Chapter 7
Fostering Academic Citizenship With a Shared Leadership Approach

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ABSTRACT

What type of leadership is the most successful in persuading academics to contribute to the multifaceted mission of modern universities? Recent reforms, in which universities have achieved different levels of institutional autonomy, were accompanied by the establishment of new public management (NPM) methods that allow governments to steer the system more effectively. Central management was strengthened, while values such as collegiality received little attention. The reforms have also fostered an exchange between universities and other actors in terms of networked governance. Using the example of doctoral studies, this chapter shows that there is evidence for both NPM and networked governance. Their perception depends on the role of academics in the reform process and partly undermined the commitment of academics to the system. Thus, to address the modernization of university management while (re-) strengthening the commitment of academics, the chapter proposes a shared leadership model that integrates the emphasis on values and participation to stimulate academic citizenship.

INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, the focus of public attention in many countries has shifted to higher education systems. The increased attention given to higher education has resulted in major changes in the system, particularly in Europe. For example, the legal framework conditions have often been adapted with the aim of making universities more efficient and aligning the structures so that universities can respond better to new tasks and challenges. Quality assurance systems have become an increasingly dominant regulatory instruments in higher education management. Sometimes these changes are also seen in the context of approaches to enforce market-oriented, competition-oriented rationalities on the basis of neo-liberal managerialism (Ekman et al., 2018; Enders et al., 2014; Jarvis 2014; Olssen et al., 2005).

In any case, changes in the framework conditions and the use of these instruments have an impact both on the relationship between the state and the university and on the network of relationships within the university, especially with regard to the different hierarchical levels. In many places, the executive management has been strengthened, while the power, but also the inertia of advisory bodies and collegial governance has been weakened. Thus, the new governance structures not only altered the balance of power in the universities, but also changed the leadership roles and demanded a different understanding of leadership. As Sporn (1996, p. 1) stated

Universities are complex social organizations with distinctive cultures. On the one hand, academic freedom and autonomy are inviolable values and, on the other hand, changing environmental conditions exert strong influence on the primary functions of universities.

This statement is still valid unchanged twenty years later. Ultimately, the changes in the system are also aimed at changing the behavior of university staff. University leaders are called upon to promote and help shape their institutions without neglecting the uniqueness of university culture.

The management of universities is fundamentally different from leadership in other contexts due to their organizational complexity, disciplinary diversity, different goals and traditional values. It requires additional competences and makes leadership a balancing act between partly - at least seemingly - contradictory objectives, e. g. the demand for strategic planning on the one hand and the creation of space for curiosity-driven research and creativity on the other.

[L]eadership becomes an essential quality for an institution to allow it to develop a completely new self-understanding, to be strongly present in the outside world, capable of defending its own interests as well as being reactive to inside demands and needs (Felt, 2007, p. 11).

Autonomy With a Different Focus

The strength and importance of universities lies in the independent thinking, creativity and autonomy of the people who work in them. In the past, it used to be the primary role of the state to guarantee the autonomy of education and research. The focus was not on government control, although the sector was and still is largely publicly financed (OECD, 2018) and thus dependent on the public sector. In the traditional view, it was left to the academic community to produce, increase and use knowledge while the exchange of knowledge with society was not a primary objective. As an independent and autonomous self-organization the academic community itself defines its own values and quality criteria and receives a monopoly from the state to exercise its function. The latter, in turn, has the duty to protect the community from external influences and to finance them adequately. When Polanyi (1962) argues in "The Republic of Science" for the understanding of science as an autonomous sphere, he also demands that the management and governance of higher education should be left primarily to academics in order to ensure high-quality research. In this tradition, rectores magnifici, deans and other academics elected to leadership positions would rather avoid than favor the term "manager" or "leader" for themselves. Polanyi goes even further and declares a clear rejection of any attempt to steer research with regard to its impact when he writes *"I appreciate the generous sentiments which actuate the aspiration of guiding the progress of science into socially beneficent channels, but I hold its aim to be impossible and nonsensical"* (Polanyi, 1962, p. 62). This position can no longer be maintained today and must be considered as outdated when

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