

**OECD Thematic Review of Tertiary Education  
4<sup>th</sup> Workshop of Participation Countries  
27-28 September, 2007, Paris**

The **OECD** Thematic Review of Tertiary Education started in 2004, with the following purposes:

- to synthesise research-based evidence on the impact of tertiary education policies and disseminate this knowledge among participating countries;
- to identify innovative and successful policy initiatives and practices;
- to facilitate exchanges of lessons and experiences among countries;
- to identify policy options.

The 4<sup>th</sup> Workshop of Participating Countries, held in Paris on 27-28 September, 2007, aimed at discussing the first draft of the Synthesis Report. In addition to participating countries, a few international bodies were invited at the workshop: ENQA, the EU Commission, Eurydice, ESU (European Student Union, former ESIB), EIB (European Investment Bank), IAU, IIPPE, INQAAHE, and two advisory committees to OECD (BIAC and TUAC). Their representatives were given 5 minutes each to present their organisation – I briefly presented INQAAHE.

The draft report (480 pages) was sent us a few days only before the meeting, because of confidentiality constraints. It is composed of 10 chapters, and David Woodhouse and myself had agreed to focus on 6 and 10:

1. Introduction
2. The value and trends in tertiary education
3. Steering tertiary systems and governing institutions
4. Devising solid basis for funding tertiary education
5. Facilitating the effectiveness of academics
- 6. Assuring and improving the quality of tertiary education**
7. Achieving equity in tertiary education
8. Enhancing the role of tertiary education in research and innovation
9. Strengthening the links with the labour market
- 10. Shaping the internationalisation of tertiary education**
11. Developing and implementing tertiary education policy

On a whole, the report, drafted by Paulo Santiago and Karine Tremblay, is based on:

- country background reports prepared by the 24 participating countries (Australia, Belgium (Flemish Community), Chile, China, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Iceland, Japan, Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom);
- country notes prepared by independent review teams for the 14 countries that also participate in the country review strand (China, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Japan, Korea, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, and Spain);
- “relevant documents and studies identified through the links developed by the Review with other international organisations and research groups”.

During the meeting, each chapter was presented by its drafter (for chapters 6 and 10, Karine Tremblay, who started to approach QA issues only a few months ago), then discussed: in fact, there was a limited time for comments, and no actual discussion. Following a comment I made on the necessity to strengthen the links between chapters in order to emphasize the importance of the contexts in which quality assurance systems operate, the two “rapporteurs” explained that they had not had time to read each other’s chapters (!). This was also obviously the case for most participants, who got a quick view during the meeting.

On Quality Assurance, Paulo Santiago and Karine Tremblay warmly welcomed the participation and comments of “specialists”, ie Peter Williams and Bruno Curvale for ENQA, myself for INQAAHE.

Our main suggestions were to:

- insist more on the motives for and objectives of creating a QA system, and relate the QA procedures to these;
- revise the terminology approach, developing what is only shortly mentioned ("different perspectives on different things with the same label"), and add a reference to the UNESCO-CEPES glossary;
- update the references with more recent publications;
- qualify the presentation of the international scene, which is over-optimistic in the report, referring more to commitments of principle than to actual practices (for example highlighting collaboration and mutual trust without mentioning competition) and omitting existing bad practice (such as diploma mills and fake accreditation);
- enhance the regional and international dimensions as a strong and quickly developing trend;
- strengthen the link between QA and recognition of qualifications;
- last but not least, highlight the importance of specific contexts, especially in the introduction of the chapter and its conclusion ("Pointers for Future Policy Development").

Next steps:

- by the end of October, further reactions and suggestions from participants through written feedback to OECD secretariat;
- by the end of December or early January, second draft of the Synthesis Report circulated to participants, with feedback invited by the beginning of February;
- early April 2008, report publicly released.