4

Higher Education

Countries have shared the very rapid expansion of higher or tertiary education, which means that instead of this being an experience enjoyed by a privileged minority, it has now become even the majority experience of each new cohort. There are broad trends visible across the OECD – for instance, the growing international tertiary education market and the greater formalisation of quality assurance. Despite rising costs for the individual, tertiary education remains a primarily public enterprise in most countries. There has been prominent OECD work on higher education, including on internationalisation, a major review of tertiary education, the regional role of higher education institutions (HEIs), the future of higher education, and feasibility work on the Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO). "Supporting Quality Teaching in Higher Education" *has identified long-term improvement factors for teaching staff, decision-making bodies and institutions. Work on the transition opportunities of young adults with disabilities into tertiary education and employment has showed the progress made in recent years and identified areas for further progress. Policy orientations include the need to develop and work towards strategic visions, to ensure that quality assurance serves both improvement and accountability purposes, and to use cost sharing between the state and students as the principle to shape the sector's funding.*

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.

INTRODUCTION

Countries share the very rapid expansion of higher or tertiary education, which means that instead of this being an experience enjoyed by a privileged minority, it has now become even the majority experience of each new cohort. There are other broad trends visible across the OECD – for instance, the growing international tertiary education market and the greater formalisation of quality assurance. A major review of tertiary education was completed in 2008 and published in two volumes. The feasibility study for the international Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO) is assessing learning outcomes internationally. Work on "Supporting Quality Teaching in Higher Education" highlights effective quality initiatives, promotes reflection and has identified long-term improvement factors for teaching staff, decision-making bodies and institutions. Reviews of higher education in regions and cities are showing the benefits of stronger interaction and engagement between institutions and local actors to reinforce social and economic development.

There has been long-running work on internationalisation of higher education at the OECD, including statistical development and analysis, policy evaluation, and the formulation of the OECD/UNESCO *Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education*. Work on "University Futures" has identified scenarios for the future, and examined trends on globalisation, demography and technology in higher education. *Pathways for Disabled Students to Tertiary Education and Employment* investigated the progress made in recent years while identifying further areas of work to encourage transitions into tertiary education and employment for all students.

Policy orientations emerging from this large body of analysis include the need to develop and work towards strategic visions, to ensure that quality assurance serves both improvement and accountability purposes, and to use cost-sharing between the state and students as the principle to shape the sector's funding.

KEY FINDINGS

Many more young adults are now in education – mostly tertiary education – compared with 15 years ago, accounting for a more than a quarter of 20-29 year-olds: In 2010 on average 27% of young adults aged 20-29 in OECD countries were enrolled in education, most of whom were in tertiary education, with 30% or more in Australia, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Korea, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Slovenia and Sweden. In contrast, only Denmark had 30% of 20-29 year-olds enrolled in education in 1995. From 1995 to 2010, enrolment rates among 20-29 year-olds increased by 10.1 percentage points across OECD countries, and doubled or more during this time in the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Korea and Turkey. Entry rates to tertiary education went up by nearly 25 percentage points across the OECD since 1995, and by 30 points or more in Australia, Austria, the Czech Republic, Iceland, Korea, Poland, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and the United States.

Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators, 2012, Indicators C1 and C3

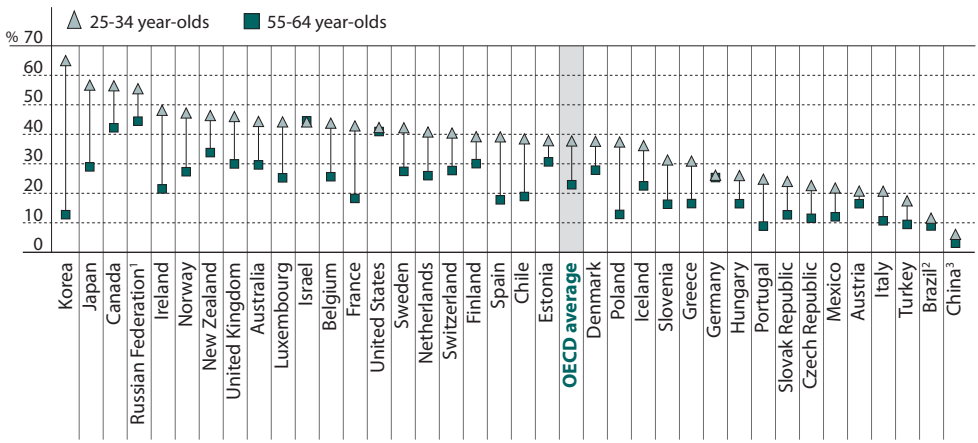
More than six out of ten young adults in OECD countries will participate in university-level education at some stage of their lives based on current patterns of entry: Participation rates in tertiary education of over 50% for a single age cohort have become the benchmark for OECD countries, with 62% for countries overall. (This refers to "net entry rates" which are calculated as the proportion in a synthetic age cohort who go into university-type education at some point in their lives based on current enrolment patterns.) For some countries such entry rates are substantially higher again: 80% or more can expect to enter university-type programmes (tertiary-type A alone) in Australia, Iceland, New Zealand, Poland and Portugal.

Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators, 2012, Indicators C3

Figure 4.1.

Younger and older working-age adults having attained tertiary education (2010)

Percentage, by age group



1. Year of reference 2002.

2. Year of reference 2009.

3. Year of reference 2000.

Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of 25-34 year-olds who have attained tertiary education.

Source: OECD (2012), *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators,* OECD Publishing. Table A1.3a. See Annex 3 for notes (*www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012*).

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932661478

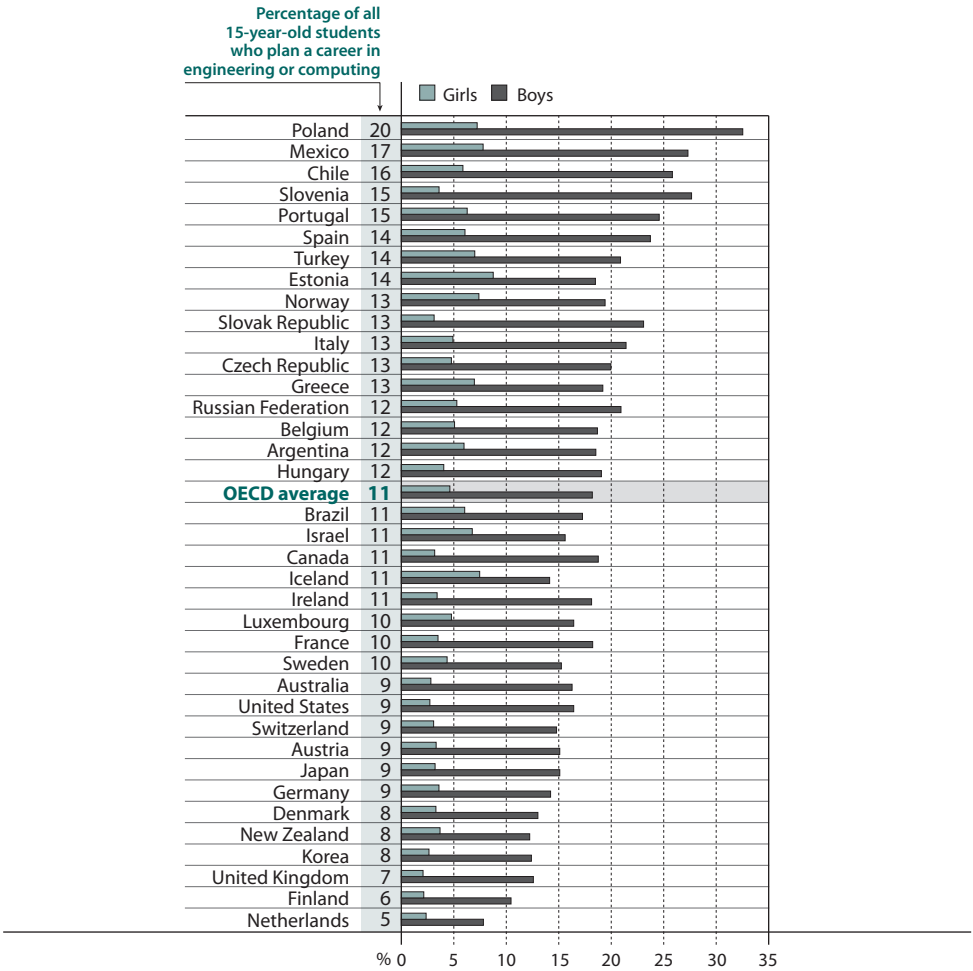
The number of people with a tertiary degree has grown rapidly in OECD countries over the past decade - and even more rapidly in the non-OECD G20 countries: In 2010, there were an estimated 66 million 25-34 year-olds with a tertiary degree in OECD countries compared with 51 million ten years earlier, an increase of approximately 30%. For non-OECD G20 countries, this increase was even more marked as in 2000 there were 39 million 25-34 year-olds with a tertiary degree compared with an estimated 64 million ten years later. If this trend continues, by 2020 the number of 25-34 year-olds from Argentina, Brazil, China, India, Indonesia,

the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia and South Africa with a higher education degree will be almost 40% higher than the number from all OECD countries put together. The strong demand for employees in "knowledge economy" fields suggests that the global labour market can continue to absorb the increased supply of highly-educated individuals.

"How Is the Global Talent Pool Changing?", Education Indicators in Focus, No. 5, 2012

Figure 4.2.

Proportion of boys and girls planning a career in engineering or computing (2010)



Countries are ranked in descending order of the percentage of all 15-year-old students who plan a career in engineering or computing (including architecture).

Source: OECD, *PISA 2006 Database.* OECD (2012), *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators,* OECD Publishing. Table A4.2. See Annex 3 for notes (*www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012*).

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932661763

A third of today's young students are planning a science-related career and just over one in ten in engineering and computing: PISA 2009 shows that a third of 15-year-old students across OECD countries expect to work in a science-related career as young adults, with hardly any difference between girls and boys. For those students planning a career in computing and engineering, an average of 11.3% of 15-year-olds across OECD countries, there are considerable gender differences – fewer than 5% of girls but 18% of boys expect to be working in engineering and computing, and this despite that girls in many countries have caught up with or even surpassed boys in science proficiency. Even among the top-performing girls in science few expect to enter engineering and computing.

Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators, 2012, Indicator A4

Though still a small minority across OECD countries, the number of doctoral graduates has grown considerably in the past decade with an average growth of 5% per year: Doctoral graduates obtain the highest level of formal education, and are typically trained as researchers. As such, they are important to creating and diffusing knowledge in society. In 2010, on average across OECD countries, an estimated 1.6% of young people graduated from advanced research programmes, compared to 1.0% in 2000. This increase in the past decade represents an annual growth rate of 5%. At this level, the graduation rate for women (1.5%) is lower than that of men (1.7%). Some countries promote doctoral education, particularly for international students: in Germany and Switzerland, graduation from doctoral programmes is high compared with the OECD average, at more than 2.5% of young people.

Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators, 2012, Indicator A3

Nearly a third of university students fail to graduate and such "dropout" is higher still in non-university tertiary programmes: On average across the 23 OECD countries for which data are available, some 30% of university (tertiary-type A) students fail to successfully complete the programmes they undertake. Completion rates differ widely. The countries where over three-quarters of university students complete the programme are Australia (80%), Denmark (82%), Japan (93%), Korea (84%), followed by Portugal (86%), Spain (79%), the United Kingdom (81%) and partner country the Russian Federation (80%). In contrast, in Mexico, New Zealand, Sweden and the United States less than six in ten of those who enter go on to complete (though for Sweden it includes those enrolled in single courses who do not intend to do the full programme). The non-completion rate in vocational, non-university programmes stands even higher than in university-type programmes at 38%, and is highest in New Zealand and the United States at around two-thirds, and in Portugal at over 80%.

Education at a Glance 2010: OECD Indicators, 2010, Indicator A4

Nearly a quarter of educational expenditure is for tertiary education, accounting for 2% or more of GDP in some countries: Tertiary education accounts for nearly a quarter of expenditure on educational institutions on average in OECD countries, or 1.6% of GDP. Differences in the size of systems, pathways available to students, programme durations, and the organisation of teaching, mean that there are large differences between countries in

the levels which they spend on higher education. For instance, Canada, Chile, Korea and the United States spend between 2.4% and 2.6% of their GDP on tertiary institutions, while some countries devote less than 1% of GDP to tertiary education, the Slovak Republic (0.9%) and partner countries Brazil (0.8%), Indonesia (0.7%) and South Africa (0.6%).

Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators, 2012, Indicator B2

Tertiary education is still predominantly a public enterprise in the OECD area: There has been no general decline in enrolments, funding or public funding in public tertiary education in OECD countries. Except for Japan and Korea, tertiary education is still predominantly a public enterprise: the private for profit sector is still marginal in the large majority of countries, and even more so for advanced research programmes. At the time of writing, tertiary education institutions had not faced a major decline in public funding either; instead, their budgets have increased over recent years, in most cases per student as well as in total. Students and their households have nevertheless felt serious changes as they contribute more to the expenditures of tertiary education institutions than they used to. In most countries, however, tertiary education is still significantly publicly subsidised.

Higher Education to 2030, Volume 2, Globalisation, 2009, Chapter 9

In the past decade, private funding for tertiary education increased by more than 7 percentage points across OECD countries, and by 10 percentage points or more in some: Across the 25 OECD countries with comparable data, the proportion of private funding for tertiary education increased from nearly 23% to 30% in the decade up to 2009. An increase in the proportion of private funding for tertiary education was seen in 18 out of the 25 countries, and it grew by as much as 20% or more in some countries (Portugal, the Slovak Republic and the United Kingdom). Only Canada, Iceland, Korea, Poland, and the United States experienced a decline in this over the decade.

Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators, 2012, Indicator B3

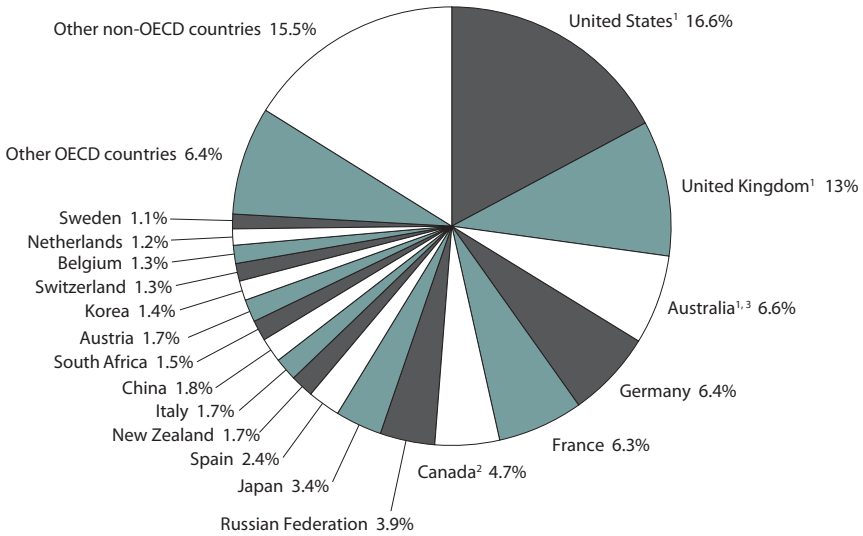
There has been more than a fivefold increase in foreign students since the mid-1970s, highly concentrated in a small number of destination countries: In the 1990s, there was a sharp increase in the international mobility of students and teachers, educational programmes and higher education institutions which has continued since. The number of foreign students stood at around 0.8 million worldwide in 1975 and had risen to an estimated 4.1 million by 2010. Foreign students are highly concentrated in a few countries as almost half go to the top five destination countries (the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Australia), with another 14% accounted by the next four (Canada [5%], Japan [3%], the Russian Federation [4%] and Spain [2%]). Foreign students make up around 15% or more of the tertiary student body in Australia (21.2%), Austria (15.4%), Luxembourg (41.4%), New Zealand (14.2%), Switzerland (15.4%) and the United Kingdom (16.0%). Nevertheless, the fastest growing destination regions are Latin America and the Caribbean, Oceania and Asia, mirroring university internationalisation in a growing set of countries.

Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators, 2012, Indicator C4

Figure 4.3.

Distribution of foreign students in tertiary education, by country of destination (2010)

Percentage of foreign tertiary students reported to the OECD who are enrolled in each country of destination



1. Data relate to international students defined on the basis of their country of residence.
2. Year of reference 2009.
3. Student stocks are derived from different sources; therefore, results should be interpreted with some caution.

Source: OECD (2012), *Education at a Glance 2012: OECD Indicators*, OECD Publishing and UNESCO Institute for Statistics for most data on non-OECD destinations. Tables C4.4 and C4.7, available on line. See Annex 3 for notes (*www.oecd.org/edu/eag2012*).

StatLink http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888932663188

Despite the major demographic changes taking place in OECD countries, the evolution of the academic workforce is not primarily a reflection of wider demographic trends: The age pyramid of academic staff reflects less the ageing of populations in general and more of an employment system in higher education whose hallmark is permanence with efforts to maintain relatively fixed student teacher ratios. Similarly, the changing composition of academic staff reflects less general demographic developments and more the diversification of the profession, and the restructuring of relationships between academics and their institutions.

Higher Education to 2030, Volume 1, Demography, 2008, Chapters 3 and 4

Higher education institutions face four main challenges in managing internationalisation:

- **Cultural understanding:** Teaching and learning within different contexts and conditions can pose major challenges of cultural understanding, though differences can be advantageous if forward-looking and accurate management strategies are adopted.

- **The management of internationalisation:** Internationalisation is one of the significant components of higher education management today, and may well become still more in the near future. HE institutions need a specific strategy on internationalisation as well as up-to-date management. Internationalisation affects research, teaching, and social responsibility, all of which fall within the realm of higher education management and may need well-defined strategies to meet the challenges posed by internationalisation.
- **Regulative frameworks:** There may be contractual and legal obstacles between institutions and between countries that make collaboration difficult, e.g. regarding intellectual property and the ethics of research, or the quality standards of HE institutional operations. Despite the international networks of associations and institutions dealing with internationalisation, up to now it has progressed primarilty through institutions' individual initiatives, needs and interests.
- **Funding**: Internationalising higher education is not cost-free, and countries and institutions are not on an equal footing regarding the funding available for internationalisation. Institutions might be purely tuition-driven, others motivated by priorities set by government, or wanting to attract the best and the brightest. Funding should reflect both government and institutional needs to strike a balance between competition and cooperation.

📖 *IMHE Focus: Approaches to Internationalisation and their Implications for Strategic Management and Institutional Practice,* 2012

The OECD/UNESCO *Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education* emphasise six objectives: 1) the inclusion of cross-border higher education in the regulatory frameworks of countries, 2) the coverage of all forms of cross-border higher education, 3) student and customer protection, 4) transparency in procedures, 5) information access and dissemination, 6) collaboration. A recent survey of compliance with the *Guidelines* among OECD countries and some non-members found:

- **Four of the six objectives tend to be met.** Countries have regulatory frameworks or arrangements in place, cover different forms of cross-border higher education comprehensively, are transparent in their procedures, and are engaged in national and international collaboration. The main compliance weaknesses regard easy access to information and the level of student and customer protection.
- **OECD countries conform to 72% of the main recommendations made to governments, tertiary education institutions, and quality assurance and accreditation agencies.** The level of compliance decreases to 67% when recommendations to student bodies are included, but the level of missing information also increases significantly.
- **Tertiary education institutions are the stakeholders that most follow the *Guidelines* recommendations with an average compliance of 80%.** Governments and quality assurance and accreditation bodies comply on average with 76% and 61% of the

Guidelines, respectively. Student bodies only conform to 51% of the recommendations – with the caveat that information about their activities is scant in the survey responses.

📖 "Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education: Where Do We Stand?", *OECD Working Papers,* No. 70, 2012

Inclusive policies have increased access to tertiary education for students with disabilities, but with transition still a concern: More flexible learning environments that can be adapted to the diversity of educational needs, the reduction of dropout rates, and quality assurance policies have all helped to increase the number of students with disabilities aspiring to tertiary education. This positive trend is also a direct result of the strategies adopted by upper secondary schools and tertiary education institutions to build pathways to tertiary education and prepare upper secondary school students to cope with the demands of the transition to adulthood. Despite the progress made, young adults with disabilities generally have a more difficult transition to tertiary education than other young adults. Those students with a sensory, motor or mental impairment or psychological problems face particular challenges.

📖 *Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in Tertiary Education and Employment,* 2011, Chapters 1-4

POLICY DIRECTIONS

While recognising differences of culture and approach in national tertiary education systems, there are a number of common main elements that underpin sound planning and policy making:

- **Develop and articulate a vision for tertiary education:** Countries should as a priority develop a comprehensive and coherent vision for the future of tertiary education, to guide the medium- and long-term in harmony with national social and economic objectives. Ideally, it should result from a systematic review and entail a clear statement of strategic aims.
- **Establish sound instruments for steering towards and implementing that vision:** Tertiary education authorities need to develop their review and monitoring capacity for the system as a whole as opposed to the standard instruments of institutional administration. Within the overall vision, steering instruments need to establish a balance between institutional autonomy and public accountability. Allowing the play of student choice can improve quality and efficiency.
- **Strengthen the ability of institutions to align with the national tertiary education strategy:** Institutions should be encouraged to develop an outward focus, including via external representation on their governing bodies, and be required to establish strategic plans. The national policy framework should give institutions the means to manage their wider responsibilities effectively.

📖 *Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society: Volume 1,* 2008, Chapter 3

Lessons drawn from OECD review about the implementation of tertiary education reforms suggest that it should:

- **Recognise the different viewpoints of stakeholders** through iterative policy development.
- **Allow for bottom-up initiatives** to come forward as proposals by independent committees.
- **Establish ad-hoc independent committees** to initiate tertiary education reforms and involve stakeholders.
- **Use pilots and experimentation.**
- **Favour incremental reforms** over comprehensive overhauls unless there is wide public support for change.
- **Avoid reforms with concentrated costs and diffused benefits.**
- **Identify potential losers** from tertiary education reform and build in compensatory mechanisms.
- **Create conditions for and support the successful implementation of reforms.**
- **Ensure communication about the benefits of reform and the costs of inaction.**
- **Implement the full package of policy proposals.**

Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society: Volume 2, 2008, Chapter 11

Among the principles and pointers for quality assurance in tertiary education, in addition to the general requisites of building the focus on student outcomes and the capacity for quality assurance are:

- **Ensure that quality assurance serves both improvement and accountability purposes**, and more generally make sure it is consistent with the goals of tertiary education.
- **Combine internal and external mechanisms** for quality assurance.
- **Make stakeholders visible in the evaluation procedures** – students, graduates and employers.
- **Enhance the international comparability** of the quality assurance framework.

Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society: Volume 1, 2008, Chapter 5

Among the main principles guiding funding strategies in tertiary education, beyond ensuring that they promote the wider goals and societal benefit, are:

- **Use cost-sharing between the state and students as the principle to shape the sector's funding:** There is need for public subsidies to tertiary education regardless of the sector of provision, but also for charging tuition fees to students, especially if limited public funds would ration student numbers, jeopardise spending levels per student, or restrict financial support for the disadvantaged.
- **Make institutional funding to teaching formula-driven:** The criteria for the distribution of funds to institutions need to be clear, using transparent formulae which shield allocation decisions from political pressures, while tailoring incentives to shape institutional plans towards national goals.

- **Improve cost-effectiveness:** Inefficiencies should be addressed through such means as: linking funding more closely to graduation rates, reducing public subsidies for those who stay too long in their studies; eliminating some duplicated programmes; rationalising low- or declining-enrolment programmes; increasing the use of shared facilities; and expanding student mobility across institutions.
- **Back the overall funding approach with a comprehensive student support system:** A mixed system of grants and loans assists students in covering tuition and living costs, alleviating excessive hours in paid work or disproportionate reliance on family support. In many countries student support needs to be expanded and diversified.

Tertiary Education for the Knowledge Society: Volume 1, 2008, Chapter 4

The OECD in close cooperation with UNESCO published a set of international *Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-border Higher Education* in 2005 recommending actions for different stakeholders. For governments, it is recommended that they:

- Establish or encourage the establishment of a **comprehensive, fair and transparent system of registration or licensing** for cross-border higher education providers wishing to operate in their territory.
- Establish or encourage the establishment of **a comprehensive capacity for reliable quality assurance and accreditation** of cross-border higher education provision.
- **Consult and co-ordinate amongst the various competent bodies for quality assurance and accreditation,** both nationally and internationally.
- Provide accurate, reliable and easily accessible **information on the criteria and standards for registration, licensure, quality assurance and accreditation** of cross-border higher education, their consequences on the funding of students, institutions or programmes where applicable, and their voluntary or mandatory nature.
- Consider becoming party to, and contribute to, the development and/or updating of the appropriate **UNESCO regional conventions on recognition of qualifications**, and establish national information centres as stipulated by the conventions.
- Where appropriate develop or encourage **bilateral or multilateral recognition agreements**, facilitating the recognition or equivalence of each country's qualifications based on the procedures and criteria included in mutual agreements.
- Contribute to efforts to improve the accessibility at the international level of up-to-date, accurate and comprehensive **information on recognised higher education institutions/ providers.**

Recognising partial outcomes and non-formal and informal learning are ways for tertiary education to improve efficiency and equity: A considerable number of students prematurely abandon their studies or do not complete the courses they began. Recognition

of accumulated learning outcomes is one way of rationalising post-secondary education and making it less expensive. Many countries or regions use the recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes to grant course exemptions for those returning to tertiary education which may be extended to those who changed their course prior to its completion. Recognition of non-formal and informal learning outcomes can broaden the group of potential entrants and help to offset the decrease in enrolments among traditional students arriving from schooling.

Recognising Non-Formal and Informal Learning: Outcomes, Policies and Practices, 2010, Chapter 3

Government has a key role to play in joining up a wide range of policies and in creating supportive environments to promote the regional role of higher education institutions. These include to:

- **Create more "joined up" decision making** (finance, education, science and technology, and industry ministries, etc.) to co-ordinate decisions on priorities and strategies in regional development.
- **Make regional engagement and its agenda for economic, social and cultural development explicit in** higher education legislation and mission strategies.
- **Develop indicators and monitor outcomes** to assess the impact of higher education institutions on regional performance, and encourage their participation in regional governance structures.
- **Provide a supportive regulatory, tax and accountability environment** for university-enterprise co-operation: what is now active regional engagement in particularly forward-looking and entrepreneurial institutions should become more widespread across the sector.

Higher Education and Regions: Globally Competitive, Locally Engaged, 2007, Chapter 9

Beyond safeguarding high-quality pathway opportunities to tertiary education, countries need to improve transition to work opportunities: Access to tertiary education does not necessarily lead to employment. Optimising the transition to employment presupposes that the vocational education and training initiatives undertaken at secondary level to improve the employability of disabled young adults offer a real educational alternative. Tertiary education institutions need to attach the same importance to the professional future of students with disabilities as they do for other students, and they should create sufficiently deep-rooted and formalised links with the economic sphere. Active employment policies should encourage firms to recruit workers with disabilities, while admissions and support services for students with disabilities should give greater attention to access to employment and work closely with agencies that assist with job searches or find jobs for persons with disabilities.

Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in Tertiary Education and Employment, 2011, Chapters 1-5

A recent study on institution-wide quality teaching policies of higher education institutions has identified a number of routes and levers for improving the quality of teaching.

- **Raise awareness of quality teaching:** Institutions play the key role in fostering quality teaching as national regulations rarely require or prompt academics to be trained in pedagogy or to upgrade their educational competences over their professional lives.
- **Develop excellent teachers:** This requires well-designed professional development for individual teachers, but also deans, heads of programmes and other team leaders who are drivers of change. There needs to be a collaborative reflection on the quality of teaching and learning that is aligned with university values, identity and faculty expectations.
- **Engage students:** Students have enormous capacity to leverage quality provided they are given the right tools and clarity about the objectives of their engagement. Student engagement is most powerful as a driver of quality teaching when it involves dialogue, and not only information on the student's experience.
- **Build organisations for change and teaching leadership:** Institutions are complex adaptive systems with no single pathway to achieve real teaching quality improvements. Many in an institution can be change agents provided they understand the change process and are committed to raising teaching quality. Effective leadership is crucial to quality improvement and shaping the institution's quality culture.
- **Align institutional policies to foster quality teaching:** Improvements in teaching quality can be achieved more rapidly and cost-effectively if approached collectively, underpinned by well-aligned institutional policies. Five areas stand out for institutional alignment to support policy teaching: human resources; information and computing technology; learning environments; student support; and internationalisation.

📖 *Fostering Quality Teaching in Higher Education: Policies and Practices: An IMHE Guide for higher education institutions,* 2012

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