Employability or Scientific Orientation?

The Case of the „New“ Universities of Applied Sciences in Switzerland

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Beyond Employability: Citizenship and Responsibility in Higher Education

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General context

- Foundation of the universities of applied sciences (UAS) in 1995
  - Transformation and regional fusion of existing colleges of professional education and training
  - Research as a new function of the UAS
  - Binary structure at the tertiary level education
- Political objectives for UAS:
  - Equal to but different from universities (U)
  - Weaken links to system of vocational training and education
  - Strengthen link to science and find a place in the field of universities

17 years after the foundation of the UAS…

- Have UAS become established in the field of universities?
- Are the values dominating practices in teaching and research more scientific-universalistic or rather professional-particularistic?
- These two questions are exemplarily discussed in the following context:
  - Differentiation of the UAS
  - Profile of scientific staff
  - Culture of teaching
  - Research participation of students
  - Comparison between disciplines

Basis of my presentation:
http://www.zuw.unibe.ch/content/e4720/e5652/Arbeitsbericht38ZUW_ger.pdf

Some selected characteristics of the UAS

	Segment 1 (architecture, construction engineering and planning; technology and IT; economy and services)	**Segment 2** (social work, health, applied psychology and linguistics)	**Segment 3** (music, theatre and other arts)
Admission diploma of students	Large proportion with federal vocational baccalaureate and baccalaureate Overall: relatively homogeneous population	Large proportion with „other admission diploma“ and with baccalaureate Overall: relatively heterogeneous population	Large proportion with baccalaureate Overall: relatively homogeneous population
Intenseness of research	Above average	Below average	Very low
Continuing education	Very active	Active	Rather passive

Educational diploma of scientific staff in the UAS

	Professors	Other lecturers	Assistants/scientific collaborators
Lower-secondary education	0.13%	0.08%	0.34%
Upper-secondary education	1.72%	3.81%	12.90%
Tertiary B level education	20.45%	14.43%	**15.10%**
UAS	7.97%	9.48%	**37.69%**
University (without doctoral/habil. degree)	**43.69%**	22.99%	24.23%
University (with doctoral/habil degree)	24.90%	9.88%	5.37%
Unknown	0.85%	**39.33**	4.37%

Data from 2007

Participation of students in discourse and production of scientific knowledge

Use of international, foreign language literature at UAS and U

Social work		Construction engineering	
UAS	**U**	**UAS**	**U**
13%	58%	19%	22%

Participation of students in research of teaching staff

Social work		Construction engineering	
UAS	**U**	**UAS**	**U**
19%	23%	33%	2242

Competence of students to discuss scientific questions on a high level

UAS	**U**
23%	74%

Discipline, type of university and profile

- According to the data of our case study, two institutional conditions influence UAS-profile:
  - Mission defined by political actors
  - Cognitive and social structure of discipline
- Important in the disciplines:
  - Consensus of the paradigmatic orientation
  - Scope of consolidated and legitimated scientific knowledge
  - Professionalisation of specific fields of work

Conclusions I

- 1. Our data show some evidence that:
  - UAS are only partly integrated in the field of scientific universities
  - With development of the UAS, practical knowledge gained importance in tertiary education while scientific knowledge lost dominant position
  - The orientations (employability vs. scientific orientation) differ between disciplines

Conclusions II

- 2. Swiss educational system has facilitated the observed development:
  - Occupational qualification as main idea behind structure of Swiss educational system (cf. Müller/Shavit 1998).
  - Structure used in own interest by occupational organisations, former colleges of professional education and training and other actors of vocational education
  - No intervention, only observation by universities
- 3. Foundation of the UAS can be interpreted as process of the reproduction of educational organisations and occupations (theory of historical institutionalism ; cf.: Mahoney 2000, Werle 2007).

References

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