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WORK AND LIFE IN ACADEMIA

# Collegiality in modern universities – the composition of governance ideals and practices

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The questions of how universities are governed and how they should be governed have recently gained attention throughout Europe. The history of universities shows a diffused pattern of repeated reform efforts. However, this situation has more or less exploded since the turn of the century, bringing in new modes of organising. In short we can observe a diffusion of more managerial forms of organising, leading to a situation where different governance ideals co-act. In this paper we analyse the interplay of several governance ideals as they play out in practice. We begin and end the essay by noting that collegiality is a modern, efficient and practical form of governance, but it never works entirely on its own; rather it interacts with other modes of governance. After an introduction of diverse modes of governance, analysed as ideal type models, we exemplify how those diverse modes mix in practices of governance and organising. A more theoretical argument that runs through the paper is a critique of the dominance of ideal types of discussions on university governance and in organisation theory more generally, to the extent that those ideal types tend to be reified.

Keywords: *collegiality*; *university governance*; *reforms*; *bureaucracy*; *management*

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How are universities governed and how should they be governed? Recently those questions have gained quite some attention throughout Europe. Observations of the long history of universities show a diffused pattern of repeated reform efforts, largely inspired by what has been seen as the most efficient ways of organising at the time and following from the shifting roles of universities in society over the years. When it comes to the reform trend often called *New Public Management*, after Hood's (1991,1995) early observations of the reforming of public sector organising and governance in the orgnisation for economic co-operation and development (OECD) countries in the 1980s and 1990s, universities appear to have been somewhat of a latecomer, but a very active one. It is true that universities have long been subject to rationalising reforms, not least in connection with the extreme expansion and transformation from elite education to mass education of the 1960s and 1970s. Since the turn of the century the introduction of new modes of organising, allocating resources and measuring and assessing results has more or less exploded.

With these transformations, universities – and public bodies more generally – have come to be shaped more and more like organised actors with clear inspiration from corporate models of organising (cf. Brunsson & Sahlin-Andersson, 2000; Jemielniak & Greenwood, 2013; Meyer & Bromley, 2013; Ramirez, 2010). Universities have developed elaborate organisational structures, including new and strengthened management positions, expanded communication departments, and innovation and technology transfer units. New modes of result-based allocations of resources have been introduced in university systems as well as in individual universities. In short we can observe a diffusion of more managerial forms of organising. However, many of the more traditional traits of university governance remain. Traditionally, universities have – in part – been structured as arenas for professions with elected leaders, with a strong emphasis on academic freedom and academic duty as the means to produce output and control quality in research and education and with decision-making resting on principles of collegiality and meritocracy.

Most Swedish higher education institutions are constituted as public agencies with regulated legal frameworks for how to govern, control and organise them. This legal framework has been subject to a number of reforms over the years. In sum, collegial structures dominated by faculty (in earlier times primarily professors) have opened up for stronger influence by students and representatives of society at large. The most recent such reforms have

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spurred a lively debate on the role of collegiality in contemporary higher education. In 2011, the so-called autonomy reform meant that the internal organisation of higher education institutions was deregulated. Before 2011 the law prescribed that all higher education institutions should have at least one faculty board – consisting of faculty and student representatives – with responsibility for the quality and content of education and research. Instead of prescribing the existence of specific forms of internal organisation, after 2011 the law just stated in general terms that issues of scientific nature should be handled by scientifically competent faculty. With the legal reform the prescription of the election of academic leaders was also deregulated.

Reforms along similar lines, at government level and in individual universities, continue. Following on the deregulation in 2011, a wave of reorganisation of Swedish higher education institutions followed, where collegial organisational structures were replaced by more management-like forms of governance and control (see Sundberg, 2013, 2014). Appointment procedures for academic leaders have also been subject to fundamental change, again more clearly influenced by management and bureaucracy ideals than by collegiality (Engwall, 2011; Sahlin & Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2016).

The new forms of governance have challenged more traditional forms, especially collegial modes of governance and of controlling quality. While many reforms have met surprisingly mild resistance, they have given rise to quite intense debates on issues of governance and the organising of universities. In Sweden, this debate has largely come to circle around the importance or limitations of collegiality. A few recent publications have clarified historical developments of collegiality (e.g. Björck, 2013, 2015), collegial practices (e.g. Sundqvist, 2010) and how recent deregulation has come to undermine the use of collegial forms of governance further (Ahlbäck Öberg, 2014; Ahlbäck Öberg et al., 2016). In general though, discussions on collegiality tend to be surprisingly imprecise. What is collegiality? Why is it or why should it be an important part of university governance? And where in and around universities do collegial models apply? Despite lively debates on collegiality, these questions are largely left unanswered.

In this paper, we define and discuss what collegiality is, how it works in practice and how it could work in practice. We identify when and where collegiality appears to work and what the prerequisites for this mode of governance are. We describe some important reforms of Swedish universities that have had an impact on collegial forms of governance and organising. We begin and end the essay by noting that collegiality is a modern, efficient and practical form of governance, but it never works entirely on their own. Collegial forms of governance interact with other modes of governance. How this interaction occurs needs to be analysed, discussed and structured.

Our discussion grew out of our observations and experiences (as researchers on organisation and governance but also as academic leaders and as practising researchers and professors in Sweden – a university system in transformation) of recent reforms and the debate on these reforms. We saw how collegial forms of governance, over time and with repeated organisational reforms, have come to be more or less abolished or perverted to the extent that they have partly become ineffective. We are at the same time critical of the often-simplified discussion, featuring in the promotion as well as in the critique of current reforms, where one ideal type of governance tends to be contrasted with another, largely without clarifying these alternative models and leaving unsaid how various modes of governance can interplay and mix.

This paper contributes to the analysis of the interplay of several governance ideals as they play out in practice. The interplay can take the form of checks and balances, or models may overlap or compete. One mode of governance may supplement, challenge, transform, pervert or undermine other modes. Hence to understand and explain the development and impact of diverse modes of governing universities, we should discuss them in relation to each other and their interplay with each other.

A more theoretical argument that runs through our paper is a critique of the dominance of ideal types of discussions on university governance, and in organisation theory more generally, to the extent that those ideal types tend to be reified. Such ways of structuring the analysis and debate on university governance and organising tend to miss many of the dynamics of current governance practice.

## Collegiality in theory and practice

What is *collegiality*? Many references are made to collegiality in the current debates on university governance, but more seldom is it clearly defined. Why this is the case is briefly discussed below, but first we would like to describe the main elements of collegiality.

Most discussed in recent debates, and in reaction to the recent reregulation of the Swedish university system, is a formal structure for collegial decision-making. The former faculty boards, consisting of academic staff and with representatives of the students, had the main responsibility for decisions on content and quality in teaching and research. This included, for example, decisions on curricula, quality assurance of research, research training and education, allocation of resources within the faculty, plans for which faculty positions to announce and how, appointments of lecturers and assistant professors and so on. Some decisions, such as the appointment of professors, were taken by the rector but after reviews chaired by the faculty board.

The faculty boards have undergone a series of reforms over the years. One important such reform was when students gained representation on the board. With the

change in the law in 2011, presented as an autonomy reform and deregulation, universities were no longer obliged to have such boards. Instead, the law now prescribes that decisions of the kind exemplified above have to be taken by people with scientific merit and with influence from the students. A follow-up study of that reform showed that almost all universities and university colleges in Sweden have abolished the faculty boards or have transformed them from being decision-making bodies into having an advisory role (Sundberg, 2013). The same study showed that smaller and newer universities have made more thorough organisational reforms, whilst the oldest universities (Uppsala and Lund) have largely kept a system with faculty boards as decision-making bodies. This is the aspect of collegiality recently most discussed: the existence of a formal decision-making structure that gives decision-making power to bodies where academic staff are in the majority. In its most clear form, persons with scientific competence, elected by their peers, form such decision-making bodies.

Unlike university systems in many other countries, Swedish universities do not have academic decision-making bodies on a university level, such as senates. The historical structure with a *konsistorium* (consisting of a body of full professors) as the highest decision-making body of the university, has been reshaped through a number of reforms into corporate-like boards with an external chair and a large share of external members.

A second aspect of the formal structure making up a collegial decision-making system concerns the role of academic leaders and how they are appointed. The collegiate organising principle ideally includes a management structure with elected leaders. Leaders who have the support and therefore confidence of their colleagues are elected by them (elected as *primus inter pares*). Academic leadership is in this view ideally formed as a non-permanent, and often not full-time, position. This position is viewed as doing a term of service to the research community. The principle of *primus inter pares* puts strong emphasise on the scientific merits of those leaders. Common arguments for such a principle is that legitimacy and confidence in the leader is essential for them to be able to lead the scientific development of the university. A second argument has to do with competence and with the need for leadership that has close contacts with and builds on scientific operations of the university. This in turn has to do with the fact that collegial decision making is to be knowledge based and in essence involves processes of forming, scrutinising and arguing for the evidence base of decisions to be taken.

Currently, according to Swedish law, university rectors are appointed by the government, but after nomination from the university board. Previously these nominations were done after elections by faculty (and starting in the early 1980s also students and staff). This has been

deregulated too. The board is still required to consult with students, academic staff and personnel, but the form for such consulting procedures is decided by the board. Only a few universities have kept some form of election procedure and most universities nowadays use external consultants for recruiting and checking candidates. Still, according to the law rectors have to fulfil some academic criteria – they have to be qualified for university lectureship. With these developments, the practice of recruiting rectors and the qualification of rectors have changed. As shown by Engwall (2014), the majority of rectors are nowadays externally recruited and on average those rectors have lower academic qualifications, but several of the recently recruited rectors in Sweden have long experience in academic leadership positions on several levels and often from several universities or university colleges. These changes suggest that academic leadership has become a career track and is no longer primarily seen as a temporary service for the academic community.

A third aspect of the collegial formal structure is the use of peer review for positions, promotion, research funding and publication. In universities, external experts are used for the reviewing and ranking of applicants to professorship and lectureship positions. This practice renders the promoted applicant support and indication of quality from external, less partial academic reviewers. However, this aspect of collegiality has also been partly compromised through a series of reforms and changes of praxis. Changed practice has followed on deregulation of the legal requirements for how to arrange peer review. One such change is that several universities now ask external reviewers only to select those who are qualified for a position, but the ranking of top candidates is done internally. The main argument for such a revised procedure is that new positions should be filled with persons whose profiles fit the strategy of the university, department and research environment. The revised procedure is an expression of the strengthened emphasis on internal organisation and strategy.

Thus far, we have described structural aspects of the collegial system and we have described how this structure has been transformed, together with the deregulation of legal support for the collegial system. However, as is true for organisational models and governance more generally, collegiality will not work just because the university organisational chart is drawn in a certain way. Collegiality is as much a culture of how work should be pursued as it is a structure for planning, decision-making and follow-up procedures. Collegiality, in other words, should primarily be defined as a work process (see also Bennett, 1998).

When defining collegiality in cultural terms, we need to bring into the picture why collegiality is seen as important. The main rationale for a collegial system is that it is seen as the main form for producing high quality research and

teaching. The formal arrangement described above all rests on the assumption that decisions and developments should be based on scientific knowledge, arguments and procedures. The basic principle for how to manage, govern and develop universities resembles the academic seminar. Leaders and decision makers pursue rational and scientifically based arguments, and their arguments can be questioned and tested through scientific discourse. Just as in a seminar and in the production of research results, discussions, criticism and the scrutinising of arguments and conclusions are core features of collegial forms of governance. Leaders, moreover, are there to chair this ongoing scientific discussion. This also means that leaders and decision makers are to represent science and the scholarly community as a whole, not a single group of scholars or employees. A further basic assumption is that the research community, and the scientific argument, is wiser than just the individual leaders. The system is built so as not to give power to individual leaders, but to form a system where individual leaders and their measures are to be subject to questioning and testing, much like the work of individual scholars and individual research results. This does not mean that academic leaders in a collegial tradition are expected to be weak. Quite the contrary – leaders are expected to take measures based on scientific argumentation and on scientific qualifications. Additionally, through the election process, academic leaders act with the support of their colleagues and thereby on behalf of the community. It is truly a meritocratic system and it is built to be independent of individual interests, all as a basis for pursuing academic freedom – knowledge should always come before interests.

However, as shown by Maasen and Olsen (2007), among others, the meritocratic collegial system is easily confused with a system of internal representative democracy. With the stepwise reforms described above, the two systems of collegiality and representative democracy are mixed in decision-making bodies. Representatives of administrative personnel and students tend to be elected and viewed as representatives of specific groups, whilst academics, according to collegiate ideals, are elected as *primus inter pares*, representing science and the scientific profession rather than scientists and their colleagues and co-workers.

Before summarising the current state of collegiality in the Swedish university system we should also note some fundamental prerequisites for a collegiate system to function. When writing about university expansion and the associated transition from elite universities to mass universities, Halsey (1992, 2004) emphasised that collegiality assumes a collegium. Collegiality presupposes, of course, that there are colleagues who can listen and talk to each other. Hence, trust, knowledge and a continuous dialogue based on and upholding a common set of norms for what is good science, good knowledge and the main objectives for universities are basic prerequisites for a collegial system to function.

Collegiality as a governance form, in other words, takes shape with continuous development for establishing what good scientific practice is and how this practice shapes research, education and collaboration. Bennett (1998) emphasised the professional community, professional togetherness, as a basis for collegiality. This community cannot be formed once and then be assumed as a basis, but must be carried and upheld through active collegial activities, such as peer review and seminars. Moreover, the professional arguments – not private interests – are assumed to shape those discourses. Collegiality, in other words, is a working process based on the scientific argument. In this way, the collegium takes responsibility for the development and the quality of research and education (Bennett, 1998).

## Challenges to collegiality in Swedish universities

We have pointed to a number of reforms of the formal organisation of universities that have weakened the legal support for collegiality. Moreover, universities are mainly organised legally as public agencies and hence are subject to governance and governance reforms of public agencies more generally. However, while formal structure plays an important role in the possibility to uphold collegiality, we have argued that collegiality should first and foremost be seen as a working process, as an aspect of university culture. As such it needs to be actively supported and maintained. This is not unique to collegial organisational forms but is true for all kinds of organisational structures. Moreover, in line with this, much effort is put into supporting management, decision-making and governance. However, support in the form of leadership training, policy papers, strategic conferences and governmental instruction largely emphasises management and bureaucratic principles, whilst the impression is given that collegiality – if not completely disregarded or criticised – is taken for granted and with no need for such maintenance support.

One striking example of a challenge to collegiality concerns leadership training. This kind of training has expanded dramatically throughout the Swedish university landscape. Our observations of such leadership training courses suggests that they spend very little time and effort on discussing, maintaining and supporting collegiality but are much more focused on bureaucratic and management ideals (more on these below). This can be explained by a number of related developments. We have already mentioned that much reform of the universities comes with reform and governance of public agencies in general. Universities in this context are seen as 'a kind of public agency' without specific features. Another explanation is found in the increased use of consultants, people who are

experts on organising and governance but tend not to have extensive experience from universities, research and teaching. Another explanation is found in the lack of clear definitions and discussions on what collegiality is and what it is for, as we have commented upon above. And as indicated in the introduction to this paper, we also find that collegiality is often described just as bottom-up influence, as ways of anchoring decisions through negotiations with various groups of collaborators. In contrast to such a view we emphasise that collegiality forms a specific, ideal type of governance, with specific aims and objectives. Moreover, in academic leadership training courses, critique of collegial forms of decision making, organising and leadership are commonly found. For example, peer review processes have been criticised for being inefficient, biased and too subjective. A similar critique has been expressed regarding faculty boards and so on. Academic leadership, as formed in line with collegial principles, has been criticised for being weak and conservative. We read this critique as a critique of collegial practices. However, the critique often spills over onto the collegial principle as such. Again, this observation makes us ask for a more lively discussion on both the principles and practices of collegiality. If it is the case that collegial processes do not function as intended or if they are found to be problematic, the conclusion may not be that collegiality – in principle – is problematic. Some of the problems attached to collegial models of leading and organising may in fact be a sign of too little, rather than too much, collegiality (see Sahlin, 2012).

It is striking that very few official documents include definitions and discussions on collegiality, whilst many books written by former deans, rectors and so on include quite extensive discussions on what collegiality is, how it works in practice and why it is important (see e.g. Cole, 2010; Kennedy, 1997; Rosovsky, 1990; Russel, 1991; Sundqvist, 2010). This observation suggests that collegiality is treated as though it is clear what it is, as an institutionalised form of governance, whilst management is seen as a model that needs much support in terms of training, definitions, strategy documents and so on. In contrast, we maintain that no form of governance works exactly according to the ideals, and all forms of governance need to be subject to translations, maintenance activities and to scrutiny and reflection.

The section above on collegiality and on developments of university governance in Sweden points to yet another challenge to collegiality. The role and task of universities have changed considerably over the years, with mass education reaching higher education, the expansion of the university system, new tasks for universities and more socially embedded universities. While collegiality is central to the task of developing and scrutinising knowledge – in research and teaching – many tasks in current 'multi-universities' go beyond these tasks (cf. Kerr, 1963; Krücken & Meier, 2006). Hence, the discussion on collegiality points to the importance of developed reflections on what universities are for (see e.g. Collini, 2012). Moreover, it relates to questions concerning the nature of universities as organisations, as well as the nature of the task and roles of universities. Are universities unique bodies that require specific forms of governance, or can they be productive entities like any kind of public agency or corporation? We do not further develop this discussion on the role of universities in society in this paper but only point to the urgency of developing this discussion systematically, together with the discussion on university governance, which is the focus of this paper.

## Ideal type comparisons: possibilities and limitations

Much of the current debate on governance of universities, the need for reforms or the critique thereof is framed in terms of ideal types. One ideal model of governance is contrasted to another. The old is put in opposition to the new. We often hear (the challenged or largely abolished) collegiality being discussed in opposition to what is sometimes described as more modern forms of (new public management or corporate-inspired) management. University leaders and reformers talk about 'line management' in contrast to 'bottom up'. The latter is an example of how collegiality is understood by the advocates of line management principles. As we will elaborate more in detail, the principle of collegiality cannot be summarised as merely a bottom-up management system.

An ideal type-based analysis, or debate, tends to emphasise differences between the types. Ideal type analysis of governance can highlight developments over time and is also used as a basis for comparisons. At the same time, such an analysis has clear limitations. Such an analysis can to a lesser extent clarify overlapping and common features of governing – across the ideals. Moreover, ideal type analyses tend sometimes to give the impression that governance forms coherent packages or models. In practice, governance hardly forms such coherent yet distinct models. Even Weber, who taught us the virtues of ideal type analysis, also urged us to go beyond such ideal type reasoning in our understanding of the organisation of society. Before going beyond the governance ideals, we now turn to those ideals that appear to form much of the basis of current reforms and developments of governance and organising of the modern university system: bureaucracy and management.

### Bureaucracy

Universities are often described as bureaucracies. The bureaucratisation of universities stems from the fact that they are public agencies and thus operate under the law of the state. Universities were also bureaucratised with their growth. They nowadays form large organisations that, in order to be coordinated and controlled, need a certain

amount of bureaucracy. The need for bureaucratisation is most often related to the need for rule following, relative to rules set by the law and to internal rules. The need for bureaucracy in universities and the criticism thereof follow well-known paths.

Possibly the best-known ideal for organising operations is Weber's (1922/1983) ideal concerning bureaucracy. The basis of this is that people are to be separated from personal interests and official capacities and that universal rather than particular relations form the foundation of operations to be taken. According to the bureaucratic principle, roles and work are in focus and those positions are filled with persons who fulfil their regulated tasks. When Weber described bureaucracy as an ideal, a series of principles were drawn up as 'a functional division of work, hierarchical issuing of orders, hard-driven specialisation within the respective field of responsibility and the employment of a professional workforce with education and experience in the area of competence' (cited in Styhre, 2009, p. 16). Besides the fact that bureaucracy starts out from hierarchical organising, it is also based on the use of rules and work descriptions and, as a third component, on co-workers identifying with these ways of organising (Bendix, 1956; cited in Styhre, 2009, p. 18).

Criticism of bureaucracy appeared soon after Weber was translated into English. Byrkjeflot and Teig (2013) discussed the criticism and defence of bureaucracy. Merton (1957), commented on by Byrkjeflot and Teig (2013), was of the opinion that bureaucracy is non-human, faceless and an obstacle to people's innovative power and creativity. Another criticism of central importance for the development according to Byrkjeflot & Teig (2013) was delivered by Mises in 1944, who found that bureaucracy, as a governance form, is unnatural and a waste of resources. Critiques of bureaucracy have depicted it as dysfunctional and as a governance form that opposes reforms and modernisation (Byrkjeflot & Du Gay, 2012), hindering economic growth and counteracting the freedom of the individual. Defenders of bureaucracy have objected to this, commenting that Weber was talking about bureaucracy as an ideal. This means, for instance, that bureaucracy is not to be seen as a recipe for organisational efficiency. Even though Weber emphasised that bureaucracy concerns an ideal for government employees, it is broader and contains a public ethos and a personality type. The personality type that becomes faceless in popular descriptions can more clearly be understood via Weber's notion of *sina ira et study*. The person who is a bureaucrat of the ideal type works without anger or preference, without devotion or enthusiasm. Rather, duties are to be performed dispassionately and in accordance with the rules that have been set. The bureaucrat is an independent decision maker whose own opinions are not allowed to impact upon the work being done (Byrkjeflot & Du Gay, 2012). Even though bureaucracy seems anachronistic, or at least mechanistic,

and lacking the ability to change, it is still, however, an organisational form capable of responding to changes in its surroundings (see, e.g. Byrkjeflot & Du Gay, 2012; Styhre, 2009), something which, for instance, is enabled by the fact that it is simpler to change and adapt roles than people, to the new demands for technical, social or economic change being made of organisations (Kallinikos, 2004). The summary between the criticism and the defenders may be that bureaucracy as an ideal has been in fashion on and off over the past 100 years (Byrkjeflot, 2000). At regular intervals, it is assumed that bureaucracy is on its way out to make way for other organisational forms, such as project-based organising or virtual organising (Styhre, 2009), but despite this it seems to return in new forms.

## Management

The introduction of management models in public organisations, including universities, was largely argued for in reaction to what was seen as too much bureaucracy. In conjunction with New Public Management being developed as a general basis of reform just over 25 years ago, the notion arose that the public sector would be more efficient and better governed if it copied corporate forms of efficiency and quality (Hood, 1991). The introduction of management into the public sector did not follow a grand programme or strategy. Rather, it was largely introduced as individual management techniques, but where one technique followed on another. With this, the entire structure and identity of organisations over time came to be understood more and more as managed corporate-like organisations. In this respect, universities followed the general trend of public sector reorganising and too came to be viewed through the frame of corporate organising (e.g. Engwall, 2011; Ramirez, 2010). However, this incremental change also means that it is not easy to present management as an ideal type.

Brunsson and Sahlin-Andersson (2000) made an attempt to describe this ideal by pointing to three characteristics. The first one is that management assumes hierarchy. The leaders are to lead and those are the ones who are assumed to initiate strategy, development initiatives and performance criteria. Management puts great emphasis on leaders and leadership. This is also emphasised in the catchphrase often used – at least initially – for many of the New Public Management–inspired reforms: 'let managers manage' (see Sahlin-Andersson, 2001 for an overview). The second characteristic of management is that the organisation is perceived to be an actor with a unique entity (also see Meyer & Bromley, 2013). The boundaries of the organisation are important and performance of the organisation as a whole is in focus; the organisation is naturally seen as operating on a market in competition with other organisations. The third characteristic is that organisations are assumed to be intentional in the sense that they work towards specific goals and purposes.

Policies are to be translated into action, and results are measured and assessed in relation to those policies.

A quick look at universities through the lens of those three ideal types shows a growth in bureaucracy and later in management, largely at the expense of collegial structures (for illustrations see Björck, 2013, 2015). We can observe an expansion of managers, increased focus on strategic planning with profiling, formulated mission statements and developed performance measures, not least on the organisation level. However, in order to learn more about the actual interplay of ideas and ideals, we need to go beyond ideal types and see how the interplay plays out in practice. We give two examples below that have been subject to quite a lot of debate: first, the election and role of leaders and, second, the way in which organisations deal with critique and conflict.

## Interplay of ideals

### Leaders

The various governance forms have different ways of choosing their leaders. In the governance form of collegiality, leaders are chosen on their scientific merits and on the person's knowledge of the operation's knowledge content and development. The reason for this is that the leader must be able to lead and coordinate knowledge-developing and knowledge-reviewing processes specifically. Leaders thus base their authority on their professional merit and in the trust shown by their colleagues. Crucially important to the leader being able to lead, and to be entrusted with leading, is that he or she have good knowledge of the operation. The recruitment of leaders is thus often done internally.

Bureaucracy in the administrative form is also based on merit, but the basis here is that people work their way upwards through the hierarchy, showing their skill as regards following rules and routines in order to govern. A leader has to follow the rules set by the principal body, and there are also clear rules regarding competence assessment. The management form also has a very pronounced belief in the individual leader. When this person is to be appointed, it will be important to have interest profiles – Does the person have the 'right' management qualities? – and to have demand profiles. With such recruitment and within the management ideal, the leader is given a mandate to act in accordance with his or her own judgement, according to the overarching goals set by the principal body.

Collegiality and bureaucracy have in common the fact that personal feelings should be controlled so that they do not come to dominate or even influence decisions. As collegiality is based on knowledge and, above all, the possibility of being able to argue and critically review different parts of the shared knowledge, personal interests become less significant.

It is often said that academic leaders 'pay service to the academic community'. Hence, leaders primarily receive their mandate from their colleagues and because of this also have an obligation to listen to them. Ideally, though, this does not mean that the leader serves the interests of their peers. The collegial system is based on the idea that decisions and development are based on knowledge – not interest. What it does entail though, is that leaders maintain their legitimacy by listening to their peers as scientific experts and that leaders have to explain why certain measures are taken and what consequences they foresee from such measures. According to this ideal, leadership is executed in close collaboration with those who are being led. This also means that the leader remains a colleague of the peers and is assumed to take on the leadership role for a limited period of time, afterwards returning to his or her previous position as a part of the group. This basic idea about leadership is also the reason why many academic leadership positions are only part-time and rotating.

The equivalent does not apply to a manager in a bureaucratic or management-oriented governance system. In both these models, being a leader becomes a career and it is assumed that in order to lead the leader needs to create some distance from those who are to be led, in order to give room also for leading measures that may not be seen as being in the direct interest of those being led. This also means that it is difficult for a leader to go back to being a colleague after having done a term of leadership. A normal procedure is rather for the leader leaves the unit upon resignation, and a leadership career often includes movements between units and between organisations.

The various governance forms entail consequences for the operations they are used in. In a study of management in academic institutions, hospitals and the manufacturing industry in the United Kingdom, the practices that concerned work processes, supervision, goals and reward structures were compared (McCormack, Propper, & Smith, 2014). The researchers found a difference between managing university environments and manufacturing industries and hospitals, but they also found that there was a difference between different university environments. Older universities were using elements of collegial governance with rotating leadership to a greater degree. Newer universities, by contrast, were to a greater degree using leadership structures in which being appointed as a head of department was often seen as an initial step towards a career in the university's management structure. In addition, studies of Swedish universities have shown similar differences between older and newer universities (Sundberg, 2013, 2014).

In the study on academic institutions, hospitals and the manufacturing industry, the configuration of the leadership showed itself to be of significance as regards how it was practised (McCormack et al., 2014). In the case of temporary and rotating leadership, heads of department

strove to put as little time as possible into administrative managerial duties in order to act as effectively as possible. Instead, their focus was on what they deemed capable of strengthening the institution as an academic institution. In cases where the position of head of department constituted an initial step towards a continued career in the university's management structure, the heads of department instead more clearly strove towards complying with the policies originating from university management.

When the ideal form of management is allowed to characterise the academic environment, specific subject-related competence is thus given less importance. If we choose such an approach, then the leader can also be taken from different types of operations, as it will be experience as a leader rather than scientific competence that is seen as key. This view of management radically differs from the collegial, where the leader's competence in the field of operations is seen as entirely crucial. Leadership in the collegial mode is about assessing and developing knowledge, simultaneous with the operation being greatly expected to be self-organising and governed, not so much by the organisation's own goals and strategies, but by quality and knowledge standards developed within the profession. Here, the key task of the collegial leader is instead to lead the knowledge-developing and knowledge-testing dialogue.

Collegial leadership is sometimes characterised as weak. Our reading of the literature does not lead to that conclusion. Instead, because collegial leaders work with a mandate from their peers, they have a strong basis for their leadership. However, they have to listen, argue and explain. When taking measures that go against some of their peers, this undertaking demands a great deal of integrity and requires that they be able to argue and explain why the measures are needed. In this sense leaders share authority with their peers.

The discussion on weak leadership, we argue, tends to mix difficulties connected with collegial leadership with the difficulties of local leaders more generally to pursue changes. This leads to the conclusion that it is as important for a collegially governed organisation to seek to form systems and levels of organisation so that locally taken decisions and leadership measures can be contextualised and partly checked by bodies including larger parts of the organisations. In practice this means, for example, that there need to be clear connections between collegial bodies at the departmental, faculty and university levels.

### Managing conflicts and criticism

In a classic text in the social sciences, economist Hirschman (1970) developed the concepts of *exit*, *voice* and *loyalty* for his analysis of how various systems deal with criticisms, conflicts, decline, failures and non-functional courses of events. Hirschman's departure point was that all systems need to be based on loyalty in order to work. Here, both individuals and groups are presupposed, as a rule, to act loyally with the system. In order to enable this goal, organisations use a range of tools to keep their members loyal. Exit and voice are two ways of acting that are used in the event of failures, conflicts and decline. These two principles can also be used to convey criticism regarding external relations with a certain body in a system, for example customer relations (Hirschman, 1970). These two means can also be used by individuals or groups within a system as means to express their critique. *Exit* means that the criticising or failing individual or group leaves the scene. This can be done through the initiative of the one exiting or the exit can be forced by the leaders of principles of the system. Voice is another form of critiquing or correcting – when people or groups raise their voice to protest against a development, to achieve change or stop certain procedures or when leaders or principles raise their voices in order to seek to change the actions and procedures of certain individuals or groups. Hirschman provided different examples from a range of different organisations showing a series of examples of how exit and voice can be used both by and against those leaving, by those who are critical and by those who are criticised. The examples also show different combinations of exit and voice. Hirschman's terms can also shed light on fundamental differences between collegiality, management and bureaucracy.

Loyalty is the basis of the collegial governance form, whereby individuals are loyal to the operation and to the academic community. At the same time, in this governance form, there is great scope for voice. Voice becomes something of collegiality's zest for life. Arguments and knowledge are under constant criticism and review while being developed within the university or the academic community at large. Of course, exit may also exist in the collegial system, but it is rather seen as an exception.

Whilst voice is an essential part of a collegial system, it is not seen as desirable in bureaucracy and management. There, the organisation members are instead prerequired to comply with set rules, strategies and goals, but when serious conflict or deviance from norms and rules occur exit tends to be preferred to voice. It is not uncommon, for example, that leaders leave or are forced to leave organisations as consequences of conflicting views, for example with higher management levels, the executive board or owners.

It is still relatively uncommon for rectors or academic personnel to be forced out of their posts at universities. And even if the legal protection for full professors to be in principle irremovable from their positions has been weakened, there are still quite firm rules that protect academic staff from being easily removed from their jobs. However, in other parts of university operations, we see a rather clear move away from viewing voice as an essential part of the daily operations to instead emphasising

loyalty coupled with exit. One example of this is found in the communication strategies of Swedish universities. These emphasise the importance of loyalty and minimise critical voices, in any case those openly challenging their own managements (cf. Björck, 2015; Fredriksson & Pallas, 2013).

As Björck (2015) has pointed out, voice includes a further alternative in practice, that is, that the co-workers choose not to say anything and instead keep quiet. While skilful researchers can choose another organisation, or university, those with their main competence in teaching are more tied to their employers – although a market for excellent researchers is at hand, there tends to be less of a market for excellent teachers. Another 'inner exile' lies in negligence, when academic staff resign dejectedly or adopt a dissociated cynicism in situations:

> where they experience trust in their professional judgement and integrity as being replaced with distrust and the chronic monitoring of their operation, with an accompanying drift of focus and resources away from primary assignments. In relation to the employer, it becomes easier to react with the same by-the-book attitude that you yourself feel you are being treated with. It seems to be more difficult to justify time-consuming commitment to shared matters – despite the fact that the institutional framework causes ramifications for your own project – and easier to limit the care taken with your own career. In a passive-aggressive state, it comes easy to be negligent vis-à-vis some tasks. (Björck, 2015, p. 18) (Our translation.)

As a consequence of this, academic staff can choose to go into 'inner exile', wrote Björck (2015).

Collegial organising and decision making are time-consuming and demand engagement from academic staff. The continuous debate and reviewing are an essential part of the collegial model. Moreover, as we described above, an important prerequisite for collegiality to work is that norms are shared for what is valid knowledge and scientific claims. In that sense the collegial model builds on a common base and a trust in this common base among peers. If groups find less motivation to engage in time-consuming collegial processes of scrutiny and decision making or if they even choose to remain silent and go into inner exile, collegiality will be undermined, not only or primarily because of the introduction of alternative modes of governance, but because of a lack of engagement and trust among those whose engagement is needed for collegiality to work.

## Concluding remarks

Despite much talk about collegiality, we have noted a lack of principle discussions on what collegiality is, how it can be upheld and why it should play an important part in university governance. As we have noted, collegial forms of governance demand activities and procedures directed at upholding a collegial culture (the existence of a collegium, common scientific standards, ongoing seminars, trust in science and so forth). Further, collegiality is a form of governance that relies on scientific norms and is aimed at basing developments on and for scientific development. This argument leads us to conclude that a developed discussion on how collegiality can be upheld and restored also needs to be based on more open arguments and practices as to why universities need collegiality. This latter discussion needs to be linked to a discussion on what the roles are for universities in society – what universities are for.

Collegiality does not work on its own and, as is the case with all modes of governance, collegiality cannot remain unchanged as new prerequisites for management come into play, various modes of governance mix and new and revised roles of universities evolve. One line of thought that has run through the paper is that collegiality has been undermined, not only through the introduction of more bureaucracy and more management, but also because the practice and knowledge about collegiality is not upheld and it becomes less and less clear what collegiality is, what it is for and how it needs to be maintained and supported.

At the same time, management is also characterised by ambiguity. Management models spread partly because they are shaped in generic and generalised ways open to translation (cf. Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall, 2002). Moreover, with the introduction of new public management, political control is pursued with a mix of bureaucratic and management principles. At the same time as management models have come to dominate much of governance in and of universities, they remain surprisingly imprecise. For example, it remains quite unclear how to define what good academic leadership is from a management perspective. This conclusion suggests that a clarifying discussion regarding what management principles are, what they are good for and what the limitations are of such principles is as much needed as the discussion of collegiality. As a basis for both these discussions, we cannot rely only on ideal type reasoning. Contemporary governance forms of universities mix to the extent that distinct ideal types may not capture important dynamics of this governance. We need comparative empirical data on reforms, practices and impact.

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