

vatiation along with globalisation was already on the table.

Despite these caveats, this is an important document and will be required reading for those concerned with ‘progress’ towards EFA. One can only hope that its balance and coverage will be improved in future editions.

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Roy Carr-Hill,

University of London, Institute of Education, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL, UK
E-mail address: r.carr-hill@ioe.ac.uk

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Incentive-based budgeting systems in public universities

Edited by Douglas M. Priest, William E. Becker, Don Hossler, and Edward P. St. John Cheltenham (UK): Edward Elgar, 2002, price £55, ISBN 1-84376-170-X

Regardless of whether one approves, there are certain inevitable consequences of recent changes in higher education. All higher education systems are expanding access. The typical industrialized country now enrolls 30–50% of the age cohort. All systems are attempting to improve the quality of teaching and to modernize curriculum. And all are attempting to improve opportunities for students who are less fortunate. With rare exceptions (such

as Norway), no nation can accomplish these three objectives by relying solely on public finance. This has led to difficult challenges to traditional methods of higher education governance and management around the world.

In general there are three groups of strategies for accomplishing these objectives without relying on public resources. One is to diversify the sources of finance. These can include new grants, income from copyrighted products, rental of property, sale of services, and of course tuition and fees. A second is to eliminate low priority programs and functions, such as expensive competitive sports, country-club student facilities and the like. And a third is to improve the efficiency by which current resources are allocated and managed. In the last category, one common tendency is the use of incentives in the system of budgeting. The theory is that with the proper incentives, resources will be more effectively targeted and more efficiently utilized. But does this assumption prove to be true?

This book of readings responds to this question. The twelve readings are divided into three categories. The first deals with the case for ‘responsibility-center budgeting’, its efficiency, and the degree to which the flexibility in revenue affects university behavior.

The second uses case studies at Indiana University, the University of Toronto, and the University of Michigan to deepen our understanding of the complexities, including unanticipated distortions, associated with the new budgeting techniques.

The third group of essays proposes lessons from the experience. These include the degree to which the incentives improve college teaching, the kinds of reward structures associated with the new budgeting, how performance indicators are constructed and used for evaluation, and the trends in incentives-based budgeting over time.

The authors of the last chapter (Douglas Priest, Edward St. John and William Tobin) come out of this policy minefield with a balanced view, useful for us all. They point out that there are many detriments and drawbacks, but there are many useful and constructive effects too. And though they do not dwell on the issue, the fact is that public universities can no longer govern themselves in isolation from the general standards for public ser-

vices. They have an obligation to demonstrate to the public that they use resources effectively.

This book provides an excellent set of stories on the trials, tribulations and successes of this inevitable university adjustment.

Stephen P. Heyneman,
Vanderbilt University, Peabody College,
Department of Leadership and Organizations,
International Education Policy Box 514,
Nashville, TN 37203, USA
E-mail address: s.heyne@vanderbilt.edu

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Teacher education through open and distance learning

Edited by Colin Latchem and Bernadette Robinson, 2002, Routledge Falmer, London, ISBN 0-415-36956-8, 272pp, Cost £22.50

In this engaging and useful book, the various edited chapters are complementary, with no key area overlooked. Central themes are woven throughout the book; if the reader feels that some dimensions of a topic are insufficiently addressed in one chapter, they have only to read on to find it revisited from a differing perspective.

From the outset, an emphasis is placed on determining the educational problem before identifying distance education as the solution. The early chapters explore the role of the teacher and the challenges they face, considering when and how open and distance learning may be appropriate. Issues of policy, partnership, collaboration and legitimacy in distance learning are discussed before addressing the ‘minefield’ of the ‘operational logistics’ of distance education (Chapter 2). Chapters 4 to 11 provide a closer insight into this ‘minefield’, such as material development, the use of technology, professional and administrative support, costs and cost-effectiveness, and programme evaluation, all within the context of different mod-

els of teacher education - Initial Teacher Education, Continuous Professional Development, Non Formal Education (NFE), and School Management.

One key theme for developing countries is whether to ‘develop, translate, buy or adapt materials’; thus Chapter 7 discusses the use of Commonwealth Secretariat’s ‘Better Schools’ material, and Chapter 8 talks of localising standardised material. The issue is raised again in relation to cost in Chapter 11 and in the concluding chapter. More research is needed into the transferability of materials into local context and achieving a balance between local ownership and utilising existing materials.

The concluding chapter appears to emphasise the importance of content over process. It suggests that, ‘without good understanding of the subject domain, training in teaching methods will not itself solve pupils’ learning problems or improve the quality of teaching’. There may be a need to challenge this continued emphasis on upgrading teachers’ academic knowledge, particularly when the primary curriculum can cover up to thirteen subjects and is textbook based and there is ever increasing access to knowledge through technology, although likely not yet a reality for many teachers. Within the difficult environment in which teachers in developing countries work, research is needed into whether it is teachers’ own knowledge or their understanding of teaching and learning which can most impact on the quality of children’s education. Ideally, of course it is both, but when resources are limited, priorities need to be identified.

The training of trainers within the context of NFE is addressed in Chapter 6. Case-study material is used to exemplify principles of good practice - participatory training, combination of distance with face-to-face learning, selection criteria, peer support, development of a manual or guidelines and ongoing support.

The discussion of the application of technology and use of multi-media to support distance education is welcome. Chapter 8 notes that ‘media used in combination are more effective’, and advocates the importance of developing shared understanding of the potential of multi-media in plan-