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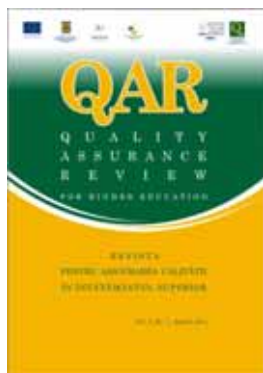
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AGENȚIA ROMÂNĂ
DE ASIGURARE A
CALITĂȚII ÎN
ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNTUL SUPERIOR



Quality Assurance Review for Higher Education

The Changing Dynamics of Higher Education Middle Managers

V. Lynn Meek, Leo Goedegebuure, Rui Santiago, Teresa Carvalho (editors), Springer, London-New York, 2010, 262 p.

Monica Pușcaș

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FONDUL SOCIAL EUROPEAN

Investește în
OAMENI

The Changing Dynamics of Higher Education Middle Managers

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London-New York, 2010, 262 p.

Monica Pușcas *Scoala Națională de Studii Politice și Administrative*
monicaipuscas@gmail.com

As part of the Higher Education Dynamics book series, *The Changing Dynamics of Higher Education Middle Managers* is a collection of articles published as a result of the 2010 annual high-level Douro seminar held by Hedda¹. The purpose of this series is to analyze the influence of the adaptation process to global performance improvements in the development of higher education systems upon the role of the middle level academic structures leaders as deans and equivalent heads of departments.

In order to increase the effectiveness of the higher education structures under the influence of the new public management, there has been made a transition in the leadership of the middle managers from collegial to managerial control. Regarding this concern, there is still a debate on the role of the middle managers, whether they should be academic authorities or efficient managers. The “pivotal” role of these leaders raised a lot of tensions because it gives them limited autonomy in action and the success of the institutions depends upon their own capacity to reconcile the interest of the academic colleagues with the assignments of the higher/central managers. The accomplishment of the educational mission in an efficient and effective manner is mainly the result of an internal struggle at executive management level in which the middle manager’s dedication and ability to manage the inputs is the main responsible for success. Although this transition of the middle management took place under different circumstances in different governmental regimes, ideology influence, cultural habits and educational traditions, the authors accept the challenge to examine the similarities from an international comparative perspective.

The Changing Dynamics of Higher Education Middle Management add up a 10 articles which enhance the diversity of the manifestation trends of “new managerialist ideology”² in particular situations from different countries like Austria, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, United States and United Kingdom and also about the general framework for analyzing the higher education management. The first article (chapter), “Academic Middle Managers under the New Governance Regime at Austrian Universities” by Hans Pechar, emphasize the transformation of the Austrian universities management in the last 40 years. Even if the dean’s activity was the last one affected, the decentralization process specific to the NPM transferred the external issues between the state and the universities into internal ones, restraining the effectiveness of the governance because of the bureaucratic burdens, inconsistency and difficulties in career advancement by specific established criteria.

The article written by Meek, Goedegebuure and De Boer, “The Changing Role of Academic Leadership in Australia and the Netherlands: Who Is the Modern Dean?” raises the question whether the new deanship from the analyzed countries accomplish all the desired particularities inspired and imported from the private sector’s advanced management.

¹ Hedda is a European consortium of nine centers and institutes developing activities of research on higher education, and CIPES, its Portuguese associated centre.

² The authors distinguish the concept of “new managerialism” from “new public management” considering that the first one stresses the ideological component of the phenomenon of the new public management manifestation

The third chapter “Academic Middle Management and Management in College Universities and Universities in Belgium” exposes a brief analysis on the higher education system in Belgium explaining what the new managerialism is, which are its specific policies, the new managerialism indicators after ‘90 and how the deans and other middle managers fit into this context.

Lydia Boyko and Glen Jones show in the next chapter that the role of the deans and chairs of higher education institutional substructures did not change significantly in the universities from Canada. Despite the fact that the Canadian educational system is well known as being an efficient one, the influence of the NPM cannot be observed by analyzing the recent legislation. They conclude that the incumbent of the dean is predominantly an academic one than managerial.

The case of Italy is analyzed by Stefano Boffo and is considered a sort of a hybrid model because of its specific particularities. As a response to the NPM oriented reform, the role of the deans in Italian Universities changed by embracing both traditional - academic value and modern - managerial skills. Unlike the Italian model, in France we deal with a similar situation to the one in Canada. Stephanie Mignot-Gerard draws a qualitative analysis about the middle level leadership in four French universities and emphasizes that each case is determined by the position of academic, administrative and deliberative power held by the dean upon the executive management.

In her article “From Democracy to Management-Oriented Leadership? The Manager-Academic in Norwegian Higher Education”, Igvild Larsen describes the changes in the Norwegian higher education system based on a political science theoretical framework related to different aspects of democracy. She attempts to draw an analysis on the development of the middle management and finds that the influence of the NPM changes the democratic character of these structures from a predominant representative model to a deliberative one in order to increase its effectiveness.

On the other hand, Teresa Carvahlo and Rui Santiago focuses on the Portuguese higher education middle managers capacity to influence the governmental policies accelerating the adaptation process to new management trends. In their article, “New Public Management and “Middle Management”: How Do Deans Influence Institutional Policies?”, the authors examine the role of the deans in the decision-making process especially as key actors depending on their institutional ability to resist to external pressures and promote their internal interest in governmental strategies.

The next chapter, written by Paul Trowler, can be considered rather a discursive new-institutionalist approach of the higher education system from UK. The author emphasizes the ideological nature of new managerialism and its poor influence in UK universities despite all the indicators that show the opposite. Jack Schuster’s article, “The New University: What it Portends for Academic Profession and Their Managers” is a close look on the general changes in higher education systems, the context which determines the incentives for the reorientation of the role in middle management positions. The last article presents a general methodological framework to encourage further research on the phenomenon presented in the previous chapters, meanwhile, the authors enhance the most important conclusion that should be drawn.

All these articles bring a consistent contribution in the qualitative higher education research field regarding to the way in which different educational systems approached the reform inspired by the “managerialist” principles. Whether it is considered a trend, an ideology or just a set of principles, new managerialism was transferred from the private “corporate” sector in the public domain in order to increase the effectiveness and efficiency, as indicator of qualitative improvement in public institutions. As this method proves to be effective in most of the situations, it was quickly spread at different levels in all kind of spheres, domains, systems, regions and countries. The phenomenon of importing norms and principles from other fields or from other regions where they prove to have a positive impact is not always a benefit for the system. The “internationalization” of higher education can also be a threat for achieving the educational mission regarding to quality standards and as it was shown in this study, importing public policies, ideological ideas, management principles induce different effects in different habits. Although many of them are heading in similar directions, the cultural factors are crucial in helping to explain the multitude of hybrid management models that occurred all over the world.