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Structure of keynote:

Higher Education in the 21st Century, Challenges and Potentials

Introduction

- congratulations to EURASHE on its tenth anniversary;
- reiteration of the importance of this sector of education (non-university higher education): 1) in national systems; 2) in European programmes

Challenges to and Potential of Higher Education in general

a. Familiar challenges

- how to make HE as a whole more responsive to its increasing range of stakeholders: HE institutions as service-providers, not just knowledge-producers; more intensive interaction with economic and societal environment; continuing need for diversified HE systems; implications for the policy of institutions;
- how to defend the university as an institution with a high degree of autonomy, nurturing individual and critical thinking and creativity;
- how to reconcile mass HE with the legitimate social need for meritocratic elites;
- how to come to terms with diminishing public resources and to diversify sources of income; reconciling the right to free or highly subsidised HE as a constitutional right on the one hand with the charging of tuition fees (since HE provides generally enhanced professional opportunities) on the other;
- how to demonstrate value for money, positive cost-benefit ratio; quality assurance, benchmarking; keeping academics motivated despite the business rhetoric;
- how to internationalise the institution

b. Newer and potentially more 'existential' challenges

- the apocalyptic undertones of recent debate: 'can the university survive...?'; three key and perhaps existential challenges to HE as we traditionally know it: lifelong learning; information and communication technology; globalisation;
- **lifelong learning** (LLL): the changing economic, social and demographic conditions which have given the concept a new sense of urgency; recent policy statements in the EU (Lisbon summit) and G8 contexts; need for interlinkage between the various educational sectors and between education and training; specific implications of LLL for HE institutions (diversifying access, outreach, credit for experiential learning; more varied and flexible courses, responding to a greater diversity of needs; fading distinction between initial and continuing training; credit accumulation, modular courses; increased emphasis on project approach, problem-solving, interdisciplinarity, creativity and entrepreneurship; increasing importance of guidance and counselling; implications for institutional management; implications for governing bodies and those responsible for the legal, administrative and budgetary framework within which institutions operate);
- **information and communication technology** (ICT): shortfall in digitally qualified human resources in Europe; the e-Europe and e-Learning initiatives as the EU's response; implications of ICT for HE institutions (ICT as subject of teaching and as teaching tool; changing relationship between teacher and learner; provision of HE at dispersed locations; course delivery via ICT modes such as cable TV, satellite, interactive video, Internet etc.; new forms of accreditation

and assessment; consumer protection; implications for institutional management; competition between HE institutions and other providers: cutthroat competition or division of labour? - possible scenarios);

- **globalisation**: distinction between globalisation and internationalisation; increasing competition among HE providers world-wide; franchising and the rise of transnational provision; quality assurance, accreditation and consumer protection; the challenge to university research from global R&D enterprises; possible scenarios for a division of labour between HE institutions and other providers; ways in which prior internationalisation / europeanisation may help HE institutions to survive in the global HE market place

The international dimension of Higher Education: Points of emphasis in recent European debate

- role of HE in preparing citizens for life in a multicultural society;
- internationalisation as a means of enhancing curricular quality;
- European dimension in quality assurance of HE institutions;
- internationalisation and globalisation, international competition in the provision of educational services, attractiveness of countries / institutions for foreign students; hope that increasing emphasis will be placed on HE's role in recognising and fulfilling global responsibilities (sustainable development, environmental protection etc.);
- transnational provision of educational services, and the concomitant challenges for new international forms of accreditation;
- improving articulation between EU programmes and national programmes;
- integrating physical and virtual mobility in a new framework for internationalising the institution;
- dismantling the barriers to the European HE area;
- reconciling the EC Treaty's abstinence with the push for greater 'coherence' coming from national governments (and industry?): the Sorbonne/Bologna process;
- maximising the efficiency of the international dimension of institutions;
- reconciling the need for greater central institutional anchoring of exchange and cooperation on the one hand, with the need to ensure continuing motivation of departments and individual academics for European/international cooperation;

Challenges and opportunities for the non-university sector

- in the light of the analysis above, the non-university sector comparatively well placed to meet the challenges identified:
- in *cost-benefit* terms, the sector seems attractive: short duration courses, low drop-out rates;
- challenge of becoming more *responsive to society* and cooperating more closely with other social 'players': the non-university sector typically regards interactivity with the community as part of its specific vocation. The generally smaller size of institutions should make them less bureaucratic and more flexibly than universities;
- *lifelong learning*: the non-university sector is typically more open than universities to modular approaches, the provision of non-degree courses, credit accumulation and transfer, and crediting experiential learning;
- *information technology*: non-university sector institutions often offer computer science as a subject, and many such institutions focus on the application of new technologies to other fields;
- the new information and communications technologies open up new and enhanced *internationalisation* opportunities for the non-university sector, which has normally been characterised by institutions which are often regional or local in orientation;
- hope that in the future, the non-university sector will become more heavily involved in *contributing to sustainable development* and in helping to meet global challenges such as environmental protection and healthcare, as there is a strong need for the more application-oriented types of higher education in the developing world;
- challenges and potential within the *EU programmes* themselves: despite considerable growth, there is still much room for the non-university sector to exploit fully its potential for European cooperation. Research has shown that this sector should invest more effort in *strategic planning* for European cooperation and in *diversifying cooperation* beyond student mobility, this still being very prominent as the non-university sector's preferred means of engaging with partners elsewhere in Europe;

- the sector will only be able to derive maximum advantage from and contribute most effectively to European (and international) cooperation, if the necessary *internal and external conditions* are created and maintained.

The second phase of SOCRATES as a means for the non-university sector to fulful its potential for European cooperation

- the advantageous characteristics of the non-university sector identified above are reflected in the new opportunities opened up for the institutions in this sector under the second phase of the programme; lifelong learning approach of the programme as a whole, and non-university institutions well positioned to benefit from it;
- continuing and improved opportunities within Erasmus;
- but the sector should look at all the opportunities offered by SOCRATES, also under the Actions other than Erasmus:
- Comenius 1: opportunities to be associated with school projects, and in particular the new School Development Projects with their emphasis on outreach into the local community;
- Comenius 2: teacher training activities of all kinds, and activities in the area of intercultural education and catering for the needs of target groups such as immigrants;
- Lingua: for example, networking local resource centres for language learning;
- Minerva: various opportunities related to the new technologies;
- Grundtvig: probably most important Action of all to the non-university sector, as it provides great opportunities for short-cycle HE institutions that straddle the divide between vocational / further / higher education and which have (therefore) not been well catered for in the past; even more opportunities in the future: not just the European cooperation projects as hitherto, but also the new Learning Partnerships and individual training activities, as well as the Grundtvig Networks

Concluding remarks

- belief in the increasing importance of adult education / other educational pathways / lifelong learning, has led me to opt for working in this field in the period ahead;
- hope that in this new capacity, I shall have many opportunities of working closely with the 'Eurashe' sector of higher education;
- best wishes to the association for its second decade.