

ELABORATING A MASTER PLAN FOR HIGHER EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

Conference to launch work on a Master plan for
Higher Education,

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CONTENT

- Justification of a master plan for tertiary education
- Scope
- Structure (components) and functions
- Coordination (permeability)
- Governance

JUSTIFICATION

- The elaboration and implementation of a master plan in highly recommendable in a country in transition
 - HE&R is essential for economic development, but extremely expensive; therefore, it is crucial to prevent waste
 - The environment of HE&R is changing rapidly (globalization, scientific and technical progress, emergence of new gigantic economic powers, Bologna process (EHEA), Lisbon Agenda (ERA); consequences: increased competition and need to cooperate
 - In new developing countries, the participation rate of a cohort tends to increase rapidly
 - To secure the highest efficiency possible of HE,
 - The architecture of HE&R should well conceived at system level
 - Institutions should be given a very large autonomy, but made accountable to the State and other sponsors

- The greatest weaknesses (sources of waste) of HE&R systems are:
 - A lack of specialization between institutions regarding the type of teaching and learning
 - (mainly “academic” (research based) or
 - vocational (“professions” based)
 - The size of institutions and subunits thereof (faculties, departments) are too small (too many programs with no critical mass, therefore higher unit costs and lower quality)
 - An exaggerated regionalization due to political pressures

- Separation between research and teaching (in particular in countries with big research institutions or academies)
- A lack of permeability between institutions of
 - the same type and
 - different types
- The scarcity of well qualified teaching staff (impossible to accelerate development without resorting to external human resources)
- Insufficient trust towards institutions, too much political micro-management (not enough institutional autonomy); institutions should be autonomous, but made accountable thanks to Quality assurance procedures

- Therefore, considering the ambition of higher education institutions
 - to be all alike and
 - their resistance to change,
 - a period of crisis (financial or other) or of transition (like in Albania) is an ideal opportunity to reengineer and fix the architecture or the system
- A possible model could undoubtedly be the very successful California master plan (1960-75)

SCOPE

- Preferable to consider tertiary education (all institutions after secondary education) than higher education,
- The plan should fix
 - The structure of the system and therefore define its different components and their functions (missions)
 - The coordination between the different components
 - The governance of the system (and of its components)

STRUCTURE AND COMPONENTS

- It seems reasonable to envisage three types of tertiary education institutions

– Research universities

- Have to train “brains”; graduates should:
 - Master the methodology and scholarship of a discipline,
 - Be trained to confront ideas
 - Be creative and critical
 - Be able to work independently
- Have to train “professional” in highly complex disciplines (medicine, psychology, law, engineering)
- Should cover the main scientific disciplines, encourage interdisciplinary approaches

- Should privilege research based teaching and learning, which implies that good research is done on the premises
- Should offer BA and MA (in selected disciplines)
- Should be the only doctorate granting institutions and to do fundamental curiosity driven research
- Access requires at least secondary school baccalaureate
- Should have a good size to secure the critical mass (one comprehensive university for 1-2 million in habitants)
- They can also be mono-disciplinary provided they have the critical mass

– Vocational higher education institutions:

- Should train students to practice a specific profession broadly defined; implies a good balance between theory, methodology and practice
- Should offer professional BAs and MAs (in specific disciplines); that is minimum 3 years
- Cover mainly the following groups of disciplines
 - Engineering and ICT
 - Business, tourism, media, graphics, as well as jobs in the public and non for profit organizations
 - Health professions (nurses, physiotherapists,.....)
- Access requires secondary school baccalaureate
- Should do applied research and development
- Size can be smaller than research universities and they can be located in different regions to contribute to the development of the local autonomy

– Short vocational program institutions

- Should train students to practice a specific profession implies some theory and methodology and a lot of practice
- Should offer profession specific certificates after 2 years
- Cover mainly the following groups of disciplines
 - Technical disciplines
 - Professions in business, tourism as well as non for profit organizations
 - Some health professions (chiropractor,

– **Arts and music institutions** should also have their place in the system

- **The Master plan should also regulate:**
 - **Private universities or higher education institutions**
 - Their development should be encouraged thanks to tax incentives, to land concessions and to work permits for foreign teachers
 - A system of certification or accreditation should be in place to secure a minimum standard quality
 - **The possibility and conditions to study abroad**
 - Should be encouraged thanks to the attribution of grant or loans to excellent students, in particular at PhD level
 - Ways should be imagined to encourage those students to come back afterwards (avoid brain drain)

COORDINATION (PERMEABILITY)

- The fact that there are 1,2 or three different systems is irrelevant; what is counting is
 - The effective division of labor between the different institutions: the missions and functions of each institution should be clear and respected
 - The access of students to the different types of institutions should be made according to their merit and probability to succeed. Different systems can be envisage:
 - The results obtained at the high school baccalaureate (if there is a national exam)
 - The result to an exam set up by institutions or a level of institutions (one danger is to encourage the creation of preparatory classes)
 - The result at intelligence/performance tests like the American Gmat
 - The promotion from one lower level to a higher level institution justified by good results

- The proportion of students in the different levels should be fixed (In California, they are approx. 12, 40 and 40%)
- Considering
 - the difficulties of orientation, and
 - the variance at which students reach their maturity for studying,.....

..... It is important that the system is permeable (authorizes mobility)

 - between institutions at the same level, and
 - the different levels (upward as well as downward)

- Another coordination question is related with the existence of **research academies**. The main challenge is:
 - To secure that good research is done within universities (research based teaching, training of PhDs); this is a necessary condition to have strong universities
 - To make sure that all capable scientists are involved in the teaching programs
 - To avoid two categories of teachers

GOVERNANCE

- Conceiving a Master plan
 - Is a complex task
 - Requires a lot of expertise (international)
 - Should be done by a committee composed mainly from tertiary education leaders who should have a clear and time limited mandate about the objectives
 - All institutions and their stakeholders should be consulted
 - Requires a strong political will to impose one coherent solution (against those opposed to change or defending local or institutional interests)
 - It is advisable to set up and launch a first plan, even if not perfect, and to amend it later
 - The plan should be part of the national legislation

- Implementing the Master plan
 - Should be delegated to the rectors-directors conferences or the three levels of institutions
 - The coordination between them should be secured by a committee composed of representatives of tertiary education institutions, the State and other stakeholders.

An aerial photograph of a snow-covered mountain peak, likely Mount Everest, with the text "THANK YOU" overlaid in large, bold, black letters. The mountain's ridges and valleys are covered in white snow, and the sky is a pale, clear blue. The text is centered horizontally and vertically on the mountain's face.

THANK YOU