

Good-bye to the Celtic Tiger? Higher Education in Ireland 2009

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Higher Education at a Time of Crisis: Challenges and Opportunities
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Changing HE Context

- GDP to decline by 9.8% 2009 and could fall by 14%;
- Government borrowing likely to rise to 11.5% GDP 2009 and 13.6% in 2010;
- Unemployment expected to rise to 12.2% 2009 and 15% in 2010;
- Inflation expected to fall to -1.3% in 2009;
- Recovery slow in 2010 +.
- HE trying to operate in a continually changing and challenging financial and uncertain budgetary environment.

Impact on DIT

- Budget Changes
 - Reduction of ~€16m since 2008
 - Effective reduction of 10% of total budget
 - = absorption of nationally agreed pay increases
 - = increasing reliance on student numbers/capitation
 - Further reductions (~3%) in 2010 expected
- Moratorium
 - Embargo on appointments
 - Curtailment of all contract positions
 - Decisions now being taken by Department of Finance
- Reduced funding for research
 - Research funding agencies and programmes (SFI, IRCHSS, IRCSET, TSR, EI)

Main Impact (1)

- Re-structuring organisation
 - Consolidation and collaboration – between/within HEIs
 - Reduction in number of faculties/schools to increase efficiencies
- Sharing resources
 - Procurement, HR, Research Administration/Technology Transfer
- Academic Programmes
 - Review programmes
 - Reduction in programme/module choice
 - Close programmes
 - Rising undergraduate/postgraduate student demand

Main Impact (2)

- Research
 - Shift focus to EU and industry-funded opportunities
 - Performance measurement: Assessment, evaluation, benchmarking
 - Review overheads – full cost recovery
 - Restrictions on contracts/secondments affecting research
- Facilities
 - Reduction in capital budget and building maintenance
 - Reduced access to buildings
 - Reduced administration support
- Student Services
 - Reduced access to libraries
 - Reduction in student counselling service

Main Impact (3)

■ Human Resources

- Restriction on all appointments and contracts
- Impact on secondments and promotions
- Pay budget to stay at least 3% less than 4th Q 2008
- Embargo on all administration posts, including admissions, academic registrar, counselling
- Restrictions on overtime

■ Finances

- Reviewing all costs and budgets
- Restrictions on travel, hospitality, contracts, consultancy, etc.
- Postgraduate fees under review
- Student stipends reviewed downwards
- Salaries under review

Challenges for HEIs

- Great difficulty operating in uncertain environment;
- Restructuring within tight/unrealistic timeframe;
- Reduced funding at time of increasing competition (talent, research, int'l students, investment) globally;
- Re-focus on EU funding – but need to re-learn how;
- Conservative/restrictive academic traditions & practices;
- Need to maintain/grow student numbers with reduced resources;
- Ability to respond to government initiatives for unemployed via graduate internships, entrepreneurship training, etc. with reduced resources;
- New pedagogical models to take account of reduced funding, more 'savvy' students, etc.;
- Poor level of internationalisation.

Implications (1)

- Bringing Irish HE into line with 'modernisation' agenda albeit within tighter timeframe and less auspicious conditions:
 - New thinking pushed out by focus on short-termism;
- Stronger focus on strategic priorities, mission and differentiation aligned to fields of expertise and competence;
- Growing recognition of attributes/benefits of working together as an HE system:
 - Inter-institutional collaboration, mergers, rationalisation

Implications (2)

- Focus on internationalisation to diversify income
- Greater attention on assessment, international benchmarking, value-for-money;
- Changes in work practices and career structures with emphasis on performance management and greater productivity.

Regional/City Region Responses

- Growing realisation of need to strengthen city-region capacity.
- Dublin as national gateway:
 - Dublin Region Higher Education Alliance
 - Dublin Creative Alliance
- International Recruitment
- Sharing modules across PhD programmes
- Common Access programme
- Grangegorman Campus – joint venture between DIT, Dublin City Council and Health Service Executive.