

Values and Ethics in University Governance

by

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The governance and administration of universities includes both leadership (setting up goals, promoting values) and management (finding tools and resources for the accepted goals).

The basic managerial values are accountability, productivity, effectiveness, and efficiency. They are the favourite slogans of the influential school known as the New Public Management, but their roots go back to Taylor's programme of "scientific management" of the early 20th century. This situation is somewhat paradoxical, since the advanced new trends of postindustrial information society wished to replace the outdated Taylorist and Fordist models of monotonous and hierarchical factory work with ideas about flexible learning organizations supporting creativity and individual self-realization. In the 1980s, these new doctrines were spread from the private sector to the public sector, including state-funded universities. Today, many universities have improved their possibilities of managerial self-governance, but at the same time their performance is tightly linked with the external, mostly economical, goals of "national innovation systems".

In spite of the importance of managerial values for effective administration, the universities cannot operate without a concern for their own academic and ethical values. Autonomy and leadership are possible only if the demands of productivity are complemented by the acknowledgement that universities are value-based organizations with a special mission. Academic values and the ethos of science together define the basic ethical commitments of the personnel of universities – researchers, teachers, directors, and other staff.

Universities are institutions for research and research-based education. Further, universities have the "third task" of interaction with society. The values of basic science include "epistemic utilities", which are constitutive of the critical and autonomous pursuit of new knowledge: truth, information, and justification. In applied research and science-based technology, these values are complemented by practical utilities: economic profit, social relevance, human well-being. Academic research seeks new knowledge by proposing and applying theories and placing theoretical hypotheses in experimental tests. Such an activity is governed by its own ethical principles. Research ethics emphasizes the values of honesty (against fraud and fabrication of data), fairness (against plagiarism), protection (against harm to objects of research), and responsibility (against environmentally, culturally, or socially harmful applications of science). In education, scientific knowledge and research skills are transmitted to new generations. In adult education, including open-university and further education, the influence of the academic *Bildung* is extended to the society at large.

To summarize: universities are valued-based organizations whose ethos should include truth, knowledge, critical attitude, creativity, autonomy, education, good human life, and social welfare. These are the key values that the leaders of universities should be able to recognize and promote in their own work.

As a public institution, a university should take care of its business in an efficient way. Other general social values include respect for democracy, equality between the sexes and ethnic groups, and sustainable development. In its human resources policy, a university should have a positive image as an employer who treats its personnel equally. Concern for motivation and job satisfaction is an important responsibility also for the leaders of universities.

It is typical to universities that the academic personnel participate in the university governance together with administrators. In these roles their performance can be evaluated by the professional ethics of public servants. Recent discussions of applied ethics have focused on the professional ethics of many occupations, such as medical doctors, lawyers, teachers, journalists, and engineers. Such principles, which reflect the specific tasks of these professions, can be motivated and grounded by the three main types of ethical theories: utilitarianism (with emphasis on effectiveness in producing results), deontology (obedience to the law and professional ethical codes), and virtue ethics (good practices in professional life).

According to the Nolan Committee of 1995, the seven most important principles of public life are selflessness, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness, honesty, and leadership. Similar principles were emphasized by the State Personnel Strategy in Finland in 2001. In a study of the attitudes Finnish public servants in 1999, the five most important professional values were legality, service, expertise, impartiality, and justice (they were far ahead of loyalty, devotion, and collegiality), while the five worst forms of unethical conduct were corruption, bargain with jobs, political discrimination, favour of friends, and sexual discrimination. The best ways of promoting professional ethical values were found to be the example of leaders and directors, explication of value commitments, public information, and education (these were far ahead of legislation, control, and surveillance).