

Editorial

SHOULD UNIVERSITY TEACHERS BE PAID ACCORDING TO PERFORMANCE?

THE DISCUSSION whether universities should pay according to merit or other criteria is flaming up on the European continent, especially in Germany. While, in the USA there has been a long tradition of pay differentials depending on performance and the type of institution, such differences in compensation are basically a taboo in Europe. An open discussion has been published in the German weekly *Die Zeit* between **Klaus Landfried** president of the German Universities Rectors Conference and **Hartmut Schiedermeier** Chairman of the Universities Teachers Association. While, there is one indisputable salary negotiating modus, which depends on the number of positions a candidate is being offered when changing universities, there is no other current possibility of negotiating higher salaries for academics staying permanently in one university.

Klaus Landfried aims at introducing new modalities of evaluation and entry salaries. He proposes time-limited pay bonuses for academics for good performance, entry salary levels dependent on prior performance and the establishment of universities as enterprises. Furthermore he proposes the establishment of university boards with external members who could relieve a university president of his job, similar to the situation in the UK and the USA. Such measures would limit the powers of the stifling closed shop committees of university self-government.

Hartmut Schiedermeier defends the status quo, and does not believe that the proposed changes will improve the miserable university reality in the country. The age-old requirement for university professors to present a monograph—the *habilitation*—in order to be able to attain the rank of professor, is out of date. In engineering, there are numerous areas where the writing of a *habilitation* is practically ruled out. A prime example is engineering design. Professor Landfried wants to dispense with such requirements.

The foregoing discussion shows how conservative German higher education has become. Breaking the encrusted structure entails a battle between the defenders of established structures and those who see the old system as overdue for reform. It needs to be added that Hartmut Schiedermeier represents the professors who do not want to see any encroachment on their established rights. These rights are for some of them a guarantee that once they have attained the professorship, they need not bother about delivering quality research and teaching. These may be the exception, but in a secure position such exceptions may torpedo the quality of the higher education system as a whole.

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