

14th International Workshop on Higher Education Reform (HER2017)

Hiroshima University, 26 to 28 September, 2017

Call for Proposals

ENHANCING PERFORMANCE AND PRODUCTIVITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Universities are under pressure from different sides: Governments demand evidence for productivity and performance in exchange for the public funds universities receive. Employers demand that teaching be workplace relevant and for research to be useful and capable of commercial exploitation. Students want their degrees to enhance their employment prospects. At the same time, there are expectations for universities to expand their missions, for example by opening up to more underrepresented groups and engaging in service to their local communities.

While the higher education (HE) sector has been expanding in all developed countries, at the same time governments have imposed on universities an obligation “to do more with less.” They require universities to demonstrate accountability and transparency by providing detailed data about what they do and what “impact” their research has had, how many students have graduated and to what extent they are finding employment in their field of study or related fields. Governments want especially universities to demonstrate that they are competitive with other universities both in their own country and internationally. As universities are encouraged by governments to seek funding from other than public sources, private sponsors likewise ask for proof that resources are being used efficiently and for the purpose for which they have been provided. In addition, in some countries, institutional governance reforms and various types of collaboration among universities (including mergers) are actively sought for enhanced efficiency and productivity.

It is primarily through public policies that this evolution in the context of HE has been occurring. The focus of this workshop is, as in former workshops, on these public policies and the underlying reasons for their evolution, as well as with their implementation and evaluation.

International workshops on Higher Education Reform (HER) have taken place annually since 2003, when the first in this series was held in Vancouver, Canada, organised by the Centre for Policy Studies in Higher Education and Training. In following years workshops took place in Tokyo (Japan), Shanghai and Tianjin (China), St. Johns, Newfoundland and again Vancouver (Canada), Vienna (Austria), Berlin (Germany), Ljubljana (Slovenia) and, most recently in 2016, Dublin (Ireland).

This year’s HER workshop will be organised by the Research Institute for Higher Education (RIHE) of Hiroshima University. As in previous workshops, it will bring together HE researchers and policy analysts from different countries and HE systems who will present and discuss their research and analyses with respect to this year’s workshop theme.

Key issues and topics:

We invite contributions dealing with the above themes. Although the following list does not cover the entire breadth of themes, it provides examples of topics and issues to be addressed:

- Over the last two decades, how and why have public policies redefined or changed the missions of universities and other HE institutions? Does an increased differentiation within HE systems mean a redefinition of missions as well as types of governance?
- What purpose do data on performance serve? How do we understand and assess performance and productivity in relation to the different missions and different types of HE institutions? In the face of new and multiple missions, how can traditional values be maintained and possibly reinvigorated?
- Is an emphasis of performance and productivity just a mechanism of control by governments and non-public sponsors or is it important to the institutions themselves, as some of them are competing for reputation, funding and good faculty and students?
- What are the implications for pedagogy in higher education of these types of indicators?
- The growing pressure on universities and other HE institutions to demonstrate good performance and high productivity in spite of decreasing public funding (“doing more with less”) – is it compatible with the core missions of universities?
- Is accountability compatible with “academic freedom” – i.e., given that the freedom and responsibility of professors to determine what they research and what and how they teach are traditionally at the core of universities’ missions?
- Can the universities’ core missions (creation, analysis and transmission of knowledge) be accomplished without academic freedom, and is the contention by many analysts – that accountability vs. academic freedom creates one of the most basic conflicts of universities with society – supported by real evidence?
- Are there other forms of “accountability” besides performance indicators and productivity measurement? How can “performance” and “productivity” in teaching, learning and research be properly defined?
- Do formal governance reforms (or structural changes in the governance) really matter, since most important decisions made in the university occur outside the formal decision-making system?
- By gaining mass, how do universities find economies of scale and rationalise the use of resources in spite of the cost necessary for the merger process? How do collaborating institutions successfully change their culture so that they may profit from their collaboration and enhance their productivity?

Call for proposals

This 14th workshop (HER2017) will provide an opportunity for comparative analysis and discussion of these and related issues with an emphasis on policies and reforms of postsecondary (higher) education. The workshop format has been chosen to encourage and facilitate a frank exchange in a collegial environment of views based on empirical research and (comparative) policy analysis.

As with previous workshops, a follow-up publication is planned based on a selection of papers and panel presentations.

Proposals for presentations (single or dual authorship) and panels (suggested are between three and five panellists) should address one of the workshop themes and issues. Proposals of up to 400 words for papers or up to 800 words for panels should be sent via email to:

iwher2017@hiroshima-u.ac.jp

The deadline for submission of abstracts is 30 April 2017. Submissions will be peer reviewed and the result communicated to proposers within three weeks.

Logistics and organisation of the Workshop

Local Organisational Team:

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International Advisory Board to the HER Workshop series:

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Maria Slowey, Dublin City University, Ireland

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Shinichi Yamamoto, Oberlin University, Japan

Pavel Zgaga, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

Registration:

Online registration will soon be available on the HER 2017 website (below). If you require further information in the meantime, please feel free to email us at the above-mentioned e-mail address.

<http://iwher2017.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/>

The workshop will take place on the Higashi-Hiroshima Campus of Hiroshima University, at the Faculty Club as well as the RIHE Building, located close to each other. Information about access to the campus and campus maps will be available on the HER 2017 website.

Please feel free to circulate and share this call for proposals to any of your contacts.