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Global Challenges, National Initiatives, and Institutional Responses: The Transformation of Higher Education

Introduction

Higher education systems have changed significantly in recent years in response to rising global challenges and various national policy initiatives. One of the major forces fostering change in higher education over recent decades has been its persistent expansion. As higher education has continued to expand, governments' responses have been to seek structural changes at system level (Taylor et al, 2008). The changes in the individual and social motivations regarding higher education have had a major impact on the external and internal regulation of higher education institutions, namely by stressing the economic dimension of higher education and the potential of institutions to contribute to individual and socio-economic goals (Teixeira, 2007, Aghion et al, 2010). This shifting view about institutions and their primary purposes has led to a need to rethink and adapt the contextual framework in which these organizations operate. Hence, we have seen a reconfiguration of the sector along market rules (Regini, 2011; Teixeira et al, 2004).

Higher education has now moved from an expanding sector to a mature industry (Teixeira and Dill, 2011) and governments and societies have become more demanding. This has had important consequences, notably through a much more explicit participation of external stakeholders in formal and informal mechanisms of governance. Another important implication of the pervasive managerial and economic dimensions of institutions has been the rising influence of academic management (Meek et al, 2010, Shattock, 2006). The rationale for many of these changes cannot be found exclusively within higher education alone (Magalhães and Amaral, 2009) and needs to combine an analysis of higher education specificities and the examination of wider transformations taking place in the public sector all over the Western world since mid-1980s (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2009 and 2011). The emergence of these new management ideas has contributed to put the focus on universities to change their 'traditional' nature (Amaral et al 2003). Having to take into account, more and more, the interests of a variety of stakeholders, and to deal with growing international

competition, higher education institutions had to rethink their traditional forms of organisation, governance and management, putting a new emphasis on the implementation of effective co-ordination and control systems, needed to improve organisational performance (Clark 1998).

The shift from collegial governance to management concepts, structures and methods has enabled higher education institutions to act more strategically. However, the emphasis on institutional autonomy does not correspond to the retraction of state regulatory power. The transformation of the regulation relationships between the state and institutions in Europe has replaced *a priori* control, via inputs (e.g., funding), by *a posteriori* control, referred to institutions' output (Neave, 2012). This has induced the elaboration of policy instruments based on performance indicators that are spreading all over Europe and beyond. The institutional adaptation to this new context has been moulded by a change from a cycle of trust and confidence in institutions to a cycle of suspicion (Amaral and Rosa 2010). This has been visible in the rise of a series of accountability instruments such as the movement towards accreditation that has been observed in recent years (Schwarz and Westerheijden 2004). It may be argued that in this new context quality bears no longer a strong relation to higher education institutions' core activities and that its processes are becoming bureaucratic and compliance structures, increasingly removed from the academic concerns that lie at the heart of quality in higher education (Westerheijden et al, 2006).

Increasingly, higher education institutions have to respond not just on the quality of their education provision, but also to a variety of aspects of their performance (Sarrico, 2010). There is no shortage of initiatives to collect data in order to classify institutions or rank them according to their performance, though the validity of a lot of these approaches is questionable, namely because of data comparability (Sarrico et al, 2008). Despite the fact that performance is increasingly measured, there is scarce evidence that it is leading to changes in behaviour and performance (Melo et al, 2010). Moreover, performance measurement is done as a collection of disjoint parallel systems that increase bureaucracy, workload and erode the goodwill of staff. This leads us to conclude that performance management in higher education institutions is something that is not just a technical problem, but increasingly an organisational one, where the issues of values and governance structures take prominence (Sarrico et al, 2010).

The question of how academics and non-academics are responding to this newly created environment is a matter requiring increasing attention. This interest is particularly evidenced in the reflection over the effects of the aforementioned changes in governance and in the assumption of a management culture over academics' identities and professionalization processes (Santiago & Carvalho, 2008). Concerning administrative and management staff theoretical reflection and empirical analysis are yet to be developed, since this group tends to be interpreted as a residual category. The simple division between academics and non-academics oversimplifies the reality and is insufficient to incorporate all the complex dynamics that the introduction of a managerial culture in higher education institutions translates (Watson, 2009; Meek et al, 2010).

In this book we aim to analyse how higher education institutions and their staff are coping with the multiple challenges confronting higher educational globally and how the policy initiatives of the last decade have shaped those institutional responses. We will pay particular attention to four dimensions of change that seem to us as key elements in higher education transformation: governance, quality assurance, performance and assessment, and the role of professionals. The chapters included in this volume contribute to illustrate that these various dimensions of change are significantly intertwined and that the effectiveness of policy initiatives regarding each of these aspects requires an integrated approach and needs to take into account the interplay of the dimensions of quality, performance, governance and the role of professionals within higher education institutions.

The chapters included in this volume constitute a selection of some of the best papers presented at the 28th annual conference of CHER – The Consortium of Higher Education Researchers. This conference took place at ISEG Lisbon School of Economics and Management, Universidade de Lisboa, between the 7th and 9th of September 2015 under the title “Global Challenges, National Initiatives, and Institutional Responses – The Transformation of Higher Education” and has counted upon the participation of almost 200 higher education researchers from multi-disciplinary backgrounds and a large number of countries. After the conference, the Scientific Committee selected a small set of the papers given its relevance for the theme and the contribution they represented for the aforementioned strands of research. Each paper was reviewed by 2 anonymous referees and their comments were sent to the authors in order to help them preparing a revised version,

namely that could strengthen the continuity and congruence of the whole volume. The result of this revision process is the backbone of this volume and represents what we consider to be a stimulating and careful set of analyses about those multiple and complex changes faced by higher education institutions worldwide. We will now proceed to a more detailed presentation of the specific contents of this volume.

The chapters in Part I, addressing the question of how governance regimes coordinate higher education institutions, identify systemic factors conditioning Nordic countries' comparative advantage in the production of scientific capital and discuss the role that non-teaching structures play in higher education institutions in Portugal.

On the basis of the theory of academic capitalism (Münch, 2014) the chapter by **Olivier Bégin-Caouette** argues that the achievements of comparatively high results of Nordic higher education institutions are associated with systemic factors conditioning Nordic countries' comparative advantage in the production of scientific capital. Academic traditions and internationalization emerged as relevant factors in the Nordic context when discussing how governance regimes coordinate higher education institutions. Economic and symbolic capital granted to researchers (resources, networks and space) are pointed out as relevant in shaping the governance coordination of institutions, buffer organizations, and the State. The chapter also contributes to understand how varieties of academic capitalism (VoAC) approach (Hall & Skoskice, 2001, 2004) is useful to apprehend how countries' political-economy influence academics' comparative advantage in the global struggle for academic production and prestige.

The chapter by **Rui Santiago and Teresa Carvalho** focuses on the non-teaching units devoted to knowledge and technology transfer and to the promotion of innovation and entrepreneurialism emerging in a sample of public Portuguese universities. They underline their importance and their relation with the established teaching and research units and they argue that these units are contributing to reshape governance regimes of higher education institutions. The non-teaching units are used by the sampled universities in strategic actions oriented to their internal and external environment. The analysis showed that in spite of their relevance, they are not recognized as influential in the institutional governance structures and processes making the case for their configuration as the a "dark side of moon".

The following chapters in Part II look at how institutions are managing their quality and wider performance, in an attempt to act more strategically regarding their future development. New missions are being added to the traditional teaching & learning and research & scholarship, usually put together under the designation of Third Mission. Moreover, new variables seem to come into the 'game', acting as explanatory factors for institutions' success (or not), as well as there is more and more a huge pressure from external rankings, making institutions working in order to look good in these national and/or international comparing schemes. Managing performance, then, implies defining the institution's purpose and goals – its desired strategic positioning, identifying measures and indicators related to all its activities that will allow it to implement monitoring mechanisms, and take corrective actions when the desired strategic position is not achieved.

Quality, although not new, seems to be treated differently from before. One of the ideas that have come into play recently is that managing quality should be part of the institutions' overall management and governance systems. Furthermore, quality assurance is not only related to teaching & learning, but it encompasses the other institutions' processes, namely research & scholarship and third mission. Knowing more about the pros and cons of mechanisms and systems designed to address quality issues, be them directed at one particular process or the overall organisation, has become mandatory for all actors with responsibility in making quality assurance systems as effective as possible.

In their chapter **Hachmeister, Duong and Roessler** discuss the possibilities of making these new missions possible for German UAS, by presenting the main results of a research project conducted with the goal (among others) of identifying the factors inhibiting and promoting research and third mission activities at these institutions. Universities of Applied Sciences (UAS) were introduced in Germany in the late 60s/70s with a mission centred solely on teaching and learning. Nevertheless, in the 80s new legislation included applied research as an additional mission for these institutions. As such, and as it happens in many other European countries, UAS have the right and the obligation to perform (applied) research, the main question being now how they will manage to build a distinct profile for their research activities. Furthermore, besides research, these institutions are also expected to do related activities, like development and technology transfer, which are usually put under the umbrella of "third mission".

Starting with interviews to rectors and professors of UAS, the authors were able to identify a set of 8 factors inhibiting research and third mission, as well as a set of 17 factors promoting these missions in UAS. These two sets of factors were then used in three surveys addressed to UAS rectors, higher education institutions' research managers and UAS professors in order to get their opinion on the degree of inhibition and the degree of benefit of each set of factors, respectively.

Overall, the authors were able to identify and evaluate a list of inhibiting and promoting factors of research and third mission in UAS that is in line with other studies on the same topic, although some interesting differences have emerged. *Missing time budget* and *missing staff* seem to be, according to the authors, "the most striking" factors inhibiting the two missions, "presumably because they have the most direct effect: If there is no extra time and no extra staff available, all resources go into teaching and not research or third mission". The 17 promoting factors for research and third mission were considered to be "beneficial" or "very beneficial" by the vast majority of respondents, leading the authors to conclude that "it is not a single instrument that needs to be used to promote research and third mission but rather an "orchestra" of measures that need to be taken to in order to make the new missions (...) possible for the UAS."

Kolster and Kaiser argue that study success is an important measure of the effectiveness of higher education systems. A closer look at study success outcomes suggests there are noticeable differences between male and female students: in terms of enrolment, study choices, drop-out rates, retention rates and completion rates. In general, on study success indicators female students are outperforming male students. Through a literature review, insights from European experts, and case studies at seven Dutch higher education institutions, they look into the extent of the problem, suggested explanations, and the policy instruments implemented to bridge the gender gap in study success. The effectiveness of policy instruments is still largely unknown, which is seen as a strong reason supporting further research on the possible effects on the gender gap of higher education policy reforms.

Mahat starts her chapter by acknowledging that key forces shaping higher education drive institutions to make strategic choices to locate themselves in niches where they can make use of their resources effectively and efficiently. However, she also concedes that the concepts

of strategy in higher education are highly contested issues due to the nature and complexity of the sector and the university. Her chapter contributes to the discussion on strategic positioning of academic organizations in a regulated environment by presenting six case studies of Australian medical schools. Drawing on data from qualitative semi-structured interviews and quantitative analysis of performance data, the findings provide evidence of strategic positioning and niche-finding behaviour of medical schools despite the highly structured and regulated field. In all case study institutions, she finds empirical evidence to show that there are concrete attempts at creating organizational coherence through strategic positioning. Additionally, the findings of the study support the contention that within the regulated environment, medical schools are indeed able to formulate coherent strategies in order to pursue improved performance.

In their chapter, **Manatos, Sarrico and Rosa** debate the integration of quality management in Portuguese universities based on the analysis of the quality policy statements of three paradigmatic case studies, which correspond to the first three universities that had their internal quality management systems certified by the Portuguese agency for assessment and accreditation of higher education (A3ES). Assuming integration as the development of quality management practices within organisations which are part of their global management systems, covering different processes, organisational levels and quality management principles, the authors discuss whether the quality management policies of universities approach their different processes in an integrated way, if the quality management policies integrate the different organisational levels, as well as whether universities integrate in their quality management policies the different QM principles. Furthermore, a focus is put on the extent to which quality management is integrated in the broader management and governance framework of universities, namely if it is part of the global strategy of the universities, if those responsible for the quality management structures are articulated with the top management and governance bodies of the universities and how far it is a tool for strategic management.

Starting with a literature review on the topics of quality management integration in higher education and the role of national quality agencies in the promotion of quality management systems within universities, the chapter follows with the presentation of the methodology

followed, namely the documents analysed and the category grid used for their content analysis. Results are then presented for each level of analysis.

From the empirical work undertaken, authors conclude that overall the universities under study have an integrative policy for quality management, which follows to a large extent the trend for integration of quality management in higher education emphasised by the literature. However, there are levels and particular dimensions still in partial or even insufficient stage of development. The authors expect that the experience of the studied three paradigmatic cases can inform the development of quality policies in those universities where quality management might be less developed.

In her chapter, **Deem** compares the methods, cultural and social processes, responses, controversies, 'gaming' and consequences for universities and higher education systems of the recent public-funded national research evaluation exercises conducted in the UK and Portugal. The author starts by setting out the theoretical framework for the comparison, which focuses on the idea of system-wide research evaluation as a 'game', the intricacies of the processes at evaluation panel meetings and the notion of unintended consequences. Then, the main characteristics of the two evaluation exercises are put forward, namely through a comparison of them. Acknowledging the existent differences in the two exercises, namely in terms of detail, scope and process, Deem explains the cultural, economic and social context of the evaluations.

Some of the features of both exercises are addressed, namely the processes and types of discussions that evaluation panels have had to deal with (e.g. number of face-to-face meetings and their benefits for the whole exercise, or the mono vs. multi-disciplinary nature of the panels). Responses to the evaluation outcomes are discussed, namely the possibility of appeals and rebuttals existent in the Portuguese exercise and the benefits and drawbacks emerging from them. The possibilities of 'gaming' are also put forward, being noticed that when evaluations are aimed at higher education institutions (as it is the case in the UK; in Portugal the evaluation focuses on research centres) there is more scope for 'gaming'. Finally, the unintended consequences resulting from both exercises, both for evaluators and the academic units being evaluated, are put in evidence and some speculation is made on how they might have come about.

The paper ends with a set of lessons to be learned from both exercises and that should probably be taken into consideration by these or other higher education systems when setting up research assessments, especially if they have funding implications. As the author refers “research evaluation is a key part of contemporary academic life and is not likely to disappear; therefore, we all have the responsibility to make evaluation systems as good as possible and to learn from past mistakes”.

Pavlyutkin and Yudkevich discuss how the institutional culture of an academic system affects a university’s response to the pressure of global rankings. They show how global rankings, as strong public measures of university performance, affect the process of organizational change at the university level. At the same time, the nature and degree of change depends on whether the university is driven by a market-based or state-based logic of accountability. Rankings derive their power from a competitive environment but few attempts were made before to investigate a university’s response to rankings in a state-dominated academic system. The authors attempt to answer the following question: *How does a university with a ‘blunted feeling of competition’ organize changes in order to enter the world-class league?* through a case study of a Russian university which has recently entered the race for global academic excellence. The authors conclude that academic culture and leadership are driving forces for both radical internal change, on the one hand, but also for coping with the symptoms of “global ranking fever”, on the other.

The chapters included in Part III related to the analysis of the way higher education professionals respond to transformations include two issues that have started recently to be subject of debate in higher education studies: the transformations in the career trajectories of PhD holders and the distinct institutional logics in academics and administrative staff.

Lucio Morettini, Emilia Primeri, Emanuela Reale and Antonio Zinilli in the chapter ‘Career trajectories of PhD holders in the SSH: drivers of career moves’ discuss the transformations that holders of a doctoral degree face in the present context. Traditionally, holding a PhD was just an introduction to an academic career. However, currently, PhD holders are increasingly facing less linear and predictable careers. In the European context, as a result of the attempt to create a European labour market for research and researchers (Musselin, 2004), the evidence of the precariousness of researchers’ working conditions led to the creation of the

European Researcher's Charter. Nevertheless, this is not a European issue but instead a problem with an international dimensions (Auriol, Misu and Freeman, 2013). Until now empirical studies related to the transformations in PhD holders' careers tended to be mainly focused in the STEM field. The authors of this chapter offer an innovative approach since they present and discuss data from an European project (POCARIM project, involving 13 European countries) aiming to collect information about the patterns of mobility in the careers of PhD holders in the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH). Looking at step by step moves along their professional lives, the authors identified as factors which are likely to affect PhD holders' employment choices: the time of transition to work, the unemployment duration, the type of contract, mobility, and personal variables such as age at the time of PhD graduation, gender and family status. The authors confirm that higher education in the public sector still represents the prime choice for PhDs holders, but the doctor degree is no longer a passport towards an academic career, since there are also fragmented working and non-academic careers. More than academia, the personal characteristics of PhD holders are the main determinants both on career moves and on employment sector choices.

The emergence of distinct institutional logics within academia is also a current issue in debate in Higher Education. The emergence of New Public Management and managerialism introduced different institutional logics in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) leading to a reconfiguration of academia and administration and to the appearance of new professional roles and areas of activities, blurring the boundaries between academic and management fields. Taking the University of Applied Sciences Upper Austria as a case study, **Silke Preymann, Stefanie Sterrer, Barbara Ehrenstorfer, Martina Gaisch and Regina Aichinger** analyse the presence of the two institutional logics in this hybrid organisation and propose possible ways to align and harmonise them. Based on a qualitative analysis, the authors conclude for the presence of the two different institutional logics, even if the corporative administrative logic is more present than the professional academic logic. According to administrators' views, which are aligned with the corporative administrative logic, the two logics have a conflicting nature leading to organisational inefficiency. The authors propose three ways to overcome this conflict, namely: the commitment of top managers to support a culture of cooperation; the key role of manager-academics as users of both logics; and the existence of hybrid project teams able to implement collaborative relationships in the field.

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