

Shaping the World of Change

Higher Education as a
Key Enabler

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CHAPTER 3

Higher Education as Key Enabler of Enlightenment and Humanism

Adjusting Strategies and Organizational Forms

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Abstract

The values and principles of Enlightenment and Humanism are currently under pressure from many sides. The challenges posed by the contempt, infiltration, and rejection of (liberal) democracy, including the principles of the separation of powers and the rule of law as well as the values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, are increasing worldwide. Closely linked to this are threats from anti-science and anti-enlightenment populism. In this volatile societal threat situation, higher education institutions have a special educational societal responsibility as key enablers and advocates of Enlightenment and Humanism. This is due to the fact that higher education produces a significant proportion of a country's best-educated citizens and leaders and that a growing proportion of an age group aspires to and completes higher education.

Against this background, it is suggested that higher education institutions should (re)adjust some of their core values, missions, and visions in line with the principles and values of Enlightenment and Humanism. These include, for example, the promotion of education for democracy, academic autonomy and a holistic-rational approach, personality development and re-purposing towards the goals of societies' ultimate and sustainable wellbeing. In terms of a whole-system approach, such (re)adjustment also regards appropriate organizational forms of higher education institutions.

Keywords

higher education – mission – humanism – enlightenment – value – vision

1 Introduction: Challenges and Weaknesses of Higher Education

In societies that are based on organizational forms of democracy and the values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), it is (still)

widely accepted that the core societal goal of education is the development of informed, competent, and responsible citizens, who are central to liberal democracies. This includes the preparation of everybody to develop the abilities to lead a personally satisfying life and strive for a socially useful career. In such situation, higher education institutions (HEIs) have a special societal educational responsibility and must play a key role in any society seeking to secure and improve the conditions for a good life for all. This is because HEIs produce a significant proportion of a country's best educated citizens and leaders, and increasing proportions of an age group are pursuing and completing higher education (HE).

Accordingly, at least in liberal democracies, the main goals of HE have been defined as the intrinsic purposes of scientific or artistic ability, the ability for social engagement and personality development, and the instrumental purpose of the ability to take up skilled employment.¹ Since these HE goals support, for example, the promotion of self-determination and individual freedom, societal participation and equity, HE of this type is a classic enabler and proponent of principles and values of Enlightenment and Humanism.

This societal role of HE systems and HEIs is all the more important and urgent as it has been questioned and threatened, particularly in the last two decades, by various anti-Enlightenment and anti-humanist social forces and tendencies, even in societies that were considered enlightened and democratic. For example, threats to Enlightenment and Humanism emerge and are on the rise worldwide through the contempt, subversion, and rejection of (liberal) democracy including the division of powers, state of right, UDHR and political liberalism (e.g. Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2022; Gerschewski, 2021). Due to this global spread, the societal role of HE and HEIs also has a geopolitical dimension, since HEIs around the world are important sites for societal education and public discursive debates including the confrontation between advocates of liberal democracy and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and their opponents.

Closely related is another source of threats, namely anti-scientific and anti-Enlightenment populism (Rovira Kaltwasser et al., 2017) which is itself anti-democratic. Typically, populism of this kind channels any protest opinions of self-declared underprivileged who, according to their own ideology, must fight against the "privileged there above" without a reliable analysis of the situation taking place. Such populism can be identified along its reliance on and distribution of seemingly simple truths, so-called post-truths that are in fact often only fake or lies or, much more threatening, half-truths (Gess, 2021), all frequently embedded in conspiracy narratives (e.g. Butter & Knight, 2020). On the political stage, such anti-Enlightenment and anti-Humanism forces and tendencies come along with, for example, imperialist nationalism, political

religion, militarism, oligarchy, kleptocracy, political one-party systems (e.g. pseudo-democratic “one-party democracies”) and tribalist mafia practices. (It is sarcastic that most of these typically insist on being democratic as a quick look at the political systems and practice, for example, of certain BRICS countries may easily reveal.)

Added to these pressing problems is that some scholars have claimed that Western HEIS (and HE systems) within the Enlightenment tradition show a basic weakness: a lack of strategies in general and a lack of right strategies in particular. According to these objections, HEIS are not always adequately strategic and not always oriented at the right goals such as wisdom,² social progress or sustainable wellbeing of all (e.g. Hurth & Stuart, 2022; Maxwell, 2021). Along this argument, HEIS are said to be too narrowly focused on subject-specific competitive development which primarily serves the mere accumulation of knowledge and the goal of economic growth while more integrative and holistic perspectives are largely missing. Furthermore, it has been claimed that (too) many HE systems and HEIS are too positivistic and too much in support of competitive pressure, neo-liberal policies, and the GDP-growth approach to economics (e.g. Kumar, 2019).

Regardless of whether these latter objections are completely justifiable or not, taken together with the threats outlined above it seems fair to suggest that HE and HEIS rethink some of their core values, missions, and visions in accordance with the values and goals of Enlightenment and Humanism – and realign if necessary. Some appropriate suggestions for strategic readjustments of HE and HEIS will be given in Sections 4 and 5. Before that Section 2 describes the research questions and approach while Section 3 gives an update of New Enlightenment and Modern Humanism with reference to core values of the UDHR (UNGA, 2008) which represents the unifying and binding value basis of the considerations presented here.

2 Research Questions and Approach

In view of the serious challenges and threats to Enlightenment and Humanism mentioned in the Introduction, the following questions arise:

- How can HE systems and HEIS, as the main responsible parties for broad tertiary education, help to counteract the fundamental challenges and threats to Enlightenment and Humanism?
- How can HEIS heal their perceived or actual strategic weakness and deficient orientation towards the goals of serving the pursuit of wisdom, social progress, and sustainable wellbeing of all?

Generally, the answers to these questions have a strategic and an operational dimension: It must be clarified which strategies should be used and which structures and procedures should be implemented to realize the strategies. In this research the focus is on the strategic dimension. Since mission statements of HEIs, among other functions, can be one source of relevant representations of HEIs' strategies (e.g. Cortés-Sanchez, 2018; Krücken & Meyer, 2006; Leiber, 2016a), such mission statements were analyzed whether they contained certain key items that are related to scientific and societal goals and values of HE, including keywords characteristic of Enlightenment and Humanism (e.g. closely related keywords such as autonomy, freedom, self-determination; sustainability, sustainable development, sustainable education; democracy, democratic commitment, education for democracy; leadership education, professionalization of leadership, education and training of leaders).³ This analysis was mainly based on qualitative content analysis, and exploratory "hands-on" coding of publicly available mission statements of a sample of 38 German and international HEIs.

Against this background, the hypothesis was adopted that the answer to the above-mentioned research questions could, to a significant extent, consist in readjusting, restructuring, (re)prioritizing and, if necessary, supplementing HEIs' mission statements – if respective elements were missing. Such changes would be undertaken with the aim that HEIs would better and more offensively advocate the principles and values of Enlightenment and Humanism and react to the objection of being strategically weak in a satisfactory manner.

Therefore, the qualitative explorative content analysis that has been carried out, looked at the published mission statements of the 38 sample HEIs. Nine of these were universities (data as of July/August 2019) and 20 were universities of applied sciences (UAS) (data as of April 2016) from Germany.⁴ Further 10 HEIs were international universities from 10 countries (data as of July/August 2019) (including one of the 9 German universities).⁵ In addition, the identification of values and missions in the mission statements examined was compared to various sources and supplemented by their content, such as the *Magna Charta Universitatem* (OMCU, 2020) and scholarly literature (e.g. Cortés-Sanchez, 2018; EUA, 2021). These sources were used by searching for relevant keywords and conceptual fields (qualitative conceptual analysis) that are aligned with the values and goals of New Enlightenment and Modern Humanism (see Section 3) such as, for example, autonomy, critical thinking, enlightenment, humanism, human rights, personality formation, sustainability.

From this analysis, 37 core missions were identified ranging from quality education (teaching and learning) through quality research, promotion of HEI autonomy, academic freedom, and academic community through sustainability and transdisciplinarity to risk management. In general, the relative frequency

of the 37 missions in the mission statements of the various sample HEIs varies between 100% and 0%. For example, all universities and 14 out of 20 UASS mention quality education (teaching and learning) in their mission statements, while the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is mentioned in the mission statement of only one university and none of the HEIs have included risk management in the institution's mission statement.

For the present purpose of identifying which values and missions represent the HEIs' role as key enabler of Enlightenment and Humanism most convincingly, some of the identified 37 missions were selected. They were compared and refined in terms of content against the background of the principles and values of New Enlightenment and Modern Humanism (see Section 3). This process resulted in a list of 9 value-laden core missions which support Enlightenment and Humanism. They are described in Section 4 and suggested for (re)adjustment of HEIs' mission statements because they are often missing.

3 New Enlightenment and Modern Humanism: An Update

Before describing and discussing these suggestions for possible readjustment and re-prioritization of some strategies of HEIs as enablers of Enlightenment and Humanism, the underlying understanding of New Enlightenment and Modern Humanism must be briefly characterized.⁶ This is necessary, first, because the understanding of the two terms has undergone differentiations and additions over time to resolve prior deficits and objections. Second, it must be shown that and how New Enlightenment and Modern Humanism are related to the best general moral code currently available, the UDHR (UNGA, 2008). Thus, it will become clear that HE, as an important pioneer and defender of New Enlightenment and Modern Humanism, ultimately implements the basic values of the UDHR.

The core novelties of New Enlightenment over traditional approaches are the overcoming of the reductionist focus on techno-scientific progress and the academic neglect of human flourishing that is based on social and moral progress (Gabriel et al., 2022, p. 50; Maxwell, 2021). This was also an obstacle to integrating sustainability issues. The focus on technoscientific progress was based, for example, on exaggerated ideas about epistemological certainty and practical feasibility, the hypotheses of value-free science, and the related ontological and epistemological gap between the natural sciences and the humanities. To overcome this limitation, New Enlightenment (cf. Gabriel et al., 2022, pp. 50ff.)

- Advocates a society based on freedom and equality, i.e. values which are fundamental in the UDHR (cf. UNGA, 2008, Art. 1 & 2).

- Advocates the defence of an integrative-philosophical humanistic-scientific rationality including appropriate ethical theories (whole-rationality approach⁷ – WRA).
- Recognizes the freedom of every human individual (also cf. UNGA, 2008, Art. 1) and the dependence on others and extra-human nature alike.⁸
- Attempts to make social progress (cf. Fleurbaey et al., 2018) in analogy with intellectual progress achieved by science.
- Attempts to advance a more equitable and ecologically sustainable model of societal development by integrating economic prosperity and humanistic goals (cf. Davidson, 2021) – perhaps even overcome (neoliberal) capitalism.⁹

Building on these principles and main goals of New Enlightenment, Modern Humanism particularly emphasizes the following goals and competencies (cf. AHA, 2023; Humanists UK, 2023) which should be reflected to a high degree by the goals and values of HEIS as enablers of Enlightenment and Humanism.

3.1 *Ethics, Personality Development and the Pursuit of Fulfilment in Our Lives*

For humanists, the need for ethics and moral behaviour arises from the abilities of sentient beings to suffer and thrive. Moral behaviour is based on reason and empathy and requires no extra-natural source. Rather it is driven by the innerworldly motivation to minimize suffering of sentient beings and, over and beyond, maximize their flourishing (Leiber, 2002, pp. 72ff.).

Accordingly, humanists respect the dignity of the individual and the right of every person to the greatest possible freedom and fullest development, to the extent that this is compatible with the rights of others. That is why humanists support peace, universal human rights, liberal democracy, and the rule of law. Humanists advocate diversity and individuality and reject racism and prejudice as well as the resulting injustices (also cf. UNGA, 2008, Art. 2 & Art. 26, § 2).

For humanists, personal freedom is linked to responsibility towards society. A free person has duties of care towards others and towards all humanity, including future generations, and furthermore towards all sentient living beings. Humanists recognize that humans are part of nature and must accept their responsibility for anthropogenic impacts on it.

It is one of the fundamental beliefs of humanists that personality development through the cultivation of a creative and ethical life is a lifelong endeavour. Humanists value all sources of individual joy and fulfilment that do not harm (directly or indirectly) any other sentient living being. Humanists therefore value artistic creativity and imagination and the transformative power of literature, music, and visual and performing arts. Humanists value

the aesthetics of nature and, for example, its potential for a sense of sublimity and meditative contemplation (also cf. UNGA, 2008, Art. 27, § 1).

3.2 *Problem-Solving and Critical Thinking*

Humanists believe that humanity has the potential to solve its problems through free inquiry, science, compassion, and imagination to promote peace and human flourishing. According to humanists, scientific research can never be value-free because sooner or later all research has practical consequences and implications that are morally relevant. Moreover, we must determine the goals of research and application by ourselves.

The ultimate goal of humanists is to improve human well-being through the humanities, social sciences, natural sciences and technology, while always carefully considering the advantages and disadvantages for all involved. In this context, critical thinking plays an important role which can be conceived as an ‘intellectually disciplined process of actively and skilfully conceptualizing, applying, analysing, synthesizing, and/or evaluating information gathered from, or generated by, observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, or communication, as a guide to belief and action’¹⁰ (Ennis, 2016, p. 8).

3.3 *World-Immanent Justification of Meaning and Purpose*

Humanists believe that knowledge of the world and humanity can only be achieved through a continuous process of observing, learning, and rethinking. Knowledge, especially scientific knowledge, can therefore reach high levels of reliability, but always remains fallible. Therefore, for humanists, the unrestricted expression and exchange of ideas, scientific hypotheses and models remains constitutive to generate a better understanding of the world and, on this basis, to maximize the wellbeing of all. Accordingly, Humanism comes as an alternative to dogmatic religion, authoritarian nationalism, tribal sectarianism, and self-contradictory nihilism. This comprises, for example, the promotion of the ideas of Enlightenment, that knowledge is based on (bounded) rationality and empiricism, not dogma, and the promotion of the criteria of good scientific practice. Also included is the insight that research and teaching are value-laden and that they are, at the end of the day, unavoidably embedded into transdisciplinary contextual situations.

4 **Readjusting Strategies: Core Values, Missions, and Visions**

Based on the sources and approach described in Section 2, the following 9 value-laden missions and visions are suggested for readjusting, if appropriate,

HEIS' mission statements with respect to fostering New Enlightenment and Modern Humanism.¹¹

4.1 *Integration of Science and Humanities*¹²

The core purpose of the mission of integration of science and humanities is to bridge the epistemological and methodological divides between sciences and humanities and implement a WRA which builds on humanistic ethics, bounded rationality, and critical thinking, all being core values and principles of Enlightenment and Humanism.

HE (though not necessarily every single HEI) should offer the full spectrum of academic disciplines, both in science and humanities, because most of the pressing challenges we are currently facing can neither be solved by purely scientific or technological means nor by humanities alone. Rather, in addition to scientific knowledge and technological know-how successful solutions require persuasive communication, consideration of moral values and norms, especially against the background of universal human rights, and intercultural knowledge and understanding. Therefore, HEIS should facilitate and promote humanistic research and teaching and encourage interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary collaboration between scientists and humanities scholars and other members of society (Peels et al., 2020, p. 6). This includes and presupposes stimulating an understanding of ethical and cultural values to realize 'universities without walls' (EUA, 2021) comprising, for example, the promotion of ethical principles and values including integrity in research and learning and teaching, moral leadership, and citizenship.

4.2 *Personality Formation*¹³

The core purpose of this mission is to (explicitly) emphasize the important educational goal of personality formation which often seems to not be considered appropriately in HEIS (Leiber, 2016b). Personality competencies can be subdivided in social competencies such as, for example, communication, empathy, cooperation, civic engagement, and leadership, and self-competencies such as, for example, self-determination, decision-making, and sovereignty (cf. Leiber, 2022, p. 34). These competencies are core abilities of free, individual citizens in a liberal democracy who advocate the principles and values of Enlightenment and Humanism (see Section 3).

4.3 *Academic Community and Institutional Autonomy*¹⁴

The core purpose of this mission is to enable HEI autonomy based on an academic community of self-determined individuals reflecting academic freedom and organizational identity. This includes the right to self-government with the

possibility of independent preparation and execution of learning and teaching curricula and research projects as well as organizational strategy building and a high degree of financial self-administration. Self-governance of HEIs also comprises the privilege of awarding publicly recognized academic degrees. Another important reason to promote the autonomy of HEIs in all respects consistent with the Enlightenment and Humanism is to oppose (exaggerating) cancel culture which can pose problems for academic autonomy (Garry, 2023).

4.4 *Education and Research for Democracy*¹⁵

The core purpose of this mission is to contribute by education and research to supporting political democracies which are the only forms of political organization of societies compatible with the principles and values of Enlightenment and Humanism. This is because democracy implements participative and transparent public politics based on fair interest representation, elections, bargaining and majority decisions, all this embedded in a state of law. Therefore, democracy depends on a knowledgeable, educated, and enlightened citizenry. As HEIs in the free world are, by definition and tradition, among the core advocates and enablers of critical thinking in any dimension, they should support democratic behaviours by educating citizenry for democracy and by researching on the variety and improvements of democratic models.

4.5 *Sustainability and Re-purposing towards the Goal of Societies' Ultimate Wellbeing*¹⁶

The core purpose of this mission is to educate, train and inform stakeholders of HE for sustainability while re-purposing HE towards the goal of ultimate wellbeing. This implies that social, ecological, and economic interests and goals must be balanced throughout all dimensions of human life which can be strived for by implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). For HEIs, this means to promote a whole-institution approach¹⁷ (WIA) towards sustainability (Kohl et al., 2021) which contributes to mitigate the effects of anthropic overconsumption of natural resources by green, sustainable transformation of economy, industry, and private households. In a more pro-active form this includes a strategy of degrowth (e.g. Hickel, 2021) wherever feasible.

4.6 *Digital Transformation*¹⁸

The core purpose of the mission of fostering digital transformation is to enable the advantageous use of digitalization (including Artificial Intelligence) without endangering the values and goals of Enlightenment and Humanism such as, for example, self-determination, protection of personal rights and critical thinking. This is highly relevant because the digital transformation influences all areas of our lives. It is fundamentally changing the world of work as well

as public communication and the way politics is done. Ultimately, Artificial Intelligence in its various forms and the increasing automation of complex activities are questioning the dominance of humans over the sphere of digital machines. Digital technologies have great potential for freedom, but this can also be turned into its opposite, as high-tech authoritarianism in some countries such as the People's Republic of China shows.

4.7 *Leadership Education*¹⁹

The core purpose of this mission is to promote education, training and professionalization of leadership for society (cf. Black, 2015; Seemiller, 2016) including the leadership of HEIs. This is an important topic because well-educated and trained leadership is a core element of effective and efficient organization in multi-faceted and multi-perspective societies including the organization of HEIs (Dopson et al., 2016; Ruben et al., 2023). This is particularly true for dynamic participative liberal democracies where many voices and intentions must be governed and led to compromises.

Again, the topic of leadership competencies is closely related to principles and values of Enlightenment and Humanism as typical leadership competencies build on combinations of specific social competencies and self-competencies such as self-determination, managing participative cooperation, conflict coping, empathy, decision-making and critical thinking. In other words, leadership, who is educated and trained accordingly, also supports the personality development and sense-making capabilities of the members and employees of an organization with respect to their professional work.²⁰ In summary, governance-relevant competencies of leadership are preconditions for successfully implementing a WIA with respect to the values, missions and visions of Enlightenment and Humanism.

4.8 *Explicit Commitment to the UDHR*²¹

The core purpose of this commitment is to advocate more offensively the UDHR as a shared set of basic moral values at individual HEIs (ideally worldwide) to take a stand against anti-Enlightenment, anti-Humanism, and anti-democratic tendencies and forces. This would, for example, explicitly clarify the explanations and values of the *Magna Charta Universitatem* (OMCU, 2020).

4.9 *Inquiry into Mankind's Most Urgent Problems*²²

The core purpose of the explicit commitment to the inquiry into mankind's most urgent problems²³ is to give a systematic place to the general task of problem-solving with respect to re-purposing towards the goals of societies' ultimate and sustainable wellbeing. Such commitment explicitly sets a permanent strategic reminder to overcome the weakness that HEIs are not always

oriented at the right goals such as wisdom, social progress, and sustainable wellbeing of all (e.g. Hurth & Stuart, 2022; Maxwell, 2021).

By adopting and implementing the above-mentioned value-laden missions, universities would at least express their willingness to evolve from more observer-oriented societal roles to stronger strategy-driven learning organizations and change agents with respect to issues related to Enlightenment and Humanism. In this way, they could contribute more intensively and proactively to the stabilization and development of enlightened and humanistic societies.

5 Summary and Conclusions: Organizational Forms of Higher Education Institutions as Key Enablers of Enlightenment and Humanism

Since the values and principles of Enlightenment and Humanism have come under pressure from many sides, HE and HEIs have a special societal educational responsibility as key enablers and advocates of Enlightenment and Humanism. HEIs can only live up to this complex, multi-perspective responsibility if they – in the sense of WIA – fulfil at least the following four basic organizational forms (see also Table 3.1). These forms are derived from the fundamental societal goals and tasks of HEIs within the framework of a liberal constitutional democracy and a social market economy, i.e. under the umbrella of the values and principles of Enlightenment and Humanism.

5.1 *HEI as a Strategic Republic of Scholars and Students*

A strategic republic of scholars and students is a value-and-work community endowed with certain rights of thought and action (such as academic freedom, own degree awards, organizational autonomy), related tasks and responsibilities and largely self-determined strategies. Its constitutive logic is defined by free enquiry and integrative-philosophical humanistic-scientific rationality and expertise including appropriate ethical theories. Accordingly, the criteria of performance and functional assessment are those of scientific quality. The typical modes of change are the internal dynamics of science related to, for example, argumentative strengthening or weakening of hypotheses, models, and theories as well as model dynamics and paradigm shifts.

5.2 *HEI as a Liberal Democracy*

The constitutive logic of an HEI as a liberal democracy arises from the concepts of equal participation and interest representation governed by elections, bargaining and majority decisions. Accordingly, the criteria of performance and functional assessment are based on considering and negotiating internal

TABLE 3.1 Basic organizational forms of HEIS and their characteristics (revised after Olsen, 2007, p. 30)

Basic organizational forms of HEIS	Constitutive logic	Criteria of assessment	Modes of change
Strategic republic of scholars and students	Free enquiry, integrative-philosophical humanistic-scientific rationality	Scientific quality	Internal dynamics of science (e.g. argumentative strengthening/weakening of hypotheses, model dynamics, paradigm shifts)
Liberal democracy	Interest representation, elections, bargaining and majority decisions	Taking internal interests into account when distributing goods	Negotiation and conflict resolution while power, interests and alliances change
Co-player and change agent in national politics	Administrative: Implementing predetermined political objectives; Pro-active: Formulation of goals for politics	Effective and efficient achievement of national and institutional objectives and purposes of HE and societal politics	Administrative: political priorities, designs depending on elections and coalition formation, changing political leadership; Pro-active: see liberal democracy
Performance and service provider in a competitive quasi-market	Society service and exchange of educational goods in quasi-markets	Effective and efficient achievement of educational demands and expectations	Selection by competition, adaptation to changing circumstances and sovereign customers, bounded entrepreneurship

interests of HEI members and stakeholders when distributing goods. Thus, typical modes of change are negotiation and conflict resolution while interests, alliances and power relations can change all the time.

5.3 *HEI as a Dependent Co-player and Change Agent in National Politics*

The constitutive logic of HEIs as actors in the political field and public has two basic aspects. As an administrative organization financed by the public sector, public HEIs must implement predetermined political objectives, while in their pro-active role as change agents they should formulate goals and development perspectives for HE and societal politics. The criteria of performance assessment are the effective and efficient achievement of national and institutional objectives and purposes of HE and societal politics. Typical modes of change for the HEI as an administrative organization are political priorities, designs depending on elections and coalition formation, and changing political leadership. For the HEI as a pro-active change agent, typical modes of change are those of liberal democracy.

5.4 *HEI as a Performance and Service Provider in a Competitive Quasi-Market*

The constitutive logic of HEIs as performance providers embedded in competitive quasi-markets²⁴ is characterized by the exchange of services for society in the quasi-market of higher education. The relevant criteria of assessment are the effective and efficient achievements of educational demands and expectations forwarded on the educational quasi-market. Typical modes of change for HEIs as service providers are selection by competition, adaptation to changing circumstances and sovereign customers, and bounded entrepreneurship.

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These four organizational forms should not be understood as four different types of HEIs that can be implemented separately by individual HEIs. Rather, these four forms occur in combination in every single HEI – if the HEI follows the values and principles of Enlightenment and Humanism.

In a nutshell, from an academia perspective this corresponds to the HEI as a social biotope of all science within a democratic society, the members of which are committed to:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Philosophic-scientific rationality and ethics, i.e. the principles and values of science such as truth or reliability, justification, explanation and understanding, self-reflection, and intersubjectivity (cf. Leiber, 2007).
- Critical thinking, comprising the organization of processes of learning and teaching, research and Third Mission as continual, open, and free controversial cooperation and debates between students, teachers, researchers, and other societal stakeholders.

Against this background, there should be no doubt that HEIs, as central actors for scientific, humanistic, and political education, critical thinking, and innovation, play an important role in the defense and further development of Enlightenment, Humanism and democracy. As a first step, HEIs can contribute to addressing the challenges and threats we are currently facing here by realigning and reprioritizing their missions, visions, and values. There is no doubt that there is a need for numerous other actors who are actively committed to Enlightenment, Humanism, and democracy. At the same time, it is presently not foreseeable whether, given the current political situation in many countries, it will be possible to adequately deal with the challenges and massive threats towards the principles and values of Enlightenment and Humanism “in a timely manner”.

6 Limitations and Research Perspectives

The studies on which this chapter is based have a number of limitations that highlight open questions for future research: Firstly, the studied sample of HEIs is limited in size and cannot be considered representative. Secondly, the study is exploratory and qualitative. Thirdly, for the analysis of values, mission, and visions of HEIs mainly mission statements were consulted, while statutes and strategic development plans and other documents of the selected HEIs could also be analyzed to make collected information more reliable. Fourth, assessments of stakeholder groups on the idea of readjusting strategies and competencies of HE systems and HEIs towards Enlightenment and Humanism could be gathered (e.g. by interviews) to test the approach. Fifth, the information used here could be updated with more recent information.

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Notes

- 1 For a current critical overview, see Kromydas (2017).
- 2 A basic understanding of wisdom (ancient Greek σοφία *sophía*) is that the term denotes, above all, a deep understanding of the structures and processes in nature, human life and

- society as well as the ability to recognize the most coherent and sensible approach to problems and challenges. In a more formalistic sense, wisdom comprises the integrative implementation and use of theoretical understanding (e.g. in sciences and humanities) and practical know-how (e.g. in ethics, scientific methods, and everyday practice).
- 3 Examples of key items represented by closely related keywords are as follows: autonomy, freedom, self-determination; sustainability, sustainable development, sustainable education; democracy, democratic commitment, education for democracy; leadership education, professionalization of leadership, education and training of leaders.
 - 4 These included all public universities and UASs in the federal state of Baden-Wuerttemberg, among them the universities of Freiburg, Heidelberg, Tuebingen and the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology as well as Media University Stuttgart, UAS Heilbronn and UAS Furtwangen, to name just a few.
 - 5 These 10 universities were those keeping the 1st national rank in the Academic Ranking of World Universities in 2019: Harvard University (USA), University of Cambridge (UK), Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich, University of Tokyo, University of Toronto, Sorbonne University, University of Melbourne, University of Heidelberg, Utrecht University, University of Helsinki.
 - 6 It should not go unmentioned that universally accepted (explicit) definitions for the two complex terms do not seem to exist, meaning that there is always some potential for the two concepts to be considered controversial to some extent.
 - 7 In a nutshell, WRA is understood as constructively integrating all emotional and cognitive abilities, practical know-how and theoretical knowledge into problem solving. This implies that a WRA relies on concepts of bounded rationality (Gigerenzer & Selten, 2002) as well as proven methodologies from the sciences and humanities instead of “perfect rationality” which would be characterized by complete clarification of an assessment situation, unambiguous and stable preferences of decision and completely transparent criteria of decision.
 - 8 Modern Humanism and New Enlightenment are no longer anthropocentric. Rather, they are compatible with the basic ideas of an anthropo-physio-relational ethics of nature (Leiber, 2002), which describes and justifies the basics of morality comprising all sentient living beings.
 - 9 In its extreme forms, neoliberal capitalism may be characterized by permanent competition, reign of profit and subordination of all activities to the economy including the commodification of living beings.
 - 10 Attributed to Michael Scriven and Richard W. Paul (1987).
 - 11 From here on, for the sake of brevity, the terms “New Enlightenment” and “Modern Humanism” are again replaced by “Enlightenment” and “Humanism”, respectively.
 - 12 Included in 9 of 38 sample HEIS’ mission statement.
 - 13 Included in 16 of 38 sample HEIS’ mission statement.
 - 14 Included in only 5 of the 38 sample HEIS’ mission statement.
 - 15 Not included in any of the 38 sample HEIS’ mission statement, though one HEI had a commitment to the integration into a democratic state.
 - 16 Included in 23 out of 38 sample HEIS’ mission statement.
 - 17 In a nutshell, WIA means that, in addition to performance and services, all structural and procedural aspects of an institution are included.
 - 18 Not included in any of the 38 sample HEIS’ mission statement.
 - 19 Not included in any of the 38 sample HEIS’ mission statement.
 - 20 For details on 41 desirable leadership competencies and 13 most important competencies for HEI leadership, see Black (2015, pp. 61–62, table 2) and Leiber (2022, p. 35, table 3), respectively.

- 21 Included in only one sample HEI's mission statement.
- 22 Included in 11 out of 38 sample HEIs' mission statement.
- 23 Obvious examples are defensiveness of democracies, sustainability, geo-politics, peace, Artificial Intelligence.
- 24 Markets are characterized by competition between the providers of services. Quasi-markets differ from markets in some important ways, for example, the providers are funded by public money, or the relationship between services/goods and (pecuniary) "market prices" is not clear.

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