

Call for Papers for the Special Issue (German/English):

## **Private higher education in Germany: dynamics - potentials - tensions**

Since the early 2000s, a profound transformation of the German higher education and science system can be observed: **Private universities** have developed - initially largely unnoticed by higher education research - from a **marginal phenomenon** to an **integral part** of the German higher education landscape. One in four universities is now privately funded. Their share is growing rapidly, particularly in the university of applied sciences sector, and there, they are also becoming increasingly important for students: in the 1990s, just over one percent of all first-year students enrolled at a private university of applied sciences; now this share is one in three (Autor:innengruppe Bildungsbericht 2024).

Not only the quantitative growth is remarkable, but also the fact that private higher education has the potential to have a **structural impact** due to their in many respects different characteristics: Private universities in Germany appear to function less as elitist places of education, but can open up the higher education system to traditionally underrepresented groups - including people without traditional higher education entrance qualifications, those with vocational qualifications or those who have moved up the educational ladder. At the same time, they are taking on a leading role in the academization of professional fields.

Despite these dynamics, private universities have long been a largely unexplored field in research. No systematic knowledge has been compiled about their organizational structures, their governance, the educational and employment biographies of their students or their social function. As more and more research projects have been dealing with the topic in recent years, the planned special issue of the Contributions to Higher Education Research (Beiträge zur Hochschulforschung) aims to close this gap and to take a closer look at private universities in Germany from different disciplinary and methodological perspectives.

Possible topics include - but are not limited to:

- Educational biographies, career pathways, social background, study motives and academic success of students at private universities
- Opportunities for access and potential for inclusion: (How) is it possible to open up to (which) new target groups?
- Organizational development, management, financing and governance of private universities
- Innovation potential in teaching, didactics, degree program development or research
- Role of private universities in the academization of new professional fields
- Social functions and positioning in the context of the higher education system
- Specific developments in the university of applied sciences sector
- Political, legal and regulatory framework conditions
- International comparative perspectives and their transferability to the German context
- Staff structure, recruitment and development at private universities
- Transfer and third mission at private universities

We welcome manuscripts of different orientation and length in German or English: research articles (quantitative or qualitative studies), research notes and insights into practice. Details on the formats can be found in the “guidelines for authors” (<https://www.bzh.bayern.de/en/guidelines-for-authors>).

If you are interested, please submit an **abstract** (max. 600 words) by **September 14, 2025**, including your intended article format. All proposed topics will be evaluated by the editors board with regard to their suitability for the planned themed issue. Authors will receive feedback in **early October 2025**; the deadline for submission of complete manuscripts is **December 15, 2025**. Authors will be notified of the result of the double-blind review by mid/end March 2026; revised manuscripts must then be received by the end of May 2026. Publication will take place in **February 2027** in the issue 1/2027 of Contributions to Higher Education Research.

### **About the Journal:**

The journal Contributions to Higher Education Research is one of the leading academic journals in the field of higher education research in the German-speaking area, publishing papers in German and English. The journal is characterised by high-quality standards, a broad range of topics, wide coverage and gold standard open access. The scientific and practical relevance as well as the diversity of disciplines and approaches are its hallmarks. It is aimed at academics conducting research on higher education-related topics, political decision-makers, and staff in higher education administrations, ministries and public administrations as well as higher education and science organisations. All articles that are considered for publication undergo a review process by independent reviewers (double-blind).

The editors of this special issue are **Antje Buche** (Professor of Social Sciences with a focus on Sociology at the European Distance Learning University Hamburg) and **Sandra Buchholz** (Professor of Quantitative Life Course Sociology at Leibniz University Hannover and Head of the Department “Educational Trajectories and Employment” at the German Center for Higher Education Research and Science Studies; member of the authors' group National Education Report Leibniz University Hannover/ German Center for Higher Education Research and Science Studies). Together they are researching students at non-state universities in the BMFTR joint project “TypeS”.

**Please submit your papers via E-mail in German or English:** [beitraege@ihf.bayern.de](mailto:beitraege@ihf.bayern.de)

If you have any queries, please contact the editors at: [beitraege@ihf.bayern.de](mailto:beitraege@ihf.bayern.de)

### **Schedule:**

Submission of abstracts:	September 14, 2025
Feedback:	October 2, 2025
Submission of full manuscripts:	December 15, 2025
Review results:	End of March 2026
Submission of final manuscripts:	End of May 2026
Release (Online and print):	Q1/2027



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