

# Freedom Equality University

Edited by Cezary Kościelniak and Jarosław Makowski

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Timo Aarveaara • Andrea Abbas • Tomasz Bilczewski  
Gaële Goastellec • Sarah Guri-Rosenblit • Lubow Jeroszenko  
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Introduction

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**UNIVERSITY AT THE CROSSROADS**





Cezary Kościelniak, Jarosław Makowski

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UNIVERSITY AT THE CROSSROADS

Economic and financial crisis pervades every single dimension of our lives today. Even such a respectable institution of Western culture as the university is not safe from its dangers. Furthermore, crisis forces the governments across Europe to redefine their higher education policies. Regrettably, changes brought by this grim tide boil down to two slogans: “priority of practicality” and “financial reductionism”.

“Priority of practicality” and “financial reductionism” would mean here bringing each and every school into adjustment with the economic reality of the time. It is not a mystery, however, that such a reality favours a rather short-term perspective of profit and evaluation based on productivity. In a procedural logic resting on the concept of market efficiency, cultural and spiritual goals as well as tradition are of lesser value. This is also the reason why the planned and implemented changes within the structure of the university are radically opposed by the students and citizens of Europe, for whom reducing the idea of university primarily to its economic role is a barbaric downgrade of its social role, which for years to come will be impossible to overturn.

Indeed, there seems to be a disquieting process going on, although, let us be frank, not for the first time in history: politicians, especially those clad in the neoliberal colours, declared war on the “university” answering to its own “universal” vocation understood as teaching and conveying academic knowledge while forming a special kind of community (which is now being almost coerced to restructure into a corporation). The vast majority of the academic community, students and professors alike, seeks to resist the changes and maintain the *status quo* – so far to no avail.

At present, European universities are thoroughly redefining their roles. The concept of the university may not be oversimplified and conceived only as the place of knowledge transfer. The origins of the university lie in undertaking social, cultural and economic issues and so it must remain. This, among others, is the purpose of the “third mission”, which seeks to challenge the university with the task of developing its regional dimension and tackling such social issues as sustained development or building platforms for public debate. These, and many other, social tasks of the university are now commonly accepted. Universities cease to be self-contained, secluded islands, but turn into active change makers on the regional, national, and (for at least some of them) international scale.

The European university is transforming as we speak and bears less and less resemblance to the Humboltian model (*vide* Kwiek, 2010). Along with incorporating its traditional ideas, the emerging post-Humboltian model is embracing new responsibilities: the aforementioned “third mission”, i.e. creating of a network linking the university with the surrounding environment, and the “civic mission”, an element of the “third mission”, which outlines the role to be played by the university within modern democracy and the tasks to be fulfilled in this area including, among others, public education.

If the university is to rise to the challenge, it requires autonomy, an independent decision-making process that would allow for individual policy-making regarding its own development. In other words, if we conceive of a university that fulfils not only traditional roles, like education and research, but is also open to economic, social and cultural interaction with its own environment, such an institution will need solid autonomy giving it tools for creating optimal policies.

If we write the above, it is not because we are naïve dreamers. We are perfectly aware that the university must offer a connection between education and the future careers of its students. And it goes without saying that it must pursue additional funding sources – suffice it to

mention the idea elaborated by Burton Clark in his *Creating Entrepreneurial Universities*. The university must become an institution nursing the much-needed relationship between science and the economic environment by offering versatile, preferably international, courses as well as teaching skills needed to obtain professional acclaim.

It is of no use, however, to fetishise these entrepreneurial reforms, nor give them top priority, as Clark does. These new adjectives describing the role of the university, such as “entrepreneurial” or “adaptive”, have attracted critics who point out that economic efficiency does not necessarily have to be in line with what is good for the educational and academic community. And, however nauseating it may be to watch the universities become purposeless non-manageable molochs, we must not forget that “entrepreneurial” trends also bring risks. This is the reason why we have to examine the autonomy of the modern university: if we restructure the university into a for-profit company characterised by strong bonds with the business world, will it limit its freedom, a prerequisite for creative and innovative work? Will the university, financially entangled with its external partners, become a sort of subordinate entity thus losing its natural, critical approach towards social issues?

Changes seem to be so deep-seated that even critics of various ideological backgrounds are surprisingly like-minded while discussing the transformations of the universities triggered by the neoliberal policy. For example, Alasdair MacIntyre, the eminent philosopher, in his book *God, Philosophy, Universities* criticises the idea of “research universities”, arguing that, as specialised and self-sufficient academic centres, they lack an underlying idea that would bring together and allow the teaming of various types of knowledge, the education process, and the communitarian dimension of the university.

Christopher Newfield offered a leftist critique of the entrepreneurial involvement of the American university in his bestselling book *Unmaking the Public University*. The author shows that cooperation of

the universities with big corporations in the USA caused the rise of tuition fees, which resulted in a more elitist character of the universities. The strong influence of the corporations on the universities' supervisory boards affected their autonomy, at the same time profit generated by the jointly developed patents rarely dropped into the pockets of the university.

Obviously, one has to remember that the American context differs by and large from the European reality. Let us keep in mind, however, that political solutions for the matter at hand should take into account local features of the countries and regions, and governance patterns cannot be simply imported from other academic cultures and treated as *a priori* formulas for success. But it seems that the European higher education policy is leaning toward subscribing to such measures.

Although the books by MacIntyre and Newfield are tackling the problem from different ideological angles, they draw common conclusions: autonomy of the university was shattered by destructive economic trends. It is interesting to note that a similar diagnosis, albeit arrived at by adhering to a different philosophical tradition and a European perspective, is proposed in this volume by Tadeusz Ślawek. The former rector of the Silesian University writes that the modern university is clearly transforming into an association of various institutions – deprived of common purpose or idea – exposed to the threat of the “Midas temptation” to turn everything it does into gold. The problem is, the university requires a long-term perspective where added value cannot be measured by financial gain. For example, such a value is represented by the citizen who is well prepared to take up life's challenges and will contribute to his community in the future.

These critical voices certainly struck a chord. We may conduct increasingly complex research, but those who run laboratories have no time for teaching. It is often the case that the most prominent scholars are employed as researchers only, causing a breach in the generational

transfer of thought – one of the most important cultural tasks of the university. It goes the other way round too. It happens that fantastic teachers have no time for research or writing down their ideas, which makes them vulnerable to a shortened existence.

In the process of education and research, specialised universities divided into “research” and “teaching” schools are prone to lose their intellectual potential, which currently allows for asking basic questions concerning the very foundations of human activity in a broader perspective of social structure. The university, if it plans to remain a critical institution, must pose such questions. For this reason, it should not renounce “soft spheres” influencing the quality of human life, such as religion (*vide* Sommerville 2009).

Another change that has a rather negative effect on academic reality concerns a new way in which scholars are performing their work. Scientists not only write books and publish research results, but also compile reports, which seem to be slowly replacing knowledge itself. A report differs from a book in that it must meet the requirements of the one who ordered it – in this sense the scholar is never entirely free or may not tackle an issue that otherwise could have been examined in independent research. Those who order the report, from state agendas to corporations, expect certain effects to be brought about – yet it is the very process of cognition that counts as an effect in science. It may also be, however, that there has simply been a sort of paradigm shift within the world of science.

Another point at issue concerns the idea of disciplinarity and transdisciplinarity. Today, it is ineffective to transfer knowledge based on one paradigm or single discipline of science. Fundamental social issues are explained by adopting a transdisciplinary perspective. The idea of “sustained development” may serve as an example here: it requires a combined effort of social sciences, biology and economy. Transdisciplinarity is also linked with the problem of autonomy. In

this particular case it would mean institutional freedom for establishing research modules or groups that would be free to act regardless of disciplinary or departmental divisions.

One of the crucial problems of the present higher education policy is the aforementioned equality issue. Equality means here an access to the university, but also an access, upon graduation, to the “institution of welfare”. In other words, universities, understood as certifying bodies (in this case they certify knowledge), should open access to social promotion. While we are aware of the difficulties caused by mass higher education, we would like to stress that universities still remain “institutions of welfare”, and for most people finishing studies is a *sine qua non* for their future personal and professional development. As this volume shows, the problem of equal access is still a valid one and it seems that it will remain so for years to come. Europe grapples today with the question: how to build a model of the university that would be more inclusive?

Although the present day seems to provide us with unlimited access to every imaginable education we elect to have, it is only graduates of the elite institutions who do not experience problems gaining qualifications that allow for fairly swift transition to professional life and the attainment of high social status. Ideas of equality and universal access to the institutions of the welfare state, proclaimed after the cultural turn in 1968, are fading into history. They were shattered by the economic crisis, less and less transparent labour market, and increasingly dimmed future of millions of Europeans. In a sense, education became a mechanism for upgrading one’s knowledge by bagging subsequent diplomas that no longer have any real value.

In mass higher education, inequalities cause consequences in the labour market, where competence must give way to informal connections. We face a paradox where equal access to the “institution of welfare”, in this case the university, does not always lead to an egalitarian society but only temporarily buffers social inequalities.

Politicians within the majority of European Union countries are becoming increasingly aware of the fact that a well-educated citizen is not only capable of carrying out his life plans or achieving success and welfare, but he is an individual who presents critical approaches, is conscious of the political projects he is involved in, shows an open attitude towards political ideas, actively exercises his rights, and is aware of the ethical responsibility that come with participation in public life. Before a citizen-to-be may acquire such virtues, he must receive an education that shapes the civic culture of the society. This is one of the reasons why it should be enshrined as a public good. At the same time education is an act of formation, it opens the individual's mind to tasks and roles which will make him fulfilled as a human being; to put it differently, education is essential in pursuing a full, satisfying life – both in its private and public dimensions.

Welfare states, those that succeeded in implementing this model as well as those which are striving for it, aim at providing help for their citizens in achieving their goals – financial support of education falls under this description. From the normative perspective, it would be difficult to compare systems where education is perceived as a public good with the systems where it is conceived as a private good. The former is epitomised by the UE, the latter by the USA. Both systems are embedded not only in different cultures, but also deal with divergent social problems and distinct conceptions of the public sphere.

Building “European Harvards” (meaning a copy-paste process) is thus doomed from the outset. Knowledge is not measured by the commercial success of the individual, region, or country, and therefore the university lends its premises on equal terms both for applicable and fundamental research, with the latter leading to posing key questions. The university must also constantly reinvent the space for discovering new horizons, public debate, reading, encounters with individuals coming from different cultures, lessons in dialogue, and action-enhancing civic ethics.

This drive to dignify the public sphere - understood as the space of social discourses and debates where we find and analyse problematic social issues - is inseparable from the need to maintain institutions that would effectively bring life to this sphere - such bodies would be critical and traditional at the same time. The European university is a paragon of such an institution. It is precisely at the university where knowledge is transferred for the sake of the knowledge itself and education as such remains a public good.

If we were to point at the main problems encountered by the modern transformations of the university, we would bring forward and single out two of them: the idea of freedom (conceived not only as the freedom of research, but also autonomy of the school) and equality (primarily access to institutions of knowledge, including peaceful co-existence of other important social practices - such as religion - within the university). We present the Reader with a book that tackles these weighty problems from the European perspective. The issues outlined above have their own, more detailed, implications that were discussed by the authors contributing to this volume.

A word on the structure of the book. It begins with a theoretical section titled "Theoretical contexts" - analysing the autonomy of the university from a theoretical and historical perspective. The second part, titled "Contexts of global changes within higher education policy", presents papers discussing selected problems in the transformation of the university, such as changes concerning the governance, attractiveness, and shifting education discourses, as well as cultural changes triggered by the student protests occurring within the last few decades. The third part, "Contexts of local transformations - case studies", includes case studies of the chosen European countries: England (having a different higher education system than Scotland and Wales), Finland, France, Germany, Russia and Italy. Here the authors examine recent changes within the higher education policies. The book concludes with an interview with the minister of science and higher



education, professor Barbara Kudrycka, who relates to the problems sketched in this book from the position of a policy maker.

While preparing this publication we were aware of the diversity of methods applied by the contributors. Case studies prevail, but the Reader will also find normative, comparative, and cultural analyses. As a discipline, the study of higher education policy is still in its infancy, hence different research methods are welcomed and accepted. To use the distinction made by Rainer Bauböck (2010), we tried to make this book rather problem-driven than method-driven. In short, our ambition was to show the problem, but not without theoretical background.

The task we undertook can be illustrated by fitting remark made by Ulrich Teichler, who argued that while explaining detailed problems, one should work with certain theories in order to prevent the “extra-theoretical accumulation of unexplained facts” (Välilmaa, 2008, p. 144, quote by Teichler, 450). Following this idea, we confronted our authors with topics and questions that purport to shed some light on those heavily discussed issues, but at the same time retain a broader, holistic approach.

By submitting this book to the judgement of the Readers we hope that it will be a good point of departure for discussion on Polish changes within the area of higher education, while at the same time being a useful tool in the already ongoing debate.

Finally, we would like to thank all those who devoted their time and effort so the book could come into existence. Special acknowledgements go to Agnieszka Mitkowska, who took charge of the organisational side of the enterprise, Magdalena M. Baran, for her unflagging help in the editing and proofreading processes, as well as maintaining contacts with the authors, and Shawn Gorman for arduous proofreading. We would also like to thank the translators: Magdalena Ptak, Rafał Jantarski and Michał Koczalski, as well as the reviewer, professor Jacek Sójka.

This book could only come into being thanks to the hard work of a team of people without whom it would not otherwise be possible.

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Part One

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**THEORETICAL CONTEXTS**



Tadeusz Ślawek  
University of Silesia

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AUTONOMY, EDUCATION, DEBT

*At bottom, the intellectual, in my sense of the word, is neither a pacifier nor a consensus-builder, but someone whose whole being is staked on a critical sense, a sense of being unwilling to accept easy formulas, or ready-made clichés, or the smooth, ever-so-accommodating confirmations of what the powerful or conventional have to say, and what they do.*

Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual*

1.

Autonomy may well be a notion that will weigh on the future shape of democracy. When John Locke emphasised man's readiness to pass and respect laws underpinning the edifice of civil society, he held certain that relations between authority and the individual are not unidirectional. Autonomy is nothing else but putting to practice a bidirectional principle regulating liaisons between the citizen and the society. *Autonomos* is thus a free and independent entity, but remember that it is not absolutely free: its freedom is expressed in individual undertakings, nothing could be more true, though we cannot forget that the said undertakings are subject not only to *auto-*, but also *nomos*. The individual and the law, as the supreme embodiment of the super-individual, may only then co-operate peacefully, if this cooperation is accomplished in freedom. The individual is free **towards** itself and **for** itself (I have my plans, projects, ambitions – says the individual), but must also be free **from** itself and certainly from **excess of itself** (I do not have the right simply to venture anything that comes to my mind

– continues the inner dialogue – because as the individual I only may achieve fulfilment where my life touches lives of the others, and this space is wrecked by any excess of the self). Being autonomous, I run to myself, but also – within the profound meaning of the word – run away from my (exaggerated, excessive) self. Autonomy is braided in a thick knot with the question of identity and the scheming of our own (“our”, not only “my”) future. In other words, being “autonomous”, I have freedom to the same extent as I am freedom-less. I have freedom, because I may design myself; I am freedom-less, because I am confronted with the restrictions constituting a frame in which I have to fit my life and work. **One may put it this way: only then am I free, if I am aware of my debt to others; auto- is indebted to heteros**, something recognised as “other”, or even “opposite”. Cultivating this awareness of debt would be a basic task of wise education. In pondering one’s freedom (we investigate issues that we assigned to ourselves and build structures pursuant to our own rules, though neither of those shall ever be completed; the mission of the university is an everlasting *mission impossible*) and one’s being freedom-less (the world asks, or even demands something from the university, and it remains to be established whether those demands are always and invariably legitimate), lies the university’s important contribution.

## 2.

One needs, however, to amend the preceding sentence. It is not just the scheming of our common future, but its *common* scheming. The future is “common” not only because in one way or another it shall scoop us all, but, first and foremost, it is to be schemed by common effort and reflection. The “community” of the future assumes two-fold consent: first, it is given by the individual agreeing for its fate to be immersed in the fate of the others; second, it is given by the society, allowing the individual not to be just a mere reproduction of the fate of the others. A wise community shall so structure its laws as to provide the individual with the liberty to structure its own fate. The autonomy of the democracy rests upon heteronomy of the fate of the individuals

comprising it. John Stuart Mill was right to warn: “He, who lets the world or his surroundings scheme his own life for himself, needs the sole skill of aping” ( Mill, 2006, p. 159). Aping and its risks are thus to be carefully scrutinised. It shall follow that democracy and its commonly binding laws, *nomos*, are to be so structured as to serve the purpose of *auto-*, that is the individual; the “scheme of life” of the democracy provides for the barely graspable multiplicity of individual schemes of lives. Therefore, what is mine and mine’s my own, relates to me, but the entire sphere of *auto-* shall necessarily remain in continuing relation with the sphere where the alien, the other, and the not-mine dwells: that is the world at large, which is *heteros-*. When this is not the case, democracy slumps into **domesticracy**, a system based on the conviction that it is only what is mine and my own which is of value and credible, and that there is just one single “scheme of life” – ours. One may recall Shakespeare’s wise word of admonition opening the *Two Gentlemen of Verona*: “Home-keeping youth have ever homely wits”. Democracy and autonomy stand against the force of so-construed homeliness in defence of what Mill called “individual voluntariness” (*ibidem*, p. 156).

### 3.

If democracy is a complicated game between a multiplicity of individual schemes of life and the common scheme of life set by the laws, and if the project of democracy is not to be turned into “aping”, but to the contrary, if it is to leave room for the individual to make its own decisions, it is of paramount importance to determine the manner in which such an individual is to be prepared for such a great responsibility. Autonomy touches upon the most profoundly understood responsibility for one’s decisions and plays a decisive role in the preparation for an individual “scheme of life”. We should say “deciding” rather than “decision” in order to underline the enduring nature of the challenge here examined: it is not one or the other resolution which is at stake, but an ever-alert disposition to investigate the world while preserving the singularity and independence of one’s life. This disposition for respecting common laws, which does not bereave us of the

right to harbour our own beliefs, falls under the notion of responsible deciding. It provides us with the sense of being an entity which is not so much endowed with “rights”, but “righteous”, meaning that following the rule of law does not release us from individual reflection, and does not allow for convenient defection, a risk-free retreat, or an alibi in the form of doing what “everybody does” whenever we face dire choices. Autonomy and deciding, which is chained to it, requires skills for engaging in risky enterprise, and careful mistrust towards those acting mindlessly “in the name” of law, invoking its force and authority as a mere tool to seek and destroy *heteros-*. The later work of Jacques Derrida is a constant reminder thereof: “There is no ‘politics’, no law, no ethics without the responsibility of a decision which, to be just, cannot content itself with applying existing norms or rules but must take the absolute risk. To that end, one has to change laws, habits (...) the entire horizon of ‘the political’, of citizenship, of belonging to a nation, and of the state.” (Derrida 2000, p. 7).

#### 4.

Autonomy promoting heteronomy, that would be the briefest description of the challenge that is democracy is. By speaking of the disposition to sketch an individual “scheme of life”, and cultivating the disposition to use a process of responsible deciding as a framework for democracy, we are immediately putting the issue of education in the spotlight. He who disregards education and learning, disregards not only the common future, but also opposes the community of the future in any form whatsoever. Education is nothing else save preparation for a common shaping of the future, which, deprived of this adhesive, shall shatter into shards of entirely individualised projects, bearing no sign of any communal idea. What say the documents – recall the *Magna Charta Universitatum* – that established the autonomy of the university at the core of European tradition? It is undoubtedly a carefully woven thread in the bureaucratic language, a thread of continuity in European thought in the service of communal issues. Indeed, autonomy was the key feature of the most ancient European universities, and today it



should be emphasised that autonomy serves the economic interests of the university well. One cannot, however, shake off the impression that the autonomy in question refers at present to the areas of science management and teaching, rather than to the nature of the crucial bonds linking the work of the university and the world. It is therefore autonomy not so much promoting the pursuit of truth as facilitating the administration of science. The former is not, obviously, left behind; it is, however, reduced to the fig leaf covering the “bashful” area of the university. The question of autonomy does not provoke discussion on the idea of the university and its far-reaching social mission, and is replaced instead with conversations and disputes concerning the management and structure of the university or provision of subsidies for it.

## 5.

It may seem that it is no great exaggeration to state that the task of the university is not so much an essentially never-ending, unrelenting pursuit of truth, but rather perfecting its organisation and the efficiency of its administration. The truth may ever less be thought of as journey in unexplored directions and uncharted territories of *ubi leones* of which we may hold nothing certain; the truth lies where good organisational structure is, the extent of “good” being measured by the degree of market and fundraising success. If we were to resort to the company of mythological personas, we would have to say that Sisyphus has been deposed as the patron of the university, so long live Midas. I hold Sisyphus as person significant to the university for a number of reasons. To start with, the son of Aeolus and future founder of Corinth was the one who denounced obedience to isolation and the incommensurability of worlds. Sisyphus strived to abolish the absolute division between gods and mortals; we may, however, construe the ancient hero’s resolve to pass Olympian secrets to the people as a conviction about the superiority of freedom of speech, which triggers a reflection that may not be suppressed by any obstacles. Sisyphus enjoys autonomy not because he violates the divine law, but first and foremost because he is convinced that what is “ours/mine” (*auto-*) must be in constant touch with

the “other/ different” (*hetero*-). Secondly, one single boulder to be rolled up the hill comprises the whole world and future of Sisyphus. This is not to hint at the absurdity of human endeavours, but to point at their uncertain, never finite nature. Autonomy of work consists in undertaking it with the awareness that it may not prove “rewarding” (in every meaning of the word, especially that which reveals the uncertainty of the final result). The effort of thinking and learning, not to forget the teaching of others, all these tasks of the university, consist in focusing on what we are to lift with all the consciousness we are able to muster, that contrary to the clear and totally predictable world of gods (being of the same character as bureaucracy and market corporations, these “gods” of our age), where effects are already perfectly predicted and expected, the outcome of such effort is highly uncertain and may not rise up to expectations. Sisyphus thus enjoys autonomy because, while pursuing his goal, he surrenders to the possibility of disappointment; he aims not at pleasing someone, but to consummate his fate; such failure is of equal value as success.

## 6.

Meanwhile, it is difficult to get rid of the impression that universities are under increasing pressure to turn everything they touch into gold. Midas, not Sisyphus, lends auspices to our enterprises. Apparently, nothing releases the university from exerting efforts to discover the worldly demands and the other way round, to awaken the curiosity of the world towards its works. It is, however, necessary to insert at this point two remarks: (1) the quality of scientific studies is of great importance, but one cannot remain indifferent to the degree of awareness and financial capability of the business sector, which often fails to initiate long-term investments (money put into scientific research or artistic activity hardly ever produces a quick return); moreover, capital at its disposal is often not sufficient (increasing the cost of research around the world); (2) only a painfully superficial and myopic approach to reality allows for viewing research as a result of work that aims solely and exclusively at immediate and quick application. Many years pass

before the discovery made by the physicist finds its way to an engineer who applies it in practice; philosophical or artistic activity may not be translated into the system of instruments facilitating our life, but it's a source of wealth drawn upon by the individual to make his life more complete, more fulfilled, to his own benefit and that of others. If we assume that the task of the university (or even education as such) is to make human existence "better" and to embark on the quest for finding better ways of being together, then the engineer and artist or physicist and philologist do not belong to different worlds. In this race for innovation one must not neglect the effort of understanding things that surround us; this is the realm of broadly conceived humanistic and artistic activity. Putting this aside would result in opening gates to abuse of domains where the human art of cognition crystallises. History delivers various examples of what happens when things constructed in good faith by scientists achieve life of their own because no one was capable of forecasting and assessing what impact they would have when embedded in the human world of motives and interests.

## 7.

This brings us to the dilemma of usefulness. Sisyphus's efforts appear to be deprived of it: each time he is about to reach the top of the hill, the boulder slips out of his hands and the whole exercise must begin anew. But we may tackle the story from a different angle. The question "what for?" is already a promising start: it opens the door for questioning the existing order that also holds the questioning person within its grasp. Sisyphus's efforts are not futile. They beg the questions "what is?" and "what makes me act pursuant to rules imposed by some authority, whether divine judgement or law or even administrative regulations?" Sisyphus' task is therefore – let me resort to Derrida's brilliant essay on the topic of the university – (though Sisyphus does not appear on its pages) that this something may become a "supreme place for critical resistance against any dogmatic or unjust appropriation". (Derrida, 2002, p. 204) Let us stress, then, that such tasks do not boil down to open anarchistic rebellion; they do not overthrow

the order of things (Sisyphus obediently resumes the march up the hill), but constitute a query about the nature of the order, its implicit intentions, and possible abuse. The usefulness of Sisyphus's task follows from its seeming uselessness: it is where the process of inquiry about the world starts; it provokes thoughts, vexes, bothers, fertilises the mind. Roberto Calasso reminds us that Sisyphus is often associated with the Danaïdes, peculiar female personas trying to fill leaky jugs, in vain. Bachofen sees here not folly and the futility of human activity, but conversely, the immeasurable and indeterminate character of human work, which does not necessarily always find its way into practical application. "Bachofen views those forty-eight girls differently. They do not dwell among the shades of Hades, but in the remote land, amid growing reeds and vast marshes where the Nile splits into numerous arms and irrigates the barren soil. (...) such pouring of the water into the jug was not in the slightest futile and desperate. To the contrary, it represented very nearly like happiness" (Calasso, 1995, p. 74). Thought fertilises through unyielding questioning, where each answer is merely a transient form of question. The culture of the university is a culture of questioning in a world of instant practical answers. Autonomy is a form of defence of this culture that does not evade the provision of answers to queries submitted by the world. These answers, however, will forever remain to the university as transient, imperfect, incomplete, a maggot of questioning.

## 8.

This is the reason why I have second thoughts when hearing slogans calling the university to enter the global arena of universal competition. Competition is a *fait accompli* and the university may not stand aside expressing indifference. Autonomy does not entitle us to disdain the world, to the contrary – it requires catching up with it, to participate in its scenarios pursuant to the principle: *auto-* is meaningful only when supporting and being supported by *hetero-*. But a serious attitude towards the world – and I understand the university as a school of serious treatment of the affairs of the world which may not necessarily

render short-term success – should not be rooted in accommodating each and every demand dictated by it. Autonomy's prerequisite is reflection – an inalienable condition of autonomy – in whose absence, to quote Mill again, it dwindles into mere “aping”. The university protects its autonomy not to isolate us from the world, but to participate in it wisely and seriously. This in turn requires not passive subordination, but reflection, a critical take on not only its own structures, but on the arrangement of the world at large. Lindsay Waters hits the mark when she lambasts the ‘mindless’ existence led by those who subscribe to the dictate of what Geertz termed ‘thick concepts’, which lacks thin concepts used by those wanting to apply reason to life” (Waters, 2010, p. 97). If we assume that university autonomy means championing the role of reason in our common (not only university) world, which is increasingly subjected to not always highly reasonable regulations and economic as well as administrative pressures, then the absence of serious discussion of these issues is rather queasy testimony about the Polish academic environment.

## 9.

Therefore, when Luc Weber, the erstwhile rector of the University of Geneva, speaking at the forum of university rectors in Thailand, 2006, argued that the most trying challenge to be faced today by the universities is the need for rapid adaptation to the reality of competition enabling universities to take charge in a changing world, he put himself in a double trap. First, there is concern whether it is masters of adaptation who are true leaders in a volatile world. It is rather he who learns what the conditions of the game are and what rules are to be followed, who subsequently makes an effort to transform conditions and to introduce truly new elements. “New”, we say, not just replicas of the existing ones. Thus, a “leader” does not adapt to the existing system; his ventures are rather launched from the peripheries, as if almost from the outside. If the leader “leads”, is the “first”, it necessarily follows that he is not within the “peloton”, he goes to the front, sets the new pace, does not hide safely inside. So, secondly, it is

not simple adaptation that is at stake at the university, but creation of what is “new”, not engaging in activity within the existing patterns, but on the margin thereof. The notion of “usefulness” becomes crucial; the university defends and protects it from its oversimplified conception as immediate benefit (meaning quick application as well as quick profit). For this reason, the university may not renounce fundamental research nor theoretical investigation due to the fact that these show that mindless “usefulness” may not claim the right to rule human thinking.

## 10.

Autonomy is therefore two-fold. First, we distinguish academic freedom of teaching and thought; secondly, management, funding and supervision of the said freedom. There is inherent and inevitable tension between them, surpassed by both sides: politicians would never (for the time being, though one should never give up careful mistrust in this matter) openly question freedom of research and teaching, while scholars ask the world of politics to appreciate the role of science and appear to believe that the world of politics appreciates the freedom of research and teaching, and if it temporarily may not translate into funding, it is due to so-called “objective reasons”. I described this tension as “inherent and inevitable”, for both sides are interdependent, albeit speaking time-wise, in the short-term (and such is the perspective of politics, quite opposite to research and education) their interests are contradictory in nature: universities assume that valuable research and education is a long-term investment project and – alas! – cannot be measured by economic indexes, which drives the politicians to conclude that these are nothing more than parasitic milieus usurping the right for lavish funding with no justification whatsoever, and they are viewed by the government as sheer extravagance. The tension in question is to a certain extent natural (the government is there to apply economic discipline, and it may also have to do with the fact that scholars are not always realistic about their expectations); what is unnatural, is the fact that the world of politics (ab)uses it to promote two dubious ends: (1) endowing the rules of the market with the right to apply to

all (science and education alike) areas of life; (2) putting the university in the position of a nagging petitioner who does not contribute, but demands something he is probably not entitled to and – consequently – presenting such activity and possible disputes as the voices of those, who, completely lost in the reality that surrounds them, are incapable of understanding the modern world. Formally speaking, the autonomy of the university appears not to be in peril; the law shall not dare to question it (we should bear in mind, however, that in post 9/11 America there is no shortage of incentives for limiting such freedom; the books *Terrorist Hunter* by Rita Katz and *Unholy Alliance: Radical Islam and the American Left* by David Horowitz elaborate on this issue pretty extensively). Indeed, it may be jeopardised by accepting the corporate character of the university, paving the way for what Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades termed in 2004 “academic capitalism”. According to those authors “corporations in the new economy treat advanced knowledge as material, access to which is regulated with specific laws stating who may own it and manners of market distribution thereof as a product or service. (...) Similarly to corporations, universities and other higher education institutions started treating knowledge as a material. Bearing in mind that the culture we live in is increasingly infused with values set by the market and its rules (we could witness its surprisingly precarious, one would say “irrational”, character exposed by the 2009 crisis), it is with great care that we should approach the problems of education and scientific research. Is autonomy not then at risk, when I no longer acknowledge my debts to others but only respect the credit given by banking institutions and state agendas? Is the debt of the student borrowing money to graduate not training in accommodation to life lived in the world where the market and Swiss franc furnish his scheme of life? Do not think of this as of idle idealism. One may not, probably, escape such a scenario - the treasury is not a bottomless pit (though it is not always wisely administered) - but it is a pity that we do not discuss these issues. The absence of serious discussion of the topics presented endangers autonomy, and the university must take a stand to defend it.

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**Tomasz Bilczewski**  
Jagiellonian University, Cracow

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## TRANSFORMATION, TRANSFER, AND TRANSLATION

*Trzeba też myśleć o uniwersytecie w kontekście logiki uni-formacji, która jest również poetyką przekładu.*

*The university must also be thought in the logic of uni-formation, which is also a poetics of translation.*

Jacques Derrida, *Theology of Translation*

### **The University Enters the Stock Exchange**

At a conference held in the building of the Warsaw Stock Exchange in December 2010, academics and businessmen discussed possible ways to translate the university's intellectual capital into the realities of the free market. Even those rather averse to diagrams and statistics must have been overwhelmed by the power of the fact that the sale of scientific knowledge generated by all Polish universities taken together amounts to a mere 100 million dollars per year. "Mere" — since it is less than the income of one American university. The 2009 financial statistics for Columbia University in New York revealed that it traded its research for more than 140 million dollars, and the income of British universities by far exceeded annual resources allocated for the development of science in our country.

Bearing these figures in mind, the market efficiency of Polish universities came as a shock to many experts when compared to the unsettling results of such prestigious rankings as the Shanghai Ranking. To find one of Poland's "academic gems" one has to scroll down

into the four hundreds. Even if the criteria applied to the evaluation are puzzling, such results are anything but comforting. If we put the conclusions of these statistical analyses in the context of the local discourses shaped by the so-called “romantic paradigm”, to use Maria Janion’s term, their peculiar metaphors would reveal to us the wounded pride of an ambitious nation that exports scholars who achieve success and acclaim at the most distinguished universities around the world. Is it not enough to recall how for centuries this soil was populated by the “most potent fellows” who “many a skill posses,” such as Copernicus or Marie-Curie (née Skłodowska)?

What should be done for Poland to produce more such intellectual titans? When will our scholars once again rekindle the pride of a Pole winning the Nobel Prize for something other than literature? The solution seems simple. Using the language of many discussions on the topic of the university, we should not hesitate to commercialize, implement, patent, and simplify for the sake of practicality. We should apply the principle recalled in the Stock Exchange building: “science is to be understood as an economic sector.” Since the 1970s, this concept has been increasingly influential in the West, particularly in the United States. Four decades ago, the development of information technology and molecular biology resulted in universities taking over the role being hitherto played by technological corporations and, consequently, they and their scholars have earned multibillion-dollar profits. Dignified lecture halls and elite shrines of knowledge became institutions “more similar to the gigantic industrial plants of Ford or Krupp, vast educational districts [...]. If the industry moved from the Ruhr District to Silicon Valley, the landscape of higher education as a single solid university is being reshaped into a well-networked [...] complex of schools” (Magala, 2000, p. 40). Using this concept of the university as a factory of knowledge, institutions of post-secondary education, particularly our local ones, need strong connections to the market. Otherwise, how else will they be able to confront the urgent issues of the deepening demographic slump or the never-ending struggles for funding?

Undoubtedly, the numerous accomplishments of Polish scholars are worth turning into money. This would have an immediate effect, further triggering often very costly enterprises and experiments that would result in a more active and competitive participation of Polish scholars in the intellectual market. It is imperative that Polish universities waste no time in catching up to their Western counterparts. The humanities should also confront reality beyond the walls of academia, undertaking and participating in the development of culture along with other institutions that function in the public sphere. However, one should remain cautious. It is worth bearing in mind the less than impeccable effects of the Bayh-Dole Bill passed in the United States in 1980, which was rooted in the tradition founded in 1863 with the Morrill Bill as an example of a law encouraging scientists to patent the results of research conducted with public money. Some have expressed ethical concerns regarding the process of privatizing knowledge acquired through public funding. One is reminded of the debate about the practice of acquiring rights to the gene sequence within the Human Genome Project (in 1996, the “Bermuda Rules” provided a solution). Some have also emphasized that waiting for research results to be protected by intellectual property laws slows down the process of popularizing discoveries and, paradoxically, limits the innovativeness of some entities (*vide* Bendyk, 2010, p. 227-236).

In Poland, this connection of academia to the market functions in a peculiar way, as a means of closing the gap induced by the past Communist era, when dreams of a free intellectual market in Poland were nothing but a blurred vision of things to come, constrained by the mechanisms of centralized power. Although it is somewhat advisable and by all means commendable to jump on the bandwagon of deepening the impact of cognitive capitalism, it may however hold some pitfalls. It is important to discuss these dangers, since the commercialization of knowledge can be structured in such a way as to pay heed to the non-commercial (and only seemingly deficit-inducing) functions of the university instead of restricting the role of science to a calculated

practice aimed solely and exclusively at the production of goods, for which there is a current, often strictly political, demand.

One particular example illustrates this danger. At first glance, it resembles a case specific to physics and chemistry that is of little importance in the grand scheme of things, but which has found its way into the pages of books recounting the history of cuisine. As is commonly known, polytetrafluorethylene, more commonly referred to as Teflon or Tarflen, became a common part of our daily experience in a rather unexpected way. One June day, the young engineer Roy Plunkett, employed in the 1930s by the DuPont Company to conduct research on substances to cool refrigerators, was checking what was going on in a heavy cylinder containing tetrafluoroethylene used for the production of coolants. Upon opening the said cylinder, he discovered a white “powder” that was not adhering to the walls. As it later turned out, unexpected polymerisation had taken place inside the cylinder, thus producing a substance with the most surprising properties: remarkably little surface energy together with high thermal and chemical resistance. Its practical application may be used today by anyone making scrambled eggs. This anecdote shows that even within the domain of the physical sciences one must expect surprises, and that it is impossible to predict and plan everything ahead to the smallest detail. In other words, Teflon was not discovered to upgrade frying pans, which nonetheless did not stop the manufacturers of cookware (and in turn the military, modern medicine, cosmonautics, and the motor and clothing industries, etc.) from translating Plunkett’s discovery into the specific products. Boole’s algebra and Frege’s logic did not immediately produce the digital computer. Meanwhile, the seemingly impractical studies in classical philology at the best British universities ultimately formed the small intellectual elite once ruling the mighty British Empire (*vide* Scruton, 2010).

Most problems resulting from the pressure to immediately transfer knowledge into market realities are encountered in the humanities,

where, to quote Martin Heidegger, “the most prominent ideas occur in an innocuous manner” (Heidegger, 2002, p. 49). At the dawn of the stock exchange era, Max Weber provided an analysis of the industrialization of science, though its inherent logic was analyzed thoroughly along with the design of the modern university (Schnädelbach, 1992, p. 47). Wilhelm von Humboldt tackled the problem in the following way: “One eagerly limits the sciences to collecting and classifying facts for practical application; speculation, hazardous to science, in itself barren and hollow, is rejected or accepted as merely an exercise of the mind helping to provide the appropriate shape of the sciences more precious or necessary. [...] Speculation, however, has its own rights, only speculation allows each science to achieve the feat of necessity and science as such may exist only with speculation in the background, providing the setting for all the particular science” (Humboldt, 2002, p. 6-7).

In his essay “Circumstances To Be Provided For the Emergence of Science and Art Within the Nation,” from which the above quote comes, Humboldt emphasizes that each form of scrutiny which does not introduce false assumptions, and is capable of explaining the phenomenon in question and rendering it possible to move from general to particular conclusions, cannot be qualified as futile. Of course, he does not offer praise for the “unworldly” features of an academic career that disregards the endeavors of “common folk.” In his quest to grasp the spirit of true science, Humboldt seeks to achieve a fragile balance between experience and intellect: “It is contemptible to suspend any undertaking that reaches beyond experience or apply experience where other faculties, such as the human mind or morality, take charge. A nation infused with such ideas would be, despite the most successful development of some areas of science, forced to reject its depth and purity; everything would be aimed solely at the practical aspects of life. And as life and experience involve human feelings and actions that, by resorting to instinct, can be embraced correctly and truthfully, and even though its sources remain unclear, at the end of this path one attains valuable compensation” (Humboldt, 2002, p. 4-5).

Humboldt strongly emphasizes that, as we tend to basic scientific needs, and given that the foundation of science is the “discovery of that which is hidden in the visible,” we must not find ourselves in a situation in which “science exists, but its spirit [...] withers.” It may be said that such spiritless science focuses exclusively on its utility and is thus controlled and enthralled without being given a chance to find a freewheeling creative approach, bereft of the right to experience the unexpected. Sterile science, which neglects human feelings and values, is deprived of depth and instrumentalizes, especially in the eyes of Humboldt, who perceives science as a stage “on the way to the ultimate and supreme.”

### **Autonomy: Between *Utilitas* and *Curiositas***

Humboldt’s remarks on the occasion of the establishment of the university in Berlin clearly lead us towards a discussion of the intellectual legacy of Immanuel Kant, Georg W. F. Hegel, and Descartes. It would also lead us towards a discussion about the philosophy of Wilhelm Dilthey and the ambitious enterprise of the anti-positivist breakthrough epitomized by Wilhelm Windelband’s project of differentiating nomotetic and idiographic sciences. It is not, however, our business to supply the details of the debates of the age, nor should the quoted excerpts from Humboldt’s writings leave the impression that there is some fundamental gap between the market and pure and immaculate science that cannot be bridged.

On the contrary, the combination of utility and the idealistic pursuit of the truth lies at the very foundation of the university, reaching back to its medieval beginnings. Aleksander Gieysztor wrote that “this peculiar feature of European civilization was expressed in the birth of the idea of the university. The university combined entrepreneurship, initiative and innovation with the inherent need of the people who shared something other than blood or personal dependence to consort. The university emerged in cities as they acquired new social, economic, political and cultural functions” (Gieysztor, 1997, p. 9)

The corporate framework of the university became apparent on the Old Continent as early as the twelfth century. It rests on the principles governing medieval guilds. Starting with Bologna, voluntary associations of students and professors created their *universitas magistrorum et scholarium* not only based on purely scholarly relations, but also on the struggle to earn income for themselves and for their universities. All this developed in a context of autonomy and independence, and the university was only at times exposed to the interference of ecclesiastical or secular authorities. Profiting from scholarly research and teaching as well as caring for the alumni to be fairly paid for their work is an integral component of university characteristics and is not necessarily a sign of *invidia pecuniae*.

Two significant dimensions of the university were revealed at the birth of the institution. The corporate approach shaped by the idea of autonomy then became apparent. It was expressed in self-governance of the associating professors and students, which radically differs from the rules followed in modern corporations, coupled with entrepreneurship and initiative, and additionally boosted by the republican sentiment of the municipal communities of Renaissance-era Northern Italy. Kant's writings made clear the intertwinement of these dimensions. His discourse dedicated to the idea and structure of the university eagerly resorts to metaphors typical of business, economics, and trade (*vide* Kant, 2003, p. 55-56)<sup>1</sup>. As history shows us, scholars took care of their wealth base with varying degrees of success. It is useful to stress that until the eighteenth century, universities in various European cities were far from financially stable. They used their own resources to get by, capitalizing at times on the property awarded to them by the church as well as their shares in villages and estates, salt mines, tenement houses, or even breweries and fish ponds. There was no safeguard provided by the state, as we are accustomed to today. The greatest financial prosperity of our Alma Mater, for example, occurred in the first

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1 Kant writes here about factories and businessmen (*Geschäftsleute*).

half of the seventeenth century, when it was allowed to grant credits to monarchs (such as the King Casimir Jagiellon) (*vide* Chwalba, 2009, p. 71-74). It was followed, however, by economic crisis, stagnation, and, to use modern terminology, the incompetence of top management.

It may seem slightly surprising to learn that many trials and tribulations faced by the Polish university today due to the ongoing political transformation have been familiar to this institution for quite some time, although at present we experience them in greater magnitude. Here, we can name the multi-job issue that once reflected a particular internal financial hierarchy of the university. At the sixteenth-century Cracow Academy, the discrepancy in salaries between the most affluent doctors of theology and scholars of liberal arts was striking, amounting to fifteen times more. "Even in 1765, twelve theologians were in possession of 9650 zloty, whereas sixteen artists and philosophers had as little as 1650 zloty" (Chwalba, 2009, p. 72). To earn their living, young bachelors were forced to work at the royal court or at a magnate manor, at parochial schools and municipal offices, which, like today, affected the quality of scholarly research and ruined the most precious capital of the university; namely, the intellectual potential of those who were part of it (without its conscientious cultivation no university, be it extraordinarily equipped or managed, will become another Harvard, Columbia, or Princeton).

In the times of Kant's intellectual activity, scholars, forming in comparison with modern times a kind of loosely-tied association, often took care of their working conditions by themselves. It was not uncommon that if they desired their lectures to be well attended, they had to provide the heating by their own means. This is the case of the Königsberg philosopher as well. Only after buying a house in 1784, with the money he earned thanks to certain investment activity, was he able to secure an independent lecture hall (*vide* Żelazny, 2003, p. 15), which was also used by younger and less affluent scholars. Let us not forget that in his seminal petition for establishing the university in Berlin,



Wilhelm von Humboldt struggled to ensure the financial resources for the new institution, counting on the king's support in the amount of 15000 thalers per year, the assignation of estates and the donation of the palace owned by Prince Henry together with its premises. Furthermore, he expected the property rights to all of the above to be transferred for eternity for the sake of national wellbeing (*vide* Humboldt, 1989a, p. 238).

It is not without reason that I recall the times of Kant and Humboldt. Both epitomize the era that has long shaped our understanding of the university. While witnessing the process of its commercialization, which in the contemporary Polish reality has gained new momentum right before our eyes, it may be of interest to draw attention to the interconnectedness of two traditions leading up to the development of the institution in the modern era.

One was founded on the regulative principle of reason. Man, assisted by it, as Kant says, emerges from "his self-imposed nonage" and pursues independence and autonomy. It is a transition from blind obedience to authority and tradition towards responsibility for one's own thinking and actions. On this path leading to Enlightenment, formation, especially university formation, is of paramount importance. Here, two dimensions of conscious existence meet. One is subject to practical reason, which in the eighteenth century was associated with the faculties of law, medicine, and theology (backing the development of skills aiming, respectively, at worldly civic, sensual, and eternal happiness); the other, tracing back to the tradition of teaching the liberal arts, embraced philosophy as representing what Kant called theoretical reason. The basic task of the three higher faculties was to convey definite and safe knowledge, in terms of science, politics, and religion. The task assigned to philosophy, as a lower faculty, was to furnish the student's mind with general knowledge, from rhetoric to astronomy. The art of asking questions, stimulating the development of knowledge along with counteracting its stiffening into dogmas also fell under its

“job description.” However, it was so arranged that no place for extreme, anarchic rebellion should be left. Kant himself was apprehensive of a university revolt on the scale of the Parisian events of 1789. Philosophy was thought of as a space for the pursuit of truth, albeit without the possibility of referring to practical power, which was exercised only by the professors of the higher faculties who were collecting money from the public treasury and often acted as censors and civil servants within the state bureaucracy. They were paid to accumulate and reproduce knowledge crucial for swift social progress, while philosophy was supposed to be a creative, critical tool scrutinizing the pros and cons of the procedures to follow (following political reshuffling in Prussia, in recognition of his preaching for intellectual freedom, Kant was suddenly rewarded with putting his *Religion Within the Limits of Reason Alone* on the index of forbidden books). This faculty, open enough to accept emerging physics, chemistry or biology, was perceived as a stronghold of independent thought, released from the control of power or authority, free of practical application or commercial demand, asking autonomous questions of *possibilities* within a community comprised of *cognoscenti*: “It is absolutely essential that the learned community at the university also contain a faculty that is independent of the government’s command with regard to its teachings; one that, having no commands to give, is free to evaluate everything, and concerns itself with the interests of the sciences that is, with truth: one in which reason is authorized to speak out publicly. For without a faculty of this kind, the truth would not come to light (and this would be to the government’s own detriment); but reason is by its nature free and admits of no command to hold something as true (no imperative “Believe!” but only a free “I believe”). The reason why this faculty, despite its great prerogative (freedom), is called the lower faculty lies in human nature; for a man who can give commands, even though he is someone else’s humble servant, is considered more distinguished than a free man who has no one under his command” (Kant, 1979, p. 27-29).

Along with the rationalization and secularization of the university, which gained momentum in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries

and was only completed in modern times, coupled with an ever greater influence of state authorities playing a supervisory role, the negotiation of scholars' autonomy took center stage. Such negotiations pierced the discussions held within the university: Kant in the *Conflict of the Faculties* pictured a friction between the critical power of reason and current politics. The conflict referred to in the title was, in Kant's view, an "elixir of the university"; its absence posed a threat to the existence of the academic community at large in a similar way as the absence of discussion is often a cause of social revolution.

The other tradition worth bringing to light, due to its enormous impact on the transformation of the modern university, was not actually related to a reform but was an entirely innovative project by Wilhelm von Humboldt who, with the full blessing of the authorities of the day, presented a model of higher education that factored in not only scientific premises, but also the need to link and reinforce institutionally the dispersed fragments of the national community. Actions taken within such a framework were aimed at reconciling the autonomy of the schools with the goals promoted by the state. The essence of the university was to combine teaching and research, rooted in a particular conception of culture, the element mediating between the demands of an independent quest for truth and the pragmatic needs of political authorities. Humboldt, inspired by German idealism, strove first to overcome the Kantian conflict between nature, which is left behind on the way toward the Enlightenment, and reason, which was destroying it (*vide* Readings, 1996; Gdula, 2010, p. 218-226). Friedrich Schiller and Friedrich Schleiermacher suggested that culture allows nature to be elevated to the heights of reason, reworking it without precipitating its destruction, while at the same time sheltering it from fatal ventures of instrumentalization. Aesthetic education and historical studies provided opportunities for harnessing the savage world and chaos, exercising truly humane control over nature by nesting it within the structures of reason. As a formative space symbolized by the notion of *Bildung*, the university is a place for achieving the unity of knowledge, which resembles the organic unity sketched by the German idealists.

For decades to come, Humboldt's project established a specific bond or contract, copied by institutions in many countries, between the state and the university, grounded in a process of negotiating academic autonomy (broken symbolically in Germany in 1933, when National Socialism expanded aggressively) (*vide* Farrias, 1997).

The state protects the existence of the university, provides for it, and in return receives an intellectual background for its actions. At the same time, it grants the university the liberty to engage in the pursuit of truth because only then may it hope to profit from its genuine critical potential. To paraphrase a pertinent remark by Bill Readings, from such a perspective, "action turns into thought, and thought into action" (Readings, 1996, p. 69). At the Humboldtian university, combining research with teaching and developing science with its verification and transfer, one fosters an autonomy of thought which does not profess idle pleasure, nor is it limited to satisfying the demand of practicality. It rather brings about a fruitful combination of *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*.

The highly influential model proposed by Humboldt was never fully implemented and is currently undergoing a singular metamorphosis. Apart from the aforementioned commercialization of academia, another factor catalyzing its substantial changes was the modern crisis of the subject, fuelled by the victorious march of totalitarian ideologies and the erosion of demand for public services apparent in the global flow of international capital within higher educational institutions, which supported the mechanisms for structuring the knowledge economy. Such phenomena played their part in the emergence of what Bill Readings termed the "university of excellence" in his incessantly inspiring book *The University in Ruins*. The model behind the idea transforms the oasis of intellect into a mechanism governed by the ubiquitous and oppressive rule of bureaucracy and referentially empty principle that goes: "It is of minor importance what you do insofar as it is excellent" (Readings, 1996, p. 21-43). Thus the modern idea of the

university, founded on the one hand on the Enlightenment's tradition of rationalism, and on the other hand on the project rooted in the idealism of German Romanticism signified by *Bildung*, enters a new era.

### **The Era of Translation: Language, Critical Power, and the Power of the Imagination**

The already mentioned crisis of the subject exposed by the so called hermeneutics of suspicion, along with the traumatic events of the twentieth century that led to the flourishing of the idea of incommensurability, somehow undermined the ultimate goal of the Humboldtian vision of the university: the possibility of creating a coherent structure forming one living organism. As we know, the Department of Denomination and Education, chaired by Humboldt, expressed this will: "The Academy of Sciences, Academy of Arts, scientific institutes, namely the clinical, anatomical, and medical [...] library, observatory and natural and historical collections together with art collections and the university itself connect into one organic entity so that each being independently co-operates with the others to achieve a common end" (Humboldt, 1989a, p. 234-235).

Such an innovative combination of so many separate institutions appeared to be only a partial success in the long run, as some wanted it. Instead of organic unity, a loosely linked federation emerged, consisting of more and more narrow arenas fenced off within the premises of particular subjects and fields of expertise. This does not prove, however, that *universitas* buried the idea of the communal vocation. The twentieth century witnessed multiple endeavors to pull down barriers as the process of specialization advanced, and it has to be said that the process itself appeared to be Janus-faced. On the one hand, it was a sign of the rapid progress of science, which, being elusive, could no longer be controlled by individual scholars; thus, they were forced to narrow even further their expert knowledge, which meant the restriction of the field of observation. On the other hand, it did not necessarily lead to

surrender and helplessness. It was the only remedy for bringing order to the avalanche of data and problems to address. Martin Heidegger, in his concept of science as “the theory of what is real” was at pains to argue that “specialization is by no means a blind degeneration or even a new low of modern science. Neither is specialization a necessary evil. It is essential to modern science. Singling out separate subject matters, closing them in special areas does not result in the disintegration of the sciences, but offers a beginning to cross-border movement between them, [...] [shaping] the border territory” (Heidegger, 2002, p. 51)

Exploring these territories, now labeled with the well-worn term of interdisciplinary studies, turned out to be one of the crucial tasks of the university in the second half of the twentieth century and presently still constitutes one of its challenges. Border territories, wrote Heidegger, are “the source of its own energy of collision creating new, often essential points of view. This is common knowledge. Its foundations remain mysterious, as is the essence of modern science” (Heidegger, 2002, p. 51). Observing border territories that span particular fields of knowledge may be described as an endeavor to rekindle communication within the reality of the multilingual *communitas* of science. And it is the university where specific languages that serve the purpose of describing the world are refined, studied and scrutinized with a critical eye. Here, the critical power of the intellect takes charge, revealing the background, possibilities, and limitations of particular discourses. In the border territories, as in life, one has to switch between codes and deal with constant displacements, crossbreeding, and contaminations. Jacques Derrida illustrates such a landscape of the university. The point of departure of his essay *Theology of Translation* is the concept of translation in the philosophy of German Romanticism, specifically the ontotheology of Friedrich Schelling. For him, as for Hegel, the fundamental law of the idea of education represented by the notion of *Bildung* is a constant ebb and flow of Spirit between one’s own and the foreign, between the tamed and the new, between repetition and reproduction and creation, and also between the real and the ideal, between

reason and the imagination. Whereas Kant senses strong opposition between the language of art and the language of philosophy, Derrida, following the steps of Schelling, points to their mutual permeability due to the swinging of the pendulum of translation from the source to the destination point, which is fixed in an original worldview that is to be transposed somewhere else and used as a formative ingredient (the movement referred to lives in the whole family of words: *Bild*, through *bilden*, finally *Bildung*). Formation results from the combination of imagination and reason, from the activation of a latent potential for mutual translatability while at the same time overcoming the resistance to translation in the act of unification [i.e., striving for uniformity without falling into the trap of uniformization (*uni-forme sans uniformiser*)] (vide Derrida, 2004, p. 69). The same rule applies to the uni-versity's construction of uniformity based upon differences, which allows for room for communication between the most diverse languages used to describe the world.

Within such a translation project (which is a perpetual challenge, since human understanding is of a limited nature), Schelling envisions philosophy not as a subject latched on to one faculty but as an omnipresent critical power, penetrating each and every room of the university and constituting a "panoptical critical approach, control, supervision" (Derrida, 2004, p. 72). It is important to note that Schelling "cannot find words harsh enough for those who wish to utilize knowledge, to "end-orient" [finaliser] it by making it serve other ends than itself, or subject it to the demands of an "alimentary professionalization" (*ibidem*, p. 69). Whereas Kant drew an impenetrable line between knowledge (philosophy) and action (the three higher faculties), Schelling sees it as a false division and instead speaks of two modes of the same world-reflection, of translation (holding at the same time a firm belief in the primal unity, *Urwissen*, of all texts and languages, a belief in the joining of all the components comprising a grand book of nature, explicable and translatable). Kant presents the conflict of the faculties as resulting from a multiplicity of languages, barely possible to recount

and essentially untranslatable. Where he sees an impenetrable wall, Schelling sees an opportunity to launch the mechanisms of transfer, the transposition of knowledge to action (the state) and of action to knowledge (the university), a movement between the public and the private, the scientific and the popular. Language referring to the potency of art and the imagination enhances philosophy as the critical power supervising the university, as well as the independence and autonomy of the intellect, and independence from the current needs of the state. The role once played by philosophy is now taken over by the humanities and social sciences, focusing on the nature of language and language in action, the process of translation and the critical review of mechanisms of knowledge-action transfer. They seek not only a certain grammar and cognitive patterns, but also supply a description of entanglement in the changing substance of history, feelings and values. They give us a helping hand so that we shall not be drawn into the avalanche of knowledge and lose our sensibility that constitutes our *humanitas*.

The air of intellectual freedom at the university, which Kant, Schelling, Fichte, Humboldt, or Schleiermacher would never contest, has its characteristic feature in the countries of Central Europe, which in the last century set themselves free from the oppression of totalitarian regimes by fostering autonomous critical thought and provided refuge from authoritarian power, not least in its metaphorical sense. It is not only the last fifty years that bear witness to these events; one can recall the formation of the idea of a flying, secret, conspiring university (*vide* Michnik, 2010, p. 164-196). What discomforts Derrida is the threat posed to this freedom by rampant bureaucracy and, additionally, less than thoughtful implementation of free market mechanisms. Polish schools found themselves in such a reality in the early 1990s. Apart from bringing attention to the opportunities emerging from this process, one can repeatedly point out ever more present destructive factors. One of them would relate to “modernization worshipped as fetish; the automatic conversion into information technology of all and anything within the body of the university, a complex organism of learning



and teaching, creates a malignant, cancerous tissue: bureaucratic formalization and omnipresent quantification. One quantifies everything, and a regime of credit assessment reigns. This substantially erases the personal bonds between teachers and students; it weakens the capacity of independent, original thinking. Each institution employs more and more people just for the sake of milling chaffs in this mill" (Michnik, 2010, p. 164-196)

The instrumentalization of university education, as a side effect of accommodation to the needs of the free market (*vide* Sowa, 2009, p. 89-122), may shape universities after the idea of the school established nearby the factory: "educating machines to operate other machines." Meanwhile, in the times of the "postponed Americanization of Polish mass culture, universities should propose soul food in competition with the tacit quasi-ethos of corporations and malls. The ethos of disapproval in the existing scheme of things, 'disobedience,' an ongoing struggle to make the world a better place is particularly desired today" (Michnik, 2010, p. 196). We should raise the awareness of officials responsible for the future of the universities in regard to sustaining the development of the various languages that exist within the walls of the academia (*vide* Bahti, 1992, p. 57-76), keeping in mind that, in retaining the kind of balance essential to any process of translation, including that within the world of science, the state is in no position to "require from the universities that which relates directly to it, but must hope that if the universities achieve their ends, they shall meet its goals also, although at such heights that allow for far broader perspective where entirely different energy and levers may be applied, different from those it is able to operate" (Humboldt, 1989, p. 244).

Nurturing such a balance promotes the university as the watchdog of democratic processes and of the standards of public debate. It not only offers production and distribution of knowledge — a practical, though subtle instrument for engaging in the life of the community — but also cultivates a critical take (*vide* Derrida, 2001, p. 24-57) on the

mechanisms of intellectual capital transfer. This self-conscious potential constitutes the kind of energy necessary to fit into the “complex ecosystem of cognitive capitalism.”

Today, as the phenomenon of swift and easy consumption is more and more widespread, universities form much-needed enclaves of resistance, intellectual suspicion, and disobedience towards discourses claiming the right to dominance or exclusivity. They undermine seemingly natural, obvious and universal beliefs that lead to abuse and oppression. They expose myths, illusions, and “evident evidences.” Today, universities are responsible not only for teaching the languages we use to describe the world, revealing their structures, as well as political, social, and gender determinants, but also for cultivating the art of dialogue and negotiation. As we constantly observe living in times of heightened terrorist activity, the scholar, cast in the role of a translator struggling to overcome the non-congruence of languages that compete in mutual resistance, is obliged not only to devote himself to the arduous burden of the pursuit of truth in the libraries and laboratories, but also to sustain connections with the world. In other words, his task is nothing short of finding a precarious balance between the autonomy of a critical approach and involvement in the world’s affairs. Tadeusz Sławek describes it as follows: “the university must [...] respect the laws of the market, but it by no means can accept the economy as the only regulatory power of university and social life” (Sławek, 2002, p. 31). We cannot accept that *utilitas* strangles *curiositas* that is inherent to the philosophical attitude of astonishment and inquiry, conceding to its lack of knowledge which, however, is not “chaste, impertinent, and self-satisfied ignorance, but rather furnishing space ready to reveal what there is to be revealed” (*ibidem*, p. 32).

Freedom and autonomy of the university, argues Humboldt, is not only endangered by excessive interference of the state, but by the institution itself, starting with the stifling atmosphere that “eagerly suppresses novelties.” For the university, science is “not an entirely solved puzzle,” but instead it gathers scholars who, while studying it,

complement each other and engage in dialogue which sheds light on the core of the problem. All this, suggests Humboldt, rests on a principle that requires “treating science as only a partially discovered problem, one that never yields to full discovery. One should constantly search for it, bearing this in mind” (Humboldt, 1989, p. 242).

The dangers posed by mindless commercialization are not equally grave for the physical, computing and natural sciences on the one hand and the humanities and social sciences on the other. It may be too hasty to plan the future of the university in which there is no space to uncover the critical power of the imagination imprinted in culture. The fate of the university, its intellectual horizon, and the community benefiting from such a great invention of civilization depends on the subtlety of those who design the future shape of Polish academia and who may come upon the idea that, along with many other things in life, the university has something that may not be subject to laws of trade.

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Part Two

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**GLOBAL CHANGES  
WITHIN THE HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY**





Sarah Guri-Rosenblit  
Open University, Izrael

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OPENING UP ACCESS TO HIGHER EDUCATION:  
IMPLICATIONS AND CHALLENGES

**Introduction**

Some profound changes in the last decades have affected higher education systems all over the world due to the immense widening of access to higher education, bottom-up initiatives of founding private higher education institutions, continuous cuts of higher education budgets by governments, and the globalization and inter-connectedness of the world. All of these phenomena have affected various aspects of the traditional roles of universities and other higher education institutions at international, national and institutional levels.

For over 800 years, since the establishment of Bologna University in 1088, which is considered to be the first university in Europe, universities were elitist in nature, and only a small fraction of the relevant age cohort had the privilege of pursuing academic studies. Since the end of World War II there has been a growing demand to widen access to higher education and change the elitist nature of universities by enabling all citizens to pursue higher education as a democratic right. The elite nature of studying at universities gradually faded in the last decades. Higher education worldwide opened up to include larger shares of each generation (*vide* Bohonnek et al., 2010). The massive expansion of higher education across all continents has been one of the defining features of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. By 2010 there were approximately 150 million students, whereas at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century only around 500,000 students were enrolled in higher education institutions over the globe (*vide* Clancy, 2010; Schofer & Meyer,

2005). Such a growth constitutes not merely a quantitative expansion but a huge qualitative change in the functions and roles of universities and other higher education institutions. Martin Trow claimed that the romantic era of the university as an autonomous venue for the education of gentlemen, like in the Oxbridge tradition in England, and for the upbringing of broadly cultivated elites, as has been typical to continental Europe universities, has come to an end today (*vide* Trow, 2005).

This article examines the main implications of the democratization of higher education systems on the structure and functioning of universities. It relates to some dialectical trends: an increased diversity of higher education institutions side by side with harmonization policies; growing government steering, on one hand, and prompting universities to become more entrepreneurial in their policies, on the other hand; an emergence of a growing private sector that competes with public higher education institutions; increased competition concurrent with the launch of many collaborative ventures and consortia; and the urgent need of universities to be attentive both to national needs and to their functioning in a global network.

### **Diversity and Harmonization**

The massification of higher education systems has led to a growing diversity of higher education institutions. In the early 1960s, when the view spread in economically advanced countries that an expansion of higher education would be essential for economic growth as well as for democratic reasons, the conviction that an increasing diversity within higher education was desirable gained momentum (*vide* Guri-Rosenblit et al., 2007; Teichler, 2009). Two arguments were most powerful as far as advocacy for increasing diversity is concerned. First, most experts agreed that it was impossible to teach all of the large numbers of students in research universities which are extremely expensive to sponsor. Therefore, it seemed obvious that other types of higher education institutions geared mainly for teaching and professional training were appropriate for absorbing the growing numbers of students. In

Israel, for instance, until 1974 there were just seven research universities, whereas in 2011 Israeli higher education was composed of 64 different higher education institutions. Second, a growth of diversity of backgrounds, talents and job expectations among the rising number of students needed to be accommodated by heterogeneous higher education providers.

The views about the desirable type of diversity, however, differed substantially at different periods. Over the years, the debates changed substantially. Major policy concerns moved from education and economic growth concerns during the 1960s to equity and employment opportunities for graduates in the 1980s (*vide* Bohonnek et al., 2010; Teichler, 2009).

National systems of higher education vary substantially according to the extent of diversity. Many higher education systems are highly diversified and contain various types of institutions, while some others are quite monolithic in their composition. Comprehensive universities reflect the nature of most higher education institutions in some national settings, while specialized institutions are the leading models in other countries. Liberal education and the cultivation of the human nature constitute the supreme goals of some leading higher education institutions, while professional training and the response to market demands shape the nature of other higher education institutes (*vide* Guri-Rosenblit, 2010). In some countries, we note relatively clear boundaries between institutions of higher education in charge of both teaching and research, and institutions focusing mainly on teaching or professional training.

Since 1999, the Bologna Process has set an intensive process aimed at establishing a harmonized joint Higher Education Area of Europe by 2010. Restructuring the academic degrees at many national jurisdictions has initiated numerous changes in different countries. Acute changes took place in several Central and Eastern European countries.

In order to change significantly the general conditions of higher education functions, restructure the higher education systems, and expand the higher education infrastructure, several top-down legal actions have been taken in countries like the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovenia (*vide* Guri-Rosenblit et al., 2007).

It seems that European higher education systems, under the Bologna Process, are currently becoming more flexible. Each stage in advancing the Bologna Process requires greater commitment to the commonality of purpose and action in the field of higher education, so that, by 2010 (or a bit later), higher education services will be able to flow freely from one side of the continent to the other, like material goods do today (*vide* Commission of the European Communities, 2003; UNESCO, 2003). The tools given by the Bologna Declaration are intended to invent a European model of higher education sufficiently strong to establish its attractiveness *vis-à-vis* the rest of the world, and particularly *vis-à-vis* the American model.

### **Government Steering and Institutional Autonomy**

Universities are not considered today as autonomous self-sustaining entities, but rather as a part of a system in which they are embedded in common frameworks of societal expectations, regulatory frameworks, and cooperative or competitive linkages. “Higher education” and “a higher education system” became popular terms in the second half of the 20th century (*vide* Guri-Rosenblit et al., 2007; Teichler, 2009). The use of these terms suggests that there is a macro-structure of higher education. Higher education activities and institutions in any given country have something in common and are interrelated. In most countries, this move towards a perception of a system became clearly visible when laws and governmental orders addressing individual institutions of higher education were supplanted by a system-wide regulatory framework (*vide* Teichler, 2009). Universities, as well as other types of higher education institutions, are subject today to growing government regulations.

New mechanisms of government steering and management have a substantial impact on the structures of the higher education systems (*vide* Bleiklie, 2004). Obviously, higher education in Europe is increasingly shaped by mechanisms of incentives and sanctions imposed top-down. It is generally assumed that these mechanisms help to increase the efficiency of higher education. However, some scholars claim that a strong emphasis placed on rewards and sanctions might undermine intrinsic motivation (*vide* Guri-Rosenblit et al., 2007). A strong managerial emphasis in higher education might lead to substantial tensions between management and academia. Both might elicit uncontrolled changes of the higher education system as a whole.

Budgetary cuts in higher education that took place in the last decades in many countries have created an interesting paradox in the interrelations between universities and governments. On one hand, universities are subjected nowadays more than ever before to stringent quality control mechanisms and accountability measures. Governments are perceived today in many national jurisdictions as responsible for the erosion of universities' autonomy, and as adversaries rather than supporting partners of the higher education community (*vide* Douglass et al., 2009). On the other hand, governments encourage universities to mobilize alternative funds through operation beyond national boundaries, and are enhancing the universities' leaders to think out of the box and find innovative ways to operate resourcefully in the national and global markets. In this sense, they are promoting institutional autonomy in defining new missions and new student clienteles for each university, which might in the long run result in weakening the national affiliation of universities.

An emerging trend in many countries is the moving of many higher education systems to charging tuition fees combined with a system of appropriate cost recovery and providing support systems. More and more universities have become entrepreneurial in their search for diverse budgeting sources, mobilizing private resources and investing in areas of applied research that bear the potential to yield revenues

through patents and collaborative ventures with industry and the corporate sector. A handful of universities have managed to take advantage of the opportunities presented to them by gaining greater freedom to define their priorities both in research and teaching.

### **Public and Private Sectors**

Quite evidently, privatization constitutes one of the most striking global changes in higher education systems in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (*vide* Altbach et al., 2009; Dogramaci, 2008; Douglass et al., 2009; Levy, 2008). Privatization has spread in the last decades to Asia, Latin America, Africa, Central and Eastern Europe and the Middle East. In some countries, the percentage of private higher education institutions is striking. In Indonesia, 96% of the higher education institutions are private, in South Korea they constitute 87%, and in Japan 86% (*vide* Tilak, 2008).

Private higher education is far from being uniform. Only a few private institutions provide elite or semi-elite options. The rising bulk of private higher education institutions throughout the world accommodate mainly the exploding demand for higher education. The bottom-up expansion of private higher education in many countries took place because these countries were unable to meet the rising demand for studies in attractive areas of high market demand.

The positive aspects of the initiation of new private institutions include: widening of learning opportunities at various higher education levels by providing more choice for citizens in any given national jurisdictions; challenging traditional education systems by introducing more competition and innovative programs and delivery methods; helping make higher education more competitive; assisting in diversifying the budgeting of higher education; and benefiting through links with prestigious institutions, mainly in developing countries.

However, many of the private institutions have turned out to be diploma mills and bogus operations. Nowadays, many national and

international bodies have established accreditation agencies, both state agencies and self-regulatory bodies of academic institutions, in order to enhance a quality assurance culture, setting clear criteria for the evaluation of quality of higher education provided by both public and private higher education institutions.

### **Competition and Collaboration**

It is quite clear that, in the world of higher education, as elsewhere, one cannot avoid competition for scarce resources, be it research funding, good faculty or good students. At the same time, successful collaborative ventures hold great potential for generating additional resources and recruiting new student clientele. Many international bodies encourage, and even condition funding of research projects by forcing collaboration between several higher education institutions, preferably from different countries. An influential model in the research domain is reflected in a growing trend of forming interdisciplinary teams within and across institutions. Each higher education institution has to define today both its competing parties and its potential collaborators.

Unlike the Anglo-Saxon countries, which have adopted an explicit competitive approach to the internationalization of higher education, most of the continental European countries seem to pursue a different approach, which is more cooperative in nature. According to van der Wende (2002) this may be explained from a political and a value-based perspective. In many European countries, free access to higher education is seen as an established right, which conflicts with the view of higher education as a commodity to be traded on a world market. The rationale to compete internationally may be absent, or even undesirable, in many European countries, such as France, Italy and Germany. Where higher education funding is virtually completely funded by the state, no fees can be charged to students, and limited autonomy is granted to institutions, with few incentives and no real options for competing internationally. Not surprisingly, most continental European countries pursue a cooperative approach to internationalization,

which in terms of international learning and experience is compatible with the traditional and cultural values of European academia.

However, it is important to note that one of the major goals of the Bologna Process has been not only to consolidate and harmonize the European higher education systems, but also to enhance the international competitiveness of European higher education, mainly *vis-à-vis* American higher education. Such a goal promotes competitiveness in the continental European countries. Furthermore, there is already a competitive market in many European countries, enhanced by the proliferation of many private providers, mainly in niche areas, such as business administration, international law, and computer science (*vide* Levy, 2008).

There are three major strategies that higher education institutions can adopt in responding to the growing competition: to strengthen their relative advantages and demonstrate excellence in specific areas; to collaborate with other competing institutions in an attempt to reduce the competitive risk; and to extend their operation beyond local and national boundaries to international markets. Partnerships, if they are successful, create greater strengths. The basic underlying idea behind cooperation is that the *whole* may be greater than the *sum of its parts*. The synergy that comes from collaboration can often yield benefits well beyond those originally envisioned. Failure to collaborate often results in an unnecessary duplication of efforts and in ineffective investments of scarce resources.

### **Globalization and National Needs**

Universities need today to be attentive to both local and global needs and opportunities, i.e., adopt a glocal network policy. The term “glocalization” is a portmanteau word of “globalization” and “localization”. Many universities and colleges are torn nowadays between the growing pressure to operate in the global higher education market in order to diversify their funding base by various mechanisms, and



their traditional roles of serving national priorities and accommodating mainly the needs of their local surrounding environments. As a matter of fact, many supra-national reforms, such as the Bologna Process in Europe, combined with the encouragement of governments to extend the operation of their universities beyond their national boundaries, challenge the cohesion of national higher education systems, and reinforce the creation of a global higher education network.

Many universities are at present engaged in becoming partners in inter-institutional schemes and pushing forward in the drive towards globalization. Students, academic staff and curricula are transferred and exchanged between institutions; accreditation agencies ensure promptness in accrediting previous experiential learning and previous academic studies; governments append their signatures to cooperative projects in higher education. Strengthening agreements between academic institutions within a particular country and across national borders will be central to the mobility of adult students (*vide* Altbach et al, 2009).

Obviously, the institutional missions of different-type higher education institutions vary immensely. The need to adopt a glocal (combining global and local policies) policy forces each university to define clearly its glocal missions. Being a “world class university” or aiming at becoming a “world class university” requires totally different infrastructures and operational strategies as compared to a conventional university; being a public university differs meaningfully from operating as a private institution; and being a campus university that teaches a few thousands students differs from being a distance teaching university, that enrolls dozens of thousands, or even over a million, students.

### **Concluding Remarks**

This paper purported to give a brief overview of the implications and challenges following the wide expansion of higher education

systems and the adoption of a universal access policy in many national jurisdictions. The increasing number of students coming from different backgrounds and possessing different abilities and study inclinations has been followed by a greater diversity of higher education institutions. Side by side with a growing diversity, great efforts have been invested to harmonize and create linkages between various higher education systems to enable the mobility of students, programs and faculty. The Bologna Process in Europe is most noticeable in its effort to harmonize between 46 higher education systems (some of which are outside Europe).

The democratization of higher education has initiated some dialectical trends. Government regulations have increased in most nation states, limiting greatly the autonomy of higher education institutions and changing universities' historical role of educating mainly broadly cultivated men to contribute to the intellectual elite of nation states. However, even today in the growing maze of various types of higher education institutions, there exists a small group of elite world-class universities responsible for conducting advanced breakthrough research and for educating scientific and social elites.

Governments are unable today to sponsor generously as large a number of students as was the case when a small fraction of the society had the privilege to pursue studies at universities. Thus, many governments nowadays encourage universities to mobilize alternative funds through operation beyond national boundaries, patenting innovative research products, and offering lifelong learning programs and short-cycle professional updates. Universities are called to become more entrepreneurial in defining their policies and missions. For many higher education institutions the potential of globalization and entrepreneurship offer exciting new opportunities for study and research no longer limited by national boundaries, but for some others it still seems a threatening phenomenon which forces them to change drastically their policies and search for innovative ways of how to engage

in a totally new world, whose rules depart sharply from old and well known conventions.

Universities are being asked today to adapt their structure and operations to the needs of the knowledge society. Operating in a global and networked landscape has a crucial impact on shaping the missions, strategic planning and operational practices of higher education institutions. The major challenge facing universities and other higher education institutions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is how to rightly navigate their policies between contrasting trends. They do not normally have the privilege of choosing one alternative over the other, but rather find the delicate balance between opposing policies. They have to identify their potential competitors as well as launch collaborative ventures with suitable partners. They have to decide to what extent do their missions serve local and national goals, and to what extent do they operate in the global higher education landscape transcending national boundaries. Traditional universities have to acknowledge that they operate in a most stormy and dynamic market. They have to define clearly their merits and advantages, and at the same time see how to overcome their limits and shortcomings. They have to decide who exactly are their potential student constituencies – mainly national or transnational students, focusing on research or training mainly for the market, teaching only towards academic degrees or also offering short-cycle professional diplomas, etc. – and act accordingly.

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**Marek Kwiek**

The Center for Public Policy Studies  
at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland

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**A CENTRAL EUROPEAN KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION  
MODEL? CHANGING UNIVERSITIES  
AND THEIR ENVIRONMENTS**

**Introduction**

The questions studied in this chapter are the following: how deep is the divide between knowledge production in Central Europe and in major Western European economies? To what extent is the divide today driven by hard (difficult to change in the medium-run) factors, and to what extent by soft factors (more easily changeable)? The former factors include levels of public funding in higher education and research systems, the social and age structure of the workforce by levels of education and by types of professions, the structure of employment by major economic sectors, and the overall national level of economic competitiveness. The latter, soft, factors include funding and governance modes in higher education and research systems, access policies in higher education and the matching of education systems and the labor market, as well the majority of factors related to business, legal and institutional environments (as, for instance, reported annually by the World Bank via the “ease of doing business” indicators, World Bank 2010). This chapter explores the question of knowledge production in the four Central European economies, all OECD members (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic) in the context of the knowledge economy, economic competitiveness and research intensity.

Universities in Central Europe are desperately struggling to remain in the outer layers of the dramatically changing global academic

centre. Without thoughtful higher education and research policies, combined with radically increased research funding and new funding modes, they might move from the outer layers of the centre to the global academic periphery. The processes in question can be most clearly observed through the analysis of trends over time in various global competitiveness indexes and in various European and global university rankings. What is especially revealing is the trends over time in those pillars of economic competitiveness (to refer to the annually reported *Global Competitiveness Index*) which refer directly to higher education, research and innovation systems and the trends in the four Central European economies under discussion.

In particular, Central European academics and policymakers in charge of higher education should no longer believe in three interrelated myths, still popular in the region: first, the myth that postcommunist universities, due to their history, are exceptional in Europe and their exceptionality should be preserved (exceptional in being systematically inward-looking and academically-driven institutions, isolated from the concerns of both society and the economy); second, the myth that postcommunist universities as public sector institutions are radically different from all other public sector institutions, and immune from the impact of global and European public sector reforms; and, third, the myth that knowledge production can be more visible in reformed (in both funding and governance modes) higher education systems even with current low public expenditures on research and development. The three myths have been powerful inhibitors to knowledge production in the region and have been shared throughout the two decades of the transition and accession period by academics and policymakers (for a panoramic view, *vide* my recent book, Kwiek 2010b).

### **Knowledge production in Central Europe and historical legacies**

Knowledge production in Central European economies is strongly linked to their legacies of operating for fifty years in command-driven communist economies, and to wider postcommunist transition processes in the last twenty years. The historical legacies relevant for the



knowledge production in the region include the following parameters: economy and society (rather than merely politics), public services (social policies, leading to the “emerging” welfare states, as opposed to “established” welfare states, *vide* Castles et al. 2010), higher education policies (including especially governance and funding reforms), and research and innovation policies (especially those related to academic entrepreneurialism and university-enterprise partnerships).

### **The fiscal context: communist and transition periods**

The fiscal context in which knowledge is produced in universities and in which universities operate in Central Europe is of critical importance for the present discussion. In postcommunist Central Europe, there has been a continuing conflict between the need for high-quality higher education and powerful fiscal constraints, especially in the 1990s when higher education systems were under the first wave of reform pressures (for details *vide*, Cuning et al. 2007: 29). Central European countries in general have similar funding modes for financing public higher education: financial aid to students is combined with the avoidance of charging them tuition fees. A dual-track system is prevalent in the region: fee-free higher education is available for regular students (disproportionately coming from socially and economically privileged families; only Poland being an “equity success story”, with decreasing inequality in access to higher education, *vide* Kwiek 2008c) admitted via competitive entrance exams, and a special fee-paying track available for those who fail to gain admission – which tends to “penalize students from disadvantaged families” (Cuning et al. 2007, p. 29) and raises serious equity concerns. Funding modes for both higher education and for research performed in higher education, most often in separate streams, have had powerful and long-term impacts on knowledge production in universities: generally, the focus of universities in Central Europe, especially in the 1990s, has been on the teaching mission. The research mission (as well as the third mission), in general, has been systematically denigrated throughout the region for almost two decades, despite differences between the four countries, related to

various attempts at reforming governance and funding patterns, especially in the 2000s – the Polish reforms of 2008-2011 being an interesting example of introducing “new rules of the game”, *vide* Kwiek and Maassen 2011. Drastic public underfunding of universities in the 1990s led both academic institutions and individual academics to apply various “survival strategies”, related mostly to introducing fee-based university programmes for part-time students in public universities and teaching in private higher education institutions by academics from public institutions (on the two types of privatization *vide* Kwiek 2010a and on the emergent public-private dynamics in higher education *vide* Kwiek 2011). The survival strategies have led to research underperformance: both institutions and academics alike were focusing on teaching.

But does almost half a century of operating under the communist regime and two decades under transition conditions explain sufficiently the current differences in overall research performance levels of higher education systems in Central Europe and in EU-15 economies? What is the long-term impact of a different academic culture(s) in Central European countries under communism, including different governance and funding regimes and the lack of academic freedom and institutional autonomy? What is the impact of what Elster et al. (with reference to economies) called “the long arm of the past” (Elster et al. 1998, p. 158) in the area of knowledge production? As stressed by analysts of social policy generally, much more attention is currently paid by academics to the legacies of the past and the ways in which these legacies “influence meaningful change” today (Inglot 2005, p. 5).

There were three major effects of the post-1989 transition, all relevant for trajectories of transformations of higher education systems: the distribution of income and earnings widened; output fell and tax revenues fell even more sharply; and job security ended (*vide* Barr 2001, p. 242-243). In the 1990s, a relatively stable social and economic environment in which knowledge was produced in communist-period universities was disintegrating, leading to new institutional and

individual “survival strategies” in the higher education sector. New institutional norms and behaviors emerged together with institutional autonomy and academic freedom, regained immediately following the collapse of communism. But autonomy was accompanied by severe financial constraints: long-term, systemic financial austerity was the trademark of university knowledge production in the region throughout the 1990s, and its impact on higher education systems, institutions and individual academics has been substantial (*vide* Kwiek 2011).

### **The social context: communist and transition periods**

Communist-era higher education and research systems and their knowledge production in Central Europe differed substantially from their Western European counterparts, in these ways: a heavily centralized higher education system, with attempts at balancing the number of graduates with the number of jobs, displaced job competition, and with educational credentials more important in job allocation than actual knowledge or skills; curriculum guidelines, research goals, and requirements for filling teaching positions defined and closely monitored by the communist party; a unitary system of traditional university education, with no bachelor’s programmes; the number of students admitted and enrollment procedures based on quotas set for controlling the proportions of students of various social backgrounds; and the financing of universities entirely dependent on the government (*vide* Mateju, Rehakova and Simonova 2007, p. 374-375). All these points are no longer valid but the removal of their legacy is what was happening, at various speeds, during the past twenty years, with different reform programs. The current shape of universities and knowledge production in Central Europe is determined by specific factors defining both the communist and postcommunist transition periods (as is the case with social policies, *vide* Tomka 2005). Again, the “arm of the past” is “long” for both social policies and university knowledge production.

It would be unfair to deny the large extent to which Central European universities have been transformed in the last two decades. But

knowledge production in the region cannot escape its recent history: after being viewed as strategic, bureaucratic elements of communist regimes, universities in the first decade of the transition period were largely left on their own, autonomous but severely underfunded, and engaged much more in (mostly fee-based) teaching than in traditional knowledge production. Their recent history matters, especially in three areas: slow (and generally conservative) governance and funding reforms, academic institutional culture accepting the denigration of the research missions, and underfunding of research in higher education.

### **The East/West divide continues**

The different roles of universities in knowledge production in more affluent OECD countries and in Central Europe can be viewed in terms of these four characteristics:

(1) The structure and level of research funding. The share of university (and government) R&D funding in Central Europe is much higher than the share of enterprise R&D funding in the national picture, compared with the OECD average. And the levels of R&D funding, both public and private, are considerably lower (gross domestic expenditure on R&D activity, or GERD, for Poland was 0.59 percent of GDP in 2009). At the same time, the structure and levels of higher education funding (usually as a separate funding stream from research funding) is broadly similar. Knowledge production is located mostly in the public sector: while, in the OECD area, on average, about 70 percent of R&D funding is concentrated in the business sector, for Poland (and Central European members of OECD) it is only 30.4 percent (2009). Different structures and substantially lower levels of research funding have a powerful negative impact on knowledge production (as a recent EC report put it explicitly, research systems in new EU member states may not deserve to be designated as “research systems” at all, *vide* EC 2009, p. 40).

(2) Institutional focus on teaching-related revenues rather than research-related revenues in public universities in the region, as

a consequence of very low public funding for research. Teaching-related revenues mean most of all fees from part-time students, a specific feature of Central European higher education systems: full-time students studying without fees, part-time students paying fees. Almost full dependence on fees in the private higher education sector and, consequently, the research mission of marginal importance in the private sector. The role of private higher education in the four countries, and in postcommunist countries generally, is exceptional on a European scale (the only exception in Western Europe being Portugal). In Western Europe, the role of research-generated revenues is growing considerably (their share in total university income grew by 50 percent in the last ten years, see CHEPS 2010). The denigration of the research mission of the university, and continuing focus on its teaching mission and teaching-related revenues, have a powerful negative impact on knowledge production, as testified by the two next features.

(3) Low levels of engagement in academic entrepreneurialism and weak university-enterprises partnerships. Academic entrepreneurialism is mostly generated by research (and third-mission) activities, although some teaching activities may be viewed as entrepreneurial (*vide* Shattock and Temple 2006). In Central Europe, though, there are only islands of entrepreneurialism located in public universities. The level of university-enterprise partnerships is generally low for structural reasons common throughout the region and related to university governance modes and levels and modes of university research funding.

(4) The continuing absence of Central European universities in global (and especially European) university rankings. In 2010, only five universities from the region were present in the Academic Ranking of World Universities: one in the third hundred (Charles University in Prague, the Czech Republic, rank 201-300) and four in the fourth hundred (Warsaw University and Jagiellonian University in Poland, Eotvos Lorand University and University of Szeged in Hungary, ranks 301-400). No university from the Slovak Republic (as well as from

Romania and Bulgaria) was ranked in top 500 world universities. No university in Central Europe is located in top 100 world universities either in subjects (like chemistry) or fields (like social sciences). The ranking is dominated by American universities: in the top 10, there are only two European universities (Cambridge ranked 5<sup>th</sup> and Oxford ranked 10<sup>th</sup>), and in the top 20 there is only one more non-American university, the University of Tokyo (ranked 20<sup>th</sup>). In the top 200 world universities published by *The Times Higher Education* in 2010, there are no institutions from Central Europe. And among the top 100 European universities, there are none from the region.

### **Knowledge production in Central Europe and economic competitiveness**

Is there a Central European variant of the knowledge production model, related to a possible Central European variant of the knowledge economy? Probably both can be discerned, both being historically related (path dependent) to communism and its central planning, in economic as well as education and skills sectors. Thus postcommunist universities, regional knowledge production, the emergent socio-economic model (“postcommunist welfare state”), and a regional variant of the knowledge economy seem to be strongly interrelated concepts.

Generally, in a world in which the economic dimension is viewed by policymakers as increasingly important in assessing countries in general and their higher education systems in particular (compared with the traditional social dimension), rankings of economic competitiveness based *inter alia* on assessments of higher education and research and innovation systems can hardly be ignored. Especially, they should not be ignored in postcommunist countries still aggressively seeking foreign direct investments. Both national economies and universities themselves are increasingly ranked and assessed according to standardized global measures. Universities are increasingly constructed as organizations (rather than merely institutions, what Ramirez called their “rationalization”, *vide* Ramirez 2006; *vide* Brunsson and Sahlin-

Andersson 2000). As Meyer et al. stress, the modern university in a globalized and rationalized world is a “purposive actor”:

In this world of imagined homogeneity, standardized dimensions of ranking, certification, and accreditation make sense. Universities around the world can be compared and rated on standard scales. And if they are effectively and purposively managed organizations, perhaps they can improve their rankings vis-à-vis all the other universities in the world (*vide* Meyer et al. 2007, p. 206).

The discussion of Central European knowledge production in this section refers only to two global indexes: the Global Competitiveness Index (*The Global Competitiveness Report 2010-2011*) and *Doing Business 2010*.<sup>1</sup> The major point is that economic competitiveness is not determined by higher education and innovation pillars in Central European countries to the same extent as it is in affluent OECD economies. Michael Porter’s higher education and training and innovation “pillars of competitiveness”, compared with the other ten pillars of competitiveness, seem to be substantially less important. Central European economies, compared with major European economies, still severely lag behind in most of the other ten pillars; lagging-behind is structural and extremely difficult to overcome; requires both time and funding, counted in years, if not decades, and (mostly public) investments counted in dozens, if not hundreds, of billions of Euros. At the same time, expectations for higher education and public R&D and innovation systems regarding economic competitiveness are very high from both governments and the general public in the region; we view them here as largely exaggerated,

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1 It could also be accompanied by references to other indexes, such as especially IMD *World Competitiveness Scoreboard 2010*, BCI *Business Competitiveness Index 2009-2010*, *The Lisbon Review 2010. Towards a More Competitive Europe*, as well as World Bank: *Knowledge Economy Score Board 2009* for Central European countries – but the overall results regarding knowledge production would not be much different, though.

due to numerous other factors exogenous to the two systems, and related to the other ten pillars of competitiveness.<sup>2</sup>

### **Two pillars of competitiveness: higher education and innovation**

Let me follow here the notion of economic competitiveness developed by Michael Porter (and used in the annual *Global Competitiveness Reports*, Porter, Sala-i-Martin, and Schwab 2008, *vide* Schwab 2010). Macroeconomic, political, legal and social circumstances underpin a successful economy – but are not in themselves sufficient: “wealth is actually created in an economy at the microeconomic level – in the ability of firms to create valuable goods and services using efficient methods. Only firms can create wealth, not government or other societal institutions” (Porter, Sala-i-Martin, and Schwab 2008, p. 53). So, on this view, economic competitiveness and productivity ultimately depend on the microeconomic capability of the economy.

Knowledge production in Central Europe is viewed in this section in the context of different types of economic competitiveness. As nations develop, their competitive advantages move from the factor-driven stage (low-cost labor, natural resources), to the investment-driven stage (foreign technology, imitation), to the highest one – the innovation-driven stage (innovative products and services at the global technology frontier). Only one Central European member of the OECD studied in this paper – the Czech Republic – is driven by the same type of competitiveness as the most affluent OECD countries. But Poland, the Slovak Republic and Hungary (as well as Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Romania) are in a transition stage. And Bulgaria is still in the lower stage of development. The role of (higher) education is

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2 The other ten pillars of competitiveness include institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomy, goods market efficiency, labor market efficiency, financial market sophistication, technological readiness, market size, business sophistication and, last not least, of interest to us here as well, innovation. They are often interdependent and try to reinforce each other (*vide* Porter, Sala-i-Martin, and Schwab 2008, p. 3-6).



different in each of the three stages and economic growth is faced with different competitiveness challenges in each of them.

Discussions on knowledge production in postcommunist Europe cannot ignore a fundamental distinction between efficiency-driven growth in such European countries as Albania or Bulgaria, almost innovation-driven growth (in transition between the second and the third stage of economic development in this classification) in Hungary, the Slovak Republic, Poland and Romania, and finally innovation-driven growth in the Czech Republic.

Of the twelve pillars of competitiveness (*vide* Schwab 2010), two are of special interest: “higher education and training” and “innovation”. While most major OECD economies are ranked in the first two deciles of the index, the four Central European countries are in the fourth, fifth and sixth deciles of it (the Czech Republic is ranked 36<sup>th</sup>, Poland ranked 39<sup>th</sup>, the Slovak Republic ranked 60<sup>th</sup>, and Hungary ranked 52<sup>nd</sup>; additionally, Romania is ranked 67<sup>th</sup> and Bulgaria 71<sup>st</sup>).

Not surprisingly, in the context of Central Europe, what seems to matter much less for economic competitiveness from a larger perspective is enrollments in education (certainly with the massification model already achieved, though), both secondary (Switzerland ranked 38<sup>th</sup>, Singapore 30<sup>th</sup> and Sweden ranked 13<sup>th</sup>) and tertiary (Switzerland ranked 38<sup>th</sup>, Singapore 30<sup>th</sup> and Sweden 16<sup>th</sup>). The four Central European countries discussed in this paper are relatively well ranked in terms of tertiary enrollments (Hungary ranked 23<sup>rd</sup>, Poland 21<sup>st</sup>, the Czech Republic 32<sup>nd</sup> and the Slovak Republic 40<sup>th</sup>) and relatively weakly ranked in terms of both the university-industry collaboration in R&D (the Czech Republic ranked 29<sup>th</sup>, Hungary 32<sup>nd</sup>, Poland 64<sup>th</sup> and the Slovak Republic 87<sup>th</sup>) and extent of staff training (the Czech Republic ranked 40<sup>th</sup>, Poland ranked 52<sup>nd</sup>, the Slovak Republic ranked 75<sup>th</sup> and Hungary ranked 88<sup>th</sup>).

Let me focus on Poland, the Slovak Republic and Hungary (and two other newer EU member states, non-OECD members, Romania

and Bulgaria), considerably less competitive economies than the Czech Republic. Where are the weak and the strong points in their tertiary education and training pillar and in their innovation pillar?

**Table 1.** Ranks by indicators of the “higher education and training” section

Indicators	Poland	Hungary	the Czech Republic	the Slovak Republic	Bulgaria	Romania
Secondary education enrollment rate	25	33	42	50	66	54
Tertiary education enrollment rate	21	23	32	40	46	22
Quality of the educational system	62	75	34	111	85	84
Quality of math and science education	40	30	25	65	69	43
Quality of management schools	62	71	56	114	94	98
Internet access in schools	48	31	24	35	45	55
Local availability of specialized research and training services	22	47	17	41	80	95
Extent of staff training	52	88	40	75	135	72

Source: Schwab 2010: 111-299.

Overall, Hungary is ranked high in the higher education and innovation pillars (34<sup>th</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup>, respectively), while Poland is ranked high in the higher education pillar and low in the innovation pillar (26<sup>th</sup> and 54<sup>th</sup>, respectively). The Slovak Republic is ranked low in both pillars (53<sup>rd</sup> and 85<sup>th</sup>, respectively). The strong points for both Poland and Hungary in the higher education and training pillar are certainly tertiary enrollments; strong points for Hungary and Poland are the quality of mathematics and science education; internet access in schools is strong in Hungary; the quality of the educational system is ranked low for Poland and dramatically low for both Hungary and the Slovak Republic; the quality of management schools is again low for Poland and dramatically low for both Hungary and the Slovak Republic; local availability of specialized and training services is relatively good only for Poland; and finally the extent of staff training is very low for all three countries. In the sub-indices for innovation, the three Central European economies rank low (about 40<sup>th</sup>-50<sup>th</sup>) or dramatically low (about 70<sup>th</sup>-80<sup>th</sup>) in all: they rank low in “capacity for innovation”, dramatically low in “quality of scientific research institutions” (except for Hungary), “company spending on R&D”, and “university-industry collaboration in R&D” (except for Hungary); they also rank low in “availability of scientists and engineers” and in “utility patents” (again except for Hungary).

**Table 2.** Ranks by indicators of the “innovation” section

Indicators	Poland	Hungary	the Czech Republic	the Slovak Republic	Bulgaria	Romania
Capacity for innovation	50	46	24	69	79	72
Quality of scientific research institutions	47	18	21	90	73	83
Company spending on R&D	61	75	25	68	96	103

University-industry collaboration in R&D	64	32	29	87	110	103
Gov't procurement of advanced tech products	61	106	31	127	87	105
Availability of scientists and engineers	60	48	50	71	77	55
Utility patents per million population	54	32	34	44	31	62

Source: Schwab 2010: 111-299.

Consequently, in the areas most important for knowledge production in the global competitiveness index, the three Central European economies are ranked generally low, and in some specific cases, dramatically low. But even if they were ranked high in these areas, their overall economic competitiveness would be still very low due to low (or, in some cases, dramatically low) rankings in other standardized and measurable pillars, not related to higher education and innovation systems. And this is the point I want to stress: Central European economies are not globally competitive not only because they lag behind in higher education and innovation pillars of economic competitiveness; they lag behind in the other pillars as well. Consequently, even much more modernized higher education and innovation systems would not be decisive in their economies' competitiveness. There is a wide, although slowly narrowing, East/West gap related to a multitude of factors, from tax systems to legal systems to transportation infrastructure. Knowledge production in the region cannot and should not be assessed in isolation from its economic environments.

## Knowledge production and its regulatory environment

Knowledge production in universities and in business occurs in regulatory environments that cannot be easily avoided by either universities or companies. In universities, it is funding and governance regimes; in the business sector it is often “ease of doing business” that matters most. To show the differences between major OECD economies and the four Central European countries let me refer briefly to the “ease of doing business” ranking (at the microeconomic level of companies), annually measured by the World Bank in the last five years, most recently in *Doing Business 2011: Making a Difference for Entrepreneurs* (vide World Bank 2010).

There are ten categories in which comparative advantages of countries are evaluated: starting a business, dealing with construction permits, employing workers, registering property, getting credit, protecting investors, paying taxes, trading across borders, enforcing contracts and closing a business. Central European countries are scattered along the ranks, with the Slovak Republic and Hungary in the forties (ranks 41<sup>st</sup> and 46<sup>th</sup>), followed by Poland and the Czech Republic almost in the middle of the ranks (70<sup>th</sup> and 63<sup>rd</sup>) (World Bank 2010: 4). Top OECD economies are in the top thirty ranks, with Singapore, Hong Kong (China), New Zealand, the UK and the USA in the first five ranks. These are the regulatory realities in which Central European economies are operating, which go far beyond (higher) education and innovation systems but, at the same time, directly influence both national economic competitiveness and processes of knowledge production in the business sector. These realities also directly or indirectly influence two other areas where knowledge production occurs in between universities and companies: the area of academic entrepreneurialism and the area of university-enterprise partnerships, as recent research tends to show (vide Shattock 2008, Mora et al. 2010).

What are the advantages of the Slovak Republic and Hungary over Poland and the Czech Republic? Poland’s weaknesses are clear:

it is ranked higher than 100 (out of 183 countries) in such categories as starting a business (rank 113), dealing with construction permits (rank 164) and paying taxes (rank 121). The Czech Republic is ranked over 100 in two categories: starting a business (rank 130) and paying taxes (rank 128). And not surprisingly, all four Central European countries are ranked around 120 (ranks 121-128, with the lowest rank for Hungary – 109) in a single category – paying taxes, with between 257 and 557 hours spent on taxes per year (World Bank 2010, p. 159-193).

**Table 3.** Ranks of countries in the World Bank’s ranking of business-favoring regulations in 183 economies by the Doing Business indicators

Indicators	Poland	Hungary	the Czech Republic	the Slovak Republic	Bulgaria	Romania
Ease of doing business	70	46	63	41	51	56
Starting a business	113	35	130	68	43	44
Dealing with construction permits	164	86	76	56	119	84
Registering property	86	41	47	9	62	92
Getting credit	15	32	46	15	6	15
Protecting investors	44	120	93	109	44	44
Paying taxes	121	109	128	122	85	151
Trading across borders	49	73	62	102	108	47
Enforcing contracts	77	22	78	71	87	54
Closing a business	81	62	32	33	83	102

Source: World Bank 2010: 159-193.

What is important in our context of Central European knowledge production is that higher education and innovation systems in Western European countries – as opposed to Central European countries – function in very competitive economies and companies, including companies involved in research, development, and innovation, operate in relatively friendly legal and regulatory environments. Which brings us back to two ideas: first, expectations from higher education (and innovation) systems should not be exaggerated in globally less competitive economies (such as Central European economies), as opposed to more competitive economies in which all other components of competitiveness are in place. And, second, the role of higher education (and innovation) systems in Central Europe and in Western Europe differs strongly due to a multitude of factors exogenous to higher education systems. The necessary (and measurable) need of “catching up with the West” in such areas as infrastructure, technology or business sophistication may be viewed as more important, and consequently public funding may be directed more easily towards these areas than towards higher education or R&D in public higher education. And, assessing the level of public funding for university research in almost all new EU member states, this is exactly what has been the case in the last two decades. Which comes close to Aghion and Howitt’s recent claim from *Economics of Growth* that, generally, the closer a country is to the productivity frontier, the more it becomes urgent to invest in higher education to foster innovation (and therefore in the US, growth will be enhanced by investing more in research education instead of two-year colleges, *vide* Aghion and Howitt 2009, p. 312). Central European countries are not at the productivity frontier, as shown in the research sector by both low publications intensity and low patents intensity.

### **Knowledge production and fiscal constraints**

The fiscal constraints in which higher education in Central Europe operates are high, and there are high levels of inter-sectoral competition for (scarce) public funding. To give a dramatic illustration of the point: in the global competitiveness index, Poland consistently ranks

dramatically low in the last few years in one of the publicly most expensive categories: the pillar of infrastructure. Poland's quality of overall infrastructure ranked 108<sup>th</sup> out of 139 economies, quality of roads ranked 131<sup>st</sup>, quality of port infrastructure ranked 114<sup>th</sup> and quality of air transport infrastructure ranked 108<sup>th</sup> (Schwab 2010, p. 278); the three other countries are also generally ranked very low in all the above sub-indices of infrastructure, with the exception of railroad infrastructure in the Czech and Slovak Republics.

**Table 4.** Ranks by selected indicators of the “infrastructure” section

Indicators	Poland	Hungary	the Czech Republic	the Slovak Republic	Bulgaria	Romania
Quality of overall infrastructure	108	49	37	65	120	136
Quality of roads	131	63	80	67	135	134
Quality of railroad infrastructure	62	43	22	21	54	70
Quality of air transport infrastructure	108	66	17	120	90	102

Source: Schwab 2010: 111-299.

Thus Central European knowledge production is performed not only in economies with different levels of competitiveness, and operating in different regulatory frameworks than most economically advanced Western European countries, as discussed above. Knowledge production is also performed in different, although in the last two decades convergent, labor markets and corresponding employment patterns, leading towards the service economy. There is a tendency of employment structures in Poland and other Central European countries to



become similar to those in major OECD economies. In Poland, between 1994 and 2004, the share of those employed in agriculture and forestry decreased (from 24% to 18%), those employed in manufacturing also decreased (from 32% to 29%), and those employed in services increased substantially, from 44% to 53%. This is still far below the OECD average in terms of employment patterns but in terms of GDP by sector, the share of services is 66%, close to the OECD average of about 70%. The substantial difference, though, is that the service sector is composed of various activities, only some of which are knowledge-intensive. Central European countries lag behind in the share of knowledge-intensive service activities (which reaches 25-30% in the USA, France, or the UK; Anita Wöflfl 2005, p. 9). In the business sector in Poland, for instance, there are only four companies with considerable (but still marginal by OECD standards) R&D investments – BRE Bank, Telekomunikacja Polska, Netia, and Orlen, with R&D funding between 5 and 23 million EUR (in 2007). The above factors have a strong impact on the realities of knowledge production in higher education institutions, including their ability to do research in partnerships with the enterprise sector.

### **The geography of knowledge production in Europe: regions**

Apart from countries as units of analysis in knowledge-production assessment, in recent years regions in European countries (referred to as NUTS 2 level) are also increasingly becoming the focus of attention of both researchers and policy makers (*vide* EC 2009, Hanell and Neubauer 2006, Arbo and Bennenworth 2007, Goddard 2000, OECD 2007). A report on *Europe's Regional Research Systems: Current Trends and Structures* published by the European Commission presents a new typology of regions that is very relevant for the assessment of knowledge production in Central Europe.

There are six leading R&D performers in Europe (three regions in Germany and one in the Netherlands, Finland and Sweden each). All other regions in the EU are classified into four types: Type 1 regions are R&D-driven regions (a high publishing and a very high patenting

intensity, and the business sector contributes an above average share to regional GERD). Type 2 regions are public-sector-centered, R&D supported regions (with a very high publishing intensity in contrast to an only slightly above average patenting intensity; gross expenditures for R&D per GDP are slightly above average, mostly accounted for by either universities or public research institutions; the contribution of the business sector is below average). Type 3 regions are broadly-based, R&D supported regions (with an average publishing and patenting intensity; unlike Type 1 or Type 2 regions, they are not home to outstanding centers of excellence in either the public sector or business research). And, finally, Type 4 regions comprise the remaining regions in which R&D plays a small role (with a far below average publishing intensity, a very low patenting intensity and an amount of investment in R&D “that can only be described as complementary to the region’s main drivers of growth”, EC 2009, p. 40).

With an exception of merely two regions (the Praha region in the Czech Republic and the *Bratislavsky kraj* region in the Slovak Republic), all regions in Central Europe (as well as, presumably, in Romania and Bulgaria, for which data are not available in a comparable format) are classified as either Type 3 or Type 4 regions, the vast majority of them being classified as Type 4 regions. Central European regions are weakest in research intensity and the least research-driven in the European Union.

A number of countries – including the four in Central Europe studied here – consist of Type 3 and Type 4 regions only (with the two above exceptions). The EC report concludes: “it is likely that within their national context they lack sources of knowledge to which an enlarged ERA network could provide access” (EC 2009, p. 44). A report on *Geographies of Knowledge Production in Europe* published by NOR-DREGIO stresses in its conclusions “a clear core-periphery pattern” in the structure of knowledge intensity in Europe. “The East-West divide in Europe” – the theme of the present paper – is “still clearly

discernable” (Hanell and Neubauer 2006, p. 28). Consequently, knowledge production in Central Europe, at a regional level, is performed in regions which are not R&D-driven: in the vast majority of regions R&D plays a supportive role or R&D is merely complementary to the local economy.

## Conclusions

A fair assessment of knowledge production in the region needs to refer back to historical legacies of the communist system and to two decades of its postcommunist transformations. Universities in Central Europe were operating under special circumstances for half a century, with far-reaching consequences for the postcommunist transition period and beyond. The early 1990s brought about rapid political and economic transformations, while in the next ten years the reform packages also included welfare policies and higher education policies. Despite a powerful role of European agendas in transforming higher education systems in the region in the 2000s, both prior to and following the EU accession in 2004, Central European higher education still struggles with communist and postcommunist legacies. Consequently, social narratives, or founding ideas, the universities produce about their own role in society and the economy are relatively weak, as opposed to strong narratives increasingly produced by policy makers involved in comprehensive reform programs, as the Polish example clearly indicates.

The East/West divide in knowledge production continues, as testified by assessments of both higher education and innovation systems. On economic grounds, both pillars of economic competitiveness related to higher education (higher education and training, and innovation) are weak, as are both research and patenting outputs in the region. The role of factors other than higher education and innovation systems is substantially more important for competitiveness and growth in Central Europe than in affluent Western economies. The international visibility of universities as knowledge production centers is extremely low, with

just a few of them present in either global or European university rankings. The analysis of the geography of knowledge production at the level of regions may indicate that Central Europe is in danger of being effectively cut off from the emergent European Research Area. The very idea of knowledge economies may be far more difficult to apply in the region than is generally accepted in OECD and EC discourse.

The East/West differences in higher education systems and in university knowledge production may be bigger than expected, and the role of historical legacies may be more long-term than generally assumed in both social science and public policy studies on the region. Transformations of universities may take much longer and the gradual convergence of both higher education and research systems in two parts of Europe cannot be taken for granted without thoughtful changes in both university funding (including both its modes and its levels) and governance. Central European universities desperately struggle to remain in the global academic center but their gradual decline to academic peripheries cannot be excluded if proper measures are not taken. Which brings to the top of the agenda the issues of European integration in higher education and research on the one hand, and revised national policies in the two areas in the region on the other hand.<sup>3</sup>

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**Cezary Kościelniak**

Adam Mickiewicz University

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**UNIVERSITY, STUDENT ACTIVISM  
AND THE IDEA OF CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE**

*[...] sprzeciw sumienia może nabrać znaczenia politycznego,  
kiedy zdarzy się tak, że pewna liczba sumień będzie  
współbrzmieć, a protestujący [...] zdecydują się wkroczyć na  
rynek i dać się słyszeć publicznie.*

*[...] this kind of conscientious objection can become politically significant  
when a number of consciences happen to coincide,  
and the conscientious objectors [...] decide to enter the market place  
and make their voices heard in public*

Hannah Arendt, "Civil disobedience"

## I

At the turn of the second decade of the 21st century, student protests across Europe gained new momentum. Their direct – although not only – cause was an increasingly restrictive financial policy adopted in the higher education sector that had a direct impact on students. Protests have also begun in reaction to other issues and "meritocratic" protests are now not rare, e.g. in Germany, where students protested against the oversimplification of curricula, low education quality, crowded lecture halls, etc. Protests take various forms and they may be of symbolic character, as was the case in Florence, Italy, where students took over the Brunelleschi's dome, or in Rome, where students organised a massive, day-long demonstration that resembled the alter-globalist protests of G8 summits.

The history of protests in the 20th and 21st century has often seen tragic endings; suffice it to recall the White Rose movement, members of which were associated with the University of Munich, or developments on Tianamen Square, a site of cruel repression of those involved in the protests. In Poland, past decades were a heyday of student activism reaching its pinnacle in 1968 and 1989, when the protests against the communist regime led to a brutal response by those in power. For the whole generation of activists involved in student contestation, the experience gathered during those years provided a firm background for their future political careers: after the turn, they emerged as the key players of Polish public life. After 1989, however, university protests lost momentum and students merged with a transforming society focused primarily on building its way to prosperity. The most recent protest took place in 2011 in Cracow; its participants opposed restrictions imposed on tuition-free studies, but the form and impact generated could by no means be compared with similar developments abroad<sup>1</sup>. It is worth noting that protests have been taking place not only in Europe or the United States, but also in Africa and the Arab world. We have relatively little data on similar events in Russia and China, although even in those countries one may record student activity that refuses servility towards the regime<sup>2</sup>. Thus, it may be of note to mention that the protests, or points of "student activism" to use a more precise phrase introduced by Philip Altbach, are a worldwide phenomenon, and it is therefore impossible to regard them – as is the common belief – as antics of spoiled youth or see in them only anti-totalitarian activity. Entering the second decade of the 21st century, student activism is preoccupied with redefining higher education policy as well as the world of politics. Scholars face one more problem here: the very phenomenon of activism is far from homogenous. Since not all protests

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1 Amendment to Higher Education Act from 2011 imposed additional criteria on students willing to start additionally a second course.

2 For instance, students of Moscow universities printed at the turn of 2011 an anti-government calendar in protest against policy adopted by the authorities.

share common traits, it is impossible to present them in a simple comparative study. The crisis-stricken second decade of the 21st century provides the setting for the current surge in political activity among Western students: politicians are being forced to return to neoliberal financial regimes and to introduce such drastic changes as disbanding departments or even closing down entire universities. Student protests seem therefore a natural implication of such changes.

The author seeks not to analyse the individual protests (this has been undertaken by other authors contributing to this volume), but rather focuses on the phenomenon of student activism as such, its cultural aspects, and how it relates to transformations in public life. Recent years brought an upsurge in student activism, which begs the question: what are its sources, meaning, and current cultural character? Is student activism just a channeling of youthful energy against an old order in need of redefinition? Does it have anything to do with the fact that from early on, young people are introduced to the idea of civil society, which triggers protests among students who feel they have no political representation? Can student activism be understood as an attempt to achieve significant social values, such as labour market accessibility and a modernised and well-organised state? Or is student activism implicitly a way of advocating against social exclusion? And in the face of the precarious financial situation of European universities, is student activism becoming a firmly established institution within the European university, which has been given the cultural task of taking a critical approach toward implementation of the political agenda? Certainly something is at stake here; protesting students not only demand to maintain the *status quo* of their universities and their position in the academic community, but they regard changes as an assault by politicians on their future, as additional obstacles and obligations limiting their personal development. Cutbacks within the university are treated as an attack on equal access both to education and to the labour market. Cuts in spending on universities and on students creates the impression that the state is refusing to facilitate equality of chances. The ideology of

equality that emerged in the wake of the protests of the sixties is currently being dismantled. At the outset, it may be useful to note that the current student protests in Europe are seen through the prism of the predominantly Western activism of the sixties. Indeed, at that time university protests were closely related to the emergence of a new model of state that completely reshaped both the society and the structure of the university<sup>3</sup>. Whereas the protests of the sixties had an emancipatory and political character, contemporary activism focuses instead on higher education policy, particularly the relationship between university students and welfare participation. The idea of egalitarianism fell short of expectations, due to the trend to cut education funding coupled with growing problems for young European graduates on the labour market. Egalitarianism, however, is an important value in the European way of dealing with social issues, and the citizens of the Old Continent require their states and its agencies - this includes the university - to apply the principle of equality. Ever since the majority of EU countries granted equality of access to institutions of knowledge, egalitarian demands advanced onward and have been converging particularly on access to institutions that ensure welfare. The research reveals, however, that it will be increasingly difficult to meet such demands in the future. A comprehensive take on the issue is presented in the inspiring volume *Oxford Handbook of Welfare State* (2010).

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3 Student protests in the West during the sixties are thoroughly analysed in the literature, *vide* Martin Klimke, comparing protests in Germany and USA, *The Other Alliance: Student Protest in West Germany and the United States in the Global Sixties*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010, Richard P. McCormick, revealing the phenomenon of black student movement, *The Black Student Protest Movement at Rutgers*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990. Th. Nick „Challenging Myths of the 1960s: The Case of Student Protest in Britain”, analyses student protests in the 60' in UK. Raymond Boudon (1977) „The French University since 1968”, a comparative study describing social changes in France in the wake of 1968. Philip Altbach (2006) uses comparative method to characterise student protests of the 60 in industrialised and third world. Polish perspective, *vide Uniwersytet zaangażowany*, *Krytyka Polityczna* 2010, presenting contexts of domestic 1968 focusing mainly on University of Warsaw.

In presenting the phenomenon of student activism, one should not focus entirely on 1968, since student disputes are as old as the university itself and have always been tempestuous and scandalous, a far cry from the staid and reserved image of a scholar. Let us stress one more thing: protests reveal involvements of the university that transcend the historical role assigned to it by Wilhelm von Humboldt, which was restricted to research and teaching. Now, the university is undertaking a so called "third mission" that consists of fostering regional and economic development as well as establishing itself as a cultural institution. The university is becoming a "society-wide" institution that tackles topics of politics, religion and art while participating in a broadly understood culture of innovative technologies. Indeed, protests show that the university has claimed (or, for that matter, reclaimed) a power of persuasion; it is not merely a stakeholder producing knowledge and kudos as an element of the economic system, it also holds authority that immensely affects public life. Such authority possesses power of its own and has its own means of persuasion; all this attracts young critical people interested in social philosophy.

Should politicians be afraid of the university? If the answer is yes, there are plenty of reasons why. In the USA, student protests forced president Johnson to abort his policy on the war in Vietnam, and protests in South Korea in 1987 contributed to the transition toward democracy. History delivers plenty of similar examples, and as for the future, it seems that in the era of global communication, the critical function of the university may be further strengthened. It follows that exercising control over the quality of the democratic process through the institutions of knowledge is not mere fiction or wishful thinking.

The brief description presented above reveals that the student activism in the Western world has strong links with democratic institutions. This link is clearly manifested in protests against certain practices taking place in the domain of public life. At its core student activism may be interpreted as a form of disobedience, although it purports not

so much to deconstruct the political system, as to initiate protest in the areas where society is dysfunctional by identifying its shortcomings and the need for new arrangements. In order to reach a better understanding of this phenomenon, we shall refer in subsequent parts of this text to the idea of civil disobedience advocated by Hannah Arendt. This serves to demonstrate that protest is an effort to improve democratic institutions. Another aim of this chapter is to provide a definition of political activism and to present its recent manifestations by sketching a comparison between Western experiences and the Polish March of 1968. Finally, the closing section of the chapter comprises an attempt to interpret the institution of protest within the context of the task of modernisation assigned to the university. One way to analyse a specific case is to apply a theoretical framework to it, thus putting it in a broader interpretive perspective (*vide* Pascal Vennesson 2010). The methodology used in cultural studies will be another point of reference, serving to reveal the values behind student activism through the introduction of a normative perspective (*vide* Michael Keating 2010).

## II

Political involvements, radical student protests, resultant riots, political bouts, and more or less serious events and disputes with occasionally tragic endings are as ancient as the university itself. While embarking on the analysis of this phenomenon, it is difficult not to mention, even briefly, the historical roots of student activism. While describing the social background of the universities at their dawn, Harold Perkin, a historian of higher education (2007), remarks that the social structure of academia is characterised by a multiplicity of social classes, and that this composition is prone to cause conflicts. Each group comprising the stakeholders of the university strives to expand its autonomy and to influence other groups. The medieval university was an institution of great tensions between the lecturers, students, local ecclesiastic hierarchy, municipal authorities, and citizens. The latter group often was at loggerheads with the students, which would lead to regular street-fighting; casualties were not uncommon. The social



structure of the medieval university varied depending on the country, but in any case was highly diverse. For instance, scholars and students at the University of Paris were associated in guilds: “In Paris, a guild of masters was in existence by 1117 with formal status from 1210, whose main concern was to limit the control of the cathedral chancellor, who had the right to license masters” (Perkin 2007, p. 163). Students were organised in groups representing their national interests: “[...] the French (of the Ile de France), The Normans, the Picards, and the English (who included the Germans and other northerners” (*ibidem*, p. 164). Such groups were governed by bodies responsible for relations with Parisians, among others. Italian universities had a different structure, and local students exercised much greater influence through participation in the governance of the university. The author summarizes this in short: “Paris became a ‘university of masters’, unlike the Italian ‘university of students’ [...]” (*ibidem*). Because the students’ rule triggered conflicts with professors or citizens, students were constantly struggling for recognition of their rights. According to Perkin, student riots and protests occurred on regular basis: “Only in 1245, after many town and gown quarrels and migrations, were the students conceded equal civil rights by the city authorities and had their status and privileges recognized by the commune and the papacy (1252 – 53)” (*ibidem*, p. 165). The British historian stresses that such harsh disputes led to the founding of new universities; masters and students were leaving hostile cities and settling elsewhere. Such was the situation in France, Italy and England: “Like Paris and the Northern universities, Bologna had its problems with local townsfolk. Quarrels and riots led to migrations of scholars to Modena and Montpellier in the 1170s, to Vicenza in 1204, Arezzo in 1215, and Padua 1222, thus establishing universities in those cities” (*ibidem*).

Perkin notes that the tradition of student protest in those countries is particularly strong (*ibidem*) and dates as far back as the Middle Ages. This mechanism of protest, which caused migration and the founding of new universities, was also present in other parts of Europe. Such were

the beginnings of Cambridge: “Cambridge originated with a migration from Oxford after town and gown riots in 1209” (*ibidem*). Disputes and political bouts engaging both students and professors were a common occurrence even at the renowned universities. The results of such events often proved to be turning points of their history.

In the Renaissance era, the university witnessed the religious strife of the Reformation. This caused conflicts and led to the establishment of new academic communities. One of the most interesting examples from Central Europe was the German-dominated Charles University of Prague, which in the 15th century was the scene of a religious quagmire. To quote Perkin: “Unfortunately, the Czechs and the Germans began to quarrel, exacerbated in the 15th century by the religious and philosophical disputes between the followers of the Bohemian reformer and realist Jan Hus and the more orthodox and nominalist Germans. When the Bohemian King Wenceslas IV tried to impose Czech hegemony on the university in 1409, the Germans seceded to Heidelberg, Cologne, and above all, to Leipzig, adding to the new universities [...]” (*ibidem*, p. 167). In effect, national and religious upheaval in Prague caused a migration of scholars and contributed to the growth of other communities that are widely recognised to this day.

The history of conflicts does not end here; they also occurred during the age of the Catholic Counter-Reformation, or the anti-religious Enlightenment, and led to founding of institutions of knowledge completely independent from religious institutions. It seems, however, that the modern-era dispute concerning the form of governance of the university is not only linked with political activism, but, as it was discussed by Immanuel Kant in his *Contest of Faculties*, stems from a dispute having at its core the status of knowledge, which in turn influences the structure of academia. Modern changes within the institution of knowledge emerged in the wake of new scientific discoveries and the establishment in modern-age France of such new institutions for further progress of knowledge as academies of science or scientific societies (*vide* Drozdowicz 1983). Ideological upheaval began with

the development of modern models of the university, e.g. the model of new Catholic university proposed by John Henry Newman, where the mission of scholarship is intertwined with a preponderant role of theology, reflecting a critical approach toward the model of the “neutral” university (*vide* Jędraszewski 2008)<sup>4</sup>. The Newmanian university is therefore a concept that matured in the course of conflict with British academic culture.

Contemporary division into research and teaching universities also sparks controversy. In his book *God, Philosophy, University* Alasdair MacIntyre reiterates the roots of the university and criticises such division as inconsistent with the more general and holistic ends that the university is supposed to pursue. Similar arguments, though presented from a different ideological perspective, are recalled by Christopher Newfield in the book *Unmaking the Public University*. He places the contemporary university against the background of a cultural conflict that expresses itself through the introduction of procedures for knowledge management and university management. Although these authors are describing the American landscape, their findings may well apply within the context of Western Europe as well.

This brief description of the chosen historical academic conflicts shows that the phenomenon of protest is an ingrained feature of academic culture that was later taken over by the civic culture of democratic systems. Students struggled for their rights as well as influence and control over universities. Further, history shows that the universities were involved in public affairs; from the dawn of the university scholars not only produced knowledge but were engaged in ideological and

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4 This dispute concerning the role of religion in the modern world begins with the opposing ideas of Newman and Humboldt. The role of religion in the university of the present day is currently widely discussed, particularly in the USA. It is worth mentioning here books analysing this issue - *The American University in Postsecular Age*, Jacobsen D., Jacobsen R.H. (ed.), Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008; Sommerville C. J., *Religious Ideas for Secular Universities*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids (MI) 2009.

social activity, and did not eschew religious strife. Neutrality is therefore a fairly new trait of the university and student activism became a solid element of democratic cultures. It may thus be worthy to pose a question: how would we position student activism in a philosophical and political context?

### III

The contemporary form of student activism requires a precise definition. An explanation provided by Philip Altbach may prove useful: he notes that regardless of political or ideological involvement, as well as country or historical context, student protest is essentially a contestation. "Student activism is generally oppositional in nature. This opposition to established authority may be from the left or right, or it may express itself in cultural or religious form" (Altbach 2006, p. 148). The author remarks that the contemporary protests tackle national, global, economic or religious issues (the latter pertains particularly to Islamic countries). If we would like to follow the train of thought of the American scholar, we would possibly state that what all protests share is their adversative character or, to employ a philosophical term, disobedience against the established social order. Disobedience is not necessarily manifested in revolutionary activity or hatred towards the state, but is rather characterised by a publicly expressed protest against the form of government, constitution of the university, public practices or deep regional or global changes<sup>5</sup>.

We would like to view student activism as one of the critical elements supporting democratic systems. The adversative character of student political involvement may be analysed in a broader context of democratic instruments, and it happens that an institutionalised form of disobedience is one such instrument. Also Zygmunt Bauman (Bau-

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5 Student activism is initiated both when changes occur on global scale and when they have more regional impact. Example for this are protests in Sub-Saharan Africa at the turn of the 90, *vide* Nkiyangi J., *Students Protests in Sub-Saharan Africa*, "Higher Education", t. 22, no 2, 1991, p. 157-173.

man 1995) stresses the importance of control over public activity and subjecting political moves to close inspection. Indeed, universities may control implementation of the social or political agenda in an informal and non-oppressive manner. This may be achieved by holding public debates or using the expert knowledge of scholars, who in this way contribute to public life.

In order to present student activism as a special case of civil disobedience sanctioned by the social order, the author of this article offers to enrich the interpretation of this phenomenon by referring to the concept presented by Hannah Arendt in her essay *Civil Disobedience* (Arendt 1999). This point of reference will allow for placing student activism within the framework of democratic institutions.

Providing an institutionalised framework for student protests is important because the authorities, and part of the society, regard such activity as having a negative or even anti-state character. Such was the case of the Polish March 1968 when the regime denounced the protesters by promoting the slogan “students back to books,” thus denying them political subjectivity. A disobedient citizen is not necessarily a disloyal citizen. An act of disobedience is a last resort when there is no other way to cause change or amend the political system. Hannah Arendt provides the following description of its origin: „Nieposłuszeństwo obywatelskie pojawia się wówczas, gdy znacząca liczba obywateli dochodzi do przekonania, że normalne kanały dokonywania zmian nie funkcjonują, a skargi nie zostaną wysłuchane lub uwzględnione, albo przeciwnie, że rząd chce dokonać zmian i zabrał się do tego, upierając się przy sposobach działania, których legalność i konstytucyjność stoją pod wielkim znakiem zapytania” (*ibidem* p. 177). *Civil disobedience arises when a significant number of citizens have become convinced either that the normal channels of change no longer function, and grievances will not be heard or acted upon, or that, on the contrary, the government is about to change and has embarked upon and persists in modes of action whose legality and constitutionality are open to grave doubt.* In this sense

civil disobedience must be public; it is a morally justified action that at the end of the day serves the ends of the state. Arendt compares those who demonstrate civil disobedience with criminals abusing the law and shows that the latter group, apart from the clear difference of intent, does not act publicly, nor reveal its purposes. Finally, „człowiek demonstrujący nieposłuszeństwo obywatelskie, choć zazwyczaj różni się w zapatrywaniach od większości, działa w imię i na rzecz grupy” (*ibidem* p. 171). *The civil disobedient, though he is usually dissenting from a majority, acts in the name and for the sake of a group.* A criminal counts on quick gain arising from the wrongdoing. Like a criminal, a disobedient citizen bears in mind his own interests, but on the other hand, he expresses the goals championed by the group, and is convinced of the rightness of his ends. Protesting students who resort to violence (as happened during demonstrations in Rome in December 2010) or who occupy buildings (as was in the case of Glasgow, where occupation was deemed illegal and ended in fights with the police) are not “criminals of a specific kind” but “disobedient citizens” who openly manifest their concern with changes that affect at least one social group. It is the conscience, argues Arendt, that is the philosophical abode of human protest. Precisely there one first senses anxiety concerning the good and the evil. Conscience, however, continues Arendt, is only capable of shaping private opinions which are individual in their character and as such have no required momentum. Only when common will they be sanctioned by the group and have the required force: „A siła opinii nie zależy od sumienia lecz od liczebności tych, którzy ją wyznają” (*ibidem* p. 161) *And the strength of opinion does not depend on conscience, but on the number of those with whom it is associated.* This remark describes how university protests unfold: they are triggered by many individual opinions of dissent. The diversity of issues taken up by the protesters, whether political or related to the university itself, indicates that the mission of the university is public in its character, and the mature civic attitude of the students generates the “multiplied force of individual opinion”. Finally, Hannah Arendt indicates that civil disobedience is related to the fact that social changes occur rapidly, and the reaction

of critical citizens is becoming an increasingly important instrument for modern democracies that permit dissent. Thus, the author argues that „znalezienie konstytucyjnej niszy dla nieposłuszeństwa obywatelskiego byłoby wydarzeniem o wielkim znaczeniu” (*ibidem* p. 181) *It would be an event of great significance to find a constitutional niche for civil disobedience.* Democratic systems must develop means to express social dissent: ‘Consent and the right to display lack thereof have become the initiating and organizing principles of action which would teach the <art of associating> to the denizens of this continent. This <art> has lead to the occurrence of voluntary associations.’ (*ibid.*, p.194.). Consent and the right to dissent became the inspiring and organizing principles of action that taught the inhabitants of this continent the “art of associating together,” from which sprang those voluntary associations.

It has been forty years since these words were written and the case of post-communist Europe provides us with ample examples of dissent that paved the way for the foundation of civil society – student activism is one of the most efficient means to achieve this end. The instrument of civil disobedience may be further warranted when politicians deny legitimate representation to groups opposing their political decisions – such as was the case with higher education reforms, e.g in Italy, which spurred massive and violent protests against politicians. It seems that Arendt’s concept should be strengthened by the identification of institutions permitting disobedience. The university is precisely such a sort of institution: on the one hand it is supposed to serve the community, on the other hand it releases its potential of critical thinking, allows for in-depth examination of social matters and sympathises (although not unconditionally) with the protesting students. There is one more cultural reason causing the protests: links between egalitarianism and the doctrine of a “knowledge society”. Currently, Europe struggles with high unemployment among university graduates. The demand for securing material prosperity proves increasingly difficult to satisfy, and this translates into disappointment and frustration. The university, understood as an institution implementing the economic policy of the

state, will experience increasing difficulties in fulfilling this social task of linking knowledge with access to material security. The future looks grim: the ongoing crisis may last for years to come, undermining this link and suggesting that the need may arise to revise it.

Student activism chimes with the critical approach of the university and the task of promoting pro-democratic attitudes, a polyphony of opinions and freedom of speech, freedom of association or public demonstration of one's convictions. Today, the university is expected to be proactive in support of civil society and education<sup>6</sup>. The university, sensitive to social "soft issues", ceases to be an institution regarding the world from a distance and instead engages in civic activities - those activities include dissent. Student activism and protests may therefore be regarded as an element of the institution of "civil disobedience," which promotes not only the ends of the specific group but those of the society at large. Throughout the last forty years, student protests have defended freedom, expressed anti-war sentiments (e.g. in Poland under the communist regime or in the USA while it was entangled in the Vietnam conflict), raised social issues (e.g. France 1968) or concerned the university itself (e.g. the 2009 meritocratic protests in Germany). Other relevant background includes budgetary cuts that had the consequence of suppressing implementation of egalitarian policies (e.g. UK, Italy and Portugal in 2010 and 2011). It is natural for student activism to take on academic and political issues, because in this way it contributes to public debate and tackles key problems of public life.

#### IV

Next, I would like to characterise student activism. Who are the contesting students and whom do they represent?

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6 University involvement in public affairs is contested. Kazimierz Twardowski in his lecture „O dostojęństwie uniwersytetu” [„On the dignity of the university”] stresses that it is the distance to the world that makes it a permanent institution. *Vide* Twardowski (2008)



In a chapter titled “Students Political Activism” from his book *Comparative Higher Education* (2006), Philip Altbach answers the question “who are the protesting students?” by applying his “time sectional” method, which consists of putting student activism in the perspective of various events over the past forty years. Arthur Levine and Keith R. Wilson (1979) also analyse the protesters by describing transformations of student activism in the United States over the course of the seventies<sup>7</sup>.

When characterising students involved in the political movements, Philip Altbach remarks that it is the students of social sciences who most actively engage in such activity. The author offers the following explanation: “The social sciences concentration on studies on society and social problems may create a critical perspective in some students. Social science faculty members also tend to have more radical views than do members of the academic profession generally and these critical views may affect students” (Altbach 2006, p. 155). At the same time, various political views of the involved students are represented more or less equally.

This would be supported by Levine and Wilson, who compared students’ involvement in 1969–1970 and 1977–1978 by examining their support of various political organisations. The study revealed that at that time “Young Democrats” had the biggest number of followers. During 1969–1970, their number amounted to 44%; in the years 1977–1978 it reached 30%. The number of students supporting a right wing organisation amounted to 43% and 28%, respectively. Further, “leftist political groups” had within both periods 9% and 8% percent of

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7 I overlook here possible methodological problems that may arise due to the great diversity of cases and broad temporal perspective adopted by Altbach. The goal of the author was to show a comparative perspective by presentation of cases of student activism in various countries. In turn, Levin and Wilson limit their field of research to cases of student activism in USA in the seventies, which results in a more precise description that, however, is limited in its scope.

followers, whereas “rightist political groups” scored 10% and 4%, respectively. It follows that only during 1969-1970 did followers of right wing movements exceed the number of left wing supporters, by 1%<sup>8</sup>. The data presented pertain to the United States. If we would like to compare them with student organisations in Poland under the communist regime, the largest group of this kind was the Independent Students’ Association (Polish name: Niezależne Zrzeszenie Studentów – NZS), a rightist organisation opposing the Marxist-oriented authorities.

While describing the background of student activists, Altbach indicates that their parents were well-educated and affluent. In addition, leaders of those movements descended from well-educated families. The author also cites research findings that revealed that the activists of the 60’s were determined to achieve the best academic results. It is remarkable that the leaders frequently belonged to minorities, which often are of religious character: “In Japan and Korea the small Christian populations have contributed a disproportional number of student leaders. In France, Protestants have been disproportionally involved in activism. In the United States, Jews and Liberal Protestants have been significantly engaged in activism” (*ibidem* p. 156).

This phenomenon is believed to be explained by the social consciousness of the minorities and their involvement in such social movements as emancipatory groups. The examination of the religious roots of the leaders of student activism is certainly thought-provoking. Although no quantitative research has been conducted to investigate this issue in Poland, Dominican and Jesuit student ministries located in large academic communities remain very active. These organisations attract committed and involved students and many representatives of this environment held public offices or were successful in business. It seems, however, that Polish Catholic universities and religion in gen-

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8 In 1969-1970, the authors list one more organisation called *Students for Democratic Society* that was supported by 16% of the students. This movement, however, is not described as clearly rightist or clearly leftist.

eral are of minor importance to the phenomenon of student activism. After the fall of communism, Catholic universities, although formerly regarded as the leading advocates of freedom (particularly the Catholic University of Lublin), failed to take leading role in redefining Polish higher education policy or setting new standards for student activism.

If one tries to compare the foregoing with the situation in communist Poland, it becomes clear that student opposition had a similar pattern. On the one hand it was an opposition professing laic ideas (it played a major part in March 1968), but on the other hand there were people with close links to the Church. Another major player during the eighties was the already-mentioned Independent Students' Association, which, despite its rightist leanings, was never entirely Church-oriented. Altbach stresses that the majority of American students come from well-to-do and educated families. But Polish universities had a more egalitarian social structure; under the communist regime candidates were awarded additional points for their working class background which translated into the fact that student leaders came from families with varied economic status.

The answer to the question "who are the protesters?" supplies us with the identification of the subject of protest, its motives, and the means used to promote the cause. If we take a close look at the protests of 2010 and 2011, we discover that methods used by the protesters have changed with the development of new media and new information technologies. Today, student activity streams through such Internet tools as Facebook or Twitter. Access to the social networks allows for following protests online. In a sense, this creates a kind of "oral history" of protests. Since they are broadcasted live, it gives them an emotional dimension, strengthening the message they are trying to convey. Furthermore, we are given a chance for more active on-line participation. All these innovations contribute to a cultural change. In effect, minister Gelmini is probably equally unpopular among students and professors from Italy, Poland, the UK or Portugal. Both global changes in high-

er education policies, caused by adopting similar systemic solutions across the world, and the emergence of global communication channels, contribute to the fact that student movements are more powerful, their voice is more resonant, and their aims, at least in Europe, are similar<sup>9</sup>.

## V

In the final part of this text I examine the social and cultural implications of student activism. Politics has always been the first reason for engaging in such activity, both in developed countries and in the third world. Philip Altbach lists the following reasons for student activism: “nuclear war, civil rights and liberties, and of course war in Vietnam were the main motivating forces for American students during the 1960s” (*ibidem* p. 157). In similar fashion, continues Altbach, students in France opposed de Gaulle and German students protested against the ruling Christian democrats. Brutally quelled protests in sub-Saharan Africa in the 80’s were not only an expression of discontent with the economic situation, but also of opposition to the unfavorable education policy (*vide* Nkinyangi 1991). African protests meet with aggressive and brutal responses from the authorities and usually end in bloodshed. This is not to say that using force against the students happens only in Africa. Altbach provides examples of other developing countries that used force in confrontation with the students: “In Uruguay, Burma and other led-countries, student activism was met with massive military repression” (*ibidem* p. 161). Certainly information concerning student activism in those countries reaches the international community, which usually in such situations remains passive and disengaged, but sometimes is in a position to use certain instruments of international policy to apply pressure on the oppressors.

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9 One may recall the common anti-crisis policy manifested by extensive budget cuts in Italy, Great Britain, and Portugal that took place at roughly the same time, which in effect caused a similar reaction from students in those countries.

Obviously, Western students are eager to organise protests because it is a useful tool for achieving their ends, and its participants are not politically stigmatised. Altbach shows that the direct effects of student protests cause cultural change, introduce new values professed by the liberal middle-class, and lead to radical revision of curricula. It is precisely protests in Europe and the United States that led to establishing such new courses and research fields as women's studies, ethnic studies or broadly conceived culture studies.

The Polish experience of student protest boasts a long tradition; it is, however, complicated and marked by the struggle for independence. It is epitomised by secret education courses organised during World War II; if discovered, participants of such courses were punished by death<sup>10</sup>. In the last forty years, however, university protests were related to political changes and the students chose radical forms of protests. A comparison of the protesting students in Poland and those in France seems illegitimate. Mikołaj Lewicki (1998) recounts an anecdote describing a Polish screening of the documentary presenting French protests that nails down the differences in goals pursued by students on both sides of iron curtain:

“We see shots on the barricades, cars in flames, suddenly a group of students appears and with joyful smiles and lavish gesticulation they push a brand new Renault into the Seine. The audience lets out a groan of terror, someone cries ‘God, what a bunch of idiots...’ The car – a luxury object of desire practically unavailable for the ‘poor Poles of 68’ is unanimously sunk in the Seine. [...] The footage from Paris is to us nothing but absurd” (*ibidem* p. 236).

Unlike in the West, Polish students were severely repressed. Lewicki notes that comparison of such protests is a risky enterprise: “[...] If one analyses the May events in Nanterre [...], any attempt to compare, find analogies or similarities with the Polish March seems futile.

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10 Higher education initiatives during the period of annexation were discussed at length by Antoni Michnik (2010).

[...] Comparison of student, or youth, opposition in specific countries and drawing any final conclusions aiming at revealing a common “spirit” of 1968, which like a spectre would haunt the world, is paradoxical to the same extent as comparison of the activity of the United States in Vietnam with Stalinist terror, and let me recall that such comparison was not uncommon among the protesting students of the Sorbonne” (*ibidem* p. 237).

Ideas harboured by supporters of both communism and capitalism, as well as the way Western students pictured real socialism, were naive and unrealistic. It was only with utmost difficulty that the repressive character and economic malfunction of the system penetrated to their minds.

Despite obvious differences, it may be of note to ask: was there a link between the experiences of the West and the East? Certainly, such common traits may be found in the fact that participants in the protests were aware of their impact on politics. This was a major asset for this generation, and even today fuels parties situated on the left of the political scene. Michał Sutowski (2010) offers the following account of Polish experiences in this respect: “The walks of life of the protesters had various bends and twists: the plight of defiant protesters was emigration, prison or political career in a party, conformism or involvement, extreme anticommunism, liberal pragmatism or renunciation of politics. [...] Student protests shaped several generations, and even if it was not “generations of Poles”, these were at least generations of “symbolic elites” (Sutowski, 2010, p. 127).

While describing the moral and cultural consequences of the Polish March, Ireneusz Krzemiński (1998) points at the deinstitutionalisation of morality and the transition to subjectivity. This process was a generational change in perception of the relation linking individual and institution. “[...] March 68 was, among others, a protest against institutionalised morality represented at that time by the party. More-

over, this experience convinces that “morality” is a spontaneous social domain and its norms are subject to lively or even impulsive interpretation” (Krzemiński, 1998, p. 262). The Polish March created an entirely new and informal role for the Polish university, namely preserving the art of a critical approach and safeguarding freedom and the democratic character of society. “The concept of ‘March generation’ assumes the emergence of two phenomena at once: first, creating what I call ‘new awareness’ which included certain moral values, and, even if shaped in a more general and brief fashion, a project of ‘righteous society’. Secondly, it involved forming [...] a social bond creating the ‘generation’. (*ibidem*, p. 271).

Here, we can discover some similarities between Poland and the West. Students engaged in contestation were prominent figures of their generation. The presidential term of Bill Clinton and liberal political projects of his administration were political symbols of the then-matured generation of protest. In Poland, the generation in question came to power after the fall of communism in 1989. In its political dimension, it had a clear leftist character. But traditional institutions, particularly the Church and the opposition that formed after August 1980, also had their share in overthrowing communism in Poland. Therefore, it seems justified to argue that student activism initially prevailed thanks to its solid anti-totalitarian frame, which later assumed a political character. Ireneusz Krzemiński proposes not to speak about “protest” but “contestation”, meaning new, socially and morally lasting changes that took place in Poland during the post-war period: “The word ‘contestation’ [...] is more fitting than ‘protest’ or ‘opposition’ because it carries the meaning of those words while at the same time allowing to speak of a broader and lasting pattern of behaviour, of a strong tendency to present a certain significant attitude in various social situations. To ‘contest’ is to refuse to accept, to be against, to demonstrate protest and dissent in one’s everyday life. This referred not only to the party or state, but to the attitude commonly manifested by the majority of the society” (*ibidem*).

Student activism was also a response to constraints imposed on intellectual life. There were attempts to rekindle it by revival of the idea of the Flying University or Society for Educational Courses. Such institutions were established during the period of annexation and their endeavors were focused on preserving Polish culture. A spontaneous need for the establishment of such institutions exposed such tasks of the university as production of knowledge and its social relevance.

Referring here to the concept of civil disobedience presented by Hannah Arendt, it may be said that it is a prerequisite of contestation. Both civil disobedience and contestation by the young generation are elements of social dynamics shaping long-term political and cultural changes. If so, one must stress at this point the importance of the university, this hatchery of protest and contestation. If Arendt advocates the need to institutionalise disobedience, it would be crucial to add that society will not be capable of forging such an institution without the university, its public tasks, and the above-mentioned critical approach. It is therefore crucial to secure the autonomy of the university and to safeguard public consent to its involvement, since this testifies to its freedom and maturity as well as to the freedom and maturity of the society itself. As for stable welfare democracies, it would be detrimental if the university were perceived only as an economic player and catalyst of the future careers of its graduates. Research presented by Altbach shows that the core of the protest is located in departments of social sciences and humanities, which indicates that precisely these parts of the university form the scene of *theatrum publicum*, the agora. To employ the language of Socrates, the university is a midwife of important social values. This becomes clear if contrasted with non-democratic countries, where force used against the students reflects the condition of the society at large; it is then a dysfunctional society where violence replaces dialoguing communities. A university that admits contestation in public life achieves the status of an institution defending human rights. Krzemiński describes the new awareness of the March generation as the right to public criticism: "The right of an individual to criticise pub-



licly those in power, whoever they are, became a universal law of the new awareness. This was so because it meant a dislike and mistrust toward any institutionalised authority, i.e. those having at their disposal an (often informal) machinery of repression used against dissent or questioning of the views or moral principles preached by the authority" (*ibidem*, p. 273).

The experience of March and the above quote testify to the need for the university to furnish an institution of civil disobedience. If we seek today a moral formula for the modern university and ask how to fit it in the democratic process, the answer is: we need a university that secures knowledge, liberty and freedom of discussion with all the benefits deriving from public privileges, including civil disobedience.

After 1989, student activism lost momentum both in Poland and in other post-communist countries, although the reason for it is not betrayal of the idea of critical thinking. It is rather the secured space of freedom where students can openly express their opinions and may freely involve themselves in politics or advocate for ideas. Moreover, the Polish university is currently redefining its identity, now covering many fields: it engages in building the welfare state, but also takes an ideological position towards its ends. The final pages of the history of student activism can be devoted to restructuring the university in the direction of innovation and growth of wealth. It should not be understood purely in terms of university management, but as a social project shaping state policy and the social goals of the new generation of students. Accessibility and links with the market cannot be avoided, although they may stand in contrast with accepted and traditional obligations and features of the university. This tension is expressed in the book *Transformacje uniwersytetu* [*Transformations of the university*] written by Marek Kwiek. In this sense, involvement is channeled in a different direction; once it was political, today it is focused on the economy and development: "The university is today very much perceived in terms of the economic competitiveness of nations and regions

as well as global pressure on national economies [...] it is arguably the first time in history when the functioning of universities is of such importance both for economy and large masses of graduates (also without precedence)” (Kwiek 2010, p. 183).

This redefinition of the mission of the university strongly influences student activism, which in a stable democracy with an emerging economy is no longer interested in involvement in public affairs, and is rather a tool for expressing student interests. Is it justified to call this situation an ideological crisis? To limit one’s interest in social affairs to the circulation of capital is surely a sign of spiritual and intellectual decay. But it may also be a sign that Polish democratic institutions are efficient enough, and it is not necessary to protest against them. A balance among the market, democracy, and development is difficult to sustain in the long term. Cuts in Italy and Great Britain that sparked student protests testify to this observation. However, a remark supplied by Marek Kwiek seems crucial here: it is impossible to view the university outside the competitive context, where competitiveness is understood not only in its economic, but also symbolic aspect. But that’s another story, taking us beyond the topic of student activism.

## VI

In conclusion, it may be of use to restate that the current, primarily European, protests create tension: states facing unyielding crisis find it increasingly difficult to meet egalitarian expectations related to access to wealth, or to promote a socially ingrained idea of the meritocratic “knowledge society”. Neoliberal changes and cuts affecting soft regions of social life (this includes universities) also contribute to this situation. Student activism is certainly an integral part of the democratic system, or, more specifically, of what Hanna Arendt called “civil disobedience”. Its significance in the Western world is undeniable. The question remains, however, to which extent the increasingly dark economic future of developed countries will prevent the materialisation of the protesters’ demands.

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Peter Mayo  
University of Malta

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GLOBALISATION, DEMOCRACY  
AND THE HE MARKET<sup>i</sup>

Higher Education (henceforth HE) is believed to play a key part in the process of globalisation. It is, as a result, being transformed, mainly within the context of the European Union which had set itself the ambitious and unlikely target of becoming the most powerful and competitive 'knowledge economy' in the world by the Year 2010 (EC, 2000). Nevertheless, "globalisation is not a single or universal phenomenon. It is nuanced according to locality (local area, nation, world region), language(s) of use, and academic cultures; and it plays out very differently according to the type of institution." (Marginson and Wende 2007, p.5). In this paper, I take a critical look at some key features of the contemporary discourse surrounding HE within the context of globalisation. I will do so with specific reference to the EU discourse in this area of educational provision and explore prospects for the relationship between HE and democracy. I argue that this discourse pushes state policies regarding HE in the direction of the emergence of a 'competition state.' (Jessop, 2002). According to Mulderrig (2008), drawing on Jessop (2002), the competition state was already conceived of in the 80s with, for instance, OECD documents "on the importance of structural competitiveness for government policy." (Mulderrig, 2008, p. 168). The competition state provides a "focus on securing the economic and extra-economic conditions for international competitiveness in a globalising KBE" (knowledge based economy) (Fairclough and Wodak, 2008, p. 112). The discursive contexts (*vide ibidem*) in which HE policies are formulated, such as the Lisbon Objectives (EC, 2000) and the Bologna Process<sup>ii</sup> (Confederation of EU Rectors Conferences and Association of

European Universities, 2000), provide both constraints and opportunities for actors, institutions, markets and states.

### **Globalisation and Higher Education**

Globalisation is conceived of as an all-embracing concept, incorporating both its economic and cultural dimensions, which are often inextricably intertwined, since, as Manuel Castells (1999) states, “we live in a global economy ...in which all processes work as a unit on real time throughout the planet; that is, an economy in which capital flows, labor markets, markets, the production process, management, information and technology operate simultaneously at the world level”. (p. 54).

The term ‘hegemonic globalisation,’ as used by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (de Sousa Santos, interviewed by Dale and Robertson, 2004, p. 150) best sums up the scenario currently being faced in the HE scene in most countries, while recognising that the notion of a ‘competition state’ provides grounds for a more nuanced perspective on the matter. De Sousa Santos (Dale and Robertson, *op. cit*) describes hegemonic globalisation as “the political form” of globalization resulting from US type of capitalism, a type that bases competitiveness on technological innovation coupled with low levels of social protection... The aggressive imposition of this model by the international financial institutions worldwide not only forces abrupt changes in the role of the state and in the rules of the game between the exploiter and the exploited...but also changes the rules of the game among the other kinds of developed capitalism” (p.151).

### **HE and Markets**

The intensification of globalisation, occurring through massive breakthroughs in information and communication technologies, has led to an opening of borders and a liberalisation of services. The fiercely contested General Agreement of Trade in Services (GATS), currently being debated in the context of the WTO, would, were its hitherto

disrupted negotiations to be finalised, have a bearing on all services within the context of education (*vide* de Siqueira, 2005; Hill et. al., 2005: 21-24; Verger and Bonal, 2006) and would include HE.<sup>iii</sup> Much of what would pass for HE, especially university commercial extension wings as well as private institutions that offer courses against payment governed by the market and therefore run on commercial lines, would be seen as a service and would therefore be subject to GATS.

Already without the GATS provision, public HE institutions in small scale countries like Malta, for instance, face stiff competition from foreign agencies operating in the field, many of which benefit from greater economies of scale. They even enter areas which have hitherto not been catered for by the local agencies. Open universities, especially those using the hegemonic English language,<sup>iv</sup> as well as recognised British universities, have been very visible internationally in this area. The tremendous revolution in information technology which has led to, and characterises, the intensification of globalisation has ushered in important multiple forms of HE delivery. Platforms are varied with impressive and effective forms of visual and auditory interaction. The global HE centre can reach learners anywhere and across time zones (*vide* Borg and Mayo, 2008).

The opening of borders and multiple regional markets has facilitated mobility of capital (fast-paced economic and financial exchange) and labour, though certainly not on a level playing field. This has led to the need for flexible workers and therefore the constant retooling of labour. Lifelong learning, initially promoted by UNESCO as Lifelong education, but subsequently carried forward more forcefully with regard to potential policy impact by the OECD (OECD, 1996, 2007) and the EU (CEC, 2000, 2001), has become an important concept within the global HE discourse, and certainly the EU discourse.

The need to have flexible workers places the emphasis on learning and skills upgrading being not time conditioned processes but ongoing

ones throughout life, given the rapidity with which changes in the labour market are said to take place. Martin Carnoy (1999) argues that globalisation has brought with it a perceived growth in demand for products with a high level of skill, thus underlining the importance of skills upgrade (*vide* Carnoy, 1999, p. 15). This has obvious implications for the HE sector with respect to graduate employability and its various extension and continuing education services (henceforth UCE).<sup>v</sup>

This forces countries to engage in spending on education for a more educated, flexible and mobile workforce, in order to attract and maintain investment as well as remain 'competitive' more generally in the global economy. There has been an expansion of HE. In countries not having the right infrastructure to cater for such an increase, including those which only recently established a public university, this could mean buying education services from outside. This occurrence is of great relevance to globalisation's impact on HE, especially with respect to established institutions where the 'concern for standards', and the workload of a limited, suitably-qualified academic staff, precludes them from offering degree courses in a variety of areas and through alternative routes (*vide* Borg and Mayo, 2008). The monopoly of one public institution, very much a characteristic of small EU member states such as Malta (*vide* Mayo, *et al*, 2008), is thus challenged. Challenging one institution's monopoly, through the creation of an HE market comprising public and private institutions (although the distinctions increasingly become blurred), is often encouraged by governments seeking to boost the country's graduate numbers to enable them to reach 'international levels' in accordance with the Lisbon agenda. Satisfying the Lisbon criteria is a priority in such countries (*vide* Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment, Malta, 2004, p.21). These private institutions, often acting as mediators for recognised foreign bodies, or, as in the case of Cyprus, being upgraded to the status of recognised universities, alleviate the government's burden of having to finance the increase in public HE. In the case of Cyprus, the private institutions enable the country to partake fully of a globalised international HE student market with their



focus on recruiting foreign, especially non-EU, students. Market driven HE is therefore seen to perform useful roles with respect to earning foreign exchange (*vide* Vossensteyn and Dobson, 1999) and enhancing graduate numbers.

### **Role of the State**

A major point to be analysed in the HE context is the role of the state. One of the greatest myths being bandied about in this contemporary Neoliberal scenario is that the nation state is no longer the main force in this period characterized by the intensification of globalization. Deregulation was brought in to expedite the process where various forms of provision, private and formerly public, were left to the market. And yet the 'credit crunch' starkly laid bare the folly of this conviction as new forms of regulation are being put in place with the state, we mean the national state, intervening to bail out banks and other institutions in this situation. As the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire put it so clearly years before the recent credit crunch (he died in 1997): "Fatalism is only understood by power and by the dominant classes when it interests them. If there is hunger, unemployment, lack of housing, health and schools, they proclaim that this is a universal trend and so be it! But when the stock market falls in a country far away and we have to tighten up our belts, or if a private national bank has internal problems due to the inability of its directors or owners, the State immediately intervenes to 'save them'. In this case, the 'natural', 'inexorable', is simply put aside" (Freire, in Nita Freire as interviewed in Borg and Mayo, 2007, p. 3)

The state and its agencies are nowadays said to work not alone but within a loose network of agencies – governance rather than government in what is presented as a 'heterarchy' of relations (*vide* Ball, 2010). Despite appearing *prima facie* to be heterarchical in what is presented as a network state (*vide* Carnoy and Castells, 2001), such relations under Capitalism can, in actual fact, be hierarchical and less democratic than

they might appear to be. This certainly applies to relations between state and NGOs or labour unions characterized by the ever-present threat of cooptation, often within a corporatist framework<sup>vi</sup> (*vide* Offe 1985 on this in terms of disorganized capitalism; Panich, 1976). Structured partnerships between state and business as well as between 'public' and 'private' tend to emphasize the link between the state and the imperatives of capital accumulation. For Antonio Gramsci, for instance, the agencies, constituting bourgeois civil society (*bürgerliche Gesellschaft*), buttressed the state. While Gramsci focused primarily on the ideological institutions in this network, one must also mention the point made by Nicos Poulantzas (1978) when underlining that the State also engages in economic activities which are not left totally in the hands of private industry. Poulantzas stated that, under monopoly capitalism, the difference between politics, ideology and the economy is not clear. It is blurred. The State enters directly into the sphere of production as a result of the crises of capitalist production itself (Carnoy, 1982, p. 97). One might argue that this point has relevance to the situation today. In the first place, industry often collaborates in policy formulation in tandem or in a loose network with the State just like NGOs or labour unions do. Nowhere is the role of the state as economic player more evident than in HE (*vide* Giroux and Searls Giroux, 2004), an area which, though traditionally vaunting relative autonomy as most education institutions do, constitutes an important domain of hegemonic struggle. The division between public and private in this sector is increasingly blurred. So-called 'public universities' are exhorted to provide services governed by the market and which have a strong commercial basis. Furthermore the state engages actively through direct and indirect means, and, in certain places, through a series of incentives or 'goal cushions' (*vide* Darmanin, 2008) to create an HE competitive market as part of the 'competition' state (*vide* Jessop, 2002). The State regulates these agencies, including HE agencies such as universities, by working in tandem with them or in a manner that supports their interests. It is certainly no neutral arbiter of different interests, even though it appears to be so, as it also engages in structured partnerships with

industry to secure the right basis for the accumulation of global capital. These structured partnerships often involve universities/other HE institutions and industry, as augured by the EU and its discourse on HE. One can argue that the state is propped up not only by the ideological institutions of what Gramsci calls 'civil society' but by industry itself (of which it is part), while it sustains both (propping both these 'civil society' institutions and industry) in a reciprocal manner to ensure the right conditions for the accumulation of capital. All this goes to show that the state, the nation state, is an active player and has not receded into the background within the context of hegemonic globalization. On the contrary, in its repressive, ideological and commercial forms, the state remains central to the neoliberal project and, as I have argued, plays a key role in regulating the market framework for HE as well as relationships and partnerships between HE institutions and the business community (EC, 2008).

### **What kind of university?**

In this scenario, what we are witnessing is a reconceptualisation of the university. Authors like Giroux (2008) and Giroux and Searls Giroux (2004) have forcefully argued that the idea of the university as a public good is being eroded in the public discourse. In a number of countries, not least the United States, we have been witnessing the emergence of the corporatised university. There are those who would argue that universities need to change in tune with the times. The old elitist ideals, or rather individualizing myths, of *bildung* and the Humboldtian academy, if ever they took root in universities throughout Europe, have been called into question. This could well be an exciting time for universities and the rest of the HE sector as new challenges are being faced and new frontiers explored. But for the time being the general staple is that of the forging of a closer nexus between productive science, ICT, research & development and business.

Divisions between technical or indeed polytechnical universities and 'other' universities are being drawn. In many universities and

institutions of higher learning, knowledge is packaged and modularized and its delivery is being constrained by the contours of 'corporate' as opposed to 'public time' (*vide* Giroux and Searls Giroux, 2004). A certain discourse of rationalization is creeping into the systems of certain countries, most notably those of Italy whose universities might well have exaggerated on the number of courses and specializations provided, leading the Berlusconi government (or rather the Education Minister, Gelmini) to embark on a cutting down exercise with regard to courses on offer. This would seem to undermine the concept of 'massification', until recently a feature of the Italian system (*vide* Todeschini, 1999, p. 190) as well as other systems. Funding for most of the arts is being considerably cut down (around an 80% cut) in UK universities where the focus of government spending will be science and technology; course fees will rise exponentially. Meanwhile, research universities which can count on endowments will continue to exist – the Oxfords and Cambridges of this world. However, we can well have a stratification in terms of research, teaching and regional universities. This having been said, not least by a former EU Commissioner for education and culture, let us not overlook a possible different 'take' on the Bologna process, the analyses of which have varied from content analyses to discourse analyses (*vide* Fairclough and Wodak, 2008). An imagined different 'take' is provided by Boaventura de Sousa Santos. For example, Santos imagines a scenario where the process "managed to strengthen the relationship between teaching and research, and, while rewarding excellence, it made sure that the community of university teachers would not be divided between two stratified segments: a small group of first class university citizens with abundant money, light teaching loads and other good conditions to carry out research, on the one hand, and, on the other, a large group of second class university citizens enslaved by long hours of teaching and tutoring with little access to research funds only because they were employed by the wrong universities or were interested in supposedly wrong topics."<sup>vii</sup> Santos goes on to mention seven other important 'positive' features in an imagined university learning and research community, including

the following: “the Bologna process ended up abandoning the once fashionable concept of human capital after concluding that the universities should form full human beings and full citizens and not just human capital subjected to market fluctuations like any other capital. This had a decisive impact on the curricula and on the evaluation of performances. Furthermore, he imagines a non neoliberal scenario where “the Bologna process managed to convince the European Union and the European states that they should be financially more generous with the public universities not because of corporatist pressures but rather because the investment in an excellent public university system is probably the best way of investing in the future of a Europe of ideas, the only way for Europe to remain truly European”.

Is this a mere pipe-dream? The foregoing might suggest that even Bologna and the kind of university it can develop can involve a process of contention, which would contradict the former Commissioner for Education and Culture, Viviane Reding’s dictum “Bologna cannot be implemented à la carte” (in Tomusk, 2004, p. 75). Voldemar Tomusk goes so far as to argue that there are conflicting agendas involved which could have led to Bologna’s dissolution (*vide ibidem* p. 93). Santos, for his part, presents us with two alternative visions of a university currently ‘at a crossroads’ and the excerpts just quoted form part of the second vision. He urges us to make sure it is the second vision, the more holistic one, rather than the narrowly oriented market driven one, which is realized. This highlights the role of agency within the emerging structures of university reform. All those who have the university at heart are called on to provide such an agency. Moreover de Sousa’s view can serve as guidelines for the various struggles for the democratization of university education taking place at different venues and sites, be it among students (the uprisings in Italy and England anticipated by the student movement protests in central Europe notably Vienna, Budapest and Prague), faculty, in parliament and via new technologies, those very same technologies that proved effective in the emergence of the pro-democracy pan-Arab youth movement (*vide* Giroux, 2011). Of

course, one can argue, as Gramsci indicated, that getting to the heart of political and economic power is conceivably harder in a Western context; there is a more complex 'civil society' (in the Gramscian sense) through which one must navigate, a far cry from the Egyptian state which lacked such a supporting structure. Yet academics, students and the population at large need to engage in a struggle for a reconceptualisation and renewal of HE as a vital public space within a democracy. Education is important not simply for employability, which in any case does not necessarily mean employment (Gelpi, 2002), but also for the development of a genuinely democratic public sphere. The humanities and social sciences need to be defended at all costs; they play a crucial role in this context. Also this struggle must be complemented by action on the part of social movements and workers' institutions to create alternative forms of provision in these areas. In a few cases, this would mean taking back many of the humanities and social sciences, as well as interdisciplinary studies (e.g. cultural studies), to their places of origin – adult education. This should however be a struggle on two fronts, the University campus and the community. One should not preclude the other. The community provision outside university should not serve as an alternative to university provision. On the contrary, in this age of draconic cutbacks in these areas, community provision would keep indicating the importance of the humanities and social sciences in the ongoing process of social development. Academics committed to a democratic HE should play their part in this struggle and type of alternative provision, just like scholars such as Raymond Williams, E. P Thompson, Aldo Capitini and countless others have done in the past. It is this provision which would serve as an antidote to the current discourse in university education, a discourse governed by policies having a strong neoliberal ring to them and which is less concerned about process and more concerned about outcomes that are limited to those that can be measured in quantitative and therefore positivist terms, what Lyotard called 'performativity.'

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## NOTES

i This paper incorporates material from the following: Borg and Mayo (2008); Mayo (2009); Mayo (2011).

ii "The series of steps coordinated by Ministers of Education to bring about harmonization of the structure of higher education cycles inside the European Union and other signatories to the process." (Jessop, 2008, p.3)

iii See the special issue of Globalisation, Societies and Education on GATS, Vol. 1 No. 3, November 2003.

iv See Macedo, Dendrinis and Gounari, (2003), on the importance of this language in a globalised context and Deem et al, 2008, for its

importance in the emergence of so-called 'word class institutions' according to international rankings.

v See the various contributions to Osborne and Thomas, 2003 regarding university continuing education (UCE) in Europe.

vi These organisations establish formal and informal links, parliamentary and extra-parliamentary, with key agents of the state in return for the advancement of their corporate interests. (see Held, 2006 p. 172).

vii Keynote address delivered at the meeting on the occasion of the "XXII Anniversary of the Magna Charta Universitatum, held at the University of Bologna, on September 16, 2010.

Part Three

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**LOCAL TRANSFORMATIONS  
- CASE STUDIES**



**Timo Aarrevaara**  
University of Helsinki

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**THE FINNISH UNIVERSITIES  
IN THE CONFLICTING DEMANDS  
OF AUTONOMY AND RELEVANCE**

Finland has acquired an excellent reputation in recent years as a country whose higher education produces high quality results and has a strong regional impact. Behind this Cinderella phenomenon there is the state's strong commitment to higher education as well as maintaining a comprehensive network. However, conditions are changing in terms of university autonomy, governance arrangements and financial management. This presentation deals with the changes that have followed the passing of a new Universities Act (558/2009).

Finland has implemented a broad reform of its higher education system, and as part of this reform, the university sector's role has changed substantially since the beginning of 2010. The background to this reform has been a long transition period during which universities have gradually ceased to be part of the state administration, and their autonomous status has been strengthened. In the early 1990s, universities began to emphasise performance management, which has been a prominent instrument for creating universities' autonomous status.

However, changes to the Finnish higher education system during the 2000s occurred very rapidly. Higher education policy objectives were on par with the implementation of change until the beginning of 2008 when the Ministry of Education published a structural development document which was an important background report on universities' financial autonomy and the administrative status of the reform. These

documents are also partly based on a 2005 Government Decision and the recommendations for the development of Finnish higher education system contained in the OECD Thematic Review of Tertiary Education on Finland (OECD 2006). The theme of this presentation is how the University Act (2009) has changed the university system and how the reform seems to have materialised in its early stages.

The reports mentioned above focused on the issues of procedural autonomy, to some extent neglecting the strengthening of universities' substantive autonomy. This focus on structural development has had an impact on the entire university sector, pushing it to implement the law vigorously, since the first phase of the university reform is focused specifically on procedural questions. These include the governance arrangements of university administration and decision-making, resource management and management of university buildings. All these are important things, but they have little direct impact on academic departments' performance.

### **The trend towards strengthening autonomy**

The Finnish higher education system is an interesting combination of strong institutions (universities and the polytechnics), with a strong controlling role being played by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The higher education system is also attached to a national innovation system with regional programmes, university funding and governmental policy programmes. The fact is that Finnish higher education is quite patchy and the number of municipalities and towns with academic units or departments is high. Finland currently has 16 universities and 25 polytechnics. This provides considerable capacity for a small country. The Parliamentary Education Committee has drawn attention to the fact that if the number of university departments were reduced by 60 per cent, the number of municipalities with higher education units would be reduced from 130 to about 50 units. However, this would affect only about 10 per cent of today's university students. Enlarging the size of academic units could mean that all higher education institutions



would be financially, administratively and academically stronger and able to provide access to higher quality education.

Achieving these objectives is likely to be somewhat cumbersome. The Finnish higher education system is characterised by multi-level governance, complex national decision-making and dispersed higher education policy interests. Attention has been drawn to this situation in several evaluations and national projections, which have presented many opportunities for higher education as part of the growing importance of the innovation system. Proposals for the innovation system are addressed first of all to the National Technology Agency (TEKES), the Academy of Finland, the Finnish National Fund for Research and Development, the Academy of Finland, and the university system, among others (*vide* Finnsight 2015, Policy report 2009, Georghiou et. al. 2003),

When looking at the universities' internal practices, the importance of the academic profession should be briefly mentioned. From the beginning of 2010, universities ceased to be part of the state administration. Academic positions were formerly treated as state civil service posts, but they are now employees with employment contracts, and state personnel policy is no longer valid. Therefore, according to the new Act, universities are now able to decide on wages and working conditions, which could add flexibility to career opportunities. In fact, in the early stages of university reform, universities as employers are continuing to deal with staff trade unions through a general collective bargaining body, but in time it is likely that the newly legislated freedom will lead to more diverse staffing practices.

The University Act (2009), which came into force in 2010, is not an isolated phenomenon in the Finnish university sector development. It is a part of the development of the higher education system in which Government has set four main goals. The Government's intention is to reduce the number of universities and polytechnics as a whole and for their profiles to become more focused on their areas of excellence. The aim is to aggregate academic units into larger and more effective

entities. In addition, the universities and polytechnics are required to create strategic alliances; the regional dimension of the Finnish higher education system means that these objectives are primarily regional in their character.

### **Changes of Governance**

The administration of universities is still prominently based on efforts to retain collegial decision-making in a way that is not typical for the rest of Finnish society. For Finnish universities it is typical that they have been communities formed by academic and other staff, and the role of external stakeholders has been marginal. Although external stakeholders must comprise at least 40 per cent of the members of university boards (the supreme university decision making body) under the new Act, the decision-making of academic departments continues to be based on the tripartite principle of professors, other staff and students jointly deciding on key issues in the representative bodies.

The Finnish university sector has been under the close scrutiny of the Ministry of Education and Culture for matters relating to both quality and goal effectiveness. The new University Act is designed to strengthen the universities' capacity to implement the accountability and transparency required by the Government and society. It can be said, however, that at least some universities are setting goals that are optimistic when compared with the resources available to them.

Universities are also subjected to many national and international trends, which since the 1990s have reflected the higher education reforms. Transparency, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence are European values which are also at the background of larger European higher education reforms. These values were built into the new Finnish Universities Act, which has strengthened the universities' financial and administrative autonomy and strengthened their role as they ceased to be treated as government accounting offices (*vide* Aarrevaara, Dobson & Elander 2010). Since the beginning of 2010, the

Finnish universities have become autonomous units either governed according to public law or according to legislation relating to foundations. Governance arrangements are different for these two models. Of the 16 universities, however, only two are being run by foundations.

All the universities under public law have a Collegium, which elects the board members, as their decision making body. The members of the Board represent the universities' interests regardless of whether they are elected from inside the university structure, or whether they represent external stakeholders. At least 40 per cent of the board members of universities under public law must be external, including the board chair. This is a big change from the situation under the previous law, and the rector's role has changed from being chair to being the official formally charged with preparing proposals for presentation to the Board. The university community has been suspicious of the introduction of external stakeholders, but the role of these stakeholders has had less impact than was originally expected. The rector used to be a member of the board, but under the new Act s/he is in effect the CEO, leading the operations of the university.

In universities under public law, the Collegium consists of members elected according to quotas of professors, teachers, researchers and other staff members, and students. There are no such quotas in membership of the boards of the universities run by foundations. The boards of foundation-based universities have to accept greater responsibility for ensuring that the university takes care of its financial and other responsibilities. Boards established under both of the university governance forms have a responsibility for their actions, including the responsibility for responding to the changing environment and appropriately developing their activities. In order to do so, universities are creating profiles that relate to their new focus areas or traditional competence areas.

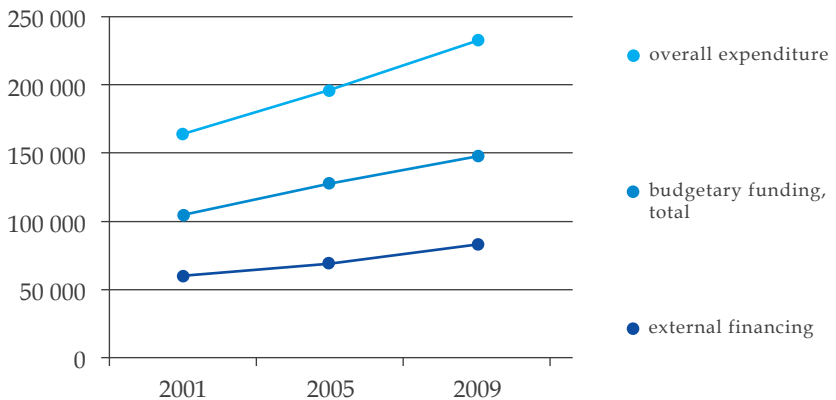
In Finnish society, especially when operations are supported by public funding, the demand for relevance to society is considerable.

This concerns universities to a certain extent, but not always as much as for the rest of society. Finland has built a national roadmap for the development of research infrastructure at the national level. This confirms the need for higher education institutions to strengthen their performance in terms of international competition, and for universities to devote resources to national-level research and in support of their focus areas. This allocation is reflected not only in research, but also in the content of educational programmes.

### Funding guarantees academic freedom?

So far, there has been quite a strong political will to develop the Finnish higher education system. This has been reflected in the consensus of decision-making in which universities are required to have social relevance and a strong grip on international networks, as well as increasing the ‘production’ of graduates. The Finnish universities have responded to these demands so far, and the higher resource allocation has been maintained at an internationally high level. For the universities, this policy has been quite agreeable, and overall expenditures of Finnish universities have increased throughout the 2000s, as can be seen in the illustration below.

### Budgetary funding and external financing of Finnish Universities in 2001, 2005 and 2009 (1000 Euro, source: KOTA database).



Even after the adoption of the University Act of 2009 the Finnish universities continue to be publicly funded institutions, with about two-thirds of their total funding (1.8 billion EUR) coming from state revenue. Nearly one-fifth of universities' funding comes from competition-based sources, which are mainly Finnish science organisations (Academy of Finland, TEKES and various Ministries among other public actors – with public funding covering almost 90 per cent of the totals) and funding from the European Union. Foreign financing is very limited. Finnish universities' role is relatively well protected by the government, although the extent of private funding is small. The universities also have their own assets and companies to maintain commercial businesses and manage their own funding arrangements.

**External financing by source. Annual accounts information of Finnish Universities in 2001, 2005 and 2009 (1000 EUR, source: KOTA database).**

Year	Academy of Finland	Tekes	Domestic companies	Other domestic	EU financing	Foreign companies	Other foreign financing	
2009	174748	105635	104709	316990	93604	14093	14987	824766
%	21,19	12,81	12,70	38,43	11,35	1,71	1,82	100%
2005	128012	86492	110628	269136	80331	8224	11357	694180
%	18,44	12,46	15,94	38,77	11,57	1,18	1,64	100%
2001	100310	91040	82715	258432	49129	9721	12476	603823
%	16,61	15,08	13,70	42,80	8,14	1,61	2,07	100%

Financial management and changes in the tools of government control are ways likely to lead to stronger profiling in terms of teaching, research, links with working life and regional development. They will

also lead to the establishment of strategic priorities for higher education institutions (MinEdu 2007, 33-36). Information management in general, and the development of quality assurance systems in particular, have increased the strength of profiling areas of the universities.

The challenge of the ongoing university reforms is for both of them to determine the quality of education. The burden of quality assurance issues is such that the responsibility to solve problems of quality lies primarily with the academic profession and university management. Their responsibilities include the amount and quality of research and relevance, teaching quality and transparency issues (*vide* Aarrevaara 2011).

It should also be emphasised that the potential influence of external stakeholders has increased relative to that of the top management of universities (University Act 558/2009, § 15 and § 24). This brings up the decision-making perspective, which is based on other than collegial decision-making arguments. External stakeholders can bring a renewed commitment to the objectives of the university, interaction with a performance environment and increased cooperation with actors outside the university. This new situation in decision-making has not easily gained the approval of the academic profession. In universities, the academic profession represents the continuity and the values, which seem to change slowly – at least much slower than procedural changes. As has occurred elsewhere with higher education reforms in some countries, opposition to reforms has been apparent.

### **Policy of relevance in Finnish higher education**

Academic freedom refers to the freedom to decide on the content of teaching and research. In the current Finnish context, for higher education institutions it also means the freedom to select people appropriate to this purpose if there is sufficient financial support (*vide* Arima 2003). For European universities, academic autonomy refers first of all to universities' ability to decide on their academic profiles,

their educational responsibilities, the introduction and termination of programmes, and the ability to select students (*vide* EUA 2010). However, the Government is influencing the universities to expand their operations in a manner that limits their ability to choose the way they perform their duties. The goal of the Ministry of Education and Culture is for 38.5 per cent of the 25–34 age group to have either a polytechnic or a university degree by 2015, and the target for 2020 is to be increased to 42 per cent.

For universities, freedom of research is the freedom to choose the subjects, theories, methods and channels of publication of research. The freedom of research is guaranteed in the Constitution as well as in the Universities Act (2009). Still, a wide range of threats can be identified, including political changes in Government. In the recent Finnish national election (13 April 2011), there were changes in political power relations, and these indicate a likely strengthening of the national perspective. Many voters rejected the international perspective and pro-European parties lost a considerable number of seats. The right-wing True Finns party increased its showing from five to nearly 20 per cent of the vote. Future years will show how strong the political climate change is and how it affects decision making on Finnish higher education policy.

Despite the rhetoric of autonomy, in principle it is possible that the exercise of government control over universities could increase. The University Act (§ 48) includes a possibility of a strong track record of ministry intervention in the target and performance negotiations, if the national university-targets cannot be nationally or sectorally coordinated in an adequate way. The Ministry of Education and Culture has allocated funding to safeguard the opportunity for it to decide on quantitative and qualitative performance targets for universities, thereby maintaining the Ministry's capacity to 'steer from a distance'.

By spring 2012, the Ministry of Education and Culture will carry out an evaluation of the implementation of the University Act (2009). It will examine in particular strategic management and personnel policy

issues. This assessment is a key input used for Ministerial reporting to Parliament on the implementation of the University Act. The evaluation will be of great importance, because in 2012 the Parliament is likely to decide whether it will revise the 2009 Act.

As the procedural autonomy of universities has increased in Finland, this has meant a reduction in state control. Universities have found a variety of practices that they use to support the key objectives. National requirements have increased the demand for relevance, and this trend seems likely to continue after 2010. Universities now require a strong grip of anticipation and reaction, in which they can direct their activities in skills and employment in their areas of expertise. Government policy (17.6.2008) is targeted at universities that can demonstrate a high level of international success, high quality and emphasis of performance on strategic development areas.

In Finland, the Swedish-speaking minority consists of about 5% of the population, and Swedish-speaking education covers all levels and fields of education. Relevant policy issues can also be formed to secure the status of higher education development in Swedish language-speaking units. One of the themes that might become a major theme in the national cross-border cooperation between universities is the development of legislation that would allow universities to offer international joint degree qualifications. The diversification of international joint degrees is already evident.

Academic departments in universities can so far demonstrate only a few functional changes in practice following the new Universities Act. Some of them relate to a redefinition of academic freedom. It seems that the most senior university researchers appreciate traditional teaching, research, and academic freedom in different ways than the younger generations. It seems that seniority reflects access to basic resources, primarily connected with operational safety. Younger generations cope with a more diversified financial structure, extensive networking and



a focus on applied research. These will bring resources – and also academic freedom, although with a different model of performance. In all groups, however, there are supporters of both the old and new form of performance.

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Dr. Andrea Abbas  
Teesside University, UK

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A NEW REVOLUTION  
IN HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY IN ENGLAND <sup>1</sup>?

**Introduction**

In this chapter I critically evaluate important changes to Higher Education policy<sup>2</sup>, which looks set to dramatically alter undergraduate provision in English universities<sup>3</sup>. Starting in the academic year 2012-2013 most of the teaching money to fund undergraduate courses will be loaned to students (6,850.58 EUR - 10,264.56 EUR<sup>4</sup> per academic year) who will pay this money in fees directly to universities (*vide* Willetts, 2010a). The government, whose policy is being led by David Willetts, Secretary of State for Universities and Science, hope that the new funding regime will eventually shift the balance of funding from a mostly publically funded system to one that is more dependent on student fees (*ibidem*). At the moment, students make a contribution (currently 3,756.88 EUR per year, also funded via government loans), and public money is used to fund the rest (through a block teaching grant from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)). In addition, new policies promise to make it easier for private companies and Further Education institutions (who currently provide pre-degree level and vocational education) to provide undergraduate courses (Willetts, *ibidem*). They assume these organisations will be cheaper than existing universities, will undercut them and stimulate market competitiveness. A whole host of associated changes, such as the further concentration of research funding into fewer universities, will also affect undergraduate provision.

The government claims this acceleration of marketisation will improve the quality of undergraduate teaching and will make the

current mass system of higher education more economically sustainable, efficient, profitable, business focused, globally competitive and vocationally relevant (*vide* Willetts, 2010a; 2010b; 2010c; 2011d). They also argue that concentrating research funding in elite institutions and in prestigious research centres will help it become more globally competitive and economically beneficial (*vide* Willetts, 2010c). Whilst at the moment it is unclear how much of the money loaned to students will be paid back to the state, and many say it will fail to reduce the amount of public money spent (*vide* Thompson and Bekhradnia, 2010), the changes will nevertheless produce systemic alterations in that student-consumers' choices will shape what undergraduate degrees are provided (*vide* Collini, 2010; Willetts, 2010c). The overall strategy combines: providing students with key information about employment; charging students higher costs; and encouraging universities to write and fund degrees in partnership with private companies. This is designed to encourage students to base their choices on employability. If this comes to fruition it represents a rapid furthering of an already partially marketised (*vide* Delanty, 2003; McLean, 2006; Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004) and vocationalised (*vide* Symes, 2000) system: "England has just embarked on a radical experiment by moving decisively towards a market system of higher education - a far more radical experiment than embarked on by any other advanced society (including the US). Scotland and Wales, wisely, have opted out. It is a leap in the dark" (Scott, *Times Higher*, 2010).

As this quotation suggests, the initial policies appear radical, but whether they constitute a policy revolution is a more complex question. On the one hand the new policy initiatives can be seen as merely accelerating an existing but comparatively slow moving neo-liberal agenda to marketise and privatise English Higher Education (*vide* Ainley, 2004; Canaan and Shumar, 2008). On the other hand, the speed with which this is about to proceed is likely to produce a qualitative transformation of the higher education system (*vide* Collini, 2010).

In this chapter I argue that the Conservative-Liberal Democrat Coalition government has rushed through a programme of financial cuts to the public sector in an attempt to substantially further a neo-liberal agenda. They are attempting this early in their office by representing the economic deficit as a particular kind of crisis (*vide* Clarke and Newman, 2010; Klein, 2007<sup>5</sup>) and convincing the public that drastic cuts to the public sector are the only solution to this crisis. I suggest that Marx's term *aufhebung*, which refers to a significant transformation which is emergent from a process that preserves some elements of an existing system and abolishes other elements (*vide* Giddens, 1979), describes the process of change from a partially marketised to a more fully marketised system that is being attempted. I suggest that contrary to Willet's (2011d) claims, space is not being provided for a proper public debate. This requires the 'communicative competence' (*vide* Habermas, 1984; 1987) on the part of those who manage, participate and work in higher education, which has been compromised by the threat of drastic changes to the sector and their lives. I also propose that current levels of marketisation influence responses to the changes and that the existing research on the value of universities and their pedagogies and should be drawn upon (*vide* Bernstein, 2000; Delanty, 2001; McLean, 2006) and should inform debate prior to the publication of the White Paper on Higher Education in June 2011. Finally I will use one small example of some of the inequality issues raised by the changes to demonstrate the complexity of the issues being avoided.

## Context

The broader context of the proposed changes to undergraduate education helps to explain the acceptance of the eighty per cent cut to the teaching budget announced in the autumn following the Coalition Government's election in May 2010. The previous New Labour Government were already proposing cuts of around twenty per cent, but within days of coming to power, the new Government began to establish a broad acceptance that the previous government had overspent drastically and the UK had a 'financial crisis' which could only

be addressed by massive cuts to whole of the public sector. Neo-liberal reforms would cut spending on all publicly funded services and encourage private companies and voluntary organisations to provide them for profit or for free (*vide* Ainley, 2004; Canaan and Shumar, 2008). There is significant opposition to these changes by a whole host of different interest groups, for example, students have protested about university fees (*vide* Springer, 2010); there are numerous petitions circulating the internet and being sent to MP's by different campaigning groups and relating to different cuts (*vide* NHS 38 Degrees Petition, 2011 ); there are large union-led protests against cuts to the public sector (*vide* *Guardian*, 2011); and there are newly formed campaigning groups (e.g. The Campaign for the Public University and The Campaign for Social Sciences). There have been successes in stopping or slowing changes, for example, the proposal to privatise forests has been put on hold following significant dissent and the changes to the National Health Service are being delayed for two months with a view to revising some of the proposals.

In this tumultuous context the range of issues the public are confronted with are manifold and complex and as Klein (2007) suggests, this is inevitably emotionally traumatic: many public sector workers will lose their jobs; most people will be financially poorer; some people will lose their homes; public services will be cut; and welfare benefits will be reduced. Successful resistance to such big scale changes is difficult because the cuts to funding across the public sector are a fait accompli and the underlying move towards further neo-liberalisation does not seem to be negotiable. In the stall to the health services changes government ministers have stated that the further involvement of private companies is not negotiable, as this will strengthen the service (*vide* Lansley, 2011). In addition any broad resistance, such as the Trade Union Congress (TUC) demonstration on the 26<sup>th</sup> March, is countered with the now accepted “fact” of the financial crisis and the need to cut the public sector. The government is working very hard to maintain this position. For example, protesters were called “deficit deniers” by

government commentators, suggesting that protesters' often well-argued claims about the government's way of tackling the deficit are akin to denying the holocaust<sup>6</sup>.

### **Complexity, Communicative Competence and Public Debate.**

At a recent conference on The Future of Higher Education, David Willets (2011d) claimed that he was contributing to an ongoing public debate about the future of universities in England. The audience, who mostly worked in universities, asked very few questions and none challenged the overall direction of the changes. Formal research interviews<sup>7</sup> and informal conversations with colleagues in different universities suggest that when university officials represent these changes to staff in formal university settings, they are told that their own institutions will survive these changes and there seems to be remarkably little dissent. Colleagues describe themselves as waiting to see what will happen. This contrasts with the debate in the media, particularly in the education press, like the *Times Higher* and *Education Guardian*. However, media debates cannot be relied upon to be inclusive or to fairly represent issues (*vide* Pilger, 2004) and higher education staff of all levels, as well as students and future students, need to be more included.

University staff and students are vociferous when specific issues arise (e.g. Keele University's philosophy department was threatened, *vide* Public Reason, 2011), or when fees were being voted on. University staff unions have protested but the most serious action of striking focuses on pay and conditions, for example the threatened cuts to pensions (University and College Union, 2011). Groups such as the Campaign for the Public University and The Campaign for Social Sciences are making valuable contributions to the debate. However, universities and their staff are not reflecting on what the changes mean for curricula and their students in the long term. Meetings held by these pressure groups and the unions asking staff to engage in more substantial deliberation have been poorly attended<sup>8</sup>. The significant changes that are being proposed to universities requires detailed analysis and debate with staff who

have expertise, identities, practices, morals and values that are at stake (*vide* Henkel, 2005). The complex issues underlying the current changes need to be discussed in public spaces within universities where staff and students feel they can legitimately raise their anxieties. Habermas’s (1984) notion of *communicative competence* suggests that dialogue which “makes meaning” and enables participants in to “reach understandings with others about these meanings” and which could inform resistance and positive change is undermined when people’s “practices, customs and ideas” (lifeworlds) are under threat (*vide* Abbas and McLean, 2003, p.71). When lifeworlds become colonised by power, as is the case at the moment with the threat of such widespread change, communication becomes distorted and people resort to strategic action (*ibid*) and engage in inauthentic debate that does not constitute real communication. These changes further the difficulties with communication that have already arisen under a partially marketised system (*ibidem*).

The multifaceted issues underlying decisions about how to fund and organise universities are difficult to grasp in their totality. As McLean (2006) suggests, there are complex “ideas” about the nature and purpose of pedagogic practices in universities. These include ideas influenced by the Enlightenment university, for example “the autonomous pursuit of knowledge and truth” (*ibidem*, p.38), that can be linked to current notions of student progression from dependent to autonomous learners in undergraduate degrees. “The connection of science and progress” and “the critical and emancipatory power of knowledge and reason” (*ibidem*, p.38) are embodied in undergraduate degree programmes that encourage students to think critically about the connection between knowledge, human progress and society (*vide* Ashwin *et al* 2011; Brennan *et al*, 2010). Other ideas have their roots in the modern university, for example the notions of “equality, citizenship, and democracy” (McLean, 2006 p.38) embedded in knowledges communicated through university curricula (*vide* Ashwin *et al*, 2011) and in institutional values and expectations. A host of ideas from previous eras currently intertwine with those stimulated by marketisation.



For example, the marketised notion that universities should produce highly skilled workforces (rather than just higher professions such as medical doctors and lawyers) for the knowledge economy combines with an understanding of the importance of disciplinary knowledge in degrees such as Crime Scene Science which draw upon academic disciplines and practitioners' knowledge (*vide* Bernstein, 2000).

The current balance between different guiding values is not ideal and universities experience both positive and negative effects (*vide* Delanty, 2001; McLean, 2008); but changes should not be rushed through without full consideration of the worth of these different ideas and values. If change is conceptualised drawing upon the term 'aufhebung' as a model for conscious change, it becomes clearer that there needs to be detailed understanding of what values and ideals currently underpin universities' practices, which of these should be abolished, which should be preserved or further encouraged and what new ones need to be developed. To do this requires a clear plan for what universities should be doing. The consequences of systemic changes cannot be totally predicted, but using existing research and the knowledge of relevant actors is critical.

The British government's focus seems to be on creating a market system that only England is forced to subscribe to. Writers like Klein (2007), Giroux (2001), Ainley (2004) and Canaan and Shumar (2008) would expect the furthering of marketisation to be the priority because they would claim that the goal of the government is to further global capitalism and to pursue the interests of political and economic elites, rather than to understand and produce the best possible national higher education system. Klein (2007) and Giroux's (2001) work would suggest that these initial changes will ultimately produce economic and associated benefits for political elites and/or their business associates. Whilst this latter claim cannot be validated until details of ownership of any private universities (or related industries) that are set up become clear, the initial claims appear to be supported by the fact that

system-wide change is taking priority over debate. The government may respond verbally to specific criticisms, for example regarding their apparent devaluing of social sciences and the arts (*vide* Willetts, 2011c), and Willetts (2011d) does emphasise how he is using research to develop policy, but research that challenges the move towards marketisation is not discussed. There is no debate on whether universities will be able to consider the importance of the social and political value of knowledge when they will be forced to focus on creating and conceptualising degrees as profitable products that engage with the needs of business. However, existing research suggests that if business and employability dominate, this undermines undergraduate education and destroys the valuable discipline-driven element of university curricula. Giroux (2001) suggests that this focus on training graduates has been detrimental to all non-science undergraduate degrees in the United States and that it has decimated the social sciences and humanities in universities.

There is important research challenging the appropriateness of consumer models being applied to higher education (*vide* Foskett and Helmsley-Brown, 2001; Hayes and Wynward (eds) 2003; Hill, 1995; Naidoo, 2004). Decisions to do a degree in a particular subject or to attend a particular university are driven by a range of complex factors; education is an atypical service; and there is insufficient research to guide government policy (*vide* Hemsley-Brown J.V. and Oplatka, 2006). Other research suggests that private providers of higher education have extremely high drop-out rates, poor completion rates, and that private education is of inferior quality (*vide* Romero and Del Rey, 2004). In some countries private education is mainly used by the most disadvantaged students (*ibid*). Research that focuses on what is known about markets and marketised systems is not being used to inform systemic change. The UK has been moving towards marketisation since the nineteen eighties and higher education researchers have been extensively analysing the impact of increasing marketisation of the English system (*vide* Delanty, 2001; Morely, Slaughter and Rhoades, 2004), and this research should be informing the debate.

## Issues and Inequalities

The new policies have diverse implications for various sectors of society as well as the hierarchically organised subsections of the university system. Individual institutions, diverse disciplines, staff groups, individual staff and students will experience different consequences. Here I can only demonstrate and re-emphasise the magnitude of the myriad of issues that are raised by systemic changes of this nature by focusing on some of the issues of inequality which arise.

The unique ramifications of marketisation are influenced by the existing system and its history. For example, despite the long slow move towards a mass system of Higher Education, which started with the Robbins Report (1963) and continued with the establishment of a singular university system in 1992 (combining the pre-existing Universities (research focused institutions) with new universities which were formerly Polytechnics (technical institutions)), nevertheless the values of elitism have prevailed. The former polytechnics have been very significant in enabling students from disadvantaged backgrounds to go to university, but they still have a reputation for providing a poorer education (*vide* Abbas and McLean, 2010). Current research is challenging the validity of these claims (*vide* Brennan *et al* 2010; Ashwin *et al*, 2011, forthcoming) but regardless of the actual quality, reputations of universities are significant and have implications for students who have degrees that are perceived as inferior. There is already some evidence that these reputational hierarchies are being cemented by the prices that universities are proposing for their degrees. So far twenty-two (of over a hundred) universities have proposed costs. All of the elite universities (eighteen at the time of writing)<sup>9</sup> have declared fees at the maximum allowed (10,264.56 EUR per year) for all of their degrees. Only one of the newer former polytechnic universities has done this (although only five of these have officially declared fees at the time of writing). A clear costing difference is likely to have further impact on more disadvantaged students, with degrees that are transparently less valued. In addition, as Brown (2010) suggests, those universities

charging less will have less money to invest in their institutions. So even if the newer post-1992 universities are producing excellent education at the moment, lower investment in the future is likely to differentiate provision and compound existing inequalities in the long run.

The government claims that its policies will continue to widen access, increase fair access, and will stimulate social mobility (*vide* Willetts, 2011a, 2011b). Some poorer students will receive an increased maintenance grant to help with living costs, which they do not have to pay back. Also a Scholarship Fund will be administered through universities (which the government wishes to compel to participate in this scheme by making those universities charging over 6850.58 EUR per year commit to increase fair access in exchange for the right to do this). This strategy, which targets elite institutions, will not help most people from disadvantaged backgrounds who attend universities because it has fundamental flaws. First, most elite universities currently have an appalling record for social inclusion despite existing scholarship and bursary schemes (Atwood, 2010). Secondly, the legal framework to enforce elite universities to meet targets set by the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) has been found not to exist (and there are issues about the freedom of universities). Thirdly, the policy itself draws upon the Browne Report (2011) which disregarded evidence that students will be unwilling to pay fees over 6850.58 EUR (*vide* Morgan, 2011). Fourthly, it does not take the complexity and strength of the current class system and the entrenched nature of other inequalities sufficiently into account.

There is a system wide problem with social mobility in an unequal society because, without an ever-expanding top sector of society, upward social mobility needs to be accompanied by downward social mobility. There are no efforts to foster downward social mobility. So whilst government does recognise that there needs to be changes throughout the education system (from pre-school through primary and secondary school), if people from poorer backgrounds are to do better there needs to be more room at the top and in the middle of social

hierarchies. However, the government appears to be trying to create more specialisation and inequality through marketisation and its focus on elite institutions, while the negative effects its policies are likely to have on other universities seems to indicate that it is unwilling to tackle the problem holistically through addressing inequality. Social justice would be more likely to be achieved if efforts were put into making the whole system more equally supported, financed and valued.

### **Concluding Comments**

In a context where there is a raft of changes to higher education policy in England, this short chapter has focused on the changes to the way that undergraduate degrees are funded in universities in England because it is these that look set to transform the system in fundamental ways. I have argued that the new policies are not revolutionary but involve a process of 'aufhebung' and that the transformation which is about to occur will retain certain features of the existing partially marketised system, as well as those of the enlightenment and modern universities that preceded them. However, I have also suggested that these policies are likely to lead to negative and radical change and that rushing through policies that are threatening to universities, staff and students is compromising communicative competence and hindering debate that otherwise could create informed change and ensure that the most desirable elements of the current system are kept and those that are less desirable are let go. I have demonstrated that substantial time and effort is needed for reflection because the issues are so complex.

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## ENDNOTES

- 1 This paper is restricted to England because Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales who have some degree of independence from the UK government have decided not to implement the same changes.
- 2 This chapter is informed by discussions with many colleagues especially Monica McLean.
- 3 It is important to note that these changes are in process and that many of the details will be unformulated until after the release of the Higher Education White Paper in June 2011. .
- 4 Currency conversions were correct on the 7<sup>th</sup> April 2011.
- 5 I thank Kevin Price for drawing my attention to the relevance of Klein's work.
- 6 These claims were made on the BBC news channel on the day of the protest which was reputed to have attracted between 250,000 and 500,000 protesters.
- 7 These interviews were carried out as part of a three year ESRC research project (grant no. ES/G00689X/1).
- 8 This statement is based upon my own and others attendance at demonstrations, union organised events and events organised by campaigning groups.
- 9 This includes the Russell Group (larger pre-1992 research focused universities) and those belonging to the 1994 Group (smaller pre-1992 research focused universities).



Gaële Goastellec <sup>1</sup>

University of Lausanne, Switzerland

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**TOWARDS AN ECONOMY OF ACCESS:  
CHANGES IN FUNDING EQUALITY OF OPPORTUNITIES,  
CHANGES IN INDIVIDUAL  
AND INSTITUTIONAL FREEDOM? <sup>2</sup>**

Freedom of access to higher education is largely intertwined with financial dimensions, the ability to support higher education costs being a determining dimension for potential students, along with the national ability to fund higher education institutions to provide opportunities to a broad range of individuals. The diversification of funding sources as well as the introduction by public authorities of a contract-based funding principle is an illustration of higher education economy reorganisation around the efficiency principle. Simultaneously, the problematic of equity in access diffuses to a broader range of higher education systems and institutions, with, in perspective, the idea that higher education must provide individuals with equality of opportunities in access to institutions and degrees (*vide* Goastellec, 2006a). How are the problematics of efficiency and equality of opportunities being articulated within national funding policies? What do they reveal about the reorganization of higher education systems and their governing models?

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1 Gaële.Goastellec@unil.ch

2 A first version of this paper was presented at the 2007 Resup Conference held in Science-Po Paris.

By means of a collective study<sup>3</sup> dealing with national policies of access and equity in eight contrasted countries (Ethiopia, France, Ireland, Israel, South Africa, the United Kingdom, the United States and Vietnam), fieldworks in South African and American institutions (interviews and participating observation), as well as a review of scientific literature, this chapter analyses funding policies in relation to equality of opportunities policies.

The first part of this paper identifies international dynamics that are conducive to putting the question of students' funding and the affirmation of the cost-sharing rationale on the political agenda.

The second part is aimed at discussing how the cost-sharing rationale is differentially implemented in contrasted higher education systems, by comparing some funding dimensions of seven higher education systems. Two dimensions are specifically explored. They stem from the dichotomous link between efficiency and equality: on one hand, the international diffusion of a more interrogative approach to tuition fees (whether characterised by the abandonment of fees, such as in the Irish case, or by the introduction of tuition fees, such as in the Ethiopian or Vietnamese case) is aimed at solving the ambiguity between the fact that higher education is considered a public good, and degrees are considered vectors of private resources, providing individuals with financial retributions (*vide* Stiglitz, 1999). On the other hand, following the international diffusion of the problematic of economy of access, the national policies of tuition fees – as well as their counterparts, fellowships and loans – always represent a specific understanding of equality, and depend upon a national organisation and history of higher education systems. Finally, recent trends in funding reveal an enlargement of

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3 This research took place within the Fulbright new century program 2005-2006. It was carried out by the Access and Equity working group, which includes Patrick Clancy, Heather Eggins, Sara Guri-Rosenblit, Phuong-Nga N'guyen, Teshome Yizengaw and myself. Although this paper draws upon individual national cases studies, the analysis developed here lies under the author's sole responsibility.

the cost-sharing argumentation: public authorities tend to make higher education institutions accountable for the realisation of equity.

Besides the international trends identified, every national situation remains singular. The concluding part then attempts to explain the diversity of cost-sharing implementation by looking at higher education configuration, path dependency, and national ideologies. The higher education funding reform is also a reform of their management (*vide* Johnstone, 2002) and higher education institutions increasingly account for equality of access. More broadly speaking, this communication is an attempt to framework the analyses of changes in the funding of equity in the broader perspective of an economy of inequalities (*vide* Piketty, 1997; Sen, 1999).

## **1. Tuition fees on political agendas: an international trend**

### **1.1. Changes in higher education call for an increase in funding**

The international questioning on how to fund students is the consequence of several international dynamics. Amongst these dynamics is the enlargement of the student body: worldwide, the number of students nearly quadrupled between 1970 and 2000 (*vide* Gradstein and Nikitin, 2004), reaching 100 million. Whether it reflects a political choice to increase access to higher education or a mechanical increase linked to a demographic dynamic (*vide* Goastellec, 2006b), national student bodies have been enlarged while national resources remain limited. Governmental funding has usually not followed up this increase according to a path that maintains the level of funding per student. The economic context, characterized in the 70's by a reduction of public expenses (*vide* Gomez, Sosteric, 1999) and new governmental priorities regarding the use of available resources within the education sector, is increasing the fiscal pressure on higher education.

Another ongoing dynamic that makes student funding a sensitive issue concerns the enhanced international competition. National

and international rankings – which compare the result of higher education institutions regarding a broad range of indicators – intensify the pressure on universities to expand their resources in order to compete. Amongst the world top twenty universities identified by the Shanghai Ranking (2005), seventeen are American. And America spends more than twice as much as the OECD average per student. Although financial resources are not the only argument employed to explicate the ranking (bias in the indicators used are also emphasised), funding remains determinant. Thus, one argument explains rankings relative to the national level of resources invested.

Indeed, the *quality dimension* is also linked to funding. An institution's ability to take students to graduation and have them reach a certain level of competence depends on the resources at its disposal. Quality agencies, at the national (such as the QAA in the UK, AQF in Australia...) and neo-regional level (the ENQA in Europe), setting norms and measuring results, have to do with this dynamic aimed at putting quality under scrutiny. In the same vein, the American Council on Education has published documents aimed at diffusing worldwide good practices for quality in higher education in 2004 and 2006 (*vide ACE, 2006*). Increasingly, quality matters. And quality cannot be dissociated from the level and uses of funding.

The scarcity of governmental resources and the increased financial needs of institutions and higher education systems call for resources diversification.

### **1.2. Increase in funding and diversification: the cost-sharing argumentation**

This general context of *scarcity of resources* is the first argument advocating cost sharing. And as observed by B. Johnstone (2006), it is also the “most politically and ideologically neutral”. Indeed, a general debate lying behind the cost-sharing argument has to do with the long lasting ambiguity of higher education, whether it is regarded



as a public or a private good. Historically, education has been set up as a public good, at least in its finalities: access to education should be non-excludable and non-rivalrous; this is what legitimates public funding. Moreover, the rationale for higher education public funding is provided by measurement of the impact of graduates on national economic productivity. Fitzgerald and Delaney (in Heller, 2002) recall research showing that “eliminating income-related gaps in (access to) post-secondary education would add hundreds of billions of dollars to national income annually”. This argument of a social return provided by national investment in human capital, is mobilized by international bodies such as the OECD and UNESCO (*vide* UNESCO, OECD, 2002).

At the same time, higher education degrees provide individuals with private returns. Some researchers conclude that not only are private returns increasing, but that they are also higher than social returns (*vide* Psacharopoulos, Patrinos, 2004). Indeed, degrees are the key to social mobility: the correlation between educational level and individual incomes reveals that in most countries, higher education graduates earn significantly more than their high school counterparts do. In Hungary, as well as in Indonesia, Portugal and the United States, this difference can reach 80% (*vide* OCDE & UNESCO, 2002, OCDE, 2004).

As a result, other more politically sensitive arguments are gaining weight. They stem from the work of social scientists that underline the fact that those who benefit the most from Higher Education mainly come from the wealthiest families. Regarding this argument, having all taxpayers financing higher education is considered non-equitable. Indeed, whenever higher education systems are elitist, massified or universal (*vide* Trow, 1974), the most valuable and costly degrees are trusted by high-income families’ offspring: in massified higher education systems, such as the French one, social specialization of the different tracks creates “segregated democratization” (Duru-Bellat, 2005). When a large proportion of one age group enters higher education, degrees become positional goods, engendering diploma races

between students and social groups. Higher education is thus considered as an impure public good: the access to higher education and/or to specific degrees is characterised by some rivalrous consumption and excludability. Accordingly, the *equity* goal – which is becoming more of an international norm in the organisation of access to higher education (*vide* Goastellec, 2006a), and was once sustained by the principle of public funding of higher education – is now becoming a strong rationale for cost sharing.

Another impetus in favour of cost-sharing is the efficiency calculation, which relates the costs to the results obtained. How much is invested for which results (especially in terms of length of studies, graduation rates, and access to the marketplace)? Several dimensions are part of the efficiency issue. First, the uses that students make of higher education: in this perspective, having students and their families pay for higher education can also be perceived as a way to avoid free riders (*vide* Stieglitz, 1999). The second and related dimension is reported by B. Johnstone (2006, p.xvii): “having to pay at least a part of the costs of the higher education should make both parents and students more discerning consumers”. As a result, higher education institutions and public authorities are required to be more transparent both in terms of the students’ results and regarding the way they use their financial resources. This motivation is also becoming an argument for the public authorities to make institutions more accountable: “The public has a right to know what it is getting for its expenditure of tax resources. (...) They have a right to know that their resources are being wisely invested and committed” (National governors association, 1991). Efficiency is thus a two-sided process: on one hand, it deals with the uses that students and their families make of higher education. Yet, on the other hand, it focuses on the way higher education institutions handle students’ careers (retention rates and graduation rates, in addition to time to graduation) as well as their integration in the marketplace. An illustration of the former dimension is given by the requirements of the French delegate minister for higher education in universities to provide

more information for the students and their families on a national website. The required information includes the details of the curricula, their graduation rate, and the graduates' access to the marketplace. In order to convince universities to provide this information, the minister foresees putting them under pressure by using the four-year contract-based funding system that defines their relation with the State as incentives (*vide* Le Monde, 18/05/2006).

Three rationales – efficiency, accountability and equity – are thus mobilised as incentives for cost-sharing. This is underlined by the World Declaration on higher education for the 21st Century (1998, art.14): “The diversification of funding sources reflects the support that society provides to higher education and must be further strengthened to ensure the development of higher education, increase its efficiency and maintain its quality and relevance...” Indeed, public authorities increasingly rely on studies measuring educational returns in order to guide their funding reforms (*vide* Psacharopoulos, Patrinos, 2004).

## **2. Cost-Sharing implementation: global trends and local variations**

The cost-sharing problematic probably finds its roots in the American higher education sector. Dominated by private higher education institutions, the American higher education system adopted tuition fees long ago. Initially implemented in private institutions, their use has progressively spread, until some major public institutions, which were tuition free until the 80's (California Community Colleges, City College of New York), finally implemented tuition fees (*vide* Heller, 2001, p.2). The diffusion of cost-sharing within this sector has not only affected the number of institutions involved in this process, but also the level of burden borne by students and their families. Between 1971 and 1997, average tuition fees have increased by 751% for community colleges and 763% for four-year colleges (Heller, *op.cit.* p.13). As a result, cost-sharing characterizes the organisation of American higher education funding. It is thus not by chance that the concept of cost-sharing

was invented in the middle of the 80's by an American economist researcher (*vide* Johnstone, 1986).

Although the cost-sharing rationale is spreading worldwide (*vide idem*, 2006) – characterized during the last decade by the implementation or reinforcement of tuition fees – there is no consistency within this process, either between countries, or within the same country. Different policies are implemented in different countries: and, within a country, funding policies do not necessarily follow a linear path. For example, tuition fees were first abandoned in 1974 by Australia, one of its pioneers, before a new form of cost-sharing was implemented in the 90's in which students are obligated to pay back afterwards on an income contingency (*vide* Chapman, 1997).

## **2.1. Tuition fees here and there**

In our sample of countries, which is characterized by very diverse higher education systems regarding their level of massification, structure, and organisation, three main situations coexist regarding the uses of tuition fees.

### **2.1.1. The abandon of tuition fees**

The first case concerns countries where tuition fees have been abandoned. This situation appears to be an exception: in only one case (Ireland), whereas third level institutions traditionally charged tuition fees, this approach was abandoned in 1995. This populist decision was partly justified on the basis that it would “remove important financial and psychological barriers to the participation at third level” (White Paper, 1995, p.101). Indeed, this decision, which ran counter to the international trend, is at the congruence of four main factors. Firstly, during the previous years, the parents of college students were entitled to raise tax allowances that served to counterbalance fees. Tax relief being indexed on income, it favoured families with the highest revenues. Secondly, the abandonment of fees took place in a context of economic

growth (the Celtic Tiger), which was also characterized by negotiations between the State, employers, and trade unions. This social partnership framework included the goal of widening participation in higher education. Indeed, access to higher education increased from 20% in one age group during 1980 to 50% in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Thirdly, in 1995, free tuitions were already in use at the Regional Technical Colleges. In order to promote access for students from low-income families to more prestigious institutions, and thus to level the playing field between the different higher education sectors, the extension of free tuition to universities was perceived as a logical continuum (*vide* Carroll P., 2006). Fourthly, simultaneous changes in the political context probably also affected this decision. Indeed, some important modifications happened at the national governmental level. This decision occurred at the junction of two original government coalitions: the 23<sup>rd</sup> government of Ireland (1993-1994), formed by the first ever alliance of Fianna Fáil (the dominant Republican Party) and the Labour Party, and the 24<sup>th</sup> government (December 94 - June 97), which came to power after a number of scandals in 1994, with the so-called “Rainbow Coalition” – the alliance of the Labour Party, the Democratic Left (a socialist party) and Fine Gael (a Christian Democrat Party) – without going through an election process. The new political association, as well as its probable lack of democratic legitimacy, must have played a role in the abandonment of tuition fees.

Nowadays, tuition fees are off the Irish political agenda. But how did they impact equity in access to higher education? Although a decade is a short period to evaluate the results of such a policy, a few analyses pointed out that they do not appear to have positively influenced access for students from low-income families. The OCDE (2004) was amongst the observers that came to this conclusion, and advocated the reversal of the tuition fee policy. This recommendation took place after the government’s failure to re-implement tuition fees in 2003. Another evaluation (Clancy, 2001), measuring in a comparative perspective changing inequalities in access to higher education by social

groups, also points out that the odds ratio between highest and lowest socio-economic groups increased between 1992 and 1998 from 3.2 to 3.5, while it had decreased previously (from 6.1 in 1986 to 3.2 in 1992). Of course, access to higher education does not depend only on higher education funding policies, but on the whole economic context. However, a recent study (*vide* Eurostudents, 2005) points out that the Irish higher education system is amongst those with the lowest level of inequalities.

The abandonment of tuition fees had other effects. It impacted university financial autonomy by requiring an annual negotiation with the State's Higher Education authority (HEA) in order to define the amount of public funding replacing traditional fees. With the increased number of students, it is not a surprise that the Conference Head of Irish Universities (CHIU) announced a drop in the funding per student of 1240€ between 1995 and 2001 (*vide* Carroll P., 2006). Regarding institutions, the end of tuition fees thus had a negative impact on their degree of autonomy, while it provided public authority with more responsibility and power.

### **2.1.2. National status quo prohibiting tuition fees with institutional attempt to increase specific student fees**

In the second case, tuition fees have been banned, and status quo characterises this facet of the higher education sector. This situation applies specifically to the French education system. In this context no tuition fees ever existed, and low ear-marked fees (mainly registration fees) are increasing slightly. Nevertheless, some universities require their students to pay other kinds of fees that are supposedly linked to the specificity of the degree for which they are preparing (exam training, sports activities). Although there is no centralisation of this data on “discrete” or “specific” fees, these complementary sums can reach as much as 3500€ per student and per year (*vide* Le Monde, 2006). This should be compared to a regular upfront fee for undergraduate students: 162€ a year.

In another sub-sector of the French higher education system, changes are also occurring in favour of cost-sharing. One higher education institution, belonging to the “Grandes Ecoles” circle, and thus not constrained by the same governmental rules as universities are, substantially increased tuition fees in 2004. Here again, the equity rationale prevails: whilst tuition fees increased from 1000 Euros a year to 5000 Euros, they are now differentiated according to family incomes. As a result, 20% of the students are still exempted and another 12% are charged 500€ instead of the traditional thousand, while the richest 29%, coming from the 2.5% richest families at the national level (that have an income superior to 4166€ net monthly), are charged a tuition fee five times more expensive. The institution uses part of the raised income in order to fund fellowships. These fellowships match by 50% those provided by the CROUS to low-income students (*vide* Sciences Po, 2005). The complex cost-sharing process implemented by this highly elitist institution thus lowers the financial burden on “needy” students. What is more, as the internationalisation of the student body also represents an important dimension for such an institution, this new model of tuition fees applies for all European students and fellowships and is offered to non-European students. The attraction power on international elites is thus warranted. In this specific case, institutional autonomy is an important feature for understanding changes in tuition fees.

Paradoxically, although French students and their families are resistant to the idea of tuition fees, and also defend the openness of universities to all high school graduates as the mark of equality of access, the Eurostudent research (2005) reveals that the French higher education system exhibits one of the highest levels of inequality of access by social group (with Austria, Germany and Portugal).

### **2.1.3. Implementation or/and consistent increase in tuition fees**

The third case, which is also the most widespread one, deals with the implementation of increases in tuition fees. It concerns Vietnam (1993), Ethiopia (1994) and the United Kingdom (1998), where tuition

fees were implemented in the 90's, and Israel, the US and South Africa, where tuition fees were increased.

In Vietnam, the introduction of tuition fees represents an important shift: since independence (1945), not only did the government offer free higher education to everyone, but students also received stipends/scholarships to cover their boarding, books and living expenses. Following a change in political regime (the Renovation, in 1987), the government reformed higher education and allowed institutions to charge fees up to a certain level. As a result, tuition fees were introduced in 1993. At this time, higher education was highly elitist, with only 162,000 students in the whole system. The introduction of tuition fees contributed to a goal of increasing access, a policy that the government could not fund alone. As a result, the student body reached 1,045,400 students in 2006, about 10% of the relevant age group, and a target of 30 to 40% of access was set up for 2020, while institutions were asked to diversify their income streams. In the wake of these important changes, public authorities are now attempting to confer legal autonomy to higher education institutions (*vide* Hayden M., Quang T., 2006). At the same time, in 1993, in order not only to expand but also to widen access, some categories of students (invalids, orphans, and ethnic minorities) were granted a conditional exemption from tuition fees. In 2005, these categories were enlarged to students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

In Ethiopia, the reform of the higher education system (ITGE, 994) advocated the introduction of financial diversification, including income generation and cost-sharing by students, as well as a shift toward more evaluation, monitoring, autonomy and accountability. Similarly to the Vietnamese case, the introduction of cost-sharing was part of a policy aimed at enlarging access and increasing the adequacy between curricula and the needs of the national economy. Small tuition fees were thus implemented in 2003, and the enlargement of the program is now questioned, because a significant number of students are



enrolled in fee-paying programs of evening and summer courses in the public institution (*vide* Yizengaw T., 2006).

In the UK, fees were introduced in 1998 at an amount of 1000£ a year. This is the result of several dynamics. The higher education sector expended rapidly at the beginning of the 90's, which led to a 25% decrease in public funding per student. This caused the government, which attempted to control the cost, to impose a ceiling on growth in full-time undergraduate student numbers (*vide* Eggins, 2006). The political changes at the governmental level represented by the Labour Party coming to power in 1997 also impinged on the introduction of tuition fees. In 2003, this policy was strengthened: the government's White Paper *The Future of Higher Education* (*vide* DFES, 2003) proposed to implement top-up fees of 3000£ a year, starting in 2006. Following the Australian trend, these fees will be repayable by graduates through the tax system once their income reaches 15000£ per annum (*vide ibidem*). This makes universities accountable for the professional development of their graduates.

Within the same period, in countries where tuition fees were already at play, such as in the US, South Africa, the UK, as well as in Israel, tuition fees have been increased to diverse extents. These are countries where higher education institutions have historically been largely autonomous, and they have long raised part of their income through this method.

Two dimensions stem from this first level of comparison: firstly, an international trend to increase the costs students bear in the higher education system, in order to expand and widen access to higher education. Secondly, as part of the cost-sharing implementation, tuition fees are more often a national trend than an institutional singularity, with the national ability to implement them being highly linked to the traditional autonomy of institutions, the degree of massification, and the context of changes in the ideology of the government. When the

dynamic of tuition fees is limited to some institutions, as well as when tuition fees are nationally implemented, it first concerns the most elitist, or prestigious institutions, before tuition fees policies eventually spread to a wider range of institutions.

At another level, a different drift that stems from this comparison concerns the emergence of new territories of access to higher education through the differentiation between tuition fees paid by local students, national students or foreign students. Initiated by the US, this indexation of tuition fees on geographic origin reveals a specific understanding of higher education institutions. It is aimed first at answering local needs, then national ones, and to propose real cost services to foreign students, who are supposed to go back to their country of origin at the end of their studies. The collective funding of higher education is then indexed on the expected direct social return of the former students. Another level of differentiation can also be witnessed in South Africa, where tuition fees are identical for foreign students and SADC students, and in the UK, where European students also pay the same fees as the national ones, while other international students are charged much higher fees. In these cases, the new regions seem to become the pertinent territory of thinking about access to higher education.

Tuition fees have both been promoted as a tool to improve quality and institutional competitiveness in higher education, and to promote equity in higher education funding. Still, the cost-sharing approach implies, in order to widen access, the implementation of compensating policies. In order to limit the financial burden on students, different tools are used. Indeed, whether tuition fees are institutional or national, they are always counterbalanced by both the framework of grants and loans. Here again, different models apply.

## **2.2. Equity needs more than tuition fees**

### **2.2.1. Different models of compensation**

The counterbalancing of tuition fees can take two forms: grants, fellowships and scholarships, which are not to be repaid, or loans, which are to be paid back.

In France and Ireland, grants are the main tool used to balance access inequalities. A state-funded higher education framework of grants is implemented, which takes into account socio-economic status to adjust the grant level. Universities also use merit-based scholarships (essentially at the graduate level in France), and some agencies, foundations, or local public authorities to fund scholarships.

In Israel and Vietnam higher education systems are in transition in terms of students' funds. In Vietnam, the system has shifted from the government providing students with lodging and food freely within a system of no tuition fees to a system of small tuition fees compensated by the implementation of a national student loan scheme as well as governmental scholarships. In Israel, although there is a plethora of student support mechanisms, no national regulation exists yet. The Ministry of Education is to adopt (2006) the Australian model plan: generous loans for students who pay back after completing their degrees on the basis of their income.

In the United Kingdom and South Africa, the Department of Education has already adopted a system quite similar to the one developed in Australia. In the UK, fees are repayable by graduates through the tax system once their income reaches £15000 per annum. A specific tool is dedicated to students from low-income families, who should be exempted from tuition fees and entitled to means-tested grants. At the same time, the higher education institutions introduced bursary schemes and other financial measures, as well as need-based fellowships. In South Africa, 1999 saw the introduction of a National Student

Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) aimed at centralising the student assistance process in terms of access to loans and bursaries. This scheme, which receives 8% of the higher education public funding, mainly provides need-based loans. Many other providers exist, but the amount of fellowships and loans provided are very low. In the US as well, loans are becoming increasingly the norm.

The mere comparison of evolution in tools of compensating for tuition fees underlines the fact that more and more students are required to finance their higher education. Furthermore, the international trend to reconcile the financial needs of higher education systems and the need for equity consists in organising a loan framework with later repayment, once the former student who becomes active on the marketplace reaches a certain level of income. More broadly, the common trend consists in an always more complex funding of access that attempts to take into account private and social returns, families' ability to pay, and institutional responsibility to take students to graduation and into the marketplace.

### **2.2.2. Institutional uses of compensation modes: limits to this kind of equality incentives**

Grants and loans are conceived as tools to improve equality of opportunities in access. As demonstrated, the new trends in loan repayment increase the degree of responsibility borne by institutions regarding the kind of degrees they offer to students and their links with the needs of the marketplace.

The uses made of grants are even more complex. Institutions use them for different purposes depending on their position in the higher education market. The American case provides an explicit example of ambiguity in the uses of grants.

Indeed, in the US, economic capital (along with social and cultural capital) strongly influences students' choice of institution. To

summarize, the cheaper the tuition fees are, the more institutions register students coming from low-income families, and vice-versa. And of course, the most expensive are also those that reward students with the highest added value regarding their position in the marketplace.

In this context of high-cost studies and high institutional differentiation, loans and grants represent high stakes: this is not only true for the students, but also for institutions, which can use these tools to seduce an academic elite that will then increase the institutions' reputation of excellence. Loans and fellowships thus participate in the debate between the creation of economic inequalities and meritocracy. Indeed, the fellowship dilemma lies in their double outcome. On one hand, they are aimed at helping the economically less favoured groups of the population. This goal finds its realisation using a national mode of calculation named "need analysis". This system was introduced in 1954 by private universities, and is aimed at measuring scientifically each family's ability to finance higher education studies: universities index the fellowship amount on family income by calculating the expected contribution of the family and taking it off the cost of studies.

On the other hand, fellowships are aimed at identifying the most talented students. As a result, some of the students from high-income families also benefit from fellowships. In a context of institutional competition, merit-based fellowships allow less prestigious universities than the flagship ones to attract academically talented students, independently of their ability to afford higher education. Due an intensification of the race for students, these fellowships represent more than half of the fellowships in public institutions, and one-fifth in private ones (*vide* McPherson, Shapiro, 1998). Finally, in a context where access to higher education depends upon academic selection and economic resources, the first circle of higher education institutions, which always attracts the "cream of the students", can use fellowships to compensate for academic handicaps. They have the freedom to provide scholarships regarding a specific definition of what merit is: in this case, merit

becomes the measurement of the academic level reached by a student in regard to the economic, social and cultural handicaps he had to face. The application of this specific definition provides some equity in access. Comparatively, their less prestigious counterparts use some of the fellowships to attract the most academically talented students. By doing so, they reduce the opportunity of access for those whose academic results were constrained by social and cultural handicaps. Here, the student's race for the most prestigious universities and degrees finds its match in a university race for the best students. Neither dynamic favours the widening of access to higher education.

When looking at the way institutions play with grants and loans to attract a certain kind of student, it becomes evident that this process does not necessarily favour access for students from minorities. As a result, and simultaneously with the implementation of new models of loan repayments that make institutions more accountable for their students, a new framework of institutional public funding – following the same rationale – is emerging.

### **2.2.3. Funding incentives for institutions toward widening access: a new dimension of cost-sharing?**

While using grants and loans as incentives to widen access, public authorities still have a limited impact on institutional policies to widen access. In order to stimulate the access of students from minorities and to be more equitable when it comes to funding institutions, public authorities are increasingly in the process of adopting a new incentive: indexing part of institutional funding on the characteristics of the students they register, as well as the characteristics of those they take to graduation.

This international trend is in the process of being implemented in Ireland through a new funding model (2006-2008) that integrates a State premium for identified target groups of students. As a result, the State allocates funding based on achieved enrolments of designated groups.

This is part of some funding principles such as increasing opportunities for students from all types of backgrounds to benefit from higher education institutions, providing stability in funding to encourage efficiency/performance – benchmarked against national and international best practices – and to reward institutional responsiveness to national and regional needs (HEA doc).

In Ethiopia, since the 2003 Higher Education Proclamation, a new framework of funding equity is in the throes of implementation. It consists in a funding formula that takes into account the type of program or course enrolment of female and disadvantaged students.

In Israel, although the practice does not directly involve a funding formula, universities that use affirmative action in order to promote minorities' access get budgetary assistance from the council of higher education.

The South African reform of the higher education system also attempts to implement some form of equity funding incentives. And the block grant received by each institution integrates indicators aimed at improving institutional and student efficiency. Indeed, the efficiency dimension is intrinsic to the equity one: the policy of widening has limited impact if not pursued by a funding policy providing institutions with the means to take these students to graduation. In this perspective, South African funding uses two indicators. On one hand, the number of entering students and the number of graduating students is taken into account and a national norm is set up which every institution is asked to reach (22%). On the other hand, the proportion of “disadvantaged” students is also taken into account in order to increase the funding received. This new funding formula should allow the government to control the development of the system and incite institutions to plan their approach within periods of three years (through rolling plans) and to follow a policy of equity within an efficiency regulation.

Last but not least, it has already been mentioned that the French delegate minister of higher education was working on a similar kind of funding framework.

The increased linkage between equity policies in access and funding policies is testament to the innovation dynamics at play in the organisation of higher education cost-sharing. This is becoming increasingly possible due to the contract-based principle linking institutions to their public authorities, and to the movement of international accountability. The comparison of these national processes reveals a common process of rethinking equity funding.

**Conclusion:**

**An Attempt to explain the changes in cost-sharing content: configurations, path dependency and national ideology**

This comparison has shed light on some major changes in the funding of equal opportunities. They can be summarised as a trend to implement cost-sharing through tuition fees and to steer the implementation of equity through a new funding framework based on institutional incentives aimed at widening access. These changes reveal that higher education institutions are increasingly required to take responsibility for the democratisation of access to higher education, as well as for the consequences on students' integration in the job market. The observed changes thus disclose the development of an institutional accountability toward society, and the focus of public authorities not only on increasing or widening access to higher education at the system level but at the institutional one. The shift is toward a more qualitative and detailed observation of the impact of institutions' policies on equal opportunities in access to higher education and degrees.

In the first part of this paper, we have already discussed the evolution of rationales used to advocate the implementation of cost-sharing. But how can it be explained? In which context is this implementation possible? What constrains it?



A certain number of dimensions appear to be central in the ability of one higher education system to implement cost-sharing in a perspective of an “efficacy redistribution” (*vide* Piketty, 2004).

Firstly, the implementation of cost sharing never happens alone: it is always part of a wider reform of the higher education system. On one hand, higher education dimensions are interdependent, which implies the need to rethink the organisation of the system when implementing, for example, tuition fees. On the other hand, it is probably easier to launch and legitimise such changes when they take place within a national reform of the whole higher education system.

A second dimension regards the attained level of massification of the higher education systems. Simultaneously with the urgent needs of other public sectors, an elitist system such as in the Vietnamese, Ethiopian, and South African cases produces a national understanding that the required enlargement of access is only sustainable through cost-sharing. This can also be explained by the fact that in elitist higher education systems, only some students are concerned by the changes, which therefore do not lead to mass protests. When a large number of individuals are engaged in higher education, protest can paralyse the implementation of all changes (see, for example, the French inability to change access organisation). Moreover, in these contexts, most of the students come from high-income families that can bear the cost of higher education and participate in the funding of minority students.

Thirdly, changes of national government, and thus, of ideology, favour the implementation of such changes. Indeed, higher education policies are path dependent, and, together with the three other features that mark political life (multiple equilibria, contingency, and inertia) the timing and sequencing of an event plays a critical role (*vide* Pierson, 2000). As a result, most of the tuition fee implementation or increase happens after a change of national government (see UK, Vietnam, South Africa...). When path dependency does not allow the implementation

of tuition fees, as in, for example, the case of France or Ireland following the abandonment of this policy a decade ago, the goal of equal opportunities in access to higher education can be more easily pursued through a funding framework. Indexing institutional funding on the diversity of the entering and graduating student body does not directly concern the students, and, thus, does not engender strikes. Moreover, higher education systems in which no tuition fees are charged are characterised by a limited institutional autonomy compared to their fee-charging counterparts. Indeed, the government has to provide institutions with replacement funding, and therefore retains the choice of indicators used to calculate each institution's funding. This leads us to focus on the impact of higher education configuration on cost-sharing implementation and vice-versa. Indeed, if we analyse the changes in cost-sharing regarding each higher education system configuration, we can see that in the higher education systems where institutions are historically autonomous, tuition fees have been more easily implemented or increased than in higher education systems characterised by a stronger central steering. As a consequence, the implementation of tuition fees also reinforces institutional autonomy, while the implementation of equality of opportunities funding incentives allows a stronger national steering of institutional policies, mainly because universities remain predominantly funded by public authorities.

However, the comparison of different nations' implementation of cost-sharing policies highlights the need to focus more research on access to higher education in terms of the economy of inequalities. There is therefore still a need to provide more benchmarks on the institutional ability to promote and sustain equality of opportunities (Clancy, Goastellec, 2007), as well as to better understand the link between freedom of access and the economics of higher education funding.

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**Lubow Jeroszenko**

The Public Initiative 'Creative Diplomacy', Russia

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**HIGHER EDUCATION AS A DRIVING FORCE  
FOR MODERNIZATION AND INNOVATIVE ECONOMY:  
RUSSIAN CASE**

**Abstract**

It is difficult to argue the fact that the XXI century is the century of human resources. The transparency of borders and the accessibility of information through the Internet make people professionally mobile and anxious for re-education. The principles and mechanisms of their practical realization are still being invented and implemented by people. And these people are supposed to have a certain ethical code of what can and cannot be done, knowledge and skills. Therefore, one of the key measures of the ability of any country to take top positions in the economy, technology and science is the very existence of professionals ready to innovate, implement and develop. In this case, the system of education remains the basic mechanism of not only initial knowledge and skills transfer, but also values transfer.

For the Russian Federation, which has announced its desire to become an innovative economy by 2020, the issue stated above appears to be of crucial importance. How does the Russian system of education become a part of, and a key player within, the declared strategy of modernization and innovation? This article examines the recent developments in the system of Russian higher education and the necessity of these changes, as well as challenges and effectiveness in the context of modernization and innovation. The key conclusions the article emphasizes are that transition, structural changes, and a certain degree of uncertainty remain the pre-dominating characteristics of Russian

higher education. Different approaches tested by the Russian government to develop the higher education system typically appear to have their pros and cons. Nevertheless, after passing through the period of adaptation, most of the initiatives can contribute to improving the competitiveness of Russian higher education on the global market.

### **Education matters: goals and objectives of a modern Russian state**

Today modernization and innovation have become two key concepts and even symbols of President Dmitry Medvedev's epoch. Overcoming the technological and economic gap between Russia and highly-industrialized countries, along with sustainable support for an innovative economy, appear to be the main goals of Russian long-term development strategy. The Western countries chosen as a kind of modernization pattern predetermine its basic parameters and finally the criteria of results evaluation.

By its essence this kind of approach already implies that the Russian political elite acknowledges the existence of the gap between 'Us' and 'Them'. The necessity of its elimination demands not only reaching the current state of Western countries' development in the shortest possible period of time, but also a system of measures that would allow Russia to remain on the same level with these countries in the future.

It is obvious that the simple import of technologies and their introduction into different strategic spheres is not enough to win the game. Technological modernization, and moreover innovation, is nothing without people who will be ready to apply these technologies, and what is more important, to invent them on native soil.

The Institute of Contemporary Development, uniting the country's intellectual capital and leading experts to work out policies and recommendations for the Russian government, emphasized in its re-

cent report *Modernization of Russia as a Way of Building a State*<sup>1</sup> that the objective of technological development requires a society ready to implement and use technologies.

Modernization and innovation seem to acquire a new dimension: a societal one. To use even imported technologies, to innovate and finally to become a leader in a particular sphere, any country, not only Russia, needs individuals who possess both competitive knowledge and skills and also share a certain system of values.

It is true that the current system of Russian values remains one of the most debatable questions among absolutely different layers of Russian society. In his first address<sup>2</sup> to the Federal Assembly (the highest representative and legislative body of Russian Federation), President Dm. Medvedev devoted significant time to the discussion of values that the state, society and each individual should share.

- **Justice** under which political equality, honesty of courts and responsibility of leadership were understood, took the priority.
- **Freedom**, first and foremost personal and individual, then freedom of entrepreneurship, and finally freedom of speech and religion, should lead to the independence of the Russian state.
- **Life of the individual**, its welfare and dignity, interethnic peace, and the unity of different cultures were also distinguished as basic fundamentals.

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1 Modernization of Russia as a Way of Building a New State. Independent Experts' Report. The Institute of Contemporary Development. Moscow, 2009. <http://www.apn.ru/publications/article22100.htm>. Accessed 5.06.2011.

2 Address to the Federal Assembly, Moscow, Russia. 5<sup>th</sup> November, 2008 [http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2008/11/05/1349\\_type63372type63374type63381type82634\\_208749.shtml](http://www.kremlin.ru/appears/2008/11/05/1349_type63372type63374type63381type82634_208749.shtml). Accessed 5.06.2011.

- **The importance of family**, critical view of Russian history: past and present, belief and loyalty to Russia and Russian culture in any circumstances, concluded the list.

Certainly, one can hardly find a person in Russia who will question the stated system of values. This is actually what is declared and lies on the surface. But on the other hand, and it is already a commonplace in various Russian analytical works, individual liberalism sometimes in its most brutal forms has firmly become a part of Russian reality. People appear to be free in their choices of a place of living, career path or religious preferences, but they somehow have lost the feeling of unity.

If a country really wants to become and to stay competitive, it needs to create an environment in which an individual is free to realize his knowledge and skills for his own welfare as well as for the welfare of a state. And at the same time an individual should be able to see his/her own development within a broader context: the development of a country.

These statements come from a logical assumption that if the laws do not work and the courts are not independent, or if private property is not defended, then there is no motive to innovate. On the other hand, if people are indifferent towards the things going on around them, institutions will never work.

This idea was recently declared in the strategy document *Innovative Russia – 2020*<sup>3</sup> issued by the Ministry of Economic Development (Moscow, Russia). The report emphasized that Russia should take care of creating a new type of person: an *innovative individual* and an environment that allows creative thinking and self-realization. The key

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3 Project. Strategy of Innovative Development of Russian Federation for the period till 2020. Ministry of Economic Development, Moscow, 2010.

features of an innovative individual as highlighted are 1) *constant education*, 2) *ability to re-educate and professional mobility*, 3) *critical thinking*, 4) *ability to work independently and in a team*, 5) *wide knowledge of foreign languages as the best communicative instruments in the globalizing world*. It looks like a new educational strategy for the Russian Federation.

Recently, speaking before the world business community in Davos (Switzerland) in January 2011, President Medvedev emphasized that the source of power of any country and its ability to take leadership in global economy lies in the existence of smart and educated people who possess knowledge and skills, imagination and desire to create<sup>4</sup>. Excellent education and the individual's desire to constantly strive for knowledge appear to be one of the key features of the Russian success story in modernization and innovation.

### **Innovative economy means new approaches to education**

Today education is announced as the key factor for the success of modernization and the proper functioning of the innovative economy. The Russian state is trying to realize an institutional triad: higher education – science – industrial corporations and production. Higher education and science should work to increase production and industrial corporations should contribute to the development of science and higher educational institutions. The idea is not so very new; the interesting question is how this approach will be implemented on the ground.

*Firstly, what does higher education suggest about Russian society and how is it currently organized?*

For a better understanding of a current number of higher education institutions in Russia and the number of students enrolled, the

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4 Dmitry Medvedev's Speech at Davos Forum, 26<sup>th</sup> of January, 2011, <http://news.kremlin.ru/news/10163>. Accessed 5.06.2011.

following statistics are suggested (taken from Statistics of Russian Education)<sup>5</sup>.

Higher Educational Institutions (Beginning of the Academic Year)							
Year	Nu	Overall Nu of Students	Full-time Learning	Evening Classes	Correspondence Learning	Extern Students	Nu of student: 10.000
1914	72	87	87				10
1917	150	149	149				16
1927 (as for the 15th of December)	90	114	114				0
1940/41	481	478	335	15	128		43
1950/51	516	797	503	17	277,1		77
1960/61	430	1497	699	167,6	629,9		124
1970/71	457	2872	1297	389,8	985,4		204
1975/76	483	2857	1516	392,9	948,5		212
1980/81	494	3046	1686	401	959,1		219
1985/86	502	2966	1569	383,8	1013		206
1990/91	514	2825	1648	284,5	892,3		190
1991/92	519	2763	1668	250	844,9		186
1992/93	535	2638	1658	202,3	777,4		178
1993/94	626	2613	1661	175,7	769,8	6,1	176
1994/95	710	2645	1668	167	801,3	7,8	179
1995/96	762	2791	1753	174,8	855,8	7,5	189
1996/97	817	2965	1848	178,5	932,3	6	202
1997/98	880	3248	1982	196,6	1064,3	5,2	222
1998/99	914	3598	2148	224,3	1218,7	7,3	247
1999/2000	939	4073	2353	259,5	1450,6	10,1	280
2000/2001	965	4741	2625	302,2	1761,8	52,2	327
2001/2002	1008	5427	2881	335,6	2138,1	72,6	376
2002/2003	1039	5948	3104	346	2399,9	97,6	414
2003/2004	1046	6456	3277	351,3	2703,7	124,1	451
2004/2005	1071	6884	3434	361,7	2942,5	146,5	481

In general the structure of higher education in Russia hasn't changed much from Soviet times. The core of the system of higher education in Russia remains state tuition-free educational institutions embracing the following types: universities, academies, and institutes.

Universities represent higher professional institutions with a wide variety of educational programs in a variety of spheres. Academies are designed to provide specialists that would apply their knowledge and

5 Statistics of Russian Education, 25<sup>th</sup> of April, 2011 [http://stat.edu.ru/scr/db.cgi?act=listDB&t=2\\_6\\_1a&ttype=2&Field=All](http://stat.edu.ru/scr/db.cgi?act=listDB&t=2_6_1a&ttype=2&Field=All). Accessed 5.06.2011.

skills in a particular sector or sub-sector of the economy: agriculture, tourism, art or medicine<sup>6</sup>. Finally, institutes are higher educational establishments that prepare specialists to work in a particular professional direction; the classical example is pedagogical institutes.

The challenges of the current system of education are two-fold. In the first place, the challenges apply to the whole system of higher education and are not very different from those that the other European countries might face. Equal right to access to higher education means the existence of equal chances for getting a degree at any university. The second challenge is actually the relevance of certain professions for society. Finally, job placement appears to be one of the crucial points.

The statistics provided by one of the most famous Russian analytical centers by Yuriy Levada shows that there is no certainty or societal consensus about whether good education is accessible or not, whether the current system of education is more advantageous in comparison with the previous one or not. The answers implying that education is less accessible and worse than in the past predominate by a certain but small percentage.

*Are you satisfied with the current system of Russian education?*<sup>7</sup>

%, answers	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Definitely yes, more 'yes' than 'no'	23	18	25	25	25
Neither 'yes' nor 'no'	20	22	22	22	26
More 'no' than 'yes'	50	50	45	48	43
It is difficult to answer	7	10	8	5	6

6 Academy of the National Economy attached to the Government of RF, Kazan State Academy of Architecture and Construction, Krasnoyarsk State Medical Academy and so on.

7 Russian analytical centers by Yuriy Levada, Analytical Report, 2008 <http://www.levada.ru/education.html>. Accessed 5.06,2011.

*Do you think that now your children, grandchildren, if necessary, are receiving a good education?*<sup>8</sup>

%, answers	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Definitely yes, more 'yes' than 'no'	37	32	42	40	43
More 'no' than 'yes'	60	63	53	55	53
It is difficult to answer	3	5	5	5	5

The fact is that the structure of secondary and higher education have not changed that much. Yet there were considerable changes that occurred within the principles upon which the system of education, especially higher education, is based. First and foremost, in September 2003 the Russian Federation entered the Bologna process. The basic principles of the Bologna process implied the following:

- Two - level system of education
- Credit system of assessment
- Control over the quality of education
- Increase of mobility
- Provision of job places for the graduates

The main idea that the Russian Federation pursued was that self-isolation from the world educational process and its standards has a negative impact upon the development and competitiveness of the national system of education. From the practical point of view Russian diplomas were not recognized abroad since Russian and most European states have different levels in their systems of education. In Russia, a graduate might have a specialist diploma, a candidate of science diploma and a doctor of science diploma. Abroad these are BA, MA and PhD diplomas.

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8 Ibidem



The transformation of the Russian system of education resulted in the creation of a kind of mixed system: a unified system of preparation for the first four courses (years) in general, then the right to choose whether to get a specialist diploma (one more year of study) or an MA diploma (two-more years of study). Plus anyone with a specialist diploma might apply for an MA as well.

The adoption of such a system was supposed to increase the level of mobility of Russian students and increase the number of opportunities for them to get additional skills and qualifications abroad if needed. The situation with the correlation of candidate of sciences, doctor of sciences and PhD holders appeared to be much more difficult. The programs of preparation for candidates of sciences and PhD students appeared to be too different to be reconciled and to get both diplomas mutually recognized.

Yet if one compares the process of recognition that existed before introduction of the two-level system, there appeared to be space for a more flexible process. In 1997, European countries signed the Lisbon Convention on recognition of higher education qualifications. The convention says that each country will recognize the documents on higher education from another country if no substantial difference between the programs of education is identified. In 1999 Russia joined this Convention. In order to simplify the process of recognition, a European attachment to the Russian diploma or other foreign diploma was developed by UNESCO together with the Council of Europe and the European Commission. This attachment does not replace its Russian variant and is given on request. It contains the following information:

- Information about the owner
- Information about the given qualification
- Information about the level of qualification
- Information about the content of the program and results
- Information about the functional purpose of this qualification
- Information about the national system of education

But the fact was that in most cases Russian diplomas were recognized partially, and Russian qualification levels and degrees were not understandable abroad. European professional associations that are supposed to recognize diplomas for work permits were at a loss how to qualify certain professions, and this added difficulties for those who wanted to receive job experience abroad.

The introduction of the BA and MA system was supposed to increase the compatibility of the national system of education with that of most European countries and to simplify access to the global labor market for Russian students. The problem is that the ability to adapt the national system of education to these new tendencies takes time, and the correct people in the right places.

The internal problems with this process of adaptation usually concern educational standards and educational programs. The credit system is generally the mechanism a student uses to create his own educational path by increasing his/her own independence, responsibility in terms of choice, and professional mobility. Receiving a certain qualification implies mastering a number of disciplines and equals a certain number of credits in order to get a BA or MA diploma in the end. Each discipline determines the amount of work needed to master it and its general importance within a certain qualification has a certain credit grade.

This means that the whole system of Russian standards and education plans will have to be changed. But what is more important ideally is that a student will choose the content of his educational program. This implies that universities or other higher educational institutions will not need a large number of permanent personnel but will switch into contract hiring. How will the problem with the staff of most universities be solved?

The other debatable question that raises lots of concern among different layers of Russian society concerns whether BA holders will

be really demanded by the market and whether there is any threat of decreasing the level of access to education with this new system. There is even fear that the BA education sooner or later might turn into education for the poor.

### **New statuses for certain universities and a new type of university: pro and con**

Special legal status as unique scientific and educational complexes was given to the oldest universities of the Russian Federation: Moscow State University and Saint Petersburg State University. This status implies that the universities have a particular importance for the development of Russian society.

The regulations of these universities are approved by the government. The rectors are appointed by the President of Russian Federation for a five-year period. In exchange, the universities have received the right to implement programs of higher and professional education on the basis of self-developed standards. They have a right to hold additional admission testing for potential bachelors. Graduates who will study on the basis of dual programs at the two universities will receive both the diploma of Moscow State University and St. Petersburg State University. But what is more important, these universities have obtained the right to direct financing from the Ministry of Finance.

The basic innovation in terms of the structure for the current system of national higher education is the introduction of a status as National Research University (NRU) to a number of higher educational institutions in Russia. National Research Universities are supposed to become the best platform for the communication between key subjects of innovative development of the Russian Federation: science, education, and, certainly, business.

By leading scientific life – to develop science at the universities – this is according to the opinion of the chancellor of Moscow

Physic – the Technical University will lead to the increase of competition in science and to the increase of competition among the universities. Currently the list of National Research Universities embraces 29 universities. In 2008, two universities were simply given this title. But in 2009 and 2010 the universities started to be chosen on a competitive basis and according to certain characteristics:

- dynamics of development during the last three years
- cadre potential of the university
- infrastructure of the educational process and scientific research
- effectiveness of the educational process and scientific research
- certificates of international and national acknowledgement
- quality of the represented program
- expected results of the represented program<sup>9</sup>

The key idea that lies behind the creation of National Research Universities is not in fact new by its essence. A University should provide professional, technical/innovative supply for a particular sector of the economy. The education sector is supposed to communicate with the business sector in order to know what kind of specialist they need and what kind of research projects they are interested in.

Therefore, the Russian State University of Oil and Gas named after I. M. Gubkin, which has received the status of NRU, aims at cooperation with big business in the oil and gas industries for development of its own infrastructure, and also for helping its graduates in job placement. The first vice chancellor of this university, Michael Silin, underlined in one of his interviews that oil and gas industries are, first and foremost, knowledge intensive and high-tech. Are Russian oil and gas companies ready to buy science projects from Russian Universities? This question still remains open for several reasons. Firstly, do Russian universities have the highly developed infrastructure and equipment

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9 Ministry of Education and Science, <http://mon.gov.ru/pro/niu/6077/>. Accessed 5.06,2011.

to produce advanced technologies needed for the Russian oil and gas sector? Secondly, are the channels of communication with heavy industry companies and universities well-developed? Do universities really know what the companies need? And will these companies invest in bi-lateral projects with the universities?

Michael Silin emphasized that active dialogue with big oil and gas corporations is therefore one of the key factors in his university's success in the realization of modernization and innovation tasks. Scientific work at the universities can solve problems for the big companies<sup>10</sup>. Many universities are eager to follow this kind of track. The first vice chancellor of the Moscow State University of Steel and Alloy (also with NRU status), Natalia Tretyak, also commented upon the development strategy of her university. The strategy implies working on scientific projects that will be then successfully demanded by various sectors of Russian industry<sup>11</sup>.

Among the most successful projects considered to have long-term perspectives, 12 were chosen that aimed at the development of nano-technologies and technologies of new materials, information and telecommunication technologies, energy efficiency technologies, and technologies of rational nature management. Listening to the demands of employers is one of the key factors for the success of universities and their undergraduates. Therefore, the government is generally trying to give a new goal to the universities aside from educating people. This strategy is supposed to revive science in the higher educational institutions and give commercial value to scientific developments. In this case, Russian Federal Law N 217<sup>12</sup> authorizes educational and scientific

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10 Round Table: National Research Universities: Perspectives of Development. *Izvestiya*. <http://www.inauka.ru/science/article101583.html>. Accessed 5.06,2011.

11 *Ibidem*

12 Russian Federal Law N 217, 27<sup>th</sup> of July, 2009. <http://document.kremlin.ru/doc.asp?ID=53857&PSC=1&PT=1&Page=1>. Accessed 5.06,2011.

institutions to create small-scale enterprises that would allow these institutions to make a profit from their innovative design projects.

Summarizing all the points presented by people from the universities, it is obvious that the idea of creating a communication channel between higher educational institutions and business is generally approved. But everything appears ideal and smooth only at first glance. Despite the overall positive attitude to the idea of creating National Research Universities, there are a number of unanswered questions that will definitely need time to be solved.

Does the appearance of National Research Universities mean that higher education is becoming more elitist by nature, with a small privileged group divided from the rest? Russia might face the problem that really high-quality education will be available only in certain regions of Russian Federation, Moscow and St. Petersburg.

Secondly, do scientists and university professors really possess the knowledge to manage and make their inventions commercial? They were definitely given a certain normative basis for this, but not guidelines for suggesting and presenting projects to the business community, or how to approach this business community.<sup>13</sup>

Thirdly, if science is to become a dimension of the university, what will happen to the Russian Academy of Sciences (the highest body responsible for the development of science in the country) and fundamental scientific research that might not have commercial value for now, but might contribute to further discoveries of world value?

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13 Dmitry Medvedev discusses with young scientists the development of the technical base of Russian science, measures of social and grant support, 8<sup>th</sup> of February, 2011. <http://special.kremlin.ru/news/10278>. Accessed 5.06,2011.

## Other Approaches to Modernization through Education

It seems that at the moment, the Russian Federation is trying to employ all possible factors of fast development if we speak about the human capital dimension. In one of his latest statements, President Dm. Medvedev said at Davos that the success of Russia as an economic power is connected with bringing people with foreign diplomas into the right place in the most important economic sectors<sup>14</sup>. Further, the President emphasized that the best engineers and specialists should work at Russian educational institutions and in Russian business, and incoming new specialists would create a special atmosphere for innovation among native specialists.

That, of course, raises a number of debatable questions that need to be clarified, and certainly explained to the public, in order to avoid negative implications. Firstly, this statement implies that the Russian government does not have any hope for the quality and standards of national educational programs. What reaction will such an approach stimulate among native Russian specialists who do not have a foreign certified diploma? It seems that in some way the ability of those who currently work in scientific research institutions of the Russian Academy of Science was underestimated and even neglected.

Fourthly, the next stage in increasing the role of education in the modernization of a country involves creating projects like SKOLKOVO. 'Become the change you want to have'. This is the slogan that appears on the site of SKOLKOVO Moscow school of management when you enter it. SKOLKOVO is one of the projects that President D. A. Medvedev will leave to Russia and to Moscow when his presidential term is over. In this project the main actors appear to be the state and business executives who are currently working in Russia. The key idea of the school is that business executives taught and socialized in the

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14 Dmitry Medvedev's Speech at Davos Forum, 26<sup>th</sup> of January, 2011, <http://news.kremlin.ru/news/10163>. Accessed 5.06.2011.

best Western business practices will develop the Russian economy as they develop themselves and their businesses. Therefore, when launching this project D. A. Medvedev underlined that the modernization of the economy starts from the modernization of minds.

In essence, the Moscow School of Management SKOLKOVO is a joint project between members of the Russian and international business elite. It is an international business school where people who have already obtained their diploma are supposed to test their skills and practical knowledge by developing personal skills of leadership, responsibility, creativity and interdependence.

What were the driving motives for the Russian political elite to invest in implementing such a school on Russian soil? It is obvious that the idea of MBA schools or management schools is not that new even for Russia. The school declares itself to be a new type of international business school and research centre focusing on basic trends in the business and economies of tomorrow. The main advantage of this school is supposed to be its focus on emerging markets and the transfer of practical knowledge that has been achieved by its founders.

The school was founded by 18 Russian and foreign major companies and individuals from the following sectors: oil and gas, metals, power generation, investment, banking, insurance and the retail trade. Basically students are trained through taking part in real projects to be developed by teams of five to seven people. Finally, project results are assessed by the founders of the Moscow School of Management and third-party experts (politicians, officials and businessmen). The whole educational process embraces a variety of training courses, role-playing games, training under the guidance of experts in specific areas, consulting projects, practical training and lectures<sup>15</sup>.

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15 Education at SKOLKOVO: specific features, <http://www.skolkovo.ru/content/view/3/46/lang,en/>. Accessed 5.06,2011.



The main advantage of the SKOLKOVO curriculum seems to be that students will master hands-on experience doing business in crisis situations. The School's corps of professors and lecturers comprises globally renowned Russian and foreign experts working both on staff and as visiting trainers.

For sure, SKOLKOVO is not a place where people are studying theories. And here lies its main advantage. It is a place where people are taught best management skills, leadership skills, and communicative skills in order to make their businesses work effectively within such a developing market as Russia. At the same time, needless to say, it is to a certain extent a political project created in order to make President Dm. Medvedev popular among the business elite. It is a modern and fashionable place where foreign leaders in business or politics can be taken to show that modernization and innovation are working products.

The crucial question that might be asked looking at SKOLKOVO is where to find the optimal balance between financing glamour projects that will certainly bring highly qualified leaders-managers to Russia, and investing in long-existing scientific centers that may be somewhere in Siberia but will get some results in fundamental science? And secondly, how to popularize professions that are not as highly paid as consultants or managers? During his recent meeting with representatives of placement services, Dm. Medvedev said that it is the state that sets priorities about who is needed for the country, and the country needs engineers<sup>16</sup>. Can the Russian public then expect another SKOLKOVO for engineers or doctors in the nearest future?

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16 Dmitry Medvedev discusses with young scientists the development of the technical base of Russian science, measures of social and grant support, 8<sup>th</sup> of February, 2011. <http://special.kremlin.ru/news/10278>. Accessed 5.06,2011.

## **Preliminary Conclusions**

Development is the key word that can characterize the current state of affairs of the system of higher education in Russia. Higher education is just the reflection of things that are generally happening in different public spheres in Russia. The idea of modernizing in order to become and stay competitive penetrates everywhere. Bringing global best practices to the native soil seems to be the current strategy for developing Russian universities. The first step in this was certainly entering the Bologna process, which enabled real professional mobility for Russian young people and vice versa. The second step is making cooperation between business and universities real and productive, which is common practice in highly industrialized countries. The third step is improving management skills of the top-management through education at special business schools for young and middle-aged professionals. These are the focal points of the general scheme of development in higher education. One can add to this the possibility that the university will sell its scientific products on the market, and the promotion of foreign languages learning.

The other side of the picture is that any kind of initiative has its non-transparent elements or questions that need to be clarified. Some of them just demand time for finding solutions. For example, the creation of special programs will enable the university elite to master techniques of communicating with business and presenting their projects to business community. The question of preserving the staff of universities even after switching into a two-level educational system (MA and BA system) is also just among the tactical problems that are more or less solved by universities themselves without governmental interference.

For Russia it is a fact that the government has not yet found the right way to stimulate the popularity of the professions that are considered outside the top-paid list, such as doctors, teachers, social workers or engineers, which might pose a major issue in the future. At the moment young people in Russia want to live now. Now means that

they want to be paid adequate salaries for their competitive knowledge and skills. Unfortunately there is no adequate system of stimulation for the professions that are considered to be of great social value. Entering a university, anyone knows that if you are an accountant or a risk analyst or a business analyst, you won't be left below minimum living wage. And if this lucky person is good with foreign languages and happens to live in Moscow or St. Petersburg, big corporations, the Big Four, Natural Resources Transnational Companies or others will open their doors. But what about the rest: social workers or school teachers?

To find the optimal balance between investing in new strategies and developing the old ones is the basic challenge that the government faces developing higher education in Russia. If someone is asked: does Russia need good managers and people who have excellent organizational skills? Does Russia need a good channel of communication between universities and corporations, and scientific products that will be demanded by the market and easily implemented in the economy? Does Russia need diplomas recognized abroad and vice versa or specialists with Western best practices skills and foreign diplomas? The answers to all these questions will be definitely 'yes'. But this doesn't mean that fundamental science or the system of stimulation for getting qualifications other than those required to become or market specialists should be forgotten. This might produce no political bonuses for the leaders at the current moment, but will serve for the long-term modernization of the country in general.

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**Barbara M. Kehm**  
INCHER-Kassel <sup>1</sup>, Germany

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**TO BE OR NOT TO BE?  
THE IMPACTS OF THE EXCELLENCE INITIATIVE  
ON THE GERMAN SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION<sup>2</sup>**

**1. Introduction:  
Traditional Characteristics of Higher Education in Germany**

Germany is essentially a binary system consisting of about 100 universities (including technical universities) and 150 universities of applied sciences. The latter offer professionally oriented higher education programmes and do not carry out basic research. About 60 percent of all German students are studying at universities and 40 percent at universities of applied sciences. In the following only the universities will be referred to. All universities are considered to be research universities. According to the Humboldtian ideal, there is a close relationship between teaching and research.

The German higher education system is also essentially a public system. There are some private institutions but they do not enrol many students. 95 percent of all students study in public, i.e. state funded higher education institutions. Furthermore, until very recently the German public higher education system did not ask for tuition fees.

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1 Barbara M. Kehm is professor of higher education research at the University of Kassel (Germany) and Managing Director of the International Centre for Higher Education Research (INCHER-Kassel) at that University.

2 This is a revised and extended version of an article by Kehm and Pasternack published in: Palfreyman, D. & Tapper, T. (eds.) (2008). Structuring Mass Higher Education: The Role of Elite Institutions. New York, London: Routledge, pp. 113-127.

When the federal government made an attempt to introduce tuition fees about 3 years ago, there were massive student protests. Since Germany is a federal system and the individual states are responsible for the whole education sector (including universities), some of the states opted out of the introduction of tuition fees from the beginning – especially the East German states – and two states introduced tuition fees but then had a change of government which abolished them after some time. Of the 16 German states five currently require tuition fees and eleven do not.

Until recently the German higher education system was also closely state controlled. Government was regarded as the “guardian angel” of academic freedom on the one hand but it acted as a strong regulatory power on the other hand.

All universities have the right to award doctoral degrees; in fact each professor can accept doctoral candidates as part of his or her academic freedom. As a rule most professorships have one or two positions for research assistants, i.e. doctoral candidates, as part of the infrastructure or resources of the chair, which are negotiated when receiving the call or being offered a professorial position. These research assistant positions are fixed term (4 to 6 years) and part-time (50%) positions in the framework of which the assistants are expected to support the professor’s research and teaching activities and also write their PhD thesis. The traditional form of research training is then basically “on the job”. No formal training or course work is required. The research assistants are employees in the civil service with a salary and all regular social benefits. Therefore, they are not considered students. However, ongoing reforms of doctoral education and training in Germany strongly promote the establishment of doctoral programmes or graduate schools to complement training on the job with more systematic training through coursework. Furthermore, for doctoral candidates not employed as junior researchers it is the only opportunity to get systematic research and transferable skills training at all.

A final characteristic feature of the German higher education system is that until very recently there was only moderate vertical and horizontal diversity. All institutions of one type were considered to be more or less equal, their treatment by government was based on legal homogeneity (*vide* Neave 1996), they received funding based on the number of students, the institution's maintenance requirements, and the salaries for all staff and professors were paid according to the same salary scale with only limited differences. Institutions of one type were considered to have more or less the same level of quality. Of course employers might prefer to recruit graduates from particular universities more than from other institutions but legally all degrees were considered to have the same value. Finally, universities did not have a tiered structure of studies with undergraduate and graduate degrees but all degrees (altogether three different ones: professional, academic, state) were master level degrees. There was no Bachelor or undergraduate degree.

## 2. Major Areas of Change since the 1990s

Many things have changed in the German higher education system in the last 15 to 20 years. A quick overview of the most pertinent reforms can be summarised in the following eight points (*vide* Teichler 2009b).

First there has been state deregulation. That means the state has withdrawn to some extent – although not as much as in other European countries – from close control and granted more institutional autonomy. However, in exchange for more autonomy, higher education institutions were also made more accountable. They now have to report regularly about their performance.

Second, state funding changed from line item budgets to lump sum budgets and a greater decision making power was given to the institutional management concerning internal allocation of funds. However,

lump sum budgeting has been linked to budget cuts and performance contracts with the ministries.

Third, both these changes have given more decision-making power to the central level or institutional management leading to a certain degree of professionalisation in this area, but decision-making power has to be shared increasingly with external stakeholders (the state being one among them) represented in university boards. This has led to a weakening of the traditional collegial bodies of decision-making.

Fourth, there is a strong drive towards further internationalisation and an increased labour market relevance of degrees. The Bologna Process has acted as a catalyst in this respect also, leading to far-reaching curricular reforms and the introduction of the tiered structure of Bachelor and Master degrees and programmes.

Fifth, the initiative of the European Commission to establish a European Research Area (Lisbon Strategy) closely linked with the Bologna Process to establish a European Higher Education Area has led to more expenditure on research. However, there is also a stronger orientation than before of research contributing to economic growth and technological innovation. Talk is about the new triangle of education, research, and innovation (a variation of the “triple helix” model developed by Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff), but there remain considerable problems to articulate these three elements.

Sixth, there is a growth of evaluation activities. Governmental funding as well as internal budget allocation within higher education institutions is increasingly based on performance indicators, goal agreements and contract management.

Seventh, there is also an increased monitoring of the teaching and research activities of professors linked to the introduction of performance related salary components.



Eighth and last we observe a shift away from horizontal or inter-institutional diversity towards increased vertical diversity.

### 3. The Breaking of a Taboo

In 2004, the then Federal Minister of Education and Research (a Social Democrat) made the proposal to identify Germany's top-level institutions. That was in so far surprising and broke a taboo, as the Social Democrats had always been against the idea of elite institutions, which was linked to the political perspective of the Conservative Parties (*vide* Kehm 2006; Pasternack 2008). The official reasons given for this initiative were (*vide* Bulmahn 2007):

- Germany needed to identify and support more cutting edge research to secure its economic future;
- Ongoing demographic changes required the mobilisation of all available talent;
- The role of higher education institutions was becoming more important in the emerging knowledge society;
- The establishment of the European higher education and research area was leading towards further internationalisation but also more global competition;
- Cutting edge research and innovation was becoming more and more interdisciplinary and required additional support;
- There was an increasing demand for top research and highly qualified research staff not only within universities but also in the knowledge intensive sectors of the economy.

But there were also a few underlying rationales which were identified to be the following:

- there was a need to strengthen university research in the face of a growing migration of research into extra-university research institutions;
- there was a need to strengthen the international visibility of German universities;

- the government wanted to identify “lighthouses” with the potential to become global players and to put German universities among the top ranking institutions in international rankings.

Despite widespread criticism of global rankings (*vide* Marginson and Rhoades 2002; Zechlin 2006, Kehm & Stensaker 2009) these seem to have a strong appeal to national policymakers in particular. At that point in time there were only six German universities among the top 100 of the Shanghai Jiao Tong Ranking, although there were 41 among the top 500. The German states criticised this initiative heavily since they insisted that higher education was their responsibility and the federal Government was meddling in their affairs. At last and after difficult negotiations a compromise was achieved in June 2004 to invest altogether 1.9 billion Euros into this initiative over the course of five years. The federal Government contributed about 250 million Euros annually and the 16 German states together 130 million Euros annually.

A competition was announced in three categories. Funding would be made available for

- a. about 40 graduate schools for doctoral training; each funded with 1 million Euros annually;
- b. about 30 clusters of excellence for interdisciplinary strategic alliances of partners to carry out cutting edge research; each funded with about 8 million Euros annually;
- c. about ten institutional development concepts with the potential to become top level universities; each funded with about 25 million Euros annually.

Funding was promised for five years after which an evaluation would take place and possibly a new competition. Universities of applied sciences were not allowed to participate.

#### 4. Outcomes of the Selection Process

Due to the loss in time because of the lengthy negotiations between the federal Government and the States and the complexity of the application and selection process, it was decided to have two rounds of selection, the first in 2006 and the second in 2007. There was also some discussion as to whether there should be such a competition every five years. In the meantime a third and most probably last round has been initiated. Universities have submitted their proposals in the fall of 2010 and candidates on the shortlist have been named in March 2011 (*vide* below).

The selection process is based on a procedure consisting of two steps. The first step consists of universities submitting sketches of their proposals in each of the categories. Then a pre-selection takes place and the successful proposals are announced on a shortlist. Universities are then asked to develop their sketches into full proposals. Then another and more rigid evaluation and selection process takes place. The selection of proposals is a complex procedure including a review by international peers.

In January 2006 the final decisions results of the first round of applications were announced. For those universities who had submitted an institutional development concept, thus aiming for the “elite” status, this was a day of hope and fear because it had been made public already beforehand that not all of the proposals would be accepted. Rejections were expected to backfire on the reputation of the whole university. The mass media had been speculating for weeks about those universities which might be among the chosen ten to become officially the first German elite universities.

The following Table (Table 1) provides an overview of the outcomes of the first round with the winners announced in October 2006.

**Table 1:** Outcomes of Round 1, German Excellence Initiative (2006)

	Graduate Schools	Excellence Clusters	Institutional Development Concepts
Number to be selected	about 20 (out of 40)	about 15 (out of 30)	about 5 (out of 10)
First proposals received	135	157	27
Selected for short-list (full proposal)	39	39	10
Winners	18	18	3

Source: Fallon (2007:12), adapted by author.

The ten universities which made it on the shortlist in the category “institutional development concepts” were: Technical University Aachen, Free University Berlin, University of Bremen, University of Freiburg, University of Heidelberg, Technical University Karlsruhe, University of Munich, Technical University of Munich, University of Tübingen, and University of Würzburg. What is remarkable about this list is the fact that a majority of institutions is located in the southern states of Germany and that there is no institution from any of the East German states. In the end only three of them were selected as winners: the University of Munich, the Technical University of Munich, and the Technical University of Karlsruhe. Among the winners of the elite status two universities are located in Bavaria and one in Baden-Württemberg. Both States are located in the south-west of Germany.

Concerning the winners in the two other categories, the distribution is interesting from a geographical as well as subject or discipline related perspective. There were 18 winners in the category “graduate schools” from eight different states, the majority again located in southern Germany and only one in East Germany. The subject distribution

shows a considerable majority in engineering and life sciences (9), some in mathematics and physics (4), and also four in the social sciences and humanities. One graduate school cannot be specified according to subject groupings. In the category “graduate schools” it is notable that many of the proposals had a strong interdisciplinary orientation with the others showing approximately an equal distribution across disciplines.

The 18 winners of excellence clusters are distributed over seven states, the majority again in the South-West and only one in East Germany. Similar to the category “graduate schools” the majority of the winners come from engineering, informatics, and life sciences, three clusters are in mathematics and physics, and only one at the interface of social sciences and humanities.

The results showed a clear bias towards hard and applied natural sciences and technical sciences so that criticism was voiced concerning the criteria for selection, which seemed to favour these subjects and subject groups while being less compatible with the humanities and social sciences (*vide* DFG/WR 2006).

The outcomes of the second round, which were announced in October 2007, are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Outcomes of Round 2, German Excellence Initiative (2007)

	Graduate Schools	Excellence Clusters	Institutional Development Concepts
Number to be selected	about 22	about 12	about 7
New first proposals received	118	123	20

Round 1 proposals carried forward	21	22	7
Selected for short-list (full proposal)	44	40	8
Winners	21	20	6

Source: Fallon (2007:13), adapted by author.

The winners of the second round of selections in the category of institutional development concepts were: the Technical University of Aachen (North Rhine Westphalia), the Free University of Berlin (Berlin), and the Universities of Freiburg (Baden-Württemberg), Goettingen (Lower Saxony), Heidelberg (Baden-Württemberg), and Konstanz (Baden-Württemberg). Four of these six universities (Aachen, Berlin, Heidelberg, Goettingen) had already applied in the category “institutional development concepts” in the first round but had been rejected in the end. The two universities rejected in this category in the second round were the Humboldt University in Berlin and Bochum University (North Rhine Westphalia). Although the distribution is more varied than in the first round, we find again a clear over-representation of institutions located in southern Germany.

Taking both selection rounds together we have four universities with elite status located in Baden-Württemberg and two located in Bavaria, thus making up two thirds of the total number of universities with this status being located in the south of Germany. Among the winners in the category of graduate schools, the picture is more varied in the results of the second round. Berlin is strongly represented (4) but also once again Baden-Württemberg (5). However, in this round two of the winners are located in two East German States. Concerning the subject distribution we find a stronger representation of humanities (3) as well as social sciences (3). With eight graduate schools in the life sciences and biology and four in engineering and computer sciences, these two

subject groups are well represented again while the hard pure sciences (mathematics and physics) won three graduate schools.

The winners of the second selection round in the category “excellence clusters” are distributed over ten of the German States, although no institution located in East Germany is among them. Strongly represented are North Rhine Westphalia (4 clusters), Berlin (4 clusters), and Baden-Württemberg again (4 clusters). The subject distribution looks as follows: seven clusters are in the fields of life sciences, biology, engineering and computer sciences, five clusters are in the humanities, and one cluster is in physics (DFG-Pressemitteilung 65/2007).

Two trends which became already visible in the first round of selections were confirmed in the second round, namely that there is an increasing number of interdisciplinary approaches among the winning graduate schools and excellence clusters, and that there is a sizable number of cooperative projects, either in the form of a university cooperating with an extra-university research institute (as is the case for the Karlsruhe institutional development concept formalising cooperation with a Fraunhofer Institute which won elite status in the first round) or in the form of two universities cooperating within the framework of a graduate school or excellence cluster. The excellence clusters also frequently include the integration of private sector companies. These features were strongly supported in the guidelines and criteria for selection.

In 2010 a third round of selections was announced in the same three categories and basically in the framework of the same procedures. Funding had been increased from 1.9 billion Euros to 2.7 billion Euros for a five-year period from 2012 to 2017. Universities had to submit their proposals by September 2010. At the beginning of March 2011 the candidates on the shortlist for the third selection round were announced. Despite the fact that the final selection has not yet taken place, it is interesting to compare the results with the first two rounds. Table 3 provides an overview of the new applications followed by

a geographical analysis. Universities which came out as winners in any of the three categories in the first two rounds did not have to submit sketches for continued support but will enter into the competition with the full proposals of the new candidates in September 2011. The final decisions are expected for the summer of 2012.

**Table 3:** Short-listed new candidates for the third selection round (2011)

	Graduate Schools	Excellence Clusters	Institutional Development Concepts
Number to be selected in final decisions	24-60	37-97	12
New proposals	98	107	22
Short-listed candidates	25	27	7

Altogether 227 proposals were submitted in all three categories. A large number of proposals came from North Rhine Westphalia (51), Baden Wurttemberg (36), Bavaria (31), and Berlin (22). These four states were also the most successful ones on the shortlist. Altogether 59 proposals in all three categories were short-listed of which 16 came from North Rhine Westphalia (31 %), 10 from Baden Wurttemberg ((28 %), seven from Bavaria (23 %), and eight from Berlin (36 %). The most interesting information, however, is which universities will compete in the final selection round together with the existing nine universities for becoming a member in the “elite club”. The seven newly applying universities short-listed for the third category are the Humboldt University in Berlin (formerly East Berlin), the University of Bremen, the Technical University of Dresden (Saxony, formerly in East Germany), the University of Cologne (North Rhine Westphalia), the University of Mainz (Rhineland Palatinate), and the University of Tuebingen (Baden-



Wurttemberg). These seven will have to compete with the existing nine universities already supported in the third category. As support will only be given to altogether twelve universities in this category, four universities will not make it and it is undecided as yet whether they will be from the group of new applicants or whether some universities from the already existing group will lose the support.

Compared to the first two rounds it is notable that two universities made it on the shortlist for the third category (institutional development concepts) that are located in former East Germany. Furthermore, the short-listed candidates in all three categories are no longer so clearly concentrated in the South of Germany. Looking at the disciplinary fields of the graduate school and excellence cluster proposals that have been selected for the shortlist, we can observe an increasing number of interdisciplinary graduate schools and excellence clusters. Among the 25 short-listed graduate schools we find 5 in the areas of engineering and information technology, 11 in the areas of social sciences and humanities, 5 in the field of life sciences, and 4 in the field of Physics and Mathematics. Among the 27 short-listed clusters of excellence we find 5 in the areas of engineering and information technology, 6 in the areas of social sciences and humanities, 10 in the field of life sciences, 3 in the area of material sciences, and 3 in the field of Physics. These results also demonstrate a certain change insofar as the support for the humanities and social sciences has increased; an issue which was heavily criticised after the decisions in the first two rounds.

## 5. Restructuring the German Higher Education Landscape

What effects has this Initiative had on the German higher education landscape so far? Certainly it is only possible to speak of trends and not clearly identifiable effects as the Initiative has taken off only recently (*vide* Kehm 2006; Kehm and Pasternack 2008; Fallon 2007; Hinderer 2007; Bloch *et al.* 2008). But seven shifts or changes can be pointed out which have become visible to some extent by now.

First, the Excellence Initiative is officially not regarded as a ranking of German universities but it indicates a clear shift towards a more vertical differentiation of the system as a whole.

Second, The Initiative triggered more competition among German universities than ever before but focused on research excellence only. Thus, some of the results were basically pre-programmed. Universities located in richer states that had been able to financially support their universities in a better way than poorer states were the big winners of the game.

Third, incentives have also been introduced lately for the reward of teaching excellence. But the awards or prizes are often just a one-time incentive and the level of the prizes only a fraction of what is awarded in the framework of the Initiative for Excellence. Thus, universities continue to establish their credibility through research and the importance of teaching is downgraded.

Fourth, the fact that politically no decision was taken about the overall structure and configuration of the German higher education system as a whole was not only a missed opportunity, but a gross oversight.

Fifth, the question needs to be asked whether ‘steep stratification’ (or rankings) is the only solution or whether there are also other systems logics that might be more appropriate. Nobody denies the necessity for diversification in mass higher education systems, but diversification can also be achieved through intra-institutional differentiation or through functional (horizontal) diversification into different institutional types (also *vide* Teichler 2009a).

Sixth, another question that needs to be asked is whether there is only one type of excellence or whether we should talk about honouring various types of excellence. It tends to remain unclear – in the

Excellence Initiative as well as in university rankings – on what kind of unit judgements of excellence are being based. Is it the individual researcher or a research group, is it the department or faculty, is it a network of partners or is it the institution as whole? It is common wisdom that no university is “excellent” across the board (also *vide* Teichler 2007).

Seventh and last, a final question needs to be asked concerning the effects of the Excellence Initiative on the German landscape of higher education. What about those universities which lost out in the competition, either by applying and not being selected or by not applying at all because chances were estimated to be too low? It is important to find a credible role for them within the national higher education system and not to punish them by reducing their funding. They too have a role to play and they can only play it well if they are motivated to play it. One of these roles could be, for example, to educate and train the available pool of talents from which the top-level institutions will recruit their future students, doctoral candidates or young researchers.

As Teichler (*vide* 2009a) has pointed out, there are a number of historical phases in German as well as in European debates on the role of diversification and differentiation of higher education systems. In the phase of higher education expansion in the 1960s and 1970s diversification was achieved through creating different institutional types (e.g. polytechnics, colleges, etc.) and internal (i.e. intra-institutional) differentiation through programme diversity. This horizontal differentiation is gradually being replaced in recent years by vertical differentiation due to increased international competition and supported by the growing popularity, in particular among institutional leaders and policy makers, of global and national rankings. To have “elite institutions” or “world class universities” in one’s own national system has almost become an imperative. This development has supported the emergence of the view that generally national higher education systems should be more vertically stratified than before, that success at the top of the

system is important, and that the “top” no longer plays in the national league but in a (global) champions league (*vide ibidem*). The three elements of this view played a major role in the decision to start the “Excellence Initiative” in German higher education.

But what about the majority of universities (and other higher education institutions) which are not among the top group? The “shock” function of the first two selection rounds in the framework of the German Excellence Initiative has triggered feelings of being a “loser”, in particular among those universities that participated in the competition but lost. The other German universities, which did not participate because they knew they would not stand a chance, also feel as if they have been relegated to “the second league” but try to counter this by emphasising their difference in function and mission. In the face of mass and even universal higher education no national system can afford to cater exclusively for the “top league” of institutions. That would trigger a form of imitation of the best to the detriment of the national higher education system as a whole. In the face of this inherent danger, Marginson and Rhoades (2002) have developed their argument about the increasingly closer relationship between global, national and regional higher education activities in the face of globalisation, which they describe as a “glonacal” process.

Rarely discussed is the question raised by Teichler (2007) as to how the emergence of a top stratum of elite institutions will influence the rest of the system. We have mentioned the danger of mimetic isomorphism (i.e. imitation). But there is legitimate doubt whether the political decision-makers who established the Excellence Initiative really took the decision on the basis of a clear understanding of the need for a new structure of the system as a whole. They wanted “Harvards” in Germany as a matter of prestige without being able and willing to provide funding at a level which would at least come close to what Harvard actually has (*vide* Zechlin 2006, Hinderer 2007), but the issue of a new configuration of the system never really came up in the public debates.

Overall, the question whether steep stratification will be the dominating concept for restructuring national higher education systems in the future, or whether new and different systems logics will emerge, cannot be answered as yet. Certainly the Bologna reform process will act as an intervening variable. In addition, those higher education institutions ranked in the middle and lower strata of a vertically stratified system will have to reorient their functions and missions as well as improve the marketing and visibility of those elements at which they are good or even excellent. Political decision-makers as well as the public will need to take account of this development.

## 6. Excellence in the Making and its Side-Effects

Besides the impact of the Excellence Initiative on the national system, some critical issues have been generated by the selection process, which will now be analysed.

A first point of criticism casts some doubt on the legitimacy of the procedure itself. It is connected to the question of what is rated in the selection procedure: Is it the quality and style of the application or is it proven excellence? The question is whether the winners have been selected on the basis of their performance promises or of their past achievements. Indeed, only those universities selected for the shortlist of overall institutional excellence (i.e. the third category) were actually visited by the reviewers. The divide between “excellence achieved” and “excellence in the making” is all the more difficult to determine when it comes to drawing the line between which institution is awarded the final winning place in any of the categories and the very next institution, or even the one equal to it but not selected (*vide* Pasternack 2008; Zürn 2007).

A second point of criticism is the inconsistency between the first two categories (graduate schools and excellence clusters) and the third one (institutional development concepts). While the first two categories are clearly based on an evaluation of research output in the past

and convincing evidence-based strategies designed to increase and improve this output, the third category actually awards institutional management concepts. These might have merited their own excellence initiative – just like teaching excellence as well – however, the relationship between excellent management strategies and excellence in research is not a given. Instead, the promoters and organisers of the Excellence Initiative made eligibility for awards in the third category dependent on winning at least one graduate school and one cluster of excellence, thus excluding universities that could have provided evidence of overall management excellence but did not score in the other two categories. Although one might argue that it is the combination of excellent research and excellent management which promises to fulfil the expectation to be able eventually – and of course with considerable extra funding – to achieve world class status, the criticism reported here points to the fact that the first two categories of awards (graduate schools and excellence clusters) are of a different order than the third (institutional development concepts). In addition, the bigger the institution the more heterogeneous it is likely to be. So the question is whether the awards in the third category, which are supposed to identify potential “elite” institutions, are perhaps the result of a compromise because there was no trust in the forms of excellence evaluated in the other two categories (*vide* Teichler 2009a).

A third issue are the unintended side effects of the Excellence Initiative on the configuration of the system as a whole. It is not yet possible to answer the question in which way the “elite” institutions will influence the “rest” and vice versa, in which way the “rest” will influence the elite institutions. Furthermore, it remains unclear whether the competition for excellence status will lead to increased resource concentration among and within institutions (i.e. the status of excellence becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy) or whether there will be a more effective use of the overall pool of talents (*vide* Teichler 2007).

Fourth, there is currently great concern about the status and reputation of those universities that lost out in the competition or did not

participate in it. The winners did not only gain additional resources but there are other effects as well, namely that they have become more attractive partners for top level institutions abroad, and that they are now actively and successfully recruiting highly reputed academic staff from other universities. That means, those universities which have not won extra funding in any of the categories of the Excellence Initiative lose out twice, which makes their effective participation in the next round all the more difficult. There may be a trend towards a new stratification of the German higher education system but it also poses the question of whether the system will also develop more heterogeneous purposes or whether there will be more homogeneity as all institutions try to achieve the same officially valued goals (*vide* Teichler 2007).

Fifth, the winners have frequently complained about a serious time loss for research as the administration of the extra elements (i.e. establishing the infrastructure, recruiting staff) has been very time consuming. Furthermore, in some of the universities there have been trends towards fragmentation. Graduate school and excellence clusters have started to develop their own life here and there because they are typically outside the departmental or faculty structure and act as little kingdoms in themselves. This causes envy from the departments where every day university life and work tends to be less “glamorous”.

## 7. Critical Discussion and Conclusions

In summarizing it can be said that the Excellence Initiative was based on a political prognosis of the (global) competitiveness of the German higher education, research and innovation system that identified a number of problems. While the solution for the problems in teaching and learning is seen in the implementation of the Bologna reforms, the solution for the problems in research was seen in a steeper stratification of the system by identifying top research universities and providing them with considerable extra funding. The process that was established in achieving this goal was based on academic selection guided by peer review to provide legitimacy. Due to time constraints

and some inconsistencies in the selection procedures, in particular when the first and the second round of selections are compared with each other, some criticism has been voiced that the procedures lacked sufficient legitimacy (*vide* Zürn 2007). To improve the situation a number of suggestions have been made:

- to repeat the competition for excellence in research every five or six years;
- to improve the selection procedures;
- to clarify the relationship of the selection criteria to each other;
- to focus on an assessment of the ability to perform

As Pasternack (2008) recently pointed out in an analysis of the Excellence Initiative as a political programme, the Initiative has changed its course. Formally, it was established as a predominantly government funded higher education support programme. Seen from a content perspective it turned out to be an open acknowledgement of existing differences among universities within the German higher education system, and forced the system as a whole to focus more on research. With regard to terminology it introduced a particular concept of “excellence” into the public discourse and established the term as the code for ‘the highest quality’, however, without clearly defining which functions are central to the definition of ‘excellence’. In terms of political and public discourse it made tacit knowledge about differences among higher education institutions visible and offered opportunities for the winners to gain more attention and reputation. In the context of higher education policy it was a termination of the longstanding fiction of a qualitatively homogeneous higher education system supported by de facto legal homogeneity.

But does that mean that the Excellence Initiative is just a new regular modus of competitive funding, or does it imply a paradigmatic shift for German higher education? According to Pasternack it is possible to conceptualise the Initiative in three different ways: (a) as a catalytic funding programme, i.e. to achieve critical mass for



later unassisted development; (b) as a compact funding programme, i.e. long-term additional funding for the winners under conditions of suspended competition for them; or (c) as permanent competition for funding, i.e. a succession of calls for tenders in the most important category, the institutional development concepts, possibly with slightly changing focuses. In the current stage of development, in particular when we also look at developments in other (European) countries, Pasternack concludes that the Excellence Initiative cannot (yet) be cast as a paradigmatic shift but must be regarded rather as a component of an increasingly competitive culture in the field of higher education. Therefore, the Initiative has a potential catalytic function for the German higher education system. But much will depend on further decisions to continue the competition periodically or not. What will be its effects on the overall German system of research funding? Will it not only entail decisions about the concept and configuration of the system as a whole, but also about its overall forms of funding and the relationship between organisation and innovation within universities? As it is almost certain that the Initiative will be an important factor in the establishment of new hierarchies at the national level, within the individual States, within institutions among the subjects and departments or faculties, and finally within departments or faculties (for example, between those involved in a graduate school or excellence cluster with funding from the Initiative and those not funded), it is most certainly worthwhile not only to analyse the effects of the Excellence Initiative on the overall system's configuration but also to see how the system as a whole actually performs (*vide* Teichler 2007).

But there are further conclusions that can be drawn already at this moment in time. First, there is a general trend to integrate research funding within the framework of programmes and projects. The Excellence Initiative is part of this development. In this respect it can be said that Germany is a latecomer again, as this form of (competitive) research funding was introduced some years ago in a number of other European countries. There is, secondly, a trend towards increased

competition for funding. Many academics currently have to engage in some form of competitive bidding for even minimal resources. This requirement not only pertains to third party research funding but also to a variety of funding possibilities within their institutions, e.g. tutors and research assistants, seed money, contracts for doctoral students, funding for participation in conferences etc. A growing amount of time is spent on writing applications, submitting reports, and the possibility of exposure to further evaluation requirements. In addition, institutional management also expects that academics be involved more than ever before in such competitions, which diminishes the time actually spent on research.

Finally, looking at the use of the term “excellence” in public and political discourse we can note the highly inflationary character it has acquired. Its newly acquired character is also infiltrating widely into the language of calls for proposals, tenders, and applications. Everything has to be “excellent” in order to justify funding at all. This brings to the fore a tension between performance and status in which it becomes difficult to distinguish between reputation on the one hand and performance on the other. The social construct of excellence based on reputation and the assessment of objective performance become intertwined and raise questions about the validity of peer review. If we cast the Excellence Initiative as a process of differentiation and distribution of reputation, “objective” measuring and assessment are hardly possible any longer, at least not within the classical forms of peer review led by scholarly and scientific criteria (*vide* Hornbostel 2008). Time will tell whether in the future a legitimate balance between “attributed” status and reputation and “objective” performance and achievement can be found.

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Annick Magnier  
University of Florence

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IN SEARCH OF ITALIAN  
HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY

**1. Managerism and bureaucracy**

Italian universities underwent a series of changes at the end of the 80's, and the system has not evolved much since; one may mention only minor, reactionary reconstructions. In 1989, the Ruberti reform, together with the implementation of the constitutional principle of university autonomy, paved the way for the still-pending transition process to reach its pinnacle, contrary to popular opinion, at the turn of the century (*vide* Vaira 2003). From then on, this frequently reviewed issue was brought to the attention of the interested parties and forced scholars to constantly redefine their role and responsibilities which, as far as the rules, goals, and effects of education are concerned, ultimately confused the younger generation and their families, and left the impression of obscurity in relation to these issues. Adding insult to injury, scarce budgetary funding, particularly resources allocated in the 2008 budget, rendered any remedial actions of the education system prone to high risk. Scornful statements released by the government on the occasion of recent events, and indeed throughout the whole twenty-year long reform, expose a lack of a coherent and common vision of the university, its social role, and the basic principles it follows due to a virtually non-existent understanding of the key issues. In discussing the problem at hand, the academic environment emphasises exclusion of the university from political and public life.

The initially adopted innovative, deliberate and progressive stance resulted in constant shifts and uncertainty within the system

(didactic reforms occurring circa every three years). There have been several crucial recent stages of reform. In 1999, there was the implementation of Bologna directives concerning the course of studies (until then lasting four years, with the exception of law, medicine and architecture, which all required five years to graduate), which was divided into two phases: a two-year and a three-year stage. Such a solution was strongly contested, for it did not seem based on thorough analysis of the demand for the newly-established courses. In 2004, there was an amendment (the so called Moratti reform, elaborated in detail only after passage of the appropriate acts in 2007) stressing control over the quantity and capability to implement courses of study. In 2009, there were further restrictions going in the same direction, aimed at tailoring the system to the designed comprehensive Gelmini reform (Act No. 240 from 2010) and subsequently to the Act No. 17 from 2011, which allows for only partial implementation of the reform.

In the meantime, universities were subjected to processes applied within the whole body of public administration: internal audits, reorganised participation of the state, fostering of competition, administrative autonomy in the decentralised entities, and product and performance supervision. The period around 1995 saw the establishment of government based distribution of financial resources on performance criteria, along with state evaluation committees (the most recent one was the State Agency for Evaluation of Universities and Research, founded in 2006; experts participating in it were not appointed until the end of 2010); these further triggered the emergence of extensive grey literature<sup>1</sup>. The Common University Fund created a bonus fund (“rebalancing sums”). Bonuses are granted based on the performance indicators, which are not necessarily well tailored for the specific disciplines. Indicators were partially or wholly modified throughout

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1 Concise guide to indicators and history of their development – Evaluation of Higher Education System, Indicators for evaluation of university education effectiveness - October 2010 -RdR 3/[http://www.cnvsu.it/\\_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11782](http://www.cnvsu.it/_library/downloadfile.asp?id=11782), particularly p. 52. Available in Internet. Access 15 March 2011. To compare *vide* Agasisti (2008).



the years, encouraging the universities to make students graduate as quickly as possible, cut payroll costs, and support local funding of research and participation in large research projects, which altogether left universities balancing on a financial tightrope. By the turn of the century, benchmarking of the recruitment process and teaching was refined, universities were obliged to raise the level of satisfaction of the students, and international accreditation of courses was stimulated. A new framework for financing higher education institutions, meant to replace the previous mechanism, was to be provided with the passage of Act No. 1 in 2009. The old system, however, still applies and is based on historical data and structural quantitative indicators (the bonus fund equals less than 10% of the resources available from public sources). Within the whole period examined here, just one research activity evaluation procedure was carried out (2004), which peculiarly combined quantitative indicators and peer review; another evaluation procedure is now being reviewed. Evaluations carried out mainly by statisticians and public finance experts, and based exclusively on quantitative indicators, served as the grounds for imposing severe restrictions on accepting new employees.

There is a traditional opposition between two models of the university, both offering a different approach to retaining the precarious balance between autonomy, which is a prerequisite of research activity, and finding financial resources, which are equally important to research and teaching as well as their quality assurance (*vide* Moscati 2010). These two opposing models are usually referred to as the European and American models. In recent years, Italian “reform” has been adopting solutions worked out in both of the approaches.

On one hand, we can observe dependence on a certain central authority. In this respect the university resembles other sectors of public administration, and while this leads to promoting the rhetoric of managerism, it strengthens certain bureaucratic traits, in the Weberian sense of the term, such as the specific manner of management, as well as the exercise of legal and financial control. Here we touch the core of

the European model in regard to bonds between the university and political power: central authority is perceived as the necessary safeguard of uniformity (I mean here the necessary uniformity in the legal sense, as granting general recognition of university degrees), impartiality, and rationality; the state also grants all the employees of the university a status of civil servant. The central authority grants autonomy, which is a basic formal requirement for embarking on scientific inquiry. The framework for autonomy was fashioned in a hurry and does not touch upon the core of the problem; it does not take into account the diverse needs or resources of academia nor the fact that the rules that are followed in specific disciplines are of varied character. To name just one example, the autonomy framework brings teaching and research carried out in the university hospitals in line with that performed in the humanities, which in effect leads to constant adjustments exacted in order to meet the education requirements in specific subjects.

On the other hand, by employing the very same rhetoric of managerism one stresses the need to find support on equal footing with private organisations. Here it must be noted that the government makes declarations endorsing “private” universities, despite the fact that they also are included in the scheme of distribution of public money and are supposed to “have equal rights”. The “Gelmini Reform” (Act No. 240 from 2010) re-establishes the lecturer as a sort of civil servant. Starting in 2013, the first group of them shall work solely under an employment contract for an indefinite time; this does not apply, however, to the rule of salary non-diversification while recruiting (as far as how it relates to career development and performance, there is an air of anticipation that further legal acts shall follow after some preliminary declarations have been made). The same act imposes an obligation to include private entities in governance bodies, although such entities will not be obliged to cover the ensuing costs.

Therefore, as we can see, these reforms do not foster the development of the main traits of the American model, where the autonomy

of the university community in its local variations is no longer secured by the central authorities, but manifests itself in the free association of scholars, local communities, and the world beyond academia. Moreover, one does not observe any activity on the part of the central authorities to create a well-measured “third way”.

At the end of the day, this final act of “reform” leaves the Italian university in limbo, although one thing is certain – before summer, university governance will be entirely reorganised: the outcome of this overhaul of university statutes will be ultimately determined by the universities themselves in the course of interpreting the often unclear or self-contradictory legal text, whether they are forced to do this by subsequent normative acts and ordinances, or must figure it out by their own means. The executive will exercise decision-making power, as opposed to the traditional and somewhat impractical principle of collegiality. Departments (the units responsible for co-ordinating the research activity of chairs having common fields of interests) were assigned the task of research; faculties from now on are to provide didactics. It is beyond doubt that the initial stages of the lecturer’s career will take new shape as the first degree, “scholar”, was replaced with a contract for an indefinite period awarded in the more or less closed competition procedure; at the present stage we may presume that such contracts will be limited in number. There is also little doubt that the direction taken will result in rationalisation of the courses (less teaching). Considering other aspects of the reform, its basic assumptions are not reflected in the specific normative acts or in the provision of resources that would ensure their implementation.

## **2. Between the hyper-reform and surrender**

With 1.800.000 students, almost 60.000 lecturers and 57.000 administration employees distributed among roughly 90 universities, Italy has a university system of a size similar to other comparable European countries (*vide* Regini 2009).

**Table 1.** Italian university landscape

	Italy	Germany	The Netherlands	Spain	Great Britain
Number of universities and other scientific and research entities	87 universities (26 – non-public, 10 of which are telematic universities)  6 institutions of higher education	104 universities  184 <i>Fachhoch- schulen</i>  103 other institu- tions of higher education	14 universities (1 offering exclu- sively distance learning)  41 <i>Hogescholen</i>	75 universities (25 private)	117 universities  24 <i>Colleges of Higher Education</i>
Number of scientific and research entities per one million citizens	1,6 (1.5 only univer- sities)	3,9 (1.3 only universities)	3,4 (0.9 only universities)	1,7	2,3 (1.9 only universities)
Number of courses per one million citizens	101,4	154,1	107,2	72,8	62,6

Source: Regini 2009: Italy, valid on 2007/2008

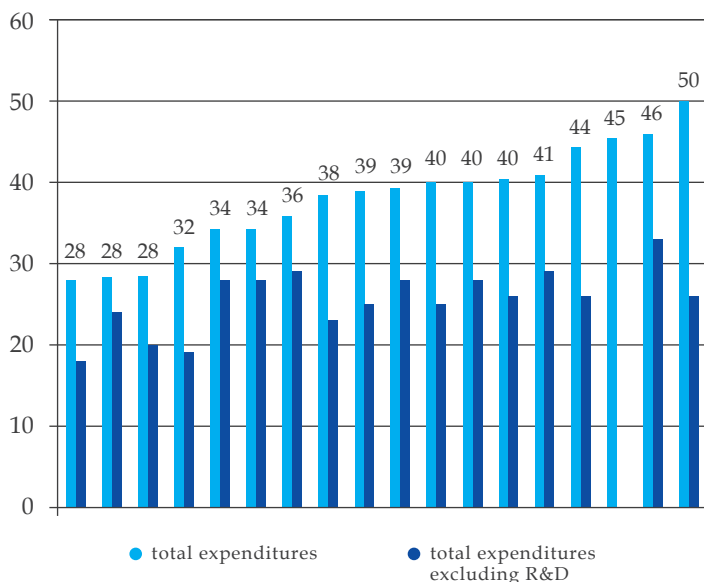
Since the 90's, the joint contribution of Italian citizens to this system (and to the education system as such) in terms of GDP is lower than in any other country save Hungary and Slovakia, where expenditures in this field are of the same proportion. In 2009 Italy spent 0.9% of its GDP on higher education and 4.5% on the whole education system (in this regard only Slovakia settles below Italy)(*vide* OECD, 2010). In the same year, the United States spent 3.1% on its higher education. Constant redundancies, uncertainty, media reports of extraordinary subsidies which in reality may only partially fill the substantial gap that was caused by the dramatic cutbacks, all this, coupled with the authorities governing the country by directing media attention to spectacular changes in ministerial posts, results in the university world resembling

the world of show business or publishing houses inciting hype to generate publicity for a book. The foundations of the university are being undermined by enforcement of financial rationalisation and a certain climate of disregard for the need to invest in education and knowledge. In the words of Regini, the university is “ailing and defamed”.

State universities somehow managed to respond to the new circumstances by searching for external sources of funds, be they private entrepreneurs or local institutions, although the largest share of funds comes from regional authorities. Some struggled to secure the recruitment process and the financing of research within the field of their own interest (needs). During the 2001-2009 period, the share of external financing more than doubled. The input of financial resources from the ministry in relation to the total figure (13.2 billion Euros in 2009) decreased from 73% in 2001 to 63% in 2009 (*vide* CNVSU – State Higher Education System Evaluation Committee, 2011), and in light of the present economic crisis, the state university system may not anticipate the modernisation it so badly needs.

Expenditures per student are at a low ebb. The popular argument that lecturers are too big a figure on the payroll – they are overpaid or there are far too many of them – cannot be sustained in the light of comparative study with respect to average wages (this discrepancy, which seems large, might have arisen from the advanced age of the lecturers), the lecturer-students proportion (also relatively high – 29.5), or the expenditure scheme of the university (36% of expenditures is the remuneration of the lecturers, 68% being the total cost of the staff (*vide* OECD 2010)).

**Table 2.** Expenditures per student in the higher education system in GDP perspective, excluding and including research and development activity



Source: OECD 2010

After the introduction of evaluation criteria designed to cut staff costs and the implementation of regulations restricting professional accessibility (contrary to guidelines issued by the state authorities promoting the prolongation of working time), the university system has embarked on the staff reorganisation process, and within several years the situation in this area will change dramatically, although presently it is difficult to predict the outcome of the process.

Within twelve years, university staff comprising researchers, university professors, and full professors increased by 15% and today amounts to 57,000 persons, 35% of whom are women. The increase pertains mainly to the first career stage, i.e. researchers (+32%). This

brilliant move aimed at rejuvenating the staff, stimulated by the specially dedicated funds provided by the ministry between 2007 and 2009, was however put on hold; recruitment is behind schedule due to the review process and to the postponed competition procedures; moreover, state universities had to cope with budget limits imposed on staff spending. On the other hand, ever since 2002 there have been general restrictions in awarding permanent contracts. A comprehensive review of the professorial appointment procedures in 2005, and selection of those possessing national-level skills, as well as the cancelation of the permanent teacher-researcher position with the title of assistant, was never concluded due to ever-recurring postponements. In 2008, further restrictions were imposed on recruitment and promotion of permanent employees due to the enforced cap of resources available from the previous year (a maximum of 50%) and scarce resources allocated for employing new teacher-researchers (60%), while at the same time granting a maximal percentage for university professors (10%). Moreover, it should be taken into consideration that within the next five years an estimated 14,000 teacher-researchers will leave the university (at present there are 57,000 of such employees) (*vide* CNVSU 2011).

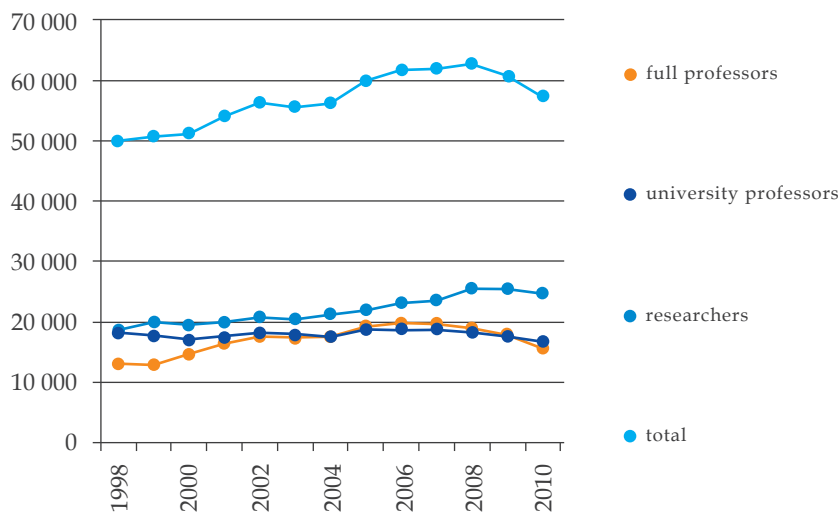
Due to the limited recruitment, the average age of teacher-researchers increased by 5 years within all the faculties between 1998 and 2010 (*ibidem*). Some of the modifications introduced to the recruitment process involved elimination of the two first stages of the academic career by the competition committees. Taking into consideration the average age of full professors, which remains in stark contrast to “anti-establishment” rhetoric employed by the minister while signing the Act, it must be noted that Italian university is of gerontocratic character. The age of appointment to specific posts was particularly high between 1988 and 2010, as far as taking a first position is concerned; the age was 37.1 years old.

Scholarly activity is initially funded with one-year research grants (there are 13.000 of these grants today), and until recently this funding system was also applied to the teacher-researchers (who were paid very little or even received no salary), whose contract could in addition be combined with grants. When the quantitative criteria for the existing courses were introduced, didactic contracts for the young scholars were eliminated, and teaching became the area of responsibility of the whole employed staff (simultaneously, since 2009 a great majority of researchers have refused to accept teaching obligations, such an act of disobedience being legally grounded in the normative definition of their position).

Considering the requirement for serving a lengthy period of internship before one takes a permanent post, the opposition against transformation of the position of researcher into another contract for a defined time seems justified: “interns” and researchers, witnessing the ever-shrinking opportunities for stabilisation following the 2013 programme, joined in protest against the last phase of the “reform”. There was a moral point in refusing informally delegated teaching obligations, and it must also be noted that performing such obligations would never be accompanied by appropriate (though costly) financial consideration. Young doctors with already significant didactic experience find themselves competing for few and highly popular researcher contracts for defined periods, whereas awarding research grants or contracts for defined periods is hampered due to the need to find external financing sources, or is put on hold while waiting for the actual implementation of the proclaimed reform.



**Table 3.** Structure of the didactic staff



Source: CNVSU 2011

The same sense of obscurity may be experienced when we look into the doctoral projects (at present there are twelve thousand of them). The first stage of the reform aimed at overcoming the traditionally dispersed doctoral training by enforcing its consolidation within local structures. In effect, however, localism became a distinctive feature of the system. The results of the reform also revealed that only around one third of those sitting for the entry exams for doctoral studies graduated from a different university than the one where they wanted to write their doctoral thesis.

Four out of ten participants in the doctoral courses currently receive no financial support, and there will be further cuts in scholarships and permanent posts. As many doctors emigrate, particularly those specialising in exact and technical sciences, it translates into a shrinking number of researchers (CNSVU). In Italy, half of the research and

development resources are provided by the public sector and are distributed among universities and large research centres (CNR – Scientific Research Centre, ISTAT – State Statistics Institute, ISS – Public Health Institute, ENEA – State Agency for New Technologies, Energy and Economic Development, INFN – State Nuclear Physics Institute), as well as countless minor entities. The discouraging terms of permanent research contracts offered by the public sector compounded the shortage of research and development resources provided by the private sector (*vide* Arentzon, Buchi 2009). Between 1998 and 2009, the number of scholars increased by 14%, while during the same period Germany increased the number of native scholars by 40%, France by 100%, and Spain by 200% (*vide* Cannavò 2010).

The emigration of scholars and graduates who shall at some time in the future achieve their doctoral degree is poorly measured and indeed is a hardly measurable phenomenon. To get in touch with such scholars, the Minister of Foreign Affairs established the Da Vinci register. So far, 2200 expatriated Italian scholars have participated in the project. The sole action proposed since 2001 to counteract the emigration consisted of simplifying the procedure for awarding contracts for defined periods; this was directed at Italian citizens teaching and carrying out research abroad (“return of the brains”). The forecasted and actual impact of such streamlining is not significant if one takes into account the rather few and brittle perspectives for employment and the low wage levels (1560 Euros as the starting net salary of a scholar).

Having said that, it must be noted that the State Higher Education System Evaluation Committee stated that if one adopted the perspective of international rankings, the Italian university is doing not that badly. A reading of the 2010 *QS World University Ranking* reveals that among the top 500 universities of the world, 15 are Italian, even if Bologna ranked 176th, Sapienza University in Rome 190th, and the University of Padova 261st. It may testify to the system quality, since these 15 universities constitute 41.8% of the students and 46.5% of the

teachers of the whole state higher education system. In *QS SAFE* the Italian university system ranks as tenth in the world – which makes it fifth in Europe – this position being a result of the application of various criteria: the Italian university system is fourth in the world and the first in Europe in terms of accessibility, and 27th considering the quality of the flagship universities of the country.

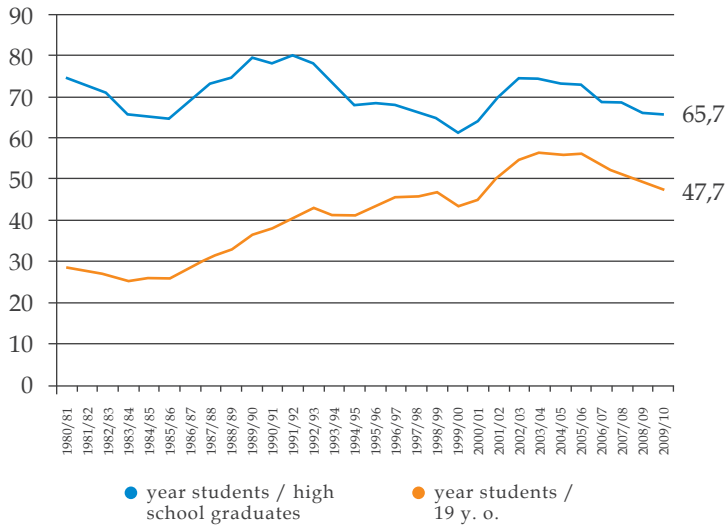
If one considers research, comparative studies by the OECD revealed that per capita output by Italian scholars places them in third position, right behind the Americans and Britons. The number of patents based on the research of Italian scholars is on the rise. The Italian share in writing scientific studies, and citations of Italian scholars, are also increasing throughout the OECD countries.

### **3. Overcoming credentialism?**

#### **Debating links between the university and social mobility**

It is the social dimension of higher education accessibility that captures the attention of politicians and commentators of public life. In terms of organisational structure and number of students enrolled, universities seem to be stable entities. The era of mass higher education is a historical fact: 300,000 students in 1960, 1,000,000 in 1980 and 1,800,000 today, which is almost the exact same figure as the year 2000. However, this seeming stability obscures quantitative changes as well as changes within the territorial and social structure (pertaining particularly to young people), and their exact impact may not be identified yet.

Since 2004 there has been a decreasing interest in higher studies (in 2009/2010 there were a little over 290,000 enrolments), which correlates with decreasing enrolments in relation to high school graduates (today 65.7%) and age group (47.7%; the index traditionally indicates larger participation among women). These figures suggest people's anxiety whether graduation will translate into employability.

**Table 4.** Students of higher education institutions

Source: CNVSU 2011

The seemingly wide accessibility to the university (the entrance fee is reasonable, there is no selection process save in certain faculties), as well as its role as the safeguard of the equality of rights and social mobility, prompted questions first debated by the interested parties in 1999, while the public and politicians joined the debate last year (here, *Fondazione FareFuturo* – the *MakeFuture Foundation* – participated actively). The emergence of the right-wing formation “*Future and Freedom*” several months ago resulted in the preparation of a report on social mobility in Italy which concludes that the “possibility that a person whose father does not have a higher education degree will graduate from the university is one of the lowest in Europe” (*vide Italia Futura 2010*), and the prospects are that it will grow even worse. On a positive note, data presented a couple of weeks later by the *Almalauera*

Consortium<sup>2</sup> revealed that in recent years we could observe an increasing number of university graduates whose parents had no university education: “From among those who graduated with a Bachelor’s degree in 2009, there are 75 persons in every 100 with such a background (in 2001 the number was 73 in 100)”. It must be stressed, however, that Almalauera studies have for some time now been pointing at the differentiated social background of graduates.

**Table 5.** University degree and social background

Social class	Persons with I and II degree in 2009	Persons with I degree in 2009	Persons with degree in 2001 (one cycle)
Bourgeoisie	21,7	19,7	39,1
Middle-class employed in administration	29,7	29,3	29,4
Lower middle-class	21,6	22,3	16,6
Workers	23,5	25,1	14,9

Source: Almalaurea 2010 and 2002

Regardless of varied interpretations of the correlation between the universities and social mobility, the studies agree in two points: employability in various sectors of the economy and the relation of the salary to the acquired education is the same for children of parents with different social backgrounds.

If we consider differentiation of salaries after the first professional experiences, it is too early to look into the effects of the recent

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2 Almalaurea is a consortium of 62 universities which has been offering services for university graduates involving registration of their field of expertise on the website (1,500,000 expert fields were identified); it also prepares an annual report concerning the profiles of the students.

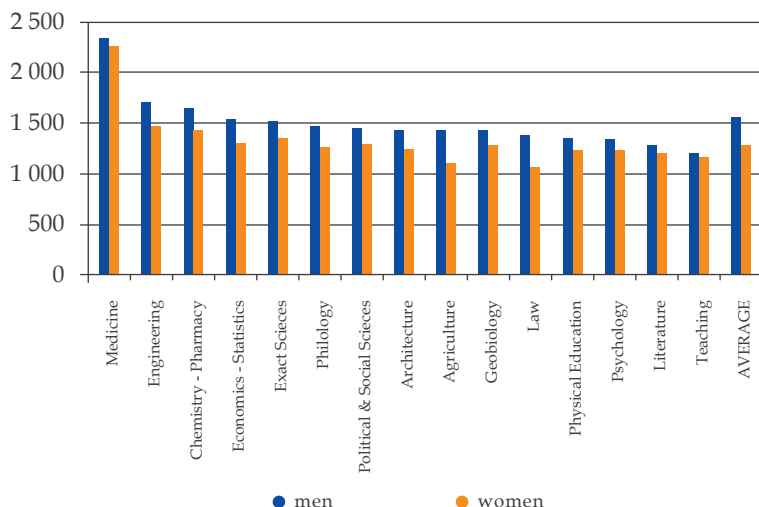
innovations; universities, however, are still not capable of replacing family in the orientation process, of filling the shortcomings caused at the stage of early education or, first and foremost, of conforming to employers' demands. The majority of female students and graduates who did better at the university still have no guarantee that this shall translate into equal wages in certain sectors of the economy.

**Table 6.** University degree and revenues: class effect

Social class	Monthly net wage within 5 years from graduation (Euro)
Bourgeoisie	1 404
Middle-class employed in commerce	1 309
Middle-class employed in administration	1 296
Workers	1 249
Middle-class	1 321

Source: Almalaurea 2011

**Table 7.** University degree and revenue: profession effect  
 Monthly net wage with regard to professions or professional groups within the period of 5 years after graduation (Euros)



Source: Almalaurea 2011

One of the goals following the transformation in 1999 of the four-year long university course into 3+2 system was reducing the number of students abandoning studies (30 graduates in 100 enrolled), reversing the growing trend of prolonging studies by those who did not graduate in the regular time, as well as focusing on employability (*vide* Fasanella 2010). The three-year long, shorter course, with narrowed field of specialisation, was designed to help larger numbers of students to graduate with a diploma recognised by employers. Those students could later return to the university and upgrade their education in line with the requirements posed by the employers.

The idea, however, was never fully effective. Economic crisis increased the unemployment rate among young people, university graduates being no exception, but it may be that the expectations of

Italian companies were never of major concern to the policy makers: small and medium-sized companies are managed by individuals with education far from university degrees who, while recruiting employees, often tend to disregard the education level of their subordinates, and in any case give them little chance of further education. Refocusing the system on the short process of education within a narrow field of expertise did not appeal to everyone; some of the newly formed courses, contrary to the traditional four-year courses, do not respond to the present market characteristics, with its flexibility forcing the graduate to adapt to a complex and varying environment where constant education is of paramount importance.

Three-year studies boast a decreased level of abandoned studies. Successful graduation from the first stage of the university career (a thesis defended with respect to the field enrolled in three years before) has been on a steady rise and now amounts to 60% (*vide* CNVSU 2011). Three fourths of first level graduates declare that they shall further pursue their studies (*vide* Almalaurea 2011). On the other hand, the average duration of studies has increased. In 2010, 60% enrolled managed to graduate without delay.

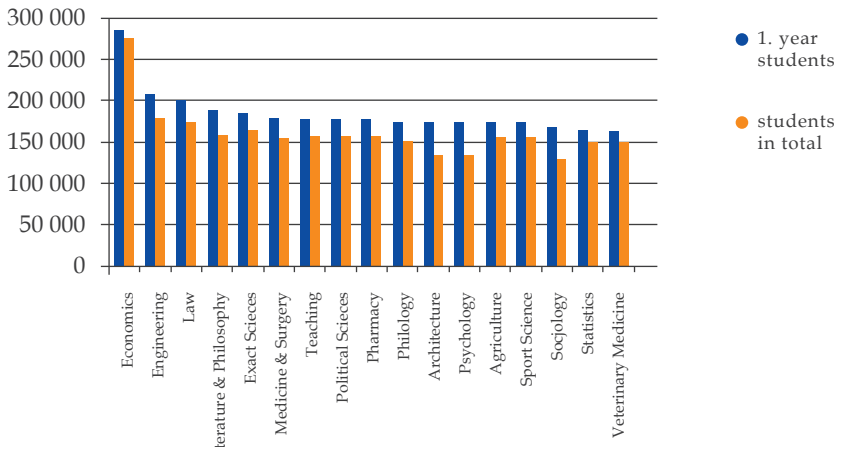
Such extended duration of study results from the absence of a stringent exam schedule; students are almost entirely free to take any exam of their choice, since all that is compulsory are propaedeutics, determining the path of the course, and taking one of the exams frequently organised throughout the year. It is a customary freedom much cherished by the students, which, combined with the selection process applied by some faculties and performance criteria introduced by the teachers, creates a peculiar selection process which promotes persistence and the ability to survive financially as a student.

This mismatch of market demand and education provided by the university has undeniably been affected by the traditional lack of focus on the specific subject, which one may observe at the beginning and at the end of the student's university education. Job orientation



through internship is still of minor significance, and it is often a mere formal requirement of the course: all universities organise internships at the central level, although only a third of those are somehow related with the chosen subject of interest, and may therefore be included in the course. As far as the studies orientation process is concerned, the traditional approach prevailing in the whole Italian education system throughout the last decade (it is only recently that this subject has been put on the agenda) rejects early and predetermined selection. The principle of optimal accessibility requires, however, that problems are to be resolved at the early stage of the process. Moreover, it prescribes that young people and their families are informed on the content of the courses, needed skills, and forecasted effects of the completed education. Italian universities regrettably neglected these requirements when they embarked on the process of transformation into a mass higher education system. In effect, the high rate of enrolment in the fashionable faculties or those enjoying transient or historical prestige may be traced as far back as the eighties.

These systemic flaws were remedied primarily by the introduction of entrance exams where over-enrolment was occurring. Such exams were subsequently uniformised at the national level. 2004 marked the introduction of obligatory “self-evaluation tests” when undertaking studies, although these were not uniformly interpreted. Presently, the introduction of national-level entrance exams to some of the faculties is being reviewed, but they shall not be binding. The broad introduction of a system providing information on courses and positive evaluation criteria, entrusted to specific entities, bears resemblance to a marketing campaign combined with the selection process. More effective national-level campaigns involving meetings, press releases, schools visits, fees reductions and prizes encouraging to enrol in less popular faculties may lead to a general shift in the cultural preferences of the society, as was proved within the field of exact sciences, where a positive trend has been created thanks to the implementation of the “exact sciences diplomas” project.

**Table 8.** Subject selection

Source: CNVSU 2011. Subjects are ranked as per enrolled in the first year in 2009; recent changes in the enrolment statistics were not included.

Whereas the level of entrance fees is more or less comparable (in 2011, the OECD assessed that in 2005 state universities set fees at the level of 1200 Euros, while private universities demanded 4300 Euros), there are hardly any procedures promoting students from low-income families. This particularly affects the student when the studies take longer than usual. 10% of students are exempted from fees due to various reasons. Acting through its regional departments, the National Integration Fund - an institution designed to foster equal university access - awards scholarships (since 1995) and honorary loans (since 1995). In 2010, these were reduced to 60% of their initial value. Today, the minimal value of the scholarship amounts to 4700 Euros for individuals studying beyond their place of residence, 2600 for those who commute, and 1700 for those studying at their place of residence. 131.000 students are eligible for scholarships: in the south, six out of ten eligible students actually subscribe for it, while in the central and northern part of the country almost all of the eligible students subscribe for it. Only one

out of five students eligible for the scholarship also gets a place in the dorms.

#### **4. Student: from mimetism to political protagonism**

It is therefore a shortage of dorms that has a significant impact on the social importance of universities. Although in 2007 it was decided to build more dorms, and the new mechanisms introduced the co-financing of the project by the ministry (although it falls under the responsibility of the regional authorities who are obliged to implement the “right to study” program), by the end of 2009 there were 37,817 places in the dorms, this to compare with 580,000 in Germany, 260,000 in France, and 350,000 in Great Britain – (*vide* CNVSU 2011).

If we take a look at the Italian university, its structure has never been that of a university town, where the university, being the dominant source of income, determines the economic relations and lifestyle of the local community. Italy has never experienced the phenomenon of the campus. Universities are traditionally based in cities that have complex production and administrative patterns, with Bologna, the seat of the most ancient university in Italy, being the model here. Only a couple of the newly established universities in the southern regions of the country are fashioned after the campus model, which is a sort of student ghetto with the majority dwelling on campus with the rest living in the adjacent areas hosting primarily students - leading a to specific kind of gentrification.

In Italy, the number of people studying beyond their place of permanent residence and renting flats from private owners in city centres has dramatically decreased in relation to other, more affluent, groups (tourists, well-off individuals, companies). The new layout of the university was a significant factor in this decline. Since the seventies, students have been seeking less expensive locations in the increasingly decentralised cities, and the expansion of universities has led students to populate ever larger areas of the city, particularly those neighbouring

the university. The city assimilates the students and students merge with the city. This symbiosis has been bringing cities hosting universities quite an income ever since the end of the eighties, as room or even single bed prices skyrocketed to 300 Euros a month.

Beginning in the seventies, the number of universities has been steadily rising. This has led to university branches opening in other cities, which often promoted curriculae reflecting the needs of manufacturers or services, predominantly health services. Such activity gained the support of local authorities. Some called it “pathological” sprawl, others envisaged the process as a harmonious co-operation of civil society, companies and the university – still others would argue that innovations implemented after the reform aimed at supporting this tripartite co-operation. Nevertheless, recent years witnessed a major decrease of local branches; only 3% out of 1800 Italian municipalities host university courses.

Various factors, hinted at above, indicate that an Italian city with a university attracts students raised in the city or within its surroundings: on average, 80% of the students come from the region. One fifth of the students choosing to leave their native region are traditionally unevenly distributed: middle and northern regions, as well as Abruzzo, tend to attract students, with those in the south emigrating to the universities based in northern and middle regions. This is often the first stage of intellectual emigration. In four out of five cases, however, the student commuting or living in the city hosting a university is a child raised in a “*famiglia lunga*” – a family where grown-up offspring is living with its parents; the experience of student life is not accompanied by living on one’s own.

It is not uncommon that the student is not particularly young or is a downright grown-up. Two thirds of the students belong to the 18-24 age group. The statistics show, however, that the number of students belonging to the 25-29 age group and older has risen: they now enjoy an 8% share (*vide* CNVSU 2011).

The traditional profile of the student, not only due to the varied age of the group, seems to be fading. Combining studies with work is a popular solution. Among those interviewed during the survey carried out by AlmaLaurea in 2010, 10% declared that they worked full-time during at least half of the period when they studied, and 25% worked less than full time. In addition, many students worked casually - it follows that only one fourth were occupied solely with studying (*vide* AlmaLaurea 2011). The option, introduced two years ago, for enrolling as a part time student (with reduced fees and fewer chances for taking exams) did not, however, bring visible effects (less than 3% of such enrolments). To conclude, studying is an experience specific to a certain age group and lasts for a considerable amount of time.

This fading of the traditional student profile – when combined with other complex social roles, as well as the growing individualism and depolitisation of young Italians recurrently indicated in sociological analyses – somehow triggered a wave of political activism expressed through the establishment of a number of short-lived associations and a fresh appetite for participation in events in recent months, following the rejection of the “Gelmini reform”.

Suddenly, demonstrators would listen to speeches more flamboyant than even the most accomplished speakers among the professors could imagine, speeches which would bring together university, cinema, theatre, arts and all those sympathising with the plight of the university. Professors, confronted with hazy reform not attuned to multiple challenges – which often combined commonly approved aims with incoherent and over-ambitious ideas – were not able to take any action or common stand. The prevailing mood of the university staff was a combination of eagerness to embark on modernisation, awareness of the shortcomings of the university, and a sense of being overwhelmed by the rapid and unexpected redundancies. But they were also determined to salvage the positive elements of the system – such was the route taken by those who managed to survive and adapt to the new

framework with its new performance criteria, as well as to preserve the scholarly activity linking both teaching and research activities.

Students, dismissing and deeming whole generations, local authorities, and internal university structures as unfit for fruitful discussion, chose two elderly persons as appropriate for dialogue – Giorgio Napolitano, President of the Republic, and Mario Monicelli, the former being an iconic champion of constitutional values, equal rights to education, and the freedom of critical approach enshrined in the cultural activity, eventually perishing in defence of them.

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**INTERVIEW WITH PROFESSOR BARBARA KUDRYCKA,  
MINISTER OF SCIENCE AND HIGHER EDUCATION**



## INVEST IN THE BEST

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Cezary Kościelniak and Jarosław Makowski in conversation  
with prof. Barbara Kudrycka,  
Minister of Science and Higher Education

**Cezary Kościelniak and Jarosław Makowski: Madam, what does the future have in store for the university?**

**Barbara Kudrycka:** The success of Western culture is a success of the university. For this reason, it is difficult to imagine the future with no university in it. Having said that, it has to be stressed that our universities are in a position where they not only compete with European schools but also with those from America and China, and universities and research centres from India or Asia have also entered the game. Bearing such a perspective in mind, I suppose that Polish universities will need to find their own way through.

**What would it look like?**

Our universities will have to draw from their abundant experience of the past, but also borrow from the best European practices. This is the example of Cambridge or Oxford, which boast exceptionally well managed humanities while at the same time setting standards for technical or exact sciences. This field combines research and implementation projects supervised by the scientists and students alike. These schools constitute a sort of a benchmark for real-life adjustment of the university to the new economic and cultural environment.

**But we are witnessing a transformation of the university across Europe as we speak and the process reveals one basic contradiction: governments of Italy or Great Britain want the universities to be part of an innovative and modern economy. But at the same time they**

**limit spending on education, thus undercutting the very position of these universities. A university can hardly be good or innovative if it operates on a shoestring budget.**

Countries with strong universities can afford such policies. Cuts at Oxford or Cambridge will neither affect mission of these schools nor their educational quality. There will always be plenty of candidates waiting to be accepted by these schools. But at the same time we have to be aware that such universities constantly implement innovative management rules for achieving the supreme quality of research and education.

Other countries that impose limits on spending must take care not to lose sight of what is of prime value. They need to be aware that investing in the young and talented is always of benefit to the state, since it is they who bring added value. They not only are the elites-to-be, but by virtue of holding high positions across the world are true ambassadors of their country. When involved in internal affairs, they form elites shaping the country in each and every imaginable dimension. Therefore, one needs to invest in the best students, the best high school graduates, and all those who, after they graduate and embark on a professional career, guarantee a double return on the money spent by the Polish taxpayer on their education.

European policy promotes mass higher education to an ever greater extent. In Europe, we want to reach the level of 40% of high school graduates continuing their education at the universities. It will be very difficult to achieve. But all things considered, the system adopted in Poland of combining public and private schools is quite efficient. The changes implemented on October 1<sup>st</sup> aim basically at promoting the best – the best universities, the best students and the best scholars.

Note that there is a twofold process happening in Europe at the moment: universities are being merged, but at the same time money is getting invested in the best academic departments or even the best

universities as a whole. Cuts within the education sector are not substantial, but where such cuts are deeper we witness money coming from private sources. I suppose that in, say, Great Britain, the idea was to provide the universities with funds far exceeding what could be offered by the state.

In the times of crisis we face today no country can afford mass education entirely covered by the taxpayers. Thus, each country must develop solutions allowing it to invest the largest share of money in the best and pursue external funding, for instance through selling the scientific output of the university.

**The problem is that the best universities you mentioned are accessible mainly to the children of the rich or the elite. But most European countries, with the possible exception of Great Britain, treat education as a public good.**

Great Britain is actually not an exception here, just look at their well-developed scholarship system. This problem you are talking about was solved by establishing a scholarship system for low-income students and introducing student loans paid back after graduation, in the case of the best students the debt is partially written off.

**So, what is your view on the egalitarian policy within the higher education system? Which model of access to higher education is in your opinion the optimal one, which model will be implemented by the reforms we face today?**

Maybe this is not the best way to put it, but ... God was egalitarian in distributing talent, not only the rich were blessed with it, also the poor or the poorest have their share. This is why financial support for the poor is of crucial importance here. And as for the most talented, they should have a chance to participate in a specially dedicated grant and scholarship system, available even for the junior-year students. For those who perform exceptionally well there should be special prizes

awarded by the ministry as well as a Diamond Grant enabling them to undertake research after the first three-year period. So the system itself should be shaped in such way as to safeguard equal access for the talented students both from more affluent as well as poorer backgrounds. It is also important that the best have a chance to study at the best universities.

### **Back to entrance tests?**

The best educational institutions would certainly have to take into consideration not only results of high school finals, but also apply some other criteria.

Considering the support of National Leading Scientific Centres for the best institutions, take for instance the best physics department in Poland, the idea is that this would be the meeting place for the eminent scientists, Ph.D. students and students in the earlier stages of their academic career. This government seeks to introduce liberal reforms, but with a human face, meaning reforms that would also lend a helping hand to those less fortunate.

I am also of the opinion that Europe should put stronger emphasis on diversification of universities and redefinition of expectations towards academic and vocational institutions. This is important if we speak today of mass education and the aforementioned 40%. Taking into account our experience from the past when only 7% of the Polish high school graduates got a diploma from a higher education institution, it is safe to say that the educational quality of the time was higher than today. At that time we had only not more than forty higher education institutions, today the number exceeds 450 and it is clear that a fair share of those schools offer lower quality of education than the older academic institutions. If we care about broad access to higher education, if we want the nurse, the caterer or the beautician to graduate from the university, the vocational education should be limited to mastering practical skills, but in a bit broader dimension since those who work in

such industries are challenged with significantly higher expectations due to the professionalisation of their respective industries.

**The “human face” rhetoric is vulnerable to the criticism that Poland has already endured the period of “socialism with human face”.**

The difference is we do not adhere to social engineering. We do not aim at being the engineers of souls. Our approach is to create an environment where universities, students and scholars may or may not take advantage of possibilities and opportunities. Leaving an actual choice to the interested party, we point at the pro-development incentives that are in line with the policy of EU countries and constitute a response to what is happening in the world in terms of civilisational and technological progress.

Our prime purpose is to enhance the quality of education and science in Poland both to make our universities more competitive in Europe and to make our graduates more competitive on the labour market.

**This seems to follow an implicit philosophy that today everyone must graduate from the university and be competitive. Universities are required to be competitive, but also the students themselves must follow this competitive pattern since they are bound to enter a labour market founded on the idea of competition. In other words, students were lured into thinking that pocketing two diplomas will make it easier to find a job. If ten years ago progression to adulthood meant starting a family, today it means finding the first job. The prerequisite for this are the two diplomas.**

Research indicates that entrepreneurs are often disappointed even with those students who graduated from two programs. The number of diplomas one holds does not translate into actual knowledge or skills of the given graduate. Quantity does not necessarily mean quality.

I think, however, that the new generation sees that the traditional rat race is being redefined. Since even having two diplomas provides no security that one finds a job, what we give to the student is crucial. This is precisely the reason why we decided to implement changes within the National Qualifications Framework. We ask the university to provide us with information about what skills are mastered by the student graduating from a given program, and we also give them the possibility to form interdepartmental programs or interdisciplinary studies combining two fields. Note that high school graduates are already very keen to participate in such projects.

This year, with more than twenty applicants per place, the Faculty of Management at the University of Warsaw set a new record for popularity. This was possible due to the establishment of a new curriculum combining economic and management studies. Students already know that such courses will provide them with a solid education as well as the core values of the Polish intelligentsia. Studies of this kind furnish the student not only with the knowledge and skills they need, but also with a certain broader view of the world we live in. What counts is not the number of diplomas, but the quality of the education the diploma signifies. And this is something best verified by employers.

**Shouldn't we also redefine the whole notion of "education" conceived as a period of learning concluded with the moment one leaves the university? Present reality challenges us with the need for constant learning, retooling and improving our skills almost from womb to tomb.**

Let me put it another way, we learn throughout our entire lives in the way we speak our language, that is, without even knowing it. As new technologies pervade our lives to an ever greater extent, children begin the process of learning far earlier than in preschool or at school. Also, new learning methods create brand new possibilities to acquire knowledge.



If we take a look at the young people today being so at ease with the digital technologies and having quick access to every imaginable kind of information, we have to concede that traditional methods of education are obsolete. In a world of multiplying information which is just one click away we run the risk that along with reliable information we will come across junk knowledge. So the learning process starts when a child, using new learning methods (a computer, a smartphone or an educational toy), tries to understand the world – and this process lasts throughout one’s whole life until its conclusion. As long as the education methodology is not reinvented, informal education will replace the formal education received at schools or at the universities.

Some say that today’s children have some kind of ADHD and cannot stay focused during class. When I was an assistant, I could talk for 45 minutes and have the undivided attention of the students. Now this period has shrunk. After 30 minutes students start fidgeting. Even PowerPoint is of no help since moving pictures and Twitter are second nature for them. Students are often dissatisfied with lectures that bring no fresh content. With just one click they can watch a lecture on the same subject given by a professor at Harvard.

Countries that neglect the development of these technologies and the redefinition of educational technologies will drive young people abroad as is happening now in Greece. It is of paramount importance that EU members embark on introducing new technologies at the universities and into schools, so that they serve the young people for acquiring reliable and sound knowledge. The question to be asked is not what to teach, but how to tell the reliable information from the type that merely fills the head without any purpose.

**Adapting the universities to new standards in education is linked with another problem that Poland is experiencing. I am referring to internationalisation. The 2010 OECD higher education report reveals that our higher education institutions score low as far**

**as hosting foreign students and academic staff is concerned. Native scholars oppose internationalisation. We attribute that to the fears that Western scientists would perform better, be more inspiring, which in turn would lay bare our setbacks. How can we stimulate the internationalisation process today?**

We have already introduced changes that may be of help to both students and scholars. At present, it is feasible to confer joint diplomas, and we also recognise diplomas conferred in OECD and EU countries; foreign scholars with a Ph.D. will experience no trouble being employed in Poland, the same with regard to being accepted as an advisor. Also, Polish scholars who have at least five years of experience working at foreign universities and have academic achievements are entitled to return to Poland with a Ph.D. and be recognised as independent members of the staff. This of course does not solve all our problems, but, say, Norman Davies, who is currently employed by the Jagiellonian University, will have the right to advise Ph.D. students.

**Today, it is difficult to conceive of a good university that is not designed to be an international university. Even schools based in countries celebrating their languages, such as France or Germany, offer courses and conduct research in English. How should we tackle the issue of international universities in Poland?**

As for the students, we are in the process of broadening the formula of Erasmus to include countries of the Eastern Partnership. Today, if students from Ukraine or Georgia want to have access to European funding they must be part of Erasmus Mundus. In my opinion, opening Erasmus for Eastern countries will create the opportunity for all the Union members to host Eastern students, but it will be Poland and the Baltic countries that will be among the major beneficiaries of this process. Let me stress, however, that to make this work we have to broaden our offering of courses conducted in English. Universities often completely neglect or have only very limited choices of such courses and usually employ just one scholar lecturing in English who

is burdened with the task of covering all the subjects. This is unacceptable. Universities should organise Polish and English courses also for our native students. Unless we overcome this obstacle, Polish schools will regrettably retain the status of provincial institutions.

### **Is a decade enough to sort this problem out?**

My answer is yes. We just have to allow the new generation to take the lead. Young people know foreign languages and do not feel handicapped in any way.

We are also facing another problem right now. We will soon have a high-quality educational infrastructure. Even now some Polish schools are visited by foreign scholars who praise our level of development in this respect. Resources flowing from structural funds will allow not only for building labs, but also high-end educational facilities. Countries that are popular among Polish students – Great Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, etc. - all have well-organised student care services. Polish universities should therefore be especially concerned with foreign students and by no means treat them as a necessary evil. Poland boasts a dozen excellent universities. If these institutions accept the challenge and adjust to the needs of foreign students, those students will return the favour and begin choosing them. This in effect will translate into an improved position held by such universities in the European and world rankings.

**We have recently coined the phrase “distribution of intellectual goods”. It means including regions in our education policy. So if a given region specialises in implementing research of a certain kind and developing new technologies, do the schools that are based there stand any chance of getting substantial support for promoting these technologies? Could it not eventually become a centre of the whole region? Is it possible to adopt a territorial take on the science policy? This would mean that the given region is supported by the local university.**

Amending the “Law on Higher Education” will result in increased competition. Higher education institutions grow stronger if supported by regions. Hopefully, this will be also the case with Poland. In this respect we can draw from the experience of Finland where education and science policy were combined with regional policy.

But we cannot forget that reasonable development of regions does not consist solely of supporting their autonomy. If only to avoid overlapping of the advanced research funding one has to define the character of the region. If we construct sophisticated computers or build biotechnological labs in each region, we will run short of experts who would use them. The greatest challenge is to find a region whose suitability would be reflected by its geographical location, natural and intellectual resources, etc. As long as this is not done we cannot imagine a reasonable regional policy. Instead, it would be a duplication policy leading to overlapping results from research that has already been conducted somewhere else.

However, the biggest mistake made by the higher education institutions so far is adopting practices followed elsewhere but which in their situation have no application whatsoever. Establishing artistic courses in engineering schools just to attract students is an idea I would not recommend. If those schools really want to set off in that direction, they should gather some recognised experts in the humanities and restructure them into the university. But first and foremost they should exploit the potential of the region; this should give them the edge in competition with the others. This would also create an opportunity for becoming a nationally recognised institution, which would compete not only on the interregional level. This is how it works in the case of not only technical schools, but also broadly conceived humanities institutions. To summarise, taking advantage of the characteristics of the region is of crucial importance. Another important thing is to be sensitive to the expectations and needs of the citizens inhabiting the given region.

**Professor Marek Kwiek argues that the attractiveness of the university, and not only in Poland, is on the decline. He notes that the kudos linked with scholarly work is fading; it is also not as well paid as it was in the past. The schools themselves are no longer so valued as far as career advancement is concerned. Students put it bluntly by saying that internships or apprenticeships proved more beneficial to their future career than direct contact with the lecturer. Furthermore, there are studies revealing that many people who chose first to work and only subsequently complemented their education by undertaking studies deal perfectly with their professional life and are often better paid than those who first opted for humanities or social sciences and started careers upon graduation. One may say that in an economic sense studying is not so rewarding as it was before. Do you agree with the diagnosis that the university has lost some of its appeal?**

Adopting the point of view of Central-Eastern countries, which twenty years ago went through a transformation process and joined the European Union only seven years ago, I should say that we stand in a slightly different position than other countries. In Poland, the attractiveness of scholarly work has been eclipsed due to a simple reason. The last twenty years have shown that well-being can be achieved quicker by working on one's own. I sense, however, a revival of the mission of scholarly activity. I feel that solutions that we propose – Ph.D. students may now combine various scholarships, young scholars may apply for specially dedicated grants thanks to which they will not be forced to compete for funding with established professors, which is a complete novelty – all this may compose a picture where young scholars in Poland will be able to maintain a decent standard of living.

Poland boasts a sufficient number of quality academicians willing to support and encourage genuine talents to continue their scholarly career at this or the other university. Recently, University College of London and American University in Bulgaria organised a huge international mathematics competition. It was won by Przemysław Mazur,

a student of Jagiellonian University, who outperformed all 305 rivals coming from the best and richest universities across the world. He scored a maximum number of 93 points by solving all the problems presented to the competitors. It is a fantastic success. It shows not only the prodigal talent of this young man, but also the fact that it was not wasted in the process. Four Polish students were classified in the first thirty. Also Russians fare exceptionally well; there are some Ukrainians as well. I suppose that there will always be individuals who want to make history, just like Marie Skłodowska-Curie. They will put their faith in universities, regardless of the working conditions and salary they will get.

**The new political agenda of Civic Platform basically follows the idea that Poland will not be able to create such brands like, say, Mercedes from scratch because our historical backwardness goes far too deep. You mentioned, however, the equality of chances. Today, broadband Internet access is a tool for achieving this equality thanks to which we can have utilities following the model of Facebook, in the sense that they are universally accessible. When our students are provided with the same playing field as their British counterparts, it turns out that we are as good as them.**

This is exactly how the cultural breakthrough works. The university provides some systematised background knowledge; studying at the university will increasingly consist in systematising the knowledge that the student acquired elsewhere.

**Hence, the learning process will not be finished once one leaves the university.**

Indeed. Once we read books and solved crosswords; today we live in an entirely different world. Broadband Internet is a *sine qua non*, foreign languages are another prerequisite, there is digital TV in original languages – all this creates a new cultural era in which universities play a totally redefined role. We, the scholars, will be responsible for

systematising this knowledge. We will be there to help the young people to find it in the complex technological world.

**And what about humanities? They are somewhat of a problem today. When an engineer builds a bridge for the people to travel from town to town, it is self-explanatory that it is useful. No one questions his work. But what are the criteria of usefulness when the matter at hand is another study of Dante's *Divine Comedy*? Today everything must be useful, but the humanities do not seem to fulfil this requirement. They are useless. But we are perfectly aware that there is no democracy, public debate or civic attitude without humanities.**

Living in a world where technological progress moves at such an insane rate we cannot let our humanity be extinguished. That is, we must constantly seek an answer to the question: where are we coming from and where are we heading? That is what the humanities are for. It is a process consisting of the broadening of perspectives, the opening of minds, the study of tradition and culture... we could go on and extend this list infinitely. While exploring the new technologies, the most important thing is to study their impact on the human being. To enable this, we want to fund research that will allow for such insight. This is the reason why we launched the National Programme for the Development of Humanities, which will constitute the core instrument for support of research within the field of humanities.

**Should we then introduce philosophy to the high school curriculum?**

I am really championing this idea. Once, regardless of all the problems with access to education, philosophy was to a certain extent conveyed when students were taught Polish or literature. Nowadays, we rather have to train teachers so that they would be able to explain the world to the young people not only through separate philosophy classes, but also during the time devoted to teaching Polish, history, geography, etc.

**Higher education institutions will from now on have the right to employ prominent figures who hold no doctoral degree. For me, it was odd that, for instance, Adam Zagajewski could lecture in the United States while in Poland he was not allowed to do so. Can something be done to encourage universities to get rid of such absurdities?**

That is exactly what we have just done.

**The question remains: will universities take advantage of this possibility?**

We will have to monitor how universities use this opportunity. In the amendment to the Act we included a provision entitling the higher education institutions to employ outstanding professionals who ensure high-quality training in preparation for the trade.

It is also very surprising to hear voices calling for the elimination of the Master's thesis. Graduates who do not know how to write - and have no written thesis in their pocket - will never find a job, and even if they do, it will not be long before they lose it. In my opinion, the reforms that we are implementing right now provide a perfect opportunity for those institutions that aim at the improvement of educational quality; institutions that want to develop and not just maintain the *status quo*. We furnish the universities with broad autonomy, not only with regard to the curriculum, but also in respect to the staffing policy adopted by the rectors. All this is done with the purpose of further development of the universities. Schools that fail to take advantage of these opportunities will be destined for a slow decline.

I am pleased to see, however, that there are many universities that are well prepared for these changes. Schools with good academic staff and a wisely managing rector who understands the meaning of quality will flourish. Schools based in smaller communities will have the prospect of growth on the regional and national scale, the elite universities will compete with other schools on the European level. Time will tell whether our universities will use all the tools provided by the new Act.



It is their choice, but it comes with responsibility. It is the responsibility for the future of Poland, by far greater than the one of a politician.

**Today universities (Poland is no exception here) must meet economic requirements, and they are treated like petitioners who ask for money but never give it back. Professor Sławek fears that such expectations will limit academic autonomy. We would add that this might affect “soft” studies which cannot convert research into solid money.**

This picture has a fundamental flaw, at least as far as the Polish system is concerned. Autonomy is possible as long as two conditions are met: a fair share of the university funding comes from public resources; for this reason, the university is subject to the rules which govern the system of public finances and must in this respect be held accountable as any other entity of that sphere. We created a framework where universities can independently manage the entrusted money, but they have to take responsibility for the management process.

We need to maximise the effects of the invested money, but the state must also promote certain values by including them in its policy – this is exactly what we do. The dignity of the university is safeguarded by the freedom to shape its own agenda. It is the freedom to implement the agenda that will testify to the actual status of the given university.

**What is your opinion on the style of governance? Would you rather see the university governed collectively or promote strong leadership by the rector?**

Everything depends on the personality of the rector and on the composition of the collective bodies. Each case must be treated separately. However, if I were to decide, I would offer each new rector practical business training. Combining scholarly competence with business skills would result in more effective management of the higher education institution.



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**NOTE ON CONTRIBUTORS**



**Timo Aarrevaara** – professor at the University of Helsinki, he also works for the Network for Higher Education and Innovation Research focusing on problems in education. He combines his service in public administration with research and lecturing. He has headed or co-worked on many local or European research projects, evaluations or audits. His most recent project to date is “Changing the Academic Profession”.

**Andrea Abbas** – holds a Ph.D. in sociology, and is a member of the Social Futures Institute at Teesside University in England. She conducts research in the sociology of higher education focusing on inequality, access to higher education, the sociology of pedagogy, and changes in higher education policy. She is co-investigator on the ESRC funded project ‘Pedagogic Quality and Inequality in University First Degrees’.

**Tomasz Bilczewski** – holds a Ph.D. in comparative literature, and his academic interests include literary theory, translation studies, and Polish and English poetry. He is an assistant professor and director of the Centre for Advanced Studies in the Humanities at the Jagiellonian University in Cracow. He recently published *Komparatystyka i interpretacja (Comparative literature and Interpretation)* (2010) and translated Lindsay Waters, *Enemies of Promise: Publishing, Perishing, and the Eclipse of Scholarship*.

**Gaële Goastellec** – assistant professor of sociology (MER), head of a research unit in the Observatory on Science, Policy and Society at the University of Lausanne. Her scholarly interests include the societal, historical and comparative approach of identities and inequalities in higher education. In 2005-2006 she was a Fulbright New Century Scholar fellow. She recently published *Understanding Equalities in, through and by Higher Education* (2010).

**Sarah Guri-Rosenblit** – professor of education and head of Graduate Studies in Education at the Open University of Israel, Raanana. She focuses on comparative studies in higher education, e-learning and

distance learning. In 2005/2006 she was a Fulbright New Century Scholars fellow. She is currently a member of the Higher Education Reform Experts Committee at the Israeli Council for Higher Education. She recently published a book on *Digital Technologies in Higher Education: Sweeping Expectations and Actual Effects* (2010).

**Liubov Yaroshenko** – executive director of the Center for Support and Development of Public Initiatives “Creative Diplomacy” in Moscow. She did her MA at the Central European University in Budapest and finished her PhD at the National Research University Higher School of Economics in Moscow; her research focuses on the foreign policy of the Russian Federation and its relationship with the European Union. Her recent work deals with the “values-gap” between the Russian Federation and the European Union and its influence on political dialogue.

**Barbara M. Kehm** – former director of the International Center for Higher Education Research in Kassel, professor for higher education research. She is an expert on numerous international scholarly councils and committees; she also headed prestigious EU and OECD projects. Since 2011 she has been a member of the Advisory Board at the University of Helsinki. She published over 20 monographs and over 200 articles in journals; she is also an author of chapters in books. Together with Jeroen Huisman and Bjorn Stensaker she published *The European Higher Education Area: Perspectives on a Moving Target* (2009).

**Cezary Kościelniak** – assistant professor of humanities and social science, he works at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan. His foci are transformation of higher education policy, sustainable development and the role of religion in public life. He serves as an expert at the Higher Education Research Association in Toronto and the Chancellery of the President of the Republic of Poland. He contributes to the monthly journal “Znak”. He recently published *Nowe Krytyki Kościoła* (*New Criticism of the Church*) (2010).

**Barbara Kudrycka** – professor of law, she specialises in administrative law. Since 2007 she has been Minister of Science and Higher Education of the Republic of Poland; she is also former deputy to European Parliament, and between 1998-2007 she was a rector of the College of Public Administration in Białystok. She is a member of many international organisations focusing on reforming public administration, and also a member of Transparency International.

**Marek Kwiek** – Marek Kwiek, professor and director of the Center for Public Policy Studies at Poznan University, Poland. He authored *The University and the State: A Study into Global Transformation* (2006) and *University Transformations: Institutional Changes and the Evolution of Education Policy in Europe* (2010, in Polish). He is an international policy expert to the European Commission, OECD, World Bank, and the Council of Europe. He is also a partner in 20 international research projects, a board member of *Higher Education Quarterly* and *European Educational Research Journal*.

**Annick Magnier** – sociologist, Jean Monnet chairholder at the Faculty of Political Sciences “Cesare Alfieri”, University of Florence. Her research focuses on urban and regional development, political and administrative culture and the theory of planning. She recently published (as co-editor) *The European Mayor* (2006) and *Mosaico Italia. Lo stato del Paese agli inizi del XX secolo (Patchwork Italy. The Condition of the Nation at the Turn of the XX Century)* (2010).

**Jarosław Makowski** – director of the Civic Institute in Warsaw, philosopher, publicist and essayist. His field of research covers educational policy, sustained development policy and political philosophy. He recently published *Kobiety uczą Kościół (Women Teach the Church)* (2007).

**Peter Mayo** – professor at the University of Malta, head of the Department of Education Studies. His major foci are sociology of education,

comparative education and adult education. His book *Gramsci, Freire, and Adult Education* (1999) was translated into six languages. He is a co-editor of "Postcolonial Studies in Education" (Palgrave Macmillan)

**Tadeusz Sławek** – anglicist, philosopher, translator of English literature, i.a., William Blake. He is a professor and former rector of the Silesian University in Katowice. His interests encompass American philosophy and the modern university. He published, i.a., *Antygone w świecie korporacji* (*Antigone in the Corporate World*) (2002).



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## NOTES

## Notes

Edited by  
**Cezary Kościelniak, Jarosław Makowski**

Review:  
**professor Jacek Sójka, PhD**

English translation:  
**Rafał Jantarski, Michał Koczalski**

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**Civic Institute**  
12 Wiejska street, suite 9  
00-490 Warsaw  
[www.institutobywatelski.pl](http://www.institutobywatelski.pl)

Extremely valuable book, major contribution to ongoing debate on transformation of higher education

*Prof. Jacek Sójka,  
Institute of Cultural Studies,  
Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan*

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Our universities will have to draw from their abundant experience of the past, but also borrow from the best European practices. (...) Having said that, it has to be stressed that our universities are in a position where they not only compete with European schools but also with those from America and China, and universities and research centres from India or Asia have also entered the game.

*Prof. Barbara Kudrycka,  
Polish Minister of Science and Higher Education*

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These, and many other, social tasks of the university are now commonly accepted. Universities cease to be self-contained, secluded islands, but turn into active change makers on the regional, national, and (for at least some of them) international scale.

*Cezary Kościelniak, Jarosław Makowski*