

Towards a theoretical framework for the comparative understanding of globalisation, higher education, the labour market and inequality

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This paper is a theoretical examination of three major empirical trends that affect many people: globalisation, increasingly close relations between higher education (HE) and labour markets, and increasing social inequality. Its aim is to identify key theoretical resources and their contribution to the development of a comparative theoretical framework for understanding countries' responses to globalisation with respect to HE and the labour market, and the significance of such responses for social inequality. The method consists in developing a theoretical reading of Bourdieu's and Brown's theoretical concepts of social inequality in the interrelation of HE and labour market. As a result this paper presents preliminary ideas for the theoretical comparison of current societies' HE systems and labour markets with regard to social inequality in the age of globalisation. It concludes by illustrating the need for further comparative research in this area.

Keywords: comparative higher education; globalisation; labour markets; recruitment; social inequality; English and German higher education

1. Introduction

We begin with three empirical observations: the first refers to what is often called globalisation, with its increasingly international division of labour which puts people in north-western countries under increasing pressure. The second observation refers to the higher education (HE) and labour markets, which seem to be linked together in an increasingly close relationship. The third observation refers to social class inequalities, which seem to increase as well, at least in north-western countries. These observations are admittedly very general.

Economic globalisation has the effect of compressing time and space (Held and McGrew 2000). For example, if we consider changes in the global division of labour (Brown, Lauder, and Ashton 2011) then a key element in

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these changes is that electronic media enable jobs to be offshored to other countries. However, we should also note that globalisation as a term does not apply to all countries. One example might be Bolivia, which, under the Morales administration, is trying to take an alternative route to familiar capitalist and socialist patterns, one which consists mainly in the indigenous construction and control of the new plurinational state. Not only are some states non-participants or unaffected by globalisation, but we also observe that nations participate in and are affected by what we call globalisation (which from my perspective mainly consists in the increasingly international division of labour, paid and non-paid) in very different ways: that is, there is no single impact or single cluster of factors that is crucial for all countries. Examples might be the offshoring of qualified work from north-western countries to mainly East Asian countries, and the high proportion of East Asian students in HE in north-western countries.

The relation between HE and the labour market is not clearly defined either. We might have a strong feeling and intuition that a relation at least *exists*, but the moment we start to make assertions about the content and the characteristics of this relation, we struggle to get it right. For example, the widespread belief that people with an HE degree earn more money because they are more productive has been refuted by various studies (see e.g. Mishel, Bernstein, and Allegreto [2006] 2007). The relationship between HE and the labour market seems to have become even stronger in recent years, and again we – especially those of us working in HE – have the feeling that our working conditions have deteriorated while others, especially young mobile people from East Asia, see HE as an opportunity their parents could not dream of.

Finally, the increasing gap between upper and lower incomes, the stagnant and even decreasing incomes of the middle classes in north-western societies are issues that have influenced the lives of millions of people for years, yet have not been closely investigated. It is only recently that research has begun to focus on this development.

It is obvious that each of the developments just mentioned is highly complex in itself, and that these three mentioned developments are interrelated to each other. It is therefore impossible to investigate one of these areas *without* referring to the others as well. Nevertheless, the exact ways and forms of their mutual interrelation, and the dynamics that caused and perpetuate and change these relationships, are not at all clear. The purpose of this paper is to identify some of the key theoretical resources and their potential contributions to the development of a comparative theoretical framework for understanding countries' responses to globalisation with regard to HE and the labour market, and the significance of such responses for social inequality. To be more exact, this paper does not aim to achieve that purpose, but to present first thoughts as an invitation for further discussion and elaboration.

Bourdieu provides a valuable theory on the interrelation of HE, the labour market and social inequality in the national context of France, mainly in the

1960s and 1980s. But he does not provide a theory which takes globalisation into account as one of the dimensions which affects our lives and which interacts with HE, labour markets and social inequality. For our present purposes, we therefore seek to use his theory as a base, a starting point for the development of a theoretical framework for the comparative analysis of the mechanisms producing social inequalities in particular countries. Comparison then aims at understanding the similarities and differences between the causal mechanisms.

Bourdieu's work has been widely received, and we select here one principal theoretical development out of his work in order to outline its potential to lead to the envisaged comparative framework. Out of Bourdieu's approach to rules and resources, Brown (2000) has developed two theoretical categories – rigging and ranking – which seem promising for a comparison of the current developments in various countries. Both Bourdieu's basic approach (with an added focus on HE and the labour market) and Brown's concepts of rigging and ranking will be outlined in the second section below. The third section applies the theoretical framework developed so far in comparing two countries, Germany and Britain. Recent changes in the form of globalisation play a crucial role here and will be included in the analysis. The final section, 'Conclusion', illustrates the need for further research in the comparative analysis of globalisation, the organisation of HE and labour markets with respect to their impact on social inequalities.

2. Bourdieu's theoretical conception of inequalities in HE and labour markets

One of Bourdieu's most prominent assertions could be summarised as follows: the educational system reproduces the class system. This claim does not seem to be new, if we recall Durkheim for example, but Bourdieu's analysis goes far beyond an assertion of a linear correlation between social background and educational achievement. Bourdieu conceptualises the relation of social class and gender to education as a process, and thus as a variable force. He is interested in relations between the educational system and the system of class relations, and hence he deals with highly complex relations.

According to Bourdieu, a person's social position consists mainly in the economic, cultural and social capital the person has acquired. These different sorts of capital always develop their influence in social spaces. Social spaces include both the different social positions and the space of habitus, and are therefore composed of both the volume of capital and the structure of the capital. The structure refers to the respective proportions of the different kinds of capital. Social spaces are always hierarchical spaces in which the occupants have different positions. Specific sections of social spaces can be examined as fields. In the following sections I will expand on Bourdieu's theoretical concept of the field with regard to HE first and then to labour markets.

2.1. *The national HE system as a field*

Bourdieu and Passeron (1971) and later Bourdieu alone ([1984] 1998) purposely selected the HE system because, in their view, the participants in education systems are at the same time products of those systems: students' behaviour and qualifications are largely formed by their prior experiences. While Bourdieu and Passeron focus in the earlier work on different facets of social inequality in HE, such as the low proportion of students from socio-economically lower families, the limited choice of subjects studied by such students, and the hierarchy of reputation among higher education institutions (HEIs), Bourdieu concentrates in the later work on the analysis of the university as a field in which professors occupy different positions depending on the types and amounts of capital they possess, and on the structure of the field.

Naidoo (2004) summarises his theory as follows:

Capital may be viewed as the specific cultural or social (rather than economic) assets that are invested with value in the field which, when possessed, enables membership to the field. The type of capital operating in the field of university education is an institutionalized form of cultural capital that has generally been termed 'academic capital.' In some instances (see *Homo Academicus*; Bourdieu, 1998), Bourdieu distinguishes between two forms of capital: 'academic capital,' which is linked to power over the instruments of reproduction of the university body; and 'intellectual' or 'scientific capital,' which is linked to scientific authority or intellectual renown. In other instances, however (for example, in *The State Nobility*; Bourdieu, 1996), the two definitions appear to merge and 'academic capital' is defined as an institutionalized form of cultural capital based on properties of educational achievement, a 'disposition' to be academic (seen, for example, in manner of speech and writing), and specially designated competencies. (458)

In this field, institutions adopt strategies derived from an institutionalised form of habitus to maintain their advantage or, as Bourdieu (1993) puts it, to maximise their symbolic gain. The outward appearance of these strategies is what he terms 'taking positions', and is a consequence of the interests of academic institutions and individuals. For Bourdieu (1993), interest is understood as the 'specific investment in the stakes' (76) over which academics struggle. Interestingly, he defines this investment as both the condition and the product of the field. And from this position he is able to articulate a much more refined concept of interest than that described by neo-classical economics, for example. The latter see interest in much narrower terms as related only to income and wealth, while Bourdieu extends the concept to the identity of both institutions and individuals. The stakes in this sense are high indeed. On the other hand, a further consequence of this view of fields and interests is that institutions are seen to have a degree of autonomy within the field.

From a comparative perspective, Bourdieu's characterisation of the HE field enables us to pose a number of questions. These include the following: How is a given national field constructed in regard to the power relations between institutions? What do these power relations consist in: do they

involve economic, academic or intellectual capital? How is the habitus constructed at both the institutional and the personal levels? How are interests and reputations defined within the field: are certain types of capital seen as more important than others in some HE fields? And are some types of capital seen as more important in some HE fields than in others? This question leads in turn to the crucial questions: What is the system of cultural meanings that gives significance to these properties of fields in any given national context, and how are they similar to or different from other national fields?

In the light of recent changes, these questions have taken on greater significance. With the rise of mass HE systems in many countries, new institutions have entered the field. The issue that arises here is: How are the new institutions positioned in the field, and why?

While it is acknowledged that the concepts of social, cultural and personal capital are important in understanding the ways in which inequalities are reproduced, it can be argued that those concepts are not sufficient for a comparative understanding of the relationship between HE and the labour market, and the ways in which education and labour may be changed by processes of economic globalisation. A major reason why this is likely to be the case is that these forms of capital are embedded in particular national contexts, and those contexts hence frame the understanding of concepts such as cultural or social capital. For this reason, it is important to be able to develop a theoretical framework in which the different processes of inequality in national HE systems and global labour markets can be understood.

However, more recent research has analysed on the HE–labour market relationship in regard to social class inequality using the concepts of cultural capital and personal capital (see for example Brown and Hesketh 2004).

Strathdee (2008, 2009), using the concepts of cultural and social capital to theorise the links between HE and the labour market, raises another interesting question about how universities are understood and judged by employers when recruiting. He argues that we should see universities, not as unitary institutions upon which reputation is conferred, but rather as networked institutions in which links are established between particular departments or sub-units of the university and companies. Companies are seen as having links or partnerships with universities in order to promote innovation, and their recruitment from partner universities is based on such innovatory strategies. Inequality in recruitment is structured through these social capital networks.

One promising approach that may widen Bourdieu's theoretical concept to permit comparative analysis is presented by Brown (2000). He takes up Bourdieu's ideas on rules and resources and develops them into what he calls rigging and ranking, which are two mechanisms of creating and maintaining class inequalities. An explanation of Brown's theoretical concepts follows, and we will return to them in Section 2.5 to see how they could lead to a theoretical framework for the comparative analysis of social inequality in the interrelation of HE and labour markets in the age of globalisation.

2.2. *From rules and resources to rigging and ranking*

Integral to the concept of fields are the rules and resources by which fields are structured. However, if we are to understand the impact of policies that purport to be a response to globalisation in the HE field, then we must identify the key properties of the field that are susceptible to policy leverage. The concepts of rules and resources are useful here because they are susceptible to manipulation, particularly through funding, by policy-makers. Rules are constitutive of fields in the sense that they define the stakes over which conflicts of interests take place, including elements of symbolic violence. However, rules can also govern access to resources. Resources are critical to who wins and loses in any given HE field. One reason for this is that, as HE has been linked with a country's global competitiveness, the importance of innovative research has been elevated to a position of prominence. But such research requires heavy investment in researchers and technology.

In Britain, the rules governing the research assessment exercise (RAE) have been intimately related to questions of resources, with the most successful universities winning increased funding through success in research assessments. Under the new conditions governing research appraisal, the Research Excellence Framework, the income a university receives is directly related to the grade awarded to a publication. Now what is significant about this relationship between rules and resources is that the government has the power to change the terms of competition within the field and, as we shall see, it has justified this change in the rules as a response to economic globalisation. It is worth noting that these changes cause considerable conflict between field participants and government, because the changes affect academic institutions' and individuals' interests, in the Bourdieuan sense: for example, these changes force academics, who may otherwise consider disinterested enquiry to be their prime concern regardless of long it takes, to publish within a limited time.

However, in a class society we might expect these rather neutral terms of rules and resources to translate into what Brown (2000) has called the 'rigging' of rules to enhance the prospects of the professional middle class, and 'ranking', which is closely related to the allocation of resources to classed institutions like universities. In the case of HE, the rules governing the distribution of resources may well change the relative ranks of universities, but are more likely to reinforce them, thereby enhancing their reputations. If this means that Oxbridge universities, for example, find their reputations enhanced, then this is a case which, from the perspective of social class inequality, the rules have indeed been rigged to produce a ranking outcome in which people attending those universities may well gain an additional advantage.

As we shall see when we examine comparative contexts, the concepts of rules, resources, rigging and ranking can do considerable theoretical work.

2.3. *The national labour market as a field*

Bourdieu's (2005) analysis can be of help in characterising the labour market as a field.¹ At least three of his observations are helpful here. The first is that the economic field is itself characterised by rules, some of which are legal rules which also apply in the labour market, governing the conditions of workers and the basis on which they are hired and fired. In this respect there is a clear connection between Bourdieu's account and the work of the Varieties of Capitalism theorists (e.g. Hall and Soskice 2001).

The second is Bourdieu's insistence that, in the economic field, cultural and social factors are linked to economic factors just as much as they are in HE, although in different ways. As he notes:

[T]he two terms of the canonical relationship [supply and demand], which neoclassical economic theory treats as unconditional givens, depend in turn more or less directly on a whole set of economic and social conditions. (Bourdieu 2005, 15)

To illustrate this point, Bourdieu focuses on the field of suppliers in the housing market, showing that the reconfiguration of the field during a recession in France in 1980 was dependent as much on the history of the companies involved as on the structuring of demand (in terms of buyers' tastes) through advertising.

The third of Bourdieu's observations concerns his view of the way in which cultural and historical factors interact on both the demand and supply sides. Indeed, Bourdieu suggests that concepts such as supply and demand should not be seen as analytically distinct, but as interrelated and mutually constitutive. As we shall see, recent recruiting practices by MNCs and their relationship with elite universities suggests something similar. In this sense, rules may include tacit cultural rules governing the field as well as legal rules.

Finally, Bourdieu draws a distinction between the housing market as a field and the field of the firm within that market, which he insists cannot be seen as a 'rational subject – the entrepreneur or the management – orientated towards a single unified objective' (Bourdieu 2005, 69). Rather, there are vectors of power relations within the firm which cannot be understood without reference to the history and culture of the firm, and to the vested interests of key players within it.

In considering how Bourdieu's account can be adapted to the labour market, there are several points to be made. First, it has been well established that different national economies have different kinds of labour markets (Brown, Green, and Lauder 2001; Hall and Soskice 2001), which have been characterised as addressing different employer and employee interests. However, these different labour markets also represent different values and cultural orientations, which suggests that how a graduate in the recruitment process is viewed will likewise depend on specific cultural attitudes and orientations. Hence, in contrast to human capital theory and in keeping with sociological accounts of recruitment, issues of culture and related values and

indeed cultural capital are likely to influence judgements made by firms in recruiting. However, it is also likely that different companies have different cultures, determined, according to Bourdieu's theory, by their institutional habitus. With regard to MNCs, one might ask at this point whether they reflect the values and assumptions of their country of origin, or whether they have developed a more distinct and focused corporate culture and related values, such as earning profits.

Since Bourdieu brings historical and cultural factors into his economic analyses, it is easy to see how the conceptual tools that he uses in regard to HE can also be applied to recruitment practices in the labour market. For example, his wider notion of interests is applicable to the power relations between different sectors within a firm just as it is to power relations in academia. This suggests that, for example, the interests of marketing or production departments may be such that recruiters will look not just for qualified applicants, but for applicants who conform to their sense of identity and mission as well as their more direct economic interests.

2.4. HE and labour markets as interrelated fields

With his anthropological background, Bourdieu was keen to show that the economic and the social are intertwined both in education and in economics. But since different fields have different ways of valuing institutions and agents in both social and economic terms, he argues that fields can be seen to be relatively autonomous and to vary from one national tradition to another, although they are always related to social class (Bourdieu 1993). But in the same book, he also notes that the position of relative autonomy can change between fields, and it may be argued that, with the attempts to press education into the service of the economy (Grubb and Lazerson 2004), the two fields have grown closer together. While this may be the case in some respects, it is not certain that the fields are now so close that the way in which recruitment into the labour market is performed does not create social inequality. If the supply and demand of educated labour worked efficiently, we would not expect to observe credential inflation nor a reproduction of inequalities with respect to social class or gender in the labour market, unless a non-democratic hierarchy of power relations between privileged and non-privileged participants obtained.

That said, the relationship between the two fields is clearly more complex than neo-classical assumptions about supply and demand suggest. Two points can illustrate this claim. The first relates to Bourdieu's thesis of the collapsing distinction between supply and demand. Brown, Lauder, and Ashton (2011) have argued that both elite universities and MNCs perceive themselves to be in a 'beauty contest' in which both gain. The elite universities gain enhanced reputations by being able to advertise such prestigious career destinations for their graduates, while the MNCs gain because they are seen to be recruiting 'the best and the brightest'. In a sense, this can be seen as a joint act of

symbolic violence, since this relationship, built on mutual reputational regard, acts to exclude those who do not attend elite universities. Even more important than the symbolic violence, however, is the unequal material distribution of salaries, in which a small group of powerful managers secure high salaries for themselves with the rationale they 'deserve' them as members of the 'brightest', since they hold degrees from elite universities, while the majority of people face decreasing incomes (Goldin and Katz 2008; Hacker and Pierson 2010). However, what constitutes such categories as the 'best' and 'brightest' for companies will be a function of their corporate cultures and national cultures, which raises some questions as to how those categories, and that of 'talent', are understood in different cultures and how they are compatible within the culture of an MNC. Which in turn raises questions about who wins and loses in the competition for recruitment.

The second point that illustrates the complexity of the relationship between the fields of HE and labour markets is that, as Meyer (1977) has argued, HE can create a demand for graduates by constructing educational paths into occupations that come to be seen as essential for the occupation. Perhaps the best example is that of business schools. For many firms, MBA degrees have come to be an essential prerequisite for managers. Questions should therefore be raised about how firms come to see the MBA as vital to their needs, and what the class base for such a view might be.

2.5. Rigging and ranking in the interrelation of HE and labour markets in the age of globalisation

We suggested above that the concepts of rules, resources, rigging and ranking could be used to analyse the impact of economic globalisation on differences between countries in the fields of HE and the labour market, and suggested that rules and resources can be translated into the classed terms of rigging and ranking. It should be stressed that both rigging and ranking can be seen as structural properties of fields, as well as mechanisms by which individuals from the professional middle class (or elements of it) can gain advantage. If we take the examples of Oxford and Cambridge, they have in the past been the products of rules governing the unequal distribution of resources, and therefore have a history as classed institutions. What the changes in the rules governing resource allocation have done is to confirm them as classed and dominant HEIs. We know from participation by social class at these institutions that there is a massive bias towards elements of the professional middle class. A range of mechanisms can be seen to reinforce their position at the top of the field, which permits a rigging of the odds of professional middle class students gaining access to them. Among these mechanisms are the history that attaches to these institutions, including a longstanding association between the ruling classes and these institutions. Underlying this association, furthermore, is that of the public school system in Britain, which still plays a major role in

recruitment to Oxbridge. Class factors such as the practice of rigging and ranking in the interrelation of HE and labour market then give those who study at these institutions a passport to the top jobs. While social class may rig the competition for access, ranking by what Bourdieu calls renown or reputation has often, although not always, come to be associated with research. In this context, both money and reputation, which is also a socially constructed and yet powerful concept, have accumulated in a way that has also enabled Oxford and Cambridge to maintain a position as top-class research universities (RUs).

The ranking of individuals in recruitment in the labour market may turn on reputation. There are several studies of the significance of universities' reputation for recruitment strategies, which differ in their focuses and findings. In two key publications, Strathdee (2008, 2009) takes a sceptical view as to whether 'reputation' affords an additional advantage or privilege over and above the students' social class background. He cites Morley (2007) who shows that employers rated the reputation of the university as one of the lowest considerations when recruiting. In addition, he points to quantitative studies on the possible premiums that can be earned as a result of attending elite universities, suggesting that such effects are either very small or nonexistent.

However, there are studies which suggest the opposite (Brown and Hesketh 2004; Brown and Lauder 2009). This paper's concern is not to adjudicate between the merits of these positions, but rather to hypothesise that whether reputation confers such an advantage will be a function of the specific, national fields of HE and labour markets. Part 2 below attempts to support this hypothesis by a comparative analysis of the German and British fields.

While the structural position of England's elite institutions may offer a ticket, that ticket still needs to be exchanged for access to the top jobs. In this process, rigging and ranking are active at the individual level.

Rigging can be seen to operate at the individual level in the process of obtaining a job in two ways. The first concerns the utilisation of social capital networks, as suggested by Strathdee (2008), which provide a channel by which graduates from elite universities gain access to jobs. Another less subtle way in which rigging can operate may be nepotism, and in some countries perhaps corruption.

Ranking likewise appears in several forms: first, in the positional competition for credentials, which, to use Britain as an example, centres on access to elite non-state schools or to the top state schools. The state schools are now part of an education market that, as Brown (1997) has argued, rigs the competition in favour of the middle class. Financial resources are required to gain access to all top-ranked schools (via access to housing in the catchment areas of top state schools, for example).

But cultural capital is also a factor in access both to universities and to jobs. The role of cultural capital in access to universities is well documented; less so is the role of cultural capital in securing good jobs. Hartmann (2000a) for one argues that it is the key to understanding access to elite jobs in Germany.

However, it can also be argued that cultural capital by itself is not enough. The competition for elite jobs is now so intense that elements of personal capital are also required – in a sense, the passport of a credential is no longer enough. This points in turn to personal ability, which Bourdieu associates with ‘habitus’. Côté (2005) has termed such ability ‘identity capital’; Brown and Hesketh (2004) speak of ‘personal capital’. Côté (2005) emphasises the psycho-social nature of this personal form of capital. He argues that, in the present context of individualisation, ‘people are confronted with the task of planning their life course which include determining their own values and beliefs’ (2005, 225): these are primarily identity tasks. In undertaking this work, the individual can draw on at least two sets of resources: ‘agentic capacities such as internal locus of control, self-esteem and a sense of purpose in life’ (2005, 226) which can help in reflecting on the best course of action; and social capital networks through which people can benefit from each other’s psychosocial skills in negotiating a way through life. It might also be added that people may learn these skills, as well as the tastes and manners necessary to gain a job, from their social networks. Arguably it is these aspects of identity capital that give rise to the strategies that different kinds of graduates may adopt in seeking a job (Brown and Hesketh 2004).

These concepts enable us to understand how the interrelations between HE and labour markets work in the age of globalisation. At the institutional level, rigging and ranking, through the notion of reputation or renown, may give graduates of renowned institutions a head start in the recruitment process, while those with top grades from the same institutions may also have a head start in the form of higher ranking by recruiters. At the same time, social class plays a part in constructing both classed institutions and at the personal level by providing access to social capital networks. From a comparative perspective, the question to be raised is whether rigging and ranking at the institutional and personal levels work in similar ways in different countries to privilege the already privileged in obtaining jobs.

A general hypothesis that can be made about the relationship between fields, rigging and ranking is that in some HE fields, the structural position of a university will be more significant for the distribution of resources, and hence for allowing gains through rigging and ranking, than in other HE fields. Furthermore, where the institution’s structural position is less significant, personal or identity capital will take on greater importance.

Having outlined some of the key mechanisms that can be used in the context of fields, we should note that the form that competition for credentials takes may change as the division of labour changes. For example, Brown, Lauder, and Ashton (2011) have argued that the professional middle class is being fragmented by changes in the division of labour, which are due in part to the social use of technology, and related to economic globalisation. In particular, they argue that the competition for talent in which MNCs engage, coupled with the routinisation of much knowledge work (which the authors call ‘digital

taylorism'), is creating divisions within the middle class. This has the consequence of intensifying the positional competition for credentials, since MNCs only recruit from a small group of elite universities in each country.

But if this is the case, then how this intensified competition plays out in different countries' HE and labour market fields would be a matter for empirical analysis. Even so, the theoretical constructs of rigging and ranking may prove fruitful in guiding such comparative empirical analyses.

Having outlined a theoretical framework, we can now consider how it can be applied in an analysis of the German and British fields. The reason for this particular comparison is that, while the fields in these two countries show historical similarities in their construction, there are also significant differences which suggest that social class privilege will be reproduced in different ways in the two countries.

3. An analysis of economic globalisation and the HE and labour market fields in regard to social inequality in Germany and Britain

I now turn to a first comparative outline of two countries, Germany and Britain, with reference to the theoretical assertions made so far. For a better understanding of these instances, it is useful to look at the history of their respective HE systems.

3.1. Phases of HEI development in Germany and England and overview of theoretical concepts of HEI differentiation

It can be argued that there are some parallels between the development of the English and German HEI systems in the post-war period. However, English and German universities have different traditions in regard to their relationships to the state, which are now challenged by transnational and international reforms in the HE sector (e.g. the Bologna Process). A significant feature of English universities has been their autonomy in admissions and in awarding degrees (Eurydice [2006] 2007), which led to differential prestige. In contrast, German universities were state-controlled, with the state mandating rules for admissions and the awarding of degrees. The system was consequently characterised by homogeneity, and the universities had equal status.

Despite this difference, the systems of institution created in the 1950s to 1960s in England, and starting in the 1970s in Germany, were similar: a binary system was established in both countries. In England, colleges of advanced technology and polytechnics were established in addition to the RUs; In Germany the 'universities of applied sciences' (UAS; *Fachhochschulen*) were developed (Arum, Gamoran, and Shavit 2007). In both countries, the binary system created hierarchies. In England the hierarchy hinged mainly on prestige and was expressed in slightly higher costs per university student than per advanced-level polytechnic student, and in the likelihood of higher future

earnings for university graduates than polytechnic graduates (Egerton and Halsey 1993). In Germany, RUs were at the top and UAS at a lower hierarchical level, based on different admission criteria, different degrees leading to different levels of qualification for public service positions with different salaries. Admission to an RU requires the *Abitur*, the highest leaving certificate in the stratified German secondary school system. Alternative means of access to RUs are quantitatively insignificant. In contrast, the UAS accept a lower school leaving certificate from a type of secondary school (called *Fachschule*) which focuses more on vocational content.

The creation of the new HEIs can be described as a policy of differentiation. With additional kinds of universities, participation in the tertiary sector increased but the effect on social class inequality is nonetheless widely debated (Arum, Gamoran, and Shavit 2007; Breen and Jonsson 2005; Jonsson, Mills, and Müller 1996; Shavit and Blossfeld 1993). In Germany, the UAS consistently admitted a greater proportion of students from working class backgrounds than the RUs (Duru-Bellat, Kieffer, and Reimer 2008). A social survey of students revealed that, in 1997, those from lower social backgrounds comprised 20% of the student body at UAS and 11% at RUs; in 2006, the respective proportions remained 19% and 11%.

Following Brint and Karabel (1989), who documented the class division between those attending community colleges in contrast to those attending universities in the USA, we might speak of a diversion of the working classes in Germany from RUs to UAS. Nevertheless, several UAS degrees lead to well-compensated jobs in Germany. Since traditional courses of study at UAS are generally more employment-related, more practical, and shorter than RU study courses, they might suggest an affinity with working class milieus and values. In sum, the creation of the UAS, and hence of institutional differentiation, could be seen to offer a small chance for broader social recruitment, but it remains arguable that they also diverted the working classes from RU education.

As another explanation for underrepresentation of the working class in universities, Powell and Solga in this volume and Mayer, Müller, and Pollak (2007) propose that the well-established German dual system of vocational education is an attractive alternative for working-class students. Notably, the overrepresentation of the upper and middle classes in all HEIs is also an effect of the significant increase in women's enrolment (Zimmer, Krimmer, and Stallmann 2007, 61). Throughout the HEI system, the social variation in recruitment by subject, which is crucial for future opportunities, is also significant. Becker, Haunberger, and Schubert (2010) provide empirical evidence that the persistence of horizontal inequality of fields of study depends on eligible individuals' social origins. Horizontal inequality here means that students of different subjects vary in their social backgrounds: for example, medical students are more likely to come from professional middle class backgrounds than sociology students. These findings conform to Bourdieu's and Passeron's observations in French universities in the 1960s.

3.2. *The changing stratification of HE and of the labour market in Germany*

In 1998 in Germany, as part of the creation of the European Higher Education Area (the so-called Bologna Process), new courses of study and the BA and MA degrees were introduced in both RUs and UAS. The new unified courses and degrees were intended to replace almost all former courses and degrees, which had been specific to the type of institution, by 2010. The crucial dimension of the BA and MA degrees is that all BA recipients, regardless of the conferring institution, qualify for admission to MA courses, and all MAs, except those that require a state examination, such as law and medicine, are equivalent for purposes of public service salary classification,² regardless of conferring institution (IMK and KMK 2007).

In short, the reform of academic degrees has dissolved the strict division between the two kinds of HEIs, which could be seen as a step towards unification under a common framework. But a second dimension of the new courses of study adds a graduation hierarchy, since admission to MA courses now requires a BA degree.

In Germany, the introduction of BA and MA degrees and the resulting hierarchy of courses of study convey at least three ambivalent signals about social recruitment. First, BA courses might be attractive to the working classes based on the rational choice perspective because of their shorter duration, and hence lower costs, compared to the obsolescent *Diplom* and *Magister* degrees. However, an empirical study of students who participated in surveys in 2002, 2004 and 2005 revealed the opposite trend: most students from working class backgrounds were sceptical and insecure about employer acceptance of the BA (Kretschmann 2008). Second, working class students might be repelled by increased costs since an MA usually takes longer to complete than the traditional *Diplom* or *Magister*. Furthermore, since the distinction between the BA and MA implies higher employment remuneration for MAs, and since students in MA courses face additional admission requirements and selection processes carried out by faculty who mainly belong to the upper and middle classes, Bourdieu's analysis of the impact of habitus in selection processes suggests that working class students might be diverted into BA and excluded from MA courses. Third, the fact both RUs and UAS offer BA and MA degrees might be seen as an opportunity for the working classes to obtain a higher degree at institutions that are more 'familiar' with reference to their habitus, avoiding the higher admission criteria at RUs. Another troubling constraint might be the increasing number of grammar school leaving certificate (*Abitur*) holders in UAS, which might squeeze out those who hold lower secondary school leaving certificates: already more than half of UAS students have the *Abitur*, which is an RU entrance qualification (Eurydice 2005), which might squeeze out those who hold lower secondary school leaving certificates.

In sum, the chance of increasing equality through the introduction of BA and MA degrees seems slim since the employment sector prefers MA graduates, and UAS increasingly enrol students holding the *Abitur*, who are mainly from the upper and middle classes due to the highly stratified secondary school system in Germany.

In regard to the theoretical framework outlined in Section 2 above, at least three points emerge from the German case. First, we need to understand not only social class but also gender in relation to access to HE. Second, we need to see that, in Germany, not only the university attended is significant, but also the type of degree pursued. Finally, there is the issue of how to delineate the concept of field in relation to mechanisms of inequality. This is raised with reference to the German case by Powell and Solga in this issue, and by Mayer, Müller, and Pollak's (2007) observation that the relative attractiveness of the dual system has provided a path for working class students which may have diverted them from the HE sector. To the extent that it has, their low levels of participation in HE need to be understood in terms of factors outside as well as inside the HE field. As we will see in the next section, working class students in Britain, which has a far less developed vocational education system, have tended to go to low-ranked universities.

In Germany, the approximate equality in reputation among RUs has led German MNCs and national champions to recruit from a much larger pool of universities. For example, Hartmann (2000a) reports that the top 100 executives in Germany came from about 22 out of 50 universities. This is a far wider spread of sources of top managers than could be expected in the UK, according to research by Brown, Lauder, and Ashton (2011).

Hartmann's study suggests that the mechanisms for the reproduction of privilege may have more to do with individual cultural capital than with the reputation of the university. In this connection he notes two points: that the RUs are dominated by students from the professional middle classes, and that employees in privileged jobs are drawn from a wide range of RUs. This leads him to infer that recruitment to elite positions has been on the basis of character or – Hartmann uses Bourdieu's term – habitus. It is the class background of German graduates that gives them an appropriate habitus to enable them to enter privileged occupations. In this respect, social capital connections between universities and the labour market may have been of far less significance than in England or even France, as described in Hartmann's study. In regard to France, Hartmann (2000b) quotes Barsoux and Lawrence:

In most countries, educational pedigree is simply an entry ticket into a company. But in France it is an employment passport which often constitutes an assurance for life (a so-called *rente éducative*). (249)

In this case, the degree to which personal or identity capital needs to be employed will depend upon the degree of congestion in the labour market for

graduates. If there is intensified competition for these positions, then clearly personal capital may be germane to understanding why some among the professional middle class are hired rather than others.

Another factor that would need to be taken into consideration in understanding the nature of recruitment in the German labour market is suggested by Pohlmann (2009). His research suggests that, while MNCs may be recruiting from elite universities in many countries, that is not yet the case in Germany because elite universities do not yet exist there. Rather, in a comparative study of the top 100 industrial companies in China in 2005, Japan in 2006 and South Korea in 2008, with case studies from Germany in 2008, Pohlmann finds that so far there has been less circulation of managers among different countries in the study than the 'war for talent' ideology might suggest. Reasons differ: in China many leading companies are state-run and management is occupied by party members, whereas in South Korea family clans are dominant, and in Germany foreigners are recruited as professionals but not in management positions. Hartmann (2009) also shows in his comparative study of the five largest European economies, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy and Spain, and the three largest non-European economies, China, Japan and the USA, that traditional national patterns of recruitment still prevail. These studies suggest that the number of senior positions in Germany is not being narrowed down by a global market for talent, and this fact suggests in turn a further reason why Germany's 'Excellence Initiative' may not lead to the kind of structuring of the HE field found in Britain with respect to the mechanisms of social class recruitment.

To complete this look at Germany, what is significant for the present comparative analysis is that German MNCs have been highly successful in their global strategies without changing their recruitment strategies. In other words, on the basis of past experience, there may be no great impetus to change recruitment strategies. Which begs the question that has already been asked several times: In that case, why was the Excellence Initiative created?

3.3. The changing stratification of HE and the labour market in Britain

Turning to England, we find that, despite changes in the HE system, universities remain heavily stratified by social class. Under the binary system, Egerton and Halsey (1993) analysed the graduates of three years between the mid-1950s and the mid-1980s, and found that members of the service class had an advantage over the intermediate and manual working class in universities, polytechnics and colleges: '[D]espite absolute increases, the service class has maintained its relative advantage in entry to both universities and polytechnics' (187).

Since the 1990s, several far-reaching policies have affected the binary system of HEIs. The most salient, the Further and Higher Education Act of 1992, granted full university status to polytechnics. Since the Education Reform Act of 1988, polytechnics and other colleges had been emancipated from local

authority and made self-governing, along with the younger universities, which had formerly operated under Royal Charter (Eurydice [2006] 2007).

The effects of these reforms on social recruitment and hence equal opportunity are now being critically appraised in Britain. As Cheung and Egerton (2007) note:

While the dissolution of the binary divide was presented as an equalizing or comprehensive strategy, in practice a hierarchy of prestige can be found within the reformed system. (199)

According to the UK's Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), the average proportion of full-time first-year students from low participation neighbourhoods in first degree study courses in 1997 was 13.7% at post-1992 universities and 7.2% at Russell Group universities. In 2007–2008, that proportion was 12.2% at post-1992 universities and 5.7% at Russell Group universities.

Referring to the participation of members of different social classes in different HEIs, David (2007a) concludes: 'The changing landscape of the new universities of the twenty-first century is that they are increasingly stratified by form and content, as well as by types of student, and academic staff or research' (86).

However, while there appear to be similarities in the recent history of the German and British HE systems, there is also one significant difference: the parity or disparity of reputation among the RUs. At the top level of universities, the field has been structured quite differently in the two countries. Where there has been a parity in reputation in Germany, Britain has had a hierarchy with Oxford, Cambridge and the London institutions LSE and Imperial College at the top, followed by the Russell Group of universities. These institutions are also found to be among the most elitist in regard to the social class backgrounds of their students, and the most elite in regard to the reputations they enjoy, which confer additional income premiums on their graduates (Lauder and Brown 2010). However, the German field of RUs may now be undergoing change in response to the German government's assessment of the significance of German universities' research capacity as a key to success in global competition.

In Section 2.5 we raised the question whether the reputation of elite universities confers more privileged access to the labour market. In England this appears to be the case. The changes in innovation and equity policies introduced by the White Paper (2003) do not seem to have fundamentally altered the issues of reputation and privilege: if anything, they will simply have exacerbated the differential in funding between the elite and the other universities while intensifying the positional competition for access to the elite universities, which are monopolised by the professional middle class (Brown and Lauder 2009). However, when we look more closely at how attending elite universities translates into a labour market advantage in England, it becomes clear that informal social capital networks among graduates of elite universities also play a part over and above that of the reputation of the university. In their study of middle class education and occupations, Power et al. (2003)

discuss graduates of elite universities who opted for cosmopolitan careers in London. Their respondents' statements clearly show that social networks are significant to them. This suggests two things: that the alumni of these elite universities have access to social capital networks that can enable them to gain an advantage in the labour market, and that, since many in their study were expecting to change occupations or had done so, these systems of social capital enable them to move across occupations during their careers.

The advantage of attending a university with a high reputation seems to be compounded at the individual level by social capital networks, and by the identity capital that enables individuals to utilise those networks.

3.4. Changing the rules and resources: the global competition for innovation

In both England and Germany, attempts have been made to reconcile the competing goals of improving equity and promoting universities at the cutting edge of global research and innovation. In Britain, the White Paper on 'The Future of Higher Education' (2003) spells out the rationale for the greater concentration of research funding and activities through the RAE (2008), while at the same time seeking additional funds for greater participation in HE and for research through the introduction of tuition fees. Underlying this concern are two assumptions. The first is that top-class concentrated research will produce economic benefits for Britain. However, Brown and Lauder (2006) have argued to the contrary that this central assumption of a magnet economy is doubtful. The second assumption, which follows from the first, is that competition between HEIs is the way to achieve greater research capacity. An influence of neo-liberalism in policy thinking is indicated by the idea of competition as a way of increasing research concentration, and by the idea that because individuals can expect benefits from a university education, should pay fees as a contribution towards those future benefits.

In Germany, the mechanisms for creating world-class departments or areas within universities are different, but there are similarities in the introduction of tuition fees. Central to the effort to promote world-class research is the Excellence Initiative (*Exzellenzvereinbarung, ExV*). In 2005, the federal government broke with the tradition of distributing research funds equally as part of the basic budget for RUs. State and federal governments joined in launching the Excellence Initiative, which was aimed at creating elite universities and improving university education and research in the sciences and humanities generally (*Bund-Länder-Vereinbarung 2005*). From 2006 through 2011, a total of €1.9 billion was allocated – three-fourths of it by the state governments and one-fourth by the federal government – to fund three arms of the programme: (1) graduate schools; (2) Clusters of Excellence, which promote cooperation among at least 25 scientists; and (3) institutional strategies for promoting elite universities.

To date, nine of the 104 RUs have received 58% of the total funding available through all three programmes (WR 2008). The distribution by subject groups is very uneven: 'Almost a third of the projects selected for the first and second lines of funding were projects in the life sciences (biology and medicine)' (WR 2008). The vast majority of graduate schools and Clusters of Excellence are found in engineering and the natural sciences, while the humanities and social sciences are the 'big losers', as Hartmann bitterly remarked (2006, 450). In 2009, the federal government and the *Länder* decided to continue the Excellence Initiative until 2017 and increased its financing by 30% to €2.7 billion.

In contrast to England, undergraduates in Germany are not charged tuition fees. Tuition fees were introduced for MA courses in 2005, however, after a lively public debate, trade union protests and a constitutional court decision (Ertl 2005) that left the question of fees up to the *Länder*. Six of the 16 *Länder* currently charge tuition fees (Heine, Quast, and Spangenberg 2008). They are also free to design differentiated fee schedules. At the moment, no *Land* charges more than €500 per semester or €1000 per year. The court's decision aimed for social inclusion in stipulating that students from lower income backgrounds not be deterred. As in England, all students are offered loans, at interest, to be repaid after leaving university and generally after an additional deferment period (Heine, Quast, and Spangenberg 2008).

The distinctions caused by unequal research funding and institutional ranking may have economic and cultural effects on equality of opportunity. Institutions may convert advantages in funding and reputation into qualitative advantages by attracting high-achieving students and researchers. Higher tuition fees may bring an additional economic advantage. Studies on the effects of the Excellence Initiative in Germany demonstrate how discourses lead to the social creation of what is called an excellence or academic elite (Hartmann 2006; Münch 2007).

International competition and political priorities have led to the concentration of excellence, creating a self-reinforcing process. The crucial effect is the accumulation of advantages by faculty who already enjoy them. As Maher and Treteault note:

The term excellence is employed not so much as a mark of quality as a mark of privilege – that is, the power of elites to control the norms of the scholarly enterprise in such a way as to keep new people, new topics, and new methodologies at bay. (cited in David 2007b, 682)

It could be argued that the enhanced funding and reputation of these nine universities will lead to the construction of a hierarchy among the RUs. In this respect Germany is an interesting case to observe because there may be countervailing factors that need to be considered in analysing the national fields. The first is that the field of HE graduates in Germany may not be as congested as that in Britain, because Germany has not engaged in the kind of massive

expansion of HE that can be seen in Britain. In 2008, approximately 28% of the workforce between the ages of 30 and 35 had a tertiary qualification, technical college certificates included. This suggests that the positional competition may not be so intense that students feel they have to compete to enter one of the nine Excellence Initiative universities. A second factor is that there may be strongly held cultural views that could tend to keep the RUs relatively equal in reputation. In this respect, the field of HE may be influenced by factors external to it. Brown, Green, and Lauder (2001, 100) comments that Germany's 'relatively even dispersal of skills [...] and the drive towards "equality of productive capacity" supported by all the social partners [...] as an essential basis of social solidarity and competitiveness' are crucial. Following this view, Germany's traditionally more egalitarian system might for these reasons resist the possible tendency of the Excellence Initiative to lead towards the intensification of positional competition. Accordingly, Streeck (2009, 3) emphasises the analysis of 'capitalism as an institutionalised social order' in order to bring cultural dimensions of capitalism back into account. Thus, in applying the concept of fields we may need to consider demographics and underlying national cultural values that permeate the HE field, and the role of vocational education, which is ostensibly outside the HE field.

4. Conclusion

The comparison between Britain and Germany has identified two issues for further consideration in the development of the theoretical framework outlined in Section 2. First, in comparing these two HE and labour market fields, it is clear that the search for causal mechanisms that produce inequalities benefits from an analysis of the levels at which these mechanisms can be seen to operate. In Britain, the structural field of HE has given rise to mutually reinforcing mechanisms at the institutional and individual levels that produce social class inequalities. Graduates from elite universities seem to have a triple advantage: the reputation of the university, social capital networks, and personal or identity capital. In this regard, further research would be worth pursuing on the way in which elite universities in Britain serve to enhance the confidence and interpersonal skills of graduates.

In Germany, on the other hand, where RUs have so far enjoyed more equal reputations, Hartmann's (2000a) study suggests that the RUs may have little effect in fostering these capacities. How social class operates with respect to recruitment in Germany needs to be understood at the structural level of the whole education system, including elementary, secondary and vocational education as well as the tertiary sector, not simply at the institutional level. This in turn implies the necessity of analysing the educational system as a classed system, as Bourdieu and Passeron have suggested. The other side of this coin is that the culture of companies, and sectors within companies, also needs to be taken into account to understand how talent is defined and socially

constructed. However, it remains to be seen whether the Excellence Initiative will fundamentally alter the structure of the German HE field so that institutions also play a part in producing inequalities. In these respects the framework can be seen as a fruitful way of understanding the mechanisms producing inequality and as a guide to the development of further hypotheses.

The second issue that the comparison between Germany and Britain raises is that the theoretical framework needs to account for additional dimensions of the production of inequality. These include the demographics of HE participation and national cultural values that may permeate the field, and raise further questions about the changing role of HE in society, as reflected for example in the decreasing autonomy of universities and the status hierarchy of subjects studied. With regard to the labour market, meanwhile, there are hypotheses to be formulated concerning the interests, cultures and forms of symbolic and material violence within and between companies in any given labour market field that favour the recruitment of some rather than others. These forces need to be analysed in greater detail. The task now is to develop and apply this framework to other countries to see how useful it is for an understanding of the production of inequalities.

Overall, it is hoped that these theoretical resources and the relationships that have been outlined between them may guide the comparative analysis of responses to globalisation, the organisation of HE and the labour market in regard to their impact on social inequality.

Notes

1. Since the author could not get hold of a copy of the German edition (1981) *Titel und Stelle Über die Reproduktion sozialer Macht* in which a collection of Bourdieu's, Boltanski's, Saint Martin's and Maldivier's work is edited and translated by Helmut Köhler, Beate Kraus, Achim Leschinsky and Gottfried Pfeffer, references here are only to Bourdieu 2005.
2. In Germany, salaries in public services are governed by state and federal law. Educational degrees are one of the many factors which determine how much a public employee earns.

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