He who pays the piper calls the tune?

Potentials and Threats of Third Party Funding of Academic Research in Europe

The financing of academic research is increasingly shifting from public university budgets towards third party funds. This trend originates in the Anglo-Saxon academy and is currently spreading to scientific communities around the globe not only in natural sciences and engineering but also in all other disciplines such as humanities, social science and economics.

In addition to the long-standing cooperation between national and supranational competitive public research funds, universities and business schools more and more rely also on financing from private individuals or companies. Such third party funds are typically earmarked assets devoted to scholarships programmes, contract research or endowed chairs and research centres. For some universities in the Anglo-Saxon context third party funds have been instrumental for developing excellence in research and for building up a reputation as a world leading scientific institution. In turn, in mainland European universities and business schools these practices are less common.

This difference is not only because of different academic traditions and diverging roles of governmental institutions in funding landscapes, but also due to a lack of systematic knowledge on how to establish and manage third party funded research in mainland European academic institutions. The potential opportunities, challenges and threats of such practices are not well understood. So far, only limited research has looked into the role and impact of third party funding of academic activities outside the Anglo-Saxon academy. Thus, now it is time to reflect and evaluate which aspects of third party funded research should or should not be established in mainland European universities and business schools and, where it has been adopted, how it changes the academic landscape.

With this special issue we address this research gap by taking a systematic look at various aspects of third party funding of academic research by private individuals and companies outside the Anglo-Saxon academy. Current practices in the Anglo-Saxon academy may serve as a background of fruitful inter-contextual comparison. Our interest is especially directed towards industry-based and private funding of academic activities in business and management studies.

Business and management studies are the centre of attention for this call because in the public austerity discourse, this discipline is especially called upon to attract third party funding from private individuals and companies, since findings are assumed to be directly exploitable by the funders. For example, it is often argued that research on management practices should, at least partially, be financed by business owners, because it is they who learn and profit from the research findings.

We invite scholars, managers and intermediaries to submit high-quality studies and research-driven literature reviews that take a systematic look at third party funding of academic research in the field of business and management studies especially at European universities and business schools. Relevant subjects include but are not strictly limited to the following:

- Overview and assessment of current practices of external income generation at European academic institutions (e.g. investigations into the interactions between macro education governance and policy, with meso-level decision making at the university/school level)
- The role of third party funding in reputation building of academic institutions
• Management and governance challenges associated with third party funding for different types of academic institutions
• Methodological characteristics of third party funded basic vs. applied research
• Rigor and relevance in third party funded research
• (In)dependence of externally funded researchers and lecturers from funders
• Philosophical/sociological foundations of third party funded research as a public/private good
• Role and purpose of universities and business schools in society
• Systematic review or meta-analysis of previous literature on third party funding in academia

A convincing submission will pay attention to one or a combination of these subjects. We invite the submission of empirical studies employing a quantitative and/or qualitative approach, as well as theory-driven literature reviews, meta-analyses and work involving the development of theoretical frameworks and scales. Longitudinal research designs and comparisons between the Anglo-Saxon and the continental academic traditions would be particularly welcome. Contributions that problematize the assumptions of the public discourse and/or existing research-based knowledge, received wisdom and “best practice” would also be welcome.

Procedure
We invite authors to submit extended abstracts of potential contributions before January 31st, 2015. All abstracts must be submitted via the online tool that can be accessed at ifi.jku.at/sirms. Based on these submitted abstracts, the editors will invite a selected number of authors to produce full papers. Authors will be informed on or before February 29th, 2015. Full papers must then be submitted before December 20th, 2016. All full papers will be double-blind refereed by at least two experts. The publication of the special issue is scheduled for 2017.

The extended abstracts should cover the following aspects:
• Problem statement and objectives (300-400 words)
• Approach/method and sample description (300-400 words)
• Findings, contributions and value (300-400 words)
• Prior work: Rooting of the author/s’ work in on-going discourses (max. 250 words)
• Brief bio of all contributing authors (max. 250 words)
• Up to five key words

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