ture. A growing divide exists between the minority of tenured faculty and the rest, creating a kind of two-tier academic profession.

> **Everywhere, increased accountability has subjected academics to bureaucratic controls and has weakened academic autonomy.**

In other countries, the situation is similarly grim. The traditional employment security of the academic profession is being weakened by moving academics from the civil service. In Britain, tenure was abolished as part of a major university reform aimed at making the entire academic system more competitive. In Germany, most new academic appointments do not permit promotion, forcing many academics to compete for new positions at other universities. In Central Europe and the countries of the former Soviet Union, the traditional academic profession has been greatly weakened by changes in working conditions, deteriorating salaries, and loss of status. It is common in developing countries for academic salaries to be so poor that even full-time professors must hold more than one job. In Latin America, traditional reliance on part-time teachers has prevented the emergence of an effective professoriate.

Everywhere, increased accountability has subjected academics to bureaucratic controls and has weakened academic autonomy. As universities have become more oriented to student interests and market demands, traditional academic values have been undermined. The rise of the private sector in higher education—the fastest growing segment worldwide—has meant further deterioration of the profession because private institutions seldom provide full-time positions nor do they provide much security of tenure. A profession that thrived on autonomy and a certain detachment from direct competition is now exposed to the vicissitudes of the market.

Consequences

The future of the academic profession is uncertain, which is a problem for the success of the academic enterprise generally. What will attract bright young people to study for the doctorate when the careers—and salaries—available are marginal at best? Will academic work continue to be organized in a way that supports and rewards basic research? How will the traditional links between teaching and research be maintained so that those responsible mainly for teaching will keep abreast of current developments in their fields? Universities depend

on a full-time professoriate—not only to teach but also to participate in governance and curriculum development. New patterns of managerial control vitiate traditional patterns of collegial governance and further weaken both the morale and the commitment of the academic profession. Academic morale is deteriorating in many countries, and many have noted declines in both the abilities and the numbers of those pursuing doctoral study with the aim of joining the professoriate.

The Future

Without an able and committed professoriate, universities will fail in their major mission—to provide high-quality teaching and engage in research. Without a doubt, there must be adjustments in academic work and in the organization of universities to meet the needs of mass higher education and of the knowledge economies. Further differentiation in professorial roles, more extensive measurement of academic performance, and greater flexibility in appointments are probably necessary. If the academic profession continues to decline, higher education may continue to produce graduates, but the intellectual quality of those graduates and their ability to participate in society will be placed in question. Just as important, the basic research that universities have produced will be less innovative and valuable. The future of the university lies in the hands of the professoriate.

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The Opportunity Cost of the Pursuit of International Quality Standards

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During the last several years, spurred in part by the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the current round of negotiations of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), efforts to establish a single set of international standards for higher education quality have picked up considerably. WTO/GATS sets the stage for attention to international standards by (1) including higher education as a "service" to be regulated for purposes of trade and (2) calling for "liberalizing" (expanding) trade in higher education by removing restrictions to market access and barriers to competition.

GATS does not specifically call for international quality standards for higher education as part of a trade

regime. However, two multinational organizations—the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)—in part reacting to GATS, are developing government-based international quality standards on the premise that these standards are essential to colleges and universities seeking to be full participants in a global society. Their efforts build on earlier work undertaken by, for example, the International Association of University Presidents (IAUP) to establish a "Worldwide Quality Register"—a means to scrutinize accreditation and quality assurance organizations based on a set of quality standards.

OECD has joined forces with UNESCO to establish an international database of reliable or "recognized" higher education institutions.

Two Major Efforts to Establish International Quality Standards
UNESCO, through its Global Forum on International Quality Assurance, Accreditation and Recognition of Qualifications, has developed a Global Forum Action Plan that would include an "education regulatory framework" for higher education quality, perhaps through updating and expanding the various UNESCO conventions to operate as "educational agreements providing international standards in the context of the growing liberalization of trade in services." The plan also calls for development of national and regional quality assurance capacity, information tools for students, and sustainable development of higher education systems.

OECD has joined forces with UNESCO to establish an international database of reliable or "recognized" higher education institutions. OECD also seeks to develop nonbinding guidelines for cross-border higher education, intended to provide student protection, to assure clarity of information and to encourage accreditation and quality assurance cooperation among countries. The guidelines may address higher education institutions, quality assurance and accreditation organizations, recognition and credential evaluation agencies, and professional bodies.

The likely outcome of these efforts remains to be seen. Government-based solutions to international quality issues are attractive to some countries as they expand their international higher education activity. And, if there is to be international regulation of higher education quality, a number of countries prefer that this take place outside WTO/GATS. The key actors, UNESCO and OECD, are large, complex organizations

with diverse constituents, and arriving at consensus will be time consuming. And, given the diverse constituencies, there is the risk that "success" may be a paper tiger: vaguely worded standards of quality that are not sufficiently robust to build trust and confidence in their reliability.

Moreover, these efforts take place in a complex environment of other —perhaps competing—efforts at standard setting driven by geographic area, mode of educational delivery, or the traditions of individual countries. Europe is engaged in a major effort, based on the Bologna Declaration, to develop regional quality standards for higher education. There are discussions of regional quality initiatives—for example, in Latin America and the Gulf states. The International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE), based in Norway, has developed international quality standards for distance learning. In the United States, with its long tradition of institutional autonomy, academic freedom and self-regulation of academic quality through private accreditation bodies, many people remain concerned that international quality standards may erode these traditions so vital to the success of U.S. higher education. How might these alternative efforts and traditions be reconciled—or at least coexist?

Whether or not these efforts to establish international quality standards can succeed, there are significant opportunity costs associated with their pursuit.

Opportunity Costs
Whether or not these efforts to establish international quality standards can succeed, there are significant opportunity costs associated with their pursuit. By creating an environment where attention to higher education quality in an international setting is defined almost exclusively by a debate about a single set of standards, the key actors, however inadvertently, draw energy away from other vital quality issues.

The *first* opportunity cost relates to developing countries. Focus on international standards appears to be at the price of the key actors giving enough priority to the needs of individual countries. At a recent OECD/UNESCO meeting in Paris, those assembled were told that at least 40 percent of UNESCO member nations lacked a reliable quality assurance capacity. How can individual countries benefit from international standards in the absence of a robust national capacity? To the contrary, they may be harmed. Absent individual nations in a position to assert their own values and culture

through their own quality assurance enterprise, the development of international standards may be dominated by more developed countries, perhaps choking off the traditions of countries that enjoy fewer resources. Although the UNESCO plan acknowledges this need, it is not clear that addressing it is a priority.

The *second* opportunity cost relates to higher education institutions. The focus on international standards as a government activity appears to be at the price of the key actors providing vital support to the development of a strong international voice for higher education institutions worldwide. UNESCO and OECD, organizations of governments, at least thus far prefer working outside the ambit of higher education and for the most part do not engage institutional leaders, policymakers, and academics in their deliberations. Yet, colleges and universities are among the oldest "international" institutions in the world, and their advice about whether to implement international quality standards might be quite useful. The development of international standards without the involvement of the academic community raises fundamental questions about whether such standards will ever be taken seriously—unless they are forced on institutions by government.

> **The development of international standards without the involvement of the academic community raises fundamental questions about whether such standards will ever be taken seriously.**

The *third* opportunity cost relates to other initiatives that these actors might undertake if they were not focusing on international quality standards—initiatives that might provide greater added value than the debate about international standards. One conspicuous example is attention to the worldwide flourishing of dubious providers of higher education: "degree mills" and "accreditation mills." An international dialogue and frame of reference to address shoddy higher education in an international setting are badly needed. It is difficult for any single country to address this. Legal constraints are one factor here and technology is another—distance delivery of degree mills cannot be effectively addressed by a single country. The key actors would help all of higher education by working with institutions and accreditation/quality assurance organizations around the world to develop means to (1) identify rogue providers, (2) develop tools to aid students and the public in distinguishing between rogue and reliable providers, and (3) explore effective practices to discourage rogue providers.

Conclusion

The multinational actors described here are devoting significant energy to creating international quality standards for higher education. While it is too soon to determine whether these efforts will be successful, it is not too soon to acknowledge that there are significant opportunity costs associated with these efforts. Important quality-related issues that these actors could profitably address are receiving little, if any, attention. These include aiding developing countries in building national quality assurance capacity, contributing to the creation of a strong international voice for academic institutions about higher education quality, and addressing such pressing issues in the international environment as identification of degree mills and accreditation mills. ■

Accra Declaration on GATS and the Internationalization of Higher Education in Africa

Editor's note: The following declaration was issued by a conference held in Accra, Ghana in April, 2004. Participants from 16 African countries discussed the implications of GATS and internationalization and agreed on the following document. The conference was organized by the Association of African Universities, UNESCO, and the Council on Higher Education (South Africa). It is presented here to provide an African perspective on the continuing worldwide debate on GATS and related issues.

Preamble

It is imperative to reaffirm the role and importance of higher education for sustainable social, political and economic development and renewal in Africa in a context where ongoing globalisation in higher education has put on the agenda issues of increased cross border provision, new modes and technologies of provision, new types of providers and qualifications, and new trade imperatives driving education. Higher education in Africa has to respond to these challenges in a global environment characterised by increasing differences in wealth, social well-being, educational opportunity and resources between rich and poor countries and where it is often asserted that 'sharing knowledge, international co-operation and new technologies can offer new opportunities to reduce this gap ("Preamble to World Declaration on Higher Education for the 21st Century," 1998, p. 19).

We participants in this workshop on the Implications of WTO/GATS for Higher Education in Africa assembled in Accra, Ghana from 27-29 April 2004: