

# HUMANE

Heads of University Management & Administration Network in Europe

SEMINAR

**Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria**  
**Friday 19<sup>th</sup> to Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2004**

***“Student Fees and Access”***

***Abstracts***

**Some reflections about academic services prices of the Spanish public universities**

*Francisco Quintana Navarro, Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria*

In Spain the prices public to satisfy by the student for the accomplishment of university studies are very heterogeneous, and there is not an articulated system beyond the establishment of a maximum and a minimum percentage of annual increase for the set of the public universities.

This diversity of public prices, whose main data are analysed in this communication, has appreciable repercussions in the university financing, conditioning both the structure of the incomes, and the cover that prices by matriculation provide to the current expenses of the academic institutions, generating situations as the distribution of the financial efforts destined to the support of public the university system. In this context, Canary Islands constitute a paradigmatic case in the system wich impose the prices by the benefit of academic services in the financing of the canary universities, characterized by his extreme dependency respect to the direct contributions of the regional administration.

In order to make possible the principle of equality of opportunities in the access to the superior education, is necessary to introduce remarkable changes in the Spanish university system in an immediate future.

If the fairness of the policies of university financing depends basically on the combination of prices, scholarships, loans and other programs of aids to the students, in Spain it is needed to establish a homogenous system of prices of reference for all the public universities within the framework of a new model of financing that assures the sufficiency and the efficiency of the resources destined to the benefit of the superior education. And in this direction, it is required to review the present policy of public prices and scholarships, to consider the introduction of public programs of support to loan-rent and to adopt complementary measures that affect the improvement of the academic yield of the university students.

**Introduction of student fees in European universities**

One of the aims of the Bologna process is the increased competitiveness of European higher education. A number of European countries are working to make their programmes (in particular master's programmes) attractive to foreign students, both from within and from without the European Union. The influx of foreign students and the pressure on higher education budgets is causing governments to change policies and legislation on the raising of tuition fees. These developments make it important for universities to develop thinking and action on the topic of student fees. Within Europe the national situations are quite different. This allows for interesting comparison of rationales behind the current policies and of experiences.

The network of alumni of the ESMU-HUMANE Winter School (held in Barcelona in March 2003 and March 2004) has addressed this topic at its first alumni seminar in Karlsruhe in October 2003. Based on the discussions at this seminar, as well as desk research and a very recent report by CHEPS<sup>[1]</sup> (University of Twente, NL) prepared for a European ministers' conference this autumn, this presentation will sketch the current state of affairs with regard to student tuition fees in the European countries and Europe's major competitors, and will discuss the issues that universities need to address when considering to raise tuition fees for students, such as impact on reputation, impact on quality of education and quality assurance measures, impact on relations with other universities, composition of applicant body and of student body, impact on student services, on financial administration and communication strategies.

The presentation will invite comments from participants on the situation at their own university. If desired, comments and discussion will be integrated together with the presentation in a written paper that could be distributed via the HUMANE network.

**The higher the fee, the greater the cost? UK experience of variable fees**

*Dugald Mackie, University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology (UK)*

This presentation looks at the experience within the United Kingdom following extensive changes to student support and funding arrangements made in 1997.

The first part of the presentation examines the impact of the changes in Scotland, their adverse effect on student demand for places and the positive impact resulting from further reforms made in 2000/01 which reversed some major elements of the changes but which preserved the principle that "those who benefit from higher education should be expected to make a direct contribution towards its cost".

The second part deals with recent changes in England which are similar to but more radical

---

<sup>[1]</sup> Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies

than those made earlier in Scotland. It will look in particular at the possible impact of higher fees on student participation and whether measures introduced by the UK Government to mitigate such effects are likely to have much impact.

The third part looks more closely at a particular institution in that it will examine how the UK's largest university (Manchester) is evolving a strategy for student support and student services in an era of higher fees where such fees will inevitably lead to greater expectations on the part of students. Issues such as the quality of services, the impact on the social make-up of the student body, students working in part-time jobs, forms of institutional financial support and whether there is likely to be a major sea-change in the nature of the student body as we know it will all be examined.

### **The French system of tuition fees**

*J.P. Bonhotat Université Claude Bernard Lyon 1 and Y. Chaimbault Université des Sciences et Technologies de Lille 1 (FR)*

Will a European tuition fees system be useful or desirable to harmonize the scholarships throughout Europe and to promote students exchanges ?

This question, the central topic of this seminar, appears not to be very relevant for most universities or higher education institutions in France, because in our country the common sense is that the best system of tuition fees would be no tuition fee at all.

Legally speaking there is no tuition fees system in French universities and the relationship between students and their higher education institution is generally based on gratuitousness. This principle, acknowledged as a legal principle in the French Education Acts is only denied by a few experts not involved in decision-making. Even theoretical debate on the question were forbidden by a kind of taboo till a very recent period.

Recently this question is becoming again on the agenda , at less as a subject of discussion , otherwise a subject of technical proposals . This revival was certainly helped :

- by the discovery that tuition fees exist elsewhere , with the increasing of student exchange programmes ;
- by the new national debate opened on university autonomy and financing

In fact the French public universities (i.e. almost the whole university field) have no properly tuition fees but only a system of registration fees , with a rather symbolic level (between 150 and 413 euro , following the degree prepared by the students ,most of them paying the minimum and a quarter of them nothing because grant holder are exonerated of every fee).

However the effective ness of such a system is discussed : it doesn't seem to be the best way to improve the rate of access to higher education (this is in France one of the lowest of the OECE) but it results in the great financial fragility of the French universities in their functioning: it is generally considered that with a tuition fee of 1000 euro per student and per year the lack of resources experienced by our universities should be likely overfilled.

So in spite of a rather constraining legal framework a lot of universities and other higher education institution tried to bargain, within or « around » the law ,creating special fees for additional services. But these solution are not liveable for long term and certainly a drastic shift would be necessary , not only on the technical aspects of tuition fees but also on the principles founding the French system ,based on gratuitousness as the way to achieve a legal and formal equality towards higher education.

---