

# Chapter 5

## Understanding Higher Education Decision-Making and Educational Practice as Interrelated and Historically Framed Phenomena—A Non-affirmative Take



Jussi Välimaa, Michael Uljens , and Janne Elo

**Abstract** This chapter discusses three historically rooted ideals of decision-making practices in universities (collegiality, democracy and managerialism) from the perspective of non-affirmative theory of education (NAT). Following a discussion on the historical layers of Finnish universities, we analyse how different practices of higher education decision-making are connected to ideas of what a university is and does. Utilising NAT, we reflect on higher education leadership both in terms of its internal character and its object and historical context. The chapter has three starting points. First, we note that contributions to conceptualisations of educational leadership, governance and management need to provide an idea of the object of this leadership—what is being led. Second, we argue that higher education leadership and governance theory needs to say something meaningful about the relation between society and university. Third, we discuss how decision-making is managing the gap between external expectations and conditions and institutional operational culture. We discuss the ways in which both collegiality and democracy recognise each other as free, capable of and responsible for participating in decision-making, either directly or indirectly. From the perspective of NAT, recognition without affirmation creates a space for collaborative reflection and the repositioning of the activities of individuals and organisations. However, the shift from the democratic mode of decision-making to managerialism implies a break with this tradition. Decision-making in Finnish universities in the period after the university law (2009) is characterised by a shift of power from democratically elected bodies into the hands of deans and the rector. Utilising NAT, we discuss how this change influences academics.

---

J. Välimaa (✉)

Finnish Institute for Educational Research, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä, Finland  
e-mail: [jussi.p.valimaa@jyu.fi](mailto:jussi.p.valimaa@jyu.fi)

M. Uljens · J. Elo

Faculty of Education and Welfare Studies, Åbo Akademi University, Vaasa, Finland  
e-mail: [michael.uljens@abo.fi](mailto:michael.uljens@abo.fi); [janne.elo@abo.fi](mailto:janne.elo@abo.fi)

© The Author(s) 2024

J. Elo, M. Uljens (eds.), *Multilevel Pedagogical Leadership in Higher Education*,  
Educational Governance Research 25, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-55116-1\\_5](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-55116-1_5)

115

**Keywords** Collegiality · Democracy · Managerialism · Non-affirmative theory · University

## Introduction

Historically, three ideals have dominated decision-making practices in universities. In temporal order, these ideals are collegiality, democracy and managerialism. Even though these three ideals developed during different historical periods, their influence can still be felt in contemporary universities. In what follows, we discuss when these decision-making ideals developed, some of their main features and how they continue to influence contemporary universities.

We argue that these *decision-making* ideals correspond with different *educational* ideals. Although this connection is sometimes loose, we want to demonstrate that the educational and societal task of a university to educate new generations according to visions of citizenship, culture and the needs of working life and the aim to support the growth of personal identity are also reflected in the governance of the university as an institution. Thus, we investigate how educational leadership and the educational task of universities appear as interrelated phenomena. While they do not determine each other, they are not independent of each other. Given their contextual character—educational governance and the leading educational idea of the university go hand in hand—they need to be conceptualised as such in their respective historically developed societal context.

Therefore, our points of departure are, first, that contributions to conceptualisations of educational leadership, governance and management need to provide an idea of the *object* of this leadership—*what* is being led, that is, (1) the practice of educating students and (2) research, which relates to the professional growth of academic staff. Second, we argue that higher education leadership and governance theory needs to say something meaningful about the relation between society and university, that is, the *where* of leadership. Even though it is obvious that this relation has changed both over centuries and more recently, surprisingly often, conceptualisations of higher education leadership fail to make sense of how educational leadership relates contextually. Third, higher education leadership and governance often occur as a mediating activity between societal expectations external to the university and the procedures and practices internal to it. Thus, decision-making is about managing the gap between external expectations and conditions and internal operational culture. The processes around and power of decision-making contribute to creating and preserving organisational discourses that also affect future decision-making processes. In addition, as curriculum construction, mentoring and teaching in universities are so strongly based on research, the development of faculty as both researchers and teachers comes to the fore. Educational leadership is therefore aimed at supporting not only staff members' growth but also students' learning. Thus, higher education leadership includes both direct and indirect instances of pedagogical leadership. All related qualifications in higher education leadership, such as managing finances, equipment, locations/buildings, agreements, laws and

regulations, etc. are, in the end, designed to support the main task: universities as havens for human development and autonomy in the service of culture, society and economy, with their development instantiated through research and teaching.

Given that higher education leadership needs to be reflected not only in terms of its internal character and qualities but also in relation to its object and context, we intend to utilise non-affirmative theory of education (NAT) to analyse how more recent practices of higher education decision-making connect to certain ideas of what a university is and does.

## On Collegiality, Democracy and Managerialism as Ideals

Historically speaking, *collegiality* was the first decision-making practice and process (or model) in European universities. This ideal was developed in and through student housing in colleges where both students and academics or only students or only academics lived and studied from the Middle Ages onwards (on different practices, see Välimaa, 2019; Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010). Collegiality also became the mode of making decisions in medieval academic communities called *universitas* or ‘studium generale’. This was the case both in Bologna (established around 1088) and later Paris (established around 1210), where either students (in Bologna) or academic teachers (in Paris) made decisions and constituted a body—or ‘universita’—for the education of lawyers, priests, medical doctors and later officials. Despite significant changes in Western universities, the collegial tradition as a principle for decision-making never completely disappeared. The collegial tradition has been most visible in higher education in Britain (e.g. Oxford and Cambridge) and the United States, where all members of academic colleagues are faculty.<sup>1</sup> Broadly speaking, the most important organising principle of the collegial tradition is the logic of argumentation. Ideally, the best argument wins, and importantly, the best argument can be suggested by any member of the academic community irrespective of status. According to the collegial ideal, there is no voting because the decision is made when the academic community concerned reaches a consensus. The collegial ideal also assumes and is based on a low-level hierarchy in academic communities because it supports critical discussion as essential for collegial debates and discussions. Thus, critical discussion is both a consequence of and precondition for collegial decision-making. In addition, academic freedom and institutional autonomy are necessary preconditions for collegiality to flourish. One of the consequences of the collegial decision-making process is a strong commitment to decisions made together (Välimaa, 2012).

*Democratic decision-making* may also result in a consensus based on negotiations between different actors of the academic community or group responsible for

---

<sup>1</sup>In the Continental European tradition, the term ‘faculty’ means an organisational unit in a university.

decision-making. However, the rule of the majority is at the core of the democratic decision-making ideal. For this reason, *voting* is a normal procedure in democratic decision-making, including in universities. Democracy emphasises values of equality and equity, especially in the Nordic countries. As for universities, the origins of democratic decision processes date back to medieval universities, especially Paris, where faculties made decisions based on voting (Välimaa, 2019). However, democratic ideals had their heyday during the 1960s when students across Europe were demanding rights to participate in university decision-making. These battles against the university establishment were especially notorious in France (see Bourdieu, 1988), but they were also highly visible in Finland. Consequently, Finnish universities implemented a tri-partite model consisting of the participation of representatives from the professorial staff, other academic staff and students in all university decision-making bodies. Each group would normally make up one-third of the representatives of a decision-making body.

*Managerialism* is the most recent decision-making ideal in higher education, which operates under the influence of the OECD (see Kallo, 2009). According to this ideal, decision-making should be concentrated in as few hands as possible in order to increase efficiency and the ability to make strategic decisions. In this context, strategic decision-making has to do with the increased ability to make cuts and set specific, often narrow, goals for universities. In practice, managerialism favours institutional leadership at the cost of democratic and collegial bodies, which are perceived as slow and inefficient in decision-making processes. Managerial practices also favour streamlined organisational models and efficiency, which can be measured with the help of numerical indicators.

## **The Three Decision-Making Ideals—A Historical Glance at the Case of Finland**

### ***Collegial Roots and Geopolitical Tensions***

The origins of the Western and Scandinavian university traditions, together with the shared civil law jurisdiction when Finland was one of the core areas of the Kingdom of Sweden (for about 700 years), constitute the cultural heritage of Finland. The expansion of universities began during the Swedish reign, in the seventeenth century. The first university after Uppsala, established in 1477, was the University of Tartu (Swe. Dorpat) in today's Estonia, established 1632, which was also a part of Swedish kingdom. The university in Åbo (Fi. Turku) was established 1640 and the university in Lund in 1666. The establishment of these universities (Dorpat, Åbo, Lund) was supported by the geopolitical motive of securing the state's expansion and survival as an administrative unit.

Higher education—especially the university context—is and has been interconnected with the changes in Finland from the establishment of the Royal Academy in Åbo in 1640. This northernmost university in Europe was established

in the middle of the Thirty Years War (1618–1648) in Europe. The rationale for establishing it was to educate priests to defend the Lutheran Church and train officials for society, especially in the service of Swedish kings (Klinge et al., 1987; Välimaa, 2019).

A similar purpose was continued, even strengthening after the fire in Åbo in 1827 when the university was moved closer to St Petersburg to the new capital Helsinki. The old Royal Academy of Åbo was renamed The Imperial Alexander University, and in 1917, it became the University of Helsinki. As part of the Russian Empire (1808–1917), the university was granted a monopoly to train (1) civil servants in order to expand public administration in the Autonomous Grand Duchy of Finland and (2) priests for the Finnish Lutheran Church. Without going into historical detail (see Välimaa, 2019), it is important to recognise that the university played central cultural, social and political roles in building the Finnish society and nation during the nineteenth century. Imperial Alexander University offered a very important social space for the development of both Finnish nationalism and the Finnish nation state (Välimaa, 2019).

As a university institution, Imperial Alexander University followed the Humboldtian principles of institutional autonomy and academic freedom regarding research and studying. This was important in separating it from Russian universities, which developed in a more vocationally oriented direction. These differences in the orientation of universities also resulted in differences in how the educated middle class developed.

In the Royal Academy of Åbo (1640–1827), professors were defined as *colleagues* from the very beginning. This tradition continued despite the Russian occupation of Finland in 1809, disconnecting the country from Sweden and turning it into a grand duchy under the czar. Therefore, professors continued to make up the decision-making body in the renamed Imperial Alexander University in Helsinki (1827–1919). The collegial tradition continued when Finland gained independence in 1917, and the university was once again reconstituted, now as the University of Helsinki (1918–present). The great and small ‘consistories’ were the central bodies.

As part of the grand duchy and the Russian Empire, the university was reformed by integrating university governance with imperial bureaucracy and incorporating university professors into civil servant categories of the grand duchy during the nineteenth century. However, the leadership of the university remained in the hands of university professors, who elected the deans and rectors and exercised power in and through consistories. At the same time, the university as an organisation was closely related with Finnish society and the ruling imperial family because the crown prince would normally be nominated as the university chancellor (Klinge et al., 1989; Välimaa, 2019).

These practices continued in the Republic of Finland as professors and other university staff were defined as civil servants and the university enjoyed institutional autonomy. The University of Helsinki and two new universities established in Turku (Åbo Akademi and the University of Turku) enjoyed a high social status in Finland between the two world wars. These universities educated the elite of Finnish society, together with a technical university and two business schools (Klinge et al., 1990; Välimaa, 2019).

In addition to the collegial nature of academic decision-making, the university administration adopted models of state bureaucracy, especially during the 19th and 20th centuries. The ideal of modern state administration was to follow rules, regulations and laws. This traditional ideal of administration has persisted, especially in human resource management, in financial and student matters because these activities are regulated by national legislation (Välimaa, 2012, 2019).

### ***The Democratic Turn of the 1960s and Its Roots in the Independence***

Finnish society began changing rapidly, both politically and economically, after WWII due to rapid industrialisation altering the country's economic structure. This development contributed to radical changes in higher education policies and the introduction of the first national higher education policy plan in the late 1950s. The aim was to expand higher education so that it could better respond to the needs of a changing, industrialising and urbanising society. The expansion was supported by macro-economic aims to mobilise talent reserves in Finland. Politically, however, the most important goal was to create a fair society with the aim of providing equal educational opportunities for all citizens regardless of their gender, socio-economic background or geographical location. These policy aims were strongly related to the social policies and values of the emerging Nordic welfare states. They were also supported by provincial regions and cities with the aim of regional development (Välimaa, 2019).

As a result, the number of university students increased rapidly, and universities were established across the country. Finland was the first among the Nordic countries to reach mass higher education in the 1970s. The policy of expansion continued with the establishment of the sector of universities of applied sciences (UAS) during the 1990s when Finland was faced with severe economic austerity related to and partly caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the political discourse, the claim was that the establishment of a new vocationally oriented higher education sector would raise the skill level of the Finnish labour force. This also illustrates the continuation of macro-economic argumentation because research and universities are seen as important supporters of the Finnish knowledge society of the twenty-first century (Nokkala, 2016; Välimaa, 2019).

The expansion of higher education also led to internal changes at universities. By the 1960s, it became quite apparent that traditional university decision-making processes and professorial rule were not sufficiently efficient for Finland's rapidly expanding universities. It was partly because of internal changes and rapid social changes that university administration and governance were in need of reform. During the late 1960s, the government of Finland demanded that universities reform their internal governance structures. Universities and especially professors resisted these reforms (Välimaa, 2019). However, following political confrontations, a

compromise was reached according to which all decision-making bodies in universities were to consist of representatives from three groups: professors, other academic staff members and students. This model was a radical democratic change because it introduced democratic decision-making processes and structures in universities formerly ruled exclusively by professors (Välilmaa, 2019).

The introduction of democratic decision-making bodies was seen as a modern initiative in terms of reforming universities and making them more democratic. In principle, democratic decision-making is based on the rule of the majority, which often leads to decision-making by voting. In practice, however, democratic decision-making tends to lead to compromises where everybody wins in order to avoid confrontations between different groups represented in the university's decision-making bodies (Välilmaa, 2019).

### ***Market State, Managerialism and the Collapse of the Soviet Union***

Following international neoliberal trends and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the role of the state started to change in Finland. Following more or less the ideas first explicated by Milton Friedman, the state was defined as the body collecting taxes, but its role in upholding institutions diminished.

The market state model, which was strongly defended by, for example, Margaret Thatcher of the United Kingdom, led to the privatisation of significant societal services at the turn of the millennium. The policy applied was a version of ordoliberalism as it retained the necessity of regulating institutions in creating stability; however, there was some distance from ordoliberalism through a subscription to the ideal of the welfare state. In Finland, the populist rhetoric of the time was that only economic liberalism could guarantee the continued existence of the welfare state, thus representing a version of the social market economy. One of the most influential neo-liberal models was new public management (NPM), which challenged traditional administrative and governance practices aimed at making public organisations more efficient, transparent and better managed business-like entities.

The substantial economic difficulties resulting from the collapse of Finnish exports to the Soviet Union, which resulted in unemployment rates of up to 17%, led to a sudden end to the growth of higher education budgets, which had continued from the mid-1980s. Consequently, there were severe budget cuts, resulting in a 21% cut in public funding to higher education between 1991 and 2000 (Välilmaa, 2019). The economic hardships were so severe that every Finnish academic was forced to meet the need to do things differently. This recession can be described as a psychological 'globalisation shock' to Finnish society and higher education, leading to increased uncertainty under social conditions of competition between universities, their faculties, and individuals. All this contributed to a radical change of mentality in universities. Under the new reality, it became socially acceptable to increase

cooperation with companies, industry and other sectors of the society in all academic disciplines.

The policy discussion also drew on the early liberal representatives of the minimalist market state. In Finland, this view was originally advocated by Anders Chydenius from Gamlakarleby, who in his essay ‘*The Source of Our Country’s Weakness in 1765*’, translated into German the same year, argued for a liberal economy and the idea of the *invisible hand* made famous by Adam Smith (1776) (see, e.g. Jonasson & Hyttinen, 2012).

In the university environment of the 1990s, the *social market state* ideal resulted in the increase in the status and power of academic leaders (departmental heads, deans and rectors). The main initiative was, however, accepting the Universities Act 558/2009, whose objectives were related to the aim of ensuring that world-class universities in Finland would be supported by new public management ideals that aim to transform universities into more productive and efficient organisations. Consequently, the Universities Act 558/2009 essentially wiped away the democratic bodies and introduced line-organisation models with strong academic leadership. Collegiality was ignored as a basic decision-making principle.

However, collegial decision-making is as old an ideal as European universities. It has been and continues to be an integral part of decision-making regarding research processes, teaching arrangements and pedagogical matters among academics. However, collegial decision-making is rather invisible in universities because it is not organised around or by a university office. This potentially explains why collegiality is easily overlooked or even forgotten as a rationale for academic decision-making. This is especially true with the contemporary Universities Act (558/2009), which emphasises the power and responsibility of academic leaders (especially deans and rectors) and the efficient implementation of decisions made with the help of a streamlined organisation. Managerialism also overlooks democratic structures and processes in universities to the benefit of academic leaders.

Today, Finland as a nation state steers its higher education system with the help of information, economic incentives (in and through performance agreements and funding models) and normative regulations by issuing acts and orders. Where reforms are concerned, however, the most efficient steering instrument is national legislation. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to the most recent legislative reform in Finland in the last 100 years, the Universities Act 558/2009.

According to the official explanation, the main aim of Finnish legislators was to increase the ‘institutional autonomy’ of universities (background memos, 2009). This was achieved by, first, separating universities from the state budget and changing their legal status and defining them as independent legal subjects (i.e. public corporations) or universities run by foundations. This change increased the economic autonomy of universities because they could now enter contracts to run their own economic activities, receive donations, make capital investments and use the profits from investments to support university teaching or research (Välimaa, 2019). However, the total operational costs for all universities are covered by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC). The MEC also gives universities permission to establish new study fields and decide on the number of starting places for



students. This means that universities have *procedural autonomy* to decide how they can reach the national targets defined by the MEC.

The second aim was to make the university board the strategic decision-making body responsible for deciding on strategic goals for the university. In addition, at least 40% of the board members had to be external to universities. The university collegium (or consistory in foundation universities) was a new decision-making body consisting of elected student and staff representatives. This democratically elected body only accepted annual budget plans and annual economic reports suggested by the board.

However, perhaps the most important change was to make rectors the most powerful executive actor in the university. This change was well in line with the aims of new public management in terms of strengthening the power of executive managers. Furthermore, it is important that the rector is now nominated by the university board, contrary to the tradition of being elected by university staff and students. This means that rectors are loyal to and responsible for university management and the university board rather than academic communities. As a result, all democratic bodies have lost much of their power at the faculty and department levels (Välilmaa, 2019).

Concerning academic staff, the most visible change was the discontinuation of the civil servant status of staff, changing it to a work contract relationship with the employer, that is, the university. However, the Universities Act continues to secure academic freedom. In addition, the Finnish Constitution protects academic freedom and institutional autonomy. These two principles are both important and interconnected because real academic freedom can only take place in the context of institutional autonomy. Critical thinking, which is the core value of academic freedom, needs both supportive academic communities and organisational structures that defend academic freedom in thinking and research. Collegiality, in turn, is at the core of academic communities because they function well when they respect the logic of argumentation (Välilmaa, 2012, 2019).

## **A Non-affirmative Approach to Interpreting the Three Decision-Making Ideals**

The aim of this historical overview was to show that Finnish higher education has changed in relation, and often in response, to social, ideological and geopolitical developments. The three decision-making ideals were born in different historical periods, but they continue to influence practices and processes in contemporary universities because they have sedimented and formed historical layers above each other. Historical layering is based on the empirical notion that it is much easier to implement new practices than discontinue existing ones (Christensen, 2012). Collegiality has passed the test of time and continues to be a way of behaviour in academic processes. It also relates to the democratic ideals of equality and shared decision-

making; however, it is challenged by managerialist ideals of measurable efficiency and strong leadership. The interplay between these ideals does help in maintaining universities as dynamic social spaces. In what follows, we apply a non-affirmative point of departure in analysing the different decision-making ideals: collegial, democratic and managerialist.

While the collegial model was previously treated in a decontextualised manner, the latter two were related to societal developments reflecting different citizenship ideals. This discussion, therefore, exemplifies the relation between the first and second regulative principles of NAT (see Chap. 1), that is, that higher education leadership and governance (second principle) are always related to the role of higher education in relation to other societal fields (first principle). It also reflects different positions regarding the two constitutive principles, that is, how we define the relation between the subject and the world and the manner in which the subject is summoned by leadership interventions. Educationally, the collegial decision procedure builds on a rational learning process and assumes that everyone has a right to challenge or question the experiences or explanations of others. As the dialogue builds on everyone's right to summon others, both parties recognise each other as free. The summoning rational dialogue also assumes the self-reflection of others regarding content or arguments presented as a necessary aspect of the collegial dialogue—the other must decide to accept an explanation that has been the subject of argumentation. Despite representing a different approach to understanding communication, the collegial tradition reminds us of some of the arguments in Habermas' theory of communicative action, believed to serve the understanding of the transmission and renewal of cultural knowledge. The process, which results in mutual understanding, contributes to forming researchers' identities. The collegial discourse features an emancipatory dimension, a belief in the power of communicative reason where language has a foundational role. In the collegial culture, leadership and decision-making come across as collaborative processual phenomena, where a shared understanding and future direction are created—'learned'—in dialogue. Sociality rather than individuality marks the point of departure. This understanding of collegial decision-making is reminiscent of a pedagogical process: Teaching is not about transmitting knowledge and values but, rather, about negotiating the reasons for and validation of given explanations. Such a pedagogy summons students according to the same communicative structure as that operating between faculty.

The shift to the democratic mode of leadership and decision-making in the 1960s relates to the shift in relations between societal fields, which resulted in a transformed view of the role of higher education in society. Previously, higher education mainly involved education for the ruling elite, thereby conserving societal power structures. In the societal dialogue of the 1960s, the view on higher education transformed towards seeing it more as a transformational force for a more equal and democratic society and economic development. This exemplifies the first regulative principle of NAT, which states that the role of education is constantly negotiated in a non-hierarchical relation between different fields of society (economy, politics, culture, religion). When this dialogue resulted in a shift in the view of higher education, it also affected the second regulative principle in terms of how this

societal task was transformed into pedagogical practice through leadership and governance. Defining the task of higher education as promoting equality and democracy appears to have led to equality and democracy becoming key principles in higher education leadership and decision-making. As previously noted, this shift was not affirmed uncritically by the professors who had led the universities until then. The result of the discussion that followed was the establishment of the democratically elected tri-partite decision-making bodies in higher education, where decision-making was based on the principles of democracy. In this mode of decision-making, the principle of argumentation remains prominent. In other words, every elected member of a decision-making body is recognised as having equal rights to summon the others, and every member is recognised as principally free to make their own judgement. However, if a consensus is not reached through argumentation, voting guarantees that decisions can still be made. From a NAT perspective, voting is based on the precondition that everyone recognises *and affirms* the results of the vote.

The introduction of the tri-partite system also meant that all members of the academic community—professors, teachers, researchers, administrators and students—were formally recognised as having influence in higher education decision-making. Adopting a democratic principle for decision-making by democratically elected bodies entails a recognition of university employees as capable of and responsible for leading their own university. This maintains a space for non-affirmative deliberative dialogue where external influences are recognised, discussed and decided on by those affected by the decisions. Even though everybody is expected to affirm decisions reached through democratic means, a democratic mode of decision-making means that the outcome of the decision-making process is open and that organisational direction is created in processual dialogue.

Both collegiality (where all faculty are included) and democracy are characterised by all members of the academic community being in one way or another recognised as free and capable of and responsible for participating in decision-making, either directly or indirectly. This has not always been the case in practice as professors were the sole participants in decision-making in Finnish higher education pre-1960s. The shift from the democratic to the managerial mode of decision-making implies a noticeable break in this tradition. Decision-making following the university law of 2009 meant that the power of the democratically elected bodies was significantly reduced and shifted mainly to deans and rector. From the perspective of recognition—pointing out that we are always recognised *as something*—this shift is noticeable as it implies that academic staff are no longer recognised as capable of making decisions and having influence on higher education leadership to the same extent as previously. Rather than being recognised as decision-makers capable of deciding on the direction of their institution, academics are now increasingly recognised as decision-implementers in need of strong leadership. The expectation is no longer that academics would recognise and non-affirmatively deliberate on external influences and collaboratively create a direction for the institution; instead, to a larger extent, they recognise, affirm and implement decisions and strategies made by academic leaders. As the shift from democracy to managerialism is also

coupled with strengthened accountability mechanisms and an increase in performance-based funding (see Chap. 4), the space for non-affirmative autonomous decision-making becomes restricted, and the summons directed at academics are increasingly affirmative in character. Perhaps most importantly, this means that academics are no longer recognised as free but are largely instruments for reaching external goals.

The above-described shift in the second regulative principle of NAT is related to a shift in the relations between societal fields—the first regulative principle. Where the democratic mode of decision-making was coupled with the view of higher education as a means for a more equal and democratic society, the managerial mode of decision-making was founded on the view of higher education as a key strategic instrument for maintaining economic competitiveness in a global market. Thus, the role of higher education was redefined in the production of competencies (education) and innovations (research) in a global market economy. This means that the right to define higher education goals no longer necessarily resides with higher education institutions and the scientific communities but increasingly among external stakeholders in business and the economy. A tighter managerial control (regulative principle 2) is logical if the goals are increasingly defined elsewhere, meaning that higher education is increasingly seen as subordinate to the economy and politics (regulative principle 1).

A shift towards more managerial modes of decision-making and leadership, which reduces the role of academics to implementers of strategies and decisions made elsewhere, creates tensions as it is at odds with the two fundamental tasks of higher education: teaching and research. As noted earlier, a key principle of scientific progress is that of collegial argumentation. Ideally, the strongest argument wins, regardless of who presented it, and it is the dialogue between different viewpoints that makes up the core of scientific progress, leading the field forward in a direction that is fundamentally open and created by the process itself. In a similar vein, teaching is fundamentally based on recognising the other as principally free and self-active, free to recognise and respond to summons more or less affirmatively. As the other is fundamentally free, a teacher cannot directly transfer ideas or knowledge to the other. Instead, by directing the self-activity of the other towards activities that have a pedagogical potential, the teacher may influence the study activities of the other in ways that support learning. More important than attempting to teach today's correct answers to students is leading students to understand the very questions that the answers address. This approach carries the potential that, in the future, students will develop entirely new answers to questions or pose different questions altogether. Relative autonomy is crucial in educational institutions as education in liberal economies and political democracies has an emancipatory task aimed at developing students' professional, personal and societal self-determination. This requires support for students to develop their abilities to analyse and reflect critically as individuals, problematising existing theoretical answers to various dilemmas. In this respect, existing knowledge offers itself as a necessary medium through which learners' reflexive ability is developed. Such an approach is coherent with a liberal and democratic polity.

As this short discussion portrays, both teaching and research are foundationally based on an open and non-affirmative relation between actors and between higher education and the surrounding society. This open and non-hierarchical relation is at the core of the potential of higher education to reach beyond the present state in both research and teaching. A tight strategic and managerial steering of these activities is therefore fundamentally at odds with the very nature of the activities, reducing the space for autonomous action and requiring affirmative responses to leadership and management initiatives. Recent managerial leadership policy reforms (Gunter et al., 2016) have favoured affirmative leadership, thus jeopardising the principles of non-affirmative education that have historically been principal aims of and of central concern to universities. Managerialist leadership therefore risks being counterproductive as it reduces the innovative potential of both teaching and research by subordinating them to external influences and goals.

## Conclusions

*Recognition without affirmation* creates a space for collaborative reflection and a repositioning of the activities of individuals and organisations, characterised by both collegiality and democracy. Non-affirmative analytics ask about the extent to which educational leadership EL considers interests such as those of the labour market, science and politics while avoiding instrumentalisation, which would violate the relative autonomy the higher education in education and research. From a multi-level systems perspective, a shift towards managerialism entails moving power upwards in the hierarchy. If higher education leadership and governance are seen as a mediating activity—managing the gap between expectations external to the university and internal procedures and practices—then gap management has moved upwards in the hierarchy, distancing itself from the core activities of higher education: teaching and research.

The three ideals of decision-making presented in this chapter exist simultaneously in contemporary Finnish higher education. The collegial logic of argumentation is still the prevailing logic of scientific discourse. The democratic tradition still prevails in the democratically elected decision-making bodies that remain, and the managerial ideal is the most recently added layer. As the discussion above shows, these layers of decision-making have distinct differences regarding *what* they recognise the individual academic to be and in what way academics are summoned. Whereas the first two recognise the academic as a principally autonomous actor, capable of taking responsibility and participating in decision-making and creating a direction for higher education, the managerial layer directs affirmative summons at the academic, mainly recognising them as implementers of strategies and pursuers of goals decided on by someone else, unable to take responsibility for the direction of higher education.

NAT contributes to the research field with its non-linear and non-hierarchical view. It offers a theoretical construct for an empirical analysis of the extent to which

instances of role superiority in relation to other practices recognise the relative autonomy of these action levels. If external interests govern higher education, or if there is a top-down hierarchy among them, leadership forces actors to *affirm* various external or internal interests. If universities not only *recognise* but also *affirm* such interests, education and research institutions sub-ordinate themselves in relation to these interests. Affirmative pedagogy and leadership run the risk of not achieving the aim of universities to promote the development of self-determining, reflective and critical citizens able to contribute to existing practices and develop new ones in a democratic society.

## References

- Bourdieu, P. (1988). *Homo academicus*. (P. Collier, Trans.). Stanford University Press.
- Christensen, T. (2012). Post-NPM and changing public governance. *Meiji Journal of Political Science and Economics*, 1, 1–11. <http://mjps.meiji.jp/articles/files/01-01/01-01.pdf>
- Gunter, H. M., Grimaldi, E., Hall, D., & Serpieri, R. (Eds.). (2016). *New public management and the reform of education: European lessons for policy and practice*. Routledge.
- Habermas, J. (1987). *Theory of communicative action: A critique of functionalist reason* (Vol. 2, T. A. McCarthy, Trans.). Beacon Press.
- Jonasson, M., & Hyttinen, P. (Eds.). (2012). *Anticipating the wealth of nations: The selected works of Anders Chydenius (1729–1803)*. Routledge.
- Kallo, J. (2009). *OECD education policy: A comparative and historical study focusing on the thematic reviews of tertiary education*. Finnish Education Research Association.
- Klinge, M., Knapas, R., Leikola, A., & Strömberg, J. (1987). *Kuninkaallinen Turun Akatemia 1640–1808. Helsingin yliopisto 1640–1990. Ensimmäinen osa* [The Royal Academy of Turku from 1640 to 1808. The University of Helsinki from 1640 to 1990. Part I]. Otava.
- Klinge, M., Knapas, R., Leikola, A., & Strömberg, J. (1989). *Kuninkaallinen Turun Akatemia 1808–1917. Helsingin yliopisto 1640–1990. Toinen osa* [The Royal Academy of Turku from 1808 to 1917. The University of Helsinki from 1640 to 1990. Part II]. Otava.
- Klinge, M., Knapas, R., Leikola, A., & Strömberg, J. (1990). *Helsingin yliopisto 1917–1990. Helsingin yliopisto 1640–1990. Kolmas osa* [The University of Helsinki from 1808 to 1917. The University of Helsinki from 1640 to 1990. Part III]. Otava.
- Nokkala, T. (2016). National stories, convergent trends and divergent paths: Discursive construction of the higher education and knowledge society: Nexus in higher education policy texts of five knowledge societies. In D. Hoffman & J. Välimaa (Eds.), *Re-becoming universities? Higher education institutions in networked knowledge societies* (pp. 75–112). [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-7369-0\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-7369-0_4)
- Tapper, T., & Palfreyman, D. (2010). *The collegial tradition in the age of mass higher education*. Springer.
- Uljens, M., & Ylimäki, R. (Eds.). (2017). *Bridging educational leadership, curriculum theory and Didaktik*. Springer.
- Universities Act 558/2009. See: [https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2009/en20090558\\_20160644.pdf](https://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaannokset/2009/en20090558_20160644.pdf)
- Välimaa, J. (2012). Yliopistojen kollegiaalisuudesta—Traditio ja haasteet yhtiöyliopistoissa [Collegiality of universities—The tradition and its challenges at entrepreneurial universities]. In M. V. Volanen (Ed.), *Toiseksi paras? Tieteentekijät ja uusi yliopisto [Second best? University researchers and teachers and the new university]* (pp. 140–159). Tieteentekijöiden liitto.
- Välimaa, J. (2019). *A history of Finnish higher education from the middle ages to the 21st century*. Springer.

**Open Access** This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

