

Economic Imperialism and the Ivory Tower: Some Reflections upon the Funding of Higher Education in the EHEA (2010-2020)

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Abstract

Although economists' interest for education is somehow recent, it has become a decisive force in shaping the social and political views about higher education. This increasing economic interest in higher education is due not only to the growing amount of resources that most advanced societies allocate to higher education, but also to the increasing relevance that economic analysis has given to higher education's outcomes.

One of the aspects in which economic influence has been most prominent has been on funding matters. With the continuous expansion of higher education during recent decades, many European countries have now to deal with mass systems and the subsequent financial challenges it poses. Moreover, this expansion of European higher education systems has been taking place in a context of reassessment of the level of engagement of governments in many social activities, due to the increasing financial difficulties of the so-called welfare state. These trends have fostered important developments and experiments in the funding of higher education, which are likely to remain relevant, and even more so, in the coming years.

The main purpose of this chapter is to discuss some possible scenarios about the funding of higher education in the EHEA for the coming decade. This will be done through the identification of some major current trends in European higher education funding.