



The Hamburg Declaration Organising Higher Education for the 21st Century

A statement adopted by the Hamburg Transnational University Leaders Council – a meeting of 50 university leaders from around the world invited for discussion in Hamburg from 7 to 9 June 2017 at the invitation of the German Rectors' Conference, the Körber Foundation, and Universität Hamburg.

Preamble. Profound changes in the global economy have placed a premium on knowledge and information, and increased democratization has significantly broadened the demand for education at all levels. These continuing trends have confronted post-secondary education worldwide with unprecedented challenges, not only for post-secondary institutions but also for the many stakeholders with which these institutions engage, such as governments, community and industry groups, and quality assurance agencies. Post-secondary education in the 21st century has experienced nothing less than a global academic revolution, with extraordinary adaptations taking place at every level. University leaders must respond in ways that meet the needs of the society they serve while embracing their most precious time-proven academic assets.

Conclusions. The Hamburg Transnational University Leaders Council arrived at the following conclusions.

The current situation

- **Global higher education** has become diversified. It is our conviction that **students and societies need institutions with different missions and profiles to serve their needs.** For post-secondary education, “one size does not fit all.” Although all institutions in post-secondary education share the characteristics of advanced teaching and learning, there is a need, which is usually the responsibility of governments, for systems of post-secondary education to differentiate among the many and varied types of institutions in the sector.
- **Strategic differentiation** in post-secondary education should be **coherent, designed with a clearly defined functions and responsibilities,** provide varied academic programmes and certifications relevant to student and societal needs, given appropriate resources from public and other sources, and accompanied by processes that assure high quality outcomes.
- **Vocational and technical education** that provides skills and competencies relevant to a specific trade differs in fundamental ways from the education provided by other institutions in the sector. Nonetheless, it is an integral part of post-secondary education.

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The role of the research university

- The research university, as the apex academic institution, is **central to the global knowledge economy**. It educates leaders, scientists and scholars who serve society, academe, industry, and the broader economy. It conducts research, and is the window to international science.
- Research universities are central to the **success of higher education**, and contribute to the **common good**.
- The research university functions in an increasingly **complex and diverse academic ecosystem**, consisting of large numbers of institutions serving varied populations and needs. To be effective in contemporary society, research universities must maintain their **essential roles of teaching, research, personality development and service to society**, but must also constructively engage with and by example provide leadership to the other institutions in the post-secondary sector.

Requirements for effective differentiation

For differentiation processes of the global higher education landscape to take place in a scientifically designed and value-oriented way, the following steps are necessary:

- **Clear-cut differentiation:** The mission of each type of post-secondary institution should be clearly defined and protected. Controls should seek to maintain appropriate academic differentiation. We note that global academic rankings often distort differentiation by promoting homogeneity.
- **Autonomy:** Post-secondary institutions should be given the authority to manage resources necessary to their mission.
- **Funding:** Predictable funding streams, adequate to the mission of each type of post-secondary institution, must be established.
- **Quality:** Quality assurance systems, designed and executed by academic professionals, must be an essential feature for all post-secondary institutions.
- **Permeability:** There should be articulation mechanisms that permit students equitable access to post-secondary education, allowing them to easily shift from one type of institution to another without loss of academic standing.
- **Coherence:** Private higher education, the fastest growing part of post-secondary education globally, requires careful integration into an effective post-secondary education system.

Hamburg, 9 June 2017

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