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RESEARCH ARTICLE



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The Crash of Humanism and Humboldt's Epoch in German Universities: Implications for Reforming Ukrainian Higher Education System

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Abstract

This article explores the process of higher education system reformation in Germany during the period from the mid-1960s to mid-1970s. Necessity of the given reforms ripened for several reasons. The first reason was founded on the need for unification for all activities of higher education institutes in Germany, especially the universities. The second reason was based on the preparation for "educational expansion" while the third reason was due to unsatisfactory financing of both universities and university scientists. The German government developed and accepted a number of necessary measures, which appeared vague and inconsistent. These also caused a period of stagnation in the system of German higher education.

Keywords: Germany, Higher Education System, Humanism, Humboldt University Model, Humboldt University Model, Ukraine, Unification of Legislation.

Introduction

The discontent with the development of German universities is also evident in a 21st century German society. This is seen, both in the training of students and in other structural challenges. Specifically, these challenges have resulted in the growth in quantity of students expelled from higher institutions for various reasons, the inadequate material support, insufficient level of consulting services and shortages of instructors for students. In addition, there have been the disappearance of "*studium generale*" in training process and insufficient formation of personal qualities of graduates (Huber, 2002; Perkin, 2007; Riess, 2000). The Bologna process promised a flexible running for higher education system, but then again created educational reform which stakes on a new centralism (Reinalda, & Kulesza-Mietkowski, 2005). While the state operates irresolutely and inconsistently, the management of higher education institutions worked too slowly and cared too little about the division of powers in the self-management of universities.

To understand these processes, it is important to carry out an analysis on the basic development and formation marks of German's higher education system in the 20th century.

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Carrying out the given analysis, it is also essential to apply this foreign experience to forecast and prevent possible future errors in the reformation of the Ukrainian system of higher education.

Analysis of the Studies and the Need for Application

Authors of several publications O. Bartz (Bartz, 2005; Bartz, 2006; Bartz, 2007), Uwe Frauenholz, Manuel Schramm (Frauenholz, & Schramm, 2005), H. Heer (Heer, 1967), E. Hobsbawm (Hobsbawm, 1995), K. H. Jarausch (Jarausch, 1999), Ch. Öhler (Oehler, 2000) and Th. Oppermann (Oppermann, 1969) make a short historical review of university education development and formation in Germany. Thus, they try to answer these 2 questions: (i) whether Bologna process threatens to destroy the "educational ideal of Humboldt"? and (ii) whether it will result in degradation of German universities to the level of average professional institutions. Though these authors address the given problem quite differently, they all see the necessity of solving essential practical problems regarding the future of German.

The usefulness of dealing with the problems facing Germany offers an indication to other European countries like Ukraine. The higher education system of Ukraine is also going through an important period of transformation, as it works to integrate itself into the European educational space. Thereupon, it is very important to study the experience of higher education reformations in such developed European countries like Germany, which has impacted on the formation of education system and pedagogical science in Ukraine. Studying the given experience will help Ukraine to understand the essence of changes occurring in the sphere of higher education and to avoid making possible erroneous decisions. It will help Ukraine to also realize the positions of the Bologna declaration by taking into account the national Ukrainian specificity.

Educational Expansion German Higher Education System

The mid-1960s are characterized as a very remarkable period in the development of German higher education system. The German educational policy shows a maximum level of reformatory dynamics in this period. This epoch covers the period of approximately 10 years and is characterized by "educational expansion" which required an urgent realization of reforms (Schimank, 2005). Their urgency has been related to a decrease in competitiveness of universities in their struggle for state financing. They began to concede considerably in this struggle to allow for the system of scientific research institutes to function.

The creation of the Max Planck Society in 1948 forced research work out of universities and concentrated them in the system of numerous research institutions. It also affected the quality of researches and their formations in higher schools. Consequently, education became "the central theme" of many political debates. The transformation process in higher education system generated uncountable discussions and offers for different interested parties. Nevertheless, most of these discussions and offers had little in common with reality. The significant stages of this process are: establishment of new higher education schools, creation of versatile higher education schools, reform of higher education system, development of students and assistants protest movement. The reform process was sometimes accelerated, slowed down or accompanied by advance and recoil. A final point of this reform period was mid-1970s (Buenstorf, 2009; Krabel, & Mueller, 2009).

Scientific Council

The political debates on the field of higher education led to the new epoch in the mid-1960s. At first sight, it would have been possible to assume that the abrupt reversal was already outlined in 1957/58 with the establishment of the Scientific Council. In essence, it was a representational body for all German scientists. Thus, the purpose of its activity was to support science and higher education system in Germany. Furthermore, the Scientific Council also regulated the use of surpluses in the federation's budget for scientific purposes. Every allocation of financial assets by Scientific Council was done in consultations with the federation and all federal states.

In 1960, the Scientific Council made valuable recommendations in a publication called "*Empfehlungen zur Entwicklung von wissenschaftlichen Instituten. Teil I: Hochschulen*" (Wissenschaftsrat, 1960). These recommendations gave rise to the allocation of considerable means for developing higher institutions. The Scientific Council also gave rights to ordinary professors to dominate in defining priorities for their universities. The government in the field of higher education also made a supporting policy to reserve the chair (department) as a base unit

and “embryonic cage” of higher education institutions. The priority task of a chair was to promote the advancement of science.

The Scientific Council also recommended to increase the number of ordinary professors by 40%, that is by 1,200 established posts (Wissenschaftsrat, 1960). Thus, the council implemented the universal preservation of the traditional organizational concept. According to this concept, every chair led his/her own institute and had autonomous powers. For this reason, “*parallel professorate*” was established at many higher education setups. The quantitative development of higher educational institutions could not sharply turn to a new quality perspective. These measures could only satisfy the requirements of university science and the growing educational requirements of the population. The Scientific Council however praised their actions by attributing that the number of students during the period from the late 1920s to the early 1960s had increased from 111,500 to 200,000.

From the review, the Scientific Council could not fully realize the measures needed for the proposed “*radical university education reform*”. It did not deem them necessary but instead, planned to keep the status quo by all means. Within that period, the federal government, the federal states and universities had almost reached a full consensus (Oppermann, 1969). The document on the relations generated among these negotiators was named “*humboldtianism*”.

In practice, one really important proposal of the Scientific Council has not been carried out, and this could become a real innovation for Ukraine. The proposal was that; certain specialties should receive priority development at separate universities. The creation of such structures which named these specialties as priorities [also called “*profiling*” nowadays], contradicted the general postulate of equality of all subjects. Thus, this idea was not accepted in the university circle and in the end, it failed.

New Era of German Higher Education

Apparently, it is difficult to determine the exact date that the new era began in the system of Germany higher education. Experts approximately assert that the mid 1960s evidently became a crucial year in the history of higher education in Germany. Around that time, the well-known book on “*the collapse of German education*” was written by Georg Picht. This book established the fact on rough extensive development of higher education and depicted possible catastrophic consequences of such a development. Picht’s work gained the attention of politicians of all ranks at the time and accelerated the working out of unprecedented measures on higher education development (Picht, 1965).

To explain this further, it was necessary to know the nature of processes which occurred in higher schools’ settings. The nature of these phenomena led the expression - “*educational expansion* and created a sort of “*social revolution*” (Hobsbawm, 1995). In 1964, universities were perceived by politicians as numb structures which are not capable to solve challenges. In particular, a phenomenon of “*high school overcrowding*” and “*training terms lengthening*” had already caused concerns in the circles of teachers and students for a long time. Simultaneously, these occurrences were perceived as real social achievements in the post-war Western Germany in which higher education became more and more accessible to various levels of the population.

The expansion of higher education structures, according to Bartz has not led to improvement of its quality; there were evidently no basis to expect positive results. The creation of additional chairs at universities could not essentially improve the situation in universities (Bartz, 2005; Bartz, 2006; Bartz, 2007). Few years after, such an attempt of direct intervention by political forces in the educational process seemed to be hardly possible. The measures planned by federal state parliament appeared less radical, more balanced and set the readiness of universities to participate in the reforms. Yet, the discontent of politicians towards the rate of reforming universities in Germany grew. Consequently, universities were accused of their unwillingness to migrate from the “Humboldt’s monastery”. According to the politicians, Germany’s system of general education leaned itself against the spiritual riches of the epoch of humanism which ceased to be tangible in 20th century, under the conditions of modern specialization strains. This estimation reflected the mood, which was dominated among German politicians, businessmen and scientists. They realized that the economy and the society then will require much bigger quantity of people with higher education in the future than it was then. This position formed the basis for working out some measures capable to order the “*educational expansion*” in the West German society.

New General (Framework) Laws on the Higher School

At the realization of higher school reform, politicians of different directions and the state engaged in unmatched activities to promote this goal. This led the federal state bodies to concentrate on creating legislative regulations. Their job consisted of working out and approving new general (framework) laws on the higher school. These laws sought to unify the frameworks of activity in all institutes of higher education in each federal state (Metzler, 2005). The process of legislative regulation for higher schools were carried out on the basis of "*the isolated and unsystematic decisions and laws which were approved under concrete historical conditions*" (Oppermann, 1969).

One striking fact was that universities in each federal state were established in different historical periods. They also had different legal statuses and mutual relations with their respective states. Some of them were public law corporations, others were state institutions, while the legal status of the rest were not even settled on in general. These concerns led to the unification the legal statuses of universities in all federal states.

During the post-war period, the federal states did not see these arrangements as necessary. At that time, their main worry was to deal with the problems of restoring and maintaining the normal functioning of higher education system which was destroyed by war and the Nazi's ideology. Comprehension of such necessity was designated as the beginning of a new stage of development – "*universal legislative regulation of a legal status of the higher school*" (Thyme, 1956, p. 27).

The border between the general laws and the federal laws regulating separate activity aspects of higher education institutes was washed away. In particular, it concerned the federal states having only one high school, (for example, Hamburg, Rhineland-Pfalz and Saarland). Ratification of laws appeared everywhere as considerably constrained in time and labor-consuming. Often, there were conflicts between the parliament and the government on the one hand, and universities, on the other hand. Universities of all the 11 federal states considered the new laws as a threat for their internal autonomy.

Conference of Education and Cult Ministers in April 1968

One of the remarkable conferences to be held in this era was the Conference of Education and Cult Ministers (KMK). The KMK occurred in Germany in April 1968 and developed the "*principles of the modern rights for institutions of higher learning.*" It also echoed a universal consensus among the states regarding the prospects of higher education development. The participants of the conference planned a number of organizational measures to increase the effectiveness of institutions of higher learning under the conditions of educational expansion in Germany. The ministers aspired, on the one hand, to expand their powers of controlling the state higher schools and, on the other hand, to concentrate control levers in their hands to restrict traditional autonomies of the existing "*academic self-management*".

Restriction of university autonomy was perceived as a measure capable of limiting uncertainty, domesticity, corporate conservatism and resistance to reforms in universities which were reined by "*the 1000-year-old spirit of mustiness*" and undividedly ruled by department chiefs. The ministries took the measures as directed, first, on transforming faculties in base divisions of institutes which could command public funds. Secondly, education and cult ministers came to the agreement on the obligatory public announcement of competition on employment of vacant posts of professors as chairs. Up to that time, only special commissions had the right to select candidates for an ordinary professor. From this time, data about applicants for employment in vacant professor posts were sent to the Education and Cult Ministries. Besides, the conference also took decisions on granting rights to corresponding groups of employees and students to discuss and define a policy for higher school institutes in research work and teaching (KMK, 1968).

The main task for the reform consisted not only in transforming professors, but also unified the training process. The given phase of higher education reformation introduced general curricula and programmes at all German universities. This process first began in the federal state of Baden-Württemberg. In 1964, the Education and Cult Minister, Wilhelm Han created "*Department of Education Planning*" as part of the core structure of his ministry. Two years later, he made the decision on drawing up general plans for institutes of higher education which he perceived as separate structural divisions of the ministry. Universal planning of their activity, in his opinion,

should raise efficiency of their work. Though this idea is perceived today as quite obvious, it seemed absolutely a novel at that time.

Darendorf's plan

In the middle of 1966, a working group under the presidency of Ralph Darendorf was charged with the sole duty to work out a general development plan for higher school institutes for the state Baden-Württemberg. After a year, the working group presented the results which soon became known as the "*Darendorf's plan*" ([Hochschulgesamtplan, 1967](#)). According to this plan, not only are scientific higher schools were included in the process of planning educational activities but engineering, pedagogical, the higher schools of arts, teacher's seminaries and the higher secondary special schools.

This approach remained a substantial innovation after having specified on the integrity of both the training process and tertiary education system Germany. However, the Darendorf's plan could not be carried out successfully out due to the following challenges. The state of Baden-Württemberg's parliament confirmed "*the general activity plan for higher school*" only in 1970; though, the theme on the development of education and science system was later put on the agenda within all German federation. In 1965, the Bundestag voted for the introduction of national training and education plan in addition to the scientific activity plan. The Commission for Planning Higher Education System under the presidency of Helmut Schelsky was also set up in 1967 ([Bartz, 2006](#)). Subsequently, other federal states like the North Rhine-Westphalia also established planning tools throughout the country ([Oehler, 2000](#)).

"Academyzation"

In the sixties, the federal states considerably increased the sphere of higher school action. This began with what is termed as "*academyzation*"; the process of transforming pedagogical schools into institutes of higher education.

Firstly, pedagogical education was seen as the pivot for pedagogical staff training for national, real and grammar schools. "Academyzation" further caused prompt development of educational institutions, including seminaries, academies and pedagogical higher educational establishments. During this period, higher establishments for pedagogy in many federal states acquired the right of awarding a Doctor of Philosophy [PhD] or Doctor of Science [Sc.D.] degree as either qualification practically came with equal rights.

Secondly, higher schools for engineering which also represented the highest step in the system of professional education received a status rise. In 1968, prime ministers of federal states lifted, at last, these institutions to the level of higher educational institutions and for this purpose the concept "*special higher educational institution*" was founded.

Thirdly, the former "*higher vocational schools*" similarly received the status of special higher educational institution to offer training in areas of economy and social work. All these measures, including the establishment of new universities became the unique way of satisfying the ever-growing demands of entrants into the market of educational services.

Establishment of Research Universities and Multiproduct Higher Institutions

Some attempts to transform universities into research universities or multiproduct higher institutions were undertaken in the process of reforming education. So, for example, University of Bielefeld was designed under the aegis of Helmut Schelsky as "*research university*", in which "*the independent right of science*" should be realized. The specificity of realizing this right consisted in the following domains: professors conducted lessons only in one of the two semesters of the academic year. The practical realization of this freedom appeared quite inconvenient.

Hans Leussink, who was the supporter of this recommendation from the Scientific Council in 1970 sought to implement this idea. Besides, this recommendation led to the merging of all existing educational institutions in a sort of a "*multiproduct higher school*". This finally integrated distinct functions of schools. Nevertheless, these concepts were not carried out.

Conclusion

The epoch of these dynamic reforms in Germany's higher education have several lessons for Ukraine. Lessons from the 1960s to the 1970s illuminate the challenges and innovations in

educational expansion, sharp strengthening of state action and the end of regular ordinary professors. The Humboldt's university, smashed into small divisions ceased to exist despite attempts to resuscitate it in the 1960s by the Scientific Council.

One obvious point is that pragmatic reforms for German universities lacked a uniform base model or a uniform concept for successful implementation. From the middle of the 1960s, the landscape of German higher educational institutions represented an unbalanced stagnating system. This system was squeezed in rigid frameworks for legal and administrative directives. Generally, the German education system started changing in the 1980s and in early 1990s. As Ukraine looks at ways to successfully transform its higher education structure, cues from Germany's transformation will be germane foundation to begin.

Conflicts of interest statement

The author declares the work has no conflicts of interest.

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