UNIVERSITIES BETWEEN MARKETIZATION AND SELF-BRANDING

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Recently, much emphasis on the study of universities has been focused upon strategic management and measurement (Czarniawska & Genell, 2002) due to their crucial role in contemporary knowledge based economies (Bleiklie & Byrkjeflot, 2002), which has led to a renewed scholarly interest in researching universities as organizations (Whitley & Gläser, 2014). The changes of universities have led to changed relationships between administrative and academic staff that is tied together through performance systems and other current technologies (Musselin, 2013).

It is, however, important to recall that university scholars are not only embedded in their home-university but also participants in worldwide competitive arenas of scholars driven by interests and passion for what they do as well as struggles for visibility, attention, recognition and even aspirations for celebrity (Van Krieken, 2012).

We particularly zoom in on an organizational practice, which both serves the marketization of the university and the well-being of university staff as a whole, the HR department (van den Brink, Fruytier, & Thunnissen, 2013). In the paper, we re-visit universities as organizations and focus upon how HR as an organizational practice may facilitate a mission of developing excellent teaching and research as well as look after the individual employees’ well-being. Thus, we ask the question: Which role does HR practices play in the juggle between management for world-class universities and the well-being of academic staff embedded in world-wide communities of scholars?

The paper is informed by a pragmatist inspired understanding of organizations as ‘people doing things together’ and organizational learning and knowing as driven by tensions and passions. This means that we particularly look at HR practices where systems, HR administration and academic staff collaborate (and collide) around issues connected to developing universities and people. The paper is a literature review preparing for an empirical study of HR practices at Danish universities and will include the following themes: 1) universities as organizations (old
and new versions); 2) the role of HRM (very limited literature); 3) theoretical framing within the field of organizational learning based upon pragmatist philosophy, and 4) tentative methodological design.

References


