

The changing governance and management perceptions in the knowledge-based society – a cross-country comparison of changes over time and by gender

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The change in organizational patterns of university governance in the knowledge-based society over the past few decades has led to significant changes in the role and expectations of the academic profession (Aarrevaara et al., 2021) and the organization and governance of higher education institutions (Bleiklie & Kogan, 2007). Even though the higher education institutions are mostly public organisations and operate in a very institutionalised and public resources dependent environment, their governance and management are much more dependent on internal factors. The traditional model of governing universities is collegial and consultative in nature, and universities are changing through minor adjustments as a reflection of high autonomy of academics (Pulkkinen et al., 2019).

In our paper, we examined the ways in which these changes have affected the academic profession, with a focus on trends and shifts in governance and management over time in EU countries participating in both EUROAC and APIKS surveys (i.e. supranational trends, also in terms of the concept of higher education systems). We looked at the three elements of governance that were addressed in both studies:

- - perception on the type of management, leadership competency and communication to the academics;
- - perceived influence of the academics on the unit/department, faculty, and institutional level;
- - emphasis given on the research and/or teaching quality practices in personnel decisions.

The results show that the self-perceived influence of academics on unit/department, faculty and institutional level increased from 2007/2008 to 2018 in Slovenia, Germany, Finland and Portugal, but not in Croatia. Also, APIKS data confirm an increase over time in academics' confidence in their leadership competency and communication in all countries but Finland and Portugal. The views on top-down management remained about the same between the studies, with a couple of exceptions. While we can observe an increase over time in the proportion of academics from all studied countries who believed that the quality of research was taken into consideration in personnel decisions, the quality of research became more of a factor in Portugal and Slovenia only. Further, we observe some notable differences between the genders in their views on the governance elements. Overall, more substantial gender differences in the studied elements were observed amongst Slovenian and Portuguese than German or Finish academics.

References

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