

## **HONORING THE TRUST: QUALITY AND COST CONTAINMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Peter Drucker may have overstated the case when he predicted that universities would be relics in 30 years writes William Massy, but will the perception of American higher education's "gentleman's B" grade performance be sufficient to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

Ten years of Massy's research, consulting, and university administration contributed to *Honoring the Trust*, a book that includes tangible recommendations. Like most of us, Massy could not have foreseen the "change spurred by competition and the information technology revolution" which has increased the urgency of his message. Nevertheless, it is clear that people question the rising costs of education and believe more can be accomplished at lower cost.

Massy's purpose is first to describe how education has created its own shortfalls which reinforce an inadequate status quo. He accomplishes this by surveying the postwar "massification" of higher education and a consequent misplaced focus on prestige. Part II of the book presents "a practical program for improving education quality while containing costs."

In 388 pages, 11 chapters accomplish the purpose of guiding change by focusing on education's core competency—learning:

1. The erosion of trust
2. Universities as economic enterprises
3. Subsidies and contribution margins
4. Research, teaching, and the quality of education
5. Technology's misunderstood potential
6. Educational quality processes
7. Core quality principles
8. Education quality oversight
9. Balancing cost and quality
10. Performance-based resource allocation
11. The action agenda

As new technologies prove themselves, and as the power of choice shifts to consumers, prospective students and international evaluators will ask American institutions "to support their quality claims with data rather than reputation" (8). Massy suspects that nearly half of the nation's universities appear to be faculty driven, focusing inward and seeking prestige, rather than customer driven, focusing outward on outcomes that are valuable to learners (23).

Thus, the action agenda for change begins with identifying desired learning outcomes, followed by designing curricula, teaching and learning processes to achieve the outcomes, and implementing quality assurance and resource conservation measures.

Practical guidance appears in the details provided in seven broad steps:

1. Build awareness and commitment
2. Commission pilot projects
3. Create venues for ongoing discussion and development
4. Organize skill development and consultation services
5. Broaden the rewards, recognition, and incentives environment
6. Adopt performance-based resource allocation
7. Develop an internal oversight and review capacity

Identifying academic audit as a driver of change, Massy adds that educational competency will benefit from incorporating change agency topics into doctoral instruction; “persistent questioning by governing boards; attention by the media and the public; and external reviews by accreditation agencies and higher education oversight bodies” (335).

Calling for colleges and universities to be “market smart and mission focused,” Massy concludes that learners, parents, faculty, and the academy itself must not allow trust to be broken, but be more responsive, protect true excellence.

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