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Changing Universities

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SEFI Seminar 2006

Norwegian University of Science & Technology

Trondheim, Norway

WGCEE

<http://www.ntnu.no/videre/sefi/programme.html>

Academic Change in Higher Education

Ireland

Time of Change

- Half-way between Berlin and Boston
- Not as cold as Norway
- Highest growth rates in OECD for 3 reasons:
 1. Growth in population
 2. Increased proportion of population at work
 3. Increased efficiency (requires organisational learning and individual LLL)

Dublin Institute of Technology

Time of Major Change

- Moving to a single campus
- Transition to University
- Faculty of Engineering
 - Accreditation of 4 year degrees to 2010
 - Equal number of students on three year B.Eng Tech Degrees as on 4 year degrees
 - Needs to widen participation:
 - Modularisation (multiples of 5 ECTS credits)
 - semesterisation
 - learning Outcomes based

Head of Learning Development

- Lead Academic Change in Faculty of Engineering (5000 students)
- 1991 – 2006 change is slow in academia
 - Why ?

Introduction

This paper considers:

- The rapid and radical change occurring in the external environment for Higher Education (HE)
- The pressure this creates on HE to respond appropriately
 - *requires innovative and imaginative response*
- What type of organisation might be successful in this new environment?
Collegial, managerial (corporate), entrepreneurial ???

The Rapidly and Radically Changing Environment for Higher Education

- Increased cost of HE to state (taxpayer)
- Demands from industry changing in Global economy, particularly in high value economies, includes CPD etc...
- Increased use of ICT (information computer technology)
- Demographics
- Changing demands of students
- Pressures for social equality & fairness

Change in HE

- Elite to mass to universal
- 17 million students across Europe
(up 20% in a decade) - Cost to the taxpayer
- Dearing in the UK, West committee in Australia
- Are European universities to follow American and become more entrepreneurial ? (Blair)
- In the US the external environment and the market serve as catalysts for change
- In Europe the major driver for change is the state
Innovation is key ?

Change from Perspective of Academic Management Staff

Ramsden (1998) identified the following as the main challenges university leaders face:

- Maintaining quality with fewer resources (doing more with less);
- Managing and leading at a time of rapid change;
- Turbulence and alteration in HE;
- Demographics and responding to new types of students.

What About the Academic ?

- Academics are being asked to meet the needs of a more diverse group of students, to teach more flexibly using information technology, to redesign curricula to take account of the more rounded skills demanded by industry, to subject their teaching to evaluation, develop and implement improvements, and use more formative assessment aligned to learning outcomes. There are pressures on academics to deliver more to the community, not only by widening access and increasing social capital but also through developing and delivering new innovations like service learning modules and supporting disadvantaged students.

Change in Industrial Organisations

- Scientific Management
- Bureaucracy and Hierarchy
- Total Quality Management
- Learning Organisations

Learning Organisation Responding to External Environment

-For an organisation to survive, its rate of learning must be equal to or greater than the rate of change in environmental conditions... Garratt (2000)
- The Learning Organisation was advocated by Senge in 1990 as the means of achieving this

Learning Organisation

- Trowler (1998), Duke (2002) and others refer to the learning university

... as a possible organisation structure that may well be suited to the modern HE organisation facing major academic change.

Learning Organisation contd

- Duke describes: *The fallacy of many senior managers in HE in the UK believing they know better than those down the line ?*
- Duke identifies the learning organisation as a continuously thinking, planning, reviewing, and adaptive organisation
- He suggests that although the term *Learning Organisation* is now dropping out of fashion, the substance of it is still rising in importance.

Learning Organisation contd

- Wonacott, in *The learning Organisation: Theory and Practice* (2000), refers to the learning organisation as something more theoretical than actual – more a concept to focus aspiration than some objective state.
- He quotes Senge as saying effectively that *ten years after he first used the term no one quite understands what a learning organisation is, least of all him.*

New Culture developing in HE

- Abandonment of collegial decision making procedures (sometimes replaced by collegial consultation) with top-down decision making processes, Felt (2001).
- Individual leadership playing a more central role in many universities
- Strong correlation between increasing institutional autonomy with increased accountability
- Diminution of the role of the individual academic paralleled with the increasing voice of others.
- Over simplistic managerial mechanisms in the UK
Yet parts of Europe appears to be drawn to this model ?

Organisational Culture

- According to Alvesson (2002) the term organisational culture has no fixed meaning.
- It is used to refer to ideas, values and ideologies, rules and norms, emotions and expressiveness, the collective unconscious, or as behaviour, patterns, structures and practices.
- Alvesson sums up culture as a tricky concept used to cover everything and nothing.

Change in DIT

- In the DIT a top down decision to Modularise and Semesterise all programmes was taken but the benefits of efficiency, increased student choice and flexibility have yet to be fully realised
- Pedagogically there has been change – but not enough
- *Boxes are ticked* for Quality Assurance purposes
- The sceptics believe that change is expedient and only skin deep.

- *Duke (1992) wonders if change in some Institutions of Higher Education is a new era or just a bending with the wind while the essentials remain unaltered ?*

Empathy with Academic staff

- Ramsden (1998) in the UK, observes that too much academic management has been reactive, leisurely and amateur with too much focus on short term goals
- ***Just as effective teaching is based on an understanding of how students learn, effective academic leadership is based on an understanding of how academics work.***

Collegial v Managerial

- Felt (2001) carried out a case study analysis of the decision making structures, university autonomy and changing paradigms in higher education policy, in eight countries in Europe.
- He considers collegial and managerial (corporate) as two polar extremes.

Collegial Systems

- The collegial university up to the 1970s?
- Lack of flexibility towards external change and slow adaptation to the demands of stakeholders.
- No clear responsibility for decision making.

Managerial Systems

- An executive management system with hierarchical structure and influenced by private sector practice.
- Less academic freedom
- Goals are set by external sources
- Academics have freedom only to decide how to fulfill them.
- A Corporate type of HE organisation?

<p>Different Model</p>	<p>Policy definition: loose</p>		
<p>Control of implementation</p> <p>Loose</p>	<p>A Collegium</p>	<p>B Bureaucracy</p>	<p>Control of implementation</p> <p>Tight</p>
	<p>D Enterprise</p>	<p>C Corporation</p>	<p>McNay Model</p>
	<p>Policy definition: tight</p>		

Questions

- Is there a consistent move across the world towards tighter policy control/definition ?
- Entrepreneurial a bridge too far in Europe?
- Most organisations appear to be a mixture of all but with the emphasis changing in different countries – what is happening in your university?
- Is the key to successful change finding a way of getting staff to take ownership of a shared vision and thus maximise the potential of every HE organisation's best asset – it's staff ?
- Where does the balance between empowerment and control best sit in an innovative organisation?
- Are managers talking about empowerment whilst retaining control ?

Final points for SEFI conference

- Collegial settings too slow
- Top down management is faster but does not maximise the potential of the organisation
- What might be worth further investigation is the pincer type movement described by Duke (2002), of:
 - a top-down and bottom up approach and the learning organisation might facilitate this.*
- The learning organisation is never a finished product and is always responding to Ext Env

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