

quality assurance deregulation  
cost-effectiveness  
entrepreneurialism fees  
academic capitalism  
competitiveness  
consumer choice Mode 2 knowledge  
instrumentalism selectivity

## NEOLIBERAL DEVELOPMENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The United Kingdom and Germany

autonomy liberal education  
collegiality unity of knowledge  
unity of research and teaching  
unity of teachers and learners  
trust Mode 1 knowledge  
academic freedom tenure

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## Introduction

The United Kingdom (UK) and Germany are embedded within two very different historical and political cultures which impact upon higher education (HE). Each is paradigmatic in its own way; yet until relatively recently there was a deficit of scholarship and publication in relation to the HE subject area in the UK. When Tony Becher, author of *Academic Tribes and Territories* (1989), was honoured with a Fellowship of the Society for Research in Higher Education, the citation paid tribute to him for helping to create the sub-discipline of research into higher education, and making it academically respectable. Understanding of the university was for a long time inchoate in Britain, but was greatly stimulated by the challenging, though somewhat threatening, character of neoliberal changes at the beginning of the 1980s. The under-development of higher education as an academic discipline made it all the easier for the British government to impose its will upon the sector, and contrasted with the situation in Germany where there was a more explicit, formal understanding of universities and their relationship to their host society. Wittrock (1993) points out that universities have become the axial institution of the modern world – the source of our ever-growing technical mastery of nature; and in the pursuit of excellent universities, tribute is consistently paid to the seminal influence of German academe. Thus, Altbach (2007: 368) states: “Historically, the world-class concept is based on the German research university that came to dominate academic thinking at the end of the nineteenth century, especially with the acceptance of this model in the United States, Japan and other developed countries.”

The neoliberal changes that are taking place in higher education in Europe, and indeed elsewhere, involve reacting to the traditional concept and trying to replace it with new concepts, resulting in gains but sometimes also in losses. The new world is one in which “The value of higher education and research ... [is] no longer taken for granted” (Henkel, 2010: 5). The

present book brings together papers on higher education that span almost twenty years of scholarship and research. Some of the chapters provide snapshots of developments from different time periods in the evolution of higher education policies, and this time frame needs to be kept firmly in mind when reading them. The present introduction aims to contextualise and link the chapters in a coherent (though not necessarily chronological) sequence; it also signposts content, and where appropriate adds updated information which it is hoped will be of interest to German as well as to Anglophone readers.

Chapter 1, entitled “Academic Freedom and Autonomy in the United Kingdom and Germany”, studies the fundamental social and intellectual values underlying universities in the two countries, as this is the background against which neoliberal developments have to be viewed and judged. The ideas formulated in this paper run like a *Leitmotif* throughout book because neoliberal trends usually define themselves in opposition to the status quo. The British notion of liberal higher education has been conceptualised by Newman (1852/1956) who is said by Rothblatt (1997: 7) to have written “the single most influential book on the meaning of a university in the English language” and to have transformed the inherited legalistic description of a university “into a thrilling, emotion-laden, higher order conception of education”. The British concept (actually elaborated for the foundation of what became University College Dublin), has been less explicitly and consciously articulated than the German ideology of *Bildung*; but both overlap conceptually; both ultimately owe their deepest origins to ancient Greece; and both place value upon the wholeness of the individual. Rothblatt (1993: 51) demonstrates how the justification of liberal education as pursuit of knowledge has its roots in the Platonic/Pythagorean tradition where the view was held that mental, emotional and physical aspects of the human being all need to be in harmony: no single part should be over-developed at the expense of others as this would lead to an unstable, unhealthy personality. The liberally educated person is enjoined to avoid concentration of great skill in one area, as this would divide the self by drawing attention to the accomplishment. Every competitive measurement of achievement leads to conflict and disharmony, and can become “the antithesis of the view that human nature is indivisible and

unmeasurable" (ibid.: 23). The human personality should never become subordinated to the skill, lest it be overcome by division and the tyranny of a particular passion, disposition or impulse (ibid.: 35). Human beings are supposed to construct themselves actively, developing their inner lives so as to become as far as possible an image (or picture – *Bild*) of God (Liedman, 1993: 80). The Christian concept of *Bildung* differs from the ancient classical concept in making the idea of *growth* central, and the secular concept that developed in the eighteenth century consists in turning away from radical transformation and towards the idea of *gradual* growth (Assmann, 1993: 23). It is interesting that Foucault drew upon the ancient tradition by advocating that one should style one's life aesthetically and grow through long practice and daily work (The Foucault Reader, 1984: 351); Peters (2007: 64) too puts forward a concept of the aestheticisation of labour, emphasising the way in which one can turn one's job, one's life and one's very self into a work of art.

Yet, despite religious overtones, the concept of *Bildung* arose from a strong secular impulse, namely an ideal of beauty of soul that achieved its first explicit formulation in British thought in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries (Norton, 1995: 6). Indeed, there was strong reciprocal influence between British and German thought. The highest ideology of personal education was born of a felt need to find an alternative to traditional Christianity and was conceived in response to a widespread perception of moral instability and social drift (ibid.: 211). In Enlightenment terms, a way had to be found of validating a moral theory in the absence of religious transcendence and of diminishing Church authority over human affairs: to this end, reason was substituted for faith. The philosopher, David Hume, who was well known in Germany, dispensed with divine authority as the guarantee for morally good behaviour, and regarded reason and instinct as jointly essential to moral knowledge. To the ethical dimension was joined beauty; and the two formed a symbiosis that was encapsulated in the Greek ideal of *kalokagathia* – all that was most excellent and admirable in a human being. It is noteworthy that the revival of Hellenism coincided with Weimar classicism in Germany, and that the founder of the University of Berlin, Wilhelm von Humboldt, thought of the Greeks as role models in the sense of *kalokagathia*. In England, the third Earl of Shaftesbury linked

the aesthetic and the ethical together in a manner that left a deep imprint on the major figures of German classical literary and philosophical culture. He believed that true beauty “occurs only in a mind that has trained its formative powers *on itself*, that has made *itself* the object of its power to impose order and harmony on external matter” (ibid.: 36). This was his way of applying beauty to the formation of personal character.

*Bildung* was not a self-sufficient aim in its own right – the proponents of the Enlightenment wanted practical benefits from knowledge. Pietism in Germany reinforced this trend towards self-improvement in its insistence on the need for spiritual transformation and rebirth; and almost obsessive care was given to cultivating one’s being (Norton, 1995: 58). Thus “taste” was the product of rational effort and of the conscious formation of the will through patient, careful discipline. Indeed, Goethe affirmed *Bildung*, but wanted it to be “tempered by authentic moral energy outwardly directed”, not diluted by the enervating wish to acquire “formal aesthetic perfection of the self” (ibid.: 264). In this, he anticipated the danger of inner emigration (*Innerlichkeit*) which had such a negative influence upon political culture in the twentieth century, and which was castigated by the novelist, Thomas Mann, in *The Magic Mountain* (Pritchard, 1990: 35; see also pp. 19–47 for a sustained treatment of the German ideology of higher education). In the latter part of the nineteenth century, however, the University of Berlin came to be the unquestioned model for university reformers; and *Bildung* was valued as “the heroic effort to re-embed a re-created national culture in a reformed polity” (Wittrock, 1993: 317). Integrative liberal ideas such as intellectual freedom; academic autonomy; the unity of knowledge; the unity of teaching and research; and the unity of teaching and learning were some compensation in the ideological domain for the lack of political unity in the German national arena.<sup>1</sup> They emanate from classical culture, and they are Western in inspiration. But they form an essentialist frame of

1 See Wilson (1998), a prize-winning biologist, for a modern-day attempt to argue for the fundamental unity of all knowledge encompassing the sciences, the arts, ethics and religion in a synthesis of all ways of knowing. The author argues that the world has a unified order that can be explained by natural laws. Science and religion combine to explain the universe and make us understand our role in it; philosophers

reference in opposition to which competing ideas, such as neoliberalism, are defined. The appeal of such holistic, essentialist concepts is such that Wittrock (1993: 362) remarks: “The problem of the universality of the university will not go away”.

Such traditional ideas of the university are now profoundly under challenge from the political pressures of neoliberalism in the United Kingdom, Germany and the wider world. Governments are seeking to divest themselves of financial responsibility for their universities, resulting in a shift from public to private finance, and sometimes causing what Beck (1992/1986: 51) has termed “inmiseration” when institutions cannot find ways of broadening their funding base. Chapter 2, “Principles and Pragmatism in Private Higher Education: Examples from the United Kingdom and Germany”, presents case studies of the first private universities in each country: the University of Buckingham in the UK and the University of Witten-Herdecke in Germany. Both now have somewhat more than 1,000 students each, and this modest scale of development reflects the fact that private higher education encounters difficulties in countries where state sponsorship of HE has traditionally been strong. Geiger (1986: 2, 157) comments that in the UK and Germany, public sector monopolies have only been cracked “slightly”, that private sectors remain “peripheral” and that Buckingham “owes its continued existence to a stubborn British conviction about the stultifying effects of monopoly and the beneficial consequences for both the individual and society of independence and self-reliance”. However, the distinction between public and private education is less important now than it once was. Marginson (2007: 309–310) argues that the dualism between the state and the market is not really useful because governments can set up markets and generate profits. What matters is the social and cultural character of the outcome or “goods” produced by higher education institutions. It is possible for state-owned HEIs to produce private goods and for private HEIs to produce public goods. Whole education systems are not *either*

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and scientists can work together at the borders between biology, social science and the humanities.