Editorial

On Prizes, Entrepreneurialism and Bologna

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One of the more pleasant duties an Editor has from time to time to perform is to bring the attention of his readership to a contribution of particular interest. It is, of course, a task full of delicacy since implicitly it suggests that others are, by the same token, of lesser interest. Although comparison is very often invidious, in this case, invidiousness is nowhere present. It is then with great pleasure that this issue of *Higher Education Policy* carries with it the Essay that won the joint IAU/Palgrave Higher Education Policy Essay Competition. The winners, Professor Daniel W. Lang and Qiang Zha, both of the Ontario Institute for the Study of Education, were announced at the Association's Twelfth General Conference, held this July in Sao Paulo, Brazil. By making their Essay 'Comparing Universities: A Case Study between Canada and China' available to readers of *Higher Education Policy*, it is naturally our hope that the Essay Competition, which will take place every 2 years — the next round being in 2006 — will draw inspiration from it.

Competition is the driving force of excellence, just as it is the locomotive of entrepreneurial behaviour, so it is more than appropriate that an example of the former goes hand in hand with a further study of the latter. In 1998, *Issues in Higher Education*, the comparative book series the IAU brings out in parallel to *Higher Education Policy*, published Burton Clark's *Creating Entrepreneurial Universities*. This pioneering work has, during the ensuing half decade, become a classic and many universities seek eagerly to show how they too are firmly set on the pathways of organizational transformation. His article in this issue brings in new exemplars of 'entrepreneurial' behaviour well beyond the European focus on which *Creating Entrepreneurial Universities* concentrated. Clark's article, based on the concluding Chapter of his new publication, *Sustaining Change in Universities*, brought out by the British Open University Press, pays special attention to the key elements in university organization that both bring about and, no less important, sustain change.

Sustaining change, if a desirable and blessed ability, is in effect the end result of many different paths of transformation and of the different demands that policy, largely national, but also in the case of the European Union, increasingly cross-national in origin and inspiration makes. Boffo introduces us to the difficulties Italian universities now face, in part as a result of pressure to improve their 'marketability', in part to provide information to a student clientele whose need for information grows greater as change itself becomes swifter, not only in Italy but also in the European Union generally.

Machado, Farhangmehr and Taylor take us into another dimension of change, which marshaled much enthusiasm in the higher education systems of Western Europe in the earlier part of the 1990s. The capacity to plan strategically at institutional level was often heralded as a prior condition to sustaining institutional initiative at a time when governments were engaged in stepping back from close oversight and instead, were putting much of their faith in remote steering. Machado, Farhangmehr and Taylor take a close look at what happened on the ground. Their conclusions on the Portuguese situation are of more than passing interest since they would appear to echo in a very

different setting, those reached by Robert Birnbaum in the United States with respect to 'fashions' in higher education (Birnbaum, 2000).

Johanna Witte takes us along another path of transformation, this time examining the Bologna Process from a number of perspectives, implementation research not least. The introduction of what she terms tiered study structures is an interesting reflection that for some systems of higher education in Europe, tiering — which is probably best seen in terms of differentiation between different degree levels — is far from being an established pattern, although arguably it has a certain convenience of administrative clarity even if it does not necessarily share either the assumptions about student learning or who controls the pace of learning which in Anglo Saxon systems and their emulators is largely taken for granted.

It is, of course, a debatable point whether nominal clarity imposed in the name of transparency, cross-frontier tidiness or convergence is itself a manifestation of managerialism — that is, the belief that concentration of power and authority should be in the hands of those whose 'expertise' lies in administrative technique as opposed to those who teach, research and continuously learn.

Santiago and Carvalho bring us back to Portugal to see just how far 'managerial' rhetoric has impinged on institutional discourse and, more especially, what might be termed the generic purposes of higher education — teaching and learning, cultural and social impact and economic relevance — have been modified, if at all, by the 'new discourse'. Their findings suggest that in certain domains, above all, those of values and mission, higher education possesses what is best understood as a layered approach to change. Some aspects of a purely administrative nature may evolve rapidly. In others, and above all, in those dimensions and domains where values are concerned, change if it is perceptible at all, is best grasped in a geological mode. That many universities in Central and Eastern Europe kept alive the memory of their Humboldtian inspiration during the regime of which the least one may say is that it was not greatly inspired by Wilhelm Freiherr von Holmboldt, is an example all too often forgotten. Incremental change can just as well coexist with change defined in terms of the brisk march down the paths to efficiency, though whether the latter really alters the pace of the former is something one may mull over.

Finally, Elise Langan examines that area, which, increasingly, is seen to be an indication of health, worth and value as it attaches to systems of higher education, and in doing so brings us back to competition for students. The Bologna Declaration set much store by such criteria as pointers to how far, to parody the Belgian national motto, Europe's 'Strength does effectively lie in Unity'. Competition for students has long been at the heart of higher education in the United States. And though the position is changing as much due to demography as to economic ideology in Europe, the latter still has a long way to go before its own house is ruled by similar considerations.

Certain of these articles, in an earlier form, were presented at the annual meeting of the Consortium of Higher Education Researchers at Porto in September 2003. Among others, we would like to thank Alberto Amaral, President of CHER for his help and persuasiveness in getting the authors to part with their screeds.

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References

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