

Call for Participation

Workshop: Challenges in Comparative Higher Education Research - Comparing Higher Education Systems, Organizations and Individual Academic Behaviour

25-27 January, Helsinki, Finland

Overview

International comparative research is the key to all four EuroHESC CRPs, which are aiming to broaden and deepen our knowledge of the fabric and functioning of higher education at the beginning of the 21st century. The CRPs combine quantitative and qualitative research approaches to international and interdisciplinary comparative research into the relationships between higher education and society. This combined approach is highly promising but also theoretically and conceptually demanding (especially compared to nationally focused research). Many of the challenges of international comparative research are enduring problems. In terms of theory, debates continue to rage on the function of comparison, the tension between universalities and cultural specificity and the search for functional equivalences. In terms of conceptions and methods, national systems, organisations and individual academics constitute different levels of comparison that suggest and exhibit diverse conceptual choices and pose their respective challenges. One of the objectives of the EuroHESC programme is therefore the theoretical and methodological improvement of comparative research in the field.

Thus, this workshop focuses on both the state of the art in (international) comparative studies in higher education research and on emerging topics and challenges that arise within the context of EuroHESC CRPs. Key to the workshop is to differentiate and to focus on three different levels of analysis and comparison that are all covered by the EuroHESC CRPs: comparisons of different national higher education systems (system level), comparisons of different higher education institutions/organizations (institutional/organizational level) and comparisons of the behaviour, attitudes or working conditions etc. of individual academics, students or graduates (individual level).

The aim of the workshop is to discuss and reflect on theoretical and conceptual potential, and on the pitfalls and opportunities (e.g. hypotheses about causalities, combination of quantitative and qualitative research or data comparability etc.) as well as problems of a

practical nature (e.g. project organisation, relationships between national teams, language restrictions etc.) within comparative studies in higher education research.

Thematic examples will be explored through examples of large-scale quantitative and qualitative comparative studies as well as on the basis of cases and problems on the different levels of comparison from all four EuroHESC CRP.

Key questions on the workshop agenda are:

- What are the potentials, drawbacks and limits of comparative research in higher education?
- What exactly is being compared in the various collaborative research projects in the EuroHESC programme?
- Do the experiences of the potentials and drawbacks call for a review of the state of comparative research in higher education?
- What can be expected from higher education research in this area and what can be utilized within the EuroHESC CRPs?

The workshop will combine introductory talks with a highly interactive workshop approach, emphasizing the linkages between the theoretical, methodological and empirical issues under discussion and specific examples from the EuroHESC CRPs. This approach takes advantage of working in small working groups (8-10 senior and junior researchers from all CRPs) and the fact that participants arrive with a great deal to share about breakthroughs and challenges in their respective CRPs. Since the workshop is expected to draw participants from all EuroHESC CRPs, a focused effort will be made in terms of inclusive plenary sessions and small group work in which the workshop participants work on issues across their respective CRPs. The workshop organisers, together with the presenters, will prepare pre-course reading packages for the working groups (2-3 texts per level) and extended bibliographies. A detailed concept for the working groups will be developed on the basis of 2-3 page input papers on the main challenges, problems and questions regarding comparative research on that level provided by the presenters and statements of interest by the participants.

Presenters

Dr. Emanuela Reale, Institute for Economic Research on Firms and Growth (CERIS-CNR),
Associated Partner TRUE CRP

Professor Dr. Ivar Bleiklie, Department of Administration and Organization Theory,
University of Bergen (TRUE PL)

Professor Dr. Jussi Välimaa, FIER, University of Jyväskylä, FINLAND (CINHEKS PL)

Professor Dr. Ulrich Teichler, INCHER Kassel (EUROAC PL)

Professor John Brennan, Centre for Higher Education Research and Information (CHERI),
Open University UK, (CINHEKS PI IP 4)

Additionally, potential external speakers or commentators who offer a significant theoretical or methodological contribution to the themes of the seminar.

Course Organization and Participation

Participants will arrive in Helsinki on Wednesday 25 January for a welcome reception in the evening. The two-day workshop will begin on Thursday morning, 26 January. For a detailed schedule, please see page 5.

Who Should Apply

We encourage applications from researchers from EuroHESC projects who feel that examining the challenges of comparative higher education research is relevant to their work. Priority will be given to early stage researchers. In order to assist the organizers to plan the workshop and to select participants, a short statement of interest will be requested (see below).

How to apply

Please submit your expression of interest to Amy Ewen (amy.ewen@incher.uni-kassel.de) by 4 November, along with a personal statement addressing the following questions:

- Which perspective/s of comparative higher education research (system level, organizational level, individual level) does the research you are conducting within the EuroHESC framework include and how? Please describe in maximum five sentences (including an indication in which EuroHESC CRP you participate).
- We would like to ask all participants to present examples of comparative research from their CRP in five minutes. Please describe in 3-5 sentences the example you would like to present and in which perspective.
- What are the key challenges you see regarding the comparison in the respective perspectives? Please list in bullet points.
- What are currently the most striking problems or questions regarding comparative Higher Education Research you would like to discuss? Please list in bullet points.

In your application, please indicate the minimum level of financial support you would require to participate in the workshop (see Funding Conditions below) and whether you will also be attending a CRP meeting prior to the workshop. Fully subsidized participation in the course is limited. In the case of oversubscription, participation will be limited to one researcher per IP.

The organizers of the workshop will decide on acceptance and inform participants by mid-November.

Funding Conditions

The workshop offers two levels of support for participants:

- For participants with no budget for the workshop: an ESF subsidy of €350 for travel, two nights' accommodation (double occupancy for junior researchers, single for senior researchers) and meals for the duration of the workshop.
- For participants traveling to CRP meetings on their own budget: two nights' accommodation (double occupancy for junior researchers, single for senior researchers) and meals for the duration of the workshop.

Course organizers

Dr. Anna Kosmützky, INCHER-Kassel

Dr. Terhi Nokkala, FIER

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Support from the European Science Foundation is gratefully acknowledged.

Workshop Schedule

Date/Day	Schedule	Time	Agenda
25 January 2012	Arrival		<i>(Evening) Welcome Reception</i>
26 January 2012	Workshop Day 1	9.00-12.30	Opening plenary: Workshops Overview & Introduction (Kosmützky/Nokkala) Focus on Conceptual and Operative Problems in Comparative Studies in Higher Education (Teichler) Challenges in the theoretical development of comparative higher education (Välimaa) Incl. coffee break
		12.30-13.30	Lunch
		13.30-16.00	Comparing Higher Education Systems – System Comparison (Introduction/Lead: Brennan/Välimaa) Including three parallel working groups
		16.00-16.30	Coffee
		16.30-19.00	Comparing Higher Education Organizations – Organizational Comparison (Introduction/Lead: Bleiklie/Reale) Including three parallel working groups
		19.30	<i>(Evening) Participants' Dinner</i>
27 January 2012	Workshop Day 2	9.00-9.30	Recap Workshop Day 1 (Nokkala/Kosmützky)
		9.30-11.30	Comparing Individual Academics' Behaviour in Different Higher Education Systems/Organizations (Introduction/Lead: Brennan/Teichler) Including three parallel working groups
		11.30-12.00	Summary of the workshops
		12.00-13.00	Lunch
		13.00-15.30	What the EuroHESC programme did not do and did not compare (Lead: all presenters, plus potential external speakers) Incl. short coffee break
		15.30	Wrap-up of the workshop and departure