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Leaders of modern universities: *Primi inter pares* or chief executive officers?

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INTRODUCTION

Universities are important organizations in modern society. Politicians and the business community have considerable expectations as far as universities' contributions to the public welfare and to economic growth. At the same time, there is great deal of scepticism on whether universities are managed in the right way. Different camps demand a greater say concerning university governance principles.

In relation to these circumstances, this chapter deals with the changing conditions of university leaders. For some time, there have been discussions on the demanding role of university leaders as stewards of complex and almost unmanageable organizations. As universities become increasingly complex, in an environment of greater dynamics and increased uncertainty, many observers argue there are even more demands on university leaders. In addition, with the increased demands for accountability, efficiency, and transparency in universities, the activities of reporting, analysing, measuring, monitoring, and evaluating have become central concerns at various university levels. Furthermore, the competition among universities, combined with technological, financial, social, and political changes, has placed new demands on university leaders. In response, university organizational structures have become more complex with greater specialization of functions, increased professionalization of roles, and the addition of more management layers.

All together, these changes create escalating demands on university leaders. At the same time, there are questions about their roles and the traditional ways in which they are appointed. The collegial form – when university leaders are appointed from among their peers and thus become *primi inter pares* – has been criticized for not providing the right type of leaders. Instead, it is often suggested, for example, that for state-funded universities, representatives from the general public (i.e. the state) should appoint the university leaders just as shareholders elect corporate boards to appoint executives.

This chapter begins with two sections that portray the general working conditions of university leaders. First, the chapter analyses the changing role of university leaders beginning with a discussion on the basic nature of universities, with

reference to DiMaggio and Powell (1983). In this discussion, the chapter points to the complex position of universities that subjects them to the influence and control of states, professions, and markets. Based on this analysis, the chapter then elaborates on modern changes in the working conditions of universities as they move towards increasing environmental embeddedness. Empirical results from studies of university leaders at two levels – Vice-Chancellors (VCs) and Department Chairs (DCs) – are then presented in the third section. The final section presents our conclusions and discusses the implications of this research.

THE GOVERNANCE OF ACADEMIC INSTITUTIONS

By tradition, self-governance is a significant characteristic of academic institutions at the university level. Basically, such institutions are professional organizations, strongly influenced by insiders who make decisions on both the admission of outsiders and on the internal governance systems.¹ The admission mechanisms control the acceptance of new students and new faculty members and the approval of new disciplines. As a matter of fact, the reputation of academic institutions depends in part on the care they exercise in their selection/approval processes. It is expected that enrolling students have specific qualifications, that faculty members meet certain standards, and that new disciplines withstand any scepticism about their lack of scientific rigour. Similarly, internal norms govern academic institutions through the mechanism of internal quality control (i.e. student examinations, control of research, and faculty promotion).

This system of self-governance, of course, creates inevitable tensions in academic institutions. On one hand, since such institutions must stand behind the quality of their product (students and research), there is a strong incentive to comply with traditional academic rules. On the other hand, they are expected to be innovative, which may sometimes mean old rules have to be broken. As noted by Thomas Kuhn (1962), over time, scientists develop strong paradigms. Imre Lakatos (1970) refers to these paradigms as scientific research programmes. However, such paradigms, which provide norm systems for scientific work, may break down if the empirical evidence against them is too strong. Therefore, Kuhn argues scientific revolutions may challenge normal science with its puzzle-solving and mop-up work.

Although universities are not infrequently criticized as ivory towers, they are not disconnected from their environments. As Clark (1983) observed, universities have significant relationships with the state and the market. In other words, politicians make decisions that affect university policy and programmes, and people in the marketplace influence university priorities.²

Given this interplay between states, professions, and markets in the discussion of the university role, it is appropriate to recall DiMaggio and Powell's arguments (1983) concerning the governance of modern institutions. They argue that organizations are subject to three isomorphic forces (Table 11.1):

- Coercive
- Normative
- Mimetic

Table 11.1 States, professions, and markets

Variable	States	Professions	Markets
<i>Force</i>	Coercive	Normative	Mimetic
<i>Signals</i>	Rules	Norms	Models
<i>Mechanism</i>	Obedience	Socialization	Imitation

Source: Our summary and development of the reasoning in DiMaggio and Powell (1983).

The coercive force (Table 11.1, vertical column 2) – traditionally related to states – is associated with obligatory *rules* (laws or regulations). There are penalties if rules are violated. The basic enforcement mechanism is *obedience*.

Second, the normative force (Table 11.1, vertical column 3) – traditionally related to academic institutions – is associated with *norms* that are developed in certain cultures, such as professions. They are adopted through the mechanism of *socialization* (i.e. new entrants to the organization gradually adopt the dominant norms).

Third, the mimetic force (Table 11.1, vertical column 4) – in our view, a particularly strong force in markets – is associated with others’ behavioural signals concerning pricing, product design, organization, etc.³ In this way, *models* are diffused. Since most markets and organizational fields, as opposed to the models of free competition, are concentrated, governance by markets tends to lead to *imitation*. Thus, homogeneity is reinforced.

Needless to say, these three governance systems interact and influence each other. Figure 11.1 is a schema of this influence and interaction. In terms of the signals presented in Table 11.1, the following conclusions may be stated:

- States influence professions and markets through rules.
- Markets influence states and professions institutions through models.
- Professions influence states and markets through norms.

The basic issues in the governance of academic institutions, then, are the significance of the three governance signals (rules, norms, and models) and the change in their importance over time. In Europe, the governance in academic institutions has traditionally been a mix of rules and norms with few market models. While the states defined the role of academic institutions with rules, insiders governed them with norms. In short, the politicians enforced the entry controls for academic institutions while the academic hierarchy managed the performance controls. With the passage of time, however, we see the growing effect of market models as states increasingly use market solutions rather than rules to allocate resources. The result is that academic institutions are also adopting such market models.

This development appears to reflect a movement towards an academic governance system similar to that in the United States. Figure 11.2 is based on Clark’s representation (1983) of the state governance of many European higher education systems in the early 1980s – with the notable exceptions of Italy and the United Kingdom where the professions governed – and of the market governance in the US higher education system. However, in the nearly three decades since Clark’s

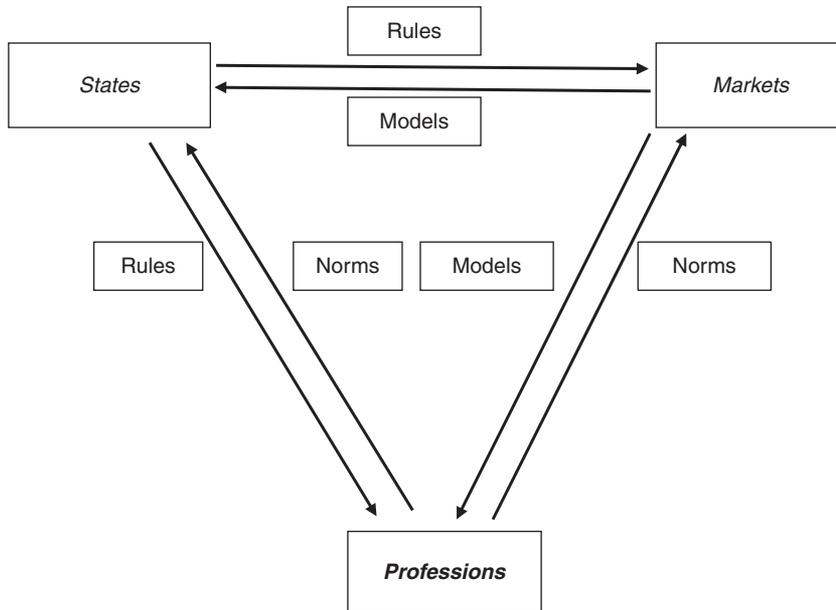


Figure 11.1 States, professions, and markets

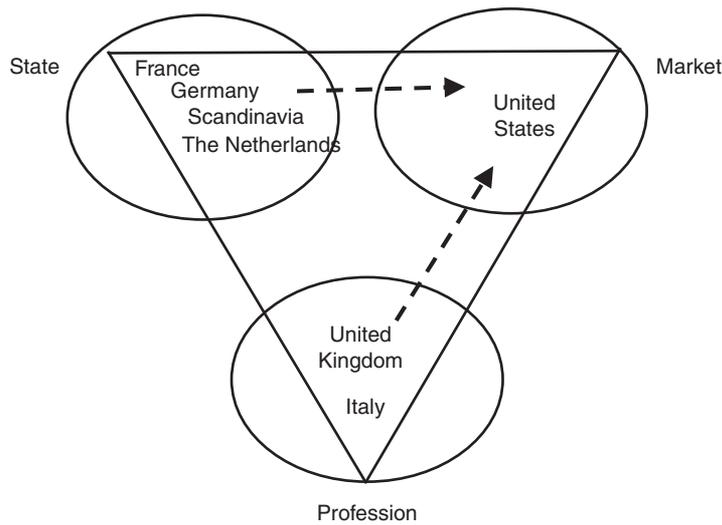


Figure 11.2 Variations in university systems (based on Clark, 1983: 143)

book on cross-national higher education, Europe has moved towards a more market-oriented system. The dashed lines in Figure 11.2 depict this movement.

The literature in the sociology of science, which argues that the production of knowledge has changed radically in recent years, examines such changes. Gibbons et al. (1994) argue there has been a shift from an exclusive focus on scientific

relevance (Mode 1) to an increase in the consideration of external factors (Mode 2). In addition to the need to recognize scientifically reliable knowledge, Nowotny et al. (2001) argue that we should develop ‘socially robust knowledge’.⁴ Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff (1997) develop the argument by claiming that a triple helix of close relationships among governments, universities, and industry has emerged in the production of knowledge. In the same vein, Rooney (2005) provides a perspective on the knowledge economy, and Drori et al. (2003) discuss the scientification of society. It is clear that that knowledge production and its diffusion have become increasingly embedded in society.

This increased societal embeddedness of universities means there are now more performance controls in what Power (1999) describes as ‘the audit society’. As concepts like transparency, accountability, and efficiency are used more in the public discourse, actors in the political and economic spheres have increasingly scrutinized universities. Evaluations of university scholars and rankings and accreditations of universities are increasingly common in most European countries. As a corollary, competitive funding is replacing lump sum grants.

In summary, it appears today that a mix of state rules, professional norms, and market models govern universities. The mix varies, and has varied, by country and by time period. In general, however, we have observed in recent decades both an increase in market models in Europe as well as more interest by the states in university governance. These changes, as well as the permanent interaction between states, professions, and markets in the governance of universities, are important to keep in mind as we examine the working conditions of university leaders.

THE EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE

There have been a number of studies on academic leadership, including research by Middlehurst (1993) and Bargh et al. (2000). More recently, the journal *Leadership* devoted a special issue to ‘Leadership in Higher Education’ (Bolden et al., 2009).

Middlehurst (1993) used questionnaires and interviews in the ‘old’ university sector. She assembled responses from questionnaires she sent to 175 academics (all of whom had participated in leadership courses) and conducted interviews with academics at ten universities in the United Kingdom. Her purpose was to analyse the relevance of contemporary ideas of leadership in academic institutions. As a result of her research, she called for a better balance between leadership and management in Academia.

Bargh et al. (2000) used (a) biographical information about 341 Vice-Chancellors, (b) questionnaire responses from university presidents in California and Georgia and from rectors in Sweden and the Netherlands, and (c) case studies. Their results suggest that although university leaders face new economic and financial pressures, the CEO (Chief Executive Officer) model is not widespread in Academia.

The special issue of *Leadership* (Bolden et al., 2009) is a collection of articles on different aspects of leadership in higher education. Gosling et al. (2009) discuss

the effects of increasing managerialism in Academia; Middlehurst et al. (2009) deal with the practical implications of research in higher education leadership; Gronn (2009) points to the varying characteristics of such leadership; Bryman and Lilley (2009) report on a study of department heads; de Boer and Goedegebuure (2009) focus on deans; and Collinson and Collinson (2009) study leadership in the further education sector. Taken as a whole, these articles describe the specific characteristics of academic leadership and call for additional research in the area.

We supplement these studies with our evidence on academic leadership. As examples of academic leaders, we look at university VCs as well as DCs who, using a military metaphor, are the captains in the field. Leadership research typically focuses on top managers, but we also direct our research to university management below presidents and rectors.

The context of the empirical studies

Since the studies of this research take place in the Swedish context, it is appropriate to explain the system of higher education in Sweden. At the outset, we note that in Sweden, as in most countries, the system has experienced considerable expansion during the past century. One hundred years ago in Sweden there were two state universities (one in Uppsala and one in Lund), two local university colleges (one in Gothenburg and one in Stockholm), and a few institutions for professional studies. Today, Sweden has sixteen universities and twenty-three university colleges (in general, university colleges do not confer doctoral degrees). In addition, there are a number of institutions that provide training in the performing arts, health care, etc. In total, sixty-one Swedish academic institutions are now authorized to award higher education degrees. Most such institutions are state-funded and are under the jurisdiction of the Higher Education Act and the Higher Education Ordinance. Section 2 of the Ordinance gives the state a strong voice in the programmes and policies of these institutions. However, as Section 2 states, since the early 1990s, with some exceptions, there has been a trend towards decentralization in higher education with less direct state control and more market-influenced solutions. A manifestation of this trend is the increasing emphasis on seeking managerial talent in the recruitment of university leaders.⁵

Three empirical studies

Of the three studies reported on in this chapter, two focus on VCs and one on DCs. These studies were reported separately in Engwall et al. (1999), Engwall (2008b), and Eriksson (1997, 1999).

The first study (Engwall et al., 1999) was the Swedish part of a larger study by Bargh et al. (2000). For the Swedish part, a standard questionnaire was used to interview the VCs of the thirty Swedish universities and university colleges.⁶ All VCs agreed to participate. Most interviews were personal interviews and lasted between sixty and ninety minutes.

The second study (Engwall, 2008*b*), which focused on the development of university media relations, was based on archival material and interviews with various university leaders. In order to analyse differences as a result of institutional age, fourteen VCs and Registrars were interviewed: four interviewees employed by old institutions, four by semi-old institutions, and six by young institutions. Seven information officers distributed over the three categories of institutions as well as two information professionals outside the universities and university colleges were interviewed.

The third study (Eriksson, 1997, 1999) concerned the working conditions of DCs in the 1990s at Uppsala University. This study concerned four departments: one small liberal arts department, one small bio-technical department, one medium-sized social science department, and one large science and technology department. All four departments were involved extensively with teaching (at the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral levels) and research. The study used three interview categories. Four deans and fourteen administrators from central administration were in the first category. Forty-nine employees from the four departments were in the second category. For these two categories, interviewers took detailed notes that were transcribed immediately after the interviews. The four DCs were in the third category. They were interviewed on four occasions during a period of eighteen months. Each of these four DCs kept a time allocation diary for a two-week period.

VICE-CHANCELLORS IN ACTION

The mandate

In an examination of the working conditions of university leaders, it is appropriate first to consider how they are selected. The process of leader selection is clear in corporations. In the corporate governance model, the shareholders select board members to represent their interests and boards in turn select executives for the same purpose. For universities the process is less clear since it varies over space and time, depending on the balance between state, professional, and market forces. However, it seems fair to say that historically the selection of VCs involves significant participation and commitment by the professions. Although the state often makes the formal appointments, the professors through a collegial process select the appointees from amongst themselves. However, in recent decades, university trustees have tended to select leaders from outside the universities.

Notable examples of such outside appointments have occurred in the last decade at both Oxford University and Cambridge University. In 2003, Cambridge University appointed the former Yale University provost and anthropology professor, Alison Richard, as VC. In 2004, Oxford University appointed New Zealander, John Hood, as the VC, the first external VC in Oxford's long history. However, Hood's efforts to change the governance structure of the university were unsuccessful, and he left his position in 2009. Andrew D. Hamilton, a Yale

University chemistry professor and provost, succeeded Hood as VC at Oxford University.⁷ Thus, at present, former professors from the United States lead both old UK universities. These appointments support the theory that there is a movement in Europe towards the US university governance system.

Outsiders were selected at both these UK universities even though there were many qualified candidates for the VC positions among their professors. Some academic institutions, however, which lack qualified internal candidates, are forced to look for candidates outside their own ranks. This has been the case, for example, in Sweden where university colleges have mainly recruited for VC positions externally. In several cases, chairpersons at Swedish universities – externally appointed since 1998 – have followed suit by employing search consultants to find university VC candidates on the open market. In this way, with their recruitment model for top academic jobs, university colleges have become a role model for VC hiring practices.⁸ This development is particularly interesting given that the reasoning of DiMaggio and Powell (1983) instead would predict universities to become the role models for university colleges.

The implication of this discussion is that university leaders are in a rather different position than their corporate counterparts. Owing to the special character of universities, with their need for academic prestige, university leaders require the support of the academic professions. Corporate boards demand market share and profits from their executives while university trustees demand an academic reputation for excellence from their leaders. Since the measure of such excellence is largely dependent on the research of individual scholars, university leaders can only manage this reputation to a limited extent. They can neither order nor control the research. Primarily, and increasingly, the research is funded by external grants that researchers have been awarded.⁹

It is of interest to examine how VCs, as chief academic and executive officers, think about the universities that they manage. In the study of thirty Swedish VCs, the respondents were asked to choose the one definition among four that they thought best fit their institution (Engwall et al., 1999: 83–4):

- *A complex organization*: Institutions of higher education are complex organizations: the rector's leadership role is to manage this complexity to ensure that the institution survives and flourishes.
- *A company*: Institutions of higher education are managerial organizations: the rector's leadership role is to create a clear sense of corporate purpose and direction.
- *A creative organization*: Institutions of higher education are creative organizations: the rector's role is to create an ethos and environment that stimulate innovation.
- *A collegial organization*: Institutions of higher education are collegial organizations: the rector's leadership role is to protect the procedural integrity of her/his institution and to build consensus.

Seventeen of the thirty respondents said their institutions were creative organizations, eight said complex organizations, four said company organizations, and one said a collegial organization.

The work of university leaders

In the study of the thirty Swedish VCs, the respondents were asked to rank the university leaders' tasks by order of importance and by the amount of time spent on each. The thirty VCs were also invited to indicate their views about the future importance of these tasks (see Table 11.2 for mean rankings of the six tasks). The questionnaire described the following six tasks for their consideration (Engwall et al., 1999: 82):

- *Human resource management*: Appointing senior individuals and developing commitment to institutional goals and values.
- *Representation, lobbying, and ceremonial activities*: Ensuring the institution reflects the respect of its regional/national/international communities; lobbying on behalf of the university interest.
- *Control systems*: Designing and implementing procedures to control and direct institutional activities and monitoring academic/financial performance.
- *Entrepreneurship and competitive advantage*: Positioning the institution within the higher education sector and engaging in successful competition with other institutions.
- *Strategic planning*: Creating a clear institutional vision/mission in relation to present and future developments in its external environment.
- *Cultural change*: Encouraging staff to embrace change and innovation throughout the university.

The VCs identify strategic planning as their most important task (mean rank = 1.6) followed by entrepreneurship and competitive advantage (mean rank = 2.8). Least important tasks are representation, lobbying, ceremonial activities (mean rank = 4.1), and control systems (mean rank = 5.6). Tasks that rank in the middle as far as importance are human resource management (mean rank = 3.0) and cultural change (mean rank = 3.9).

There are clear differences in the ranking of tasks by importance and their ranking by time spent on them. Strategic planning takes the most time (mean value = 2.7 vs. 1.6), although it ranks lower in the importance ranking. The task of representation, lobbying, and ceremonial activities takes the second-most time, although it is one of the tasks ranked least important (mean value = 2.9 vs. 4.1). Human resource management (mean value = 3.3 vs. 3.0), entrepreneurship and competitive advantage (mean value = 3.3 vs. 2.8), and cultural change (mean value = 4.3 vs. 3.9) rank in the middle range for both time spent and importance. Control systems are least important in both categories although time spent ranks higher than importance (mean value = 4.5 vs. 5.6). As far as the importance of future development of the six tasks is concerned, entrepreneurship and competitive advantage rank first (mean value = 0.57), control systems rank last (mean value = 0.13), and the other four tasks rank in the middle with mean values between 0.37 and 0.47.

Two conclusions may be drawn from this analysis. First, it is evident that VCs have to spend more time on tasks they rank as less important than others. For example, strategic planning may suffer because of the attention given to the more

Table 11.2 The mean rankings of VCs based on the importance and time spent on six tasks and their views on future development

Task	Importance	Time Spent	Difference	Future
Human resource management	3.0	3.3	-0.3	0.37
Representation, lobbying, and ceremonial activities	4.1	2.9	1.2	0.43
Control systems	5.6	4.5	1.1	0.13
Entrepreneurship and competitive advantage	2.8	3.3	-0.5	0.57
Strategic planning	1.6	2.7	-1.1	0.47
Cultural change	3.9	4.3	-0.4	0.47

Note: Scale of importance and time spent: 1 = most important/most time and 6 = least important/least time. For future development, respondents were asked whether the importance of the task would increase (+1), be stable (0), or decrease (-1). Table 11.2 is based on Tables 3, 4, and 7 in Engwall et al. (1999).

short-term tasks of control systems and of representation, lobbying, and ceremonial activities. This conclusion is consistent with earlier findings on executive behaviour by Carlson (1951) and later researchers. Second, it is clear that VCs foresee that their jobs will be even more demanding in the future. There are no negative mean values for future development of the six tasks.

Of the six tasks, all of which are assumed to increase in importance in the future, the task of representation, lobbying, and ceremonial activities shows the highest disparity between present importance and time spent. This may indicate that the VCs are aware of the increasing importance of their public roles in the promotion of their institutions. This conclusion is consistent with Stefan Tengblad's study where he found that CEOs 'participated more frequently in ceremonies (business dinners, inaugurations, and other social gatherings)' (2006: 1448).

It is also notable that the VCs exhibit a rather negative attitude towards control systems. They do not consider them important, they do not devote much time to them, and they do not consider their importance will increase much in the future. This is a remarkable finding since modern society, as Power (1999) observes, is an audit society with powerful demands for transparency and accountability. Such demands are acute in Academia with public control exerted through evaluations, accreditations, rankings, etc. (see e.g. Wedlin et al., 2009).

The protection of university leaders

In his study of CEOs, Tengblad (2002) reports findings that conflict with findings in studies by Carlson (1951), Stewart (1967), Mintzberg (1973), and Kotter (1982). Tengblad shows that the executives of his study have fewer work disturbances than the executives in the earlier research. Studies of modern corporations provide a likely explanation for this change in executive working conditions. Such studies suggest that various administrative units responsible for external relations buffer the executives (see Engwall, 2006). Pallas (2007) reports this is the case in particular with media relations.

Engwall's study (2008*b*) of media strategies in universities reveals a similar development. For example, in the 1960s, the old Swedish institution studied hired its first information officer. By 2006, the information department of the same university employed more than a dozen people. Moreover, the additional employees had more professional training, such as in journalism or communications. At the same time as university information activities expanded, titles were upgraded. For example, when the Head of Information at one of the old Swedish universities retired in early 2009, a Director of Communications succeeded her.

It is evident from Engwall's study (2008*b*) that the expansion in university media relations is a result of the increasing public interest in universities as societal actors. Universities today are more and more in the media, especially compared to former times when the media did not cover universities to any significant extent. This is particularly true in the media's reporting on academic research results and on academic organizational problems. Although some university leaders in this study complain of the media coverage, on the whole they feel well treated by the media. This attitude may reflect the successful protective work of their media relations units. First, such units have developed rules for handling upcoming media issues. Second, media training is now a standard procedure for university leaders, from deans upwards. Third, the units act as buffers to protect VCs and to direct questions to other university personnel. As one registrar commented: 'We want to save the VC for the positive things; I take care of those things that are not so positive'.

It was also evident that another task of the media relations units is to promote the universities. We observed two promotional strategies – *branding* and *boosting*. The first of these strategies, *branding*, means being proactive in creating a favourable picture of the university. To that end, the media relations units establish permanent relationships with journalists, issue press releases, and hold press conferences. In recent years, the web has also become an important means of communication. One VC in the study even writes a blog that attracts considerable public attention. The second strategy, *boosting*, means creating a sense of pride inside the organization. For example, one VC stresses the importance of developing internal communications that advance the organizational culture and the strategic thinking processes.

The three forces (coercive, normative, and mimetic) of the governance framework presented above are instrumental in the development of the universities' information activities. The increase in competition for students and for research resources has stimulated protective and promotional efforts with the state. In addition, academic norms are now more positive about media coverage, not least because of student requests. Finally, there are considerable mimetic elements in the comparisons with other universities and in the exchange of experiences by information officers from various institutions.

Conclusions on university leaders

Our analysis of the roles of the thirty VCs points to significant differences in their mandates in comparison with corporate executives. These differences derive principally from their different missions: market share and profit versus a

reputation for academic and research excellence. Furthermore, unlike the appointments of corporate executives that reflect market demands, the appointment of university VCs reflects the influence of the state, the professions, and the market, all of which have a voice even as their individual influence varies in space and over time. Despite these differences, however, it appears that university leaders experience the same hectic work life that corporate executives do. For example, university leaders would like to take a more long-term perspective even as they are required to take short-term actions. Yet, like corporate executives, university leaders are able to shield themselves somewhat from external disturbances by the creation of special buffering organizational units.

DEPARTMENT CHAIRS IN ACTION

Introduction

In the previous section, we noted that universities have created media units to protect VCs from external disturbances. However, there is also another administrative layer that protects the VC. Middlehurst (1993: 189) comments:

[Universities have] tightened their coordination and control systems; streamlined their decision-making processes; integrated their academic, financial and physical planning; improved their cost-control procedures; devolved many managerial functions from institutional to the basic unit and individual level; restructured operational units; created new functions and posts (public relations, marketing, a development office); developed new policies; and shifted from collective to individual managerial responsibility and accountability.

Reporting, analysing, measuring, monitoring, and evaluating have thus become central concerns at all levels in all areas of the university. Managing such challenging activities requires skilled leadership. One administration leader charged with these tasks is the DC who copes daily with demands from both above and below in the organizational hierarchy.¹⁰ These demands arise from various expectations in different arenas – education, research, and administration. The explanation for the importance of the DC's leadership role is that because of changes in university administration, the university departments have often acquired greater authority, and the DCs, as department managers, have had to assume larger responsibilities.

In an academic department, while there may be a department tradition surrounding the DC position, it is also likely that its members have different expectations and experiences of leadership. The special nature of the DC position, owing to the characteristics of the university, may also create problems. DCs are appointed to a term of office during which time they lead their peers. At the completion of this term, the DCs resume their former positions as colleagues. The DC position is rarely for the long-term. Moreover, since most DCs are faculty members, they have little or no administrative experience. Their expertise is in an academic discipline, such as English literature, mathematics, or chemistry; management is a new responsibility for them.

Expectations of DCs

The interviews in the four departments at Uppsala University (Eriksson, 1997, 1999) revealed that the department members had many expectations of their department leaders. Table 11.3 lists these various expectations in two columns. The left column lists the administrative roles DCs are expected to assume: able administrator, skilled economist, and strategist. Their tasks require them to be coordinators, problem-solvers, and conflict-solvers. As diplomats, communicators, and decision-makers, they must lead. The right column lists a different set of DC roles that are more related to the profession. The DC is expected to be a colleague who mentors, advises, and inspires. The DC should also act as a mediator, servant, and facilitator for the department. In addition, the DC should be an experienced teacher, established researcher, and well-considered professional. High performance ratings on the professional roles may partially explain high performance ratings on the administrative roles, but the opposite relationship is less likely.

The analysis of the study’s interviews reveals that the department members take three perspectives about the DC role:

- the professional perspective
- the collegial perspective
- the conflictual perspective

The *professional perspective* primarily relates to the *legitimization* process for leaders. Many interviewees described the specific skills and expertise they (and others) need to exert influence and authority. DCs should be able to inspire and lead their colleagues. As a representative for the professionals in the department who require research funding, DCs should be able to attract resources. DCs should be well regarded for their scholarship in the department’s field. In order to lead the department, DCs should also understand the profession and its professionals – that is, DCs should know the department from the inside.

The *collegial perspective* relates to the process of creating a collegial environment in which DCs support the work of individuals and of the group. Such leadership is based on facilitation and consultation, with the leaders viewed as servants – and never as masters. DCs are involved in consensus decision-making as they represent the department members’ interests and opinions; such a process

Table 11.3 Expected DC roles

Able administrator	Colleague
Skilled economist	Mentor
Strategist	Advisor
Coordinator	Provider of inspiration
Problem-solver	Mediator
Conflict-solver	Servant
Diplomat	Facilitator
Communicator	Experienced teacher
Decision-maker	Established researcher
Leader	Well-considered professional

Source: Eriksson (1997: 42–3).

reflects the idea that ‘we need to make all the important decision together’. In this perspective, the best DCs embrace the group’s commonly shared values and goals fully even as they recognize there will always be people in the group who reject those values and goals. In describing the presidency of the American college, Cohen and March (1974: 3) explain the natural discord of the academic institution:

The organization appears to operate on a variety of inconsistent and ill-defined preferences. It can be described better as a loose collection of changing ideas than a coherent structure. It discovers preferences through action more than it acts on the basis of preferences.

However, it is no simple matter to identify the values and goals related to the dual mission of teaching and conducting research. Various interpretations of values are possible; achievements of goals are difficult to measure. At times, when the DC can distinguish no common values and goals, the fragmentation in the department poses a severe challenge to the collegial perspective.

The *conflictual perspective* relates to the circumstances where opposing goals, values, and expectations among department members sometimes create departmental tension. Just as in other organizations, conflicts may occur for many reasons in an academic department.¹¹ Three types of conflict emerged in this study. The first conflict is caused by the diversity and allocation of work tasks. For example, a director of studies may ask a colleague to teach in a term that the colleague planned to use for research, or an administrator may ask others to do work they think unnecessary or boring, or a teacher may adopt teaching methods not used by others in the same field. A second conflict arises out of career-oriented concerns. Examples are disagreements about the distribution of career-enhancing tasks and of resources (new computers, rooms, equipment, funding, etc.). The third conflict may result when people simply ‘can’t get along’.

The majority of the interviewees emphasize that DCs must be able to manage these complex situations and difficult conflicts. A good DC, they say, listens to others and respects the diversity of their opinions, but is unafraid to make a decision when the situation warrants it.

The work of the DC

The four DCs in the study confirm the other interviewees’ opinion that they are expected to play many roles. However, they also agree they cannot meet all expectations, some of which seem either impractical or incompatible with others. One DC said:

I believe I handle this job rather well – I am tough enough for it. It is a matter of recognizing that one cannot satisfy all demands. It is also necessary to be able to choose what one wants to prioritize and sometimes dare to make unpopular decisions.

Another DC said:

I am not the manager type. I do not want to make decisions and control others in the department. I know that I am expected to take a stand and get involved with university issues, but I am not that type of person. I serve as a department chair only

Table 11.4 Working conditions of the DCs

Activity	DC1	DC2	DC3	DC4	Average
Total work hours per week	54	50	53	43	50
Activity ≤15 minutes (%)	61	59	58	81	65
Paper work (%)	15	29	21	34	24
Meetings (%)	4	18	17	16	14
Discussions and social interaction (%)	30	17	27	49	28
Research (%)	1	24	31	1	16
Teaching (%)	50	12	4	0	18
Own office (%)	50	48	27	46	43
Elsewhere in the department (%)	24	10	10	41	20
Home (%)	21	11	10	2	12
Other (%)	5	31	53	11	25

because I feel it is my turn to bear the responsibility, but it is oppressive knowing that I cannot live up to the demands.

The four DCs, with their different personalities, confront their conflicting role expectations in different ways. Their management styles are reflected in how they use their time, where they work, and with whom they work. Table 11.4 presents their time allocation on management activities based on their two weeks of diary entries.

The DCs work an average of fifty hours per week. These hours include teaching and research as well as departmental administration. While they think that they have enough time to complete all their work as DC, the time officially designated for DC-related work is insufficient. Thus, certain important tasks have to be set aside in order to attend to those with a higher priority. Their diaries also show that a large portion of the DCs' activities take fifteen minutes or less. DC4, in the largest of the four departments, has the most fragmented workday with 81 per cent of his activities taking fifteen minutes or less. On average, he was interrupted every eleven minutes by a knock at the door or a telephone call. The three other DCs were not interrupted as often. About 40 per cent of their time could be spent on activities taking longer than fifteen minutes.

On average, the DCs spend the highest proportion of their time (28 per cent) in discussions and social interaction. Paper work, which includes reading, answering mail, and other administrative activities, is second (24 per cent). Formal meetings take 14 per cent of their time.

Two DCs have very little time for research (1 per cent each) compared to the other DCs: one at 31 per cent and the other at 24 per cent. One DC spends a significant part of his time in teaching (50 per cent) while others spend far less. One DC does no teaching. The DC who teaches the most emphasizes the importance of student contact. Conversely, another DC stresses the greater importance of his external contacts. In their complaints that they lack time for long-term planning, the four DCs confirm the classic findings by studies on executive work behaviour.

On average, the DCs spend about two-thirds of their time in their departments, either in their own offices (43 per cent) or elsewhere in the department (20 per

cent). At the extreme, DC4 spends 87 per cent of his time in the department while DC3 spends only 37 per cent in the department.

Conclusions on the work of DCs

The motivation for this research was the examination of university leadership at an administrative layer below that of university VCs. The leader role selected was the DC who administers and leads an academic department. The DC, who is the administrator closest to the teaching and research activities of the university, is a key figure in the university hierarchy.

We conclude that DCs, in their managerial and professional roles, are the focal points for diverse expectations. They are expected to be administrators who understand economic issues, who can devise and implement strategy, and who can communicate effectively both within and without their departments. In addition, they are expected to have achieved excellence in scholarship and teaching. Yet they should also be colleagues who can manage departmental personalities and conflicts. Their work environment in the midst of these multiple expectations is often one of constant interruptions with many and varied demands. In brief, DCs have to act according to both corporate (i.e. market) and collegial (i.e. professional) norm systems as described above.

CONCLUSIONS

Universities of today are not ivory towers, and perhaps never were. They have always depended on the community for funding – from the Sovereign, wealthy benefactors, or the State. Thus, university leaders have always been subject to the conflict between their professional values and the interests of their financiers. However, the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries have created new scenarios for university leaders that pose new leadership problems.

First, owing to state initiatives in many countries, national university systems have expanded significantly. The last 100 years have witnessed the founding of new universities and the growth of established universities with many more students and faculty members. Second, the development of large corporations and the rapid diffusion of management concepts worldwide have made corporate leaders role models whose behaviour other leaders are expected to emulate. Third, as scientific fields have developed, the academic disciplines have become professionalized with professional associations, journals, annual meetings, etc.

As posited by the framework of this chapter, today state, professional, and market forces strongly influence the programmes and policies of universities. The effect on university leaders, obviously, is significant. It has long been established in leadership studies that the work of leaders is demanding in many respects. One particular problem is the difficulty in making long-term plans when work is constantly interrupted by short-term disturbances. More recent studies indicate

that corporate leaders as well as academic leaders are increasingly protected from such disturbances by various buffering arrangements. However, such arrangements may be less effective for academic leaders than for corporate leaders since the former are required to manage professional issues as well as state and market concerns. While this problem exists at the VC level, it is more pronounced at the DC level since DCs have less administrative support.

An interesting feature in university hiring is that markets for university leaders, including VCs, are developing. This development is part of the professionalization of university leadership that is related to the three changes discussed above. Formerly, the position of the VC circulated among faculty members, often with an annual term of office. With the passage of time, as the position became more demanding, faculty members were elected and re-elected as VCs for longer terms. Today it is common to recruit VCs externally. As noted above, even the two tradition-steeped UK universities of Cambridge and Oxford recruited externally for top administrative positions! While we expect to see more such hiring activity in the future, academic reputation is likely to remain a required qualification of university top leaders who seek administrative posts.

By contrast, DCs today are rarely recruited externally although this situation may change in the future as department mergers increase, and ranking surveys and accreditation results are more publicized. These trends may require DCs to make more external contacts and to expand the marketing of their departments. The DC of the future will remain an important university leader, but one with perhaps a broader range of skills and expertise than the traditional professor with little or no administrative experience.

Taking the findings of this and other chapters in this book into consideration, it is natural to ask if universities are moving towards a mainstream corporate model of organization and leadership. To a certain extent, this appears to be the case. The corporate model is penetrating universities as a result of a movement towards market models and the introduction of different kinds of management control systems. However, at the same time, universities, like other professional organizations dealt with in this book, will continue to have a strong professional component. This conclusion means that university leaders will face problems and standards different from those of their corporate counterparts.

Finally, we call for further research into the leadership of academic institutions, particularly because such institutions in recent years have been exposed to the management philosophy of New Public Management (NPM). This philosophy, with its methods and ideas that typically are applied to the public sector, is not necessarily applicable to academic governance. The adaptation of NPM to academic institutions requires more intensive studies of academic leaders at all levels. As such research is undertaken, it is appropriate to place the recent developments in an historical perspective in order to demonstrate the changes in the working conditions of university leaders. In addition, such studies should take an international perspective in order to demonstrate the effects of regulation on university leadership. Two strategic aspects in that context are the development of recruiting principles and the growth of administrative support functions in academic institutions.

NOTES

1. On professions, see e.g. Abbott (1988), Burrage and Torstendahl (1990), Larson (1977), and Torstendahl and Burrage (1990).
2. Economists point to a similar dichotomy for business entities – that is, whether the organizational hierarchy or the market is the more efficient way to make certain transactions (Williamson, 1985). In this tradition, Ouchi (1980) introduced the concept of ‘clan’ for the intermediate form between the market and the organizational hierarchy.
3. The argument that markets are linked to mimetic forces may appear to depart from DiMaggio and Powell’s distinction between competitive and institutional isomorphism. However, in the former case, these authors refer to a ‘free and open competition’ (1983: 150) that seldom exists. Instead, most markets have a limited number of actors who can observe and copy their competitors.
4. For a critical view of the argument of a radical change in science production, see e.g. Whitley (2000: xiii–xxii).
5. For a fuller account of the Swedish system for higher education and research, see Engwall and Nybom (2007).
6. The questionnaire was in five parts. Part one asked basic questions about the interviewees and their institutions. Part two asked about the interviewees’ professional qualifications. Part three focused on interviewees’ previous professional experience. Part four dealt with the interviewees’ external commitments. Part five asked ten questions on interviewees’ attitudes.
7. <http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/po/vc/biog.shtml>, http://www.ox.ac.uk/media/news_stories/2008/080616a.html, and <http://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/offices/v-c/richard.html>. As the first web link reveals, Hood had previous experience as a VC in New Zealand but had a limited scientific record other than his doctoral research. In contrast, both Hamilton at Oxford University and Alison at Cambridge University have considerable research records.
8. See further Engwall (2007).
9. See further Engwall (2008a).
10. Instead of the term, Department Chair (DC), some universities use the term Department Head. While it is possible to distinguish between the terms in order to reflect the selection patterns or organizational images in different university systems, that distinction is unnecessary for this analysis.
11. Organizational theory more often uses the metaphor of the ‘political system’ to refer to this situation. The metaphor implies that individuals and groups of individuals compete and have different wills, values, interests, and norms (e.g. Cyert and March, 1963; Pfeffer, 1981).

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