

Interestingly, the ranking is dominated by countries that charge international students high tuition fees—including the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia.

The issue of international student fees in France sparked acute debate at least in part because of the origin of its students. Nearly half of the international students studying in France come from Africa, a heritage from France's colonial past. Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Senegal, and Cameroon are in the top 10 countries of origin. It is very unlikely that these students can afford more than US\$12,500 of tuition fees. Actually, in the present circumstances—i.e., with very low tuition—82 percent of international students in France declared in a survey that studying in France constitutes a financial strain for them and their families. In these conditions, it is impossible to contemplate such an increase in tuition fee without considering the consequences for these students who want and need to get access to a good higher education system. Additionally, the question of the public good needs to be raised, as France is currently helping countries that are in less fortunate economic conditions, by providing them with the skilled labor that is essential in today's economy.

This question was under scrutiny in France during the first half of 2015, as a report by France Stratégie—a think tank working for the prime minister—suggested the introduction of international tuition fees.

From France's point of view, however, the trade-off is in the quantity and diversity of international students in the system. There is no question that an increase in international tuition fees would have an impact on the number of mobile students coming to France. The 2015 report forecasts a 40 percent decrease, a number that will be hard to gain back. Replacing the international students that will be put off by tuition fees would indeed be extremely difficult, as France does not have the capacity to attract the students that can and are ready to pay—especially when one considers the language barrier and the competition of the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia among others.

Last but not least, this question needs to be properly examined economically. In 2014, economic benefits from the presence of international students in France were estimated at nearly US\$5 billion with a positive balance of US\$1.6 billion once the cost of tuition was removed. This

far exceeds the US\$930 million the 2015 report estimates would be saved from moving to full cost tuition fees. The economic benefits of having international students participate in the economy might very well be worth the investment in their education.

CONCLUSION

In July 2015, the French government put an end to the debate about international tuition fees by stating that international students will continue to pay the same tuition fees as domestic and European ones. But the debate itself opened the door to the possibility of establishing higher tuition fees for international students in the future. Finland, for instance, resisted the trend for a few years but is now set to introduce such fees in September 2016. When the debate resurfaces, France will once again need to consider the role of international students in the system, but also its role as a developed nation in educating foreign students. Therefore, the debate should not stop at mere economic arguments, but also focus on the diversity in the system, the global and national public good, and even foreign affairs. ■

UK Teaching Quality Under the Microscope: What are the Drivers?

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The UK higher education system is typically rated highly in relation to the quality of teaching, according to different metrics. In the 2015 national *Guardian* league table, for example, student satisfaction with teaching across 119 institutions responding to the survey ranged from 77.6 percent to 93.3 percent, while in the most recent National Student Survey (2015), the range of overall student satisfaction across 156 responding institutions was between 74 percent and 98 percent. National performance indicators also demonstrate that the United Kingdom (overall) is facilitating access to higher education for under-represented groups, is focusing on supporting student progression and educational attainment, and has strong success in the employment of its graduates.

For decades the United Kingdom has had strong external quality review mechanisms that focus on teaching, learning, assessment, and curriculum design—at program level through professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies—and at institutional level through the Quality Assurance Agency. Internal and external quality assurance is supported by a comprehensive “UK Quality Code for Higher Education.” In addition, the United Kingdom is a pioneer in developing a “National Professional Standards Framework” (UKPSF) for teaching, learning, and assessment in higher education. Individuals who complete programs accredited against the UKPSF can become “Fellows” of the national Higher Education Academy, the United Kingdom’s national agency for quality enhancement. There are now more than 60,000 HEA Fellows, including a number from overseas.

NEW INITIATIVES ON “TEACHING EXCELLENCE” IN ENGLAND

Nonetheless, three significant initiatives are underway to focus even more attention on the quality of teaching and learning, and its assessment and measurement. These include: the Funding Bodies Quality Assessment Review (2014–2015) which proposed a fundamental shake-up of internal and external approaches to quality assessment; a “Teaching Excellence Framework” announced by the new Minister in London and outlined in a “Green Paper” published on 6.11.15; and a Parliamentary Inquiry just beginning into both these proposals and their potential impact on the system. These developments are producing a torrent of debate in the UK, while doubtless prompting quizzical looks from observers abroad. So what are the drivers?

There is certainly no obvious “burning platform” in relation to teaching quality in the United Kingdom, rather the reverse. All institutions are focusing ever more attention on teaching, learning, and the quality of students’ educational experiences. While precise drivers of change are difficult to capture in a fluid political context, three sets of national drivers offer a possible rationale for UK developments. Some have wider international resonance.

A POLITICAL PERSPECTIVE

The first driver is political, focused on England. For the last decade, and under governments of different political persuasions, English higher education has been deregulated, with new private providers gaining degree-awarding powers, university title and access to student loan funding. Tuition fees have been introduced and raised, with OECD statistics highlighting the shift from largely public to increasingly private funding of the system, particularly in relation to non-STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths’) subjects. At the same time, research funding has been concentrated in fewer institutions; and ring-fenced at

a time of cuts in the teaching budget. Conservative Ministers in the last and present governments have raised two sets of concerns about what may be happening in higher education (as a consequence of these government policies). The first concern is about value-for-money linked to the new fees and fee-levels; fees are paid up-front by government and re-paid later by graduates. The second is about the priority and prestige linked to research, potentially at the expense of teaching, particularly when viewed against the incentives driving the Research Excellence Framework. The new higher education Minister in England has announced that a “Teaching Excellence Framework” should rebalance research and teaching priorities and incentives.

AN ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE

The second driver is economic, still with a focus on England but with wider resonance. The new government, elected in May 2015, has pledged to continue the austerity policy begun in response to the global economic crisis of 2007–2008. Changes in funding described above are part of this context, with more radical cuts likely soon. To achieve deeper cuts and to meet other policy objectives including further marketization, the government is seeking to change the regulatory architecture of the system in potentially radical ways. Alternative providers have been lobbying hard both for access to student loans and for a “level-playing field” in relation to regulation. On the other hand, “traditional” universities have lobbied for a reduction in external scrutiny, on the grounds of cost, burden, and proven quality, favoring a move to a “risk-based” quality assurance system. Within the scope of the funding bodies’ review of quality assessment, the US regional accreditation system and the new Australian risk-based quality standards have been closely examined as potential models for the United Kingdom.

A SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE

The third driver offers a social perspective in a UK-wide context, but with wider international resonance. The UK higher education system is now a diverse, mass system with steadily increasing levels of participation. However, while progress is being made and monitored nationally, it is not yet an equal system in retention, progression, and success for all students or in terms of social mobility. Disadvantaged students include those from lower socioeconomic groups, black and minority ethnic students and students with disabilities. As more data on these target groups of students are collected and analysed, the cross-institutional picture becomes clearer; it is also possible to identify institutions that are using data systematically to improve student outcomes and those that are not. A wider use of metrics to assess quality and teaching excellence is proposed in all the

current reviews.

There are of course other drivers of importance to institutions and government such as promoting innovation in teaching and sustaining international competitiveness in recruiting international students. However, the political, economic, and social drivers outlined are those in the forefront of debate. Unsurprisingly, there are strong echoes of these issues in other countries, including the extensive critiques and debates surrounding US accreditation. ■

Higher Education in Kosovo: A Prolonged Transition

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Together with the Kosovar society, Kosovo's higher education system has been going through a long process of transition: it has evolved from a completely destroyed and deeply politicized system in the late nineties, to a system striving to provide quality teaching to its students and to integrate into the European Higher Education Area.

Kosovo's population of 1.8 million is one of the youngest in Europe, with 45 percent under 25 years of age and more than a quarter not yet 15. According to 2011 census data, 6.72 percent of Kosovo's population holds a tertiary qualification, comparably lower than in other Western Balkan countries, where the share ranges from 8 to 14 percent. Fifteen years after the war of 1999, Kosovo's higher education system has increased student access to academic services from 12 to 55 students per 1,000 inhabitants between 2005 and 2014. The period also saw a significant structural transformation in the higher education landscape.

UNPLANNED EXPANSION AND STRUCTURAL CHANGES

The number of public universities rose from only one, the University of Pristina (UP, established 1970), with 27,000 students in 2007, to six universities with instruction in Albanian language (established between 2010–2013) and one with instruction in Serbian in (established in 2000), altogether catering to over 75,000 students in 2014. Meanwhile, the private higher education sector ballooned. Between 2004 and 2014, the number of private institutions

(called "colleges" or "higher schools"), licensed and accredited by the authorities, rose from two to twenty-five. The private higher education sector provides services to roughly one third of the total student population in Kosovo, mainly at bachelor and master levels, and numbers continue to increase.

THE IMPACT OF SYSTEM EXPANSION AND INCREASED PARTICIPATION

Scarce statistical data from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and the Kosovo Agency of Statistics on student enrollment and graduation at UP for the period 2008–2013, show a rapid increase in student numbers. This increased participation appears to have had a devastating effect on the quality of education and on student performance, since the overall number of graduates has only decreased, both in real and relative terms. In the academic year 2008–2009, 5,161 students graduated, or about two thirds of around 7,000 students who had registered at UP in 2005. In the same year, 2008–2009, the UP admitted 10,007 new students. Three years later, in 2011, 4,496, or only 44 percent of those enrolled, graduated to join the labor market. Consequently, the intake increased by more than 40 percent over the three years (2005–2008), whereas the output instead of increasing, was reduced in nominal terms by around 10 percent. Data indicate that there has been a drastic fall of system performance—expressed in significantly increased attrition and decreased graduation rates—as a result of uncontrollably increased participation and the same trends continues to this day.

An almost threefold increase in student numbers between 2008 and 2013 in the public sector was not accompanied by a similar increase in government funding (less than 40 percent); teaching staff numbers (less than 30 percent); or new infrastructure. Public universities in Kosovo spend annually between €300 and 500 per student, in average 3 times less than in other countries in the Western Balkan countries and 15 times less than in OECD countries. Until June 2014, students in public universities paid a low annual tuition fee of €100 (US\$130). In an effort to gain political support during the national election campaign of 2014, the government curtailed these fees by 50 percent. As a result, transfer and administration costs to collect these fees exceeded the value of the income collected. The expansion of the system was not followed by more resources. Instead, existing resources were redistributed across a dramatically expanded sector, with the teaching staff and funds of UP allocated to more public institutions. It is only sensible to assume that this situation has negatively affected teaching quality and student learning.