



Universität Hamburg

DER FORSCHUNG | DER LEHRE | DER BILDUNG

Dieter Lenzen

Welcoming speech to open the European Conference on Educational Research (ECER)

September 2019

Dear State Secretary, Mr. Luft,

Dear President of the European Educational Research Association, Professor O'Hara,

Dear Chairman of the German Educational Research Association, Harm Kuper,

Dear Ms. Lemmens of the Joachim Herz Foundation,

Dear chairs of the local organizing committee, Ingrid Gogolin and Professor Lengyel,

On behalf of Universität Hamburg, I would like to warmly welcome you to the opening of the European Conference on Educational Research 2019.

This year, Universität Hamburg is celebrating its founding 100 years ago. To celebrate the occasion, we have invited members of the Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany, non-university research institutions, and academic associations to host their annual events here, at Universität Hamburg. Throughout the year, we have celebrated our centennial with a formal reception in the Town Hall, a less formal festival on campus, a “summer of knowledge” event, lectures on barges and in football stadiums, and many specialist congresses both large and small. As the president of a comprehensive research university, I should not favor one subject over another, but I have to admit that, as an educationalist, I am especially fond of the European Conference on Educational Research. Added to that, the subject of this year's conference is one that has occupied my thinking for many years: “Education in an era of risk—the role of educational research for the future.” The conference title and the breadth of the program suggest that the role of the educational sciences in combating the crises that sadly characterize the present day in Europe will be outlined over the four coming days.

My personal and professional interest lies in the function that universities and particularly university education will have in society in the future, a function that itself is also in the middle of the crisis for which it is supposed to be part of the remedy. In this, the role of universities can only consist in communicating the specific characteristic of a university as against other institutions of higher education: that is to convey an academic, research-based approach to reality. Essentially, this was the basis of the founding idea behind the Berlin University in 1809. I am not speaking of the so-called “third mission” of universities that is constantly referred to, and frequently discussed in prominent circles. I am talking about the unity of research and teaching that the Berlin University was based on, and which still characterizes the German concept of a university today. This unity stems from the idea, shaped by Enlightenment thought on education, that the individual who is educated by research leads society

along the path of progress to a higher level of humanity. It is only through education in the Enlightenment sense of the word, namely: the cultivation of character and society through scholarship, that universities can shape the minds of the future for, and in, society. The founders of Universität Hamburg knew this 100 years ago, when they placed the inscription on the Main Building that is still the mission statement of our University today: “To research, To Teach, To Educate and Form”—encapsulating our task as an indivisible whole.

I hope that this statement inspires you, and that it leads to fruitful and, in the broadest sense of the word, thought-provoking discussions. I wish you every success in your sessions, inspiring and stimulating keynote lectures, and that you may keep Hamburg fondly in your memories.