

The Strategic Purposes and Significant Effects of Quality Assurance in German Higher Education: A Comparative Perspective

by

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This paper attempts to explain how the German higher education system strategically used quality assurance, through the new system of accreditation, to offer globally recognisable degrees such as the Bachelor's (Bakkalaureaus) and Master's (Magister) degrees. We also discuss the types of effects that this strategy has produced on the current structure of the German higher education system. In order to strengthen this discussion, the fundamental impacts of quality-related funding on the system's structure are scrutinised.

Introduction

According to Helga A. Welsh (2004, p. 360), “Policy and institutional change in [Germany] have traditionally emphasised “change through adaptation”; rather than radical restructuring. The emphasis on gradualism is more than a cultural preference for piecemeal approaches to reform. It is the outcome of multiple consensual features in which major veto players impose multilevel decision-making and compromise, as well as competition amongst the political parties that fosters conflict. This tension between consensual and majoritarian elements of policy-making marks the German political system.” In spite of this traditional policy-making pattern, “Currently, the German higher education system is undergoing drastic reform” (Liefner *et al.*, 2004, p. 23). In particular, the introduction of Bachelor’s and Master’s degree courses into higher education institutions implies their fundamental restructuring.

The question that arises here is with regard to how this drastic reform could be initiated within the German political system.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the strategic purposes and significant effects of new quality assurance systems, in particular the new system of accreditation which was introduced into the German higher education system around the turn of the century. The argument is to deductively demonstrate that this accreditation system was strategically designed to persuade institutions of higher education to offer spontaneously new Bachelor’s and Master’s degree programmes. However, this strategy has a “side effect”; the accreditation system, in addition to a new system of performance-based funding, also encourages the restructuring of many universities of applied sciences (*Fachhochschulen*) from practice-centred to theory-oriented institutions placing them on the same footing as universities (*Universitäten*). This restructuring entails a problem – the probability of further dispersal of research grants among universities, although a serious shortage of these grants for each institution is already notable.

This paper comprises three sections. The first section will consider one of the reasons why foreign ideas of accreditation were distorted and how this distortion has influenced the structure of the German higher education system. The second section will look at the way in which the introduction of new performance-based funding allocation can affect this structure through a comparison with the British system of quality-related funding. The final section will draw the arguments together and seek to identify some conclusions.

Accreditation

Up to the early 1990s, in German higher education no explicit policy system of quality assurance, such as an accreditation system, was evident. As Helmut De Rudder (1994, p. 204) suggests:

“Until recently, German policy makers, higher education leaders and professors did not see the need to institutionalise either quality assessment or systematic quality evaluation, as had become common in American higher education and as happened in some other Western countries.”

De Rudder (1994, p. 203) argues that “one reason for the notable absence of a quality debate or a quality assurance policy in German higher education is that differences in quality within German higher education, in contrast, for instance, to American higher education, have not been very great within a given institutional type.” He adds:

“Indeed, in recent decades the general thrust and intention of higher education policy at both federal and state level has been to treat all universities or all polytechnic colleges (*Fachhochschulen*) as more or less equal, with the same standards for exams, the same entrance qualifications, the same curricula, the same overall level of funding, the same regulations governing appointments and promotions, the same salary scales, the same organisational structures, and the same basic conditions for researching, teaching and studying” (1994, p. 203).

Despite the clear separation of the *Universitäten* from the *Fachhochschulen*, this “equal” policy, for a long time, continued attracting public support.

Nonetheless, a new quality assurance system appeared in 1999, the time when the German Accreditation Council (*Akkreditierungsrat*) was established in Bonn, according to the Resolution of the Standing Conference of the *Länder* Ministers for Education and Cultural Affairs (*Kultusministerkonferenz*, KMK) – which had been adopted on 3 December 1998 (Berner and Richter, 2001). This Council is now a permanent independent institution, which operates nationwide to ensure quality of teaching and research in German higher education. The creation of a national accreditation system accorded with German legislatures’ endorsement of two documents, the Sorbonne Declaration and the Bologna Declaration, which advocated that a European common frame for teaching and learning in higher education should be created.

In 1998, the ministers responsible for higher education in France, Germany, Italy and the United Kingdom ratified the Sorbonne Declaration. According to Helena Sebkova (2002, p. 239), this “Declaration expressed the view that Europe should not only be a continent of joint currency, banking, and economics, but also that it should be a Europe of knowledge, with a strong intellectual, cultural, social and technological base in which higher education institutions would serve as leaders in the process of this development.”

In the next year, higher education authorities from 29 European countries concurred with each other on the fundamental principles of the Sorbonne Declaration, and issued the Bologna Declaration, which put stress on the shaping of the “European Higher Education Area” through achievement of the following six goals:

1. adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees;
2. adoption of a system based essentially on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate;
3. establishment of a system of credits;
4. promotion of mobility by the overcoming of obstacles to effective free movement;
5. promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance;
6. promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education (Sebkova, 2002, p. 240).

Nevertheless, for German governments at that time, it was not easy to achieve the six goals of the Bologna Declaration. Firstly, traditional degrees at German universities, such as *Diplom*, *Magister*, and *Staatsprüfung* in law and medicine, were not understood to be “easily readable and comparable degrees” in other countries, especially outside Europe. Secondly, German universities had no established concept of the “two main cycles, undergraduate and (post)graduate”. Finally, the idea of “credits” was unpopular (Peisert and Framhein, 1995).

German legislatures had already been well aware of these problems. Indeed, in 1998 the 16 *Länder* governments reached agreement on the immediate establishment of the “Anglo-Saxon” structure of two consecutive courses: Bachelor’s and Master’s degree programmes (Berner and Richter, 2001). Nonetheless, they had no intention of constraining German universities to adopt such programmes, because of their respect for the autonomy of the universities that was also stressed in the Bologna Declaration (Sebkova, 2002). For that reason, the German governments needed to find tactics that would induce the universities to spontaneously do so.

It is conjecturable that one of those tactics could be the institution of an accreditation system in 1999, in addition to the creation of the German Accreditation Council in the same year. According to this Council (1999, p. 1), “The process of accreditation aims to contribute towards securing quality in higher education teaching and study by setting basic standards.”

This accreditation system was, however, designed for securing the quality of Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Master of Arts (MA) degree courses only, not for that of traditional *Diplom* courses, even though “the introduction of BA and MA degree courses was initially conceived as an addition to the traditional *Diplom* degree courses offered in Germany” (German Accreditation Council, 2001, p. 1). All of

these traditional degrees continued to be “governed by federal framework regulations to guarantee the same level of qualifications in all *Länder*” (Berner and Richter, 2001, p. 248). This pattern would be slightly modified, as the German Accreditation Council (2003, p. 8) explains, “Since the beginning of 2003, newly-established *Diplom* and *Magister* degree courses in subject areas for which no framework examination regulations exist or where current framework regulations are outdated are also subject to obligatory accreditation.”

In spite of this modification, the accreditation system was still not applicable to traditional *Diplom* courses.

Thus, the German legislatures who initiated this accreditation system did not accept the foreign idea of accreditation as a method to maintain and improve the overall quality of the German university system as a whole. Instead, as Heike Berner and Roland Richter (2001, p. 249) indicate, these legislatures welcomed it “as a steering instrument in the approval procedures of new Bachelor’s and Master’s programmes in Germany”. The legislatures finally succeeded in stimulating the diffusion of BA and MA degree courses – although it was a very slow process – without violating the autonomy of the universities (Berner and Richter, 2001).

Even so, the co-existence of BA and MA degree programmes with traditional *Diplom* programmes helped to produce tension between universities (*Universitäten*) and universities of applied sciences (*Fachhochschulen*).

Fachhochschulen are higher education institutions that were upgraded from secondary schools for vocational education, such as colleges of engineering (*Ingenieurschulen*), as a result of the agreement between the *Länder* governments in the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany) in October 1968. Candidates for *Fachhochschulen* did not have to acquire the *Abitur*, the general qualification for entering higher education (*allgemeine Hochschulreife*). The entrance qualification for a *Fachhochschule* (*Fachhochschulreife*) was sufficient for them (Gellert, 1997).

Other than requirements for entrance, the *Fachhochschulen* had several characteristics different from those of the *Universitäten*:

1. mostly vocational-oriented education was provided;
2. almost all study programmes were in the fields of engineering, agriculture, economics or design;
3. study courses were shorter and more structured;
4. professors’ teaching loads were heavier;
5. research activities were not often required;
6. no doctoral courses were offered (Gellert and Rau, 1992).

Moreover, the *Fachhochschulen* conferred the *FH-Diploms* which were generally deemed to be equivalent of BA degrees, whilst the first degrees

gained at the *Universitäten* were usually viewed as equivalent to MA degrees (Klumpp and Teichler, 2004).

These gaps between the *Universitäten* and the *Fachhochschulen* are, however, gradually being bridged, partly because these institutions are both entitled to establish BA and MA degree courses. Despite the fact that the Accreditation Council made a distinction between applied (practical) and theoretical (research) BA and MA degree programmes, this does not mean that the *Fachhochschulen* are prohibited from offering any theoretical BA and MA degree courses (German Accreditation Council, 2001).

In Germany, the introduction of the accreditation system was thus conducive not only to disseminating BA and MA degree courses, but also to reducing the differences between the *Fachhochschulen* and the *Universitäten*. A problematic consequence of this reduction can be that some *Fachhochschulen* voluntarily started making attempts to convert themselves from cheap but good vocational-oriented institutions into expensive theory-oriented institutions with poor infrastructures.

The *Fachhochschulen* are highly appreciated as good vocational-oriented institutions in Germany, especially in industrial society. As the Federal Ministry of Education and Research in Germany (*Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung*, BMBF) (2002, p. 20) explains, “The special qualifications which graduates of *Fachhochschulen* offer correspond to the economy’s need for specialists with higher education degrees who received vocational-oriented education and thus bring with them good skills for mastering the ever more complex tasks demanded in the industrial and service society.” The BMBF additionally states:

“In keeping with this trend, the economy has in the past repeatedly advocated a more differentiated system of higher education with a strong *Fachhochschule* sector. The demand for employees with a degree from a *Fachhochschule* has – according to the trade associates – continued to remain strong. Many companies make no distinction between degrees from a *Fachhochschule* or a university when hiring. Top and highest level executive positions are open to graduates of *Fachhochschulen*. The lowest level of unemployment for all educational groups is found among graduates of *Fachhochschulen*” (2002, p. 20).

As well as having such a high reputation, the *Fachhochschulen* are less expensive than the *Universitäten*, in terms of the average expenditure on teaching and research per student; this is shown in Table 1.

As can be seen, although in a few subject groups the *Fachhochschulen* are slightly more expensive than the *Universitäten*, in areas of natural sciences huge differences exist in expenditures per student between these two types of institutions.

Table 1. Current expenditure (in EUR) of higher education institutions on teaching and research per student in Germany by subject group and type of institution (2001)

Subject group	<i>Universitäten</i>	<i>Fachhochschulen</i>
Law, Economics, Social Science	1 988	1 884
Mathematics, Science	7 062	2 437
Human Medicine	28 363	–
Agriculture, Forestry, Dietetics	10 003	3 733
Engineering	7 688	4 018
Language, Cultural Studies	2 800	3 475
Art	2 744	3 925
Average	5 821	2 902

Source: Federal Ministry of Education and Research in Germany (2004), *Grund- und Strukturdaten 2003/2004*, BMBF, Bonn, p. 279.

These differences come from the fact that, whereas the *Universitäten* are spending considerable amounts of money on their scientific research activities, the *Fachhochschulen* are poorly “funded for research and their staffing establishments do not include top grade professors” (Williams 1996, p. 25). The differences are also due to the fact that “*Fachhochschule* teachers spend a much lower proportion of their time on research than their colleagues at universities” (Teichler, 1996, p. 101).

Because *Fachhochschule* professors have had – as compared to their *Universität* counterparts – inferior research conditions, even though the list of their requirements for appointment includes proof of special aptitude for research work, they understandably tend to possess aspirations for “academic drift” (drift towards theory-oriented institutions, comparable to the *Universitäten*) (Teichler, 1996, p. 99). For that reason, many *Fachhochschule* professors look on the adoption of BA and MA degree courses, especially the theoretical ones, as a good chance to promote such academic drift.

The next section includes a further discussion on how the academic drift *Fachhochschulen* is fostered, not only by the adoption of BA and MA degree programmes, but also by the initiation of the new performance-based funding systems that implicitly follow the British and US examples.

Performance-based funding

The major sources of revenue for German institutions of higher education are – apart from their own incomes – basic funds (*Grundmittel*) from the Federal and the *Länder* governments, in addition to external funds (*Drittmittel*) from research councils and foundations. These basic funds were, for a long time, almost evenly allocated to the institutions of higher education according to their types. As Klaus Schnitzer and Andrä Wolter (2000, p. 246) indicate:

“The present procedure (before the reform) for basic state funding is traditionally based on actual needs. This is an incrementalist approach that takes as a starting point the staffing and equipment resources already available at the respective higher education institutions. Budget calculations are based on input-related formulae such as the number of students, the number of professional posts or teaching capacity.”

However, when the fourth revision of the Framework Act for Higher Education (*Hochschulrahmengesetz*, HRG), which was a federal law to prescribe the general systems of German higher education, was made on 20 August 1998, the termination of this funding system was advocated. Article V of this new Framework Act (HRG, 1998, p. 5) specifies, “State funding for institutions of higher education is oriented towards performance achieved in research and education as well as in the fostering of the new generations of academics.”

In response to this alteration in the purpose of funding, several *Länder* governments took active measures to make “budgeting more flexible [and to create systems of] performance-related resource allocation between and within the higher education institutions” (Schnitzer and Wolter, 2000, p. 246).

The creation of such funding systems was by no means new for European countries. For example, over one decade ago, the British government had already introduced a new system for performance-oriented distribution of research money on a competitive basis (Williams, 1992).

This British system of performance-based funding, as will be described later in this section, contributed to drawing a line between research-centred universities and education-centred universities, with the consequence that the government succeeded in checking the rapid rise in the research expenses of the new universities mostly upgraded from polytechnics. Analysis of this development provides a comparative perspective that is useful for examining the German situation.

British higher education used to have a binary system, with two different sectors – similar to current German higher education. One was the university sector, which was composed of institutions for scholarly research and academic education; the other was the non-university sector, which consisted mainly of polytechnics offering degree courses with a vocational emphasis (Kogan and Hanney, 1999). This binary system was eventually dissolved by upgrading of all the polytechnics and two colleges of higher education to universities, following the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act passed by the Conservative government (McNay, 1999).

About a decade before this dissolution, the Conservative government made consecutive announcements stating that it would cut down the amount of recurrent grant allotted to universities. This decision of the government had a crucial impact on the University Grants Committee (UGC). As Michael

Shattock (1994) points out, "... the UGC made it absolutely clear to universities that although it did not contemplate the closure of any university, it certainly envisaged the closure of courses and even whole departments. ... It rejected any policy of levying an equal percentage cut across the system" (1994, p. 21). In 1984, this resulted in the UGC publishing a paper with the title "A Strategy for Higher Education into the 1990's", which stated, "We propose to adopt a more selective approach in the allocation of research support among universities in order to ensure that resources for research are used to best advantage" (para. 1.9).

In 1986, the UGC, which had long distributed its research funds almost on a per capita basis among the universities, implemented this principle of the performance-based distribution of research funding (Williams, 1988).

In 1989, the government disbanded the UGC, which had worked as an autonomous buffer agency between the governments and universities, and established the University Funding Council (UFC) and the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Council (PCFC); this implies that emphasis changed from planning to financial control (Kogan and Marton, 2000). In 1992, accompanying the termination of the binary system, the UFC and the PCFC were replaced by the three Higher Education Funding Councils (HEFCs) established in England, Scotland and Wales (Lund and Jackson, 2000).

The UFC and later the HEFCs repeatedly received the same crucial advice. That advice was in favour of a heavy concentration of research funds in a small number of universities, on the assumption that the dispersal of research funds would diminish the overall quality of research in higher education. In accord with such recommendations, the UFC and then the HEFCs made their quality-related research (QR) funding increasingly selective.

According to the HEFC for England (2004, pp. 19-20), "Mainstream QR funds are divided between 68 subject areas (units of assessment). [...] The 68 subject totals are distributed to institutions in proportion to the volume of research multiplied by the quality of research in the subject for each institution." In addition, "the quality of research is assessed in the RAE [Research Assessment Exercise]. The last RAE was conducted in 2001 and has informed funding decisions from 2002-03. In the last RAE, each institution was awarded a rating, on a scale of 1 to 5* (five star), for the quality of its research in each unit of assessment in which it was active."

These RAE ratings are judged by peer review (the evaluation of academic work by others who are working in the same field) (Henkel, 2000). How the RAE ratings in 2001 were connected with increase or decrease in the QR funding is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. **RAE ratings converted into funding weights for each unit of assessment (2004)**

Ratings	1	2	3b	3a	4	5	5*
Funding weights	0	0	0	0	1	2.793	3.362

Source: Higher Education Funding Council for England (2004), *Funding Higher Education in England: How the HEFCE Allocates its Funds*, HEFCE, Bristol, p. 20.

As can be seen, whilst a rating of 5* attracted over three times more QR funding than a rating of 4 for the same volume of research activity, ratings of 1, 2, 3b and 3a received nothing.

Furthermore, according to the HEFCE (2004, p. 20), “the Government’s White Paper ‘The Future of Higher Education’ asked us to provide additional resources to the ‘very best of the 5* department’. In 2003-04, we distributed an additional GBP 20 million for departments that achieved a 5* rating in both the 1996 and 2001 RAEs.” Therefore, greater funding partiality is now apparent towards a limited number of world-class research universities.

Thanks to such selective funding of research, the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge and London (London School of Economics, University College London and Imperial College), where many subjects were awarded 5* or 5 ratings in both the 1996 and 2001 RAEs, enjoyed a considerable amount of the QR funds from the HEFCE (Morgan, 2004). By contrast, many universities, including even some of the older universities, attracted little funding on account of this selectivity (Bleiklie, 2000).

Within this allocation pattern, most of the new universities, whose initial RAE ratings were low, acquired almost no QR funds, and therefore found it difficult to develop their research activities, with the consequence that their low ratings remained unimproved (Williams, 1997). This vicious circle, or more appropriately, “determinist” circle, constrained them to choose to survive as education-oriented universities with little research activities – exactly as they used to be when they were polytechnics (Kogan, 2002).

Consequently, it has been suggested that the quality-related allocation of research funds forced former polytechnics to maintain their characteristics as cheap but good education-oriented institutions, at the same time as it assisted particular universities with the ability to do academic research at international level to attract most of the competitive research funds.

After the middle of the 1980s, councils to evaluate the quality of higher education were established in many West European countries other than the United Kingdom. For example, in France in 1985 the National Evaluation Committee (*Comité national d’évaluation*) was created as an independent organisation (Eicher and Chevallier, 2000). In similar fashion, in the Netherlands in 1988 the Association of Dutch Universities (*Vereniging van samenwerkende*

nederlandse universiteiten) was founded (Plankeel, 2000). In Denmark too, in 1992 the Centre for Quality Assurance and Evaluation of Higher Education (*Evalueringscenteret*) was established (Thune, 1994).

The governments of these three countries resembled each other in their procedures for introducing the evaluation systems. Firstly, these governments moderately relaxed their restrictions on universities; secondly, in exchange for this relaxation, they demanded that each university should reform itself to improve the efficiency of its research and education, and hence should assume accountability for the results of these reforms; lastly, they induced the universities to accept educational and research assessment conducted by evaluation councils (Neave, 2000).

Following these precedents, in May 1993 the Joint Working Group of the German Federal and *Länder* governments (*Bund-Länder-Arbeitsgruppe*) first issued a “Benchmark Paper” (*Eckwertepapier*). This paper recommended reinforcing the autonomy and responsibility of higher educational institutions through a change in the higher education law, with a view to encouraging individual institutions to cope with various and variable educational needs in ways different from one another (Federal and *Länder* Working Group, 1993).

Next, in July of the same year the KMK issued a joint statement, with the Association of Universities and Other Higher Education Institutions (*Hochschulrektorenkonferenz*, HRK), entitled “The Implementation of the Structural Reform for Study” (*Umsetzung der Studienstrukturreform*). This joint statement advised adopting the idea of block grants (*Globalhaushalt*) to permit each institution to spend its money from the *Länder* budgets almost at its own discretion (Schnitzer and Wolter, 2000).

Finally, as already stated, in August 1998 the Framework Act for Higher Education was amended; its Articles V and VI promulgate the introduction of university evaluation systems and the institution of competitive funding distributions in accordance with the outcome of evaluations. In response to this proclamation, several *Länder* governments began to establish evaluating organisations that were independent of the governments and institutions of higher education.

German academics have not yet reached agreement on how to apportion funds competitively in proportion to the performance attained in educational activities. What measures of education evaluation should be instituted has been in dispute, because educational evaluation itself is an imported and unfamiliar concept (Schnitzer and Wolter, 2000). In contrast, research councils’ practice of dispensing their research subsidies on a competitive basis is already rooted deeply in Germany (Konow, 1996).

One of the most influential research councils is the German Research Council (*Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft*, DFG), which is an autonomous

organisation (Stucke, 1999). Research assessment by the DFG is conducted through peer review – comparable to that of the HEFCs in Britain. As the DFG (German Research Council, 2001a, p. 3) itself explains, “[The] DFG uses peer review on all project grant applications. While mail review is commonly used for individual grants, panel review, often including site visits, is common for all forms of co-operative research.”

What is important here is that, whilst the major objects of the British HEFCs’ evaluation when deciding on their financial support are each subject in each institution (although this means that only submitted research staff in each subject in each institution are subject to the RAE), the DFG considers individual applicants and groups for joint research. Other German research societies (both governmental organs and private foundations) also distribute their research grants mostly in accordance with the assessment of individual applicants’ research proposals and achievements in the past (Peisert and Framhein, 1995).

In the United States, where a parallel means of allocation is widely utilised, research and development (R&D) funds for higher education “are concentrated: the top 100 institutions account for over 80% of all academic R&D funds, the top 50 over 60%, the top 10 over 20%. The distribution of academic R&D across fields has remained essentially the same over the past two decades” (Gumport, 1993, p. 244). This striking concentration of academic R&D funds in particular universities takes place, because of the “Matthew effect, in which cumulative advantage helps the rich to become richer” (Gumport, 1993, p. 230).

This Matthew effect is cyclical: US universities are clearly stratified in status; the status of the university to which each applicant belongs is regarded as an important element in judging whether academic R&D funds should be awarded to these applicants or not; the higher the status which an institution enjoys, the more that the institution can save on the overhead costs of its R&D funds, and thus, afford to recruit distinguished scholars and to improve research equipment. Consequently, the stratification among the universities is reinforced.

In contrast to the case in the United States, the Matthew effect cannot be seen in Germany. This is because no marked ranking order among the *Universitäten* exists, and due to the common practice of forbidding institutions to seek support for the overhead costs from the research funds that their academics have attracted (German Research Council, 2001b).

Because there is no apparent ranking order among the *Universitäten*, when German scholars apply for research grants, it is not very important for many of

them which *Universität* they belong to – as compared with their British, Japanese and US counterparts. As Hans Brinckmann (1994, p. 194) points out:

“The allocation of [research] money is determined by individual performance and funds are given to the individual researcher, not to the university. If the researcher takes up a position at another university, he or she can take his/her external money with him/her. Thus, the procedures concerning allocation of research funds have nothing to do with any decision concerning the performance of the university or the department as a whole.”

At present, this method of allocation is also applied to the *Fachhochschulen*, whose commitment to research has been stimulated since the BMBF programme for Applied Research and Development at *Fachhochschulen* started in 1992. Although most *Fachhochschulen* still have difficulties in attracting funding for research, many academics there are now devoting themselves to forming research projects, with the aim of acquiring such funds (Federal Ministry of Education and Research in Germany, 2002).

Thus far, the new German system of performance-related funding has been conducive to moving the line between research- and education-centred institutions downwards. On the other hand, the British system of funding results in an upward movement of this line. To be more precise, in Britain, the research funds tend to be heavily concentrated merely among a small number of old elite universities. However, in Germany, it is possible that these funds will perhaps be granted extensively even to some *Fachhochschulen*, despite the current plan of promoting an elite research sector within the university system.

Conclusion

According to Angelika Schade (2003, p. 286):

“The most significant reform in higher education in the last two decades has been the greater autonomy given to higher education institutions in most European countries and the move away from the ‘interventionary State’ towards a more ‘facilitatory State’. This process has often entailed the releasing of higher education institutions from strict control through legislation by giving them the right to pass their own statutes in the broadening area over which they have autonomy. The main focus was on reforms in institutional management, in financing institutions and in procedures for assessment and quality control of the educational provision.”

In this current of the times, the importance of performance-based funding and financial competition is being increasingly emphasised. This makes it more difficult to justify sustaining the traditional German separation of the *Universitäten* from the *Fachhochschulen*. As has been discussed in the

paper, this difficulty is partly due to the fact that the accreditation system is thrown open to both the *Universitäten* and the *Fachhochschulen*: this system provides an official guarantee that every *Fachhochschule* can compete – in the quality of their education – on equal terms with the *Universitäten*.

Moreover, the new German system of distributing performance-based funding to higher education institutions encourages many academics of the *Fachhochschulen* to enter into strong competition for research funds with their colleagues affiliated to the *Universitäten*. This is because the basic units of valuation in this system are individual applicants and the institutions that they belong to have habitually not been a decisive factor in this valuation.

However, dissolution of the disparities between the *Fachhochschulen* and the *Universitäten* may not be a story with a happy ending. The German funding system involves one structural issue by which it can bring about the further proliferation of demands for research money – the *Universitäten* will be required to share the limited amount of the money with many *Fachhochschulen*. Thus, German universities will suffer from a more serious dearth of such funds than they face at present.

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