

Some lessons for non-finance sectors from the GFC: Higher education

Abstract

The objective of this paper is to examine whether the tertiary education sector (TES) could learn lessons from the recent Global Financial Crisis (GFC). For this purpose we, firstly, present policy environment of TES in general and more specifically the New Zealand and Australia. In this effort we explore policy documents, including New Zealand's Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019; Australia's Bradley (2008), Marginson (2013), Universities Australia (2013) reports. Secondly, after reviewing the literature on Pre and Post GFC, we identify points of consensus of pre-GFC conditions that contributed to the GFC in order to draw parallels between policy environment of TES and pre-GFC conditions. Based on this aggregated material we, then, discuss the issues relevant to sustainability of the tertiary education sector in the future. This may give a different assessment of the sector's ongoing viability than appears in university or polytechnic managements pursuing a corporate business model. What does the current position of the broader tertiary sector look like in terms of its successes, its concerns, in anticipating future change? How do intersectional links work or could work in approaching TES sustainability to address government concerns about controlling expanding tertiary sector costs. These are paradoxically linked to calls for "hands-off" de-regulation to pursue a market-driven model. The scope of this paper has not attempt to offer solutions to these issues, but highlighting 'red flags' that the present higher education policy environment may have global relevance, and Australasian educational policy makers in particular.