak

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

World Conference on Higher Education 2009

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Foreword

Foreword

In the current economic crisis the role of government has once again become central. Similarly, as the limits of the unregulated market are becoming clear in the economy, the public responsibility (responsibility of the State) for higher education is once again taking centre stage in a context of growing expectations that higher education will contribute to the solutions needed.

The notion of public responsibility for higher education is not the same as public responsibility of higher education, though they are closely interconnected and there is an expected mutuality of benefits when these two sides of the coin are balanced properly. The collection of papers presented here, focuses primarily on the former - namely the public responsibility for higher education. The social or societal responsibilities of higher education and research are dealt with elsewhere and both will certainly be debated by participants at the 2009 UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education.

The justification for the public responsibility for higher education is both political and economic and the predominance of one or the other shifts over time, and according to the context in different parts of the world. The political rationale has to do with commitments to education as a human right, as a key means for social mobility and social cohesion, for the protection of learners and due to the contribution that higher education makes to all levels of education, among others. The economic reasons stem from the fact that the public purse remains the highest contributor to higher education in most nations even though the share of private higher education (not-for profit and commercial) is growing. As well, higher

education is seen as an investment in the economic competitiveness of a nation or a region, thus further justifying economic arguments for the public responsibility for higher education.

The debate about whether higher education is a 'public good', even one of the so called 'global public goods' is an important one in principle. However, with the application of tuition fees, the sale of curriculum, intellectual property and patents and the export of programs on the rise, it might be more important to stress that higher education is a service in the public interest and that its development - whether publically or privately funded - must be framed by public policy. Only such policy can ensure that investment in Knowledge production (research), dissemination (teaching and learning) and accessibility and application (service to the community) serves the needs of society.

Viewing knowledge and higher education as a service in the public interest, requires and justifies that its overall development, without encroaching on institutional autonomy, must be framed by a proactive public policy. Furthermore, this is the case whether the higher education system is a predominantly publically funded one or a system which rests on a mix of public and private sources of funding.

The areas in which the policy makers need to play a role are multiple. They have to do with investment, steering and regulating at the systemic level. The following list, indicative and by no means exhaustive, highlights a few specific areas of this public responsibility:

- Investment of adequate resources in HE and/or creating the legal framework and conditions for higher education to be able to generate alternative financial resources (taxation and other fiscal measures);
- Establishment, implementation and monitoring of mechanisms for defining and distinguishing institutions of HE (accreditation), including their respective rights (in terms of granting qualifications, for example) and responsibilities (establishment of accountability and quality assurance frameworks);
- Development of policy frameworks that ensure that degree structures in HE are transparent, valid information is available and recognition of degrees and programs of study is fair and equitable, for example through the creation of quality assurance frameworks;

- Creation of a policy and incentive framework to promote fair and equitable access for all potential students, including for those who cannot afford higher education or are excluded for reasons of race, gender, religion, ethnic background or disability, among others;
- Provision of a framework for quality assurance and accreditation system, including for cross border programs;
- Monitoring that HEIs and all levels of government respect international and regional agreements in HE.

As the following selection of papers will demonstrate, these broad brushstrokes that justify and describe the ways and means in which the public responsibilities for higher education can be exercised give way to a variety of contextually-defined policies. However, it remains essential that despite the differences in capacities and traditions, we do not lose sight of the common underlying principles, values and goals that do exist and that can frame the discussion about the appropriate and necessary public responsibility for higher education in all nations.

Eva Egron-Polak
Secretary General, International Association of Universities
Eegron.iau@unesco.org
June 15, 2009

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In search of relevance: higher education for participatory research and sustainable development

Rajesh Tandon

In search of relevance: higher education for participatory research and sustainable development[1]

Rajesh Tandon

This chapter presents my perspectives and analysis on how principles and methodologies of participatory research could be applied to promote a greater contribution by higher education and institutions of higher education towards participatory and sustainable development in our region in the Asia-Pacific.

We need to be reminded of the new realities of the Asia-Pacific today. This is the region of the world where the only conversation these days is about rates of economic growth and the disagreement is only around whether it is nine percent or nine and a half percent. However, along with this very high rate of economic growth, we are also witnessing within the region widening disparities - disparities across countries, across regions within a country, and even within a district in a region. These disparities are not merely economic, they are also social and political. But these disparities are associated with what I have termed here as a "deepening developmental crisis". And that crisis has various manifestations. The most visible of those manifestations is increasing protests from the citizens around our region. And these protests are not only increasing in number but they are intensifying. There is a sense of disaffection, of despair, of exclusion, in a growing number of our people be they in the country I come from, India, or in South Asia or in many parts of the Asia-Pacific. And these protests are taking the form of resistance, sometimes resistance

1 This article first appeared in "Reinventing Higher Education: Toward Participatory and Sustainable Development" which was published by UNESCO Bangkok, 2008

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which is on the streets and is noted by the media but many times resistance which is in the form of apathy, disengagement and what is called passive hostility. There is an attempt to increasingly categorize this resistance, after 9/11, under a rather broad rubric of war on terror. That war on terror is being fought by authorities concerned with security, naturally, in many of our countries in the region. And this security concern, this concern for linking resistance of protests to issues of security and then supplying them under the umbrella of war on terror, tends to mask the growing and deepening developmental crisis in our region. The essence of that crisis, in my view, is a model of development which is attempting to homogenize the world, under the rubric of globalization and many other issues. We are now witnessing a uniform, universally mandated approach to economic development, political organization and social behaviour. This has led to a divide in our societies, in our countries, in our region, where globalization is commencing. My children may find it easier to relate to other children in Europe or North America, but they may not find any similarity of conversation with the kids in rural and tribal areas in my own country. This disconnect is reflected in the homogenization of culture and behaviour - blue jeans, hamburgers, Spice Girls, that's about it. Associated with this concern for security and the larger rubric of war on terror is also, in my judgement, declining space for democratic governance - space which is necessary for the expression of disagreements, dissent and critique because that is the essence of democratic behaviour. There is declining space for questioning, for arguing, as the World Social Forum has begun to argue, that "another world is possible", that there could be multiple models of development, relevant to multiple communities, diverse societies and aspirations, but that declining space and the exclusion of large numbers of people from this model of development reflected in their resistance and protests are further deepening the crises in the Asia-Pacific region.

I find that there is a paradox in the field of higher education, in this context, within the Asia-Pacific. As economic growth moves forward, there is growing demand for higher education in all our countries, which is unparalleled in many of our societies in recent history. But that demand is exclusively linked to labour market requirements of trained manpower to fuel the economic growth that is taking place. As a result, there is increasing commercialization of higher education and increasing vocationalization of higher education. Higher education is linked to producing trained, ready-made, quickly adaptable manpower for the labour market. And this growing

commercialization and growing link between higher education and labour market requirements have also marketized, in my view, both the contents and pedagogy of higher education. Content has become vocationalized, skill-oriented; pedagogy has become short term, rote learning, mastery of a few skills; the pedagogy has become ahistorical, it does not situate education and learning in a historical perspective; and pedagogy has become de-contextualized, where you can train call centre staff in Manila, Bangkok and Mumbai without reference to their different contexts. They can all be called Maria and taught to speak a slang which is appropriate to the job. I want to raise, therefore, a discourse about what the nature and meaning of higher education is in today's context. Is higher education a public social good or is it a private good? This discourse needs to be made a central part of our conversation. Can the "private good" approach of higher education - that is, higher education left entirely to market forces and to its commercial nexus - be expected to focus on sustainability? My view is that this is a contradiction; that higher education viewed exclusively and largely as a "private good" and not as a "public social good" is likely to contribute to non-sustainability. If you look at the higher education participation rates around the world and in our region and you look at the emissions - carbon dioxide emissions - you will find a close co-relation. In the country I come from, those who are illiterate, semi-illiterate, only high school educated, do not contribute that much to the problem of climate change or carbon emissions. It is those of us who have had access to higher education who are contributing to that.

Therefore, we find that access to higher education is very skewed, and certain strata of society do not have the means and capacity to participate in higher education for personal and professional development.

The global terrain in this first decade of the twenty-first century is full of promises, as well as expectations. Economic and technical resources are now available to address problems of poverty, disease and malnutrition. Yet, as the mid-term reviews clearly show, Millennium Development Goals are nowhere near being achieved (Social Watch 2007). There has been a widespread acceptance of democracy as a form of governance across the globe; yet, most citizens in these countries feel disaffected by the system of decision-making. Citizens across the world now demand a voice in decision-making, even when their elected representatives are engaged in governance (Commonwealth Foundation, 1999).

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This growing paradox of the twenty-first century is further complicated by the widespread recognition of problems of climate change and challenges of sustainable development. Within this scenario, the questions about the roles and contributions of higher education need to be posed. Does higher education have any contribution to make? What do higher education institutions have to contribute towards these challenges facing humanity?

Functions

Historically, higher education has served the twin purposes of research and teaching. In its knowledge production function, higher education institutions have been the centres of innovation and creators of new knowledge in diverse fields of human activity. The knowledge production function is based on academic rigour and the intellectual apparatus within higher education institutions. Over decades, such an intellectual apparatus has contributed to the establishment of an orthodoxy around the meaning and epistemology of knowledge. This orthodoxy has been associated with the privileging of intellectual activity within higher education institutions over any such activity in society itself. As a result, it has been assumed that knowledge production is taking place only in higher education institutions; people's experiences and daily struggles in communities produce experiences, not knowledge. This elitist view of knowledge has been challenged over human history.

Thirty years ago, participatory research began in the context of such an orthodoxy. It challenged the hegemonic nature of knowledge and its underlying epistemology, as well as its superstructure of higher education institutions, by espousing the relevance and contribution of popular knowledge and innovations in practice. The movement of participatory research also highlighted the negative human and societal consequences of monopolistic approaches to knowledge production. It thus began to be acknowledged that knowledge-in-action and knowledge-for-action were important for finding solutions to the problems of societies and communities. Numerous studies and reports highlighted this world view of research for, with, and by, the people themselves, with the support and partnership of "experts" (Tandon, 2002).

In their teaching function, higher education institutions have focused largely on the learning of theories in the classrooms. Students are discouraged from "engaged" learning in real settings, and much of that arises from the orthodox meaning of

teaching and education. Alternative approaches to learning are being attempted, largely at the margins of academia. The perspective of participatory research can thus be utilized not merely in the research function but also in the teaching function of higher education institutions (see Peter Taylor's chapter).

In order to reinvent higher education to make its contemporary relevance more meaningful, it is important to explore how the principles and perspectives of participatory research can be applied in higher education institutions to address the challenges of participatory and sustainable development.

Participatory research

How does participatory research come into play? The origins of participatory research 30 years ago came from the world of practice - practice in adult education, practice in community development, in social change, in many parts of the world, which are today called the majority world. The tradition of participatory research has benefited from the work of Paulo Freire, Myles Horton and Julius Nyerere, as well as the kind of work that has happened in self-help groups and community self-reliance in Korea, indigenous knowledge with communities in regions in Chiang Ma, in the Maori communities and in the Pacific as well as among the indigenous peoples of my own country. The essential premise of participatory research is recognition and utilization of knowledge for purposes of transforming the relations of power in social systems. This perspective allows the knowledge production function to be carried out in "engaged" stances - where learning about the dynamics of a social-political system (be it a community, an organization, programme or region) is closely linked to bringing about changes in that system to achieve certain desirable public values of equity, justice and peace. Participatory research methodologies are thus used to both learn about realities and transform the same towards such desirable public values (Horton and Freire, 1990).

Thirty years ago, I embarked on a journey where I was more or less well prepared as a product of higher education. With my techno-managerial professional background - electronics engineer with a management degree about to complete my Ph.D. in management - I caught the bug of citizen empowerment, and that bug is still infecting me, but my background and my higher education training at times was a handicap.

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When I went to the field with that kind of professional education I was full of confidence and full of arrogance. Arrogance about knowledge, methodologies and tools that were at my disposal. It did not take very long to discover in the rural areas where I spent a year that my education had not prepared me for many things about life, living and development. I discovered very quickly that my training was a training in a rational- technical approach to understanding reality. I was equipped with the questionnaire. And, given my electronics engineering background, I could manipulate numbers as well. But very soon I realized that there was a world of knowledge which was linked to the struggles of people over generations. There was a world of knowledge which was linked to action. Only later I began to understand approaches linked to action research, unable to grasp that historically it came from a different context. It was very difficult to understand that it is possible that there could be multiple epistemologies. There could be multiple ways of knowing; and cognition-rationality is only one of them. Experience is another powerful mode of knowing and so is action. We learn from action, "learning from doing" is a concept that has been around but it is not linked to the question of epistemology, it is not linked to modes of knowing. And this realization was difficult for me in those days, as it is now, because I had to unlearn, and, as many of us know from our experience, unlearning is a bit more painful than learning.

The second aspect of participatory research throughout these three decades has been linking knowledge production with mobilization. Mobilization does not only mean mobilization in the streets - that is only one manifestation - mobilization is meant also in terms of conscientization, awareness raising, collectivization, getting together to address a problem, with or without external help. We see that in our own context, in our own villages and slums and communities, we see it in our households. There is a very close link between knowledge, learning and mobilization to act - to act to solve a problem. We also discovered in the process that participatory research methodology and perspective tend to integrate what are called research and teaching functions - the twin key functions in any institution of higher education. But this is unlike what occurs in institutions of higher education where research functions are seen as separate from teaching; some days of the year you do research, other days of the year you do teaching. Some experts, senior professors, research universities do research; some "lower order", not so eloquent ones are teachers, tutors who do teaching. This disconnect between research and teaching has become a part of many higher education institutions. This is what participatory

research tries to challenge. It challenged by changing the concept. Research is about knowing and teaching is about learning. The moment you change the concept, the moment you treat research as an act of knowing and make teaching a process of learning, then you see very close connections between the act of knowing and an act of learning, because in a sense they are similar acts. Unfortunately, learning is something that has lost its significance in much of teaching that goes on in higher education institutions. And knowing has lost its credibility in much of research that is going on. These days, a lot of research has become what I call "measuring the inconsequential precisely".

So, participatory research tries to suggest that it is possible to look at engagement in the act of knowing as a process of learning, that one could approach knowing not only from the head, from cognition, but also from experience, from the heart, and from action. And that knowledge so generated in itself would contribute to a mobilization of individuals and collectives to address a concern that they share. This is the holistic perspective with which participatory research philosophy and methodology evolved over the last three decades and they evolved in the work of many of you and many of us in this region as well.

It took 20 years after that, and the WTO to come around, before respect for indigenous knowledge was brought back to the table. Indigenous knowledge related to ecology, to the protection of forests, to living with species other than human, to conservation of water, to ensuring fertility of land - that indigenous knowledge was dismissed earlier as "voodoo" science. And those who stood with that knowledge, who tried to systematize and validate popular knowledge, were labelled "unscientific" at best, and "crazies" at worst. Now we see the respect for indigenous knowledge coming back in the large field of health care. That health care could be a treatment of the whole was known to many of our people in many of our societies, particularly Asian societies. That maintaining health was an act of self-action, preventive action and education and it was linked to a spiritual, emotional dimension. When somebody in Europe said it was psychosomatic then we understood it as a mental case and sent the person to a mental hospital. But every aspect of health, as well as disease, is psychosomatic. That is what holistic medicine today has taught us. It is a revalidation of the same indigenous knowledge that has existed in our societies through an oral and practical tradition. Volumes were not written about it, synthetic names were not given, but indigenous knowledge, popular knowledge - knowledge learned through

the act of life and living - had validity then and we are rediscovering its validity now. So, participatory research as a perspective, as a methodology, over the last three decades, attempted to validate, systematize and promote indigenous knowledge, while not negating knowledge derived from other forms, nor negating cognitive-rational modes of learning and knowing, but equating emotional-experiential and action-oriented modes of knowing as equally valid.

Practice

It has been 26 years since the Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), where I work in Delhi, was founded. This society came about through a small network of people in 1976-77 sharing stories via a cyclostyle newsletter. And then it became obvious to a group of us working in India that we needed an institutional framework which would allow us to use this perspective. But PRIA over 26 years spent the first half of its journey distancing itself from institutions of higher education. Not by choice, but by force; because, in those days, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, this was dismissed as community development. Organizing actions has nothing to do with knowledge. It took some profound writers like Orlando Fals Borda and Robert Chambers and others to come back and write volumes about this, and that gave it academic credibility.

In the last 15 years, we have tried to engage with academic institutions in South Asia, in India, where we have attempted to link participatory research methodology to teaching as well as to research. Students and faculty or departments of social work, sociology, political science, public administration, law, engineering, management, geography, planners, etc. go out and work with local communities, local community-based organizations, civil society groups, local governing institutions like Panchayats and municipalities to contribute to their development through micro-planning, resource mapping, studies on the status of malnutrition of kids, issues relating to the dropout of girls from schools; as well as gain knowledge from such an engagement. Most of these faculty members and students have come back saying it was a powerful learning experience. Most of the community people were heard to say, "Really, if you do study higher education it could be useful to us" about which there was great suspicion earlier, because they saw those who went away to study higher education never came back, except to conduct some survey or to complete a report, which they never heard about again. This approach is now being tried in higher education in Canada, Thailand,

Samoa, etc. I have a dear friend in East Africa who is trying to create what he calls "multiversity". He says multiversity is the only concept which can accept multiple epistemologies, because university as a concept talks only about uni - a similar epistemology. Paul Wangoola is his name - a great practitioner. He has a network of people that practises herbal science and he is trying to get those professors of herbal science from the grassroots to teach in a university in Kampala. I wish him luck. In Europe there is also a vast network called the "living knowledge network" that operates through a network of science shops. What is most interesting about this network is that it brings chemists, metallurgists, environmental scientists, structural engineers - those kinds of folks - together, not just softer sociology types and social work types. A science shop is actually an interface between the community and those who have technical, research and professional expertise and they address community problems. I am closely associated with another initiative at the University of Victoria in Canada, where the university, known for its specialization in such fields as earth and ocean sciences, made a decision to do, university-wide, what they call "community-based participatory research". And one of the early champions of participatory research, Dr. Budd Hall, has been made the director of this initiative by the university. I mention these examples because when I mention them in the Indian context, I find that my colleagues from higher education institutions say, "Which university?", "What research?" The point I am making is - this is a growing movement; there are positive examples from different regions of the world and perhaps we need to find a way to link ourselves into an alliance which supports the work that we all do.

Challenges

I believe that higher education institutions face several challenges if we are going to talk about participatory and sustainable development as an arena where institutions of higher education can make a contribution. The first challenge which starts from the perspective of multiple epistemologies is what I call the power equalization challenge. Higher education institutions are sites of expertise, of domain knowledge. With a high density of Ph.D.s in such institutions, power is derived from the exclusive process of certification of knowledge and resources applied to disseminate that knowledge. When you posit this high density, high power expertise in an institution of higher education with a group of indigenous people in either Samoa or in my country - a group that talks about the need for leaving land fallow for a few years in order to refertilize it - it is a very big one-sided story. It is difficult for them to stand up and say

that there is another epistemology. And I believe that if you want to talk about inclusive epistemologies, if you want to talk about a world view which is inclusive, then those who today have power must reach out to those who do not. Because otherwise those who are disempowered know only one way - resist, shout, protest.

The second issue I want to bring to you is that of "authentic participation", as I call it, within institutions of higher education. There is no incentive in such institutions to do participatory research and to link our work to participatory and sustainable development. There is incentive to have short-term field engagements, quickly produce a dissertation and a refereed journal article and see promotion or admission to the next conference. But I know that there are students, researchers, academics and faculty members in all institutions of higher education, who would like to engage, who are engaging sometimes without telling authorities that they are engaging. So this work needs to be incentivized and mainstreamed in institutions of higher education. But in many of our funding agencies, unless you have a questionnaire prepared in advance, the table set, and heavy duty biodatas of those people who will never do research attached, you will never attract research funding. These practices must change. If they do not, participatory research methodologies and engagements on participatory sustainable development by our students, faculty, researchers and academics will remain hidden and marginalized.

The third point I make is the challenge of democratic citizenship. Universities and institutions of higher education are known to be places of independent, autonomous thinking, of questioning, of critiquing - in a way, preparing future active citizens of our society, who know how to respect democratic practices. But I am afraid that role is fast disappearing. It has to do with questions of political economy, of knowledge and enterprise. The question about multinationals funding research is a legitimate one. What about states funding research? In many instances, there is research funded by government agencies that could not be published in the public domain because its conclusions went against the relevant mainstream state policy. We are finding in our societies that the nature of education in higher education institutions is such that today in society the most passive citizens are those who have higher education. They are becoming disengaged from the public sphere and democratic questions - questions of justice and equity. They are only concerned with meeting private goals. To promote participatory and sustainable development, higher education (and higher

education institutions) need to re-dedicate themselves to deepening democracy through active citizenship.

The sort of question we have to put to higher education institutions is: If we want to support participatory and sustainable development, are they producing consumers or are they creating citizens? Consumers are in high supply, active citizenship is declining.

Questions?

The first question I have been struggling with for these three decades of my own practice is: What is this participation? And we get lost in the current vocabulary of means and ends: Is it a right? Is it an obligation? etc. I have begun to feel that participation may be a natural human aspiration and activity; that, left to ourselves, all human beings at all times in all situations around the world would engage with their context in order to have a better life. The difficulty comes when this natural stream of participation is blocked by a variety of rocks - rocks of information control, of procedural control, of institutional design, and this to my mind is the core principle of democracy. Without participation, there is no democracy. The practice of democracy starts with the family, in the community, in our neighbourhoods, in our institutions - not just in government institutions; it is in our institutions of higher education that the practice of democracy is about authentic participation, about the ability to disagree with dignity, to question honestly, and work together, even if we disagree. I am trying to understand, therefore, how participatory development and deepening democracy are linked together and how they can be encouraged and promoted as natural human phenomena.

The second question for myself is: What is going on in the name of GATS and WTO by the commercialization and monopolization of indigenous knowledge? My kids would not use turmeric in their milk, which I used to use because my grandmother said it was good for me, but if I gave them a pill, which was properly packaged, they may swallow it in the same way they eat bananas. This is commercialization of indigenous knowledge, packaged programmes available now for holistic health. This kind of monopolization of indigenous knowledge is systematically going to result in market forces and, therefore, create competition. If knowledge is a commodity, and

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is going to be traded for dollars and euros, then you and I would like to maintain our knowledge close to our hearts, and not share it. The basis of the knowledge society - knowledge - becomes the basis of the knowledge economy and, therefore, knowledge may become difficult to access by many who do not have the money to buy knowledge. And, in fact, knowledge may leave their villages and communities and enter labs and factories very soon.

The third question is related to instrumental rationality. I have been thinking about this for many years now because I had the privilege to understand science and technology as a student of engineering. And I kept on asking myself, what is the purpose of knowledge? And the answer I used to get in my science and technology training was to control nature, to control other species, to control possibly other human beings. If the purpose of instrumental rationality is control, may I submit to you that knowledge will cause unsustainability. Unless that very purpose of knowledge is challenged, unless that very modality of knowing through instrumental rationality is questioned, we may never see the possibilities of sustainability in our communities or in our larger ecosystems. How do we legitimize multiple epistemologies and how do we question the purpose of knowledge?

And, finally, there is the question of ethics and values. This is a larger question, linked to the purpose of knowledge and the meaning of life. If purpose of knowledge is emancipatory then it should link to the meaning of life. If meaning of life is material acquisition then, as Mahatma Gandhi said, "there is enough on this earth for everybody's need but not enough for anybody's greed". The model of development, the lifestyle, the values of control, acquisition and consumption - unless they are questioned by practitioners and academics in institutions of higher education, and an alternative ethical, normative and value framework is re-positioned as part of the human development discourse, we will find that our attempts to invent "green" technologies, through instrumental rationality, will create future generations of climate change and devastation.

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Higher education: a public good or a commodity for trade?

Commitment to higher education or commitment of higher education to trade

Jandhyala B. G. Tilak

Higher education: a public good or a commodity for trade?

Commitment *to* Higher Education or commitment *of* Higher Education to trade[1]

Jandhyala B. G. Tilak

Abstract

Conventionally, higher education is regarded as a public good, benefiting not only the individuals but also the whole society by producing a wide variety of externalities or social benefits. Of late, however, the chronic shortage of public funds for higher education, the widespread introduction of neo-liberal economic policies and globalization in every country and in every sector, and the heralding of the international law on trade in services by the World Trade Organization and the General Agreement on Trade and Services-all tend to challenge the long-cherished, well-established view of many that higher education is a public good, and to propose and legitimize the sale and purchase of higher education, as if it is a normal commodity meant for trade. The very shift in perception on the nature of higher education from a public good to a private good-a commodity that can be traded-will have serious

1 This document was first published by IBE in Vol. 38, No. 4, December 2008 issue of the review Prospects. A revised version of the keynote address delivered in the Second Nobel Laureates Meeting at Barcelona, organised by the Global University Network for Innovation & Universidad Politécnica De Cataluña, Barcelona, Spain (December 2, 2005). Without implicating for the opinions and the errors that remain in it, the author acknowledges with gratitude the helpful comments and observations made by Frederico Mayor, Marco Antonio Dias, Josep Ferrer Llop, Nobel laureates Joseph H. Taylor, Jr., Adolfo, Perrez Esquivel, Jerome I. Friedman, Jose Seramago, Werner Aber, Martinus J.G. Veltman and Rigorreta Menchu Tum, who participated in the meeting and the two anonymous referees of the PROSPECTS.

implications. The paper describes the nature of the shift from viewing higher education as a public good to a private, tradable commodity and its dangerous implications.

Introduction

Conventionally, education has for a long period been regarded as a public good, producing a huge set of externalities (mainly positive externalities), benefiting not only the individuals but also the whole society. In case of higher education too, not only educationists, but also other social scientists and thinkers including economists, have recognized the public good nature: higher education constitutes a public good in itself, and also it produces public goods, benefiting simultaneously the individuals and the larger society. This view has been almost universally prevalent for a long period, influencing public policies on higher education.

In recent years, however, the growth in market forces and more importantly international law on trade in services tend to question or simply gloss over the long-cherished, well-established view of many that higher education is a public good and to propose and legitimize the sale and purchase of education, as if it is a commodity meant for trade. Higher education tends to be not regarded as a public good or a social service, and it appears as if we have "lost the 'public' in higher education" (Zemsky, 2003). Even in the earlier decades, while there were some who questioned the concept of higher education as a public good, the heralding of the neo-liberal and globalization policies, and later the advent of international trade in educational services accentuated such thinking. Public good and similar principles are viewed as too naive to be relevant in the rapidly changing, increasingly privatised and liberalised modern context.[2] The conventional wisdom is becoming rapidly invaded by the strong, powerful forces of national and international mercantilists, represented in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS), the institutions that were set up outside the United Nations system. Higher education is seen primarily as a private good, as a tradable commodity that can be subjected to the vagaries of national and international markets. As Knight (1999) summed up:

> With the massification of higher education, increasing at an exponential rate, there is strong interest on the part of large and small countries to make the export of education products and services a major part of their foreign

2 See Tilak (2008) for a review of Indian experience in this context.

policy. In fact, we see major shifts in foreign policies where education was primarily seen as a development assistance activity or cultural programme to one where education is an export commodity.

In short, higher education is subject to severe pressures from domestic and international markets. The divide between public policy and commercial activities is at stake. In a sense, at the centre of the current debate is a fundamental clash of values between traditional versus modern, state versus market, national versus global, and educational versus commercial. This article reviews the arguments on both sides: higher education as a public good and higher education as a tradable commodity, and argues how important it is to recognize and resurrect the public good nature of higher education.

What is a *Public Good*?

Let us start with the basic question: what is a public good? Among the several beautiful concepts that economists have contributed to development studies, the concept of public good is an important one.[3] What is a public good? Economists (see Samuelson, 1954; also Musgrave, 1959) define public goods as those that are non-excludable and non-rivalrous, i.e., such goods cannot be provided exclusively to some: others cannot be excluded from consuming them; secondly, non-rivalrous means their consumption by some does not diminish other people's consumption levels of the same goods. Public goods generate a large quantum of externalities, simply known as social or public benefits. Public goods are available to all equally; marginal utility is equal, and the marginal cost of producing public goods is zero. They are also collective consumption goods.[4] Economists consider all public goods that strictly satisfy all the above conditions as *pure* public goods; alternatively, other public goods that do not necessarily fully satisfy all the conditions are seen as *semi-* or *quasi*-public goods. Further, if the benefits of public goods are limited geographically, they are called local public goods (Tiebout, 1956); and the public goods whose benefits accrue to the whole world are called *global* or *international* public goods (Stiglitz, 1999).[5] By contrast, private goods are altogether different; they do not satisfy any of these conditions.

3 Hence, it is not proper to blame, as some (e.g., Grace 1994) do, economic science for the neglect of public good nature of education.

4 But not all collective consumption goods are public goods. Some of them are "price-excludable" goods, i.e., some can be excluded using the price mechanism (e.g., clubs), some are "congestible" goods, i.e., the more the consumers, the more congestion there is (e.g., a public road, or a music programme in an auditorium).

5 Stiglitz (1999) has identified five such global public goods, viz., international economic stability, international security (political stability), international environment, international humanitarian assistance, and knowledge. See also several papers in Kaul et al. (1999) and Kaul et al. (2003).

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An important implication of public goods is: production of public goods has to be financed by the state out of general revenues, without necessarily relying on prices or any user charges like student fees, and markets, as individuals do not completely reveal their preferences and will not be ready to meet the full costs. Therefore, the personal or market provision of public goods is not feasible, and even if feasible is inefficient.[6] Even if some public goods are excludable, market mechanisms cannot provide public goods efficiently and cannot ensure optimum levels of production. Public goods are typically characterized by underproduction in a market situation, because private demand would fall severely short of socially optimal levels. Besides, public goods are generally made accessible to all and they are not subject to competition. That the provision of such goods is subject to market failures, and that economies of scale also operate in case of many of the public goods, further support their public provision. In fact, public goods that are subject to economies of scale are better provided by the state as a monopolist, than by many, as the economies of scale enjoyed by the single supplier far outweigh any efficiency gains from competition. To prevent the abuse of the monopoly power, and to ensure that any producer surplus is returned to the society, it is only natural that it is produced and supplied by the state. On the other hand, private goods are not available to all and they are subject to principles and laws of markets.

Some view that the distinction between public and private goods is "technical" and "ideological" and that classification of public goods is not an absolute one; it depends upon government policies, market conditions, level of development and political realities. After all, public goods have been provided since the Middle Ages, and hence they need to be redefined time and again in consideration of changing political realities (Desai, 2003). Sadmo (1989) argues that normative theory serves better than the positive theory in recognizing and classifying the public goods.[7] The concept of public goods needs to be interpreted, considering all aspects-the intrinsic nature of the given good, the public goods it produces, the social purpose it serves, and the limitations of markets or what is widely known as market failures in the production of such goods.

6 For example, each one cannot have a school; or each cannot and should not be allowed to have a pistol for safety.

7 See Besley and Ghatak (2006) for a discussion of different types of public goods, including market-supporting and market-augmenting public goods, and on spontaneous provision of public goods.

Is Higher Education a Public Good?

Some argue that higher education cannot be treated as a public good as it does not satisfy either of the first two features, *viz*., non-excludability and non-rivalrousness. Entry into education institutions, it is argued, can be restricted to some, and others can be excluded; and since the places of admission are generally given, admission to or consumption by some necessarily means reduction in the consumption levels of others. Similarly it is argued that there are additional costs in providing access to higher education to additional members of the society. This, in my view, is a very narrow interpretation of the technical attributes of public goods and of consumption of education. As Stiglitz (1999) has argued, knowledge, thereby higher education and research, does satisfy all these conditions. As an illustration he has given the example of a mathematical theorem, which is non-excludable (once it is published no one can be excluded from reading and enjoying the theorem), and non-rivalrous (one's enjoyment of the theorem will not affect other's enjoyment of the same). It is equally available to all, all may have same utility. There is zero marginal cost for making it available to an additional person.[8] For the same reason higher education is also regarded as a collective good, as the cost of excluding an additional person from benefiting from higher education can be infinite, while the cost of an additional person can be nil (Johansson, 1991, pp. 63-4).

Few deny the existence of externalities in case of higher education. So if the consumption is interpreted as consumption of benefits from education, not consumption of a good *per se* (admission to a university in the present case), education satisfies both the essential features: the spread of benefits from an educated citizenry cannot be restricted to a small population, nor is the quantum of benefits received by some affected by the level of benefits others receive. As Stiglitz (1986) noted, there are two critical properties of public goods: it is not feasible to ration public goods, nor it is desirable to do so. While it may be feasible to ration admissions to higher education it is not feasible to ration the distribution of benefits that flow from higher education; nor is it desirable to ration admissions to higher education (Weisbrod, 1988). Exclusion of the poor from the consumption of education will result in a loss of overall equity as well as efficiency in the economy. Thus education, specifically higher education, satisfies all the three essential features of public goods: they are non-excludable, non-rivalrous and they produce externalities. Other associated features of public goods, like "free-riders", are also applicable to education.

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8 The additional person may, however, have to incur a small cost of accessing it, say in the form of purchasing the book.

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Education is also a merit good, a good with special merit, "deserving public support to a level of supply beyond that which consumer sovereignty would imply" (Colclough, 1997, p. 10). Higher education is also an "experience good" (McPherson and Winston, 1993), whose product characteristics such as quality and price and even the benefits are difficult to observe in advance, but can be ascertained only upon consumption. Higher education is also associated with asymmetric information including imperfect quality information (Dill and Soo, 2004; Stiglitz, 2000). Consumer choice has no much meaning in case of merit goods (see Arcelus and Levine 1986), as consumer behaviour is critically dependent upon information consumer receives (Nelson, 1970), which in case of education is imperfect, incomplete and highly inadequate. Further, higher education institutions have multiple objectives and they are not just economic. They also produce multiple, varied types of outputs, some tangible and many not.

Because of these special features, public goods like higher education cannot be provided by markets in a manner that satisfies social demand. Optimum levels cannot be produced and supplied by markets, as profits cannot be a criterion in the production of the public goods; private producers cannot profit from producing public goods.

Obviously, since public goods yield both private and public benefits, there are also private benefits from higher education (Bloom e*t al* 2006). After all, while the benefits associated with private goods are exclusive to the private individuals, those associated with public goods are not exclusive: public goods benefit the society and private individuals too. But the public benefits outweigh the personal benefits by several times, and hence higher education cannot be treated as a private good, or as a "public *and* private good" (Levin, 1987), or as a "mixed good" one that is both public and private, as some (e.g., Hüfner, 2003 p. 339) argue.[9] In short, higher education is a public good beyond any doubt and the current controversy is ill-motivated and unwarranted.

The public good nature of higher education is well understood when one recognizes the traditional functions of higher education and the social benefits that it produces, many of which constitute public goods in themselves.

[9] Given the quantum and nature of externalities, and the individual benefits, some prefer to treat school or more specifically basic education as a "pure" public good, and higher education as a quasi-public good (Blaug 1970; Levin 1987; Tomlinson 1986), but a public good nevertheless.

Functions of Higher Education

Traditionally, the functions of higher education are recognized as noble and lying at the core of the very sustenance of societies. From the society's point of view, the core functions higher education performs can be listed as follows (see also UNESCO, 1998).

First and most important, higher education helps in the creation, advancement, absorption and dissemination of knowledge through research and teaching. After all, it is well established that universities are nurseries of ideas, innovations and development and gradually they become reservoirs of knowledge.

Secondly, higher education helps in the rapid industrialization of the economy, by providing manpower with professional, technical and managerial skills. In the present context of transformation of societies into knowledge societies, higher education provides not just educated workers, but knowledge workers who are essential for rapid growth of the knowledge economies. It also helps in reaping the gains from globalization.

Thirdly, universities are institutions that assist in building the character and morals of the individuals; they inculcate ethical and moral values, orderly habits and create attitudes, and make possible attitudinal changes necessary for the socialization of the individuals and the modernization and overall transformation of the societies, by protecting and enhancing societal values.

Fourthly, higher education also helps in the formation of a strong nation-state, contributes to the deepening of democracy by producing a better citizenry which actively participates in the civil, political, social, cultural and economic activities of the society, with members who understand, interpret, preserve, enhance and promote national, regional, international and historical cultures, in a context of cultural pluralism and diversity. It also has the potential to produce social and political leaders of high calibre and vision.

The nation-building role of higher education is one, that is considered as one of the most important functions by many.

Further, higher education contributes to the development and improvement of education at all levels and allows people to enjoy an enhanced "life of the mind", offering the wider society both cultural and political benefits (TFHES, 2000, p. 37).

Since all these are in the public interest, higher education thus serves the public interest. Because of the nobility involved in the multiple functions-social, economic, political, and cultural-higher education is also regarded as a noble public service and higher education institutions as temples of learning.

The Task Force on Higher Education and Society (TFHES) (2000) highlighted higher education's ability to serve public interest, by: unlocking the potential at all levels of society, helping talented people to gain advanced training whatever their background; creating a pool of highly trained individuals that attains a critical size and becomes a key national resource; addressing issues for study whose long term value to society is thought to exceed their current value to students and employers; and by providing a space for the free and open discussion of ideas and values.

An important ingredient in the public interest in higher education is its role in creating a meritocratic society that is able to secure the best political leaders, civil servants, doctors, teachers, lawyers, engineers and business and civil leaders, while at the same time being inclusive.

Many of these social functions that higher education performs also constitute social benefits.

Social Benefits of Higher Education

Higher education confers a broad array of benefits on the individuals, and also on the whole society. These are well recognized by all, including economists, starting with Adam Smith, who also pleaded for the same reason for public financing of education. Such benefits are numerous and diverse: some are individual or private and many are public and social. Both individual and public benefits are economic, social, political, cultural and demographic in nature. They may even flow across generations and across borders. The social benefits of higher education are immense. In fact, as stated earlier, many social benefits also constitute public goods in themselves. Since the benefits flow across borders, higher education is also considered as an international public good (Naert, 2004).

As the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education (1973, p. vii) clearly stated, "benefits from higher education flow to all, or nearly all, persons … directly or in-directly."[10] Many have documented the several types of benefits that accrue to the individuals and to

10 In fact the Commission goes further, adding that for the same reason, "the costs of higher education are assessed against all, or nearly all, adults directly or indirectly."

the society (e.g., Weisbrod, 1964; Bowen, 1988; Merisotis, 1998; Baum and Payea, 2004; Institute of Higher Education Policy, 2005). The public benefits include economic benefits and social benefits. Public economic benefits are those that have broad economic, fiscal and labour market effects. These benefits result in the overall improvement of the national economy, as a result of citizen's participation in higher education. At the macro level, one can note that societies with increasing numbers of the higher educated in their population are dynamic, competitive in global markets and successful in terms of higher levels of economic development (TFHES, 2000). An important public economic benefit is greater productivity of the labour force. The presence of an educated labour force increases the productivity of the less well-educated, too (Johnson, 1984; Lucas, 1988), which is an important externality. Other specific public economic benefits include: increased tax revenues, higher levels of savings which are necessary for investment that result in higher levels of growth, growth in overall consumption levels, increased supply of educated labour force, decreased reliance on government support for welfare programmes and so on, many of which are well documented in the literature on human capital. Further, the benefits of education as a socializing force are realized in a variety of ways. Instilling common core virtues through public education is not only important; it can later reduce the cost of enforcing desirable social norms. Gradstein and Justman (2002, p. 1192) highlight the role of public education in producing a major externality, viz., the shrinking of the "social distance" between individuals of different distinct ethnic, religious and social groups, and thereby in reducing the associated transaction costs, and in reducing the potential for conflict over rent-seeking activities between competing groups in the population. In addition to these "normal" externalities, in case of higher education in particular, "technological" and "dynamic" externalities may be very important.[11] For the same reason, Krueger and Lindahl, 2001, p. 1120) argue that the existence of quite large externalities can cause "an enormous return to investment in schooling, equal to three or four times the private return to schooling estimated within most countries."

Public social benefits are those benefits that accrue to the society, but are not directly related to economic aspects. Such public social benefits include reduced crime rate, social cohesion and appreciation of diversity, increase in the age of marriage, thus resulting in decrease in fertility rate among women, improved health conditions, etc. The political and civil benefits of higher education are also immense. Public higher education systems are generally regarded as the single most important instruments in

11 On dynamic externalities, see Schultz (1988), Romer (1986 and 1990), Lucas (1988) and Stewart and Ghani (1992). See Azariadis and Drazen (1990) and Behrman (1990) for a discussion on "technological" externalities. See also Schultz (1990) and Birdsall (1996) on the externalities produced by research and higher education.

the maintenance of a democratic system, as it produces better, well-informed citizenry, enabling more sensitive and wider public participation and debate on national issues.[12] They also help in building strong nation-state philosophy, at the same time offering resistance to social and political ideas that threaten the broader social interests. Institutions of higher education are custodians of liberty, freedom and an unfettered search for truth; they are considered as civilizing forces, inculcating good character and values, producing leaders (Lawrence, 2004). Their contribution to increased quality of civic life, better elected governments and democracy is very substantial. Higher education is also viewed as a major instrument of equity, serving as an important means of access and social mobility to disenfranchised segments of population. Public education has an intrinsic equity content.

Thus the typology of benefits indicates a broad range-economic, social, cultural, political etc., often overlapping, short term and long term, having a significant positive impact on the people's well-being. They are indeed diverse. As Snower (1993, p. 706) noted, "the uncompensated benefits from education are legion." Very few (e.g., Arrow, 1993) believe that externalities in higher education are negligible.

Externalities or public benefits are generally believed to be non-measurable. But even if externalities cannot be quantified, it is clear that they do exist (Summers, 1987), so one should refrain from being dogmatic (Hope and Miller, 1988, p. 40). Large quantitative evidence does exist on the effects of education on economic growth, income distribution, infant mortality, life expectancy, health conditions, fertility rates, population control, etc.[13] McMahon (1999) has indeed measured several social benefits of education, such as benefits relating to health, population growth, democracy, human rights, political stability, poverty, inequality, environment and crime, apart from the direct benefits of education relating to economic growth in a cross section of countries. Thus, higher education is not only a public good, it also shapes, produces and helps realize other public goods. In this sense it can be regarded as a very special public good of a high order.

Thus there is a huge accumulated stock of conventional wisdom on the versatile and critical contribution of higher education to various development facets of society. Further, higher education is not only a means for development, it itself constitutes development, a higher standard of quality of life, as higher educated people acquire the ability to read, write, understand and enjoy serious writings, develop critical thinking and become involved in scholarly debates on academic as well as

12 For example, the Indian university system is found to have played a very significant part in education for democratic citizenship (Béteille, 2005). See also Patnaik (2007).

13 Weale (1993, p. 736) argues that these externalities are particularly important in developing countries. See Bowen (1988) and Leslie (1990) for elaborate descriptions of externalities in education.

sociopolitical issues of national and global importance and become socially and politically engaged (Helliwell and Putnam, 1999). The abilities of the people to get engaged in critical writings, thinking and in social and political activities constitute a non-excludable public good, since "they allow a more complex organization of social life" (Checchi, 2006, pp. 15-16). In this sense, education is development; it is freedom, and the creation of capabilities among the people is an important function of higher education (see Sen, 1999).

Why is the Conventional Wisdom Changing?

Despite overall awareness of the public good nature and role of higher education in society, a rapid shift in the development paradigm of higher education is taking place. Two essential factors explain the new trends that treat education as a marketable commodity and not as a public good. Both factors are also related to each other.

First, higher education systems, even in economically prosperous countries, are under severe financial strain, with growing student numbers on the one hand, and a chronic shortage of public funds on the other. In recent years, most countries have inflicted serious cuts in state grants to higher education institutions. The resultant fall in public expenditures can be noticed in many countries in any or all of the following: total public expenditure on higher education, per student expenditures, share of public expenditure on higher education in the corresponding country's national income, or in the total government budget expenditure, allocations in absolute and relative terms to important programmes that include research, scholarships, etc.

Some of the available evidence presented in Table 1 on the extent of decline in public expenditure on higher education per student as a percentage of gross domestic product per capita during the last decade and a half in a select few countries shows very clearly that: (a) the decline is not confined to the developing countries, though a larger number of developing countries experienced the decline than the number of high-income countries; there has been a very significant fall even in advanced countries such as the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, and in the group of the high-income countries as a whole; and (b) the fall in the ratio is very steep in some of the countries, developed as well as developing.

Table 1. Decline in Public Expenditure on Higher Education per Student

(% of GDP per capita)			
	1990-91	2006	Change
UK	40.9	27.6	-13.3
Australia	50.7	22.5*	-28.2
New Zealand	67.8	25.2	-42.6
Chile	27.1	11.6	-15.5
Czech	45.9	30.4	-15.5
Nepal	90.8	71.1*	-19.7
Malaysia	116.6	71.0	-45.6
India	92.0	61.0	-31.0
Estonia	55.9	18.2	-37.7
South Africa	90.9	50.1	-40.8
Hungary	81.3	24.3	-57.0
Jamaica	132.3	40.7*	-91.6
Region			
High Income Countries	47.1	29.0	-18.1
South Asia	90.8	68.6*	-22.0
Upper Middle Income Countries	61.8	23.3	-38.5

Note: Data for two points of time are not available on all countries; data on some select countries only are presented here.

* refers to 2005

Source: World Development Indicators 2004 and 2008 (Washington DC: World Bank).

The second important factor that contributed to the radical shift in the thinking on the nature and role of higher education is the introduction of neo-liberal economic policies in the name of stabilization, structural adjustment and globalization, associated with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Policies question the role of the state and involve withdrawal of the state from, and liberalization and

privatization of several social and economic sectors including higher education and even the welfare programmes. These policies also clearly favour and promote an increase in the role of the markets. The case for treating higher education as a marketable commodity received great support from these policies and these organizations. Such policies have been introduced in almost all developing countries, and even many developed countries found it convenient to adopt such policies as an easy escape from the problem of public funding of higher education.

Further, inclusion of education in the negotiations under GATS and WTO, which is an obvious extension of the neo-liberal economic policies, is also found to be highly attractive to many universities and the governments (Tilak, 2007). Higher education as an internationally traded service is believed to be capable of producing an immense amount of profit to the exporters of education. After all, the international market in higher education was valued at US$ 30 billion, or 3% of global services exports in 1998 (OECD, 2004). For example, of the US$ 30 billion, USA and UK accounted for US$ 11.4 billion each in 2001. Third in rank comes Australia with over US$ 2 billion (OECD, 2004, p. 32). The total value of exports of the five largest exporting countries (USA, UK, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada) itself was estimated to be nearly US$ 30 billion in 2005 (Bashir, 2007).

Many governments of the "exporting" countries encouraged the negotiations on higher education under GATS and WTO, as trade in higher education is essentially viewed as an important source of revenues for the universities, thus reducing the need for the governments to allocate higher proportions of their budgetary resources. For example, even some of the best universities in the world, such as Oxford and Cambridge, which were seen as "gold standard" in higher education until ten years ago, are entering into the business of trading their degrees to overseas students, essentially constrained by state grants (Suror, 2005). As Knight (2007) reported, more than 50 large transnational companies which are active in providing international education programmes on a for-profit basis are publicly traded on stock exchanges.

It is generally argued that international trade in higher education benefits both the "exporting" countries as well as the "importing" ones; importing countries gain access to high quality higher education systems, and exporting countries make economic gains, besides reaping academic pay-offs in terms of diversity etc. While the accrual of economic gains to the exporting countries seem to be real, gains on the academic

front to the importing countries or to the exporting countries are elusive. It is widely noted that: (a) only substandard institutions in advanced countries participate in the trade in higher education in developing countries; and (b) the institutions in advanced countries also adopt dual standards and procedures-tough and high quality ensuring mechanisms and strong regulatory procedures and methods for education in their own countries and questionable mechanisms and methods for export of education to the developing countries. As a result of all this, developing countries suffer both economic as well as academic losses, and rich countries might get only economic benefits, but few benefit in academic and intellectual spheres; and all countries lose the public good nature of higher education (Tilak 2007).

Unfortunately, those who patronize the cause of higher education as a marketable commodity recognize only the individual economic benefits conferred by higher education, and refuse to recognize the vast magnitude of social benefits higher education produces, and the inability of the markets to produce a sufficient quantum of public goods. They (e.g., Tooley, 1994, 2001, 2004) find that markets are capable of solving all educational problems. For them the individual interests should take precedence over social interests. They also stress the superficial principle of individual choice in this regard. The principle is superficial, as it matters only for those who can pay for higher education. They also believe that markets serve the social interests and that "unfettered market is always superior" (Schultze, 1977). But most such claims are open to question; some empirical studies have indeed proved them to be wrong.[14]

One of the strong arguments neo-liberals have made against the public provision of higher education and clearly in favour of private education and/or high fees and user charges in higher education is: public provision of higher education benefits the upper middle and upper income groups of the population more than the low income groups and thereby accentuates unequal distribution (World Bank 1995; Jimenez, 1987). Though this argument is true to some extent, the situation in developing countries is changing rapidly; access to higher education is no longer confined to upper middle and high income groups; the participation rates of the low socioeconomic strata are rising, albeit slowly. For example, in India, about 50% of the enrolments in higher education are accounted for by socioeconomically weaker sections of society (scheduled castes/tribes and other backward castes in 2004-05 (NSSO, 2006). Secondly and more importantly, it is to be noted that acceptance of the neo-liberal arguments on public financing of higher education and withdrawal of the state from higher education would reduce the rates of participation of

14 See Tilak (2006, 2009) for a critique of some of the assumptions and claims of advocates of private higher education.

socioeconomically weaker sections of society in higher education and further accentuate inequalities in higher education (see Tilak, 1997, 2006). Further, higher education is also regarded by some as a "positional good"-an economic good which has a relative or social value, but not an absolute one, and earns economic rents or quasi-rents for being scarce (Hirsch, 1976). The traditional function of higher education as a positional good serving mainly as a status symbol is important, but limited, because positional goods, strictly speaking, are inherently scarce, and they do not produce absolute value, which are not strong features of higher education. More importantly, it can be argued that public provision of education to larger numbers of the population, or what is known as "massification of higher education" will reduce the undesirable nature of higher education as a positional good, while the treatment of higher education as a private commodity, on the other hand, will only fortify it as a positional good, meant for the privileged.

Thus one notices only practical economic compulsions and vested interests in making quick money, and no theoretical base for the arguments to treat education as a commodity rather than as a public good. But the pace of change in the conventional wisdom is rapid. The idea of the university as a place of scholarship and as a community of scholars and students drawn from all corners of society, seeking truth and engaging in the task of pursuing scientific research etc., and not as a confederacy of self-seekers, is treated as an old fashioned idea. These neo-liberals view higher education institutions neither as centres of learning nor as important social institutions. For them there is no distinction between higher education and the production of cars and soaps. They treat universities as knowledge factories. For them investment in higher education is not human capital, but venture capital;[15] and equity in higher education means not socioeconomic equity, but "equity" in share markets relating to investment in universities.

Costs of Treating Higher Education as a Commodity

Treating higher education as a commodity is much more complex and dangerous than it appears on the face of it. It might affect higher education in a variety of ways.

First and foremost, by treating higher education as a commodity that can be bought and sold in the domestic and international markets, the public good character of higher education may disappear altogether. Instead of serving public interests, higher education might become disengaged from the public interest and might become an

15 See, for example, www.ifc.org/edinvest, which produces a monthly electronic newsletter, championing the cause of facilitating investment in the global education market.

instrument that serves individual narrow interests. As the TFHES (2000, p. 45) warned, reliance on market forces reduces the public benefits that higher education produces. This, in my view, could be the most serious casualty of commoditization of higher education. As Altbach (2001) observed, "if higher education worldwide were subject to the strictures of the WTO, academe would be significantly altered. The idea that the university serves a broad public good would be weakened, and the universities would be subject to all of the commercial pressures of the marketplace-a marketplace enforced by international treaties and legal requirements. The goal of having the university contribute to national development and the strengthening of civil society in developing countries would be impossible to fulfill." University education might be designed independently of academic and social responsibilities.

Second, the commoditization of higher education would terribly weaken governments' commitment to and public funding of higher education, and promote a rapid growth in the privatization of higher education. Privatization, specifically profit-seeking private institutions of higher education, might become the order of the day with all its ramifications, converting an institution that is basically a non-profit institution into a profit seeking institution. Eventually, the whole higher education scene might get eclipsed by the private sector, and the public sector might become invisible. I have described elsewhere (Tilak, 1991, 2005, 2009) the several problems associated with the growth of private higher education in terms of quality and quantity of higher education and equity, in addition to the problems it creates in developing a balanced system of higher education with a necessary focus on all areas of study that are important to society in the long run. Marketization of higher education will result in a rapid extinction of some of the important disciplines of study that serve as a basic foundation for the development of any humane society. Only the marketable and revenue generating courses of study will survive. This is already being experienced in countries like India, with an increase in demand for engineering education, management education and areas like fashion technology, and with a falling demand for the natural and physical sciences, social sciences, humanities, languages etc. And then societies have to struggle to highlight the importance of and revive the social sciences and humanities.

Third, treating higher education as a marketable product may severely affect knowledge production and will lead to "knowledge capitalism" (see Olssen and Peters, 2005). The reduction in the role of the state, and a corresponding increase in the role of the markets-domestic and international-in higher education would generally

severely restrict access to higher education, and widen education inequalities within and between nations. In the WTO framework, Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) include legal means in both domestic and international law for excluding and restricting access to knowledge. Knowledge capitalism makes higher education beyond the reach of large numbers of youth belonging to middle and lower socioeconomic strata. This is not good for those populations nor is it good for the higher education system itself. Similarly, knowledge capitalism keeps many economically poor countries away from good quality higher education. This too is not good for those poor countries, nor is it good for other countries in this rapidly growing, interdependent world. This too will not help build strong, vibrant higher education systems in the developed countries.

Fourthly, knowledge is a public good. The TFHES (2000) has also noted the public interest value of higher education in terms of creation of research and knowledge. Higher education adds to society's stock of knowledge, which is an important externality. If research and knowledge are treated as private goods, and access to them is restricted, new knowledge creation becomes impossible as new knowledge is necessarily built on old knowledge. The noble tradition that universities are centres of creation and dissemination of knowledge in a spirit of academic freedom with special stress on independent research may become an idea of the past. The quality and content of higher education and research might become severely dampened. Even if research is conducted in private or public universities, the integrity of research could be at stake, with the interests of the corporate sector determining research priorities and outcomes. Further, research supported by the corporate sector may satisfy the perceived present demands, but may fail to look at society's long term needs. Basic and fundamental research that forms the humanistic foundation and helps in understanding the universal context, in which humanity lives, may get traded off in favour of current applications. The core academic values would get traded off in favour of commercial gains (Bok, 2003). The GATS and related developments such as TRIPS could raise fundamental roadblocks to the provision of global and national public goods.

Fifthly, progress in higher education depends on the time-tested "social contract" system, a contract between the older generation, the younger generation and the education system (Martin, 2005). The principle of the contract is simple: the present generation of adults finances the education of the future. The principle refers to the bonds between the present and future generations, and between society and its

collective children, which constitute the bedrock upon which every successful civilization rests. The responsibility one generation feels towards those that follow is a valuable public asset. The mechanism works through the method of taxation: the present generation of taxpayers pays for the education of the future generations. If higher education is regarded as a private good, as an individual responsibility that one has to finance oneself, through tuition and student loans, for example, one finances one's own higher education out of one's own future income, the principle of social contract is in great trouble. Jeopardizing the principle of the social contract may lead not only to impeding the progress of education system, but also to straining of the entire social fabric throughout.

Lastly and quite importantly, it is important to realize that trade in higher education might actually jeopardize existing human rights agreements, as the several provisions in WTO and GATS conflict with the United Nations conventions (see Tomasevski, 2006). The provisions in the trade agreements are indeed subversive of and contradictory to the true meaning of higher education. After all, the *United Nations Declaration on Human Rights* (1948) has clearly stated:

Everyone has the right to education…and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.

The *United Nations Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (Article 13) further states:

> Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the *progressive introduction of free education* (emphasis added).

The *Bologna Declaration* has also ratified the UN Covenant. Treatment of higher education as a commodity and trade in higher education may make realization of these conventions not just difficult, but impossible.

Conclusion

Basically higher education is a public good; it is also recognized as a merit good. Besides being a public good in itself, it produces several public goods. The public goods that higher education produces, shapes and nurtures are also diverse. The social purpose it serves, the nation-building role it performs, the public good nature

and the human right nature of higher education-all these dimensions are very closely related, and they need to be considered as fundamental and non-compromizable principles in the formulation of public policies relating to higher education.

But higher education as a public good is now at risk, as higher education comes to the centre stage of the WTO (Altbach, 2004). The financial pressures and broader changes in economic thinking-specifically the emergence of neo-liberal thinking-play an important role here. The role and definition of higher education and other public goods is contested and embattled. The neo-liberals see the role of higher education differently; they view it as a commodity that can be traded in domestic as well as international markets. The neo-liberal economic policies introduced almost everywhere-every society and every sector, the chronic shortage of funds for higher education, and the advent of WTO and GATS in higher education-all dramatically changed the public thinking on higher education. GATS is basically hostile to public goods and social services, including specifically higher education. As a result, the wave of commoditization of higher education is on and the "higher education bazaar" (Kirp, 2003) is growing rapidly. Increasingly, all components of higher education and research, including good ideas and policy concepts, are traded in the international marketplace (Newman and Couturier 2002). "Commitment *to* higher education" has given way to "commitment *of* higher education" to WTO under GATS. But though a majority of the countries have not made "commitments" to liberalize their higher education systems under WTO,[16] a "progressively higher level of liberalisation in higher education is taking place" (Tomasevski, 2005, p. 12), with an increase in quantum and types of pressures to "seek" and to "offer" commitments on higher education (Knight, 2006).

The very shift in the perception of the nature of higher education from a public good to a private one, a commodity that can be traded, and the reforms being attempted in higher education in this direction that do not recognize the principle of the social contract, may have dangerous implications, replacing academic values by commercial considerations, social concerns and purposes by individual interests, and long term needs by short term demands. Even if there are some gains to be had from the commoditization of higher education for trade, they may be few and short-lived, while the losses could be immense and may produce very serious, long term dangers to the whole society. The core academic values and social purposes are so important that they cannot be traded off in favour of markets (e.g., Kirp, 2003).

16 Only 52 countries (including the European Union, which is counted as one country) made commitments with respect to education sector as of March 2006. Of these countries, 36 have agreed to liberalize access to higher education (Education International, 2006; Knight, 2006). Further, it is important to note that the public higher education sector is in principle not covered by the GATS negotiations and no member country has expressed an interest in including it. But the situation seems to be changing rapidly.

At the bottom-line, it is important to realize that higher education institutions are not commercial production firms (Winston, 1999; see also Clotfelter, 1996) and hence higher education is not a business commodity that can be subject to liberalization, privatization and commercialization and be bought and sold in markets. Higher education is related to the national culture and the values of a society. It protects culture, intellectual independence and the values of a civilized society. Higher education institutions act as bastions of rich traditional values, at the same time as providing the setting for a new kind of social imagination and experience. They are not only centres of learning, continuously creating and disseminating knowledge, and inculcating the skills and attitudes necessary for the modernization of societies, but are also important social institutions that provide the setting for a very distinct kind of interaction among young men and women, between the generations and the nations (Béteille, 2005, p. 3377). All this makes higher education very different from other goods and services covered by GATS.

Therefore it is necessary to make special efforts to protect the integrity of research, to preserve the much cherished educational and social values and, in brief, to resurrect the public good nature of higher education, so that it serves the public interests that it is expected to do. As Altbach (2001) cautioned,

Universities are indeed special institutions with a long history and a societal mission that deserve support. Subjecting academe to the rigors of a WTO-enforced marketplace would destroy one of the most valuable institutions in any society.

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3

Higher education as a "public good and public responsibility": what does it mean?

Sjur Bergan

Higher education as a "public good and public responsibility": what does it mean?

Sjur Bergan[1]

Introduction

The right to education is fundamental, an integral part of our European heritage values[2], and one that is included in the European Convention on Human Rights. In European countries, it is, in fact, not only a right but also a legal obligation for certain age groups, and the average grade school student may well emphasize the aspect of obligation rather than that of right. There is general agreement that public authorities have a duty to provide education for all at basic level, and the interpretation of what basic level means has been expanding. As a result, the length of mandatory schooling has tended to expand over the past couple of generations - but not to the level of higher education.

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2 The point can be illustrated by two quotes from Sanz and Bergan 2002: "In terms of cultural heritage, the university presents itself as an actor of collective responsibility guaranteeing the sense of certain moral, intellectual and technical values. Freedom of belief, freedom of teaching and the preservation of memory - physical or intellectual - teach values for life and for respect between generations. The project embarked from an attempt at defining a conceptual and contextual framework for the concept of university heritage as well as for considerations deriving from the role of universities as heritage in Europe. In addition, the university appeared as a space for reflection on the delimitation or enlargement of the term "heritage". This programme was inserted into a discussion already underway concerning a heritage that was constantly widening its definition and its basis for social, cultural, economic and symbolic action" (p. 9) and "Heritage is conceived of as an inheritance, as a cultural product and as a political resource. This practice includes more possible kinds of usage, not only those aiming at improving our knowledge of the past, as in the case of history. Rather, heritage conveys contemporary economic, cultural, political or social use" (p. 11).

3

The situation with regard to higher education, then, is somewhat less clear, even if the concept of public higher education is very strong in Europe. Today, there is a high level of public involvement in higher education in our continent, and this was reflected in the Communiqué adopted by the "Bologna" Ministers at the Praha Higher Education Summit:

As the Bologna Declaration sets out, Ministers asserted that building the European Higher Education Area is a condition for enhancing the attractiveness and competitiveness of higher education institutions in Europe. They supported the idea that higher education should be considered a public good and is and will remain a public responsibility (regulations etc.), and that students are full members of the higher education community.

On the face of it, the statement by the Bologna Ministers would seem to reaffirm a well-established European practice. However, we also know something about the context in which the statement was made, which is one of stagnating or even diminishing public budgets combined with increased claims on the public purse, an increase in the provision of private higher education and in higher education with no link to public higher education systems (transnational education) and a general debate on the proper role of public authorities, generally cast as a debate on the role of the State.[3]

This context warrants the question of whether the Praha Communiqué should be seen not primarily as a statement of fact but as an expression of concern. When you need to state the obvious, it is often an indication that it is no longer obvious. The Communiqué also provides an opportunity to explore what the Ministers' statement could actually mean, as the concept of higher education as a public good is less straightforward than it would seem at face value. In order to do so, I shall seek to outline some questions raised by the statement and then try to identify some common ground before exploring a number of "twilight zones" where the debate deserves to be phrased in shades of gray rather than stark contrasts of black and white. We are at the beginning of a debate, and my ambition is limited to discerning some areas where we might move toward agreement as well as outlining some issues for further discussion.

3 In this article, I shall prefer the term "public authority" to "state" or "state authorities", as responsibility for higher education is in some countries located at other levels, e.g. in federal states.

Some questions

Beyond the question of why Ministers felt the need to underline that higher education is a public good and a public responsibility, a number of questions could be asked about the statement. The first one is in what sense the term "public good" is used.

The problem here is that the term is well established in economic theory, where it denotes a good that is freely available to be enjoyed by all. In more technical terms - and that may be a risky undertaking on the part of a non-economist - a public good has been described as non-rivalrous and non-excludable, meaning that one person's consumption of the good does not prevent that of others, and that it is not possible to exclude anyone from enjoying the good (Stieglitz). It follows that public goods are not readily tradable, whereas their opposites - private goods - are essentially sold on the market for exclusive consumption by one person or a group of persons paying for the privilege.

While widespread access to higher education is a cornerstone of higher education policy in most European countries, unrestricted and free access is not a realistic description of the situation: higher education - whether in the form of higher education provision (courses and study programs) or its outcomes (diplomas and qualifications) can actually be traded and people can be excluded from higher education. In fact, in our societies, concern about the knowledge or qualifications gap is an indication that exclusion is to some extent the real situation today, and experience from other political regimes past and present shows that undemocratic rulers will go to some length to exclude their subjects - "citizens" is hardly the word to use - from at least the kind of education that may awaken their curiosity and stimulate critical thinking. While these are perhaps extreme examples, the knowledge gap is of great concern also in democratic societies and may well be one of the most important social and economic divides in modern democratic societies. There is also solid evidence that higher education is tradable, hence our concern about the inclusion of higher education in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and our distinction between non-profit and for-profit higher education providers. Therefore, higher education is hardly a public good in the economic sense of the term, and it is difficult to envisage policies that would render it so in the foreseeable future.

We are left, then, with an economic term used as a political statement. It is of course not unusual for terms to mean different things in different contexts, or even to change meaning in the course of time,[4] and life is certainly much more than economics. Yet, using a well established term from one area of knowledge in a different context is not unproblematic, and this shift in usage from the domain of economics to that of a political and social context is perhaps a part of the reason for the confusion. Reality does not always correspond to ideal types, and higher education is probably situated somewhere in between public and private goods, or has elements of both (Quéau, who uses the term "global common good"). In this sense, one is also reminded of the Biblical parable of the Silver Pieces.[5] While the silver pieces were given to individual servants by a demanding master - and were thus eminently private goods - the parable does underline the obligation to put these to good use. This aspect may not be a part of the economic definition of a public good, but it underlines an obligation incumbent on public authorities as well as on individuals: not to let their resources and talents lay idle but to use them in a beneficial way and for the greater good.

The most reasonable interpretation of the term as used in the Praha Communiqué seems to be that good quality higher education should be enjoyed by as many qualified persons as possible on equal terms, and that is a goal that would meet with approval in much of Europe.

If a public good is not marketable, does it also mean it is free of charge? This seems to be a common assumption, and the assumption is reinforced through association with the concept of public service, or rather the French concept of *service public*, which, at least in France, has strong connotations of non-payment. However, even this needs to be nuanced. At least in some countries, services that are regarded as public are in fact performed for a fee, which is normally quite modest. Passports would be one example. More importantly, all goods or services come at a price - the question is who pays. Even where modest fees are charged, a substantial part of the real cost is borne not by individual users in accordance with their actual use of the service, but by a collective through other payment mechanisms - typically taxes - and where wealth or ability to pay is as likely a criterion as actual use of the service.

However, the Ministers do not only refer to public good; they also speak about public responsibility. The next question is therefore why the two terms have been coupled. I take the explicit connection between the two as an indication that the Ministers are

4 The obvious example from English is "gay", which in the space of a generation has gone from describing a mood to describing sexual orientation, and the opposite of which is no longer "sad" but "straight".

5 St. Matthew 25, 14 - 27. I am grateful to Nuria Sanz for reminding me of this parable - as well as of the fact that the Spanish version uses the term *talentos*.

in fact concerned that higher education may not be a public good after all or - more to the point - that higher education may not be accessible on equal terms to all qualified candidates. Public responsibility is in a sense an instrument or a precondition for such a system of higher education, and the more relevant issue for the European Higher Education Area may be to explore the implications of a public responsibility for higher education. I will seek to do so by first outlining some areas on which I believe there is general agreement and then address some points on which opinions are likely to diverge.

Yet another possible question is what is meant by public.[6] In the widest sense, the public encompasses all members of society and the public sphere what is done collectively or on behalf of at least a large part of society. For the purpose of this article, however, I will focus on public authorities, as the operationalization or agent of society.

Some common ground

Higher education framework

Given that there is agreement that public authorities have some kind of responsibility in higher education, this responsibility should at the very minimum extend to the make-up of the education system or, if you prefer, the framework within which higher education is delivered, regardless of by whom.

One important part of the higher education system is the qualifications framework. There is agreement in Europe that public authorities decide the degree structure and its requirements. If this were not to be the case, one of the key goals of the Bologna Process - a three-tier degree structure - would be difficult to implement, as would the goal of transparency. Nor can it easily be argued that public responsibility for the degree structure makes it too rigid, as there is considerable scope for variation within the overall qualifications framework. There seem to be two conflicting tendencies today: on the one hand, study programs give individual students possibilities to choose combinations that appeal to them for various reasons, whether of personal interest or judgments about career perspectives, and on the other hand there is increasing awareness that this diversity has to be fitted to an overall framework that can be described in a transparent way. These two tendencies can only be combined within

6 I am grateful to Birger Hendriks for making this point.

a transparent degree structure with a limited number of levels, but one that allows flexible combinations of credits and courses at each level. Establishing and maintaining this framework is a public responsibility.

Another important element of the higher education framework is quality assurance, where there now seems to be agreement that public authorities are responsible for ensuring that there is adequate provision for transparent quality assurance, whether they themselves carry it out or not. Quality assurance is also an example of how the perceptions of the proper role of public authorities in higher education may change quite rapidly. As late as 1997, when the Council of Europe/UNESCO Recognition Convention was adopted, the need for formalized quality assurance was still disputed, and the Convention had to circumscribe references to quality assurance by referring to institutions and programs making up the higher education system of a Party. We also had to include separate provisions for parties having a formalized system for the assessment of institutions and programs and those that do not.[7] Today, the discussion is no longer of whether but of how, and public responsibility for a transparent quality assurance system is one of the corner stones of the Bologna Process.

Autonomy

University autonomy[8] is another key element of the Bologna Process and would in the first instance seem to have more to do with public authorities keeping out of matters beyond their competence than interfering with them (Magna Charta Observatory 2002). This is in a certain sense true, but university autonomy is an important part of the higher education framework and can only exist if public authorities make adequate provisions for autonomy in the legal and practical framework for higher education, i.e. if public authorities not only ensure laws that guarantee autonomy but also ensure that these laws are implemented. The same is true for higher education governance - balancing concerns of democratic participation, academic competence and stakeholder interests - which has to be implemented at institutional level but which cannot exist without an adequate framework, which again is the responsibility of public authorities.

7 Cf. Section VIII of the Convention.

8 It may be argued that institutional autonomy and the freedom of individual academics are at the very least two sides of the coin, possibly separate if related issues, and it may be asked whether universities and non-university higher education institutions should have the same kind of autonomy.

Equal access

Another point on which there is general agreement and which again concerns the higher education framework rather than case-by-case implementation of the policy is the equal access of all qualified candidates to higher education. Here, the responsibility of public authorities really extends to two aspects of the same policy framework. Firstly, public authorities are responsible for ensuring that qualified candidates are treated equally, i.e. that the access process corresponds to the Weberian definition of the much-reviled term "bureaucracy": impartial decisions made according to transparent procedures and with predictable outcomes (Weber 1982: 105 - 157). In other words, whether you are admitted to higher education should depend solely on your qualifications and not on who assesses your qualifications, at what time your qualification is considered (as long as you apply within the published deadlines), your opinions, beliefs or other characteristics or what favors you might do the person handling your application, generally referred to as corruption.

This is the classical conception of the rule of law,[9] which is essentially that of passively ensuring equal treatment on the basis of the applicants' current situation. However, contemporary European societies would tend to agree on a more activist approach under which public authorities are not only responsible for watching over the equitable application of rules but also ensuring equal opportunities through other means, in this case by taking measures to increase the number of qualified candidates through improving educational opportunities for underprivileged groups. The task, then, is not simply to administer an equitable procedure for qualified candidates, but also to increase that pool of candidates, e.g. through providing better education opportunities at lower levels of the system. Here, we are rapidly approaching the limits of consensus and the discussion may more appropriately be resumed under the consideration of the "twilight zones".

Higher education subject to general laws

A final example, which is not a minor one, is that higher education is subject to a good number of general laws intended to apply to society at large, and which influence the activities of higher education institutions. Examples include health regulations, e.g. on hazardous materials in laboratories, accounting practices, salaries or labor regulations, such as the maximum hours an employee can be required - or indeed is allowed - to

9 Possibly more precisely conveyed by the German term *Rechtsstaat* or the Norwegian *rettsstat*.

work per week. Some of these measures are controversial - academic staff do not take lightly to attempts to curtail their working hours - but the principle that public authorities have a right and duty to regulate such matters and apply these regulations also to higher education is hardly at issue.

Absence of public monopoly

The "common ground" includes not only a set of responsibilities for public authorities but also the recognition that in some areas, there is no public monopoly. Here we are, of course, beginning to address the limits of public responsibility. The most obvious of these is that there should be no public monopoly on higher education provision.[10] Higher education institutions may be required to operate within the framework established by public authorities but as long as they do so, it is difficult to argue that they have to be publicly run and financed. To me, the issue is not whether higher education institutions are public or private, but whether they are of good quality, are subject to quality assessment, offer programs leading to recognized qualifications, offer equal access and ensure academic freedom for staff and students. To paraphrase two dictums of a now outmoded ideology, what matters is not the ownership of the means of education, but whether the cat catches mice.[11]

Secondly, public authorities have no monopoly on defining knowledge or truth. There is no lack of examples from both ends of the political spectrum to show what happens when the attempt is made or, less dramatically, of what happens to the development of research in an environment where, even on an a-political basis, new and alternative ideas are frowned upon.

Some "Twilight Zones"

Anything goes in the name of autonomy?

However, there is a caveat to this assertion, and this takes us from the common ground of consensus to the "twilight zones" of controversy. Saying that there is no public monopoly on the definition of truth or the content of teaching is not equivalent to saying that all views are acceptable or that higher education staff may teach anything they want. For one, higher education staff also have to abide by laws prohibiting racial discrimination or slurs or incentives to violence and crime. There is,

10 Non-public higher education provision may be non-profit or for profit; the former seems more readily accepted than the latter, but both forms are a part of the current higher education scene, if not in every country.

11 From Marx and Engels and Deng H'siao-ping, respectively.

of course, in any society an inherent danger that such laws may be interpreted too narrowly, but as long as they are reasonably interpreted, such laws also clearly serve a noble purpose.

Secondly, higher education staff are required to be competent in their field, and this competence is defined by their peers even if the definition can sometimes be formally approved by public authorities. History teachers who make denial of the Holocaust an element of their courses could probably be prosecuted for breaking laws against inciting ethnic hatred, but they could also be attacked on the grounds of incompetence, since the reality of the Holocaust is not in doubt. Similarly, the medical profession has established criteria for what is academically accepted doctrines and practice, and these would normally be confirmed in legal terms by public authorities. Teaching medical students to treat patients by methods judged to be hazardous would invite disciplinary proceedings. Research is another matter, and the point is perhaps that while seeking new knowledge and hence a redefinition of truth is acceptable and even laudable, this new knowledge has to be accepted by peers before it becomes a part of the teaching canon. This is nevertheless not an unproblematic point, as is shown in medicine by the case of Semmelweiss, the current debate on human cloning and in more general terms by the tension between teaching and research in 16 - 17th century European universities, where teachers often had to lecture according to the established canon but disseminated new knowledge through their publications (de Ridder-Symoens in Sanz and Bergan (2002: 77 - 87).

Funding issues

A characteristic element of what I have called the "twilight zone" is that it concerns the details of implementation more than the framework and it concerns what is negotiable in view of a compromise rather than absolute principles. An important part of it is made up of funding issues, the foremost of which is how much funding is reasonable for higher education. The absence of a public monopoly implies that public authorities will not fund all higher education provision, but it is equally clear that public authorities cannot reasonably run away from an obligation to provide substantial funding. That private provision is a part of the higher education system in many countries does not mean that public provision is no longer required. The difficult part is identifying how much public funding is reasonable, and on what conditions.

The public responsibility should extend to funding teaching and research in a wide diversity of academic disciplines, which is something market driven higher education is unlikely to do. Many disciplines will have low staff and student numbers, but cultural, political, economic or other reasons will dictate that a society have a certain academic activity in these areas, which may concern less widely spoken foreign languages, less studied periods of history, relatively neglected fields of art or areas of mathematics and natural science currently out of vogue. Part of the point is that even areas that seem less important now may suddenly find themselves in the focus of public attention a few years down the road, as when many European countries scrambled to upgrade their meager knowledge of Arabic language and culture in the wake of the oil crisis in the 1970s. An even stronger reason, however, is that areas that may not be important in numbers may be very important for our cultural identity or as a basis for developing the key concepts on which more applied knowledge is based. These are areas in which our societies need advanced competence, but they may not need large numbers of people with this knowledge.

The fact that public authorities provide significant funding for higher education institutions does, however, not mean that all higher education institutions fulfilling defined minimum quality standards have a claim on the public budget. Firstly, public authorities should have a right to distinguish in funding terms between public institutions, which public authorities fund entirely or substantially, and private ones, for which they provide much less funding or none at all. Secondly, in the same way that public authorities make judgments about the need for higher education institutions and programs when they decide on the level and distribution of public funding for these institutions, they should be in a position to make similar judgments about public funding for private institutions. A decision that private institutions and programs are recognized because they are of sufficient quality should not automatically mean they have a right to receive public funds. Needless to say, this is an important point in the context of GATS.

Student support

Student support is another key economic issue where no readymade answer exists, but which is intimately linked to the public responsibility for making higher education accessible to wider groups and more individuals. The basic principle seems clear: it is a public responsibility that no qualified candidate should have to abstain from higher education because he or she lacks the means to study. This principle, however, raises

a number of questions, such as how "qualified candidates" should be defined. Are we talking only about the academically promising ones or also about those who may barely make it through a study program? Is public responsibility limited to funding some kind of higher education for qualified candidates, or does it extend to giving them access to and funding for the discipline and level of their choice? Is there a free choice of institution or should public student support be given a maximum "price tag"? Not least, should it be given as scholarships or loans, and if the latter, at market rates or more favorable student rates?

One argument has it that students should bear a substantial part of the cost of their studies because higher education will most likely give them access to more highly paid jobs, so that over a life time investment in higher education will pay off in pure economic terms. That may be so, although I suspect it is not true for all academic disciplines in all European countries. Some higher education graduates - lawyers would be an obvious example - may reasonably expect a high financial return on their investment of time and money, whereas others -school teachers would probably be a valid example - would not. An argument in favor of a high level of student support would be that if society believes higher education is vital to its development, and that a country as a whole should have advanced knowledge of a wide area of disciplines, society should also stimulate its members to seek higher education in as many fields as possible. Another argument is that even where there may be lifetime economic gain in pursuing higher education, not all qualified students will actually be in a position to raise the money needed to study in the first place.

If higher education is to be made more widely accessible, a reasonable student support scheme therefore seems to be vital, but there may be a case for designing it in such a way that it caters in particular to less favored students. This is, however, a difficult discussion that goes well beyond the scope of this article, and it touches on such issues of principle as individual vs. group rights and the legal relationship between young adults and their parents.

Direct student support through loans and scholarships is, however, only a part of the discussion. To the extent students do not pay the full cost of their education, they receive public support, and the question is how much such support they should receive or - to phrase it in more controversial terms - whether they should pay study fees. Traditionally, at least in many European countries, public higher education does

not charge fees, and the issue is highly charged, even if - or perhaps precisely because - the issue is now being raised in some countries. In considering the issue of fees, it should be kept in mind that higher education is generally considered to be of benefit to the individual, even where it does not demonstrably increase overall lifetime earnings, and that access to higher education is not unbiased, in that young people from families of higher socioeconomic status whose parents have higher education degrees are more likely to take higher education than those from lower socioeconomic status with little or no education traditions in the family. Granted, this argument again raises the question of individual versus group rights, but it should at least serve to illustrate the fact that higher education free of charge to the individual is not an issue to be phrased in black and white.

The point is also illustrated by the opposite possibility: students paying the full cost of their education. Apart from the fact that the full cost of some study programs would be prohibitive and could cut society off from certain kinds of much needed competence, this model is also untenable on reasons of principle. While the benefits of higher education may be most immediately felt by those who graduate from it, all member of society to some extent benefit from a high general level of competence in that society. Certainly, the benefits of a medical education is not limited to doctors.

Funds from other sources

If it is recognized that public authorities do not have a monopoly on funding higher education, and indeed that they are unlikely to be able to provide funding at anything like the aspirations of higher education institutions, what is the role of private funding? This is, in my view, not a discussion of whether there should be private funding, but of whether there should be conditions for such funding. Where is the balance between the priorities decided by the governing body of a university and the power of outside funding to modify those priorities? If some academic disciplines will easily attract funding and others not, should a part of external funds be redistributed within the institution through some kind of "internal taxation", or would this be unfair on those who are able to raise money and discourage external sources from contributing because the priorities of those contributors will not be fully respected? Could external funds be used not only to improve the working conditions in certain fields, e.g. by financing advanced equipment or travel, but also to improve salaries of staff or scholarships for students? In the latter case, access may be improved, but students'

choice of academic field may be influenced as much by immediate possibilities for financing their studies as by their own interest in the disciplines or by considerations of future earnings.

This is of course not a new issue: in past centuries, the seminary was often the only possibility for sons of poor families to break out of a cycle of poverty and low status and to satisfy intellectual curiosity, even if they did not all have a burning vocation for the priesthood. Military academies have also been engines for social mobility. However, there are also examples of selection procedures to military training that aim at ensuring that the control over the armed force rest with the dominant parts of society (Rouquié 1987: 84 - 93).

Funding from private sources is a valuable and much needed supplement to public finance, but it should be subject to conditions. The precise implementation of this principle, however, implies a delicate balance between ensuring that public and institutional priorities are not unduly skewed through the power of external finance and avoiding setting up rules that would deter potential contributors.

Access policies - how directive and activist?

We considered that the role of public authorities in ensuring equal access to higher education was a part of the consensus, but we also indicated that there were limits to this consensus, and that the degree to which public authorities can direct institutions in their access policies is a part of the "twilight zone", as is the extent to which such policies should be "activist".

If it is recognized that educational opportunities at least to some extent depend on place of residence and socio-economic or cultural background, public authorities could take steps to ensure favorable access for members of underprivileged groups if these are considered to have the potential to do well in higher education even if they might not satisfy all access requirements at the time of application, or, if access is restricted and competitive, a certain number of qualified candidates from disadvantaged background may be given preference over better qualified applicants from more classical higher education backgrounds (Council of Europe 1997 and 1998).

Such measures, often referred to as "positive discrimination" or "affirmative action", are often controversial, as proven by the discussions in many countries about favoring

access of women applicants to study programs in which they are underrepresented or measures in favor of ethnic minorities. The latter has frequently been a bone of contention in US higher education, where the Bakke case is possibly the best-known example since Brown vs. the Board of Education,[12] and where the Bush Administration is now seeking to have current practice at the University of Michigan declared unconstitutional on the grounds that it discriminates against members of the "majority".[13] In a recent case, Norwegian universities have been directed to review policies favoring qualified women candidates for academic positions, in an attempt to recruit more women in fields where they are underrepresented, in particular at the highest levels, because this has been judged unacceptable under the non-discrimination provisions of the European Economic Area.

Ultimately, the main argument in favor of activist public authorities in the domain of access is that the public responsibility for ensuring fair and equitable access to higher education is an important instrument in making higher education something close to a public good. However, exactly where the right balance is to be found between this highly important concern and other policy goals is likely to continue to be a matter of debate.

Consequences of quality assurance

As we have seen, a consensus on the need for quality assurance has emerged over the past five years or so. However, this consensus does not - at least not yet - extend to an agreement on what should be the consequences of quality assurance. At one level, while accreditation is in many countries given on the basis of quality assurance, the concept of accreditation is not accepted in all countries. Beyond the concepts, however, there is considerable discussion of what the goals and consequences of quality assurance should be. If an institution or program receives a negative assessment, should it be closed, should it be given a deadline to bring its house in order but otherwise be left alone, or should a sustained effort be made to turn it into a good quality institution or program? Most likely, the answer will depend on circumstances. An institution that is seen as important to the development of an underprivileged part of the country is likely to be looked at with more lenience than one that is located in an area where there are many alternatives, and the only study program in a discipline public authorities consider important are more likely to receive the benefit of the doubt along with an infusion of funds than one that is considered expendable.

12 In this landmark case from Topeka, Kansas, the US Supreme Court struck a decisive blow against the segregation of US schools.

13 See the *International Herald Tribune*, January 17, 2003, p. 3

Nevertheless, some would go further and reject the notion that a quality assurance process could be linked to decisions concerning funding or licenses to operate a given institution or program. There may be a case for carrying out quality assurance solely with a view to improving existing higher education provision,[14] but in my view it is unreasonable to say that this must in all circumstances be the only purpose of quality assurance. Public funds for higher education are limited, and it would seem unreasonable to spend them on programs of unsatisfactory quality unless other concerns would dictate a sustained effort to improve those programs. Likewise, students would be badly served by funding policies that simply aimed to maintain programs regardless of their quality.

Information

This brings me to my final point in this far from exhaustive overview of the "twilight zone", namely the responsibility of public authorities with regard to information to students, employers, parents and others. We all agree that they should receive correct and comprehensible information provided in good faith (UNESCO/Council of Europe 2001), and that for many kinds of information, this is primarily the responsibility of the education provider. However, what responsibility do public authorities have to oversee the information given by institutions? On the one hand, public authorities should not unduly interfere with academic autonomy and the right of institutions to provide the particular kind of information known as advertising, but on the other hand, public authorities do have some responsibility for ensuring that citizens are not lead astray by patently untruthful publicity material.

Again, suggesting an overall rule of thumb is difficult, but I would suggest that public authorities should be responsible for providing information on the higher education system, including its degree structure and on the institutions and programs that make up the higher education system of a given country,[15] which also implies that the results of quality assurance exercises should be made public and easily accessible. Public authorities should also be able to suggest models for how institutions could provide information, and in some cases they should be able to enforce a specific format for the provision of information. Thus, I am fully in line with the authorities of those countries that have included in their laws an obligation for institutions to provide students with a Diploma Supplement and/or have made the European Credit

14 The EUA institutional review program is intended to support universities and their leaders in their efforts to improve institutional management and, in particular, processes to face change. The emphasis is laid on self evaluation and allows the institutions to understand their strengths and weaknesses. Such reviews may make specific recommendations to institutional leadership regarding the internal allocation of budgets, but since the evaluation is independent of national or other funding sources there is obviously no link to decisions concerning such funding.

15 In this respect, the ENICs/NARICs play an important role.

Transfer System mandatory. I also believe that public authorities should keep an eye on the overall information provided by institutions operating on their territory and that they should have as much power to act against systematic misinformation by higher education providers as against any other kind of false advertising.[16]

Right to university heritage

Finally, I would suggest that students, staff and society at large have a right to the heritage of universities, that this heritage should be a factor in shaping current policies, and that public authorities share a responsibility for making this right real. As we stated in a different context:

> *The university heritage is not a story of immediate gratification, nor is it one of constant and unfailing success. Its importance is of a different order: the heritage of European universities is one of the most consistent and most important examples of sustainable success and achievement that Europe has ever seen. The university is a part of our heritage, and its future is decided now. … Our reflection on the university heritage coincides with a time when cultural heritage policies are no longer only identified with a typology or with a prescriptive approach to tangible and intangible resources, but they are also aimed at valorizing problems of heritage policies that also have to do with filiation and affective ties (cultural, sociological , confessional, territorial). From these ties a specific kind of current relationship to the ways of establishing memories can be defined, based on what is lived today* (Sanz and Bergan 2002:174).

The Bologna Process builds on the heritage of European universities, and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances is very much a part of this heritage. The public responsibility for higher education also includes conserving and building on this heritage and to transmit it to future generations. A medieval scholar might not recognize organized higher education exchange programs, even if Dom Sancho I of Portugal set up a kind of mobility scholarship scheme as early as the 12th century (Saraiva 1978:109), he would be surprised at the range of today's academic disciplines and the fact that academic discourse is no longer in Latin, and he would probably consider the idea of a Socrates Office in Athens as an unnecessary bureaucratization of philosophy. Yet, the idea of a European Higher Education Area is not only one he could easily identify with, but probably one he would take for granted.

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16 In discussions at the conference for which this article was written, the need for proper guidance to students was strongly emphasized and, I believe, rightly so. However, the main responsibility for guidance would seem to lie with the institutions rather than would public authorities as considered here.

By way of conclusion

As the ambitions for this article were limited to outlining the issues and identifying some areas of consensus as well as for further discussion, the conclusions can hardly be final. They are made up of four elements.

Firstly, I believe public authorities have e*xclusive responsibility* for the *framework* of higher education, including the degree structure, the institutional framework, the framework for quality assurance and authoritative information on the higher education framework. The framework cannot be left to others.

Secondly, I would maintain that public authorities bear the *main responsibility* for ensuring e*qual opportunities* in higher education, including access policies and student finance. This is a crucial area in making higher education as much of a public good as possible, and the overall goal for public authorities in this area must be to make sure that any person living in the country[17] be able to make full use of his or her abilities regardless of socioeconomic and cultural background, financial possibilities and previous education opportunities.

Thirdly, I believe public authorities should have an *important role* in the *provision of higher education*. While there should be no public monopoly on higher education provision, public authorities should be heavily involved not only in designing the framework but also in the actually running of higher education institutions and programs, to contribute to good educational opportunities on reasonable conditions and to ensure that higher education encompasses a wide variety of disciplines and levels.

Fourthly, and this point is in part a consequence of the other three, public authorities in my view have an *important financial responsibility* for higher education. Public funds may and should be supplemented by money from other sources, but these alternative funding sources should never be a pretext for public authorities not to provide substantial public resources.

In thinking about higher education as a public good I was reminded of an illustration in one of the first books I can remember reading. Snorri Sturluson was an Icelander, but he wrote the sagas that have now come to be considered as one of the main items of Norwegian literature and the first attempt at writing Norwegian history. In

17 To avoid misunderstanding, I deliberately use the more cumbersome formulation "any person living in the country" rather than "citizen", as I believe this obligation extends not only to those who are citizens in the legal, "passport" sense of the term, but to all those who are citizens in the larger sense as members of a given society. For this, residence is a surer guide than cultural or political identity. Besides, at least in some context, "citizen" is now used as the public policy equivalent of "consumer".

one of his illustrations of Olav Haraldssson's - Saint Olaf's - final battle at Stiklestad on July 29, 1030, Halfdan Egedius showed a steady stream of people bearing arms and moving in the same direction. In the laconic style of the sagas, the caption to this particular drawing simply states that "all paths were filled with people" (Snorri Sturluson 1964: 453). My vision of higher education as a public good is something like this, except that the arms are to be replaced with a desire for learning and that the people on the paths are on their way not to battle - an extreme form of competition - but to higher education institutions and programs based on competition but even more on cooperation, where they will find a wide variety of offers on terms that will not exclude any qualified candidate, and that will:

- prepare for the labor market;
- prepare for life as active citizens in democratic society;
- contribute to personal growth;
- maintain and develop an advanced knowledge base.

This is no small challenge, but it is vital to our future that we meet it. I am convinced it is one that can be met, and that public authorities bear the main responsibility for meeting it. Public authorities cannot do this alone, and they need to draw on the combined efforts of higher education institutions, students and staff, the private sector, and other members of society. However, the overall responsibility for the exercise and for its success of failure remains in the public domain - which is to say it is a collective responsibility for all of us as citizens of democratic societies.

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4

Bologna seminar on the public responsibility for higher education and research: final report of the conference

Eva Egron Polak

Bologna seminar on the public responsibility for higher education and research: final report of the conference[1]

Eva Egron Polak

Introduction

The Council of Europe's Steering Committee for Higher Education and Research (CDESR) is a particularly well-suited forum to discuss public responsibility for higher education and research (HE&R) because it brings together representatives of both public authorities and higher education institutions. The conference, organized to examine the question of public responsibility by the Committee, brought together a large number of higher education leaders, representatives of government and of the EU Commission, students and associations. All papers that were presented in plenary and discussed in workshop sessions were excellent and very rich; the questions they raised and the debate they stimulated were equally so.

The issue of public responsibility is a timely one and the stakes are high in debating it at this time, because the conference was part of the Bologna Seminars and thus expected to provide input into this process, as it prepares for the next Ministerial meeting in Bergen in 2005. For this reason, the report provides a synthesis of the main points of discussion but includes as well the relevant recommendation that participants endorsed and which, taken collectively, were submitted to the Bologna

1 This report was presented at the Steering Committee on Higher Education and Research (CDESR) Working Party on Public Responsibility at the Council of Europe, 24 -23, September 2005, Strasbourg, France, Council of Europe.

Follow-Up Group as immediate outcomes from this reflection.[2] The discussions were thought provoking, underlining the complexity and interconnectedness of various policies, measures and questions. They made it clear how the topic of public responsibility for HE&R[3] crystallizes so much of the current debate on the changes taking place in higher education at the local, national regional and global level and the challenges these changes pose for policy makers and for the HE&R community.

Structure of the General Report

The objective was to explore the nature, scope and exercise of public responsibility for HE&R in today's society and particularly in Europe. It was, and deliberately so, a look only at one side, the public authority side, of the equation and this was clearly recognized and noted. Neither the responsibilities of institutions to society, nor the responsibilities of students and other stakeholders, were examined in order to sharpen the focus but noting that such reflections require equal time and consideration. This is also reflected in the recommendations, where the focus is also exclusively on public authorities' responsibilities or where additional work research and other discussions are needed. Indeed, the list of recommendations that were prepared as an integral part of this report, conclude with the following statement:

> Building the Knowledge Society that is democratic, inclusive, equitable and competitive is a **shared responsibility** in which an examination of the responsibilities of public authorities must be completed by an analysis of the public responsibility of all other stakeholders. We urge that such corresponding analysis be undertaken as well.

This report is little more than a bird's eye view of the complex and multiple issues that are covered in detail in the various papers. All references in this report are to these authors. The report first quickly sets out the context or the changing landscape in which HE&R are evolving in Europe. Second, some of the key messages with regard to the rationale and the ways in which public responsibility can be, is or indeed should be exercised, are presented. For the most part, these messages are also the source of the final recommendations. While there are areas of consensus concerning the areas of public responsibilities, the means or various instruments for exercising such public responsibility and their impact is a very complex matter. At least three different ways of examining these issues or three distinct frameworks for analysis appear

2 Propose to integrate recommendations that were approved in the report since they function as a conclusion to the various points raised. I also assume that the full set will be annexed in the volume. If not, I would number them in my text otherwise they can remain without numbers.

3 Need comment on style here, this is a convenient way of referring to higher education and research but may not be acceptable in the volume.

possible. Each could serve to structure the on-going work and each is summarized. Following this section, the core and additional public responsibilities are presented very briefly before the challenges and outstanding questions are summarized.

Indeed, there are far more questions than answers in these attempts to define the nature and scope of public responsibility and so highlighting some of the risks and areas for further research is also a worthwhile exercise. Such research is needed to understand better the each of the different public policy instruments and the interaction between them as well as with other forces which also play a role in HE&R, including the market.

Finally, as indicated earlier, throughout the report, the main recommendations that were endorsed and some additional suggestions that issued from the discussions are integrated into the report as appropriate. (The complete list of recommendations is also reproduced separately.)

Context

In the present juncture, there is an overwhelming agreement on what structures or most influences the context in which institutions of higher learning and research are evolving today. Some of these features or defining forces are almost universal and effect systems everywhere. Others are specific to Europe. Among those that were brought forth repeatedly, and thus colour the overall approach to the topic of public responsibility are the following:

- Advent of the Knowledge Society means that HE&R have become sectors of strategic importance - key to national and regional competitiveness and innovation, a vehicle to build or secure social cohesion and institutions for the embedding of democracy.
- In most of Europe a mass higher education is now well and truly established and in the Knowledge Society and even more so in the knowledge-based economy, individual expectations for higher education have risen and are changing, but absolutely not diminishing.
- Higher participation rates have not removed inequities based on socio-economic, racial or ethnic origins of students and significant gaps remain within many countries and between countries in Europe.

- HE&R performance cannot be analysed using only a national framework for its evaluation, but must rather be viewed in a global context, where increasingly there is a global higher education market.
- Higher education must compete for a place on the public agenda with other sectors such as health; competition for scare resources (from both public and private sources) is also increasing competition between institutions of higher education and is leading to greater commercialization and commodification of knowledge.
- Growing demand for higher education, less funding for its supply and the availability and capacity of Information and Communications Technologies have contributed to the rise of new providers - national, transnational, public and private, including non and for profit and those employing new delivery means.
- New actors, national, regional and even international, both governmental and non-governmental have been added to the higher education landscape and are exerting or expected to exert increasing influence and carry responsibilities on various aspects of HE&R, such as quality assessment, regulation, information provision, etc.

And, in Europe, in addition or concurrently, the changes and forces that are steering HE&R are largely influenced by the Bologna Process and the Ministers' overarching 2010 goals of establishing the European Higher Education Area and the European Research Area, all part of the European Union's objective for Europe to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world.

Key messages

The successive Ministerial summits and Declarations within the Bologna Process, that twice (Prague in 2001 and Berlin in 2003), made specific reference to the idea that 'higher education should be considered a public good and is and will remain a public responsibility', provided the overall starting point for the more specific probing for what such statements mean and what such responsibility may entail.

In the rapidly shifting and very complex context, the roles HE&R are expected to play and the demands that society places on HE&R are changing. The governance of higher education institutions is hotly debated and the relationship between institutions and the State or the authorities that exercise public responsibility in HE&R

in each country are also in transition. At the same time, demands on the public authorities and on the public purse are also changing and imposing new, lower and perhaps upper limits to the scope of public responsibility and bringing new actors to the table.

Nevertheless, there is a clear sense that throughout Europe, the concept of public responsibility is under threat or at least that its scope is being reduced and not just in the higher education sector. Most would also agree that the era in which we live is one in which the creation of knowledge and innovation and of unprecedented importance (Blasi). It was recommended that:

> in light of their importance in the process of building a Europe of Knowledge, higher education and research be viewed as strategic investments rather than as consumers of resources and that public funding must remain a major source of their support.

It must be noted that while the initial discussion and presentations of the topic of public responsibility for higher education took on a very economic tone, especially with the careful examination of the concept of 'public good', there was also a strong effort to continuously add other dimensions. Nevertheless, a thorough overview of the literature demonstrated the overwhelming presence of economic theory in the examination of this topic and pointed out the paucity of non-economic analysis in this field (Schoenenberger). It was also underlined that applying the concept of 'public good' in the strictest, and purely economic sense, could actually pose a long-term threat to the viability of HE&R (Weber). Thus clarity of definitions and in-depth reflection of the various aspects and instruments of public policy and responsibility are essential and need to supersede the expediency of using politically correct terms even if those, as in this case, can serve in favour of the objectives pursued, namely retain an important role for public authorities and public finance in higher education. It is to reflect these issues that it was recommended that:

> public responsibility for Higher Education and Research, be understood as a multidimensional concept that includes the establishment and maintenance of the required legal infrastructure, elaboration of policy, provision of funds and the further development of the social dimension, to meet current and future needs of the Knowledge Society.

And that Ministers:

> acknowledge that funding, motivating and stimulating the development of higher education and research is as important a part of public responsibility as the exercise of regulation and control.

Indeed, just as HE&R play multiple roles in society and in the economy, the nature and scope of public responsibility is complex and has multiple dimensions. It must be underlined though, that these are intrinsically linked. The rationale for public responsibility for HE&R cannot be divorced from the mission of universities and their responsibilities vis à vis students and democratic society as well as the world of work. In this regard, it was recommended that:

> in keeping with the values of democratic and equitable societies, public authorities ensure that higher education institutions, while exercising increased autonomy, can meet society's multiple expectations and fulfil their various purposes, which include personal development of learners, preparation for active citizenship in democratic societies, development and dissemination of advanced knowledge and preparation for the labour market.

It was also repeated that no universal model for defining the nature and scope of public responsibility exists and that local and national conditions will each time colour the way it is exercised (Shishlov).

There is overwhelming consensus that HE&R are a key area of public responsibility and even the strictly economic, and therefore only partial, justification is solid: higher education is an investment of strategic importance. However, in the current circumstances of competing priorities vying for public authorities' attention, it becomes urgent to strengthen such justification by finding new ways to quantify what in economic terms are called the 'externalities', in other words to quantify the benefits that accrue to society as a whole, and go beyond the private returns on the investment in higher education.

In addition, it was pointed out that increasingly important concepts such as 'social capital', which refers to social ties, shared values etc. and which form part of a broader objective - social cohesion. These aspects are far more difficult to quantify, yet they are particularly pertinent if the rationale for public intervention in HE&R is to be based

on the contributions made to society's overall well-being (Schoenenberger). In economic parlance, this leaves the theory of 'market failure' as a primary justification for public investment in higher education. Justifying public responsibility through the failure of market forces seems a less than satisfactory manner in which to demonstrate the importance of this key sector. At the same time, getting at the indirect or social benefits that the society and the economy as a whole derive from a strong and independent HE&R sector is essential to complete the analysis of the rationale for public responsibility.

Yet, this very brief justification for why we need to probe deeper to gain better understanding of the economic and non-economic rationales for public responsibilities in HE&R system must not ignore that public policy and public institutions can also fall short of expectations and needs. Thus it is appropriate also to note that 'government failure' and inefficiency in terms of fairness etc. can exist in HE/R as well. (Weber)

Frameworks for analysis

Several frameworks may be used to analyse both the scope and the level of public responsibility for higher education. Given the limits of viewing HE&R from a purely economic perspective when all of the objectives of higher education are considered, it seems clear that whichever framework is adopted, it must also integrate political and social considerations at the very least. Determining the appropriate role or type of involvement of public authorities and assessing the effectiveness of various instruments used to exercise public responsibility needs also to be anchored in shared societal values of democracy, human rights, equity etc.

In terms of analyzing the public responsibility for research, first it must be noted that to some extent research presents a different set of challenges from the learning and teaching aspects of higher education. Nevertheless, there is also, perhaps even a stronger rationale for public responsibility in the area of research, with in addition to the social and political considerations, some ethical, security aspects to keep in mind. Furthermore, it can be argued that the very nature of the scientific method of critical and open enquiry defines the space that needs to be occupied by public authorities. (Aaviksoo)

Thus in research, it was recommended that:

> in order for universities in the European Higher Education Area to meet society's requirements for research and respond to public interests, public authorities must provide adequate funds and, together with the research community, design policies to regulate conditions under which private resources can best be used.

In all of this however, and despite the need for public authorities to play an important role in creating an environment that is conducive to strong development in research and higher education, it must be underlined that public responsibility is not the same as direct public intervention. Finding appropriate instruments, which can build and not obstruct the creation of such an environment is often a particularly difficult balancing act between too little and too much control.

Recognizing that this is a delicate balancing task, it also requires appropriate conditions at the institutions of higher education. They must have sufficient levels of autonomy and adequate governance structures to set priorities, make and implement strategic choices. It was therefore recommended that:

> public responsibilities be exercised throughout the European Higher Education Area with due regard for the need of higher education and research institutions and systems to act freely and efficiently in the pursuit of their mission.

The three frameworks that were put forward to facilitate the analysis of the nature and scope of public responsibility can be summarized and coined as follows:

a) An **instrumental framework**: which looks most particularly at the nature of state or public intervention. It highlights that such exercise of public responsibility can be made through legal or policy instruments; through financial supports and various incentives such as tax breaks and investment opportunities, or by the exercise of moral influence through which public authorities can create an environment conducive to public respect and trust in HE&R. (Shishlov).

b) The second framework that can be adopted is based on the **level of engagement**. This means that specific areas of public responsibility are assessed in terms of those where public responsibility is essential and exclusively exercised by public authorities, aspects where such public responsibility is desirable and rests, for the main part, in the hands of public authorities and third, areas or aspects of HE&R that do not require the intervention of public authorities but where such intervention is important but optional (Shishlov, Bergan).

c) The third framework can be called **functional** and takes, as the starting point, the needs of society: the scope of public responsibility is defined in terms of its purpose. It is exercised to ensure the quantity of HE&R available in society; it is necessary to guarantee fair distribution of access to HE&R and ensures the quality of education and research. The concept of 'quality', when extended to include research, could also include public responsibility to provide vigilance and oversight to protect public safety and uphold ethical considerations. (Weber, Aaviksoo).

Core Responsibilities

The establishment of a clear and favourable policy framework in which HE&R can adequately develop and providing basic funding to support this development, are the two most obvious aspects of public responsibility. Yet, within each of these broad areas, what should be covered in such a policy framework, how binding it ought to be, what mechanisms it should employ and how far it should extend are all questions open to debate. Similarly, the level of public funding and how it might be supplemented by other fiscal measures and mechanisms, or how best to aid individuals or families make bigger contributions to the cost of higher education are the kinds of details, where, as the saying goes, the devil may still be winning the battle. Nevertheless, these are the domains where public responsibility is of utmost importance.

These and other considerations of equitable access and objective or disinterested review with regard to quality of learning and research, were at the heart of many of the presentations and discussions concerning the core public responsibilities for HE&R. Noting that decreasing public financial support has already led to an increase in private involvement in both teaching and research, whether through the introduction of or rise in tuition fees or through growing sponsorship of research by

industry, it is clear that the number of issues that must be considered when defining the scope of public responsibility has grown. For this reason, it is urgent that whatever approach is taken to redefining the scope and nature of public responsibility in this field, sufficient time is allowed to carefully weigh its short and medium term impact against all the goals being pursued in the European Higher Education Area.

In terms of research, as alternatives or supplements to public funding are explored, it was recommended that:

> considering the importance and the potential benefits and risks of research, public authorities ensure that adequate and disinterested oversight is developed and that access to research results be broadened, for example by adopting and supporting Open Access Publishing initiatives.

More specifically looking at the teaching and learning aspects of higher education, a variety of alternatives exist and are being explored and tested around the world to fill the funding gap left by generally declining public finance. In Europe too the search for ways of financing of higher education takes place against the background of a context where public authorities are either unwilling or unable to meet the need for expansion. A variety of approaches are possible but ultimately the choice is a political one, which can take the form of institutional or individual subsidies, income contingent repayment schemes etc. (Salerno). The key issues that are underlining the debate about funding choices are how to uphold the principles of accessibility and equity, yet retain high quality higher education. Research and evidence-based policy making and a long-term vision are essential in this regard and it was also recommended that:

> to respond to increased pressure for cost-sharing in higher education, where students and families may be expected to bear a greater share of the direct costs, public authorities stimulate further research and debate on the impact of different instruments such as tuition fees, student grants, bursaries and loans etc, on aspects such as equality of opportunity, system efficiency, social cohesion, long-term impact on public funding etc, as a basis for future action.

Additional Aspects of Public Responsibility

In light of the importance that is assigned to HE&R as instrument or levers of economic, political and social development in Europe, it is not surprising that the areas of public responsibility appear to be expanding, even as the level of direct support and involvement in terms of funding may, in many cases, be declining. The exact scope of public responsibility varies from country to country, according to history and tradition and the system of government in place. In most countries though, in addition to the core responsibilities mentioned above, some or all of the following areas would also be considered as part of the public responsibility. Indeed, as the process of building the European Higher Education Area progresses, these additional areas appear to be less and less optional.

a) Employability

Whose responsibility is it to bridge the gaps between higher education and employment? Even if the reply most likely involves both institutions of higher education and public authorities, there are a number of ways in which public authorities have drawn the link between higher education and employability and brought it to the fore during the various stages of the Bologna Process. Perhaps, it is most visible from the full acceptance by both the Ministers and other actors of the need for a coherent European framework of qualifications that will cover vocational training as well as higher education and their commitment towards a more outcome-based view of qualifications. Such a framework and a competency-based approach to qualifications aim to further facilitate movement of graduates within the European labour market. They are also expected to bring greater ease and flexibility for movement within and to and from the higher educational systems. This issue has been given high profile in several ways during the process of building the European Higher Education Area and in several ways has become an integral part of the public responsibility. (Haug) On the one hand this requires that higher education institutions address the issue of employability when designing their programmes and fully integrate the life long learning mission into their plans. On the other hand, and in support of these developments, it is recommended that:

with the aim of enhancing sustainable employability of graduates in the European labour market, public authorities ensure that appropriate bridges exist between higher education institutions and the world of work; elements of such bridging include a coherent qualifications framework at the national and European levels, transparent mechanisms for recognition of qualifications and quality assurance, two way information flows between the labour market and higher education, flexible exit, entry and re-entry opportunities.

b) Information provision

As the higher education landscape shifts and changes due to structural reforms brought about by the Bologna Process and the diversification of institutions and programs, a key and growing area of public responsibility is to ensure that learners, employers and others in society are well-informed. This public responsibility though has as much to do with the substance of the information - comparability, accuracy and relevance, as with its availability or accessibility. Indeed what is of concern is the quality and the overall legitimacy of information available on systems, programmes and qualifications in higher education offered by all providers, national and transnational, public and private. The most important users of such trustworthy information are the learners, but employers too need to know what they can expect in terms of outcomes and competencies when hiring graduates of higher education. It was recommended that:

avoiding burdensome administrative arrangements and seeking greater transparency, public authorities in the European Higher Education Area adopt a common approach in setting the requirements for the provision of accurate, objective and up-to-date information on higher education options, including on transnational education providers, that corresponds to the needs of learners as well as other stakeholders, enabling and empowering each to make informed choices at all stages from entry, to employment and including for mobility purposes.

In addition, information that can guide or empower users to ask the right questions and seek appropriate and relevant information is also needed. Finally, ensuring that such data has undergone some kind of objective quality control is also a growing responsibility of public authorities, especially private and commercial interests are increasingly active in higher education. (Almqvist)

c) Regulatory mechanism

Linked to making sound choices and knowing what can be expected from graduates is another priority area of public responsibility, namely quality assurance and quality assessment processes in higher education. These remain of utmost importance when the overall higher education sector is expanding, yet where direct control may be diminishing, new providers are being created or imported and the overall the system is becoming both more complex and more prone to change. The processes of quality assessment are an important instrument of regulation and, again, in most countries in Europe and at the regional level, public authorities are examining and debating most appropriate approaches. The United Kingdom, where attention paid to such regulatory mechanisms has perhaps the longest history in Europe, offers some powerful lessons, good practice cases as well as, in the words of Roderick Floud, rich experiences of what to avoid. Overall, the United Kingdom experience suggests quite strongly that such regulation be developed with due regard to a balance between costs and benefits, with due respect for university values and trust in university staff to act as 'Knights', rather than 'Knaves', which means trust that they generally act in the best interest of the students and the system. Also, quality assessment and regulation needs to build on internal process for promoting quality rather than undermining them and any such regulatory mechanisms needs to be to be guided by the principle of subsidiarity. (Floud). Keeping these lessons in mind, it was recommended that:

> public authorities establish, as an essential regulatory mechanism in increasingly diversified higher education systems, cost-effective quality assessment mechanisms that are built on trust, give due regard to internal quality development processes, have the right to independent decision-making and abide by agreed-upon principles .

d) Public responsibility and transnational education

The presence of transnational education providers is not felt to the same extent in all countries of Europe, however, the expansion of what is often also called borderless education is creating new challenges and demands for all stakeholders, including public authorities. It is doing so at the local but also at the regional and international levels. Precisely because of its transnational nature, borderless education requires a coordinated European, if not global response that takes place within a public policy framework. In this area change and innovation is often very rapid and new actors or new alliances are being formed and getting involved in training and education. Both important academic but also commercial interests are driving these developments but decision-makers, as well as higher education leaders, academics, students and even employers have far more questions than answers about the benefits and potential risks of a rapid expansion and diversification of ways and providers delivering higher education. (Adam) It is in order to seek some of these responses that it was recommended:

> a public debate between national and international stakeholders be promoted in order to develop coordinated policies on the implications of transnational education, keeping in mind the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the UNESCO/Council of Europe Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education as well as the work of OECD and UNESCO to develop guidelines on quality provision in cross border education.

Risks, Challenges, Opportunities and Outstanding Questions

Even if predominantly and firmly embedded within the public sector, most systems of HE&R, including those in Europe, are increasingly characterized by a mix of public-private aspects, whether it is in knowledge production, provision or funding. Thus the process of defining public responsibility has become an art of finding the balance within these gray zones and blurred boundaries while seeking the most suitable, acceptable and effective means to obtain the desired ends. In addition to a balancing act, it is also a process of negotiation among multiple stakeholders.

Quite clearly, public funding, even if by no means sufficient or exclusive, is critical for HE&R within the European Higher Education Area. It is however equally important

to have the laws guaranteeing institutional autonomy, to have firm policies about non-discriminatory access to higher education on the basis of merit, to have clear policies concerning degree structures, to enact enabling tax laws concerning funding of research, to pass laws determining when and how new institutions can be established and to establish transparent rules concerning recognition, accreditation, and quality assessment of institutions of higher education whether they are domestic or foreign. It is in fact the policy environment that can either be conducive or stifling for the growth and sound development of higher education and research. Such a policy environment can exert a critical steering effect at the level of institutions as well at systemic levels and have important financial implications as well. It is more than evident that each policy instrument and the interplay among them require further analysis and discussion.

Furthermore if the full multiplicity of roles of higher education is factored into the vision of the European Higher Education Area and the collective goals of social cohesion, democracy and equality of opportunity are to be pursued, the policy framework must be widened and expanded. To achieve these far-reaching political goals public authorities need to create conditions and expectations and provide the support for education based on values. Among these, reasserting democracy as an inner value to the university is most important. (Zgaga) Looking at other values for the EHEA, such as inclusiveness and equity, links to many other sectors of public policy - social, health and increasingly immigration policy and others, are required so that concrete ways can be found to remove barriers for all minority groups. (Pedroso)

A vision and pro-active measures at all levels of the system will be required and the European Ministers who will meet in Bergen in May 2005 are urged to:

- affirm their commitment to making equal opportunity in higher education a fundamental building block of the European Higher Education Area and to undertake actions that will allow the development of systemic and institutional responses to enable all individuals to realize their full potential and thus contribute to the shaping of a competitive and coherent Europe of Knowledge.
- acknowledge that funding, motivating and stimulating the development of higher education and research is as important a part of public responsibility as the exercise of regulation and control.

- as the basis for the formulation of a coherent and sustainable public policy in Europe, stimulate a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of various approaches that would lead to increased funds for higher education and research, paying particularly attention to the requirement of meeting equity, effectiveness and efficiency objectives as well as those of quality and autonomy.

Recognizing the funding shifts, how should other policy instruments of public responsibility be adjusted? Who and how will the best policy and regulation infrastructure be designed? How much of a role should rest with public authorities and how much should be left to the market to create the conditions in which autonomous institution of higher education are empowered and entrepreneurial enough to both compete and cooperate? How can we avoid the worst-case scenario of little public support and over-regulation? What are the best conditions in which institutions can exercise their mission to provide higher education of quality to students and life long learners and to undertake research to advance knowledge and improve the quality of life, in a sustainable manner, for all citizens? And what is the best way to assess whether higher education is fulfilling this mission? Finally how should public authorities regulate these autonomous institutions through accountability and assessment exercises?

What is clearly of universal concern in Europe and elsewhere is that funding and commitment of resources accompany the laws and regulatory mechanisms thus enabling their sound implementation. Goals such as becoming more attractive to the best qualified students and researchers and becoming the most competitive knowledge economy in the world require commitments of adequate funds and other supports in both HE&R.

As it was pointed out earlier, the stakes are very high for Europe, for public authorities at the national level, for higher education leadership faculty, researchers and students, for employers and for society at large. All countries and the region as a whole needs a higher education and research system that meet economic and social goals and help all individuals achieve their full potential in society. Meeting such goals requires many instruments and levers to work in harmony rather than in contradiction with one another. The very complexity of these issues, though, makes it difficult as often contradictory objectives push and pull the system in different directions. It is almost

always a matter of striking the right balance on a shifting continuum. The importance of the issues though requires full and active participation of all stakeholders in the search for a balanced, collective and negotiated response.

So, in conclusion, it is important to recognize that building the Knowledge Society or the Europe of Knowledge, that is democratic, inclusive, equitable and competitive is a shared responsibility in which an examination of the responsibilities of public authorities must be completed by an analysis of the public responsibility of all other stakeholders.

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Higher education in the World Trade Organization (WTO): A threat to the future of higher education in the world

Rafael Guarga

Higher education in the World Trade Organization (WTO): A threat to the future of higher education in the world

Rafael Guarga[1]

1. Introduction

A year after UNESCO organized its 1st World Conference on Higher Education (WCHE 98) in October 1998, education was included among the services to be considered within the scope of the WTO. As a result, this issue, which is of great importance for the future of Higher Education (HE) in the world, and particularly in developing countries, was not addressed by the aforementioned Conference.

Nevertheless, as can be seen in this paper, when Higher Education is considered as a service that is subject to commercial transactions and is therefore incorporated into the services sector list as proposed in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) in the WTO, the foundations laid down in the WCHE 98 (World Conference on Higher Education, 1998), and reaffirmed on many occasions, are being noticeably called into question.

Motivated by the belief that these basic grounds are being questioned in their essence millions of major HE participants in the world (professors, lecturers and students), through their associations, have spoken out against incorporating HE into GATS in the WTO.

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1 Secretary General of the Asociación de Universidades "Grupo Montevideo" (AUGM).

We shall later refer to these foundations and, in particular, how they were reaffirmed and updated in the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Conference in preparation for the 2nd World Conference on Higher Education, which will take place this year in Paris (WCHE 09).

This will allow us to address the topic of this paper, based on widely held notions of the value of HE. This valuation is not only shared by those directly involved in HE (professors, lecturers and students) but also by those States that consider education and, HE in particular, as a fundamental element for the consolidation of their national cultural identity, and as the current most important investment toward the construction of a better future for their respective societies.

2. HE as a "public social good"

As established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Art. 26), the WCHE 98 considered HE both as a right, and as a "public good," which is essential for the construction of the future of the modern society as a whole. This notion implies the need for national States to establish public policies to assure access to quality HE to all young people who have finished their previous educational levels. This type of quality HE should also be relevant in content, meaning that it should meet the demands of society.

This notion of HE as "a public good" already caused controversy in the Follow-up Conference in 2003 (Paris +5) when in the first known version of the general report an attempt was made to substitute this concept by that of "a global public good." Finally, it must be remembered that this attempt failed mainly because attending Latin American and Caribbean (LA and C) representations resolutely questioned it.

On the other hand, it must be pointed out that the original idea of understanding "a global public good" without roots in any particular society, or, employing concepts of the WCHE 98, as "a public good" without the attribute of "pertinence" had already been formulated the year before the abovementioned Paris +5 Conference, when it appeared in a World Bank document titled "Constructing Knowledge Societies: New Challenges for Tertiary Education" edited in 2002. (1)

Based on what was previously mentioned and aiming to clearly set out the concept of HE as "a public good" which is pertinent to society, the Regional Conference on

Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, summoned by UNESCO's Institute for Higher Education (IESALC) and held in 2008 in Cartagena de Indias (CRES 2008), in its final Declaration introduces the notion of "a social public good" as indicated below (Declaration Section B) (2):

1. Higher education is a human right and **a social public good**. States have the fundamental duty to guarantee this right. States, national societies, and academic communities should define the basic principles upon which citizen training is based, and assure that it is pertinent and of quality.
2. Higher education as **a social public good** is reaffirmed in the measure that access to it is a true right of all citizens. National education policies are the necessary condition for fostering access to quality higher education through appropriate strategies and actions.

Having established what has been Stated before, we will now present how the fundamental principles, expressed in the final CRES 2008 declaration, enter into a directly antagonistic relationship with the concept of HE framed in terms of quality with no specific social reference (a "global" public good) or, as already mentioned, with no relevance for society.

With this in mind, we will then reveal the motive for incorporating HE within the scope of the GATS.

3. Universalizing HE and the Creation of a Huge Global Educational Market

In this section, we will briefly examine some of the real situations that currently exist in markets linked to training people, putting particular emphasis on those that are directly linked to HE.

A primary estimate of the global market subsector of HE that includes universities, other tertiary institutions, and postgraduate courses (ISCED 97: levels 5 y 6) can be made if we consider that in 2005 138 million students of HE level were registered around the world. Today, 31.5% of these are enrolled in private institutions (UNESCO Questionnaire sent to Member States) with the highest percentages found in developing countries and the lowest in western European countries. Taking into consideration a minimum annual cost of US$ 2000 per student (US$ 11,270 in

Western Europe), today we have a private market around the world which is worth no less than US$ 87.000 million.

Another estimate can be made by observing international trade in educational services, which in the last decade have shown a significant increase. On the basis of a conservative calculation made only within the member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), international trade in educational services increased in 2004 to US$ 77.000 million, which corresponds to approximately 4% of the total trade in services in the area. This amount corresponds to statistics related primarily to "consumption abroad", where the student travels to another country to continue his or her studies. These statistics include import and export data of educational services and the number of foreign students.

Similarly, there has been an increasingly vigorous introduction of educational options offered across borders in the abovementioned HE subsector (with the most dynamic ones found within the "education services" sector and the so-called "adult education" sector, while in some countries this has occurred within the "language teaching" sector). This is due to the accelerated development of new information and communication technologies applied to teaching, which has transformed - and continues to transform - the panorama of traditional careers and courses, making it possible to offer a variety of courses which are not based in the same country as that of the student.

Companies who award certificates in various fields, mainly in computer sciences and administration, as in the case of Cisco, Microsoft, etc., have also developed training programs.

Bearing in mind what was Stated above, it should not be surprising that in response to the requests made by various countries who currently receive benefits from this trade and who aim to continue doing so in the context of an accelerated expansion, teaching services, and particularly those related to higher education - according to its denomination in the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) - have been included as a sector which should be regulated within the negotiations framework of international trade services.

It must be remembered that the GATS objective is the progressive liberalization of trading services and that the mechanisms adopted represent the specific commitments that countries must make in the successive "rounds of negotiations."

Neither should it be forgotten that in these negotiations, concessions may be "exchanged" as, for example, commercial aspects of a country "A" that favour a country "B", which exports "commodities" for allowances so that country "B" can provide educational services in its territory to companies in country "A".

Such trade is a growing trend and is becoming increasingly complex. It is worth mentioning that this phenomenon is independent from GATS and GATS represents no obstacle to it, in as much as the increase in the phenomenon responds to a growth in demand for worldwide tertiary educational services. As long as citizens and their countries continue believing, and ever more strongly, that human capital is a fundamental pillar for growth, and economic and social development, this demand will continue to rise.

It is in this context of increasing demand for HE in the world that, as previously Stated, the World Bank launched the abovementioned concept of HE as "a global public good" into the public arena. The move responds to powerful economic interests seeking to make their entry into large markets with significant potential for growth. These facts, which come under the scope of the WTO but are supported conceptually by the World Bank, have prompted comments made in *"Globalization and Its Discontents"* (3) by J. Stiglitz - a primary witness of issues concerning globalization. There he points out that:

> Globalization is powerfully driven by international corporations, which move not only capital and goods across borders but also technology. (p.43)

After verifying what economic interests, expressed in the WTO, are seeking to do with HE, "services" should be added to what has been said about capital, goods and technology.

4. Higher Education in the WTO.

The inclusion of services in the international trade services negotiations was fostered by various developed countries in the Uruguay Round of General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). The approval of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) by member States of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in April 1994, which gave form to this objective.

In September 1998, in a restricted document (4) the WTO secretariat proposed that as long as governments accept the existence of private providers in education, it can be treated as a commercial service, and therefore must be regulated within WTO framework. In 1999 the WTO secretariat defined the services that are regulated by GATS and included education among them. In the year 2000, negotiations for the freeing-up of services, among which education was included, officially commenced. Later, in March 2001, the Council for Trade in Services established the negotiation guidelines and procedures and in November 2001, in the Doha Declaration, these were reaffirmed and key dates were established, including the deadline for completion of negotiations. In June 2002 requests for market access were set out by Australia, the United States, Japan and New Zealand, and in March 2003 governments raised the initial offers to access national markets (5). In September that same year, the WTO negotiations came to a stand-still after the semi-failure of the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference held in Cancun, Mexico, where a proposal was made by a group of 22 countries (among them various LA and C countries) that conditioned the continuity of negotiations in the WTO to the resolution of outstanding issues regarding subsidies that were in violation of the GATT.

5. Declarations Against the Inclusion of HE in the WTO.

It is evident from what has been discussed that concepts behind referring to HE as a public good, as formulated by the WCHE and reaffirmed and specified by the RCHE 2008 for LA and the C, are distinctly opposed to the notion of HE as a "negotiable good" of "global" character, and question this latter's quality, its lack of relevant content for the societies it will ultimately service, and the fact that it can be "traded", once regulated by agreements between States belonging to the WTO.

Since the concepts recorded in the final resolutions of the WCHE 98 eleven years ago, and today reaffirmed and updated for LA and the C at the RCHE 2008, express the consensus of the great majority of academics and governments with regards to long term HE in their respective countries, we should not be surprised by the implications and significance that such pronouncements have had against the decisions made by the WTO regarding the inclusion of education in services and, in particular, the trading of HE services.

The answers from the education sector concerning the inclusion of HE in the WTC's orbit were first set out from a variety of viewpoints. Education International (EI), an organization that represents 26 million members in 310 organizations, set out the inclusion of higher education in GATS as a main objective in this topic because it considers that it is fundamentally important that public services still be considered a State responsibility (6).

In September 1999, numerous university organizations from the United States and Europe wrote a Statement against the proposal to include Higher Education teaching among the services to be considered in GATS. On the other hand, other bodies questioned the inclusion of higher education in the field of negotiations because, as pointed out by the WTO, the agreement is governed by all measures that affect services, with the exception of "those services supplied in the exercise of government authority".

In September 2001, four organizations from Canada, Europe and the United States sent a joint note to the Government of Canada, the United States trade representative, the European Governments and to the representative of the European commission in the negotiations. The four organizations, referred to as Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC), represented 92 Canadian non-profit making public and private universities and colleges, the American Council on Education (ACE), 1800 accredited, degree-awarding universities and colleges in the United States, the European University Association (EUA), 30 national congresses of vice chancellors and 537 individual universities on the European continent, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), 3000 accredited, degree-awarding universities and colleges and 60 well known accrediting bodies of institutions and programs in the United States. In the document they emphasized their rejection of the inclusion of education in the negotiations of GATS, underlining that "education is not merchandise" and also emphasizing its public nature, meaning that it should be regulated by the competent organisms as defined by each nation.

In February 2002, at the Porto Alegre World Social Forum, the participants of the conference "Science and technology, an instrument for peace in the 21st century" agreed to propose a world pact that would guarantee the consolidation of the principals of action approved by the World Conference on Higher Education, (Paris 1998) organized by the UNESCO, and the exclusion of Higher Education from GATS.

With regards to Ibero-America, during the *III Reunión Cumbre de Rectores de Universidades públicas ibero-americanas held in Porto Alegre* in April 2002, the vice chancellors approved a Statement that was sent to the governments of Spain, Portugal and Latin American countries in which they reaffirmed the commitment which governments and the international academic community took on at the World Conference of Paris 1998; they took education into account as a public good and requested their governments not to sign any commitment on this matter within the field of GATS. At that same meeting, a broader group made up of vice chancellors, directors of institutions, higher education associations and academic authorities signed the *Carta de Porto Alegre* (Document of Porto Alegre) which emphasized the concern regarding WTO policies that tend to be in favor of trade in higher education services, which subsequently causes the State to abandon its specific role linked to the orientation and management with regards to social responsibility, quality control and the specificity of education. The *Carta de Porto Alegre* was signed by, among others, the *Associação Brasileira de Universidades Estaduales y Municipales* (ABRUEM), the *Asociación de Universidades del Grupo Montevideo* (AUGM), the *Associação Nacional dos Dirigentes das Instituições Federais do Ensino Superior* (ANDIFES), the *Centro Extremeño de Estudios y Cooperación con Iberoamérica, the Instituto Latinoamericano de Educación para el Desarrollo* (ILADES), the *Organización Universitaria Interamericana,* whose headquarters are in Canada, and various other universities from Spain, Portugal and Latin America (7).

The topic continues to arise in those areas and, as a consequence of GATS activities, has now been handed over to other regional and government offices. For that reason, the topic should be discussed as a central element by the Mercosur Education Sector's Regional Coordinating Commission of Higher Education, which, in its 6th meeting held in Rio de Janeiro in November 2002, agreed to request that a recommendation be sent to ministers of education from the regional coordinating committee to commission them to conduct studies regarding the process of freeing-up the provision of educational services. They also commissioned Uruguay to carry out an investigation that would consider reactions resulting from the exclusion of higher education from the service negotiations sector and also suggested that Mercosur enter into direct negotiations with the WTO.

In addition to this information, we could also add further declarations made by student and teacher organizations, and other different academic associations, who have also expressed their disagreement with the proposals deriving from the GATS

regulations and that vindicated education should be a public good. To avoid being too extensive, we will just mention the final resolution of the *VI Cumbre de Rectores de Iberoamérica* held in Montevideo on the 6th and 7th of July 2006, at the *Universidad de la República*, where vice chancellors from Latin America, the Caribbean and Spain were present and where they once again reaffirmed their rejection of the process that is being developed in the WTO regarding HE.

The resolutions of the RCHE 2008 concerning this topic must be added to those mentioned above. In the final declaration, in the chapter "HE as a human right and a public social good" (sections 7 and 8) the following is pointed out:

7. Education offered by transnational providers, exempt from the control and guidance of national States, favors education that is de-contextualized and in which the principles of pertinence and equity are displaced. This increases social exclusion, fosters inequality, and consolidates underdevelopment. We must foster in our countries laws and mechanisms necessary for regulating academic offerings, and especially transnational offerings, in all of the key aspects of quality higher education.
8. The incorporation of education as a commercial service within the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO) has resulted in a generalized rejection by a large variety of organizations directly related to higher education. Such incorporation represents a strong threat to the construction of pertinent higher education in the countries that accept the commitments demanded by the General Agreement on Trade and Services, and its acceptance involves serious injury to the humanitarian proposals of comprehensive education and to national sovereignty. For this reason, we, the participants in CRES 2008, warn the States of Latin America and the Caribbean regarding the dangers involved in accepting the WTO agreements, and to then be obliged by them, among other negative impacts, to direct public funds toward foreign private enterprises established in their territories in fulfillment of the principle of "national treatment" established by these agreements. We further declare our intention to see to it that education in general and higher education in particular not be considered commercial services. Consequently, these elements should be eliminated from WTO negotiations.

Such a vast and varied group of academic declarations, which have conjugated from different sectors such a clear and defined position in rejecting the link between HE and GATS, is not easily found. It therefore means the issues and format of the topic at hand can be properly situated. The discussion is not about adapting new technologies to pedagogical contents, nor the development of education across borders. Ultimately it is the institutions that oppose the insertion of education in GATS who have introduced new technologies and long-distance education as part of their educational proposals. Neither is it a discussion about the participation of institutions with private rights in the field of education, as this topic that has been treated and resolved in various ways in the States.

What is suggested is that the principles upon which HE finds its basis as a "social public good," safeguarded by the State and pertinent to its given society, be modified. This occurs as soon as educational proposals are regulated and supervised by the WTO, in accordance with the principles of the Most Favored Nation and National Treatment Clauses.

It must also be added that the role of local universities is called into question as soon as educational proposals can be provided by companies and different entities located outside of the society that is being attended to.

In summary, the accumulation of declarations against the incorporation of HE to GATS may be explained by the fact that this incorporation questions such fundamental aspects such as the value of HE in constructing national identity, the public function of the State in this area, and the status of universities as the ideal areas for higher education.

International trading rules and the defined GATS activities open the door to future rounds of talks to continue liberalizing the provision of services. From that point of view, the objectives in sight serve as signals along the way, but the fundamental question is how the path should be traveled.

6. Some Specific Examples and an Illustrative Case

The following are some specific examples of the dangers that States (especially States in developing countries) will have to face in the negotiation processes already under way.

6.1 Specific Examples

Some analysts and members of government have tried to interpret GATS norms and they are convinced of two aspects. The first refers to the fact that the public education sector would not be dealt with in the GATS negotiations because it was placed in the categories of "services supplied in the exercise of governmental authority," and the second refers to the fact that WTO members would have the right to make no commitments in this matter.

Regarding the first aspect, it may be said that it is true that Section B of Chapter 3 in the first article of GATS norms stipulates that "services" include any service in any sector, except those provided by governments exercising their authority. With this in mind, we might conclude that public State-financed education would be excluded from WTO negotiations. However, Section B of the same article States that:

> services supplied in the exercise of governmental authority refer to services supplied neither on a commercial basis, nor in competition with one or more service suppliers.

Based on what was previously Stated, it is enough for a country to have private universities to demonstrate that there is competition. The same occurs if public universities play a commercial role restricted to the sale of selected products.

Next, we will present some comments made by a team of Canadian jurists who analyzed the impact that GATS would have, by commenting on the unconditional obligations stipulated in the agreement (8). These jurists estimate that in the current situation of service negotiations the scope of obligations is the following:

> All educational services supplied on a commercial basis, or in competition with one or more service suppliers, independently from those offered by public or private institutions, are subject to a more favored nation treatment and other unconditional obligations of GATS.

The "more favored nation" treatment is explained in the GATS Norms (Article II) which States that:

> With respect to any measure covered by this Agreement, each Member shall accord immediately and unconditionally to services and service suppliers of any other Member treatment no less favorable than that it accords to like services and service suppliers of any other country.

In other words, the treatment of a "more favored nation" means that countries should provide equal treatment to all foreign commercial partners. It must also be Stated that the "more favored nation treatment" takes into consideration all services comprised in GATS, independently of whether they are subject to commitment or not. On specific occasions, there may be exceptions to this for a period of up to ten years.

Another complex norm of GATS complements the principle of "more favored nation" and refers to "national treatment" which applies to all national measures, including those related to service financing by the State (Article XVII, 1). GATS defines "national treatment" as that which is "less favorable if it modifies the conditions of competition in favor of services or service suppliers of the Member compared to like services or service suppliers of any other Member". Regarding its application in higher education, it may be invoked, as we will see later on, by foreign providers in order to obtain financing from the State, in those cases where the State finances public higher education.

The abovementioned refers to the commitments that are acquired with the provision of higher education, even if there is public higher education offered "in exercise of State authority."

Let us now take a look at the second aspect, which deals with the GATS agreements for countries that have decided not to make compromises in educational matters. It may be argued that GATS concerns obligations which State members have decided to acquire. In other words, this clause would not apply if there were no acquired commitments. Nonetheless, even in this case the situation is ambiguous because GATS establishes a permanent process. For that reason, countries would periodically have to open up their educational systems to external requirements, a process that would conclude only when the demand is filled.

At the beginning of 2006, the Brazilian press announced that, due to a request presented by some wealthy countries the WTO inaugurated in May 2006 a new framework of negotiations for the opening up of economies and the need for changes in national legislations so as to allow foreign universities to operate freely in each country's territory. In that note, it was Stated that the majority of the developing countries were against these measures. (9)

We have previously referred, in general terms, to two GATS norms, (the "more favored nation" and the "national treatment"). Next we will mention in some detail a case that has been studied carefully by academics from the Center for European Law at the University of Oslo. (10)

6.2 An Illustrative Case

In September 2003, the Jamaican press informed that the higher education private sector, which granted foreign university degrees using a franchising program, demanded "equal treatment" regarding access to public funding allocated to public higher education. This demand was based on the fact that Jamaica had undertaken compromises for higher education based on the GATS.

The Norwegian academics' study carefully examined the Jamaican case based on the GATS agreement and the meaning of the full commitment the government of the country had accepted and they reached the following conclusions:

1. Government funding for education is not excluded from the application of the "national treatment" norm related to educational service providers that are commercially present in the territory of the State.
2. The States which have fully committed themselves to educational issues are compelled to finance, in the same way they do with national private institutions, all foreign private educational institutions located in their territory and to provide the same education as the local institutions.

The study conducted by the Norwegian academics points out that as a complement to the aforementioned conclusions (which reflect exactly the contents of the GATS agreements previously highlighted) the two most important members of the WTO, the United States and the European Union, have both subscribed very limited compromises regarding higher education. This restriction is directed towards avoiding foreign institutions from having the right to access financing from public funds.

Regarding the consequences of this situation, a month after the news that foreign universities within the Jamaican territory had requested public funds had been released, the Prime Minister of Jamaica indicated that:

> Due to the lack of resources, we cannot reduce the grant to local institutions in order to comply with foreign institutions. The debate on these issues is far from finished. For the near future, higher education institutions must be excluded from the taxative list of services upon which the developing countries agree to liberalization commitments.

However, the University of the West Indies made declarations regarding the commitments some Caribbean countries have established with GATS by pointing out:

> It has become evident that various governments from other Caribbean countries lack the capacity to develop the necessary investigation to formulate effective political answers to GATS and the commitments they may have done without a complete appreciation of the long-term implications in relation to their national educational policies.

7. Proposals made through CRES

To conclude this paper we will quote recommendations for the governments of the LA and C region as established in the Action Plan CRES 2008, which refer to policies with the WTO in HE matters (11).

Guideline 5 (Regional and Global Integration) sets out these recommendations as follows:

- To reject the use of education as a commercial service within the framework of WTO agreements, and regulate the foreign capital investment in national higher education institutions.
- To highlight cross-border offering of Higher Education, analyzing specific regulatory measures, to monitor the foreign capital investment and to implement appropriate systems of assessment and accreditation in the Higher Education institutions which are set up in the region.

Likewise in reference to the proposals for CMES 2009 for the region, it sets out the following recommendations:

- To request that governments act in favor of higher education as a right, and not as a marketable service within the framework of the World Trade Organization.
- To support member countries in the implementation of measures to regulate cross-border education offerings and the acquisition of institutions of higher education by foreign companies.

These are the final resolutions that the LA and C CRES 2008 have decided regarding the issue addressed in this paper.

> **There are recommendations and proposals for the LA and C governments to be made during the CMES 2009 which, if heeded by governments and adopted as lines of action by UNESCO, will contribute to making higher education a powerful instrument for the consolidation of national identity and the construction of a better future for our societies, thus eliminating the current threat presented by the incorporation of HE into the WTO's GATS.**

Note

This structure of this material was based on three documents: one prepared by L. Bizzozero et al. at MERCOSUR'S Regional Coordinating Committee for Education (MERCOSUR Educativo, 2003) (12), R. Guarga's participation, on behalf of IESALC, during the Latin American Parliament (PARLATINO) meeting in Montevideo on 10/24/2006 (13), and on a document prepared by L. Bizzozero and J. Hermo for the Regional Conference on Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (CRES 2008) (14).

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6

Higher education: a public good, a State duty

José Dias Sobrinho

Higher education: a public good, a State duty[1]

José Dias Sobrinho

Introduction

The arguments below all rest on one basic premise: education is a public good, a right of everyone, and a duty of the State. This premise further develops two important points: (a) not only does everyone have the right to education, but it is also a duty of the State to provide quality education for all; and (b) education is not a negotiable good, although it may be provided by private entities. As it is public, education must be of a high quality for everyone. The mechanisms that promote and assure quality in higher education institutions (HEIs), in line with society's priorities, are therefore beneficial. As education is a public good, the assurance of quality education cannot be considered a profitable commercial product; it must be an instrument that reinforces democratic values and strengthens national sovereignty and national identity.

This text emphasizes the duty of the State to provide quality education for all of its citizens at all levels and throughout life, not merely as a requirement of economic development but, above all, as a fundamental condition of all-round human development and for the purpose of consolidating democratic values.

It must also be borne in mind that it is very difficult to define the word "quality" satisfactorily, especially in terms of education, as used in literature in this area. There

1 This text was first published as the following: Dias Sobrinho, José. 2008. Quality, Pertinence and the Social Responsibility of the Latin American and Caribbean University in Ana Lucia Gazzola and Axel Didriksson eds. *Trends in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean.* Caracas. IESALC-UNESCO. This text uses and adapts the following: Dias Sobrinho, José. 2008. Quality, Pertinence and the Social Responsibility of the Latin American and Caribbean University in Ana Lucia Gazzola and Axel Didriksson , eds. *Trends in Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean.* Caracas. IESALC-UNESCO.

are many references to it, but it has neither been defined nor substantively operationalized. Assessments are based on quality, but it is not possible to state convincingly what it is. Of course, this is not only due to the inherent thematic complexity of the issue, it is also not easy to study these topics within the Latin America context, in view of the region's enormous diversity encompassing common values or values that conflict with various, often contradictory, interests and projects. The large relative inequalities in degrees of economic, cultural, educational and technological development - especially the enormous differences between national higher education systems - make it difficult to establish present and future cohesion at the regional level. In addition, each State's responsibilities for its own higher education system also involve different aspects, degrees and implementation strategies.

Quality in higher education is an ongoing challenge, all the more so during expansion and privatization, which turn higher education into a battleground as many disputes run their course.

Although there is no definition that fully satisfies everyone, it is important to anchor the concept of quality on some solid fundamental pillars. This text stresses the unavoidable need to link quality to relevance, equity, social responsibility, cultural diversity and the specific contexts in which it is established. This helps to show that quality is not an isolated concept, but that it can only be understood when linked to its social objectives. In the case of higher education, the concept of quality must take into consideration public commitments and roles of HEIs and the State in terms of society's collective needs and ambitions.

1. The State, society and higher education: quality, relevance and social importance

The innumerable quality-related concepts found in literature on education have many important aspects and attributes in common but, from our point of view, none of these definitions has overcome the complexity of all of the possible meanings to the satisfaction of all academics and interest groups. From the perspective adopted in this text, which emphasizes that higher education is a public good, a basic right and a duty of the State, it is important to distinguish those quality-related concepts which are rooted in corporate concepts from those which are based on educational concepts and aim to achieve full human development, build critical and reflective capacities in

citizens and promote active participation in the development of democratic societies.

The corporate concept of quality has been transferred to broad and important educational sectors. As economic value is being increasingly given to education, corporate logic is increasingly being used to formulate the concept and evaluate quality. Quality education is thus quite frequently associated with concepts such as efficiency, productivity, cost-benefit ratio, profitability and adjustment to the needs of the industry and the world of work, and quantitative expressions thereof. For central government, quality in education is associated more with student performance and output, training for employment, lowering costs and increasing the numbers of enrolled students. These aspects are more obvious and can be presented objectively to society, but they do not cover all of the meanings of "quality".

It is true that States should create the conditions to make higher education, through training and knowledge, one of the most important motors of economic development and of the expansion of the material foundations of society. However, effective and qualified contribution to economic development is only one of the many dimensions of the inherent objectives of public higher education and it must be integrated into general processes of socialization and the building of a nation's critical awareness and its intellectual, ethical and cultural development.

Apart from the productive and financial aspects, it is undeniably the State's responsibility to provide for adequate material and human conditions - and to protect them - so that their educational institutions can accomplish, in terms of quality and social relevance, the tasks entrusted to them by society, namely to train individuals to be autonomous, lay the foundations for critical and creative citizenship and formulate comprehensive and historic synopses on humanity.

States must therefore have radically democratic operations and functions and must seek to improve the lives of all of their citizens. Furthermore, equity and social justice will be achieved in higher education only if quality universal education has been provided at the preceding levels. Accordingly, higher education is integrated into States' strategies to increase social justice as the basis of a genuinely democratic society.

For many reasons, quality is an increasingly important item on States' and academic and scientific communities' political agenda in regard to higher education. The reasons for this are not necessarily the same for each interest group, or for multilateral bodies

or State agencies. Quality is important to each interest group for various, sometimes conflicting, reasons such as the need to raise economic competitiveness, to contribute to scientific and technological development, to boost cultural heritage and society's cognitive baggage, to improve qualitative citizenship indicators, to enhance employment conditions and to build public faith in the proper provision of educational services.

In any case, one factor makes quality a highly topical, urgent and vital issue and compounds the State's enormous responsibilities: exponential enrolment and institutional growth, reaching excessive levels in some countries.

This phenomenon is one of the tensions in the argument over the meaning of quality. Elitist arguments maintain that quality education is possible for only a few. On the other hand, if education is regarded as a strategy to strengthen national potential, as a public good that everyone has the right to enjoy, as a means of diminishing inequity and increasing social justice, then education for more people, if possible for everyone, admittedly requires quality to be raised, not lowered. If the criteria of equity and social justice that are associated with the concept of education as a public good are taken into account, then it must be concluded that an education system that excludes certain groups or, as is often the case, most of the national population, is not a quality system.

External structural matters were largely responsible for most of the pressure exerted on higher education to give top priority to quality. Society, governments and, in particular, markets have exerted strong pressure to secure important changes to the very meaning of higher education and to its functions and powers within the global economy. These changes have also prompted a revision of quality-related concepts. Current moves in academia to redefine quality reveal the contradiction between, on the one hand, efforts to import the language, logic, strategies and practices used successfully in industry into higher education and, on the other hand, the struggle to preserve the academic ethos and its values in relation to its autonomy, the public interest and scientific specificities in the areas of research and education.

Schematically, it may be said that there are two conflicting types of paradigms of quality. Some understand quality in terms of seemingly objective and universal criteria, according more worth to scientific rigour and quantitative and measurable aspects that are identified using economic terms and concepts such as development

indicators, profitability, cost-benefit calculations, efficiency, returns on economic investment, quantitative enrolment growth rates, time allotted to training, student-teacher ratios, scientific production indicators, system expansion, performance measurement, student performance, capacity to raise funds from different sources and employability. Others do not deny that these are important features, but ascribe equal importance to the political and social realities of the educational institutions and systems and to qualitative factors such as ethical attitudes and civic values, and accordingly integrate higher education into national and regional strategies geared to the consolidation of democracy, sustainable development of citizenship and the national economy, respect for cultural identities and the ideals of cohesion among peoples.

As the restrictive concept of economic development has been given primacy over human development and as the threats of education being transformed into a negotiable product grow, rich countries now consider both planning and commercial and business logic to be very important. This shift has occurred to the detriment of issues such as the relevance, social responsibility and equity of higher education on which the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education (WCHE) set great store in 1998. In the poor and developing countries of the Latin America and the Caribbean region, these topics are still on the political and higher education agenda but are being strongly resisted by the forces of so-called "modernization"; forces that are generally identified with globalization and the economic rating of higher education. Higher education has become a key concern of great importance because knowledge has been transformed, now that neoliberalism holds sway, into a productive force that is increasingly geared to commercial interests.

Relevance is effectively ensured if the educational institution participates, through its stakeholders, in the social, economic and cultural life of the society of which it is part, especially with people living in the vicinity, without ever losing sight of the need for universality. This participation is bidirectional and includes both the producers and users of knowledge. Knowledge is thus a public asset of educational value and it contributes to social development. The quality-relevance nexus rules out any link to commercial ideas and business logic, inasmuch as its espouses a conception of education as a public good that helps to build fair and democratic societies in order to reaffirm national identities.

Education is a public good and, as such, its central reference is its social import as a

common good. The State is therefore duty-bound to create the necessary conditions for the widest possible range of educational provision that is always of high quality and is available, at all levels, to all throughout life. Being a public good, education is essential and is a priority for human survival and co-existence. It is irreplaceable and indispensable because it is crucial and necessary to personal and collective development, that is, to broadening the scope for human achievement, culture and life within society. As such, it is the quintessence of autonomous responsible human beings who are aware of their role in society.

Education is a matter of public responsibility - not of rivalry and exclusion. A public good must be available to all; it is based on inclusion and solidarity or, in other words, collective responsibility, because it belongs to the sphere of collective human rights. For that reason, it is the government's role to provide for the inclusion and retention of all persons in education, at their respective educational levels.

The State is not only the guarantor of a sufficiently wide range of quality education in technical and social terms but also the public authority that is required to ensure that social goods respect democratic standards and are basically instrumental in increasing the common good. The State therefore has the responsibility and the authority to guarantee that the ownership and management of higher education are not dependent on decisions and use by individuals or groups who have opportunities to acquire knowledge and training privately in order only to increase their wealth and power. Education fulfils a public function when it is democratically produced, applied and used to improve all people's lives. If the State abdicates its public authority over education, it will be subject to the market and private interests. On the other hand, if the State cannot meet all educational demands in institutions maintained through public funding, then private initiatives are welcome. However, private educational institutions should complement and respect the standards set by the public authority.

It is the State's duty to organize public education as a system composed of formal and informal levels and strongly connected to science and technology. The education system is organized to enable the various actors to interact through its connections: different educational institutions, research at all levels and authority of government and society. Quality higher education cannot exist without a strong link to education subsystems lower down the chain and without a close connection to scientific and technological bodies.

These premises - education as a public good and a public system - rule out

consideration of education as merchandise dependent on the market. For this reason, the social processes promoted by HEIs, whose activities are relevant and important to the mission that society requires them to accomplish, are crucial. The role of the State in ensuring relevance and in formulating public policies on higher education is a political function of great significance, especially in underdeveloped or developing countries, where it is paramount to generate knowledge with a view to preserving and strengthening national sovereignty.

Higher education may not neglect its role to strengthen national identity. Accordingly, if higher education is a public good and its quality must be associated with relevance, equity and national and regional objectives, without losing its universal outlook, then it cannot be a "global public good". Such a redefinition generally cuts education off from its historical roots and from the institution's specific physical environment in which education and knowledge are provided. It would thus run counter to the public provision of education as the primary and irreplaceable means of promoting individual and social development, achieving the common goal of consolidating cultural identities and raising standards of living, in particular in underdeveloped countries.

Acceptance of education as a "global" public good, without taking the national and international obligations of societies in non-industrialized countries, above all, into consideration amounts to paving the way for the consolidation of a global higher education system that is of interest only to industrialized countries. The consequences for our countries would be twofold: an opening for the physical and virtual invasion by transnational institutions that are usually geared to profit-making and are not committed to the local society's objectives and demands; and exertion of pressure to establish a global and uniform model of higher education, entailing homogeneous criteria and global evaluation and accreditation mechanisms that do not take into account the concepts of relevance, social importance or national policies. This is a real threat in view of the progress achieved under agreements adopted at multilateral organizations, especially the World Trade Organization, in defining education officially and generally as a negotiable service. This fairly feasible scenario must constitute one more argument in favour of effective efforts by Latin American and Caribbean countries to cooperate and establish common agreements to strengthen national higher education systems and their respective national evaluation and accreditation mechanisms. The disturbing image of transforming education, in general, and higher education, in particular, into a commodity should hopefully strengthen people's conviction that education systems, and their institutions in particular, play a key role

in the construction of active nations, as political and cultural units, in the great human community.

Apart from considerations relating to the cultural and historical characteristics of HEIs and their contexts, the concept of quality entails recognition of international benchmarks, each based on critical appraisal. However, not all international and transnational quality criteria or all strategies applied in the education systems of rich countries are necessarily suitable or important to poor and developing countries. The "good practices" of the industrially developed countries, in which industrial demand and technological capacity are high, do not always meet the needs of economically less developed countries. This statement does not denote rejection of internationalization. On the contrary, it highlights the need for national higher education systems to practise effective policies to secure international integration, not only to avoid passivity and vulnerability to undesirable external influences, but also as a cooperation strategy that rests on the affirmation of each country's political and cultural identity - in this case in point, Latin American and Caribbean countries.

National education policies must be implemented to promote quality, through consistent strategies and action. These policies require the State to be involved specifically by providing the necessary resources for education; the current level of commitment to education as a basic condition for giving effect to the principle of the right to education for all must generally be raised. Traditionally marginalized young people face enormous difficulties in reaching higher education and compete with those who possess cultural and economic capital that makes it easier for them to enter the most prestigious public institutions. Furthermore, support measures must be introduced in order to train the more disadvantaged student sectors and thus remedy the adverse effects of the unfair system that has existed historically in many of our countries.

Education is a human right at all levels and throughout life. It therefore requires the adoption of a continuous and integrated approach. The State should formulate and put into practice public policies and material and human resources to ensure that students can have access to and remain in education, from the primary and secondary school levels to the higher education levels, in suitable conditions to allow them to continue studying, to graduate and to obtain suitable employment in line with their studies: this is crucial if individuals are to be socially accomplished as responsible

citizens and to have opportunities to live in greater dignity and to exercise all of their social rights.

Merit-based access does not suffice, however, to guarantee fairness or, in other words, equal opportunities to "enter, remain and graduate", taking into account the powerful conditioning produced by the segmentation of schooling, which occurs at primary and secondary schools. Action must be taken above all to ensure that students from lower-income social groups, such as indigenous, black and mixed-race people, persons with special needs and those who live in remote areas, can have access to and remain in higher education.

These concepts must all be subsumed into the idea of education as a public system consisting of all educational levels. The various meanings of relevance relates higher education to social, cultural and also economic concepts, in other words, to all-round sustainable human development that allows all men and women to live in dignity and fairness. To achieve this in full while assuring quality and social relevance, governments must maintain efficient policies to improve basic education systems, in particular through specific measures that increase the social value of the teaching profession. Responsibilities within the higher education subsystem are determined socially in relation to other educational levels, particularly in regard to teacher training. Without a strong education system at all levels, which requires capable professionals who are aware of their roles and are socially recognized, genuine citizenship and a sovereign nation are inconceivable.

Governments must also encourage higher education institutions to preserve and, at the same time, energize the people's cultural organizations and forms of expressions. It is important for higher education to be instrumental in consolidating memory and strengthening cultures and national identities, while always ensuring respect for the plurality of the expressions and characteristics of different social groups.

2. The State, higher education and sustainable development

Development is an important matter on the agenda of States and contemporary society, but it is paradoxical that the concept has not really been addressed thematically. Higher education is closely linked to development ideas and

expectations in many ways, such as their economic, social, cultural and scientific aspects. It is now widely held that quality higher education generates development. However, while the meaning of quality must be clarified, the concept of development must be examined also in a critical review of higher education. The role of higher education is irrefutably to consider critically the hegemonic meanings currently attributed to development and, consequently, the roles that should be played by higher education.

Generally speaking, in the current society of the global economy, development is associated with economic growth and improvement of the factors of production of material wealth. Accordingly, in order to meet quality requirements, adjustment to the market and proper performance of economic functions, particularly those relating to vocational training and the strengthening of industry, would be necessary. However, the conception of education as a public resource, whose main mission is to increase human freedoms and fulfil the common objectives of national cohesion and all-round development, rules out any economic approach to education. The topics of human achievement, citizenship and development raise many theoretical difficulties and huge practical challenges that must be resolved by drawing on the contribution of higher education. In this respect, a warning is inevitable: higher education cannot merely take the economic and commercial path to development and social responsibility.

The social responsibility of higher education should be radically different from the social responsibility of businesses. Involved as it is in a new civic discourse, the social responsibility practised by businesses, including those in the educational sector, is, on the whole, a subterfuge used to increase profits. It is a marketing strategy that may add value to a company's brand through the promotion of its corporate image, thus lessening the impacts of public policies designed to reduce social injustice.

The State should encourage higher education to rethink critically its concepts and its relationship to sustainable development in the light of new epistemological theories and ethical reference points. University action in furtherance of development and, hence, the connections of higher education institutions with public policies and businesses could be an important issue in institutional and governmental evaluations. Offering services to specific external sectors is not sufficient; nor is it enough for universities to build bridges into society without reflecting on the meanings of such action - they must rethink such activities completely from a social standpoint. Beyond

the business concept, social responsibility require universities to be rebuilt internally in order to reflect the surrounding real-life sociocultural situation.

Accordingly, social responsibility means producing knowledge, training professionals and making culture in and for the reality of which the educational institution is actively part. Therefore, universities must not only look outside, they must be rethought from the inside. It is not a question of bureaucratic and administrative reorganization, but of the importance of reflection on their significance and their role in the construction of the civilizing process in these new contexts. Indeed, the social responsibility of higher education is also associated with the concepts of relevance and importance and, consequently, of quality that has public value.

The quality of education that is committed to public values and objectives can never be a factor of unfairness and barbarity. On the contrary, education must encourage all possibilities and opportunities to increase social equity in order to achieve a loftier and more just civilization. Relevant and socially responsible education must contribute to knowledge of and solutions to societal problems and needs, within and according to its scope. It is the responsibility of society as a whole and of educational institutions in particular to facilitate fair access to public resources and reduce poverty and inequalities. HEIs, including private ones, should undertake publicly to do so.

The quality of higher education is directly related to its capacity to contribute to personal and societal development. The comprehensive education of individuals correlates with social human development, which requires higher increases in the schooling of the population, in terms of coverage and quality, strong reinforcement of policies to increase equity and reduce poverty, strategies for the exploitation of natural resources and the application of knowledge to ensure sustainable development. This requires material and human resources, in other words, financing, political will and intellectual and ethical capacities on the part of States, societies and institutions.

Nevertheless, it is important to underline that it is not a matter of adjusting and using knowledge to strengthen the economic model of private accumulation, especially in the labour market. The university is an institution whose benchmark is society and not the market. It must be open to the social environment, but this does not limit its main task to labour-market integration and to responding passively to economic bodies. Over and above operations and calibration to meet market needs, higher education has a civilizing role, justified by values shared by academic and scientific community

members. Higher education's responses to societal demands must be based on the university community's rigorous and critical capacity for reflection when defining its purposes and undertaking its commitments. It is therefore essential for the State to assure autonomy, otherwise, the university could not rethink its commitments, define its priorities and take its decisions according to the public values on which science and the objectives of social well-being rest.

Autonomy is, therefore, essential for the university to be able to undertake self-examination and decide on its values and the production and the application of knowledge. Indeed, in discharging their social responsibilities and in conducting educational and scientific activities, higher education institutions must contribute to the fundamental transformation of the epistemic and moral-ethical paradigm that underlies governments', institutions' and people's thought and behaviour patterns. As part of its social responsibility, higher education must give high priority to the urgent and serious matters that face humanity, such as environmental issues, intercultural problems, interdisciplinary approaches, peace and sustainable development - hence the need for technical and scientific knowledge, epistemic democratization and all critical capacity to be geared to the humanitarian ideals of liberty, social justice, peace and human development.

From the standpoint of social responsibility and ethical commitments, it is not merely a question of achieving development at all costs, but more of looking for a model of sustainable development. There is a great deal of evidence that the current hegemonic model of development, driven by a global economy society, neither solves humanity's basic problems, such as access to food, housing, education and health, nor guarantees the preservation of the environment. On the contrary, much evidence shows that this model has been exacerbating environmental and social imbalances significantly. Even though humanity has sufficient knowledge and financial resources in hand to eliminate poverty and preserve the environment, the latter goals are far from being secured. The ideology behind the exclusively economic approach to development threatens to cause the collapse of human civilization, both socially and ecologically. The signs of exhaustion of an ecologically predatory and socially unfair style of development are widely known. Higher education should help to build knowledge, awareness and attitudes that represent a radical change in human beings' relationship to nature and life in general. Under a sustainable development model,

economic growth should be harmonized with social, human and environmental development.

The issue is wide-ranging and complex, but, at first glance, the notion of development can be outlined as universal, comprehensive and sustainable. Universal because it must reach all human beings in all countries and regions; comprehensive because the human being must be addressed holistically, that is, both materially and spiritually; and sustainable because it cannot be a short-term consideration only but must be guaranteed for all future generations.

The current globalization process has led to great progress, especially in the field of information, but it does compound the already serious problems faced by the vast majority of humankind. There is growing poverty, hunger, illiteracy, violence, environmental damage and urban violence, and new forms of exclusion associated with inequality, employment instability, and new epidemics have emerged. Moreover, a new type of exclusion of the poorest, with very serious consequences, looms large: digital exclusion linked to the lack of access to new technology. Such exclusion is characteristic of a new type of slavery. Many individuals, social groups and even whole societies have no access to communication and information and are thus excluded from the great international circuits that control not only the economy, but also culture itself. Strictly speaking, they are excluded from the world of work, from citizenship and, therefore, from any likelihood of a decent life.

The changes produced by the global economy in all areas of life, especially in relation to modes of production, reception and application of knowledge, have lowered the importance of relevance and public values, not only in higher education but also in political circles and, particularly, in business sectors, which are hardly committed to the encouragement of science and technology.

Powerful global interest groups impose their will and practices in areas outside their national borders, legislation and authority. Hegemonic scientific and technological developments often set priorities that are not in the interest and do not meet the needs of underdeveloped or developing societies. As science should always further social justice and human legitimacy, it cannot be justified only by criteria of utility and instrumentality. In order to understand rather than merely manipulate the world for

self-profit, this subject must be central to knowledge processes and to human beings' relationship to nature and to each other.

One of the main tasks of higher education is professional training to meet labour market requirements that are increasingly controlled by private institutions and under strong economic pressure. In this respect, neither reality nor structural unemployment nor the desultory effects that the ranking of individuals on the labour market generates in human development may be disregarded. The great importance of training through lifelong education with a view to citizenship or, in other words, of people's active, critical and constructive participation in society, must also be highlighted.

States should provide for the evaluation of the quality of higher education, with emphasis on students' education. A most apposite question is whether the aim is to train individuals to adapt and respond to the interests of the economic system or whether it is to educate citizens to be aware, critical and actively involved in building a developed and fair humane society. Professional training is an important feature of social relevance but cannot be confined to market instrumentality. Moreover, human education consists of the holistic and lifelong training of the person in all professional, intellectual, political and ethical fields and is committed to the key issues of sustainable human development projects. Therefore, quality criteria, related to vocational and civic education, should be based on the context in which institutions exist, that is, the realities of specific human beings and their traditions, cultures, needs, idiosyncrasies and identities.

The capacity for lifelong learning is one of the most important requirements of educational quality. It is important to point out that it is not merely instrumental in value, but, above all, it should entail acquisition of the capacity to read and understand the contemporary world and to learn the meanings of transformations. Higher education should contribute to in-depth reflection on dialogue and cultural communication. This is not restricted substantively to practical economic considerations and is an essential condition of peace and sustainable development. Great advances have been made in science and technology, but the distance and inequality between cultures are serious obstacles to sustainable development. From this standpoint, higher education should make a critical effort to emulate the ethos of

people's culture, in other words, in the light of universal movements and national idiosyncrasies, it cannot avoid critical review of the culture, regulations, values and traditions that are part of society. In the creative and symbiotic interface between the universal and the local, sustainable development rests on ethics. The university is universal reason at work, drawing substance in the intermediary stages from the national culture.

There are fundamental problems that are not necessarily shared to the same degree by the various cultures, including such issues as multiculturalism, ethnicity, illiteracy, violence and corruption. If these problems are not tackled, they can make any sustainable development project unfeasible. Every society has specific characteristics that do not occur in other contexts and that need to be recognized, and has the scope to develop into a more decent and just community. This is the principle of hope; the principle that universities must reinforce. As a place of theoretical and social ethos, a university should be a public space for critical analysis, thus offsetting the lack of criticism of globalization. Culture and communication encompass key issues such as solidarity, mass society, emancipation projects, preservation of identity and cultural diversity, and languages. It counteracts the dominant ideology of the economy as the sole reason for the existence of mankind.

Higher education cannot be an instrument for the type of globalization that increases social disparities, does not respect cultures and is not subject to ethical principles of justice and sociability. It follows that the great ethical challenge facing higher education is the construction of globalization that is primarily globalization of justice and dignity. For higher education, this consists in producing knowledge and promoting training with great emphasis on relevance and ethics. Relevance of higher education is determined by a commitment to socially relevant knowledge and training in furtherance of an ethical and political blueprint of society.

3. The State: quality evaluation and assurance in national and regional contexts

Establishing organizations, forming a standard-setting and conceptual corpus, developing national mechanisms and promoting evaluation processes and accreditation for higher education are part of the responsibility and come under the

authority of States, in conjunction with the legitimate participation of academic and scientific communities. This is required in order to assure quality, increase relevance and the public value of citizens' education and the production of knowledge. Most countries today have organized, or are organizing, evaluation mechanisms designed to determine quality in HEIs. Evaluation in HEIs is a recent activity in Latin America, where progress has been achieved to various extents and differing objectives have been set, while attempts are still being made to strengthen models in the face of many technical and political difficulties. Owing to globalization, in particular regard to the internationalization and interdependence of markets and the imposition of corporate logic on educational institutions, States and international organizations must maintain a strong presence in action designed to promote evaluation and assure quality.

Owing to globalization, political mechanisms and proposals likely to globalize evaluation and accreditation and break all ties with nations and States are emerging. In that case, commercial ventures would have carte blanche, backed up by certificates with academic value. This is not a vague fear, it is a real possibility, to which universities and States should respond by being on the alert and by taking action. It is important to incorporate evaluation and accreditation into national public quality assurance mechanisms in order to strengthen national higher education systems without isolating them within national borders.

Conversely, valid and much needed initiatives have been taken by Latin America and Caribbean States, government agencies, higher education institutions and social organizations in order to establish regionally integrated evaluation and accreditation systems. This strategy is premised mainly on the promotion of exchanges, which have been consubstantial with the historical cosmopolitanism of academic communities. The basic requirement is international openness in a context free from hegemonies or asymmetries that enable powerful countries or groups thereof to gain additional advantages. The unavoidable condition is that the criteria used to define quality should not be an uncritical copy of external models, however prestigious they may be, but should constitute genuine roadmaps designed endogenously and involving the creative and participative collaboration of our academic and professional communities, thus highlighting differences and similarities in the countries' respective situations, scope and problems and bearing in mind the inalienable goal of advanced knowledge.

The quality of higher education is closely associated with relevance and responsibility

in the sustainable development of society. It cannot be reduced to a formal, abstract and static construct that has not been realistically devised by people in specific situations and conditions. Not all concepts, criteria or quality standards formulated in and by developed countries can be of use to poor or developing institutions. Many strategies and objectives that rich states apply to higher education are distinctly different from those formulated by countries that have not yet reached high levels of economic, educational and technological development. The same holds for the overall stability of their democratic life and social justice. These asymmetries account for existing discrepancies between hegemonic and other countries in regard to the concepts of quality and its assurance in higher education.

There are universal challenges and others that differ considerably depending on whether the country has a strong economy and society or whether it is a developing country. There are common values in higher education worldwide, such as the quest for truth, ethics, respect for diversity, scientific rigor, autonomy and freedom of thought, a culture of peace and self-criticism. However, national realities must be the starting point in building institutions to be aware of their social responsibilities.

Relevance is a key factor of quality. Therefore, quality cannot be abstract, country-neutral or not rooted in the specific realities from which it derives its content and form. Quality must have social and public value and the communities in which educational institutions exist must be committed to its assurance. Consequently, in evaluation and accreditation activities in Latin America and the Caribbean primacy must indisputably be given to indicators of relevance and social importance and to policies and action that increase equality and well-being for all.

Quality-related concepts determine evaluation and accreditation styles which, together, may also produce notions of quality. In Latin-American and Caribbean countries, which are still at different stages of democracy, quality in higher education must build genuine bridges between the scientific and educational dimensions of the institutional mission and regional realities, the people's needs, projects and national strategies, without swerving from its main objective, namely the construction of public citizenship for democratic, fair, socially and environmentally sustainable societies. Relevance is related to specific, located and dated realities and necessities. Evaluation may be used as an instrument of quality by promoting its essential dimension: relevance and social importance.

There is no universally valid model of higher education, nor is there one for the

production or appropriation of knowledge. No universal, unique and objective concept of quality valid for institutions worldwide can be produced. General indicators cannot supersede decisions taken by each institution in building its identity. When systems and institutions differ and have their own histories and identities, allowance must be made for differing interpretations of quality and compliance with standards to reflect the key commitments entered into by each institution in accordance with international requirements, national strategies, community needs and its own opportunities.

Quality cannot be identified by its instruments, for instance national examinations or their results. It must be stressed that education is achieved by means other than the teaching-learning relationship, especially if this relationship only concerns the content of an academic syllabus. It is important to measure students' results in the teaching-learning process but, in isolation, this is not enough to determine the quality of a syllabus or of an educational institution. In addition to learning measurable academic content, experience, learning values, aptitudes, projects, expectations and dreams are all part of education. Knowledge does not have economic value only, even though the market has gained the ascendancy in the last few decades; it also has, above all, crucial social and cultural value for individual and collective well-being.

Training is the substantive function of education. It is also a multidimensional and polysemous concept, being concomitantly epistemic, ethical, aesthetic, economic and socio-political in outlook. Lastly, educational quality must be related to training in its full and permanent sense: intellectual, moral, professional, social, emotional and aesthetic. The quest for educational quality entails attempting to ensure that students and teachers are fulfilled in the best possible way in the numerous facets of human life. A university geared to the development of public values should not, therefore, give primacy to the ideology of individual achievement. Quality in education is public and social: it is essential and fundamental to all; it is the source and the instrument of common well-being, not a motor for possessive individualism. Quality in higher education must be clearly linked to institutions' commitments to a social sense of knowledge and training, to ethical and moral values of collective well-being, to the democratization of access to education and opportunities to remain within it, to social justice and to sustainable development.

Training, knowledge and techniques must be rigorous, from an intrinsic point of view, relevant to the society in which, and for which, they are generated. In other words,

they must have social utility, or better, social value. The advancement of quality relevant and socially important education is not only a fundamental human right, but also a social need and a duty of the State. The lack of quality education broadly capable of reaching all people is a violation of a fundamental human right and a waste of intellectual and moral potential causing irreparable economic, civic and human damage. Learning must be relevant so that individuals may become socially responsible. Individuals, who are also responsible for their own critical and constructive integration into society, should therefore also play a central role in judging quality and in evaluation and accreditation.

The relationship between quality education and the construction of citizenship (socially responsible individuals) cannot be understood in isolation from the idea of higher education as a public good. As society is its main benchmark, its contribution to the construction of democracy is of the essence. The dialectic between quality public education and the construction of democracy and of republican equality brings the concept of the social responsibility of educational institutions and the duties of democratic States into play. Education has universal and global facets, but it is also radically grounded in local, national and regional realities. It should be useful for economic development, but as an instrument of humanization, not as an ultimate goal or as a determinant reason of society.

Intra- and inter-regional exchanges boost mutual learning among countries, as each gains from the experience of the other. However, in addition to bilateral exchanges, multilateral networks must be established urgently to permit cooperative agreements among countries within a region. This requires an international body that can work not only to achieve harmony, but also to encourage progress in all educational systems. Among all multilateral organizations, UNESCO is best suited to coordinating cooperative internationalization, as it has great credibility in academic and scientific fields and has a respectable tradition of defending human and democratic values, which constitute the essential core of education as a public good.

A key task of international cooperation is the strengthening of public, relevant and highly valuable scientific and social higher education. National States, multilateral bodies, networks, academics, scientists, national systems, subregional and regional blocs face a common struggle in Latin America and the Caribbean against the commercialization of educational services that do not follow national public policies and criteria. This is especially the case with multinational services, which do not

generally contribute to the strengthening of a nation's identity, because they neither acknowledge nor express linguistic and cultural diversity, nor work for the development and social cohesion of the country in which profit-making enterprises have been established, and against all university practices that do not comply with public obligations or fall short of minimum quality standards from scientific and professional points of view or fail to meet the communities' priority needs and demands of communities. In this struggle, the basic requirement and challenge in regard to the responsibility of States and of society, especially in the sector of higher education, are that all countries should try to provide quality education at all levels for a rapidly increasing student population in a context of multiform crisis and highly diversified demands.

In order to strengthen institutions and regional higher education systems through the integration of social quality, production processes must generally focus on some essential points that are all linked to the comprehension and effective practice of social importance, relevance and responsibility and public commitments. Meanwhile, an important feature in constructing such convergence is respect for institutional identity, tantamount to recognition of autonomy as a basic condition for defining the mission and choosing the appropriate means of meeting society's commitments.

States have huge responsibilities and legitimate authority to provide the bases to ensure that higher education can meet the people's aspirations and tangible and intangible needs through national development strategies, the strengthening of democratic processes, the assertion of national culture and identity and, in short, generally improving the lives of all members of society through educational activities linked to the construction and socialization of knowledge. Their duties and authority link political, legal, administrative, ethical, epistemological and educational aspects, among others. Furthermore, they require huge financial resources, the corresponding accountability and a strong capacity to mobilize and motivate the educational community. Evaluation and accreditation processes are important aspects of their duty and authority, not only because they evaluate the accomplishment of goals, but also because they have a very strong educational impact and introduce good practices.

Quality assessment and assurance promoted by States, in collaboration with universities, nationally and regionally in Latin-America and the Caribbean, perforce take into account some fundamental values of quality attainment and improvement,

drawing on the basic premise of public good: relevance, social responsibility, equity, social importance, ethics and commitment to building national identity; autonomy, freedom of thought, respect for institutional identity, democracy (in internal and external contexts) and transparency; internationalization, cooperation, integration and the linking of networks between State and university actors; education designed as a system of interlinked components, levels and networks; mutual respect and confidence among agencies and university actors; evaluation and accreditation processes that are participative, democratic and formative, as well as supervisory and regulatory; respect for the environment and for all harmonious ways of life in society; responsibility for the transformation of society, especially in the ethical and technical training of individuals, and in knowledge production that contributes to the strengthening of democracy, to a culture of peace, the eradication of illiteracy and overcoming all forms of social injustice; and respect for institutional missions, which is the key to quality assessment.

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