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QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION – A PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

Abstract: From a philosophical perspective the question of quality in higher education can be linked to two subsequent issues: aims and goals of universities and teaching and learning excellence. Main goals of contemporary university education are Socratic education and employability of graduates. However, there are also important latent functions of the university which importantly contribute to developed democratic societies: social mobility, keeping young talented minds engaged with interesting subjects, and the development of youngsters' culture. As the chapter shows, some of these aims contradict each other: especially the labor market pressure and Socratic aims. Ideas about excellence in teaching and learning have – despite perhaps prevalent views – changed little over past three centuries. The concluding section shows that the history of university was turbulent since its inception and that this institution was always a battleground for various political, economic, and personal interests. However, since the impacts of university culture on society are variegated, a more holistic view is needed to understand its goals, whereby it can be shown that universities flourished in periods of relative freedom and autonomy.

Keywords: philosophy of education, aims of higher education, university, teaching excellence, Socratic education.

INTRODUCTION

The question of quality in higher education is closely related to two other questions: 1) the question of the aims and goals of higher education and 2) the question of teaching and learning excellence. The “quality” of teaching can namely only be assessed if one knows *what to assess* and if, consequently, the goals and methods of teaching are taken into account. Both subsequent questions are, to be sure, closely related: a certain type of answer to the aims and goals question determines the answer to the teaching excellence question and vice versa. If, for instance, one advocates the idea that graduates should be initiative-taking proactive employees, then teaching based on active learning and student interaction is likely to be emphasized as the most important and productive learning method. However, the two questions can nonetheless be handled relatively independently:

the aims and goals question is obviously related to broader socio-economic and political issues, while the teaching excellence question ties in more with psychological, pedagogical and didactical factors of good learning. For this reason, the present chapter will explore the two questions separately, focusing first on a philosophical analysis of aims and goals in higher education and then proceeding to the question of excellence in teaching and learning.

Before taking up this challenge, a short explanation of the role of philosophical analysis of educational issues is in place. The simplest question that might arise in this context is what has philosophy to do with all these problems? And the simplest answer to this question is: *a lot!* As Amélie Oksenberg Rorty emphasizes in her chapter on “The Ruling History of Education,” “The disputes at the heart of contemporary discussion of educational policy [...] reenact the controversies that mark the history of philosophy from Plato to social epistemology” (Oksenberg Rorty, 1998, p. 1). Indeed, as Oksenberg Rorty is quick to point out, “philosophers have always intended to transform the way we see and think, act and interact; they have always taken themselves to be the ultimate educators of mankind” (Ibid.). Educational interests are thus inherent to philosophical reflection and its final aim to improve the lives of individuals and society. It is thus not surprising to find out that the two points at which philosophical and educational efforts make the closest approach – ethics and epistemology – are also closely related to the two initial questions. As Eva D. Bahovec points out, “the concept of education encompasses two basic, closely related issues: transfer of knowledge and shaping of subjectivity” (Bahovec, 1992, p. 7). These issues are, however, present also in ethics and epistemology – indeed, they are *the central* issues of these two disciplines. Ethics as a discipline that explores good life and righteous society is primarily interested in “shaping of subjectivity,” in producing a virtuous and just character, or – to put it simply – the making of good personality. In turn, the primary concern of epistemology or theory of knowledge is the possibility of knowledge transfer. The question of whether we want initiative-taking graduates thus boils down to the question of whether self-confident, assertive personality is a good educational aim; similarly, the issue of active learning reduces to the question of the most promising method of attaining knowledge (cf. Curren, 2006, p. 2). Thus the role of philosophical reflection in education is not only an important part of educational science but also implicit in *every* educational theory and practical educational day-to-day decisions, since “they involve the very questions philosophers have been asking about education throughout the centuries” (Amiran, 2006, p. 553).

The first part of the present chapter thus provides an examination of different – often even antagonistic – aims and goals in higher education. The first explored aim, described by Minda R. Amiran, is to foster critical inquiry and independent thinking (2006, p. 551), a so-called “Socratic aim”. However, this aim in practice

often collides with the dictates of the market. Indeed, future employment of graduates is often seen as the most important function of higher education institutions (European Commission, 2017), and eagerness to attract large numbers of students often sacrifices small-scale learning environment for packed lecturing halls. In addition to these two explicitly stated aims, higher education institutions also have at least three “latent” functions (Stone, 2005): keeping young talented minds out of mischief by occupying them with appropriate and interesting contents, development of vibrant young culture, and providing opportunities for those less privileged to climb up social ladder. It will be argued that these last, often neglected, social aims play a vital role in contemporary societies since they significantly contribute to the shaping of engaged and interested personalities that are indispensable for well-functioning democratic societies.

The second part of the chapter deals with excellence in teaching and learning, focusing first on the elements of “Socratic education” with its emphasis on “student-centered learning” as one of the most favored method in contemporary higher education. As this section will try to show, Socratic education – similar to Socratic aims – often comes in conflict with economic realities of contemporary universities. Secondly, the idea of “experiential education,” together with the emphasis on “practice” will be explored in this section together with John Locke’s educational ideal. As the analysis will show, “experiential education” again stumbles on economic hurdles, since it demands small-scale learning environment where tutors can work with students individually. Moreover, in the framework of the discussion of “more practice” in higher education curricula one should not overlook the fact that the attitude between theory and practice is varied and complicated: thus “more practice” on its own does not yet guarantee sound education; instead, what is needed is theory-informed practice.

The concluding section will try to shed light on the university culture from a more historical viewpoint. It will try to show that universities were almost always in a state of crisis, since they represented the battlefield of various political, economic, and personal interests. Indeed, since its inception “university” was an institution dependent on economic frameworks and mustered on a typical “guild,” meaning that it was never independent of broader social and economic phenomena. As will be shown, periods in which universities flourished were followed with periods of knowledge-crisis and stagnation. Consequently, one should understand the current situation in higher education as a part of this fluctuating history of an institution that is more than 800 years old and has managed to survive through major social changes. The direction in which future universities will develop will thus be inevitably linked to upcoming global developments. The conclusion thus highlights the idea that the issue of “quality” in higher education should be approached carefully and holistically, and it should not be reduced

only to the numbers of graduates produced or their employability. To the contrary, history teaches us that the periods in which knowledge production flourished was marked with relative freedom and independence of universities. Rather than stimulating suitable learning environments at the universities, new administrative pressures can thus sooner hinder the development of higher education.

AIMS AND GOALS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

In a chapter that analyses aims and goals of American higher education institutions, Minda R. Amiran (2006) points out critical inquiry as the prime goal of higher learning. This goal can even be deduced from college brochures that often feature pictures of small groups of engaged students, exchanging ideas and communicating personally with their professors. Spacious lecture halls, packed with students, are seldom portrayed on such advertisements, giving us clues as to how exactly academia wants to see itself. According to Minda R. Amiran:

“The academy, then, as it most often presents itself, aims to foster free and open inquiry guided by Socrates’ values, or the values of free speech and action [...] It would thus act as an ethical agent for its students, helping them examine themselves and their place in the world, helping them develop their powers of reasoning and acting through intellectual discipline and self-government, getting them to question their society and its values independently.” (Amiran, 2006, p. 551-2)

Looking at the European higher education institutions soon reveals that this goal is shared also across the Atlantic: introductory remarks of the Slovenian National Program of Higher Education 2011-2020 explicitly refer to both Horace as well as Kant and their *sapere aude* – dare to know – parole that underlines pretty much the same goals of higher education: critical inquiry, autonomy, and creativity (Ministrstvo za visoko šolstvo, znanost in tehnologijo [Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology], 2011).

However, as Amiran points out, this goal is sometimes difficult to achieve because of the market and economic pressures on higher education institutions. Too often these realities take a heavy toll on critical inquiry and student autonomy. Amiran thus points out several points of conflict between “Socratic and economic aims” of higher education (Amiran, 2006, p. 553–7):

1. Limited access to higher education: even though in theory every hard-working student should have an opportunity to access higher education, merit-based scholarships nonetheless favor well-to-do students, as those (because

- of their favorable demographic background) are more likely to score high in tests and be competitive.
2. Faculty recruitment and student/faculty ratio: even though research and experience show that learning works best in small groups, colleges and universities are under pressure to hire “academic stars” in order to attract a large number of students. Universities and colleges thus rather employ a small number of reputed scholars instead of a larger number of well qualified teachers. In turn, this leads to packed lecturing halls instead of small groups of students, thus lowering the quality of teaching and minimizing the opportunity of students to actively and critically engage in the pedagogical process.
 3. Choice of a curriculum: liberal arts – mathematics, music, astronomy, literature, and philosophy – were and still are conceived as “essential to the education of wise, civic-minded leaders” (Amiran, 2006, p. 556). However, higher education institutions are under heavy pressure to introduce “applied” sciences like engineering, accounting, and finance. Since these study programs often require substantial investment (laboratory equipment etc.), their introduction comes at a considerable cost to liberal arts: normally, funds are cut in the liberal arts and humanities departments in order to finance currently popular and financially more demanding programs. This results in the loss of basic science research and teaching in favor of supposedly more “applicable” skills and competences which can have detrimental long-term effects on progress and development (Grušovnik, 2015).

Critical and autonomous thinking is thus often joined with another aim of contemporary university: the economic success. Indeed, while European Commission’s higher education policy does favor Socratic ideal, it nonetheless strongly emphasizes this latter aim – the “success” of graduates after finishing university programs: “High quality and relevant higher education is able to equip students with the knowledge, skills and core transferable competences they need to succeed after graduation, within a high quality learning environment which recognizes and supports good teaching” (European Commission, 2017). The “success” is here seen as success in labor market, the ability to find high-paying jobs in good working environment that fosters personal career development. The “employability,” then, can be seen as another important aim of higher education, often conflicting – as we have seen above – with the Socratic ideal.

The quality of higher education institutions is, however, much more easily assessed according to this economic aim: employability of students in a certain period after graduation can be measured much more easily than “critical” or “autonomous” thinking, and perhaps this is also one of the reasons why economic goals of universities gained in their importance in our increasingly quantitatively oriented societies, where quality is often seen as correlated with measurable figures.

Needless to say, such orientation has a detrimental impact on more qualitative results of teaching and learning in higher education institutions, since the later are much more difficult to assess and are consequently at risk of being overlooked.

In addition to these two central and often very explicitly – even officially – stated aims of higher education institutions, Lawrence Stone's (2005) chapter on the history of Oxbridge and Edinburg university culture provides fascinating insight into the aims and goals of higher learning that are not so often mentioned, even though they have a tremendous impact on student life. Reminiscent of both Aristotle (Pol. 1337^b 35)¹ and Komensky (DM, VI, 7),² Stone sees an important – even the central – latent function of the university in “the difficult task of keeping adolescents out of mischief at their most impossible age, when they are most likely to run wild” (Stone, 2005, p. 16). In this sense, then, an important goal of higher education is simply to occupy young, curious minds with subjects deemed suitable for them by society. The idea that higher education also has such *moral aim* is expressive of Herbart's and Humboldt's vision of university's *Bildung*³ as ultimately moral education – the education for the highest aim of humanity (cf. Bowen, 2003b, p. 233). In addition to that, universities also provide young people with vibrant cultural life: “Another enduring latent function of the university has been to provide the undergraduate with access to a luxuriant and an exciting adolescent subculture” (Stone, 2005, p. 17). Moreover, universities also have an important latent aim connected with social control and/or mobility. In this sense, their goal is:

“to provide a new generation of elite with those skills and values deemed necessary for future leadership roles, and to allow these elite to make influential friends and contacts who will come in very useful in later life. In this respect, great universities are instruments of hierarchy and social stasis. On the other hand, they also serve to open up channels of upward social mobility for bright and ambitious sons of the poor, supported by scholarships; and also a shelter for the germination and fruition of new and possibly subversive ideas” (Stone, 2005, p. 16).

Needless to say, higher education policy should emphasize the role of universities in stimulating social mobility while preventing them to become elite institutions that protect the privileges of well-to-do citizens. This, in turn, means

1 Aristotle's *Politics* is cited in accordance with traditional method, referring to Bekker's pagination.

2 *Didactica Magna – The Great Didactic*, chapter VI., paragraph 7. (Comenius, 1907, p. 55)

3 “*Bildung*” is traditional German concept meaning foremost “the education of humanity” (Beiser, 1998, p. 284). The English word “education” itself comes from Latin proposition “*e*” (meaning “from”) and verb “*duco, ducere*” (meaning “to guide”): the “moral” dimension is thus always implicit in education, which can be etymologically understood as the process by which an individual is shaped, “guided” from his/her undeveloped to the developed state.

that higher education should become or remain free for all, or at least that merit-based scholarships should indeed go into the right hands and be granted to those that are less privileged.

Besides nourishing critical thinking and preparing students for their professional careers (and thus contributing to economical goals of society), universities then also have important social goals – keeping young minds busy and thus preventing talented people to waste their intellectual potential by directing their attention to worthy subjects, providing young adults with creative culture, and helping those that are economically and demographically deprived to attain a better social position on the basis of their skills and abilities (and thereby contributing to social equality and justice). These goals are especially important if we keep in mind that society is a holistic complex of various interrelated factors, and that properly functioning democratic states are unimaginable without cultured, informed, engaged, and interested citizens. The assessment of the quality of higher education should, then, take into account all these aims and functions of higher education: focusing only on explicitly stated goals would be too reductionist and would not do justice to a complex of effects that higher education has on our social lives and our societal wellbeing. Finally, if mentioned social goals are taken into account when the quality of higher education is under assessment, it can turn out that universities are better in accomplishing these than in achieving Socratic ideals and economic aims.

EXCELLENCE IN TEACHING AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

As said in the Introduction, the questions about good teaching and learning practice relate closely to the question of aims and goals in education. Thus, for instance, Socratic aim of striving towards critical inquisitive minds relates to “Socratic education,” emphasizing what we today fashionably call “student-centered learning”. The idea that students should be active in pedagogical process, that they should discover important truths by themselves – indeed that the *only way* one can learn something is by her- or himself – thus dates back almost two and a half millennia.

One of the traditional places where this idea can be found in its articulated form is Plato’s *Republic*. This Plato’s view – expressive of Socrates’ own ideas – can be found immediately after the famous “Allegory of the cave”. Engaged in a traditional Platonic dialogue with Glaucon, Socrates criticizes the Sophists’ idea of education as knowledge transmission and develops his own vision of education as “the art of turning around” in the following way:

“Then, if this is true,’ I said, ‘we must hold the following about these things: education is not what the professions of certain men assert it to be. They presumably assert that they put into the soul the knowledge that isn’t in it, as though they were putting sight into blind eyes.’

‘Yes,’ he said, ‘they do indeed assert that.’

‘But the present argument, on the other hand,’ I said, ‘indicates that this power is in the soul of each, and that the instrument with which each learns – just as an eye is not able to turn toward the light from the dark without the whole body – must be turned around from that which *is coming into being* together with the whole soul until it is able to endure looking at that which *is* and the brightest part of that which *is*. And we affirm that this is the good, don’t we?’

‘Yes.’

‘There would, therefore,’ I said, ‘be an art of this turning around, concerned with the way in which this power can most easily and efficiently be turned around, not an art of producing sight in it. Rather, this art takes as given that sight is there, but not rightly turned nor looking at what it ought to look at, and accomplishes this object” (Rep. 518 b–d).⁴

As Paul Woodruff points thus out, the “Socratic education puts the responsibility for learning on the learner” (Woodruff, 1998, p. 14). Indeed, “Nothing is more important to this kind of education than the resources that learners bring to it: their experience, their conceptual and logical abilities, and their desire to know the truth.” (Ibid.) The Socratic education, then, has three interrelated features, connected with “1. an emphasis on critical and consistent thinking; 2. a unique concept of teacherless education, contrasted with teaching both as it occurs in Athens and as it would occur in ideal circumstances; 3. the hope that education in philosophy has the potential to transform people’s lives for the better” (Woodruff, 1998, p. 14).

We have seen in the previous section that Socratic aim often comes in conflict with economic interests and consequent pressure put on the higher education institutions to produce large numbers of degrees. Since Socratic education favors a learning community in a small-scale environment and sufficient time to reflect critically on educational topics, it often has to be abandoned in large lecturing halls, packed with students under time pressure. Indeed, Socratic education is rare outside elite institutions, and average faculties usually submit to the socio-economic imperative of “knowledge production,” thus resembling Sophist education. Nonetheless, progress is made in this area as well, partly also because many institutions require their faculty to have an educational certificate and because educational science took interest in university didactics.

⁴ Plato’s *Republic* is cited according to the traditional method – the Stephanus pagination. The quote can also be found in Plato, 1968, p. 197.

Another ideal of learning and teaching excellence is undoubtedly connected with the idea of “experiential learning,” i.e. learning based on “concrete” experience and practice, and not on “abstract” rules or ideas. The idea that the “abstract” knowledge has its basis in “concrete” experience comes ultimately from Aristotle, but was reinterpreted by Comenius and Locke and finally found its way into curricula where it dominates to this day. Again, we deal with an ideal that is – contrary to common perception – nothing new. Indeed, its history can be traced back more than 300 years to Locke and his famous *Some Thoughts concerning Education*. There Locke envisioned practice-based education for young children, but its precepts can easily be applied to all teaching and learning situations, including higher education. Locke’s emphasis on “practical” education is explicated in the following way:

“But pray remember, children are not to be taught by rules, which will be always slipping out of their memories. What you think necessary for them to do, settle in them by an indispensable practice, as often as the occasion returns; and, if it be possible, make occasions” (Locke, 1824 [1690], § 66, p. 46).

As Locke sees it, one should, for instance, teach language by “talking it into children in constant conversation, and not by grammatical rules.” (Ibid., § 162, p. 152)

While experiential education is rightly widely considered as the most promising method of teaching and learning, it nonetheless has two problems when it is applied to higher education. The first problem is connected with high costs of such education, thus resembling the conflict between Socratic aims and economic goals. Similar to Socratic education, experiential education demands that teachers pay close attention to *individual* students: “The centrality given by Locke to particulars in his metaphysical system is reflected in his account of persons and in his work on education. Each child is to be dealt with individually” (Yolton, 1998, p. 174). This is, however, nearly impossible in modern higher education settings with packed lecturing halls and limited resources. The idea of “practical” education is thus under pressure from imperative to produce as many graduates as possible, practically compromising the ideal of learning by practice with the teacher’s guidance.

While this first problem of Lockean experiential education in higher education could, at least in theory, be solved with more funds and faculty, the second problem is more profound and touches on problematic ontological and epistemological aspects of Lockean empiricism. For Locke, experience is namely “simple” and the attitude between sense data and ideas is a one-way relation: from experience to theory. However, since Kant, Hegel, Dewey, Wittgenstein, and Kuhn

– to name only a few great thinkers – we know that “theory” informs “experience” and even that there is no such thing as theory-independent, objective sense data. As John Dewey showed, “experience” always unfolds in “experiential continuum” where past and future experience determine the quality of current experience (Dewey, 1963, p. 35). To put it simply: what we experience right now is a consequence of what we already know – thus, if one for instance knows that Newton’s law of universal gravitation applies to *all objects*, one will *experience* Moon’s motion around Earth as identical to an apple’s falling to the Earth’s ground. Thus, teaching *theory* can be very *practical* indeed, since it transforms the way we see and think about the world and the phenomena; also, it would be very time-consuming to count on students to deduce all theory that is relevant for their field from their own experience, since this process took several hundred years and for a long time employed some of the greatest minds that ever existed. Indeed, it would be irresponsible not to teach theory to students and count only on “practice”. Thus the calls for more “practice” in higher education should be properly contextualized; one should not simply understand them as “more practice” and “less theory” but sooner as “more theory-informed” practice, for bad practice is equally detrimental to good education. Such theory-informed practice can, for instance, operate in such a way that experience is correlated with theory, and that theory is taught on the basis of “examples” from concrete settings. Similarly, calls for more “applicability” should also be taken *cum grano salis*: since the economy is changing quickly, what *seems* applicable today can soon become outdated. Thus teaching students only what looks applicable in this moment and neglecting a more broader education can actually rob students of knowledge that is more long-lasting and could be used in future and unpredictable situations (cf. Grušovnik, 2015).

As shown in this section, excellence in teaching and learning in higher education can be understood as a proper implementation of Socratic education and experiential learning: the outcomes of both are engaged students that are able to critically and autonomously reflect on issues that they encounter. Quality assessment of higher education should thus take into account these elements, but it should also remain realistic (give the economic pressures on universities) and it should not fall prey to the idea of “more practice” and even economy-driven demand for “applicability,” since these two – if not properly implemented – can have detrimental long-term effects on university education.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: A HISTORICAL APPROACH TO THE SOCIAL RELEVANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Since its inception university as an institution of higher education was influenced by social, political, and economic factors. First universities – such as those in Paris and Bologna – developed out of so called “cathedral schools”. The latter, as their name suggests, were schools attached to cathedrals where bishops normally had their seat. The primary goal of these schools, which flourished around tenth century, was education of clergy. The overarching educational ideal of that period – connected also with Alcuin’s (c. 730/735 – 804) educational strivings and Charlemagne’s *renovatio* and *schola palatina* – was “*pietas literata*”, or “educated devotion”. Primary subject was instruction in grammar and rhetoric; however, Alcuin also worked hard to provide standardized Latin version of Vulgate, as well as other manuscripts deemed necessary by his vision of well-educated *Imperium Christianum*, together with a standardized book hand, now known as Carolingian minuscule. As the church developed and as the economy of the middle ages improved, the need for cadres – especially lawyers, theologians, and teachers – increased, thus giving rise to the *studium generale* which later became known as the “university”:

“The task of providing a wider secular education in the eleventh and twelfth centuries had been taken up by the cathedral schools, which, from their embryonic form in the sixth and seventh centuries, had expanded rapidly to accommodate the needs of learning and scholarship in the period of intellectual and economic activity after the European revival of the tenth century. As the twelfth century progressed into its later decades, concern with the classification and content of studies, with a view to increasing their relevance to human affairs, had become a greater preoccupation of scholars in the cathedral schools. In that period some of those schools began to assume a more corporate character and in the relatively short period of a century they developed into the new institution of the university, or *stadium generale* as it was first called, which emerged to meet the overwhelming need to provide for the training of lawyers, schoolmasters and clerics to fill the ranks of the increasingly sophisticated administration of both church and state” (Bowen, 2003a, p. 105).

First universities tried to provide cadres for emerging needs as a result of social and societal development and progress. As the name – *universitas* – itself suggests, these institutions were foremost guilds of craftsmen (i.e. schoolmasters) and were organized according to the principles of the economy of the middle ages. This is very important to bear in mind, since it indicates that the production and

transmission of knowledge in universities was from the very beginning connected with the stately and/or papal power – the idyllic notion of old universities as removed from real life, almost other-worldly institutions, dedicated only to contemplation of universal truths and transmission of transcendent knowledge, is simply poorly informed. Indeed, since its inception university was an institution of crisis: maybe the most explicit example of this fact is the so-called “university of Paris strike of 1229” which lasted more than two years. Moreover, the introduction of Aristotle’s works (mostly from developed Islamic cultures) challenged the ideas and ideology of church (which was at that time mostly Neoplatonic), thus triggering major knowledge-crisis and social upheaval. The university, then, was never a stable institution; to the contrary, since it represented the battle ground for various political interests, it was almost always in crisis, and periods of its flourishing alternated with periods of general degradation and decay of university culture over the centuries. This fluctuation can, for instance, be traced back to the history of Cambridge, Oxford, and Edinburgh Universities:

“Thus over the centuries the self-image of the university has fluctuated wildly between that of an authoritarian dictator of established wisdom in religion, politics, philosophy, morals and all academic topics, to that of an intellectual liberator which has deliberately set out to encourage a spirit of free enquiry. The latter periods have, however, historically been few and fairly short” (Stone, 2005, p. 16).

Indeed, even the famous “Humboldt university” fluctuated between periods of openness and progress on the one side and conservative reaction on the other side, as its primary aim was *moral education* (cf. Bowen, 2003b, p. 233). It would thus be incorrect to think that our times are special in the sense that we live in a “special” age of academic degradation (even if this degradation would be a well-proven fact).

What can be learned out of these historical remarks? First of all, university was always immersed in broader socio-economic events in the society: keeping this in mind – together with the fact that university culture has a much more broader impact on society than only knowledge-transmission (as has been shown in the first section of the present chapter) – one should always tend toward a holistic approach to the problem of higher education. Foremost this means that it is nearly impossible to take into account both, all of the impacts that university culture has on society and social development as well as economic and political factors that determine the fate of higher education. The issue of “quality” in higher education should thus be approached carefully and holistically, and it should not be reduced only to the numbers of graduates or their employability. Moreover, as Stone (2005) shows, the periods in which universities flourished were marked by

relative independence and freedom; putting additional administrative constraints on universities (with bureaucracy, changing economic visions, constant revisions of curricula etc.) can thus sooner hinder the development of the productive learning environment on these institutions rather than improve their functionality.

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