Improving the quality of student learning and the level of degree attainment through common degree requirements and assessment – background, drivers, methodologies and current steps.

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This Session

At the end of the session you will have an understanding of:

- Challenges facing U.S. Higher education
- Some data indicators of the challenges
- How change can occur given the legal framework for higher education
- How similar challenges are being tackled in the European Higher Education Area and how this work is being scrutinised around the globe
- What ‘Tuning USA’ is and is doing
- How issues of quality might be approached
- Some conclusions reached by the presenters to debate
Thesis: Think Globally; Act Locally

• Similar Problems (Around the Globe)

• US should scrutinize, evaluate and learn from International Developments

• Students Matter – 21st Century Students Are Different than Their Forebears – Learning is Vital

• US higher education will benefit from change

• National/Transnational Approach
US needs to increase degree attainment

• Labor market will require it

• The knowledge based economy is the future

• Global Competitiveness

• Significant higher education reform
By 2018, 63% of all jobs will require some post secondary education and training.
Real wages of Americans increase by education level

Real Wages of Americans increase by education level
(ages 23-64)

Source: March CPS
Least educated are most vulnerable in economic downturns (employment rates by education)
Countries are ranked in descending order of the employment rate of 25-64 year-olds with tertiary education.
Source: OECD. Table A6.3a. See Annex 3 for notes (www.oecd.org/edu/eag2010).
Chart A4.1. Proportion of students who enter tertiary education without graduating from at least a first degree at this level (2008)

Note: Some of the students who have not graduated may be still enrolled, or may have finished their education at a different institution than the one they started at, like in the United States.
1. Includes students entering single courses who may never intend to study all courses needed for a degree.
2. Tertiary-type A only.
Countries are ranked in descending order of the proportion of students who enter tertiary education without graduating from at least a first degree at this level.
Expenditure Rates on Students
OECD Countries 2007
What Europe Faced

• Started 1999 as “Bologna” or the European Higher Education Area (March 2010)
• Various action lines, including:
  • 3 cycles (BA/MA/PhD)
  • Credits (ECTS – output/learning outcomes driven + workload)
  • Mobility (trans-national and vertical as well as horizontal, linked to the Lisbon Agenda)
  • Quality assurance (ENQA)
  • Lifelong Learning (LLL + RPL)
  • Students at the centre (all types)
  • QFs (Degree Profile)
Parallels: US & Bologna

Why the comparison?

• Bologna 47 states/USA 50 states
• Bologna no legal competence for higher education/USA little federal legal competence
• Bologna states saw the need for change/USA has a growing groundswell of a view that there is a need for change:
  • Transparency (quality, accreditation, learning, reference points, costs, benefits)
• Effect of recognizing a changed paradigm
• Can “soft law” achieve large scale change?
Diverse and Complex Landscape of US higher ed.

- Federal/National/Regional/State

- Categories of university - public (2 year, 4 year, doctoral), private (for profit, not for profit), religious affiliation, ODL, etc.

- Traditions:- tenure track, academic freedom, fee structures, sport, research, role of the law, etc.
Changing the Landscape #1

U.S. Law:

• Constitutional law
• Department of Education (….supplement and complement state and local government …)
• Federal “scene changers”, for example:
  • GI Bill 1944
  • Higher Education Act 1965 (….restrictions on the use of federal funds….):
    • What is an “institute of higher education”?
    • What is the role of educational accrediting agencies?
    • What authority does the federal government have over the accrediting agencies?

• The power of funding.
Changing the Landscape #2

U.S. Law continued:

• What are the criteria for accrediting agency recognition?
  • Voluntary membership of HEIs
  • apply and enforce standards that “respect the stated mission of the HEI”
  • Assess whether the courses offered are of “sufficient quality” to achieve the mission
  • Institutional factors to be considered
  • Periodic review – of what?
Why ..........................?
Tuning USA

What is Tuning and where did it come from:
• It is and always has been a faculty led project across many disciplines that turned into a process
• It is not universally used or accepted in Europe, but
• It is now adopted as a key part of Bologna (learning outcomes, workload, assessment, learning, students etc), active learning outcomes, and
• It is now used or in pilot process in Latin America, Mexico, Australia, parts of the USA
• It is different from other learning outcome projects
• It is a living process and so changes, adapts, melds

~~~”know, understand and be able to do”~~~
Tuning USA Pilot & beyond

The Pilot Project (March 2009 - August 2010):

- 3 States – Utah, Minnesota, Indiana
- 6 disciplines & 20+ institutions across the whole sector (2 Year, 4 Year, Flagship)

Tuning methodology in use –

- 4 way survey – general competencies & subject competencies

Tuning 2 (November 2010 – November 2011):

- Original states + some contiguous states e.g. Kentucky
- History “wider and deeper”
Qualifications Framework

• What is a Qualification Framework?
  • Value
  • Accountability
  • Transparency
  • Student Outcomes
  • Multiple pathway
  • Globalization
  • Quality
Degree Profile to be piloted in the U.S.

• What is the DP?
• How was it developed?
• What stage is it now at? [see: also copies available today]
• What has the reaction been to date?
• What happens next?
• What happens after that
Conclusions

(1) Change is inevitable
(2) Faculty can lead change through Tuning
(3) Global influences cannot be ignored
(4) US higher education still leads the world in some aspects e.g. research but also lags in others e.g. making the implicit, explicit
(5) The US is not alone in any of these matters