

# Affordable Quality Higher Education – At What Price?

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# Global post-secondary education: seven propositions

1. **mass** education (97%) not elite education (3%)
2. market-driven value for money (**affordability**) and successful participation (**accessibility**)
3. **in-country or virtual** provision (97%) not cross-border mobility (3%)
4. **total ability to pay** (individual, employer, state, family) rather than public/private contribution

# Global post-secondary education: seven propositions

5. **skills** more than **qualifications** leading to jobs
6. **family** opportunity (wealth, immigration) rather than **individual** empowerment or benefit
7. **global** questions of change being addressed by a highly **unglobalized** industry (still high national regulation).



## Affordable Quality Higher Education

- **Education** for the mass (97%) of HE participants
- **Affordable** to the “whole community”, wherever the widening participation may come from
- **Quality**: “Decent education . . .”
- **Value**: “For a decent price”.
- **An Age of Austerity**: Declining or static living standards
- **In summary**: Part of the continuing massification of HE at a time of, or because of, austerity.

# Massification of HE: aspirations

**United Kingdom** (Leitch, 2006) By 2020:

Basic skills: over 90 percent of adults Level 2 or above

Intermediate skills: over 70 per cent of adults Level 3 or above

Higher skills: over 40 per cent of adults Level 4 or above (degree)

“2020: Prosperity for all in the global economy – world class skills”

2020: 50 per cent of **London jobs** requiring Level 4 or higher skills

**Australia** (Bradley, 2008)

By 2025, 40 per cent of aged 25-34 with degree qualifications

**United States** (Lumina Foundation, 2011)

By 2025, 60 per cent of the population with degree qualifications.

# Massification of HE: aspirations

**European Union** (EU Council, 2011)

“Achieving the two EU headline targets in education and training, i.e. reducing the share of early school leavers to less than 10%, and increasing the proportion of 30-34 year olds having **completed tertiary or equivalent education to at least 40%** -- will have a positive effect on jobs and growth. . . . In order to be attractive and efficient, tertiary or equivalent education systems require a high level of efficient investment, modernised curricula and improved governance.”

# Questioning massification: over-education?

“Reckless university enrolment has aggravated both the private-education burden and youth unemployment. It’s a huge loss, not just for households but for the whole country.”



# Over-education? South Korea

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**President Lee Myung-Bak, “S Korea faces problems of over-education”, *FT.com*, 11 June 2010.**

# Questioning massification Status aspirations? Australia

“The mantra, pushed with more and more vigour as the resources boom took hold in the early years of this century, was that higher education [in Australia] was an **indulgence which reflected parents’ status aspirations for their children.**”

Bob Birrell & Daniel Edwards, “The Bradley Review and access to higher education in Australia”, *Australian Universities’ Review*, 51/1 (2009), 4-13 (p.5)

# Questioning massification Private earnings benefit? UK

"For men, we find very large returns for economics, management and law but not for other subjects - we even find **small negative returns in arts, humanities and other social sciences.**"

Ian Walker & Yu Zhu, "Differences by degrees" (2010), economic working paper, Lancaster University.

# Questioning massification Private earnings benefit? Australia

“A further complication in determining the level of student contributions on the basis of private benefit is that there is no direct relationship between the cost of a course of study and the level of public or private return. For example, costs of courses in the **visual and performing arts** can be very high, but there is, on average, **often no private benefit**, in terms of increased wages to graduates of this field of study.”

Source: *Higher Education Base Funding Review – Final Report*, October 2011 ([www.deewr.gov.au/basefundingreview](http://www.deewr.gov.au/basefundingreview)), p. 106.

# Massification of HE: why?

1. “Prerequisite to success” in a knowledge-based society
2. Societal/economic benefit, from civic engagement, better health, to less crime, more economic productivity
3. Social cohesion strengthened through closing attainment gaps.

Source: Adapted, [http://www.luminafoundation.org/goal\\_2025.html](http://www.luminafoundation.org/goal_2025.html)

# Massification of HE: how?

1. Increased investment, public or private
2. Increasing productivity per academic, reducing per-student cost
3. Tailoring curriculum and pedagogy, to meet fundamental, social, economic or employment goals in a more targeted way
4. Designing new levels of efficiency in support services
5. Drawing on the different intents of widening participation, fair access, and massification.

Hence, **affordable mass education**. But, of **quality**?

# Questions of quality

- Workforce: increasingly casualised?
- Staff training: sufficiently in relevant work environments?
- Student skills: less development of critical thinking skills “than their employers deem desirable”?
- Classes: larger?
- Estate: Space/place compromises (few contemporary learning spaces or state-of-the-art technology)?
- Compromise: Need “to strike the balance between quality and efficiency”? – i.e. what a society can afford, or is prepared to spend.





# Affordable Quality Higher Education: A Case Study

London Met, in its various guises, has been providing Affordable Quality Education since 1848. Our Strategic Plan's No. 1 and No. 2 priorities are “**providing a quality learning experience for our students**” and “**enhancing student participation and ensuring fair access**”. Our Plan adds, “on equitable principles”.

Source: London Metropolitan University's Strategic Plan 2010-13, *Transforming Lives, Meeting Needs, Building Careers*.

# Affordable Quality Higher Education

1. **We are committed to affordable and equitable practice:**
  - We have set UK/EU undergraduate fees at the lower end of range: an average of £6,850 (€8,500) and are seeking to bring postgraduate student fees to an average of £8K (€10K)
  - We are seeking to harmonise UK/EU and international fees where there is no government subsidy to students (recommended)
  - We are ensuring affordability both to our students and to the taxpayers of the future – this is an important aspect of our Strategic Plan's commitment to **social justice**.

# Affordable Quality Higher Education

- 2. We are committed to providing value for money:**
  - We have redrawn undergraduate and postgraduate portfolios (reduced courses by between 50 and 70 per cent) and are increasing teaching time and term lengths for most students
  - We are concentrating our research and research training work so that it also is affordable, and has demonstrable financial support
  - We are process-redesigning our administration, as a prelude to **sharing services** with other universities; through application of a new resource allocation model, efficiencies will benefit the student experience.

# Affordable Quality Higher Education

## 3. We are committed to an access approach:

- We recognise the **debt aversion** of many, particularly our poorest students, so have set low, clear price tags
- We are keeping the message simple for prospective students (e.g. limited fee waivers, rather than bursaries), so our fees are transparent, and mean what they say
- We have bid for new “affordable” student numbers, and have successfully been awarded over 10 per cent more funded student places for 2012/13 because of our “affordability”.



# At What Price? Leadership

- From centralised “dictatorship” to faculty-based leadership → the Dean’s role
- From a culture of coordinated course delivery to one of reengaged individual pedagogy → teaching responsibility
- From costs model to resourcing model → financial responsibility and reward
- From entitlement of teaching-and-research to the obligations of different scholarships → talent management

# At What Price? Management

- Transformation: reshaped portfolio, staffing profile, student profile, estates, finances, new ventures – under-resourced, over-regulated?
- Quality, efficiency, quantity – compromise?
- People, incl. staff morale, student satisfaction: focus, balance, dedication, faith?
- Relationships: collaborating *and* competing?

# At What Price? Consensus

- The strategic: often prophetically strong
- The operational: often weak, disconnected systems, even with expectation of failure
- The financial: role of state, cross-subsidy
- The ideological: access vs. elite, rhetoric vs. action
- The industrial: rights, expectations, opportunities



# At What Price? Collegiality

- “To communicate openly and honestly with other department members
- To work productively with other department members
- To participate in and otherwise support departmental activities
- To shoulder his/her fair share of departmental tasks
- To make a continuing positive contribution to the working atmosphere of the department.”

But to uphold academic freedom *and* freedom of speech!

Access to Higher Education: a right, a privilege or a necessity?

# A right

To “students whose prior learning or experience should be sufficient to succeed on our courses”

To “a diverse range of national, European Union and international students”.



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