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Paper and Poster Proposal

Making new Missions possible – Obstacles for and Measures to promote Research and Third Mission at German Universities of Applied Science.

Track 2

Type of proposal: paper

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Structured Abstract:

Purpose of this paper: The German Universities of Applied Science (UAS) are representatives of a special type of Higher Education Institutions (HEI) which only exists in a few European countries (Lepori & Kyvik, 2010). They used to be solely dedicated to teaching in applied academic disciplines like engineering, business studies, informatics and social work.

From 1985 until 2006 eventually all 16 federal states of Germany gave the UAS also a mandate for (applied) research. Special activities like development and technology transfer, which belong to the so-called "Third Mission", (Görason, Maharajh, & Schmoich, 2009; Benneworth & Zomer, 2011) have also become more important. In addition to that, the number of students and programmes increased vastly in the past years.

However, the endowment and the funding of the UAS has also barely kept up with the extension of the missions of these institutions: The UAS lack equipment, staff and time as well as money to engage in the various activities. As a UAS rector pointed out "politics is relatively ruthless, giving us new tasks, but not the money for them".

The question is, how the UAS deal with this problem. This paper analyses the obstacles for widening research and Third Mission-activities at German Universities of Applied Science (UAS) and describes ways to overcome these obstacles.

Design/methodology/approach: The analysis is based on various data sources. First on qualitative interviews with 12 rectors of selected UAS, second on a quantitative survey among UAS professors and UAS rectors and third on a workshop with HEI-research managers. Additional information stems from an analysis of the research promotion programmes by the federal and state governments.

Findings: The deficits described by various respondents can be classified in internal and external factors. Internal factors being, for example, a too large amount of teaching obligation, the lack of equipment or an administration that is not yet laid-out for administering large research projects. External factors are the lack of funding for applied research or legal restrictions.

Thus, at UAS the management of research and Third Mission activities is rather an effort to make up for the structural deficits the German UAS are facing. Possible measures are providing central administrative support, third party funding applications, reducing the teaching load for the professors, establishing central research institutes or providing for the promotion of research activities.

The result of this research study is a how-to manual to solve problems in managing additional performances next to teaching.

Research limitations/implications: For the qualitative study, a sample of UAS was selected that were rather active in research, development and Third Mission. So in the first place the obstacles as well as possible measures to overcome the obstacles are described from their point of view. These findings were validated on a larger sample of professors, HEI leaders and research managers.

Practical implications: The paper can be used by HEI leaders as well as by Ministries of Science as a basis for developing their institutions as well as the state laws and funding streams in order to foster research, development and Third Mission activities at UAS.

Social Implications: "Substantial impulses for the innovative ability of society emerge from research and development at UAS" – as the German Council of Science and Humanities put it (German Council of Science and Humanities, 2010). To create these impulses UAS need to be enabled to engage in these kind of tasks. The paper contributes to the accomplishment of these additional missions by UAS.

What is original/value of paper: The paper structures the obstacles and possible ways to deal with them. Thereby they become visible to society and politics. This will help the UAS to discuss with different and important stakeholders about existing problems and ways to solve them.

Keywords: Universities of Applied Science, research, Third Mission, obstacles, measures, Germany

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Biographical Details:

Cort-Denis Hachmeister studied psychology at the University of Bielefeld and has been working for the CHE Centre for Higher Education since 1999. He is currently working on the project FIFTH – Facets of and Indicators for Research and Third Mission at Universities of Applied Science. He also works for the CHE University Ranking, a multidimensional Ranking for German HEI.

Isabel Roessler studied Social Science at the Ruhr-University Bochum and also worked there before she started working for the CHE Centre for Higher Education in 2007. She is the leader of the project FIFTH. She is also engaged in other projects on Third Mission and in the international Ranking U-Multirank.

Sindy Duong studied North American Studies, History and Political Science at the Free University of Berlin before she started working for the CHE in 2011. Besides FIFTH she is working in projects concerned with permeability and careers in academia.