

default administration for almost all discussion of policy, with hats tipped to Wales and Northern Ireland, but no serious discussion of Scotland (a land with no 'graduate contribution', no foundation degrees, centrally driven cooperation on some fields of research, a historically more generous pattern of economic hospitality to international post-graduates, and so on).

In short, *Identity crisis* does its major task well. It is a well-rounded, fluent and sympathetic account of our present condition, as well as sensibly priced. That it will prove more useful to recent immigrants to our strange land ('people who come to academic life in mid-career', many of whom may be post-recession asylum-seekers) rather than to those established settlers who have grown into their roles knowing little else, is no bad thing.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14748460.2012.659068>

European universities and the challenge of the market: a comparative analysis, edited by Marino Regini, with contributions from Gabriele Ballarino, Sabrina Colombo, Loris Perotti and Renata Semenza, Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA, USA, Edward Elgar, 2011, 233 pp., £69.95, ISBN 9-7818-4980-4035

It is clear, even to casual observers, that there have been far reaching changes in the higher education arrangements of most European countries during the past quarter century. There have been dramatic increases in student numbers, reforms of qualifications frameworks and radical changes in institutional governance, financing mechanisms and academic cultures. These changes have often been seen, as the title of this volume implies, as responses to market challenges. Yet this simplistic interpretation raises many questions. Why has 'the market' become so central? Is it deep ideological and cultural change? Is it a result of new technology which makes different modes of management and governance feasible? Or is simply that there are insufficient resources for universities and colleges to be managed in the rather casual way that was widespread in most the twentieth century.

Regini and his colleagues attempt to throw light on such questions by detailed case studies of two decades of higher education change in six major European countries, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain and the UK. The largely descriptive case studies provide little information that will be new to academic higher education specialists. However, they do follow a common structure covering changes in funding, governance, curricula and qualifica-

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Regini and his colleagues attempt to throw light on such questions by detailed case studies of two decades of higher education change in six major European countries, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain and the UK. The largely descriptive case studies provide little information that will be new to academic higher education specialists. However, they do follow a common structure covering changes in funding, governance, curricula and qualifica-

tions, student services and research, paying particular attention to their relationships with other economic sectors. This facilitates comparisons between the countries and even the most knowledgeable reader will be able to find some useful information. The main weakness of the case studies is that, while some of them, the UK for example, and to a lesser extent Germany and Netherlands, make extensive use of institutional case study material which is combined with accounts of changes in the sector as a whole, others rely almost entirely on general accounts from the literature. Some important points do emerge, however, such as the shortage of cash as a major driver of change, the growing financial autonomy of universities and the marked differences in many respects, especially relations with industry, between STEM subjects (science and technology), and humanities and social sciences. In most countries the former seem to have embraced change and often benefited from it, the latter have generally been apathetic, or sluggish, or resistant to change. Another useful, though not surprising, detail to emerge from the case studies is that the Bologna process has had a considerably greater impact on change in countries other than the UK. This may be because they are better Europeans than the British, or it may be that governments wanted reforms of qualifications structures and Bologna provided a stimulus, or it may be just that in broad terms the Bologna proposals are for qualifications profiles fairly similar to those that already existed in the UK. However, the biggest differences between the countries appear to be in the provision of student services, a term which in itself seems capable of a wide range of interpretations. From a European policy viewpoint one interesting conclusion is that in general, far from universities being recalcitrant partners in forming relations with outside employers, it is the latter who are usually suspicious when universities appear to change their traditional practices in attempts to meet the needs of other economic sectors.

[The] empirical findings run counter to the conventional wisdom that sees universities as reluctant partners, unwilling or slow to respond to market demand. This is, for instance, the view held by the European Commission. . . . Our case studies show a . . . complex situation, one in which it is often the case that universities try to anticipate market demands by reshaping curricula and governance structures, setting up placement services, while enterprises do not always 'respond better and faster' to such attempts. (86)

Readers with a specialist academic interest in higher education are more likely to be interested in Regini's introductory and concluding chapters which attempt to arrive at some analytic interpretations of the evidence the team has collected. They draw on Clark's 1983 analysis and essentially chart how the shift away from academic oligarchy and state regulation towards the market has come about. His analysis is particularly well worth reading by those who assume the 'Anglo Saxon' model of higher education is the only valid one. He makes one particularly important point at the beginning of his analysis. He points out that the idea of the individual university as an organisation with its own interests distinct from those of the academic community within it was a major new departure in European countries other than the UK.

For a market logic to become potentially relevant in an HE system, universities must, in the first place, acquire an identity and the ability to pursue their organizational interests autonomously. (5)

The book shows clearly how the developments in institutional quality assessment have been associated with new public management forms of governance and funding which have in principle given universities as organisations more autonomy. In doing so, the authors rec-

ognise the validity of national and global university rankings even if they are cautious about some of the indicators currently used.

Regini starts from what he perceives to have been the initial situation in most European countries other than the UK, a situation in which, in effect, the state and the academic oligarchy coalesced to maintain the status quo or change very slowly. He hypothesises two different drivers of change, demand from external stakeholders and internalised desire for change from those within the universities. He was also interested in distinguishing between top down and bottom up pressures for market oriented change. His conclusion is that, while at a very general level there is a tendency towards convergence between European higher education systems, there have been important differences of detail in the ways national systems have responded to the challenges.. He concludes with a 'typology of HE change'. Depending on whether 'external' or 'internal' actors have more power and whether the system is more oriented to student and employers' demands or to what universities choose to supply, the internal reorganisation of institutions can be categorised as 'expansion-oriented', 'business-oriented', 'self-oriented' or 'competition-oriented'.

There is little in the book that will be new to higher education researchers but there is a useful assemblage of information about the state of higher education systems in six major European countries and some interesting analyses of similarities and differences between them. I have benefited from reading it and would recommend it as introductory reading for masters and research students.

References

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14748460.2012.659069>