

## Introduction

International education or cross-border education has increased dramatically in the last fifteen years. In 1992 UNESCO estimated that the ‘world market’ for international students was slightly in excess of 1, 2 million students (Lenn, 1997: 1). Lenn (1997: 1), drawing on official United States of America trade and Australian Department of Employment, Education and Training figures says that “(in) 1994, the United States earned about \$7 billion (US) for educational services... while Australia earned about \$1 billion (US) in the year prior.” Moving into the new millennium, Hirtt (2000) estimates that cross-border education has become a \$1000 billion industry employing 50 million people and serving a billion potential customers in the form of students. The scale of the phenomenon is extremely large. Countries like the United States of America, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Australia, South Africa have become large receivers of students from around the globe.

There is general agreement between the various stakeholders in the debate on internationalisation of higher education on the virtue of cross-border-education. It has the potential, as European collaborators are finding (see Burnett, 2007), to stimulate innovative new teaching methods, new forms of collaborative research and new forms of learning. What principles, however, should govern the nature of cross-border higher education and particularly its quality is a much more disputed matter. Central to this debate is the question of who should assure the quality of this kind of provision and how this should be done. Should countries offer each other ‘mutual recognition’, should the matter be handed over to international agencies such as UNESCO, or should a supranational agency or agencies be established? Judith Eaton, the President for the Council for Higher Education Accreditation

(CHEA) has distilled these challenges into three key questions that need to be answered:

1. Should the emerging expectations and agreements about quality in the international space be collegial understandings or regulatory obligations?

2. What is the nature of the ownership of international quality? Does it derive from institutions, governments, multinational organizations, and students? Or is it shared among various stakeholders?

3. Are either or both a single set of international quality standards and ‘meta-accreditation’ (external review of the quality of quality assurance and accreditation bodies) essential – or optional – to a viable international higher education space? (Eaton, 2005: 4)

Valuable as these questions are, they focus on the processes and policies that are necessary for ensuring quality. What they do not do is lift out the core question about education which relates to its actual substance. To Eaton’s questions I would wish, therefore, to add a fourth, which, hopefully takes us to a point where we can discuss cross-border education for its intrinsic educational value as opposed to the other benefits, such as the economic, that it might confer on individuals and nations (Knight, 2003a, 2003b). I make this argument to mitigate the problems that come with forms of cross-border education which insufficiently attend to the classical objectives of modern education such as its non-instrumentality, its concern with the cultivation in the individual of worthwhile ends or goals of life and its commitments to broad enquiry. The university was for Fichte (Bowden & Marton, 1998: 3) “the visible representation of humankind’s immortality: the university is the institutional appearance of truth, the place where each age consciously and methodically hands down its highest intellectual formation to the coming ages.” It is a place of learning in the broadest sense, “it is about expanding, widening and transforming the collective mind. The Humboldtian concept of