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Higher Education Politics in Europe: A Critical Discussion

I Description

II Discussion

III Conclusions

I Description

- 1 The Idea of the Past: The Cooperative University
- 2 The Current Policy: The Competitive University

1 The idea of the past: the cooperative university

1.1 The „evolution“ of the idea to an ideal

1.2 The essentials of the idealistic concept

1.1 The „evolution“ of the idea to an ideal

- 1088 Bologna I: Founding of the first European University. The beginning of the civil society: the need for regulation of trade by laws, interest in medicine and theology.
- 1810 Berlin: The construction of a model university (Wilhelm v. Humboldt). The principles: universitas magistrorum et scholarium, connection of research and teaching, formation of cultivated personalities.
- 1988 Bologna II: Magna Charta Universitatum. (900 year anniversary of the university – celebration with 388 rectors and presidents of the universities of the world). General confirmation of the principles of the Humboldt-type university.
- 1998 Sorbonne: Declaration of four European ministers in charge of universities (Italy, France, Germany, United Kingdom). Aims: Transparency of European studies, curricula, marks and graduations in order to facilitate mobility of students and employability of graduates throughout Europe.
- 1998 Gion: Declaration of US-American and European university leaders on the essentials of the university.

1.2 The essentials of the idealistic concept

- universitas/ community (magistorum et scholarium, litterarum, scientific community)
- autonomy/ freedom
- public alimentation
- interdependency of research and teaching
- development of well cultivated personalities

2 The current policy: the competitive university

- 2.1 General increase of higher education
- 2.2 The shift from the cooperative to the competitive university
- 2.3 Keywords of Bologna III
- 2.4 National university laws

2.1 General increase of higher education

- Increase of students: e.g. in Austria between 2001 and 2007 from 197.000 to 253.000 (28%) – competition because of restricted access.
- Increase of graduates: e.g. in Austria between 2001 and 2007 from 17.000 to 25.000 (47%) – competition in regard to grades and titles.
- Increase of academic jobless: e.g. in Austria between Oct. 2008 and Oct. 2009 from 6.700 to 8.500 (27%) – competition even in regard to precarious employment and self-employment (BA-graduates: 136 to 293 = 115%)

2.2 The shift from the cooperative to the competitive university

- The effective means according to the Magna Charta Universitatum (Sept. 1288, "Bologna I") are "1. To preserve freedom in research and teaching, the instruments appropriate to realise that freedom must be made available to all members of the university community. 2. Recruitment of teachers, and regulation of their status, must obey the principles that research is inseparable from teaching. 3. Each university must – with due allowance for particular circumstances - ensure that its students' freedoms are safeguarded, and that they enjoy concessions in which they can acquire the culture and training which it is their purpose to possess. 4. Universities – particularly in Europe – regard the mutual exchange of information and documentation, and frequent joint projects for the advancement of learning, as essential to the steady progress of knowledge."
- The explicit goal of the Sorbonne Declaration (1998) is "to make our higher education schemes clear to all. In the graduate cycle there would be a choice between a shorter master's degree and graduate degrees, appropriate emphasis would be placed on research and autonomous work."

cont. 2.2

- *The "Project Report prepared for the Bologna Conference on 18-19 June 1999" stated: "Hence the Sorbonne Declaration is not only about academic recognition or comparability per se; the raison d'être of the debate is intimately linked to the emergence of an ever more European and indeed international labour market." In introducing the market dimension, the article imputes: the Sorbonne Declaration "is a plea for Europe to take up its full role in the world markets of knowledge and education."*
- *The "Presidency Conclusion, Lisbon European Council, 23 and 24 March 2000" proclaimed"... to become the most dynamic and competitive knowledge based economy of the world" by 2010.*
- *The "Communication from the Commission to the Council in the European Parliament" (November 21, 2003): "Europe must become more competitive." (: 1) "The European educational and training systems show structural weaknesses and require urgent reform to achieve the Lisbon Strategy goal."*

2.3 Keywords of Bologna III

mobility, BA/ MA/PhD and specifically employability

- "...employability rather than instruction is becoming the keyword for the development of a competitive Europe" (Andris Barblan, Secretary General, Association of European Universities, April 17, 1999).
- "Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees... in order to promote European citizens' employability and the international competitiveness of the European higher education system." (Joint declaration of the European Ministers of Education – Convened in Bologna on the 19th of June 1999)
- "...From the three aims underpinning the Bologna Declaration, enhanced employability seems to be the strongest source of change and reform in higher education." (Haug/ Tauch 2001: 26)

2.4 National university laws

- New Public Management
- controlling, evaluation
- numerus clausus (restricted access)
- competition (best students, best instructors, best researchers)
- financing (public/ private, tuition/ fees, fund raising)
- accreditations
- private institutions

II Discussion

- 1 Problems of a common understanding of the central concepts
- 2 Alternatives of tasks and aims of studies and universities

**1 Problems of a common understanding of
the central concepts**

- education (transitive/intransitive, process/result, organized/institutional/ "hidden")
- work (paid/unpaid, individually/collectively)
- time and life (independent variable/socially constructed, (alien/self-satisfactory)
- values (exchange/use value, money oriented/end in it-self)

2 Alternatives of tasks and aims of studies and universities

- „bread-and-butter academic“ vs. „philosophical mind“ (Friedrich Schiller, Jena 1789)
- instruction and training vs. studying and learning
- push vs. pull
- exchange vs. use value
- living for learning vs. learning for living
- employability vs. professional competences
- fees vs. salary
- business vs. science
- money vs. knowledge
- commodity vs. public good
- etc.

III Conclusions

1 Contradictions

2 Purposes and conditions of university studies

1 Contradictions

- Mobility according to Bologna III and restricted access to universities generally and specially by highly differentiated curricula
- Employability as the essential purpose of Bologna III and the deficit of appropriate jobs, neglecting the fact that also the self-employed professions are still studying at universities
- To introduce the BA-studies in order to shorten the duration of studies and the fact that most of BA-graduates continue with a MA-study.
- To expect the BA-study could perform specialists in academic fields although all areas of sciences are complex
- To ask for „entrepreneurs“ but to offer studies for employees
- Disfranchisement of students in regard to self-organisation, self-responsibility, self-decision vs. the need of creativity, activity and initiative as highly qualified workforce
- Possible chances for improvements of studies by some elements of Bologna III and their implementations by national, regional, local even single institutional regulations
- Profit oriented private institutions vs. universities with public/societal missions

2 Purposes and conditions of university studies

- In the frame of the long history of the social division of labour the university became a special institution with a specific purpose – first, to interpret and teach historically transmitted knowledge (law, philosophy, theology, medicine ..), later to create respective knowledge by research and to offer studies. During this development particular schools (faculties) emerged inside the university, each with special work perspectives. This differentiation is presently neglected in favour of „moneyism“, the predominant thinking and acting in money categories and numbers.

Cont. 2

- Taking into account the essentials for successful studying, teaching and research at the university, the basic conditions are intrinsic motivation for the respective effort on the side of the individual and stimulating social and cultural environment and appropriate equipment on the side of the institution.
- Three types of study motivations
 - Curiosity: interest, joy, need regarding a special study field
 - Life consciousness: experience of a special segment of life
 - Status: an essential means for getting a privileged position