

# Possible Futures of Higher Education Research in Germany

---

Ulrich Teichler\*

## 1. The First Wave of Higher Education Research in the 1960s

Shortly after World War II, efforts were made in the Federal Republic of Germany to revitalize the university, as it had existed prior to the Nazi regime: The traditional German university generally was viewed at that time as “healthy in its nucleus” (*“im Kern gesund”*), and no need was felt for substantial reform.

Therefore – not surprisingly – interest in systematic knowledge on higher education was low. Until the 1950s, only a few systematic, research-based studies on higher education had been published: For example on the history of individual universities, on academic careers, and on the development of the higher education system according to available statistics. One often said jokingly at that time: The German professor conducts research on everything except on his own institutional base.

During the 1960s, academics and policy makers in Germany increasingly got interested in varied issues of higher education. Notably, two developments contributed to this change of affairs.

First, the increase of student enrolment in many economically advanced

---

\* Ulrich Teichler has been professor at the International Centre for Higher Education Research (INCHER-Kassel) of the University of Kassel (Germany) from 1978 to 2013 and director of the Centre for 16 years. His about 1,400 publications notably address higher education and the world of work, international comparison of higher education systems, the academic profession, and international mobility and cooperation in higher education. He played major roles in the Consortium of Higher Education Researchers (CHER), the European Association for Institutional Research (EAIR), the Academia Europaea and the International Academy of Education. He was awarded the doctor honoris causa by the University of Turku (Finland) and the Comenius Prize of UNESCO. He is sponsor of the Ulrich-Teichler Prize for excellent doctoral dissertations in higher education research in German-speaking countries.

countries fueled a controversial debate – also in Germany already at a time, when the expansion was not yet very high – whether a substantial expansion of higher education was beneficial for economic growth and for equality of opportunity, or whether it endangered the quality of universities and led to unfavorable employment conditions of many graduates – called “*Akademisches Proletariat*” in Germany at that time. After some period, another argument spread in Germany – also with a negative undercurrent: No matter what happens on the labour market: Universities serving 20 per cent of the age group cannot be the same as traditional universities serving five per cent.

Second, as in Japan, the student protest in the 1960s reinforced a widespread conviction in Germany – even a strong conviction among those criticizing the student protest – that many higher education reforms were necessary: Improvements of teaching and learning, increasing social relevance of research, reduction of the power of the individual professors, etc. Eventually, a higher education reform mood spread in Germany in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

During the 1960s, a substantial number of individual scholars from various disciplines in Germany began to address issues of higher education. Economists undertook projection studies on future quantitative developments of higher education and analyzed changes of graduate employment. Geographers addressed regional disparities of study provisions and actual study behaviour. Notably sociologists surveyed students’ attitudes and behaviour as well as students’ political thoughts. Scholars in the field of education paid attention to teaching and learning in higher education. However, there was not a single professor position at German universities at that time explicitly defined as addressing higher education.

Initiated by UNESCO, German scholars at the Max-Planck-Institute for Educational Research, located in Berlin, undertook the first worldwide inventory of higher education research; this project undertaken in the 1960s was chaired by the sociologist Dietrich Goldschmidt, who might be viewed as the nestor of higher education research in Germany. Actually, international communication was restricted at that time. The scholars involved in this project at that institute, where I already got employed while being a student, asked me to help them getting in touch with higher education researchers in Japan, because had not found any publications by Japanese higher education researchers, but they knew that I had been in Japan already as a student.

## **2. First Steps towards Institutionalisation of Higher Education Research in the 1970s**

From 1970 onwards, various steps were undertaken in the Federal Republic of Germany to institutionalize higher education research. Actually, three directions of institutionalization might be named.

First, more than a dozen universities established centres for higher education didactics (“*Hochschuldiaktische Zentren*”). These – in most cases quite small – units were established outside the departmental structure of universities. They were in charge of services for staff development and of applied research on teaching and learning. Ludwig Huber, director of the respective centre at the University of Hamburg for many years, was generally viewed as the leading scholar in this area.

Second, two Institutions *outside* universities were established in the early 1970s. The Higher Education Information System (*Hochschul-Informationssystem – HIS*) – initially run by Volkswagen Foundation and later jointly by Federal and state (*Länder*) governments – was established in Hannover. It was in charge of large-scale surveys and of consultancy for construction and for computer use in higher education. Four decades later, its research unit was enlarged and renamed: German Centre for Higher Education and Science Research (*Deutsches Zentrum für Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsforschung – DZHW*); it is by far the largest research unit on higher education in Germany today. The Bavarian Institute for Higher Education Research and Planning (*Bayrisches Staatsinstitut für Hochschulforschung und Hochschulplanung – IHF*) was established in the early 1970s by the government of the state Bavaria. Other German states considered the foundation of such institutes, but actually did not implement these plans.

Third, a typical academic research institute for higher education located within a university was founded for the first time in 1978. The newly established Comprehensive University of Kassel wanted to set research priorities in selected areas in order to increase its reputation and in order to set priorities in topical interdisciplinary areas neglected by traditional universities: It opted for ecological priorities in science and engineering (e.g. on solar energy and bio-agriculture) and for higher education research in the humanities and social sciences. The interdisciplinary centre established outside the departmental structure initially was called Centre for Research on Higher Education and Work (*Wissenschaftliches Zentrum für Berufs- und Hochschulforschung*), because the implications of changing graduate employment and work for higher education was a key issue of public debate at that time. It was renamed to International Centre for Higher Education Research (INCHER-Kassel) in 2006.

The Federal government of Germany as well as the Volkswagen Foundation are the major sponsors of higher education research since the 1960s – both for these institutions as well as for individual scholars active in this area. In the 1970s, the Federal government considered the establishment of a national institute for higher education research, but the German *Länder*, being primarily in charge of higher education according to the German constitution and providing more than 80 per cent of the public funds for higher education, opposed such a consideration as an illegitimate step towards centralisation of higher education.

### **3. The Interim Period from the Late 1970s to the Mid-1990s**

The public discourse in the Federal Republic of Germany on higher education was a to lesser extent reform-oriented from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s than it had been from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s.

- It was a period of general “reform fatigue”: Less critique was voiced about the traditional German university, and many reform concepts and implementations met with strong critique.
- Universities had to cope during this period with a demographically imposed temporary growth of student numbers without being provided a corresponding increase of public funds. Many politicians and representatives of universities called for a postponement of reforms or for political compromises in order to cope with the so-called temporary “student mountain” (“*Studentenberg*”).
- As a consequence of the German unification in 1989/1990, reforms in the eastern areas of Germany became the key issue of higher education policy. Actually, substantial institutional and personnel transformations occurred, whereby the character of higher education in the east was more or less adapted to that prevailing in the west.

The loss of public interest in higher education reform led also to a decline of interest in higher education research. During this period,

- no new centres for higher education didactics were established, and even a few of the existing ones were closed;
- no initiatives were taken to establish additional higher education research institutes outside universities; and
- no further steps were taken to establish professorships of higher

education or academic research units within universities addressing higher education issues.

#### **4. Higher Education Research in Kassel**

Scholars of the research centres in Kassel and Hiroshima often cooperated, because both were established as first visible units within universities in the respective country focusing on higher education research and because they had similar features in some respects, but different in others:

- Both institutions were established as research units outside the departmental structure. The Centre in Kassel was expected initially to develop as a prototypical case for interdisciplinary research units in contrast to the predominantly disciplinary departments both in charge of teaching and research.
- Whereas the majority of academic staff in Hiroshima were full or associate professors, the Centre in Kassel had only one full-professor position (Ulrich Teichler from 1978 for more than three decades and Georg Krücken since 2011) most of the time and only a second professor position for some periods. 3-5 professors of other departments in Kassel were active part-time in the Centre. Junior academic staff positions dominated in Kassel: They increased from 3 to 7 over the years along the provision of 2-4 staff positions for secretarial, library and computer services.
- The Centre in Kassel was expected to raise substantial external research funds. Most of the time, the salaries of more than 10 additional junior staff, and for some periods even of more than 20 persons were paid with the help of additional grants (notably from the German federal ministry in charge of higher education, the European Commission and the Volkswagen Foundation).
- Almost half of the research in Kassel focused initially on a specific topical area: higher education and the world of work. But the range of topics widened substantially over time.
- The Centre in Kassel placed a strong emphasis on major empirical projects, e.g. (a) surveys on university graduates in Germany; (b) large-scale projects on international student mobility – among them major projects on ERASMUS student mobility; (c) the first international comparative survey of university graduates; (d) involvement (as also

RIHE) in four international comparative projects of the academic profession.

As public interest in higher education reforms began to decline in Germany already at the time, when the Centre in Kassel was founded, it remained the only sizeable university-based research unit for higher education research in Germany for a long time – up to the mid-1990s. For some period, the Centre had to increase its visibility only through funds from foreign agencies and the European Commission.

Within ten years after its foundation, the Centre in Kassel had sufficiently become known to take major steps towards international cooperation among higher education researchers. In 1988, it invited more than 50 scholars from all over the world to a conference summarizing the state of higher education research internationally. On this occasion, the Consortium of Higher Education Research (CHER) was founded – now the major international association in this domain. CHER also fueled the idea of enhancing regional or national cooperation of scholars, e.g. CHERA (Consortium of Higher Education Researchers in Asia) and CHERIF (Consortium of Higher Education in Finland).

## **5. Worldwide Fashions of Innovations Potentially Affecting Higher Education Research in Germany since the Mid-1990s**

A new higher education spirit began to spread in some economically advanced countries already in the 1980s and in many other countries notably since the 1990s. Different umbrella terms are used to characterize the new socio-political climate, e. g. “New Public Management”, “managerialism”, “the evaluative state”, “knowledge society”, “marketisation”, “globalisation”, or “internationalisation” of higher education. Although higher education remained more varied between countries than those experts favoring the term “globalisation” suggested who believed to note “global” trends, we note somewhat similar moves across countries towards (a) a reduction of detailed governmental regulation, (b) a growth of evaluation mechanisms, (c) an increasing power of university management, (d) a declining influence of university professors, (e) a growing expectation that universities ought to be socially relevant or even become utilitarian, (f) more emphasis placed on research productivity, (g) an increasing attention being paid to the top of the institutional hierarchy (“rankings”), (h) a rising role played by competition in higher education between individuals, institutions and countries, and (i) a

growing popularity of “indicators” or other superficial measures to assess the “performance” of higher education.

Policy changes into those directions could be observed in the 1980s in the Netherlands and the United Kingdom as well as in many other countries since the early 1990s. Germany and Japan are viewed to be “late-comers” in those respects – with most visible changes occurring in the late 1990s and early years of the 21st century. These changes did not only affect higher education profoundly, but also higher education research – however varying substantially across countries.

## **6. Growing Interest in Varied Types of Knowledge on Higher Education**

The changing socio-political climate has led in Germany among higher education actors since the late 1990s to a substantial increase of interest in systematic information on higher education: For example, on the quality of teaching, on teaching, learning and research, on causes of student success and drop-out, and on employment and work after graduation. But varied types of knowledge gained popularity:

- Often, “evaluation” was called for instead of research: Information closely linked to assessments according to normative views of a desirable “quality” of higher education. Also many recent systematic inquiries undertaken by higher education researchers are embedded into the logic of evaluations.
- Interest increased in information about features of single universities rather than information about features of the German higher education system.
- Studies aimed at comparing individual universities, departments and programmes on the basis of a few quantitative “indicators” gained popularity – most prominently university “rankings”.

## **7. Moderate Increase of Higher Education Researchers and Enormous Increase of Other Knowledge Producers**

We might define a higher education researcher as a person (a) spending most of the working time on analyzing higher education, (b) being active, in most instances, within an academic unit of an institution of higher education or a

research institute outside higher education, and (c) undertaking analyses according to the prevailing academic standards of theory, methodology as well as of presentation and interpretation of findings

I estimate, as will be explained below, that the number of higher education researchers in Germany has increased from about 200 in the early 1990s to about 500 around 2020. But there was a substantially stronger increase of other knowledge producers.

First, evaluations of varied types increased enormously and, thus, the number of scholars and administrators of various areas of expertise being active for a short time in information gathering and information-based assessment – for example in the accreditation of individual study programmes or in the evaluation of the universities’ internationalisation strategies. For example, about a dozen accreditation and evaluation agencies were established in Germany.

Second, the number of persons, which might be called “higher education professionals” or most frequently called “science managers” (*Wissenschaftsmanager*) in Germany, increased dramatically (now certainly more than 20,000 in Germany) – i.e. persons who are in charge of service functions (e.g. international officers, study programme officers, guidance counselors, placement officers, technology transfer officers) or management-support functions (e.g. assistants of university presidents or deans). Many of these professionals are not only interested in gathering information provided by higher education research, but also in being actively involved in higher education research. There is no “institutional research” in Germany similarly to the U.S., but many of these professionals act similarly and some of them are part-time higher education researchers.

Third, we note an increase of consultancy in higher education. Hardly anything is known about the extent to which institutions of higher education in Germany ask for support from consultants. Only a single institution founded in the 1990s became well-known, which can be called a mix of consultancy agency and applied research institute: The *Centrum für Hochschulentwicklung* (CHE – Centre for Higher Education Development) in Güterloh established by the Bertelsmann Foundation. The CHE is best known for its ranking of German universities according to the quality of teaching in the individual universities within the individual disciplines and for consulting university management collectively in various popular issues of higher education.

The increase of such other “experts” and knowledge workers on higher education can be detrimental for higher educational research: Higher education research might be overlooked as a small group of persons doing analyses in areas



often outside the mainstreams of popular debates. But it might be a useful challenge for higher education research to be distinct from those experts and knowledge producers: To be clearly superior in the academic quality of their research. Finally, higher education researchers might find ways of creative cooperation with other experts. For example, researchers of INCHER-Kassel, who later founded a small institute of their own (*ISTAT*), established a Cooperation Network Graduate Surveys (*KOAB*): They train professionals employed in career offices, placement offices, guidance centres, etc. of more than 100 institutions of higher education in Germany and advise them in conducting surveys of their graduates, thereby taking into account both specifics at these institutions as well as common elements with other institutions in order to facilitate comparisons.

## **8. Quantities and Characteristics of Higher Education Researchers**

A directory of higher education researchers in Germany published in 2003 named about 150 higher education researchers. The authors of the directory had contacted about 300 persons having published a few respective articles or even books, and invited them to present information about their biography, professional activities and publications. About half of those approached provided such information and agreed to be named in such a directory. The authors of the directory were convinced that altogether more than 300 persons could have been classified as higher education researchers: Those active in higher education research and not responding, young scholars not having been sufficiently visible, and “higher education professionals”/“science managers” doing research along their major service and management-support tasks.

These figures have increased thereafter: According to a study undertaken in 2021, more than 500 scholars could be defined as higher education researcher or science researchers, among them about almost quarter professors and more than three quarters junior academic staff. However, only between 90 and 150 persons could be considered to be the “core community” of higher education researchers and science researchers.

The directory of 2003 had shown the diversity of higher education researchers. About 40 were university professors; among them, only about 10 were officially named specialists of higher education and science. About 10 each of the professors were active in sociology and in education, but also law, economics and political science were frequently represented. About additional 10

were retired professors. About 50 were research associates in institutions or units specialized on higher education research, and about 25 in university and research institutes departments of other disciplines. The remaining about 25 were widely scattered institutionally: “higher education professionals”/“science managers”, high-level administrators, representatives of consulting agencies, etc.

## **9. The Changing Institutional Basis of Higher Education Research**

Since the 1990s, only a single new sizeable research unit on higher education was established – in addition to the Centre in Kassel already established in 1978. After the very large Institute for Higher Education Pedagogy of the German Democratic Republic was closed in 1990 in the wake of the German unification, a new institute was founded in 1997 with only one full-professor position and about ten research associate positions: The Institute for Higher Education Research Wittenberg (*Institut für Hochschulforschung Wittenberg*). This was not a typical unit within a university, but rather an institute “at” the University of Halle-Wittenberg, and it was funded directly by the state of Sachsen-Anhalt.

The growing interest in higher education research led to the creation of various – about three dozen – professor positions for higher education research at universities or other institutions of higher education in Germany – partly completely new and partly, as will be explained below, as substitute for the previous professorships in centres for higher education didactics. In most cases, single professorships and in some cases two professorships were established within a university: In respective reports, universities in Berlin, Hamburg, Dortmund and Speyer tend to be named as noteworthy locations of higher education research. The overview published in 2021 names about a dozen of units of higher education research – either a institutions established outside the departmental structure or linked to departments of humanities and social sciences.

When the first generation of professors at centres for higher education didactics retired, most of these centres were closed. Some professor positions remained focused on higher education in general or on teaching and learning and were allocated to different departments. Concurrently, other academics and professionals in university administrations became active in improving teaching and learning. The Working Community off Higher Education Didactics (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Hochschuldidaktik - AHD*) – the traditional association

founded in the late 1960s – was substituted by the German Society for Higher Education Didactics (*Deutsche Gesellschaft für Hochschuldidaktik – DGHD*).

Key persons involved in higher education research involved finally agreed to form an academic association in 2006: The Association for Higher Education Research (*Gesellschaft für Hochschulforschung – GfHf*). This association – now having more than 300 members – actually comprises members not only from Germany, but also some from other German-speaking areas in Europe (Austria, Switzerland as well as some areas in Luxembourg, Belgium and Italy).

As already mentioned, the Federal government and the governments of the *Länder* decided a few years ago to transform the research unit of the Higher Education System (HIS), located in Hannover, into a large research institute on higher education outside the universities: The German Centre for Higher Education and Science Research – *DZHW*).

The Centre for Higher Education Development (*CHE*) already named above is often referred to in overviews on higher education research in Germany. *CHE* is quite active in consulting, but visible as well in research projects on higher education.

The idea got momentum recently of creating closer ties between higher education research and science research. Scholars of different backgrounds began to cooperate. The largest unit of higher education research in Germany, the above named *DZHW*, now addresses both higher education and science research. The newest visible research unit within a university striving for such a link is the Leibniz Centre for Science and Society at the University of Hannover.

Finally, it is worth noting that the number of young persons embarking on higher education research has increased enormously over the years. Many doctoral candidates decide to focus on issues of higher education, many units of higher education research recruit substantial numbers of junior staff, and many higher education professionals/science managers consider their job role to be more interesting, if they are part-time involved in research. Actually, many young persons writing their doctoral dissertation on higher education or being involved for a short period in higher education research, who do not find a permanent position in higher education, become higher education professionals/science managers; many of them are well prepared for research and like to continue doing research on higher education part-time. Thus, it is not surprising to note that young persons are the most active members in the *Gesellschaft für Hochschulforschung* and usually arrange a one-day conference for young scholars before every annual conference. It fits into this context that young scholars have asked Ulrich Teichler to fund annual research prizes for the best

master theses and the best doctoral dissertations in the domain of higher education research; they are awarded as Ulrich-Teichler-Prizes by the *GfHf* on the occasion of its annual meetings since 2008.

## 10. Conclusion

At German universities, institutional units and professorships continue to be structured predominantly according to disciplinary rationales. For examples, study programmes or department focus on economics, sociology, etc., and professorships are defined for example as theory of sociology, social science methods, etc. In recent decades, we note a gradual move towards topical definitions, such as industrial sociology or educational sociology, but not a strong move towards a topical structure or even towards relatively small topical areas, such as higher education research.

When public interest grew in higher education issues in the 1960s and early 1970s, more initiatives were taken to combine research with practical activities, as in combined research and service units for higher education didactics, and in applied higher education research institutes outside universities than to provide a basis for academic higher education research in universities. When such interest even began to grow stronger since the 1990s, we note a more substantial increase of information gathering on higher education through evaluation, consultancy and part-time research activities of university administrators in charge of professional services and management-support – in Germany often called “science managers” – than a growth of typical academic higher education research.

Nowadays about 500 scholars in Germany doing most or least a substantial share of their research on higher education. There are now a few dozens of professor positions at German higher education institutions focusing on higher education research, but not all of these positions are officially named to be specialized on higher education research. And there are a few hundreds of doctoral candidates, young scholars, “science managers”, etc. being active in higher education research.

This situation can be viewed as a challenge for the core academic scholars active as higher education researchers to underscore the potential of good higher education research in contrast to superficial and by strong normative rationales driven analyses. Also higher education researchers might cooperate well with other experts who cannot devote all their professional work to higher education, but appreciate the rationales of academically well-based higher education

research.

It should be added that most research on higher education in Germany has remained predominantly national, regional or local in focus. And more than three quarters of publications in this domain have been written in the German language. The Centre in Kassel is an exception. Therefore, the international expert team evaluating the Centre thoroughly in 2005 suggested to underscore its international emphasis in its institutional name. In 2006, the name International Centre for Higher Education Research was chosen.

The author of this presentation had been the first foreign visitor of RIHE in the early 1970s. He visited RIHE about 20 times, and he was invited about 20 times to contribute to RIHE's publication. Both RIHE and the Centre in Kassel have cooperated over the years in counterbalancing the lop-sided international visibility of English-speaking countries on the world-wide higher education research scene and in making higher education research of other countries highly visible as well. Let us hope that RIHE can continue to be an important world-wide platform of communication among higher education researchers.

World-wide cooperation among higher education researchers might be even more important in the future than in the past. We note signs of increasing "international misunderstanding", signs of increasing nationalism of higher education policy in many countries, signs of increasing isolation of scholars in response to health catastrophes and turn to digitalization, and signs of collapse of international academic cooperation in response to wars. Higher education research has benefitted so much in the past from comparing varied higher education approaches in different countries of the world that it has the potential to resist such communication-restricting pressures.

## References

- Gunkel, S., Freidank, G., & Teichler, U. (Eds.) (2003). *Directory der Hochschulforschung: Personen und Institutionen in Deutschland* (Directory of Higher Education Research: Persons and Institutions in Germany). Bonn: Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (HRK), (Beiträge zur Hochschulpolitik, No. 4/2003).
- Ramirez, R., Beer, A., & Pasternack, P. (2021). WiHoTop – Elemente einer Topografie der deutschen Wissenschafts- und Hochschulforschung (WiHoTop – Elements of a topography of German Science and Higher Education Research). *die hochschule. Journal für wissenschaft und bildung*, 30(1), 5-80.
- Teichler, U. (2013a). Academically Ambitious and Relevant Higher Education Research: The Legacy of the Consortium of Higher Education Researchers. *European Journal of Higher*

*Education*, 3(3), 242-254 (P. Zgaga, Ed., Special Issue: The Past, Present and Future of Higher Education Research: Between Scholarship and Policy Making).

Teichler, U. (2013b). Yôroppa no kôtô kyôiku kenkyû (Higher Education Research in Europe). *Kôtôkyôikukenyû* (Japanese Journal of Higher Education Research), No.16, 123-143. (Kôtôkyôiku kenkyû no seidoka to kadai tokushû/Special Issue: Higher Education Research: Institutionalization and Its Challenges).

Teichler, U. (2015). Higher Education Research in Europe. In A. Curaj, L. Matei, R. Pricopie, L. Salmi, & P. Scott (Eds.), *The European Higher Education Area: Between Critical Reflections and Future Policies* (pp. 823-856). Cham: Springer Open.

Teichler, U. (2018). Der studentische Protest der 1960er Jahre und die Entstehung der Hochschulforschung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (The Student Protest of the 1960s and the Emergence of Higher Education Research in the Federal Republic of Germany). *die hochschule. Journal für wissenschaft und bildung*, 27(1), 179-203.

## **Possible Futures of Higher Education Research in Germany**

***International Symposium: Higher Education  
Research – Challenges and Responses  
Hiroshima, 14 May 2022***

***Prof. Dr. Ulrich Teichler***

***International Center for Higher Education Research  
(INCHER)  
University of Kassel, Germany***

## **The Situation in the 1950s**

- **After WWII, efforts to revitalize higher education in the Federal Republic of Germany (Western Germany) according to the traditions of the 1920s**
- **Argument: The traditional university has been “healthy in its nucleus” (“im Kern gesund”)**
- **Hardly any interest in systematic information on the higher education system**
- **HER: Few studies, e.g on history of universities, academic careers, quantitative developments of HE**
- **“The German professor conducts research on everything except on his institutional basis”**

## **The First Wave of Higher Education Research in the 1960s**

- **Two developments challenged the trust in the traditional university: (a) Concerns about the conditions and consequences of HE expansion, (b) The student protest opened eyes for weaknesses of traditional HE**
- **Increasing interest in systematic knowledge on HE**
- **Many individual scholars of various disciplines analysed HE issues: Notably economists, geographers, sociologists and education researchers**
- **Themes: Expansion, regional and social inequality, students' views and attitudes, study conditions, etc.**
- **First trend report on higher education research worldwide (Max Planck Institute for Educational Research)**

## **First Steps towards Institutionalization of Higher Education Research in the 1970s**

- **Centres for Higher Education Didactics at various universities (in charge of applied research and services for improvement of teaching and learning)**
- **Institutes outside universities: (a) Higher Education Information System (HIS), (b) Bavarian Institute for Higher Education Research and Planning (IHF)**
- **In 1978, establishment of first academic HE research unit within a German university: Centre for Research on Higher and Work, Comprehensive University of Kassel (renamed in 2006: INCHER-Kassel)-**



## **The Interim Period from the Late 1970s to the Mid-1990s**

- Reform mood of the previous years vanished
- A period of general "reform fatigue": Less critique of the traditional German university; critique of reform concepts and implementations
- Prime concern about demographically supported increase of student enrolment. Calls for postponement of reforms
- After German unification 1989/1990s, attention paid to transformation of higher education in the East – adaptation to the West

## **Higher Education Research in the Interim Period from the Late 1970s to the Mid-1990s**

### **Loss of interest in higher education research**

- No new centres for higher education didactics, some closures
- No new initiatives for the establishment of institutes for HER outside universities
- No new professorships on HER and no new research units of HER within universities

## **The Higher Education Research Centre in Kassel**

- **The new university in Kassel wanted to select research priorities neglected by traditional universities**
- **Interdisciplinary unit outside departmental structure**
- **Only 1-2 professor positions, 3-5 professors active part-time, up to 7 junior academic staff positions paid by university**
- **Substantial external research funds raised, which helped paying 10-20 more additional junior acad.**
- **One priority topic and various other topics of research. Many empirical surveys**

## **Worldwide Fashions of HE Innovation since the 1990s**

- **(1) Reduction of detailed governmental regulations**
- **(2) Growth of evaluation mechanisms**
- **(3) Increasing power of university management**
- **(4) Declining influence of university professors**
- **(5) Expectation of relevance and utilitarianism**
- **(6) More emphasis placed on research productivity**
- **(7) Attention to the top of the system: "Rankings"**
- **(8) Stronger role played by competition between individuals, institutions and countries**
- **(9) Popularity of "indicators"/superficial data**

## **Growing Interest in Varied Types of Knowledge on HE**

- **The new innovative spirit in HE led to increasing interest in systematic information on HE, but interest in other types of knowledge than those prevailing in higher education research:**
- **(1) "Evaluation", i.e. information gathering linked to normative assessment**
- **(2) Information related to the individual university rather than to the national system of HE**
- **(3) Comparisons between universities, e.g. "rankings"**

## **Enormous Increase of Other "Knowledge Workers"**

- **Estimate of the number of higher education researchers in Germany: About 200 in 1990, 500 in 2020**
- **(1) Substantial increase of evaluators: Academics of various disciplines being occasional short-term part-time knowledge workers on HE**
- **(2) Substantial increase of "higher education professionals"/"science managers": University staff in charge of services and management-support**
- **(3) Emergence of consultancy in HE: Most visible in Germany: Centre for Higher Education Development (CHE), known for ranking studies and training of managers**

## Higher Education Researchers - Quantity and Characteristics

- **Estimate: Increase from 200 in 1990 to 500 in 2020**
- **Directory of Higher Education Researchers 2003: 150 (about 50% responses to invitations of persons having written some publications on higher education)**
- **Among them: About 40 professors (10 on some kind of HER positions; others notably from education and sociology, also from law, economics and other disciplines) and about 10 retired professors**
- **Among them: About 50 junior academics at units specialized on HE, about 25 junior academics at other units, and about 25 persons of varied institutional basis**

## The Changing Institutional Basis of Higher Education Research (I)

- **Large East German Institute for Higher Education Pedagogy closed in 1990**
- **Instead 1997: Institute for Higher Education Research Wittenberg ("at" the University of Halle-Wittenberg) – similar in size to INCHER-Kassel**
- **No further HER centres at German universities, but additional single professor positions. Other universities known for some HER: HU Berlin, Hamburg, Dortmund and Speyer**
- **2006: Foundation of Association for HE Research (GfHf) for German-speaking-regions in Europe**

## **The Changing Institutional Basis of Higher Education Research (II)**

- **Some closures of centres of HE didactics, some transformations of professorships, some other professional actors on teaching and learning. New association: formerly AHD, now DGDH**
- **2013: Transformation of the mixed service and research institution HIS into the – very large – German Centre for Higher Education and Science Research (DZHW)**
- **Efforts to improve cooperation between higher education research and science research; establishment of Leibniz Centre for Science and Society, University of Hannover**

## **The Changing Institutional Basis of HE Research (III)**

- **Hundred of “higher education professionals”/ “science managers” are not only the most ardent readers of HER publications, but are also active part-time as higher education researchers**
- **A substantial number of doctoral candidates and junior academics specialized on HER become HE professionals and remain active in HER part-time**
- **Young HE researchers are very active in GfHf**
- **Annually, award of Ulrich Teichler Prize for the best doctoral dissertation and the best master thesis in HER (awarded at annual GfHf conferences)**

## Conclusion (I)

- **The community of higher education researchers has grown since the 1990s, HER has benefitted from changes in the higher education system, but faces problems**
- **(1) Very heterogeneous background of professional situation of higher education researchers and very heterogeneous and often weak institutional basis**
- **(2) Enormous quantities of other "knowledge producers" workers: Evaluators, "higher education professionals"/"science managers"**

## Conclusion (II)

- **Higher education researchers ought to cooperate with "higher education professionals"/"science managers".**
- **The example of the "Cooperation Network Graduate Surveys" (KOAB): Scholars from Kassel cooperate with professionals of more than 100 HEIs active in institutional surveys.**
- **Higher education researchers have been enormously active in disseminating their research findings.**
- **Higher education researchers have to show that a good theoretical and methodological quality of research is not only beneficial for academic reputation, but also contributes to a higher social relevance of research, i.e. is more valuable for higher education policy and practice.**

## References (I)

- Gunkel, Sonja, Freidank, Gebriele and Teichler, Ulrich (Eds.). *Directory der Hochschulforschung: Personen und Institutionen in Deutschland* (Directory of Higher Education Research: Persons and Institutions in Germany). Bonn: Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (HRK), 2003 (Beiträge zur Hochschulpolitik, No. 4/2003).
- Teichler, Ulrich. "Academically Ambitious and Relevant Higher Education Research: The Legacy of the Consortium of Higher Education Researchers". *European Journal of Higher Education*, 3 (3), 2013, 242-254.

## References (II)

- Teichler, Ulrich. "Yôroppa no kôtô kyôiku kenkyû" (Higher Education Research in Europe). *Kôtôkyôikukenyû* (Japanese Journal of Higher Education Research), dai 16 shû (No. 16), 2013, 123-143 (Kôtôkyôiku kenkyû no seidoka to kadai tokushû/Special Issue: Higher Education Research: Institutionalization and Its Challenges).
- Teichler, Ulrich. "Higher Education Research in Europe". In Curaj, Adrian, Matei, Liviu, Pricopie, Remus, Salmi, Jamil and Scott, Peter (Eds.), *The European Higher Education Area: Between Critical Reflections and Future Policies*. Cham: SpringerOpen 2015, pp. 823-856.

## References (III)

**Teichler, Ulrich. "Der studentische Protest der 1960er Jahre und die Entstehung der Hochschulforschung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland" (The Student Protest of the 1960s and the Emergence of Higher Education Research in the Federal Republic of Germany). *die hochschule. Journal für wissenschaft und bildung*, 27 (1), 2018, 179-203.**