



Diversity-Management Strategies of Universities and Technical Colleges in Germany

Theoretical Reflections and Empirical Findings

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Diversity as a concept that covers multiple sub-groups



Female students

*Students from
migrant families*

Students as parents

*disabled
students*

Mature students

International students

**Students from
working class families**

first generation students

Students without A-levels

**Students with
care-dependent relatives**

etc.



Diversity in German higher education

- Rapidly growing number of students
- Increasing attention to diversity-related issues
- Growing differences in initial competence and attitudes
- Most universities and technical colleges have developed programs to reduce dropouts by addressing these differences



- most frequent measures to reduce differences in initial attitudes and competence (Wild & Esdar, 2014):
 - Improvements in the supervision relationship in teaching (e.g. tutorials)
 - Pre-courses and “bridging courses” in preparation for the study program (particularly in MINT subjects)
 - Counselling for students experiencing academic difficulties on their course
 - Mentoring to promote social integration of “non-traditional” students (e.g. first generation, international students)
 - Further training and qualifications for teaching staff



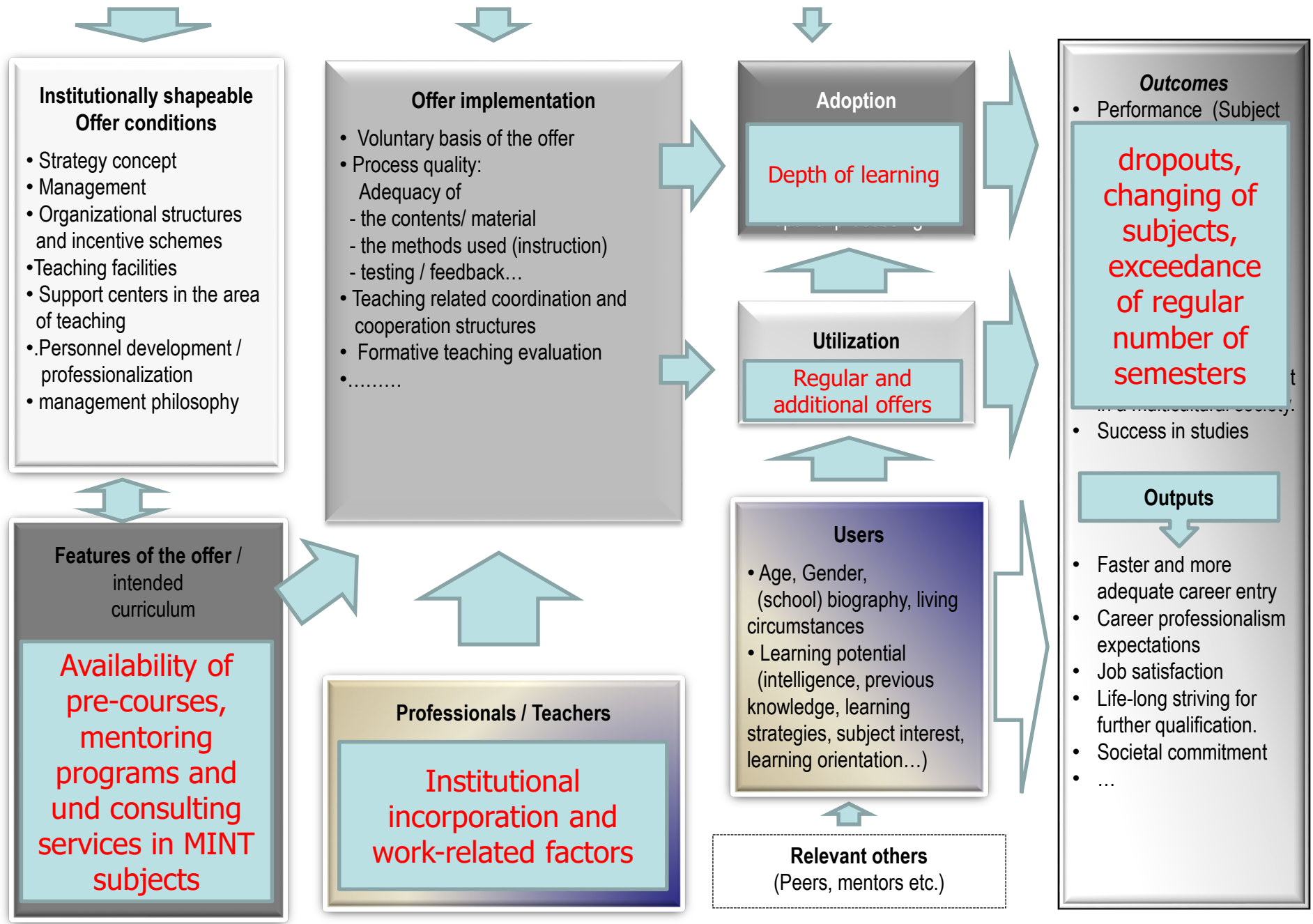
Theoretical approach

Offer-adoption model (Wild & Esdar, 2014)



- builds on the Learning Opportunities Model (Helmke & Schrader, 1999) used in empirical school research
- Adapted for a higher education teaching and learning context
- Accounts for the high degree of freedom that students have
 - in the regularity and level of active attendance of curricular courses
 - in the utilization of extra-curricular support offers

Context: regional environment, legal requirements, type of higher education institute, subject, composition of student body...





Issues and design in HeLGA

Central research questions in HeLGA



- Does the provision of 'additional' measures (i.e. pre-courses, student consultation offers, mentoring-programmes) lead to a reduction to "atypical" study paths (dropout, changing of subject, exceedance of regular number of semesters)?
- If not: which underlying circumstances may undermine beneficial effects of such additional measures?
- Which characteristics of learners ("user") may explain differences in utilization as well as in academic success/attainment?



- Content analysis of QPL-proposals to identify 3 universities and 6 technical colleges from across the federal states with diversity-oriented goals in MINT subjects
- Recruitment of MINT-students through internal mailing lists
- Followed throughout their Bachelor degrees (original sample of app. 1000 student participants)
- Standardized online-data collection with three rounds of data collection: directly before the winter semester 2015/16, one year later (winter semester 2016/17) and finally at the end of their Bachelor degrees (winter semester 2018/19).
- 26 interviews with QPL-lecturers, data analysis using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) as well as the documentary analysis method of Bohnsack (2006).



Results in HeLGA

Utilization of additional (extra-curricular) offers



- Pre-courses are often utilized, student consultation services and mentoring programs rather seldom
- Hardly any difference in utilization between university and college students
- After controlling for the type of institution, it was found that additional offers to support “at-risk-students” tended to be utilized by more academically capable students
 - Empirical evidence of the prevention dilemma in the context of higher education.

Effects of the utilization of extra-curricular offers?



- Utilization of pre-courses reduced the risk of dropout and of changing subjects, however the effects are weak
- Participation in pre-courses didn't increase the probability of completing one's studies within the regular number of semesters
- Mentoring and student consultation/advice programs had no effect on the observed outcomes

Which factors are most likely to lead to a “typical” path through a Bachelors degree course?



- Frequent attendance and participation in regular lectures
- Courses and modules which:
 - implement “inclusive didactics”
 - maintain interests, foster self-determined motivation and reduce heteronomous motivation

Occupational situation of professionals within the “Quality Pact for Teaching”



- High levels of identification with teaching-related tasks, however often also with research-related career ambitions
- Little support in coping with goal conflicts
- experience little guidance/support in dealing with job-related demands
- The successful pursuit of scientific ambitions is most likely if lectures are connected to an institute / a research group. Informal cooperation between colleagues is perceived as helpful to propagate the “mission” of the Quality Pact for Teaching.



Optimization suggestions

- Inclusive higher education didactics
- Professional development of teachers/lecturers
- Further training / guidance / supervision of university professionals

- Regular performance evaluation
- Establishment of an early warning system with compulsory controlling
- Student consultation anchored within the curriculum
- Low-threshold support offers
- Monitoring attendance



Thank you for your attention!

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