

PREFACE

Over the last decades higher education has gone through an unprecedented growth period, and as a result the average university or college has now more students and a larger output than ever before. At the same time, the socio-economic and political demands with respect to higher education have grown dramatically. These developments have taken place without a proportional increase of the budgets and facilities of the higher education institutions. This has created an imbalance between the expectations with respect to higher education and the institutional capacities in the sector. One of the underlying trends is that the traditional pact between higher education and society has become problematic. Society no longer accepts the rather special and protected position that universities have had for a very long time in our societies. The knowledge-based social and cultural missions of higher education institutions are no longer taken for granted as the main legitimacy bases for public investments in higher education. Universities and colleges are at present expected to function efficiently, to contribute to sustainable economic growth at various levels, and to add to national and even supranational trade balances. On top of this they have to prove that they maintain a high level of quality in their primary activities, i.e. teaching, research and services, while adapting and responding to the expectations expressed so vehemently in their environments, and to a decreasing per capita funding basis. All of this fits the current so-called period of transition, in which our societies are moving from being manufacturing based to being information or knowledge driven. Higher education institutions are argued to be core organizations in the emerging knowledge society, but the exact nature and role of these institutions, and therefore the exact adaptations they have to go through, are not clear yet. Many scenarios have been developed and predictions formulated, but the knowledge needed to make better-founded, valid interpretations of the change processes that currently characterize higher education is often lacking.

Here is where the field of higher education research comes in. This is a relatively young field that has developed rapidly over the last 30 years, resulting in a growing body of knowledge on higher education. However, many of the basic questions on higher education, related to our knowledge on which policies, instruments and approaches work and which do not work, still remain largely unanswered. An example of such a question concerns the contribution of higher education to economic development. Another example is the question on the most effective institutional governance structures for universities and colleges. The relative lack of research funding for these types of questions and the limited research capacity, amongst other things, as a result of the rather fragmented organizational basis of the field, are the main reasons why these kinds of questions have so far not been addressed in an adequate way. In order to use the available funds and capacity more

effectively various initiatives have been taken within the field. One of these initiatives in Europe was the establishment on 1 January 2001 of *Hedda*, a consortium of 7 research centres and institutes on higher education (see webpage: www.uv.uio.no/hedda). The mission of *Hedda* includes strengthening the field of higher education research through stimulating and structuring the research cooperation between the *Hedda* partners and between *Hedda* and other research groups. For this purpose one of the *Hedda* partners, Cipes, has taken the initiative to organize an annual seminar for discussing the state-of-the-art with respect to one specific research area in the field. These discussions take place on the basis of research-based papers that are written within an overall conceptual framework. To make these discussions and the body of knowledge behind it accessible for a larger audience, Cipes and *Hedda* have agreed with Kluwer Academic Publishers to include the manuscripts that are the result of the seminars in the new Kluwer book series called Higher Education Dynamics (HEDY). In order to make these annual books recognizable within the HEDY series Cipes, *Hedda* and Kluwer have decided to start a 'series in the series' called the Douro Seminars on Higher Education Research (DOSHER). The name is inspired by the wonderful location in Portugal where the annual seminars take place.

This is the first of the so-called Douro books. It is edited by three of the colleagues who participated in the first Douro seminar that took place 13-17 October 2001. The seminar topic *Governance structures in higher education* refers to all relevant dimensions of the way higher education institutions are governed, for example, developments concerning the formal and informal institutional decision-making procedures and structures; changes in the composition, tasks and functioning of institutional governance bodies; and the growing involvement of external stakeholders in institutional governance issues. The book reflects this diversity. However, the first and last chapter provide the framework and comparative reflections that give this book the necessary coherence. We are very pleased to start the Douro series with this valuable collection and we are confident that the high scholarly quality level of this book will set the standard for the Douro books to be produced in the coming years, to start with in 2002/2003 on 'Managerialism in higher education; institutional autonomy and the professionalisation of institutional management and administration', and in 2003/2004 on 'Markets in higher education'.

We want to express our gratitude to all who have made the first Douro seminar and this book and the subsequent series possible, to begin with Amélia Veiga at Cipes and Therese Marie Uppstrøm at *Hedda*, without whom the seminar could never have been organised. We are obviously impressed by and grateful for the contributions of our colleagues to the seminar and this book. Not only did they put a lot of effort in the production of the basic paper, but all of them were also willing to take the comments and editorial suggestions received from the others seriously enough to integrate them into the edited version of their paper that you will find in this book. The energy put in this process and the speed with which the papers were developed into edited book chapters is an indication of the commitment of these scholars to their field and their profession. Finally, we want to acknowledge the financial support from *Fundação para a Ciência e Tecnologia*, of the Portuguese

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