

Anne J. MacLachlan, Ph.D. Center for Studies in Higher Education, Evans Hall, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720-4650. maclach@berkeley.edu 510 643 8397
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Unequal Access to Doctoral Training in Germany and the United States: Comparing Defining Parameters

Abstract: In Germany and the United States nearly 80% of those earning Ph.D.s have parents holding bachelors, advanced degrees or certification such as *Staatsexamen* or *Diplom*. Few defined as “minority” in either country are in this group. Both countries are having difficulty in increasing their postsecondary access, although the US has been actively working on it for decades with some success and has developed substantial expertise. There are apparent similarities in both education systems since Bologna. These include the increasing number of those qualified for university entrance, growing bachelor level participation, and the growth of student affairs personnel. However, there are serious impediments to applying US ideas about access and inclusion to German universities: History, law, social and cultural values stand in the way. This paper looks at the data for both countries showing where they are today in terms of broadening the pool of doctoral recipients, and discusses the impact of efforts to increase minority participation. It argues that these efforts are fundamentally different because they address very different target populations and operate with different perceptions of historical and current obligation. These are examined and contrasted. It closes by suggesting that while there may be ideas in the US approach useful for German application, overall solutions in both countries need to be found domestically.