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ABSTRACT

This case study of development in a technical university situates distributed leadership in higher education in an organizational perspective. Analysis of documentation from development programs and interviews with 10 faculty members showed that leadership practices were related to different institutional logics prominent in four key activities in this specific university: education, research, formal organization and boundary-spanning cross-scientific environments. A shared understanding of these logics was accompanied with a reported increase in organizational understanding and leadership awareness that helped establish collaboration and sensemaking. Furthermore, we show that the theory of logic multiplicity provides a way to analyze previously neglected aspects of power, tensions, context and the practical relevance of the concept of distributed leadership.

Introduction

This study contributes to the debate on leadership in higher education and especially the concept of distributed leadership (Bolden, 2011; Bolden, Petrov, & Gosling, 2008; Jones, Harvey, Lefoe, & Ryland, 2014; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2004) by connecting leadership phenomena to an organizational perspective. We suggest that leadership in higher education is an ambiguous and contested practice (Juntrasook, 2014) that depends on the coexistence of multiple institutional logics in higher education institutions (Besharov & Smith, 2014; Thornton, Ocasio, & Lounsbury, 2012). To demonstrate how distributed leadership can be positioned in relation to different logics we present a case study of a development program in a technical university in which we show that leadership practices were related to different institutional logics prominent in four key activities in this specific university: education, research, formal organization and boundary-spanning cross-scientific environments.

Specifically, we show that a more evolved and shared understanding of these logics was accompanied with a reported increase in organizational understanding and leadership awareness, which helped establish collaboration and sensemaking. Furthermore, we show that the theory of logic multiplicity provides a way to analyze some previously neglected aspects of power, tensions, context and the practical relevance of the concept of distributed leadership (Bolden, 2011).

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The changing environment of universities

Changes in the governance of higher education institutions have increasingly been accompanied by new models for managing (Bolman & Gallos, 2011; Fullan & Scott, 2009; Sahlin, 2012; Stensaker, Välimaa, & Sarrico, 2012), highlighting differences between different leadership ideals. Sometimes this takes the form of one model of governance attempting to dominate the other(s) (Rhodes & Wray-Bliss, 2013). Often collegiality and collegial leadership are hailed as a preferable alternative and a bulwark against contemporary management practices sometimes referred to as academic management (Bolden et al., 2012). However, this dualism may do little to convey an understanding of the inherent tensions and ambiguities of the academy. Kligyte and Barrie (2014) identified three ideas of collegiality, in the form of an ideal type of governance, in the cultivation of an intellectual community and finally as a set of norms emphasizing service and reciprocity. Kligyte and Barrie (2014) suggest that collegiality is a fantasy that has paradoxical consequences for academics in that it ' … makes the contingent nature of the social and structural arrangements in universities … less visible for leaders and academics, and in this way solidifies and reproduces the status quo … '. As an alternative to holding on to this fantasy they suggest that ' … it might be more useful to put indeterminacy, absence and lack at the very centre of the academic leadership project' (p. 167).

Leadership in higher education

Reform initiatives in institutions of higher education and research currently emphasize the role of leaders as a key element for implementing change and stimulating creative research and educational excellence (Mårtensson, 2014; Roxå, 2014). The most common conceptualization of leadership in this context is anchored in a *functionalist paradigm* (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). This is exemplified by literature reviews identifying leader behaviors that are related to department effectiveness, such as having a clear sense of direction, providing performance feedback, being a role model (Bryman, 2007).

Criticisms of the functionalist approach in leadership studies have inspired studies of leadership as relational, distributed or socially constructed and have provided alternative accounts of leadership phenomena (Uhl-Bien, 2006), as well as critical studies of leadership (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012).

In the wake of the strong functionalist paradigm, there have been attempts to nuance and broaden the approach to leadership. Juntrasook (2014) identified four different meanings of leadership in the academic context: as a formal position, as achieving a certain level of performance, a set of practices and being a professional role model. Juntrasook (2014) thus showed that the idea of leadership is regarded as meaningful and valuable in very different ways depending on the position of the academic. A study of Evans' (2014) showed that junior academics perceived that professors (senior colleagues) provided leadership in the form of mentoring and practical advice, supporting choices and setting standards. Evans (2014) concluded that research leadership is not confined to those in formal management positions but is rather to be understood as processes of influence related to everyday activities integral to academic work. Within education, distributed leadership has been promoted as a less leader-centric, relational and more organizationally

relevant and participative approach to studying and exercising leadership (Bolden, 2011; Bolden et al., 2008; Jones et al., 2014; Spillane et al., 2004).

However, the concept of distributed leadership has been criticized for underestimating the power dynamics in organizations, for instance by downplaying or neglecting the role of competition and micro-politics and tendencies to use discourses of partnership and collaboration as rhetorical devices (Bolden, 2011). Furthermore, most studies of distributed leadership tend to focus on formal leaders and less on the networks and wider relations in- and outside of organizations and the extent to which the concept of distributed leadership helps to understand or hide power differentials and the conditions for diversity (Bolden, 2011).

In the context of higher education, the promises (Jones et al., 2014) and limitations of distributed leadership are under debate. For instance, Bolden et al. (2008) discuss the opposing forces that leaders in higher education institutions experience and suggest that a full appreciation of how leadership is distributed has to involve a wider understanding of not only individual aspects but also social, structural and contextual aspects.

In this paper we suggest that a productive way to situate distributive leadership within different aspects of the organizational context and also to make it more relevant for practice is to make explicit links to the organization and specifically to the tensions between multiple and sometimes contradictory perspectives typical of higher education and research.

An organizational perspective on leadership

The discourse on distributed leadership is relatively disconnected from consideration of the organizational context. One theoretical development that takes an explicit interest in the co-existence of different logics in organizations and how these are involved in patterns of change and stability is the institutional logic theory of Thornton et al. (2012).

Thornton and Ocasio (1999, in Besharov & Smith, 2014, p. 366) define institutional logics as 'socially constructed historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs and rules'. These logics, in turn, are expected to shape the cognition and behavior of actors in organizations. On a very general, societal level, institutional logics are expressed in a limited number of typical patterns found in institutions like community, family, religion, market, state, corporation and profession. The institutional logics in specific organizations can be traced back to these institutions but their actual expression and interaction depend on local circumstances. Besharov and Smith (2014) suggest that organizations typically are characterized by multiple institutional logics and that it in many cases is the nature of this so-called logic multiplicity that can shed light on key organizational processes and outcomes.

They argue that depending on how important or central the multiple logics are for an organization and how complementary the different logics are, four different types of logic multiplicity can be identified. In the case of high centrality and low compatibility the multiplicity is *contested*, which implies that a high level of conflict and tension are integral to the organization. In cases of high centrality and high compatibility the different logics are important and at the same time coexist in a constructive way; they are *aligned*. In cases of low centrality and high compatibility, one logic may *dominate* others in a way which leads

to low levels of tension. Finally, low centrality and low compatibility are consistent with logics that exist side by side in an *estranged* way with relatively low levels of conflict (Besharov & Smith, 2014). Based on the theory of multiple logics we suggest that much of the discussion concerning tensions in higher education and research institutions that have been structured in terms of a dichotomy between collegiality on one side and management and new public management on the other side can be analyzed more thoroughly by relating the varying ideals of leading to different institutional logics. This means that these organizations might best be described as composed of multiple logics with low compatibility that at the same time are vital for high-quality processes and outcomes. This kind of multiplicity is also suggested by Bergquist and Pawlak (2008) in their discussion of six different cultures of the academy (e.g., collegial, managerial, developmental, advocacy, virtual and tangible culture). Higher education and research institutions can thus be described as contested organizations according to the typology suggested by Besharov and Smith (2014).

Methods

The setting of this study is a technical university in northern Europe with about 10,000 students and 2500 faculty members. During the period 2000–2010, two organizational changes of the university took place, as a response to increasing pressures and needs from surrounding society. The first one, in 2005, was aimed at rationalizing the flows of line management. It did away with disciplinary-oriented sections and radically reduced the number of departments to less than 20 that directly reported to the vice-chancellor of the university. In 2006 a new vice-chancellor was appointed. After some time, the leadership levels were again restructured, this time toward an organizational matrix. Three cross-functional initiatives were added to the 17 departments and three new deputy vice-chancellors were appointed to head these initiatives.

To support organizational development at the university a series of leadership development programs were launched during the first decade following 2000. Participants were young researchers with the prospect of being recruited as future leaders in different levels and areas of the university. They were problem-based in the sense that in each program learning leadership was interwoven with working with a current strategic challenge provided by the university leadership.

Methodology – combining practitioner inquiry and retrospective interviews

The empirical material used in this study came out of the first author's long-term involvement with projects within this technical university. In the role of consultant and learning coach the first author was part of a team designing development programs for faculty, focusing on staff with potential for taking on more senior leader roles. During this period the first author conducted focus groups and collected, structured and validated participants' descriptions of what it was like to be a leader in various situations in the everyday life at the university. The aim was to develop a leadership portfolio for early career researchers. One of the main findings that came out of this inquiry was a heuristic model of four different fields or 'rooms' that were recurrent themes in what program participants reported about leadership. Parts of the documentation from this project have

previously been presented in two short reports (Sewerin & Jonnergård, 2015; Sewerin, Jonnergård, & Birgersson, 2010).

In this paper we combine a presentation of some findings from the earlier inquiry with interviews with 10 members of faculty who at the time had key roles at the university and were involved in the development programs. This combination of analysis of different data sources represents a way to integrate the learning that resulted from long-term, in-depth involvement with a more detached and retrospective research perspective (interviews and analysis). This mixed approach thus allows us to draw on understandings that have evolved over time and been validated by the involved actors and at the same time take a step back and explore the theoretical significance of the process. The interviews are a source of data in themselves but also provide a validity check on the assumptions made by the first author's analysis based on his involvement in the development project.

Data collection

In the findings section we present an abridged version of the outcomes of the focus groups and discussions with staff members concerning their leadership experiences in the years 2000–2010. The presentation draws on reports by the first author and collaborators (Sewerin et al., 2010).

In 2011 two collaborators (other than the first author) conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 members of faculty at the university. The group consisted of six women and four men. Three had been vice-chancellors responsible for various areas in the university, three had a background as researchers but were for the moment mainly involved in administrative functions, one was Head of Department and three were senior researchers with varying experience of leadership positions. The interviews were conducted as reflection sessions in which the informants were asked to share their experiences of different leadership interventions and how they perceived and used the heuristic model of leadership. An interview guide consisting of questions concerning the university organization, experiences of the development programs and current challenges in their work situation were used in each interview. Each of the interviews lasted for 1.5 hours and have been audiotaped and transcribed and analyzed using a version of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis started with a thorough reading of the whole transcript followed by a more focused analysis. We were looking for general themes that approximately 3/4 of the informants agreed on. This led to the identification of a number of themes. Examples of these were: experience of growing complexity as a consequence of a new matrix organization, organizational tensions, steps toward integration, reduction in emotional pain. In the next stage we went through the themes and the quotations if the themes were mutually exclusive and finally we checked to what extent there were deviating examples or views in the interviews that went against the thematic structure that we had identified.

Ethics

The presentation of the case is built on the reports that came out of the projects and these have been done in full cooperation with involved parties as part of the documentation of the projects. The informants in the retrospective interview study were informed of the

purpose and that the material would be presented in a journal article, that they would have the opportunity to comment on the manuscript, that participation was voluntary and could be interrupted any time. These practices follow the ethical guidelines for social science research projects in Sweden.

Findings

Program participants making sense of their university

Based on work with the leadership portfolio and the development programs from which it evolved, the notion developed that leadership and means of influence are fashioned differently in different areas of the university. Program participants reported that there was not one, but *four* radically distinctive modes of leading at the university. This notion developed into a model used for practical purposes in the ongoing development project to arrange and characterize leadership experiences for young researchers and to further explore how different tasks in the university call for different leadership responses.

The four rooms of the university – a heuristic model

The young researchers, and later more members of the organization, started referring to these different modes of leadership as different *rooms* of leading. The model, very briefly, is presented in Figure 1.

Managing the formal organization
The university is formally structured and designed as a line organization, with the assumptions and expectations of a hierarchy. Within this organization formal leaders, administrators,
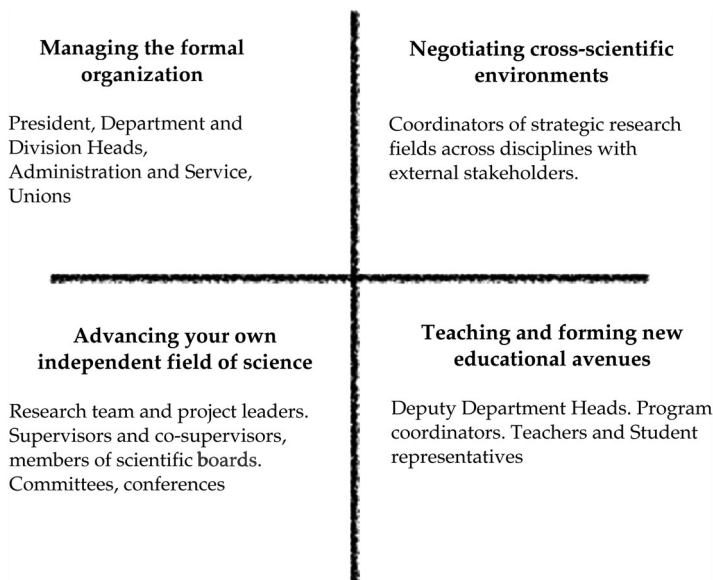

Managing the formal organization	**Negotiating cross-scientific environments**
President, Department and Division Heads, Administration and Service, Unions	Coordinators of strategic research fields across disciplines with external stakeholders.
Advancing your own independent field of science	**Teaching and forming new educational avenues**
Research team and project leaders. Supervisors and co-supervisors, members of scientific boards. Committees, conferences	Deputy Department Heads. Program coordinators. Teachers and Student representatives

Figure 1. Four arenas for undertaking leadership in universities developed in focus groups with younger researchers.

experts and the unions govern, control and support the employees of the university to achieve strategic goals expressed in visions and documents of organizational objectives. Here budgets are formed, procedures of long-term planning, staffing, quality assurance and the like. Decisions are based on national laws and regulations governing the public sector and higher education. This leadership environment is enmeshed with the language and tools of modern business management, like risk analysis, trademark designation, customer satisfaction, key performance indicators, balanced score cards and process management.

Advancing your own independent field of science

In this intra-scientific room key influential individuals and teams are nodes in a scientific network that reaches out across the world. You enter this world as a PhD student; learn to lead scientific discourses in seminar rooms, conferences and journals. You eventually master the language, the tools and the social dynamics of this room. Working and leading from this platform provides the dominant norm of the academic career path and rewards you with a position in the community of science. This area of influence is characterized by informal dynamics. Independence is a key feature of scientific enquiry and requires the questioning of authority and constant skepticism. It is in many ways opposite to the logic of the formal hierarchy. Yet, power and authority is wielded here, in dynamically developed networks based on scientific positions residing in age-old lineage of strong personalities. Here you find creative supervising environments, but also highly competitive and elitist circumstances of Darwinian portions. In this leadership context the scientific authority often looks upon himself as a builder and the custodian of a highly individual field of knowledge.

Teaching and forming new educational avenues

This is the classical and oldest of the university's environments of influence. Here the teacher is the emblematic figure of authority. Leading courses and programs around a certain field of knowledge aiming at a profession for the students is about representing and creating meaning, identity and culture around this field of knowledge. Authority in the classroom involves containing young peoples' career dreams and meeting their expectations to develop a professional identity for the future. In this room some of the public personalities of the university govern. They appear in debates in media, they are charismatic ambassadors of knowledge, magnets drawing with the appeal of Academia and higher learning. There are many stakeholders in this leadership environment – students, teachers, the various departments of science, the Department of Basic Education, program councils, the external world of business and parents.

Negotiating cross-scientific environments

This is the youngest of university influence contexts. It is concerned with creating and governing arenas for research and teaching that cut across traditional disciplines at the university and connecting these with stakeholders on the outside, companies, local government and state agencies. These boundary-spanning inter-environments are transitory. They are arranged by agents from different fields of science and from external partners in a network and matrix fashion in relationship to the formal line management of the university. If advancing your own independent field of science is like climbing a mountain and there chiseling out an autonomous and exclusive platform of your own, this area is

more like the market place of a town (Benschop & Brouns, 2003). It is involved with the open exchange, the translation and transmission of knowledge. Leading here consists less of formal authority, less of preponderance on your own unique field of investigation, than of the ability to see and acknowledge other fields, to connect and build the platform and preconditions for satisfying mutual needs.

The dynamics between the four parts of the model

It was easily established that the leadership room called 'Advancing your own independent field of science' is the starting point and take-off for a career path at the university. It is this place that provides the legitimacy and identity that will give you positions in Academia. If you undertake too long stopovers in the other rooms, you might jeopardize your scientific career. You are often committed to several of these rooms with simultaneous leadership and these different positions have contradictory requirements and conditions. They affect not only young scientists. Senior staff are also involved in multiple assignments. Fragmented workdays in combination with lots of lonely work often result in a high work-load, leading to stress. The boundaries between the four different rooms are not distinct but power and expectations of leadership and control are qualitatively different in the different environments.

The heuristic model in retrospect

Documentation from the retrospective interviews points to two main themes referring to the recent development process at this university, *organizational understanding* and *leadership awareness*. One theme concerned attempts to understand what is happening with the university in a changing society and how this understanding will assist useful action. The other was about finding or construing a model of leading that would be helpful in engaging key actors in building sustainable social structures that would promote collective action. We want to highlight examples of how these two themes were perceived and acted upon during the process of changing the organization. There seems to be an agreement amongst the interviewees that a thorough engagement in the relationships between different modes of leading had consequences for the success of the process.

- Theme 1: Organizational understanding. (Attention and sensemaking related to the organizational context)
- Theme 2: Leadership awareness. (An increased awareness of one's own and others' leader roles).

Organizational understanding. Increased engagement with multiple logics

All of the interviewees were struggling with creating a meaningful picture as the result of the process of change and emerging structures. They all emphasized the experience of an increasing organizational complexity. Said one of them:

> There used to be a well-functioning formal line management alongside the academic leadership where research teams have been highly autonomous and yet responsive to administrative needs. This situation is now radically altered by forces of leadership across boundaries, an

orthogonal dimension that consumes some of the autonomy of groups in favor of loosely connecting them with each other in intricate patterns governed by needs of society.

The boundaries between spheres of influence were sometimes described as distinct. The formal line management did strategy formation in response to current need of industry on how to best organize to survive in a competitive environment, and research leadership continuously safeguarded the quality of research. New centers were formed, across departments; some of them with external funding, some were more like interest groups. 'We discuss continuously', said one of our informants,

> if they should belong to the interdisciplinary centers instead of to the departments. People will live in the departments and do their science in the centers. What does this imply? We don't know yet. We must talk to really understand.

The rather rapid change producing the emerging tensions and organizational paradoxes was introduced by the coming of a new vice-chancellor but it had been in the making for a long time. 'During recent years', said one interviewee, 'I have seen department heads and center leaders with almost identical interests fight away most of their waking time. The organization will not profit by this frantic internal friction'. There was also a concern that the central support system being built could be perceived as an extravagant and costly control function in an increasingly centralized top-down system.

Complexity defined an ever-increasing number of initiatives and processes that cut across boundaries and needed to be picked up and managed somehow and there were emotional reactions to these changes. There were frustrated cynical comments about a 'market discourse taking over. It is a new language and it is spreading all over the university, into research, education and collaborations with external stakeholders'. Another said, 'The university doesn't have an organization! The Ivory Tower metaphor was the old university. Now I see the university as a Tower of Babel where many languages are spoken'. Another, 'This *management talk* is dangerous'.

Responding to and visualizing the change and growing complexity were reported by interviewees as useful in making sense of their organization. The heuristic model of four rooms of leadership appeared to have provided comfort in the times of struggle and efforts of sensemaking. It became a metaphor enabling an informed conversation about leadership in the academy:

> We need the time and tools, pictures and words, that facilitate our understanding of what we are talking about. It's important that what leadership does, it's interventions, reaches all the way into the capillaries, and that it's understood all the way out there. So that we become organizational grown-ups in this system.

There was also a growing understanding of a new role for the university as a neutral and strong player gained in response to society's new challenges and this could put Academia in a position to offer new ways of leading. One of the former vice-chancellors described this:

> An example could be the transition from oil to forest products in the refineries in our region. Who will take the lead in processing such a highly complex task? Business? Not likely because of the financial risks involved. Government? Not likely since they will be regulating the outcomes. Without taking too much risk the university can lead such a project because we can stay neutral, we can coordinate information flows and provide knowledge formation and leverage the inclusion and alleviate the risk of the other actors within relevant networks.

Leadership awareness

Concomitant to changes in the role of the university and the development of understanding of these changes there came a growing awareness of the role of leadership and a perceived need to develop leadership to adjust to these changes.

Some acknowledged the perception of different modes of leading in different places of the university. 'Some issues are led through line management. Other issues through other means', said one, 'Some things cannot be led from the position of the vice-chancellor, for instance quality assurance in research and education'. Another reported: 'The formal vertical chain of command is discontinued at the university, it ends where research leadership begins'. These differences were also appreciated as important and necessary. Another:

> These four rooms helped me see the first time I saw them. Eureka! That's how it is. On some kind of simple level people unfamiliar with the university leadership environment they can never grasp the notion of different rooms. They can be very irritated that things are going this way and that. They would say: Why do you let this happen? Why doesn't the Vice-chancellor intervene, make a decision and settle things!?

The metaphor of four rooms of leadership made some of the informants realize that there were different kinds of ground rules in different situations. This realization made it easier to grasp the rules of the game in certain situations and provide a guide for actions. Said one:

> Gosh, I was silent for so many years, I didn't have the position where I knew and felt the hidden rules sitting in the walls. It's the grand professors who are speaking and little me knows nothing … imagine this device with the room metaphor that enables the opportunity to speak explicitly about the rules in such and such situation. This could speed up the dynamics of meetings and facilitate understandings of contexts and roles.

There was also a realization of a new role for formal line management to design processes and influence from a special place from which they can coordinate and tap into the resources of the different spheres of authority at the university; not leading them but rather collaborating with them.

Our informants claimed that one of the keys to fruition at this university was that different actors with different interests were able to collaborate because they recognized and understood the others. The notion of a career path across these four leadership rooms, and the acceptance of people choosing different paths, promoted sensemaking, what it meant and was like to *lead* in the different contexts.

It was as if identity shifted whilst individuals moved between different spheres of influence in the university. They seemed to embrace the logics of the different worlds of leading and no longer perceive the others as threatening. One person made a point that you probably do the leading better after having leadership experience in the different 'rooms'. She saw a wriggling snake pattern through the four rooms when she looked back at her own professional advancement; how she had developed through a series of turns, of different roles, challenges and choices to find a voice and become who she was now. Another person reported having gone through his personal career path and with increasing responsibilities becoming successively skillful in including parts he was not immediately responsible for. 'A learning process', he said, 'a training, a process of demystification'.

The informants reported that they had been on a cultural journey through this development process. It was a trip which seemed to have started in frustrated fragmentation and, by the help of the conceptual model, had come to a close with a sense of comfort with seeing and acting in circumstances that have a linked pattern and made sense. It was an emotional journey from pain to hope. The words 'comfort' and 'safety' came up over and over in the conversations with the informants. It seemed the model, and the way it was used, provided some kind of emotional stability in contrast to the confusion that existed before. The informants also reported that emotions responding to impending threat were much less frequent in the organization today.

The idea of success – in the organizational development and an ensuing grant application process – at this institution of higher education was that the parts, the different quarters of the university, collaborated in a joint effort. It was never a question of replacing leadership in the scientific disciplines with a cross-scientific leadership influence, but both of these leadership environments in conjunction with line management appeared to be necessary to complete these projects. There was, according to the informants, a sense amongst leadership that they were leading and not excluding, that one became responsible for something greater than one's own territory and the idea of leading fostered inclusion more than being led into something. In this there emerged an affirmation of differences, of being positive in front of contestants.

Leadership was earlier often understood as related to, and even equated with, line management and therefore instinctively perceived as alien and met with skepticism and even repelled by other domains of influence in the university.

Discussion

Institutional logics in the university

In this paper we have showed that the organizational conditions or contexts for leadership are varied and characterized by different institutional logics (Besharov & Smith, 2014). Coexisting multiple logics provide a background for distributed leadership in this specific context. In the discussion we will show that the heuristic model that was produced in the development project is a representation of a sample of logics typical of higher education and research institutions.

In the findings section we referred to four different 'rooms' that represented different modes of leading in the technical university as perceived by participants in a series of development programs. These have some substantial overlap with the academic cultures described by Bergquist and Pawlak (2008). The relevant institutional logics in the research room are the informal dynamics between supervisors and doctoral students and the kind of groups that senior researchers gather around them and they follow logics that have similarities to both families and communities. The formal organization is clearly and increasingly characterized by corporate logics. The educational room is primarily characterized by professional logics. The rapidly expanding room of cross-disciplinary environments is to a large extent dominated by market logic.

The different logics represent core aspects of the university and members of faculty are expected to be involved in at least two of these areas and a majority tend to have some experience from each of the four areas and their corresponding logics. In the case of

the university this multiplicity is central to the organization's functioning. High-quality research and education have the potential to contribute to each other and contribute to a creative environment. And yet the logics are contested, there are strong and prevailing tensions between collegiality and management, research and education, specialization and multidisciplinarity.

Distributed leadership

The concept of logic multiplicity helps us to situate distributed leadership in a better way. There are three important aspects to this. The first concerns the notion of leadership itself. It is clear that in order for leadership to be a meaningful and legitimate concept in the eyes of the actors it helps if it is anchored in a certain institutional logic. In the university context, leadership is mainly related to roles within the formal organization and has become dominant as part of a formal organization designed according to corporate logics under the aegis of new public management approaches to governance.

The presence of contested logic multiplicity as is often the case in universities implies that meaningful coordination seems to rely on initiatives and cooperation from actors situated within different logics. The literature on distributed leadership has to a large extent been focused on forms of collaboration between those holding formal roles or between formal leaders and followers (Bolden, 2011). Thus, the second aspect is related to how the concept of logic multiplicity adds to this understanding of distributed leadership in that it provides a lens for interpreting distributed leadership as collaboration between actors drawing on different logics. It also helps to appreciate the contested role of the leadership concept within universities as leadership mostly draws on a corporate logic which is only one among a number of not highly aligned logics. A third aspect is therefore that the different ideal types of contested, aligned, dominant and estranged multiplicity indicate relevant patterns of tension and power differentials that can be found in organizations.

The development project

The heuristic model of the different rooms that was articulated during the development project was perceived by the participants as helpful in a number of ways. Firstly, it seemed to capture dimensions of the organizational environment that were different from formal organizational diagrams or charts but that made immediate sense to them. Drawing on Besharov and Smith (2014) it can be argued that the representation of different rooms made it possible to reflect on and put into words the multiple institutional logics existing in their organization. By shifting the focus from dualities to multiplicity and thereby normalizing the presence of difference and even to some extent tensions, it seems to have opened up opportunities to perceive that the different logics might all be important (thus central) and that it is possible to appreciate this condition of multiplicity rather than try to get away from it or fight it. As a consequence, the extent to which this development process was beneficial can be interpreted in terms of an increased capacity for aligned logic multiplicity in the university. This increased capacity was also evident in the participants' reports of a changed understanding of the organization and different leadership awareness.

Conclusions

Writing about distributed leadership in universities Bolden et al. (2008) called for more studies of what bonds people together and what helps to span boundaries between social groups. They also suggested that exploration of social capital and identity may be necessary for a fuller appreciation of leadership in universities. Furthermore, Bolden (2011) identified a need for focusing more on the power aspects, the context and the wider networks that are involved in distributed leadership. In this paper we have shown that logic multiplicity (Besharov & Smith, 2014) is a construct that can help to specify the contextual conditions for distributed leadership. Our analysis also demonstrates that a developmental process in a technical university can be analyzed not primarily in terms of increased leadership skills but in terms of increasing the shared capacity for appreciating contested logic multiplicity and in taking some steps in the direction to more aligned forms of multiplicity.

The practical implications are that the idea and concept of leadership can probably only be used within the limited framework of formal organization of the university where it can rely on some version of corporate logics. Proposing leadership, or leadership development, as an overall recommendation or interpersonal quality that can be generalized throughout the university organization is therefore met with skepticism and even repelled by other quarters of the university, causing a deadlock in change processes. For those charged with initiating development projects it seems that differentiation, the acknowledgement and appreciation of other and divergent uses of authority and influence that draw on different institutional logics, helps to unlock conversational, social and organizational impasses. This might be due to the perception of the differences between logics, the overcoming of tensions and conflicts (if the deadlock between management and collegiality), as organizational paradoxes (polarities) calling for the establishment of dynamic equilibriums and ambidexterity.

In line with recent contributions by Day and Harrison (2007) and Juntrasook (2014) there are also strong arguments for moving in the direction of much more systemically oriented ways of developing staff in higher education. Drawing on an analysis of the subtle varieties of leadership within the academy Juntrasook (2014) also calls for a rethinking of strategies for development:

> … we need to create a space of dialogue where we can openly communicate with one another about what 'leadership' means to us and how we can practice it, as individuals and as collectives. One space could be a collaboratively designed forum for sharing our experiences about 'leading' and 'being-led' as well as articulating what we want for and from 'leaders' in academia. (Juntrasook, 2014, p. 29)

With the reflection and self-understanding in this kind of process, it becomes appropriate and necessary to develop an understanding, a theory of distributed leadership and influence, congruent on the working through of dilemmas and strategic problems at the university, a conception that would make a potentially aligned multiplicity possible.

Disclosure statement

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