Academic Ranking and Quality Assurance in Online Education

Richard Yelland
OECD
Directorate for Education

UOC, Barcelona, 22 September 2011
Presentation

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A. Higher Education and *Human Capital*

B. Lifelong and Lifewide Learning

C. The value of Higher Education
Higher Education (HE) has an enduring social value based in its *twofold* nature.

*Social Capital*, e.g. economic development and social well-being.

*Individual Capital*, e.g. social status, personal income and health.

Labour market earnings, economic growth, wider markets of consumption, and cultural capital are necessarily correlated with employability, income and individual literacy.

*Human Capital*: individual gain and social participation.
### A. Higher Education and Human Capital

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Education has a direct impact in the development of the notion of a “healthy lifestyle”</strong></th>
<th><strong>Appropriate management of illnesses</strong> + <strong>Reduction of health threatening behaviours</strong> = <strong>healthier individuals</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual tendencies for healthy lifestyles tend to have a corresponding collective behaviour: <strong>public support for “healthy” environments and thus healthier societies</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Individual and Social effects of education can be translated into Institutional, Cultural, or Political Capital</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
B. Lifelong and Lifewide Learning

What skills and capacities are needed to face efficiently our rapidly changing knowledge-based social contexts?

**UNESCO’s Four Pillars of Learning**

- **Learning to Know**: The acquisition, exercise and expansion of individual cognitive abilities and judgement, and self-control over their own social roles.
- **Learning to Do**: The application of the individual’s abilities to specific real-life situations, social and work related, and the capacity to adapt those abilities in particular contexts to solve specific problems.
- **Learning to Live Together**: The development of civic qualities and collectively shared attitudes, and civic performance towards other individuals.
- **Learning to Be**: The growth and application of the individual knowledge and judgement to the self and self’s well-being.
C. The Value of Higher Education

What is Higher Education’s added value to this complex learning process?

• What do we know about the learning outcomes in Higher Education?
• What are the roles of HEIs in this process of lifelong learning?
• How is Higher Education translated into social capital?
• In what ways is online education any different from classroom-based education?

How can we broaden access to higher education while maintaining its quality and value?

• How can higher education institutions and systems be transformed so that they help more of us to face the challenges of our fast changing societies; to generate and deliver the required knowledge; and to foster the development of skills, competencies and cognitive tools in a broad population.
A. A world of change

B. The Indian example
The composition of the global talent pool has changed…

Countries’ share in the population with tertiary education, for 25-34 and 55-64 year-old age groups, percentage (2009)

55-64-year-old population

About 39 million people who attained tertiary level

25-34-year-old population

About 81 million people who attained tertiary level
The composition of the global talent pool has changed…

Countries’ share in the population with tertiary education, for 25-34 and 55-64 year-old age groups, percentage (2009)

25-34-year-old population

United States, 20.5
Japan, 10.5
China, 18.3
Germany, 3.1
United Kingdom, 4.4
Canada, 3.1
France, 4.1
Spain, 3.5
Brazil, 4.5
Italy, 2.0
Mexico, 3.9
Australia, 1.6
Korea, 5.7
other, 14.5

55-64-year-old population

United States, 35.8
Japan, 12.4
China, 6.9
Germany, 6.3
United Kingdom, 5.3
Canada, 4.2
France, 3.5
Spain, 2.1
Italy, 1.9
Mexico, 1.8
Australia, 1.7
Korea, 1.6
other, 12.9

...and will continue to change

Share of new entrants into tertiary education in 2009 (all OECD and G20 countries)

- China, 36.6%
- United States, 12.9%
- Russian Federation, 10.0%
- United Kingdom, 8.3%
- Indonesia, 4.0%
- Japan, 4.2%
- Mexico, 3.1%
- Korea, 3.1%
- Germany, 2.5%
- Poland, 2.1%
- Spain, 1.6%
- Italy, 1.4%
- Netherlands, 0.5%
- Chile, 1.3%
- Australia, 1.3%
- Argentina, 2.7%
- Other countries, 4.8%

Other:
- Portugal 0.5%
- Czech Republic 0.4%
- Israel 0.4%
- Sweden 0.4%
- Belgium 0.4%
- Hungary 0.4%
- Austria 0.4%
- New Zealand 0.3%
- Switzerland 0.3%
- Slovak Republic 0.3%
- Denmark 0.2%
- Norway 0.2%
- Ireland 0.2%
- Finland 0.2%
- Slovenia 0.1%
- Estonia 0.1%
- Iceland 0.0%
- Norway 0.2%
- Finland 0.2%
- Slovenia 0.1%
- Estonia 0.1%
- Iceland 0.0%
B. The Indian example

With its population of 1.2 billion, India is facing rapid changes in HE.

India’s education system reflects the country’s federal configuration:

*the central and the state governments play important roles in the regulation of vocational and tertiary education*

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1. Rajagopalan, T.  "A study of the development of the State Open Schools (SOSs) in India" Report for The Commonwealth of Learning, Vancouver, 2011
B. The Indian example

There are about 534 universities and 25,951 colleges in India.

The population of the country between 14 and 18 years old for 2011 is estimated in 100 million.

A target 40% Gross Enrolment Rate for Higher Education by 2020 = 40 million students.

Most of the resources designated to education are destined to primary education.

Per-student funding in HE was lower in the period 2007-08 than in the mid 1990’s.

### B. The Indian example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Distance Learning Programmes</th>
<th>There are more than 100 HEIs offering Distance Learning programmes in India today</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU)</strong></td>
<td>Created in 1985 is today the biggest university in the world, with more than 3,000,000 enrolled students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS)</strong></td>
<td>Had a cumulative enrolment of 1.6 million students in 2009 and by 2010 it had over 3700 study centres across India, UAE and Nepal, and a staff of 251 people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A. A well-established approach

B. Exporters and importers

C. A complex model of governance
A. A well-established approach

Online and Distance Learning are no novel tools in HE

They are a significant part of an increasingly complex HE market

The British Open University was established in the late 1960’s and now it imparts courses to more than 250,000 students

However, not only Open Universities are part of the Distance and Online Learning market
In the distance-online learning market there are at least two major roles to which HE systems adapt.

Countries like China and South Africa focus in the import of education programmes seeking to expand educational opportunities and prospects.

Countries like the US, Australia and the UK are exporters of distance and online learning programmes based in their wide HE infrastructure.

B. Exporters and Importers
B. Exporters and Importers

Heavy “exporters” have become heavy consumers

• **In the US**, during the late 1990’s about 1.6 students were enrolled in distance learning courses based in different platforms (print-and-mailed, electronic or else) in HEIs based in the US.

• By 2003-04 **16% of all undergraduates in the US** took at least one distance learning course, while **in 2007-2008 the amount increased to 20%** meaning about **4.3 million undergraduate students**

• About **0.8 million** took their whole programme through **distance learning.**

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C. A complex model of governance

• **Online Learning** increases the complexities of the HE market.

• The alliance of non-profit and for-profit organisations sharing resources and pursuing common goals, increases the particularities of the HE market.

• Quality assurance has to deal with two **key features**:
  
  • **No direct classroom attendance**: how to allow for a different **experience of learning**
  
  • **Availability of services online**: student services and resources must be sophisticated and reliable.
Part 4 – Markets and Quality

A. A distorted market

B. Confidence in the quality of education

C. Further complexities
A. A distorted market

What are the proxies available for determining the value and the quality of HE products?

HE market is not based in standard demand and supply market logics:

*the same product is delivered at different prices and its quality is usually determined by unreliable proxies*

What happens then with online learning?
Confidence in the quality of higher education is essential

- **Accreditation and quality assurance** of online and distance learning must demonstrate their comparability with presential learning.

- It must **avoid current perceptions** of the quality and value of higher education heavily influenced by **international rankings**.
C. Further complexities

**HE is broadly conceived as a public good**

- Nevertheless, there is a growing tendency to believe that HE has to develop common grounds with private interests.

**A segmented market with asymmetric international rules**

- Some higher education institutions and systems are effectively public monopolies, while others are highly autonomous private businesses. The information that would enable the market to function more efficiently is lacking.

**Governmental control is only partial**

- Government intervention is aimed at establishing general competition rules to grant equal opportunities to all participants within one country. The international market is weakly regulated.

- Every HE system is different, but their constituent parts are operating in a convergent world. The problem for Governments is to foster quality, equity and efficiency without inducing unhelpful incentives.
C. Further complexities

We face a market where the goods are not exchanged based on its price, but on perceptions of quality and of social value.

The mere assessment of any sort of reforms or rule shaping for the development of the HE market, presupposes the definition of what sort of individual and social outcome we aim to obtain.

- **OECD’s Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes (AHELO)** points precisely into that direction.
Part 5 – AHELO

A. General overview

B. Strands of work

C. Expected outcomes
A. General overview

What is AHELO?

A ground-breaking initiative to assess HE learning outcomes on an international scale, by creating measures that would be valid:

- For all cultures and languages
- For the diversity of HE institutions

Why is AHELO important?

- Employs a wide range of measures
- Provides a more balanced assessment of HE quality in all its forms and platforms
- No sacrifice of HEIs’ missions or autonomy in their subsequent efforts to improve performance
A. General overview

Goal? To assess whether reliable cross-national comparisons of HE learning outcomes are *scientifically possible* and whether their *implementation is feasible*.

What? A research approach to provide a proof of concept and proof of practicality.

Why? The outcomes will be used to assist countries to decide on the next steps.

Who? Data is being collected from a targeted population of students who are near, but before, the end of their first 3-4 year degree.

How? OECD’s role has been to establish broad frameworks that guide international expert committees and contractors charged with instrument development in the assessment areas.
B. Strands of work

**Discipline strand in Economics**
Initial work on defining expected learning outcomes through ‘Tuning’ approach.

+ contextual data

**Discipline strand in Engineering**
Initial work on defining expected learning outcomes through ‘Tuning’ approach.

+ contextual data

AHELO focus on ‘above content’ skills:

*students’ ability to reflect, and to apply their knowledge and experience to novel and real world tasks and challenges*
B. Strands of work

Generic skills strand

International pilot test of the US Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), to assess the extent to which problem-solving or critical thinking can be validly measured across different cultural, linguistic and institutional contexts.

+ contextual data

With each assessment, a collection of contextual information:

- to look beyond student performance: *(e.g. institutional missions, student characteristics and exposure to “good practices”, satisfaction).*
- to make AHELO an effective tool to reveal best practices and to identify shared problems.
B. Strands of work

- **Generic Skills Strand**
  - Colombia
  - Egypt
  - Finland
  - Korea
  - Kuwait
  - Mexico
  - Norway
  - Slovak Republic
  - United States

- **Economics Strand**
  - Belgium (Flemish Community)
  - Egypt
  - Italy
  - Mexico
  - Netherlands
  - Russia
  - Slovak Republic

- **Engineering Strand**
  - Australia
  - Colombia
  - Egypt
  - Japan
  - Mexico
  - Slovak Republic
### C. Expected Outcomes

**Goal** *Scientific and practical feasibility*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>No publication of initial comparisons and no league tables</th>
<th>Focus of final report on feasibility aspects: cross-cultural validity, cultural biases, reliability issues etc.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feasibility of implementation</td>
<td>Focus on how to ensure student and faculty participation (or correct response biases) Need for some feedback (anonymous)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political feasibility</td>
<td>Analyses to demonstrate the potential analytical value of AHELO for institutional improvement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
C. Expected Outcomes

- **No comparative data** at the national level
- **Institutions/departments** are the units of analysis, hence **measures** and **reporting** at HEI/dept level
- Feedback to HEIs: **performance profiles** and **contextual data**, with their own results and those of other HEIs (**anonymously**)
- Pragmatic and cost-effective mode of delivery
- In time, a measure of **value added**
Once completed, AHELO should support the improvement of teaching and learning in higher education, by providing a tool for the assessment of quality in online learning as much as in other modes of instruction.
Thank you for your attention

richard.yelland@oecd.org

www.oecd.org/edu/higher

Twitter: @RichardJYelland