



Structural Reform Policies in European Higher Education: Changing the Landscape

Don F. Westerheijden

Center for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS)
University of Twente, the Netherlands

January 9, 2018 (Tuesday)

12:30 – 14:00

Room 206, Runme Shaw Building, HKU

Chair: Dr Hugo Horta

Abstract:

Higher education systems have changed dramatically in recent decades. In this presentation I discuss outcomes of the project *Structural Higher Education Reform—Design and Evaluation*, which analysed the policy processes and factors relevant for success or failure of (government-initiated) structural reforms in higher education across European countries. We considered each *policy stage* as a *policy arena* with its own logics and participants. The interactions among the actors determine the policy problem, the courses of action taken and their consequences. To assess success or failure of a structural reform, we focused on goal achievement at two levels: the *operational* and *strategic* goals, respectively. Our project involved *case studies* of reform policies in eleven European countries aimed at increasing *vertical* or *horizontal differentiation*, or increasing *inter-institutional cooperation* (up to merger).



With regard to the study's *results*, the 'mixed performances' and the critical success factors that emerged may not come as surprises: 'create a win-win situation', 'provide sufficient resources', 'involve salient stakeholders', 'consider the time frame' and 'evaluate appropriately'. Yet it helps to (re-)establish that empirically.

About the speaker:

Don Westerheijden is senior research associate at the Center for Higher Education Policy Studies (CHEPS) of the University of Twente, the Netherlands, where he co-ordinates research on quality management. Don mostly studies quality assurance and accreditation in higher education in the Netherlands and Europe, its impacts, as well as university rankings. Policy evaluation is another area of research interest. Since 1993 he co-developed the CRE/EUA Institutional Evaluation Programme. He led the independent assessment of the Bologna Process in 2009/2010. He was a member of the team that developed U-Multirank, the online, multidimensional worldwide university ranking. He is a member of the editorial board of the journals *Quality in Higher Education* and *Qualität in der Wissenschaft*, besides serving on international boards of quality assurance agencies in Portugal and Hong Kong. His publications include e.g. de Boer, H., File, J., Huisman, J., Seeber, M., Vukasović, M., and Westerheijden, D. F. (2017). *Policy Analysis of Structural Reforms in Higher Education: Processes and Outcomes*; and Westerheijden, D. F., Stensaker, B., Rosa, M. J., and Corbett, A. (2014). "Next Generations, Catwalks, Random Walks and Arms Races: Conceptualising the development of quality assurance schemes." *European Journal of Education*, 49(3), 421-434.