

Revisiting Adaptation:

The Role of Impact, Quality, and Sustainability in Shaping the Future of Universities



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Content: What to expect?

Global trends and concerns

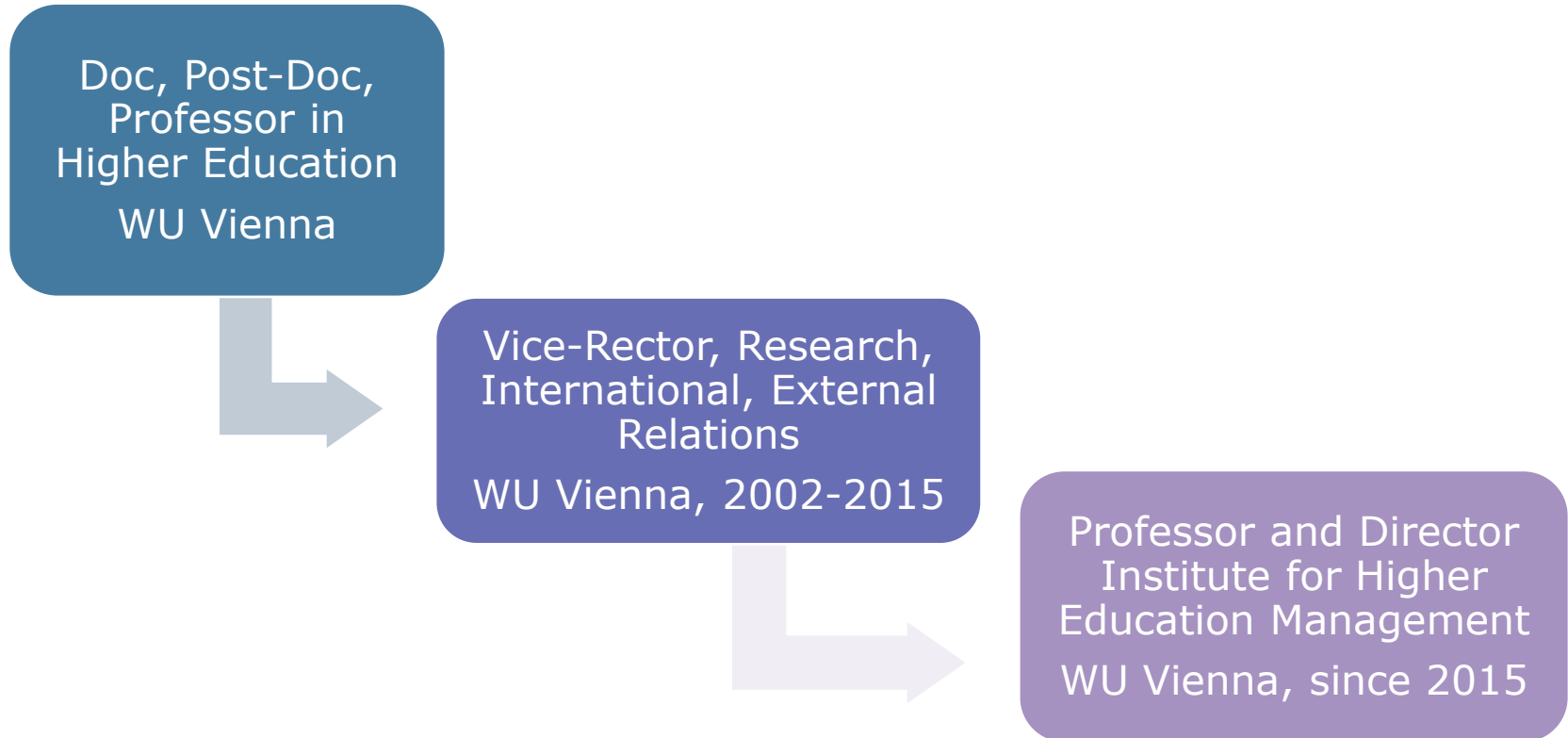
Revisit theory of adaptation

Models of the University

The Role of Quality, Sustainability and Impact

The Future of the University

My Personal Departure Point



Where do we stand?

The **higher education landscape** in 2024 is poised for significant transformations driven by

Role of **technology**

Changing **educational paradigms**

Commitment to **inclusivity**

Challenging **policy and societal environment**

European Degree label eases legal path to joint programmes

(Nic Mitchell, 14 March 2024)

Higher education faces a more fragile and contested future

(Simon Marginson,
17 February 2024)

AI in higher education – A tool for better learning?

(Jacques Viljoen,
24 February 2023)

Universities' role in supporting democracy – And the SDGs

(Patrick Blessinger, Fareeda Khodabocus, Mirela Panait and Beena Girdharan, 21 January 2023)

Major Trends: A Summary

Enrollment Trends

- Global Increase in Higher Education Enrollment
- Shifts Due to Demographics with major regional differences: Modes of Delivery
- Rise of Online Education
- Microcredentials and Lifelong Learning

Financial Aspects

- Tuition Fees and Student Debt
- Public vs. Private Funding

Academic Programs and Fields of Study

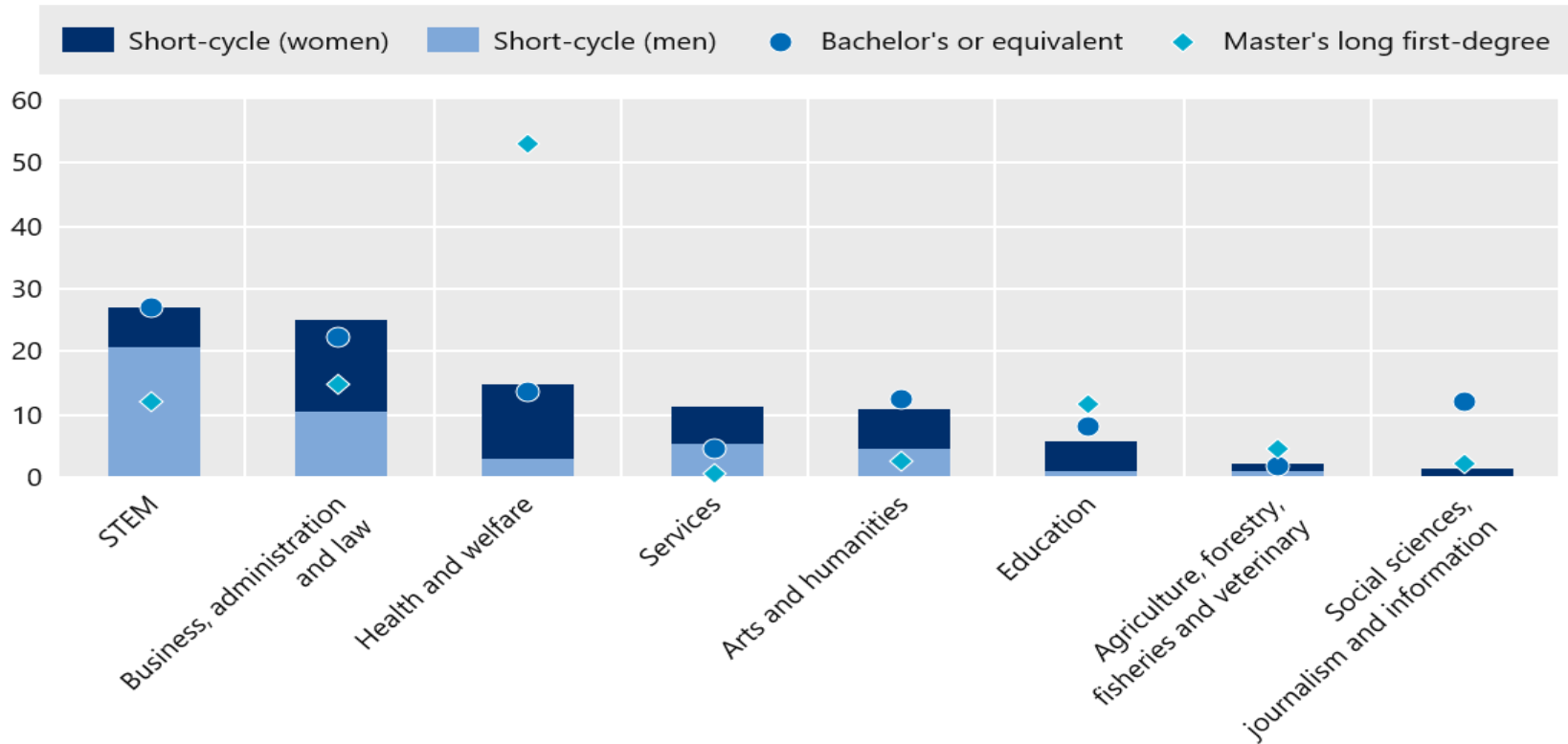
- STEM, Business and Economics and Interdisciplinary Studies
- Adaptation to Market Needs

Equity and Access

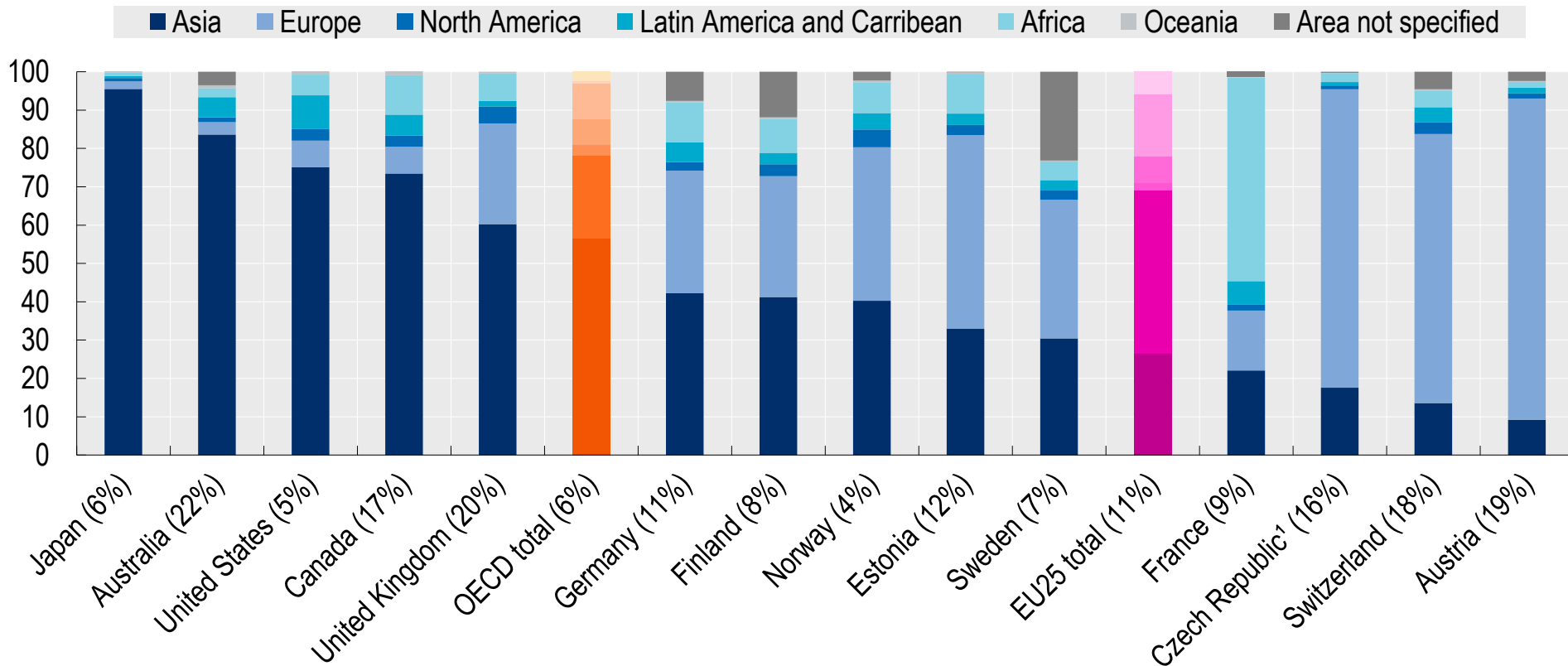
- Efforts to Improve Access
- Rising Internationalization

Distribution of new entrants to tertiary education, by field, gender and educational level (2021)

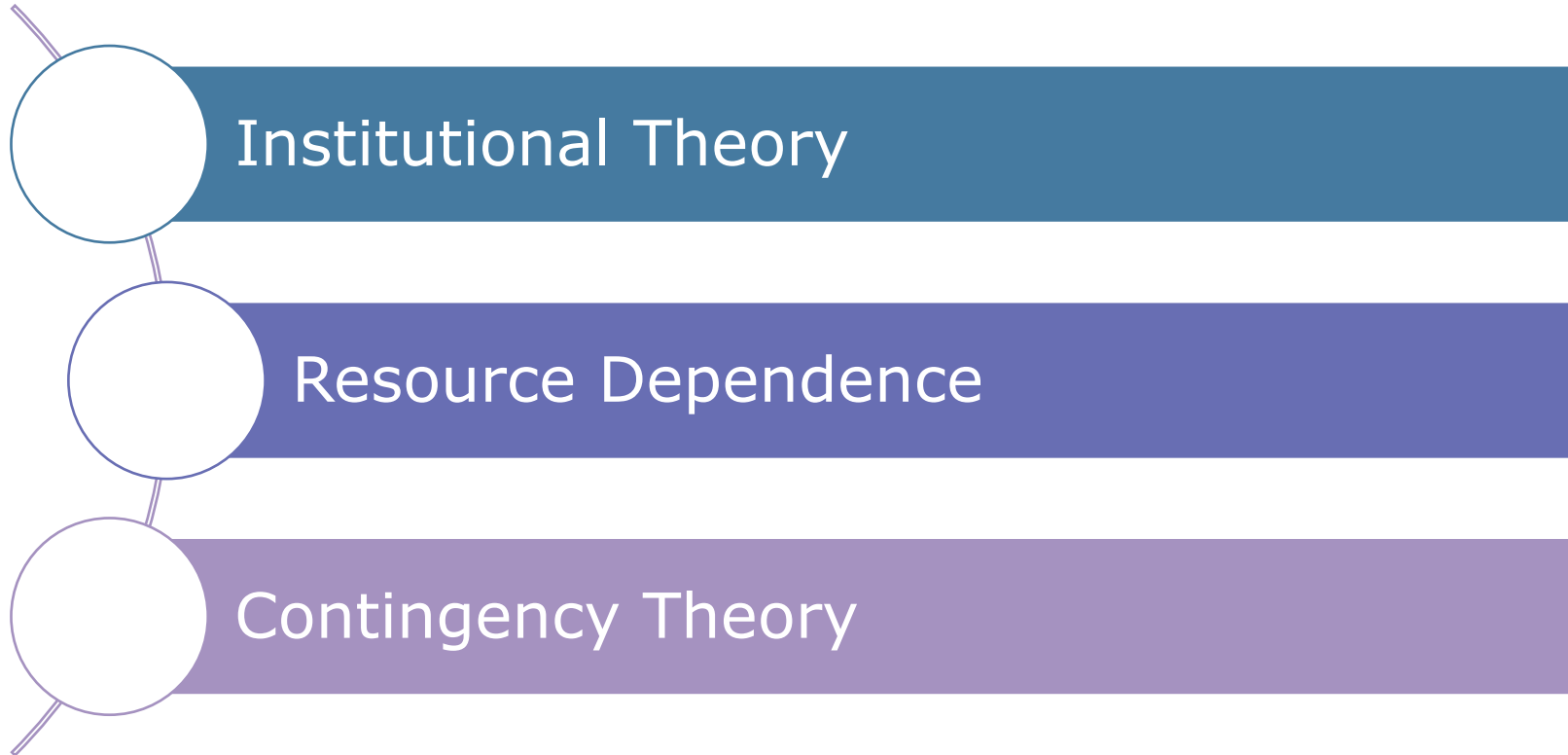
OECD average, in per cent



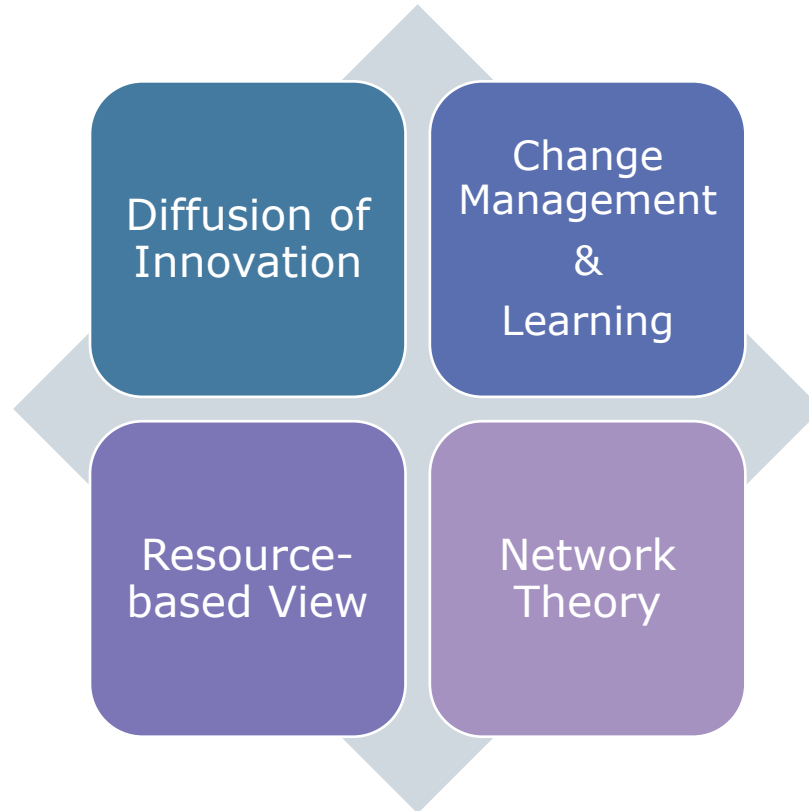
Distribution of international or foreign tertiary students studying in OECD and partner/accession countries, by region of origin (2021)



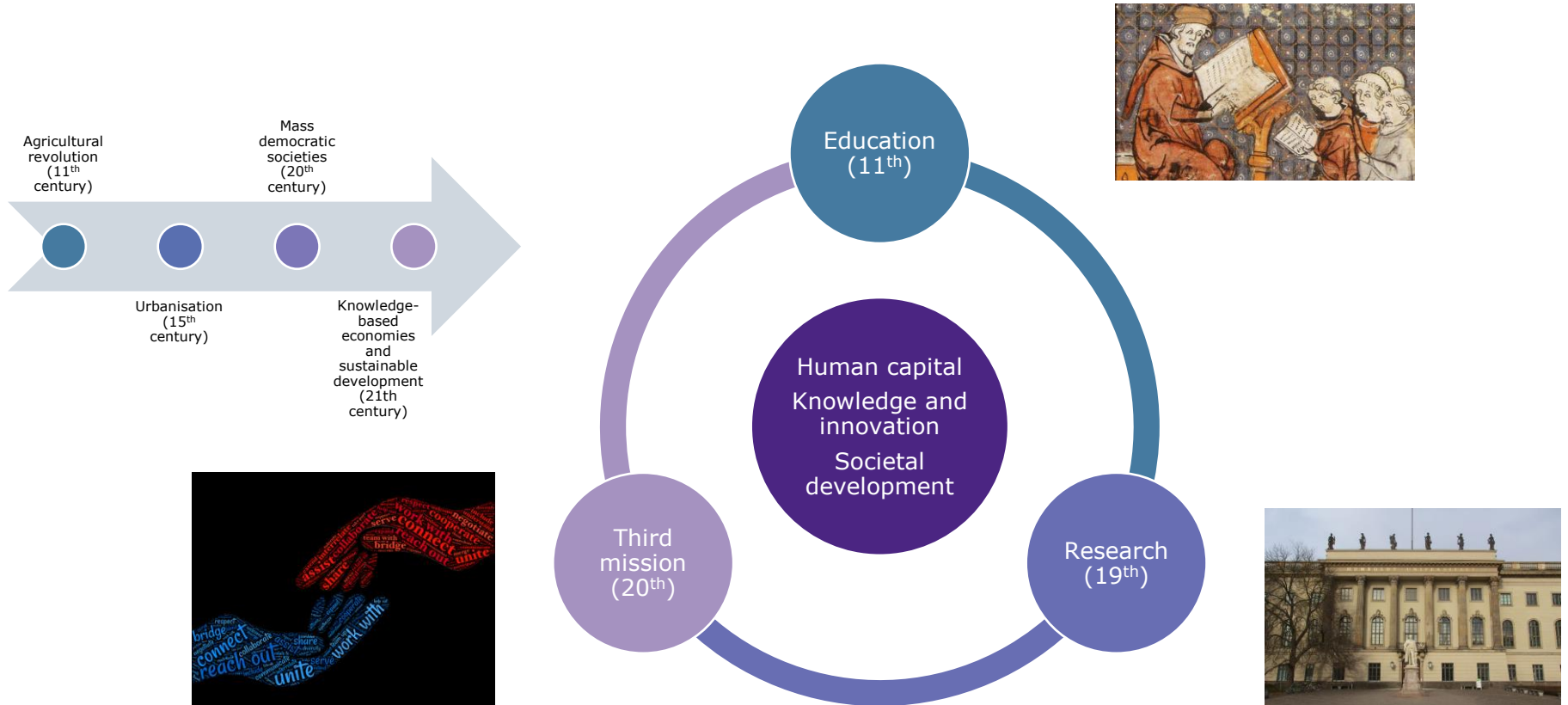
Theories of Adaptation: Sociological



Theories of Adaptation: Managerial



Evolution of the Mission of the University



Universities as Organizations



Colleges and universities as complex organizations

Distinguishing Characteristics

Goal
Ambiguity

Multiple
Clients

Unclear
Technology

Power of
Professionals

Dynamic
Environment

Source: Weick (1976)

Adaptive University Structures (Sporn, 1999)



6 SUCCESS FACTORS FOR ADAPTATION

1. Shared Governance
2. Committed Leadership
3. Professional Management
4. Clear Mission
5. Differentiated Structure
6. Entrepreneurial Culture

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Models of the University (Olsen, 2007)

Autonomy and Conflict	Internal Governance	External Governance
Shared Norms and Objectives	Community of Scholars	Instrument of National Political Agenda
Conflicting Norms and Objectives	Representative Democracy	Service Enterprise in Competitive Markets

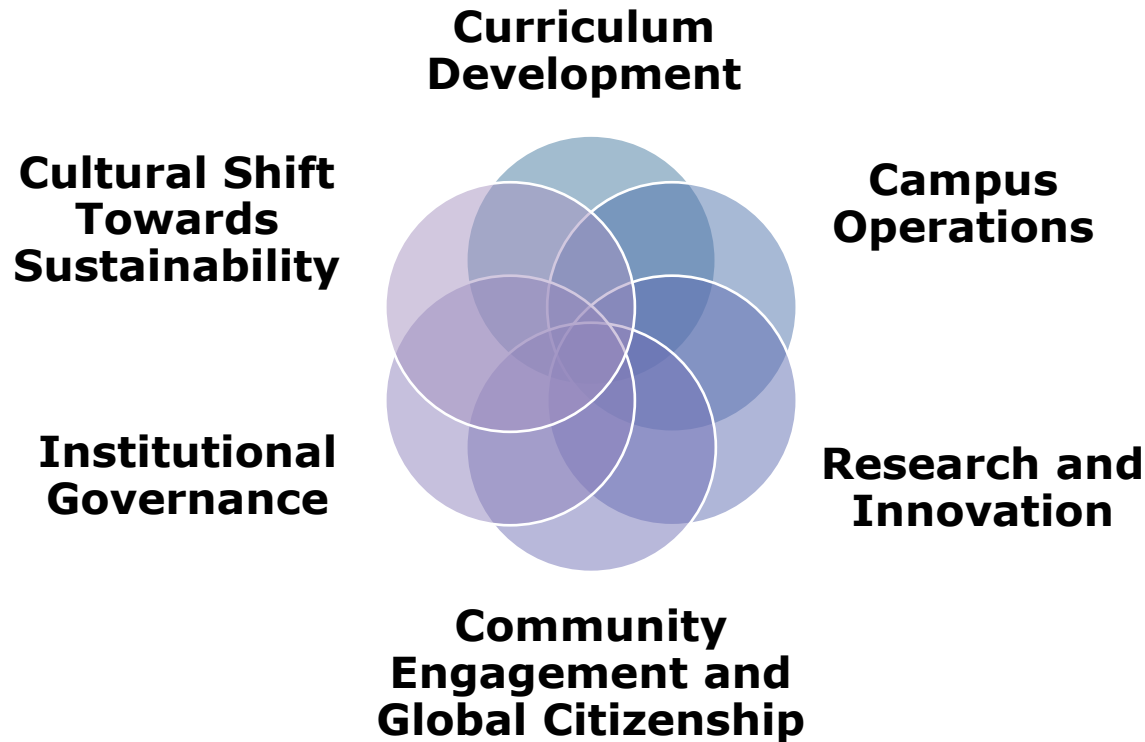
Thrive towards Quality and Impact

Expansion → Public Finance → Legitimacy →
Accountability → Impact



Globalization → Competition → Differentiation → Quality
Assurance

Sustainability Agenda



External and Internal Aspects of Social Impact Management

Institutional pressures for SI assessment

Environmental

- normative through accreditation
- Coercive through law and funding regulations (state logic)

Organizational

- Central leadership
- Organizational strategy (market logic)

Organizing for SI assessment

Performance indicators in 3 areas

- Education
- Service
- Research

Assessment tools

- external reporting to governments and accreditations
- Sustainability-focused student surveys
- SDG-mapping of courses and research outputs

Incentives

- non-monetary, not widely implemented

Needs for organizing for SI

- consistent use of incentives
- Integration into workload and promotion criteria

Models of Adaptive HEIs

	Resilient	Strategic	Innovative
Strategic orientation	Cherish complexity	Manage and control complexity	Use complexity for new solutions
Core Value	Robustness	Efficiency	Change
Resources	Allow slack	Maximize	Invest
Internal dynamics	Support variety	Rationalize	Capitalize
Locus of Control	Networks – loose coupling	Hierarchy – tight coupling	Hybrid
Modus Operandi	Exploration	Exploitation	Innovation
Positional objective	Thriving – adapting to niche	Winning – being the best in the field	Creating – offering new solutions

Where do we stand with adaptation?

Continued need to understand university steering as self-reliant, adaptive, entrepreneurial, innovative, ...



For that it is necessary

To see universities as **organizations** in their environment

Use theories and approaches from **organization studies**

Focus on **change and new modes of governance** and integrate critical aspects

Continued **comparative** work of all sorts

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