

Call for Papers

Interaction between Higher Education Research and Higher Education Development: Empiricism, Transfer and Impact

18th Annual Conference of the Gesellschaft für Hochschulforschung (GfHf)
11–13 September 2023 in Osnabrück

In spite of the different roles and approaches taken in higher education research and higher education development, there are a number of overlaps. These overlaps include the shared focus on the organisational type of “higher education institutions” and the central importance of data and evidence-basing. Higher education research is a theory-driven area of science in which research topics usually have a direct connection to the systematic development of research, teaching and learning, continuing education and the Third Mission in higher education institutions (HEIs), as well as their management. Given its more empirical focus, higher education research is often linked to a specific context of application, as demonstrated recently by the study “*WiHoTop – Elemente einer Topografie der deutschen Wissenschafts- und Hochschulforschung*” (WiHoTop – Elements of a Topography of Science and Higher Education Research), published in 2021. This alone does not automatically mean that the knowledge generated is directly linked to university practice. Nevertheless, studies that can help solve specific problems have a high priority in the context of higher education research, meaning that there is a basic connectivity between research and university practice.

On that basis, the 18th Annual Conference of the GfHf is concerned with the interaction between these two areas, understood as a process of mutual exchange. On the one hand, the focus is on the data obtained from higher education research; its transfer to university practice; and the impact generated as a result. In particular, university executives and managers in science and administration are dependent on an evidence base in their discussions and decisions. To this end, they do not only receive results from higher education research, but also conduct their own surveys and institutional research. In this context, theoretically reflective higher education research can help to critically question the use of data for university management. On the other hand, we intend to shed light on the impetus (potentially) coming from university practice for higher education research. The aim of the conference is therefore also to highlight the cooperative relationships between the two areas, and to provide suggestions for future work.

In the process, it is important to reflect on how close the link should be between higher education research and university practice in order to be beneficial. The scope ranges from views that revolve around application orientation to other views that tend to see an excessively close relationship between higher education research and its subject area as a problem.

Against this backdrop, the next GfHf Annual Conference will address the following thematic areas and issues:

1 Practice-based research and reflection on it

1.1 Research on design issues in university practice:

What insights does higher education research provide for the design of evidence-based higher education development? These insights may deal with different aspects, for example university management by means of tools and procedures such as those used in strategy development; quality development in learning and teaching; evaluation procedures in research, teaching, management and administration; the generation of bibliometric data; and the development and monitoring of indicators used, among other things, in the context of appointment procedures or target agreements. We can also shed light on the role and potential of big data. In addition, broader topics relating to human resources and organisations can be addressed.

1.2 Research on design issues in higher education policy:

What insights does higher education research provide for the design of evidence-based higher education policy? Examples of possible topics in this field include government support programmes at federal and state level; government control and funding of higher education institutions; legal frameworks; research support; academic career paths; and the monitoring of data relevant to higher education policy.

1.3 Relationship between theory and practice:

How application-oriented should higher education research be? How much distance/remoteness from practice is required between higher education research and its object of research? What constitutes beneficial interaction between theory and empiricism in higher education research?

2 Measurement approaches and how they are linked to higher education development

2.1 Measurement objects and approaches:

What approaches does higher education research provide for measuring the changing tasks of HEIs and the demands placed on them? If we pursue the idea of HEIs measuring their performance fairly, the question arises as to how to measure their level of digitalisation; the Third Mission services they provide; and the sustainability of HEIs. What valid measurement approaches from higher education research exist to measure performance?

2.2 Development-related accompanying research:

How can research approaches be designed in which empirical higher education research can be interlinked with higher education development? This refers to research methods and methodologies such as those used in the course of institutional research or design-based research. The focus should be on identifying the fields of higher education development in

which such research approaches are already being used; their advantages and disadvantages; and how they are specifically linked to higher education development.

3 Transfer and impact research

3.1 Transfer research:

How can results from higher education research be transferred to university practice and policy? What approaches exist and what experience has been gained? Where is there room for improvement? Is the principle of co-creation, understood as an open process of exchange between research and practice, already being applied, or are ideas being mooted for its implementation?

3.2 Impact research:

What insights does higher education research provide on the impact of empiricism and data in university practice, higher education policy, and possibly beyond? What is the impact of data-based management tools (academic scorecards, rankings, controlling, research information systems, allocation of resources, etc.)?

4 Other approaches and topics (Open Track)

As every year, there will also be an Open Track in 2023, enabling scholars to present the latest results of national and international higher education research that is not directly related to one of the conference topics. These results should have a proven relevance for the discussion within higher education research.

Conference formats

Contributions may be given in either **German or English**. We welcome **empirical or theoretical contributions**, as well as the **presentation of concrete examples** relating to the interaction between higher education research and higher education development.

Contributions may take one of the following formats:

- **Individual talks:** a 15–20 minute talk followed by a discussion.
- **Symposia:** Several individual contributions related to an overarching topic. A 90-minute period will be allocated for lectures and discussion.
- **Poster presentations:** Concise presentation of a research project by means of a poster. After a short presentation by the speakers, questions will be asked and, where appropriate, discussed with the audience. Posters will be presented as printouts in A0 format (84 x 119 cm) on display walls.

Submission of abstracts

Talks and poster presentations: Please use the ConfTool (<https://www.conftool.net/gfhf2023/>) to submit an abstract (in German or English) of maximum 500 words (including bibliographical references) by **18 April 2023**. Each author may contribute a maximum of two abstracts on different topics.

Symposia: Proposals for a symposium should include abstracts of the individual talks (maximum 500 words per abstract) and a leader (maximum 200 words) explaining the overarching topic of the symposium. You should also state who would host the symposium. Deadline for abstracts is also 18 April 2023.

The abstracts should be assigned to one or at most two of the thematic areas referred to in the Call for Papers. At the substantive level, abstracts should contain information on the following points: research question(s) and its/their relevance, methodology and data basis (where applicable), expected results.

The abstracts of the contributions accepted into the programme will be compiled in a Book of Abstracts and shared with all participants prior to the conference.

Overview of dates and deadlines

18 April 2023:	Closing date for submission of abstracts
Mid-May 2023:	ConfTool will notify authors of the abstracts accepted
Early June 2023:	Publication of the conference programme
1 September 2023:	Closing date for registration for the GfHf Annual Conference
11–13 September 2023:	GfHf Annual Conference on the campus of Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences; the HoFoNa annual meeting for doctoral and early-career researchers will take place on the third day of the conference (13 September)

More information

The conference website is at <https://gfhf2023.che.de/en/>

If you have any queries concerning the Call for Papers, please email: gfhf2023@che.de

The venue is Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences. The CHE Centre for Higher Education is responsible for organising the conference: Dr Sigrun Nickel & Anna-Lena Thiele (programme planning and information), Alexandra Tegethoff (event organisation and participation management).