

Human Resources and the Entrepreneurial University: The cases of Finland, Spain, Sweden and the UK.

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*Two roads diverged in a wood, and I-
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.
Robert Frost*

Introduction

There is an increasing realization that knowledge is the most important asset for economic growth of a country. Knowledge-intensive production is dependent on a highly educated work-force and therefore on the higher education systems of a country. Harnessing the capabilities and commitment of “knowledge workers” is the central managerial challenge of our time, but despite the rhetoric, as pointed out by some researchers, not much attention is given to the creation of the best possible working conditions or environments for them. Organisational structures, (and ownership in the private sector) governance systems and incentive programmes, where the latter exist, are still a reflection of the industrial age. In this context it is remarkable that in the most knowledge-intensive organisations, higher education institutions, the human resources and their commitment seem to be almost taken for granted, as observed by many.

Increasing demands from various forces like state, market and clients transform academic institutions and pressure them to be more entrepreneurial. Government resource allocations are now frequently tied to results, and public expenditures have not been allowed to increase at the same rate as the demand for educating more and new types of students. Research funding via government resource allocations, especially for basic research, is decreasing and individuals and institutions are competing fiercely for external research funds and trying to generate revenues from market-like activities, with could result in a decreasing focus on activities such as research or the development of innovative pedagogy.

Human resources-the concept

Human resources as a term was originally used in economics or political economy for one of the three forces of production, instead of using the term labour. The concept was developed in response to Taylorism. When human resource management was introduced in the 1980s there were expectations that this would help in the process of managing social capital in organisations. Models of different kinds were developed with the aim of linking the organisational strategy to the choices involved in selecting, appraising, rewarding and further developing the employees. These models, or processes, were supposed to have an impact on commitment, competence, cost effectiveness, quality and flexibility for the good of the organisation. Successful human resource management was seen as a way to gain maximal benefits from the human potential by tying the individual(s) closer to the organisation.

In the 1990s followed heavy criticism against the optimistic view of human resource management. Critics claimed that as the tradition of personnel departments of seeing people

as a cost was now being replaced by treating people as resource there was the danger of falling into the same normative trap, applying models without true consideration of human values. (Steyert and Janssens, 1999). Work psychologists and other people concerned with employment issues initiated the human relations movement, with a focus on the individual in the organisation, not treating the individuals as replaceable cogs in a machine. Employees, then, were to be seen as individuals with their own goals and needs, who, supposedly, also want to work towards common goals, if they possess the adequate preparation and are offered the proper conditions to do so, including the opportunities for learning and up-skilling.

Modern macro-economic theory prefers the expression firm-specific human capital. Human beings, however, are not predictable or controllable in the same way as for example physical resources. They are able to creatively contribute to their organisation beyond their contract or expectations but they are also mobile. Nowadays, human resources refers to individuals in an organisation or business and to the functions in organisations which manages personnel issues including recruitment and redundancies, units traditionally named “personnel “departments.

Researchers into the theoretical foundations of human resource management, relating it to entrepreneurship, warn against seeing human resource management as something static, as an end result. They analyse the *promise of care-taking* which is an integral part of both thinking and practice in management (clearly seen in human resource management), the *concept of human* as understood through the tensions between *homo economicus* and *homo ludens*, the creative individual, and the *question of continuation*, choice of road to take. (Hjorth, 1999) Human resource management, then, functions as an operationalisation of governmentality in human relationships such as those that could be found in pedagogy or counselling.

Government is here:

...designated the way in which the conduct of individuals or groups might be directed... It did not only cover the legitimately constituted forms of political or economic subjection, but also models of action, more or less considered and calculated, which were destined to act upon the possible field of action of others. (Foucault, 1982, quoted in D. Hjorth, *ibid.*).

In this tradition, researchers are seeking for a more complex understanding of the concept *human* in relation to management, organisation and entrepreneurship.

Human resource management and higher education

The sustainability and credibility of higher education institutions depends on the quality of its academic inputs, including research, and the teaching and learning processes. There are a number of key issues related to the management of human resources in higher education institutions, both academic and administrative or managerial staff. These issues are concerned with processes such as acquisition or recruitment and introduction of new employees as well as retention, motivation, assessment of performance, promotion or career systems and training (knowledge management). These processes have to be managed in constantly changing environments within university organisations that are bottom heavy and loosely coupled.

Challenges

There are many challenges to human resource management in higher education. Academic work is, quite naturally, influenced by all developments within the field of higher education as well as their relatively new expanded social role, rapid growth, diversification

and internationalisation. Competition with other sectors of society and other countries has increased steadily during recent years. New science fields have been created and the ongoing process of specialisation influences demands for knowledge and competence as well as career opportunities. New governance and management principles introduced in line with the “New Public Management”-philosophy have impinged upon the collegial decision-making principle in higher education and as a consequence the forms and content of the traditional role as teacher/researcher has changed along side changes in the practical and economic preconditions for their work. All these changes inside and outside universities need to be considered in context, as for example in the following figure:

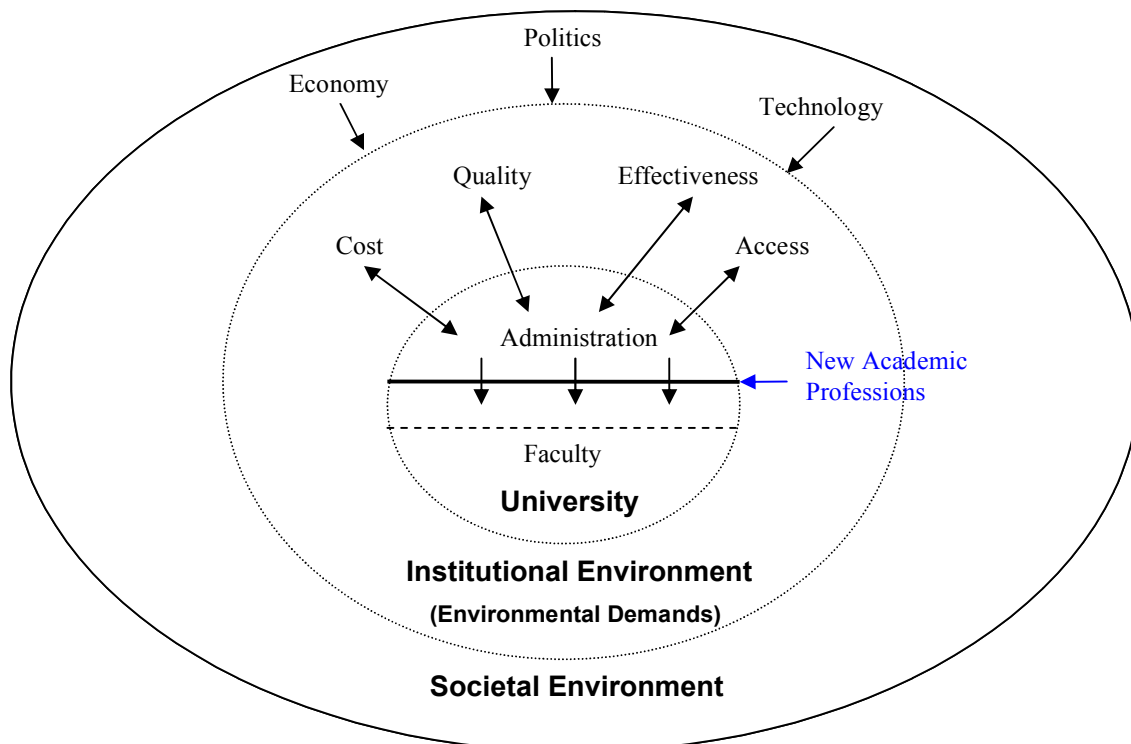


Figure 1. The role of university administration in adaptation. (Gumport, P. J. and Sporn, B.: *Institutional Adaptation in J. C. Smart and W. G. Tierney Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research, Volume XIV*, Agathon Press, New York.

Academic professions

A rather recent phenomenon is the emergence of new expert management professions. (We have added “new professionals” to the category “administration” used by Barbara Sporn in the above figure.) This development is, of course, related to the changes in demands mentioned above. There is a growing need for quality assurance officers, research managers, IPR specialists, controllers etc. In general, there has been increased pressure for professionalisation of management in higher education, a tendency observed all over Europe. At the same time, however, strong tendencies towards de-professionalisation of academics can be observed as academics are placed under the control of new groups of professional managers. Part-time, fixed-term and external faculty is increasingly replacing full-time

academic staff and a general tendency for the casualisation of academic work can be observed.

A part-time employment policy could also be used for continuity, when resources are to a large extent from external sources, in order to keep highly qualified people in the organisation, as for example in the internationally well-known London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. The school has relatively few permanent academic staff. A high proportion of its research income emanates from external research grants, around 60 per cent. Also, in the case of gaps in external funding, academics could receive 6-16 months “underwriting”, depending on length of employment.

One of the main challenges to human resource management in general, as mentioned, is to bring about the commitment of the employees. Young academics, at the beginning of their academic careers in higher education experience that favourable positions with some minimum of job security might be hard to find and academic work, therefore, could appear to be a less attractive choice.

However, as stated in an interview with the director of the faculty office for humanities and Theology at Lund University, Sweden: *Lack of money forces new ideas to come forward. People are used to look for new routes, but continuity could be a problem. There is some instability for post-docs for example. An incredible amount time is spent on writing applications and the success rate has dropped from one project per three applications to one in twelve. But there is some research involved in actually writing these proposals as well and the faculty tries to support. Co-financing, which is common now, also means that the faculty takes some responsibility.*

This situation has been observed by the new government and some additional funds are being directed towards the financing of post-doc positions and other beginning or mid-career academic posts in order to secure human resources for higher education in the future. Another problem is that discretion, the relative freedom of academics to decide about their own work has been curtailed by new managerial demands, time pressures as more students are admitted without accompanying resources and the increasing tendency to steer research programmes and research funding towards strategic areas.

Recruitment

European academics are often civil servants, which mean that strict state rules apply to conditions of employment, including salaries. Recruitment of academic staff as well as promotion or career ladders usually follows strict systems of academic merits. In many cases rules about these processes are laid down in Higher Education Acts or government regulations. Many higher education systems in continental Europe are strongly centralised, leaving little lee-way for pro-active institutional human resource strategies, including recruitment policies.

The Nordic countries, in the EUERЕК project represented by Sweden and Finland, have experienced some decentralisation of decisions related to recruitment, employment and salaries of academic staff after the reforms of the early 1990s. In Sweden, for example, universities themselves decide about the establishment of new professorships, if there are funds available to cover the costs, and salaries are individually negotiated. The employees are

still government employees, however, and the conditions of employment are the same as those in the public agencies. Jönköping University is an exception; however, being a non government foundation with several companies, the recruitment process is less bureaucratic as Swedish government employment rules do not apply. Academic merits, however, are taken into account much in the same way as in other universities. Interesting to note is that the heads of schools, all professors are called CEOs.

There few examples of conscious institutional policies for recruitment of future faculty, which are trying translate lofty mission statements about “diversified faculty body”, attention to gender equality, internationalisation etc. into strategies with attainable goals. The Future Faculty Project at the Royal Institute of Technology (KTH) is an example of such a rare strategy. This project has an annual budget of 10 million SEK from internal sources and is headed by one of the two Vice-Presidents of KTH. This broad effort is about developing teams, cultivating star researchers, while tolerating more of a sense of risk within the organisation thereby making the university a more attractive place. Different types of more flexible work arrangement that could be desired by young faculty, sometimes with small children, are sought in order for them to combine family attentions with academic careers.

In Finland universities recruit their own staff, but the process is regulated by the Ministry of Education. In Spain, still with a much centralised system which roots in the Napoleonic model, academic recruitment is restricted by many rules, but, as mentioned in the Valencia self-assessment report to the OECD, there are ways in which universities try to circumvent these rules by creating new types of positions for the employment of desirable staff. An example is the so called contracted doctor, recently set up, not with civil servant status, but enjoying some employment stability.

In all Western European countries included in EUEREK, academic recruitment and promotion is based upon traditional academic criteria such as scientific publication and teaching experience primarily. However, now other criteria are increasingly being considered such as the ability to attract external research funding, international cooperation and third task activities. As could be seen from the following interview quote from the Plymouth University case study: *The University appointed a reader this year that had relatively few RAE publications, but 70 consultancy reports that were very good for the university...*

It is indeed true that in the UK consultancies by academic staff have increased enormously in recent years. Academics at Nottingham University, for example, are allowed to spend up to 50 days per year in privately paid consultancy. On the other hand, the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine consciously restricted the consultancy activities as they considered this type of entrepreneurialism as commercial rather than academic. Indeed, one could question whether a large number of consultancies should outweigh research or other academic merits in the appointment to a traditional academic position as Reader?

Salaries

Recent studies of the rate of salary increases during the 1990s show that salaries for professors and lecturers in Swedish higher education institutions have not kept pace with other government professionals of high, middle or even lower rank, or, highly ranking legal professionals (Kim, 2001). The rate of salary increases for the latter category of legal professionals was 44 per cent, for high ranking professionals 41 per cent while full professors received 30 and lecturers between 21 and 33 per cent only. Salaries are now lower for

academics in higher education than for comparable (or even those with shorter education) professionals in public and private sectors in spite of the fact that there is room for more individual variation within the system. However, expansion without more resources has undermined the financial situation. Also, the competition for research funding is stiffer.

There are similar experiences reported from Finland, for example, where it has been observed that academic work needs to be better rewarded in order to compete with the private sector for qualified persons. The Ministry of Education signs collective agreements with the employee organisations. These agreements determine the minimum terms and salaries with the possibility for the universities themselves to add to those levels. From 2006 a new merit based system will be implemented with the aims of achieving salary levels that are more competitive with those in the private sector and developing more managerialist and result-oriented human resource policies.

The Spanish situation is that academic salaries are fixed by the State (as is the case for all civil servants) and relatively modest, but salary increases are very common and there are some incentives and overheads in some universities, like the Technical University, are as low as ten per cent for the part of the contract which is reserved for salaries.

In the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine professors and readers are paid on individual salary points not on a salary scale as most UK universities. Initial salaries are determined by the school director in consultation with the head of department and the chair of the governing body of the school. Salaries are subject to annual review by the senior staff review committee. In 2004 salaries for the 26 highest paid were £148,000 which is an impressive figure in comparison to most other academic salaries in our case countries.

Accountability and performance management

Increasing pressure for social responsibility and accountability, to get good value for the tax money, has brought about another type of state control exercised in new ways via the financing system and various types of quality control measures. (Fägerlind & Strömquist, 2004). Management by objectives and lump sum budgeting coupled with various types of production indicators are to be found in many European countries, following, at least partly the example of the UK. In Finland, several interviewees express the view that there is increasing bureaucracy between the university and the Ministry of Education. The rigid scientific and administration model does not fit in the current management by results thinking and intended entrepreneurial culture.

One example of accountability measures applied in the UK is the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), which has been widely debated. The new emphasis on performance management has clearly imposed a more rigorous regime than before, according to one of the UK case studies. Problems as to how to deal with individual cases, especially where teaching overweighs research skills, could arise, as one of the interviewees at LSHTM points out about RAE, it shifts attention to high impact journals which *can stifle innovation to some extent because it is all about point-scoring exercise and individuals have less room to think freely, academically entrepreneurial.*

Mission and Human Resource Management Strategies

An institution's ability to attract good academics as well as administrative and managerial staff is often considered crucial in the competitive environment that universities find

themselves today. The management of human resources, therefore, ought to be as an integral part, or even the basis, of strategic plans or management efforts in higher education institutions. However, after reviewing the case studies we find that the link between missions and visions and the human resources to implement them is not always so well developed, so *some written directions remain on rhetorical level*. There are some examples of more conscious strategies to be found, such as the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Its staff is *self-motivated which is enhanced by an institutional management style and the school distinctive mission. ...The School is quite unusual: we are a small and independent post-graduate international medical school. An unusual thing about the School is the degree to which a very large number of our staff completely buy into the mission*. A commitment to the mission made academics restricts their consultancy activities as it was mentioned before for instead devote themselves to more academically determined entrepreneurship.

Incentives, rewards (and punishment)

This is an offer you cannot refuse...

Rewards are meant to give recognition to people for their achievements and contribution. If rewards are worth having and attainable and people know how they can attain them, they can act as motivators. Incentives, on the other hand are designed to encourage people to achieve the objectives of the organisation. They are intended to provide direct motivation. Incentives are mostly financial, but they can include the promise of non-financial rewards such as promotion, prestige or a particularly interesting assignment (Armstrong and Stephens, 2005).

However, a number of theorists have argued that the pervasive use of rewards and punishments may undermine creativity and impair productivity. One reason for this is that the use of rewards diverts one's attention from primary long-term goals. Amabile (?), for example, demonstrated that the use of rewards inhibits creativity and discourages risk-taking with the result that researchers play it safe and stick to areas that are well established and encouraged. The use of rewards and punishments, therefore, is problematic in academic institutions.

Results from several EUERЕК case studies show that the "carrots and sticks" approach is probably not the best way to stimulate academic creativity and entrepreneurship. It could also be assumed that management "by threat" forces the academic, striving for survival in the system, to become *entrepreneurial by fear*.

The major problem for academics today, according to the case studies, is the time pressure because of above mentioned expanding and new demands. More students mean more teaching and governments demand collaboration with business, industry and surrounding society. *Time is a huge issue because there are many tasks that we are bombarded with these days, administrative tasks, committee work, teaching preparations, writing grant proposals, etc. it is a huge burden. So if you have a very good idea, it has to have a very high chance of success before you decide to spend time on it*, complains one of the interviewees at LSHTM. In Swedish universities, as for example, professors and lecturers are able to get adequate time for research only because they "buy research time" through time consuming applications for external money, which, if granted, could free them of some of their teaching responsibilities.

Magnus Henrekson and Nathan Rosenberg (2000), in their comparative study of incentives for academic entrepreneurship and economic performance in some US and Swedish universities, underline the crucial importance of encouraging excellence in both teaching and research. Other important factors include

- To what extent and how quickly curricula are adjusted to changing demands
- The efficiency with which research budgets can be reallocated across disciplines in response to changes in commercial potential
- The incentives for faculty to interact with industry in economically beneficial ways.

They studied human capital formation as well as incentives to become an entrepreneur or to expand existing business.

In the following there are some examples of incentive and rewards schemes in the Western European universities studied in the framework of EUERЕК:

Spain

In Spain, at the *national level*, established in 1991, there are two types of incentives, mostly for publication and only for professors:

- Research productivity incentives (a wage increase of 100 euro per month after a positive evaluation of six years of research activities.
- Teaching productivity incentives. The same wage increase after a positive evaluation of five years of teaching activities. Assessment of teaching is made at institutional levels.

University funding depends on regions and there are *regional bonuses* as well.

Salaries of professors are fixed by the central government, but regional governments can increase wages based on individual assessment. Most universities have established “*regional increases*”.

At the *institutional level*

- Some regions link public financing to performance
- 10 per cent of public financing of Valencia universities is related to performance indicators, some of them related to individual productivity.

The University Castellon Jaume I has its own incentive system. This is financed with the extra funds gained by the university due to improvement of the scores on the performance indicators. More credit is given for basic research than applied.

The University of Valencia. Some economic benefits exist for individuals (and for the university as well) including prestige. As some interviewees point out: *Incentive bonuses do not affect the behaviour of researchers. If anybody is looking for economic incentives, they are in the wrong place, they should be in business. Our incentives are more a question of having to do what is really right and of contributing to the progress of society* (Head of Research Institute)

Individual entrepreneurial behaviour is not affected in the slightest. The bonus system is absolutely restricted. If there are projects, there is money. (Dean)

The Miguel Hernandez University offers the possibility to increase salaries via private sources. The university has its own system for rewarding quality in teaching, R& D and

management based on the level of achievement of each department, programme, institute or research centre.

The University Cardinal-Herrera stimulates research by allocating resources to projects developed by various departments and institutes, but unlike public universities those who do research or similar activities are not given personal rewards or reduced teaching hours.

The Technical University of Valencia

The university has its own system in addition to national and regional bonuses. The so called Supplementary Research Support is distributed according to the Personalized Researcher Activity Index. Unlike the regional bonus the UPV index includes innovation and development.

Sweden

There are few direct financial rewards that function as incentives. Research funding from external sources is basically a matter of survival -opportunity for research-, prestige and also promotion. Salaries are individual and could reflect activities in several realms. Salaries, based on performance in teaching, research and third mission as well as market are negotiated locally with unions at the time of employment and regularly over time in local collective agreements within the framework of national agreements between the representatives of the government employers and the central union federations.

Umeå University

Criteria for individual salaries exist, so called success criteria; based on performance and monitoring of the market. However salaries are rather low compared to national averages. There are no reward systems but, *We need rewards. There is great time pressure (increased when chasing for money). We have no time to be entrepreneurial, especially if professionally it doesn't count. These activities should be incorporated into research and teaching, but need to be better linked in order to be considered merits.*

Jönköping University

The International Business School has bonuses for successfully landing research grants. Professors/researchers receive up to four per cent of the project budget sum for their disposal - one per cent when the contract is received and 3 per cent later on when the money starts to flow. There is also some extra funding available for work on research applications, mostly to free some time from other scheduled activities while preparing the proposals. The university rector added, however, that there is a need to make changes in the financial system. *We are developing new indicators for the budget for 2006. It is important to create incentives. We reserved 6 million SEK for this reason.*

For the moment there is no well-developed incentive system at JU, though there is an understanding that it is important to praise people who succeed. We should be happy for their success.

Salaries are based on results. In most cases professors/researchers are getting more time for their research and more time for teaching (as an "incentive") when they succeed in getting external grants.

Lund University has been offering "seed money" to encourage project applications in some faculties. Also, academics responsible for successful applications get some percentage of the project grants landed. However, the major incentive for academics to be active in applying for

research grants is to get more time for research instead of teaching, as research activity and publications are the most important factors in promotion. In addition, many academics regard it as crucial to combine teaching and research in order to maintain quality in their work with students.

Finland

There are some extra rewards for supervision of doctoral students and for leading projects. In all three higher education institutions studied interviewees say that you could pretend acting entrepreneurially but if it is unclear who has the power and responsibility within the institution entrepreneurialism is impossible. Interviewees point out that universities need to be able to act autonomously of the state.

The University of Tampere

The university has a management by result system since 1990s. Personal financial rewards, however, are limited.

The University of Lapland

Support from the region and European Union structural funds have been important for this university, but there are no personal rewards.

The Helsinki School of Economics

The Helsinki School of Economics has no personal reward system, but additional commissions for supervising doctoral students and leading projects entitle to extra rewards. At companies attached to the school there are, however, personal reward systems.

UK

In the UK supportive structures are developed in many higher education institutions. There are advanced consultancy services and tuition fees from overseas students act as incentives for international recruitment.

The London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

According to interviews a pro-active “sticks and carrots” approach is applied to human resource management at the school. Generous salaries are offered, subject to annual reviews. Individual salaries are possible for certain recruitments. There is an emphasis on performance management and less on tenure. The organisational culture is motivating and innovation encouraged. The altruistic interest towards social good - social entrepreneurship- is an important component of the culture.

The University of Plymouth

The University of Plymouth has a devolved organisation in order to promote bottom-up innovative approaches, especially in teaching. Support systems are in place. As mentioned, consultancy reports were considered in promotion.

The University of Buckingham

Due to the tight financial situation the university offers little in terms of incentives. The dean of the business, school, however, offers the following view: *The problem is that we tended to run a public school and stick to what is perceived to be the norms of public competitors. I am trying to change drastically performance criteria here. I don't want 95 per cent of the annual*

raise just simply going into a percentage so that everyone gets four or five per cent for merit. I want 60 per cent merit-based pay so that my best professors here can earn £100,000 and those who are not so good stick on £20,000.

The University of Nottingham

Third stream activities are increasingly considered part of the core activities of the university. As mentioned the university allows privately paid consultancy work since the university thinks that some external consultancy work helps supplement the modest salaries of the academic staff at the same time as their experience of the “real world” in their areas of expertise. In addition the university set up a company to manage the support of these kinds of services.

To conclude our review of the EUERЕК cases incentives systems we find that these systems are not well developed yet for various reasons, structural factors, rules and regulations as well as institutional context, the nature of academic career patterns and mindsets. There is a general understanding, however, that there is a need to develop systems of incentives at several levels, be they individualised salaries, more time for research, a certain percentage of research grants for successful applicants, promotions based on several (new) criteria. Rewards and other kinds of recognition are important in higher education, just as elsewhere. Incentives and rewards must be based on an understanding of what is considered to be important by the individuals for whom they are designed. It is also important to consider that any measures introduced will bring about positive effects in the long-term, rather than short-term gains.

Concluding remarks

Modern organisations (in business as elsewhere) are adapting new forms of organisational structures that “might lessen management control”- such as self-directing project teams and other flexible organisations etc. Universities, in contrast, moved towards more control of faculty behaviour, applying standardised norms and evaluation systems providing an easy way of measuring academic work and reporting to government bodies (Newell & Stone, 2001). A bureaucratised university environment, dominated by managerial culture, runs the risk of encouraging conformity, punishing alternative thinking which ultimately results in mediocrity. Individuals could become opportunistic, lose their motivation and inner drive, and as a result for example, limit their research to “appropriate” topics, or even drop out from academia. Therefore, the university environment has to be set up in such a way that creativity and entrepreneurship in academic endeavours could flourish, allowing space for *homo ludens* as well as for *homo economicus*, as academic entrepreneurship is driven by individuals.

“Creating a fun, challenging, and empowered work environment in which individuals are able to use their abilities to do meaningful jobs for which they are shown appreciation is likely to be a more certain way to enhance motivation and performance – even though creating such an environment may be more difficult and take more time than simply turning the reward lever” (Pfeffer, 2006)

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EUEREK case studies...