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MAX WEBER PROGRAMME FOR POST-DOCTORAL STUDIES

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ACADEMIC CAREERS OBSERVATORY

Report of the conference on

UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY AND THE
GLOBALIZATION OF ACADEMIC CAREERS

Wednesday 12th November 2008
Villa la Fonte, Florence



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Summary

This document reports the main findings and discussions of the third MWP-ACO conference on academic careers. The conference looked at the evolution of academic careers in relation to university autonomy and the globalization of academic markets. Higher education experts of different disciplines from European and US universities gathered together in Villa La Fonte in San Domenico di Fiesole to debate this complex and multi-faceted issue. Different aspects of the link between careers, autonomy and markets were highlighted, the state of the art of research in this area was defined, and a map was traced for future investigation.

In principle, the conference speakers considered autonomy an asset to universities. Universities need autonomy to compete for the best minds on a scale that increasingly transcends national borders. In Europe, the Commission has actively promoted autonomy as a way of modernising the 4000 European universities in the European Research Area.

However, autonomy should not imply state withdrawal. The state should create the proper regulatory and financial environment for autonomous universities to operate well in. In this respect, the case of Italy was raised as a negative example. Although they are largely autonomous, Italian universities perform badly because funding is limited and not based on scientific criteria. As opposed to that, in the UK, autonomy is not conceded by the state but gained by universities on the basis of scientific merit.

At yet a higher level, the state should act to reconcile the academic vision of each university with broader public policy perspectives aiming to respond to the needs of mass education and job markets. In principle, universities should specialise according to their fields of excellence. Overall, while a minority of universities have the resources and scale to be research-intensive, the majority should focus on teaching or professional education, as already happens in the US. The state can steer this process by providing ad hoc assets. In Hong-Kong, for example, the government was able to re-qualify the eight public universities, with only 2-3 remaining research-intensive while the others shifted their mission in response to adequate state financial inputs.

Just as autonomy is shaping and differentiating academic missions in the market, so also are academic careers diversifying and specialising. In the UK, career patterns are being re-defined along the lines of research, teaching and academic administration, with a new division of labour among the hierarchy of Ph.D. students, post-docs and professors, the latter increasingly performing managerial tasks.

Within this picture, the relationship between university autonomy and accountability was also tackled. As universities are recipients of public funding, their performance should also respond to the broader society. This principle, however, creates a tension between the “collective” responsibility of universities and the “individual” freedom of academics. In the long run, universities as “employers” can limit this tension by attaching specific requirements to academic positions. In turn, academics should search for employment in those institutions whose mission is close to their own profile.



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Introduction to the conference

Ramon Marimon (Director of the Max Weber Programme)

Marimon opened the conference by setting its agenda and elaborating on its main themes. He stressed how academic careers are increasingly becoming “globalised”, a fact that is influencing the way in which universities are organising themselves to face new challenges and attract the best researchers and teachers. In this respect, as also underlined by the Commission, there are two intertwined factors that can make a difference: 1) university organisational and financial autonomy, and 2) funding. During his speech, Prof. Marimon also introduced the Max Weber Programme and the Academic Careers Observatory project. In particular, he stressed the international character of the Programme and its special focus on academic practice. Because of these qualities, the Programme enables junior doctoral and post-doctoral researchers to compete in the academic market and succeed in every aspect of today’s academic profession. [Click here for more information.](#)

Session 1. Chair: Edith Sand, Max Weber Fellow

1) “A European university policy? An analysis of the EU’s higher education, research and knowledge transfer policies”

Frans van Vught (Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies, University of Twente)

Van Vught identified some trends and questions related to universities in Europe by addressing the three main EU policy domains concerned with research: higher education, research and innovation. With respect to higher education, the Commission has established a “hesitant linking” between the Bologna process and the Lisbon strategy, while also pushing a “modernisation agenda” for universities, on the assumption that they are old-fashioned, over-regulated and lacking autonomy. With regard to EU research policy, over the years the Commission has intensified its efforts to build a common European Research Area (ERA) through seven framework programmes (FP). These, however, have coexisted with national programmes, leading to the fragmentation and duplication of initiatives. Only with FP6 and FP7 has the alignment between Commission and member state policies increased. Another issue that has emerged in the ERA has been the limited link between research and competitiveness. With respect to innovation, since the mid-1990s the Commission has strongly linked it to research through the adoption of plans FP6 and FP7. Today, the Commission’s objectives are to integrate the innovation, higher education and research policies, while linking them as much as possible to the Lisbon agenda, within a complex system (EU → member states → universities → single academics) where the highest echelon influences, but does not control, the lower ones.

In the light of this, different policy trends are emerging. First, one can note a growing importance of the supranational policy echelon within, still, a multiplicity of national laws



and regulations. Second, there is the increasing importance of doctoral education. Third, one can notice a reinforcement of public-private networks within a changing governance model, especially between universities and industry. All these trends point towards a European model of universities as providers of knowledge.

At the same time, no “fifth freedom” - the mobility of knowledge – has really materialised. Innovation indexes still show a disappointing performance level by European universities. Furthermore, three effects can be seen to be at work at the university level. First, there is stratification: over the years, successful universities become more successful, while weaker institutions are unable to get funding and become increasingly weaker. Second, there is regional diversification, whereby talent attracts talent and excellence tends to concentrate (as in the US, but not Europe). Third, there is a reputation race: all universities want to be top universities.

The way in which the question of autonomy relates to this scenario is ambiguous and risky. Given total autonomy, universities will invest in reputation and try to become excellent intensive research centres. They should focus instead on different tasks, including training professionals. In the US, only 300 universities are research intensive, compared to 1000 in the EU. To encourage this process, a degree of top-down control on autonomy is needed. Van Vught gave the example of the eight universities of Hong Kong: although all of them tried to excel in research, only 2-3 managed to do so while the others did not have the scale and resources to succeed. The Government defined four missions for universities, and gave (financial) incentives to those which accepted to differentiate accordingly. In terms of academic careers, the trend is towards diversification: few researchers will continue doing only research, and new tasks will be developed in the future to meet the needs of universities.

Comments and discussion

Comments by **Diego Muro** (Max Weber Fellow). Muro addressed several points from van Vught’s presentation. Van Vught’s presentation was insufficiently critical: some initiatives were portrayed as successful, such as the Bologna process (in terms of careers and state participation) despite the fact that the process has been very much criticized in the last decade. By the same token, little was said about the failure to reach the Lisbon strategy goals by 2010. The Open Method of Coordination (OMC) may be interpreted as an indicator that member states are not interested in having a supranational policy or an indicator that all is working correctly. Finally, citation indexes may not be valid criteria for assessing the quality of research, especially in the social sciences and humanities, as many US-dominated indexes do not consider European and non-English journals as relevant citation sources.

Some questions were also raised by people in the audience. In particular, one participant asked whether university autonomy could be restricted without also restricting academic freedom.

Van Vught’s answers stressed the following points. First, criticism of the Bologna Process is unreasonable, as in principle it offers a more competitive university system, which in turn benefits students. The problem with the Bologna Process is that it has



decreased rather than increased the transparency of the system. Furthermore, many institutions have not adopted the Bologna process as they had said they would. With regard to the Lisbon Agenda, it has not been a failure, because since 2005 it has helped economic development. On the question of journals and citation indexes, despite the problems there is no reason to stay out of those rankings: critics should either prove they do not work, or change the index criteria. With respect to the OMC, it helps by putting “peer pressure” on member states. Finally, limiting institutional autonomy does not restrict individual academic freedom: the need is 1) to have universities focus on different missions (research, teaching and professionalization), and 2) to have individuals choose institutions compatible with their profile.

2) “Academic labour markets in Europe: an analytical framework to understand their transformation”

Christine Musselin (Centre de Sociologie des Organisations, Sciences-Po, CNRS Paris)

Musselin focused on current changes in the academic profession and the fragmentation of academic careers, proposing a new analytical framework in order to understand these processes. This framework looks at the content of academic work, academic labour markets, the transformation of academic organisations, and the interplay between these aspects. Academic work is being redefined by new contractual arrangements that are creating new hierarchies between PhDs, post-docs (who are taking on very specialised tasks) and professors (increasingly seen as “manager” academic leaders). A process of individuation is emerging, made possible through indexes and rankings. At the same time, integration is needed in order to avoid tensions within departments between different “individuals” (as one can see happening in UK universities). Regulation remains a key issue, with new norms emerging and non-academic standards being developed.

With respect to academic labour markets, a number of phenomena can be observed. Markets are becoming more segmented. As access to primary labour markets becomes increasingly “difficult”, one sees a growing importance of the secondary labour markets. From an academic viewpoint, being “local” is increasingly perceived as a limit. At the same time, internal labour markets have become better equipped to increase performance by introducing such features as merit-based salaries, contracts by objectives, and advancement rules. Overall, one can see universities shifting from the role of “host” to that of “employer”.

With respect to academic organisations, other questions emerge. In general, as a result of the reforms affecting the governance of universities, organisations are considering themselves - and behaving - as organisations: they build specific assets and identities, and portray themselves as “special”, with more coordination and control imposed on individual behaviours *vis-à-vis* the overall institutional project.

An analysis of the interplay between these three dimensions shows that academics are moving to new forms of work and that the difference between academic and non-academic work is being reduced. Universities are also differentiating their missions, and the academic profession itself is also becoming more and more differentiated.



Comments and discussion

Comments by **Nikolaos Lavranos** (Max Weber Fellow). Lavranos addressed several points from both van Vught's and Musselin's presentations. First, the EU and the US do not seem comparable. With regard to the law, for example, there are many more national regulations and requirements in the EU (such as *Habilitation*), and this needs to be taken into account. Furthermore, as Diego Muro stated, indicators may not be fair as they are dominated by US standards. Besides, these standards and peer reviews are extremely subjective, usually fixed by those already in the highest positions in the system (heads of departments).

Looking at Musselin's presentation, there are tensions and diverging expectations surrounding post-doc researchers. One main problem for junior academics nowadays is the insecurity produced by flexibility. Researchers have to devote a lot of energy to applying for research grants. Flexibility comes at the expenses of clarity about the specific tasks that junior researchers have to perform. Academic careers are getting internationalised but this may not be positive for students, who may benefit more from stable teacher figures in departments. Furthermore, cheap lecturers are often hired to teach while post-docs are abroad, and this is also detrimental for students. Another issue is that researchers are under too much pressure to become inter-disciplinary, something which is not always possible or even good. To escape from this contradictory picture, a clearer career pattern should facilitate the forthcoming transition from the old to the new generation of academics (about 30% of senior professors will retire soon). Juniors should be attached to senior academics for a period of 3-5 years instead of 1-2 years (as in most post-doc programmes in the EU) in order to be raised to a higher professional level. In the process, juniors should be left free to opt for research, teaching or management.

Concerning the question of comparability between the US and Europe, Musselin argued that although we need a better understanding of the differences, this does not mean we have to follow the US model. To start with, it must be clear that flexibility is not just a requirement of post-docs but increasingly also of tenured professors. In France, for example, the Government wants to implement contracts related to specific targets and performances and divide faculty members according to their specialisation. With regard to the different profiles of the academic career – scientific, pedagogical and the “good citizen” formulation – these criteria for recruitment are being formalised but also differ from one department to another, and are also being implemented differently.

Session 2. Chair: Roger Schoenman, Max Weber Fellow

3) “Towards evidence-based reform of European universities”

Reinhilde Veugelers (Catholic University of Leuven)

Veugelers started by questioning the conventional discourse on higher education in Europe with the intention of providing a more informed account of the real state of



universities and research in Europe, while considering the still limited data available and the need for further research. Common sense says that universities underperform, yet evidence shows that 1) there is a low but growing proportion of EU citizens in higher education; 2) the EU-27 produces more PhDs than all OECD countries combined; 3) there are more EU graduates in mathematics and sciences than in the USA. What is still problematic in the EU is the access of researchers to the labour market and the fact that fewer graduates do research.

In terms of research performance, the EU world share of publications has in fact been higher than that of the US since 1995. Overall, there is convergence among European countries with respect to publication rates. What does not work is the Shanghai ranking, which should be replaced by a multi-dimensional evaluation of university performance. For example, Italian universities do not rank high on the Shanghai scoreboard but nevertheless account for about 12% of EU publications. Comparing the quantity with the quality of scientific output, the EU's larger share in world publications is mostly in the bottom 50 percent (publications with 0 or 1 citations), whereas the US still dominates in top 1 (publications with more than 21 citations). The EU and Asia have, however, been slowly catching up in both the top 1 and top 10 (publications with more than 6 citations).

Regarding the factors that explain university performance, budget autonomy generally increases the budget per student, which in turn positively affects research performance. Policy should therefore simultaneously tackle funding and governance. Available data show that current investment in higher education in the EU (especially private funding) is below the level of key competitors. Yet nothing shows under-funding compared to the US. Eventually, more private funding and higher fees (compensated for by an adequate subsidy structure and income-contingent loans) will be needed. At the same time, public funding should be delivered on the basis of performance and should concentrate on fostering excellence.

In terms of governance, there is a high level of variation across EU countries, as well as a difference in country dispersion across different dimensions of governance: different dimensions of autonomy and accountability are not necessarily correlated. Yet this kind of mix – based on the best balance between autonomy and accountability - would provide better university governance.

Comments and discussion

Comments by *Frans Kaiser* (Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies, University of Twente). Veugelers' research is a good step forward but sometimes still unclear. When criticising the dominant discourse by saying that “more autonomy leads to better performance,” the definition and measurement of performance is problematic. Should the focus be on the university system, the single institution or the researcher? This is crucial, because the institution's performance depends on the researcher's. Another issue is that it will take some time before a reform implementing autonomy starts to have an impact. The first reforms date back to 2001 and we have not seen any results yet. As many of Veugelers' data are from 2004-2005, it is hard to get a real picture of what is



happening in reformed universities. Finally, more systematic contextualisation of the data is needed.

Other questions were raised by the audience. Based on the data presented by Veugelers, Andreas Frijdal held that the EU is doing well in terms of PhDs: it has doubled its number of PhDs since 1996 and the quality of US PhDs is open to question. Furthermore, on average it now takes 4 years to complete a PhD in Europe and about 10 years in the US. The completion rate in the UK is about 60-70% but in the US below 35% in humanities and below 45% in hard sciences. Sylos Labini observed that in the US widely-cited research comes from research-intensive universities; in Europe – especially continental Europe – it comes from research centres: is there an issue here concerning research in Europe? Musselin said that according to the existing literature the problem is not the quantity but the domains in which we are producing research, which are not cutting-edge and relevant. Marimon agreed that we need more data and better knowledge but still considered that we should use what we have instead of doing nothing and simply see where researchers - and investors - go. The evidence we have is important. He agreed with Frijdal on completion rates, but stressed that when researchers have a grant they usually go to the US, which also says something relevant.

Veugelers agreed with Kaiser that it is not only a question of data but also of frameworks. However, more data would allow economists to build better frameworks. More attention needs to be paid to the unit of analysis: each level is crucial and we need to study individual performance to assess how institutions work, spill-over effects, and so on. In terms of performance indicators, we need to look into levels of education and research output, and in particular explore the interplay of these dimensions. The environment – universities – is also crucial. Concerning the time dimension, again proper data would help cover that as much as the context. Comparable data – eventually collected at the EU-wide level - would help cross-national studies. Other dimensions of quality may be even more important. In line with Marimon, data on wages and the mobility of researchers could be added. An integrated European market would allow specialisation: are we actually operating as an integrated market and what is the eventual impact of this in terms of internal competition? Yet, again there is lack of data. We need more for better clear-cut policy choices.

4) “Budget uncertainty and faculty contracts: a dynamic framework for comparative analysis”

Maria Yudkevich (Higher School of Economics, Moscow)

Starting with the efforts of countries like Brazil, China, India, and Russia to implement reforms and create new research universities, Yudkevich analysed what a research university is, how it can attract scholars, and what is the role of budget autonomy. One assumption was that a research university needs a higher level of human capital in its faculty than a teaching university. It must also succeed in attracting the best students. How are faculty incentive contracts affected by the budgetary issues that a university faces? How does budget uncertainty affect hiring decisions? To answer these questions, an economic model of analysis was used from both a static and a dynamic perspective,



considering the presence of students and teachers with different abilities in one university, and how certain/uncertain budget perspectives affect the pursuit of research or teaching priorities. On the one hand, a budget increase for universities with a fixed student-teacher ratio may push these institutions to abandon a high research-focused standard and shift to teaching (and lower standards). On the other, a decrease in the student-teacher ratio will push institutions to maintain high standards. From a dynamic perspective, then, budget uncertainty pushes universities to hire normal-quality professors, even if a more high-quality faculty is optimal for any possible budget. As evidence for the veracity of her model, examples of the New Economic School (NES) and the Higher School of Economics (HSE), both created in 1992, were reported. The conclusion was that “huge financial support is not enough to create a research university”: it is crucial for universities to be able to rely on a long-term commitment in budget allocations for them not to switch to low-profile, teaching-based strategies to cope with increasing numbers of students.

Comments by *Florian Schuett* (Max Weber Fellow). Despite the interesting results, Schuett claimed that some underlying theory was missing from Yudkevich’s paper, concerning university funding and governance, and overall university strategies. He also contested the interpretation and the objective functions introduced in the paper and mentioned the lack of reference to welfare in the model.

5) “Differential grading standards and university funding: evidence from Italy”

Manuel Bagues (University Carlos III, Madrid)

Bagues presented an analysis of a university system – Italy – in which budget allocations to universities have since 1995 partly depended on students’ grades, meaning the more successful the students grades, the higher the level of funding. The question was whether this system really rewards universities that graduate the most successful students (once out of university). In order to carry out the research, data on University-To-Work transition collected in 1998, 2000 and 2001 were used. The starting point of the analysis was the huge variation in student grades among Italian universities, with a clear difference between institutions in the North (lower grades) and the South (higher grades). Two proxies were used to measure student performance: labour market performance and the outcome of qualification exams (required to exercise certain professions). The research showed that, in fact, students coming out of universities with higher grades (mainly from the South of Italy) perform less well in the market than students with lower grades (from universities based in the North). This can be interpreted as evidence of the existence of different grading standards among universities. This, in turn, means that funding “based on the number of exams passed by students favours universities that generate lower added value”.

Comments by *Paolo Masella* (Max Weber Fellow). Masella suggested three different directions in which the research presented by Bagues could be pushed. First, he proposed a comparison between different university rankings and standards, to see if they assess students in the same way. Second, it would be interesting to assess the quality of the ranking of students, to see for each university the correlation between university



rankings and rankings in the labour market. Third, one could explore why there is such heterogeneity in grading, and arguably also the quality of the ranking. Another issue could be the impact of cultural factors, in particular considering the lower social capital in the South.

Discussion

Participants also put several questions to the speakers. With respect to Yudkevich's paper, the issue of the cost side was raised as well as the possibility that universities lower their costs by attracting the more talented students because they need to do "less work" with them. Max Weber Fellow Jane Gringich asked Bagues whether the paper in fact captured the different structures of the labour markets in the North and South of Italy rather than the different performances of graduates. Again referring to Bagues' presentation, Ramon commented that there was something wrong with the paper, given that Minister Gelmini supports excellence but went South to get her qualification.

In her reply, Yudkevitch discussed the methodological questions raised by Schuett. One can assume that students meet different types of professors over the years. With respect to the teacher/student ratio, this is in fact an important policy and bargaining variable used by universities in their interactions with the government. Concerning the cost question, at the MA level it may actually be important for both students and teachers to learn from or teach people of quality. The strategy is to set a certain cost and then see what the profits can be, and not vice versa (fix profits and minimise costs).

Bagues replied to Masella by observing that the model in the paper controls for both the region of education and that of employment, with a recurrent pattern emerging, in particular that people educated in the North stay in the North.

Session 3. Chair: Chiara Valentini, Max Weber Fellow

6) "Why reform Europe's universities"

Philippe Aghion (Harvard University)

Aghion discussed the correlation between funding and governance, and how these affect the performance of European universities, suggesting that governance – and university autonomy - can matter more than funding. In the Shanghai ranking, EU countries such as the UK, Sweden and Switzerland do better than the US, yet the UK invests "only" 1.1% of GDP in research, against a US rate of 3.3%. This suggests that although funding is an issue, it is not the only one.

In this respect, a survey over 10 countries shows a high degree of heterogeneity between states. Southern EU countries have very large but poorly-funded universities; Sweden and the Netherlands have average-size universities but better funded; finally, the UK and Switzerland have small but very well-funded universities. The findings show that state intervention is clearly pervasive, most of the universities analysed are very old, wage-setting autonomy is rare except in Sweden and the UK, hiring autonomy is prevalent



except in the southern EU, and there is a clear absence of significant academic mobility between EU countries.

With respect to the correlation between budget per student and university governance on the one hand, and research performance on the other, the conclusions show different dynamics. On the one hand, university performance is positively correlated with the size of budget per student, budgetary autonomy and hiring and wage-setting autonomy. On the other, it is negatively correlated with the degree of public ownership and endogamy in faculty hiring.

Overall, research performance is positively affected by the different aspects of university autonomy. First, in terms of public policy, EU countries should increase public spending by 1% of their GDP. Universities should introduce fees backed by loans and income-contingent repayment schemes. Second, academic boards should be established with mandates to set university policy, and universities should avoid self-governance with entirely internal representation. Third, more competition should be implemented: for students, by introducing a “Standardized European Test”; for faculty, to avoid endogamy and by favouring portable pension schemes; for research funds, through programmes such as that of the European Research Council. Graduate fellowships should be promoted that support student access to master programmes. Finally, Europe should push for more generalist and flexible undergraduate curricula.

Comments and discussion

Comments by *David White* (Director, DG Education and Culture; visiting EU Fellow, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies). White commented on several points of Aghion’s presentation. Overall, EU universities certainly reach a high standard and several surpass the US in certain fields. However, the Shanghai ranking is based on too narrow a group of research-related indicators to be a good performance indicator (the Times Higher Education index is at least more “democratic”). With respect to university competition for limited public funds for education, Member States can in fact achieve higher returns from investment in primary and pre-primary education, while subsidies to university education are socially regressive. It would be better, then, if universities diversified their sources of finance through innovative strategies based on autonomy and competitive business models. Universities can find rewarding niches and contribute to European competitiveness within the scope of the integrated European market and European multiculturalism. They should also look at the demand for a wide range of differentiated education services, from leading-edge research to lifelong learning.

Some other comments were made on Aghion’s presentation. Sylos Labini elaborated on internal alliances between mediocre professors and presidents of universities, as denounced by Aghion. In fact, alliances can also be created outside the university between professors and trustees, and also with politicians and other professors, as in Italy. Marimon urged that attention be paid to the data on the allocation of ERC funds in order to capture the state and internal differences between European universities. With respect to public research centres, they tend to be expensive and unnecessary in the social sciences: researchers should rather stay within departments and focus on teaching.



European states should not aim to have their own MIT but rather reform their universities, which is where their researchers will be.

Aghion agreed that the Shanghai ranking is limited, but also added that if you measure performance by citation, which is part of Shanghai, the outcome does not change. All data from the US confirm that universities which perform well enjoy both autonomy and funding. Alternative rankings present slight differences compared to Shanghai but the questions remain the same. About the mission of universities and the learning process, it would be more problematic to measure this. Benchmarks could be used. More research is also needed into the employment performance of universities. In this respect, loans and reimbursement from future salary is an incentive for universities to prepare students for the labour market and to better train them, in order to be repaid. Another question raised was the interrelationship of all the levels of education: this implies, for example, that higher education should evaluate and train teachers in secondary education, especially where this is bad (as in Portugal). Universities do not only need to train innovators. About the multicultural advantage of Europe: it is true, and Europe can make a difference compared to the US, also with respect to spreading positive values. With regard to university control, regardless of the limits, an external trustee board based in a foundation works better than a purely internal system of governance and selection: these boards have a different stake in the university and a reputation to defend. As for centres of excellence, the experience of the *Institut Barcelona d'Estudis Internacionals* (Barcelona Institute of International Studies, IBEI) was good and different ways of supporting them can be imagined, such as putting them in a network. In the end, however, what is needed is a combination of autonomy, performance evaluation and funding.

7) “Globalisation and the regulation of academic careers: the case of the UK”

Mary Henkel (Brunel University)

Henkel argued that, through the different frameworks that have shaped the regulation of UK universities, institutional autonomy has remained central but has also been redefined and given a new justification and form of legitimacy. Since the 1990s higher education has undergone a process of massification. At the same time, neo-liberalism has pushed for policies that fostered research excellence within a philosophy of economic instrumentalism. New national and institutional governance frameworks very much influenced by managerialism and academic self-governance in universities were established. In the UK, but also elsewhere, the final trend has been the consolidation of an elite group of universities; the stratification of institutional academic statuses, resources and power; increasing unequal rewards and constraints; and official attempts to polarise functions, which have resulted in a diversification of university functions and positionings at global, European, national, and local levels.

In this new political and institutional context, autonomy and academic freedom from external influences are relativised. Academic institutions are perceived as "axial structures", whose work is important to, and may be influenced by, governments, businesses and civil society. The idea of university autonomy has accordingly been redefined in terms of an enhanced organisational capacity to sustain the institution and



maximise control over its future in the new context: a “corporate enterprise” run with managerial techniques and supported by multiple financial sources. In other words, institutional autonomy is not a general principle granted by the state, but conditional, and earned by the institution itself.

In terms of the regulation of academic careers, the academic profession is now characterized by a diversification of roles, new career pathways and acute inequalities of status, security and rewards. There are growing trends towards career specialization, as between research, teaching and management. At the same time, the multiplication of institutional functions has loosened the boundaries between academic and non-academic work and between academics and other professionals in universities.

The clearest imposition by government of a new mandatory framework for academic careers came with the abolition of academic tenure under the 1988 Education Act. Since then, university staffing procedures have been significantly affected by equality legislation, as well as by trends towards the professionalization of academic work. A PhD is now the normative requirement. A new national salary structure has been developed, designed to reduce inequalities between academic and “academic-related” careers and to accommodate more role diversity and specialization in research, teaching and management careers. It is subject to local interpretation and negotiation, and may actually enhance institutional autonomy as now defined in managing university workforces.

Comments and discussion

Comments by *Raya Muttarak* (Max Weber Fellow). Muttarak touched upon some of the issues raised by Henkel. Although UK universities are certainly doing well, the system is in fact driven by 20 institutions. There is a need to also look at the other universities transformed by the reform of 1992, included polytechnic colleges, and see how these other institutions compete and get their funding. She also raised the questions of whether it is possible to move from being a teaching towards a research university, and of anti-discrimination policies and women (for her, not well developed in the paper).

Questions and comments also came from the audience. Max Weber Fellow Rasmus Hoffmann observed that, if science is about freeing oneself from ignorance, then it is important to understand the way in which the technicalisation and specialisation of education will influence the way in which one thinks. University structure is not independent of life. He accordingly raised the issue of what idea of education we have in mind. Marimon linked partly to Hoffmann’s question by distinguishing the three main roles of universities: research, teaching and (recalling Musselin’s presentation) providing a service that builds the “good citizen”. Lennart Ståhle elaborated a little on the Swedish situation, observing that in the 90s the government tried twice to re-structure academic careers and define the skills according to which academics are appointed. In particular, he asked Henkel how the UK handled pedagogic skills and how these are rated compared to research skills.

Henkel replied and commented in different ways to these questions. Concerning the 20 top research institutions and the internal division of roles and labour among UK



universities, more research is certainly needed, in particular to clarify the research profile of many universities outside the elite group. In this respect, the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) has been a crucial incentive. On gender, there has been progress over recent years by making the hiring procedure more transparent and equal. Nevertheless, RAE has probably marginalised gender issues. The question now has become not only that of discrimination against young women but also young male parents. With respect to teaching skills, all universities now have formal criteria for the assessment of both teaching and other “service” functions. In principle, universities give these functions a high profile. In practice, it is research achievements that matter, including for individual career progress.

8) “Autonomy, accountability and academic freedom: toward a good balance”

Emanuela Reale (CERIS CNR, Rome)

Reale explored the extent to which autonomy, accountability and academic freedom are means of coordinating the distribution of power between state, university and academic oligarchy, arguing that the implementation of any reform and its outcome is strongly intertwined with the modification of the relations between these three levels and their changing equilibrium. To show this, the case of Italy was introduced. Italy belongs to the continental model and is characterised 1) by long unchanged university organisational assets and 2) by strong path dependency. Italian universities benefit from a relatively high level of autonomy, especially on budget matters. At the same time, there exist limitations in hiring people, setting wages and in the capability of attracting external resources. Like France and Germany and unlike the Netherlands and the UK, Italy scores high on the measure of academic freedom, which combined with large autonomy and weak accountability tends to create a situation where reform processes are implemented in a way which favours the pursuit of individual objectives rather than institutional aims.

The presentation, in particular, focused on the reforms implemented between 1998 and 2001, relying on a survey by the European University Association. The reforms introduced greater autonomy and the principles of the Bologna process into the university system. However, the way in which the reforms were implemented was strongly influenced by conservative and corporate behaviours in the institutions. Internal competition between different disciplines only randomly changed the status quo. At the same time, government policies did not pursue the harmonisation of autonomy, accountability and academic freedom with a strong and persistent political will, which ended up reinforcing the power of academics. The reform processes did not affect some distinctive Italian features: universities remained the sole players in the higher education system, degrees awarded by universities had the same legal value, and the regulation of the status and working conditions of professors stayed in the hands of the government. Most Italian universities did not improve their institutional management skills, remaining incapable of effectively coping with complexity and competition in an open academic market.

Comments and discussion



Comments by *Lukas Baschung* (University of Lausanne). Baschung focused on three points from Reale's presentation. First, he asked whether there are differences within higher education institutions concerning, first, the power distribution between university management and the academic profession, and second, the implementation of public management reform. Another issue was the extent to which the problem of internal and local appointments in Italian universities is actually related to the reform and university autonomy, rather than being a pre-existing feature of the system. Finally, the need to further articulate and interrelate the different theoretical frameworks of Reale's paper was addressed.

Other questions and comments followed. Marimon caught up on the question of autonomy, arguing that Italy provides the perfect example of how an institution can mishandle autonomy: because universities have no incentive to perform well and do research, nepotism flourishes and opportunities for outsiders are minimal. The question is tied to the lack of funds: the sums are not available to support financial autonomy. Musselin further commented on autonomy, arguing that in other countries this is combined with strong managerial skills: why is it then not possible to view institutional and individual autonomy as complementary? Grigolo raised the question of "what comes next", considering the major debate on Italian universities opened by the protests by Italian students and researchers in the previous weeks. Veugelers pointed out that, despite low performance in the Shanghai rankings, Italian academics do well in the Institute for Scientific Information (ISI) ranking and publications, pointing out that individuals perform better than institutions.

Reale replied to several of these comments and questions. On the implementation of reforms, in fact there are some success stories: areas of excellence in an archipelago of mediocrity. On the question of local and uncompetitive behaviours, these were certainly in place well before the last reforms, which nevertheless reinforced them. This also confirmed Marimon's comment that Italy had done badly with autonomy. One solution is to reinforce evaluation mechanisms, which at present are "largely ineffective" because there is no punishment/reward associated with them. Concerning future reforms, the problem is that there is no money for a new policy, one that gives both incentives and a vision for the future able to steer university behaviour. In Italy, GDP investment in research is less than 1%. In line with Veugelers' observations, Reale agreed that in Italian universities individuals are more important than institutions.

Session 4. Chair: Roberta Pergher, Max Weber Fellow

9) Final commentary by *David Dill* (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

Dill started by stressing that, although universities have been remarkably stable institutions since they evolved in the 12th century, the nature of academic organisation is now changing, and in some cases quite rapidly. The three main models of university system – the continental European, the US and the UK models - are being altered by the creation of an open academic market, which is also changing the nature of academic careers. In particular, there is increasing global competition for academic talent due to



the reduced cost of travel and greater accessibility of data via the internet; the world-wide adoption of English in academia; a competitive international market for PhD students/post-docs; and the emergence of a market for information on academic quality/reputation. The market has also swept away the illusion that all universities are of equal quality and should be equally funded. The “high fliers” – the larger and older European universities – compete for the best talents and receive a disproportionate amount of Framework Programme research funds. Yet, increased competition also involves market failures. In the US, the race for academic prestige has led to a decline in research productivity. Colleges and “low flyers” have also joined the race for excellence, investing more resources in research and doctoral programmes and less in teaching, increasing fees in an effort to enhance their academic reputations. As a result, the efficiency of the overall US academic research system has declined with increasing costs associated with each cited article produced.

In this new environment, traditional forms of professional self-regulation are no longer effective and the award of institutional autonomy must be relative and conditional. Autonomy should be granted on the basis of research performance. In the absence of that, universities should be provided with incentives and framework conditions appropriate to their particular enterprises. The problem with Europe is that autonomy is awarded with the title of university rather than on institutional performance: what is often missing is a regulatory framework that makes universities responsive vis-à-vis the larger society. Greater autonomy also encourages a dilemma of collective action in which the rational actions of individual members of academic staff to maximize their own careers may not collectively benefit society. The focus on the market and the state therefore needs to be balanced by an appreciation of the significant and continuing influence the academic profession itself plays in assuring the effectiveness of universities.

As an example, one should look at the differences in the concept of graduate school as it has evolved in Europe and the US over time. US graduate schools are not collaborative doctoral programmes across universities as in Europe: they are collegial structures, designed, implemented, and administered by the collective academic staff of the entire university. They enforce common standards in the design of programmes, student admissions and assessment, and academic supervision through universal policies and peer review. As such, the academic autonomy of faculties and schools, departments, as well as individual faculty members is clearly constrained for the larger good.

Despite its limitations, this is the type of collective mechanism that will be needed in the future to assure that public interest is maintained as university governance is reformed in the more competitive global environment. While new members of the academic profession will have limited influence on the forces of the market or the state, through their individual choices and actions they will be likely to have a great deal of influence on the effectiveness of the collegial mechanisms within universities necessary to assure the continued contribution of academic work to the public good.

10) Presentations by Max Weber Fellows



China by *Fang Xu*. China has undergone very dynamic development in recent decades. The higher education system has always been highly competitive and, as a result, high school students face challenging entrance examinations to undergraduate programmes. Although the selection is rigorous, the exit rate in universities is very high in China. Compared to the European Union, where it is still possible for many students to access good or very good universities, Chinese students are sorted much more into different levels of universities. Xu also mentioned the weakness of a system where hierarchy is very strong, in the sense that researchers tend not to be innovative and are too dependent on their supervisors. In terms of the labour market, she concluded by saying that Chinese researchers with experience abroad are very welcome to come back to the country, with very high salary incentives.

Israel/Arab countries by *Sami Miaari*. Miaari stressed the fact that Arab countries are practically absent from many debates related to universities and their universities have limited autonomy. The main reason is that modern universities are inexistent in the Arab world and those which exist rank very poorly internationally (the top Arab university appears in the 400 top world universities) and compared to Israeli universities. Some signs of change are however visible, including the increasing role of Arab foundations such as the Qatar Foundation in supporting research. Hopefully, market challenges will force Arab universities to become more competitive.

Turkey by *Gaye Gungor*. Gungor started by saying that Turkish universities are similar to the Italian and Chinese universities of the 1980s. Although the country has massive potential (31 million of the total population are under 20), only a few have or will have access to higher education. Yet, the Turkish system has evolved. Universities are not as old as in Europe and in the 1950s they underwent major transformations and “Americanisation” with the support of the Marshall Plan. Recently, a new law has provided for the establishment of private universities, of which there are now 33, compared to 94 state universities. These universities also enjoy higher autonomy. Despite these changes, many challenges still lie ahead. For instance, the system still lacks resources and private-public partnerships are limited. Although the position of Turkey in the ISI ranking is increasing every year, institutional ranking is still low.

Eastern Europe by *Mindia Vashakmadze*. Vashakmadze made some random observations on systems in Eastern Europe. Five points were made. On institutional autonomy, the relationship with the state is crucial, but often no clear legal framework exists for taking independent internal, and especially managerial, decisions. In Georgia, there is no financial autonomy to support institutional autonomy. In support of the popular concept of “academic democracy,” some governments are also firing the older generations of academics in order to employ the younger one: a problem in fact. As for departmental and faculty selection autonomy, there is a lack of transparency and no incentive for young researchers to improve their skills because of a lack of investment, with the result that many move to the private sector, their places being filled by less qualified people. Instability of academic careers and corruption are also problems. In the Communist era, universities were intended for ideological training and so research skills and funding were – and still often are – not a priority. Curricula that meet higher Western academic standards and issues of accountability are not an issue. In terms of academic freedom, many recent private institutions attract academics from public



universities but with no improvement in quality at the output level of student performance. In Romania, however, there are examples of more effective systems of internal management. A challenge is how to stop the brain drain; support from Western countries is crucial. Some programmes – such as those of the Open Society Institute - offer good positions to attract researchers back to the country, yet more is needed to improve the situation: formal cooperation agreements with Western and US universities, investing in new scholarships, and improving university infrastructure.

Final debate

Dill was asked to elaborate more on collective action problems and their relation with individual careers. Dill stressed that the “dilemma” emerges within the current highly competitive academic market, whereby the individual is pushed to focus only on her/his individual career, to do research and publish, at the expenses of any other activity. This attitude has negative collective consequences. For example, in the US, and especially young faculty members, systematically avoid administrative duties, which serve the purpose of maintaining the collegial infrastructure and spirit of the faculty. Dill also returned to the differentiation of university missions for the sake of the public interest, as Europe distinguishes between university and polytechnics in many cases. When the UK abolished that distinction, it ran into regulatory problems and had to rewrite the regulations. In the US, there are 300 universities but only 99 (66 public and 33 private) produce two thirds of all PhDs and three quarters of all federally funded research: it is an extremely concentrated system. Europe has 1000; they are expensive and governments have to deal with that.

Marimon commented on several issues. It is true that in Europe there are private universities that perform badly but European public universities with low tuition fees have also failed in their mission. Universities were meant for the masses, but few people go to university anyway. Despite the limits of measurement, it would be pointless to go back to the past. One challenge ahead for universities is to become attractive environments in which working and studying, and developing trust within the institution go hand in hand.

Finally, Pergher asked the speakers on the roundtable to comment on the divergence and convergence of their systems with respect to the Western European and US ones, and on forms of collaboration between the two. Xu focused on the imbalance between the high demand for, and low supply of, higher education; the government reacted by building new infrastructure and hiring new staff, but entry is still hard. It is becoming more common for people with money to send their children to foreign institutions already for high school. To attract these people back, Chinese universities have set up parallel bachelor programmes, which are becoming very popular. Gungor focused on the close relationship between Turkey as a candidate country and the Bologna Process. Strong relations are in place with the US, whose universities have campuses in Turkey. Miaari stressed the connections between the programmes of new foundations and Western countries. Vashakmadze referred to Fulbright programmes in some states, but also went back to the need to improve research skills in the academic environment of Eastern countries.