

Tino Bargel (Ed.)

**Student Experiences and Evaluation of  
Bologna-Process and Bachelor  
Empirical Results of the German Student Survey**



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Empirical Results of the German Student Survey**

**Hefte zur Bildungs- und Hochschulforschung (61)**

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## **Introduction**

### **Focus: Bologna process and Bachelor**

The universities in Europe have been implementing a European Higher Education Area consisting of common structures and comparable study conditions called the “Bologna process”. These ambitious efforts started in 1998 and up to now about 47 nations of Europe are participating. Many countries had to introduce a new study structure consisting of three cycles: the (undergraduate) Bachelor as a first general degree, the (postgraduate) Master as a second degree, followed by a doctorate’s degree as the third cycle. Other additional new features were modules, workload, ECTS-points (European Credit Transfer Points), and a Diploma Supplement.

This institutional change within the universities had a considerable effect on the study organization and on teaching habits, thereby producing some conflicts between professors and politicians, as well as between administration and students. In this situation, it seems helpful to look at the empirical research and to use the results of student surveys in order to discover how the new changes affected students. Thus, it will be analyzed what are legitimate complaints and false claims, what are incorrect assumptions, and what are helpful devices when looking at the Bachelor system.

### **Data: Student Survey in Germany**

The AG Hochschulforschung at the University of Konstanz is in charge of the “German Student Survey” (Gestus) since the 1980s, supported by the German Ministry of Education and Research. Every three years about 9,000 students from German universities are asked to evaluate their study situation and experiences, the quality of teaching and learning, their contacts and level of participation, their professional preparation and career perspectives, and last but not least, their difficulties and stress level, as well as their wishes and demands. There is a time series of eleven surveys existing up to now, which provide information not only about the actual situation at universities, but about developments and trends in higher education as well.

With the introduction of the new study structure (Bachelor und Master), this German study and survey offers an important source of data about the development and establishment of the “Bachelor” at German universities. In spring 2010, a special monograph was published: “Bachelor-Studierende – Erfahrungen in Studium und Lehre” (Bachelor Students – Experience of their Studies and Teaching). This report and its findings have received a great response from university rectors and students’ associations, by the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) and the DSW (German Student Services), and by political parties and administrations. Thus the survey with its systematic and differentiated information proved to be useful to find out the facts, and to be a basis for decisions in what is a crucial situation for higher education.

### **Evaluation: The Bachelor through the students’ eyes**

Central results of this report on the Bachelor have already been posted on the Internet as short articles called “news”. Since these articles could be useful to stimulate international discussion, these “news” articles have been translated by Dr. Birgitta Busse (Godt) in English and are now gathered in this booklet. They give an overview of criticism and support for the Bologna process and offer some insights into special topics, such as international mobility, social selection, and study problems.

Additionally a summary is presented about: “Developing the European Higher Education Area – Experiences of German Students” (May 2009). Recommendations have been incorporated here about: further processes, the inclusion of necessary repairs in study regulations, preferable reconstructions of study structure, and desirable reanimation of central principles of scientific learning at universities.

### **Perspective: Data about the cultural dimension of studying in Europe**

More and more people responsible for the development of the universities in Europe are convinced that it is necessary to have systematic empirical data. Already the “social dimension” of the study situation has been acknowledged, following the communiqués of London and of Leuven (2007 und 2009). Due to this acknowledgment, the “Eurostudent” as a survey about the financial situation of students, their dwelling, nourishment, health, and counseling has been established in some countries.

However, now it is also necessary to establish a survey about the **cultural dimension** of universities and students in Europe. The cultural dimension incorporates the following domains:

- qualification (employability) and education (citizenship),
- integration (contacts) and participation (responsibility),
- study habits (research orientation) and teaching styles (sense of science),
- support (counseling) and services (going abroad).
- cultural impact (motives), social criteria (values) and political beliefs (aims and affiliations).

Study quality and evaluation of lessons and teachers are important aspects to consider; however, cognitive and cultural development of students, processes of social selection, difficulties and stress, and wishes and demands for further development of the study situation and higher education (students as experts) are important as well.

### **Future: Invitation to ISSUE and proposal of QUISS**

The German student survey (Gestus) is an example of how one can measure the cultural dimension of universities and studying with indicators. Our experiences in collaborating with several colleagues in Europe in translating, as well as using this instrument, or part of it, encouraged us to establish an association called ISSUE (International Student Survey in Europe), and to propose an instrument called QUISS (Questionnaire for International Student Survey). This instrument is not only used in German, but also in French, Spanish, English, in addition to Ukrainian and Lithuanian; it is valid and proved to be reliable for international comparisons. There are also some cooperative work and publications based on this instrument, showing that theory and concept, indicators and dimensions, questions and items of the instrument are applicable and useful in all participating countries and regions (and faculties).

The topics of our last three international workshops, held every year in Konstanz in November, may be instructive: “Quality and Equity in Higher Education (2008), “The Bachelor – Changes in Performance and Quality of Studying” (2009), and “Empirical Evidence for the Development of the Bologna Process” (2010). All these meetings, discussions, and documents are evidence of the necessity, as well as the possibility to have reliable research in this difficult field. It is the field of study, students’ life, and learning that is especially crucial to the evaluation of the Bachelor and the creation of the European Area of Higher Education.

This booklet about the “Bachelor in Germany” through students’ eyes may contribute to the conviction that it is not enough to observe the “social dimension”; rather, the “cultural dimension” is equally important. We think it is time to start an international initiative on the European level for the International Student Survey in Europe: this is the ISSUE.

***Tino Bargel***

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The report „Bachelor-Studierende - Erfahrungen in Studium und Lehre“ (BMBF 2009) (“Bachelor undergraduates - experiences on study and on teaching”) focuses, besides on experiences regarding the study itself, on motives for studying, experiences during a study abroad, expectations regarding the job market, and on wishes and demands of undergraduate students. Three complex surveys of 2006 to 2008 deliver the relevant data: the “students’ survey”, the online survey on the European Higher Education Area, and the “study quality monitor”. They give us important and differentiating results on the state of development regarding undergraduate study with the Bachelor as a final degree, in the sense of an interim report.

## **1 Bachelor undergraduates - summary**

### **A big majority in favour of the aims represented by the Bologna process**

A big majority of Bachelor students support the aims underlying the Bologna process. These aims are an international orientation of study, a study abroad for some time, accreditation of study, and comparable standards. More than 80 per cent of all undergraduate students always agree, that these aims are important, among them almost one-half even think they are very important. So students widely approve of the European Higher Education Area as it has been built up to now.

Regarding the new study structure, with the Bachelor as a first degree after six semesters and the Master’s degree coming second afterwards, undergraduates approve less. The majority of 75 per cent think of the new study structure as an appropriate one, but of the obligatory Bachelor exam after six semester they approve of much less (53 per cent in favour). To have a fixed three-year-study is therefore disputed among students.

### **Core elements of the Bologna process realized**

The core elements of the Bologna process have been realized to the opinion of undergraduates of Bachelor studies. Nearly all students agree with reference to the new study structure (Bachelor/Master), the credit point system (ECTS), and the implementation of modules in the course of study. There are four further elements which are regarded by the majority of students as being realized: a general quality control and evaluation of teaching, the international cooperation with foreign universities, the possibility to study abroad, and the accreditation of courses of study (students’ agreement ranging from 55 to 70 per cent here).

The Bologna aims have been realized in the same amount at both types of universities. Neither type of university has put a different weight on aspects. Looking at the basic elements of the Bologna process, no significant differences can be perceived among the subject groups as well. The two-phased study structure has been put into practice with the same intensity in every subject, the Bachelor as the first degree has been established, as well as the credit point system (ECTS), and the modularisation of study. It is to be assumed that in 2010 the main guidelines of the European Higher Education Area will be realized in all subject groups (excepting jurisprudence, medicine, and teacher-training courses). The experiences of students show us that the foundation of the European Higher Education Area in Germany has been built – equally at universities as at universities of applied sciences.

### **More regulations and rules for a Bachelor’s degree**

Most undergraduates in Bachelor studies think that their course of study is regulated and restricted by guidelines: predominantly so to 82 per cent of them. Though to follow this predefined way of study poses no real problems to the most of them, every third

has some bigger difficulties in order to cope with regulations. Every second undergraduate think the independence allowed within study is appropriate, but for one-fourth of them it is too much and for another not enough. 59 per cent of students are of the opinion that they cannot sufficiently follow their own interests within their course of study. The appropriate amount of liberty to choose courses in accordance with one's own interest has not been reached yet.

There is a high number of regulations within study at universities and at universities of applied sciences. Things have not changed much at universities of applied sciences, but at universities changes have been remarkable. This applies mostly to cultural sciences because four out of five Bachelor undergraduates notice fixed regulations here, but at Diploma studies this is true only for one-third of them.

The fact of having more regulations now concerning study and the question which classes to choose poses significantly more problems at universities than at universities of applied sciences (40 per cent to 25 per cent respectively). Regarding regulations both types of universities are now on the same level – which is the level of the universities of applied sciences. Additionally differences between subject groups are diminished.

### **Problems concerning conditions for study: lack of clear structure, lack of transparency combined with high performance requirements**

In spite of all regulations Bachelor studies have some defects which oppose good and efficient study conditions. To a lot of students clear structure (42 per cent) and clear definitions what is demanded for the final exam are missing to even more (54 per cent). Transparency and structure are both central conditions for a consistent study. On the other hand undergraduate students are frequently confronted with high performance requirements (66 per cent), a bit more often than undergraduates in Diploma studies are.

It is important for a strictly regulated course of study with high performance requirements to have good clear structure and requirements. There is an imbalance between requirements and structure, and consequently courses of study are no longer thought to have hardly sufficient “conditions for study”, making things very difficult for undergraduates. A main point here is the lack of transparency concerning exams. If, additionally, reliable and comprehensible study and examination regulations are missing, going on with study could pose problems. If undergraduates are confronted with constellations like this, every second, in spite of all regulations, will meet with some or even a lot of difficulties to plan his or her course of study.

### **Implementation of modules and delivery of ECTS points: frequently inadequate**

Most undergraduate students do not think **implementing modules** in their courses of study has been a success. Using modules means to divide the study into larger groups of coordinated courses terminating with an exam, focussing more than before on enlarging knowledge and improving competences of students. At universities only 38 per cent of students, even less than at universities of applied sciences with 46 per cent, give positive votes for using modules. In consequence 21 per cent of undergraduates tell us about larger, further 25 per cent about some, difficulties in coping with them. Students of engineering and of cultural sciences at universities approve the less of modules and experience the most difficulties here. Students of economics are definitely more positive about the implementation of modules.

The **credit point system ECTS** has been realized far better in the opinion of undergraduates than implementing modules. Again differences exist with regard to the type of university: at universities of applied sciences more than 62 per cent of undergraduates

ates think it has been implemented well, at universities only close to half of them. Consequently the credit point system poses fewer problems to students. This is the case for the big majority. Some differences, however, exist with regard to the subject groups: in cultural sciences only 41 per cent think the ECTS system has been established successfully, but in economics 67 per cent (universities) or even 71 per cent (universities of applied sciences) think so. Difficulties to use ECTS points occur most frequently in engineering and most rarely in economics.

### **Time invested for study not higher for Bachelor undergraduates**

Bachelor undergraduates invest altogether a bit more than 35 hours a week for their study. This is similar to the average time amount students at universities and at universities of applied sciences spend (35,6 and 35,4 respectively a week); there are no big differences to Diploma students (34,0 and 36,6 respectively). Bachelor studies have more obligatory classes in relation to Diploma studies. But on the other hand the time spent at home with study has lessened accordingly, so in the end the whole time invested for study has drifted towards a structure known from universities of applied sciences.

As other research (18. Sozialerhebung des DSW - 18. Social Research of the DSM) have already confirmed, the obligatory time investment for study cannot be the reason for students' feeling of mental stress and insufficient time for further activities. So students' frequently stated impression of having to cope with excessive demands and to be constantly in a mad rush, which a lot of them attribute to the Bachelor exam, must have other reasons. These are obviously the amount of regulations, more obligatory courses, too many exams combined with insufficient transparency, lack of structure, and overloaded modules. But it is grounded as well in teachers' missing feedback, and in the inflexibility of choosing classes. At the same time the pressure on undergraduates to study efficiently and successfully has increased. This combination leads to a feeling of more stress, inability, and self-consciousness. The real time amount necessary for study has not too much to do with it.

### **Not enough contact to teachers, but good consultation**

The Bachelor study is leading to undergraduates to get in closer contact with each other. In fact, contacts are more frequent than they are for students with a Diploma as a final degree. At universities contacts among students are about as frequent as they are at universities of applied sciences. It is a highly satisfying situation to students: 79 per cent give positive votes.

Contacts of students to their teachers, who are playing an important role in coping with study, do not take place more frequently during a Bachelor study than during a study with other degrees. Contacts stay at a low level: 20 per cent of undergraduate students do not have any contact to their teachers, almost a half of them are rarely in contact (48 per cent), and only 7 per cent succeed in getting a good and regular one. Especially professionals with higher degrees (German "Professoren") keep at a large distance to their students. If improvement of teachers' consultation has been an intention of introducing Bachelor studies, this did not come to pass according to students. The lack of contact and support seems to be rather problematic, because the new regulations and changes in the course of study call for more contact between students and teachers in order to get feedback, consultation, and encouragement.

The quality of consultation itself, taking place during consulting hours or as informal talks, may be judged by four aspects: how long, and how well done regarding delivery of content, further study, usefulness in general. Undergraduates vote predominantly positive: about two-third to three-fourth judge the consultation quality to be rather satis-

factory. There exist no larger differences to students, regarding all four aspects, between more formal consultations during consulting hours and informal talks.

### **International cooperation and study abroad**

International cooperation, the exchange between students of different countries, and students' mobility are core intentions of the Bologna process. To students these are very important aims. They are predominantly of the opinion that a study abroad for some time is very important for their personal development as it is for their professional expectations. There is a high potential of students, with a Bachelor's degree in view as well as with other degrees, who wish to go abroad for study. Insofar it is of special importance what they think about realisation of these aspects already during their Bachelor study.

Students are of the opinion that international orientations at universities and mobility have mostly not been realized sufficiently up to now. But when a real international cooperation has been built up it gets good votes from students, because they frequently approve of the applications done. It is noticeable that there are no differences, with regard to internationalisation and studying abroad, between the votes of Bachelor undergraduates at universities and at universities of applied sciences. In this aspect the latter have closed up to universities.

**Cooperation with foreign universities** has improved within all subject groups. Some deficits remain, to the opinion of undergraduates, within the natural and social sciences at universities. Only half of the students acknowledge international cooperation here. Opportunities to **study some time at a foreign university** have not been offered in the same amount to Bachelor students of all subjects, larger deficiencies remain in engineering. Possible **scholarships for a study abroad** are known to a part of students in cultural sciences (37 per cent) and in economics (35 per cent), even less in other subjects.

The most extensive offers with regard to international mobility, a **fixed time of study abroad** or a **double degree** (German and foreign), have only been realized in some subjects. A double degree is even less known; only in economics about 16 per cent of undergraduate students give a positive vote here.

### **High quality of study as a conclusion**

In drawing conclusions on the quality of study four basic elements are of special value: content of courses, structure of the course of study, how classes are carried out, and finally how teachers are looking after their students and offer consultations. Most of the Bachelor students get a good quality of study. The element which they are mostly convinced to be good is the content of their courses: 72 per cent think so.

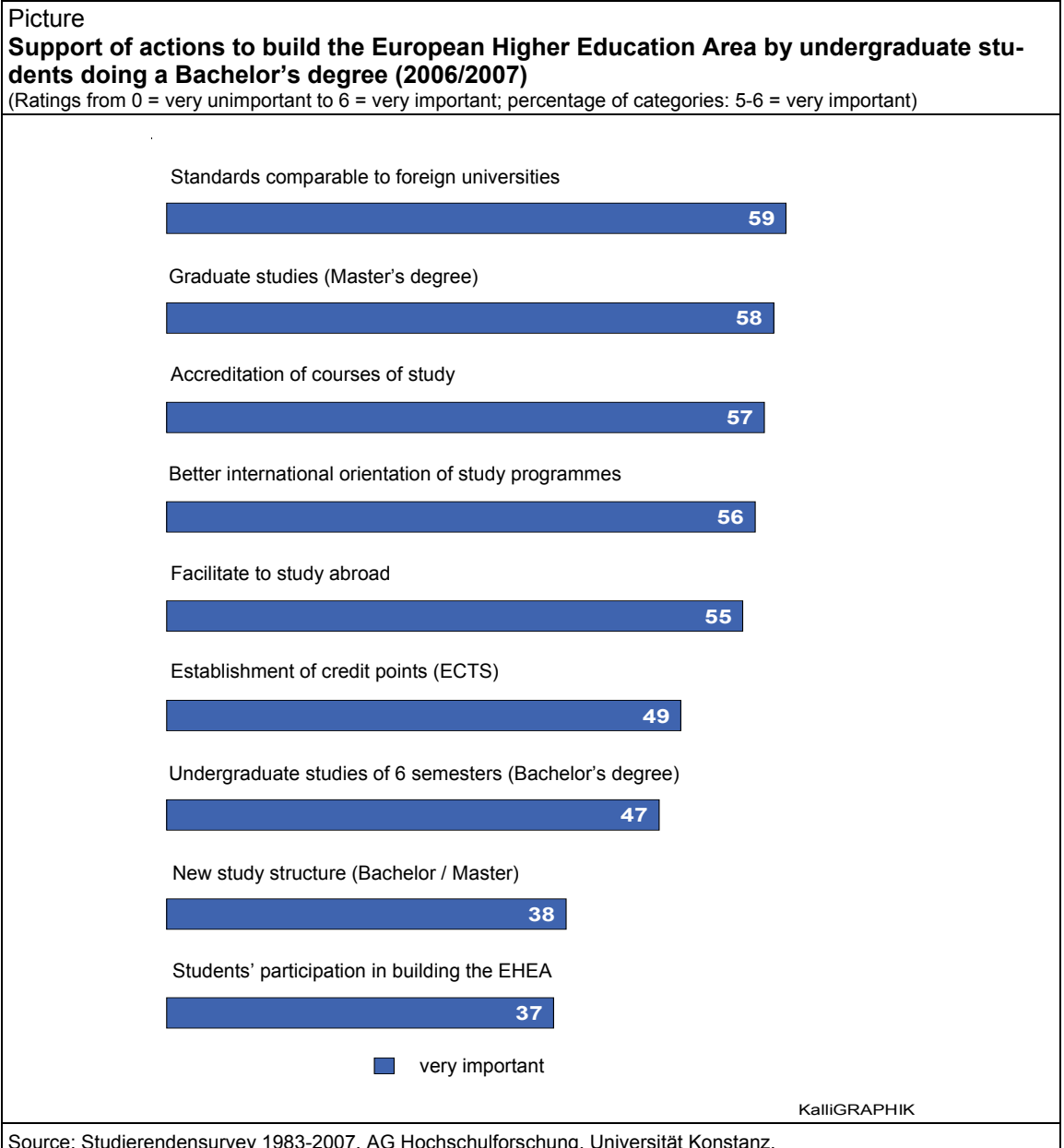
The new study structure has improved the quality of study for undergraduate students at universities of applied sciences, and for those at universities it has at least kept it on the same level as before. No decrease and specially no collapse has taken place, so in this regard the restructure has been successfully done. But present shortcomings have not at all been sufficiently remedied. The task remains for universities and faculties to improve the following features: mainly consultation and advice by teachers, partly study structure and teaching. Ideas and feedback of undergraduate students should be taken into account as far as possible.

**Tino Bargel**

After having introduced new finalized degrees, there is a special interest to find out what is important to Bachelor students, and whether they, along with undergraduates of other degrees, are equally supportive of the European Higher Education Area. These and other questions are examined in the report "Bachelor-Studierende - Erfahrungen in Studium und Lehre"(BMBF 2009). Part of this report is presented here.

## 2 New study structure

Undergraduate students doing a Bachelor's degree associate a number of advantages and expectations with it. Moreover, undergraduates support a lot of measures, which have been planted within the framework of the Bologna treaty. These measures are of special importance to undergraduates taking high quality courses of study which enable further training. Furthermore courses of study should be accredited and internationally comparable. Such expectations, shared by more than half of the students, are linked with those wanting an international orientation in study programmes and an easier access to studying abroad (see picture below).



## Universities: Comparable standards and the Master's degree

It is most important to undergraduate students at regular universities that their course of study is comparable internationally, and that they may get the next degree, a Master, after a Bachelor. However, undergraduate students at universities of applied sciences give the highest priority to accreditation and internationalisation of their course of study. However, it should also be taken into account that differences between positive ratings are small, when one compares both types of universities.

There are differences concerning two issues only: Firstly, it is significantly more important to undergraduate students at regular universities to get a degree that is comparable, and to have the possibility to study abroad (62% and 58% respectively) than it is to those at universities of applied sciences (51% and 48% respectively). It is also very important to half of undergraduate students to have a university degree already after a period of six semesters. The same is true for credit points, which were introduced in order to enhance flexibility of and comparison between courses of study.

Even though it takes much effort in order to convert to a two level study structure, undergraduate students find it less important to have an active part in this reorganisation. Undergraduates doing a German "Diplom" or "Magister" degree, as expected, show hardly any interest for this issue. However, they are interested as well in the internationalisation of study, that is to say, in facilitating ways to go abroad for study, and in the international orientation of courses of study. Furthermore, they support the idea of quality standards in education.

## Undergraduate students of economics (Bachelor's degree) most frequently support the new study structure

The measures to build the European Higher Education Area receive different responses. Undergraduate students of Economics seem to like programmes with a Bachelor's degree best, seeing that the relevant characteristics are mostly supported by them. More than two-thirds vehemently stand up for a large number of processes instigated in order to change the study structure (see table below).

Table  
**Importance of actions to build the European Higher Education Area in relation to subjects (2006/07)**

(Ratings from 0 = very unimportant to 6 = very important; percentage of categories: 5-6= very important)

Actions	Cult. scien.		Nat. scien.		Social sciences		Economics		Engineering.	
	Univ.	appl.	Univ.	appl.	Univ.	appl.	Univ.	appl.	Univ.	appl.
Comparability	64	63	56	63	<b>71</b>	47	44	38		
Master's degree	62	57	52	51	<b>70</b>	52	52	44		
Internat. orient.	61	51	56	63	<b>69</b>	56	44	45		
Study abroad	66	51	54	51	<b>68</b>	47	46	40		
Accreditation	56	58	53	63	<b>68</b>	60	42	37		
Exam 6th sem.	47	44	45	44	<b>66</b>	46	41	39		
ECTS points	48	48	45	59	<b>61</b>	48	35	35		
Two-level struc.	38	34	37	38	<b>51</b>	41	34	33		
Students' participa.	40	36	35	51	<b>42</b>	36	24	23		

Source: Studierendensurvey 1983-2007, AG Hochschulforschung, Universität Konstanz.

In contrast, undergraduate students of Economics at universities of applied sciences are remarkably careful about voicing their approval compared with those at regular universities, although they are of the opinion as well that accreditation and international orientation of study are very important factors.

On the one hand, quality of study and possibility to compare educational training, internationalisation of programmes, as well as further education are issues which are regarded to be very important by more than a half of the undergraduate students of cultural, social, and natural sciences. On the other hand, undergraduates of Engineering support these measures of restructuring higher education comparatively less.

The strongest support for these measures at universities of applied sciences are to be found in social sciences. The focus here is mainly on accreditation, internationally comparable standards, and international orientation of courses of study. 63 percent of undergraduate students in social sciences think it is especially important to translate these three features into practice. Yet it is also important to half of those students to be able to study abroad and to do a Master's degree.

Part of these measures meet with less approval in two other subject groups: economics and engineering. This is the case especially in engineering at universities of applied sciences and at regular universities. Though, at least these undergraduate students think that the international orientation of study and ability to do a Master's degree are the most important measures (45% and 44% respectively "very important").

Accreditation of courses of study (60 per cent), international orientation (56 per cent), and the Master's degree (52 per cent) receive the most frequent votes in economics as well.

### **Support in restructuring the European Higher Education Area**

The measures to build a universal European Higher Education Area, which were supported by undergraduate students already in 2007, still receive approval (see online survey of 2008 on the homepage in [www.uni-konstanz.de/ag-hochschulforschung](http://www.uni-konstanz.de/ag-hochschulforschung)).

The main emphasis by undergraduate Bachelor students is laid on the fact that courses of study should be accredited and comparable to international standards. The assurance to have a standard quality in higher education seems to be especially important to most of them, despite the irritation that some are experiencing with the new degrees.

The extensive interest in internationally orientated courses of study and in going abroad during their studies remains stable. The latter is always accompanied by demands for better offers of scholarships when studying abroad, coming from four-fifths of undergraduate students at regular universities and three-fourths of those at universities of applied sciences. In general, undergraduates doing other final degrees support the internationalisation of courses as well.

Compared to 2007, students are participating significantly more in the creation of the European Higher Education Area. More than half of the undergraduate students (Bachelor's degree) at regular universities and a bit less at universities of applied sciences (48 per cent) now wish to participate.

### **Access to the Master's degree and a duplicate degree**

Undergraduate students do not think it would be very helpful that only those students with a relatively good exam are accepted into higher studies, thus receiving higher qualifications by doing a Master's degree. Accordingly, a lot of them disapprove of the fact that the first degree after six semesters of study is obligatory to all of them.

They greatly support the idea of Master studies as an extension, which could be done as further education after having worked for some time. About half of the undergraduates would welcome a duplicate degree allowing them to get a foreign and a German degree.

### **Further flexibility during study for a Bachelor's degree**

Undergraduate students support most concepts and measures taken to reorganise the European Higher Education Area. These should therefore be realized as quickly as possible, together with some necessary improvements. The new design of courses should be more flexible than before and be freed of guidelines that are too restrictive, in order to carry out the intended measures.

Most students wish for high quality standards and more flexibility in education, as well as for more offers in further education. In case these aims, concerning studies with a Bachelor's degree, cannot be realized now, expectations of a lot of students will not be fulfilled. Furthermore the two-level study structure would then be called into question. Up to now there still exists a big approval among students of the structuring of the European Higher Education Area (75 per cent).

**Michael Ramm**



International mobility of undergraduate-students and supporting measures here are both core parts of the Bologna process. Whether undergraduates go abroad during or for their study, and what are their opinions on an international orientation of study is examined here. The report "Bachelor-Studierende - Erfahrungen in Studium und Lehre" (BMBF 2009) gives answers to these questions. Some results are presented here.

### **3 International mobility and going abroad**

#### **Courses taken abroad**

Mobility of undergraduate-students is seen as an important indicator to the success of the Bologna process. A supporting pillar of the European Higher Education Area will be called into question, if the exchange of students – i.e. the possibility of students to study some time abroad – is not working properly. However, undergraduates aren't at all universally in favour of going abroad during their study. The alternative for them is rather to postpone it until graduate study.

#### **Practical training and language courses abroad are very popular**

The comparison with both of the other possibilities to go abroad during study, **language courses** and **practical training**, show us that undergraduate-students don't primarily use time abroad for study. About 26 per cent of undergraduates at universities and 24 per cent at universities of applied sciences have already been doing language courses in a foreign country. Almost as many went to do some practical trainings there. Students' further planning show similar results. More undergraduate-students want to do language courses and practical training than to study abroad. More than 40 per cent at universities and more than every third at universities of applied sciences plan to do such a "time abroad related to study". Obviously it is easier for undergraduates to arrange a stay of this kind because for the most part it takes up less time.

Reasons may be either there are more possibilities presently offered, or on the whole charges are lower for students. There are obstacles for undergraduates to overcome as well when organising practical training. Further in favour for this choice is that a stay of this kind may be arranged during vacation, thus lessen the charge on their study. As it is deemed important to have stayed some time abroad, it is reasonable to suppose that undergraduate-students thus hope to gain an important qualification, even when not actually having studied there.

#### **Less mobility of undergraduate-students with regard to stay some time abroad**

It is difficult to categorize the differences between Bachelor undergraduate-students and undergraduates doing a German "Magister" or "Diplom". Latter have already studied more frequently abroad (16 per cent). But this is due to their higher average rate of semesters: they are in their seventh semester of study and Bachelor students are mostly in their fourth semester. But even when taking only undergraduate-students up to their sixth semester, Bachelor students don't keep up with the others: 7 per cent of undergraduate-students doing a Bachelor's degree and 9 per cent doing a "Diplom" and "Magister" went abroad for study.

The new curriculum obviously doesn't contribute much to increase international mobility of Bachelor undergraduates in comparison to those in traditional courses of study. On the other hand it does not notably hinder them to go abroad, as has been feared beforehand.

Regarding the gender aspect, as well as different subject groups, there are in general no significant differences in students' wishes to go some time abroad for study. Female undergraduates seem to be more willing to go.

### **Study abroad and social selection**

Keeping this in mind a further problem arises. If a semester abroad is meant to be done as a graduate, who will really have the choice to go? The study for a Master's degree as well as to study abroad is a further financial burden. The Master study is left to be financed by students themselves even more. It is to be feared that social selection takes place at this stage, because a further financial burden is one of the big hindrances to spend some time abroad for study. There are further studies and reports stating social selection and importance of financial aspects with regard to study abroad (see Orr u.a.: Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe, 2008, S. 16; Jahr/Schomburg/Teichler 2007). Social selection could be strengthened by pushing time to spend abroad further into the time when taking courses for the Master's degree. This means that social differences will get stronger, if students who cannot afford to go abroad experience disadvantages in the job market: "If going abroad during study is so advantageous, privately and professionally, then it will be a special example how social inequality has long during consequences. It is an aspect which has not been discussed up to now." (Bargel: Soziale Ungleichheit im Hochschulwesen. Hefte zur Bildungs- und Hochschulforschung 49, 2007).

It could be regarded to be a success that every forth to fifth Bachelor undergraduate went abroad some time for study. This is especially true because the course of study is so very compact and short. But there are two restrictions: firstly mobility of undergraduate-students doing traditional degrees are slightly higher, and secondly far more undergraduates deem going abroad to be very useful – about two-third – than really plan or realize it.

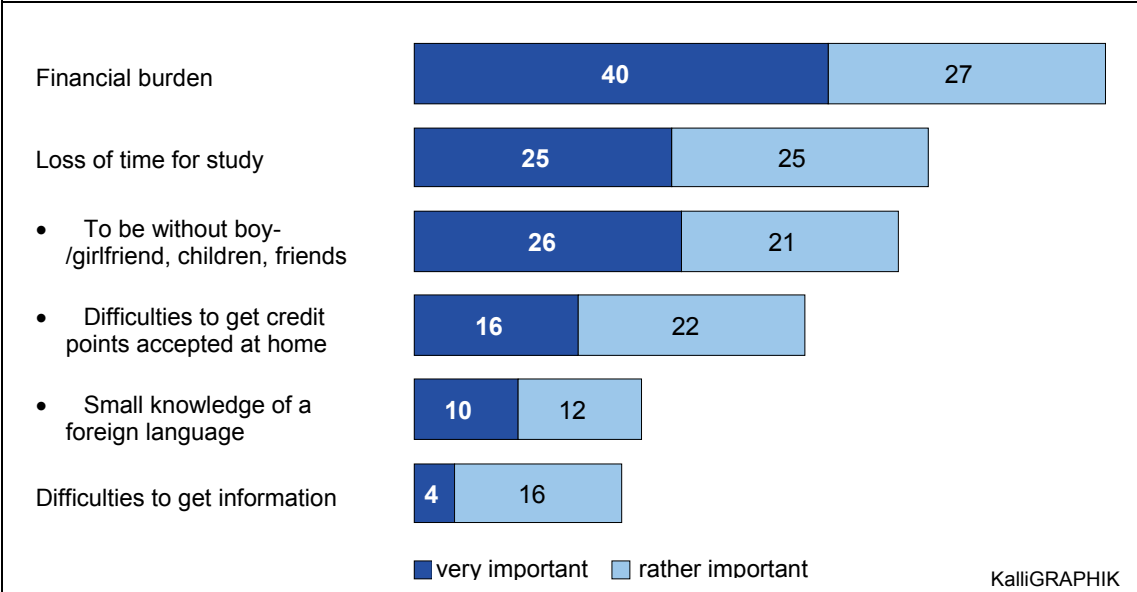
The aim to improve mobility of undergraduate-students - to go abroad for studies - by building an universal European curriculum has not been realized up to now. The potential of undergraduates who are interested has not been sufficiently exhausted. Accordingly more than half of the undergraduates state that it is more difficult to study some time abroad, when doing a Bachelor's degree than traditional degrees. Therefore the question arises why so many undergraduates don't take the chance go abroad, and whether mechanisms exist reducing possibilities for some, or even totally hindering them?

### **Financial burden as a main reason not to go abroad for study**

What are the main reasons not to go abroad for study? And how can undergraduates who are interested but not yet fully decided ("perhaps", "probable") be won? In answer to the question how important those reasons are for them not to consider a study abroad, students give structural as well as personal reasons (see picture below).

The most important factor for undergraduates is a **further financial burden**. For 40 per cent this is a very important factor. It is understandable then that a lot of students wish for more financial help, for instance special scholarships. A large amount of students' state that the **loss of time in their study** is a very important reason (25 per cent) not to go abroad. But to be **divided from girl- or boyfriend and friends** keeps a lot of undergraduates from going abroad, too, for 26 per cent this is even a very strong reason. It seems to be remarkable that 38 per cent give **problems to have credit points achieved abroad accepted at home** as a reason, among them 16 per cent who see a very big problem here. Other reasons are not seen to be as important, for example **small knowledge of the foreign language** (10 per cent very important) or **problems of getting information** (4 per cent).

Picture  
**Reasons for Bachelor students not to go abroad (2008)**  
 (in percentage)



Source: STEHR 2008, AG Hochschulforschung, Universität Konstanz.  
 1) Only students not having already been abroad at the time of survey

Weighting the reasons averagely there are no big differences between undergraduate-students at universities and at universities of applied sciences, only excepting that not having sufficient knowledge of foreign languages poses obviously some more problems to undergraduates at universities of applied sciences. Women give more often than men financial burden und to be divided from boyfriends as reasons to hinder them to go abroad (children of their own play no role here). Compared to students doing a German “Diplom” or “Magister” degree, Bachelor undergraduates relate that the problems stated above have some more importance for them when deciding to go abroad or not. But there are significant differences only concerning two reasons: small knowledge of foreign languages and a further financial burden.

**Holger Bargel**

Evaluation of teaching concerns the choice for students among courses, the contents of courses, and the presentation of contents. All of this are important quality factors. A course of study with the Bachelor as a final degree intends to keep the high quality standard, and even wishes to improve it in some parts. What are the experiences of undergraduate-students? Has teaching improved for them? This and other aspects are discussed in the report „Bachelor-Studierende - Erfahrungen in Studium und Lehre“ (BMBF 2009). Some aspects are presented here.

## **4 About teaching at universities**

In order to guarantee that time for study keeps within clear bounds and an effective study is possible, organisation as a whole and especially of courses should work properly. If it is difficult for undergraduates to take classes continuously and to do their workloads, the strict regulation of study even may become a disadvantage to them. The time needed to do the whole study may take longer than necessary.

### **Deficiencies in organisation of courses**

In order to study rapidly undergraduate-students must be able to take the courses they need. If classes are cancelled too frequently or important courses take place at the same time, effective study will be prevented; meaning the time needed for the course of study will take longer.

One out of five students tells us about regular cancelling of classes, but for more than a half of them this is rarely the case. Consequently classes really take place very regularly for only every fourth student. However, more often undergraduates have to cope with classes taking place at the same time. Nearly every third student has regularly to decide which course out of several important ones to do, because they take place simultaneously.

### **Classes are cancelled more frequently at universities of applied sciences than at universities**

Classes are cancelled more frequently at universities of applied sciences than at universities: 32 per cent and 19 per cent of undergraduates with a Bachelor have regularly to do without class. Consequently undergraduate-students at universities of applied sciences are having fewer classes regularly than those at universities. But this is a deficiency occurring in the same amount in traditional courses of study. Classes are cancelled as well more often for undergraduates with a German “Diplom” as a final degree at universities of applied sciences than at universities. The change towards the new study structure could not remedy this shortcoming (see table below).

### **More overlapping classes at universities**

Undergraduate-students at universities are having the problem of classes taking place at the same time more often than those at universities of applied sciences: About 36 per cent of them are faced regularly with overlapping classes, 17 per cent even frequently. There is a better coordination of classes at universities of applied sciences: only 13 per cent tell us here about some, and 2 per cent about frequent, overlapping. But 63 per cent have never had such a problem.

However, undergraduates for a German “Diplom” state even more frequently, at universities every second and at universities of applied sciences every third that they have to cope with such a problem regularly. In relation to that the new study structure has improved organisation of classes, but the main problem still isn't solved (see table 1).

Table 1

**Organisation of study divided into degree and type of university (2006/07)**

(Ratings from 0 = never to 6 = very frequently; percentage of categories: 0 = never , 1-2 = seldom, 3-4 = sometimes, 5-6 = frequently)

Cancel of classes	Bachelor		Diplom/Magister	
	Univ.	appl.	Univ.	appl.
never	26	20	29	17
seldom	55	48	51	51
sometimes	15	25	16	25
frequently	4	7	4	7
<b>Classes taking place at the same time</b>				
never	37	63	20	32
Seldom	27	24	29	31
Sometimes	19	11	27	22
Frequently	17	2	23	15

Source: Studierendensurvey 1983-2007, AG Hochschulforschung, Universität Konstanz.

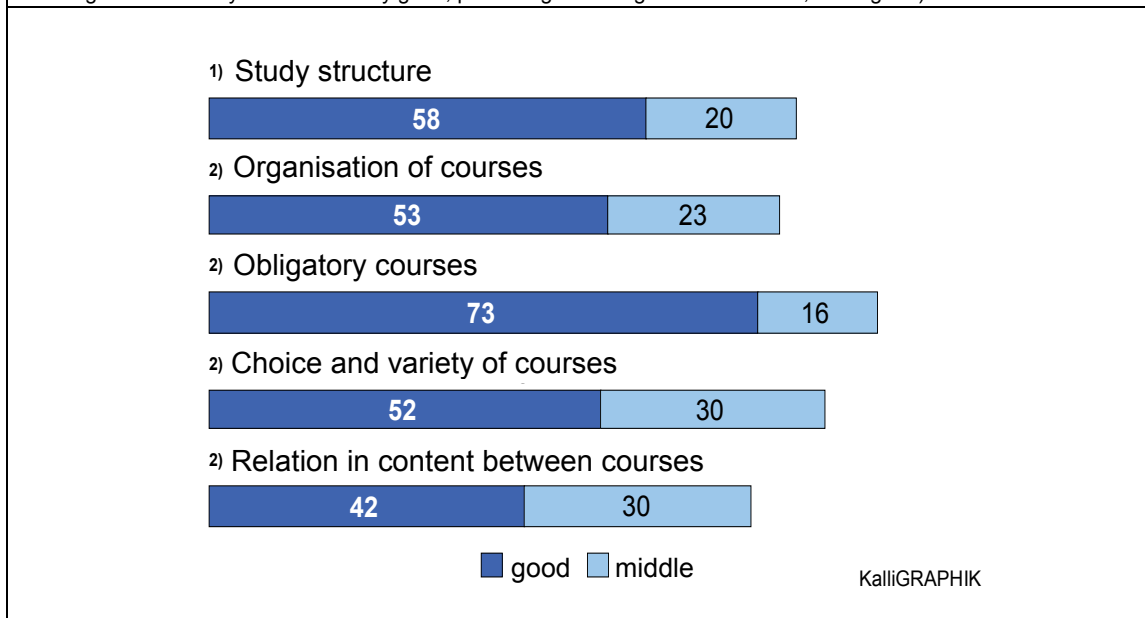
**Mainly good organisation of obligatory courses**

In spite of some deficits in organisation of classes more than half of the Bachelor students confirm that their course of study is well organised. This is true for about 58 per cent of undergraduates. Almost as many are content about how to get credit points and give good votes here. Even more positively students rate participation in obligatory courses (73 per cent say they are good). These guidelines, important for a rapid and efficient study for Bachelor students, are mostly there (see picture below).

Picture

**Features concerning contents of study appraised by Bachelor students (2007, 2008)**

(1. Ratings from 0 = not at all to 6 = very much; percentage of categories: 3 = middle, 4-6 = good;  
2. Ratings from 1 = very bad to 5 = very good; percentage of categories: 3 = middle, 4-5 = good)



Source: Studierendensurvey 1983-2007, AG Hochschulforschung, Universität Konstanz. SQM 2008, HIS und AG Hochschulforschung.

**Organisation of content is still deficient**

About the half of the undergraduates are satisfied with the choice and variety of courses. So teaching is not as one-dimensional as well as not as confusing as has been feared for Bachelor studies.

The majority of undergraduate-students seem to cope well with the structure and appraise it to be sufficient, because only few demand more independency in organising their course of study. However, undergraduates think that contents of classes aren't related well to each other. Only two-fifth give a positive rating here (see picture). The modular design of study could be the reason, not being successful to large amount of undergraduates up to now.

There is a relatively equal rating of content aspects in courses by undergraduates at universities and at universities of applied sciences, whether they are doing a Bachelor's degree or a German "Diplom". A study with a Bachelor as a final degree therefore shows no improvements comparing to traditional courses of study.

### Good principles of teaching

To take into account certain principles is an important factor for good teaching. Some preparation and engagement on the side of teachers is needed to use these elementary aspects, but they could have great effects on motivating students and on the efficiency of teaching.

### Good preparation of classes but not enough feedback

Rather frequently undergraduates experience that teachers are well prepared when coming into class, teach what they have announced beforehand, and doing it in the allotted time. 74 per cent (good preparation) and 67 per cent of students (time schedule) respectively acknowledge these important accomplishments. To their minds, however, teachers don't pay enough attention in giving feedback to students' work in class. Only 28 per cent of undergraduates were told later why they had got a good or bad grade (see table 2).

Table 2

#### Features of good teaching as regarded by Bachelor students (2006/07)

(1. Ratings from 0 = never to 6 = very frequently; percentage of categories: 4-6 = frequently; 2. Ratings from 1 = never in class to 5 = in all classes; percentage of categories: 4-5 = most of them)

<b>Frequent experience<sup>1)</sup></b>	<b>Bachelor</b>
Good preparation of teachers	74
Efficient teaching	67
Feedback	28
<b>In most classes<sup>2)</sup></b>	
Clear definition of content	61
Good talk	58
References to exams	51
Motivation for interest in content	30
Questions regarding comprehension of content	30
Summaries, repeating of content	25

Source: Studierendensurvey 1983-2007, AG Hochschulforschung, Universität Konstanz.

### Still deficiencies in using important aids which support good teaching

The majority of students get a clear defined aim to be reached during class. Nearly as often students confirm that teachers give a good and comprehensible talk. Half of the students relate that teachers in most classes regularly refer to subject material important for exams (see table 2).

Though teachers are mostly well prepared for class and give clear talks they are not able to motivate students for their subject or for the material under discussion. About

30 per cent of students say that their teachers are mostly able to motivate them. Only about the same amount of teachers make sure in class that their students have understood the material. Even less frequently they summaries or repeat subject material. Only one out of four undergraduates experiences such useful aids regularly.

Teachers seem to concentrate mainly on subject material, preparing and presenting it well. However, deficits occur when going further than just communicate material. The useful aids to do so are used far too seldom; perhaps they are thought to be less relevant. But they are on the contrary important for efficient teaching, giving to the undergraduate-students the feeling of certainty and stability.

### **Mostly good rates for teachers**

Teachers get rather positive rates for their work. Preparation of material (72 per cent), efficiency of subject material (70 per cent) and teachers' engagement (67 per cent) are judged to be good by most of the students. Presentation of material is seen to be slightly less well done (56 per cent).

Students appraise comparatively well how teachers are able to motivate them. About 51 per cent give a positive rate, though many don't feel as regularly motivated to get an interest in the subject material itself. It seems that undergraduate-students give good motivation votes to teachers even if they are only occasionally able to interest students in the present material.

Undergraduate-students doing a German "Diplom" as a final degree describe the teaching situation quite similarly as Bachelor undergraduates do. Thus it cannot be proved that introducing the Bachelor's degree has led to a better teaching situation, it has just been following general development.

### **Frank Multrus**

After having introduced the new final degrees of Bachelor and Master, it is of special importance to get to know students' viewpoints regarding improvements of their situation, and whether they share the same ideas on necessary changes as their colleges with other final degrees. Beside there are other measures of universities' development in focus. What advice gives Bachelor undergraduates here? What are, to their minds, the necessary reforms primary to be done in university education? The report „Bachelor-Studierende - Erfahrungen in Studium und Lehre“ (BMBF 2009) deals with those measures of improvement and with possible developments. After that some conclusions are drawn with regard to what undergraduate students think is needed when further developing the Bachelor program.

## 5 Wishes, demands and conclusions

### Wishes and demands

**Ranking the wishes** of undergraduate students (Bachelor programs) regarding their study situation, they place three items above all other (given the mark high priority):

- Better job chances (40 per cent);
- Smaller classes (36 per cent);
- More money through Bafög (support of students by the state, 36 per cent).

For undergraduates at universities practical relevance within study is important as well. Students at universities of applied sciences rank the item to get more money during their study through Bafög far above the rest, because their financial situation often is difficult. The last time the state augmented Bafög benefits was in 2007 (22. Bafög-ÄndG), when money to receive in general and in relation to other sources of income was increased.

Only very few students in a Bachelor programme, though they often feel the pressure of it, demand to lower the exam requirements: only 12 per cent of all students there think this is highly needed. But this wish is less frequent among students doing a German Diploma. Only few Bachelor students as well as Diploma students wish for lower requirements in courses. When criticising these requirements, a bit more frequently done by Bachelor students, they therefore don't primary aim at the level and demands of requirements, but more at the way to fulfil them, how they are checked afterwards, and the insufficient feedback of teachers regarding students' state of knowledge.

Regarding the **development and reform of universities** Bachelor student's stress that three demands are very important:

- Obligatory practical training for every course of study (66 per cent);
- Cooperation between universities and economy (56 per cent);
- More staff at universities (51 per cent).

This underlines students' turn towards usefulness of study and preparation for jobs. Students at universities underline mostly the extension of staff for teaching here, being probably a result of frequent experiences of overcrowded classes.

Students think the following elements, connected with the new study structure, to be important:

- The **quality** of study at universities should be assured by comparable standards for results, and by the accreditation of courses of study;



- To have an **internationally orientated** study, offering more possibilities to go abroad for study and including more courses with international aspects;
- To have **free access** to graduate study (to do a master programme) and to get further qualifications without restraint, and thus having more equality of job chances.

Of late years undergraduate students raise more demands to participate in reorganizing the study structure and in creating the European Higher Education Area. In this aspect they were not showing much interest and were not well informed in the years before; they neither participated here nor demanded to do so.

### **Conclusions concerning further developments**

The statement of undergraduates occasions some conclusions to be drawn and further developments of the study structure with regard to the Bachelor's degree to be considered. This concerns two levels: one regards directly the subjects and the universities, and the other general guidelines and measures concerning the development of universities and the Bologna process.

### **Organisation of study and of teaching**

The organisation of the Bologna process and the new study structure, with the Bachelor as a final degree, has been done at all universities, but in the opinion of students with different success. To a high degree it is important to undergraduates to have a study structure which enables them to study efficiently and well on the one hand and on the other hand to get good practical training and preparations for jobs.

Undergraduate students value the **quality of study**, but to them a number of larger problems remain. This is the reason why they often complain about **insufficient possibilities to study well**. The most pressing organisational talks are the following: the amount of content and exams should fit, the structure of courses should be clear and comprehensible, classes should take place continuously, and teachers should keep more contact to their students.

A reorganisation of **modules** is strongly needed. Besides just receiving knowledge on their subjects, classes should enable students more to think about the content, to fiddle about, to discuss and talk about it. This is not only a question of time but also of organisation and coordination, of company and feedback. Furthermore it is important to examine whether there is a good connection to the content of other courses within the modules.

### **General guidelines and measures**

Students present us with ideas to take into account when further developing the guidelines of the new study structure with the Bachelor as a final degree. Most of the students vote for some changes. But some aspects of university development are not wholly indisputable, i.e. under discussion, even among them.

A lot of undergraduates would applaud guidelines concerning the **duration of study** to be loosened, combined with more flexibility how to structure their study. The formal and strict study structure should get more open and allow new teaching measures (as projects, relation to research) to be integrated.

Furthermore they wish for a **promotion of going abroad for study**, especially a study phase abroad before doing the Bachelor's degree. Though internationality is a given aim, international mobility is difficult to achieve. It should be extended, as well as a possibility to study abroad for some time (and to do practical training and language courses as well). In order to do those modules, ECTS points, and exams have to be adjusted. They more often hinder undergraduates to go abroad than to foster it.

Undergraduate students want to have made it clear to them under what conditions the **transition to a master programme** is possible. The respective guidelines and quota are unclear and differ from university to university and from subject to subject, often being unofficial but effective. This causes a lot of uneasiness among students. The criteria to be accepted for a master programme are frequently unclear or too tight for them.

It is important to go on **extending support and services** in order to comply with the raising need of undergraduates here. But change in conditions of study, a study structure with modules, time for practical training, and international mobility as well, increase students' need for support by teachers and by universities in general.

To **improve conditions of study** classes should first of all be less overcrowded (more staff, more courses with a small number of attendances), feedback by teachers should be more frequent, and preparation for jobs as well as promotion of job qualifications should be better. These wishes and demands, which exist independently to the introduction of the Bachelor's degree, are of high importance for the most of undergraduate students.

The **social dimension of study** is being stressed more often by students now, because to a lot of them questions how to finance it (and the study abroad) become more pressing. Urgent demands are to increase the support of students by the state (Bafög), to offer more scholarships, and to improve conditions on the job market. Related to that, students pay more attention to social equality during study and to cultural and social chances (stay abroad, Master's degree, job chances).

The communiqué of the latest conference of ministers on the Bologna process (Leuven, 2009) is demanding more information in order to further develop the European Higher Education Area. To the German science council there is a great need to improve research on education and universities (Wissenschaftsrat 2008). Besides data on the social situation of undergraduates (see for example Euro-Student 2008) empirical results on the study situation and study quality seem to be necessary and useful. Experiences and judgements of students, put into international comparable data, may give us important hints and ideas for further development: Bologna and Bachelor with students' eyes.

**Tino Bargel / Holger Bargel / Frank Multrus / Michael Ramm**

## **Developing the European Higher Education Area - Experiences of German Students**

***Lesson at Taras-Shevchenko-University, Kiev, Ukraine, 22nd May 2009***

This contribution presents some remarks about the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) as viewed and experienced by German students. It seems necessary to me, to enlarge the international exchange about the development of the Bologna process in the participating 47 countries in Europe, as a part of an evaluation and of a new quality management. And I think the students as the clients of our efforts are, though not the only, but an important source.

### **1 Introduction**

During the last years we have been witnesses, some of us even actors, of a profound change of our higher education systems. This change is due to the so-called Bologna process, an ambitious task to develop a common structure for all European universities with the central aim to foster international exchange, cooperation and mobility.

In Germany we have opposite positions concerning this Bologna process and the two-cycle-structure of study having the Bachelor as the common and first degree. On the one hand there are the proponents consisting of nearly all the representatives of politics and administration together with our association of universities' rectors (HRK - Hochschulrektorenkonferenz). On the other hand there are the opponents. They consist especially of the union of professors and lecturers at higher education (called Hochschullehrerverband), which claims to stop the experiment and to restore the old German "diploma". This is quite a delicate conflict.

What about the students, you may ask? Their attitude in Germany has changed during the last ten years. At the beginning they have been rather strongly against this process; but since they have achieved an introduction and strengthening of the social dimension, a success of the European student union at Brussels (ESU), the majority now is in favour of the new structure and the new conditions. They still have some criticism however: especially concerning the design and the steps of many study programs (Studierbarkeit), and the inequality and selection of access and during the study raising also the question of financing, grants and loans.

Looking at these different positions, from hopeful expectations and promises to critical roasting and damnation, it might be helpful to consult empirical researches. This is exactly my intention, to inform you about some results and findings of our empirical investigations concerning the experiences and judgements of students in Germany, and to discuss with you considerations about the present situation and some proposals for further steps.

### **2 The image of the Bachelor in Germany**

The "image" of a product, like the Bachelor, is of special interest; because imaginations are very important for our orientations and actions in reality, especially as concerns political processes. Therefore we should not underestimate or neglect the image of the Bachelor in its impact for further development.

The Bachelor-image of students in Germany shows an astonishing development: it grew from bad to worse during the last ten years, as we could show in our research - due to the time series of our investigation.

We have found **three special negative traits** in the profile of the Bachelor the way it has been realized in Germany. They are of central relevance for its prestige and acceptance in economy and in public:

- Firstly, it seems to be **not scientific enough**, more a practical formation; an opinion especially being held by university students,
- secondly, it is **not autonomous enough**, much too regulated (like school),
- thirdly, the most critical point: it offers **no good chances** in the labour market.

To give you an impression of the growing negative associations and the decline of positive expectations concerning the Bachelor, I want to point out to you the percentages having changed between 2002 and 2008:

- Scientific quality not sufficient enough: from 33% to 50% full convinced students,
- too many regulations and no individual autonomy: from 27% to 49%,
- and in good chances in the labour market believe only 12% in former times 25%.

Additionally students deny that an important aim has been carried out: that the German universities will be more attractive for foreign countries. The numbers have declined from 45% to 36% of affirmative statements. Even worse is the general result: students often believe that graduates with a Bachelor will only be "second class academics". This means, not many students think it is good for them to leave university after the Bachelor.

Comparing members from different subjects and faculties we observe a differentiation which is instructive. The image of the Bachelor is by far the best in economics at universities as well as at applied institutions. The worst image is held by students in engineering, especially at universities. In cultural sciences (German: Geisteswissenschaften) the image is ambivalent. It is a little bit more negative in social sciences.

The main criticism of students in engineering is: the Bachelor is not scientific enough, too compressed and superficial in the learning program, and doesn't offer good chances in the labour market. The main criticism from students in social sciences is: there is not enough autonomy and not enough time for own ways. Students of economy are mainly content, because their interest doesn't lie mainly on science but on a short, adaptable study program in order to start early with a job and to make a career there. And this attitude concurs best with a Bachelor degree.

We should further observe this development in the Bachelor-image. But we have also to have a close look at the reality in our universities in order to realize what really happens there, which opinions are correct, and which ones prove to be prejudices.

### **3 Realization of the elements of the Bologna-Process**

I don't have the time and it isn't even necessary to speak about all the aims, guidelines, elements, and measurements of the Bologna process in detail. There are enough documents and reports for instance of the European University Association (EUA) or of the European Student Union (ESU). Additionally there are also handbooks of national institutions and many articles of experts – which are all worthwhile to read if one can find the time.

What is the current situation of those students, who are already studying under the conditions of the transformed and new structure? One third of the German students (about 600.000 of nearly two millions) are at the moment studying with the new struc-

ture having the Bachelor as their first exam. Already two third of the beginners are enrolled to get a Bachelor. But we have to mention that three traditional subjects have not been included until now: medicine, law and teaching (these are interesting exceptions, but I will not comment on it at the moment).

Let us have a look first at the three core elements of the Bologna process. In the documents we find an agreement about the relevance:

1. The structure of two phases to get a Bachelor (three or four years) and Master degree (one or two years),
2. the modularisation of the study program, and
3. the regulations for the ECTS-points for comparing the workloads, not for the results. In Germany you have to get 180 points in three years, every year 60 points, and every semester 30 points.

As the Bachelor students have pointed out, these three central elements have been nearly everywhere realized until 2008, at universities as well as at polytechnics. The transformation of the study structure will be mainly done, as intended, until 2010.

The two processes for quality improvement of study and learning, also belonging to the central intentions of the Bologna process (and becoming more and more important), have not been nationwide realized as intended:

- The quality management and the evaluation processes only for 78% of the students,
- the accreditation and controlling of the study programs only for 61%.

Concerning the accreditation and the quality management we have some delay, and therefore some additional work is to be done, but the process is on the way.

The students report shortcomings in the case of internationality and mobility:

- The international cooperation and partnership is realized only for 66% of them,
- and the possibility to study abroad, to go to a foreign country is realized for 63%.

The amount of about one third of the Bachelor students without such offers and experience in international cooperation and mobility is astonishing as well as disappointing, because both aspects belong to the main goals of the Bologna process. The preliminary official statistics show, too, that there is a diminution of students going into other countries during the last years, especially during the Bachelor study.

The main reasons here are: the cycle of the Bachelor is too short and too narrow, the equivalence of achievements is not assured, even the amount of workloads is not clear, and there are too many students who have simply not enough money to go abroad.

Making up a first summary we may say: the shell of the building called European Higher Education Area is quite ready; normally in such a case we have a great party, a topping-out-ceremony. We have to recognize and give credit to the following facts: much work has been done by the professors at our universities in the last years including a lot of discussions, compromises, plans and new adaptations. The main elements for the European Higher Education Area have been introduced with some effort, often with lack of time and without preliminary tests. Even the procedures of accreditation, of evaluation and of quality management have all been new experiences for most of the members at our universities.

But nevertheless some questions remain: is the fundament of the building firm is the construction solid, are all proportions in a good shape? Many important things stay rather unclear up to now: the static of the building, the inner ambience of the rooms, and the outlook (important factors for feeling well).

And last but not least two problems remain unsolved leading to many irritations and uncertainty:

1. Firstly, how does the access from the first floor to the second floor work? This means what ways are offered to get a Master's degree after the Bachelor? In Germany we receive as many answers to this question as there are universities and fields of subjects - every institution has its own regulations which are sometimes rather tricky.
2. Secondly, even more important: What is the value of the whole thing on the one hand in an idealistic sense, concerning the prestige of the Bachelor; on the other hand in a utilitarian view, concerning the chances of the Bachelor degree at the labour market?

The European University Association (EUA) is now convinced that without a wide acceptance in the economic world and in society the value and image of the Bachelor remain mean and instable - with negative consequences for the universities as well as for the students.

#### 4 Quality of transformations

The greater part of the general German public and of the political institutions, the leaders of the universities and also the students are convinced that this Bologna process is important. Aims like internationalization and some more structure and effectiveness are supported, too. But what can be said about the quality of the realization?

To make up our minds we should listen to the judgments of the students: what elements have been done well and what not so well? This is even more important information than the pure realization. I want to mention this because in Germany many defenders of the process think that realization purely in itself is already a success, and they forget or omit the even more important question of the quality.

Taking the evaluation of the Bachelor students into account, we don't find any of the cited elements with a majority of supporters saying "well done at my university or in my subject". Always a majority of Bachelor students is more or less not content or dissatisfied with the realization. Both our own investigations show this result, the one done in winter 2006/07, the other more actually done in summer 2008.

I want to go a little bit more into detail here in order to show results which are more impressive and concrete:

It is the **credit transfer system** (ECTS) which receives the best evaluation: but anyhow only 46% of the students give a positive feedback in this case.

The second best result in the evaluation is given to the **structure of the two phases** which seems to 40% of the students to be successful - but 60% think it could be done better. It seems that especially the unclear rules for the transition from Bachelor to Master are responsible for this dissatisfaction.

Thirdly the **modularization of the study program** is thought to be well organized only by 35% of the Bachelor students. This means that two third of the students are not content with the partition, sequence and configuration of the material and the study program - a remarkable amount of criticism, and one of the main reasons for the difficulties.

Two other components of the European Higher Education Area are the international cooperation and the accreditation of courses. In both cases less than one third of the Bachelor students (32% or 30%) are satisfied with the realization. One reason for the negative impression for most students is surely the lack of transparency concerning the procedures, criteria and consequences of the Bologna process.

A special problem is indicated by the result that only less than one fifth, exactly 18% , are convinced that the possibility to stay abroad for study is realized in a manner which is convenient and practical. There are many reasons contributing to this harsh and disappointing judgment: the narrow follow-up of the study-program, missing information and encouragements, low budgets for loans and the unclear acceptance of workloads between the universities (even in the same country).

It seems that for most students the program of the Bachelor offers more hindrances than help. We might understand therefore that now less students go abroad to study at a foreign university for some time. The problem here is: this part of the biography gets more and more important – and the students know it. It is an unresolved question whether they will do so after the Bachelor or during the Master. We will see that; at the moment we expect or even suspect a great social inequality in this respect.

It is useful to add some more results here about the differences between the subjects. The amount of it is astonishing to me and stimulates further considerations. The realization of the elements belonging to the Bologna process is best in the field of economic sciences, often much better than in other faculties. This is especially the case for the credit point-system, the two-cycle program and the accreditation, but also the international cooperation has been judged much better. On the other hand there are the engineers: they often belong to the group of the less satisfied students. Especially the modularisations of the program, the ECTS system and the possibility to study abroad have been realized badly for the students here.

To give a summary: there is a big variety of successful and non-successful realizations. Again we find the economists on the one side. They have been the first and the best in realizing the Bologna process. The engineers on the other side have been the last, the most reluctant, and the students here are mostly discontent. The students also being rather critical towards the development are those of social sciences; the ambivalent ones are students of cultural subjects.

It may be useful to discuss the possible reasons for these differences. Could we learn from the economists, how do they do it? Looking only at the success and the benchmarking we are forced to say "yes, we could". But if we take a closer look at the universal functions of studying, doing this would be a mistake because the fundamental orientation would be much too utilitarian. A model with a less ambitious study program would dominate. Do we want this? Or should we prefer a wider, more universal model which is better adopted to more scientific-experimental students and also to more reflective-discussing students (to give for the moment a rough idea).

But at this point I anticipate already considerations and discussion about the concepts and consequences. Let us return to empirical findings about quality and effectiveness.

## **5 Effectiveness: study-length and drop-out**

With the introduction of the new programs, even though mostly of structural and formal character, many protagonists were convinced that a better efficiency and quality of studying would be achieved. Let's start with the **effectiveness of studying**. Normally two indicators are used: the **length of study**, which seemed to last for many persons responsible much too long in Germany and the **rate of drop outs** which seemed to be often much too high.

The expectation of shorter studies was important, especially for politicians, not so much for the students. One reason for the Bachelor study being rather strictly limited to three years in Germany is this interest in shorter study times.

And now we have empirically three consequences concerning the duration of the Bachelor programs, which are at least irritating:

- First irritation: at the universities the three-years-cycle is rather normal (over 90% of the established Bachelor courses), but at the former polytechnics, now called applied universities, the regular mandatory study-time for half of the offered study courses is three and a half years. This means the study here takes quite longer than at universities, but the certificates are asserted to be of equal value.
- Second irritation: if we add the time for the Bachelor and the Master, we get five years: Most of the students (between 70 and 80%) try to continue directly after the Bachelor. This is in opposition to the intention of many politicians and universities, who want only 33 to 50 percent of the Bachelors to continue directly. The greater part of them should leave university for a job. The consequence is: studying at a whole will take longer now than during the former regular time schedule (normally four years at university and three years at the polytechnics).
- And third irritation: we observe that although the regulations are rather strict, more and more students have a delay in their Bachelor program; it seems that the study might be extended to nearly four years (in the average) instead of the originally planned three years.

The fundamental decision about the length of study time with the Bachelor must be reconsidered in Germany because with strictly three years it is too narrow for a qualified degree. It is a barrier for studying abroad and often a disadvantage for German students compared to students in other countries.

We have also **more drop-outs**, leaving higher education without a degree especially in the subject engineering and at applied universities. The correct amount and the reasons are unclear: is it due to the labour market, the bad image, and the new entrance regulations or is it due to the study structure? Whatsoever, it is a reality that during the study for a Bachelor more students are leaving higher education than before. This is a big problem with which we are confronted in Germany.

## **6 Study Quality: structure, support and success**

Many promises were aligned with the new structure of studying, the modularization of the programs, the ECTS-points for the workloads and the continuous testing combined with more student orientation in lessons and more support services. The expectations were directed towards more transparency, more helpful structure, more flexibility, and better learning and coping. And now we learn of many students complaining about more stress than before, too much regulation, too many tests, but also about more confusion, and no time for other cultural, social or political interests and engagements.

In this respect the first indicator concerns the **time-budget**. According to findings of our research group as well as of other institutes (HIS), we cannot affirm that students spent a higher amount of time for studying, comprising lessons, studying at home or in groups and sitting or reading in libraries. This amount of time is nearly exactly the same as in other study courses for Diploma or Magister. It is about forty hours per week in the average, but with great differences between the subjects: highest amount in medicine.

Nevertheless the students experience much more regulations and counting of points (seems to them more bureaucratic), more and continues testing (during and after the modules), more pressure because of the demanded workloads. And in addition it is more and more expected of them to have a practical phase outside university, and to go for some time to another university abroad. They feel really more stress and more burdens by exams, because the results are more important for their further chances.



Therefore we can understand their complaints, but sometimes we are not sure if they are also lamentations.

We are confronted with two developments which are essentially crucial, because they are central aims of the Bologna-Process, and both are basic for the study quality and acceptance: One is the **international mobility** of students and the other is the **employability** with the certificate as a Bachelor. In both cases we are missing these aims or have not reached convincing results – at least in the eyes of the majority of the students.

Different investigations, also statistics, show that the study abroad during Bachelor is noticeable diminishing – and is not fully compensated later during the master-study (as we have observed until now). The amount of courses in foreign languages and the shorter practical trainings in foreign countries are not so much lower than in former years or in other study courses. It is especially the longer study period abroad, and this is of greater problematic, because staying longer is more fruitful for the learning outcome and for cultural experiences of the students.

It seems even worse, that there is a huge social selection in going abroad: students coming from academic families are much more often abroad than students coming from families of workers or small servants – the lower social classes. For them going abroad is not a matter of course or self-evident; it is of less cultural appropriateness, and it implies more financial problems. Their participation in international mobility is so low during Bachelor that one may say they are excluded from the European dimension of higher education.

Concerning the **employability** with the Bachelor degree here we observe more ambiguities in the signals by the labour market, which irritate the students very much (because they also learned to look more to the use and chances at the labour market). Many Bachelor-students experienced to be lower classified, also their earnings are lower. In the public sector they get only a middle position and not an upper place – and this serves as an orientation for the private sector.

The great majority of students, especially at universities, are not convinced that it is possible to have a good professional qualification after three years, especially in natural sciences but also in part of social and cultural sciences. Therefore nearly all of these students plan to continue with the master directly.

Concerning the transition into jobs and the evaluation of the usefulness to study for the performance at a job there again are great differences between the subjects. And again we observe better conditions and more contentedness for the graduates of economics than for those of natural sciences, engineering, and also of cultural or social sciences.

One remark is necessary about the positive development in the quality of studying and of teaching during the last years: we have in general a positive process at the German universities worth noting, concerning the relations between students and teachers, a better teaching quality, a better integration and counselling, more support agencies and special courses as well.

All these efforts are acknowledged by most of the students. But this positive development started before the introduction of the Bachelor and was due to other investments. It seems, especially in engineering, that the new conditions and demands are sometimes contrary to this progress in study quality.

## 7 Considerations and Conclusions

The complex transitions of the Bologna-Process with new demands every two years after a conference are managed not easily neither for the professors nor for the students. We have to acknowledge these circumstances, and keeping them in mind, I want to present now some considerations and conclusions which are sometimes rather critical.

The starting point of my first consideration is the differences between the subjects and their respective students, especially between economic sciences on the one side and the engineers on the other. These differences are great and cover many levels: image of the Bachelor, the realization and quality of the transition, also the satisfaction of the students with the new conditions.

That shows to me that the new study structures with its standardization, adaptability, allocation, accreditation and quality management, and its internationalization as well, it fits better for economic sciences and study as for other subjects. It seems to me that it is easier for this discipline to transform the guidelines of the Bachelor process, as well as the modularization, and the study program in three years. Insofar the Bachelor in its present realization and actual construction is essentially in accordance with the interests of economic sciences.

Is this interpretation correct, we may ask? In the Bologna process there are too many economic premises incorporated and decisive for the study program. What does it mean? It means the following: the domination of utilitarian thinking and of pure efficiency, with the focus on adaptability and employability; the students are no more than consumers. If this is true, we'll have to pose the question: is this concept adequate for other disciplines or student types and as the general model for the European Higher Education Area?

I think, some doubts are allowed that the economic sciences could be the model or ideal for the whole European Higher Education Area. Because this form of study, as it is usual in economic science, is mostly for not ambitious, meek student types, who learn what is wanted, who are not much interested in science or research, who stress adaptability, for whom income and career are more important – and who therefore want to stay as shortly as possible at university.

This way of studying is not appropriate to the scientific curious student types who want to go their own way, who want to make experiments and to search for innovations as it is the case in natural sciences and in engineering, or for the other student types who prefer to discuss results and to reflect on the subject matter, to choose and try alternatives as it is often the case in social and cultural sciences. In the consequence a great part of the students in natural and engineer sciences, as well as many of the students in social and cultural sciences, won't receive the study program and the study conditions they want or need.

May be, these considerations are a little bit sophisticated. But if they are conclusive, it'll mean to take the general spirit of the Bologna process under discussion. I am convinced, as most of the students, that a change in this respect is necessary. We must promote the animating principles of scientific higher education. I will come back to what this will imply. Before doing that, I want shortly to point to you four other considerations which are important, though they are rather often overseen or forgotten, nevertheless.

### 1. First consideration: **Structure is not quality**

The realization of a new structure and the measurements in courses of study are not enough to produce good quality, even to reach the intended aims. Again we see: it is

necessary to develop own and special activities in the new structure to develop studying, international mobility and employability. It would be worthwhile to exchange opinions about these necessary activities and motivations for the students going beyond regulations, credits and workloads.

### 2. Second conclusion: **high scientific standards**

Studying with a Bachelor as a final exam should be as autonomous, as research oriented, as international from the first day on as possible. It is a mistake to think, as it is often the case, that we can postpone all this to the Master degree. Then we will bore the best students, and the outcome of the Bachelor study is neither good nor excellent. One consequence would be not to be as strict concerning the three years as regular period of study, as it is now the case in Germany, and to give the student more time for going abroad and doing an internship or a practical training. What are your experiences and decisions concerning time and standards of the Bachelor study?

### 3. Third conclusion: **feasibility of studying**

In many cases the program and the modules for the Bachelor are too strict, overburdened by formal demands and unclear workloads. Even organization and coordination often hinder the continuity of studying. But this should be a discussion between students and their teachers, using the evaluation results. It seems that most of the responsible persons at universities are ready to find better solutions.

## 8 Recommendations

The evaluations by students about the Bologna process and the Bachelor in Germany, about which I have given you some information, support further development of the Bologna process in general. But it is necessary to rethink many guidelines and measurements and to refresh or change basic principles.

### **Return to focus**

For further development it might be helpful that the last declaration of the Association of the German Universities (HRK), published this spring, is quite in accordance with the consequences which could be drawn from the experiences and the judgments of the students. This important institution emphasizes the necessity to return to the central values of the Bologna process with the focus on scientific quality (not only efficiency), on better outcomes and professional qualification (not only employability) and on more intensive integration of students with more autonomy for them. Also they accentuate to develop more responsibility and citizenship of students as an outcome of a study.

### **Special efforts concerning internationality and social equity**

Some special efforts are necessary in the years before us. I want to mention only three: the international mobility, the social dimension and the selection procedures.

A main task is to promote **the international mobility** of the students, even during the Bachelor time. It is especially important to develop everywhere the international cooperation and to give to all students realistic chances of international mobility. Also the support for going abroad often aren't already installed: that means counselling, adjustment of workloads, special contracts, integration in the study, better funding by loans for going abroad.

Next we must give better conditions to the **social dimension** and more support if students have financial problems. In Germany especially many young people of not so well-situated family don't visit higher education, even if they are intelligent or brilliant enough. There must be a broader culture of grants and loans, also for going abroad. Without these supports we will not reach equity as an important part of quality.

Furthermore we need more transparency and fairness in the **selection processes**. That does not only mean access to higher education, but also participation and chances during studying. There are many critical situations and decisions for students: coming into contact with professors, to assist in research projects, to become a tutor, to belong to the gifted, to dare a promotion, to start the career, to become a professor.

### **General and reliably information: Evaluation**

There are a lot of social disadvantages, sometimes even discriminations, of students coming from lower classes or workers families. We have too much barriers for the educational climbers. To reach more fairness we need a **social monitoring system** in all countries and for the whole of Europe.

This leads to a special point, often neglected: we need general and reliable informations as a firm ground for the further development. Two sentences I will give here for publicly advertising own concepts and instruments: In Europe we already have Euro-Student covering the social dimension. For the study situation and quality dimensions, necessary to compare more urgently than ever, we need ISSUE and QUISS – that means an international investigation about study quality, qualification and orientation of students.

### **Refreshing basic, animating principles**

As a final point, I want to make a plea for refreshing basic principles in further constructing the European Higher Education Area, and not to follow the one-sided utilitarian model or the bureaucratic guidelines. It means to think about the "animating principles" (by Clark Kerr) which serves as a basic fundament for the diversity of the institutions and disciplines of higher education, and of the different student-types. These principles, not the structures, are basics for educational processes and exchange.

All in all there are about twelve of such principles. They are even more important in our modern societies with the domination of knowledge and information, of quick changes and economic globalisation. I want to mention some of these principles, but using keywords here only:

- The autonomy and self-reliance of the students (not customers),
- research orientation and curiosity, open for innovations,
- adaptability and transfer of learning and practical activities,
- interactive teaching: engaged and inspiring, in exercises and projects,
- internationality and international exchange, students mobility,
- professionalism, including employability, with autonomic expertise and responsibility,
- social responsibility and public engagement, in one word: citizenship.

It is necessary to realize these principles already during the study for a Bachelor not only for a Master. And it is also necessary not to outsource it in special courses (learning autonomy in three weeks). It must be interwoven in the whole study period and in most of the lessons.

That has not so much to do with a return to "Humboldt", as often presumed, no, the conceptual frame originates from other sources with universal outlines about the functions and benefits of higher education in the modern democratic world, helping the students to develop scientific rationality and expertise, professionalism and practical capabilities, cultural participation, and public responsibility and engagement.

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