

I. INTRODUCTION

In April 1991 UKCOSA was asked by the Commonwealth Secretariat to conduct a brief study of foreign student mobility both within the EC and into the Community from other countries, with emphasis on intake from the developing world. We were asked to gather statistical data and also to investigate the policies of the main EC receiving nations towards students from abroad in areas such as numbers, admissions, fees and scholarship support, and countries of origin. A summary document based on the study provided background information for a seminar convened by the Overseas Students Trust, in association with the Commonwealth Secretariat, held on 24 June 1991 and entitled *Educational Exchange: the Third World Dimension*. This report, based on that study, is intended as an information resource and discussion document for those concerned with monitoring and facilitating student mobility into and within Europe. Limitations of time have dictated a 'broad-brush' rather than a detailed approach to policy analysis. Likewise, in accordance with our restricted brief, we concentrate on national policies and perspectives within the EC at the expense of multilateral provisions such as those of Lome, in full recognition that this yields only a partial picture of student movement.

It was surprising to discover that comparative policy analysis in this field is a relatively new activity, from a European perspective at least. As Kaoru Okamoto states in his Introduction to *Foreign Students in OECD Countries* (OECD 1990):

'...we should first.. identify the national and institutional policy areas related to the flow of foreign students, look into... existing foreign student policies, institutional practices and the nature of the involvement of various stakeholders, and then analyse the interactions [among these]...Through...such...far-reaching efforts, one could pursue...a comprehensive and overall national foreign student policy. Such...analytical efforts, however, have scarcely been made by any policy makers, relevant committees, researchers or practitioners. Although there have been...policy statements, committee reports, research outcomes, institutional reports etc on the flow of foreign students, they all looked into only a limited number of ...pertinent factors...eg socio-cultural adaptation..., cost/benefit of foreign student enrolment, diplomatic implications of flows.'

Describing the 'national policy' of a given country towards foreign students is no straightforward task. In the course of discussions with representatives of national Governments the view was frequently stated that there was 'no co-ordinated national policy' towards foreign students. Responsibility for policy formulation and implementation is often spread widely across Ministries and at different levels of national and local government and institutions. While policy declarations in the form of Ministerial statements and the like are often not hard to find, policy in action tends to be more a compromise among overlapping interests and agendas. Even a common rhetoric may clothe differing priorities. For example, there is broad consensus among EC government officials and others that the 'internationalisation' of higher education is a value to be promoted, but less agreement on what constitutes this objective and how to achieve it. Some have considered more critically than others how far the goal of internationalism in education goes beyond the import and export of students to call for transformations within the national education system itself. For these reasons, in our view, it is most fruitful to study what might be termed the climate of policy: the constraints and priorities that drive national practice in specific domains such as admission, funding and subsidy, quotas and preferential treatment. This is the approach we have attempted to take.