

EERA: Designing a Leadership Training Programme for University Academic Managers

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Contribution

Designing a Leadership Training Programme for University Academic Managers

Management and leadership at the University have suffered an important increase of pressure to adapt even to external demands and to change requirements received for those organizations during last decades. From this point of view, 'new managerilism' (Deem, 2005) has been a discourse that impulse the adoption of some technologies practices and values typically adscribed to private sector, inside public organizations,. Anyway, University managers are no longer seen as administrators that make decisions on their own. Nowadays, they are expected to develop leadership practices characerized for some features as:

(a) *Distributed or shared leadership*, where leadership is no longer an individual feature but a social process, therefore the whole group must be excellent (Gardner, 2000: 12).

(b) *Collective processes of decision making*, promoting democracy even if this way of functioning contrasts with cultural and organizational fragmentation that are typically shown by Universities (Sánchez & López, 2003).

(c) *Balance between pedagogical and management issues*, widely deffended (Yielder & Codling, 2004) but not always achieved.

So numerous demands suggest the convinience of a leadership training for university managers which take into account some recommendations such as:

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1. Being oriented towards the consolidation of the managers identity as leaders (Wolverton & als, 2005; Aasen & Stensaker, 2007).
2. Giving priority to practical knowledge and to experiences discussions (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007; Calabrese & als, 2008).
3. Putting in connection training and collegial discourses, avoiding a managerialist conception of university leadership (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007; Calabrese & als, 2008).
4. Adapting needs and specific features of Universities as organizations (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007; Calabrese & als, 2008).
5. Including technologies to collaborative relations (Calabrese & als, 2008)

Besides those specific guidelines, we think it would be useful to contemplate others that were proposed by Pulido & als (2010) about general training programmes for University teachers; as well as those proposed by *Leadership Foundation for Higher Education* (2009): diversity, internalization, interconnection and sustainable development.

Taking the exposed ideas into account, our research group is developing a research study[1] whose main purpose is to identify good practices of management developed by academic managers at different organizational levels of the University with the final aim of designing and putting into practice a training programme for those teachers that are interested in management and direction at the University. One of the most relevant elements of that programme will be a blog dedicated to expose and share Management Experiences. Those experiences could be the basis for the construction of a network for the exchange of knowledge and management practices among researchers interested in that topic.

[1] Sánchez Moreno, M. (Head) **Formación de gestores y construcción de una red de buenas prácticas para el gobierno y la gestión de la universidad**, granted by the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science, National Plan of Research + Development + innovation (2011?2014) reference: EDU2011-26437.

Method

In a first phase of the study, developed during 2012, and based on the opinion of diverse members of different Spanish Universities, we identified successful managers stipulated as developing good practices as leaders. Secondly, using in-depth interviews, we tried to identify those necessities those leaders had felt for developing their work as well as particular situations that have represented a challenge for every one of them as a manager. In this paper we are presenting some findings on this topic that could be the basis of a proposal for a leadership training program and, at the same time, we are providing contrasted cases to be shared as illustrations of good practices in management. The final sample was constituted for 60 academic managers from the Universities of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Lleida and Seville. Besides of the initial criteria of being identified as good managers by qualified informers, the selection of the research subjects took into account other criteria as charge, gender, academic field, experience and university. Interviews were developed following a semi-structured script and were recorded. To analyse them, we used a software programme for qualitative data called MAXQDA.10.

Expected Outcomes

In a context of increasing demands over Universities, it is not surprising that some kind of training in the exercise of their direction and management is recognized as needed. Less agreement is registered on the manner that training would be developed but, in coincidence with some previous studies (Del Favero, 2006),

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mentorship is mentioned as a good strategy for that purpose. Among the diverse abilities cited as important for leadership at the University, some must be underlined because of their coincidence with those mentioned by literacy on the issue: - Sense of direction and strategic vision (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Bryman, 2007; Blackmore & Blackwell, 2006; Scott & Webber, 2008). - Personal values (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Bryman, 2007). - Social abilities and empathy (Kezar & Lester, 2009; Bryman, 2007; Scott & Webber, 2008, Spendlove, 2007; Wolverton, Ackerman & Holt, 2005). In contrast, political skills to obtain resources and external support as well as improving organization's visibility (Bryman, 2007; Kezar & Lester, 2009; Scott & Webber, 2008) are not recognized as important. On the other hand, the participants in our research underline the capacity to respect habitual ways of solving administrative tasks and openness for gathering a good team.

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