

Purity and danger in university governance: a comparative analysis of autonomy and control in higher education (0260)

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The paper considers the contemporary versions of university governance against the classic typologies drawing on Humboldt and Jaspers in Germany and Adam Smith and John Henry Newman in the UK.

There is already a considerable literature that discusses the state-university relations in terms of academic autonomy and control. This paper will depict the key concepts from the writings of the four thinkers which have been influential frames of reference for our understanding of university governance across space and time in Europe and beyond, e.g. in the United States, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, and Singapore (Kim, 2001).

Very much within the German tradition and Kant's epistemology, Jaspers' *The Idea of the University* starts with a classic statement: "The university is a community of scholars and students engaged in the task of seeking truth" (p. 65). In the Germany context, for instance, Jaspers finds the locus of the university in the *Rechtstaat*, to locate the university within the state. Through institutionalization, the university becomes 'a state within the state': while some autonomy is granted to the university, there is also some state control over the correct functioning of the institutions.

As an inheritor of the Humboldtian tradition of the university, Jaspers writes: "It [the university] can only live as and where the state desires. The state makes the university's existence possible and protects it" (p. 121). He justifies the selection of excellence by its eventual benefit for society as a whole. However "the state should not look to them [universities] at all for anything that directly concerns its own interest, but should rather cherish a conviction that.. they will not only serve its own purposes, but serve them on an infinitely higher plane than [being] at the disposal of the state itself" (von Humboldt, W. 1854; re-quoted from Allington & O'Shaughnessy, 1992: 27). "the university can control the state through the power of truth not of force" (p.135).

On the other hand, both Adam Smith and John Henry Newman conceived their views of the university through their times in Oxford. Smith's *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* discusses the university as an institution with built-in tendencies towards corruption; and the only anti-corruptive mechanism his thinking hit upon was the market. The main forces in this market were (i) the students choosing their professors; (ii) professors competing for students; and (iii) universities competing for both, students and professors (Smith, 1994; Meyer, 2016). The exact relationship between the university and the state is left unclear in the English context; though there is a set of assumptions about the qualities of leadership required in government and the professions. Newman originally wrote *The Idea of a University* for the Roman Catholic University in Dublin; therefore the general line of the nine Discourses in the book relates to the church, not the state. In Newman's view, and in an ideal-typical model of the 'English' university, the state should have a weak or very minimal relationship with the university (Newman, 1996; Kim, 2001, pp. 20-22).

Contemporaneously, however, the university governance paradigms have become increasingly subjugated to the state regulations and corporate interests in many countries regardless of different academic

traditions and contexts (Goodman, et. al., 2011). There is a fierce competition for public funds regulated by the state and a sharpening institutional stratification as a result of performance measurements (Kehm and Stensaker, 2009). The paper will argue that the changing governance mechanism in higher education legitimizes the displacement of substance/truth-value with performativity, which broadly reflect how society is organized in the process of mercantilization of knowledge, by invoking Lyotard (1979). Simultaneously the ideas of ‘academic capitalism’ (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004), the ‘entrepreneurial’ or ‘market-framed’ university have been employed to capture ongoing neo-liberal trends across the globe. The paper will draw examples from the UK, Europe and East Asia to discuss the contexts of paradigm shift in university governance. From the comparative perspective, the paper will then critically re-consider the long established ideas of academic autonomy and boundaries of ‘sanctity’ and ‘pollution’ – by invoking Mary Douglas (1966) - in the domain of university governance.

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