

CARDS 2002

The Quality in Higher Education

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Zagreb - AZVO

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The Quality Gap

- Governments: interest in an expansion of their HE system
 - Debates over participation rates and access
- But HE is capital and labour intensive (high-cost service) → funding becomes a public agenda
- One means of funding the expansion: **diminishing unit costs**
- This motivation in turn gives rise to assessments HE in terms of **efficiency** and **effectiveness**



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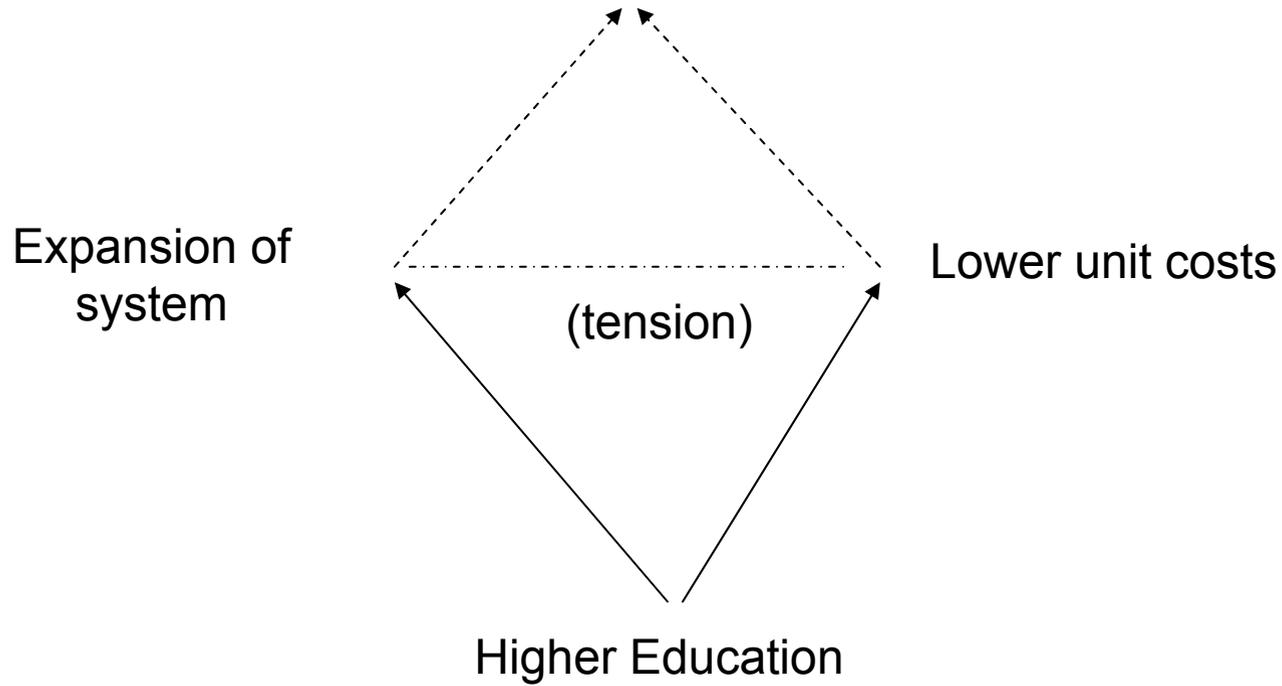
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The Quality Gap

Procedures for assessing quality



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Quality: a key word

- Three central issues
 - access (how can we get more students into the system)
 - funding (how can we pay for them)
 - quality (how can we bridge the gap)



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Approaches

- Philosophical
 - Clarify our intentions and suppositions and supply reasons for them
- Sociological
 - Indicates how we coem to be in the position we are in



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Philosophical

- Quality is simply to say, hey this is good
- It is emotional and tells little about the the element in question, it is a positive inner feeling towards a feature
- We should be prepared to identify some entities or features of HE that would command general assent as examples of quality



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Philosophical

The crucial question is:

- Is quality essentially one thing (or set of related things)? or
- Is quality justifiably an attribute of different kinds of entity or achievement in HE?

A related question is:

- Does quality reside in HE or in the minds of those who use the language of quality?



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Sociological

- Burton Clark's triangle:
Systems influenced by
 - Academic community
 - State, or
 - Open to market



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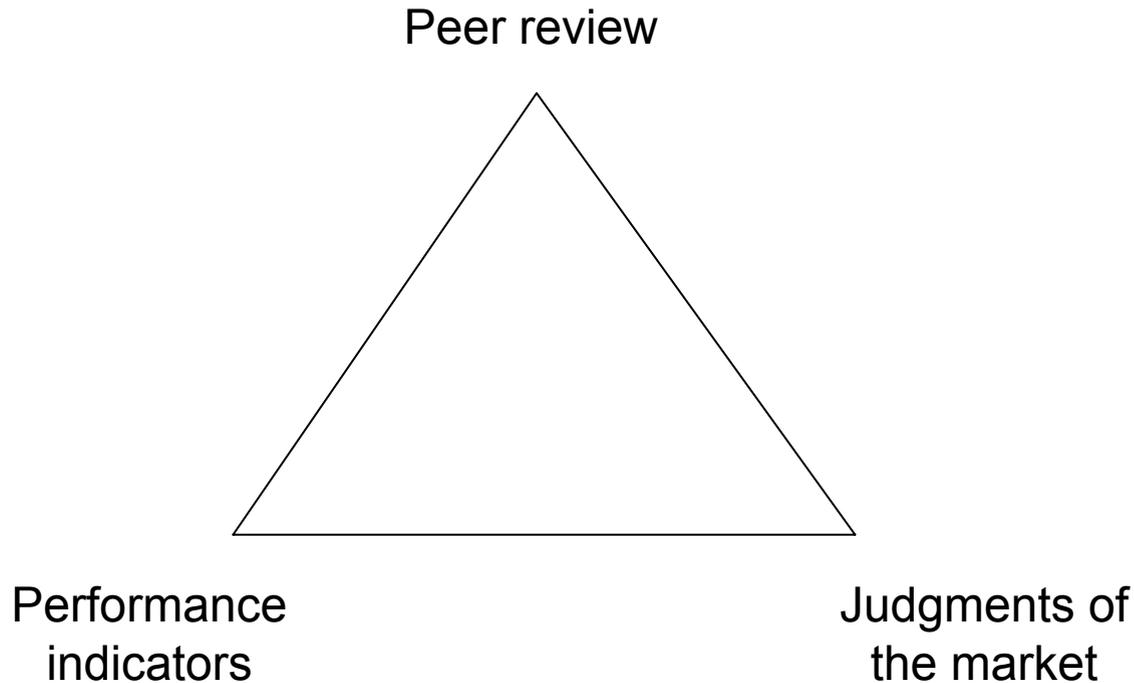


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The Triangle (forms of assessment)



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Sociological

The triangle does not offer a comprehensive summary of social groupings on quality, but pick out the key figures with their conflicting claims about quality.



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What is behind?

A shift from:

- A system enjoyed by the few to a system in which a large proportion of the population participates (accountability)
- HE being part of the cultural apparatus of society to a HE which is much more part of economic apparatus
- HE being a personal and positional good to being more of a wider social good (additionality)
- HE being valued for its intrinsic properties to its being an instrumental good (for economic survival)
- a culture characterized by the formation of personal life-world projects to one dominated by the formation of public and strategic policies (the educational project of HE)



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