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Critical Evaluation of the Impact of Global Educational Reform: an Irish Perspective

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Autobiographical Note

Roisin Donnelly is a course co-ordinator in the Postgraduate Programme in Third Level Learning and Teaching, based in the Learning and Teaching Centre in the Dublin Institute of Technology. She received a BA Honours Degree from Queen's University Belfast and has a Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education from the University of Ulster at Jordanstown, which led on to her completing the M.Ed. in Professional Development in Higher Education. She also has an M.Sc. in Computing and Information Systems and collectively has been lecturing and researching in higher education for 12 years. In 2003, Roisin became a member of the professional body The Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. She is continuing her research in higher education through the Doctorate of Education Degree (EdD) from Queen's University Belfast.

Abstract

Global trends in the new public management of education have manifested themselves differently in different countries. Its manifestation, the significant issue that this paper addresses, is whether it has led to any changes in education in the third level sector in the Republic of Ireland in the last ten years. This will be achieved through a critical exploration of the expression of higher educational reform worldwide, and a review of its impact on Higher Education (HE) in Ireland. Within this, there are a number of specific objectives:

- to discuss the context of higher education (including policy issues and stakeholders) in the Republic of Ireland;
- to summarise the main trends of New Public Management (NPM) in higher education;
- to critically evaluate the concept of educational reform, and through an articulation of a theoretical framework, explore this growing global trend and examine whether Irish HE is developing in a similar direction.

Keywords

Global, Ireland, Higher Education, Reform, Framework, Pedagogy

Introduction

Irish universities have until recently operated on a relatively small scale with very modest budgets. Largely state funded with augmentation from private sources for specific projects, they have been demonstrably effective, enjoying a high degree of protection while experiencing the effects of rapid growth in enrolments and highly constrained budgets. The swift, sustained growth of the Irish economy in the nineties, combined with a wide range of social, cultural and political changes, is resulting in a new dynamic. In an environment of national goal setting and strategic planning, a traditional society and economy is being transformed into a modern, knowledge-based society. University reform and development are seen to be key factors in this transformation. There is a challenging new environment made up of a decade of intensive policy development: social, economic and educational reform measures, proposals and legislation.

Context of Study

I am an academic tutor in the Learning and Teaching Centre (LTC), based in the Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT). The issues explored in this paper will have a direct bearing upon the context in which I work: teaching on a postgraduate lecturer training course, the Postgraduate Certificate, Diploma and Masters in Third Level Learning and Teaching, the first such course designed specifically for academic staff in the sector in the Republic of Ireland.

In an economy such as exists in Ireland, education is hugely important. Education is key to economic competitiveness and social cohesion however Wolf (2002) presents a critical

discussion about this with partial reference to the UK. Rising participation rates, diminishing labour market opportunities and intense competition for public and private funds have combined to put higher education policy under renewed pressure. Moreover, education at this level is increasingly led by demand, with institutions of all types having to adapt themselves to students' requirements. Governments have to readjust their policies too (Wagner, 1998, p1). Higher education now puts the focus as much on demand as it does on supply. It is more student-led than it was in the past, and that has new implications for stakeholders, institutions and resource planning.

All these are the topics with which higher education leaders are having to grapple and to assess the development of priorities in higher education. There have been a number of broad developments over the last decades of the twentieth century for Irish higher education which are the background against which recent attempts to reform higher education can be understood.

Movement from a Binary to an Integrated System

Skilbeck (2003, p5) argues that the binary distinction of highly regulated higher education institutions in Ireland, whose merits can be extolled in the abstract, is not working in practice and efforts to sustain it are inconsistent with the type of socio-economic environment and national priorities which are being sought. Presently, universities appear to enjoy degrees of freedom, power, prestige and influence beyond even the largest and strongest institutes of technology. In place of this, what is being proposed is a more integrated system which recognizes the value of a variety of players,

public and private, formal and informal. In interrelating most of the public sector institutions within a single framework of higher education in Ireland, a goal is to facilitate, amongst others, distinctiveness of institutions, programmes, staffing, and funding.

The Bologna Declaration

Clearly, Quality Assurance (QA) influences exist from the UK and the USA also, however the Bologna Declaration (1999) is having a direct impact on Irish HE. The Declaration's objective of increasing the international competitiveness of the European system of higher education has produced at least three developments that are having a direct influence on the design of educational programmes at third level in Ireland.

Firstly, the Declaration is promoting the adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees in order to both promote European citizens' employability and the international competitiveness of the European HE system. Secondly, the establishment of a system of credits is being developed as a proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility. Thirdly, the Declaration is promoting quality assurance co-operation with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies.

Increased Accountability

There have been attempts to apply '*transparent accountability*' to many parts of the public sector in Great Britain in recent years. This form of accountability is central to the 'new public management' that has become so influential within government circles

across many Western societies (Hammersley, 2002, p4). One element of this is the provision of information about institutional performance. From the point of view of NPM, the publication of league tables and of the results of audits and inspections provides information about the performance of particular units or policies which can be used by those who fund the public sector, both government and citizens generally, to judge its effectiveness and efficiency.

Some inroads towards increased accountability are being made in specific areas of Irish HE. A range of recommendations aimed at improving accountability and transparency in the financial governance of Irish Universities is contained in a joint report published by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the Conference of Heads of Irish Universities (C.H.I.U.). The recommendations were accepted by the Higher Education Authority (HEA) and the individual universities and were implemented with effect from the beginning of the 2001/2002 academic year.

> *"This seminal Report will be an indispensable source of guidance to the universities in ensuring effective and accountable financial governance of their institutions. The Report provides an authoritative benchmark for the attainment of best practice by the universities in this vital area of operation."* Dr Art Cosgrove, Chairman of the C.H.I.U.

This report is welcomed in the area of financial governance, but there is clearly room for much further movement in other areas also.

Greater Access/Widening Participation

Globalisation of education faces many challenges: recruiting foreign students can become an entrepreneurial activity designed to generate revenue for universities with sagging budget and the quest to maximise enrollments can mean a decline in quality.

In Ireland and abroad, for higher education leaders and managers, the question of widening participation has now moved to the top of the agenda. It is seen as crucial in raising aspirations, creating opportunities for individuals, and providing social and economic benefits to society. There are now calls from several quarters in Irish society for an intensification of efforts to achieve both greater depths of knowledge and competence and considerably higher levels of educational participation for young people and adults alike (Skilbeck, 2003, p6).

Elsewhere, in the UK, over the past fifteen years, the student participation rate in higher education has more than doubled and yet the sector has absorbed a cost reduction of nearly 40%. Newby is one author who (2003, p18) argues that these results testify to a record of good management.

Increased Concerns about Vocationalism

Towards the close of the last millennium, there has been a common view that Ireland has lagged behind other countries in the provision of vocational and educational training. This finding is well documented in many publications, for example, the Roche and Tansey report (1992), and reports from international organisations such as the

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (1990) (Garavan *et al*, 1995). In these reports, figures point to wide discrepancies in educational attainment levels between countries. They show that Ireland did indeed lag behind many of her European neighbours with the exception perhaps of the UK. Ireland, like the UK, has a bias towards academic achievement rather than towards more broadly based vocational and educational training.

Greater Flexibility

An important focus for Irish HE is developing inter-institutional partnerships and more cost effective forms of technology-based delivery by actively preparing for the 'digital revolution' in course delivery and extended opportunities for learning. This issue is directly related to the area of managerialism. In higher education in Ireland, it is important to consider the issue of providing full and part-time educational programmes through an innovative, responsive, caring and flexible learning environment. Current and future leaders in this higher education environment need the background knowledge and skills to work towards fulfilling these goals.

Greater Managerialism

Although the term 'managerialsim' has had negative connotations in the literature, Osborne (1990, p1), for one, had suggested at the end of the last millenium that there was an emergence of a 'chief executive' approach to management in education, which is profoundly conservative. This point has been made in relation to education in the UK. However, one could anticipate that over time, those in positions of management in third level education in Ireland and those who aspire to future leadership position, will benefit

from an awareness of the global educational trends, and, importantly, be able to critically understand and evaluate the NPM principles being applied to practice.

There is little doubt that Irish society as a whole is profoundly affected by the international culture of globalization and by a wide array of cultural, social and economic change forces affecting education (Skilbeck, 2003, p.5). The next section of the paper explores these in depth.

Global Higher Education Reform

This section of the paper will examine the key dimensions of the rise of market forces in higher education throughout the world and the implications of this phenomenon for the Irish system. The aim of the review of the literature for this paper is to have a closer look into the so-called 'black box' of organisational change, contrast it to NPM, and critically evaluate its relationship to the principal work and workers in third level education in the Republic of Ireland, i.e. to study the impact of changing governance regimes on policy.

The goal of NPM is to introduce forms of organization within the public sector, higher education included, that approximate to the '*discipline of the market*' (Hammersley, 2002, p4).

Taken further, the process of convergence in education policies which is currently observable across the globe, has been described by Levin (1998, p131) as a '*policy epidemic*'. The policies are internally complex and complexly interrelated, and it is not

within the scope of this paper to explain the complexities; rather, it is the two main organizing principles that underpin the focus of the paper. One is the insertion of the '*market form*' which is intended to subject higher education to the dynamics and culture of competition and business. The other is '*performativity*', the use of targets and performance indicators to drive, evaluate and compare 'educational 'products' (Ball, 1999, p1).

It is useful to begin exploring NPM by looking at the changing role of higher education in the modern world. These changes are based on the very different expectations of governments, wider society, students and staff from a few decades ago. These changes should be explored for university leadership, governance and management.

Higher education systems around the world come in all sizes and configurations: different degrees of diversification, participation of private institutions, financing patterns and unit costs, and modes of governance (Barnett, 1997); however there is a set of common challenges for management that can be looked at in a global perspective. To a large extent, these problems are generated by the process of shifting from elite to expanded, mass higher education under severe resource constraints and with the burden of a legacy of persistent inequalities in access and outcomes, inadequate educational quality, low relevance to economic needs, and rigid governance and management structures.

What we have seen over the past thirty years is the increasing realisation and articulation of the central role of higher education in creating and supporting a modern economy, and

benefiting society in a wide variety of ways. In the UK for example, much of the expansion of higher education of the 1980s and 1990s was funded through so-called "efficiency gains". The Dearing Report signified a change in attitude by government to higher education.

Specific key roles of the higher education agenda developed by Lord Dearing in the UK in 1997 are lifelong learning, creation of a learning society, regional economic development, research and scholarship, technological innovation, social cohesion and public accountability (Newby, 2003, p11). Within a wide European context, the notions of lifelong learning and a learning society have been an important policy driver in the EU at both commission and national government levels for a number of years. Overall, these policies aim to promote the twin goals of competitiveness in international markets and social cohesion within the still-expanding borders of the Union itself. To date, however, Edwards and Boreham, (2003, p407), argue that the impact of this emphasis on lifelong learning has been relatively slight.

Hartley's belief (1997, p47) that the important changes that have been taking place in culture and in the global economy cannot be accommodated within the traditional form of education is similar to the synopsis by the World Bank:

> "*Expansion, public and private, has been unbridled, unplanned and often chaotic. The results have been deterioration in average quality, continued interregional, intercountry and intracountry inequities, and increased for-*

profit provision of higher education – could all have serious consequences" (World Bank and UNESCO, 2000).

It is important to explore the evolving relationship between the marketplace, the state and higher education institutions. The context of these relations has evolved strikingly in recent years, which have seen three major developments: growing system differentiation, changing governance patterns, and diminished direct involvement of governments in the funding and provision of higher education.

Since the 1980s, an increasingly popular reform around the world has been devolvement of educational decision-making authority and responsibility - from the centre to regional and local systems. At least eight, often interrelated, goals are arguably driving the change: accelerating economic development by modernising institutions; increasing management efficiency; reallocating financial responsibility, for example, from the centre to the periphery; promoting democratization; increasing local control through deregulation; introducing market-based education; neutralizing competing centres of power such as teachers unions and political parties; and enhancing the quality of education (for example, by reducing dropout rates or increasing the emphasis on learning).

During the last decade, we have been able to observe a remarkable shift in governmental beliefs and attitudes in Western European countries concerning the role of the state in modern societies and the modes of governmental problem-solving in public sectors like

higher education (Neave and Van Vught, 1991). This development has been analysed as a shift from a state control model towards a state supervising model, as the rise of the evaluative state or the ‘off-load’ state in search for new sources of income, influence and legitimacy in the regulation of higher education. By and large, the implementation of respective reforms has profoundly modified the relationship between government and higher education and rests at the same time upon a significant reinforcement of the external ties of higher education institutions with their environment as well as the internal governance of higher education (Birnbaum, 2001).

The shift towards governmental steering at a distance, the extension of institutional autonomy and market-like steering in higher education has taken place alongside an overall change in the style of governance and management of public sector organisations that is frequently referred to as the 'New Public Management' (Ferlie, 1997).

Over recent years, Australian higher education institutions have moved from largely collegial to much more corporate styles of university management (Harman, 2002). This trend raises important issues about the possible impact this has had and is continuing to have on the positions of heads of academic schools and departments. Are the new generation of deans and heads more inclined to be corporate managers rather than more traditional academic leaders, with their main loyalties now being more to their vice-chancellors rather than to their academic colleagues?

Changes in educational policy in the context of changes within the European Union in the last decade can also shed light on the impact of reform. A radical policy shift in Finland's educational policy involving such concepts as marketisation and parental choice suggests that the change is more profound in Finland that elsewhere in continental Europe (Rinne, 2000).

So, there is no doubt that the environment in which higher education institutions around the world operate is changing rapidly. Globalisation of higher education, increased initiatives aiming at internationalisation, the activities of so-called new providers and various forms of 'borderless' higher education, and – not least – the discussion on the liberalisation of trade in higher education services challenge the higher education community worldwide and call for new and imaginative strategies.

The World Bank has undertaken initiatives to this end. 'Education for the Knowledge Economy (EKE)' is a three year analytical program to understand and articulate how education and training systems need to change in order to meet the challenges of the knowledge economy, and to offer practical and sustainable policy options for developing countries (World Bank Group, 2003, p102).

To successfully fulfil their educational, research, and informational functions in the 21st century, higher education institutions need to be able to respond effectively to changing education and training needs, adapt to a rapidly shifting higher education landscape, and adopt more flexible modes of organisation and operation.

Three broad activities of higher education institutions that assist the construction of democratic, knowledge-driven societies are:

1. Supporting innovation by generating new knowledge, accessing global stores of knowledge and adapting knowledge to local use.
2. Contributing to human capital formation by training a qualified and adaptable labour force.
3. Providing the foundation for democracy, nation building and social cohesion.

The emergence of borderless higher education also heralds important changes in quality assurance needs and practices. Higher education institutions in many countries are initiating sweeping transformations to align themselves better with new educational demands and competitive challenges. The main goal is to increase institutional flexibility and build up the adaptive capacity of these institutions and their programs. These reforms are all-encompassing, touching on program offerings, academic structure and organisation, pedagogical processes and modes of delivery, physical infrastructure and the teaching profession. Quality assurance practices in The Dublin Institute of Technology are currently undergoing review in the light of such change.

A central question remains from all this: what will be the implications of 'Commodification'? - making higher education a purchasable and saleable good and subject therefore to international trade law. It is important to look at an answer for this within the Irish context previously outlined.

To what extent does Irish Higher Education adopt, adapt, reject these trends? Why?

Skilbeck's continuing work in 2003 in the Irish HE context aims to carry forward issues already current in Ireland and to build on the previously-discussed trends and movements in the international higher education environment. In both instances, they have as their focus changing patterns of higher education in the broader context of public policy issues, notably the part to be played by higher education in achieving national development goals.

He has argued that there are some who wish to maintain the status quo; in many ways traditional Irish society, while very cohesive, was highly structured and had been criticised for being tinged with a degree of fundamentalism and absolutism. However, forces within the country and in the international environment have already combined to ensure a culture of continuing change. The challenge, according to Skilbeck (2003, p2), is "*to face the issues squarely and to demonstrate that tertiary education in all its forms and manifestations is capable of strategic innovation and creative problem solving.*"

The Irish Minster for Education and Science invited the OECD to conduct a review of Irish Higher Education. The report was published in May 2003 and notes that Ireland has followed the international trend of introducing market based principles into the public sector with the aim of enhancing efficiency in publicly funded services through competition. It observes that there is still room for further exploiting the benefits of market mechanism. The report further notes that such heavy subsidisation of higher education is questionable on both equity and efficiency grounds, in particular given that

the private return to education is much higher that the social rate of return for those who have a university degree. The report suggests that the government might consider introducing a government backed loan scheme pointing to their success in other countries.

In a speech describing the background to the review, the Minister outlined significant growth, both in enrolment numbers and funding terms, that higher education has experienced over recent decades and the new challenges that now faced the sector in remaining relevant to broader social and economic needs:

> "*We need to ensure that our higher education system is both responsive to and leading change in the world around it. Economically, Ireland now faces new challenges; most fundamentally through the need to achieve a successful transition to the knowledge and innovation society that is key to our future competitiveness and prosperity. The higher education sector and our capacity to produce leading edge research will be central to that transition. In social terms, Irish society continues to evolve rapidly and the lifelong learning needs of individual learners are changing. There are also particular challenges for the higher education sector in achieving greater rates of participation from the traditionally under-represented and socially disadvantaged sectors in our communities"* (Dempsey, 2003).

According to the Skilbeck report in 2001, the university in Ireland is a big, complex, demanding, competitive business requiring large-scale ongoing investment. In 1998, the UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education estimated that some 82 million people were enrolled in higher education institutions, a sixfold increase in the period 1960 to 1995. This rise has its parallel in Ireland where currently over 115,000 students study full-time compared to just under 19,000 in 1966.

As planners in Irish HE seek to address society's economic, cultural and social requirements, much of the current worldwide debate in the field of higher education is dominated by the imposing challenges of the new century. These include the impact of new technologies particularly in the communications field on higher education institutions and traditional modes of delivery; the changing demography in the student population particularly in the developed world; and the sources of funding for the ever increasing costs of investment in higher education.

The demands and expectations that are being placed on Irish higher education institutions by Government, industry, social partners, and professional bodies are formidable. It can be argued that it is important for these said institutions to assess, review and explore performance and chart strategies so that the higher education system is equipped to deal with the new challenges of this century. While all agencies have to cope with change, it can be argued that it is essential that the Irish higher education institutions are strategically equipped to maintain that crucial distance necessary to offer objective

insights and a critique of events and developments so that society in general can better cope and progress.

Several forces that are transforming societies, not only in the OECD countries but globally, are having a powerful impact on higher education policies and practices. There is continuing growth in demand by individuals and by whole societies for ever higher levels of educational attainment. There is increased recognition of the economic returns that follow investment in education that are of high quality and relevance to society's needs and expectations.

There have been both fresh initiatives determined from within the institutions and state-wide reform endeavours. There is also the concern that the universities may not be providing the leadership in contemporary society that reflects their distinctive moral and intellectual stature.

In Ireland, as elsewhere, governments face common challenges in seeking to achieve their education and skills objectives. How can new investment in learning be managed most effectively and equitably, often within decentralised governance structures? What strategies can be employed to secure resources from the private and not-for-profit sectors? What should 21st century learning organisations look like? What sort of teaching and learning should take placed in them? How can out-dated management arrangements be updated or transformed?

There have been inroads made to lay down a strategy for '*future excellence*' in Irish higher education at this time of key transition for the sector as a whole *(Dempsey, 2003).* Minister Dempsey has admitted that as such, it is highly ambitious, but is necessary to operate in an intensely competitive global environment.

Global educational reforms of the last decade can be used as a measuring stick for higher education in Ireland by viewing the impetus behind such reforms and their impact on practice. Barlow and Robertson (1994) whilst discussing the educational reforms in Canada, posit that changes were motivated more by ultraconservative "*ideological and political*" beliefs than by fiscal need. They added that there were no pedagogical basis to the educational reforms. Interestingly, Hallinger *et al* (1993) made a similar claim about the overall educational restructuring phenomenon in New Zealand, the USA and Great Britain, stating that reformers paid attention to organizational and governance issues at the expense of curricular and instructional matters. Aronowitz and Giroux (1993) agreed that the restructuring movement results from "*narrow economic concerns, private interests, and strongly conservative values*."

I would argue that the intentions of reformers of policies and what actually happens in reality are two different things. "*The past is a presence that shapes today's world and the moment beyond, the future*" (Cuban, 2003). A common feature of change that most countries experience is that there is a media hype that accompanies reform. One example that can illustrate this is policy makers wanting more frequent and innovative use of technology in the classroom. However, there are certain questions that teachers ask and

policymakers do not. Why dissect the logic of a policy that can change when it is put into practice? The theory behind a policy can directly affect children. I believe that clarity about the logic of a policy makes possible the evaluation of it by the public; maintaining faith in credibility of elected officials in a democracy is important. However, making transparent the assumptions of a policy can weaken policymakers. When the logic of a policy is dissected, myths can be broken.

Whilst written in the context of school teaching, this argument can also be made to higher education teaching practice. Ball (1999, p8) suggests that the combination of market and performative reforms bites deep into the practice of teaching and into the teacher's soul – into the '*classroom life*' and world of imagination of the teacher – specific and diverse aspects of conduct are reworked and the locus of control over the selection of pedagogies and curricula is shifted. Classroom practice is increasingly '*made up*' out of responses to changing external demands. As such a teacher in Irish higher education, I am aware of the impact that these reforms can have on my classroom practice and on those academics whom I support in developing pedagogy and curricula at third level.

As an academic teaching in Irish higher education, the research explored for this paper has shed light for me on recent global educational reforms. Moving towards exploring the impact of these reforms on the Irish HE context, I found it useful to compile the following table (Table I) as a formulation of current facets of Irish Higher Education, drawn up from a pedagogical perspective.

“Take in Table I"

Policy Implications: the way forward for Irish Education Management at Third Level

It is important to look to the future by considering the implications of global educational reform for policy within third level learning and teaching in Ireland. Within this, it is imperative that all who have a stake in the quality and responsiveness of the HE system in Ireland engage in the future direction and development of HE policy.

We live in a knowledge-based society and I would argue that no institutions are as well positioned to play an influential role as our seats of learning. Higher education and research are essential components of cultural and socio-economic development of individuals, communities and nations.

Changes will be acutely felt in a number of areas. Changes are systematic through legislation, policymaking, regulation, performance targeting, monitoring and funding. Systems, structures and linkages, both formal and informal are expanding, from the state and national levels to cross-country regional and global groupings. Changes can be radical, as new kinds of institutions and processes emerge (private and corporate providers, virtual institutions), staff responsibilities and new models of staffing are needed (contract and performance based, entrepreneurial).

The scale and the pace of change in a constrained resource environment require difficult decisions and strategic thinking of a high order. There are a number of expectations of Irish universities from a number of areas:

- to be more outward-looking partners in the development of the learning society;
- to provide leadership and service at local, regional, national and global levels;
- to make efficiency gains, more effectively manage themselves to achieve performance targets in teaching and research, and be publicly accountable and transparent;
- to maintain standards and high quality with reducing unit costs;
- to demonstrate ability to obtain new and additional sources of revenue.

The action needed to meet the challenges are numerous. System-wide strategic planning and financial decision making, monitoring and reporting on performance including quality of processes and actions are of growing importance and need to be built into the norms of institutional life. Institutions, whether public or private, do not function in isolation but are part of intricate networks and systems. Policy makers, faced with the pressure of increasing enrolments, much more diverse categories of students, rising costs and socio-economic demand for applicable knowledge, are having to find ways to reposition universities within diverse tertiary or higher education systems.

Technology can play an interesting part in management practices in higher education. In the USA, 'Virtual U'[1] is a web site which models the attitudes and behaviours of the academic community in five major areas of higher education management. Spending and income decisions such as operating budget, incoming donations and management of the

[1] http://www.virtual-u.org

endowment; staff and student issues; admissions standards, university prestige and student enrolment; resources and facilities; and performance indicators.

Enhancing the collective voice and influence of university leaders is widely recognised as a necessary counterbalance to the 'corporatisation' of decision-making across the whole of a society. It is against a turbulent international higher education environment that the universities of Ireland among other countries are now being challenged to meet the requirements of a fast growing economy and changing society.

Conclusion

There is no doubt about the existence of a myriad of themes, issues, challenges, threats, options, perspectives, patterns, policies and approaches that have surfaced in the recent international history of higher education. Issues not only relating to teaching and research but further questions of student and staff mobility, equality, transparency, quality assurance and financing can be further explored in national and international contexts.

Within this, Ireland has now entered what is widely seen as a critical phase in economic and social development. Perhaps less well appreciated is that the pulse of education reform needs to be quickened if the country's highly ambitious socio-economic goals are to be achieved. While it is not evident that there is any threat at present to the survival of any of the Irish universities, there are major changes in orientation and style that are called for. There are opportunities and pressing needs for change to strengthen individual institutions and to steer the system as a whole into closer alignment with the development

strategies for a highly competent, knowledge-based society that are now being pursued across the wide spectrum of recent and current national policy concerns.

The challenges are now around how Irish universities and higher education institutions sets their goals, defines targets, develops strategies, deploys resources and monitors and assesses their own performance. Momentous changes in the global environment are stretching the traditional time and space boundaries of higher education, in OECD countries and in developing and transition countries. The time dimension is altered by the requirement for lifelong learning, and space barriers are falling before ICTs. These further challenges can be seen as serious threats or tremendous opportunities for higher education everywhere. The hegemony of classical higher institutions in Ireland has been definitively challenged, and institutional differentiation is bound to accelerate, resulting in a greater variety of organisational configurations and patterns. In the view of an academic continuing to work in this environment, I see this as a positive way forward only if management can learn from their peers elsewhere and take on board the benefits as well as lessons learnt from implementing new public management in higher education.

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Desired Outcomes	Changing Education and Training Needs	Changing Higher Education Landscape	Changing Modes of Operation and Organisation
Advanced human capital	Demand for higher skills: skills derived from a mediation between experience and theory	Appearance of new providers	More interactive pedagogy with emphasis on learning: classroom event perceived in relation to institutional policies and goals
New knowledge, and competencies: both in greater depth	Methodological and analytical skills	Development of borderless education	Continuing education programs
Adaptation of global knowledge for resolution of local problems	Demands for internationally recognised qualifications	High involvement in non-teaching professional activities (academic centres, subject associations, research)	Increased reliance on ICT for pedagogical, information, administration and management purposes. Multi and transdisciplinarity
Democratic values, attitudes and cultural norms	Perspective embracing the broader social context of education	Value placed on professional collaboration	Humanistic dimension of education and training. Adaptability and flexibility.

Table I Current pedagogical facets of Irish Higher Education

(Adapted from World Bank's Constructing Knowledge Societies, 2003)