




Monografía

**Hacia una universidad al servicio de
la sociedad: rendición de cuentas y
modelos de gobernanza**



Rendición de cuentas en la universidad: una asignatura pendiente

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La universidad contemporánea concentra para el conjunto de cada país o región la mayoría de las capacidades educativas, de difusión y creación de conocimiento. En paralelo, la inversión en los sistemas de educación superior es significativamente elevada y la media de la OCDE cifra en 1,5% del PNB la inversión en el sistema. Si además entendemos que existen retos de carácter global (clima, desigualdad, etc.) que requieren diagnósticos que comporten enfoques complejos y articulados, sea por esta o por cualquiera de las otras dos razones, es adecuado preguntarse por la contribución de la universidad.

Cabe pues preguntarse legítimamente si la universidad en España, que concentra recursos y responsabilidades de formación e investigación tan significativas, ofrece una respuesta adecuada y relevante local y globalmente.

Para responder a esta pregunta, hemos dado un paso previo consistente en explorar cómo la cuestión es abordada en contextos y geografías diversas, confiando en que las respuestas singulares puedan enriquecer nuestra perspectiva. De este modo, tanto podremos visualizar la variedad de enfoques existente como comprobar si en los casos referenciados hay elementos comunes, y eventualmente seleccionar aquellas ideas que permitan construir una respuesta a la pregunta por la gobernanza y la rendición de cuentas en nuestra universidad.

Este artículo se divide en dos secciones. En la primera parte trataremos de las perspectivas externas, recogiendo y sintetizando aquellas iniciativas que se hayan implementado o se encuentren en curso, prestando especial atención tanto a las revisiones que se hayan llevado a cabo en los modelos de gobernanza y rendición de cuentas como a las razones de las mismas.

En la segunda parte, partiremos de la situación actual al hilo de la reciente publicación de la LOSU (2024) y, tras una breve referencia a aquello que nos es más relevante, buscaremos elementos de comparación, para terminar concluyendo con algunas notas sobre la situación actual y el futuro previsible.

Para la primera parte hemos buscado seleccionar no solo autores referentes, sino marcos institucionales y geográficos diversos en aras de la creación de una perspectiva más rica e inclusiva. Así, mientras que los casos de Finlandia y Austria son ejemplos significativos en sí mismos, recogen la perspectiva del norte y el centro de Europa y añaden

las recientes y significativas modificaciones de sus marcos legislativos. El caso de Singapur es, por un lado, importante en sí mismo, dada la estrecha vinculación de la educación terciaria con la estrategia de país, y, por otro lado, añade que al posicionarse como un *hub* educativo es una plataforma que nos permite alzar la mirada hacia Hong Kong y Japón¹. La calidad de la educación superior en Australia goza de reconocido prestigio global y a esta añade su relevancia económica, al ser el cuarto sector exportador. Incorpora además algunos de los rasgos del Reino Unido, especialmente en lo que respecta a la evaluación de la investigación. El entorno del subcontinente indio tiene un gran interés desde que la NEP (New Education Policy, 2020) ha iniciado un proceso de transición de un entorno sumamente regulado a otro en el que se abre un espacio para la autonomía y sobre todo para apertura y la iniciativa. El interés de Times Higher Education es doble ya que, siendo en sí mismo un observatorio global, toma también el papel de un agente externo al sistema señalando los límites de la autorregulación corporativa. Por último, la contribución de Andreu Mas-Colell, además de pincelar brevemente el modelo estadounidense, inicia una aguda y pertinente visión interna de nuestra gobernanza.

Conviene aclarar que en cada una de las contribuciones que siguen a esta introducción encontramos una descripción detallada e inteligente de un contexto específico, y no haríamos justicia a la calidad y riqueza de los trabajos² si buscáramos resumirlas aquí. Su función es la de informarnos y permitirnos seleccionar algunas de las ideas y funciones que sustentan la rendición de cuentas y la gobernanza en los diferentes sistemas universitarios.

Por último, la relevancia de iniciar esta reflexión no es ajena al hecho de que la universidad de cualquier país forma parte de un sistema global, que no solo incluye la movilidad de estudiantes y profesores, sino también la circulación de conocimiento. Sería ingenuo ignorar que los sistemas universitarios colaboran y compiten entre sí, tanto por los recursos (sean estos financieros o humanos) como por la generación de conocimiento. Por ello, de la revisión de los casos citados cabe esperar tanto recoger ideas fuerza y en cualquier caso como un sano e higiénico ejercicio de *benchmarking*.

1. Aunque el caso chino está también dentro del radio de influencia de Singapur, opera en la actualidad con unas variables muy específicas y poco exportables.

2. Alguna de ellas está pendiente de publicación una vez esta monografía lo autorice.

Las ideas fuerza y las *commonalities*

La primera conclusión a la que podemos llegar tras la lectura de las contribuciones es tan sencilla como previsible: los diferentes contextos geográficos e institucionales así como la existencia de diferentes prioridades resultan en diferentes abordajes de la rendición de cuentas. Por tanto, no hay una única forma de hablar de la gobernanza ni de la rendición de cuentas: no hay pues un “one best way”.

La segunda es que, con todo y la gran diversidad existente, hay considerables *commonalities* entre los casos que aquí se presentan. Estos aspectos comunes a los diferentes modelos nos servirán de referencia para analizar el caso español.

1. La primera idea es el reconocimiento de que cada universidad forma parte de un sistema universitario más amplio. Y, tomado en su conjunto, tal sistema es considerado como una pieza fundamental y explícitamente vinculada al desarrollo y bienestar del país. Dicho bienestar puede priorizar aspectos sociales (p. ej., movilidad y desarrollo personal, identidad colectiva, capital social) o económicos (contribución al sistema de innovación, generación directa de actividad empresarial, exportación de servicios), pero aun cuando las prioridades en los diferentes países sean lógicamente diferentes, el sistema como tal es analizado en su conjunto.
2. El sistema universitario, por tanto, es abordado desde un punto de vista estratégico, comenzando por el tipo y forma de las universidades y la función de cada una de ellas. El análisis/país es una pieza fundamental para elevar la mirada sobre las consideraciones corporativistas sin la que resulta difícil establecer planes a largo plazo, de tal modo que cada una de las medidas responda a planteamientos estratégicos. Lo vemos en la decisión de la India de abrir fronteras y en paralelo introducir elementos internacionales en la evaluación de los máximos responsables de los institutos financiados por el Gobierno, lo vemos en la modificación del modelo de gobernanza en Finlandia y Austria, en la relación entre el estado y las universidades en Singapur y Hong Kong o en las precisiones sobre la gobernanza hacia las que se dirige Australia. Está presente incluso en los países en que la estrategia colectiva es menor, como en los Estados Unidos, donde existe una división entre *teaching institutions* y *research oriented institutions*, que responde a un modelo de educación y de investigación.

3. Dentro de este análisis estratégico cabe la pregunta por la medida en que las competencias que proporciona el sistema universitario dan respuesta a los retos de futuro; en otras palabras, cabe preguntarse en qué medida contribuyen al sistema de innovación (Finlandia), en qué medida atraen estudiantes (Australia), en qué medida contribuyen a la movilidad social (India) o en qué medida responden a las necesidades del mercado contribuyendo así al desarrollo económico del país (Singapur).

4. Se diferencia claramente entre el *output* inmediato del sistema y el *outcome* del mismo, incorporando además indicadores intermedios al análisis. El porcentaje de graduados o la ratio de artículos de determinado nivel académico producidos por el profesor serían ejemplos de lo primero. La demanda del mercado se aborda observando el tiempo de incorporación del graduado al mundo laboral y la correspondencia entre la titulación y el contenido del primer empleo. Por último, el número de *start-up* y las contribuciones al sistema de innovación serían ejemplos indicadores del último orden.

El análisis estratégico permite introducir reflexiones en torno al impacto, trascendiendo los datos inmediatos pero no ignorando su importancia. Así en Finlandia el presupuesto incentiva los programas *undergraduates* para alcanzar el 40% que se ha fijado el país e incrementa la financiación de los programas doctorales, entendiendo que ambos objetivos son intermedios y funcionales para obtener resultados en un nivel estratégico más elevado.

5. La dimensión estratégica del sistema universitario se hace aún más patente si cabe al constatar las recientes revisiones de los marcos legislativos de los sistemas referenciados. Efectivamente, en los últimos 25 años se han producido cambios muy significativos en los marcos legislativos en todos y cada uno de los países, buscando una mejor respuesta a los retos que se plantean aquí³. Los sistemas evolucionan enfatizando la relevancia del sistema universitario para el conjunto de la sociedad y, consecuentemente, estableciendo sistemas de rendición de cuentas con la mirada puesta en el impacto social.

6. La tendencia de fondo en estos cambios es que tanto en los casos en que la regulación académica ha sido el modelo de gobernanza dominante, como en aquellos en los que el estado ha intervenido decisivamente en el gobierno de las universidades, se ha añadido un tercer actor que puede denominarse 'una cierta visión de mercado', en la medida en que se incorpora a la

3. Estos cambios pueden suponer en algunos casos modificar los modelos en profundidad. El caso finlandés ilustra la cuestión. La universidad pasa a ser una entidad legalmente independiente y los profesores dejan, pues, de ser funcionarios.

gobernanza la sociedad en su conjunto. La introducción de este parámetro no comporta mercantilización, simplemente reconoce que si el sistema universitario tiene objetivos estratégicos de país es lógico que bajo diferentes formas se añada un *stakeholder*.

Asimismo, una tendencia general es la de que el sistema universitario responda con más rapidez a los cambios en el entorno y aproveche las oportunidades que cada nuevo marco ofrece al sistema.

7. El análisis del sistema universitario implica una visión de contribución, y en este sentido rendir cuentas es un ejercicio lógico y natural. Recordemos que, aunque obvio, es fundamental apuntar que la rendición de cuentas no es un ejercicio contable. Padecemos el pecado de la traducción, por el que *accountability* suena demasiado a un cuaderno de debe y haber. Rendir cuentas dista mucho de ser una auditoria, se asemeja más bien a la evaluación de un proyecto. Requiere la existencia de objetivos de diferente orden, algunos estratégicos (posiblemente a nivel de país) y otros más específicos, que se desarrollen dentro de cada unidad del sistema universitario (aceptando, así, implícitamente, la diversidad entre ellas). Dichos objetivos se delimitan en el marco de una negociación que incorpora estrategias, recursos y objetivos. Por tanto, en la rendición de cuentas tendremos objetivos de diferentes niveles y actores (no auditores) capaces de valorar los retos de un proyecto y sus resultados.

8. En la fijación de objetivos existen diferentes niveles de intercambio, negociación y acuerdo, y se concretan y revisan en marcos temporales determinados (anual, bianual, trianual, etc.). Al mismo tiempo, se aceptan elementos de competencia entre los propios miembros del sistema universitario en relación a la evaluación y a la asignación de fondos, para lo cual existen agencias semiautónomas que gestionan dichos intercambios.

9. Si la rendición de cuentas es institucionalizada, cabe esperar un desarrollo paralelo dentro de cada unidad del sistema universitario. En síntesis, si la rendición de cuentas requiere algo más que el mero ejercicio auditor, el consejo o *board* de cada universidad deberá incorporar, en consecuencia, las competencias suficientes que garanticen un intercambio productivo. El ejemplo más llamativo de la importancia que se otorga a esta función lo encontramos en Australia, donde los miembros de los *boards* universitarios reciben formación específica. En cualquier caso, los *boards* los componen profesionales competentes y de alto prestigio, y en algunos casos, dependiendo del modelo, profesionales a tiempo completo.

10. El tipo de *board* y su función específica varía significativamente entre países y entre instituciones. Si en el caso austriaco el *board* puede llegar a nombrar y cesar a un rector, en Singapur, los miembros del *board* de la universidad participan activamente en la selección de nuevos cargos.⁴ En Finlandia la nueva legislación incorporó un mínimo de un 40% de profesionales no académicos, con la posibilidad de rebasar ese límite, y es así que Aalto llega al 50%. En último caso, el *board* en una universidad tiene algunas semejanzas con un *board* empresarial donde *grosso modo* el rector funcionaría como CEO del mismo, y el presidente del consejo aprobaría la estrategia y pediría cuentas a lo largo del ejercicio.

De ahí que la gobernanza y la rendición de cuentas vayan ligadas a la importancia que el SU tiene en su dimensión estratégica⁵, que a su vez se deriva de una visión integrada de la política de país. El ejemplo de Hong Kong da idea de lo que queremos decir. En Hong Kong el posicionamiento de la universidad forma parte de la ambición de situar a HK como un *hub* de innovación y como referente dentro de la región que incluye Mainland China (Shenzen, etc.). La dotación a las universidades para investigación viene siendo considerable y vinculada a objetivos claros. En los últimos años se ha incluido un porcentaje muy significativo (10%) relacionado con el desarrollo de casos que permitan extraer y difundir "best practices". Asimismo, se financian ampliamente posiciones postdoctorales y en la última revisión se ha pasado de una cifra de 5.600 a 7.100. Es obvio que estas medidas tienen sentido como parte de un proyecto más ambicioso que incluye generar capital social para dotar de identidad y sentimiento de pertenencia significativos a Hong Kong.

11. La regulación por otra parte no siempre ha ido en la buena dirección, es decir el debate no está tanto en la cantidad de regulación sino en el propósito de la misma. Pankaj Chandra nos lo recuerda,

«The regulatory definitions have often stood in the way of developing contemporary managerial systems that will enhance operational capabilities and consequently help achieve the objectives of the university»⁶

4. Sirva como ejemplo el caso del presidente de uno de los dos *sovereign wealth funds* en Singapur, que modificó su agenda para entrevistarse en Europa con un candidato al decanato en alguna de las facultades de la Universidad.

5. Por lo mismo, si la importancia estratégica es menor, la relevancia del *board* disminuirá.

6. El reciente borrador de la ley de internacionalización, que regula el acceso de estudiantes extranjeros a la universidad española, es un buen ejemplo de un análisis deficiente que tomando la parte por el todo termina por cercenar cualquier iniciativa que alguna universidad consciente de la oportunidad que la internacionalización ofrece pueda albergar. En expresión más contemporánea, es un magnífico ejemplo de "throwing the baby out with the water".

Y el ejemplo que aporta es interesante y revelador. El Estado indio regula las *fees* de los estudios de ingeniería y de *management* en todo el territorio sin considerar el coste real de la plaza del estudiante en los diferentes estados, de tal modo que las universidades se encuentran con grandes dificultades para establecer una estrategia a largo plazo en esas condiciones.

En otras palabras, la rendición de cuentas alcanza su pleno sentido en la medida en que responde a la evaluación de la implementación de una estrategia que a su vez comporta la descripción de objetivos recursos, acciones y medios en relación con periodos específicos. Esto implica aceptar un determinado nivel de autonomía estratégica en cada una de las partes del SU o bien la implementación de un marco estratégico de país.

12. Concluyendo, un *board* en una universidad de los casos citados es fundamental en el desarrollo de la estrategia, de las acciones e indicadores de su implementación y de la evaluación de los resultados. Puede cumplir asimismo una función ejecutiva indirecta en la medida en que participa de los nombramientos del gobierno interno de la universidad. Las diferencias entre países son significativas, pero coinciden en que es un órgano esencial para una productiva rendición de cuentas.

El caso español

1. Partimos de la reciente aprobación de la LOSU. De la lectura de su articulado resulta que las funciones de la universidad son múltiples y se hace alguna referencia a la creación de conocimiento y a la aportación al sistema de innovación. Llama la atención sin embargo que del preámbulo, en el que se afirma contundentemente que la Universidad *como principal productora y difusora de conocimiento, [está] al servicio de la Sociedad*, no le siga una clara referencia al impacto de la universidad. Cabe pensar pues que la Ley se oriente hacia la regulación interna antes que a facilitar el proceso para establecer objetivos estratégicos, o en su defecto proponer un marco de rendición de cuentas.
2. De la gobernanza de la universidad se trata en varios artículos, los cuales establecen con claridad que la máxima autoridad institucional la ostenta el consejo de gobierno de la universidad. En dicho consejo, el equipo rectoral tiene presencia significativa y suficiente para establecer agendas y tomar decisiones.

El equipo rectoral es, a su vez, resultado del nombramiento directo por el rector, el cual es elegido de acuerdo a un sistema interno de la universidad, claramente descrito en el artículo 51.

Es importante notar que en este modelo piramidal el mandato de un rector es de 6 años, improrrogable y no repetible.

Cabe suponer, pues, que la Ley se dirige a evitar las posibles disfunciones derivadas de un mandato prolongado antes que a permitir iniciativas que requieran del largo plazo.

3. Siendo el consejo de gobierno la máxima autoridad, y tratándose de un órgano que emana por entero de la universidad, la relación con el contexto social en el nivel de gobernanza se estructura a través del consejo social. La función del consejo social es descrita de forma algo más “fluida”, de tal forma que ni su composición ni sus funciones quedan claramente especificadas. Los verbos que se utilizan en la Ley para describir las funciones del consejo social son los de *influir*, *promover* o *consultar*. De modo que, con la salvedad de la aprobación anual de las cuentas, no se asigna al consejo ninguna función ejecutiva o estratégica.

Es evidente que de la descripción de las funciones tanto del consejo social como del consejo de gobierno no se infiere la existencia de un marco estratégico en el sistema universitario que pueda orientar a cada una de las universidades. Sin embargo, la LOSU sí señala la importancia de responder al reto de la diversidad, la paridad, la *open science* y otras cuestiones de funcionamiento interno. Siendo estas cuestiones importantes para la buena gestión interna, llama la atención la ausencia de referencias al impacto social de la universidad, orillando un marco de desarrollo estratégico o, en otros términos, la preocupación por el futuro.

4. En este contexto y a primera vista, la rendición de cuentas se limita a un ejercicio de auditoría de cuentas antes que a una valoración de corte estratégico.

Podría interpretarse que, dado que la ley no regula con detalle la función y el alcance del consejo social, esta misma ausencia, en un giro posibilista, podría convertirse en una ventana abierta para que se exploren fórmulas que le permitan “influir” efectivamente en la marcha de la universidad.

Ciertamente esto podría ocurrir, pero sería el resultado de la voluntad explícita, expresa y automotivada del consejo social antes que el resultado del marco regulador. La pregunta sobre en qué medida cabe esperar que un consejo social, más allá de la ley, influya en la marcha de las universidades, nos lleva a examinar los consejos.

5. Un somero análisis de la composición de los consejos de algunas universidades cercanas nos proporciona mucha información. Veamos una composición típica: el parlamento de la comunidad autónoma nombra a dos

representantes, el gobierno de la comunidad nombra a dos representantes, el ayuntamiento nombra a un representante, las dos organizaciones sindicales mayoritarias nombran a un representante cada una, las organizaciones patronales, mayores y de pequeña empresa, nombran a un representante cada una, y el consejo con la presencia del rector y el secretario queda así completado en buena medida.

De tal composición cabe inferir que el servicio en un consejo social es una suerte de *ex officio* de otros organismos. Los cuales no parecen ser, a su vez, los más apropiados ni estar capacitados para generar una política universitaria con una clara componente estratégica.

En otras palabras, del consejo social cabe esperar una relación nominal con la sociedad, pero no cabe esperar de este una intervención que revise o ajuste las prioridades estratégicas de la Universidad—si las hubieran. No se espera esto de un consejo social.

Dos apuntes confirman indirectamente esta apreciación: a diferencia del rector, no hay limitación de mandato en un consejo social, y un apunte curioso, en los casos revisados un mismo representante se sienta en los consejos sociales de diferentes universidades. Parecería, pues, que si el consejo social no requiere limitaciones, quizás sea porque sus funciones sean tan poco relevantes. En cualquier caso, la observación pertinente es que su composición se ajusta a su función.

Por tanto, y desafortunadamente, la pregunta por la medida en que el consejo social influirá en las universidades es más bien una pregunta retórica. En otras palabras, la Ley al no cuestionar la gobernanza actual corre el riesgo de acentuar un corporativismo desincentivador de cualquier cambio en profundidad.

Reflexiones finales sobre el futuro

A la pregunta inicial por el impacto social partimos de la base de que la universidad en España tiende a funcionar en su gobernanza como un sistema cerrado. Puede decirse que es autónomo ciertamente, pero este es un valor que resultando primordial hace tres o cuatro décadas hoy es un mal síntoma si no va acompañado de otros mecanismos que lo corrijan.

La improrrogabilidad de los mandatos de los rectores, el proceso de elección, y las funciones, composición y características del consejo social no son marcos que precisamente incentiven el cambio o la ambición en cada universidad, y es evidente que la falta de claridad en lo que hace al sistema universitario en su conjunto y a su contribución al bienestar del país tampoco ayuda.

El resumen es sencillo, la gobernanza de las universidades es claramente mejorable, y la ausencia de un sistema de

checks and balances hace extremadamente difícil salir de las soluciones *ad hoc*. Sigue faltando un plan estratégico que abarque el sistema universitario y que termine por darle la importancia que requiere en la sociedad contemporánea. Los ejemplos citados aquí deberían estimular algo más que un dialogo constructivo, deberían ser una seria llamada de atención.

El apunte según el que la Ley ofrecerá oportunidades al nivel de las comunidades autónoma ciertamente está en la letra de la Ley o mejor en su ausencia, pero pretender que sea el consejo social el que inicie un proceso de cambio antes que un compromiso serio, es un acrobático ejercicio de voluntarismo y de hábil posicionamiento político probablemente, a partes iguales.

Termino, las diferencias entre sistemas son grandes. Parten ciertamente de realidades diferentes. Nuestro sistema es clamorosamente perfectible. Qué mejor manera de reflejarlo que comparar los modelos aquí referenciados con una declaración reciente en la que la presidencia de la Conferencia de Rectores afirmaba que “nos encantaría

ofrecer titulaciones que tuvieran demanda”⁷ y “seguir trabajando para que del 0,75% de inversión del PIB se pasara al 1%”⁸. Cualquiera de las dos afirmaciones, de nuevo, debería ser una llamada urgente a revisar el sistema universitario.

Que frente al escaso horizonte que ofrece la LOSU y a la resignación que se deriva de las declaraciones de la máxima representante de los rectores de la Conferencia de Rectores no se genere un debate serio que permita abordar esta cuestión de forma estratégica es, cuando menos, llamativo. Duncan Ross pone el dedo en la llaga al recordar que pocos sectores han tenido éxito en la autorregulación y no cabe esperar de nuestro sector mayor fortuna.

7. Pensemos por un momento que vivimos en tiempos de cambios rápidos, en el vértigo de la introducción de nuevas tecnologías (IA, etc.) y con nuevos modelos de trabajo e investigación al doblar la esquina, y que en nuestro país nos gustaría ofrecer titulaciones con demanda.

8. El diferencial económico entre el 0,75 % y el 1 % del PNB es en sí mismo suficientemente significativo, pero en un entorno en el que el SU es considerado una inversión estratégica de país, el déficit de inversión acumulado no se resuelve a corto plazo y genera incapacidades estructurales.

En resumen, resulta extremadamente llamativo, por no decir que grave, que el sistema universitario español carezca de estos marcos referenciales operativos comunes en casi cualquier país del mundo que se haya tomado en serio la función de la universidad.

La reflexión sobre el sistema universitario y sobre cada una de las universidades es una reflexión sobre el futuro de la sociedad y no hace falta insistir más en el grave déficit que representa la ausencia de una clara estrategia de país⁹. En este contexto, la función del consejo social debería ser aún más relevante para paliar esta ausencia en cada una de las universidades, apoyando a aquellos rectores que hayan decidido que su paso por la universidad sea una tarea que trasciende la mera administración. Ignorar esta cuestión obliga a preguntarse por la seriedad y el profesionalismo de quien, teniendo la posibilidad de abordar el problema e introducir los cambios pertinentes, haya ignorado la gravedad y la importancia del reto sin siquiera plantear la cuestión.

9. Me gustaría recordar que en estas mismas páginas Rolf Tarrach argumentó que el modelo duplicado de investigación/universidad no es sostenible en nuestro país, lo cual debería ser también objeto de un serio debate.

University Governance and Societal Impact in Finland

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Universities and other higher education institutions (HEIs) are facing a dynamic set of societal expectations related to their three missions, teaching, research, and societal engagement. HEIs are increasingly expected to contribute to the economic, environmental, and social sustainability of society (Laredo 2007; Donina and Hasanefendic 2019). But what are the governance mechanisms through which HEIs are steered towards increased societal engagement and impact, and how are HEIs made accountable to their stakeholders? In this chapter, we will address this issue by examining the higher education sector in Finland, drawing on academic research, reviews of the sector (OECD 2023; Technopolis Group 2023), and some personal observations.

Finland has a dual higher education model consisting of 13 universities (plus the Finnish Defense University) and 22 universities of applied sciences. We will here focus on the role and governance of the Finnish universities.

The chapter is structured as follows: first we present a framework of three types of HEI governance (Dobbins and Knill 2017). Then, recognizing that HEIs as highly embedded in institutional systems (de Lange 2013), we provide a brief overview of the historical development of the sector in Finland, before focusing analyzing different governance mechanisms used for Finnish universities. Finally, we discuss how these mechanisms intersect and affect HEIs engagement and acknowledgement of their economic, environmental, and social impacts.

Three types of university governance

The extent to which universities adopt actions to address economic, environmental, social and other societal challenges is influenced by the overall governance model found in the country (de Lange 2013). We can recognize three basic forms of university governance: the state-centered model, the academic self-rule model, and the marketized model (Dobbins and Knill 2017). These three models are, however, *ideal* types – in reality, they highly intersect and overlap, and the relative prominence of each is formed by developments in the national and international context (see also Donina and Hasanefendic 2019).

In the *state-centered model*, HEIs are viewed as largely utilitarian institutions with a mission to meet national priorities in teaching and research. The state actively coordinates and steers the most central procedural matters (e.g. admission requirements and the right to establish degree programs),

the nomination of high-level academic personnel, and/or curricular matters (Dobbins and Knill 2017). The state has large control over funding, the HEIs are governed by uniform legislation and nationally standardized employment and salary regulations, and the state has strong interventionist capacity that circumvents the decision-making of the HEIs in matters related to quality control (e.g. through ministerial guidelines and audits).

In the *academic self-rule* model, HEI management is relatively weak with a strong role for professors in deciding on the content of research and teaching. At the same time, this model assumes a partnership between the university and the state, governed by collective agreement and corporatism – thus creating a duality of a strong role of self-governing bodies by the elites in the academic community at the institutional level, and a constrain on the same self-governing by the state through financial steering, while allowing for quite broad discretion (Dobbins and Knill 2017). Evaluation is based on academic peer and self-evaluations. Cooperation with other stakeholders exists, also in setting agendas, but the senior faculty/academics control and coordinate these.

In the *marketized* model, HEIs are expected to operate much like firms competing on markets for human capital and financial resources. HEI management is ‘professionalized’ (often separate from the academic day-to-day management) and vested with significant power. HEI management is largely autonomous, with teaching and research strategically positioned in relation to the demand of the market. In the ideal form, the government defines broad policies that focus on promoting competition for the student-consumer. The funding system is characterized by an entrepreneurial and investment ethos, with strong competition for funding from a diverse set of sources and performance-based funding (Dobbins and Knill 2017). Evaluation is driven by quasi-governmental accreditation bodies. In this model, certain stakeholders, such as business, are active agenda-setters in both teaching and research.

Historical background of the Finnish Higher Education System

The governance of Finnish universities has exhibited elements of all three ideal types described above. During the late 20th and the early 21st century, the universities were a large extent characterized by an academic-self-rule ideal combined with significant elements of a state-centered model (Pulkkinen et al. 2019). Rectors and other academic leaders were elected

by three groups: the professors, other employees, and students. Central university decision-making bodies, including the board, also consisted of members of these three groups. Internally, academic units like departments and faculties had fairly large autonomy, as had individual professors.

The state-centered model was clearly visible. Until the University reform in 2009, all university employees were civil servants. HEIs were highly reliant on public funding, with limited possibilities for universities to secure other funding as education on bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral degrees were tuition-free (also for international students regardless of their home countries).

However, the Finnish admissions system was more decentralized than in many other EU countries with HEIs being free to establish admission criteria of students and to develop their educational program portfolios within their existing disciplines (Pinheiro et al 2019), all which in theory gave universities the opportunity to be attentive to educational demands and changing societal needs through close collaboration with a variety of stakeholders.

Towards a marketized ideal: Regulatory reforms

Like many other countries, the Finnish HEIs have experienced a series of New Public Management (NPM)-inspired reforms and mergers during the 21st century (Ramirez and Christensen 2013, Pulkkinen et al 2019). The university reform of 2009 changed the status of universities from being part of the state administration, covered by the detailed regulations applying to all government institutions, to a status of independent legal entities, organized either as corporations under public law or as foundation universities. The transformation of the universities from state institutions to independent legal entities meant that employees were no longer civil servants – a key difference between employment relations in the state and academic self-rule ideals on the one hand, and the marketized ideal on the other hand (Dobbins and Knill 2017).

An important overall objective of the 2009 university reform was to improve the capabilities of the universities, with the intent of strengthening the competitiveness of Finland. The reform was influenced by political developments in the education sector in the EU, particularly two political processes aiming for European policy convergence: the EU Commission’s ‘Modernization Agenda’ and the

intergovernmental Bologna process (Pulkkinen et al. 2019). The aim that Finnish universities should improve their capacity to react to changes in the environment, to diversify their funding base, to increase their share of international research funding, to develop their quality, and to strengthen their role in the national innovation system, are directly aligned with these EU-level policies. Universities were granted additional financial autonomy – in line with the logic of the marketized ideal – and given the right to fundraise and invest their funds.

Today, Finnish universities have the autonomy to decide on the number of degree students and establish - as well as discontinue - educational programs within their established academic disciplines. While the financial and operational autonomy of the universities increased significantly as an outcome of the university reform, some key state-centered governance and steering mechanisms still guide Finnish HEIs, including regulations regarding the governance of universities, the mechanisms through which government funds are allocated to universities, and interaction between the ministry and the universities.

In spite of the development towards the marketized model, HEIs are still heavily reliant on public funding for their operations, with public funding sources accounting for the majority of their total income with education remaining free for students coming from EU and EES countries.

In Finland, both prior and post-university reform, universities are considered key actors in the national innovation systems, and they are expected to contribute to sustainable economic growth, employment, and national competitiveness (Kivistö 2019), leading to a situation where a variety of economic stakeholders, from firms to employer organizations, to trade unions view HEIs an important part of the political agenda. Universities are considered to have social and civic responsibilities, for example, in reducing inequality in the country. With universities remaining highly dependent on government funding, the role of political influence on university operations is at a comparatively high level (Kivistö et al. 2019); the formation of a new government, including the appointment of a new minister of education, is typically associated with shifts in policies towards the universities.

University management

The administrative bodies of the Finnish public university are the board, the rector and the university collegium. The board serves as the highest decision-making body of the Finnish university. According to the University Act, the remit of the board is to determine the main objectives of the university operations and finances, the strategy and steering principles. The board is accountable for the management and use of the assets of the university, unless the board has devolved some of the power to the rector. It approves agreements of major importance or fundamental consequence for the

university and issue opinions on important matters of principle concerning the university and approve the agreement with the Ministry of Education and Culture (discussed below). The board also elects (and may dismiss) the rector. There have indeed been examples of rectors having been replaced during their mandate periods.

The composition of the university boards has changed significantly over time. Prior to 1997, the board consisted of only internal members with the rector serving as the chair. In 1997 it became possible for up to a third of the members to be external to the university. In 2010, following the NPM and the marketized ideal, the university law was changed so that a minimum of 40 % of the board members as well as the chair and vice chair had to be external to the university. Of the 13 Finnish universities, the two foundation universities (Aalto University and Tampere University) have board where the members are external while the others have a majority of internal members. Notable is that the original draft bill promoted a requirement of least 50% of external members for all university boards, but after opposition from academic stakeholders the requirement was reduced 40 %, underlining the importance of understanding the historical embeddedness of HEI governance and the struggle between stakeholders in influencing current practice (Ursin 2019).

A survey of the university boards shows that of the 197 external board members during 2010-2020, 39% were deemed to represent corporations, 28% the academic community, 21% public and/or political organizations, 6% culture/art, and 4% other organizations (Kuusela, 2021). Anecdotal evidence suggests that universities have been successful in persuading candidates to join university boards. A number of prominent individuals have served on the university boards, including a former president of the country and several current and former CEOs and chairs of the boards of leading Finnish corporations.

The board members are appointed by the university collegiums consisting of elected professors, other employees, and students. The role of the collegiums in HEI governance is strongly rooted in the tradition of academic self-regulation but its role has diminished with the influx of NPM (Gustafsson 2023) with the adoption of corporate-type governance logics with increased power to the university leadership and the role of the board largely similar to that in the corporate sector (Veiga, Magalhães, & Amaral 2015; Poutanen et al. 2022).

While we are not aware of any published research on the role played by the university boards in Finland, it appears clear that the significant role played by the external members on these boards since 2010 has served as an important vehicle for stakeholder input into the Finnish universities. The revision of the university governance ensured involvement from a broader set of stakeholders, providing an outside perspective on the activities of the universities and with university leaders

being made accountable to external stakeholders. The inclusion of board members with relevant expertise in board sub-committees (e.g. audit committees, HR committees, and fundraising committees) have reinforced the role of the university boards. The intent of staffing the boards with corporate professionals has indeed been to contribute to the development of the internal management and governance of the universities and the strengthening of the professional management ideals of the marketized model (Holmén 2022).

One limitation in terms of diversity of input to university operations has been the fact that all but one of the boards in Finland operate in one of the two national languages, Finnish and Swedish, thereby severely limiting international input to university governance. Aalto University has served as the only exception, with board members coming from a range of countries in Europe and North America. Thus, while Finnish universities have an increasing number of international faculty members and students, the boards have not gone through a similar process of internationalization. To be noted, though, is that several Finnish universities have international advisory boards that above all support university leadership. It might also be noted in this respect, that Aalto University does not have any university-level international advisory board, the board being the vehicle used to provide input to the university leadership.

The university reform also led to a stronger role for university middle-management such as heads of department who hold academic and financial responsibility for their respective units. These individuals try to navigate a balance between the tensions of in particular the marketized and academic self-rule models of university governance, between strengthened efforts at university leadership attempting to strengthen the steering of activities related to research, teaching, and societal engagements and the traditional ideals of academic autonomy (Kohtamäki 2019).

The Public University Funding System

The heavy reliance of the universities in Finland on public funding, provides the government with a strong lever to steer university activities. OECD data suggest that 96% of the total spending on HEIs in Finland comes from public sources, compared to an average of 80% in the 22 EU countries and an average across the OECD of 70% (OECD 2023). The national public funding is provided through two separate mechanisms: Core operating university funding allocated by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), and Competitively awarded grants awarded through government funding bodies such as the Research Council of Finland (RCF) and Business Finland (BF).

The majority of the core operating grants are allocated on the basis of a formula that is revised every four years. The models for 2021-24 and 2025-28 are presented in Table

Table 1. Parameters used in Finland's funding allocation models for universities

	2021-2024	2025-2028
Education	42 %	44 %
New degree students (first-year students without previous degrees)	-	3 %
Bachelor's degrees	11 %	11 %
Master's degrees	19 %	19 %
Continuous education	4 %	3 %
Collaborative studies across HEI institutions in Finland	1 %	1 %
Graduate employment rates (one year after graduation)	2 %	2 %
Employment quality (based on graduate feedback)	2 %	2 %
Graduate feedback on their studies (BSc.)	3 %	3 %
Research	34 %	37 %
Doctoral degrees	8 %	9 %
Scientific publications	14 %	14 %
International competitive research funding	6 %	7 %
Corporate research funding and domestic competitive research funding	6 %	7 %
Strategic priorities	24 %	19 %
Strategic development funding	15 %	10 %
National duties	9 %	9 %

1. The percentages in the table refer to the part of the total core operating funds allocated to universities based on their performance on the parameter in question. For instance, during 2025-28 9% of the core government funding will be allocated based on the number of doctoral degrees, with some universities (with large doctoral programs) likely to get significantly more than 9% of their core operating funding from the government based on this indicator in the model.

The model outlined in Table 1 account for an average of 62% of total university income (OECD, 2023). The content of the allocation model is used by the state as a governance mechanism to influence the university sector. For instance, the new element in the model for 2025-28 was related to a national objective to increase the percentage of the population with a higher education degree from 41% to 50% while the increased weight of competitive and corporate research funding served to provide incentives to increase the national RDI percentage to 4%. Following the logic of state-university partnership, and the corporative/collective agreement model of the academic self-governance ideal, HEIs and other stakeholders have been represented in the revisions of the funding allocation models taking place every four years, while the objectives of government have served as signposts for the revised models.

The allocation system is highly performance-oriented by international standards, in line with the marketized ideal. While there also exist other elements, the funding formula is arguably the central element through which much of the steering effect of the current public system is exercised. Given

the importance of performance-based funding for Finnish universities, it is clear that the content of the allocation model has had a significant impact on the internal priorities of the universities many of which have internal resource allocation models that are to a significant degree modeled after the national funding model. When the national allocation models have changed, many universities have also adopted not only their priorities but also their internal models, thereby creating incentives for schools and facilities within universities to improve their performance within the revised model. So while the universities post-2009 have much increased financial autonomy and total budget discretion, the state influence is obvious.

Following the academic-self governance ideal, at the start of each four-year agreement period, the Ministry of Education and Culture holds negotiations with the universities, covering common objectives for the higher education system, key measures for each higher education institution, the tasks, profile, core areas and newly emerging scientific fields in each higher education institution, degree objectives as well as the appropriations allocated on the basis of these. The agreement also specifies how the outcomes of the objectives will be reported on.

Prior to the negotiations, universities are asked to submit proposals for strategic development projects to be funded by the Ministry within the allocated part (for 2025-28: 10%, see Table 1) of the core university funding discussed above. Expectations regarding the projects related to education, research and societal interaction likely to receive funding

– with the priorities and objectives of the current Finnish government being one important factor – form integrated parts of the considerations of the universities as they formulate their project plans ahead of the negotiations. For instance, during the negotiations taking place in 2024, universities are encouraged to present plans to increase the intake of both domestic and international students and invest in the wellbeing of both students and wellbeing.

The Public Research Funding System

Within the realm of competitive funding, the Research Council of Finland (RCF) and Business Finland are key sources of public funding for the university sector. The Research Council operates within the Ministry of Education and Culture. The funding of research projects that are mostly evaluated based on scientific criteria and international academic peer review continues to be at the core of how RCF operates.

However, the RCF has introduced several instruments that serve to enhance research within topic areas viewed as societally important, two of which are particularly relevant for the Third mission, as they involve the government, industry, and universities as well as the civic society. The *Flagship Program* is an instrument in place since 2018 that supports high-quality research and aims at increasing the economic and societal impact emerging from the research. Most of the flagships are hosted by universities but there are also research institutes and some other institutions represented. Peer review is a key element in the selection of new flagships. The flagships have received significant government funding, and they were generously financed in the “doctoral education pilot” initiative funded by the government in 2024.

The funding granted by the *Strategic Research Council* (SRC) is intended for extensive, multidisciplinary research consortia that carry out research with an emphasis on active interaction and engagement with users and beneficiaries of research. Introduced in 2014, the research themes and priorities of the 3-6-year long programs are suggested through academic self-regulation/input but ultimately decided and approved by the Finnish Government. The SRC funds multi-disciplinary research oriented to analyzing and finding solutions to societal challenges. The SRC funding explicitly recognizes the social contract that exists between university-state, in which the state provides funds to universities to perform research and teaching at the highest level. Policymakers need science-based knowledge produced by university not only for its direct impact on society at large but also to provide insights into how to tackle complex societal problems (Pulkkinen et al. 2019).

An important element of the SPR projects is to plan for the organizing of systematic participation of policy decision makers, the civil society, and corporations during the project

lifespan. An analysis of some of the early projects indicates that these indeed have been instrumental in enhancing societal interaction. One of the central findings was that such interaction was indeed achieved with the main benefits being “better legitimacy, strategic planning and more effective mobilization of academic and non-academic resources, without compromising research integrity” (Pulkkinen et al., 2024, p. 11). While the proposal of strategic themes and the review process is done relying on academic self-governance ideals, the state control is highly present, as seen in 2023 when the government did not accept the proposed theme of “*Interactions of immigration, work and wellbeing in future Finland*”, apparently due to political and ideological tensions of the theme of immigration with the government’s political program (Paananen, 2023).

Both these relatively recently introduced research instruments have received significant attention within the academic community and more broadly in society and appear to have directed both resources and attention to certain topic areas. They also seem to have been instrumental in increasing collaboration across disciplines as it has become evident to universities that multidisciplinary is a key criterion when significant funding is being decided upon.

Business Finland (BF) is a government organization operating under the administration of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. Among its key activities it funds innovation projects where universities can and in many cases are expected to contribute. This instrument follows a largely marketized ideal, with direct impact of business and industry as ‘co-agenda-setters’ for research. Yet, while universities have received funding within BF’s innovation and development projects, the amounts have decreased considerably during the last decade. At the time of writing this chapter, the role of universities is less pronounced than some years ago, at the expense of funding going directly to firms. This has also sparked critique from the university sector at BF for a lack of research funding instruments directed towards co-creation research projects between universities and corporations. At present, it remains doubtful the extent to which leading university researchers are the ones who pursue such funding.

Fundraising as marketized ideal

An important part of the 2009 University Act was to allow universities financial autonomy. Donations to universities became tax deductible. Private donations were matched by the government to provide further incentives for donors to contribute to universities, the original matching campaign ending in 2011 but being followed by other similar (though smaller) matching campaigns with the latest one ending in 2022. Returns from the universities’ endowments have partly offset the drop of public university funding during the last decade. By the end of 2023, Aalto University, the most successful fundraiser, had an endowment of 1.832 bn euros.

The efforts on the part of the universities to fundraise have arguably led to a stronger need to present to donors and potential donors – alumni and other potential supporters of the university – what is done for society. In this way, increased reliance on fundraising since 2010 may at least to some extent have led to an increased emphasis on societal impact, at least in areas valued by potential and actual donors. It is conceivable that engaging in discussions about issues that potential donors may want to support might have led to universities contemplating activities that they would not otherwise necessarily have considered.

However, to be noted is that the increased importance of fundraising shifts the potential influence of donors to certain groups in society, groups that are likely to have certain interests and views regarding the roles that they would like universities to play in society. Research has shown that fundraising from a diversity of sources, which might alleviate concerns of the risk of autonomy of research in relation to private gains and vested interests, has been most successful for universities with activities in disciplines of direct interest for industry as well as universities located in metropolitan areas where a large number of corporations are located (Ursin 2019).

Changes in the composition and assessment of faculty and researchers

The reforms of the higher education sector in Finland over the past decades have

fundamentally changed the position of academic staff. University staff no longer belong to the civil service. Higher education institutions have a high degree of autonomy in HR policy and staffing decisions; therefore, the influence of the Ministry’s steering in this area is less direct. Finnish universities have during the last decade introduced tenure track systems similar to those found in many leading universities world-wide. Observations from Finnish universities indicate that this change has not only contributed to there being a growing number of international scholars being attracted by a system with features that they recognize, but also that the impact of globally institutionalized evaluation criteria has had a significant impact on the activities undertaken by researchers and faculty members.

Our personal observation is that – at least in some disciplines and universities – the importance of academic “top publications” has increased, a trend that at least potentially runs counter to the efforts on the part of the government and other stakeholders to involve researchers in projects directly aiming at addressing societal challenges. For example, research has indicated that less than 3% of articles in top management journals address global grand challenges (Harley and Fleming, 2021). On the other hand, universities have incorporated both societal interaction and impact as part of

their faculty assessment criteria, thus serving as incentives for faculty members to engage in societally relevant activities.

Discussion

As outlined in this chapter, the Finnish university governance system is characterized by a mosaic of the state-centered, the academic self-rule, and the marketized governance models. The 2009 university reforms were intended to strengthen the marketized model to ensure that HEIs were better equipped to fulfill their Third Mission by better catering to the needs of society, particularly market and industry. Direct state regulation was to be reduced and university autonomy increased. Governance was to be achieved through a system of performance indicators and negotiated agreements between universities and the Ministry of Education and Culture. But in practice, embedded in the state-centered ideal, the Finnish government has continued to strive for significant influence to ensure that certain tenets of both the state centered and the academic self-rule models are maintained. The balance between, and the manifestations of, these different governance model continue to evolve in Finland with the jury still being out in terms of the combination of governance mechanisms best equipped to ascertain that the Finnish universities are responsive to the challenges that contemporary societies face.

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Organizing for Social Impact in Universities in the DACH Region

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1. Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEIs) are often characterized as loosely coupled systems (Weick, 1976), organized anarchies (Cohen et al., 1972) or professional bureaucracies (Mintzberg, 1979). The common element, among others, in these characterizations is the fact that HEIs follow multiple missions with a diverse set of activities. Historically, HEIs have focused on education (knowledge exchange) and research (knowledge discovery). More recently, the emphasis has shifted to widening the benefits of these two missions to serve the broader society, leading to increasing public demands for evidence of societal impact (SI) (Godonoga & Sporn, 2023).

These expectations derive from several factors. First, the societal impact of HEIs stems from the growing need of funders, policy makers and the public to understand and measure the value of university education and research. Thus, universities – as other areas in the public sphere – have become part of the audit society (Power, 1997). The translation of core activities of the academy to society results from calls for accountability and value creation for the common good (Marginson, 2024).

Second, universities are confronted with a competitive and turbulent environment (Krücken, 2021; Sporn, 2017). An increasing number of institutions have emerged that do not resemble the traditional structures, processes and missions of HEIs. These include private for-profit universities, online providers, corporate training centers with degree offers, micro-credentials or stacked degrees (European Commission, 2022). They all create an environment where universities must develop a differentiated profile and a good understanding of the expectations of external stakeholders. Accordingly, in more recent years, there has been a strong focus in science policies across the world – including the German-speaking world – on knowledge production models enabling wider impact through multi-disciplinarity and collaboration with stakeholders (de Jong & Balaban, 2022; Engwall, 2018; Nowotny et al., 2001).

Third, there are growing public expectations for higher education – through the development and exchange of knowledge – to contribute more actively to the sustainable development agenda (Chankseliani & Mccowan, 2021; Findler et al., 2019). They are increasingly expected to address societal challenges, including health problems, poverty and economic downturn, equality and democracy, and environmental degradation (Godonoga & Sarrico,

2023; Sporn, 2022; Stensaker & Hermansen, 2023). These pressures are especially visible in the work of accreditation agencies, who already integrate a strong focus on impact in their standards (e.g. the Accreditation Council for Entrepreneurial and Engaged Universities or the EQUIS standards and criteria with emphasis on ethics, responsibility, and sustainability by the EFMD (European Foundation for Management Development)). Rating agencies have also started to publish impact rankings of all sorts (e.g. Times Higher Education Impact Ranking), disclosing how HEIs perform in relation to social and ecological aspects. Networks with a common cause have formed to collaborate, exchange good practices and advocate for a more impactful education and research offer in HEIs (e.g. Talloires Network of Engaged Universities, Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME)).

As societal impact (SI) is increasingly tied to institutional accountability and legitimacy (Meyer & Sporn, 2018), it is important to understand how universities respond to the challenges that contemporary societies face and the extent to which they account for their impact on society. In this sense, societal impact is conceptualized in relation to widening participation, citizen and open science, service learning, civic engagement, community outreach and social entrepreneurship.

These two questions are addressed in this chapter, drawing on the experience of business schools in the DACH region (i.e. Austria, Germany and Switzerland). As a subfield of higher education that is subject to corporate social responsibility pressures, and is called upon to prepare responsible leaders (Hoffman, 2021; Rasche & Gilbert, 2015; Sporn & Badelt, 2011) and generate impactful management knowledge (Aguinis et al., 2020; Godonoga et al., 2023; Ramani et al., 2022; Rasche & Gilbert, 2015), business schools in the DACH region show promising advancements when it comes to organizational practices for SI. Accordingly, exemplary institutions are used in this chapter to show what works well and what needs improvement, which bears relevance for the higher education field as a whole.

Accordingly, this chapter comprises two sections. First, it describes the regulatory and funding environment in Austria, Germany and Switzerland to show how the higher education systems in these countries have been responding to demands for SI. Dominated by public institutions, state authorities and accreditation agencies in the DACH region play a pivotal role in steering the SI agenda. Second, empirical data are

used to illustrate how business schools are accounting for their SI through governance and performance management practices. For this, survey data on the DACH region and three purposefully sampled cases are drawn upon to highlight good practices, discuss aspects that need improvement and reflect on practical implications to strengthen the capacity of HEIs to deliver positive impacts on society.

2. Higher education regulatory environment for social impact in the DACH region

The German-speaking systems of higher education are dominated by publicly funded universities. Consequently, regulations have been devised in relation to accreditation, funding and performance steering, targeting – among other aspects – the broader impacts of higher education. Often, policies are set forth under the heading of “third mission” (Berghaeuser & Hoelscher, 2020), ranging from technology transfer and innovation to lifelong learning and social engagement.

The importance of regulatory environments stems from the fact that through a neo-institutional lens, universities are subject to coercive pressures to which they respond by structural arrangements that converge across the field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Godonoga & Sporn, 2023). Even though they share similarities, countries in the DACH region also exhibit differentiated system characteristics. In Germany, a more decentralized system, the Excellence Initiative has triggered substantial adaptations in the system. Austria, with its centralized higher education system, has started to reform in the early 2000s and included a relatively strong push for SI connected to performance contracts. In Switzerland, the strategic plan for the university sector is based on clear goals that include diversity and inclusion, open science and service to society (Swissuniversities, 2022).

2.1. Policy and Funding in Austria

In Austria, public universities dominate regarding student numbers. At the same time, an equal number of universities of applied sciences have emerged as private institutions. The different types of HEIs diverge substantially regarding funding and legal regulations. Whereas public universities receive federal funding, universities of applied sciences are financed based on study slots. Universities of applied sciences and private universities must undergo regular accreditation.

The Austrian system is based on stringent policy documents starting with the Austrian Higher Education Plan (Österreichischer Hochschulplan) for 2030. The major goals of this plan are the improvement of student-faculty ratios, the increase in completion rates, internationalization, and equal opportunity. Based on that, universities are steered through performance agreements.

Steering the performance of public universities has been a priority since 2002 with the new legal framework (i.e. University Act 2002). Third mission has been playing an important role ever since and has led to several funding mechanisms (Meyer & Sporn, 2018), such as Sparkling Science 2.0 (i.e. funding for citizen-science projects) or Spin-off Fellowships (i.e. funding for knowledge transfer initiatives). Today, the topic of societal responsibility features prominently in the performance agreements between the government and the universities (Federal Ministry of Education Science and Research of Austria, n.d.).

Performance agreements are negotiated on a three-year basis. Beyond the regular funding of teaching and research, universities are required to define goals and actions on certain strategic areas prescribed by the government. Third mission is part of it and includes the request to develop strategies for social inclusion, equal opportunities, knowledge transfer, sustainability, and digitalization.

2.2. Policy and Funding in Germany

The German higher education system is diverse, dominated by universities and universities of applied sciences. Roughly one quarter of institutions are private, the rest being funded through province (i.e. state) and federal budgets. All HEIs must undergo regular accreditation processes – either at the program or institutional level.

The funding of universities is based on a dual responsibility between the federal level and the different German provinces (i.e. Länder). Generally, the provinces cover about 80% of the funding for teaching and research as the key pillars. On the federal level, the state defines priorities and sets the agenda for the German higher education system and funds some 15% of higher education expenditure through project grants. Most prominently, the Excellence Initiative was created in 2016 to position selected German universities globally. It includes strong aspects of collaboration, international visibility and impact on society (Federal Ministry of Education and Research of Germany, n.d.). Social impact mainly focuses on widening participation and open access. Funding instruments include the real-world labs or the program “Innovative University” (Berghaeuser & Hoelscher, 2020).

German HEIs must follow a stringent system of indicators for a summative accreditation. These include issues of inclusion and impact in teaching and research, such as student access,

research impact, implication for practice and cooperation with external partners.

2.3. Policy and Funding in Switzerland

The Swiss higher education system is divided in a federal and a cantonal system with ten universities of the cantons, two federal universities and nine universities of applied sciences. Accordingly, universities are provided basic funding by the cantons or by the federal government. Beyond that, Swiss universities are steered through different forms of project funding (Swissuniversities, 2022). All HEIs must undergo regular accreditation and most HEIs are among the best in the world in their field.

The strategic objectives of the Swiss higher education system are included in the strategic plan for the development of HEIs. Diversity and inclusion, research impact and open science, digitalization, and sustainability are among its key priorities. These priorities are set at the national level and help the coordination of the system.

The accreditation of all HEIs follows the same model as in the other German-speaking countries. They cover program or institution-level accreditation based on a well-defined set of indicators, including areas of societal responsibility and inclusion (Swiss Agency for Quality Assurance, 2019).

In sum, system-level responses to demands for societal impact in the DACH region comprise policies, funding and accreditation, which are rather prescriptive. These three types of steering levers define goals for societal impact in the respective higher education systems, setting the framework for implementation at the organizational level.

3. Organizational practices for social impact in DACH institutions

This section shifts focus to the organizational level and discusses practices for SI in two areas – *governance* and *performance management*. Governance relates to the professionalization of SI by integrating it into organizational policies and structures. To contextualize the analysis, the key features of the governance model for each higher education system is provided. Performance management refers to measuring and evaluating SI, as well as incentivizing and rewarding outcomes with a demonstrable impact on society. Survey data on the region is drawn upon, followed by examples of practices from three case institutions. Each data source is described below.

The survey was conducted by the authors in 2023 as part of a research project on forms of organizing for social impact in business schools that are part of the Principles for Responsible Management Education (PRME) network. The data pertaining to the DACH region comprises thirteen

business schools – i.e. four based in Austria, eight in Germany and one in Switzerland. The survey was sent to experts in academic, administrative or leadership positions in charge of reporting on social responsibility and impact as part of their institution's PRME affiliation. Therefore, each business school had one respondent, who represented the experience of their organization with societal impact. Considering the small sample size, this analysis is exploratory and should not be regarded as representative of the population of business schools in the region.

The second part of the analysis includes three exemplary cases – i.e. WU Vienna University of Economics and Business (Austria), Munich Business School University of Applied Sciences (Germany) and University of St. Gallen (Switzerland). All three have a proven record of commitment to SI as evidenced by their AACSB and/or EQUIS/BSIS accreditation and long-standing membership in PRME. The authors deliberately selected two public (WU and St. Gallen) and one private institution (Munich Business School) to show that social impact has permeated the sector as a whole, driven by a state as well as market logic where compliance and also differentiation rationales are at play (Godonoga et al., 2023).

3.1. Governance for social impact

The governance models in the three systems share similarities but also some key differences. The board structure – a feature of the three systems – is particularly important in linking universities' strategic priorities with societal needs and bringing external stakeholder representation in universities. The management of Austrian universities is carried out by the university council, the rectorate and the senate. The university council oversees financial and strategic matters and comprises external members in positions that span scientific, cultural and business domains (five, seven or nine members). Half of the members are nominated by the senate, half by the government, and one by the council itself. The senate is responsible for academic affairs and consists of professors, administrative staff and students. The rectorate is responsible for operational affairs and is headed by a rector and up to four vice-rectors. The senate nominates three candidates for the rector position, who is then elected by the university council for a period of four years, renewable twice (Eurydice, 2024). In 2021, the 2002 Universities Act was amended, introducing new criteria for the position of rector – i.e. international experience, knowledge of Austrian and European higher education and experience with organizational and financial management (European University Association, 2023).

The governance model in Germany shows differentiated configurations depending on the province and its respective legislation. According to a study by Döhler et al., (2023) there are seven bodies characteristic for German university governance. Legislative bodies include the board of governors, the senate and an extended leadership. Unlike

Figure 1. % SI Embeddedness in DACH Universities

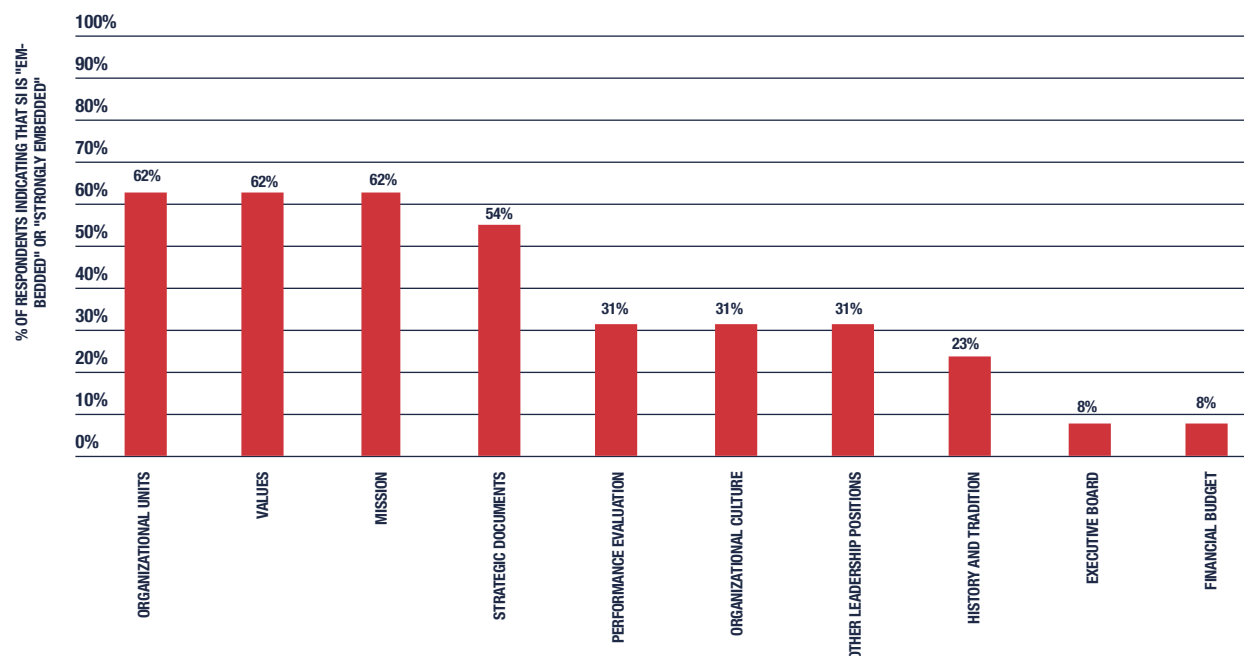
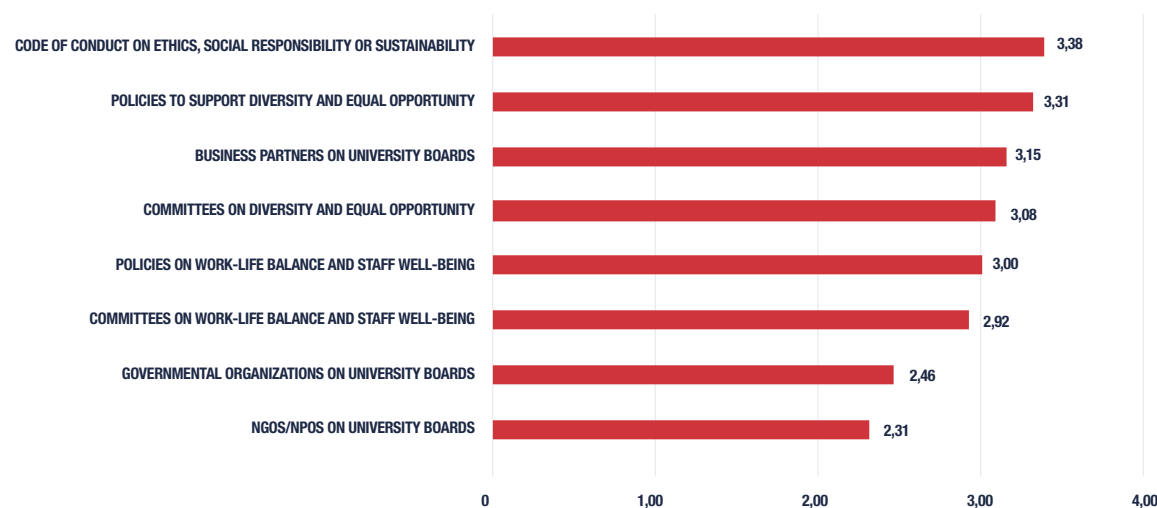


Figure 2. Governance and management practices for SI



Austria and Switzerland, the board in Germany can consist of external and internal members (exceptions apply in some provinces). The senate also consists of academic and non-academic staff and students. The extended leadership body exists in some universities, comprised of deans. They ensure that information on important strategic matters is passed on to departments and have a consensus-building role. Executive functions are carried out by the university leadership, which consists, depending on the context, of a university president/rector, vice presidents/vice rectors and a chancellor. The president is generally elected by the senate or an electoral body that consists of senate and

board members. Provincial laws state the selection criteria for presidents, define the terms of office and the procedures for dismissal (European University Association, 2023). The chancellor is the administration head of the university. Unlike the president and vice-presidents, who are recruited from the professoriate, the chancellor has a management or career administration background, and more power compared to vice-presidents (Döhler et al., 2023).

In Switzerland, the governance model of universities also shows diversity. A majority of universities have a dual board-senate structure, while a share has a senate-only unitary

model (European University Association, 2023). Depending on the canton, boards can have a supervisory role or hold more substantial decision-making power. Like in Austria, the board comprises external members only. The senate includes academic and administrative staff and students. Rectors are elected either by the board (in dual governance models) or by the senate (in unitary governance models), with a preliminary selection of candidates being done by an internal body. The final decision is always validated by an external authority. The law provisions in each canton regulate the selection procedure, as well as the terms of office of the rector. Rectors are generally elected for two to six years, and re-election is possible.

Moving to the survey analysis, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which SI is embedded into their organization's mission, policies and structures. Around two-thirds of respondents from the DACH region agreed that SI is "embedded" or "strongly embedded" into their institutions' units, values and mission statements (see Figure 1). In about half of the sample, SI is embedded into organizational strategies. Contrastingly, a minority noted that SI is embedded into their institutions' executive boards and financial budgets.

In relation to governance and management practices, stronger implementation and monitoring is observed in reference to the use of a code of conduct on ethics, responsibility or sustainability, policies to support diversity, equality and inclusion and business partners on university boards (see Figure 2). Implementation and monitoring are weakest when it comes to the representation of non-business stakeholders on university boards.

3.2. Performance management for social impact

Performance management practices for SI include three aspects – key performance indicators, monitoring instruments and incentives.

In relation to education (see Figure 3), most implemented and monitored practices across the DACH sample refer to cooperation with business organizations in teaching, bachelor and master theses addressing societal challenges and degree programs on societal challenges. Cooperation with governmental organizations in teaching, and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) available to the public are the least frequently implemented and monitored.

When it comes to research (see Figure 4), business schools most commonly monitor their collaboration with business organizations, research publications and research units working on societal challenges. Of all practices, open science and research dissemination appear to be the least frequently implemented and monitored.

Figure 3. Educational practices for social impact

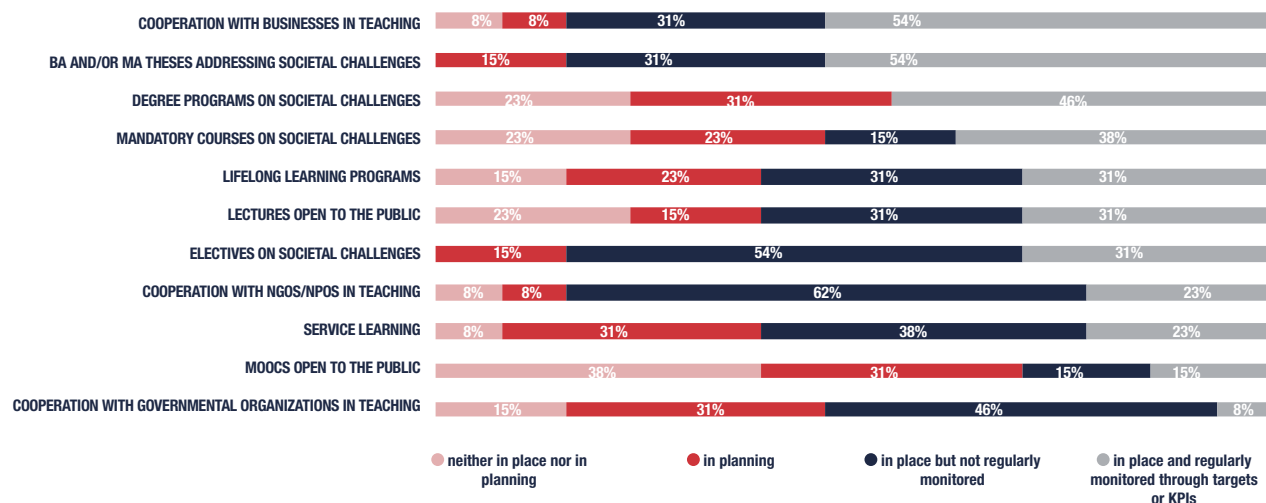


Figure 4. Research practices for social impact

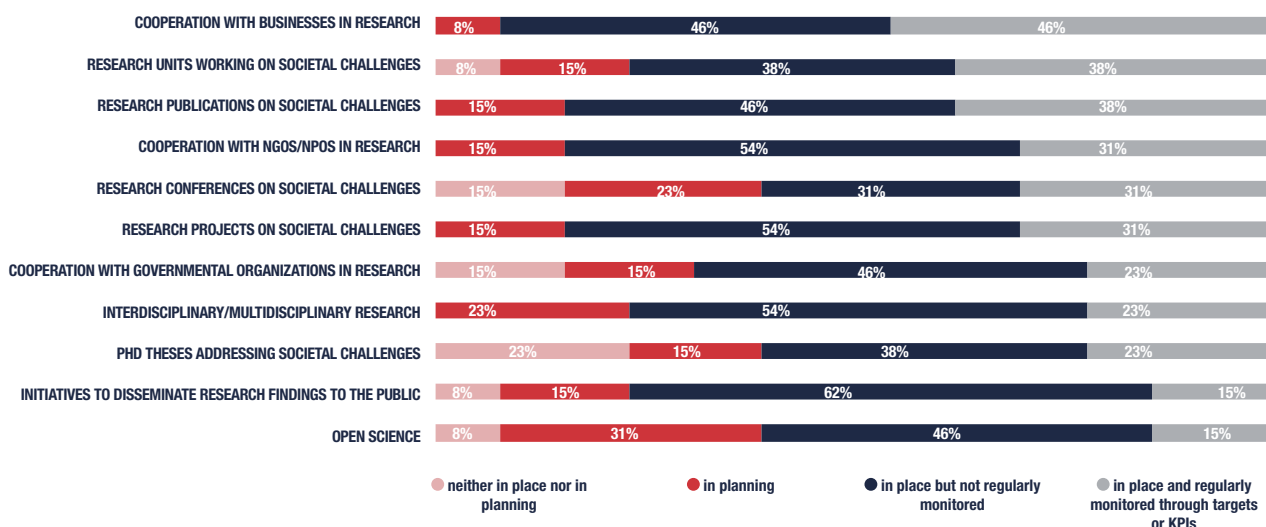
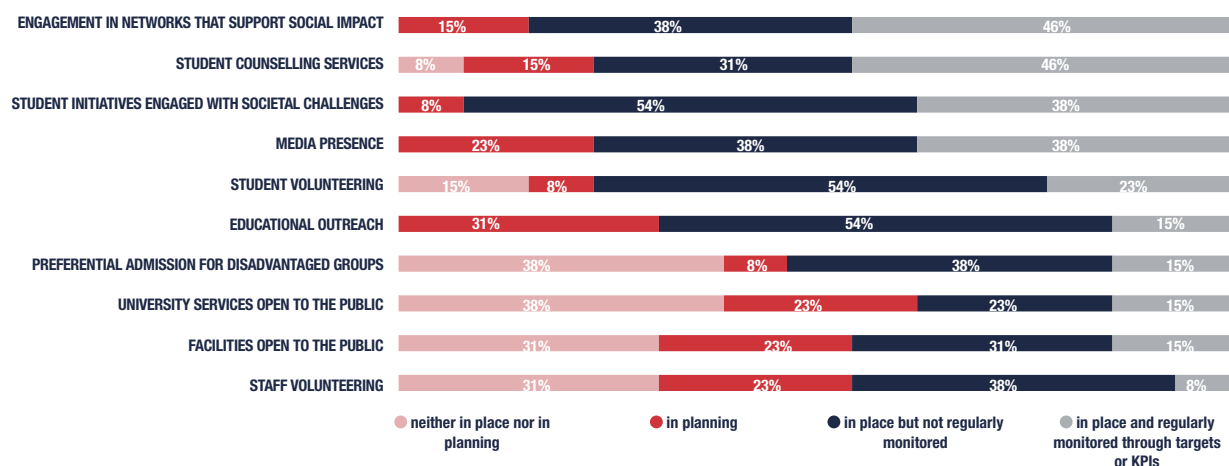


Figure 5. Service and outreach practices for social impact



As far as service and outreach practices are concerned (see Figure 5), participation in networks, student counselling services, media presence and student engagement were found to be in place and monitored on a regular basis. Contrastingly, implementation and monitoring are weakest when it comes to staff volunteering, services and facilities open to the public, educational outreach and preferential admission for disadvantaged groups.

Apart from KPIs, respondents were also asked to report on the use of monitoring instruments for SI in their organizations (see Figure 6). A majority of DACH institutions in the sample noted that they regularly report on SI to external parties, including accreditation agencies and rankings. Around half mentioned that they use global standards for social responsibility (e.g. Global Reporting Initiative) and analyze how their education and research output address the SDGs. Accounting for SI in the evaluation of staff performance and the use of impact surveys are the least common.

Finally, only a small share of institutions uses incentives and rewards for SI on a regular basis (see Figure 7). Monetary incentives and accounting for SI in staff recruitment and promotion are especially underdeveloped.

In summary, results from the PRME survey, summarized in Table 1, point to a strong discourse of social impact in DACH business schools, reflected in its embeddedness in institutional missions, visions and strategies. At the same time, results reveal weaknesses in terms of implementation, especially the integration of SI into leadership roles, financial budgets, and instruments to monitor and reward performance. Open models of education and research, and engagement with non-business stakeholders also require improvement.

Table 1. Summary of PRME survey findings (DACH region)

Organizing for SI through governance and performance management

Stronger implementation

Governance and management: **SI in missions, values, codes of conduct, policies for equality, diversity and inclusion, business partners on university boards**

KPIs: **cooperation with business in education and research, BA and MA theses on societal challenges, publications, engagement in networks**

Monitoring and incentives: **reporting on SI to accreditations and rankings, mapping education and research against the SDGs, non-monetary incentives for research with SI**

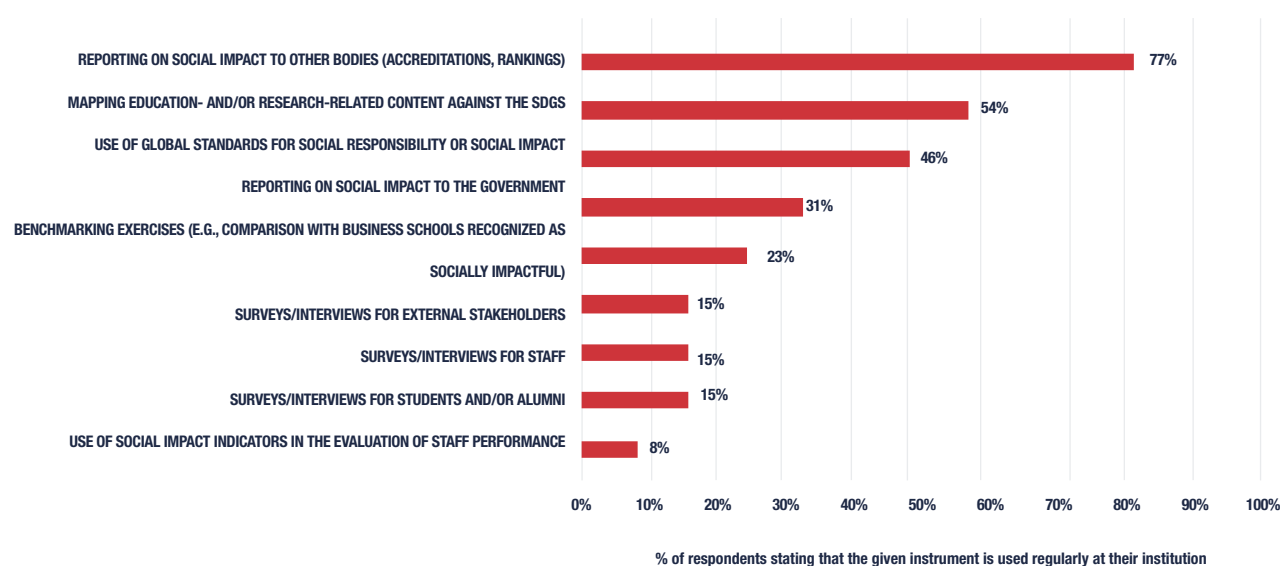
Weaker implementation

Governance and management: **SI integration into budgets and leadership positions, non-business partners on university boards**

KPIs: **MOOCs, educational outreach, open science, research dissemination, staff volunteering**

Monitoring and incentives: **SI indicators in performance appraisals, surveys to measure progress, monetary incentives for SI**

Figure 6. Monitoring instruments for social impact



3.3. Case examples

This section briefly discusses the experience of three institutions across the region that have integrated SI into their governance and performance management practices. The goal is to show, on the one hand, how universities can account for their societal impact by drawing on good examples, and on the other hand, reflect on critical areas that need improvement to make SI a more systemic and central feature of higher education.

WU Vienna, Austria

Vienna University of Economics and Business (WU) is a public university in Austria, founded in 1898. As part of its mission, WU “provides space for contemplation and creativity and is a pioneer in research and teaching, all with the goal of increasing economic capability and social prosperity” (WU, n.d.). Following the policy discourse, WU conceptualizes its broader role in society as part of its third mission, emphasizing that a university’s social responsibility goes beyond educating students and generating new knowledge to a role that includes engaging with societal needs, serving as partners in non-academic networks and co-creating solutions to tackle societal challenges (WU, 2023).

Since the inauguration of the new rector’s council in 2023, WU has made third mission a part of its **governance** – i.e. it now has a Vice-Rector for Research and Third Mission, whose responsibility is “to make WU’s third mission contributions visible and thereby strengthening their impact” (WU, 2023, p. 5). In response to regulatory and funding requirements, several policies and units facilitate the implementation of third mission initiatives. They include the Strategic Plan, the Plan for the Advancement of Women, the Guidelines for the Inclusion of Employees with Disabilities, the Equal Opportunities Committee and the Competence Center for Sustainability Transformation and Responsibility.

WU monitors and communicates the impact of its education, research and third mission activities through **impact reports**. The data include interviews with alumni, surveys to WU researchers, and analyses of institutional documents and datasets. The reports feature impact stories and cases in teaching and learning, research and societal engagement, and for each activity, an impact pathway is provided (see example in Figure 8), reflecting on its outputs, outcomes and impacts.

In relation to **incentives**, WU provides funding for research institutes involving external partners (Godonoga et al., 2023) and has an Open Access Policy in place, supporting researchers to publish their work in an open access format. Through its “Researcher of the Month” series, WU recognizes researchers who make a significant contribution to addressing economic and social issues.

Figure 7. Incentives for social impact

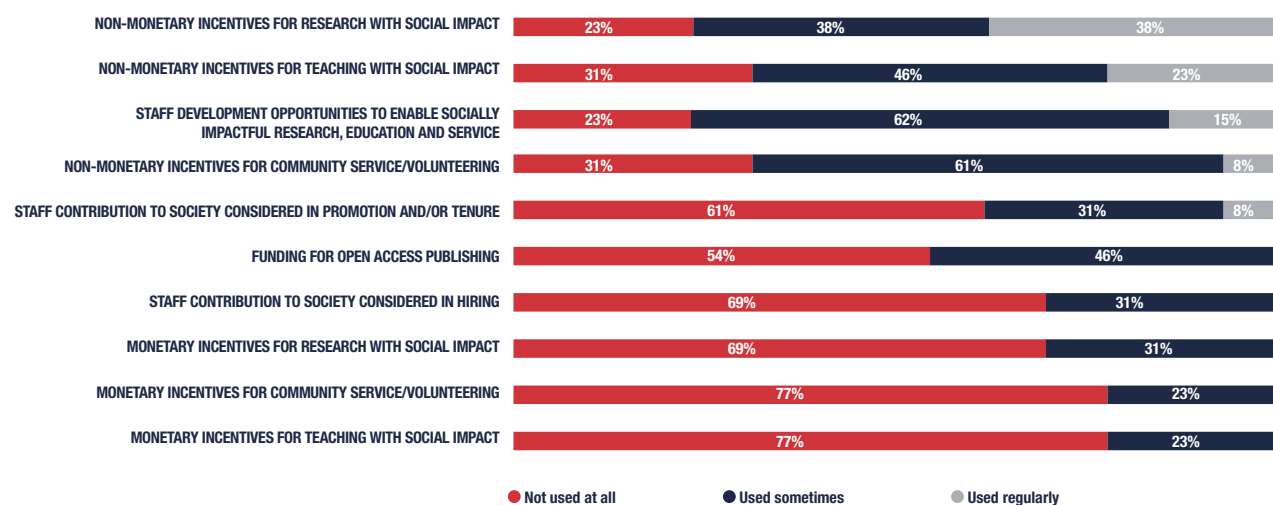


Figure 8. Impact pathway example (WU Third Mission Impact Report 2023, p.11)

IMPACT PATHWAY



Munich Business School, Germany

Munich Business School (MBS) University of Applied Sciences is a private institution in Germany founded in 1991 with the mission to “contribute to the economy and society by creating an inspiring academic environment in Munich that enables individuals to strive for entrepreneurial success while treating the people around them as well as our natural resources in a respectful and responsible manner” (Munich Business School, 2023, p. 9). Deriving from its website and an interview with its Impact Officer, MBS’ commitment to SI stems from a legitimization rationale and a need to differentiate in a competitive market (Munich Business School, 2022a).

In terms of **governance**, the MBS Advisory Board, comprising experts from different social sectors, keeps the institution accountable and supports it to fulfil its social responsibilities. In addition, in 2022, MBS appointed an Impact Officer to oversee the development of its impact strategy and follow up on its implementation and performance evaluation. Furthermore, several policies and units reinforce the impact-driven spirit of the institution, including its Strategic Plan, Code of Conduct, Ethics Committee and Diversity and Inclusion Officer.

To **monitor its social impact**, MBS has developed its own impact model after an extensive stakeholder consultation process, where students and alumni, faculty and staff, the advisory board and partners of the university were asked to provide their view on the social impact that MBS should generate. The data were analyzed and consolidated into five impact areas – i.e. people, planet, prosperity, purpose and passion, with research and education at its core (see Figure 9). In its current impact statement, MBS calls itself “the first Quintuple Bottom Line School” (Munich Business School, 2022b, p. 3), drawing inspiration from the Triple Bottom Line model (Elkington, 1999) and extending it to include the voice of its community and its strategic priorities. The school has an impact strategy with defined priority areas, which

Figure 9. Impact Model at Munich Business School (Impact Report, 2022, p. 3).



are implemented and monitored through a yearly impact report. The report outlines how its activities respond to its impact model and how they address the SDGs. As far as **incentives** are concerned, MBS provides a Research Award for faculty whose work is both of outstanding quality and with a demonstrable societal impact.

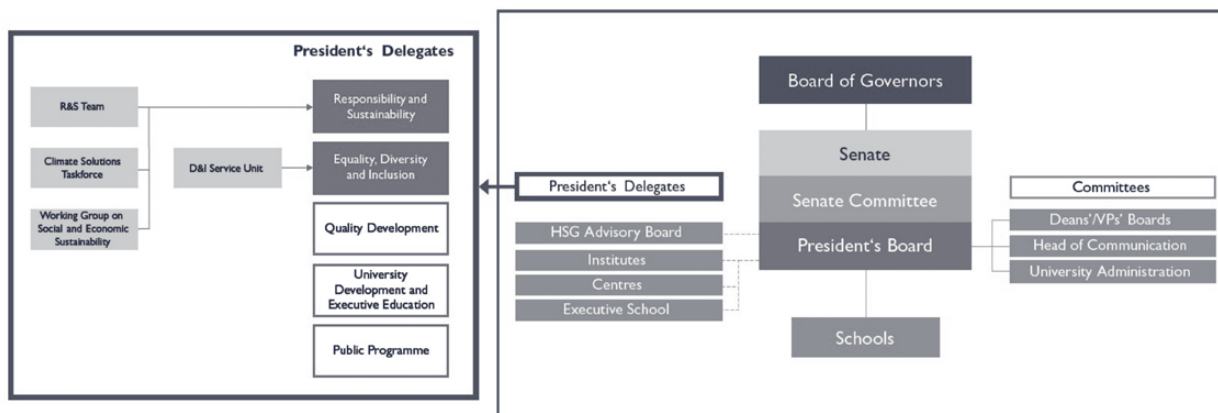
University of St. Gallen, Switzerland

The University of St. Gallen is a public university in Switzerland founded in 1898 with the mission to “empower talents and inspire leaders” (University of St. Gallen, n.d.). Reflecting national policy objectives, sustainability is deeply embedded in all aspects of the organization. St. Gallen’s commitment to society, economy and the environment are outlined in its Sustainability Strategy, as well as its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, with initiatives implemented across teaching, research and service/outreach.

The **governance** of the university (see Figure 10) is organized to lead the implementation of social, environmental and economic objectives. Namely, the president appointed a Delegate for Responsibility & Sustainability and a Delegate for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) to coordinate sustainability and EDI initiatives across the university. They work closely with four units – the Responsibility and Sustainability Team, the Climate Solutions Taskforce, the Working Group on Social and Economic Sustainability and the Diversity and Inclusion Service unit – to set the strategic framework for sustainability and EDI, facilitate implementation and monitor and evaluate performance.

Over the past years, the institution has developed several **instruments to monitor its impact**. In relation to environmental impact, St. Gallen has a university-wide Greenhouse Gas (GHG) accounting system, which tracks its carbon footprint in its operations and supply chain (i.e. scope 1, 2 and 3). The university published its first GHG

Figure 10. Governance for impact at the University of St. Gallen (Report on Responsibility and Sustainability 2021-22, p.7)



Report in 2022, and its aspiration is to become a carbon-neutral organization by 2030. Furthermore, St. Gallen has had a long tradition of assessing its regional impact through its graduates, start-ups and spin-offs, executive education and public events. The regional impact report, published biennially, focuses on financial, social and environmental aspects (University of St. Gallen, 2021).

Finally, the university uses several **incentives** to build internal commitment to SI (University of St. Gallen, 2022):

- Funding from the Basic Research Fund and the Swiss National Science Foundation for sustainability-related research projects.
- Financial incentives to promote sustainable travel for conferences and student exchange.
- HSG Impact Award for research projects with a demonstrable impact on society.
- Professional development activities on the integration of sustainability in research and teaching for faculty and PhD candidates.

To summarize, all three cases presented above have integrated SI into their governance and performance management practices. They have professionalized SI by embedding it into executive boards and positions and have set concrete measures to monitor and evaluate their SI. Some incentives are in place, but more could still be done in this area.

4. Lessons learned and practical implications

In a world confronted with complex challenges, universities play an important role as transformative agents in society. Strengthening this role requires changes to policy levers at the system level and adaptive capacity at the organizational level. This pertains to how HEIs are managed, governed and

funded, the way education, research and service practices are designed and carried out, and how external stakeholders are engaged in university activities.

This chapter contributes to research on the social impact of higher education (Godonoga & Sporn, 2023; Godonoga et al., 2023; Hoffman, 2021; Maloni et al., 2021; Rasche & Gilbert, 2015) by unraveling how higher education systems and institutions in the DACH region respond to societal challenges and account for their impact on society. Interventions at the policy level were complemented with examples of organizational practices using exemplary cases to show what works well and what needs improvement.

The higher education systems in the DACH region show responsiveness to societal challenges by defining societal responsibilities in policy documents and aligning these to funding instruments and accreditation requirements. At the organizational level, business schools integrate goals for societal impact into their missions, strategies and codes of conduct but evidence of implementation is weaker, especially when it comes to allocating financial and human resources to lead SI efforts, devising adequate instruments for measuring impact and incentivizing commitment. The cases presented above show more promising practices, especially when it comes to embedding SI into governance and devising accountability instruments for SI.

Drawing on these findings, this chapter has two practical implications for the higher education field. First, it calls for a strong regulatory policy framework for SI at the system level and a holistic approach to integrating SI at the organizational level. Aspects for improvement relate to institutionalizing SI into leadership positions, ensuring that financial resources are in place for the implementation of SI initiatives and redesigning systems for evaluating and rewarding faculty performance. As other studies have shown (Godonoga & Sporn, 2023; Haley, 2023; Watermeyer & Lewis, 2018), SI needs to be embedded more prominently into recruitment, compensation, promotion and tenure, and recognition and rewards need to be established for impactful teaching and research (Ramani et al., 2022).

Second, to make SI an institutional priority, universities are strongly encouraged to devise their own impact models, with the participation of key stakeholders and in alignment with their missions, goals and core competencies. To monitor and evaluate SI, a process view is of key importance underlined by a good understanding of university inputs, activities, outputs and impacts, and the use of appropriate indicators that account for the diverse pathways through which universities generate impact.

These implications emphasize the criticality of closing the gap between universities' talk and walk and prepare them to be not only objects but also subjects of societal change (Välilmaa,

2022). Currently, the responses that we see are largely geared to comply with external pressures, resulting in ad-hoc and peripheral measures. This explains why we see impact more in the discourse than in the practice of universities. What we really need is to activate the agency of actors inside universities so that impact moves from being an aspirational talk to an embedded organizational practice that is legitimized internally and lived by its members. If universities as loosely coupled organizations have been criticized as being detached from society, perhaps it is time to imagine an alternative model of organization that is more fit for purpose to serve society. The cases presented above show that such model requires 1) a strong governance structure with leadership roles dedicated to SI, 2) defining what SI means for the organization and pathways to achieve it through participatory processes engaging key actors, and 3) building commitment through performance evaluation and rewards that move away from "publish or perish" to a culture that cherishes educational and research activities with positive impacts on society. This is already in the agenda as far as governance is concerned but a lot more needs to be done to professionalize impact and transform academic recruitment, promotion and evaluation to build motivation and commitment internally. Only then can universities truly walk their impact talk and move from peripheral measures to holistic and sustainable pathways to impact.

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East Asian Universities and their Impact on Society¹

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Abstract

East Asian nations have high expectations about the role of their universities beyond them being institutions of higher learning. They expect them to contribute to social mobility for the citizens, build social capital for the nation and structure lifelong learning. How do they ensure that the universities live up to these expectations? Mainly through the development of good governance systems for the sector as whole. Through two examples I show that this can be successful on condition that one finds a good compromise between respect for the autonomy of the university and clear agreements about the deliveries to society.

What role does higher education play in Asian societies, and what impact is it expected to have? According to a 2012 report by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), higher education in Asia contributes to national development in three key ways. First, it prepares primary and secondary teachers who shape the quality of the entire education system. Second, it trains the high-level technical and administrative professionals needed in government and business. Third, universities serve as incubators for innovation and creative thinking, essential for maintaining economic competitiveness. These roles are largely *market-driven*, viewing the education system as a vital source of talent and innovation to fuel a country's economic growth.

Higher education in Asia plays a crucial secondary role: addressing the diverse aspirations of an expanding population of young citizens. Since the late 1980s, enrolment in higher education across the region has surged. This growth can be attributed to population increases, higher participation rates, and the perceived value of advanced education. Marginson (2011) highlights that in countries with a strong Confucian tradition, education is deeply valued as a pathway to personal and professional advancement. It is seen as a key mechanism for *social mobility*, enabling individuals to rise from lower social strata to higher economic status. In response to these growing aspirations, Asian countries have expanded their higher education systems by establishing new universities, expanding existing institutions, developing graduate programs to train new faculty, and licensing private education providers.

For many governments, the expansion of graduate education offered a key additional advantage: the potential to transform universities into research hubs capable of driving economic growth. Graduate programs were seen not just as merely educational endeavours but as strategic investments in a

nation's competitiveness. Expanding these programs was thus viewed as a dual opportunity—addressing a wide group of citizens' aspirations while simultaneously bolstering the country's economic development.

In Asia, higher education has traditionally served a third key purpose: nation-building, or in broader terms, *creating social capital* for the country. This role is especially prominent in emerging nations or those with relatively recent histories. For instance, in a country like Japan, which has a strong and well-established national identity, the need for nation-building through education might be less pressing. However, in newer countries like Singapore or in diverse nations like Indonesia, Malaysia, and even mainland China, where different cultures, ethnicities, and languages converge, higher education plays a crucial role in fostering national unity and identity.

In the past decade, a new role has emerged for higher education: *shaping lifelong education*. While universities and colleges have traditionally offered continuing education, it was often a secondary activity, except for certain fields like business. Unlike their counterparts in the United States, which often have extensive extension programs, many Asian universities lacked such offerings on a similar scale. However, the rapidly changing job market, driven by technological advancements and longer careers, has created a pressing need for high-quality lifelong learning.

As a result, universities across Asia are now being called upon to play a central role in developing and sometimes delivering continuing education. Policymakers are challenging these institutions to rethink education, extending their focus beyond young adults to include lifelong learners. This shift requires universities to establish standards and curricula for adult education, guiding the development of new courses and programs and the traditional model of education, centred on students aged 18 to 28, is evolving into a more flexible system where individuals move in and out of university throughout their careers.

The relative importance of the four roles of higher education—responding to market needs, providing diverse opportunities for social mobility for young citizens, building social capital, and shaping lifelong learning—varies of course significantly across countries and even among individual universities in Asia.

Generalizing about higher education in East Asia is indeed challenging due to the region's diversity. The region includes

vast differences, from populous nations like China to smaller countries like Laos and Mongolia, and ranges from wealthy nations like Japan, South Korea, Brunei, and Singapore to middle-income countries like Malaysia and Thailand, as well as poorer ones like Cambodia and Myanmar. The higher education landscape reflects this variety as well: China has one of the fastest-growing systems, while Japan and South Korea are facing the need to downsize.

Even within a single country, significant differences exist. For example, in Japan, while the top research universities are mostly government institutions (except for Waseda and Keio University), nearly 80% of students attend private universities that primarily prepare them for professional roles. This creates a division of labour between public and private institutions, where national universities and a few private ones focus on research and elite preparation, thus developing social capital, while most private universities train students for the workforce.

To illustrate how some of these choices are managed, I will describe two systems in which I am personally involved: Singapore, where I used to be President of SMU, one of the six autonomous universities, and the Special Autonomous Region (SAR) of Hong Kong, where I am a member of the University Grants Committee².

Singapore: providing good jobs and stimulating innovation

Singapore's higher education system is fundamentally pragmatic, closely aligned with manpower planning and designed to be "fit for purpose". It was originally established to support nation-building and economic development, evolving in response to the specific needs of the Singaporean economy. As the country developed economically from a third world economy to an innovative and sophisticated industrialised economy, its structure has dynamically shifted to match the changing needs and aspirations of society. As current President Tharman Shanmugaratnam explained during his tenure as Minister for Education, the goal of Singapore's universities is not only to produce graduates who support the economy but also to propel the nation up the curve of knowledge creation through strategic investments in research and development (Lim, 2013).

The original goal of education, particularly higher education, was often seen as creating a workforce tailored to the needs of the

² The opinions and observations in the descriptions of Singapore and SAR Hong Kong's higher education systems are strictly my personal ones, and do not engage any of the institutions in Singapore or SAR Hong Kong

¹ This contribution is partially based on two previous publications (De Meyer 2023; De Meyer and Ang, 2022)

economy and society. In simplistic terms, this might involve the Ministry of Manpower predicting the types of workers Singapore would need in the coming decade, then relaying that information to the Ministry of Education to decide which disciplines to prioritize and how many students to admit in each field.

In reality, however, the process is far more complex. Accurately forecasting Singapore's manpower needs is both a science and an art. As the economy and society become more sophisticated, predicting these needs becomes increasingly challenging. This is further complicated by the evolving expectations of students, who may choose to pursue studies based on their interests rather than the disciplines projected by government ministries.

Through this forecasting process, it became evident that society's needs are in constant flux. To remain relevant and effective, the higher education system must continually adapt to these changing demands. Therefore, Singapore's universities have consistently responded to market signals from employers, students, parents, and faculty. For instance, in the early 1990s, there was a growing demand for information technology and computer science courses. By the late 1990s, the focus shifted to biotechnology, followed by a surge in interest in banking and finance in the early 2000s. Today, the emphasis is more on data analytics, artificial intelligence, and robotics. The underlying principle has always been to align higher education with the manpower needs of society.

In a 2017 economic review conducted with input from various societal stakeholders, the government developed Industry Transformation Maps (ITMs) for over 20 sectors. These maps outlined the required changes in areas such as innovation, internationalization, productivity, sustainability, resilience, and skills development. The ITMs have served as an interesting and valuable resource for universities, guiding them in developing educational innovations and programs to meet these evolving needs.

As globalisation and digital disruption introduced new and complex challenges, Singapore's leaders recognised the critical role of innovation in sustaining economic growth. This recognition led to a heightened focus on research excellence at the universities from 2000 onwards. Significant funding had already been directed toward building research capacity outside universities, first through the National Science and Technology Board (NSTB), later renamed the Agency for Science, Technology and Research (A*STAR). From the late 1990s, research capabilities were also developed at the National University of Singapore (NUS), Nanyang Technological University (NTU), and later at Singapore Management University (SMU) and Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD). Given its small size, Singapore adopted an open talent strategy, attracting researchers from around the world and continually calibrating its higher education system with global trends.

The system has also evolved to meet the changing aspirations of Singaporeans, offering a diverse range of educational opportunities that cater to students with different abilities and aptitudes. The six universities are quite different from each other, with the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) and the Singapore University for the Social Sciences (SUSS) being more applied in nature than the four research-oriented universities mentioned earlier. This diversity allows young Singaporeans to pursue higher education at their own pace and follow their chosen paths, beyond traditional fields like Engineering, Technology, and the Sciences.

As mentioned earlier, the Singapore government has recognized the growing role of universities in continuing education and lifelong learning. In 2015, it launched SkillsFuture, a national movement to promote lifelong learning.

A key challenge for universities is to move away from an education model that focuses heavily on the first two decades of a person's life and shift towards a system that supports learning throughout one's career.

With the rapid pace of change in industry and the constant evolution of skills, front-loading education is increasingly seen by the government as insufficient for preparing its citizens to be future-ready. In response, the government has significantly boosted spending on continuing education and training (CET), making skills upgrading and lifelong learning more accessible and affordable for all. For universities that may have to confront a reduction in the number of undergraduate students because of the low birth rate in Singapore, this a new and welcome source of revenues.

How is the government implementing its policies and holding the universities to their mission of serving the nation? The answer is straightforward: though its governance system described as that of autonomous universities.

In our book on Singapore's experience in building a system of higher education (De Meyer and Ang, 2022) we mention that all key actors who determined the development of the system of higher education agreed that its success was largely due to the successful implementation of the concept of the autonomous university in 2006. The autonomy in governance led to a more professional management of the universities and instilled a culture of ownership with the stakeholders of the universities. It also reinforced the differentiation between the universities. It was more the implementation of the autonomous universities rather than the concept itself that made it a success.

Following an initial and successful experiment with Singapore Management University (SMU), which was established in 2000 as a Company Limited by Guarantee that entered into an agreement with the Ministry of Education to confer degrees, diplomas, and certificates while adhering to a defined

accountability and quality assurance framework, the National University of Singapore (NUS) and Nanyang Technological University (NTU) were also corporatised in 2006. These institutions then began operating as autonomous universities, and subsequent universities followed the same governance model.

Under this governance framework, universities are required to sign two key agreements with the Ministry of Education (MOE): a policy agreement and a performance agreement. The policy agreement outlines the university's role and allows the MOE to provide strategic direction and guidance while setting boundaries for university autonomy. Universities must ensure their activities are neutral and do not breach public peace, engage in indecent or immoral conduct, cause unnecessary suffering, or act contrary to public interest. The policy also mandates that universities function as vital national institutions, delivering education and research of high quality and international standards.

The performance agreement, formulated by the universities and approved by the MOE, established goals in teaching, research, service, and organizational development, originally for a five-year period. These agreements set objectives and key performance indicators to assess university performance. While these agreements were designed to grant universities substantial autonomy, in practice, the MOE continued to play a significant role in shaping performance expectations.

The agreements are reviewed regularly, and universities must submit annual performance reports to the MOE. These agreements help define broad guidelines and consequences for deviations from policy expectations.

To address increasing demands for accountability and efficiency, the MOE introduced the Quality Assurance Framework for Universities (QAFU) in 2001, alongside a dedicated unit to oversee quality assurance in government-funded post-secondary institutions. QAFU serves as a developmental tool for institutional self-assessment and quality enhancement across governance, management, teaching, research, and service.

Financing remains a critical aspect of this framework. While government funding is the primary source for university education, institutions are encouraged to diversify their income through donations, endowments, continuing education, and industry contributions. Government funding is provided in three main forms: capitation or operating grants per subsidized student (for undergraduates and some postgraduates), block grants for operating and infrastructure costs, and research funding based on competitive peer-reviewed processes.

A well-defined policy framework for university autonomy is not unique to Singapore. Similar moves towards increased

autonomy have occurred elsewhere in East Asia. Both South Korea and Japan have introduced similar policies, but their implementations have been less successful. In Japan, for instance, university presidents often struggle to roll out strategic initiatives effectively.

In contrast, Singapore has advanced the concept of autonomy more robustly and successfully. Our research identified five key drivers behind this effective implementation (De Meyer and Ang, 2022):

1. **Thorough Preparation:** The government laid a solid foundation for university autonomy by modelling its approach after successful systems, such as those in the United States. The model, piloted with SMU, balanced autonomy with accountability and included short- and long-term quality controls, along with support for alternative financial resources. Parliamentary discussions on the Act on Autonomous Universities provided broad societal support for the new structure.
2. **Selecting Experienced Trustees:** Effective autonomy required trustees with managerial and governance expertise. The government appointed business leaders with experience in corporate boards and audit committees to the university boards, ensuring a blend of corporate and academic understanding. Trustees, including all board chairmen, were appointed for long terms to provide stable leadership.
3. **Commitment to Real Autonomy:** Initially, there was concern that the Ministry of Education (MOE) might not fully relinquish control. While MOE leadership was committed to autonomy, there were fears about middle management's reluctance to cede control. The transition from advisory to governance roles for boards involved a steep learning curve. Despite this, MOE adopted a hands-off approach in day-to-day management, while continuing to set key policies for the sector.
4. **Growing Trust in University Management:** Successful autonomy implementation was bolstered by MOE's growing trust in university management. The commitment and business-like approach of university boards and leaders fostered a culture of ownership and mutual trust between MOE and the universities.
5. **Reasonable Policies:** While university presidents naturally sought more autonomy on issues like fees and program creation, they generally found MOE's policies reasonable. For example, MOE's strong control over the creation of new programs aimed

to prevent overlap and redundancy in the higher education system, which is essential for a small country was accepted precisely for that reason.

Is this system successful? Many indicators, ranging from the attractiveness of Singapore Universities to international students, the international rankings, the satisfaction of stakeholders such as parents, students and employers suggest that indeed Singapore's system of higher education is successful. But did all policies and initiatives succeed? Of course not. But failing policies were quickly adjusted in a flexible way. Pragmatism is no doubt one of the key characteristics of the development of the system of higher education in Singapore.

SAR Hong Kong: rapid acceleration of research capabilities and integration with the mainland

The recent evolutions in SAR Hong Kong's eight government supported universities are largely determined by the evolution of Hong Kong's society as a whole. They are a response to among others (not in order of priority):

- a. A push towards a closer engagement with Mainland China, while remaining if not increasing international partnerships. Hong Kong's universities realise that they need to develop closer partnerships with universities and corporations in the mainland, in particular in the Greater Bay Area (GBA), which includes Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Macao, Zhuhai, etc. Several universities have set up campuses in GBA and beyond, including for example the Chinese University of Hong Kong Shenzhen campus, the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology Guangzhou campus, and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University Foshan campus. But they also realise that they have a comparative advantage over their colleagues on the mainland in promoting international collaboration in an increasingly complex geo-political environment.
- b. A significant increase in resources for R&D to support the government's ambition to become a leading innovation hub within the Greater Bay Area. Most recently the government made for example an additional 1600 postgraduate research positions yearly available on top of the existing 5600. But it is clear that a significant number of these places will be allocated to research that is aligned with the strategic priorities of the SAR' government within the context of the 14th National Development Plan, e.g. enhancing the position of Hong Kong as a an international financial centre, a transport centre, a trade centre, a centre for international dispute resolution, an international aviation hub,

an international innovation and technology hub, a regional intellectual property trading centre, and an East-meets-West centre for international cultural exchanges.

- c. A stronger emphasis on enhancing the whole-person development and character building of the students, while maintaining a very high quality of the student experience in learning. This includes traditional foci such as whole-person development, developing leadership and social responsibility, improving mental well-being, stimulating creative thinking, but also an emphasis on national awareness and the understanding of the national security laws.
- d. And a demand for higher impact of the research output on society, be it in Hong Kong or the GBA.

In contrast to Singapore, where the Ministry of Education (MOE) has direct formal agreements with universities, the higher education sector in Hong Kong is regulated by the Education Bureau with support from the University Grants Committee (UGC), a non-statutory advisory body. The UGC plays a critical role in advising the SAR Hong Kong Government on the funding and strategic development of higher education. It collaborates with institutions, the administration, and the community to foster excellence within the sector.

The UGC is responsible for overseeing the allocation of funds to advance the strategic development of higher education in Hong Kong. Its mission includes enhancing diversity within the sector, stimulating innovation, and encouraging universities to contribute new ideas to the community. Additionally, the UGC focuses on improving the student experience and boosting international competitiveness in teaching, research, and knowledge transfer, while ensuring that institutions adhere to their defined and diverse roles.

The committee promotes strong inter-university collaboration and is committed to maintaining high standards of quality, efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and accountability. Throughout its activities, the UGC strives to uphold institutional autonomy and academic freedom, balanced with financial and public accountability.

The Research Grants Council (RGC), operating under the UGC, serves as a semi-autonomous advisory body. Its mandate includes advising the SAR Government on the research needs of universities, identifying priority areas to develop a robust research base that maintains academic excellence and aligns with Hong Kong's needs. The RGC also invites and reviews applications from academic staff for research grants, as well as for studentships and post-doctoral fellowships.

The University Grants Committee (UGC) holds an advisory, not an executive, authority. Each higher education institution operates autonomously under its own Ordinance and Governing Council, with significant freedom over curricula, academic standards, staffing, research, and resource allocation. Despite this autonomy, as these institutions are largely funded by the public and play a crucial role in society, the Government and society have obviously a vested interest in ensuring high educational standards and cost-effectiveness. The UGC aims to balance these interests effectively.

Two initiatives by the UGC have a significant influence on how Universities achieve impact on society: the triennial University Accountability Agreements and the Research Assessment Exercise.

The University Accountability Agreement (UAA) aims to improve accountability and transparency in government-supported universities. The initial UAAs for the 2019-22 triennium were signed in 2019, with a renewal for the 2022-25 triennium occurring in 2022. UGC does a yearly evaluation to gauge how the universities adhere to their plans. Discussions are now underway between the UGC and universities for the next triennium.

The UAA outlines strategic directions and funding principles for the triennium and includes performance indicators to assess each university's performance relative to its specific context. For the 2022-25 period, these indicators covered five key areas: (i) Quality of student experience in teaching and learning; (ii) Research performance and postgraduate research experience; (iii) Knowledge transfer and community engagement; (iv) Internationalisation and engagement

with Mainland China; and (v) Financial health, social responsibilities, and sustainability.

Another key mechanism for assessing the impact of universities on society is the Research Assessment Exercises (RAE), conducted every 6 to 7 years. These exercises help inform the allocation of research funding, ensure public accountability, and drive improvements in research quality. The current RAE model is largely inspired by the UK's RAE and subsequent Research Excellence Framework (REF). Notably, the assessment focuses not only on research output and the university research environment but also places significant emphasis on the societal impact of research. Following the 2020 RAE, the UGC published a report detailing 342 impact case studies, illustrating the significant influence of research conducted by Hong Kong's eight universities on the broader community and impacting positively the 8 centres mentioned before (UGC, 2022). These impact cases are also accessible in an interactive database.

Conclusions

The expectations that East Asian societies have about the role and the impact of their universities are increasing. I indicated that these expectations are along four dimensions: responding to socio-economic market needs, providing opportunities for social mobility, developing the social capital of the nation and contributing to the development of lifelong learning. Depending on the country and the specific role of a university the portfolio of expectations and the ensuing performance indicators may differ. But as we indicated through our two cases the stakeholders, and in particular the funding governments, attempt to achieve positive

outcomes for society through the governance mechanisms. In Singapore as well as in SAR Hong Kong the guiding principle is that universities should remain autonomous, so that they can pursue their own specific positioning, manage their resources as effectively and efficiently as possible, but that they are funded in exchange for some contracts or agreements on policy and performance. Having experienced the systems first hand I know that there is a fine line to walk between autonomy with contractual agreements and strict control by the government. But if the autonomy is well implemented it can lead to a powerful portfolio of diverse and responsive institutions.

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Australian University Governance: In Transition

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This chapter will provide a focussed summary of the current governance of the Australian university sector while recognising key moments in history that have changed its trajectory. Governance will be addressed at the sector level through regulatory frameworks, voluntary agreements and funding regimes as well as within individual universities as required by relevant regulatory bodies. The proposed changes to sector governance identified by a recent review aimed at preparing the Australian higher education sector for the next 30 years are considered where relevant.

Review-led sector change

Australian universities have a long tradition of supporting the country's intellectual capital and prosperity starting with the establishment of the first university, the University of Sydney, in 1850, followed closely by the University of Melbourne in 1853¹. Innovation and inclusiveness are foundation stones of the sector with the University of Sydney among the first public, non-denominational and secular universities in the British Empire which then went on to admit female students on an equal basis with men in 1881, one of the first universities in the world to do so.

There have been a number of significant changes in the Australian university sector following major reviews. Reforms of major note include the establishment of Colleges of Advanced Education following the Martin Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia in 1964² to support professional education and skills in emerging fields and more flexibility of study. In 1974, the financial and policy responsibilities for higher education transitioned from the states of Australia to the Australian Government. In the same year, tuition fees for university courses were abolished³. Extensive reform was led by the then Minister for Employment, Education and Training, the Hon. John Dawkins MP in the late 1980s⁴ which saw the amalgamation of Australia's 75 higher education institutions (such as universities, institutes of technology and colleges of advanced education) into 36 universities and the reinstatement of a fee-based system which saw students once again contribute to the cost of their education through an income contingent loan system. The Dawkins reforms continue in many ways through to today with various adjustments along the way.

1. Marginson, S., and Considine, R. (2000). *The enterprise university: Power, governance and reinvention in Australia*, 1st Edn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 2. Committee on the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia (1964), Tertiary education in Australia [Martin report], Government Printer, Canberra.
 3. Marginson, S. (2002). Nation-building universities in a global environment: The case of Australia. *High. Educ.* 43, 409–428
 4. Dawkins, J. S. (1987). *The challenge for higher education in Australia*, 1st Edn. Canberra, ACT: Australian Government Publishing Service.

The Bradley review⁵ in 2008 recommended the establishment of a national regulator, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) which will be discussed later in this chapter. It also highlighted the need to grow the proportion of university educated citizens within Australia and the need to increase participation by historically under-represented groups such as those from low socio-economic backgrounds and Indigenous Australian students.

In late 2022, the Australian Government commissioned a full review 'to drive lasting reform in Australia's higher education system'⁶. What has become known as the Australian Universities Accord was presented to the Australian Government at the end of 2023 and included 47 recommendations for change. The review committee reported that the sector needs 'a step change in participation, performance and investment to generate the knowledge, skills and research needed to prosper in the contemporary world'⁷. The Australian Government is yet to respond in full to the recommendations, therefore the Australian university sector is somewhat in a state of flux in 2024 in terms of its future governance, funding and operations. Where possible, this chapter will outline the recent proposals by the government to align with the Accord recommendations, recognising these could change in the near future.

Current Sector Snapshot

University governance can be influenced by a variety of factors, including changes to legislation addressing governing bodies of universities and sources and levels of funding for universities. Today, the Australian university sector remains largely public with 38 of the 42 Australian universities funded by the national government and teaching more than 90% of university students⁸. The other four universities are either private for-profit or private not-for-profit institutions. No new public universities have been established in the last 20 years although three private universities have been granted university status over this time. Two public universities have recently received approval to merge, reducing the total number of public universities by one. The Accord has flagged the possibility of more public universities being established including discipline specific or research-intensive universities.⁹

5. Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (2008), *Review of Australian Higher Education: Final Report (Bradley Review)*, Canberra
 6. <https://www.education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord>
 7. <https://www.education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord>, 7.
 8. www.teqsa.gov.au/national-register
 9. <https://www.education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord>, 255.

Collectively, the 42 Australian universities serve a total Australian population of approximately 26.5 million. Approximately 45% of 25-34 year olds currently hold a bachelor degree or above with plans to increase this level to 55% by 2050. There is a National Register of Higher Education Providers published by TEQSA to ensure the public, including prospective students, is informed about registered providers.¹⁰

The average university size in Australia has an equivalent student load of less than 30,000 and revenue close to \$500 million per year, however a small number of universities are very large with more than 70,000 students and more than \$2 billion in annual revenue.¹¹ Public universities operate more than 300 physical campuses across Australia as well as overseas.¹² All Australian universities by definition must undertake research with the term *university* restricted to institutions who can demonstrate quality research performance in at least three disciplines.¹³ International students and their fee revenue are a major funding source for university research.

Universities operate through a mission-based compact which is an agreement between the Australian Government and each university and is a pre-requisite to the provision of commonwealth funding. The compact is designed to ensure a 'shared and mutual commitment to provide students with high-quality educational experiences and outcomes and to building research and innovation capabilities and international competitiveness.'¹⁴ Written plans and reports are submitted by each university with follow up meetings with the relevant government department to confirm progress against agreed targets.

The national government provides funding to universities for both teaching and research. The majority of undergraduate teaching is supported by Commonwealth Supported Places where the government makes a significant contribution towards the cost of teaching and scholarship. Approximately 860,000 students are supported through this current system.¹⁵ Students also contribute to the cost of their courses depending on their field of study. Universities receive approximately \$18,000 per year from these combined sources to deliver

10. <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/national-register>
 11. <https://www.education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord>, 55
 12. <https://www.education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord>, 55
 13- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency Act 2011
 14. <https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education-funding/mission-based-compacts>
 15. <https://www.education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord>

courses in law, economics, philosophy, history through to nearly \$45,000 per year to deliver medicine, dentistry and veterinary science.¹⁶ There remains considerable debate on the appropriateness of the level of funding for each course and the proportion of the cost of delivery paid by students and this is considered by each federal government in its higher education policies.

Domestic students can access HECS-HELP (Higher Education Loan Program)¹⁷ Income Contingent Loans to fund their portion of their degrees to ensure there is no upfront fees, supporting the inclusiveness agenda of Australian universities. While less than in many countries, the indebtedness level of graduates is now attracting considerable public attention as overall debts grow and the borrowing capacity of graduates is impaired.

Universities offer government supported and full fee-paying postgraduate coursework courses to domestic students as well as full fee-paying undergraduate and postgraduate courses to international students. Eligible domestic students¹⁸ can defer their tuition fees to the HELP program known as FEE-HELP when enrolled in a full fee-paying place.

International education is a critical part of Australian university operations, with international education being Australia's largest services export and fourth largest export overall in the 2022-2023 financial year, worth approximately \$36 billion to the Australian economy.¹⁹ In 2023, there were approximately 440,000 international students in higher education.²⁰ China (32.6%) and India (19.3%) represent the largest markets for international students. International students make up between 5% and 47%²¹ of enrolments at each of the Australian universities and approximately 29% of total students.²² Concerned with total migration numbers and a high cost of living environment including a shortage of housing, the current federal government is proposing to limit the total number of international students each university can enrol, however, the precise mechanism through which this is to be achieved is unclear and the subject of a current parliamentary enquiry. The financial impact to the sector of the government's initial proposals would be significant. Universities Australia, the peak industry body, has estimated that the 60,000 less student visas issued in 2024 alone will cost the economy \$4.3 billion.²³

16. Hare, J. (2024) The \$50,000 arts degree arrives, as university student debt climbs, *Australian Financial Review*, 18 July, 3
17. <https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education-loan-program>
18. <https://www.studyassist.gov.au/financial-and-study-support/fee-help>
19. <https://www.education.gov.au/international-education-data-and-research/education-export-income-financial-year>
20. <https://www.education.gov.au/download/13536/international-student-data-full-year-data-based-data-finalised-december-2023/36985/document/xlsx>
21. <https://www.education.gov.au/download/17783/student-enrolments-pivot-table-2022/35971/document/xlsx>
22. <https://www.education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord>, 55
23. <https://universitiesaustralia.edu.au/media-item/universities-australia-chief-executive-officer-luke-sheehy-am-agenda/>

The Australian Government provides funding for research training through the Research Training Program (RTP)²⁴ which can be provided to students through stipends, fee offsets and allowances. Around 90% of domestic HDR students received some form of support from the RTP in 2022.²⁵

Australian universities produce approximately 3.4% of the world's published research with only 0.33% of the world's population.²⁶ Unlike many countries, university research in Australia accounts for 33% of the nation's R&D expenditures whereas industry accounts for 53% of R&D expenditure. The university sector carries out the bulk of Australia's basic research, while businesses focus more on applied research and experimental development.²⁷

The Australian Research Council, established by the *Australian Research Council Act 2001*, supports Australia's research system by financing basic research at universities. In 2022 – 2023, \$850 million of funding was available under the National Competitive Grants Program.²⁸ Research infrastructure is funded through the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy which coordinates funding by governments, universities, publicly funded research agencies and industry. Clinical and other medical research is primarily supported by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) with annual grants alone and in partnership of approximately \$1.5 billion in 2022 - 2023.²⁹

Research quality in Australia has been assessed through the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) framework, introduced in 2010³⁰ but currently on hold pending the outcomes of a review. ERA was introduced to lift the quality of Australian research. In the last full round of ERA, 92% of university research received a rating of 'at world standard' or 'above world standard'³¹, leading to some commentators reflecting that ERA's job was done.³²

Major Parts of the Regulatory Framework

There are four major government acts and standards which provide the legal framework for the governance of Australian higher education:

- Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Act 2011 (TEQSA Act)

24. <https://www.education.gov.au/research-block-grants/research-training-program>
25. <https://www.education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord>, 55
26. <https://www.education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord>, 57
27. <https://www.education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord>, 56
28. <https://www.arc.gov.au/about-arc>
29. NHMRC Annual Report 2022-23
30. Excellence in Research for Australia | Australian Research Council
<https://www.arc.gov.au/evaluating-research/excellence-research-australia>
31. <https://www.education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord>, 219
32. Where is the evidence for ERA? Time's up for Australia's research evaluation system (theconversation.com)

- Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021
- Education Services for Overseas Students Act 2001 (ESOS Act)
- National Code of Practice for Providers of Education and Training to Overseas Students 2018

The first two of these Acts will be reviewed here as they cover governance and accountability provisions related to all university operations. The second two Acts relate to the provision of services to international students only.

The TEQSA Act establishes the Australian university system's main regulator, TEQSA. TEQSA is responsible for regulating and assuring the quality of all providers of higher education in Australia, not just universities. The TEQSA Act requires the agency to:³³

- register regulated entities as higher education providers and accredit their courses of study
- conduct compliance and quality assessments
- conduct re-accreditation assessments of courses developed by providers without self-accrediting authority
- provide advice and make recommendations to the Commonwealth Minister responsible for Education on matters relating to the quality and regulation of higher education providers
- cooperate with similar agencies in other countries
- collect, analyse, interpret and disseminate information relating to quality assurance practice and quality improvement in higher education
- to investigate and take action against individuals or organisations offering or advertising commercial academic cheating services to students at Australian higher education providers.

The *Higher Education Standards Framework* (HESF) outlines seven core domains or threshold standards that a provider needs to meet to hold registration:³⁴ 'student participation and attainment; learning environment; teaching; research and research training; institutional quality assurance; governance and accountability; representation, information and information management'.

HESF Domain 6 (Governance and Accountability)³⁵ is core to understanding university governance and is a significant factor for TEQSA when determining the ongoing status of registration. The university's governing body must be formally established by a legal instrument (such as an Act of Parliament). While the model of governance is not prescribed in the domain the governing body must hold the organisation accountable as demonstrated through the university's

33. <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/>
34. Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021
35. HESF Domain 6: Governance and accountability | Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (teqsa.gov.au)

instrument of establishment, constitution, board charter and/or delegations. The governing body itself must go through periodic independent reviews of its effectiveness and the academic governance processes in place.

Like any board of directors, the University's governing body must have clear procedures for effective governance of the management of risks, including risks to quality. TEQSA has recently requested all universities to consider the risk to academic integrity of artificial intelligence with all providers required to provide the regulator with an actionable plan.³⁶ Financial viability and sufficient funding to sustain the quality of education is also critical. Any concerns on financial viability are flagged by the regulator through the provision of annual data reports and may require further discussion with the regulator on corrective actions.

A voluntary national committee of the Chancellors (Chairs of Council/Board) of Australia's universities, the University Chancellor Council (UCC) reports that the governing body, whether called a Council, Senate or Board of Trustees 'has collective responsibility for providing oversight of a university's strategic planning and its educational, financial, commercial and legal accountabilities. It is responsible for the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor and monitors his/her performance'.³⁷ According to the UCC, governing bodies currently vary in size from 10 – 18 members including appointees from the relevant state government and external members selected for their expertise with an average number of 14 members. The majority also include representatives of the staff and student bodies as well as senior staff (ex officio).

In 2010, Universities Australia developed the Voluntary Code of Best Practice for the Governance of Australian Public Universities.³⁸ This was endorsed by the University Chancellors Council in 2010, and then by the Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment in 2011. The Voluntary Code was amended at the Universities Australia and University Chancellors Council joint meeting in 2018 but is now set for significant change following the Australian Universities Accord.

University governance attracted significant attention in the recent review of the university sector, particularly in terms of the composition of governing boards and whether they remain fit for purpose in the current and future environments. Opinions differed on whether university governing boards/councils have become too similar to corporate entities in terms of how members were selected and appointed and how different stakeholder groups were being represented. There are

36. <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/about-us/news-and-events/latest-news/information-request-issued-ai-risk-mitigation>

37. <https://ucc.edu.au/university-governance-in-australia>

38. <https://www.canberra.edu.au/about-uc/governance/voluntary-code-folder/Voluntary-Code-of-Best-Practice-for-the-Governance-of-Australian-Universities-May-2018.pdf>

nearly 550 positions on Australian university councils, with about 25% held by elected staff and students and about 25% by corporate executives or consultants.³⁹

Action on strengthening university governance was identified as a priority action by the Australian Universities Accord panel through its interim report⁴⁰ which allowed the responsible national Minister to take action before receiving the final Accord report and recommendations. In April 2024, the responsible national Minister and their state Education minister counterparts, acting as the Education Ministers Council, agreed to establish a council of experts to oversee university governance, considering executive remuneration, board diversity and workplace relations compliance.⁴¹

Based on a proposal from the University Chancellors Council, the ministers agreed to develop new 'University Governance Principles and Recommendations' against which universities will be required to report their compliance. The areas 'include:

1. achieve a balance between higher education and other expertise on the governing body, with at least one non-executive member who has university leadership expertise from outside the institution;
2. improve structures and processes to ensure that high risk and high priority matters reflect consultation and engagement with the university community and have appropriate oversight and reporting to and by the governing body;
3. reflect the diversity of the Australian community, and the specific characteristics of the university community they serve, in making appointments;
4. achieve gender balance on the governing body in line with jurisdictional and Australian Government targets;
5. have First Nations membership on the governing body, and separate, transparent processes to capture First Nations leadership and engagement on university strategy, policies and performance;
6. have one or more student members of the governing body, and separate, transparent processes to capture student input on

39. Groch, S. (2023) <https://www.smh.com.au/education/inside-the-plan-that-could-rein-in-vice-chancellor-salaries-and-overhaul-uni-boards-20231107-p5ei4t.html>

40. <https://www.education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord/resources/accord-interim-report>

41. Clare, J., <https://jasonclare.com.au/media/portfolio-media-releases/communique-friday-26-april-2024/>

university strategy, policies and performance;

7. have one or more staff members of the governing body, and separate, transparent processes to capture staff and union input on university strategy, policies and performance;
8. require all new appointments to go through a rigorous and transparent selection process that utilises a formal and regularly updated skills, capabilities, and diversity selection matrix that is in line with their jurisdiction's requirements and directed to the selection of the person best suited to the position;
9. require all governing body members to have, or undertake, training on the specific responsibilities and expectations of their role as governing body members, and separately clarify the way the role of governing body members is described; and
10. demonstrate and maintain a rigorous and transparent process for developing remuneration policies and settings for senior university staff, with consideration given to comparable scale and complexity public sector entities, and ensure remuneration policies and packages are publicly reported'.⁴²

These principles will replace the current 'voluntary code' and require different levels of change within each university based on their current processes. Membership of the oversight body, the Expert Governance Council, is yet to be decided.

University governance as specified by the national regulator must also address the specific area of academic governance under the terms of registration. As outlined in the TEQSA Guidance Note: Academic Governance: 'Academic governance is a subset of overall governance of a higher education provider, concerned with the integrity and quality of the core higher education activities of teaching, student learning, research and scholarship. It refers to the framework that regulates a provider's academic decisions and quality assurance, incorporating policies, processes, definitions of roles, relationships, specifications of delegations, systems, strategies and resources that ensure academic quality and continuous improvement.'

⁴³ While procedures to ensure the highest level of academic governance are not prescribed, the university must demonstrate that the organisation of its academic

42. Clare, J. <https://jasonclare.com.au/media/portfolio-media-releases/communique-friday-26-april-2024/>

43. <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/guides-resources/resources/guidance-notes/guidance-note-academic-governance>

governance is effective. In practice, universities have an academic board or senate which acts as its highest level of academic governance. The board/senate reports to the university's governing body (e.g. Council, Board), often through the direct membership of the head of the academic governance board. At the time of registration or reregistration, TEQSA will review how the governing body is providing oversight of the development and implementation of appropriate policies, reviews, analyses and implementation plans to ensure effective academic oversight of high education activities. It may also make interim requests on specific oversight based on environmental conditions or government policy.

All Australian universities have the authority to self-accredit their degrees under the TEQSA Act.⁴⁴ This means they can accredit their own individual degrees (from design through to delivery) without ongoing direct oversight of TEQSA and use internal mechanisms to review performance. Other higher education providers without self-accrediting status need to seek TEQSA approval to accredit each individual degree. In practice, universities decide which degrees they wish to offer and which degrees they may wish to close, although the national government asks for early advice on the latter if the degree is deemed to be in the national interest. Recent proposals suggest the federal minister may be given the ability to control the number of places in certain degrees through a reserve power to be used where the government considers it necessary. While considered unlikely to be enacted, this level of oversight would be a significant change to the current relationship between the national government and each university on degree offerings.

University registration and/or renewal registration can be for a period determined by TEQSA and can't exceed seven years ensuring the regular review of each provider is achieved. Conditions can be applied as part of the registration process which the provider may need to report on back to the regulator within a certain period of time.

Under their registration provisions in section 6 of the HESF Threshold Standards on Governance and Accountability, all universities must have a clearly articulated higher education purpose that includes a commitment to freedom of speech and academic freedom.⁴⁵ This is assessed at the time of registration and re-registration in addition to direct requests from either TEQSA or the Department of Education should issues be raised regarding individual universities or sector practices. Through the University Chancellor's Council, member

44. <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/sites/default/files/saa-application-guide-2022-v0-6.docx>

45. <https://www.teqsa.gov.au/how-we-regulate/higher-education-standards-framework-2021>

universities have adopted either in total or in part, the *Model Code for the Protection of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom in Australian Higher Education Providers*, amended in July 2019.⁴⁶ This has become increasingly important in recent times as the commitment to academic freedom and freedom of speech are tested through geopolitical shifts and world events.

A Potential New Player

The Accord suggests that TEQSA has been successful in 'establishing a set of minimum standards and enforcing a baseline for provider behaviour'.⁴⁷ The Accord team, however, believe a new governance framework is required given the new challenges the sector will face. Thus, it has proposed the establishment of the Australian Tertiary Education Commission (ATEC) to provide 'strong sector stewardship'.⁴⁸ In the Accord panel's view, 'the sector is too important to Australia's social, economic and environmental wellbeing to leave its future to the uncoordinated action of individual institutions'.

At the time of writing, the national government has accepted the recommendation for the ATEC to be responsible for tertiary education system stewardship and driving reform over the longer term, including being responsible for 'providing stronger governance, rigour and oversight of public funding for higher education in Australia'.⁴⁹ In June 2024, the government released a consultation paper on this significant structural reform to the tertiary education sector.⁵⁰

According to the consultation paper, the objective of the ATEC is to 'underpin and drive:

- (a) equitable opportunity through supporting all Australians to access and participate in high-quality, engaging and transformative tertiary education programs
- (b) a productive economy and society through the delivery of highly skilled and educated graduates, and through facilitating the production and application of new knowledge
- (c) a strong civic democracy through institutions that foster robust debate and critical inquiry and contribute to Australia's cultural and intellectual life'.

46. <https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education-reviews-and-consultations/independent-review-adoption-model-code-freedom-speech-and-academic-freedom>

47. <https://www.education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord>, 229

48. <https://www.education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord>, 228

49. Department of Education, (2024) Australian Tertiary Education Commission, Implementation consultation paper

50. Clare, J, <https://ministers.education.gov.au/clare/next-steps-delivering-universities-accord-reforms>

The ATEC will 'achieve this purpose through:

- (a) facilitating a strong, dynamic and efficient tertiary education system that has the capacity and capability it needs
- (b) fostering collaborative and purposeful work between all governments, tertiary education providers, industry, employers, communities and unions
- (c) working with other relevant agencies, including Jobs and Skills Australia on the identification of skills needs and the Australian Research Council on research funding
- (d) enhancing collaboration between Commonwealth and States and Territories on tertiary related matters.'⁵¹

Consultation on the proposed ATEC is only just closing as this chapter is being finalised. Consultation is addressing what the ATEC will look like and what its duties will be. It is proposed that TEQSA will sit within ATEC whereas the Australian Research Council will remain separate to the new regulator. The responsible Minister is proposing that the ATEC is established in an interim capacity by 1 July 2025 and formally established from 1 January 2026, pending the passage of legislation. While not entirely aligned in its views, much of the university sector has lobbied against the formation of the ATEC in its proposed form and/or the timeline for its establishment. Clarity of purpose, structure, commission membership and responsibilities of the new body are high on the list of requests by the sector given the current work of other regulatory and sector bodies and the range of policies with which universities must comply currently.

Finding the Right Balance

The governance of Australian universities tries to balance national priorities and accountability for public investment with the ambitions of each university to build its future through its vision and mission as determined by its local governing council. Overall this balance has provided for a high-quality sector, outperforming many other countries given the size of the Australian population and its geographic positioning. Whether the current proposals will serve to enhance or detract from Australia's proud tradition of innovation and inclusiveness remains to be seen.

51. Clare, J, <https://ministers.education.gov.au/clare/next-steps-delivering-universities-accord-reforms>

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The Evolving Governance System in the Indian Higher Education: Challenges and Promises

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Introduction

Higher education in India is regulated both by the Central as well as the State governments through its respective ministries of education. The Indian model of higher education comprises public and private institutions that have been provided a charter by either of these governments. State governments impose their own requirements and regulations over and above those by the agencies of the central government. In addition, certain public institutions are fully funded by the Central government and are regulated directly by the ministry of education as institutions of national importance. Private institutions could be partly funded by a government or may remain completely funded by private sources. However, all remain largely controlled by the government. Universities in India can be multi-disciplinary or focused around a single discipline.

Governance of higher education in India becomes complex as institutions face different rules and regulations and their comparison becomes challenging. In this essay, we provide an overview of the evolution of the higher education model in India and an assessment of how its governance system is changing in light of social and economic changes in its society and around the world.

The Objective of Education

Universities are supposed to be the most dynamic places in any society. They provide for talent, their research addresses key dilemmas of the society, they provide opportunities to a community to pursue what they are passionate about, and most important, they question our practices and provide ways to think better.

There are three key purposes of education. The first purpose of education must be to imbibe the constitutional obligation of every citizen of a nation. A highly educated society shows high respect for the laws of the land, high regard for the freedoms of others, high tolerance for diversity and difference, high desire for peace, and is more giving towards those less endowed. Education is supposed to build faculties that allow us to develop nuanced and reflective positions on issues that a society faces.

The second purpose of education is to prepare the youth for livelihood. When a society's brightest start to choose vocations that do not suit their passion but instead suit the

forces of the market, the chances of mismatch, especially at the upper end of skills, become quite real. This is a strong challenge that the higher education landscape faces in India. Our measure of success seems to be derived from those who make to elite institutions rather than quality of those who graduate from all our institutions.

The third purpose of education is even more sophisticated in its value—to help find one's life-long passion for learning and one's own meaning in that life. Experiences induced by the campus and the reflection arising out of such experiences are supposed to help an individual to think deeply about herself, her relationships with the lifelong quest for knowledge, and discovery of the self as well as picking up skills of the times (a need that is becoming more real now).

Indian institutions have fared variably over these three purposes and over the period of its recent history.

History of Indian Higher Education

The current higher education system has evolved over the last one hundred and seventy-five years though the history of formal higher education in India dates to second century AD. It can be divided in three phases — the pre-independence period (from 1850 to 1947), the remaining years of the 20th century, i.e., from 1947 to 2000, and the early 21st century. Much has been achieved in terms of access to higher education, which was an important objective.

By the end of the 19th century, there were 5 universities and about 25 colleges across the country. They were largely designed on the patterns of the universities and colleges of Oxford, Cambridge and London. At that time, higher education was largely for children of the social and economic elite. As more universities and colleges were started between 1900 and 1947, the enrollment also grew but its elitist character remained. In these early years, most institutions were graduating students for the service of British government departments and government's civil service. This period also saw the establishment of a University of London styled affiliation system where colleges were affiliated to the few established universities who would conduct examinations. Undergraduate education was largely in colleges (though unitary Universities that were non-affiliating started to appear in early 20th century). Very influential educational institutions that would go on to build a distinctive culture and scholarship which would shape India's freedom struggle were found

during this period included universities like AMU, BHU, Lucknow, Patna, Andhra, Viswabharti, Osmania etc. and Colleges like Fergusson in Pune; Wilson, Elphinstone, St Xavier's in Bombay, Loyala in Chennai, Agra College, Baroda College, Christ Church College in Kanpur, Presidency and St Xavier's in Calcutta; St Stephen's, Hindu, and Ramjas in Delhi, Cotton College in Guwahati, and Khalsa College in Amritsar. Unfortunately, many would lose their original glory over time. This was perhaps also the period when Indian Science was global and very cutting edge. At the same time, politics on campus were largely driven by the independence movement.

The Post-Independent India – the period between 1947 and 2000, perhaps, has been the most celebrated yet traumatic period for higher education. When India gained independence in 1947, the nation had a total of 241,369 students registered across 20 universities and 496 colleges. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) was 0.5 percent. The nation had to be built and education was the aspiration of the growing population. The University Grants Commission (UGC), the regulator that oversees the funding, access of quality education, and maintenance of standards of the universities was established in 1945 and became a statutory body in 1956. By the year 2000, enrolment grew to 8mn in about 256 universities and 13,000 colleges with a GER of 10 percent. This rapid growth was fuelled by enrolment from the middle class and the demands of industry and the government. But it did not accompany commensurate increase in public resources. This period also saw the growth of private institutions – mostly run by people in power and many of who saw this as a business proposition. The private started seeking and getting subsidies from the government for running their institutions. Private donors at public institutions shrank and they became fully dependent on the government. These led to an increase in regulation and control by the government. This paved the way for a complete bureaucratization of higher education. It had three characteristics – one, the bureaucrats took full control of the running of institutions by defining every process therein – from the process for hiring of faculty, to criteria for admissions, to appointment of vice chancellors, to determination of governance structures, to curriculum, to rigid heads under which grants could be used, to processes for growth and rejuvenation, how were surpluses to be used etc. Two, the only way to control large number of institutions was to standardize the processes and ways of doing things at all institutions in the country. All had to become similar in every way thereby destroying what was distinctive about each of the great institutions of India. This slide started

in 1950s and continues to date. And three, academics in higher education were to be treated like de-facto public servants and all rules and regulations of the government were applicable. This smoked innovation out of university governance. This standardization also removed all flexibility in admissions and appointments that brought very valuable people to campuses in the early years. Universities had come to resemble government offices. Departments became insular and Universities were unable to solve big puzzles of society because they required knowledge systems from many discipline to be deployed together. There was another force at play (and it continues to date) where the best and the brightest saw better opportunities in a growing industry rather than academia and faculty shortage grew. The growing demand for education and the expansion of universities & colleges was so rapid that it brought in, as faculty, people who were more agreeable to the bureaucracy and often had lower academic preparation.

The Affiliation system that had started in the previous era also become a real monster. For instance, the great University Mumbai has 700 colleges affiliated to it. Change making to meet the requirements of time became very difficult. Centralization led universities to shrink their purpose to simply readying manpower for industry with varying preparation, and the latter led to a forsaking of the love of learning—a key purpose of education!

This was also a period where the State's emphasis moved away from Universities into stand-alone institutions for teaching and research. We saw growth of single or limited discipline institutions like the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs), the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), National Law Schools, All India Institutes of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Architecture schools as well as various research institutions that were setup outside of the universities. This deprived the Universities of precious new resources and an opportunity to become leaders in research and innovation. New Central universities were started but they were largely catering to students only in the region with faculty from that region too! National integration and pluralism in a diverse society, which was a very valuable outcome of attending a university, was now diluted.

As this cache of professional institutions grew post 1950s, their graduates could get jobs easily. They became the most competitive in the world and the value of others declined. The arts and sciences (which attracted the highest enrolment) were no longer in demand by industry. Interestingly, most engineers went on to work in sectors other than engineering. The growth of the IT industry post 2000 exacerbated this problem and core industry started getting affected.

The society outside the universities was also changing intensely and its influence on the university was negatively centripetal. Political parties started to see universities as

preparatory grounds for their profession—not in terms of building experts, but as small-time political leaders who would do the bidding for regional politicians—hired hands who had a negative influence on the functioning of the institution.

It was under these conditions that Indian higher education entered the 21st century. One significant change started to take place in the first decade of the 21st century – the growth of liberal arts driven, multi-disciplinary private universities that provide flexibility to students. These take inspiration from the US Universities – a big change from the earlier institutions. My own institution, the Ahmedabad University, an example of this experiment to build research driven interdisciplinary University was established in 2009. Perhaps, these institutions and their governance model supported by private philanthropy can show the way to rejuvenate higher education in India and also its much needed public institutions. However, the jury is still out on them and we will see how much autonomy will they be allowed by the State and what they do with it. One would be amiss if we don't mention the National Education Policy of 2020 which reflects a clear shift in an articulation of what education must be in the 21st century and what will be its drivers. Interestingly, it celebrates the multidisciplinary, integrative university and argues for stand-alone institutions to become one. Its implementation, however, will require dismantling of all the powers and structures which have prevented existing great institutions to become a pale shadow of their past.

Today, the enrolment in higher education stands at 43.3mn (which is expected to increase to 92mn by 2035) across 1114 universities, around 44,000 colleges, and 11,300 stand-alone institutions with a GER of 29 percent. Three interesting characteristics seem to emerge at this time: first, most institutions are single or limited-discipline institutions with an average enrolment of 600 per institution. In these times, when complex problems require deployment of knowledge from multiple disciplines at the same time, most of these institutions are unable to address them. They must grow in size. Two, while many of our stand-alone institutions are regarded well with their congregation of high calibre researchers and teachers, many universities remain under an intellectual eclipse – over regulated, and under resourced. And three, institutional autonomy is at an all-time low. It has been progressively destroyed over the last twenty years. Today it is the judiciary that has started to decide how should a graduating class be evaluated and promoted or if a decision of the University to promote a faculty has been appropriate? Is that how contemporary accountability and governance systems will evolve ?

However, what India has managed to do well is to provide affirmative action in the form of “reservation” or quotas for underserved and underprivileged communities. This has increased access to higher education.

The Governance System

Governance in higher education can be viewed from multiple lenses of decision making and influence. They help us understand the complex interaction of issues that define the governance system in the Indian university. They also support the argument that governance is about ways of doing things. There is a strategic view of governance at the university which allows universities to establish a long term view of their own activities and make choices that support it. These also relate to the purpose of the university and the roles of each stakeholder; the structure of the university and the related aspects of autonomy, relationship between stakeholders (within the university and outside) and its accountability; and the task of curating university values. University as an organization imposes its own constraints and challenges in the way it is governed and the processes needed to keep it healthy.

Indian institutions are governed through a set of iron-clad rules established by the regulator, the UGC for the Universities and the All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) for stand-alone engineering and management colleges. There exist similar agencies for other professional programmes. They define what institutions can do and how should they conduct themselves leaving little room for experimentation. For example, the State of Gujarat defines how students will be admitted in the management and engineering programmes, what would be the fees (irrespective of the cost), and determines the merit list for admission. Consequently, institutions find development of a long-term strategy a challenge. More recently, the regulator has started to talk about graded autonomy for those institutions who are ranked highly in the National Institutional ranking Framework (NIRF) – a system of ranking developed by the government. One always believed that it was academic autonomy that led to better performance and not the other way around.

Accreditation in India is not mandatory for all institutions. All institutions of national importance are outside its purview. However, for universities and colleges, several government grants and incentives are linked to the performance score from accreditation. The governance tendency is to make institutions look similar rather than grow in their own imagination. This has allowed especially bad practices (and good ones) to spread unchecked.

The structure of relationship between the government, the regulator, and the university defines the extent to which each of these views can be exercised effectively. Two such relationships are at crossroads at an Indian institution – the one within the academy and the one from outside. The regulatory definitions have often stood in the way of developing contemporary managerial systems that will enhance operational capabilities and consequently help achieve the objectives of the university. The heavy hand of the regulatory system as well as the control

system, both at the Sates and at the Centre, have led to the evolution of sub-optimal decision making processes that have also had a limiting effect on the growth of Indian institutions as well as on their learning environments. For example, the regulatory environment determines the quantum of the content as reflected by the credit required for graduation. Recently, the Central regulator defined the minimum number of credits required for a four year degree to be 160. One of the State governments increased it, unilaterally, by ten percent and prescribed it for all institutions chartered by that State. Absence of any consultation with the public and the institutions is the hallmark of such governance system. As result, for many institutions, the pursuit of the purposes of education has been challenging and they question their ability to deliver on that promise.

These issues make the relationship between the government, the regulator, and the university more complex than what they should be. The key question remains as to how accountability is enforced; whether those who fund an institution should make strategic decisions for it; how should the society ringfence the institution from the powers of the day whether it is the government or others; and how does a society evaluate the governance of its institutions.

Social and Economic Changes and the University

Universities are about how lives could be lived. They prepare young people for challenges of tomorrow. That is how universities deliver to the nation in perpetuity with ideas that are ahead of time. Theory of today becomes practice of tomorrow and society draws on these resources for advancing knowledge that will better the world. Four forces are influencing the society in India to re-calibrate its position on how life is going to be lived. These are demographics, technology including automation and particularly AI, climate change, and urbanization. They are having a phenomenal impact on how people think, work and relate with others and the state of resources for the same. The pandemic has significantly changed how young people want to work and their perspective on what they want to learn and how. As significant population of India is young with a median age of 24.8 years, this will require a new shift in how education is imparted and partaken. Similarly, India is urbanisation rapidly. For example, the prosperous state of Gujarat is expected to be 80 percent urban by 2070. Preparing the youth for the market and the society will require growing the size of institutions, setting up newer institutions, as well as newer types of institutions. More important, new jobs that will require technology training will require enabling of academic institutions and development of new programmes differently.

The big challenge before higher education today is to remain salient to the lives of the youth of the country. Much of the educational experience of most students in India revolves around creating social and cultural spaces to engage with,

examinations to receive credentials for the employment market, navigating institutional bureaucracy that refuses to understand needs of students, and which thinks that it exists for itself, and lectures inter-spread in between all such activities. Learning is for examination and alas, much of teaching is also geared towards the examination. In fact, education has become one long season of testing from high school onwards. You literally are relieved the day you graduate with a feeling of 'no more!' Sometimes it feels that our higher education system is going to be disrupted sooner than later.

NEP and the Promise

There have been several commissions on rejuvenation of higher education in India but have never found enough supporters in the government. The most recent one, the New Education Policy of 2020, incorporates several ideas from the previous ones and carried the support of the government in place. It tries to address the challenges that Indian higher education has been facing and the needs of the future. The part that works includes moving away from early disciplinary specialisation to broadening of education at the undergraduate level. Other elements include the following:

- Multidisciplinary education – inclusion of humanities and social sciences in professional education and in within themselves;
- Categorisation of institutions into research and teaching institutions thereby strengthening their respective strategic intent;
- Interdisciplinary education to address complex challenges of the times (for example, climate change);
- Flexibility in choice of disciplines and ability to discover areas of interest through majors and minors, dual degrees, dual majors etc.
- Facilitating specialization in multiple disciplines at the undergraduate level to allow building of career options;
- Strong focus on building employable skills as part of the curriculum; and
- Multiple entry and exit points along with a portal called the Academic Bank of Credits to facilitate accumulating requirements over time for receiving credentials.

The NEP is also attempting to simplify decision making within the university. One key change relates to replacement of the University Court with a Board of Governors. The Court is the highest governance body and comprises several elected members from the university and from the larger society and has been dysfunctional for a long time. However, implementation of many of the new policies have also seen flip-flops like the retracting of autonomy given to the IIMs on the powers of the Boards and their ability to select the leader of these institutions. New changes also include development of a central entrance examination for all universities thereby taking the decision away from universities on who would they like to admit at their institution (this has always been a contested issue in India).

India is experiencing a large outflow of young students for undergraduate education to other countries and especially to the US. Is this indicative of the state of higher education or the changing economic strength of the country? India is also starting to invite foreign institutions to establish campuses in India – this has been under discussion for the last three decades! And some of its public institutions, i.e., the IITs have started to establish campuses overseas. The new hope are its new private institutions that are supported by philanthropy. They are starting to become more attractive alternatives to foreign education because of their more rigorous and flexible curriculum and their critical thinking environment. Interestingly, though not frictionless, such systems are also becoming possible in India.

India's increased focus on employability and especially around services has brought the role of technology to centre stage. Universities are being strongly encouraged to use content (largely around technical disciplines) developed on Indian platforms like SWAYAM as substitutes or complements to in-class instruction. As this world expands, Universities will find themselves segregated more by research and/or teaching and that may lead to further stratification in the academic landscape.

Conclusion

Indian higher education system is evolving quite rapidly and global options are becoming possible due to socio-economic changes in the middle class of the country. For India to grow its GER, its Universities will have to grow larger and more interdisciplinary. Business schools are sitting at the cusp of change and many are responding by developing new teaching and research agenda around sustainability and digital. This is where University based business or engineering schools are moving more interestingly by engaging closely with humanities and social science and other schools in building problem driven interdisciplinary teaching and research agenda.

As the objective of the governance system become more focused on the success of the youth instead of being mere compliant to the regulator, we may see new types of institutions emerge as leaders. This will require both space from the regulator and a closer participation of industry and society in how the youth get trained and how to leverage university research for its own benefit and those of the society. A few other issues remain to be addressed – one, the scope of education to address local issues through global experience; two, to spread quality beyond its top institutions through accreditation and experimentation; three, build more use-inspired basic research in the short run; and focus on translation mission to bring quality content in vernacular languages thereby complementing its push on access. The educational system has surely started to move.

University accountability

Duncan Ross, Chief Data Officer at THE

In the western traditions higher education has primarily been accountable to itself. The great institutions have been fellowships – jealously guarding their independence of thought. Of course, in reality the independence has always been limited by the realities of society, and an academy that stands against vested interests – whether political or scientific – will soon be brought back to a position of conformity.

But the prevailing approach has been self-governance, and with it only a limited element of external accountability. Where there is an external overview it should – ideally – be from other parts of academia.

Research, similarly, is primarily evaluated by academics themselves through peer-review and the control of editorships. And although funding bodies may perform external assessments of research, in order to do so they primarily rely on academics for insight. This can clearly be seen in the panels created for the UK Research Excellence Framework or the Excellence in Research for Australia reports.

There are good reasons why this should be the case. How can non-experts be asked to understand the detailed work done in higher education? Who better than academics to ensure that academia is doing what it should?

The problem with this approach is that sectors are notoriously bad at self-regulation. Financial services, oil and gas, newspapers, gambling, politics – none have a great track record when it comes to the ability to effectively and transparently regulate their own affairs. Why would we expect higher education to be any different?

Beyond this, of course, higher education has to accept that it is an expensive activity, and one that can often appear to be a luxury to outsiders. Wherever the resourcing come from it needs to be justified.

There are differing approaches to this. Some focus on the economic value of universities, and their role in preparing students for employment.

When the new University of Sheffield, UK was created in 1905 there was a clear public focus:

You should support the university because:

1. The UNIVERSITY will be for the people.

2. The UNIVERSITY will bring the highest education within the reach of the working man.

3. The UNIVERSITY will help the local industries.

4. The UNIVERSITY will be the centre where the treatment of accidents and diseases will be studied.

5. SHEFFIELD is the only large City in England without a University. Sheffield cannot afford to remain in this position.

6. The UNIVERSITY will not only benefit this district, it will assist the nation in its trade competition with other nations.

I would hope that today we can take a broader view of the societal impact that our institutions can have.

If so then we need to decide firstly what societal criteria we think we should be evaluated against, and secondly who should evaluate us, and how.

The key challenge: climate

It may seem odd to start a discussion about the societal impact of higher education by suggesting that we focus on climate change.

It is, however, the defining issue of our time. How we address it will determine how we are perceived by our children and grandchildren, or more existentially whether our institutions will even exist in 100 years' time.

There is also a distinct advantage in deciding to use climate as the key driver. The United Nations has endorsed a set of Sustainable Development Goals that provide a common, agreed framework that can be used for assessment.

The goals were agreed in 2015 as part of the UN Agenda 2030. They aim to give a series of targets and objectives by which the world can avoid the worst effects of climate change. They are broad enough to recognise the importance of equity and a “just transition” identified through seventeen linked high-level goals and 169 distinct targets.

When Times Higher Education was looking for a new way of understanding the progress being made by higher education the SDGs seemed to be a potential fit.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals adopted by the UN in 2015



Despite their drawbacks, and the political nature of some of the targets, they have been agreed by all the nations of the UN.

By using them wisely we can develop metrics that are relevant across the sector, and where even a performative approach to delivery can make a difference.

It can also be argued that within Agenda 2030 itself – the founding document that launched the Goals - there is an imperative for universities at the very least to participate actively within the national reviews envisioned by the Agenda.

“79. We also encourage member states to conduct regular and inclusive reviews of progress at the national and sub-national levels which are country-led and country-driven. Such reviews should draw on contributions from indigenous peoples, civil society, the private sector and other stakeholders, in line with national circumstances, policies and priorities. National parliaments as well as other institutions can also support these processes.”

<https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

What measurement systems should universities explore if they want to be evaluated against the SDGs?

There is an established mechanism for voluntary national reviews, and for voluntary reviews at lower organisational levels. Cities and towns have conducted reviews (and some

have been conducted by towns that are significantly smaller than some universities).

There are also Voluntary University Reviews, although far too few have been completed. One of the earliest was by Carnegie Mellon University (<https://www.cmu.edu/sustainability-initiative/review/index.html>) – and this shows both the opportunity and the complexity of a voluntary review. CMU have now published four reviews, led by Alexandra Hiniker, CMU's Director of the Sustainability Initiative. Alexandra came to the role following her fantastic work leading New York City through its first Voluntary Local Review.

Voluntary Reviews are, by their nature, unique. This is a strength – institutions can choose their own themes, identify relevant metrics, and ensure they collect data relevant to their own context. It is also a weakness. The review is internal, and it is difficult to directly compare your institution with another.

For many institutions this won't be a problem. But for others the idea of comparison, of understanding where there is scope to improve, is vital.

Designing a measurement framework

At Times Higher Education we created the Impact Rankings to provide that comparison. And, to be honest also to provide competition and, yes, a little theatre.

When we did this we had to address many of the issues that need to be approached when undertaking a Voluntary Review. The key difference was that we were working at scale, for what we hoped would be many hundreds of institutions.

This did, however, also include a challenge. We had to build metrics that we hoped would be universal (such as a commitment to carbon neutrality in SDG 13, or to gender pay equity in SDG 5) or that we could design in a way that was flexible enough to be answered in a way appropriate to the context of an institution.

We also had to recognise that not all universities would have the same level of resource to support data collection, and it would not make sense to have a *sustainability focused* ranking that simply rewarded the wealthy institutions of north America and western Europe, and ignored the work being done elsewhere in the world.

With this in mind we looked at the 169 targets through a theory of change that had four major components. Although this was a distinctly Times Higher Education approach it bears similarities to other framings of the SDGs.

Our approach postulates four key ways that SDG targets can be delivered or addressed within Higher Education:

Research

Performing valuable, relevant research is the first opportunity that higher education has to support the goals. Scientific, interdisciplinary and social research is needed across the SDGs, and fortunately there are many well established mechanisms for assessing it.

Bibliometric databases (Web of Science, Scopus etc) have all incorporated the SDGs into their categorisation approaches, although not yet in a consistent way.

There is also a real challenge of linking research to action and then to impact: one that the *SDG Publishers Compact Fellows* have been addressing (<https://www.sdgcompactfellows.org/>). However, Research is still important.

Teaching

Teaching (or perhaps, learning) is the second way that higher education participates in delivery of the SDGs. This can be framed in a variety of ways.

Governments often focus on specific skillsets – often referred to as Green Skills – as the minimum that we will need in order for individuals to adapt their skills to the future of sustainable employment. The exact definition of what makes a Green Skill is open to debate – and it's fair to say that Governments don't have a great track record of predicting the future of work. However there are a number of international approaches to the definition and development of these skills that are underway, including the Green Skills Accelerator, led by UNEP. (<https://www.unep.org/events/unep-event/launch-international-green-learning-and-skills-accelerator>)

A broader approach, however, is that identified by organisations such as Sulitest (<https://www.sulitest.org/>), an organisation born out of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. Their approach is to understand, and assess, the level of general sustainability literacy – an objective that sits alongside Target 4.7.

Stewardship

Many approaches to assessing sustainability focus on a narrow area of what we describe as stewardship. Stewardship – the actions any organisation takes to maintain and support the environment in which they are situated, is, of course critical.

However, especially when it comes to a broader understanding of civic responsibilities within the SDGs, we should reinterpret this to also include how our institutions behave with regards to the people who live, work and learn in our universities.

We should, without doubt, be good employers. We should behave humanly towards people, and demonstrate a commitment to the broad principles of equity and inclusion enshrined in the SDGs, most notably SDGs 10: Reduced Inequalities and 5: Gender Equality.

Outreach

Finally, we should recognise our roles as leaders in our communities. Providing the guidance and insight that can help our cities and towns to implement solutions and mitigations to the climate catastrophe. The relatively large resources of our higher education institutions must be made far more widely available than they have in the past, when narrow admission criteria has resulted (at least in the modern world) in a group of civil leaders who come from a specific and privileged class.

This leadership also needs to be humble, and recognise that learning from our communities is as important as supporting their leadership.

Extending the framework towards impact

Within these four areas Times Higher Education has identified 75 metrics that are backed up by 251 data points. Not all of these metrics are equally relevant to all institutions – we wouldn't expect that. We see the ability of higher education to adapt to their local needs and demands as a strength, not a weakness.

And the approach we take can and should also be used alongside other frameworks, such as the Depth of Change approach suggested by Cuesta-Carlos et al (as an adaption of Sterling 2013)

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S258981162300023X>

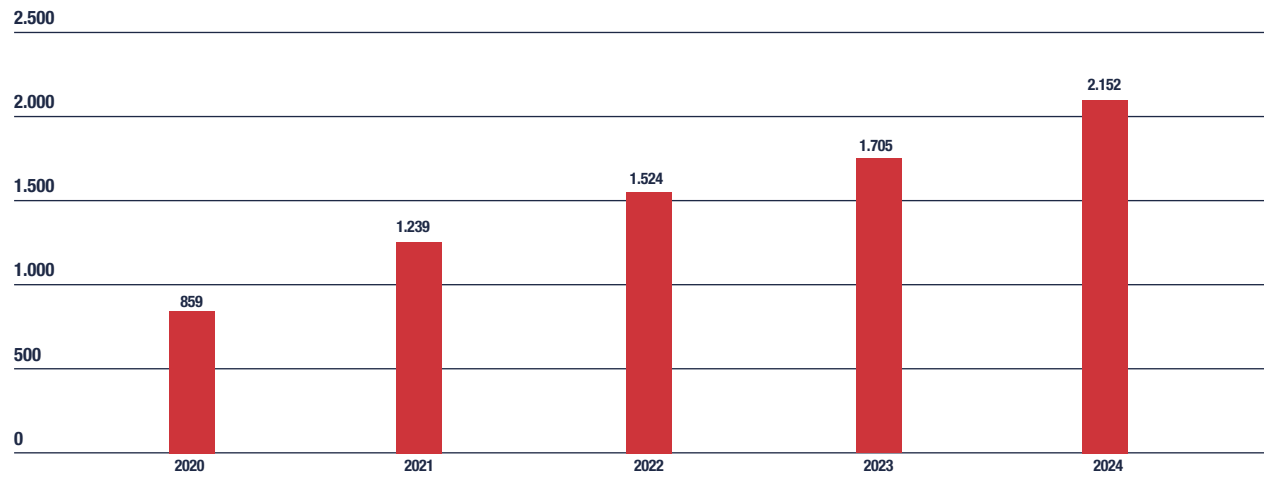
In the six years that the THE Impact Rankings have been published we have seen an increasing number of institutions across the world participating.

In 2024 more than 2,100 higher education institutions provided us with data for at least one SDG.

In 2018 the United Nations Higher Education Sustainability Initiative recognised the influence that this kind of assessment could have on progress by institutions and inaugurated the Rankings, Ratings and Assessment Action Group to focus on how best to maximise the positive and correct for the negatives in these evaluations.

<https://sdgs.un.org/HESI/rankings-ratings-and-assessment>

THE Impact Renkings Participants



No measurement approach is without challenges, but the necessity for institutions to hold themselves accountable to society has never been stronger.

“As we begin the second half of our journey to 2030, signs of a determined, sustained global comeback have yet to emerge. This year’s report reveals that only seventeen per cent of SDGs targets are on track to be achieved, nearly half are showing minimal or moderate progress, and progress on over a third has stalled or even regressed.”

*Progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals
Report of the Secretary-General May 2024*

La gobernanza: lecciones norteamericanas aplicables a España

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I. Prefacio

Comparto el diagnóstico, expresado en los informes Bricall (2000), Tarrach (2011) o Miras-Portugal (2013), que una disfunción básica de nuestra legislación universitaria es la estructura de gobernanza que determina. Me apena que en lo esencial esta no haya cambiado en el último cuarto de siglo, un periodo en que muchos de nuestros vecinos europeos –que se encontraban en una situación similar a la nuestra– han sabido hacerla evolucionar. Y no me refiero solamente a Austria o Finlandia, sino también a Portugal.

Es evidente que las fuentes de inspiración más realistas para un cambio legislativo en España serían las experiencias europeas. Y para mí lo que estas sugieren están muy bien expresadas en Tarrach (2019). Pero en este artículo voy a llevar a cabo un ejercicio muy contrapuesto a esta constatación. En dos aspectos. El primero es que comentaré sobre el tema a partir de experiencias norteamericanas, en parte porque así se me lo han pedido los editores y en parte porque, como los editores han entendido, es un entorno universitario que conozco bien. El segundo es más triste. En España hemos aprobado, desde la restauración de la democracia, una ley orgánica de universidades cada 20 años (LRU: 1983, LOU: 2001, LOSU: 2023). La LOSU es muy reciente y la posibilidad de introducir en ella algunas de las ideas de Tarrach en lo concerniente a la gobernanza apareció en borradores tempranos de la Ley, pero no en el texto final de la misma. Otra ocasión perdida. Como no se trata de esperar sin más otros veinte años, y como además estoy convencido de que el conservadurismo en este tema no es solo cosa de la normativa básica sino también de la propensión a interpretarla en forma muy restrictiva, me pregunto: ¿Hasta donde podríamos llegar si superásemos esta actitud? Pienso que explorar, con espíritu intrépido, los límites de la gobernanza que el texto de la LOSU permite es un ejercicio que vale la pena llevar a cabo. A partir de ahí la palabra será ahora de las comunidades autónomas. Son ellas las que pueden utilizar, o no, el margen de actuación que la ley les concede. La tesis de este artículo es que este margen es considerable.

II. Norteamérica

Me refiero a Norteamérica y no directamente a los EE.UU., en los que de hecho esta sección se va a concentrar, para permitirme una observación preliminar. En muchas ocasiones me han preguntado cómo aconsejaría organizar un viaje de estudio a las universidades norteamericanas. Mi consejo, si el

tiempo lo permite, es no iniciarlo por las Harvard o Stanford de este mundo. Demasiado distantes de nuestra realidad. Con facilidad pueden inducir desánimo. Nos aparecerán como inalcanzables en su inmensa riqueza. Es mejor iniciar la exploración por las universidades canadienses. Estas son reconocibles desde Europa. Representan un buen ejemplo de que es posible incorporar con provecho (¡el *machine learning* surgió del Canadá!) características de modelos estadounidenses en estructuras universitarias en origen no muy distintas de las prevalentes en la Europa continental

No ofreceré a continuación una presentación sistemática de la organización de la educación superior en los EE.UU. Me limitaré a describir algunas de las características que, como argumentaré más adelante, pienso que pueden ser fuente de inspiración para las comunidades autónomas españolas y sus universidades. No me entretendré con aspectos esenciales de la organización de la educación superior en los EE.UU. que, pienso, no podrán ser fuente de inspiración para nosotros, a menos que sea a *sensu contrario*, o en todo caso no en los próximos años. En particular, de la financiación. Así, por lo que hace a los costes de matrícula, es claro que la norma europea es perfectible pero es mucho mejor que la de los EE.UU. donde ha generado un endeudamiento personal desmesurado que ha resultado en un problema social de primera magnitud. Y por lo que hace a la filantropía, es evidente que nos convendría disponer de ella con más abundancia. y que el ejemplo americano es ahí paradigmático. No lo trato explícitamente porque no tengo nada nuevo que ofrecer. Convendrían más estímulos fiscales (en concreto, aproximar más nuestra Ley del Mecenazgo a la francesa) pero sobre todo que la cultura evolucione en un doble sentido: que los beneficiarios de la filantropía la aplaudamos sin reservas y que aumente la propensión a practicarla por parte de los que pueden.

II. A. Docencia e investigación

En su conjunto, las estructuras de educación superior de los EE.UU. cumplen adecuadamente bien la función docente, y espectacularmente bien la investigadora. Pero la cualificación “en su conjunto” debe ser subrayada. En lo que se refiere a la investigación, el contraste con Europa es muy notable. Podríamos decir que la estructura europea es horizontal: todas las universidades aspiran a ser investigadoras y prácticamente todas ellas tienen programas de doctorado. La estructura americana es vertical. Las universidades que ofrecen formación de doctorado no pasan del 10% de las instituciones de educación superior. Esas –entre 250 y 400

según se cuente– son las universidades investigadoras, que, a su vez, son muy disimilares en potencia investigadora y prestigio. No todas son Harvard, MIT, Berkeley o Stanford. Un reto difícil, pero inexcusable, para la política universitaria europea es como compatibilizar la buena característica de la dispersión geográfica de la excelencia, a la cual no podemos renunciar, con la aspiración de impulsar cimas de excelencia comparables a las de los EE.UU. Estoy convencido de que es un objetivo alcanzable. Pero para diseñar las políticas adecuadas hay un aspecto del ejemplo americano que se debe tener muy presente: el coste de la investigación es, incluso para un país tan rico como los EE.UU., un factor que inevitablemente ha de llevar a la focalización del esfuerzo.

En el caso de los EE.UU. esta focalización ha conducido a una separación entre universidades investigadoras, las menos, y las restantes instituciones docentes de educación superior. Me referiré en breve a estas, pero antes quiero dejar constancia de que las universidades investigadoras también son docentes, como corresponde a una universidad. Lo son tanto a nivel de grado (*bachelor*) como de postgrado –*master* y *Ph. D.* Algunas, pocas, se limitan al postgrado, que es el nivel docente más relacionado con la investigación. Pero la inmensa mayoría aspiran también a formar estudiantes que no serán investigadores y que, culminado el grado, se incorporarán directamente al mercado laboral o a escuelas profesionales (derecho, arquitectura, medicina, educación, etc.). Y es que para entender el complejo de la educación superior americana hay que recordar sus orígenes. En su esencia, la realidad presente responde a una combinación feliz de dos modelos europeos. El *liberal arts* de corte británico (Oxford, Cambridge...), que desemboca en el *bachelor*, y la universidad de investigación que surgió en Alemania a principios del siglo XIX (modelo *Humboldt*) y que, como es bien sabido, hasta la Primera Guerra Mundial fue modelo universal –tanto para norteamericanos como para japoneses o españoles– de lo que debía ser una universidad moderna (véase Barry, 2000).

Las instituciones de formación superior con una misión formativa a niveles inferiores al posgrado, que son las más, tienen una tipología diversa. Algunas son universidades clásicas sin ambición investigadora. Otras son los *liberal arts colleges*. Este es un segmento muy característico de los EE.UU. Es minoritario y orientado a la formación de elites. El profesorado, predominantemente compuesto de doctores, está muy bien seleccionado, las clases son de pocos alumnos, y la formación es generalista e inclusiva de las humanidades. La pedagogía pone énfasis en cultivar en

debate y el espíritu crítico. Llegan a ser instituciones de gran prestigio (con nombres como Wellesley, Swarthmore, Oberlin, Grennell, etc.) y son modelos imitados en el mundo (véase Penprase i Pickus, 2023). Finalmente, el sector mayoritario es el de los *community colleges*. En contraste con los *liberal arts*, que son privados –pero sin ánimo de lucro– estos son públicos (las universidades, incluidas las de más reputación, pueden ser privadas, por ejemplo Harvard o Yale, o públicas, por ejemplo Minnesota o Berkeley). Los *community colleges* son la razón por la cual puede afirmarse que más de los 2/3 de los alumnos norteamericanos de formación superior estudian en instituciones públicas. En un contexto donde la educación superior es muy costosa para los alumnos los *community colleges* son más asequibles –también permiten compatibilizar el estudio y el trabajo– y son, por tanto, un factor importante de movilidad social ascendente. Los *community colleges* pueden ser complementarios a las universidades. Es muy común que estos impartan los dos primeros años de un *bachelor* y que los alumnos transfieran su matrícula a una universidad al tercer o cuarto año. Pero también imparten titulaciones de las que en España llamaríamos de formación profesional –o vocacionales– es decir muy orientadas a la formación técnica y a la empleabilidad. Estas son de dos años o, aunque no en todos los Estados, de cuatro años.

II.B. La gobernanza

El gobierno de las universidades norteamericanas responde, en su modelo básico, a una dualidad clásica de la institución universitaria que de forma estilizada puede describirse de la siguiente forma:

Siempre hay un órgano responsable de los aspectos económicos y de la estrategia de la universidad. Está nombrado por un proceso político en el caso de las públicas y por cooptación en el caso de las privadas. Lo denominaré el Consejo de la Universidad. Es común que en el Consejo haya una presencia importante de antiguos alumnos –*alumni*–, con un sesgo en las privadas hacia donantes. Se ha argumentado –en mi caso debo la observación al profesor Shailendra Mehta, investigador sobre el tema– que la presencia de estos *alumni* está muy alineada con la promoción de la calidad ya qué, ¿quiénes sino ellos serán los primeros interesados en mantener la reputación de la universidad? El sesgo hacia el donante es, sin embargo, problemático. Lo ha sido, por ejemplo, a raíz de los intensos debates sobre la guerra de Gaza donde más de un donante ha tratado de influir sobre cuestiones estrictamente académicas o con implicaciones importantes para la preservación del principio de libertad de cátedra y de expresión.

Y tenemos también otro órgano interno a la universidad que recoge la esencia colegial de la universidad y que está a cargo de todos los aspectos académicos y de mantener el principio de soberanía académica del profesorado,

frecuentemente representado por un senado. Lo denominaré el Consejo de Gobierno.

El responsable del Consejo de la Universidad es el presidente de la universidad, el del Consejo de Gobierno el *provost*. En los EE.UU. el presidente predomina sobre el *provost*. La primera autoridad protocolaria y efectiva en la dualidad es el presidente. Ambos cargos son a dedicación completa. Los presidentes son típicamente académicos de gran distinción reclutados en procesos selectivos muy cuidadosos y no restringidos en absoluto a profesores de la propia universidad (en contraste, el *provost* siempre lo es).

No puedo resistir mencionar el libro de H. Rosovsky (1991). Es una entretenida e inteligente exposición de la práctica real de la gobernanza en las grandes universidades norteamericanas escrita por un antiguo y brillante decano de la Universidad de Harvard.

II.C. El profesorado

Las universidades, públicas o privadas, contratan a sus profesores mediante contratos laborales. El pilar troncal del profesorado es el que está en *tenure track* o que ya tiene *tenure*. El *tenure* es una institución peculiar. No es simplemente un contrato indefinido sino eso complementado con un compromiso de la universidad según el cual el profesor solo podrá ser despedido si incurre en algún comportamiento muy irregular (también, en algunos casos, si la universidad cierra completamente un departamento). La *tenure* se obtiene, o no, entre los cinco o diez años de la contratación inicial en *tenure track*. El sistema ha funcionado muy bien para la constitución de cuadros de profesores potentes, motivados e implicados. Y de hecho se ha convertido en modelo para las universidades con ambición de excelencia de todo el mundo, incluidas las españolas. Debo advertir, sin embargo, que la tipología de personal contratado no incluye, en las universidades de los EE.UU., solamente el *tenure track* o *tenure*. Hay también muchos profesores con contratos, típicamente temporales, que no son de *tenure track*. Con frecuencia los contratos se ofrecen para cubrir una necesidad docente concreta –*adjunct professors*. En las *research universities* muchos investigadores están contratados a término o indefinidos pero no en *tenure track* (el *tenure track* está asociado con la condición de profesor). También es importante resaltar que incluso en las universidades más potentes en investigación hay perfiles de profesores de carácter docente (con denominaciones como *preceptor* o *professor of the practice*).

Es muy relevante referirse a las condiciones retributivas. Dos observaciones:

En conjunto, los niveles retributivos están muy influidos por la competencia entre instituciones. Los profesores que reciben propuestas externas de contratación verán aumentados sus

salarios, ya sea porque aceptan la oferta externa, ya sea porque su universidad responde con una contraoferta. En la etiqueta de este juego es casi obligado aceptar la externa si no hay contraoferta. Inducir ofertas externas para generar contraofertas tiene, por lo tanto, riesgos (cambiar de ciudad, casa, disrupción familiar...) excepto, claro está, si las dos universidades están en la misma ciudad. Se dice que muy pocos profesores se trasladan de Harvard a MIT, o viceversa, pero que el tráfico de ofertas y contraofertas es permanente, en beneficio del nivel general de salarios.

Es plenamente aceptado que los profesores puedan tener otras fuentes de ingresos. Para facilitarlos los contratos no son a tiempo completo sino por nueve meses. Es común que los profesores tengan alguna ocupación en los meses de verano. También se permiten compromisos que conlleven remuneración durante los nueve meses de contratación. La regla viene a ser que estas dedicaciones ocupen el equivalente a un día a la semana. Asimismo, es posible, dentro de la propia universidad, llevar a cabo docencia adicional para obtener ingresos adicionales. El que esto firma mientras era profesor a tiempo completo en Harvard enseñó unos tres años un curso de macroeconomía en la escuela de extensión universitaria. Lo disfruté y ayudó a pagar la hipoteca.

III. España

En esta sección comentaré sobre una evolución posible, y ajustada a la LOSU, de las universidades españolas en los tres aspectos que he examinado con referencia a las universidades norteamericanas.

III.A. Docencia e investigación

III.A.1. Universidades y centros

Con la Ley Moyano (1857), con un modelo modernizador difícil de entender desde el presente, la misión investigadora de la universidad española quedó circunscrita a una universidad de nueva planta: la Universidad Central en Madrid. Todas las demás universidades o fueron suprimidas, como lo fue la Complutense de Alcalá de Henares –el cardenal Cisneros se removería en su tumba–, o, ocho de ellas, fueron limitadas a estudios de licenciatura, sin posgrado. Solo la Universidad Central impartía estudios de doctorado. Es notable que Salamanca –que, con la suprimida Complutense, hubiesen podido ser la Cambridge y Oxford de Castilla– fuese despojada de la capacidad de formar doctores.

Exceptuando el periodo de la República en Catalunya, el dislate no se corrigió hasta los años cincuenta del siglo pasado. Fue Ruiz Jiménez que, como ministro de Educación, retornó la capacidad doctoral a Salamanca y, poco después, al resto de universidades. En los sesenta la Central,

perdida su centralidad, adoptó pedigrí clásico asumiendo la denominación vacante de Complutense.

De esta forma la situación que quedó establecida ya al final del franquismo, ratificada en la LRU de Maravall del año 1983 y adoptada por todas las nuevas universidades públicas, es que ser investigadora es consubstancial con la condición de universidad. Una generalización de la misión investigadora que significó un magnífico punto de partida para el futuro pero que, sin embargo, no se profundizó en una buena dirección. En efecto, la LRU estableció que todas las universidades, pero no que todos los centros de una universidad, deben incorporar una misión investigadora. No la tenían ni las escuelas universitarias ni necesariamente los centros adscritos. Era lo razonable. Con escuelas universitarias y centros adscritos se podía atender necesidades puramente docentes, mientras que la investigación se concentraba en facultades y escuelas técnicas. Desgraciadamente, el proceso de erosión de la estructura diseñada por la LRU comenzó pronto. Las escuelas universitarias de Enfermería, Educación, Ingeniería Técnica, etc., se sentían tratadas con inferioridad al impartir solo docencia de titulaciones de tres años, y no poder formar doctores. No cesaron en reivindicar una equiparación plena. Lo consiguieron con la LOU de 2001. Todas las escuelas universitarias desaparecieron como tales y pasaron a –o fueron absorbidas por– centros universitarios con titulaciones de grado de cuatro años. Es muy notable que ello se justificase en nombre de la adaptación al modelo de Bolonia, un modelo que se focalizaba en titulaciones de tres años para las cuales las escuelas universitarias estaban perfectamente bien adaptadas.

Situémonos ahora en el presente y anticipemos el futuro. Para impulsar la docencia en la amplitud necesaria – que si tenemos en cuenta la formación a lo largo de la vida y también la conveniencia de contar con alumnado internacional será considerable– estoy convencido de que necesitamos disponer de un modelo de centro que, como los *liberal arts* y los *community colleges* americanos, no tenga necesariamente asociada a la misión docente una misión investigadora o de formación de doctores. Si no es así, las realidades económicas que de forma extrema se han impuesto en los EE.UU. se impondrán también entre nosotros: el coste de centros docentes que son también (realmente) investigadores es demasiado elevado para que pueda ser la norma absoluta de los centros en que se imparte docencia.

Para las universidades públicas –lo tienen más fácil las privadas–, solo veo una vía para hacer posible la existencia de centros básicamente docentes: los centros adscritos. Es cierto que estos no gozan de una aceptación general en el mundo universitario. Pero lo que cuenta no es el poco o mucho atractivo que nos susciten las experiencias concretas del pasado o el presente, sino la letra de la ley. Nada impide

a las universidades promocionar centros adscritos –que podríamos llamar de nuevo cuño– que no sean concebidos como subalternos sino que incorporen centralidad universitaria en formación (no doctoral). Deberían ser centros alineados en su gobierno, explícita o tácitamente –pero siempre de manera firme– con la universidad de adscripción (que vía convenio ejerce el control académico). Los centros adscritos permiten grados de flexibilidad muy convenientes: en el modelo económico –por ejemplo, aplicando principios de tarificación social donde la contribución del alumno depende de sus disponibilidades: se paga con arreglo a las disponibilidades del alumno– o en el modelo académico. La viabilidad económica es, por supuesto, un requerimiento imprescindible. Por lo que hace a la investigación: que cada centro tenga su política. La ley no ha de imponer un modelo.

III.A.2. El concepto de profesor universitario

Con respecto al concepto de profesor universitario la evolución ha sido paralela y consecuencia de la que acabo de describir para los centros. La LRU del año 1983 introdujo una gran novedad: el profesorado universitario debía ser predominantemente docente e investigador. Nótese que la conjunción es “y”, no “o”. Es una copulativa que impulsó una auténtica revolución investigadora en la universidad. Para la misión investigadora funcionó espectacularmente bien. Pero he escrito “predominantemente”. Hubo excepciones al requerimiento de docencia e investigación: el profesorado de las escuelas universitarias para empezar, o la utilización de profesores asociados, a los que se suponía una ocupación externa a la universidad, pero que en muchos casos no era así. Son excepciones que el tiempo ha erosionado, culminado con la LOSU. Las escuelas universitarias, y su profesorado específico, ya desaparecieron con la LOU y el recurso a los asociados ha sido limitado por la LOSU. Esta, como las leyes anteriores, entiende por asociado un experto con dedicación laboral principal externa a la universidad. Pero para terminar con la práctica de encadenar contratos temporales de docentes que, de hecho, tienen su ocupación principal en la universidad, la LOSU impone que la contratación debe ser indefinida. A su vez, para garantizar que los asociados tendrán dedicación laboral externa, impone que los contratos serán a tiempo parcial –aunque posiblemente lo podrán ser al 95% de dedicación– con un máximo de 120 horas de docencia. Este es un punto clave y, a mi entender, sin justificación una vez se ha impuesto el contrato indefinido. ¿Por qué limitar las horas de docencia de un profesor asociado como si se tratase de un investigador? O ¿por qué un asociado docente sin obligaciones investigadoras hubiera de tener una carga docente muy inferior a la de un profesor de bachillerato? Y, en definitiva, por qué no admitir una categoría de profesorado asociado docente y con dedicación principal a la universidad? También sería natural que los expertos externos con contrato temporal no quedasen limitados a un 8%. Con todo ello la universidad queda severamente limitada en sus posibilidades de formación.

La insistencia de que todo el profesorado de las universidades públicas, sin excepciones, deba ser investigador no va a elevar esta vez el nivel investigador de las universidades públicas. El impacto en profundidad lo determina la producción científica de, digamos, no más allá de un tercio de su profesorado. En cambio, la insistencia va a agarrar económicamente a las universidades públicas que no podrán seguir el paso de las privadas en responder a las nuevas necesidades docentes.

En definitiva, me permito imaginar que una universidad pública que esté a la altura de ser protagonista en las nuevas exigencias docentes e investigadoras, y que lo haga en el único contexto posible –el de la LOSU– concentrará el personal docente e investigador en las facultades y escuelas técnicas de su núcleo central, pero a su vez extenderá su cobertura docente impulsando escuelas adscritas de base fundacional y técnicamente privadas pero académicamente totalmente bajo el control de la universidad que acredita títulos propios o tramita títulos oficiales. La contratación en estos centros es laboral. Típicamente la exigencia de trabajo será docente y los requisitos de titulación de los profesores dependerán de la naturaleza de la escuela, pero, ya sea por razones legales o de contenido, habrá una contratación importante de doctores. Pudieran ser escuelas de postgrado focalizadas en formación continua –incluyendo másteres, pero no doctorado–, o escuelas con titulaciones de dos años de formación profesional superior y/o grados universitarios de cuatro años, pero todos ellos con pasarelas hacia la universidad (esta sería una versión de los *community colleges*). También, como en los Países Bajos, podría contarse con escuelas impartiendo grados generalistas, del estilo de los *liberal arts colleges*. Y por supuesto, algunas podrían ir muy dirigidas al alumnado internacional, otras a la formación continua *on-line*, etc. Modelos de toda esta tipología ya existen en Europa y hay poca duda de que institucionalmente las tendencias van por ahí. Las seguirán las universidades privadas, ciertamente. Pero deberíamos conseguir que también lo hagan las públicas, ya que es ahí donde está el potencial investigador. Dicho de otra forma: si pensamos en términos de centros, las tendencias de futuro llevan hacia una cierta dualización de centros. Los habrá predominantemente docentes y los habrá predominantemente investigadores. Sería una mala evolución si los segundos se agrupan solo en universidades públicas (es bueno que las privadas sean también investigadoras), pero sería una evolución terriblemente mala si los primeros se agrupan solo en universidades privadas.

III. B. La gobernanza

La gobernanza y la financiación son probablemente los dos factores fundamentales que explican la calidad de las universidades (véase, por ejemplo, Aghion *et al.*, 2008). En este trabajo nos ocupamos de la gobernanza.

Como en la globalidad de las universidades del mundo también en España las tres leyes universitarias han establecido un sistema dual de gobernanza: tenemos el Consejo de Gobierno, presidido por un rector surgido de un proceso electoral interno a la universidad –y muy regulado en la ley, incluida la vigente LOSU–, y tenemos el Consejo Social, con un presidente y miembros surgidos de un proceso político de las comunidades autónomas, financiadoras de las universidades. En contraste con los EE.UU. en nuestra ley el Consejo de Gobierno predomina *de facto* sobre el Consejo Social y el rector también por ley sobre el presidente del Consejo Social. El rector es oficialmente la primera autoridad universitaria.

En contraste con el Consejo de Gobierno el Consejo Social está relativamente poco regulado desde la LOSU y este es un punto que merece enfatizarse. El artículo relevante es el 47, en el que se especifican sus competencias. No entraré en detalles aquí, pero estas son amplias en los aspectos económicos de la universidad, incluida la aprobación de los presupuestos. En cambio no se menciona, ni en el artículo 47 sobre el Consejo Social, ni en el 52 sobre otros cargos unipersonales la figura del presidente del Consejo Social. Una visión tradicional de las leyes que considerase que estas normativizan al detalle todo lo importante concluiría de esta ausencia que la ley no considera la presidencia del Consejo Social una figura importante. Pero creo que no es así. Creo que el legislador ha querido dejar y ha dejado a las comunidades autónomas, que son las financiadoras de las universidades, la capacidad de regular y de establecer el grado de solidez y de potencial de acción de los Consejos Sociales que consideren deseable. Incluso indica que la dirección sobre la que avanzar es la de aumentar su capacidad gestora en sus competencias. Así, el último punto del artículo 47 establece:

“4. Para el adecuado cumplimiento de sus funciones, el Consejo Social dispondrá de una organización de apoyo con recursos suficientes. La ley que establezca su organización y funcionamiento podrá contemplar la dotación de un presupuesto propio del Consejo Social, así como su gestión económico-presupuestaria con carácter autónomo”.

En todo caso, lo que debe notarse es que el panorama legal ha quedado muy abierto para que las CC.AA., si así lo desean, puedan potenciar el papel de los Consejos Sociales (el artículo 47 incluye: “g: ejercer aquellas otras funciones que la Ley de la Comunidad Autónoma determine”).

Creo que ello debería aprovecharse porque desde la interacción del Consejo de Gobierno con un Consejo Social fuerte las universidades podrían desplegar programas de calidad e iniciativas innovadoras de competitividad que son difíciles de articular e impulsar si ello debe hacerse estrictamente desde el ámbito interno a la universidad. En definitiva: las CC.AA. tienen en sus manos transformar los

Consejos Sociales en factores importantes, quizás decisivos, de dinamismo.

Como ejemplo, podrían contemplarse medidas como las siguientes:

- Recoger la sugerencia de la LOSU y proveer a los Consejos Sociales con una organización de apoyo con recursos suficientes. Y no ser tímidos en el aspecto de suficiencia. El Consejo Social ha de poder actuar como agente económico de refuerzo para los grandes programas estratégicos de la universidad.
- Implicar al Consejo Social en el desarrollo de planes estratégicos de la universidad y en su seguimiento.
- Sería particularmente indicado que el Consejo Social incidiera sobre las políticas –de becas, entre otras– destinadas a facilitar el acceso a la universidad al talento procedente de todos los sectores de la sociedad española, o del exterior.
- Hacer posible que la universidad pueda desarrollar una política de personal académico competitiva en el contexto internacional. El apartado j del artículo 47 dice: “aprobar las asignaciones de los complementos retributivos”. Es una habilitación que podría ser extremadamente útil y ya presente en leyes anteriores. Sin embargo, ha sido muy poco utilizada. ¿Por qué? Diría que porque los Consejos Sociales han sido estructuras demasiado débiles hasta ahora. En particular, sin recursos propios significativos. Por otro lado, impulsar programas exigentes de profesorado –necesariamente cargados de implicaciones económicas– se ha demostrado –con excepciones– un objetivo muy difícil de alcanzar si los órganos internos de la universidad no disponen de un refuerzo externo con peso propio que los incentive y apoye. Este podría ser un gran papel para los nuevos Consejos Sociales.
- La presidencia del Consejo Social, que en nuestro sistema continuaría siendo protocolariamente la segunda autoridad, debería tener mucha más entidad. En particular debería ser el resultado de un proceso formal de contratación internacional. Y debería ser una posición a tiempo completo. Esta no es una propuesta menor. Seguramente es la más importante y la que más puede hacer la diferencia de las que hasta ahora se han sugerido. Admito que no está en la inercia mental de nuestras rutinas. Pero, ¿por qué no?, ¿para evitar los peligros de la bicefalia? Sin embargo, ¿cuántas veces he oído, en la intimidad, a rectores expresando el deseo de disponer de un Consejo Social potente y muy cómplice en la introducción y despliegue de políticas ambiciosas?

III. C. El profesorado

La retención, recuperación y atracción de talento es esencial para la calidad y competitividad de nuestras universidades

públicas. Y ello requiere que las autoridades universitarias responsables de las políticas de profesorado –políticas que deben existir y ser centrales en la política de una universidad– deben disponer de grados de libertad en la negociación de condiciones contractuales.

Históricamente esto ha sido bien reconocido en España, y se concretó en unas normas de compatibilidad muy abiertas. Estas tenían una doble virtud. Por un lado, permitían a los profesores suplementar sus ingresos y, por otro, se estimulaba el objetivo deseable de evitar que el talento universitario quedara secuestrado en la universidad, con perjuicio claro a la exigencia de transferencia de conocimiento que el país precisa y que se requiere de la universidad.

Un peligro que se cierne sobre la universidad española es la noción de que este tratamiento está lejos del ideal –que sería el de incompatibilidades generalizadas y escalas salariales muy rígidas– y que su existencia en España era una consecuencia desafortunada pero necesaria de nuestra falta de recursos, una situación en vías de solución. Ambas aseveraciones no son correctas. Como ya hemos visto, los niveles de flexibilidad en esta materia en los EE.UU., un país con muchos recursos, son muy altos. Lo son en razón de favorecer el impacto externo de la universidad. y también porque cuando se compite, los recursos son siempre pocos y hay que utilizar otras variables, en particular las condiciones de compatibilidad. Y por esa misma razón, pero en el ámbito más amplio de Europa y el mundo –que es donde están hoy nuestros competidores por el talento– seguimos, en términos relativos, tan escasos de recursos como siempre.

La LOSU, afortunadamente, no cierra las puertas a la flexibilidad. Pero la tendencia a cerrarlas en interpretaciones restrictivas de la misma o en desarrollos reglamentarios está ahí y podría suceder. Sería un gran error, por no decir una gran estupidez. Ya he mencionado que el redactor de estas líneas enseñó en la Extension School de Harvard. Harvard no solo me lo permitía sino que estaba encantada de que lo hiciera (era bueno para la Extension School). Es el tipo de flexibilidad que, a toda costa, debemos tener y mantener.

Continuo con las condiciones contractuales de trabajo en general, no solo el régimen de incompatibilidades, también el salario, etc. Otra vez, las leyes universitarias no han cerrado la puerta completamente a la posibilidad de competir con, por ejemplo, las mejores universidades europeas. Ha habido programas de profesores distinguidos –o términos similares. Siempre pequeños y poco recurrentes. Y ya he mencionada la opción no utilizada de los Consejos Sociales. No repetiré la propuesta que planteé en la sección sobre Consejos Sociales, pero reitero aquí que sería extremadamente valioso contar con iniciativas de las comunidades autónomas orientadas a la retención, recuperación y atracción de la

élite profesoral de nuestras universidades. Son iniciativas que podrían dotarse de gran potencia si se instrumentan a través de Consejos Sociales con más consistencia y capacidad de gestión que en la actualidad y, deseablemente, con la participación positiva –es decir: complicidad– del Consejo de Gobierno de la universidad. Insisto en el término “recuperación”. A la hora de atraer talento externo no debemos hacerlo con consideraciones de nacionalidad, pero el sentido común indica que el segmento de origen español será el más propenso a aceptar nuestras ofertas. Y el hecho es que este segmento es muy numeroso. Nuestra diáspora científica tiene ya una dimensión inquietante. Para todos los que acabemos recuperando, este paso por la diáspora habrá sido un gran programa formativo, pero si estos acaban siendo una fracción menor de las cohortes profesoras que reemplazarán en los próximos años al muy numeroso grupo de profesores que van entrando en la jubilación, entonces el diagnóstico ha de ser –disculpen la hipérbole– de desastre histórico. Está en manos de las CC.AA. impedirlo. La LOSE se lo permite. Para ello puede utilizar muchos instrumentos en su política de incentivos. Un buen número ya se utilizan, el repertorio de iniciativas es amplio. Si me refiero a Catalunya,

que conozco bien, mencionaría el Plan Serra Húnter o el Programa Icrea Acadèmia. En este texto he sugerido un instrumento adicional: la utilización de fortalecidos Consejos Sociales con presupuesto propio para impulsar, siempre en colaboración con el Consejo de Gobierno, programas de atracción, retención, y recuperación de talento profesoral. Quiero enfatizar que, como en los EE.UU., ello es plenamente compatible con el respeto a la autonomía académica de las universidades. Por ejemplo, la universidad propone con quien negociar una oferta de contrato y el Consejo Social negocia, utilizando, en concepto de complementos, fondos propios de origen público o privado.

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