

Georg Krücken/Albrecht Blümel/Katharina Kloke

Towards Organizational  
Actorhood of Universities:  
Occupational and Organizational Change  
within German University Administrations



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## I. Introduction

Universities have been confronted with changing rationalities regarding their role in society i.e. increasing demands from economic and societal actors (*Dill/Sporn 1995; Etzkowitz/Webster/Healey 1998; Gibbons et al. 1994*) as well as a global rise of student enrollments along with the need to incorporate an increasingly diverse and international body of students (*Schofer/Meyer 2005; Windolf 1997; Frank/Meyer 2007*).

At the same time, New Public Management (NPM) reforms in the area of higher education and state-funded research in European countries have led to changing modes of inter-organizational steering as well as institutional governance of universities (*Lange/Schimank 2007; Amaral/Jones/Karseth 2002*). While the state is withdrawing to a more supervisory role via “*steering at a distance*”, universities have been granted substantial leeway with regard to institutional autonomy and increased devolved responsibilities for budgeting, recruitment and organizational development (*Huisman/Kaiser 2002*). Concepts and instruments borrowed from the corporate sector and mingled into national adaptations of the NPM-model have led to converging processes towards a “*managerial regime*” of university governance (*Lange/Schimank 2007; Reed/Deem 2002; Braun/Merrien 1999b*).

On the institutional level universities responded to these changes of autonomy and the growing complexity of university missions by strengthening their institutional management and a more managerial reorganization of its operations and decision-making processes (*Amaral/Meek/Larsen 2003; de Boer/Enders/Schimank 2007*). But what are the underlying conceptional premises that account for these changes within universities?

Drawing on the notion of organizational actorhood outlined in section II of this paper, we argue that organizational change within universities needs to be interpreted against the background of more global developments of rationalization of specific organizational patterns affecting public sector organizations internationally (*Brunsson/Sahlin-Andersson 2000; Djelic/Sahlin-Andersson 2006; Dobbin et al. 2007*). To this end, universities are increasingly embedded in

transnational processes of diffusion of organizational change and rationalization gradually transforming them into accountable and coherent organizational actors (*Krücken/Meier 2006; Whitley 2007*). As the transformation towards organizational actorhood of universities is connected to the construction of leadership and the move towards a more managerial form of university governance this has also far reaching implications for the non-academic domains in universities. But in what way has this transformation of universities impinged on the administrative domains of higher education institutions?

While there has been broad interest in institutional responses of universities to the “*managerial reforms*” in higher education (*Amaral/Meek/Larsen 2003; Deem 1998; Sporn 1999*) and its implications for academic work (*Askling 2001; Enders/Kaulisch 2006; Kogan/Teichler 2007; Henkel 2000; Jansen 2007; Schubert 2008*), changes within university administrations have received less attention in empirical research so far.

For that reason, in section III we outline three lines of research regarding organizational and occupational change in university administrations that have been pursued so far in comparative higher education research: organizational change within university administrations; the configuration of (administrative) staff and the influx of “new professionals”; and changes of institutional profiles and professional identities of non-academic staff in universities.

In section IV, we discuss some of the findings of our empirical analysis of university administrations in Germany that is based on quantitative data on university staff and results of a national survey of the Kanzler as heads of university administrations. We suggest that the move towards organizational actorhood of universities in Germany is leading to increasingly specialized modes of organization and recruitment. In addition, we observe shifts within the configuration of university staff towards higher qualification and status.

## **II. Changing Modes of Organization in Higher Education Institutions: Universities as Organizational Actors**

Traditional concepts encapsulating decision-making and organization in universities such as “*organized anarchies*” (*Cohen/March/Olsen 1972*), “*loosely coupled systems*” (*Weick 1976*) or “*professional bu-*

*reaucracies*" (Mintzberg 1979) have been challenged by the development of a number of newer conceptualizations (Tjeldvoll 1997; Braun/Merrien 1999a; Marginson/Considine 2000; Clark 1998; Etzkowitz/Leydesdorff 1998). Against this background we argue that organizational change in universities needs to be understood in the light of broader conceptual accounts within organization studies. Based on a general trend of new modes of managing, controlling and organizing public sector institutions in an increasingly organizational society (Meyer 2005), one can witness a process of "corporatization" or constructing organizations as "real organizations" (Greenwood/Hinnings 1996; Ferlie et al. 1996; Brunsson/Sahlin-Andersson 2000). In this view, organizational changes within universities are understood as a process of transforming universities into "organizational actors" (Krücken/Meier 2006; Meier 2008) or "strategic actors" (Whitley 2007) who construct their own identity, hierarchy and "rational goal models of effectiveness" (de Boer/Enders/Leišytė 2007). But what does transforming universities into organizational actors mean and how is this notion different from traditional conceptualizations of universities?

The notion of an "organizational actor" tries to evoke the image of an "integrated, goal-oriented entity that is deliberately choosing its own actions and that can thus be held responsible for what it does" (Krücken/Meier 2006, p. 241). Building on different concepts of actorhood within social theory, Frank Meier argues that organizational actorhood essentially builds upon three characteristics that can differ across organizational context and time (see Meier 2008, pp.77-82):

- Causal and moral responsibility for actions and omissions of organizations is mostly directed to the organizational level and not to individuals.
- The organization can cognitively become a subject to normative and social expectations within the external environment.
- Finally, there is a translation of external and internal responsibility into recognizable formal structures that become a proxy for steering collective decision-making within the organization.

We see at least two overarching processes that are currently driving this transformation towards organizational actorhood of universities. First, political reforms in the higher education sector of many OECD countries have pushed towards an increasing role of competition and the global market in higher education. This has led to the transfer of



capacities for decision-making on strategic resources for universities (de Boer/Enders/Schimank 2007; Teixeira et al. 2004; Lange/Schimank 2007). Consequently, coherent organizational decision-making structures and strengthened institutional management are considered a key aspect for a changing regime of university governance (Lange/Schimank 2007; Braun/Merrien 1999b).

Second, as universities are increasingly tied into a global horizon, “*organizational actorhood*” has become a generalized script for universities, which through processes of transnational communication and observation is diffusing globally and thereby has become subject to cultural rationalization (Meyer 2005; Frank/Meyer 2007; Drori/Meyer/Hwang 2006a; Scott 1999). There are certain elements of universities as organizational actors that have become culturally or politically expected from them as normal organizations (Meyer/Boli/Thomas 1994). Drawing on a previous paper by one of the authors, four interrelated elements of a new, globalizing model of what it means to be a modern university can be distinguished (see Krücken/Meier 2006, pp. 247-252):

**1.) *Organizational accountability and evaluation*** (Krücken/Meier 2006, pp. 247-248): The first element can be labeled as “*organizational accountability*” and relates to the intensified establishment of evaluation procedures within the higher education sector. Since traditionally the output of universities (e.g. knowledge and educated people) has been seen as distinct from the output of other organizations, it was not subject to scrutiny and formal measurement.

With the assignment of greater institutional autonomy to universities, governments and international organizations have begun to impel them to transparently account for their results not only in research and teaching, but also in areas of institutional development to stakeholders and the wider society (Westerheijden/Stensaker/Rosa 2007). The subsequent proliferation of quality assurance practices like evaluation and accreditation is a salient indicator of an overall trend towards accountability and auditing in modern societies (Power 1997; Hornborstel 2001). This becomes manifest in the creation of specialized organizations and associations for external evaluation and accreditation agencies in the higher education sector as well as the establishment of quality-assurance units within universities (Schwarz/Westerheijden 2004).

While in traditional concepts of university organization the attribution of responsibility was individualized and could be traced back to the single professor, it is now transformed into an organizational account and finally mirrored in national or international rankings. This implies that universities as organizations are to be held responsible for their decisions but also their omissions and non-decisions.

**2.) Definition of organizational goals** (*Krücken/Meier* 2006, pp. 249-250): Closely related to the notion of measurement and evaluation of output by higher education institutions is the growing tendency of universities to define their “own” organizational goals as opposed to the practice of reacting to politically imposed tasks by the state or informal decision-making within the academic community. This has become apparent through the development of mission statements, university strategies and the implementation of strategic planning and related management practices (*Maassen/Potman* 1990; *Dill* 1996; *Patterson* 2001; *Machado/Taylor/Peterson* 2008; *Machado/Taylor* 2006).

These developments imply the creation of an “organizational self” which then is widely displayed to members of the organization, stakeholders and the wider society. In addition, mission statements often serve as a legitimating base for management-by-objectives tools (*Palandt* 2002; *Allen* 2003; *Nickel* 2007; *Sandberg* 2003), which aim at strengthening the link between the organization and its individual members. By implementing tools of strategic planning, universities also follow developments within other organizations in the corporate or NGO sector (*Mintzberg* 1994; *Weber* 2003) and therewith envision themselves ever more as “normal organizations”.

Interestingly, these missions of universities frequently invoke the same goals e.g. “excellence in research and teaching”, “internationalization” or interdisciplinary research programs and a focus on innovation and entrepreneurship (*Morphew/Hartley* 2006). The use of the same goals in mission statements worldwide can be seen as an indication that universities enact globally institutionalized scripts of what a university is expected to be.

**3.) Elaboration and expansion of formal structures and hierarchies:** (*Krücken/Meier* 2006, pp. 250-251): Another element of the emerging script of organizational actorhood for universities is the ongoing elaboration and expansion of formal technical structures and hierar-

chies. Traditional notions of university organization emphasized non-hierarchical, consensus-oriented decision-making of academic self-governance often transcending institutional boundaries. In many European systems of higher education there has been a strong move towards the construction of hierarchies within universities replacing old arrangements of non-hierarchical decision-making (*Braun/Merrien 1999b; de Boer/Enders/Schimank 2007*). Thus, organizational actorhood is closely related to the development of institutional management within universities.

This has become apparent in the strengthening of leadership positions in universities, the introduction of university boards and the creation of new positions within academic middle management along with the explicit allocation of increased responsibility for budgeting and personnel (*Whitley 2007; Huisman/Kaiser 2002; Amaral/Meek/Larsen 2003; Mayntz, 2002*).

Moreover, organizational rationalization and the quest for increased accountability to external and internal stakeholders have led to the establishment of new organizational units, e.g. for regional development, technology transfer, external relations, and student placement or marketing. Implications of the elaboration of formal structures at the organizational level can be illustrated with regard to technology transfer: While the transfer of knowledge or collaboration with external partners and faculty regionally and internationally was previously the responsibility solely of the individual academic, this responsibility increasingly has become part of an institutional mission of the university itself and formalized via the establishment of organizational units (*Krücken 2003*).

**4.) *University management as emerging organizational profession*** (*Krücken/Meier 2006, pp. 251-252*): Along with the management reforms and a new organizational model for universities, demands on the organization and its members have also increased. It follows that the personnel responsible for organizational tasks is increasingly recruited according to the organizational characteristics and institutional missions of universities as organizational actors.

Before, organizational tasks had laid primarily in the hands of academic staff supported by an administrative cadre, in the case of many European universities often consisting of public service administrators deployable in any public sector organization. Now we witness the establishment of whole new categories of administrative staff and

an influx of specialized professionals in higher education administration (Rhoades/Sporn 2002; Whitchurch 2004; 2007; Gornitzka/Larsen 2004; Teichler/Klump 2006). In addition, we observe the emergence of professional networks, academic programs and also journals for higher education management. In many cases, they have been established with the explicit aim of contributing to the exchange of knowledge and diffusion of “best practices” within a growing community of experts in higher education administration (Lauwers 2002; Teichler/Kehm/Alesi 2006).

However, it should be stressed that the development and application of “*professionalism*” in this context of higher education administration clearly differs from traditional concepts based on trust, discretion and collegial authority put forward by scholars of sociology of professions (Abbott 1988; Freidson 2001; Parsons 1951; Wilensky 1964). In the context of constructing organizational actorhood of universities professionalism mainly refers to the incorporation of “*rational-legal forms of authority and hierarchical structures of responsibilities*” within organizations (Evetts 2008, p.102). Thus, similar to other public sector and knowledge based service organizations we witness the advent of “*organizational professionalism*” (Evetts 2008; 2006) in higher education administration that may serve as a quiet but powerful means for rationalizing managerial and organizational knowledge and standardized practices.

Clearly, the notion of organizational actor counters traditional concepts of universities “*that have not been conceived as important decision making entities in their own right*” (Krücken/Meier 2006, p. 241). Instead of providing an analytical model of university organization, with the outline of the four elements of organizational actorhood we seek to characterize overarching and global elements of an increasingly rationalized model of universities affecting institutions in many higher education systems. It is to serve as a heuristic framework for empirical investigation, for which we expect a great deal of institutional and cultural variations and adaptations.

In the following sections of the paper, we are therefore especially interested in the implications of organizational transformation with regard to university administrations, especially in Germany. Thus, our main focus is on the two latter aspects of organizational actorhood: the elaboration of formal structures and the emergence of “*organizational professionalism*” (Evetts 2006) in higher education administra-

tion. Before addressing the case of German universities we briefly illustrate current trends of changes within administrative domains in other countries derived from studies in comparative higher education.

### III. From University Administration to University Management

In traditional constellations of intra-university governance in many European higher education systems until the 1980s, institutional management in universities was very limited (*Lange/Schimank 2007*, p. 530; *Dill, 1996*, p. 36). Internal decision-making was based on the dominant principles of academic self-governance of the professoriate and the organizational “saga of collegiality“ (*Clark 1972*).

In this context, university administrations often functioned as discrete bureaucracies responsible for the general maintenance and implementation of decisions made by academic councils. Functional administrative units such as departments for finance, personnel, international affairs or facilities in many universities mainly served as administrative support channels for the distribution of information and state funds to academic units according to specific public service procedures. There were strict boundaries between the academic core and the university administration as well as for its interaction with external partners and public agencies.

With changes in university governance, which started in Great Britain in the 1980s and subsequently moved across most European countries, there have been substantial transformations on the institutional level of universities (*Amaral/Meek/Larsen 2003*; *de Boer/Enders/Schimank 2007*; *Kehm/Lanzendorf 2006a*).

These changes in institutional governance have also impacted the locus and organization of university administrations and its staff (*Gumport/Sporn 1999*). We identified three broad lines of research in comparative higher education, which have focused on organizational and occupational change in university administrations.

1.) First, scholars have taken stock of ***changing organizational patterns within university administrations***. By expanding their managerial capacity to accommodate for increased market pressures, university administrations engaged in substantial reorganization in order to become more responsive to external expectations. Some argue that the

idea of public or administrative service has been extended to customer service and support of the executive university management (*Whitchurch 2004; Tjeldvoll 1997*).

Taking the case of organizational transformation within the Norwegian and Scandinavian university sector, Arild Tjeldvoll claims that universities are leaning towards a “*service model*” (*Tjeldvoll 1997*). He argues that core academic activities are increasingly perceived as service provisions with explicitly measurable, marketable results. In his view, this has far reaching implications for the organization of universities. The “*service model*” is characterized by a shift towards stronger management and increased control of academic activities (*Tjeldvoll 1997*). In order to account for intensified market forces in the service model context, university administrations are increasingly taking over initiatives and decision-making competencies with regard to the core academic missions of teaching and research.

With regard to British universities, Celia Whitchurch observes an increasing organizational flexibility of university administrations, which enables them to be more responsive to external environments and new tasks (*Whitchurch 2006a, p.160*). She argues that functional areas within university administrations in Great Britain – e.g. marketing, external relations, budgeting and human resource management, etc. – have been reformed and expanded according to universities’ strategic planning and new profiles.

There are clearly ambivalent accounts of what implications this more pronounced role of administrative domains of universities has for the conduct of their core activities in research and teaching. While some scholars emphasize the potential of better separation of tasks and therefore protection of academic values, other studies point to growing tensions about recognition and authority over organizational knowledge between university administrators and academics (*McInnis 1998; Dobson 2000*).

2.) Second, some scholars of higher education observed an influx of ***new administrative or managerial professionals in universities and subsequent shifts in the composition of university staff*** (*Gumpert/Pusser 1995; Gornitzka/Kyvik/Larsen 1998; Gornitzka/Larsen 2004; Rhoades/Sporn 2002*). Building on an earlier study on the rise of administrative professionals paralleled by shifts within the configuration of faculty in universities in the U.S., Gary Rhoades and Barbara Sporn analyzed the configuration of university staff in four European

countries based on case studies and statistical data (*Rhoades/Sporn 2002*). They observed a tendency of staff development in universities characterized by differentiation and reduction of the full time academic faculty complemented by the establishment of more permanent university administrators. However, their analysis clearly points to differences in European university systems compared to the dramatic increase of “managerial professionals” at universities in the U.S. (*Rhoades 1998a; 1998b*)

By analyzing transformations within administrative staff at Norwegian universities between 1987 and 1999, Ase Gornitzka and Ingvild Larsen contend that administrative positions grew by 66% (*Gornitzka/Larsen 2004*, p. 460). In addition, Gornitzka and Larsen note that there was a significant increase of administrators holding university degrees, which arguably implies a shift in qualifications of administrative personnel. This increase within administrative staff had been especially high for higher administrative professionals and managers while the proportion of clerical staff was significantly reduced (*Gornitzka/Larsen 2004*, p. 460).

In a similar vein, Jarmo Visakorpi argued in a study on the Finnish higher education system, that between 1987 and 1992 non-academic staff had grown more strongly than academic staff with a substantial proportion of growth in the highly skilled university administrators with 39%, whereas low-skilled service staff fell by 11.8% (*Visakorpi 1996*). Therefore, she assumes that the future of university administrators will be strongly based on academic knowledge and qualifications, but will also lead to the emergence of new professions in this area.

Based on her research on administrative professionals in Great Britain, Celia Whitchurch argues that there has been a remarkable diversification of roles and positions within university administrations (*Whitchurch 2006b*, p. 3). She contends that especially in the stratum of specialized “professionals” – defined as people with higher study qualifications and accredited qualifications working in responsible positions of specialized institutional initiatives – universities have expanded their portfolio. These positions tend to be more frequently staffed with specialists who are formally qualified for specific missions and work areas (*Whitchurch 2004*, p. 285).

3.) Organizational change within university administrations and the establishment of new administrative units has also broadened the

spectrum of tasks, *institutional profiles and professional identities of senior leaders and administrative staff*. As university administrators have started working in more “*project oriented domains crossing functional and organizational boundaries*” (Whitchurch 2004, p. 286), their knowledge has become increasingly important for initiating change and performing new administrative tasks (Whitchurch 2006a; 2007). Consequently, universities begun to introduce more systematic human resource management instruments that aim for a better fit between administrative tasks and specific qualifications (Blackwell/Blackmore 2003).

Against the background of the reorganization of university leadership in many countries, also the position of Pro-Vice Chancellors in charge of resources and administration has been subject to organizational and professional change (Smith et al. 1999; Johnson 2002; Bargh et al. 2000; Aitkin 1998). Particularly studies focusing on the changing role of Pro-Vice Chancellors (PVC) in higher education institutions in Great Britain underline the changing parameters of recruitment towards external recruitment for full time positions and the formal strengthening of managerial control of PVCs (Smith/Adams/Mount 2007, p. 23). At the same time, it is highlighted that management and leadership in these positions between academic or administration are based on a specific set of intellectual and academic values and a strong affinity to the organizational peculiarities of higher education institutions concerning their prior training and professional identity (Johnson 2002; Smith/Adams/Mount 2007, p. 33-49).

Furthermore, administrative leaders and university administrators in British universities have started to develop more flexible career patterns involving further education and training as well as job rotation in order to develop a “*distinguishing portfolio*” as specialists in their respective areas (Whitchurch 2004, p. 285; Gornall 1999). In the long run, it is argued, that this might lead to a gradual retreat of administrative generalists who traditionally have had prior work experience in the public sector, but who do not possess a specialist qualification (Whitchurch 2004, p. 287; Holmes 1998, p. 112).

In addition, scholars observed the establishment of professional training programs and networks in higher education management and administration (Scinner 2001; Conway 2000). Following developments in the US, university administrators in the UK and Australia over the last decade have established their own professional networks like the Association of University Administrators (AUA) in Great Brit-



ain or the Association for Tertiary Education Management (ATEM) in Australia. Aside from publishing their own journals and organizing annual conferences, these associated networks provide for specific training and serve as a platform for knowledge exchange (Scinner 2001; Conway 2000). The establishment and intensified international outreach of these professional networks may also foster the development of professional roles and specific career paths in higher education management.

Thus, there are some indications that organizational change within European universities seems to be complemented by an altered configuration and “hybridization” and hence occupational change of non-academic staff. Some scholars argue that this implies a process that in the long run might lead to the “*professionalization*” of administrative staff within universities (Gornitzka/Larsen 2004; Whitchurch 2004; Gornall 1999; Rhoades/Sporn 2002; Kogan/Teichler 2007, p. 12).

But how has the organizational transformation of universities in Germany been complemented by similar patterns of organizational and occupational change within administrative services? In order to answer this question, we now turn to German university administrations. For our analysis we draw on empirical results from two sources of data: First, we conducted a cross-sectional and longitudinal analysis of data on university staff provided by the federal agency for statistics and the HIS-ICE Database for the time period 1994-2004. Second, we carried out a questionnaire-based survey distributed to the Kanzler (equivalent to the Pro-Vice Chancellor (PVC) for resources and administration at Anglo-Saxon universities) as heads of the university administration in Germany. From a total of 267 questionnaires that were sent out to universities and universities of applied sciences, we received 153 responses, which come up to an overall response rate of 57%.

#### **IV. Organizational and Occupational Change within German University Administrations: Empirical Findings**

In the German higher education sector, famously framed by Burton Clark as “bureaucratic oligarchy” and characterized by “a combination of political regulation by the state and professional self-control by

academic oligarchies” (Clark 1983, p. 140), universities were meshed between the strong external influence of state ministries on procedures, budgeting and organization on the one hand, and on the other by the internal dominance of academic self-governance reflected in academic councils (Schimank/Meier 2002).

In the context of a dualistic legal status of German universities as state-owned corporation (“*Körperschaft öffentlichen Rechts*”) **and** an agency of the state bureaucracy (“*staatliche Anstalt*”), the main task of the administration has been the maintenance of important infrastructures of the university, closely working with their respective ministries regarding institutional development. Central administrations in German universities had developed an almost universally applied formal structure for their functional service areas, the so-called “*Dezer-nate*” or “*Referate*” – legal office; human resources; student services; finance and infrastructure (Hoffstetter/Pennartz 1998). Also, with the restrictive and inward-oriented administrative mission of universities, there was hardly any necessity to develop specialized units.

Within a dual model of university leadership with the rector or president elected by the academic senate, the Kanzler served as head of the university administration and the non-academic staff (Wallerath 2004; Heß 2000). As a public servant appointed by the ministry on a lifelong basis, he/she developed considerable institutional knowledge and experience in dealing with internal and external partners during the course of his/her service. To this end, the position of the Kanzler - appointed by the state and therefore transcending organizational boundaries between the university and the state - can be regarded as a peculiarity of the public higher education system in Germany.

Members of administrative staff within universities in Germany were dominantly consisting of federal bureaucrats recruited from differentiated status groups of public service streams. Often building on a qualification from a specialized school of administration for public servants, or in the case of senior administrators (“*Dezernenten*”) often educated with a law degree, many had a career across different positions mostly within the same university or other institutions of the public sector. Their main responsibilities were the implementation of policies, recordkeeping, and accounting according to procedural rules and decisions by the state and the academic council. Administrative tasks were strongly centralized with little administrative capacities within decentralized academic units.

Reforms within the higher education sector in Germany started later than in most other European countries (*Lange/Schimank 2007*). But in a similar vein, reforms of university governance in Germany entailed a significant change of state-university relations (*Kehm/Lanzendorf 2006b*). In 1998 the 4<sup>th</sup> amendment to the Federal Framework Act of Higher Education in Germany initiated a comprehensive move towards institutional reforms of universities including the gradual delegation of responsibility to universities for internal budgeting with lump-sum budgets and performance-based management and increased autonomy of universities for their internal organization (*Kehm/Lanzendorf 2006b*, p. 149; *Ziegele 2005*). This marked a significant move towards deregulation for internal organizational management that then became emulated in the reforms of higher education laws on the federal level.

On the institutional level this was translated into new models of university leadership that implied changing formal recruitment procedures, power and roles of university presidents as well as the Kanzler (*Nickel/Ziegele 2006; Röbbken 2006; Heß 2000; Knauff 2007*).

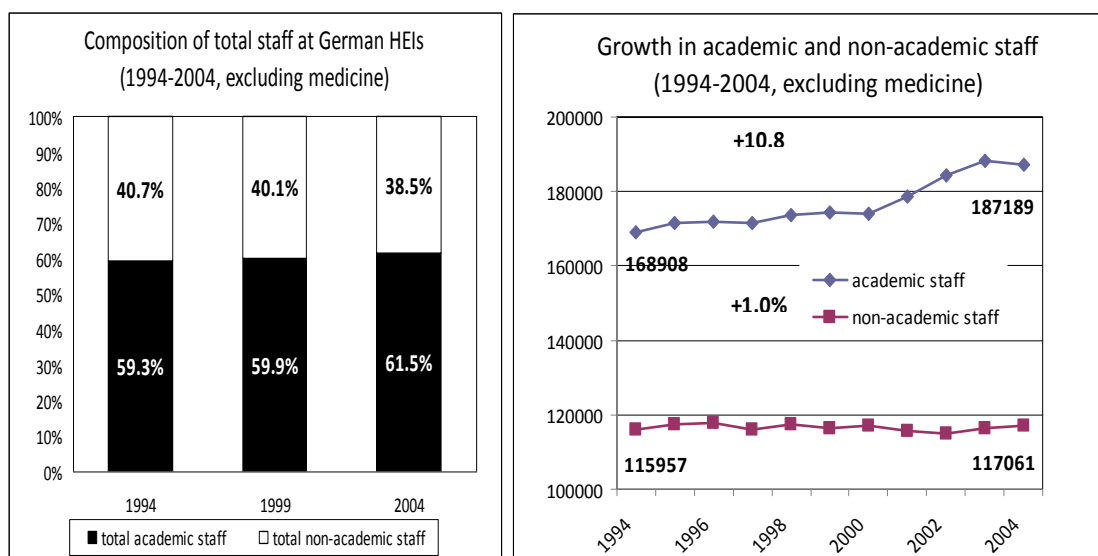
In addition to efforts of strengthening or professionalizing institutional leadership (*Nullmeier 2001; Nickel/Ziegele 2006*), universities in Germany begun with reorganizing their administrative service units that also resulted in the establishment of new functional areas and project-oriented service units, e.g. for quality assurance in teaching and research, student services and career offices (*Teichler/Klump 2006*).

This has been accompanied by the introduction of more corporate human resource management instruments and recruitment policies within university administrations aiming at more systematic qualification and recruitment of non-academic staff (*Oechsler 1998; Hanft 2004*). Consequently, it is assumed that there will be a further increase in the number of “*new professionals*” („*Hochschulprofessionen*“) within university administrations in Germany as well as more functional specialization of staff (*Teichler/Klump 2006; Kehm 2006; Leichsenring 2007*). Consequently, this could lead to the gradual diminishing of public servant generalists and lawyers as primary groups of administrative staff. Their dominance within the administrative staff would be dissolved in favor of more diversified occupational profiles of university administrators and the recruitment of “*new professionals*” specializing in functional areas of university management at the intersection of academic and administrative services e.g. research man-

agement and research evaluation (Adamczak/Debusmann/Merkator 2007).

#### 4.1 General Trends in Staffing of University Administrations

In 1994 there were 284.865 staff positions (“Vollzeitäquivalente”) in public German higher education institutions, while in 2004 this number rose to 304.250. That means a total increase of 6.37 %. However, there are clearly differences between academic and non-academic staff: While the number of academic staff between 1994 and 2004 increased by 10.8 % (from 59.3 % to 61.5 % of the total share), the non-academic staff remained with only a marginal increase of + 1.0% almost at the same level (see table 1).

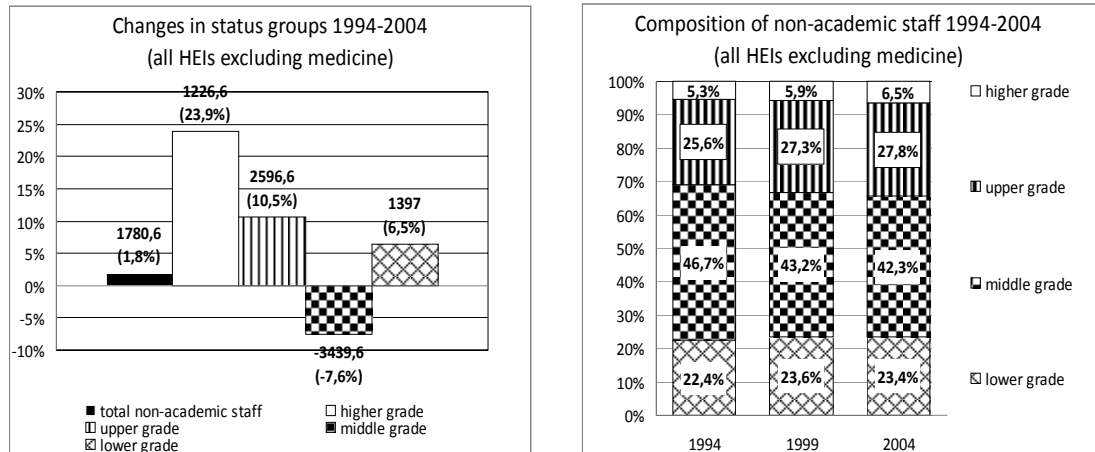


**Table 1: University Staff at German Universities 1994-2004**

Source: HIS-ICE Database 2008: <http://www.iceland.his.de>.

However, while the share of non-academic staff of the total number of university staff slightly decreased from 40.7% to 38.5%, more profound changes have taken place **within** the composition of non-academic staff (see Table 2 below). Looking at developments between 1994 and 2004 within the different categories of non-academic staff, we observe diverging tendencies: while administrative positions in the middle grade of the civil service (mainly clerical workers; secretaries, technical staff and routine administrations without a university degree) dropped by 7.6%, staff within higher positions (upper grade and higher grade of the civil service) rose significantly by 10.5% and

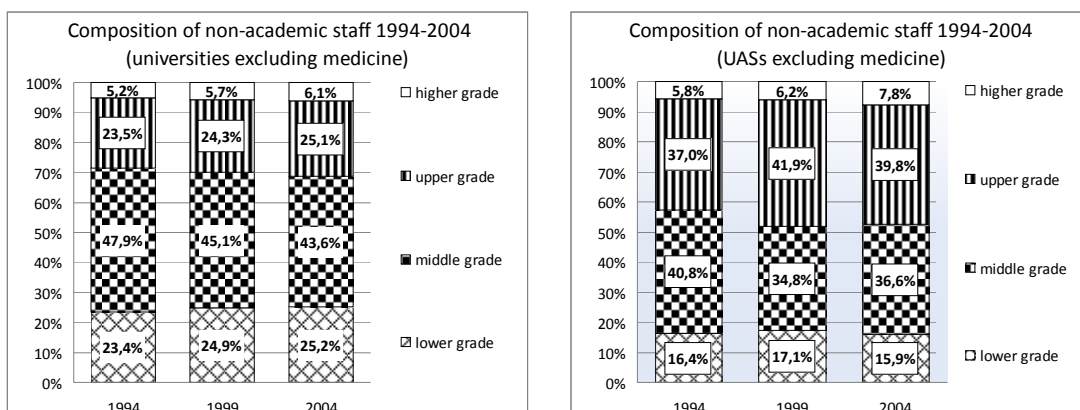
23.9%. Thus, it can be argued that there has been a reconfiguration of staff in terms of qualification and/or status within administrative staff. However, this reconfiguration within the administrative staff did not unfold at the expense of reducing the share of academic workforce.



**Table 2: Composition of Non-academic Staff at German Universities 1994-2004**

Source: HIS-ICE Database 2008: [www.iceland.his.de](http://www.iceland.his.de).

There are also differences between the two dominant types of higher education institutions in Germany. Generally there appear to be structural differences between staff compositions at universities and universities of applied sciences: While at universities the ratio of non-academic/academic staff is between 2/5 and 3/5, the ratio of staff at universities of applied sciences is 1/3 to 2/3. Apart from different institutional profiles these general differences in staff composition could result from the differences of academic staff categories: Different from universities of applied science, at universities there is a number of additional categories of academic staff who often support the work of a senior full professor.



**Table 3: Non-academic Staff at German Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences 1996-2004**

Source: HIS-ICE Database 2008: [www.iceland.his.de](http://www.iceland.his.de).

The analysis shows that a large part of the growth rates of non-academic staff in the upper and higher grade results from a strong increase in the categories of upper grade and higher grade staff at universities of applied sciences (see Table 3). Upper grade staff at universities of applied sciences grew more strongly in percentage and in absolute terms at universities; higher-grade staff at universities of applied sciences grew almost as strongly in absolute terms as it did at universities. Ultimately, it seems that there is a process of assimilation at work. As universities of applied sciences are moving away from being an institution exclusively focusing on teaching, they are also amended their structural composition of administrative staff to that of the universities.

## 4.2 Organization and Recruitment within University Administrations

To gain information on long-term developments concerning changing modes of organization and recruitment within university administration, we draw on assessments made by the Kanzler. In the first part of the questionnaire we asked the Kanzler to evaluate whether and when new administrative units and positions have been established or substantially been reorganized during the last five and/or ten years.<sup>1</sup> The

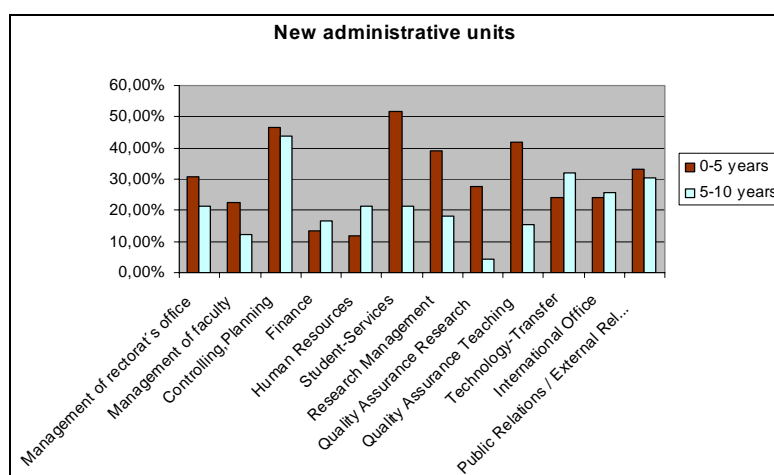
<sup>1</sup> Please note that the data presented in 4.2 are based on the assessments of the Kanzler on changes within their organization and their institutional profiles. Therefore, they are highly subjective and can only serve as a proxy for

responses show that university administrations in German universities have been subject to quite substantial reorganization with a tendency to organize new specialized units and to establish new positions in university administrations. This is especially true for the last five years (see Tables 4 and 5).

In the fields with high relevance and responsiveness to societal actors, a growth in newly created positions and units can be observed. Student-services mirrors the highest growth rate among newly created positions and units: 69.6% of the Kanzler responded that new positions in the area of student services within the administration were established: 51.7% that new units were created during the last five years. We assume that this is by and large due to the study reforms, introduction of student fees and the subsequent need for study coordinators, student fee administrators and counselors.

The functional area of public relations and marketing has also experienced a substantial increase of new positions for administrative staff: 57.7% of the Kanzler responded that new positions were created during the last five years. The same strong increase in new organizational units and positions is visible in the area of quality assurance for teaching and research: 54.6% of the Kanzler state that new positions and 41.6% that new subunits for quality assurance in teaching were established during the last five years.

*In what functional areas of your university have new organizational units been established or existing units substantially reorganized?*



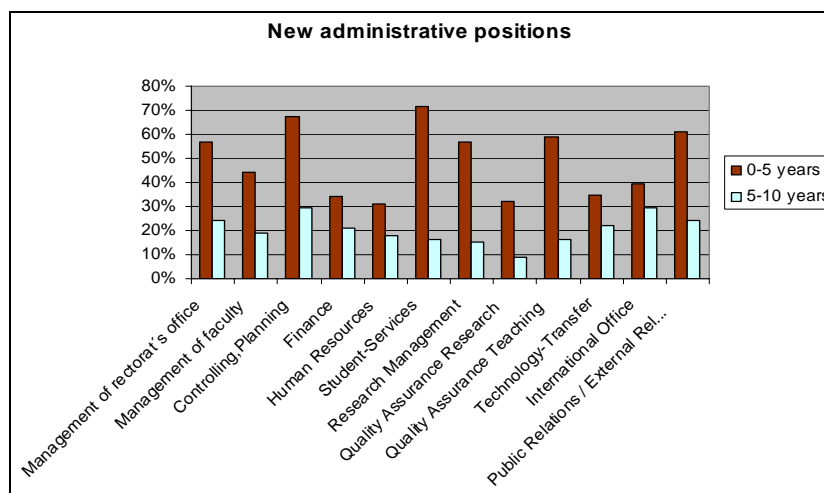
**Table 4: New administrative units**

Source: Kanzler-Survey FOEV-Speyer 2008.

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measuring actual change. We seek to validate our claims in further case studies on universities that allow for a more fine-grained account.

*In what functional areas of your university have new organizational positions been established?*



**Table 5: New administrative positions**

Source: Kanzler-Survey FOEV-Speyer 2008.

These developments reflect the theoretical assumptions we outlined in section II by conceptualizing universities as organizational actors. The process of differentiation within administrative services and the growing number of units established for example in the area of quality-assurance in research and teaching illustrate the changing attribution of responsibility: What formerly was individualized and could be traced back to the single professor is being transformed into an organizational account. The growing number of units and positions established as new management support for the rectorat's office as well as controlling and planning activities illustrates the increased devolved responsibilities for budgeting, personnel recruitment and organizational development (Brinckmann 1998; Kehm/Lanzendorf 2006b, pp. 9-11). With the integration of new units into their formal structure, universities seem to be reacting to the growing complexity of university missions and newly assigned demands. In order to assure a "legitimate base" as a university organization in accordance to societal expectations, they design new formal technical structures to meet for taken-for-granted social norms of the missions and the functional formal structure of a "modern" university.

But to what extent do decision-makers (in this case the Kanzler) attribute the establishment of new units or positions to external demands and forces? In our questionnaire we asked them to evaluate the main catalysts for the establishment of new units during the last ten years.



While the Kanzler attribute the highest importance for organizational change to new demands by societal actors (69.5%), within the last decade 77.8% of the Kanzler claim that organizational change and the establishment of new organizational units were **not** due to political pressure. This, in our view, reflects the retreat of the state bureaucracy and the changing perception of the Kanzler on the institutional autonomy of universities. Almost unanimously, 92% of the Kanzler see the personal engagement of university leadership as a key factor for organizational change and the establishment of new organizational units within universities.

<i>What were the main catalysts for the establishment of new administrative units during the last 5 or 10 years?</i>		
	<b>Not applicable + Less applicable (Cumulated)</b>	<b>Applicable + Fully applicable (Cumulated)</b>
<b>Legal amendments</b>	48.40%	50.00%
<b>Political pressure</b>	77.80%	20.40%
<b>Changing rules for budgeting and apportionment of funds</b>	47.30%	50.00%
<b>Scarcity of resources</b>	55.80%	44.10%
<b>New societal demands</b>	30.40%	69.50%
<b>New demands from students</b>	30.60%	68.60%
<b>New demands from economic actors</b>	55.60%	43.50%
<b>Orientation at other universities / higher education systems</b>	43.90%	56.00%
<b>External consultation</b>	77.10%	21.10%
<b>Personal engagement of university leadership at your university</b>	7.00%	92.20%

**Table 6: Main catalysts for the establishment of new units**

Source: Kanzler-Survey FOEV-Speyer 2008.

Obviously, these attributions should not be taken at face value, and especially the strong emphasis on the personal engagement of university leadership has to be interpreted very cautiously. Nevertheless, these lines of attributing responsibility have not always been common practice. They stand in contrast to the results of an earlier study that ten years ago tried to analyze the driving-forces that led to the institutionalization of technology transfer offices at all public universities in North Rhine-Westphalia between 1976 and 1988 (*Krücken* 2003). In interviews with the Kanzler, there had been a common opinion among respondents that technology transfer offices were mainly established due to an increased pressure from the side of the ministry of

research and education pushing for a visible and active role of universities in knowledge and technology transfer.

Despite the popular belief within public policy circles and the wider public concerning an assumed growing role of external consultancies driving change also with regard to higher education policy, a strong majority of 77% of the Kanzler answered that external consultation was not an important impulse for organizational change.

### **4.3 Institutional Role of the Kanzler**

Shifting parameters of university governance and reorganization of executive leadership have also impacted the position and role of the Kanzler as head of the university administration (*Wallerath 2004; Heß 2000*). Although with great variance across different federal university systems, most of the federal higher education law reforms in Germany stipulated a substantial formal transformation of the recruitment patterns, competencies and the role of the Kanzler within universities (*Bebber 2006, p. 10*). In some cases, the position of the Kanzler has been formally replaced by the position of the “Hauptamtlicher Vizepräsident” (Vice-President for administration), thereby strengthening the notion of an elected integrated member of the university leadership team (*Knauff 2007, p. 391*). In other cases, the broad range of the responsibilities of the Kanzler was diminished to being the executive head only for the core administrative service units like facilities and financial operations.

Thus, in the context of profound organizational transformation within universities, the almost universal position of the Kanzler has developed into an institutional variation of formal powers of the Kanzler in accordance with the specific context of the respective university organization. But how have these formal changes at the institutional level affected the institutional and professional role of the Kanzler?

When asked about their commitment to persons and institutions in their work environment, the Kanzler responded to be very committed to the president/rector and their own university, and not to their respective ministry of higher education (see Table 7). 94.4% of the Kanzler state that they have a very strong commitment to their own

<i>How strong is your commitment in work towards the following institutions or persons?</i>					
	<b>Very little commitment</b>	<b>Little commitment</b>	<b>Strong commitment</b>	<b>Very strong commitment</b>	<b>Do not know</b>
<b>Own university</b>	0.0%	0.8%	4.8%	94.4%	0.0%
<b>President/rector of my own university</b>	1.6%	4.8%	50.0%	43.5%	0.0%
<b>Administrative staff at your university</b>	0.0%	1.6%	47.2%	51.2%	0.0%
<b>Professoriate at your university</b>	0.8%	9.8%	68.9%	20.5%	0.0%
<b>Students at your university</b>	2.5%	9.0%	54.1%	34.4%	0.0%
<b>Respective ministry of higher education</b>	10.6%	40.7%	40.7%	6.5%	1.6%
<b>Stakeholders of the system of higher education</b>	8.2%	41.8%	33.6%	12.3%	4.1%

**Table 7: Institutional Commitment of Kanzler**

Source: Kanzler-Survey FOEV-Speyer 2008.

university. This commitment especially relates to their president/rector and to the administrative staff at their university (43.5% respectively 51.2%). Only 6.5% of the respondents stated that they see themselves strongly committed to their respective ministries. On the other hand, the Kanzler still perceive themselves as focus persons when it comes to dealing with the state bureaucracy. When asked on their role and working profiles within the institution, 56.9% responded positively to the item of them being *“the main contact person for the ministry”*.

There are also signs for an occupational change in terms of recruitment and the work experience of the Kanzler departing from the traditional profile of a law-educated public servant with a career path characterized by positions in the public sector. In many states, having a law degree or even meeting the formal requirement for being a judge

at a public court had long been a prerequisite for entering the position of the Kanzler.

In the context of ongoing organizational reforms in higher education this has apparently started to change. By 2007, 51.4% of the Kanzler had a law degree, 25.3% had a degree in business studies or economics and 11% graduated with a degree in public administration (see Table 8). In addition, there is a small but heterogeneous group with degrees in other disciplines. Interestingly, we found no systematic differences on educational background between public and private universities.

In our view, this differentiation of educational backgrounds relates to the increased organizational orientation of recruitment and the institutional profiles of the Kanzler. He/she is no longer the prime agent of the state ministry building upon his/her legal knowledge. Instead, the Kanzler has become a key member of the senior leadership team within the universities.

<i>What is your Educational Background?</i>	
<b>Field of study</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Law	51.4
Business Studies / Economics	25.3
Public Administration	11.0
Social Sciences	2.7
Humanities	2.1
Mathematics and Sciences	4.8
Engineering	2.1

**Table 8: Educational Background**

Source: Kanzler-Survey FOEV-Speyer 2008

<i>Where did you work before starting your current position as a Kanzler?</i> <i>(Multiple answers possible) Dichotomy-group tabulated by factor 1</i>	
<b>Working Experience</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
At the same university	26.5%
At a university of the same type	30.8%
At a university of a different type	27.4%
Other educational or scientific organizations	8.5%
Ministries (federal and state)	20.5%
Other agencies and organizations within the public sector	29.1%
Private sector	20.5%

**Table 9: Working Experience of Kanzler**

Source: Kanzler-Survey FOEV-Speyer 2008.

However, despite these indications of an increase in managerial knowledge in terms of educational backgrounds of the Kanzler, one can barely speak of “managerialisation” in terms of a strong business background. Only 20.5% of the Kanzler have had prior working experience in the private sector whereas 20.5% had worked in ministries, 29.1% in other public sector organizations and 8.5% in other research organizations before entering the position of the Kanzler of a university (see Table 9).

Thus, it appears that leadership and management of the universities from the perspective of the Kanzler implies a specific set of qualifications that increasingly builds upon organizational and management skills but might be distinct from running a private corporation. When asked about their assessment of what qualifications and experiences are important for working as a Kanzler of a university, 63.2% responded that management and business tools are very important (see Table 10). However, only 8.2% of the Kanzler state that work experience in the private sector is of high importance.

<i>In your assessment, how important are the following items for working in the position of a Kanzler?</i>					
	<b>Not Important 1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>Very Important 5</b>
<b>Law degree (2<sup>nd</sup> state examination)</b>	10.0%	9.3%	31.3%	34.7%	14.7%
<b>Management and business skills</b>	0.0%	0.7%	7.9%	28.3%	63.2%
<b>Leadership skills</b>	0.0%	0.7%	0.7%	14.0%	84.7%
<b>Postgraduate education in higher education &amp; research management</b>	2.7%	6.0%	20.8%	58.4%	12.1%
<b>Ph.D. degree and/or personal experience in research</b>	30.4%	12.2%	39.2%	14.2%	4.1%
<b>Prior working experience in management/ administration of universities</b>	0.0%	2.6%	13.2%	42.8%	41.4%
<b>Prior working experience in the private sector</b>	4.1%	8.2%	51.0%	28.6%	8.2%

**Table 10: Assessment of qualifications and work experience for working as a Kanzler**

Source: Kanzler-Survey FOEV-Speyer 2008.

Also, with regard to working tasks, the results of our survey point to increasingly specialized and organization-oriented profiles of the Kan-

zler. In the questionnaire, the Kanzler were asked to evaluate the importance of different activity areas in their daily work (i.e. legal matters, financial administration, human resources; see Table 10). Interestingly, along with financial management (budgeting, controlling and strategic planning) the highest importance was given to activities in human resources and organizational development as well as strategic development: 52.3% of the Kanzler state that strategic development and 50% that organizational development are of very high importance in their range of activities, while only 23.8% see legal issues to be a very important part of their daily work.

Our results on the institutional profile of the Kanzler mirror findings in other studies on the implications of new management structures at the institutional level of universities, arguing that there has been a “hybridization” of organizational and individual self-conceptions and degrees of implementation (Deem 1998; Whitchurch 2007): On the one hand, “old” values of administration and practices for running a university are still strongly upheld and given high importance. On the other hand, the upgrading of managerial capacity of university administration is apparent in organizational and individual practices (Scott 1996, p. 64).

<i>How important are the following activity areas as part of your routine work?</i>					
	<b>Does not belong to my responsibilities</b>	<b>Very unimportant</b>	<b>Unimportant</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Very important</b>
<b>Legal issues</b>	3.4%	2.0%	21.8%	49.0%	23.8%
<b>Finance (Budgeting; Accounting etc.)</b>	0.3%	0.0%	4.0%	23.3%	71.3%
<b>Controlling</b>	1.3%	0.7%	6.7%	46.3%	45.0%
<b>Strategy (Development &amp; Planning)</b>	2.0%	0.0%	9.3%	36.4%	52.3%
<b>Human Resource Management (Administration)</b>	0.7%	0.7%	14.0%	45.3%	39.3%
<b>Organizational Development</b>	0.0%	0.7%	7.9%	40.8%	50.7%
<b>Media and Public Relations</b>	19.3%	5.3%	31.3%	31.3%	12.7%
<b>Student Service Issues</b>	5.3%	5.3%	17.9%	50.3%	21.2%
<b>Admission &amp; Examination Issues</b>	10.7%	9.4%	28.2%	40.9%	10.7%

<i>How important are the following activity areas as part of your routine work?</i>					
	<b>Does not belong to my responsibilities</b>	<b>Very unimportant</b>	<b>Unimportant</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Very important</b>
<b>International Cooperation and Exchange</b>	23.4%	4.8%	37.9%	28.3%	5.5%
<b>Quality Assurance</b>	24.8%	6.0%	34.2%	26.8%	8.1%
<b>Knowledge and Technology Transfer</b>	22.3%	11.5%	30.4%	29.1%	6.8%
<b>Construction of Buildings and Facilities ("Hochschulbau")</b>	4.7%	2.7%	15.5%	31.8%	45.3%
<b>IT Management</b>	6.0%	2.0%	14.0%	50.0%	28.0%

**Table 11: Work Profiles and activities of the Kanzler**

Source: Kanzler-Survey FOEV-Speyer 2008.

Furthermore, with regard to their professional self-understanding we found strong indications for a more professional orientation of the Kanzler characterized by hierarchical control and the immediate political or regional environment of their organizations. While the Kanzler stated a very strong commitment towards their own organization and the university leadership, when asked about their relations to other categories of colleagues and partners they revealed only a limited commitment towards other members of their own occupational group: Only 33.1% stated that they feel very strongly committed to their occupational group and the Kanzler at other universities.

In a similar vein, also the use of professional networks by the Kanzler is characterized by a strong organizational focus. There are two national associations of the Kanzler and heads of administration in Germany (one for the Kanzler at universities and another one for the Kanzler at universities of applied sciences): both with a very high number of members accounting for most of the Kanzler in Germany.<sup>2</sup> They are both organized around issue-specific working groups, each providing for some sort of specific training. Most importantly, the national associations organize an annual conference for all the Kanzler. In addition, there are also working groups loosely connected to the

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.uni-kanzler.de>; <http://www.kanzlernet.de>.

national associations on the federal level that are used as a platform for consultation on administrative practice and knowledge exchange.

<i>How relevant are professional networks/working groups organized at different levels for you and your work as a Kanzler?</i>					
	<b>Not relevant</b>	<b>Partially relevant</b>	<b>Generally relevant</b>	<b>Very relevant</b>	<b>Do not know</b>
<b>On the federal level (Bundesland) (e.g. Working groups with colleagues at other universities)</b>	1.5%	8.3%	30.3%	58.3%	1.5%
<b>On the national level in Germany (e.g. Association of the Kanzler)</b>	6.1%	19.8%	45,0%	26.7%	2.3%
<b>On the international and European level</b>	40.6%	40,6%	10,2%	4.7%	3.9%

**Table 12: Work Profiles and activities of Kanzler**

Source: Kanzler-Survey FOEV-Speyer 2008.

It appears that working groups organized by the Kanzler and heads of university administration on the state level (“Bundesland”) seem to be most relevant (see table 11). When asked about the relevance of these different levels or types of professional networks, the Kanzler stated that cooperation and knowledge exchange with colleagues of universities within their state was very relevant (58.3%), while networks and cooperation at the national level had significantly less relevance (26.7%). In contrast, professional networks and cooperation at the international and European level were found by a majority to be only partially relevant (40.6%) or not relevant (40.6%).

Thus, the specific organizational environments of universities and different regulations stipulated in the legal frameworks for higher education on the state level have strongly influenced the institutional profiles of the Kanzler and their professional orientation, as well as knowledge exchange with colleagues at other higher education institutions.



## V. Conclusion

Our empirical results on changes of staff and organization within German university administrations support our theoretical argument regarding the ongoing construction of universities as accountable and coherent organizational actors. The increasing organizational differentiation of administrative units and the specialization of administrative staff contribute to the elaboration and expansion of formal structures within universities. The establishment of new units and the creation of related occupational positions in higher education administration follow developments in other organizations in both the private and the public sector. Thus, the formal introduction of new units is also a mechanism to gain legitimacy from the external environment of universities (*Meyer/Rowan 1977; DiMaggio/Powell 1983*).

Our analysis of quantitative data on staffing patterns in German higher education reveals an increase in higher grade and upper grade positions that is particularly strong at universities of applied sciences. This increase comes at the expense of middle and lower grade positions. Contrary to the results of case studies being conducted in other countries, however, we cannot observe an expansion of administrative staff at the expense of academic staff. We rather see a disproportionate growth of academic staff and a general upgrading of administrative positions. Based on our Kanzler survey, we can give a more fine-grained account of recent developments in organizational development and administrative recruitment. Especially during the last five years many new positions have been created in fields like planning and strategy, student services, quality control, and public relations. These fields are of high relevance to the new organizational actorhood of universities.

Furthermore, the Kanzler survey shows interesting results with regard to the institutional role and the professional identity of the Kanzler themselves. Their traditional position as a mediator between the state and the university seems to have disappeared. Instead, a more organization-oriented and managerial profile is expressed. This does not only mirror the transformation of state-university relations, but also illustrates the strong role of the Kanzler in the ongoing construction process of universities' organizational actorhood. Neither are professional values transcending organizational and national boundaries, nor are their occupational group the main point of reference for the Kanzler, but their organization. Therefore, we regard them as an inter-

esting case for organizational professionalism (Evetts 2008). The only marginal relevance of international networks gives further evidence of this type of professionalism.

Our results point to further directions in analyzing occupational and organizational changes within universities. First and foremost, we have to fully take into account how changes within organizations and their environments shape the institutional role and the professional identity not only of the Kanzler, but also of those 'new professionals' who work in the newly created university positions. Given our analysis we suppose that we will not witness the emergence of a broad professional community of university managers, but rather distinct and smaller communities that identify with their organization and their specific area of expertise.

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