

Comparing German and British Governance with the Governance-Equalizer: An empirical trial (0232)

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Recent decades have seen important shifts in the governance of universities, both in the UK and Germany (as elsewhere). However, while many observers see a growing isomorphism (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) with regard to these two countries (Halffmann & Leydesdorff, 2010; CHEPS, 2006; Lazzarotti & Tavoletti, 2006), others claim that “steering patterns vary from one European nation state to another, reflecting attachment to alternative narratives, conditions of path dependency and localised reform trajectories” (Brennan, Enders, Musselin, Teichler, & Välimaa, 2008: 14 f.). The empirical basis therefore seems to be still insufficient.

One important attempt to approach this issue is the so-called Governance-Equalizer by de Boer, Enders and Schimank (2007). They distinguish five dimensions of governance: state regulation, stakeholder guidance, academic self-governance, managerial self-governance and competition for resources. New Public Management (NPM) is characterised by low state regulation and low academic self-governance, while the other three should score high on the agenda. On the basis of a qualitative assessment of the recent changes and the current situation they conclude: “The governance of universities in all four countries has undergone substantial change (...) and changes are going in the direction of NPM. However, at present, there is a complex and somewhat disorderly jumble of the five governance dimensions in all four [England, Netherlands, Austria and Germany] countries” (de Boer, Enders & Schimank, 2007: 150).

While the Governance-Equalizer has proved to be a very useful tool, its qualitative assessment somewhat limits its comparability across countries and time. However, a sound quantitative operationalisation is still missing. Hauptmann (2002), for example, discussed some important characteristics that indicators in this field would have to possess, but he remains on the theoretical level. The proposed paper therefore will test the availability and usefulness of different data for the purpose of a quantitative assessment of the five governance dimensions.

The paper will firstly explain the Governance-Equalizer and its dimensions. In a second step, available data sources and indicators will be presented and assigned to these different dimensions. Thirdly, the appropriateness of this operationalisation will be tested. Fourthly, results for Germany, the UK and other countries will be discussed with regard to the literature and more qualitative approaches and findings. Finally, some conclusions and an outlook will be provided.

The paper has a twofold objective: Firstly, it wishes to contribute to a methodological improvement of international comparisons with regard to governance. Secondly, it wants to produce useful empirical findings for the comparative discussion of governance issues in Germany and the UK. Thus, it fits to the overall symposium by adding a complementary, more quantitative approach to the general topic. (438 words)

Literature:

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