

# Do We Overestimate the Power and the Potentials of Managerialism?

## Governance and the Academics' Changing Views and Activities in the Knowledge Society

---

AIPKS Online Conference “Management and Governance of Higher Education”, Vilnius, August 2020

Ulrich Teichler

Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Ulrich Teichler  
International Centre for Higher Education Research (INCHER-Kassel)  
University of Kassel, 34109 Kassel, Germany  
E-mail: [teichler@incher.uni-kassel.de](mailto:teichler@incher.uni-kassel.de)

# Four Key Issues of HE in the First Two Decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

- **Functional:** The “Knowledge Society” and the quality vs. relevance nexus
- **Structural:** “Ranking” and increasing stratification of higher education
- **Organisational:** Increasing power of governance, notably of managerial power
- **Spatial:** “Internationalisation” and/or “globalisation”

# Key Issues: Some Caveats

- The list of four issues might be appropriate for **economically advanced countries**. Are other themes equally or more salient in other countries and regions: HE and sustainable development? HE and in/equality?
- The list might be influenced by **too much attention paid to the ideology of “managerialism”** and - related to that - to the individual university as the key arena of action. Would we name **other issues**, if we were not pre-occupied with this ideological “war”? E.g. “Professionalisation” in HE (of managers, “HE professionals”, and academics)?

# The Links between the Key Issues

- The key issues are not viewed as isolated, but rather as **interrelated**.
- There is a widespread view that **governance** is **the most important issue** regarding the links between these issues: “Good” governance should contribute to (a) the best functional balance, (b) the best institutional structure, (c) more successful international cooperation, etc.
- There is a widespread view that the **power of governance** is **growing** and/or has to grow in order to (a) develop more convincing strategies regarding the various key issues, and (b) strengthen “expectations” and pressures which might be helpful for implementation.

# Governance - Not a New Key Issue, but a New Approach

- In most economically advanced countries: **Governments** moved forward towards deregulation combined with a stronger role of major policy directives.
- In most economically advanced countries: The power of **university leadership/management** was traditionally weak and increased substantially in recent decades.
- In all econ. advanced countries: **The academic profession was steered (pushed, regulated) more strongly**

# The Start of the New Wave of Steering

- **Tradition** of a strong university management in the U.S.
- **In the 1980s:** The “Steering from a Distance” philosophy in the Netherlands and the “Research Assessment Exercise” in the UK are widely seen as the start of the new wave.
- **In the 1990s:** A strengthening of management in many countries.
- **In the early 2000s:** Major late-coming changes in some countries (e.g. Germany and Japan)

# Characteristics of the “Managerial University”

- Strong **power of institutional leadership**
- Combined with “**strategies**” and professional underpinning
- **Governments** strengthened **policy directives** and weakened regulation and supervision
- In various countries: Stronger involvement of **external stakeholders**
- Increase of **assessment** measures, **incentive/-sanction** mechanisms, and often of **job insecurity of academics**
- More emphasis placed on the **individual university as key arena of action**

# Assumed Strengths and Weaknesses of the “Managerial University”

- Increased **strategic reflections** by all actors
- Growing emphasis placed on **visible performance** (“academic productivity”, reduction of student drop-out, etc.) and on **higher performance** (realized ?)
- More targeted **resource allocation** (realized ?)
- Success viewed to be more strongly determined **by individual university** (really ?)
- **Opportunities and dangers of strong incentives and sanctions:** Increasing efficiency? Less concern about academic creativity?
- Contribution to a balance or increasing tensions as regards the **relationships between “quality”, “relevance”, and “efficiency”?**
- **Strengthening the top quality sector** of HE? Imitation by others? At the expense of functional diversity and of quality outside the elite segment?



# The Underlying Rationales of the Controversial Discourse

- The **“indeterminate” university**: New knowledge, creativity, innovation, need of “academic freedom”
- University as a **“professional organization”**
- **Increasing pressures of efficient resource allocation** in the process of HE expansion
- **Growing pressures of societal needs** (“knowl. society”, “employability”, etc.)
- **Trust vs. increasing mistrust as regards the academic profession**

# The Steering-Resistant Skeptical Academic Profession

The managerial university would be successful, if academics were successfully steered to become extrinsically motivated employees.

The opposite scenario:

- Academics are smart in undermining power.
- Academics are convinced that they are entitled to play a strong role in the “indeterminate” target-setting in academia.
- Academics believe that that they have the professional expertise as regards academic work and performance.
- Academics believe that their freedom is essential for creativity.
- Academics have a dominant individualistic perspective.
- Senior academics believe in the appropriateness of collegial or professorial power.

# Research on the Academic Profession – a Key Sector of Research on University Governance

## Reasons:

- Academics are (participant) **observers** of policies and activities of governance.
- Academics are key **subjects** of governance.
- Academics are key **filters of the impact** of governance.

# Governance Addressed in the 3 International Academic Profession Surveys

- The **Carnegie Study** of AP (designed 1990/1991 – prior to elaborate managerialism): “The AP profession under pressure” (to do more with less, etc.)
- “**The Changing Academic Profession (CAP)**” (designed in 2004-2006): “Governance”, “Relevance” and “internationalization” as key themes
- “**The Academic Profession in the Knowledge Society (APIKS)**” (designed 2015-2017): The same themes - in a more “matured” stage?

# Major Questions on Governance in the CAP and APIKS Questionnaires

Governance was a marginal theme in the Carnegie Survey

Governance was a key theme in the CAP survey and APIKS survey, whereby similar themes were addressed. Themes:

- **Institutional governance styles**
- **Strategic targets** set by institution
- Explicit institutional **expectations and targets** as regards individual academics
- **Evaluation** of academic activities
- **Respondents' influence** to shape academic policies

# Select Questions **Linked to Governance** in the CAP and APIKS Questionnaires

- **Employment status** (part-time vs. full-time, temporary vs. permanent)
- **Preferences** for research and teaching
- **Affiliation** to the discipline, the department and the institution
- **Academic productivity**
- **Job satisfaction**

# Major AP Sub-Groups Relevant for the Analysis of Governance

- **Country** (system of HE)
- **Senior-junior** (Full and associate profs. vs. other regularly employed academics)
- **Institutional type** (research and teaching oriented vs. predominantly teaching)
- **Disciplinary groups** (Hum./social sc. vs. science/engineering, STEM vs. others, etc.)
- **Academics' function** (e.g. time spent on research, teaching, administration)

# The CAP Book on Governance (Locke/Cummings/Fisher 2011)

## Major messages:

1. **Governance is not as "strong" or "weak" and not as "good" or "bad" as the discourse on the managerial university suggests.**
2. There are substantial **differences by country.**

**Conceptual framework: "Shared governance"** between institutional managers and academics is most successful.

## Problems:

- Little regard of differences by academic rank - senior/junior (most deplorable because of different power within institution), institutional type and disciplinary group
- Few analyses of impact of management on academic views and behaviour
- Few analyses of the compatibility vs. tensions between different management styles and strategic options



# Select Findings – Changes from Carnegie to CAP

Key themes of governance were not addressed in the Carnegie Questionnaire, but some noteworthy findings.

Developments possibly indicating a limited or unexpected impact of managerialism:

- The **academics' affiliation to the institutions** did not increase; it declined in some countries.
- The **job satisfaction remained** constant or improved in most countries; only few cases of declining job satisfaction (e.g. UK).

# Select Findings – CAP (I): Perceived Country Differences of Managerial Style

Responses by university senior academics:

- The US university is viewed concurrently as academic, managerial and supportive.
- The German university as academic (i.e. strong influence of academics) and not as managerial.
- The UK university as managerial and neither as academic nor collegial.
- The Finnish university as collegial and managerial.
- The Japanese university as supportive and not as academic.

## Select Findings – CAP (II): Influence of University Professors – by Country

- Influential in shaping key academic policies **at the faculty level**: Ranging from 21% (Norway) to 64% (Germany) – other examples: Brazil 56%; US 50%; China 40%; UK 30%
- Influential in shaping key academic policies **at the university level**: Ranging from 10% (Italy) to 30% (China) – other examples: Germany 27%, Brazil 26%, US 25%, UK 12%

# Possible Overarching Questions to be Addressed in 2020 (I)

- Has “**managerialism**” grown from CAP to APIKS or “shared governance”?
- Have “managerialism” or “shared governance” a stronger **influence on the views and activities of the academics**? If so, how?
- Has governance become **more strategic** and detailed regarding target-setting in recent years?
- Has governance become **more research-oriented** (research-biased)?

# Possible Overarching Questions to be Addressed in 2020 (II)

- Which role does governance play in emphasizing “**quality**”, “**relevance**” and “**efficiency**” and the relationships between these three orientations? Does university management call for a balance, or do the goals vary substantially between the actors?
- Do governance and its impact on academics become more similar from CAP to APIKS across countries, or do **country differences** grow?
- Do governance and its impact on academics become more similar from CAP to APIKS between STEM fields and other fields, or do **disciplinary differences** grow?

# “Knowledge Society”, Governance and Academia (I)

The “Knowledge Society” paradigm sends vague and controversial signals to higher education and to the academic profession:

- Is there a predominant call for the “**knowledge economy**”, or do other societal goals play a substantial role as well?
- Is the vision of an “**elite knowledge society**” prevailing, or does one strive for diversity and “wisdom of the many”?

# “Knowledge Society”, Governance and Academia (II)

- Is the knowledge system expected to be closely **geared to the assumed demands** (knowledge economy”, “employability”), or are there more flexible/broader perspectives?
- Does the call for “relevance” in the KS destroy or lead to a new creative **balance between “quality”, “relevance” and “efficiency”**?
- Do the universities and the academics **lose their knowledge oligopoly and their relative status** vis-à-vis other knowledge producers and experts?
- Does **knowledge not linked to technological /economic progress lose so much support** that its quality and relevance is undermined?

# “Knowledge Society”, Governance and Academia (III)

- Can academics trust governments, external stakeholders and university managers to strive for a balance of the different demands and visions of the knowledge society?
- Or are governments, stakeholders and university managers biased actors with one-sided goals in mind (e.g. utility of knowledge and efficiency)?
- Are academics also biased actors having other one-sided goals in mind (e.g. only quality)?
- What mechanism can serve **balanced solutions**?