

Hochschulforschung und die historische Perspektive. Eine schwierige Geschichte?

**Nachmittagsgespräch am 14.10.2014, 16-18 Uhr, INCHER-Kassel,
Mönchebergstraße 17, 4. Stock**

Hochschulen - das Untersuchungsfeld der Hochschulforschung - sind geprägt vom jeweiligen nationalen, sozialen und historischen Kontext. Entsprechend heterogene Herangehensweisen und Perspektiven auf den Untersuchungsgegenstand finden sich in der Hochschulforschung. Dennoch scheinen manche Forschungsperspektiven gegenüber anderen zu dominieren. So finden sich kaum fundierte historische Analysen zeitgenössischer Reformdynamiken und Hochschulforschungsstudien beziehen sich selten auf geschichtswissenschaftliche Erkenntnisse. Es scheint, dass Hochschulforschung und Geschichtswissenschaft sich wechselseitig wenig beachten – dabei liegt ein Gewinn für beide auf der Hand.

Über Ursachen und mögliche Auswege wollen wir im Rahmen eines Nachmittagsgesprächs diskutieren. Dr. Anne MacLachlan, Center for Studies of Higher Education (CSHE) wird ein Impulsreferat halten, das sie wie folgt ankündigt:

A comparative discussion of higher education research from the perspective of a US/German historian.

To a historian it is self-evident that higher education institutions reflect the history and culture of the countries in which they are found—as does the research on them. What research, how it is conducted, the available material to conduct it and the theory guiding it varies substantially by country. The problems deemed worthy of investigation vary similarly, in part also reflecting the discipline of the researcher. With the field of history, analytical higher education studies are more or less peripheral (somewhat like business studies) to the broader historical themes of politics, society, war, international relations, societies, etc. It is a peculiar omission since colleges and universities not only reflect national cultures and social objectives, but shape them, transmit them, interact with other powerful agents such as government, politics and industry as they are shaped by them.

There are many considerations affecting this situation which deserve discussion: why are few historians interested in studying higher education? Why are so few higher education researchers reluctant to pursue historical topics? What kinds of conflicts exist about methodology, the particular versus the general, the kinds of training needed. If all the possible questions are pursued a large question seems to arise about higher education studies in general—can it be considered a field in itself, or is it more of a set of interests broken into small areas of research? Why is the development of colleges & universities as well as the history of aspects of them as it relates to the larger history of the period so neglected. Instrumental studies in particular about new student policies, say, seem to overlook the fact

that similar ideas were advanced in the past, similar policies failed or succeeded.
The absence of context is deleterious to understanding the present.