Ulrich Teichler

Ulrich Teichler is professor at the International Centre for Higher Education Research (INCHER-Kassel) and the Department for Social Sciences of the University of Kassel, Germany. Born in 1942, he studied sociology at the Free University of Berlin and received a PhD from the University of Bremen, in 1975. He has been Professor in Kassel since 1978, former director for altogether 16 years of INCHER-Kassel, former dean of faculty, and vice president of the University of Kassel. Professor Teichler has also worked in several international universities including the Northwestern University, the United States, College of Europe in Bruges, Belgium, Hiroshima University, Japan, and the Open University, the United Kingdom, in addition to other temporary teaching assignments and research work in various countries worldwide. His key research areas are higher education and the world of work, international comparison of higher education systems, and international cooperation and mobility in higher education. Professor Teichler has conducted expert and consultancy activities for UNESCO, the OECD, the World Bank, the Council of Europe, the European Commission, various national governments as well as various international and national university organisations. He has served in several boards and executive committees, and is former or current co-editor of various academic journals. He was awarded the Research Prize by CIEE (1997), the Comenius Prize by UNESCO (1998), and the ERASMUS Special Prize 2008 by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). He is Doctor honoris causa of the University of Turku, Finland (2006). Professor Teichler is the author or the editor of more than 1,000 academic publications.

In your view, what is the most probable or desirable future scenario regarding labour market changes and higher education?

A gradual move towards a Highly Educated Society would be most desirable: A large proportion of the population should have a good command of the best established "rules" and "tools" to cope with demanding professional tasks and concurrently be able and motivated to be sceptical, to challenge constantly conventional wisdom to change their work setting pro-actively, thereby contributing towards dynamic change towards a society less stratified according to knowledge, power and living conditions.

In your opinion, what is or should be the most important objective for higher education in the future? Why?

To strengthen intrinsic motivation for students. Because the dominant information and incentive systems are designed to reinforce non-creative imitation behaviour. Moreover, extrinsic motivation systems can only work if substantial income differences are preserved instead of efforts made to move towards a Highly Educated Society (cf. OECD: Tertiary Education Reconsidered, 1998).

What do you consider to be the main future challenge(s) for higher education systems? Why?

A. To counteract the misleading notion of a clear divide between "academic" and "professional emphasis" in higher education.

B. To move towards a closer ties of "quality" and "relevance" in teaching/learning and research

C. To promote "horizontal diversity" in terms of diverse substantive approaches of curricula serving substantially diverse activities of professional problem-solving

In your opinion, what would be the worst, but possible, way to tackle these future challenges? Why?

The worst way is to establish information, incentive and reward system which aim to reinforce only vertical diversity (e.g rankings) or to measure or praise only narrow a set of competences (e.g. a higher education "Pisa")

What do you consider to be the best possible way to tackle the above mentioned future challenges? Why?

Don't ask me (ask the almighty).