
“Higher Education & Research Universities: Tradition and Reform, Inertia and Change”

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Where did we stand?

- **The Humboldtian (German) university was the model of the modern research university.**
- **It influenced developments in other countries:**
 - **new focus of Harvard University (1869);**
 - **founding of the Johns Hopkins University (1876);**
 - **vision of Abraham Flexner (1930).**
- **Inter- and intra-institutional forms of organization fostered research, quality and growth:**
 - **the system was decentralized (competition);**
 - **chairs (institutes) secured research;**
 - **the chair-principle forced expansion.**

Where do we stand today?

- **The Humboldtian (German) university has lost its supremacy:**
 - early in the 20th century (Joseph Ben-David);
 - definitely after 1933.
- **It could not regain its status after World War II.**
- **Other continental European HE systems are similarly deficient.**
- **Today, the US research university serves as the role model.**
- **Various reforms after 1945 (in Europe) did not alter this picture (significantly).**

What is being criticized?

- **Mass higher education (Martin Trow) in the negative sense:**
 - unfavorable student-faculty ratios;
 - high attrition (drop-out) rates;
 - long study durations.
- **Low research productivity:**
 - understaffed faculty (high teaching loads, administrative duties);
 - not enough (or badly distributed) resources.
- **Low attractiveness of a university career:**
 - for women — & young scholars in general;
 - causing loss of talents (emigration, industry).

Why is European HE deficient?

- **The question needs to be better researched:**
 - **HE research requires sophistication:**
 - **more quantitative research is needed;**
 - **more trans-disciplinary research (borrowed from biology, epidemiology, economics, operations research, etc.).**
 - **There exists a (glaring) lack of insight.**
- **Maladjustment to a changing world (Martin Trow).**
- **Strong (wrong) traditions, oligarchic structures, vested interests (Pierre Bourdieu, Burton Clark, Richard Münch).**
- **Lack of competition & entrepreneurship, inappropriate incentive structures (Burton Clark).**

Does it matter?

- Do we need (European) research universities?
 - “This is , in fact, questionable.”
- Do we need computer sciences?
 - “No, we source them out to Bangalore.”
- Do we need engineering?
 - “No, we are a service industry society.”
- Do we need medical/pharmaceutical research?
 - “No, we shall import its findings (patents).”
- Is research/higher education the “motor of economic development”?
 - “This is a good slogan only.”

Which reforms were/are pursued?

- Higher education for many;
- binary systems (in most countries);
- evaluations (self-assessment and peer reviews);
- strengthening of dedicated research institutes (CNRS, Max Planck Institutes);
- granting of institutional autonomy (somehow);
- New Public Management (NPM) methods and performance funding;
- ranking of institutions and departmental disciplines;
- Bologna process;
- broadening the income base, raising tuition & fees;
- excellence initiatives.

Which reforms make sense?

- Higher education for many;
- diversified HE systems;
- evaluations (if they serve the assessed, H.R. Kells);
- granting of institutional autonomy;
- ranking of departments (by competent evaluators);
- Bologna process (perhaps, 3-2-3, top-down process):
 - ECTS (100 years after introduction in the US!);
 - effect on mobility is questionable (19th century!);
 - compatibility with US system?
 - inter-institutional agreements preferable.
- broadening the income base.

Which reforms are questionable?

- **Strengthening of dedicated research institutes:**
 - bleeds out research universities;
 - reduces turnover of young talents.
- **New Public Management (NPM) methods and performance funding:**
 - ineffective, do not serve their goals;
 - can easily be circumvented or perverted;
 - new Taylorism or Stachanovian system.
- **Ranking of institutions (very poor job of evaluators).**
- **Bologna process (effect is unclear).**
- **Raising (significantly) tuition & fees.**
- **Excellence initiatives.**

Which problems loom?

- **The commercialization of research.**
- **The clogging of research funding systems (visible in the US today):**
 - **too many researchers compared to funds available;**
 - **grantsmanship becomes inordinate;**
 - **short-term research goals dominate.**
- **The commercialization of education:**
 - **The disappearance of general (liberal) education.**
 - **HE is/will be too costly for the student:**
 - **HE is not (strictly) a private good;**
 - **tuition & fees do not raise income;**
 - **social disadvantages will increase (for many).**

Why is there inertia?

“Changing a university is like moving a graveyard — it is extremely difficult and you don’t get much internal support”

Per Nyborg (2000)

- **Sensible orientations of HE-systems and personal interests of its main actors are disjointed:**
 - **within existing structures, faculty ambitions do not serve (enough) the common good;**
 - **faculty have no interest (incentive) to change.**
- **Systems and institutional structures will have to be brought in line (again) with the aspirations and talents of the actors and constituencies of HE.**

How should we proceed?

- **European Higher Education needs:**
 - **increased institutional control:**
 - **autonomy, incl. the “4th academic freedom”;**
 - **fair and open institutional competition based on:**
 - **a diversified (and permeable) HE system;**
 - **separate funding for teaching and research;**
 - **bottom-up (and not top-down) initiated change;**
 - **more (and better) research to explore:**
 - **implications of current structures, rules and regulations (James G. March);**
 - **initiations and growth conditions for desired, sustainable futures.**

Literature

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