

WORLD education NEWS & REVIEWS

A Publication of World Education Services Vol. 10 No. 4 Fall 1997

WAITING FOR DEARING

by Peter Leuner

The most comprehensive strategic review of British higher education since the Robbins Report (1963) was published in July. The 1,700-page Dearing Report, *Higher Education in the Learning Society*, is a reminder to anyone with fond memories of the British university system as it was in the third quartile of this century that things have changed beyond recognition.

The cozy consensual system that provided a highly selective, state-funded arrangement for a restricted group of students has been eroded by both politics and markets. Thatcherite policies to dramatically expand student numbers without increasing per capita funding produced profound changes in institutional culture, causing consternation and entrepreneurial zeal, though not in equal measures.

The Dearing Report addresses three key questions generated by the trebling of the proportion of the age group attending university:

- Who will go to university? Access issues have moved to the center of the debate on higher education (HE).
- Who will pay? Is the time-honored British principle of free HE about to end?
- What and how will they be studying? Introducing supply and demand mechanisms directly into the curriculum will accelerate the already changed course structures, pedagogy and modes of assessment.

The Dearing Commission was a bi-partisan attempt to clarify the issues and point the way to the future. Sir Ron Dearing, a businessman and former Deputy Secre-

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tary in the Department of Trade and Industry, had already played numerous public service roles in relation to elementary and secondary education and the development of the National Curriculum. Working for more than a year with colleagues from various education and corporate backgrounds appointed by the Conservative government of Prime Minister John Major, Dearing has produced over 140 recommendations. The new Labour government moved within hours to endorse some and to produce counter-proposals of its own, particularly regarding funding issues.

Publication of the report was scheduled for a month or two after the General Election in which we saw a Labour Government elected

with a landslide majority. The return of a Labour government after eighteen years of opposition may, however, have less impact on the restructuring of British Higher Education than might be supposed, even though linking markets with higher education would have been unthinkable when they were last in power. Despite Labour's election promise to stress "education, education and education," the focus appears to be mainly on the under-18 age group, reflecting the public's greatest concern. Although a growing number of people—students, their parents or their dependents—are affected by resource constraints on HE, New Labour's thinking is unlikely to run counter to more than a decade of identifying university students as consumers in a market relationship with the HE system.

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ARGENTINA

STRUGGLE TO ENSURE QUALITY: The proliferation of graduate degree programs in Argentina is causing problems of quality control for the country's higher education system.

The universities, faced with rapidly increasing numbers of graduate students and lacking national academic standards for graduate programs, are working with Argentina's Ministry of Education on a new system to accredit these programs.

The total of graduate degree programs offered by the approximately 80 universities now exceeds 1,000—more than double the number five years ago. Officials put the number of students now enrolled in these programs at 10,000 to 15,000, up from only 3,000 a decade ago.

Master's degree programs account for 40% of the total, as do doctoral programs. "Specialization" programs, mainly in engineering and medical sciences, account for the remaining 20%. The number of master's programs has grown to about 400 from fewer than 20. Programs in the social sciences showed the sharpest increase.

The National Commission for University Evaluation and Accreditation (CONEAU), is expected to begin accrediting graduate programs this year. Formed under the 1995

Higher Education Law, the commission is made up of representatives from private and public universities as well as officials of the education ministry, the National Academy of Education, and both houses of congress.

The law gives the commission two years—once basic criteria are approved—to evaluate and accredit all existing graduate programs.

The law also provides for the commission to accredit undergraduate programs in fields such as medicine and law, because in Argentina a university degree in those fields is an automatic license to practice.

All programs will be subject to a compulsory review.

In general, undergraduate studies here follow the Spanish and French traditions, and most degree programs take at least six years to complete. But until the 1990s, graduate programs consisted mainly of doctoral studies that followed the German pattern. The American model is used for master's programs. The problem will be melding all these different models, shortening undergraduate programs with a basic curriculum, and leaving specialization to the graduate level.

The Chronicle of Higher Education 8/15/97

AUSTRALIA

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS: Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) and the University of Western Sydney (UWS) Nepean have agreed to articulate arrangements in engineering, management, information technology and accounting courses.

This means, for example, that CIT engineering students can now study 18 months of an advanced diploma in electronics, civil or mechanical engineering before studying at Nepean for a further 18 months to complete their CIT qualification and a Bachelor of Technology program. If students opt to study for a further two years at UWS Nepean, they can complete a Bachelor of Engineering. Similar arrangements are possible for management and business studies.

A three-way merger is planned among Ballarat Univer-

sity, the School of Mines and Industries and the Wimmera Institute of TAFE. *Campus Review 6/11-17/97*

BALTIC NATIONS

THE ROAD TO REFORM: Since Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania gained their independence from the USSR in 1991, the three countries have been struggling to rebuild their economies in preparation to join their Baltic Sea neighbors in the European Union.

EuroFaculty was established in September 1993 to bring the Baltic universities up to European standards in the social sciences. The institutions involved are Tartu University in Estonia, Vilnius University in Lithuania, and the University of Latvia. The initial funding of EuroFaculty came through a Tempus joint European project via Phare, which has since remained a major contributor. Additional funding has been provided by the Danish, Finnish, German, Norwegian and Swedish governments on a voluntary basis.

After 51 years under the Soviet regime, drastic action was needed to raise academic standards. At Tartu University, for example, an international evaluation led by academics from Bentley College in the US revealed that work considered postgraduate would only be viewed as at the undergraduate level in the West, and the level of research and education was so far below standards that the Faculty of Economics should have been closed down. Progress in the fields of political science and public administration have been hampered by the political sensitivities attached to these subjects under the Soviet regime.

In addition, the low remuneration of academic staff has meant that many do not have time to devote to professional development. Some professors at Tartu University left after being offered ten times their salary in private industry.

One of EuroFaculty's main goals is to make the universities self-sufficient in academic staff. Professors from donor countries work alongside existing staff as a team, retraining local teachers, updating teaching materials in the Baltic languages, and transmitting professional knowledge and modern teaching methods.

Le Magazine European Commission #7/97

BULGARIA

NEW UNIVERSITY: Thracian University was founded by the government in January, 1995 in Stara Zagora, combining the Higher Institute of Zootechnics and Veterinary Medicine and the Higher Institute of Human Medicine. The rector is Prof. Dr. Ivan Georguiev Bozhkov, who can be reached at 359-42-2003 or by fax at 359-42-34102.

Correspondence of 7/97 from Thracian University

CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPE

SEVERE SHORTAGE: A study by Korn Ferry International and the London Business School identifies a severe shortage of qualified executives in Central and Eastern European companies. "Eight years after the old socialist economies began to evolve into market economies, companies still depend almost exclusively on expatriates for top management, marketing and finance posts," says Axel Mollik, managing director of Central and Eastern Europe for Korn/Ferry International, an executive search firm based in New York City.

Local technical, operational and marketing skills are

improving, but top management, financial and change-management skills are elusive, the study finds. The typical career path for indigenous managers has become one of leapfrogging from company to company to take advantage of escalating compensation packages. Private firms nearly doubled salaries from 1993 to 1995, and even state-owned firms increased pay by 25%. The higher pay and benefits packages needed to attract talent have diminished resources that might have been invested in training programs to broaden the ranks of skilled junior executives. *Global Workforce 7/97*

CHINA

EXPANSION PLANS: Tongji University, well-known for its architecture and civil engineering programs, plans to develop more programs in science, economics, the liberal arts and law in order to produce engineers who are well-rounded.

Tongji requires each student to major in an engineering speciality and to choose several optional humanities courses. The Shanghai-based institution has 22,000 students, 6,000 teachers and administrative staff, and 30 departments.

Tongji was begun in 1907 as the Tongji German Medical School. In 1927 it became a State university with colleges of medicine, engineering, science, liberal arts and law. Today it offers 42 undergraduate programs, 68 master's programs and 22 doctoral programs. It has 38 research institutes, seven key State laboratories, and nine research centers. *China Daily 5/7/97*

ATTRACTION OF MAINLAND UNIVERSITIES: A record 280 Hong Kong middle school students applied for mainland universities this year, an increase of 70 percent, according to the Hong Kong Examination Authority.

Statistics from the State Education Commission suggested that a total of 1,286 students from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macao applied for mainland universities in 1997.

According to the Hong Kong education system, Secondary Form Five students must take the Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination (HKCEE) to determine their eligibility for further education. Form Five students who achieve 14 points or above in their best six subjects in the annual examination may register for Form Six, which prepares them for entry into university. Those with poor results must go to professional schools or find jobs.

This year, about 130,000 Form Five students took the university entrance examination, but only 24,000 Form Six places were available for the new school year in Hong Kong. The attraction of the mainland universities is enhanced by this shortage, as well as by their lower fees and relevant course offerings. *China Daily 8/8/97*

TOP PAY SCALE: Academic pay in Hong Kong far outstrips earnings at universities in many other countries, according to a new survey of 31 Commonwealth universities.

Professors in Hong Kong earn at least twice as much as their counterparts in Australia, New Zealand and the UK. Benefits are also good in Hong Kong, with a non-contributory health care scheme, the largest amount of leave (42-46 days a year), ten weeks' paid maternity leave, university housing for senior staff and a cash allowance for junior academics. Pension schemes are comparable to the

UK, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

The lowest paid Hong Kong academic earns \$46,000, compared with \$25,110 in the UK, \$24,000 in Australia, Canada and New Zealand, and \$9,161 in South Africa. A senior lecturer at the bottom of the pay scale in the UK would earn \$46,000. An equivalent in Hong Kong earns \$102,345, compared to Singapore (\$85,380), Australia (\$50,861), New Zealand (\$50,640), Canada (\$43,252) and South Africa (\$21,600).

Survey of Academic Staff Salaries, 1996/97. Commonwealth Higher Education Management Services.

ACTUARIALS NEEDED: The local insurance industry in Shanghai needs professionals who can calculate insurance risks and premiums. The city has only about 40 actuaries, including university professors and financial and insurance professionals.

Actuarial science was almost non-existent in China in the early 1990s. Four Shanghai universities now offer systematic actuarial education: Fudan University, Shanghai University of Finance and Economics, Tongji University and East China Normal University.

MetLife and New York Life have established actuarial scholarships and teaching fellowships at Shanghai University of Finance and Economics. *China Daily 7/14/97*

FRANCE

US ACCREDITATION RECEIVED: The Ecole Supérieure des Sciences Economiques et Commerciales (ESSEC) has been accredited by the American Assembly of Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). This is the first time an organization outside of North America has received this designation. *La Lettre de la Conférence des Grandes Ecoles 7/97*

GERMANY

MIRACLES HAPPEN: After years of sparring, the German federal government and the *Länder* (states) have suddenly agreed on reform in higher education. The program will require an investment of an additional 3,600 million marks up to the end of the year 2000.

For the center-right government in Bonn and the mainly Social Democratic-led *Länder* to reach accord on anything is surprising. But the universities cannot go on as they are. Chronic maladies include ultra-long periods of study (some students re-enroll for more than a decade), overflowing lecture theaters, inadequate contact between teachers and the taught as well as between researchers and industry, and a lack of compatibility between German and international qualifications.

The central points of the new program are:

- The post-graduate colleges, which have proven to be extremely successful, will be expanded. These colleges are for students who have already achieved a university diploma.
- Course guidance services and tutorials are to be improved in order to reduce the length of study and reduce attrition rates.
- The use of multimedia is to be intensified, particularly with improvement in library services, distance education and multimedia studies.
- *Fachhochschulen* (polytechnics) are to be further expanded, with the objective of having 35% of students studying at such institutions by the year 2000.
- European and international cooperation is to be further intensified with more educational exchanges.

The politicians have decreed fewer fussy rules, more flexibility and greater competition. Students will need to get through most courses in about four years; they will face an interim exam to prove they are up to scratch, and slouches "as a rule" will be ousted. Bachelor's and master's degrees will be introduced as well as "credit points" on the American pattern, making it easier for students to switch institutions.

Universities will have more freedom to choose students on merit, and the amount of state cash they get will depend on the results they achieve in teaching and research. Students will be among those judging the results.

The issue of student fees has been shunted aside. Some universities have already introduced them, others are pondering. The Social Democrats, urging equal chances for rich and poor alike, oppose fees but are keeping quiet for now.

*Le Magazine European Commission #7/97
and The Economist 8/23/97*

GREECE

ATHENS SCHOOL OF FINE ART offers five-year programs in painting, sculpture, printmaking and theoretical studies. The institution has no graduate school. Admission examinations take place over five days in September, and consist of drawing in black and white, and color. Foreign students are required to pay 90,000 drachmas per year, except for students from those EU countries which have exchange agreements with Greece. *Correspondence from the Ministry of Education, Dept. of Studies and Student Welfare, Section B, Mitropoleos 15,101 85 Athens, Greece*

INDIA

BIOMEDICAL PROGRAM: Delhi University's three-year-old Dr. B. R. Ambedkar Center for Biomedical Research (ACBR) is planning to offer a four-year combined master's and doctoral program in biomedical sciences. The only other institution offering such an intensive program is the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

ACBR has no departments and few faculty members, preferring to use the facilities and staff of other university laboratories. For clinical work, students will go to G. B. Pant Hospital, Maulana Azad Medical College and the V. P. Chest Institute. There are also tie-ins with private laboratories. *University News 7/14/97*

AGRICULTURE JOURNALISM: The Chaudhary Charan Singh Haryana Agricultural University (CCSHAU) in Hisar offers a one-year postgraduate diploma in Agriculture Journalism. Specialists in this field are especially needed in India, where three-fourths of the working population is engaged in agriculture. *University News 7/7/97*

ISRAEL

EXPANDING HIGHER EDUCATION: The new undergraduate colleges that are part of a planned expansion of higher education in Israel are destined to become second-class institutions that will draw students mainly from disadvantaged segments of the country's Jewish population, according to a forthcoming report.

The report, called "Higher Education in Israel," is primarily concerned with Sephardic Jews—those whose parents came to Israel mainly from North Africa or the Middle East—and who now account for a majority of the country's Jewish population.

In response to a growing demand for higher education,

the Council of Higher Education three years ago embarked on a plan to significantly increase the number of institutions awarding bachelor's degrees. Academic planners estimated that Israel needed to make room for at least 40,000 more students in higher education by the end of the decade.

Enrollment in degree programs has climbed steadily in the 1990s from 67,750 in 1989-90 to 101,700 students in 1995-96.

While the government planned to establish a few new institutions, it expected to rely mainly on the upgrading of several regional extension colleges. Located in outlying areas, these colleges offered courses in association with a sponsoring university, but not degrees. They had served primarily as conduits for adult education and extension programs. The plan was to "academize" the colleges and turn them into independent institutions that would grant undergraduate degrees in a variety of fields. Three regional colleges have already been upgraded.

The report contends that the existence of the new colleges allows the universities to continue to be highly selective, accepting only the best students—especially those who have graduated from college preparatory programs in high school. Furthermore, not enough money is being invested in the infrastructure of the colleges to make them attractive to highly qualified academics.

The Chronicle of Higher Education 7/25/97

ITALY

TRILINGUAL NET DEGREE: What began as a television company's project to promote Italian culture worldwide over the Internet has developed into an online university degree course.

The Italice project, launched by the Italian state television service RAI International, has been given the legal status of an Open University degree course under the auspices of the Italian higher education ministry (MURST) and the University of Pisa.

Italice has been operating experimentally since last year on a private "intranet," and opens to the public in October. It will probably be at least another year before degree students, who must be non-Italian residents, can enroll officially.

The project is trilingual in Italian, English and Spanish.



