

Academics, librarians, and some administrators think they have found a way around the increasingly expensive and monopolistic journal system—bypassing them altogether.

PROBLEMS

There are several problems with open access. Essentially, peer review is eliminated and all knowledge becomes equal. The current outlook implies “let the buyer beware,” but most customers lack the expertise to make good choices. There is no quality control on the Internet, from a Wikipedia article to an essay by a distinguished researcher. In a strange way, open access may benefit those already at the top of the knowledge system. A Harvard open access Web site is likely to attract readers simply because of its world-class name. A less well-known institution in a developing country, for example, would likely gain less attention, not to mention a posting by a little-known scholar at a peripheral institution. While the traditional jour-

The academic accountability movement has strengthened the traditional journal system.

nals also tend to privilege scholars working at top institutions, at least the peer-review system gave some chance for publication in recognized journals. Essentially, open access means there is no objective way of measuring the quality of research without each individual evaluating it. If the traditional journals and their peer-review systems are no longer operating, there is anarchy in the evaluation of scholarship. Counting the number of times an article is accessed is possible, but it is quite likely that the randomness of a Google search will skew such evaluations. Researchers will have no accurate way of assessing quality in scholarly publication.

A WAY FORWARD?

The old practice may well be the best, although flawed, way of communicating research. Scholarly journals owned by academic societies or universities or other nonprofit publishers provide a filter and peer review. The more innovative nonprofit publishers, such as the Johns Hopkins University Press and its Project MUSE, creatively used the Internet for distribution. Prices were not exorbitant. The recent decision by the American Anthropological Association to lease their journals to a for-profit publisher, which has already raised prices, seems like a move in a negative direction. Without question, the proliferation of knowledge and the increasing complexity of dissemination through the Internet has created unprecedented strains on the knowledge communication system. Open access, while it seems like an easy panacea, has problems that deserve careful consideration.

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Teaching in English on the Rise in European Education

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The latest UNESCO data cited 2.7 million international students worldwide in 2005, up from 1.8 million in 2000 and 600,000 in 1975. The figures are expected to rise fast in the coming years. While a fierce competition has set in over these students, non-English-speaking destinations are often seen as disadvantaged in this sector. The linguistic handicap is one of the reasons why continental European countries started, some 10 years ago, to introduce instruction in English. In 2002, the Academic Cooperation Association, a Brussels-based European association specialized in the internationalization of higher education, produced the first ever empirical study on this phenomenon. Six years later the organization has now come out with a follow-up study (Bernd Wächter and Friedhelm Maiworm. *English-Taught Programmes in European Higher Education: The Picture in 2007*. Bonn: Lemmens, 2008). This article presents the key findings from the original publication.

STRONG GROWTH, UNEVEN DISTRIBUTION

The study is based on surveys of 2,200 higher education institutions in 27 European countries where English is not the domestic language of instruction. It identified about 2,400 English-medium programs in the 38 percent of responding institutions. This finding translates into a threefold increase since the 2002 surveys. Despite this, the English-medium offer still represents only a modest share of the average European program provision.

It is important to note that English-medium provision unevenly extends across Europe. Nearly one-third of all identified programs are offered by institutions in the Netherlands, the uncontested European leader in this form of education. Germany, the second provider in absolute numbers, occupies only a modest middle-rank position. The Nordic countries all score at high levels. Higher education institutions in southern Europe, on the other hand, offer very few programs in English. In institutional terms, it is the PhD-awarding, multidisciplinary (comprehensive) universities with large enrollments rather than the smaller, college-type institutions that offer most English-medium programs. Interestingly, there is no clear correlation between the number of these programs and the number of international students at an institution. Institutions with a modest proportion of international students—above all in countries with languages less often spoken, internationally—appear to use English-medium programs as a means of “countersteering.” They introduce these

programs *because* they cannot attract sufficient numbers of students with provision delivered in the domestic language.

FOCUS ON POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

English-medium education is very predominantly offered at the master's level, with a share of almost four-fifths of all programs. In some countries, such as Germany, Sweden, and Switzerland, the postgraduate share even exceeds 90 percent. Since 2002, when the postgraduate proportion stood at 68 percent, the trend toward the second cycle has thus been further strengthened.

English-medium education in Europe is still an early-stage phenomenon since a fast growth rate is under way.

Across Europe, the subject area in which English-taught programs are most frequently offered is engineering and technology (27 percent), followed by business and management studies (24 percent) and the social sciences (21 percent). Together, these three subject area groups make up 72 percent of the total program offer. The subject-area distribution has changed remarkably since 2002, when business and management led the second-ranked subject area, engineering, by more than double, and the social sciences were only in fourth place.

English-medium education in Europe is still an early-stage phenomenon since a fast growth rate is under way. The majority of the programs identified (51%) were created in the four years prior to the surveys. More than a quarter even came into being in the last two years. Only about one-fifth of all programs were set up before 2000.

Students enrolled in English-taught programs are, in the majority, foreigners in their country of study. Their share is almost two-thirds (65%), up from 60 percent in the 2002 surveys. Domestic students, with an overall share of 35 percent, tend to concentrate in bachelor's programs, where they make up more than half of all students. The largest group of international students is made up of Europeans (36%), closely followed by Asians (34%). The largest single nationality group across Europe consists of Chinese, with close to 10 percent, but the regional origin of students differs considerably between receiving countries.

More than two-thirds of all programs (70%) charge tuition fees, a level considerably up from 2002. Only northern Europe (Finland, Sweden, and Norway) is still almost "fee free." On a European average, the annual fee for domestic students and those from European Union countries is about 3,400 euros. The fee for international students from outside the EU is roughly 6,300 euros. Programs in Denmark were most expensive, at 11,000 euros on average.

THE LANGUAGE DEBATE: NORMALCY, AT LAST

Especially in the early years, provision of education in English led to a heated—not to say, ideological—debate. Critics of English-medium teaching and learning maintained that this approach would inevitably lead to a loss of quality, due to the deficiencies in the command of English among both the teachers and the students. The new trend is also seen as a threat that will ultimately lead to the extinction of many a small language as a medium of scientific expression. Defenders admitted that while problems existed, they were not nearly as serious as the critics believed.

The findings of the 2002 surveys already seemed to support the defenders—as does the present study, even more clearly. Only 16 percent of respondents identified an insufficient command of English among international students. And only 9 percent found the mastery of English among domestic students inadequate. Perhaps surprisingly, the most frequently stated linguistic problem concerns the (lack of) mastery of the domestic language by international students. While the problem has not changed, Europe's higher education institutions have become accustomed to the communication situation in the international classroom. What once created frustrations is today viewed as a normal condition. ■

The Humanities and Social Sciences in Asia: Endangered Species?

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Most observers agree that the humanities and social sciences—the soft sciences—are an integral part of any university, indeed that a real university must have strength in these areas. These disciplines are important in their own right, and are a central core for any general education program. The humanities and to a lesser extent the social sciences are in crisis in many East Asian universities. Few students are choosing to focus their studies on the humanities—fields such as philosophy, history, and cultural studies. Linguistics and language studies, other than practical English programs, are also in decline. The social sciences, particularly such disciplines as economics and a few others that relate to management or policy studies, fare somewhat better. A conference held recently at Harvard University and sponsored by the Harvard-Yenching Institute brought together leaders of key East Asian universi-