

Editorial

After a year and a half (see *CEPS Journal*, 2/2012), the present issue of our journal once again focuses on higher education studies. This time, we present seven authors who either originate from Central Europe or work in Central European universities (Hungary, Romania, Slovenia), or both. Higher education studies have met with great interest over the last decades and have gained quite a reputation worldwide, but most of the research is still limited to North America and Western Europe, and to perspectives offered by “global research centres”.

Since its inception, the *CEPS Journal* has aimed, inter alia, to promote education researchers from Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, and thus to make topics and issues seen from the perspective of these spaces more transparent. This does not, of course, mean that such an approach implies any closure from the global world. The world of research is universal; it is a world without borders. For this very reason, research should not end within the scope of the “centres” and their generalised answers intended to fit all, but should instead open up rare windows to the many details and differences that emerge from them. It is only by focusing on these details and differences that a generalised picture is established which does not need to fit all.

Higher education studies are an interdisciplinary research field that invokes different research approaches: a rainbow ranging from empirical to theoretical horizons. This was taken into account in drawing up the present issue, which presents research results powered by a variety of contemporary research practices and addressing a variety of topics. Among the keywords of the articles collected in this issue, one can find many that characterise today’s discussion in a global context: the entrepreneurial university, the academic profession, internationalisation and international cooperation, purposes and values in higher education, the idea of the university, etc. Among them there are also more specific topics, such as gender role attitudes among higher education students or higher education observed within the centre-periphery relationship.

The content of this issue is closely linked to the ongoing international debate on higher education in one more horizon: higher education and university reforms. The frequently written assertion that contemporary higher education is experiencing very deep and profound changes sometimes already sounds like a worn-out phrase to our ears, but this statement is completely true. Compared to the past (not only centuries but also decades), today’s higher education faces challenges that require responses not only at the institutional and national level, but also at the regional, international and global level. These responses are in danger of becoming worn phrase and pure rhetoric if they are not founded on research and analysis: not only on analysis of global trends, but also on analysis

of, for example, regional or institutional diversities, taking into account the specific perspectives of different academic traditions and cultures. The desire of the editor of this issue is to strengthen this dimension and to offer several relevant analyses of this kind.

The first article is authored by József Berács from the Corvinus University of Budapest (Hungary). He addresses the concept of entrepreneurial universities within the context of contemporary university reforms. Berács reflects on and recapitulates the classics of entrepreneurship literature (J. Schumpeter, P. Drucker, R. Coase) and extends the discussion to the rise of the entrepreneurial university (B. Clark). At this point, he turns his attention to “prestigious universities with an entrepreneurial spirit” and “traditional top universities” that “follow the rules of the entrepreneurial ethos”. Here he discusses the cases of the Nottingham and Stanford universities, but his original contribution is an analysis of the two oldest Hungarian universities, the Hungarian Royal University of Debrecen and the Corvinus University of Budapest. The latter represents a particularly interesting case: the author presents a short history of academic studies of economics and commerce in Hungary, from the turbulence of the 20th century until recent times. On the basis of classical literature, Berács formulates some key indicators of entrepreneurial universities and “tests” their presence in three periods of Corvinus University: the socialist reform period (1968–1973), the transitional reform period (1988–1993), and the post-transitional reform period (2008–2013). He comes to some surprising conclusions; for example, that “the existence of capitalist society in the last 25 years in Hungary does not mean that one of its top universities is more entrepreneurial than it was before”.

In their joint article, Alenka Flander (Center of the Republic of Slovenia for Mobility and European Educational and Training Programmes, Ljubljana, Slovenia) and Manja Klemenčič (Harvard University, Boston, USA) report on their findings from a survey on the conditions of academic work. This has recently been reported by several authors (Alenka and Manja refer directly to the well-known EUROAC project), but this particular case is the first such survey to focus directly on Slovenian universities. Within this context, the authors refer, on the one hand, to the National Higher Education Programme of the Republic of Slovenia, which was adopted in 2011 and sets internationalisation as one of the main strategic priorities, while, on the other hand, asking how academic staff either contribute to or inhibit the implementation of the internationalisation strategy. In a slightly modified questionnaire from the EUROAC project (the section on international cooperation and internationalisation was added), the authors captured a sufficient share of the Slovenian academic population to enable them to provide some interesting answers to this question. In conclusion, they stress the importance of the culture and climate of the academic community: the

particular contextual conditions can enable or obstruct the implementation of the reform agenda. The survey found some discrepancies between the values and behaviours of academics and the goals stated in the policy document. We suggest that the reader satisfies her or his curiosity about what these discrepancies are by reading the article.

The subject of research in the third article is the next key group in higher education: students. In this case, attention is not directed towards one or another aspect of the position of students *within* higher education, but rather to a specific aspect of the student population in the wider social context. Hajnalka Fényes from the University of Debrecen (Hungary) analyses gender role attitudes among higher education students in a specific and (too) little-known European region: “a borderland Central-Eastern European region” as she says. This is again a report on an original research project: the author uses the database from her project “The Impact of Tertiary Education on Regional Development” (N=602, 2010). Her intention is to determine what kind of attitudes towards gender roles the students identify themselves with, what affects these attitudes (gender, faculty type, social background of students, locality type, religiosity), and finally what kind of educational policy implications could be relevant concerning her findings. The results show that there are a large number of students who belong to the more traditional attitude cluster in this region, but that women more frequently identify themselves with modern gender roles than men do. On the other hand, with “male-dominated” majors, both women and men identify themselves with more traditional attitudes, whereas with “female-dominated” majors all students have more modern attitudes. Furthermore, students who live in villages are not more traditional than others, because they live in cities during their studies. For a more detailed insight into the results, readers are invited to browse through the journal and find her article.

Sintayehu Kassaye Alemu from the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia (prior to September 2013, from Mekelle University, Ethiopia) contributes the fourth article in which he appraises the internationalisation of higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa. Although the subject of research in this case is not higher education in Central Europe, we can still find some parallels. First, higher education in Sub-Saharan Africa is not very often a topic of scientific articles. Second, the author addresses the issue from the perspective of the dichotomy centre-periphery, which is a perspective that could also be applied in the analysis of a European region. The author notes that today more powerful universities play a central role and are “suppliers” of knowledge, whereas weaker institutions and systems with fewer resources and lower academic standards occupy a peripheral position and are “consumers”. For developing regions like Africa, he argues, higher education is an important instrument for socioeconomic development, and one

of the strategies to improve and qualify higher education is internationalisation. However, in spite of various attempts to enhance the benefits of internationalisation, African higher education has continued to be peripheral, with relationships remaining asymmetrical, unethical and unequal. The author asks: “Are the challenges and the adverse consequences avoidable?” This is a question that could also be raised in some other cases.

The last article is a more pronounced example of a theoretical article; in it, the authors return to the today almost forgotten category of the idea of the university. Even more, Sonia Pavlenko and Cristina Bojan from the Babeş-Bolyai University (Cluj-Napoca, Romania) want to reclaim the idea of the university “as a possible solution to today’s crisis”. Indeed, the authors associate higher education with “one type or another of crisis” and claim that all major reforms in the history of higher education “have arisen as a result of a crisis”. Distinguished scholars of the past, such as von Humboldt, addressed the crisis of the university by reconsidering “the very foundation on which it was built”. Today, however, the issue debated the most is the global economic crisis, while “the idea of the university” is no longer present when addressing contemporary issues in higher education. In their eyes, the focus today is on detailed aspects of higher education institutions – which are managed, evaluated, quality assured, ranked, assessed, and so forth – while the global perspective on the university has been lost/ignored. The authors argue that there is an imperative need to reclaim and reconsider the idea of the university, as this could provide a possible solution to today’s crisis in higher education: “Today’s crisis could be used as an opportunity to reassess and found again a relevant idea for today’s university.”

The “*varia*” section of the present issue presents an article from the field of teaching and learning mathematics, a field that was highlighted in one of our past issues (see No. 4/2013). András Ambrus from Eötvös Lóránd University Budapest reports on his experience with a selected mathematical problem in mathematics lessons and group study sessions, demonstrating how he modified the problem based on his experience with the students, and reflecting on his studies of brain-based mathematics teaching and learning.

Finally, in the concluding part of this issue, we return again to issues that are closely related to higher education studies. Živa Kos Kecojević (University of Ljubljana, Slovenia) reviews Mats Alvesson’s book *The Triumph of Emptiness: Consumption, Higher Education, and Work Organization* (Oxford University Press, 2013). We believe that with this book review we effectively conclude this issue of our journal.