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INTRODUCTION

A common theme in the dramatic restructuring of higher education throughout much of the world over the past few decades has been a shift in the relationships between universities, and other institutions of higher education, and the state. These new relationships have received considerable attention in the scholarly literature, in large part because they imply significant changes in the role of higher education in light of new or evolving social and economic demands for knowledge and educated labour, and new mechanisms for steering higher education, often involving a new regulatory environment and the introduction of instruments designed to create market-like competition within the sector. The implications of these reforms are broad and far-reaching, and include changes in how institutions of higher education are defined and understood, their role in society, their relationship to the communities in which they function, the nature and status of academic work, and the ways in which these institutions are funded and supported.

The restructuring of higher education in many jurisdictions has also led to fundamental changes in how institutions decide what they do and how they do it. The objective of this volume is to further our understanding of how institutions of higher education are governed, and how these processes, and the assumptions and discourses that underscore these processes, have evolved. Changes in institutional governance have received far less attention in the research literature than broad system-level reforms of higher education, and most of the studies that have been published have focused on the experience of institutions in a single jurisdiction. The contributors to this volume share a common view that institutional governance is a central issue in higher education; changes in the relationship between higher education and the state have direct implications for institutional governance, and have frequently involved state-imposed reforms of governance arrangements, and these governance structures provide the central forum for the struggle over what these institutions are or should be, and the complex and evolving relationships between academics, students, and external interests. They also share a common view that institutional governance has become an international issue in higher education, and that much can be learned by sharing research findings across national boundaries in order to identify common themes and important differences.

The thirteen core chapters of this volume were written by national experts in the study of higher education governance, and each presents a critical analysis of governance in a particular jurisdiction. The authors address key research questions on governance issues, but given the immense differences between systems there has been no attempt to create a homogeneous framework or a common research template. Instead, the papers focus on specific issues that are relevant to these

jurisdictions, ranging from system-level reforms and influences, to the impact of institutional changes in governance arrangements on the organisational life of the institution or on component parts of the institutions. The authors also draw on a wealth of empirical evidence and a diverse range of theoretical approaches to analyse these issues.

The objective of this chapter is to provide a theoretical roadmap of the concepts and perspectives that provide a foundation for the analyses. We begin by mapping the social science disciplines, perspectives, themes and concepts that are employed by our authors in the analysis of governance issues. This section is followed by a brief review of definitions and concepts from scholarship focusing on university governance that frames these discussions. We conclude the chapter by providing an overview of the volume.

1. THEORETICAL ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES

A range of theoretical issues and perspectives are highlighted and developed in this book. Research and analysis of the institutional changes and organisational innovations associated with new forms of governance and management within contemporary higher education and universities cannot proceed in an intellectual vacuum. Each of our authors draws on an extensive range of conceptual, analytical and methodological resources to articulate and elaborate their respective analyses of the current situation in university governance and management. The purpose of this section of the chapter is to provide a broad overview and evaluation of the range of intellectual resources that our authors deploy. In this way, the potential reader may be better placed to make his/her own assessments of 'where our authors are coming from' and how their theoretical and methodological preferences influence their substantive analyses and conclusions. We will begin by looking at the range of social science **disciplines** that inform the detailed studies and analyses provided between these two covers. In turn, this will lead into a more focussed discussion of the specific theoretical **perspectives** utilised by our contributors and the ways in which these perspectives necessarily embody certain core ontological, epistemological and methodological commitments. Finally, we will move on to discuss the generic research **themes** that have shaped our authors' analyses and the key sensitising **concepts** they have selected to articulate and advance the former.

Three foundational social science disciplines underpin the substantive analyses developed within this book – organisation/management theory, policy studies/decision-making theory, and the sociology of occupations/professions. Each of these disciplinary matrices provides our contributors with a cluster of interrelated assumptions, categories and propositions that frame and legitimate their empirical studies and the various ways in which they are theoretically interpreted. Most of our contributors draw, in various ways, on organisation/management theory to understand and explain the dynamics of institutional restructuring and its longer-term impact on organisational design and behaviour within contemporary universities. In particular, several authors (Musselin and Mignot-Gérard, Reed, De Boer, Amaral and Magalhães, Meek, Fulton, Jones, Verhoeven and Devos) develop

analyses that draw extensively on contemporary organisation/management theory in order to better appreciate the complex interplay between 'structure' and 'agency' over time. They see the latter as being of crucial explanatory significance, given its strategic role in shaping and reshaping the organisational trajectories and outcomes of institutional transformation in a range of higher education systems. We can only begin to understand, much less explain, the strategic re-orientation of higher education systems in different countries and its implications for everyday life in contemporary universities, if we confront the 'structure/agency' dilemma. The latter necessarily entails the development of theoretical approaches that directly engage with the complex ways in which 'structural constraints' and 'action choices' interact across different spatial, temporal and cultural contexts to generate various 'logics' and 'packages' of organisational change that actors then selectively appropriate for their own purposes. In this respect, our contributors tend to draw on the 'non-deterministic' streams of thinking and analysis within contemporary organisation/management studies insofar as they individually and collectively reject approaches that assume a universal direct 'cause and effect' relationship between environmental and organisational change. Instead, the majority of our contributors insist that new forms of university governance and management are emerging out of ongoing power struggles between various policy-making and implementing groups located within material, cultural and structural networks that differentially equip them to engage in 'institution building'. Any attempt to impose a deterministic mode of analysis on this highly complex, uncertain and unpredictable process of change – such as that entailed in the 'adaptive or selective paradigm' favoured by structural contingency theorists, population ecologists and resource-dependency theorists – is firmly rejected. In place of deterministically-inclined approaches, our contributors offer a more subtle and nuanced appreciation of the relatively 'open' and 'contestable' nature of institutional and organisational restructuring.

Policy studies and decision-making theory also provides a major source of disciplinary inspiration to a number of our contributors (Maassen, Jones, Verhoeven and Devos, Karseth, Meek, Fulton, Chevaillier, El-Khawas, and Larsen). This ranges across internal resource allocation decision-making (Chevaillier) and inter-organisational policy decision-making networks (Jones) where a form of structural analysis is deployed to explain the interaction between different levels of policy formulation and implementation. Various formulations of stakeholder theory are also developed and applied by our authors (Amaral and Magalhães, Maassen, De Boer, Meek, and Larsen). These are intended to clarify the impact of both 'internal' and 'external' interest groups on the historical and comparative trajectories of institutional change followed by universities and their implications for strategic steering and operational management. Such stakeholder models also challenge unitary and linear conceptions of policy formulation and implementation in higher education. Instead, they focus on the several competing and legitimate centres of authority and control that characterise and define the policy-making arena within higher education as it struggles to accommodate the plethora of structured alliances, interests and resources that clamour for attention. Finally, a number of contributors (Musselin, Verhoeven and Devos, Reed) develop a model of collective action decision-making as a disciplinary/theoretical basis for their substantive analyses. In

this theoretical context, the explanatory focus is directed to the 'loosely-coupled' hierarchy of collective decision-making that shapes the emergence and development of new organisational forms as alternative ways of regulating and managing academic work. The latter have come more forcefully into play as national higher education systems come under increasing pressure to adapt to global policy drivers and trends that seem to push ineluctably in the direction of massification, commodification and rationalisation. These studies also highlight the wider institutional and policy context within which operational innovations at the organisational level – such as the widespread implementation of much more explicit and detailed performance management and control systems across a swathe of public sector service organisations, including universities – have to be understood and explained.

The final disciplinary base that provides a significant source of intellectual inspiration for a number of our contributors is the sociology of the occupations/professions. Several of the chapters in this book (Reed, Fulton, Musselin and Mignot-Gérard, De Boer, Karseth, Meek, and Verhoeven and Devos) are centrally concerned with the longer-term impact of institutional and organisational restructuring on the content, process and practice of academic labour. They are also interested in the political and organisational tactics followed by the academic labourers in the face of the challenges presented by restructuring. Academics seem to have little or no choice but to try and cope with the inevitable discontinuities and dislocations that rapid and deep-seated institutional change necessarily produces. These radical or 'disjunctive' changes also inevitably raise difficult questions about the future prospects for the identity, status and moral authority of academic work/workers as a vocation or profession within a cultural and political context that seems increasingly suspicious of the 'donnish dominion'. These questions are likely to become especially acute when the occupational ideologies and discourses that are conventionally taken to embody and exemplify these core values seem to be under direct attack from an increasingly powerful and pervasive 'managerialism'. Universities may be regarded as the prototypical 'knowledge-intensive organisations' and university academics may likewise be treated as the prototypical 'knowledge workers'. As key institutionalised sites of and settings for core 'knowledge production, dissemination and evaluation' in modern societies, universities are supposed to be exemplars of the high-trust, collegiate, open and dialogical cultures typical of a post-industrial, knowledge-based economy and society (Fuller 2002). However, the evidence and analysis of trends and trajectories that emerge from the chapters in this book suggest something very different is happening. At the very least, they indicate that an ongoing cultural and political struggle for legitimacy and control within higher education is occurring that will have fateful consequences for the nature, organisation and regulation of academic work. Concepts, theories and findings extracted from the sociology of occupations/professions can help us to understand what this might mean for the future of the academic profession. In particular, this body of work and literature can provide a more systematic and rigorous explanation of the competing 'regulative logics' through which expert or specialist – including academic/intellectual – work can be ordered and controlled in much more fluid, not to say contradictory and

chaotic, institutional environments (Freidson 2001). They can also help us to begin to answer the central question of how the identity, development and practice of academic work should be redefined and legitimated today. This seems to be a particularly pertinent question to pose in a political and cultural environment that seems much less supportive of, if not downright hostile to, the 'academic state' and its wider social legitimacy. Within this sort of institutional context, the politics and sociology of expert work and organisation take on a particular analytical and explanatory relevance for the present situation in which higher education finds itself. This is true to the extent that they can help us to define and assess a number of possible 'future scenarios' for academic knowledge workers as they struggle to defend their 'jurisdictional domains and boundaries' from penetration and incursion by competitor groups. Will we see academics slowly but surely transformed into a group of relatively privileged, but deprofessionalised, technical workers (Freidson 2001) or will they be able to retain substantial elements of their professional autonomy, status and power?

Having previously outlined the disciplinary foundations for much of the analysis that is provided in this book, we can now move on to a more detailed consideration of the specific theoretical and methodological positions that emerge from the core intellectual commitments embodied within the former. We can identify a broad cluster of theoretical positions developed within this book that have been drawn primarily from organisation/management theory. Several of our contributors call on relatively   new   and   innovative   theoretical   approaches   within organisation/management studies to provide the conceptual tools and analytical frameworks needed to map, describe, interpret and explain the new governance structures and organisational forms taking shape in increasingly globalised higher education systems. Thus, approaches such as neo-institutionalism, organisation learning theory, strategic management theory, control theory and neo-Foucauldian discourse analysis (Fulton, Musselin and Mignot-Gérard, Meek, Amaral and Magalhães, Verhoeven and Devos, De Boer, Reed, and Karseth) are outlined and deployed by our authors. Their overarching explanatory 'mission' is to provide greater insight into the political and cultural power struggles that are reshaping the governance structures and management systems through which contemporary university education and research is being reformed and reordered. Many of our authors identify an inexorable blurring of the previously separate and distinctive decision-making domains or institutional arenas (e.g. the traditional separation between 'academic' and 'financial' decision-making arenas) that once defined the system of higher education and everyday university life. This 'de-differentiation' of previously separate and autonomous institutional spheres within higher education can be interpreted as a strategic and operational response to the continuous political demand for more integrative, efficient and effective managerial control within a sector well-known for its profligacy, indulgency and inertia. However, our authors suggest that this response often generates and reproduces as many problems as it solves. In particular, the loss of, or at least significant reduction in, high-trust relations and the innate flexibility and adaptability that they once provided seems to create a whole raft of new problems for university managers, administrators and governors alike. Insofar as the process of institutional and organisational 'de-