

# Shaping higher education fifty years after Robbins

Tuesday 22 October 2013

London School of Economics and Political Science  
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# „What structure for higher education: A European vision“

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## I. The emergence of diversity of national university systems in Europe (1)

### Common origin

- The *medieval university* with 4 faculties: (a) the “lower“ faculty of artists: “*humanus intellectus*“, “*ratio*“, (b) the three “upper“ faculties of theology (strengthening the christian faith), of law (“*judicial equity*“), and of medicine (public good); the university as “*universitas magistrorum et scholarium*“
- The medieval (Scottish) university model taken over *in New England, later in the US*: (a) colleges (emancipation through education, forming a civil society, students as learned and honourable gentlemen) and (b) professional schools (Divinity, Law, Medicine, later: Business)



## Diversity of national university systems in Europe (2)

### The impact of the 18th/19th century

- *French model*: state utilitarianism, closure of universities on behalf of progress (Talleyrand Commission 1791), instead „écoles spéciales“ (Ecole Polytechnique 1794), focus on the higher education of state cadres, research performed in specific research institutions (CNRS a.s.o.)
- *German (Humboldt) model*: idea of a “true“ research university, searching for the truth only; only PhD studies, no bachelor and master programmes (Kant: prescriptions to be replaced by philosophical, scientific reasoning), faculty of philosophy no longer a “lower“, but a “superior“ faculty; university as “universitas litterarum“
- *Nationalization*: Fichte´s cultural definition of a nation that people with a common language should have an own state fostered the idea of a “national university“, cultivating the native language (instead of Latin)
- Rôle models in the 19th century: (a) French model leading to Institutes of Technology and (b) the German/ Humboldtian model of a “true“ research university



## Diversity of national university systems (3)

### US system as a rôle model for today

- Starting in the second half of the 19th century, the US system gets hybrid: (1) putting (Humboldtian) PhD programs on top of the medieval (Scottish) model, Johns Hopkins University 1876, (2) foundation of institutes of technology (MIT 1861)
- Today: 200 – 300 PhD granting universities within a differentiated HE-system, encompassing 4-5000 HEIs
- US system now copied around the world

In modern knowledge societies, the US system copes best with the *massification of higher education (participation rates of age cohorts in HE of more than 40%, life long learning)* and the *intensification of research*



## II. Pressures on national systems in Europe, especially since 1999/2000 (1)

### Reform pressures *within national systems*

- Pressures in *Germany*: coping with the massification of HE (“mass university”), new study architecture, differentiation of the system (universities of applied sciences, excellence initiative)
- Pressures in *France*: re-enforcing research in the universities and grandes écoles, upgrading universities and overcoming their fragmentation into I,II, a.s.o.
- Transfer of decision making powers from the (national) ministries to autonomous universities, autonomy with respect to strategy, organisation, curricula, number of students to be admitted, personell, finance (overcoming the status of being part of a ministry)
- Merging universities, differentiation of profiles and missions in order to better address the differentiated demand in a knowledge economy more adequately?



## Pressures on national systems (2)

### Bologna reform:

- The success of ERASMUS since 1987, an EU programme of horizontal, “non-degree seeking mobility“ of students across borders, now reaching more than 200 000 students per year, led to adopting a *common study architecture* and *the European Credit Transfer System* (Bologna Declaration 1999)
- The broad acknowledgement of studies abroad requires mutual trust, based on common principles of – internal and external – *quality assurance* (Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, Bergen 2005; EQAR, London 2007)
- *Employability of graduates*: reform of curricula, life-long learning
- Next step: vertical mobility (“loan guarantee scheme for Masters“, EU Commission), creating new pressures on the competitiveness of national systems ?



## Pressures on national systems (3)

### European Research Area (ERA)

- Lisbon Strategy, launched in 2000, with the intention to make Europe “the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world“ (3% of GDP for R&D)
- European monitoring on the effectiveness of national research and innovation strategies, recommendation of smart specialisation (EU Commission, ERA, Facts and Figures 2013)
- Increasing transnational cooperation and competition (4% of 2010 R&D budget directed towards transnational coordinated research, Strategic Research Agendas by Joint Programming Initiatives, common research infrastructures, ERC grants a.s.o)
- Opening the labour market for researchers (open recruitment, attractive careers, portability of grants, social security and visa procedures for mobile researchers, academia-industry mobility, focus on doctoral training)
- Knowledge circulation (open access, digital ERA)





## Pressures on national systems (4)

### A European Modernisation Agenda for Universities?

- The Hampton Court summit of Heads of State and Government, October 2005, fight against a “pattern of complacency and decline of universities“ in Europe (The Economist, September 8, 2005)
- “Delivering on the modernisation agenda“ (EU Commission 10 May 2006), transcending the Bologna themes: member states should ensure “real autonomy and accountability for universities“; at least 2 % of GDP (including both public and private funding) devoted “to a modernised higher education sector“; competition for excellence should be intensified (EIT, ERC); overcoming national fragmentation
- This modernisation agenda rejected by member states (interference with the responsibilities of member states) in 2006/2007
- Modernisation Agenda of 2011: The Commission limits the scope of the debate, issues of autonomy, governance, or funding are left out and should be addressed by member states, yet pressures on member states and universities to improve the quality skills of students, to increase the university-business links and to contribute more to regional development (smart specialisation)



## III European Vision (1)

### (1) Realising a “New Renaissance“ (ERAB 2009, ERAB 2010)

Immediate and medium-term actions, e.g.,

- Single EU wide patent, mandatory adherence to Open Innovation Charter in the management of intellectual properties
- pre-commercial procurement of R&D (US public sector spends 50 bio USD per annum which is 20 times higher than in EU)
- focusing R& D funding on high-impact research topics
- earmarking 30% of Structural Funds and 10% of the common agricultural policy for RDI projects.



## European Vision (2)

- (2) US demonstrates: transfer of responsibilities for universities from the (member) state level to the federal (EU) level is not needed. Universities may remain loyal to their British/French/German (a.s.o.) traditions, that may help them to adopt differentiated profiles and missions
- (3) It is sufficient
  - to establish a high degree of interstate mobility for staff and students (horizontal+vertical mobility of students, opening the labour market for researchers)
  - to increase the research funding for excellent frontier research at the top (NSF-ERC)
  - to implement a federal/EU innovation demand (see Aho Report 2006)
- (4) Yet: we need autonomous universities, looking for additional funding and embarking on acting strategically; national frameworks needed to ensure system differentiation within national borders,
- (5) Reputational competition at the top and among national systems (within the EU), and the (financial) necessity for universities to cater to local/regional needs; both may do the trick of transforming inefficient universities in isolated national systems into a vibrant European university system.



**Thank you for your attention!**

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