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University Autonomy

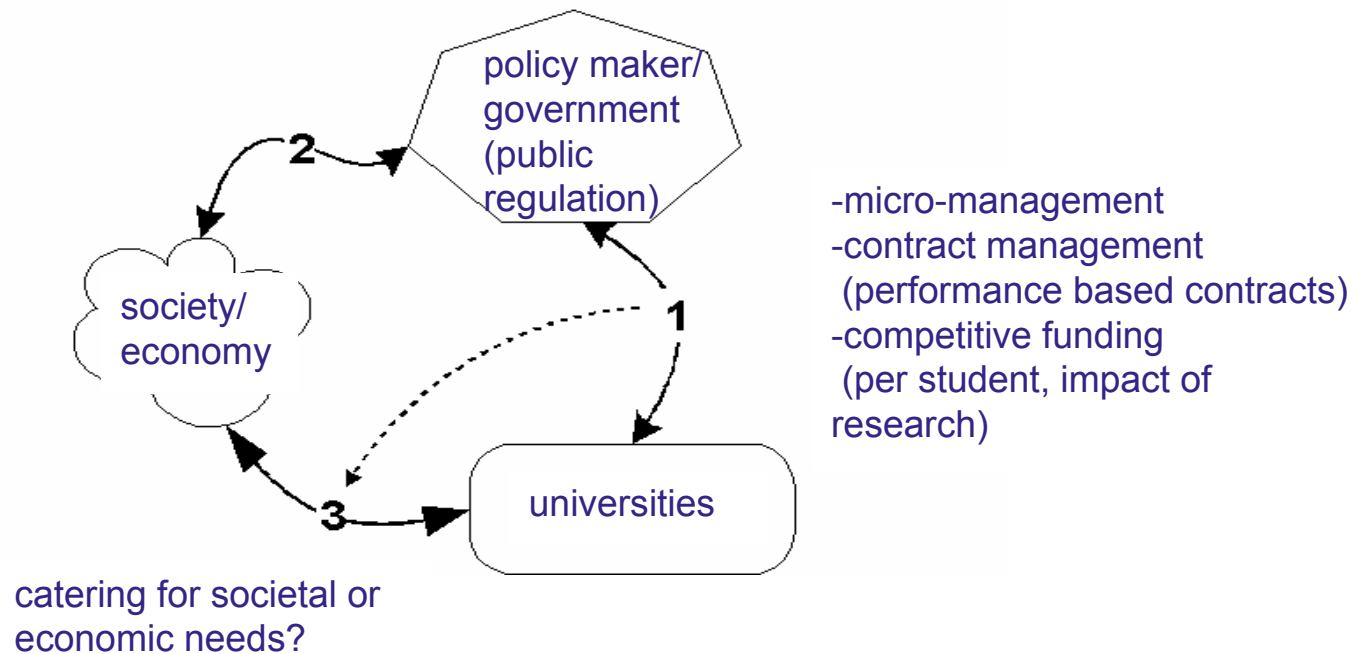
Definition, Scope and the Austrian example

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Framework for the Autonomy of Universities



University Systems

- - Medieval system / “Oxbridge”: pragmatism, enlightenment/limited role of the state
- The French challenge (1791): écoles spéciales as state institutions/utilitarian legitimisation of knowledge
- The Humboldtian answer: idealistic legitimisation of knowledge, knowledge as an end in itself/only PhD studies/Academic freedom and government micromanagement/national universities
- The hybrid system in the US: on top of the medieval British system Humboldtian PhD studies/diversification of missions and profiles/from “elite” to “mass” system: democratic at the base, elitist at the top/post-modern legitimisation of knowledge

Autonomy: Why?

Not an end in itself but a means:

- To act quickly in a fast changing, competitive and globalised environment => shape the future
- To better respond to societal needs at regional, national and European levels
- To raise additional funds in a context of stagnating public resources
- To respond to demographic challenges in Europe by:
 - ü Nurturing local talents => Ensure appropriate academic careers developments
 - ü Attracting talents internationally

Institutional Autonomy (definition)

- Legal autonomy (full legal entity)
- Academic autonomy (curricula, teaching, research)
- Staffing autonomy (responsibility for recruitment, salaries and promotion)
- Financial autonomy (lump sum budgeting)
- Organisational autonomy (internal structure)

Convince staff and students that institutional autonomy serves as a buffer that protects their academic freedom and as a means to assure quality

Accountability - Why and How?

■ Why?

- ü For the public (students, governments, the public, etc.)
- ü For the institution itself:
 - to shape the future => accountability must lead to increased capacity to set/achieve strategic goals

■ How?

- ü External boards
- ü Full-cost accounting
- ü Internal/external quality assurance
- ü Rankings?

Accountability - Actors/Instruments (1)

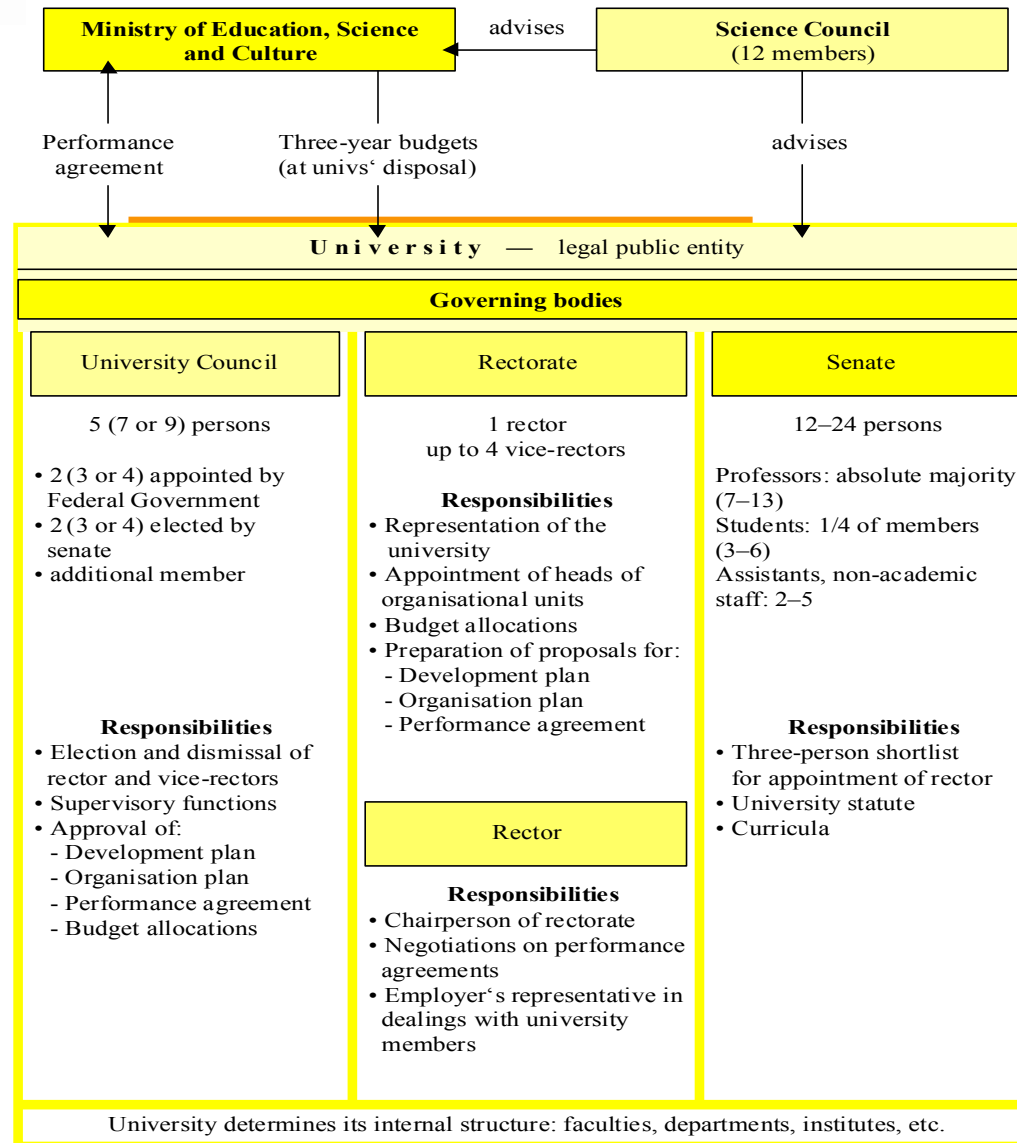
- **External board – A variety of models that:**
 - ü Reflect increased emphasis on professionalism of university leadership
 - ü Offer potential for increased effectiveness/efficiency and accountability to the public
 - ü Lead to increased leadership credibility that balances decreased democracy/collegiality
- **Full-cost systems:**
 - ü To ensure external/internal reporting and appropriate internal resources allocation
 - ⇒ Requires persuading academic staff that staff-time accounting is essential
 - § Keep it simple but effective
 - § Explain the benefits

Accountability - Actors/Instruments (2)

- **Internal Quality – Develop a quality culture;**
i.e.:
 - ü Ensure ownership by the community – emphasis on process
 - ü Rely on younger staff to be your “quality champions”
 - ü Minimise bureaucracy
 - ü Involve students (especially in ensuring quality of teaching)
 - ü Leadership must:
 - § demonstrate value of internal processes (e.g., less intrusive external QA processes)
 - § use the results for improvements (staff development rather than sanction)

The Austrian example

Universities Act 2002



Steps toward autonomy (1)

Mission statement, strategic plan

- § study programmes
- § research areas, research profile
- § quality assurance
- § internationality
- § other goals (local, societal)

Steps toward autonomy (2)

Organisation (structure follows strategy)

- § internal organisation: faculties, departments, the organisation of study centres
- § organisation of services
- § the role of collegial bodies

Steps toward autonomy (3)

Employment issues

- § definition and organisation of the role of the university as an employer
- § university employees no longer as civil servants; employees might get dismissed
- § wage agreements for all universities ("Kollektivvertrag") and within individual universities ("Betriebsvereinbarung")
- § career models, tenure-track models
- § human resource development

Steps toward autonomy (4)

Financial resources

- § universities as companies (profit and loss accounting, balance sheet, public financial statements)
- § three-year budgets from government
- § tuition fees as direct revenues
- § third-party funds

Outlook

- § It should be up to the autonomous university to position itself in the more and more diversified and internationalised world of knowledge
- § The visible institutional profile of an autonomous university may create a positive image that has positive feedbacks for staff and students