

often described as such. The primary difference, however, is that students are not enrolled in the provider institution but rather pursue a program—often leading to a local qualification of the partner organization—that is recognized for credit by the provider institution. Entry with advanced standing to the provider's home-based program is conditional on achieving a specified level of performance in the initial program. For instance, the first two years of study may lead to a diploma from the host institution. This may then be recognized for entry into the final year of the bachelor's degree in the provider's home program.

Branch Campuses

The meaning of branch campuses is ambiguous. Sometimes it is used synonymously with “twinning programs.” In the strictest sense, it refers to a fully fledged campus of the provider institution that offers programs from commencement through graduation. The campus could be a joint venture, or wholly owned by the provider institution.

[Articulation] programs are similar to twinning programs and are often described as such. The primary difference, however, is that students are not enrolled in the provider institution but rather pursue a program that is recognized for credit by the provider institution.

Franchising Arrangements

Under such an arrangement, the provider institution grants a host in another country permission or “license” to offer the provider institution's degree under agreed conditions. The provider may then have very limited involvement in how the program is taught.

Depending upon the nature of the franchise agreement, this may sometimes be considered an unethical use of an institution's name. We know of no instance of an Australian university entering into a franchise arrangement.

This is not an exhaustive list of forms of transnational education. Instead, it briefly highlights some of the more prominent initiatives currently being practiced by Australian colleges and universities. Certainly, further options remain yet to be explored.

Note

1. See “GATE Certification Manual,” page 1, available on GATE's Website at <<http://www.edugate.org>>.

Research, Policy, and Practice in Higher Education: A UNESCO Roundtable Discussion

Glen A. Jones

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An invited roundtable conference on “The Relationship Among Research, Policy and Practice in Higher Education” was held at the University of Tokyo the first week of September 1997. Delegates included high-level policymakers in higher education, higher education researchers, and representatives of several international associations involved in higher education policy or research. Sponsored by UNESCO and the new Center for Research and Development of Higher Education (University of Tokyo), the conference provided participants with an opportunity to explore a number of extremely important themes related to this broad topic. Two recent publications provided a strong foundation for these discussions: a recent book edited by Jan Sadlak and Philip Altbach entitled *Research on Higher Education at the Turn of the Century: Structures, Issues, and Trends* (Garland, 1997); and the special issue of *Higher Education* (vol. 32, no. 4, 1996) edited by Ulrich Teichler, focusing on “The State of Comparative Research in Higher Education.”

One of the central issues discussed at the conference involved the conceptual relationship between research, policy, and practice in higher education. If one assumes that higher education research should have some direct impact on policy and practice, then it is important to understand these relationships so as to increase the impact of research on both policy and practice.

One of the central issues discussed at the conference involved the conceptual relationship between research, policy, and practice in higher education.

A number of presentations examined recent policy reform processes in several countries, further illuminating the complexity of these relationships. In some situations, major policy reforms have directly or indirectly resulted from the identification of particular problems by higher education researchers. More commonly, the desire to reform higher education policy provides the stimulus for

higher education research as policymakers or advisers struggle to understand the situation and seek alternative policy approaches. Policymakers may turn to research as a legitimizing tool within the political process, but policy can also be made in situations where there is no research base. Several participants noted that in some respects higher education researchers need policymakers and practitioners more than the latter need higher education researchers.

Another layer of complexity is added when one considers the various ways of defining or understanding higher education research. For a number of participants from the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom, higher education was viewed as an interdisciplinary field of study, a broadly defined area of academic research. In these countries there are scholars who define themselves as specialists in the study of higher education, as well as research centers, peer-reviewed journals, and—especially in the United States—graduate programs and other attributes of a scholarly field of study. Some participants from places with a less-developed infrastructure for research tended to discuss higher education as an area of emphasis associated with the more traditional disciplines. In other words, an economic study of a particular university might be viewed as a contribution to economics based on the application of economic principles to the university, rather than as a contribution to higher education as a distinct field of scholarly inquiry.

There were also discussions about the relationship between higher education as an interdisciplinary field of study and the parent disciplines. Several people suggested that higher education is a largely derivative field, borrowing theoretical frameworks and methodologies from parent disciplines but seldom contributing new perspectives to the scholarly debates within those disciplines. Others pointed to the benefits of being interdisciplinary: the pulling together of ideas and perspectives from a variety of disciplines. How we view higher education can also be influenced by the way in which centers and academic programs are configured within our own universities—academics attached to a faculty of education may have quite a different view from those working in a research center attached to a department of public policy, for example.

Despite differences of opinion, participants agreed that more research on higher education is needed. This was articulated by policymakers who often find that there is no indigenous research on even the most essential questions related to higher education, and who, in the absence of local expertise, have been forced to employ international consultants to provide guidance on local issues. Some scholars from less-developed nations reported sometimes being unable to obtain data on even the most basic research questions and having to rely on information published by international agencies to understand local issues. Even in countries with a more established tradition of higher edu-

cation research, important policy and practice issues may receive relatively little attention by researchers. In some countries, higher education is a major area of government expenditure and yet there is little support for research on higher education. Participants concluded that UNESCO and the new United Nations University should be asked to play an active role in articulating the importance of higher education research, facilitating the broader development of expertise in higher education, and developing additional forums for the dissemination of research findings. These and other issues raised during the Tokyo roundtable will be communicated to participants at the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education later this year in Paris.

Tertiary Distance Learning in Africa

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Tertiary distance learning initiatives were the focus of a review convened last year by the Working Group on Higher Education—an arm of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA). Held October 20–22, 1997 at the Université Gaston Berger in Saint-Louis, Senegal, discussants reviewed the results of two surveys and 10 case studies that had been commissioned by ADEA to determine the efficacy of current distance learning initiatives in sub-Saharan Africa. (These materials are currently being incorporated into a report that will be available in French and English by April 1998.) Analysis of the survey responses indicates that only three countries—Madagascar, Mauritius, and South Africa—have national distance learning policies in place. A number of other countries, in spite of their long experience with distance learning, currently function without similar policies.

Distance learning programs pursue different goals in different countries. Their most common use involves the training and upgrading of teachers in primary and secondary schools. As a means of delivering postsecondary education, they are far less common. Only two countries, the Congo and South Africa, are experienced in providing correspondence courses in the subregion. But this is slowly changing: Madagascar increasingly employs distance learning in the education of first-year university students; Tan-