

Studium generale come pars pro toto dell'università e le sue amorfe trasformazioni

On the *studium generale* as *pars pro toto* of the university and its amorphous transformations

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OPEN ACCESS

Siped
Società Italiana di Pedagogia

Double blind peer review

Citation: Casale, R. & Molzberger, G. (2025). On the *studium generale* as *pars pro toto* of the university and its amorphous transformations. *Pedagogia oggi*, 23(1), 26-33.
<https://doi.org/10.7346/PO-012025-03>

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Journal Homepage
<https://ojs.pensamultimedia.it/index.php/siped>

Pensa MultiMedia / ISSN 2611-6561
<https://doi.org/10.7346/PO-012025-03>

ABSTRACT

Our contribution considers the *studium generale* as a *pars pro toto* of the university. The analysis aims at the epistemological and education-political significance attributed to the *studium generale* in the context of the changed self-understanding of the university and its societal function. Our reconstruction emphasizes its polyvalent direction, the epistemological preconditions for the various shapes it may take on, and the education-political negotiation processes, which also form the basis of curriculum implementations. The function of the *studium generale* varied during different phases of the history of university; it experienced a renaissance after World War and in the wake of the Bologna Process. We specify our analyses of the education-political significance of the *studium generale* in the Federal Republic of Germany after 1945 by way of a serial analysis of political recommendations and assessments in the period 1945-2015.

Il contributo esamina lo *studium generale* come *pars pro toto* dell'università, concentrandosi sul significato epistemologico e politico-educativo attribuitogli in una fase storica in cui l'idea stessa di università è stata oggetto di un profondo processo di revisione. La ricostruzione mette in luce l'orientamento polivalente dello *studium generale*, le premesse epistemologiche che ne rendono possibili le diverse configurazioni, nonché i processi di negoziazione politico-educativa che ne accompagnano l'attuazione curricolare in ambito accademico. La prima parte del contributo ricostruisce il diverso significato assunto storicamente dallo *studium generale*; in una seconda parte si rivolge l'attenzione alla sua rinascita nel secondo dopoguerra e alla sua istituzionalizzazione curricolare in seguito al Processo di Bologna.

Al centro dell'indagine è posto il significato politico-educativo assunto dallo *studium generale* nella Repubblica Federale di Germania nel periodo successivo al 1945, attraverso un'analisi seriale delle raccomandazioni e delle valutazioni politiche elaborate tra il 1945 e il 2015.

Keywords: *studium generale*, general education, adult education, university reform, university history

Parole chiave: *studium generale*, formazione generale, formazione continua, riforma universitaria, storia dell'università

Received: April 10, 2025

Accepted: June 11, 2025

Published: June 30, 2025

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Introduction

From an education-historical perspective, our contribution considers the *studium generale* a *pars pro toto* of the university. Our analysis aims at the epistemological and education-political significance attributed to the *studium generale* in the context of the changed self-understanding of the university and its societal function. Our reconstruction emphasizes its polyvalent direction, the epistemological preconditions for the various shapes it may take on, and the education-political negotiation processes, which also form the basis of curriculum implementations¹.

By a first step (1), as an introduction we deal with the function of the *studium generale* during the first phase of the history of universities and at the time when the university took shape in the modern age; by a second step (2), in terms of intellectual and social history we deal with the renaissance of the *studium generale* after World War II and its new function in the wake of the Bologna Process; by a third step (3) we specify our analyses of the education-political significance of the *studium generale* in the Federal Republic of Germany after 1945 by way of a serial analysis of political recommendations and assessments in the period 1945-2015. For the concluding remarks we bring the crucial insights of our analysis together.

Our analysis starts out most of all from an exemplary reconstruction of the meaning and function of the *studium generale* in the German context. Given the European context of the history of universities, however, the results of our investigation become relevant to such a degree that they go beyond the purely national realm. They point out to trends, which would have to be assessed rather from a transnational or global perspective.

1. The *studium generale* as propaedeutics and as a foundation

In the late Middle Ages the *studium generale* meant all university studies, thus delimiting them from other paths of education. It was distinguished from the *studium particulare* and the *studium provinciale* as well as from the *artes liberales*, as the propaedeutics of the university (Huber, 1992). Initially, the *studium generale* referred to the community of the scholars and later of teachers and students. The term had most of a legal meaning. For the students, their matriculation for the *studium generale* changed the students' legal status and was a costly thing.

The idea of the *studium generale* was gained from propaedeutics of the Aristotelian kind. It could be understood in the sense of general education, because the teaching of the arts included the foundations of science and knowledge in those subjects, which were relevant for the practice, such as rhetoric (Schuh, 2023). At the Arts Faculty of the seven liberal arts it meant the "preliminary education" for studies at the three higher-ranking faculties qualifying for a profession (theology, jurisprudence, medicine).

If in the Late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Age the *studium generale* was tied to the propaedeutic function of the *artes liberales*. With the arts faculties becoming independent in the course of the 18th century to form the philosophical faculty, its epistemic status changed. By the Prussian Law on Universities, propaedeutic general education was shifted to secondary school, and the meaning of general education was connected, in the sense of Idealism, to Immanuel Kant's understanding of science as the art of the systems or as an organically structured whole. Thus, the possibility of human education was linked to the systematic kind of knowledge (Städtler, 2023). In the 19th century, in terms of conception the *studium generale* formed the core idea of modern university, which had paradigmatically taken its institutional shape by the founding of the University of Berlin (1809-1810). Texts which ideally form the basis of the concept of the University of Berlin, such as I. Kant's *Streit der Fakultäten* (1798), J. G. Fichte's *Vorlesungen über die Bestimmung des Gelehrten* (1794), F. W. J. Schellings *Studium Generale. Vorlesungen über die Methode des akademischen Studiums* (1802), F. E. E. Schleiermacher's *Gelegentliche Gedanken über Universitäten im deutschen Sinn* (1808), attribute the nature of a *studium generale* to philosophy, by considering philosophy the transcendental grammar of all science. According to the understanding of Idealism, philosophy

1 The research project 'Studium Generale in der BRD nach 1945 (The *studium generale* in the FRG after 1945)' was funded by Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG), in the form of aid in kind. Project No.: 351258276.

– understood as *studium generale* – means the uni-(ty) of the faculties (-versitas, from Lat. *vertere*, to turn, to turn around, to sweep).

2. The *studium generale* as an antidote, a supplement, a compensation

Authors such as Karl Jaspers or Theodor Litt, who considered the *studium generale* an antidote, a remedy for a university, which was physically and intellectually down, referred to the tradition of neo-humanism. However, equalling the *studium generale* and philosophy had lost its immediacy not only after 1945. Since long, philosophy had no longer been considered the common epistemological foundation and guarantor of the transcendental unity of the sciences (on this see Husserl, 1934/1937).

The restitution of the modern idea of the university happened in the post-war era, in the mode of interdisciplinary remembrance. After 1945 the *studium generale* served as a kind of self-assurance of *universitas*, as a “precarious supplement” of the general, at a time “which could not be zeroed” (Haverkamp, 2023). As a replacement for the lost unity, the *studium generale* was supposed to be organised as an interdisciplinarily communicated kind of interdisciplinarity. For this purpose, it was organised by specific programmes at university, connected to certain forms of life – such as the *Collegium Academicum* in Freiburg im Breisgau (1946-1948) or at the *Leibniz-Kolleg* in Tübingen (since 1947) – and discussed in the context of the founding of interdisciplinary scientific journals. Paradigmatic in this context is the journal *Studium generale; Zeitschrift für die Einheit der Wissenschaften im Zusammenhang ihrer Begriffsbildungen und Forschungsmethoden*, terminated in 1971 under the title *Studium Generale. Zeitschrift für interdisziplinäre Studien*.

When it came to education policy, immediately after the end of the war the Allies attempted to reorient the educational system in the context of the so called re-education programmes. An important role in this process played the *Studienausschuss für Hochschulreform* (1948), established by the British occupation forces, which worked out the so called *Blaues Gutachten* (Blue Report). The Blue Report counted also the subject-specific and political-social education of adults among the democratising tasks of the university, whose reestablishment was oriented at models from Scandinavia and Great Britain. Scientists returning from exile also demanded the theoretical and practical inclusion of adult education into university (such as Fritz Borinski; on this see Friedenthal-Haase, 2023) as an element of an appropriate university reform. However, neither the Blue Report nor education-political appeals to the intellectual responsibility of the universities had much effect (Casale, 2023; Molzberger, 2023).

In the 1970s there happens the transition from a philosophy-grounded understanding of the *studium generale* as the unity of the sciences (Litt, 1953; Derbolav, 1960) to its interdisciplinary interpretation. The cause of the *studium generale* was adopted by the programmes of didactics of the sciences and university didactics (Mollenhauer, 1969; Saß, 1970; for the later development see Nieke, Freytag-Loringhoven, 2015, among others).

In terms of the history of knowledge there happens a shift for which the term *scientification of society and socialisation of university* may be appropriate (Casale, Molzberger, 2023). It questions the idealistic understanding of science the neo-humanist idea of the university was based on. This shift which, if certain aspects (the unity of the sciences, the unity of research and teaching) are taken into consideration, is somewhat a turning point, did not happen immediately after World War II but only in the course of the 1960s.

A number of different social and education policy factors contributed to the development of a new constellation: the so called economic miracle, the social opening of the university, the growing politicisation of the students. In terms of the history of knowledge, this shift can be connected to the natural sciences becoming more application-oriented, to a growing significance of the social sciences, and not least to a culturalization of the humanities. At the beginning of the 1990s the politicisation of the university, the establishing of the mass university, is followed by the introduction of the “competition paradigm” (Mayer, 2019, p. 109). University reforms were replaced by evaluation processes, the university’s classical claim to liberty is domesticated by an orientation at the criterion of efficiency. By the introduction of the competition paradigm the territorial rooting of the university gains a specific meaning (Clark, 1998) which at first sight has contradicting effects: provincialisation on the one hand, increased internationalisation on the other.

In terms of the history of institutions, due to privatisation, market orientation, and competitive principles of the educational system, which here can just be sketched by the terms accountability and output-orientation, there happens a shift of educational spaces, a differentiation and expansion of the realm of the university. E. g. the German slogan of the equivalence of vocational and general education attempts to semantically pacify the thus connected distortions when it comes to the validity and recognition of educational qualifications which in the 1970s had been socially established as standardised kinds of knowledge according to the vocation principle. It is important that the generalist aspect of professionalism or modern vocation is replaced by generic skills for any possible purpose of the labour market. Any professional relevance of studies is reinterpreted as academic education immediately enabling for the labour market. Between 1993 and 2000 the consolidation of the concept of the “autonomised competitive university” (Bartz, 2007, p. 185) culminates by the Bologna Process (Perrotti 2010; Capano, Regini, Turri, 2016; Vögtle 2019).

During this period, the debate on the *studium generale* is characterised by the process of the Europeanisation of the educational system and by education policy. Concerning the steering of universities, the Paris Declaration of 1998 served as the basis of a restructuring and adjustment of the structures of studying, thus marking a crucial turning point of the history of university (Schriewer, 2007). The Bologna Declaration, the thus introduced consecutive studying, and the thus concluding far-reaching reform of studying may be considered the definite institutionalisation of the turning point which between 1966 and 1968 had developed as the de-institutionalisation of the Humboldtian unity of research and teaching. Concerning this phase of consolidation, which is most of all characterised by the abandoning of diploma degrees and the introduction of a new, European (transnational) university space, the concept of competence is being curricularised and sanctioned by way of accreditation procedures.

The initiated reforms were continued in the years to follow – also with unintended consequences (Capano, Regini, Turri, 2016). As a result of a number of legal measures, the model of an autonomised competitive university, which had taken shape as an alternative to the Humboldtian model of previous years, improves its image: the Federalism Reform (2006), the Excellence Initiative (2005-2006), and the Excellence Strategy (2017-2018). These measures serve for the improvement of the competitiveness of the university at the regional, national and international level altogether.

Each according to context, the self-contradicting legitimations of the *studium generale* attribute an optimising (in the form of a facultative, extra-curricular offer) or a compensatory function (e. g. during the initial phase of studying) to it. The statement “Governance regime in crisis” (Wissenschaftsrat, 2023) seems to announce a new phase of the steering of education and science which questions its previous premises, although its principles must still be negotiated.

3. On the education-political legitimation of the *studium generale* after 1945

The material of our research on the education-political legitimation of the *studium generale* in the FRG after 1945 consists of expert reports and recommendations for the reform of universities. Such documents articulate neither theoretical positions nor do they include concrete institutional measures, but they formulate proposals, give hints. They are not meant for giving reasons but must be convincing, and they are of a marked rhetoric nature. Accordingly, they were analysed in view of the thus stated action requirements and the statements they make implicitly and contextually. The contextualisation of the calls to action made by the reports was concluded on by way of figures of speech which, diachronically seen, change or appear subsequently. These topoi have a three-fold function: they must start out from the present, must keep the tradition, and must evoke the future. To grasp this three-fold function, the texts were serially analysed². The topos analysis of the *studium generale* to give reasons for the reform of universities referred

2 The expert reports were at first chronologically organised, and the following features were grasped in tabular form: year of publication/period covered by the document, historical context of the document, publishing institution and authors, institutional tasking, document title (literal), formal structure of the text, the topoi of reason-giving for university reform, topical foci of the *studium generale* in the form of keywords, explicit relevance of the *studium generale* within the document. This way, the basic features of a total of 43 documents were assessed and made into an overview. To emphasize those sta-

to the following elements: the articulation of social and political motives, the idea of the university or the *studium generale* resp., the attribution of social functions, the speaking position, the addressees, the intended effect, the discursive strategy, the taking into consideration or disregarding of conventions.

The synchronous, phase-specific analysis of the political documents happened while considering the analysis-guiding pars-pro-toto thesis. The context of the elaborations on the *studium generale* was considered in two-fold ways: on the one hand, the *studium generale* was considered within the context of university reform. From this there concludes that also expert reports were included into the analysis which indeed do not mention the *studium generale*, although its intentions find expression for example in interdisciplinary study courses or are replaced by labour market-relevant scientific further education. On the other hand, for the sake of interpreting the topics stated by the reports it was necessary to reconstruct the intended effect in the sense of offering solutions for problems.

For the presentation of the analysis results we refer to structuring the period under research into four historical phases: 1st phase: the *studium generale* after World War II (1945-1964); 2nd phase: the *studium generale* during the period of extending and democratising the universities (1964-1977); 3rd phase: the *studium generale* at the mass university (1977-1993); 4th phase: the *studium generale* in the context of the Bologna Reform (1993-2015).

Following Hermann Heimpel, the 1st phase, from 1945 to 1964, may be called the period of “retaining and complementing” (Heimpel, 1955; Brentano, 1966). During this phase the *studium generale* is much taken into consideration. It is discussed as an effective way of healing the university by help of the triad of research, teaching and educating. Outstanding from all documents is the significance and status the Blue report (1948) attributes to the *studium generale* (Molzberger, 2020). In *Oberaudorfer Besprechungen* (Oberaudorf Talks) (1950) its direction is elevated, by retrospective reference to ambivalent traditions of progressive education or to the paedagogisation of university during the Weimar Republic (Casale, Dingler, 2020) while also attributing, apart from research and teaching, the “*interdisciplinary education of personality or the educational formation of man*” (quoted after Heinemann, 1996, p. 20; Italics in the original) to it. That the location of the *studium generale* within the context of the educational reform was controversial becomes exemplarily obvious from the *Rahmenplan zur Umgestaltung und Vereinheitlichung des allgemeinbildenden öffentlichen Schulwesens* (Framework Plan for the Reorganisation and Standardisation of Public Schooling for General Education) by *Deutscher Ausschuss für das Erziehungs- und Bildungswesen* (German Committee for the Educational System) of 1959. Education is grasped as a “crucial and decisive task of our society” (*ivi*, p. 17). Teachers and economists, researchers and engineers as well as representatives of cultural life agree on evoking the future by way of an extended and reformed educational system. Three passages on the *studium generale* connect it to the unity of the sciences, the specialisation of the individual disciplines or subjects, to the spirit of positivism, to the unity of science, and to the danger of a fragmentation of universities (*ivi*, p. 98), and rooting it in the senior classes of secondary school is suggested (*ivi*, p. 1999). The *Primae* (the two final forms of German grammar schools in those days), it says, “are the place of the *studium generale*, to propaedeutically introduce to the basic ways of scientific insight and thought” (*ivi*, p. 536).

In *Empfehlungen des Wissenschaftsrates zum Ausbau der wissenschaftlichen Einrichtungen* (Recommendations for the Extension of Scientific Institutions) of 1960, the *studium generale* is not explicitly mentioned. The issue of a unity of science, of the reconciliation of the humanities and the natural sciences, has its equivalence by new directions and denominations. The idea of general education or a *studium generale* is on the one hand connected to a Humboldtian ideal of science, on the other hand, more closely than in the Blue Report it is seen as being connected to a methodical debate on one’s own subject and to a new concept of an interdisciplinary setting of priorities (*ivi*, p. 42). The problems stated by the Framework Plan of the German Committee (1959) were answered by the *Wissenschaftsrat* (Council of Science) (1960) not by way of educating students in the mode of a *studium generale* but by a process of opening and democratisation which, it said, was to be realised in the form of supporting second-chance education (*ivi*, p. 16). To cope with the problem of the thus required additional university places, the concept of the

tements as serving for legitimating the *studium generale* in the political expert report, there followed a detailed topos analysis of selected documents.

Gesamthochschule (combination of university and university of applied science) is anticipated, which is recommended at a later stage (1967) (*ivi*, p. 55).

Then, in the follow-up document, the restructuring of the ways of organising science at university is transferred, among others, to “suggestions” for the organisation of new universities. The issue of specialisation appears in the guise of the struggle between the systems of the East and the West, as a consequence of the so called Sputnik Shock. To reconcile specialisation and general education in the natural sciences, the establishment of new chairs exclusively of the history of the natural sciences and technology was recommended. Thus, the *studium generale* is shifted to the disciplines and imagined as the history of the disciplines. Vocation and profession becomes its epistemic horizon.

At a very early stage, during the 2nd phase in 1966, the *Wissenschaftsrat* gives new *Empfehlungen zur Neuordnung des Studiums* (Recommendations for a Reorganisation of Studying). Demands for a democratisation of the educational system are combined with the expansion of the university system. At the same time, along with the development of mass universities, there are considerations on limiting the time of studying. For the first time there are ideas of postgraduate studies and refresher courses, and the unity of research and teaching is questioned (*ivi*, p. 30). The *studium generale* is not explicitly mentioned, its intentions are taken up indirectly and negatively, by asking “what of the multifarious whole of a discipline belongs to the studies of those who are not taking the path to research” (*ivi*, p. 12). It becomes a residual.

After the passing of the *Hochschulrahmengesetz* (Framework Law of Universities) in 1976, during the third phase and with the founding of universities of applied sciences, not the unity of the university but differentiation becomes the guiding topos of the competitive university system. The *studium generale* comes under pressure and is replaced. This becomes more than obvious from the fact that the *Empfehlungen des Wissenschaftsrates zur Weiterbildung* (The Council of Science’s Recommendations for Continuing Education) of 1983 mention is only negatively, according to which the *studium generale* shall not count as scientific further education. As a new (third) core task, further education had already found its way into the Framework Law, apart from research and teaching – instead of education. The actual replacement of the *studium generale* is also connected to the introduction of levelled study courses which, from 1992 on, were also taken up by the *Hochschulrektorenkonferenz* (Standing Committee of University Principals).

Apart from the recommendations by the Council of Science of 1960 and 1966, finally also the *Empfehlungen zur künftigen Rolle der Universitäten im Wissenschaftssystem* (Recommendations for the Future Role of Universities in the Scientific System) of 2006 (*Wissenschaftsrat*, 2006) must be considered to be crucial for an analysis of the *studium generale* as a part of the reform of the universities. They are prototypical for the fourth phase, from 1992 on, when the change of universities is increased by inner and outer factors, i. e. by their institutional structures being organized according to the company model (“Aufbauorganisation” and “Expertenorganisation”) and the support of excellence against the background of “increasingly intensifying international competition” (*ivi*, p. 6). The university’s relations to the outside world are not referred to state or society but to non-university research institutions and to the universities of applied science with whom the universities are considered to compete when it comes to third party funding and research reputation on the one hand and to teaching on the other. Context and point of reference are the so called New Public Management or New Steering with their changed ways of ascribing responsibility and accountability. The *studium generale* can only be identified as being on a kind of retreat, as a demand it is only visible indirectly and implicitly, latently: “Today, as the strategic capacity to act is not only expected from universities but as they are given more and more scope, the mutual indifference of the disciplines can be as little maintained as the fiction of unity” (*ivi*, p. 34). The intention is indirectly and implicitly stated as a part of the guidelines: “The way in which science at a university is done in the form of research and is passed on among the community of teachers and students serves not only the purpose of training the specialist but also of forming the educated citizen of a democratic community who is obliged to the common good” (*ivi*, p. 13), it is no longer made an element of the action-guiding recommendations.

4. Conclusion

Concerning the *pars pro toto* thesis (the *studium generale* as a simulacrum for the university) stated in the course of the analysis, the following results may be stated:

1. Throughout the entire 1st phase (1945-1964) of the analysis the *studium generale* serves as a *remedy*, as an antidote, as a counterpoint of specialisation (in research) on the one hand and for educating towards the lost academic community on the other.
2. Even at the beginning of the 1960s and determinedly during the 2nd phase of the analysis (1964-1977) the idea and shape of the *studium generale* change into being a *residual* from the classical university. Epistemologically, its horizon shifts: from philosophy at first towards history and later towards sociology. This results in the kind of interdisciplinarity which in the course of the 1970s will say goodbye to the preconditions of the idealistic dispute of the faculties.
3. During the 3rd phase (1977-1993) the *studium generale* is still offered as a format with a polyvalent direction. During this phase there happens a reduction of offers of general education and an increase of fine arts as well as of university-didactic offers. The growing polyvalence represents on the one hand the institutional conservation of a programme, on the other hand it represents the political pressure on and replacing of the *studium generale* as a *simulacrum* of the Humboldtian university. In contrast to the university practice, in terms of regulations a clear separation of *studium generale* and further education is enforced.
4. During the final phase of the analysis (1993-2015) a kind of retreat can be stated – among others as a reaction to the Bologna Reform – which finds expression by a *latency*, by an appeal and by the renewed introduction of a general, education-oriented *studium generale* whose idea and format, however, remain only implicit.

The material sketched for our study consists of expert reports and recommendations for the reform of universities in the FRG which are located between giving reasons for a *studium generale* in journals of the scientific discourse and institutional arrangements in the context of concrete programmes at universities. Our paper was also meant for contributing to the history and present of universities beyond the boundaries of educational systems at the level of the national states (Casale, Molzberger, 2023).

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