

Effective governance, leadership and management in tertiary education

Research Plan LH Martin Institute

April 2009

Introduction

In the plan for the establishment of the Martin Institute it is stated that the Institute is committed to the development and delivery of best practice, evidence-based programs, underpinned by contemporary research. With both short and award courses currently being rolled out it is timely for the Institute to start work on its research program. The Research Plan outlines the overall philosophy behind the Institute's research activities, its structured approach to PhD training embedded in an international network of leading tertiary education research centres, and the projects that will be initiated.

Research at the Martin Institute

The key feature of the Institute's research activities is that these should contribute to improving professional practice in the area of tertiary education management and leadership. It is clear that tertiary education institutions have gone through a period of profound change over the last ten to fifteen years, that this has had a major impact on the way in which they are governed and managed, and that these changes are far from over. External demands from a variety of stakeholders continue to increase, policy environments, nationally as well as internationally, change on an almost continuous basis, and we are only beginning to understand the impacts of the evolution into knowledge-based societies. Our research activities will be geared to better prepare institutional leaders, both academic and administrative, at the executive and middle-level to intellectually engage with this dynamic environment.

The central question guiding the Institute's research is "What constitutes effective governance, leadership and management in tertiary education institutions?" Although much has been written on governance, management and leadership in general, far less is known about effectiveness, particularly in the public sector. When it comes to effective leadership, management and governance in the context of tertiary education, the research landscape is remarkably barren. Much of what exists is either anecdotal or the accounts of individual experiences. Systematic and structured analyses based on solid theoretical foundations, like the ones that do exist in the field of comparative higher education policy studies at the systems level, are few. It is the objective of the Institute's Research Plan to contribute to filling this gap.

The assumptions underlying the Institute's research activities are four-fold. First, for the analysis of governance, leadership and management in tertiary education systems and institutions a multi-level, multi-actor perspective is required. By design and function, tertiary education systems are complex. Although one of the challenges of research is to

reduce complexity to something that is understandable, it must take into account that a variety of actors at different levels influence tertiary education policy and hence impact upon both system and institutional governance, leadership and management. Second, because of the relationship between policy and governance, leadership and management, the research needs to be focused on both the environment in which institutions operate as well as on the institutions themselves. The one cannot be analyzed and understood without the other. Third, whilst not taking a dogmatic position on the nature of a tertiary organization, it is recognized that they are organizations “sui generis”. The mix of high professionalism, goal ambiguity, decentralization, strong functional specialization and diffused decision-making make tertiary education organizations rather unique. Contextualization of theoretical frameworks therefore is necessary. Fourth, in order to ‘benchmark’ Australian tertiary education governance, leadership and management, the Institute’s research will adopt a comparative approach where possible. This implies comparisons with other sectors and similar types of organizations, such as government departments and hospitals, as well as international comparative studies across tertiary education sectors.

Structured PhD Training

In addition to the Institute’s staff, its primary national collaborators – the Centre for the Study of Higher Education, the Centre for Higher Education Management and Policy, and the Australian Council for Educational Research – and its Fellows and Associates being involved in research projects, the Institute will attract a small number of full-time PhD students. These students will work on pre-defined projects (see below), which implies that the Martin Institute will expect students to select projects that contribute to a consistent Institute Research Plan for the coming years. The Institute, because of its size, needs to maintain focus. Although such an approach is quite common for the sciences, it is not so widely adopted in the social sciences. Yet, experience at other research institutes, in particular at the Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies at the University of Twente, has shown that this is an effective and efficient approach. Students do not lose unnecessary time in defining their project and searching for a suitable theoretical framework or a suitable supervisor. They tend to stay with the project as they know beforehand what they are signing up to. Ideally, they work in small cohorts so they can also draw on each other, engaging in peer support and learning.

The cohort concept, in conjunction with the comparative research principle discussed above, reinforces the notion of international institutional collaboration. Most of our colleague institutes around the world are relatively small when it comes to doctoral students, so it makes sense to collaborate. This collaboration can range from joint PhD students and supervisors to joint summer schools and research seminars. The Martin Institute is keen to strengthen its relationships with its key international partners and proposes to embark on a joint degree trajectory through setting up agreements along the lines of the Cotutelle arrangement (see annex 1) initially with the following colleague institutes:

- University of Oslo, PFI Institute for Educational Research and National Graduate School in Educational Research (NATED); coordinator - Prof. Peter Maassen;
- University of Helsinki, Higher Education Group; coordinator - Prof. Seppo Holttä;

- University of Twente, Centre for Higher Education Policy Studies; coordinator - Prof. Juergen Enders;
- University of London, Institute of Education; coordinator - Prof. Sir David Watson;
- University of Bath, International Centre for Higher Education Management; coordinator - Prof. Jeroen Huisman;
- University of Georgia (Athens), Institute for Higher Education; coordinator - Prof. Doug Toma;

These joint degree and supervision arrangements are the first step to a joint Erasmus Mundus 2, Action 1b application for an EM doctoral network in 2010, following the April '09 application for an EM masters program in higher education policy and management in which the Martin Institute is the Australian partner institute. The European Commission in February 2009 released the call for the second Erasmus Mundus program cycle. Whilst the first cycle was solely focused on joint master programs, the second cycle is to be extended to the doctoral phase as well. Given that proposals for the 2009 application round are to be submitted by the end of April, it has been decided for this year to apply for renewal of the higher education policy master and extend this to higher education management. By April 2010, a proposal for a joint doctoral program will be submitted. Partner institutions for the EM2 masters proposal are: University of Oslo (coordinator), University of Helsinki, University of Twente, University of Aveiro, University of Georgia and University of Melbourne.

Project overview

For its first five-year period, the Institute intends to pursue the following five thematic research areas, which provide a mix of system and institutional level policy and management challenges:

- Diversity and differentiation
- Good governance
- Institutional leadership
- The changing nature of the academic profession
- International education

These areas reflect the primary research expertise of the current MI staff and fellows/associates and the majority of the areas for which specialized executive programs are being developed. Thus, they embody the teaching-research nexus referred to earlier in this document (see Annex 3). Bearing in mind the multi-level, multi-actor perspective as a guiding research assumption, four out of the five themes are located at both the system and the institutional level, with the middle management theme being more solely focused at the institutional level. A brief outline of the themes is provided below. Full project descriptions for each will be developed over the coming months. It is expected that the projects will be rolled out over the five year period depending on capacity constraints and the need to attract high quality PhD students. The priority projects for the immediate future are: institutional leadership, the changing nature of the academic profession, and international education.

Diversity and differentiation

There is a general belief among both policymakers and analysts that a diverse tertiary education system best serves societal needs, since these are quite varied. Yet, there remains a good deal of contestability about what promotes or deters diversity at the system level. Governmental policy may stimulate diversity through, for example, mission-based steering, but it can also limit diversity through rigid structuring of tertiary education systems. Market-based steering approaches may have similar effects through on the one hand niche-seeking behavior by institutions or imitation of successful competitors on the other. The research objective in this theme is to further analyze the interface between national and institutional policies. How is institutional strategy influenced by national policy, what is a policy environment that allows for institutional differentiation, and what are the conditions under which such environments can be created and maintained? As part of this theme the research and innovation mission of tertiary institutions is addressed as well as the importance of leadership with respect to these matters.

The proposed research builds on the earlier work of Goedegebuure, Massaro, Meek and Sharrock and research will be undertaken in collaboration with Huisman (ICHEM, Bath, UK) and Van Vught (ESMU/Cheps). Where possible it will link to the Institutional Classification pilot currently under tender by the European Commission.

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Good governance

Both in the corporate and the public sector the issue of good governance has been on the agenda for the better part of two decades. Leaving aside the current financial crisis that according to several observers is due at least in part to a breakdown in governance arrangements, governance can be conceptualized as a structure through which a system's or institution's objectives are set and the means of attaining those objectives and monitoring performance are determined. Good governance not only addresses the question of effective structural arrangements, but also focuses on the relationships

between the key actors in these structures. The straightforward question that will guide research on good governance is whether governance matters, that is: does good governance lead to good outcomes and bad governance to bad outcomes? The starting point for establishing good governance is found in the UK's Good Governance Standard for Public Services, constituting six principles (see annex 2), which can be applied at the system's level as well as at the institutional level.

The proposed research builds on earlier work by Goedegebuure, Massaro and Meek and will be undertaken in collaboration with Maassen (Oslo), Toma (Georgia) and Huisman (Bath).

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Institutional leadership

As a result of responses to changes in the environment of tertiary education institutions, the role of management is changing and is gaining in importance. This not only refers to the institutional executive, but increasingly takes the form of distributed leadership, requiring individuals and groups at various levels within the institution to take up management and leadership roles. Yet empirical research on effective management and leadership in the context of tertiary education is relatively scarce. By focussing on distributed leadership we aim at breaking down this concept into the different roles and positions that currently constitute "the middle" in our institutions as well as how this articulates with the executive. The guiding questions are the capabilities that are required for effectively carrying out these roles and how these relate to organizational culture. Theoretically, inspiration is found in the well-tested Competing Values Framework.

Whilst there is an established literature on women in the academy there is less that focuses on the experience and challenges of women as leaders in the tertiary education environment. This strand of the institutional leadership theme will focus on the experience and impact of women leaders in what remains a gendered organisational environment.

The proposed research builds on earlier work by Bell, Goedegebuure, Massaro, Meek and Sharrock and incorporates the current study undertaken on VET leadership in collaboration with ACER. Internationally, it links to work undertaken by colleagues in CHEPS, University of Twente, at the Higher Education Group, University of Helsinki, and at the Institute for Higher Education, University of Georgia.

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The Changing nature of the Academic Profession

Over the next decade, Australia will see an exodus of senior teaching and research staff. This comes at a time when the government reform agenda aims at increased participation in tertiary education. It also comes at a time when our major competitor countries are experiencing similar pressures in terms of academic staff recruitment and retention, resulting in what has been labelled the "war for talent". Succession planning has not been a strong feature of Australian tertiary education, but it will need to become a high priority for institutions if they are to maintain their competitive position within the system and globally. This implies that effective institutional management to a large extent will also depend on the ability to attract high calibre staff. This in turn largely depends on the perceived attractiveness of the positions and perspectives offered.

Key Institute staff and Hamish Coates from ACER over the last three years have participated in the international comparative project the Changing nature of the Academic Profession (CAP), a 20+ country study that follows on from the 1992 study initiated by the Carnegie Foundation on the academic profession. The 2007-08 study has seen a standard survey instrument being developed and run the all systems, resulting in the largest ever comparative database on the academic profession. The proposed research will continue the analysis of the Australian data and will benchmark Australia against other major competitor systems with the objective of informing

institutional leaders on (i) the relative attractiveness of their institutions, (ii) the prevailing and changing attitudes of their academic staff in terms of teaching, research and community engagement, and (iii) the perceptions of academic staff on the management of their institutions. An ARC Linkage project is currently being developed to facilitate a qualitative follow up study of the survey results.

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International education

With international education responsible for some \$14 billion and Australia's third largest export, there is no denying its importance for the country as well as for the tertiary education sector. Given the current state of public funding for tertiary education, institutions have become financially dependent on international education to support their teaching and research activities. Should future international student numbers drop significantly, many institutions would find themselves in difficulty. Thus, securing a continued flow of international students has become a strategic priority for the sector. It also raises questions on the balance between domestic and international students, on the volatility of markets, on quality and branding, and on moving on from trade to sustainable international relationships (see Bradley Report) and the integration of international education in the core of institutional strategy. These all have to do with the question of risk assessment and management, and the structures that will be required to minimise risk while maintaining income.

In collaboration with the International Education Association of Australia (IEAA), the Martin Institute has launched a multi-year executive training program to build and support the next generation of leaders in international education. To support this program, in collaboration with IEAA and CSHE a Delphi study will be run during the first half of 2009, resulting in a number of future scenarios for international education. Following the standard scenario building methodology in the context of a Delphi study, three alternative futures are sketched, based on the input provided by the respondents to the study. For training purposes, these alternative futures will enable participants to examine factors that are likely to impact upon international business. These will range from political and societal stability through to mechanisms for influencing these, and will be followed by dealing with risk assessment and strategies to minimise risk. In the case of international education it seems likely from the outset that the three scenarios translate in a continued growth scenario, a stabilizing scenario and a substantive shrink scenario, with a focus on associated institutional and national strategies. A more encompassing agenda will be developed upon completion of the Delphi study.

In close collaboration with both CSHE and CHEMP the Institute will further extend the monitoring and analysis of the tertiary education policy environment in the Asia-Pacific region. For Australia it is imperative to have a solid understanding of the tertiary education dynamics that unfold in the region and to translate this into national and institutional strategies. Continuous monitoring of these dynamics and a translation into high level policy briefings can be of valuable assistance. The Institute's Advisory Board strongly endorses such a focus and the strengthening of the Institute's relationships with partners in the region, such as Hiroshima's Research Institute for Higher Education, the Higher Education Leadership Academy in Malaysia, the Center for World Class Universities at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, and the UNESCO Bangkok office.

References

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Annex 1: The Cotutelle program

(source: www.gradresearch.unimelb.edu.au/future/frenchcotutelle.html)

The Cotutelle program allows approved PhD students to be supervised jointly by academics from The University of Melbourne and a nominated French university. The Cotutelle agreement which sets out in detail the terms and conditions of candidature gives approval for the candidate to be enrolled concurrently in two institutions, spending at least 30% of the total maximum time limit (or one year) in each university.

Each student's program takes place under a reciprocal agreement which needs to be drawn up for each student between the two institutions, which sets out in detail the terms and conditions for joint supervision and examination. The candidate pays fees at one institution only. If successful, the student will be awarded a doctoral degree jointly badged by the two institutions, and stating that the award was made as a consequence of a Cotutelle agreement with the partner institution.

It is important to note that Cotutelles are primarily a device for promoting research, not a process for recruiting international students. It is not aimed at getting PhD students to knock on the door of the administration to look for a "Cotutelle grant" and then ask to find the foreign partner as well. The objective is to allow French and Australian research teams that already have collaborative links and that have found a bright PhD candidate, to jointly propose to both their institutions to approve a Cotutelle project (each Cotutelle PhD has to be approved in writing by both the concerned institutions, since the award is a joint or double degree).

Annex 2: UK Good Governance Standard for Public Services

1. Good governance means focusing on the organization's purpose and on outcomes for citizens and service users.
2. Good governance means performing effectively in clearly defined functions and roles.
3. Good governance means promoting values for the whole organization and demonstrating the values of good governance through behavior.
4. Good governance means taking informed, transparent decisions and managing risk.
5. Good governance means developing the capacity and capability of the governing body to be effective.
6. Good governance means engaging stakeholders and making accountability real

Annex 3: Relationship between research themes and training priorities

| | MTEM | SSL | HoD | LfW | ELMIEE |
|-------------------------------|------|-----|-----|-----|--------|
| Diversity and differentiation | ■ | ■ | | | |
| Good governance | ■ | ■ | | | |
| Institutional leadership | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| Changing academic profession | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| International education | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ | ■ |

- MTEM Master in tertiary education management
- SSL Senior strategic leaders program
- HoD Head of department program
- LfW Leadership for women program
- ELMIEE Executive leadership and management in international education program