Non-Technical Summary

Background to the Project and Aim of the Study

The restructuring of higher education (HE) systems has become a very widespread trend. In many countries they are being affected by globalization, neo-liberalism and marketization all of which may tend to substitute ‘academic capitalism’ for traditional university values. Governments are reducing their commitment to funding and financing HE, and placing increased onus upon institutions and individuals to make good the shortfall by finding alternative resources. The aim of the research was to investigate in what way attitudes, values and relationships among British and German staff and students are changing in response to neo-liberal influences and financial stringency in higher education.

Neo-liberal influences were conceptualised as competition, choice and institutional differentiation -- all contingent upon the increasing reluctance of the state to fund HE; they were regarded as concomitant with a regime of marketization, massification, evaluation, accreditation, quality assurance, academic entrepreneurship and executive leadership. Traditional values were conceptualised as collegiality; a close link between research and teaching; commitment to liberal and personal education, the pursuit of scholarship and research; reservations about materialist, vocational and bureaucratic values as dominant characteristics of HE. Are these traditional values changing in HE, and if so, in what way?

Objectives

- To investigate the implications of neo-liberalism for personal and professional values among staff and students, including their mutual perceptions of their relationship.

- To consider role of the nation state in accounting for such cross-systemic differences as might be found, and evaluate its importance in relation to the current globalizing HE regimes of the UK and Germany.

- To search for a theory that might account for why the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the United Kingdom (UK) are at different points along a marketization spectrum, and to examine respects in which they may be converging.
Results

**Human relationships within academe** Over two thirds of the British students but fewer than twenty percent of the German students feel that their lecturers make an effort to achieve a good human relationship with them. Yet eighty six percent of the German academics claim that this relationship is ‘very important’ to them. They do care about their students, but their goodwill is not being effectively communicated.

**Student satisfaction** The British students are vastly more satisfied with their courses than their German counterparts, and more aware of quality assurance measures within their institutions. More of them got their first choice of HEI, are proud of it, and believe that its good reputation will contribute to their professional success. Most German staff do not themselves believe or even claim that their students are satisfied, and the latter call for an urgent increase in practical learning activities.

**Alumni donations** Despite high levels of satisfaction, very few British students would consider future financial donations to their HEIs, therefore if money is to be ‘harvested’ to compensate for reduction of state funding in HE, much remains to be done to associate institutional loyalty with a culture of giving on the American model.

**Academic entrepreneurship and executive leadership** Over eighty percent of academics in both countries – most especially in the FRG – feel that their institutions are seriously under-resourced. Yet they are not strongly in favour of increased executive power and entrepreneurial action for their leaders (though the Germans would go part of the way in that direction). The British especially are opposed to greater privatisation of the system, and want their managers to ‘stand up to the government’ more. Attitudes in keeping with a market force philosophy appear to be superficially embedded in the academics’ value system.

**Staff satisfaction** The British staff feel much more stressed, underpaid, hard-worked, and over-burdened by quality assurance and administration than their German counterparts; they also suffer more from a status-deficit. In their more marketised system, there is an inverse relationship between staff and student satisfaction: the satisfaction of the British students seems to be achieved at the expense of the British staff.

**Students’ values** The British students were found to be more instrumental and materialistic in relation to their future career and earning prospects. They stressed the intellectual dimension of higher education, whereas the Germans tended to stress personal development, and were keener on socially useful work.

**Research as a casualty of marketization** Despite fears that market-oriented knowledge concepts lead to theory-aversion, the UK students display more intellectual enthusiasm and express more interest in future graduate study and research. However, examination of syllabuses and curricula indicates that the underlying concept of knowledge may be different in each country with the UK oriented towards ‘Mode 2’ (applied/experiential) and the FRG towards ‘Mode 1’ (theoretical). This epistemological orientation may soon change in Germany as a result of the European Union’s pressure to move towards a BA/MA structure. Marginally more of the UK than of the FRG staff regard research as more important then teaching and the British want more time for research; but very few in either country resent the amount of teaching they have to do.
In a country-specific question, many UK respondents state that their students are not sufficiently challenged intellectually.

**Globalization and the nation state** Some observers argue that globalization may push countries to converge beyond national sovereignty, with consequent downgrading of the nation state; others argue that globalization may actually be held in check by the influence of the nation state. The conclusion of the present study is that the nation state is still very important and far from ‘post-sovereign’.

**Regulation theory** The research was predicated on the assumption that UK has been more exposed to neo-liberal trends than the FRG. An objective was to search for a theory that might account for why the FRG and the UK are at different points along a marketization spectrum, and to examine respects in which they may be converging. There were substantial differences – and also some convergences – in national responses, and an explanation for them is postulated in terms of Regulation Theory, detailed in Free Text attached.

**UK staff respondents see a need to**
- wind back privatisation and executive power
- make teacher education and training more theory-rich
- stand up to government and reduce state-sponsored interference in HE
- improve payment and status of academics
- provide more time for research
- reduce stress and overwork within the HE system

**German staff respondents see a need to**
- move a little more in the direction of privatisation and entrepreneurial values in HE
- give middle and, to a lesser extent, senior managers more power
- staff the institutions more generously
- ensure that students become more satisfied with the quality of teaching, e.g. by increasing practical components

Both see a need to improve resources within HE, but without necessarily endorsing entrepreneurial values and increased privatisation in a major way.

**UK students** want less bureaucracy and better organisation in their course delivery. **German students** want more practice.

**Significant academic achievements**
Publications in print or forthcoming
- *Comparative Education Review*
- *Comparative Education*
- *Higher Education Management and Policy*
- *Tertiary Education and Management*
- *Datenreport Erziehungswissenschaft*
- *Beiträge zur Hochschulforschung*
**Dissemination activities**

The results were presented at conferences as follows:

- British Association for International and Comparative Education (2004)
- European Association for Institutional Research (2004)

They were disseminated in Germany by means of presentations at:

- The Max-Planck Institut for Educational Research, Berlin
- The University of Leipzig
- The Ludwig-Maximilian University of Munich
- The Bavarian State Institute for Higher Education Research and Planning

**Publications in print**
