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“Transformations experienced by higher education and research institutions in European countries”

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11 am to 11:45

Anneliese Dodds

(London School of Economics, London, Great Britain)

“A comparison between British and French state involvement
in trade in Higher Education”

Discussant : **Taina Saarinen**

**The CNE, the QAA, and the evaluation of
foreign student numbers, origins and services:**

An institutional analysis

Anneliese Dodds

London School of Economics

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From 1979, both French and British governments have increasingly encouraged foreign students from Western countries and the emerging economies to enter domestic institutions. Diminishing emphasis has been placed on maintaining 'traditional' links with the previously predominant catchment areas of ex-colonial Africa. Hence, Tony Blair stated in his Romanes Lecture at Oxford University in 1999 that "[u]niversities are wealth creators in their own right: in the value they add through their teaching at home; [and] in the revenue, commitment and goodwill for the UK they generate from overseas students, a market we need to exploit as ambitiously as possible"². Jean-Pierre Raffarin commented more recently that the policy of increasing the attractiveness of France would aid the

¹ This paper is written on the basis of documentary and interview data collected between October 2003 and April 2004 in Paris and London. Please note that this is a DRAFT PAPER- please DO NOT QUOTE without the permission of the author, especially as additional data collection and statistical analysis is required.

² Blair, Tony, Romanes lecture at Oxford - 2 December 1999

French people to 'profit from globalisation' and the 'wealth and investment' it brought, and that this policy involved the 'reception of foreign researchers, students and workers'³.

The quotations above indicate that French and British policy makers have increasingly come to consider foreign students' policy as at least partly a form of industrial policy⁴.

Foreign student policy has become progressively de-linked from development and strategic foreign policy considerations and more frequently discussed within the rubric of trade and commercial policy. It is therefore appropriate to consider state activity in this area within the framework of theories comparing British and French industrial policies.

These have often depicted Britain as a "spectator state", with rather "tenuous" connections between governmental policy-makers and economic interests⁵, in comparison with a French state "capable of mobilizing public and private energies in the support of its own conception of the national interest to an impressive degree when compared with the situation in Britain"⁶. This "strong" French state was portrayed in a variety of comparative studies as possessing greater leverage in economic and industrial policy than the "weak" British state⁷.

³ Raffarin, Jean-Pierre, Speech on the Attractiveness of France, 4th November 2003

⁴ See the various definitions of this term in Kassim, Hussein and Menon, Anand, *The European Union and national industrial policy*, Routledge, 1996, London, New York

⁵ pp. 80, 91, Grant, Wyn, 1995, *The Spectator State*, in Jack Hayward, ed., *Industrial Enterprise and European Integration*, Oxford University Press, Oxford; also p.65, Hayward, Jack and Jacques Lorenz, 1990, *Nationalism and the Economy*, in Françoise de La Serre, Jacques Lorenz and Helen Wallace, eds., *French and British Foreign Policies in Transition: The challenge of adjustment*, Berg Publishers, New York; and Zysman, John, 1983, *Governments, Markets and Growth: Financial Systems and the Politics of Industrial Change*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca

⁶ p.66, Grant, *ibid.*

⁷ cf. Coleman, W., 1989, *Strong state and weak states: sectoral policy networks in advanced capitalist economies*, *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol.14:1, pp.46-67; Suleiman, E., 1987, *Private Power and Centralisation in France*, Princeton University Press, Princeton; Hayward, Jack, 1995, *Organised interests and public policies*, in *Governing the New Europe*, eds. Jack Hayward and Edward C. Page, Polity Press, Cambridge.

This “strong/weak states hypothesis”⁸ suggests that the French state would be more able than the British one to engineer changes in its higher education sector in order to foster the new foreign student flows prioritised by the executive. The superior proportion of state funding for universities and the greater extent of *a priori* regulation of the sector, along with a historically weak university presidents’ conference in France, would suggest a greater capacity for state-induced change in the French system, at least as concerns public universities (as opposed to private and public *grandes écoles*).

This paper considers the role of evaluation as one element of state activity in foreign students’ policy. It centres on the reports produced by the two key agencies in this field, the *Comité National de l’Évaluation des Établissements Public à caractère scientifique, culturel et professionnel* (CNE) and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). Both agencies have apparently similar goals, in ensuring the quality of their respective national higher education sectors, including a consideration of the degree of institutional “internationalisation”. They have been considered as functionally equivalent in a number of comparative studies of educational evaluation⁹.

This mirrors cross-national studies of evaluation per se, which have generally seen evaluation as a generic policy tool, and its proliferation as an indication of political harmonisation. Jacques Toulemonde, for instance, has claimed that whilst there may have been little in common between the political origins of the first uses of evaluation in Britain and France, the culture of evaluation which has been diffused is broadly similar cross-

⁸ As it will be labelled throughout this paper.

⁹ As for example those written under the aegis of the European Network of Quality Assurance agencies, such as Hämäläinen, Kauko, Satu Pehu-Voima and Staffan Wahlén, 2001, Institutional Evaluations in Europe, ENQA Workshop Reports 1, available via <http://www.enqa.net/>

nationally¹⁰. This paper, however, will illustrate the extensive differences in the actions of the CNE and the QAA in relation to foreign students, and how these reflect the institutional context of evaluation in each country. It thus reinforces the work of scholars such as Christopher Pollitt, who have challenged claims that the proliferation of particular organisational forms, such as evaluation agencies, indicate political homogenisation¹¹.

Of course, in viewing evaluation as one way in which states can pursue industrial policy aims, such an analytical approach involves the separation of higher education institutions from the state. The extent of state funding, management and regulation of both the French and British university systems (if the former to a much greater extent) requires one to continually bear in mind the complex relationships between each state and its respective sector, when using this particular heuristic division.

This paper first reviews the development of the 'strong/weak hypothesis' and considers potential criticisms of this, especially those from the 'varieties of capitalism' school. It details the role of evaluative mechanisms in national public policy more generally, before considering the creation of the QAA and CNE, and their criteria and operations in relation to foreign students' issues. It uses these to test the validity of the 'strong/weak' hypothesis. Overall, the different models of evaluation operating in the British and French cases might (very broadly) be termed 'control' and 'cooperation', or again between 'audit' and 'auto-evaluation'. The fact that the French evaluation process seems more cooperative and less involved in bureaucratic control of higher education institutions, at least as concerns foreign students, runs counter to the 'strong/weak states hypothesis'

¹⁰ p.100, Toulemonde, Jacques, 2001, in Société Française de l'Évaluation, IIIèmes journées françaises de l'évaluation, 14th et 15th June, Issy-les-Moulineaux

¹¹ Pollitt, Christopher and Geert Bouckaert, 2000, Public Management Reform: A Comparative Analysis, first edition, Oxford University Press

and suggests a more nuanced view may be needed. In particular, the analysis indicates a tension between evaluation as a method to increase cooperation, relying on coordination between homogeneous actors, and evaluation as a method of regulating market competition, which presupposes a more heterogeneous sectoral structure and less cooperative linkages within it.

The weak/strong state hypothesis and its critiques

Differences between Britain and France concerning the extent of state intervention formed a staple of comparative public policy analyses dating from Andrew Schonfield's comparison of the two countries in 1965¹². For Shonfield, in "the history of capitalism Britain and France supply the convenience of sustained polarity", with France subject to an "Étatist tradition" contrasting with the British pattern of "arm's length government"¹³. The view of France as an extremely centralised state, with a strong and "long-standing dirigiste tradition still [making] itself felt" in comparison to Britain especially, was buttressed by Jack Hayward's seminal survey of French public policy in the late 1960s and early 1970s¹⁴.

The greater capacity of the French state was also adduced as a feature of higher education policy, in comparison with Britain. British universities and colleges of higher education are significantly but by no means entirely funded by the state. British university

¹² Albert, Michel, 1991, *Capitalisme contre capitalisme*, Seuil: Histoire Immediate, Paris; Andrew Shonfield, 1965, *Modern Capitalism: The Changing balance of public and private power*, Oxford University Press and Royal Institute of International Affairs, London; Alain Touraine, 1969, *La Société Post-Industrielle*, Éditions Denoël, Paris; Robert Boyer, 1997, French statism at the crossroads, in *Political Economy of Modern Capitalism: Mapping Convergence and Diversity*, eds. Crouch, Colin and Wolfgang Streeck, Sage, London

¹³ pp. 71, 171, Shonfield, Andrew, 1965, op cit.

¹⁴ p.152, Hayward, Jack, 1973, *The One and Indivisible French Republic*, World University, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London

status is obtained through the state (by Royal Charter) and degree awards and research quality regulated through the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). Academics are employed by their particular institution rather than by the state directly.

In contrast, one notes two types of HE institution in France, subject to differing degrees of state intervention. All universities are almost entirely publicly funded, degree awards are directly delivered by the state, research activity is coordinated through state bodies rather than through the universities themselves, and academics are directly employed by the state. The *grandes écoles* sector, on the other hand, can be divided into two. The first set of *grandes écoles* come under the aegis of the Minister of Education as concerns funding, degree awards and evaluation. A separate grouping are privately financed through fees and donations (often from local Chambers of Commerce), deliver their own degrees which are not 'nationally-recognised', and employ their own academics. The French university sector, if not that of the *grandes écoles*, was portrayed as possessing a minimal degree of institutional autonomy, given the cross-cutting cleavages resulting from subject, faculty and grade divisions amongst French academics. In these circumstances, the French state appeared to possess a large capacity for control over a fragmented public higher education sector¹⁵.

By the late 1970s, however, stereotypes of a centralised, highly-regulated French university (if not *grandes écoles*) sector, in comparison with a decentralised, lightly regulated British university sector, were no longer ringing true. Changes to the British funding system with the abolition of the Universities Grant (then Funding) Council

¹⁵ Neave, Guy, 1992, France, in Neave, G. and Van Vught, F., Prometheus Bound: Changing Relationships between Government and HE in Western Europe, Pergamon Books, Oxford

(previously described as a “buffer” between the state and institutions), and the development of the QAA and RAE systems, were seen as diminishing the ‘autonomy’ of institutions from the state¹⁶. In France, the development of the contractual funding system, and the growing role of the *Conférence des Présidents d’Université* peak association, has resulted in a general perception of increased institutional autonomy, albeit one that is seen as necessitating increased regulation¹⁷.

Concomitant with these changes, there has been a general questioning of the explanatory adequacy of the strong/weak dichotomy¹⁸, especially with the increasing decentralisation of French public policy from the early 1980s¹⁹. However, Vivien Schmidt has maintained that a ‘state-enhanced’ model of capitalism can still be differentiated from Rhenish and Anglo-Saxon models²⁰. She claims that whilst successive French governments have begun to “dismantle state power and control”, “the state continues to exercise leadership, albeit in a more indirect and often supply-side way ... [including] through state support of industry in a more centralized and active way than in Germany”, and in a significantly more interventionist manner than Britain, which according to Schmidt has moved “even farther in a market capitalist direction from its original market capitalist starting point”²¹ in the early 1980s.

¹⁶ See especially p.199-202, Salter, B. and T.Tapper, 1984, *The State and Higher Education*, London: Woburn Press

¹⁷ p.145 and 154, Francois Fillon and Jean-Dominique Lafay, respectively, 1999, quoted in *Demain l’Université*, presented by Gérard Tobelem, Initiatives et Réflexions, Entretiens, John Libbey Eurotext, Paris

¹⁸ p.116, Hayward, Jack, 1982, *Mobilising private interests in the service of public ambitions: the salient element in the dual French policy style*, in J. Richardson, ed., *Policy Styles in Western Europe*, Allen and Unwin, London; p.441, Schmidt, Vivien A., 1996, *From state to market? The transformation of French business and government*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

¹⁹ Keating, Michael and Paul Hainsworth, 1986, *Decentralisation and change in contemporary France*, Gower, Aldershot; Garrish, Stephen, 1986, *Centralisation and decentralisation in England and France*, University of Bristol, School for Advanced Urban Studies, Bristol

²⁰ Schmidt, Vivien, 2002, *The Futures of European Capitalism*, Oxford University Press, New York

²¹ p.117, Schmidt, *ibid.*

This concentration on the extent of state capacity as the key explanandum for national public policy has been criticised by the ‘varieties of capitalism’ school, which instead focusses on the degree of coordination amongst sectoral actors.

To illustrate the challenge posed by the ‘varieties of capitalism’ theory to the strong/weak states hypothesis, let us consider two possible models of industrial policy. The first one is the liberal project of ‘creating the conditions’²² for market capitalism. Applied to the higher education sector, this view would suggest that the state should limit its activities to ensuring an equal playing field between institutions in the ‘market’ for foreign students. Institutions might have heterogeneous policies towards the attraction of and provision of services for foreign students, but beyond ensuring baseline standards the state would not intervene.

The second model might be termed a mercantilist strategy of trade promotion. For Robert Gilpin, a theorist of mercantilism, the essence of this strategy is the priority of national economic and political objectives over considerations of global economic efficiency²³. States use mercantilist strategies to promote the competitiveness of their economies, or other public policy goals²⁴. In so doing, states will prioritise what they perceive as the interests of whole (sub) sectors of the economy, rather than individual competitors. In the

22 Prominent examples of literature presaging a state role in this connection are available from Geoffrey Garrett, as in his *Global Markets and National Politics: Collision Course or Virtuous Circle* (1998, International Organization, Vol.52:4); also cf. Elmar Rieger and Stephan Leibfried, 1998, *Welfare State Limits to Globalisation*, *Politics and Society*, Vol.26:3, September, pp.363-390; Fritz Scharpf, 1991, *Crisis and Choice in European Social Democracy*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London; Linda Weiss, 1998, *The Myth of the Powerless State: Governing the Economy in a Global Era*, Polity Press, Cambridge. For a critique of this view of state activity see Paul Hirst, 1997, *From Statism to Pluralism: Democracy, Civil Society and Global Politics*, UCL Press, London

23 Gilpin, Robert, 1975, *US Power and the Multinational Corporation: The Political Economy of Direct Justice*, Basic Books, New York. See also Robert Gilpin, 1975, *The Challenge of Global Capitalism: The World Economy in the 21st Century*, Princeton University Press, Princeton; Robert Gilpin, 1987, *The Political Economy of International Relations*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.

24 p.184, Kapstein, Ethan B., 1996, *Governing the Global Economy: International Finance and the State*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass. and London

foreign students' context, this would lead to an emphasis on the *homogeneity* of national higher education, 'rather than on the heterogeneity of different institutions.

It follows that the success of particular policies, if as part of a *mercantilist* scheme, will depend on the extent to which the 'target' sector already possesses coordinating capacities. In the liberal capitalist context, relationships between firms will be defined "by demand and supply conditions in competitive markets", whilst those in more coordinated economies "are more often the result of strategic interaction among firms and other actors"²⁵. Public policies can emphasise or work against the existence of coordinative capacities.

The use of 'market incentives', for example, attempts to induce actors to perform more effectively through employing the market mechanism of supply and demand. Where there is a wide diversity of views on the best approach to be taken within a sector, the use of policy mechanisms based on a homogeneous approach will become politically controversial and will likely involve less negotiation with institutions themselves.

In contrast, where institutions are more homogeneous, states may attempt to work with strong peak associations, as these will help to overcome coordination problems such as those resulting from information asymmetry, time-inconsistency, and high transaction costs²⁶. In addition, where a sector is relatively homogeneous, it will be easier for it to develop a coherent voice through peak associations and thus to affect public policy.

25 p.8, Hall, Peter and David Soskice, 2001, *An Introduction to Varieties of Capitalism*, in *Varieties of Capitalism: The Institutional Foundations of Comparative Advantage*, Oxford University Press, New York

26 This section is influenced by Stewart Wood's discussion of the coordinative capacity of 'liberal market' and 'coordinated market' economies (Wood, Stewart, 2001, *Business, Government, and Patterns of Labor Market Policy in Britain and the Federal Republic of Germany*, in Hall and Soskice, op cit.)

By centering on coordination as the key explanatory factor in economic policy, the varieties of capitalism school offers a more nuanced understanding of economic policy, as depending upon existing relationships between institutions. The following discussion suggests that the strong/weak states hypothesis, with its emphasis on state capacity, does not sufficiently explain the differences between French and British evaluation agencies' activities concerning foreign students, and that the varieties of capitalism school's emphasis on sectoral structure can help to rectify this.

The place of evaluation in French and British public policy

This section will offer a brief introduction to the role of evaluation in the British and French public sectors, before considering the CNE and QAA's treatment of foreign student issues.

Bernard Perret, a prominent member of the French Society of Evaluation, has claimed that "in France more than elsewhere" the development of different instances of evaluation "cannot be separated from the "politics of evaluation"²⁷. The use of evaluation in public policy has been much more salient in French than in British political discourse.

The first instance of the use of evaluation in French public policy was the introduction of the short-lived "*rationalisation des choix budgétaires*" or RCB system in the late 1960s. This was explicitly modelled on the American experience of the "Planning Programming and Budgeting System" and of the "Management by Objectives" programmes²⁸.

²⁷ p.75, Perret, Bernard, 2001, L'évaluation de la politique publique, La Découverte, Paris

²⁸ p.74, Albertini, Jean-Benoit, 2000, Réforme Administrative et Réforme de l'Etat en France. Thèmes et variations de l'esprit de réforme de 1815 à nos jours, Economica, Paris

After the failure of the RCB programme, apparently due to administrative difficulties, the next moves to introduce evaluation followed Michel Rocard's inauguration as Prime Minister. Rocard proposed a greater use of evaluation in order to move "from a producing state to a regulating state....from the powerful state to the acting state"²⁹. It was at this point that evaluation was first linked, rhetorically, to a greater degree of autonomy on the part of service providing institutions³⁰. In January 1990, Rocard passed a decree for an interministerial evaluation committee, which was to coordinate the use of evaluation across government³¹. However, the committee had limited success, examining only the most complicated evaluation programmes, and with ministries developing their own programmes largely independent of it³².

Whereas Rocard often linked the use of evaluation to a deepening of democracy as well as to greater institutional autonomy, this element is less pronounced in current French debates surrounding evaluation. A more restrictive view of evaluation has become prevalent, as an "assessment of the efficacy of a programme, a policy or a public action following scientifically rigorous research, into the real effects, having regard to the objectives (explicit or implicit) and the means put into place"³³.

In France, therefore, evaluation was, and largely remains, explicitly separated from control. In this sense, it can be viewed as a more collaborative project than British evaluation procedures.

²⁹ p.247, Rocard, Michel, 1987, *Le coeur à l'ouvrage*, Seuil, Paris

³⁰ p.251, *ibid.*

³¹ p.53, Jacobs, Steve, 2001, *L'institutionnalisation de l'évaluation des politiques publiques en France*, Institut d'études politiques, Paris

³² p.40, Jacobs, *op cit.*

³³ to use the definition in the Cour des Comptes' *Manual de Vérification*, quoted in Bonniol, Jean-Jacques and Michel Vial, 1997, *Les modèles de l'évaluation*, De Boeckle University and Larcier SA, Paris and Brussels

In contrast to France, the overall development of forms of evaluation and of performance audit has not been particularly politically salient in Britain, but the operations of the QAA, unlike those of the CNE, have been extensively criticised by universities.

In France, evaluation was linked by Rocard to a political project of democratisation of the public sector, and by the CNE to an iterative process of self-evaluation. In Britain, evaluation has been much more closely tied to “notions of accountability and value for money”³⁴.

There is no central, predominant organisation or authority in Britain which controls or supervises all evaluation activities³⁵. However, the Treasury has played a significant role in developing the use of evaluation and performance audit across government. The Treasury’s ultimate control over departmental funding lessens the relevance of the French distinction between control and evaluation³⁶.

In the British context, performance auditing especially has emphasised efficiency, effectiveness and economy³⁷. Rather than attempting to develop a specifically public, or even sectoral, approach towards evaluation and/or performance auditing, the British case illustrates the extensive use of concepts derived from extra-governmental sources of evaluation expertise. This is notable in the case of the QAA’s approach towards

³⁴ p.62, Perret, op cit. It is interesting to note that there is no direct translation of “accountability” into French, a point which has not been lost on French analysts of evaluation; cf Jacques Toulemonde’s comment that accountability “*signifie rendre des comptes... (it is) une agrégation des notions de contrôle, responsabilité, transparence dans une perspective d’apprentissage*” [Toulemonde, op cit.]

³⁵ p.29, Conseil Supérieur de l’évaluation, 1998, Rapport Annuel sur l’évaluation des pratiques d’évaluation des politiques publics, La Documentation Française, Paris

³⁶ p.63, Perret, op cit.

³⁷ p.70, Pollitt, Christopher and Geert Bouckaert, 2000, Public Management Reform: a comparative analysis, Oxford University Press, Oxford

institutional audits, with its emphasis on brand maintenance, cross-site quality control and the formalising of potentially litigious “partnership” arrangements.

The development of British evaluation can thus be linked to that of other mechanisms of budgetary control. The extent to which evaluation involved a collaborative relationship with the ‘evaluatee’ was limited.

The creation of the CNE and the QAA

Although there has been considerable discussion of the role of the CNE within government, this has infrequently been within the context of more general government evaluation programmes such as the interministerial committee. As Bernard Perret noted, the CNE is to an extent “situated at the edge of the field of overall evaluation of public policies”³⁸. Its creation in 1984 pre-dated that of the various Rocardian evaluation initiatives, for instance.

However, the CNE has been affected by general developments affecting the use of evaluation in French public policy. For example, the CNE began to consider the fulfillment of the contracts struck between the state and universities as part of its mandate from the late 1990s. This coincided with the start of the use of evaluation for the contracts struck between French regions and the state from 1998³⁹.

³⁸ p.78, Perret, op cit.

³⁹ As embodied in the Circular of 28.12.98, which proposed the evaluation of the policies proposed in the context of the “contrats de plan Etat- regions”.

The proposal to create the CNE was one of the least controversial aspects of the 1984 Loi Savary on higher education⁴⁰, and established France as one of the first nations to possess an evaluative agency for state higher education. The agency was to assess scientific, cultural and professional institutions (thus including research institutions as well as universities and the *grande écoles* under the tutelage of the Minister of Education)⁴¹. In July 1989, the CNE was given the status of an “*autorité administrative indépendante*”, giving the agency financial and, to an extent, operational autonomy.

The CNE’s seventeen members are ultimately chosen by the Minister of Education, mainly from a list drawn up by the CNESER, a consultative body including representatives of higher education institutions, students and education trade unions. It also includes four people chosen for their qualifications in the field of evaluation, a member of the *Conseil d’Etat* and of the *Cour des Comptes*⁴².

The initial definition of the CNE’s role was to analyse “the ensemble of actions and means put in place by establishments in the framework of their scientific and educational policies”⁴³. From its creation in 1985, it has developed a range of criteria for institutional assessments through a process of consultation with higher education institutions, and especially with the universities’ peak association, the *Conférence des Présidents d’Université*.

⁴⁰ The law’s proposals relating to the prohibition of selection caused wide-scale protests and counter-protests by the student right and left, respectively.

⁴¹ Article 65, Loi sur l’enseignement supérieur, 26th January 1984

⁴² p.109, Mallet, Daniel, Pierre Balme and Pierre Richard, *Règlement et Management des Universités Françaises*, 2002, in Jean-Pierre Korolitski, *La relance de la Politique Contractuelle*, Berger Levrault, Paris

⁴³ Décret no. 85-258

The CNE was created explicitly within the context of debates concerning the degree of institutional autonomy of French universities. Evaluation was described by the agency as “above all destined for the evaluated establishment and its leadership”⁴⁴. It was not, ostensibly, to enforce public accountability (and/or to control public expenditure) but rather to aid on-going processes of institutional improvement⁴⁵. Evaluation was described as a necessary concomitant of institutional autonomy rather than as leading to a diminution of this⁴⁶. Furthermore, qualitative assessment rather than quantitative indicators were prioritised; the CNE indicated that the “evaluation of higher education is above all a qualitative matter; this is why it does not think it is possible to have recourse exclusively to performance indicators”⁴⁷.

The CNE is not the only organisation to assess French higher education. The longer-established *Inspection Générale de l'Administration de l'Éducation Nationale et de la Recherche* (IGAENR)⁴⁸ continued to undertake a role of “conformity and management control” rather than ceding this to the new agency. The CNE was similar to the IGAENR in some respects. However, by reporting directly to the President, it was claimed that the CNE possessed considerable autonomy *viz* the state compared to the IGAENR. The CNE described its alleged autonomy as one of the methods of “modernisation and

⁴⁴ Vie Universitaire July/August, 1998, no.8, Les 12 Travaux de Claude Allegre, pp.12-18

⁴⁵ To use the division explained by El-Khawas, p.115 (El-Khawas, E., 2001, *Who's in charge of quality? The governance issues in quality assurance*, Tertiary Education and Management, 7, pp.111-119)

⁴⁶ p.145 and 154, Francois Fillon and Jean-Dominique Lafay, respectively, 1999, quoted in Demain l'Université, presented by Gérard Tobelem, Initiatives et Réflexions, Entretiens, John Libbey Eurotext, Paris

⁴⁷ p.49, Jacob, *ibid.*

⁴⁸ created in 1965, endowed with a mission of monitoring higher as well as primary and secondary education, and research, under the direct oversight of the Minister of Education (p.98, Mallet, Daniel, Pierre Balme and Pierre Richard, *ibid.*).

democratisation of public policy”⁴⁹. In addition, in contrast with the IGAENR, the CNE’s reports had no potential impact on the levels of funding for universities⁵⁰.

The CNE should also be distinguished from those French bodies tasked with assessing the quality of new degrees. The work of these Commissions has recently been highly politically contested, especially by the *grandes écoles*, as the Helfer and Duby Commissions have failed to approve a number of applications to deliver the new *Master Professionel* and *Master de Recherche* qualifications⁵¹.

Finally, although many private qualifications are assessed through peer accreditation within the *Conférence des Grandes Ecoles*⁵², a number of degrees privately delivered in France fail to be evaluated by any organisation⁵³. Some such degrees are accredited through international peer systems such as the EQUIS group of engineering schools or the AMBA scheme for business education, and the *Conférence des Grandes Ecoles* has proposed the abandoning of state assessment in favour of such schemes⁵⁴. However, thus far their coverage is still patchy. This is especially the case for many of the MBAs delivered in France⁵⁵.

⁴⁹ CNE website. See also Harman’s description of the CNE as autonomous in p. 349-51, Harman, G., 1998, *The Management of Quality Assurance: a review of international practice*, Higher Education Quarterly, 52:4, October, pp.345-364

⁵⁰ Although the increased involvement of the CNE in the contractual funding process has perhaps challenged its neutrality in this respect.

⁵¹ Le Monde Campus, 25.11.03

⁵² Le Monde, 11.4.02.

⁵³ p.97, Halimi, Suzy, 1996, La reconnaissance: un droit individuel et une responsabilité de société, in La reconnaissance des qualifications en matière d’enseignement supérieur: les défis pour la prochaine décennie, Conférence de forum du Comité de l’enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche, Malta, 26-28 October 1994, Editions du Conseil de l’Europe, Strasbourg, 1996.

⁵⁴ Interview data. This proposal was also formulated in the Institut Montaigne’s report on the international competitiveness of French higher education (p.20-21, 2001, Enseignement Supérieur: Aborder la Competition Mondiale a armes égales, Lyon, November, Institut Montaigne).

⁵⁵ p.100, dos Santos, S. Machado, 2002, *Regulation and Quality assurance in transnational education*, Tertiary Education and Management, 8, pp.97-112

The QAA

The Quality Assurance Agency was created in April 1997 as an “independent” body funded by subscriptions from individual higher education institutions, and through contracts with the higher education funding agencies, HEFCE and SHEFC⁵⁶, under whose initiative it was created.

Between 1992 and 1997, the task of quality assessment had been performed by the funding councils themselves as an obligation under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 (with quality assessment for higher education coming under the aegis of the Quality Assurance Division of the HEFCE). Previous to 1992, hence before the removal of the “binary divide” between further and higher education, there were separate funding bodies for these sectors, which enjoyed funding control functions. Hence, the University Funding Committee (previously the University Grants Committee) allocated funding additional to that provided by a formula for the number of students, on the basis of an assessment of research quality, as well as assessing the allocation of funds by universities themselves.

The creation of the new funding committees and then of the QAA has been described as leading to a more direct form of governmental control of university funding and management, away from the University Grants Committee’s mediating role between the universities and the state, famously described as a “buffer” by Tapper and Salter⁵⁷.

Despite its part funding by higher education institutions, the QAA’s role is generally

⁵⁶ the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, respectively.

⁵⁷ p.199-202, Salter and Tapper, *ibid*.

perceived as *ex post* control of public funding, rather than as part of an iterative process of auto-evaluation.

In addition, the fact that the QAA's institutional reports are described as 'audits' indicates its role in budgetary control above other objectives. As Michael Power has suggested, the growth of audit outside its original, strictly financial, sphere takes with it a presumption of potential risk of moral hazard by an agent, against a principal's wishes, and thus explicitly embodies a notion of control⁵⁸. In the context of higher education, an 'audit' is thus explicitly designed to (attempt to) verify that the delegated responsibility for managing state funding is being adequately discharged.

As with the CNE, the QAA is not the sole body to evaluate British higher education institutions. Firstly, the system of external examiners, instituted by the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (the higher education peak association⁵⁹) attempts to ensure some comparability of degree standards. As in France, there are a number of voluntary, often international, peer accreditation schemes covering British degrees such as EQUIS and AMBA. In contrast to the French situation, however, most MBA programmes are also assessed by the QAA, as an integral part of the British higher education sector.

Finally, the QAA is not responsible for accrediting courses, with university and degree-awarding status being conferred either through Royal Charter or an Act of Parliament. However, it possesses a larger role than the CNE in this area, as QAA quality assessments are often required by the privy council or, in the Scottish case, the Scottish

⁵⁸ Power, Michael, 1997, *The Audit Society: Rituals of Verification*, Oxford University Press, Oxford

⁵⁹ Now known as UniversitiesUK

executive, before institutions are deemed suitable to upgrade to University or degree awarding status⁶⁰.

The evaluation of foreign students' issues by the CNE and the QAA

The CNE

The extent to which the CNE has accorded a formal place to the assessment of foreign student numbers and associated issues has differed over the years since its inception. From the late 1980s, a number of reports were produced in France by advisory organisations (the *Haut Comité Education-Economie*⁶¹), government advisors (Elie Cohen⁶², Jacques Attali⁶³, Patrick Weil⁶⁴), and deputies (Alain Claeys⁶⁵) which emphasised a perceived need to increase French institutions' intake of foreign students. These reports did not result in any direct impact on the institutions themselves, aside from the Attali report's provisions for the restructuring of degree systems. Rather, it was the inclusion of foreign student issues in the negotiation of funding contracts struck between the state and the universities which offered a statutory basis for the incorporation of foreign students issues in CNE evaluations. These developments provide the political context for the CNE's development of assessment criteria concerning foreign students.

⁶⁰ QAA reports for Imperial College, 2002; Bell College of Technology, Designation Audit Report, July 1999; UHI Millennium Institute, Designation Audit Report, 1999

⁶¹ Haut Comité Éducation-Économie, 1988, *D'autres lieux, d'autres cultures: des clés pour l'éducation de demain*

⁶² Cohen, Elie, 2001, *Un plan d'action pour améliorer l'accueil des étudiants étrangers*, La Documentation Française, Paris

⁶³ Jacques Attali, 1997, *Pour un modèle Européen d'enseignement supérieur*, La Documentation Française, Paris

⁶⁴ Weil, Patrick, 1997, *Mission d'étude des législations de la nationalité et de l'immigration: rapports au Premier Ministre*

⁶⁵ Claeys, Alain, 1999, *L'accueil des étudiants étrangers en France : enjeu commercial ou priorité éducative ?*, Assemblée Nationale, Rapport d'Information... par la Commission des Finances, de l'économie générale et du Plan, N° 1806

The CNE's first framework for institutional evaluations required systems of "international cooperation", including foreign students, to be described by university heads in their initial submissions to the CNE before the formal evaluation process began⁶⁶. In November 1986, the CNE created a working group on the methodology of evaluation with the universities' peak association, the *Conférence des Présidents d'Université*⁶⁷. The group proposed a number of "rubriques" to guide evaluation, under which were specific indicators. The number of foreign students and researchers was classified as "indispensable information for an evaluation"⁶⁸, and as an indicator within the context of the universities' policies. These indicators were apparently accepted by the institutions themselves⁶⁹. Despite the change in the CNE's status to an independent administrative authority, accompanied by a declaration by the Minister of Education that its role should increase in December 1988, no changes were made at this point to the evaluation criteria⁷⁰. However, from this stage onwards, the CNE began to make a number of policy pronouncements which promoted increased autonomy for universities in conjunction with robust evaluation⁷¹.

In 1993 the evaluation process changed, following the introduction of four yearly contracts between higher education institutions and the state delivering a larger proportion of institutional funding (aside from research funding, which had already formed the content of institutional contracts). This new policy was described by the CNE as leading to a "strong need for auto-evaluation"⁷² which required less time-specific indicators. In January 1995,

⁶⁶ p.4, Bulletin du CNE, No.1, October 1986

⁶⁷ p.4, Bulletin du CNE no.5 March 1988

⁶⁸ Bulletin du CNE no.6 Mai 1988

⁶⁹ Bulletin du CNE no.7 October 1988

⁷⁰ p.1 Bulletin du CNE, no.8, Janvier 1989

⁷¹ CNE, 1989, Priorités pour l'université, rapport 89 au Président de la République, La Documentation Française, Paris

⁷² Bulletin du CNE no.16 October 1993

the CNE published a new set of indicators, which this time included the number of foreign students only as necessary information for evaluations⁷³. In 1996, the CNE proposed that there should be an “annual census of all institutions...of foreign students and teachers, and also of partnerships between institutions”, and enjoined universities “to develop joint diplomas and modular courses to increase international exchanges”⁷⁴. This followed a call from Elie Cohen, the academic and advisor to the Education Minister, that the international dimension should be better taken into account in evaluation processes⁷⁵.

The largest change to the CNE’s criteria occurred, however, in 2000, when the evaluation time-table was altered to actually coincide with the four yearly funding contract cycle. The CNE made efforts to indicate that this change was technical rather than substantial; the “contractual aspect” was to be only one of the many evaluated by the CNE⁷⁶ and the decision to consider the contractual process had been taken by the CNE itself rather than by the Minister of Education⁷⁷. It noted that whilst it may need to work with the Minister, the IGAENR or the *Cour des Comptes*, “it acts within a methodological framework which has been freely chosen, with experts who have been freely appointed and produces its reports in complete freedom *viz.* the authorities and institutions” and that it “will not itself participate in the contractual process”, but only evaluate the fulfillment of the contracts⁷⁸. It thus distinguished its evaluative role from that of control, as rather than verifying “conformity to an established rule”, the CNE evaluations involved a “notion of value” or worth, thus requiring “appreciation and judgement”⁷⁹.

⁷³ p.2, Bulletin du CNE no.19, January 1995

⁷⁴ Le Bulletin du CNE, no.21, June 1996, Contribution du Comité National d’évaluation aux états généraux de l’université

⁷⁵ p.56, Les actes des entretiens de la conférence CPU supplément au no.13 du magazine Espace Universitaire, Saint-Malo, 22.3.96

⁷⁶ p.2, Bulletin du CNE no.30, Novembre 2000

⁷⁷ Bulletin du CNE no.36, April 2003

⁷⁸ op cit.

⁷⁹ Bulletin no.36 *ibid.*

CNE reports and foreign students

The following analysis is based on an examination of CNE evaluations of higher education establishments published between 1988 and 2003⁸⁰. After reading the reports as a whole, particular clusters of comments appeared to recur frequently. In order to track whether particular comments became more or less frequent across these periods, the number of mentions in reports up to 1995, 1998 and 2000 were added together and considered as a percentage of the number of reports up to that time (or, in the case of comments concerning overseas collaborative programmes, the number of reports concerning institutions with these). Any changes in the recurrence of particular comments would therefore have to be particularly salient in order for them to be picked up through percentage changes across periods. This comparison of institutional reports indicates a number of trends concerning the CNE's consideration of foreign students in institutional evaluations.

Firstly, despite foreign students being singled out as either "indicators" or as "necessary information" throughout the period studied, in three institutional reports they were not mentioned at all⁸¹ and in another, the only time when foreign students were mentioned was to show there were none on a particular programme⁸².

⁸⁰ Please note that this examination is, unfortunately, only partial, as I have been unable thus far to get access to those reports which are not available via the CNE website. The analysis is thus based on 71 rather than the around 85 reports published from 1988-2003. In addition, I lacked access to statistical tools when conducting the analysis. Hence, my apologies for the rather basic methods of analysis used.

⁸¹ L'Université de Marne-la-Vallée, 1996; L'Université d'Artois, 1996; l'Université d'Evry, Val d'Essone, 1996

⁸² p.49 of the report, L'Université de Bretagne-sud, 1999

The extent to which foreign student *numbers* were detailed slightly declined over the period (from 100% of the first three institutional evaluations to 87.09% of those up to and including 1995 to 77.46% of those up to and including 2003). Three institutions were criticised for a lack of sufficient information concerning the numbers of foreign students⁸³.

The extent to which numbers of such students were noted as either above or below average also declined slightly over the period. Of the institutional reports published up to and including 1995, 12.9% of institutions were claimed to have above average numbers of foreign students and 38.71% below average numbers. Over the period as a whole, only 11.27% institutions were noted as having above average, and 23.94% below average, foreign student numbers.

Indeed, the CNE appeared to take a rather contradictory approach to foreign student numbers at times, as in some reports it claimed that low foreign student numbers in relation to French student numbers indicated the operation of a strong degree of selectivity, rather than a lack of international attractiveness⁸⁴. High numbers of foreign students, especially in doctoral programmes, were sometimes taken as indicators that insufficient efforts were being made to attract French students⁸⁵. Even where very low foreign student numbers were noted, the CNE did not always recommend measures to improve the situation⁸⁶.

There was also a drop over the period studied in the extent to which the type of foreigners attending institutions was picked out by the CNE, with 54.84% of institutions' intake being

⁸³ L'Université des Antilles et de la Guyane 1991; L'Université Montpellier II et l'École nationale supérieure de chimie de Montpellier 2003; Université de Perpignan 2003

⁸⁴ p.139, L'Université de Reims - Champagne-Ardenne 1991

⁸⁵ cf L'Université de Rennes I 1995

⁸⁶ As with L'Université de Toulon et du Var 1992

disaggregated into nationalities up to and including 1995, falling to 40.85% over the period as a whole.

Interestingly, given the general tenor of government policy, the CNE criticised a small number of institutions' intakes as overly oriented towards European and/or North American students (3.51% up to and including 2000, 2.82% over the period as a whole). In contrast, it criticised 5.26% of institutions up to 2000 (falling to 4.23% over the period as a whole) for *not* concentrating enough on attracting European and/or North American students.

In a small number of cases, institutions were criticised as concentrating on incoming student mobility at the expense of that of French students' mobility (4.23% or three institutions over the period as a whole) or vice-versa (1.40% or one institution over the period as a whole).

Over the period there was a gradual increase in the extent to which institutions were praised for their international activities (from 16.13% up to 1995 inclusive to 19.72% up to 2003 inclusive), and a diminution in the extent to which they were criticised for failing to engage in such activities (from 12.9% of institutions up to 1995 inclusive, falling to 8.45% of institutions up to 2003 inclusive). The CNE occasionally exhorted institutions to develop their international programmes for strategic reasons; hence a faculty of the *Université de la Réunion* was incited to take the choice between "stagnating" or opening to the rest of the region⁸⁷, and its efforts to do so were praised in a later evaluation⁸⁸; and the University

⁸⁷ p.51, L'Université de la Réunion 1989

⁸⁸ p.87, L'Université de la Réunion 2002

of Reims was urged to increase student exchanges⁸⁹. Other institutions were praised for their efforts to increase foreign student recruitment, as with INSA Toulouse's special programmes for foreign students⁹⁰.

Over the period as a whole, seven institutions were criticised for failing to successfully integrate their foreign students' services with other institutional activities, and two were urged to join forces with other local higher education institutions in order to improve their foreign students' facilities.

The CNE did not write separate reports on overseas collaborative provision, as did the QAA. However, mention was made in a number of CNE reports of the existence of overseas collaborative programmes (25.81% up to 1995 inclusive, falling to 19.72% up to 2003 inclusive) and of foreign satellite institutions (two institutions or 2.82% of those reported on up to and including 2003). There was also fairly regular note of the programmes provided by institutions especially for foreign students, from 32.26% of these up to 1995 inclusive falling to 23.94% up to 2003 inclusive. Of these, it was noted that four were special fee-paying, i.e. semi-private, programmes (5.63% of all institutions reported on up to 2003).

In only one case out of all of these, however, was there extensive consideration of matters of quality control resulting from the development of Overseas Collaborative Programmes (OCPs), that of the *Université de Perpignan*. The University was rebuked for a "disequilibrium" between its metropolitan and delocalised faculties, and for an apparent

⁸⁹ p.41, L'Université de Reims - Champagne-Ardenne 1999

⁹⁰ p.18, L'Institut national des sciences appliquées de Toulouse 2001

“numerical inferiority complex” which had induced it to augment the number of students at its delocalised antennae without consideration of the consequences of this.

Whilst noting that the “market” in OCPs was a reality and that the University of Perpignan was admirably attempting to engage in this, it affirmed that the “degrees dispensed still have the label of a national French degree; the quality of teaching, the control of information and its supervision, the local providers, the recruitment of staff, all required an extreme rigour and the organisation of regular missions of a significant duration” by the University⁹¹.

Overall, therefore, the CNE’s reports indicate a rather changeable attitude towards foreign student numbers and their geographical origins and towards the services available for such students. The criteria for CNE reports, drawn up in conjunction with the *Conférence des Présidents d’Université* generally included the number of foreign students, at least as ‘necessary information’ if not as an ‘indicator’. However, these numbers were not always reported, nor were they uniformly reported on. The CNE’s comments concerning over-concentration on Western students at some institutions indicates a distance between the agency’s attitude towards the goals of foreign students’ policy and that of successive governments. Finally, the extensive differences between reports on this question suggests a large degree of cooperation between the CNE and the institutions examined concerning the setting of evaluation goals.

⁹¹ p.20, 29, 42, Université de Perpignan 2003

The QAA

Aside from the decision to introduce full-cost fees for foreign students from 1979, there was little policy change in this area until the announcement of the “Prime Minister’s Initiative” in 1998, which proposed an increased effort by institutions to augment foreign student numbers within the context of a new national promotion effort.

In contrast to the CNE, the QAA explicitly separated the consideration of institutions’ overseas from domestic provision. The existence and operation of OCPs, including franchise, overseas delivery and joint degree programmes, were considered as, broadly, a method of increasing foreign student enrolment, but this eventually became the focus of a largely separate evaluation programme, with its own methodology. It is thus necessary to consider both the QAA’s incorporation of foreign student issues into the “standard” British institution reports, and its consideration of OCPs in the separate report series devoted to them.

The main development concerning the QAA’s consideration of foreign students in domestic institutions was the creation of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the Code), published by the QAA in response to the Dearing and Garrick reports between 1999 and 2001. In January 1999, Section 1 of the Code was published, concerning postgraduate research programmes. This section singled out the needs of foreign students in interviews and language matters. Section 10 of the Code, on recruitment and admissions, published in September 2001, required institutions to consider their procedures for the appropriate accommodation of applications from international students. Overall, however, the numbers and needs of

foreign students were not particularly salient in the QAA's Code, with a HEFCE Task Group on "information on quality and standards in higher education" able to ask in 2002 whether the Code had any particular purchase on foreign student issues aside from within its section on Collaborative Provision⁹².

The QAA's assessment of OCP arrangements was already much more explicit than its assessment of numbers and services for foreign students in domestic institutions. The HEFCE had prepared a *Code of Practice for Overseas Collaborative Provision in Higher Education*, with a second edition appearing in 1996. In 1999, this was followed by recommendations by the National Audit Office concerning OCPs, following the discovery of extensive irregularities in the overseas operations of the Southampton Institute⁹³, and by the Public Accounts Committee on those of the Swansea Institute of Higher Education.

The HEFCE, following these reports, set out a series of further "guiding principles" for collaborative activity⁹⁴. These re-emphasised the Dearing Committee's recommendation that all OCP arrangements should have been evaluated by the QAA by January 2001, with reference to the HEFCE Code, but added a number of other financial and management requirements. In particular, it was stated that collaborative "activity with overseas partners should come within a published institutional policy for international education", and that it should also be possible to "illustrate a clear connection with the institution's plans for the recruitment of overseas students to study in the UK". OCP activities were required to be "self-financing" rather than involving the use of public monies

⁹² Report 02/15, Information on quality and standards in higher education, Final report of the task group, HEFCE, March

⁹³ SHEFC, 21.1.99, Circular Letter HE.03.99, National Audit Office Report on "Overseas Operations, Governance and Management at Southampton Institute".

⁹⁴ Fender, Brian, 11.3.99, Circular letter number 8/99

from the funding councils. Finally, it stated that degree certificates should record the location of the delivery of the course and the language of instruction⁹⁵.

Many of these requirements had been formalised in Section 2 of the QAA Code of Practice, published in July 1999, on “Collaborative Provision”. Articles 33 and 34 of the Code specified the need to include the place and language of study on award certificates, with other parts of the Section relating to financial and quality assurance mechanisms. It was stated that the Code was for guidance only, and “not intended to be either prescriptive or exhaustive: its purpose is to offer a framework for quality assurance and control which institutions may wish to use directly...”. However, it claimed that “in many institutions the guidance will constitute appropriate good practice”, and the QAA expected “that by autumn 2000 all institutions will be able to demonstrate that they are adhering to the precepts”.

The HEFCE and then the QAA codes became the basis for an extensive programme of overseas audits undertaken by the QAA. These tended to centre upon institutions operating in particular geographical areas, such as the UAE, Oman and Bahrain, audited in October 1997, India (in October 1997), Israel (in Spring 1998), Malaysia (in Spring 1999), China (in Spring 2001), Egypt and Cyprus (from August 1999 to March 2001), and Denmark, Germany and Switzerland (Spring and early Summer 2002). Institutions were required to write a commentary on their activities, taking into account the successive codes’ requirements, and then particular institutions were chosen for audit.

⁹⁵ Op cit.

QAA reports and foreign students

The following analysis considers reports from the QAA from April 1997 to December 2003. As with the French reports, clusters of responses have been coded and counted as cumulative percentages.

As noted above, the QAA reports can be divided into those examining OCPs only, and those considering these (if relevant) along with all other institutional arrangements. The latter shall be considered first.

The numbers of overseas students at individual universities and colleges were generally detailed by the latter in their submissions to the QAA, although these were very infrequently referenced to the national average. Where comments on high levels of foreign students were made by the QAA, these were both positive and negative. For instance, UMIST's overseas student population (amounting to almost a quarter of all its students) was described as resulting from a conscientious effort on the part of the institution to cater for their needs⁹⁶. The high number of overseas students at the University of Wales College of Medicine, however, was criticised as "the prevalence of particular cultural mores amongst specific groups within teaching situations" could "inhibit" learning opportunities⁹⁷. Little comment was made on the origins of overseas student populations, although it was noted in the case of St Andrews University that overseas students' services should not be oriented too exclusively towards its large proportion of North American students⁹⁸.

⁹⁶ p.94, University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, July 2003

⁹⁷ University of Wales, College of Medicine, July 1999

⁹⁸ p.62, University of St Andrews, November 1999

A small number of institutions were criticised by the QAA near the end of the period for failing to sufficiently coordinate international activities with other institutional actions (5.7% over the period as a whole). Between 1997 and 2003, the QAA singled out international student issues⁹⁹ in 16% of reports. In 10.2% of reports it commented favourably on the services available to foreign students, and in 5.8% of these, it claimed that changes should be made to improve or create such services. Hence, the University of Paisley was counselled to ensure that it enhanced “support services for international students as their numbers increase”¹⁰⁰. Unlike the CNE, the QAA did not at any point suggest actions institutions should take in order to increase numbers of overseas students.

Little mention was made of special degrees for overseas students, aside from Henley Management College’s “DBA”, upon which the QAA remarked that the College should “take into account national guidance concerning the quality assurance of research degree level education”¹⁰¹.

25.5% of reports mentioned the existence of OCPs, with a slightly higher rate of reporting of OCPs at the start of the period (up to March 1999). There was a progressive decrease in the number of reports of envisaged expansions of OCPs by institutions, from a third of those already with OCPs to a fifth. Swansea Institute’s decision to withdraw from all OCPs is particularly noticeable, as it followed a very critical report by the HEQC in 1996¹⁰². Of those institutions already participating in OCPs, the number counselled to seriously reconsider any expansion fell from 14.3% of those audited up to July 1999 to 2.9% of those over the period as a whole. In one of these cases, that of Thames Valley University,

⁹⁹ In the sense of having a section of the report devoted to them

¹⁰⁰ p.109, University of Paisley, January 2002

¹⁰¹ p.109, Henley Management College, 1998

¹⁰² Swansea Institute of Higher Education, 2002

the QAA criticised both the envisaged scale of expansion and the countries this was aimed towards¹⁰³.

The number of those institutions whose quality assurance arrangements were seriously criticised went from 100% of OCPs up to January 1999, to 85.7% up to July 1999, to 66.7% up to January 2001, diminishing to 42.8% of all institutions reported on over the period as a whole. The less critical injunction to continue to develop quality assurance procedures was made for 25% of institutions with OCPs in the run up to January 2001, with a slight increase to 28.6% when the entire period is taken into account. The QAA expressed general satisfaction with quality assurance systems for 8.3% of institutions with OCPs up to January 2001, falling to 2.9% of such institutions over the period as a whole. 25.7% of institutions with OCPs were praised over the period as a whole for having improved standards since previous audits.

Many of the criteria used for the QAA's assessment of OCPs (aside from the rest of the institution) were similar to those indicated above. However, the QAA appears to have structured its reports on OCPs more firmly on the fulfillment or otherwise of the HEFCE and the QAA Codes than its 'ordinary' institutional reports.

Certain clusters of criticisms are notable when considering the OCP reports as a whole. Firstly, 5.7% of OCP institutions were criticised for the use of languages other than English for assessment purposes over the period. The same percentage was criticised for a lack of coherence between international activities and overarching institutional strategies. Hence, for example, Liverpool John Mores university was asked whether its

¹⁰³ Thames Valley University, 1998

“recently augmented International Strategy” required a consideration of “the impact of these developments on its well-established mission to widen participation”¹⁰⁴. Secondly, a common criticism was the failure to indicate the place and/or language of study on students’ award certificates. On the contrary, 2.9% of OCP institutions were praised for the coherence of their treatment of international issues with their mission statements and for listing the language and place of study on award certificates.

Between April 1997 and December 2003, the QAA counselled 38.1% of institutions to exercise a greater degree of oversight of their overseas operations. However, the number of institutions whose quality assurance was judged on balance acceptable increased slightly over the period, from 25% up to March 1999, to 32.14% of reports over the entire period. The QAA stated explicitly that the degree quality offered was equivalent to that of a UK degree for 16.67% of reports up to March 1999 and 9.52% of reports over the period as a whole. This was roughly twice as many times as it explicitly claimed that degree quality was not comparable to that of an institution’s UK programmes (a relatively steady 8% over the period considered).

The number of institutions counselled by the QAA to reconsider future expansion was relatively high at the beginning of the period, at 16.67% up to March 1999, but declined to 8.34% considering the period as a whole. A number of institutions were reported as having withdrawn from previous OCPs, with the figure at roughly 4% over the entire period considered. Between April 1997 and December 2003, the QAA noted in 3.57% of reports that institutions had heeded the results of previous institutional audits.

¹⁰⁴ Liverpool John Moores, July 1999

The frequency of advice from the QAA to refer to the relevant Codes (first that of the HEFCE then of the QAA) increased slightly over the period, from only one institution up to January 2001. However, 5.56% of institutions up to December 2003 were asked to incorporate the QAA Code's injunction to include the place and language of study on award certificates. This point was particularly controversial; as the rector of Middlesex University noted in his reply to a QAA report, "within British higher education there [was] a singular lack of unanimity on the question whether relevant award certificates should refer to the language of instruction and/or assessment"¹⁰⁵. Furthermore, there was some confusion over the exact import of the Code's phrasing on this matter. As another QAA report noted, the failure to include such information on the certificate (placing it instead on the transcript), while "not inconsistent with the letter of QAA's Code, [may not be] keeping with its spirit, and [may not assist] third parties"¹⁰⁶.

Aside from the issue of award certificates, other common criticisms can be identified. Firstly, the need for better assessment arrangements was identified in 7.14% of reports over the period as a whole. In particular, the lack of involvement of UK staff in assessment was singled out in a number of reports¹⁰⁷. The QAA noted for instance that in the case of an OCP by the University of Westminster, neither "of the external examiners appointed by the University....appears to have had first hand experience of teaching, learning and assessment in a UK higher education institution. In view of this fact it is difficult to see how the external examiners are in a position to report to the University on the comparability of standards of student performance at ICOM with those of similar programmes, or parts of

¹⁰⁵ Middlesex University and VITAL- the Tel Aviv Center for Design Studies, October 1998

¹⁰⁶ University of Hertfordshire and INTI College Malaysia, April 2003

¹⁰⁷ Those on the University of Abertay Dundee and North College, Thessaloniki, April 2002; the University of Westminster and International College of Music, Malaysia, April 2003; the Victoria University of Manchester and the Israeli Center for Academic Studies, February 1999; University of Lincolnshire and Humberside and Skyline Institute, Sharjah, UAE, September 1998.

programmes, in other UK higher education institutions, as recommended in Section 4 of QAA's Code". Similarly, the Victoria University of Manchester was criticised as "the experience of those principally involved has been that of Israeli higher education, which has a different culture and practices from those of the University of Manchester"¹⁰⁸.

This criticism reflected decisions by the QAA to assess the quality of OCPs not through a direct analysis of the quality of programmes offered, but through a consideration of the extent to which the quality assurance mechanisms in operation overseas were adequate to ensure a comparable service to that operating in the UK. This approach of course took the quality of home institutions' provision as given. It hence implicitly assumed the superior quality of UK higher education from that of other providers, despite the claim of the QAA in relation to Israeli higher education that it "is not that one [system] is better than the other, but that they are different Students are seeking degrees of a United Kingdom university" and thus degrees should reflect standards at that institution¹⁰⁹. Similarly, the QAA praised the University of Essex' joint degree programme with the British Council in Athens as reflecting a good choice of overseas partner, without directly considering the British Council's own quality assurance procedures¹¹⁰.

The QAA also counselled the need for more formal relationships between institutions and their overseas partners (from 12.5% up to March 1999 falling to 11.9% over the period as a whole), and the need for better staff development at the overseas institution (from 4.17% up to March 1999 falling to 2.39% over the period as a whole).

¹⁰⁸ the Victoria University of Manchester and the Israeli Center for Academic Studies, February 1999

¹⁰⁹ *ibid.*

¹¹⁰ University of Essex and the British Council Teaching Centre, Athens, December 1997

Finally, as with the “ordinary” institutional reports, some of the QAA’s reports on OCPs considered the coherence of OCPs with institutions’ overall missions. Hence, the University of Warwick was praised for its links with a South African institution, these being coherent with its stated intention to improve access to higher education for non-traditional students¹¹¹.

Conclusion: the CNE, the QAA and the promotion of new foreign student flows

In both Britain and France, higher education evaluation agencies have operated against the background of governmental policy promoting increased numbers of foreign students from Western and emerging countries. These policies were partly reflected in the inclusion by both agencies of numbers of foreign students in their schemes of indicators or required information. However, both agencies differed greatly in the extent to which they then commented on the numbers of foreign students at particular universities or colleges, even when as in the case of many CNE evaluations, this was referenced to the national average.

In addition, both agencies appeared to move beyond their mandates with regard to foreign student policies. In the case of the QAA, a specific policy concerning the format of degree certificates was made on the basis of a political decision, which had neither a technical nor a legislative basis. In the case of the CNE, extensive policies towards foreign students, including injunctions for more action on the part of the government, were promoted which went far beyond the indicators of good practice developed in conjunction with the

¹¹¹ University of Warwick and Morgan University Alliance, South Africa, November 1999

Conférence des Présidents d'Université. In addition, the claims made by the CNE that some universities' intake of Western students was excessive in relation to their intake of African students, and that their student body was thus insufficiently "international", went directly against the core of successive governments' policies towards foreign students.

Overall, the use of evaluation in the field of foreign students' policy rather contradicts the strong/weak states dichotomy, and lends some strength to the "varieties of capitalism" approach towards the impact of the relationships between the state and sectors of production, on public policy.

The French state clearly has a much more direct funding and management relationship with the more homogeneous university sector than the British. However, partly due to the absence of significant differences in institutions' priorities, French universities now possess a strong peak association, which is committed to a view of evaluation as self-evaluation. The criteria developed by the CNE, in conjunction with the *Conférence des Présidents d'Université*, reflected this.

The CNE reports were thus strongly linked to institutions' own auto-evaluation processes. The fact that Ardonio and Berger comment that evaluation has become no more than disguised control in France¹¹² indicates that at one point it was *not* 'merely' controlling. But aside from limited spheres of use of self-evaluation in the public sector, such as action research by some teachers, this developmentalist view of evaluation has never been as strong in Britain. Indeed, the very creation of the QAA was seen as a move away from a

¹¹² Ardoino, J. and G. Berger, 1986, L'évaluation comme interprétation, *Pour*, No.107, pp.120-127

previously negotiated relationship with government to one of more direct governmental control¹¹³, rather than as an opportunity for collaboration.

Secondly, as previously noted the CNE developed its evaluatory criteria in discussion with the universities' peak association. The QAA developed its codes of practice privately, although ostensibly also in consultation with the higher education sector. It is interesting to note that the British codes and criteria were considerably more prescriptive than the French. Again, one notes the continuing existence of a debate over whether the "strategic logic of conventional action", should be evaluated in France¹¹⁴; to use anglo-saxon terminology, whether one should evaluate programmes or policy. In contrast, British evaluation mechanisms were mainly developed within the context of auditing and the measuring of "efficiency, efficacy and economy"¹¹⁵. This precluded any extensive debate over the possibility of a wider-ranging view of evaluation, including the evaluation of policies themselves. This restricted conception of evaluation is reflected in the fact that the QAA's reports infrequently mentioned broader issues of policy, whereas the CNE made a number of general remarks both in its reports and outside them, concerning the appropriate actions to be taken towards foreign students. This may in turn have been related to the heterogeneity of the British higher education sector concerning foreign students, with some universities admitting large numbers of these, often in order to subsidise domestic students, whilst others (often less prestigious and more regionally-based institutions) are less able to attract foreign students and use them in this manner.

Finally, differences between French auto-evaluation and British audit-style evaluation indicate a more general tension, between the use of evaluation to increase cooperation, or

¹¹³ Salter and Tapper, *ibid.*

¹¹⁴ p.4, Leroy, Marc, in *La Société Française de l'évaluation*, *op cit.*

¹¹⁵ Pollitt et al., *ibid.*

to increase market competition. It appears from this brief survey that the CNE's reports focused on the former goal; indicating to institutions how they might increase their numbers of foreign students in many cases, but very infrequently taking a critical approach to existing numbers and provision (the exception to the rule being the report on the Université de Perpignan). The QAA's reports, on the contrary, never mentioned how institutions might increase their numbers of foreign students, but frequently criticised existing services for foreign students, especially as part of overseas collaborative programmes. In so doing, the QAA appears to have been attempting to maintain the image of British higher education through monitoring and enforcing general standards, but not to directly aid institutions in increasing their 'attractiveness' to foreign students. This 'negative' role of the QAA thus contrasts with the more activist, 'positive' role of the CNE. Contrary to the 'strong/weak states hypothesis', however, the CNE's activity in this respect was in collaboration with institutions and their peak associations, acknowledging the differences between institutional priorities in the published reports, whilst the more uniform QAA process approximated to control rather than to collaboration.

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Characters: 50,971