

Call for Leadership and Governance through Reflective Management



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It is argued in this paper that university governance should be guided by three principles – the principles of collegiality, respect for truth, and efficiency. The task of university leaders should be to stimulate, motivate and assist the academic community to develop, using these three principles, in a mode of management, here called “reflective management”, that differs in important ways from the management modes that are thought suitable for business firms and many types of non-academic institutions. Academic leadership is to be realized in the spirit of participatory governance, taking into account the governing structure of modern universities that divides schematically into an academic senate, a governing board, and a management team (which may have different names in different institutions). An effective university leader will act as a “mediator”, engaging the university community in the formation of a common vision built around the principal academic missions of (1) research, (2) education of the individual student, and (3) service to the institution’s home community. In the spirit of reflective management, a university leader will insist that academic activity be devoted to the acquisition, preservation and transmission of the sort of knowledge that has been developed by means of scientific and scholarly thought and practice, from Medieval times to the present.

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1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to explain what sort of leadership and governance is needed by modern universities in order to face present challenges. The focus here is on European public universities. Universities are special, in that they are academic institutions, with a multitude of important roles and complex organisational and social structures, and their own internal logic. They are intrinsically different from other public institutions, like courts and police, and also from private industry or business firms. Each type of organization calls for its own form of leadership and governance, and it will be argued that this is especially true of universities.

Are universities knowledge factories?

In recent times there has been a tendency to overlook the special character of the universities and to try to push them into the mould of “efficiently run business operations”. The universities have been encouraged to look at themselves as *business enterprises* that have to pay their way by providing marketable scientific and educational services. In that sense they may even be described as *knowledge factories* with three clearly identifiable products that are much in demand: (1) diplomas or degrees that certify professional competence, (2) theoretical knowledge and scientific expertise, and (3) occasionally, technical products, which can be sold or patented, such as computer systems or pharmaceuticals.

In this academic and educational market, competition between the “knowledge factories” has been growing steadily: competition for public and private funding, competition for students, competition for teachers and researchers, and, not least, competition for recognition and attention. For this last purpose, universities have found themselves obliged to advertise their merits and to try to convince the general public (including potential students), the public authorities, and private industry that they provide *excellent* teaching and *excellent* research. Some universities have even gone so far as to make the striving for “excellence” the ultimate goal of their activity.

Excellence: meaningful concept or empty rhetoric?

Herein lies a problem: concepts like truth and understanding, love and justice are continually and vigorously discussed, because they give meaning to our lives. But we rarely discuss the concept of “excellence”, apparently for the simple reason that it really stands for *nothing* or, in Bill Reading’s words, “has no external referent or internal content” (Readings, 1997, p. 23). It sounds like a piece of empty rhetoric, designed to make an impression in an ill-founded discussion. Its meaning in that discussion is often tied to some artificially constructed technical scale which allows for a ranking, like the Shanghai scale, which quantifies scientific publications, Nobel Prize winners, PhD students and so on; but these scales are mostly constructed for promotional purposes, and their validity as measures of anything that might seriously be called “academic excellence” is rarely reflected

upon. The rhetoric of excellence is symptomatic of the effort that universities are now making to uphold standards while at the same time being pushed to do more teaching and more research with fewer and fewer resources at their disposal.

The trends just described have diverted attention from something that should never be forgotten, which is that universities have certain characteristics and roles which distinguish them fundamentally from factories or shopping malls. To lead and govern universities means to ensure that they accomplish what should be expected from them as *academic institutions*. It is clear that in the present context universities are expected to undertake a number of different missions, not all of which are strictly academic.

The remainder of this article is divided into two parts. The first part deals with the governing structure of the university and its main principles. In that part, the focus is upon certain basic characteristics of universities and certain specific tasks that university leaders must take on if they hope to ensure that their institutions can fulfil their most fundamental mission. The second part argues for what could be called *reflective management*: the kind of management that is required of university leaders today.

2. The governing structure of universities

2.1 The internal structure of universities

Universities are academic institutions dedicated to the acquisition, preservation and transmission of the sort of knowledge that has been developed by means of scientific and scholarly thought and practice, which includes the building of theoretical frameworks and the collection and application of evidence. Early on, this activity was organised into a variety of subjects, such as logic, physics, psychology, mathematics and so on.¹ Modern universities group these and many other

**Basic academic
structure**

¹ The Medieval universities inherited the division of subjects from the Ancient Greeks. Logic, rhetoric, astronomy, physics, psychology, geometry, to name just a few disciplines, had all flourished in the old Greek schools and had been further developed in the Arabic schools during the centuries before the foundation of the first universities in Europe in the 12th century. Besides these theoretical subjects, some professional disciplines like medicine, law and the interpretation of Holy Scripture also had long tradition behind them before the European universities were created.

subjects into disciplines, departments, and faculties that exist under a variety of different labels. Because of this inherent complexity, universities need (and typically have) very special operational rules which make them different from most, if not all, other enterprises.

Each of the units (disciplines, departments, and faculties) carries academic responsibilities and enjoys a certain autonomy, based upon its formally acknowledged expertise.² Within each of the disciplines and departments, academics are left to decide, on the basis of their scholarly expertise, how to organise the transmission, preservation and acquisition of knowledge. How this is best accomplished differs among the various disciplines and is normally best left to those who have themselves undergone the apprenticeship specific to the discipline. In the faculties, several disciplines or subjects are brought together in various ways, again according to the main purpose of the teaching, and the nature of the knowledge, in question. In a well-structured academic institution, these larger units bring together disciplines that have an intrinsic kinship suitable for subjection to a common layer of organizational principles.

Role of leaders in academic community: preserving ethical standards

The basic role of the leaders in such a community consists in preserving and upholding the ethical and scholarly standards without which the academic community would fall apart. Of course, members of that community may not always be faithful to their own principles. Some may fail to fulfil their teaching duties in an appropriate manner. And some may disregard the basic rules of objectivity and honesty, serving values unrelated to education and knowledge, such as wealth or fame, and developing vices like envy or greed that spread corruption. A university leader must therefore be committed to moral leadership, as the guardian of academic values. Moreover, the academic community does not exist as a harmonious and peaceful unity, which puts the onus on leaders to balance internal interests, without undue sacrifice of the common good. On the contrary, it is full of tensions, conflicts, and competition between scholars, faculties, departments and other internal units. Despite these inherent tensions, the academy must be run as a cooperative enterprise, grounded in the virtues, principles and values

² Early on, universities were divided into two types of faculties: those that were dedicated to the professional disciplines and others that were purely academic. For a long time there were three basic professional faculties: Medicine, Law and Theology, and one purely academic faculty, namely Philosophy which grouped together all of the theoretical disciplines. Philosophical subjects were often studied prior professional studies. Progressively, the faculty of Philosophy was divided into several faculties: Faculty of Natural sciences, Faculty of social sciences, Faculty of the humanities and so on. And in similar vein, many new professional faculties were established, like the Faculty of engineering, Faculty of nursing and so on (these disciplines and many others are in many countries still taught in special professional or technical schools).

that are recognized and practiced by the community of scholars, teachers and students. If it is not, it will be subject to manipulation and dissolution by external, as well as internal, forces. And, if effective cooperation is to exist, the university must constantly try to overcome these adversarial interactions and forge out of them a constructive, principled consensus (an ongoing process). This requires rules and structures that guarantee continuous consultation and dialogue between scholars in different disciplines, departments and faculties in order to nurture consensus, not only in academic matters but also in the management of funds, equipment and buildings, i.e. the infrastructure of a university.

2.2 Three principles of academic governance

The university has developed traditional administrative practices that aim at making the members of the academic community responsible towards each other and collectively responsible for their common affairs. These practices reflect three basic principles of academic governance. The first is that of *collegiality*:

“The principle of collegiality says that the participants in an activity should conduct themselves co-operatively and on the basis of mutual respect and shared responsibility for decision-making about that activity. Levels of mutual trust tend to be, and in fact have to be, quite high. Strongly or permanently hierarchical relations of authority and subordination are suspect and a substantially egalitarian attitude prevails among members of a relevant ‘college’.” (MacCormick, 1999)

**Basic principles of academic governance:
responsible collegiality,
respect for the truth
and efficiency**

The second is that of *respect for the truth* (or knowledge itself): the principle that academic activity depends upon the dedication of each member to the pursuit of learning, and upon the support, criticism and academic vigilance of the members of the community with respect to every aspect of the scholarly work.

Finally, the third principle is that of *efficiency* according to which academic activity and management should be rationally organized so as to increase scientific productivity, control costs and avoid time-wasting.

These three principles apply at all levels of academic activity, especially at the level of those units which bear special responsibility for organizing and making possible the cooperative pursuit of learning within a given field of scholarship or within a set of related disciplines. This is true *academic* governance, that is, the appropriate style of governance for an institution dedicated to teaching, research, and the preservation of knowledge.

2.3 Governing structure

If it is to function as a true scientific and scholarly institution, every university needs to be established and realised in the spirit of participatory governance of the kind just described. The vehicles for participation may be structured in different ways within different universities and may bear various names. But in general, there are three main bodies that can be identified in the governing structure of a university:

Three main governance structures: academic senate, governing board, management team

1. An *academic senate* that exists as a venue for making clear the needs, goals, and critical views of scholars in all the various disciplines which need to be taken into consideration in order to secure effective participation in the cooperative pursuit of learning which is the proper business of the university. This body deals with the overarching concerns of the institution as a whole. It is meant to be the common venue of the university community, within which the principle of *collegial governance* is, or ought to be, constantly refreshed.
2. A *governing board* that renders the university capable of acting as one person in relation to external parties, and is meant to promote and ensure the cooperative framework that is the basis for all individual academic endeavours. A central task of this body is to mitigate polarisation or disciplinary hegemony within the institution. It should also oversee the just distribution of resources. In the present academic milieu, it should spur the interdisciplinary work that is the mark of the coming scientific culture, and ensure that proper co-ordination between tasks is in place. It should uphold the *respect for truth and knowledge* as the principle for the spiritual unity of the whole academic body.³
3. A *management team* that oversees the institutional and technical organization without which the university would not be able to function and develop. It is important to establish and sustain the notion that the administration is an integral part of the institution that does not stand apart from, or beneath, or above, the collegial academic governance of the institution. The principle of sound management is that of *efficiency*.

The art of leading and governing a university consists in letting these three bodies – and the principles which guide them – support and limit each other and thus work together in a harmonious manner.

³ In a business firm an equivalent principle for the direction or the board would be the profit of the owners of that company. For a nation-state it would be justice or peace.

2.4 Interplay of the governing bodies

The three governing bodies may take on different forms and have different rules and responsibilities in different institutions.

In many traditional universities the Rector (President, Vice-Chancellor) is the president of the Academic Senate and also of the Governing Board, but has a Manager (Vice-President, Vice-Rector) at his side for the management of finance, buildings and so on. In younger universities the Rector may be seen as the main executive manager, hired by an independent or an external board.⁴ Whatever variants may be in place, and whatever they may be called, the leaders of universities must fully respect the three aforementioned dimensions of the academic governance which come together in the daily running of a university and must enjoy the trust of their colleagues.

First, the Board must rely, on the one hand, on information coming from the management team and, on the other hand, on information coming from the faculties represented in the senate. Quite often there are tensions between the faculties (which are concerned with academic matters) and the management, (which is concerned with finance and material organisation); and it typically falls to the Rector or Manager to settle the issue.

**Inherent tensions
and ways of
overcoming them**

Second, the faculties led by their deans, have to accept the decisions made by the board and the financial and material provisions framed by the management. Sometimes the board and the management do not work in concert, and here the rector has a vital role to play, in order to ensure that the concerns of all parties are fully taken into account.

Finally, the management may be caught between directives they receive from the Board, for instance, to reduce costs, and the demands for resources coming from the faculties, concerning equipment or staffing. In some cases, the management has no realistic means to follow the directives or to meet the demands.

The three types of situations just described show how varied and diverse the issues and problems are with which the leaders of universities have to deal. In concrete situations the task of the university's leader is to determine which requirements are to be given priority. For this he has to rely upon his own judgment or that of his colleagues. Moreover, universities have for centuries set up either permanent or ad hoc committees in order to assist the governing bodies in dealing with complex issues concerning teaching, research, staff development, distribution of funds, student counselling, international relations, and so on.

⁴ In American universities, the President is typically such an executive manager, while another person serves as the President of the Academic Senate.

2.5 The main task of the university leaders

In light of what has been said about the diversity of university activities, it is most important for a university community to have a common vision of its institution, its basic mission and its future development. The university leader has relentlessly to promote such a vision among the staff of his institution in order to preserve the unity of the institution and ensure the active cooperation of the university staff.

Leaders as mediators

In his famous book, *The Uses of the University*, Clark Kerr, who was the President of the University of California at Berkeley, says about the university president that he “is a leader, educator, creator, initiator, wielder of power, pomp; he is *also* officeholder, caretaker, inheritor, consensus-seeker, persuader, bottleneck. But he is mostly a mediator”. (Kerr, 2001, p. 27)

Kerr’s term, “mediator”, is the key to understanding what is required of those who are called upon to lead and govern a university. There are always many missions, objectives, aims, ambitions, ideas, and interests at stake within an academic institution. The success of leadership and the quality of governance depend in the end on how well a university leader is able to spur, motivate, harmonise and assist the academic community to develop on the basis of the efforts made by all the participants in that community.

University leaders must always respect the free exercise of science and scholarship and the great diversity of disciplines and subjects that coexist within universities. But they also need to have a clear understanding of what creates and sustains the *unity* of their own institution; how they can unite under common goals and missions the different scholars and students in the various faculties, departments and disciplines. Here, university leaders must steadily apply the principle of collegiality and engage the members of the academic community in a serious reflection upon *the mission(s) of their universities* and how well they are carried out.

2.6 How to achieve a common mission for a university

In order to explore such a reflection, let us take a closer look at the notion of the *mission* of a university. From the 19th century onward, many universities have had an overarching *national* mission, namely to support the development of the nations that spawned them. José Ortega Y Gasset maintained that this mission requires the universities to perform three essential functions: (1) the fostering and transmission of culture, (2) teaching of the learned professions (law, medicine etc), and (3) scientific research and the training of new scientists (Ortega, 1930), and his account seems still to be applicable.

Nowadays, we are witnessing a renewed tendency to insist upon the *international* character of universities, which affects the interpretation of the three classical missions, and these may be re-labeled accordingly. First, a greater emphasis has been placed upon research, leading to new knowledge and technical innovation. Teaching, the transmission of knowledge, and all services to society are here seen as depending ultimately on the university's capacity to undertake research that merits international recognition by the global academic community. This is *the research mission*.

Three missions for a university: research mission, liberal mission and service mission

Second, emphasis has been placed upon providing individual students with the opportunity to develop their intellectual, aesthetic, ethical and technical capabilities. Among these opportunities would, of course, be good training in a specific field of study, whether for professional purposes or for doing research. But the university's main concern would be the flourishing of the individual, the development of his or her character and competence. This is *the liberal mission*.

A third emphasis is upon service to the society, the nation or the region to which a university belongs, which has a more direct economic basis. A university might even have been created for the purpose of helping a city, a region or even a specific industry to develop (for example the land-grant universities in USA or some of the provincial universities in Europe). What is important in singling out this third mission is its direct and pragmatic societal contribution, such as is the case where a university is established with the specific intention of helping a region, an industry or a country to develop. A classical example would be the foundation of "l'Université française" by Napoleon, which turned all higher education in France into an instrument in the service of the French Nation. This is the explicit (or specific) *societal mission* of the university.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to the leadership and governance of contemporary universities is the fact that our times require that most, if not all, universities attempt to pursue all of these three different missions concurrently: (1) to do research, (2) to educate the individual student, and (3) meet the specific needs of a society. But each university has to do this in its own way and must formulate clearly for itself, and for the society at large, what its priorities are and how it will endeavour to realize them. And it is imperative that the whole university community is engaged in formulating and carrying out this basic policy commitment.

Challenges for governance and leadership: pursuing all three missions simultaneously

2.7 Practical questions and concerns

When formulating the objectives of their institution, university leaders should link them to the questions from which they cannot escape, questions such as the following: What is the right direction for my institution? Are the academics sufficiently aware of the ideological framework within which they are operating or what is required of them? Are we really accomplishing what we want? Are we making decisions and controlling our activities efficiently, and do they reinforce our aims?

The reasons for asking such questions are anchored in the concrete problems that all rectors or presidents and deans face. To take three examples:

- A faculty wants to set up a new program, and one has to ask if it fits the mission of the university, how it connects to other programs, and whether it has been prepared and decided upon in the right way, and also whether it makes financial sense.
- A company wants to support a research project within a given institute; again similar questions arise and most likely there are also issues of autonomy, integrity and conflicts of interest to be considered.
- A financial crisis may affect the university's funding, and the university may have to trim several of its operations, even reconsider its missions, its programs and how it runs itself.

Leaders need to reflect regularly on the social context and internal dynamics of their institutions

But university leaders or governors also have more general reasons for reflecting upon their universities. To take proper care of their institutions they must reflect regularly on the social context within which their university is located and the internal dynamics of their institutions. Is the university's mission the one that is most appropriate given the social context and the available resources? Are the educational objectives realistic or perhaps no longer in harmony with societal needs? Does the governing structure allow the university to develop, or is it in fact a hindrance to its development?

There is always the danger that these questions are not confronted seriously, that the answers to them are not well grounded or are simply given in order to defend powerful interests within the institution or external to it. It may also be the case that university leaders are so preoccupied with reacting to problems concerning the financial or material conditions of the university that they neglect the proactive responses to existing academic issues.

3. Towards the reflective management of universities

3.1 Technical management and academic governance

As an organization, the university has to manage its affairs like any other entity – a city, a town, or a business firm, with attention to its economic and material conditions.⁵ For this purpose, it will need other sorts of administrative bodies than those that concern themselves with educational and academic values. It needs accounting departments, technical services departments, buildings and grounds departments, a student registry, and so on. Such units are necessary to manage the functioning of the university; they are integral to its operation, not an auxiliary part.

However, the organization of such technical management services is normally quite different from that of bodies dedicated to academic governance, and properly so, because there are different values at stake in these different operation. *Technical* or *bureaucratic* management is set up in order to take care of values, goals or targets that can be measured by technical criteria, for instance speed and reliability, which are important in organisation of whatever activity, also teaching and research. There is a tendency to look at money as the most universal standard by which the achievement of such goals are to be measured; it is definitely not a standard that can be ignored or pushed aside, though it is ruled by a different set of values. And, as we have already noticed, the principle that guides technical management is that of *efficiency*.

Although the principle of efficiency also matters in the organisation of academic activity (teaching and learning), *academic* governance is, as such, established to take care of the educational values of understanding, truth and reason: values that are very difficult to measure according to technical criteria, like the ethical values of justice, friendship and courtesy. When educational, cultural or ethical values are at stake, decisions have to be made on the basis of mutual trust and shared responsibility. That is why the principles of *collegiality*, and the principle of *respect for the truth*, which we have already discussed, are so important in institutions that have the responsibility for such values.

Technical or bureaucratic management is not equal to academic governance

Importance of principles of collegiality and respect for the truth

⁵ The universities have always had to fight for the material support that they need for their existence. In the Middle Ages, when they did not get sufficient support from the towns where they were located, they even threatened to leave! Universities have in fact always needed a good economic management, and therefore worldly values have always determined to a certain extent what kind of leadership and governance is required in universities.

3.2 The business ideology

As mentioned before, universities have in recent times been encouraged to look at themselves *as knowledge factories* that have to follow the laws of the market, both in aims and operations and should thus be run as any *business firm*. The basic principle for such a firm is that of efficiency defined on the basis of rather simple and transparent criteria: maximising production and minimizing costs. Looking at the university as a business firm means applying this principle to *all* the activities of the academic institution – and this means pushing aside the operational principle of collegiality and the respect for truth as an overriding concern.⁶ This trend has had dramatic effects upon universities, described by the Nobel Prize winner, J.M. Coetzee, in the following terms:

“It was always a bit of a lie that universities were self-governing institutions. Nevertheless, what universities suffered during the 80s and 1990s was pretty shameful, as under threat of having their funding cut they allowed themselves to be turned into business enterprises, in which professors who had previously carried on their enquiries in sovereign freedom were transformed into harried employees required to fulfil quotas under the scrutiny of professional managers. Whether the old powers of the professoriate will ever be restored is much to be doubted.” (Coetzee, 2007, p. 35)

Can teaching and research be monitored and controlled in the same manner as manufacturing cars?

The idea behind this development is that all activities can be submitted to the same kind of technical management: teaching and research can be monitored and controlled in the same way as constructing houses or manufacturing cars. In that spirit the academic activity has been submitted to measuring and monitoring as if it were entirely technical and could in practice be evaluated and controlled with objective instruments and indicators. At the same time systems of incentives have been invented in order to steer academic activity in certain directions, usually to increase productivity in awarding degrees, publishing scientific articles, and so on. These technical management methods have then been used in order to allocate funding to faculties, departments and research projects, as if the activity taking place in the academia could be properly assessed by these methods. Finally, universities have been submitted to systematic ranking on various technical scales in order to measure and ultimately increase their competitiveness on the academic and educational market.

⁶ This conflict may exist no less in business firms that produce specific “intelligence products”, which, like academic institutions, require independent-minded people. Firms of this kind are more similar to academic institutions than firms of most other kinds and may call for “academic” forms of organization and management.

The principle of efficiency is, of course, valid for the material and financial management of universities, as for any organisation or enterprise. But to apply it in academic governance in such a way that basic principles of collegiality and truth are put aside is indeed shameful. It reflects disrespect for the values that the academic institution is created to sustain and threatens to undermine the values of education and knowledge, understanding and truth. Therefore, it is the obligation of all university leaders today to resist this ideology before it does further damage to academic activity.

It is the obligation of all university leaders today to resist the business ideology

For this battle it is thus essential that university leaders make *proper* use of those management methods that involve technical measurement, conformity to procedures and protocol, detailed record-keeping, performance indicators, bench-marking, and auditing of various types, to mention a few items familiar from the management discourse of present times. University leaders can no longer dream of turning back to some “good, old times”, but should instead follow Clark Kerr who liked to see the university president as “a gladiator, fighting for ‘freedom and quality’” (Kerr, 2001, p. 28 and p. 109). These terms underscore the duty of university leaders to ensure both the autonomy and the accountability of their institutions, as universities.

3.3 Autonomy and accountability

Coetzee seems to be on to something when he says “It was always a bit of a lie that universities were self-governing institutions.” In fact, universities have always depended on external powers that exerted a certain control over them. They have been established by clerical, political and economic powers that have always wanted to influence university leadership and governance. The idea of “academic freedom” was invented because of this external pressure, to which academics are, and have always been, subjected. Just as nobody can be *forced* to believe something he or she does not believe, academics must be free to search for the truth on whatever subject that appeals to them, not least because it is impossible to know in advance what sorts of knowledge may prove to be of fundamental importance to science or to society.

Claims for academic freedom as a response to pressures from external powers

Coetzee seems to go further on the right track when he says: “Whether the old powers of the professoriate will ever be restored is much to be doubted.” University leaders should not even try to restore the ancient “powers of the professoriate”, but they should push all the more for the *autonomy* of their institutions in academic matters and also the university’s *accountability*. *Autonomy* refers to the university’s capacity to manage its own affairs in accordance with reasons and premises that it has accepted on the basis of its respect for the principles on which it is based. *Accountability* refers, on the other

Autonomy and accountability

hand, to the capacity to reflect upon and to demonstrate how the university is accomplishing its duties and meeting the expectations of those who support its activities.

The need for reflective management

The style of academic management that requires not only the technical instruments that allow for the daily control of the university activity but also a constant reflection on how the university cares for the values that ground its activity (in the manner described in the preceding pages) can be called *reflective management*. The leaders of universities need not only develop such reflection, but to encourage all those who are involved in the management of the university to do the same, thus ensuring its incorporation into the operations of the university.

In order to make their autonomy and accountability clear, most if not all European universities now have contracts with the public authorities, contracts that stipulate what the universities have accepted to do within a given time period and how much money the state will provide to allow them to fulfil the tasks they have undertaken. These are inspired by a trend sometimes described as “new public management”. Typically, an important part of such a contract requires the universities to develop internal quality-control systems and provides for external quality-assurance.

There are many interesting sides to this policy, especially when an informed and open dialogue between the academics and the politicians is developed while preparing or renewing the contract between the university and the public authorities. Such a dialogue can be essential for the university in order to establish its autonomy vis-à-vis the political and financial powers and also to make clear its internal autonomy, i.e. how it makes decisions as an independent entity and solves internal conflicts.

Unfortunately, however, these contracts are not always the result of an authentic negotiating process, because an essential principal of free contract is absent, namely the equivalence of bargaining power that is the only genuine guarantor of fairness. Where there is no equality of bargaining power, the contract model is a pseudo-liberal model which tends to conceal authoritarian control through the illusion of false consent.

3.4 Contracts between universities and public authorities

There are many issues that need to be recognized and respected when a *contract* is made between a university and a public authority. One must recognize that most universities are trying to do more than they have the capacity to do. This stems from the fact that the different missions of serving society (the nation), the sciences and the individual student, which we discussed in the first part of this article, are important in almost every university. The state may seek to limit the missions and tasks of a given university, but a university which follows its own nature, which is the free pursuit of scientific and scholarly activity, always tries to develop in many different directions because of the various interests that are at stake both within, and outside of, the institution.

The public authorities need to respect this fact and recognize that the *autonomy* of a university consists not only in its capacity to make decisions at the top level as to its specific objectives, but also to allow its academics to develop their activities in the ways they think to be the most appropriate. Accordingly the *accountability* of a university should not *only* be thought of in terms of a set of tasks defined in a contract with the state but must *also* be thought of as assuming the responsibility of satisfying the needs and demands of a great number of stakeholders, both within, and outside of, the university.

**A deeper understanding
of autonomy and
accountability**

Another issue, closely related to the previous one, is that the state has no possibility to, and should not pretend to, represent all the various stakeholders of a university, who range from the individual student and his family to business corporations or NGO's, not to mention the various cultural, political and economic interests that may be at stake in the development of a given university (Jónasson, 2008). In a contract between a university and the public authorities, one should not try to cover all the issues that might be of interest for the society, but instead respect and rely on the *freedom* given to the expertise and zeal of the university faculty to develop according to new opportunities or initiatives and to try to create favourable conditions for the university to perform as well as possible at whatever it tries to do.

3.5 Academic leadership and quality assurance

To make their decisions, university leaders need to take into account the academic activities of all the departments, institutes, faculties or disciplines that belong to the university. They must grasp and appreciate the multifaceted character of their own institution, even when they are forced to take hard decisions that downsize, or eliminate, academic elements of their institutions. Quite often, and this may be a good reason for criticizing the decisions made at the top level of a university, leaders and governors have neither the information nor the understanding they need in order to make wise decisions. Nevertheless, they bear the responsibility for developing the means for acquiring the necessary knowledge. For this, various methods of quality assurance can be most useful, providing information and insights into academic activity, its conditions, processes, outcomes, and management.

Multifaceted institutions require multifaceted leadership

At the same time, as in all learning process, they need to become aware of the limitations of their own reflective thinking.⁷ Each leader has his or her character and competences, experience and expertise, which it is his or her responsibility to overcome, or counterbalance, by reliance upon trustworthy advisors and the judicious delegation of decision-making.

Autonomy and *accountability* are, at their core, ethical concepts that can never be completely grasped by technological methods, as is sometimes imagined. These concepts call for the personal and serious reflection of those who find themselves in a position to lead and govern their universities. And such reflection should put its mark upon the public discourse that university leaders have to develop both within the university community and in the wider society.

Among the crucial instruments for the leadership and governance within the university sector is the methodology of evaluation and of quality assurance. In that connection, various approaches can be immensely helpful because they make it possible for the ambitious university to look at itself from both internal and external perspectives, and in new and interesting ways. But university leaders have always to be very clear about what they understand the university to stand for, and they must ascertain that the basic principles are clear both to themselves and the members of the university community.

In his book, *The Ideal of the University*, the American philosopher, Robert Paul Wolff, makes the following remarks that explain the kind of leadership and governance that universities need:

⁷ I am here reflecting, by hindsight, on my own experience as a university rector for eight years.

“A community of *learning* differs from all other kinds of community, such as a political community, a religious community, a community of work, or an artistic community, in the character of its collective goals and the forms of activity and organization which flow there from. The university is a community devoted to the preservation and advancement of knowledge, to the pursuit of truth, and to the development and enjoyment of man’s intellectual powers. Furthermore, it is devoted to the pursuit of these goals collectively, not merely individually. The public discourse of the university community is not a mere *means* to the private activity of research. . . . Rather, that discourse is itself one of the chief goods to be found in a flourishing university. It is precisely this devotion to an essentially collective activity that makes the university a community rather than an aggregation of individuals.” (Wolff, 1969, p. 128)

4. Conclusion – a call for reflective management

Universities require a special kind of leadership and governance because of the complexity of the theoretical and scholarly activity that is itself divided into various subjects, disciplines, department and faculties. The acquisition, preservation and transmission of knowledge requires constant cooperation and dialogue between scholars who have to organize this enterprise in common, while at the same time following diverse plans appropriate to the various disciplines. Academic governance thus necessarily requires the active participation of the members of the university in the decision-making processes that define the university framework. It was argued in this paper that this central organization must be guided by three basic principles: the principle of *collegiality*, the principle of *respect for the truth* (or knowledge itself), and the principle of *efficiency*. The governing bodies of a university – the Senate, the Governing Board, and the management – must all be guided by these principles, albeit in somewhat different ways.

Everything depends upon how university leaders develop *reflection* as the principle of their leadership responsibilities. In order to become a good university leader, it is not enough to learn the management techniques that are nowadays generally taught and that are not most appropriate to academic governance. One has *to learn* to reflect *systematically* upon how the university can take care of the values that ground the academy and to develop the reflective managerial techniques that are appropriate for academic governance. Training for such *reflective management* has yet to be developed within academia, and this contribution, amongst other, constitutes a call for the development of such training.

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