

Academics' Societal Engagement in Switzerland and Austria: A replication study attempt

Katharina Sommer von Schönberg (ZHAW - Zurich University of Applied Sciences), Corinna Geppert (University for Continuing Education KREMS), Attila Pausits (University for Continuing Education KREMS), Carole Probst (ZHAW - Zurich University of Applied Sciences), Florian Reisky (University for Continuing Education KREMS), Christian Wassmer (ZHAW - Zurich University of Applied Sciences)

Theoretical Framework/Definition of Concepts

Our study focuses on differences in academics' societal engagement (ASE) in Switzerland and Austria, where we examine public universities and universities of applied sciences (UAS). We draw on a published analysis based on APIKS data, the paper "Academics' Societal Engagement in Diverse European Binary Higher Education Systems: A Cross-Country Comparative Analysis" (Götze, Carvalho & Aarrevaara, 2021) and attempt to replicate the analysis with data from Austria and Switzerland.

In our study, we have three main research interests: (1) We want to test whether it is possible to replicate the analysis model of Germany, Finland, and Portugal. (2) We want to discuss how our results differ from the original study (Götze et al. 2021) regarding a) the main effect of the type of higher education institution on ASE (hypothesis block 1), b) the correlation between publication productivity and ASE (hypothesis block 2), and c) the correlation between research time and ASE (hypothesis block 3), and try to find explanations in terms of the quality of the datasets and country characteristics. (3) We further develop the model of the original study by including additional dimensions that we consider important for our country contexts, such as the expectations of the higher education institutions to be active in ASE, and previous full-time or part-time employment outside academia.

Methodology

We use the APIKS data from Switzerland, collected in 2018/19 and Austria, collected in 2021. The Swiss dataset consists of 1411 completed surveys. In the analysis, we included participants from universities (N = 708) and from UAS (N = 548). Respondents from universities of teacher education were excluded, so that the dataset used for the replication study consists of 1256 respondents (UAS: 44% female and 18% senior academics; university: 45% female and 20% senior academics).

The Austrian dataset consists of 5261 completed surveys (N = 3677 participants from universities and N = 1584 from UAS). At the Austrian universities, 57% were male and 20% were senior academics; at UAS, 51% were male and 17% were senior academics.

Data Analysis and Conclusions

We aim to replicate the analysis of Götze et al. (2021), which was based on structural equation modeling with a multigroup confirmatory factor analysis (MGCFA) and with weighted least square mean and variance adjusted (WLSMV) estimators. The dependent variables consist of three latent variables from 17 measured ASE-activities. In line with the original study, we use the concepts of research-related (techno-commercial) ASE, dissemination ASE, and teaching-related (training-related) ASE. Independent variables are the type of university, gender, age, academic rank, discipline, publication productivity, authorship, and research time. In a second step, we include additional variables in the model, namely the expectations of the HEI to be active in ASE and previous full-time or part-time employment outside academia.

In our presentation, we would like to discuss the methodological challenges and possible explanations for our findings.