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”Implementation of New Public Management in Norwegian Universities”

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New Public Management in Norwegian Universities¹

Paper to be presented at the 11th Euredocs conference
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Abstract

The paper discusses the question of which cultural biases have been activated in the implementation of New Public Management in Norwegian universities. It attempts to demonstrate how cultural theory, institutional theory and studies of implementation of public policy can fruitfully be merged, and by analysing the perceived conflict between managerialism and basic academic values indicate how managerialism may be pursued in an academic context and how managerialism can be combated on justifications from this very logic in academia. The analysis is designed as a case study of 20 years' policy formulation and implementation of Management by Objectives in Norwegian universities with data based on national policy development, and from two universities, thereof five faculties (more than 100 written documents and 10 qualitative interviews). Five different strategies of argumentation stemming from three different cultural biases are activated during the controversy on the implementation. Justification of the reform is based on three different cultural biases: a bureaucratic point of reference, a market based point of view and a group oriented point of reference. The opposition to the reform follows two strategies of argumentation: a market-based point of view and a group-oriented point of reference. Additional findings of the case study are empirical documentation policy formulation as a continuous process, a scrutiny of the thesis of normative mismatch between managerialism and academic organisations, documentation of the application of arguments referring both to disciplinary references as well as administrative justifications of both reform and opposition, a long and complicated implementation process, an instrumental application of the reform and a troublesome concept of top-down implementation.

Introduction

Research question

The paper poses the following question: Which cultural biases activated in Norwegian university New Public Management implementation? Following normative institutionalism, implementation of reform provokes resistance if the values underlying the reform diverge from the basic values of the organisation (March and Olsen 1989; March and Olsen 1996; Brunsson and Olsen 1997). The academic values of a university are supposed to diverge from the values underlying New Public Management (NPM) (Christensen 1991a; Bleiklie et al. 2000), so presumably implementation of such reforms provokes resistance in academia. To analyse this implementation process empirically this paper takes as a point of departure a theory which supposes that value conflicts may be seen as being related to four different cultures or discourses (Douglas 1978; Wildavsky 1987; Thompson et al. 1990; Grendstad and Selle 1996; Thompson et al. 1999; Innvær 1999a). Such a research strategy makes it possible

¹ The paper is based on my doctoral thesis *Kunnskapens pris – regnskapets time? Iverksettning av mål- og resultatstyring i norske universiteter (Implementation of Management by objectives in Norwegian Universities)* (Frølich 2001) defended in april 2002 at University of Bergen. Simon Innvær, Stein Kuhnle, Ivar Bleiklie, Harald Grimen, Robert Zuna, Jarle Trondal, Agnete Vabø, Roar Høstaker, Eli Feiring, Anders Molander, Janike Kampevold Larsen, Juliette Frølich, Morten Egeberg and Tom Christensen, gave valuable support and criticism and thereby enabled the thesis.

to disentangle which cultural biases were activated during the implementation process. Knowledge of which cultural biases were activated makes it possible to describe normative mismatch in practice and to include more than two opposing set of values in the analysis. The aim of the paper is to demonstrate how Norwegian university New Public Management implementation may be reframed in these terms with help from cultural theory indicating how multiple cultural rationales might be said to underlie both the reform attempts and the resistance (Frølich 1996; Frølich 2001). Consequently the paper refines our understanding of implementation of reforms in culturally complex organisations and may contribute to the development of sociological normative institutionalism.

Background

Implementation of New Public Management in Norwegian universities provoked resistance (Frølich 1994; Bleiklie et al. 1996; Forland and Haaland 1996; Frølich 1996; Gornitzka 1997; Høstaker 1997; Collet 1999; Vabø 2002). Academics argued that the reforms introduced marked mechanisms that broke with the value basis of universities. Such steering mechanisms might work in business but universities operated from a different logic that did not suit this governance. To a certain extent New Public Management was implemented in Norwegian universities in spite of the supposed normative mismatch between the reform and the organisation.

Data and methodology

Data from the period 1980–2000 forms the empirical basis of the analysis. The analysis rests on a case-study of the implementation process of New Public Managements steering tools in Norwegian higher education focused on national policy formulation and university policy implementation in two universities and a total of five faculties and schools (Frølich 2001). An explorative, intensive case-study research design is applied (Ragin 1992a; Ragin and Becker 1992b). Data consists of more than 100 official documents collected by search in central university and faculty archives and sent on request from these archives, in addition 10 key informants' qualitative interviews conducted in person and on net. Data is analysed by combining methods of text analysis, pragmatics and case study (Jakobson 1963; Lundquist 1983; Silverman 1993; Yin 1994; Verschueren 1999).

Theoretical framework

Both studies in higher education (Clark 1983) and in organisational theory (consult for example, Scott 2003) argue in line with sociological/normative Institutionalism that universities may be described as organisations infused with value, i.e. *institutions* (Selznick 1984 (1957)) which render them robust to implementation of reforms conflicting with their basic values. The empirical descriptions of New Public Management managerialism state that these steering ideologies conflict with Humboldtian basic values of freedom of research. Consequently, it is expected that such reform attempts possibly drive organisations like universities to resist such reform efforts. Cultural theory represents an instrument enabling a scrutiny of this expectation by way of introducing not just the dichotomy reform vs. resisting organisation launched by normative institutionalism; but also taking in to account additional perspectives on both the reform and the resistance.

Cultural theory argues that political conflicts evolve around four different cultures/discourses each of which has its understanding of what constitutes the problem, consequently what seems like a suitable solution, which facts count and which values should be supported. The four cultures are mutually exclusive and at the same time mutually dependent of each other. Each culture produces arguments with holes and loose ends that the other cultures may use to

build up its own arguments and break down the other's arguments by building on other values and premises (Innvær 1999a). In this sense the theory argues that the different cultures will never agree because they are arguing from different premises (Schwarz and Thompson 1990). In this sense cultural theory presupposes conflict, i.e. normative conflict, and as such is suitable to analyse the value conflict evolving around implementation of New Public Management in universities. In Cultural theory the four cultures are developed from two axes, one distinguishing between groups organising themselves in line with many and detailed rules or in line with few and overall rules (high and low grid), and the other axis distinguishing between tight or loosely coupled groups (high and low group) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: The four cultures

High grid	Fatalism	Hierarchy
Low grid	Individualism	Egalitarianism
	Low group	High group

Individualism is a culture where the members regulate their relations by few rules and where the members are loosely coupled to each other. As long as one does not harm any other person, individualists consider people free to choose their own way (few rules). In individualism or the market culture, the members are connected in networks (low group). Considering rules, they should guarantee fair play and give everybody a fair chance to enter the play, but then everyone is responsible for his own results and no-one is to blame but the individual if he/she fails. Individualists are out on their own.

Individuals experiencing a loose coupling, but many rules restricting their actions and relations, are living in a *fatalistic culture*. No-one is to blame and nothing matters or helps. In the theory the fatalistic culture is not considered one of the active cultures because to participate in a conflict for example is not considered important; nothing matters and nothing helps.

A culture where many rules regulate the members and where they also belong to a tight group is called a *hierarchy*. In the hierarchy everyone has and knows his place and rank. Someone who knows better than others is obliged to rule and regulate the group. Hierarchy argues on the equality of procedures.

Egalitarianism is a culture where the members belong to tight groups, but with few rules. Every member is allowed to participate on equal terms and should achieve the same result, no rules distinguish between rank and file so every member is equal.

New Public Management as an ideology has been described as managerialism and market ideology. Introduction of the steering system was described as the introduction of market principles in public administration and as the import of standards from the business sector to academia. In Norway, New Public Management was introduced in public administration as a system of MBO and steering by results. In most empirical studies using CT it is expected that fatalism will not be an active culture in the controversy. It goes without saying that fatalistic argumentation will probably not develop since it presumes that nothing helps or matters (Grendstad and Selle 1996; Thompson et al. 1999). Taking NPM, it is reasonable to expect that this steering system is justified by referring to managerialism (i.e. proceeding on

individualistic points of view). Given the expectation of normative mismatch between NPM and academia, academia must be expected to justify its arguments by referring to a hierarchical and/or egalitarian point of view. On the other hand it is also reasonable to expect that NPM is also justified by referring to a hierarchical point of view. Consequently the opposition develops its arguments by referring to individualistic and egalitarian points of view. Thirdly, it is also reasonable to take as a point of departure the basic values of academia, i.e. autonomy presupposes individualism as cultural bias and that the element of control in NPM reflects a hierarchical world view. This flora of expectations motivates an empirical study of the case.

If one is to argue consistently pro NPM, given a hierarchical point of view, it is possible to put weight on the fact that NPM in Norway in the meaning of MBO was mandatory. MBO then must be implemented because this is decided by the authorities. Given an individualistic point of reference, one can argue the NPM will increase efficiency and that it has to be implemented for this reason. It is theoretically more difficult to think of arguments given an egalitarian point of view to support implementation of NPM. What is given is that an egalitarian argumentation will focus on “the group” and the differences between “us and them”. Hierarchical justifications of MBO in academia may focus being part of public administration, university reforms have been determined and thus have to be implemented. A pragmatic argumentation pro reforms in academia may argue that the reforms increase efficiency and thereby makes more time available for other tasks in academia. A pragmatic argumentation may also proceed on the line that the reforms are a fact and that one just has to make the best of the situation. An egalitarian argumentation pro the reforms given in academia may argue that the reforms make the resources spent visible, and thereby academia’s special identity compared to other types of organisations.

Hierarchical justifications of resistance to MBO may argue that the established scholarly traditions have functioned well over a long time. An individualistic argumentative strategy would emphasise that this is a not suitable steering system which only takes time, gives no efficiency gains, and increases bureaucracy. To argue consistently against MBO from an egalitarian point of view one may argue that it implies more control and monitoring of academia which does not take sufficient care of academia’s special identity.

Taking action

University initiatives

Both the University of Oslo and the University of Bergen commenced work on their resource situation before national plans to increase efficiency in public administration were formulated (i.e. the Haga committee of 1984 (NOU 1984: 23)). In 1980 the University of Bergen decided to evaluate its physical infrastructure in relation to its scholarly tasks (DAK-UiB 1988d). In 1982 the University of Oslo started to evaluate the resource situation by comparing resources at different schools (Collet 1999).

The Ministry of Finance

In 1983 the Norwegian national assembly decided to start a major reform of public administration (*Stortingsproposisjon* 1985). The Ministry of Finance called upon a committee (the Haga committee) to review ameliorations in the state budget system. The Ministry urged the committee to include in the system incentives for a more efficient production in public administration. The committee was asked to evaluate whether the budget and production of results could be better coordinated and to evaluate whether the restructuring of public administration should be an instrument to achieve more efficient production. According to the

argumentation of the Ministry of Finance the spurn to action was lack of efficient production in Norwegian public administration (*Stortingsproposisjon* 1985: 5). Actually the Ministry argued that the reforms would reduce control by removing detailed steering systems and, as such, represent increase freedom.

The Haga committee

The Haga committee delivered its report in 1984 (NOU 1984:23). The committee argued that public administration should be managed by setting goals and providing budget frameworks. Authorities should avoid detailed steering. The committee recommended that public administration in Norway should develop plans with specified goals, instruments and result measures (i.e. in Norwegian *virksomhetsplaner* (MBO)). The Haga committee saw the problem in public administration as one of too detailed steering; their solution was more freedom and responsibility. Planning goals, instruments and measurement of results was introduced as an instrument to escape from detailed steering and obtain more freedom in public administration. MBO was also described as a solution to the control problem. The Haga committee argued that MBO would increase efficiency and reduce the need for detailed steering.

“Detailed steering” may be viewed both as an egalitarian and an individualistic critique of a hierarchical steering system. The Haga committee argued that efficiency rather than detailed steering would increase freedom. It seems as though the Haga committee is arguing that public administration must be released from detailed steering. Since the committee also argues pro efficiency, this argumentative strategy fits more into individualistic than an egalitarian logic which would have difficulties with arguing pro efficiency. Both efficiency and detailed steering are evils in an egalitarian world view; efficiency because it is considered opposing democratic procedures, and detailed steering because it is associated with hierarchical control.

The problem according to the Ministry of Finance

In 1985 the Norwegian cabinet proposes revisions of the state budget system to the national assembly based on the work of the Haga committee (*Stortingsproposisjon* 1985). The Ministry of Finance argues that the financial situation of the country has made possible only limited growth in budgets. This situation impedes the focus on efficiency allowing growth in highly prioritised areas and in stimulating quality improvements. The Ministry of Finance thus argues that increased efficiency is the only road to improvements in public administration. The Ministry of Finance describes a world that has to be controlled by piecemeal and neat changes in the system – what ever happened to the Haga committees escape from control? Compared to the argumentation of the Haga committee, the Ministry of Finance argues in line with a more hierarchical world view.

The strategy of the director of the University of Bergen

At the same time as the national assembly presents the recommendations of the Haga committee, the director of University of Bergen present the new budget system to the departments and units of University of Bergen (UiB 1985). The director argues that at the request of the cabinet the national assembly has decided on certain changes in the budget system. The changes aim at more freedom and on the other hand responsibility to ensure the efficient use of resources and to obtain results. The director designed a system where faculty was to report time spent on different tasks and be able to calculate efficiency (input vs. output). New Public Management is introduced at University of Bergen as small changes in the existing system. The argument for change is formulated as a chain of authority from the

King, via the National Assembly to the cabinet, and to the Ministry of Finance where this revision of the budget system has been decided. In this sense the director argues in line with a hierarchical logic. On the other hand values in a more individualistic worldview are used as normative basis of change: the director argues that the goal of these changes is to increase efficiency and a result-oriented mentality in the organisation. Result-oriented mentality and efficiency are values which are more valuable in an individualistic world than in a hierarchical world. But individualists do not need the monarch to have decided on efficiency in order to implement a new budget system. In this sense the argumentation strategy of the director of University of Bergen is characterised by tension when introducing the new system: the goals are valuable in an individualistic world, but the justifications are evaluated in a hierarchical world.

Business steering at the University of Oslo

The discussion on resource allocation at the University of Oslo proceeded according to plan., and in 1986 a committee was established – the B-committee – to analyse the resources spent in the administration of the university. These discussions gave rise to an idea of business steering at the University (Gornitzka 1997: 100f; Collet 1999: 237).

The conflict and management by objectives comes to Bergen

In 1986 the board of University of Bergen recommends the university administration to decrease the burden of administrative reports on faculty (UiB 1986c). The director of the university argues that the new system proved to be work-intensive for the departments and faculties (UiB 1986a). The solution according to the director is to reduce and simplify the number of forms to be completed. In the instructions for 1986 the word *virksomhetsplan* is used for the first time. The director does not explain what this means but the plans are put into a context where it is expected that faculty is expected to report to a greater extent how they time is spent and the results which have been obtained. Management by Objectives is presented in a form that was associated with control of faculty.

How did the new steering system become associated with control, when it was initially presented as freedom? So far we have seen how, initially, the new steering system was presented as freedom from detailed steering and during the implementation process became associated with control of faculty. We have seen that when meeting the university the new system was motivated by referring to a hierarchical logic when advocated by the university director. Initially the Haga committee argued that Management by Objectives would increase efficiency, and as such, increase resources. This individualistic logic was transformed into a hierarchical logic by the Ministry of Finance which by the university director survived and all by a sudden, Management by objectives had become a control system that faculty did not want. When the reaction came to the board of the university it was expressed as a question of administrative burden on faculty, and the university administration perceived the problem as a technical problem which could be solved by reducing and simplifying the tables to be filled in. Against this background the director of the University of Bergen called upon a committee (the Nilsen committee) to discuss how the annual report and budget proposal might be better coordinated (DAK-UiB 1987; Nilsen-utvalget 1987).

At the time when the Nilsen committee was set up the conception of the problem concerning management by objectives at the University of Bergen was the administrative burden the system put on faculty. The problem was described as a problem of inefficiency and heavy procedures. Thus, the situation may be described as one where the more hierarchical discourse or argumentative strategy of the director of the University had been challenged by a more

individualistic argumentative strategy highlighting inefficiency and administrative burdens. The initial critique of management by objectives at the University of Bergen thus originated in an individualistic point of view. We see how the system which initially was put forth by the Haga committee with individualistic arguments of efficiency, was promoted further along the system in a hierarchical argumentative strategy, first by the Ministry of Finance, and then by the director of the University, is now challenged by individualistically-based arguments of efficiency.

The next step of the university director

In 1986 the university director sends out a document where the new system is evaluated (UiB 1986b). The director argues that the new system was too work-intensive and argues that the reason was that the university wanted high quality information. The director says he understands the reactions, wants to inform about the work being done and assures that the new system will improve the University. Apparently, the director has changed his argumentative strategy: it is more inclusive than previously and attaches weight to establishing a “we”, i.e. a relation or a group including the administration and faculty together comprising the University of Bergen. It seems as though the hierarchical argumentative strategy is being met with critique based on a more individualistic point of view; it responds with care: i.e. ‘we understand your problems and do listen’. Presumably the hierarchical culture borrows an egalitarian voice.

By now the director of University of Bergen also has fully presented the system of Management by Objectives, this is a year before the cabinet’s decision that Norwegian public administration should develop management by objectives plans and four years before the deadline to implement the system.

Simplification of the department structure at the Faculty of Arts at University of Oslo

We have seen how in 1983 the Ministry of Finance argued in line with rational organisational theory that the structure of the organisations in public administration had to be reviewed so as to match the new steering system and fully extract the efficiency gain. We have also seen how an idea of business steering had developed at the University of Oslo. In 1986 the first attempts at restructuring departments was taken at the Faculty of Arts (HF faculty) at the University of Oslo (Rapport 1993; Vabø 1996). The dean asks one of the committees at the faculty to propose a structure with fewer departments. The motivation was a desire to transfer more tasks to the institutes and to give them more autonomy in order to carry them out. The background of the initiative must be seen in a context where the HF faculty experienced a crises of legitimacy and declining resources (Vabø 1996).

Performance at the University of Bergen

In 1987 the director at University of Bergen calls upon a new committee (the Vårdal committee) to continue work on development of performance indicators at University of Bergen (Vårdal-utvalget 1987; DAK-UiB 1988a). The committee could also discuss other types of evaluation at the university. The university wished to document the spending of resources to ensure the size of the budget. The perception was that such evaluation methods were in the process of being introduced and the university wanted to be avant-garde. We observe how a perception that the university had to justify itself was established both at Universities of Oslo and Bergen at the time.

National policy on Management by Objectives

In 1987 the Norwegian cabinet decides that every organisation in public administration should develop annual Management by Objectives plans within 1990 (Thorsvik 1991). Management by Objectives became the Norwegian early version of New Public Management and the instrument to achieve efficiency in spending of state resources.

The Perspective Analysis at the University of Oslo

At the time when the cabinet decided on Management by Objectives in public administration, the University of Oslo decided on a Perspective Analysis (UiO 1987). The intention was to formulate a long-term university policy (Collet 1999). The document argues on the basis of the identity and uniqueness of the university (UiO 1987). The writing of the Perspective analysis may be viewed in the light of the critique and declining legitimacy the university experienced. The perspective analysis argues on the basis of emancipation, responsibility and visibility of the university towards state funding. It is seen as both necessary and smart to demonstrate the production actually going on at the university in the light of state funding. The reference to necessity argues on grounds of loyalty and commitment of the university to state funding, but the reference to the smartness in this visibility and demonstration builds on other reasons such as 'it is smart to be visible to ensure resources'. The Perspective Analysis argues on visibility of the university to ensure resources, not to increase efficiency. The document also argues on the necessity of establishment of documentation databases and schemes in order to demonstrate resource expenditures. It is underlined that the systems and schemes must be efficient and easy to use. The Perspective Analysis thus combines both the element of a hierarchical argumentative strategy, an individualistic and an egalitarian logic.

The organisation and administration committee at the University of Oslo

The board at the University of Oslo established a committee to discuss resource allocation within the university administration and between the administration and the faculties (Gornitzka 1997). This opened for a discussion of the general organisation structure of the university. It was argued that to take the organisation's structure for granted would stiffen the university in a form that was not suitable for the future.

Merging of departments at the HF faculty at the University of Oslo

At the HF faculty a committee (the ADORO committee) received the mandate to discuss merging of departments at the faculty (Rapport 1993). ADORO argued that the Ministry wanted to give more autonomy to the university, that the faculties and departments would get more autonomy, but that a prerequisite would be departments of a certain size (HF-Oslo 1987b). ADORO argues that this is not actually demanded of the Ministry, but something the university wanted: more autonomy, more freedom and less detailed steering, thus modifying the hierarchy as seen from an egalitarian point of view.

The Nilsen committee at the University of Bergen

In 1987 the director of University of Bergen presents to the board the report from the Nilsen committee (Nilsen-utvalget 1987). The Nilsen committee argues in line with a logic where already taken decisions, the authorities and formal procedures function as arguments to obey (i.e. hierarchy). The director of the university assures that "table 1" will be further discussed both in the board and between the leaders and the unions at the university (DAK-UiB 1987).

The Ruud committee at HF of the University of Oslo

The process of merging of departments at HF in Oslo took time and was described as full of conflicts (Vabø 1996). The departments feared they would lose resources, scholarly identity

and that administration and bureaucracy would increase (Rapport 1993). In 1987 a new committee was established, the Ruud committee, to launch a new proposal on merging departments that would increase efficiency of administration, promote more manageable units, and yield a better system of organising education and research (HF-Oslo 1987a).

National recommendations on Management of Objectives

In 1988 a national agency, *Statskonsult*, published a recommendation in management by objectives (Statskonsult 1988). *Statskonsult* argues that Management by Objectives is a tool to meet the challenges of increasing demand on universities (Statskonsult 1989). MBO is a tool to make universities give something back to society, an instrument to better resource management and stronger steering. *Statskonsult* argues that the reforms are part of a general trend; they are demanded by business and society. *Statskonsult* argues that if the universities are not reformed they may experience decreasing resources. *Statskonsult* argues by referring to decisions taken higher up in the system which appear as a reason to act. In addition threats a evolving described as declining resources. *Statskonsult* argues that the university has an obligation to meet the needs of the market and MBO is presented as an instrument to follow such requirements. *Statskonsult* argues in line with a hierarchical logic.

Management by Objectives meets the board at University of Bergen

In 1988 the director of University of Bergen presents to the board to hearings to the Nilsen committee (Nilsen-utvalget 1987) and a report from another committee, the Vårdal committee (Vårdal-utvalget 1987; DAK-UiB 1988a) . The director orientates the board about the hearings and the report, and asks permission to pass the case over to the budget committee. “Table 1” is to be discussed with the unions. When the director presents these reports to the board he still frames the complaints about implementation of MBO as a technical question of improvements of the system. The director emphasises that by and large, the Nilsen report has been approved by the organisation and he assures that improvements must be worked out in close relation with those concerned. The director argues on the need of ‘visibleness’ of the university; yet the case is still conceived as a technical one. The director argues that to report actual time spent on different tasks is launched to take care of faculty.

The Espelid committee at the University of Bergen

At the University of Oslo MBO and merging of departments was presented, as we have seen, as two sides of the same case. But as we have also seen this was not the case at University of Bergen until now. In 1988 a committee was called on to discuss leader roles and forms in relation to the department boards (Planutvalget 1989a). The committee was also asked to discuss principles on which departments could merge. The background for the committee was an experienced need of professionalisation of the head of the departments. The Espelid committee must be seen in relation to the work on organisation and administration the university had been carrying out since 1980 but also in relation to a national committee on organisation of higher education (the Hernes committee)(NOU 1988: 28).

A pilot project on management by objectives at the University of Oslo

At the University of Oslo implementation of MBO was launched as a pilot project at three faculties, the HF faculty, Faculty of Medicine and the Faculty of Social Sciences (SV faculty) (Christensen 1991a). MBO and strategic planning was launched as a solution to the steering problems of the university.

The merging process at the HF faculty of Oslo University

The Ruud committee presents its report in 1988 (Rapport 1993). It argues that the national MBO reforms actually demand larger departments. The Ruud committee argued that larger departments would be better equipped to build up an efficient administrative system. The Ruud proposal was followed up with four faculty committees that were to evaluate the different alternatives that the Ruud committee proposed. Also the dean argued that merging departments actually was demanded by implementation of MBO (HF-Oslo 1988a). The dean argues that merging of departments was necessary to not lose power and resources. The Ministry of Finance would say that reorganisation was necessary to decrease power and the spending of resources. In the argumentation of the HF dean, reorganisation is a mean to not end as obeying and passive implementations of management by objectives. In his perspective MBO had lead to increased steering capacity at the faculty level. The dean actually redresses reorganisation as a tool in MBO to reorganisation as a counter strategy to management by objectives. We have seen how the dean argues along another logic; it is not seen as a quality to obey faculty which is perceived as gaining power due to the reforms. Both an individualistic and an egalitarian point of view would underline the dangers in increased hierarchy. An individualistic argumentation would argue on the inefficiency of such a strategy while an egalitarian logic would underline the more creepy aspects of increased hierarchy in general. We have seen how the HF dean argues along the line of an egalitarian logic. He also proceeds on individualistic arguments that merging of departments is fulfilling the goal of MBO. The argumentation pro the reforms at the HF faculty of Oslo thus proceeds on egalitaristic and individualistic arguments pro MBO.

Proposal to merge departments at the MN faculty at the University of Oslo

In 1988 the dean of Faculty of mathematics and natural sciences (MN faculty) at University of Oslo presents to the faculty board a proposal to merge 15 departments into 6 (MN-Oslo 1988a). There had been no committee working on the proposal. The background of the proposal was implementation of MBO at the university (MN-Oslo 1988b). The dean is very explicit in his argumentation that MBO presupposes larger departments at the university. The dean argues a long an individualistic logic where adequate premises are will and capacity to make priorities, will to resource allocations, efficient use of resources and a useful organisation. The dean also referees to that others are implementing reforms, an argument which is more in line with more group-oriented cultures such as egalitritism and hierarchy.

Centrally initiated proposal on merging of department at University of Bergen

In 1989 the Espelid committee presented its proposal to the University of Bergen proposing merging departments (Planutvalget 1989a). Merging departments was seen as a prerequisite to strengthen the scholarly leadership of the departments. The director argues that merging departments will increase cross-disciplinary cooperation and increase efficiency of spending resources. The university leaders argue that they had to justify merging departments on scholarly reasons in order to get a commitment from the disciplines. It was decided that each faculty should call on a committee to discuss the merging of departments.

A decision on merging of departments at HF in Oslo

In 1989 the board of the HF faculty in Oslo decided to merge departments into 10 units (HF-Oslo 1989c). So far this seems as though an individualistic and egalitarian logic provided arguments to the proposal to merge departments at the HF faculty of Oslo.

Justification of the merger at the HF faculty

Those who argued pro merging of departments argued that one background for the proposal was to transfer more autonomy to the departments concerning spending of resources in solving new tasks. Solving new tasks at department level was seen as a prerequisite for larger departments. The existing department structure was regarded as being inefficient in respect of solving future demands on resource spending in research, education, organisation and human resource management. The national proposal on MBO was important, larger units were seen as more administratively efficient. If one wanted more autonomy and lesser central steering, department structure had to be changed. This was seen as practical administrative cooperation that was necessary because the whole university was changing. The future was seen as insecure and it was unrealistic not to believe the changes would be implemented, one way to confront the changes was to rationalise administration and increase cooperation between faculties. Actually MBO demanded the merging of departments. MBO demanded that disciplines and departments should have an influence on the targets set and instruments used, i.e. resources to be used which prerequisite larger departments. Larger departments were necessary to implement the system of framework budgets and only larger departments would have the administrative capacity to design and implement MBO plans. Only larger departments would have the capacity to formulate strategic plans and by them influence faculty and university plans. Management by objective plans would also secure scholarly autonomy

The argumentation pro merging departments at the HF faculty of Oslo University is mainly justified administratively, arguing that the merger will increase autonomy in spending resources, that it represents a practical and administrative cooperation and a counter strategy to top-down steering, and that the merger is made unavoidable by the system of MBO. The scholarly justification for the merger is that it would increase scholarly influence and contact between the different disciplines.

There are certain tensions in the justification of the reform at the HF faculty in Oslo. It is argued both that a merger will increase autonomy, that it is a counter strategy to top-down steering, and that is only a practical administrative cooperation. It is as if one wants to meet the demands to protect autonomy and hinder hierarchy and at the same time one argues that these are not profound changes but only a procedure for practical and administrative cooperation. This double feature becomes understandable when it is connected to both an individualistic and an egalitarian point of view: in an egalitarian world hierarchy is rejected by Principe at the same time as the underlining of technicalities may be drawn back to an individualistic and pragmatic point of view. Thus the justification of MBO at the HF faculty of Oslo seems to be founded on an egalitarian and individualistic world view.

Counter-arguments to the merger at the HF faculty

The faculty at HF proceeded on counter-arguments to the merger. They feared losing the battle over resources and to lose their scholarly identity. They also feared increased bureaucratisation and administration without any advantages. The positive effects of the merger were doubted if co-localisation was not obtained. The main problem was formulated as a problem of scholarly autonomy. Faculty experienced that they were directed from levels above and that the changes were pulled down their heads. They argued that the merger had to be scholarly justified. It was feared that small disciplines would lose both resources and identity. What was the gain in a merger if disciplines lost their status?

The administrative arguments against the merger at HF is based on two lines of arguing: that a merger will increase bureaucracy and that a merger prerequisite co localisation. The scholarly argumentation contra the changes are based on two premises: fear of losing disciplinary identity and the prerequisite that the merger must be scholarly justified.

In the argumentation contra the merger at HF, fear of loss of autonomy and increased bureaucratisation are the main reasons. It is argued that the merger will result in a loss of scholarly identity, that small disciplines will lose to the advantage of something more efficient. Thus the argument is based on the dangers attached to the reforms and the question is concerning which gains are to be derived from more hierarchy? The reforms are described as something threatening and without gains. Increased hierarchy are threatening in both an individualistic and egalitarian world view. The question about gains, then, is more pertinent in an individualistic culture. So the justification of reasons not to merge is presented mainly following an individualistic and an egalitarian point of view at HF in Oslo.

Administrative basic units at the MN faculty of Oslo University

In 1989 the dean of the MN faculty resumes the hearing statements on the proposal to merge departments (MN-Oslo 1989a). He argues that faculty expresses commitment to the idea of a merger, but notes that there are strong opinions about some organisational questions.

Justification of the merger at the MN faculty

The arguments justifying the merger at the MN faculty in Oslo stated that the present organisation model with 15 departments was unsuitable considering MBO which was being implemented at the university. It was also argued that organisation of the disciplines was historically based, and that changes had to be considered in relation to changes in the disciplines and the needs of education. Disciplines and education had to be organised in relation to societal problems and needs at any time. Such questions should always be on the agenda of the university and the organisation should be discussed from time to time, and subsequently evaluated and reformed. Modern research and scientific work demands both technical and administrative assistance that prerequisite larger administrative units that could not just follow disciplinary boundaries. Considering the New Public Management reforms, it was necessary to organise the faculty into units large enough to function adequately in administrative terms. It was also considered a goal that these units should be sufficiently scholarly similar that they could take decisions also in such matters. The economic situation and resource allocation matters were seen as pushing this development. When a larger pot of administrative issues was to be delegated to the departments, this demanded units of a certain size. It was argued that these matters especially had prompted the process in the other faculties. Also national reports had discussed these matters. Clearly the present organisation of the faculty was not suitable considering the demands to be expected concerning administrative capacity of the departments in the years to come. Actually New Public Management demanded fewer and larger departments. The departments expressed consent for the organisation structure to be reviewed in order to strengthen education and research activities. A prerequisite was that the basic units were scholarly homogenous. To promote a merger it had to be strongly scholarly justified. A merger could actually contribute to a scholarly strengthening of the disciplines at a time when the disciplines were being challenged by external cooperation. If a merger should be agreed, the present unit had to remain both administratively, functionally and geographically coherent. These established connections actually promoted scholarly activities. Scholarly cooperation was already in place; any merger was not required to promote these activities. Scholarly cooperation was wanted. If the disciplines were co-localised it would encourage administrative and technical efficiency

gains. Disciplinary developments were perceived to be in line with the proposed organisational model. A merger could promote scholarly cooperation. Organisation of curricula and lectures would be simplified. Both scholarly and teaching reasons justified the merger. Scholarly and administrative reasons to merge had to be balanced.

It becomes clear that the argumentation pro a merger at the MN faculty was mainly administratively justified. A merger will promote autonomy in resource allocation; it is considered a practical and administrative arrangement a counter-power to top-down steering and it is actually demanded by MBO. The scholarly argument pro a merger is that it will promote disciplinary influence and cooperation.

The faculty maintains that a merger will contribute to efficiency and builds its argumentation on this. Efficiency is thought to function as a reason for a merger. From an individualistic point of view, this seems convincing. In addition the faculty argues that the merger is demanded by decisions at a higher level in the organisation. This implies that the faculty refers to obligations to merge by the central authority which is a justification which is convincing from a more hierarchical point of view. In this sense the MN faculty justifies a merger with a combination of individualistic and hierarchical premises.

The departments at the MN faculty argue on other premises: Their prerequisite is that a merger must build on scholarly reasons and cooperation. Focus on cooperation may be reasonable given an egalitarian context, instead of, for example, efficiency. By this way of reasoning it may be said that the arguments pro a merger at the MN faculty build on an egalitarian point of view.

Counter-arguments to the merger at the MN faculty

The strong opposition towards the merger was noted by the faculty at an early stage and declared that they would not force any department to merge. It was argued that to split up research milieus could not be supported, neither administratively nor geographically. Faculty argued that the new model implied larger and more complex departments which had no administrative nor scholarly advantages. The departments want to remain autonomous units. It was argued that the new department would imply more complicated dealing with different issues and a more difficult communication. It was feared that the heritage of the departments would be spoiled. It was argued that the merger plans were not fully discussed or thought through; they did not document scholarly justifications of the merger. The resistance to the merger was mainly scholarly justified. It was seen as waste of resources and counter to efficient use of space to move departments against their will. Administrative gains were perceived to be obtained only until a certain point. Too large departments would become administratively and scholarly inefficient. Increased bureaucratisation was strongly feared. The proposed model was both administratively and scholarly a danger to the discipline. It was argued that to solve difficult resource allocation matters was much easier at the faculty level than on a merged department level. Disciplines argued that they were natural units organised according to international trends in their disciplines.

The counter-arguments to a merger at the MN faculty are based on two administrative arguments, one on loss of gains resulting from a merger, and the other relating to a more complicated organisational structure. These arguments develop around technical efficiency as a justification of a merger. This would be an adequate premise, if one argues in line with an individualistic point of view. Thus the argumentation counter a merger is based on two main premises: that a merger will not imply any administrative advantage and that a merger must

be scholarly justified, neither which are said to be the case according to the opposition to the merger plans. Thus the opposition builds on an egalitarian viewpoint in combination with an individualistic world view.

Implementation goes on in Bergen

In 1989 the director of the University of Bergen prepares a case for the board, but its not launched in the meeting (DAK-UiB 1989a). This might be an indication that by now the tension concerning implementation of MBO has risen. The director writes that all response to the Vårdal report supports the newly established result indicators at the university, but that it is emphasised that this should not be the only evaluation method applied at the university. The director proposes that work on development of result indicators should continue. The case was never considered by the board. In the next meeting the same case is presented, now with a new proposal that the board should call upon a committee (the Evans committee) to prepare a report on the reporting and evaluation routines, including result indicators at the university (DAK-UiB 1989b; DAK-UiB 1989c; DAK-UiB 1989e). This marks a turn in the case of implementing MBO at the university. By now the issue is rather highly politicised internally and high on the national agenda with the Hernes committee.

Merging of departments at the University of Bergen

The Espelid committee at University of Bergen recommended merging of departments and the board passed this case over to the faculties recommending that the faculty committees propose mergers at each faculty. The MN and Faculty of psychology recommended mergers (DAK-UiB 1989g), while HF (DAK-UiB 1989f), Law (Planutvalget 1989c) and SV (SV-UiB 1989; SV-UiB 1990) did not want any mergers at their faculties in 1989. The Faculty of dentistry and the Faculty of medicine were still working on the case when the university board handled the issue in 1989 (DAK-UiB 1989f). The university leadership experienced that the opposition both at the Faculty of medicine and Faculty of HF was too strong. They changed strategy and the university director argued that merging departments should be left to the faculties to decide.

Rejection of the idea of mergers at HF in Bergen

At the HF faculty in Bergen a committee (the Svindland committee) was called on to follow up the Espelid committee. The issue of merging departments at the HF faculty in Bergen had a high level of sound (Høstaker 1997: 176). A majority in the Svindland committee wanted to merge departments, arguing that the administrative burden on faculty was high and increasing. One reason was seen as fear of loss of resources if not any mergers were not implemented. The minority in the Svindland committee argued that research and scholarly cooperation already existed and was functioning without any organisational structure supporting it, so a merger would only imply more meetings and no administrative gains. The faculty board rejected the idea of any merger unless the departments themselves wanted this (DAK-UiB 1989f). The board promised to work on organisational solutions to reduce administrative matters taking time from research. The dean could not see how it was possible to implement mergers at HF at the time.

Justification of the merger at the HF faculty in Bergen

Those who supported the idea of a merger at HF in Bergen argued that administration would increase and that merges would reduce the negative impacts of this development. Thus the justification of a merger was mainly based on administrative reasons in this case

Counter-arguments to the merger at the HF faculty in Bergen

The majority at HF in Bergen could not see how mergers would reduce the administrative burden on faculty more than the scholarly losses resulting from a merger. They did not agree that a merger would reduce administration and bureaucracy.

The opposition at HF in Bergen was mainly administratively justified. This argumentation assumes that a merger increases bureaucracy, and was thus an attack on a hierarchical way of reasoning. It was also argued that administrative gains could not compensate scholarly losses, which may be described as an argument based on an egalitarian point of view which prefers the scholarly community to administrative efficiency (i.e. an individualistic point of view). Thus the argumentation at HF in Bergen may be described as involving individualistic and egalitarian points of reference.

No support to merger plans at the SV faculty in Bergen

In 1990 the committee working on the proposals of the Espelid committee at the SV faculty (the Svåsand committee) delivered its report. The committee could not support plans for merging departments at the faculty (SV-UiB 1989; SV-UiB 1990).

Arguments justifying merger at the SV faculty in Bergen

It was argued that some mutual tasks could be made simpler by merging departments, but these gains might be obtained by other methods than a merger such as cooperation in administrative matters, for example by joint use of administrative resources.

Counter-arguments to the merger at the SV faculty in Bergen

It was argued that the conditions for a merger of departments was especially poor at this faculty. If any gains were to be obtained from a merger it was conditional upon researchers having mutual goals and plans for joint research projects, which was unrealistic at a social science faculty characterised by many individual research projects. So any cooperation gains were not expected. Neither was it possible to see how an unwanted merger would produce administrative gains since the previous departments would most probably continue to exist in a merged department. It was argued that the SV faculty differed from the professional faculties by offering particular and autonomous professional studies. Scholarly cooperation already existed, but was contingent on personal research relations which would not automatically be promoted by mergers. It was underlined that none of the existing departments were particularly small and that the existing disciplinary and curricular structure would hamper efficiency gains. Rather, introducing a new departmental structure would increase bureaucratisation and not increase quality of teaching nor research. A merger would make the organisation more complex and complicated without necessarily introducing positive scholarly effects.

There is a strong opposition against a merger at the SV faculty in Bergen. In this material there are no scholarly arguments supporting a merger and only a small argument on possible administrative gains which might be obtained by other means. The arguments counter to a merger are based equally on administrative- and scholarly-founded reasons. The scholarly reason not to promote a merger is that no positive scholarly effects might be seen given the way research is conducted in the social sciences. The administrative reason is that a merger will increase bureaucratisation and that the departments are not considered as being too small. The argumentation against a merger is based both on a rejection of the idea of administrative gains of a merger and against increased bureaucratisation. The scholarly reason argues the special identity of social science contra those of the professional faculties. Thus it might be

said that the argumentation against merger at the SV faculty is based on egalitarian premises on the uniqueness of the faculty in combination with a critique of the efficiency of individualism and the complexity of hierarchy.

The Evans report at University of Bergen

In 1991 the Evans committee at University of Bergen presents its report to the board of the university (DAK-UiB 1991a). The argumentation of the report builds on establishing a distinction between the university as an organisation, and companies and ordinary state agencies. The argumentation rests on this clear distinction between 'us' and 'them'. The committee uses the same sort of argumentation when making a distinction between hierarchical administrative steering and steering on scholarly premises. Steering on scholarly premises entails a mode of steering and planning that comes from the inside, built on discussions in the egalitarian group. The system of the hierarchy is criticised by arguing that it hampers promotion of quality and by stating that quality may not be decided nor evaluated at any administrative or political level. Authority and leadership must be embedded in the scholarly community. The committee also argues that the steering system at the university must adjust the detailed evaluation reports and methods such that this aids and decreases the administrative burden on faculty. This sort of argumentation is not based on an egalitarian rejection of the steering systems of the hierarchy but on a more individualistic critique arguing on behalf of efficiency and reasonableness. Thus the Evans committee's argumentation has tensions: on the one side it rejects the new steering system; on the other side it argues that it must be adjusted to a tolerable level. The University of Bergen decides that the principles of the Evans committee shall lay the ground for the steering system to be developed at the university (DAK-UiB 1991d).

Initiative to merging of departments at the Faculty of dentistry at University of Oslo

In 1992 the director of the Faculty of dentistry presents to the board a new model for organising the faculty (OD-Oslo 1992a). The director argues on the behalf of the situation of the students and patients at the faculty. He also justifies the proposal by referring to the process of decentralisation that has taken place by the University of Oslo during recent years. This process has resulted in more tasks to be solved at the faculty level and a new mode of structuring the faculty is necessary in order to obtain efficient and rational problem- and task-solving. It is also argued that the proposed model is in use at other Faculties of dentistry and that the model has internal support.

Some month later the faculty boards decides to call on a committee to discuss the scholarly justification to merge (OD-Oslo 1992b; OD-Oslo 1992c). The director argues that scholarly justifications are necessary (OD-Oslo 1992b).

Next round with merging attempts at the HF faculty of Bergen

In 1993 the HF faculty in Bergen re-establishes the merger plans (HF-UiB 1994a). The board called on a committee to continue the work on merging departments. This round of mergers is described as more peaceful and silent than formerly as no departments were forced to merge (Høstaker 1997: 177). It was part of the mandate that the merger should encourage better research and teaching.

Justification of the merger at the HF faculty in Bergen – Phase 2:

The committee presented its report in 1994 arguing that a merger should promote the scholarly aspect of the activities at the faculty. The committee meant that support from the departments to be merged had to be a prerequisite. It was argued that faculty was too occupied

with administrative tasks and which hampered research and thereby reducing the quality of teaching. It was seen as a goal to bring students of different disciplines together and to initiate cross-disciplinary research projects. The doctorate program needed larger departments. There was a lack of cooperation, and restricted time for research. A merger would promote both cross-disciplinary cooperation and lower the level of administration.

Thus the merger plans was strongly scholarly justified in this round at the HF faculty in Bergen. The administrative reasons were perceived as administrative gains resulting from a merger. The argumentation is based both on premises involving promotion of the scholarly community and a competition argument implying, as such, egalitarian and individualistic world views. The administrative argument is pragmatic, as a perception of administrative gains.

Counter-arguments to the merger at the HF faculty in Bergen

The argument was made against the idea of administrative gains of a merger. Co-localisation was rejected while co-administration might work. Others did not want administrative cooperation. It was argued that there no administrative gains would be result because the departments would become too big and complex. There was no scholarly advantage in a merger. It was argued the cooperation did not prerequisite a merger, and that it was possible to develop joint curricula without merging. This was actually already taking place. The departments asked for scholarly justifications for the merger.

Thus the argumentation underlines that scholarly cooperation does not prerequisite mergers and it is not desired to take steps that decrease the disciplinary identity. A merger is not seen as necessary to promote egalitarian ideals of cooperation. In addition it is argued pragmatically that these gains already had already been obtained. Administrative gains are doubtful and there is a danger of increased hierarchy. Thus the argumentation is based on a combination of critique and pragmatique which might be said to imply egalitarian and individualistic perspectives.

Merger plans at Faculty of dentistry

In 1994 the third committee at Faculty of dentistry in Oslo presented its report recommending a new organisational model (OD-Oslo 1994b). In 1995 the board approved the proposal and decided to merge departments into two new departments.

Pro and contra at Faculty of dentistry

The argumentation pro a merger at this faculty is mainly based on administrative reasons, but there are also clear scholarly justifications. The main argument pro a merger is an improvement of the organisational structure. Arguments concerning improved communication and cooperation are also evident in the material. In addition advantages for students, patients and staff arising from a merger are also presented. The scholarly arguments mention better visibility, better teaching, a better research community, guarantee of scholarly autonomy and the optimal management of the dentistry clinic.

The argumentation pro a merger builds on the premise of efficient and convenient organisational structure: an efficient structuring of the work process, more efficient resource expenditure, and better distribution of tasks. This sort of argumentation is valid given a hierarchical and individualistic point of view. But there are also other arguments underlining communication, cooperation, the students and patients. These arguments may be said to prerequisite a more egalitarian point of reference.

The argumentation against a merger is not very evident, but is based on the claim that larger departments hamper efficient communication and that the scholarly autonomy is threatened.

Conclusion

Five different strategies of argumentation stemming from three different cultural biases are activated during the controversy on the implementation. Justification of the reform is based on three different cultural biases: a bureaucratic point of reference (i.e. an hierarchical point of reference) , a market-based point of view (i.e. an individualistic point of reference) and a group-oriented (i.e. egalitarian) point of reference. Opposition to the reform is argued along two strategies: a market-based point of view and a group-oriented point of reference (i.e. individualism and egalitarianism). The study documents in addition several findings: First how the policy formulation develops as a continuous process (i.e. the content of the policy is reframed and reinterpreted from different points of view during the process of implementation). Second how scrutinising of the thesis of normative mismatch between managerialism and academic organisations refines our understanding of both the justifications of the reform as well as the opposition. Thirdly the study documented the application of arguments both referring to disciplinary references as well as administrative justifications of both reform and opposition. Fourth the case study describes a long and complicated implementation process vs. an instrumental application of the reform and thus in this case a troublesome concept of top-down implementation. A research strategy combining normative institutionalism, concepts from implementation studies and Cultural theory enables these results.

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