

Understanding governance in higher education from an actor-centred perspective:

Peters' "emerging models" and empirical findings for German higher education

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1 Introduction

1.1 Concept of governance

Governance as ...

Analytical framework

- Analyzing coordination and steering in social systems (Mayntz 2004)

Normative concept

- E.g. in the sense of improving the governance in political systems or in the sense of fostering corporate citizenship (e.g. Benz 2004)

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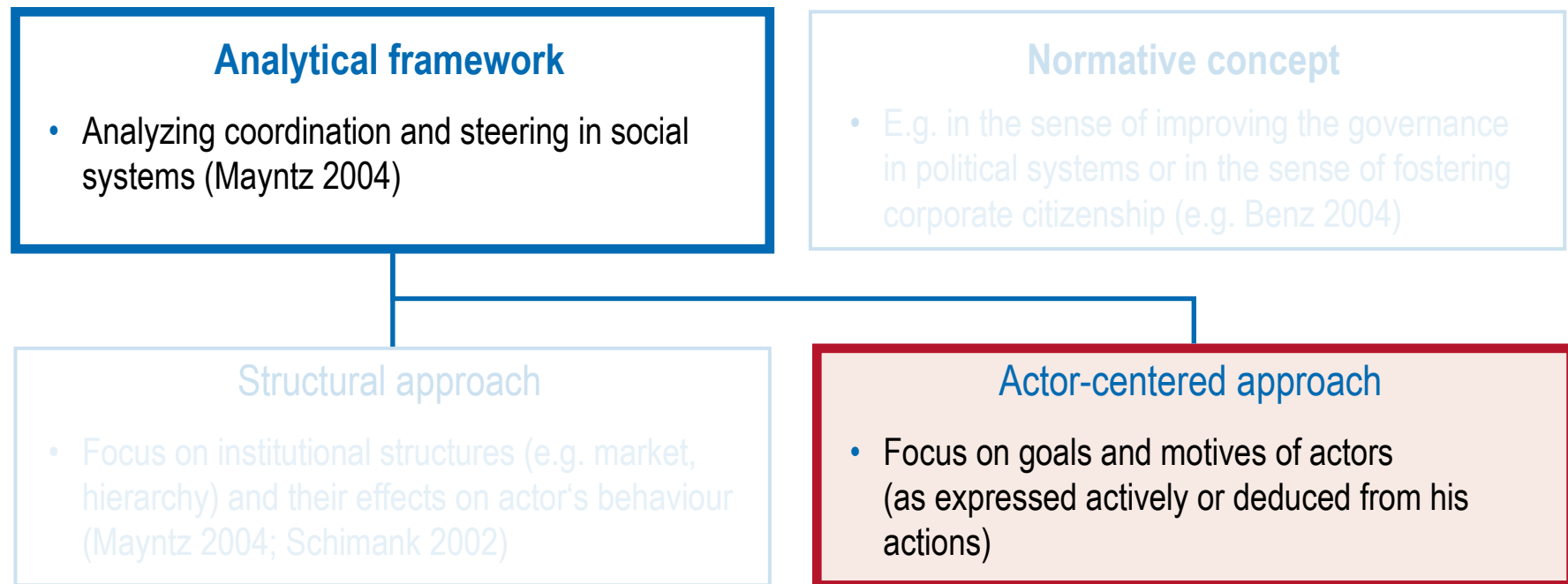
Structural approach

- Focus on institutional structures (e.g. market, hierarchy) and their effects on actor's behaviour (Mayntz 2004; Schimank 2002)

- ↳ Dominating approach in research about governance in higher education (e.g. Equalizer model by Schimank 2002)
- ↳ But masks the dimension of goals and purposes e.g. of reforms which is a central aspect in advising policy makers and evaluating reforms

1.2 Topic of the paper

Governance as ...



- ↳ Dominating approach in research about governance in higher education (e.g. Equalizer model by Schimank 2002)
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➔ **Appropriate model: Peters (1996/2001)?**

2 Peters' models of governance

2.1 General aspects

Peters' (1996, 2001):

- Analyses contemporary public service reform, deduces different “prototypes” (e.g. market government, deregulation)
- Focus on the policy maker who recognises a problem, searches for a solution and implements a programme

Central aspects

1. Diagnosis of the problem from a policy maker's perspective
2. Preference for a basic approach
3. Consequences for organization of policy initiatives (“policy making”)
 - Recommended structure for public services
 - Consequences for management within public institutions

2.2 Focus on three models*

| | | Market government | Participative government | Deregulated government |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------|--|--|--|
| Diagnosis of problem | | Bureaucratic monopolies with own objectives | Hierarchy; distance of decision makers from product delivery | Regulations prevent the effective delivery of services |
| Dimensions of basic approach | Policy making | Incentives to simulate and/or stimulate markets | Negotiation, consultation | Entrepreneurial public service management |
| | Structure | Decentralisation and specialisation | Flatter, more open organisations | |
| | Management | Management principles are not domain-specific; pay for performance and other private sector techniques | Teamwork within a quality-focused framework (e.g. TQM) | Greater managerial freedom |

* flexible government not included here

3 The practice of higher education reform in Germany

3.1 General picture

Until the 1990s

The regulatory and governance space was dominated by the forces of state regulation and a strong academic oligarchy. The state regulations were primarily geared to the formal level (e.g. employment of academic staff and line-item budgeting). The academic oligarchy centred on the content of teaching and research (e.g. research profiles, curricula design). This constellation signifies a governance regime in which vertical differences between universities are avoided or – under the fiction of equality of service – at least non-transparent.

Current situation

The universities should now see themselves more as enterprises and take on the task of self-steering (i.e. being entrepreneurial). This is linked to a shift away from a regulatory and administrative state to a system of autonomous institutions of higher education, which are steered by the state on the basis of negotiated performance targets and results. This development is flanked by an increase in competition, in particular for financial resources.

3.2 A look through Peters' lens

| | Deregulated government | Market government | Participative government |
|---------------------------|--|--|--|
| General approach | State deregulation and new organisational models within universities | New forms of output-based steering | Contract-like forms of higher education steering |
| Developments, instruments | Competencies to universities; legal reforms; organisational structures | Performance-based allocation of state grants; adaption of internal systems in HEIs; tuition fees; third-party research funding | Target agreements |

3.3 Participative governance within the context of other reform initiatives

The introduction of elements of deregulation and market orientation have knock-on effects for existing elements of participative coordination.

The task for policy-makers has been to find a coordination structure which:

- is acceptable to academics used to a participatory approach and maintains the structure by which creativity can be fostered at low levels in the organization
- is able to reflect the newly strengthened hierarchy between subordinate units. This is important as the autonomy given to universities can be dealt with in this very complex organizational structure only if common goals, targets and performance measurements can be communicated effectively. This is especially important now the organization “university” finds itself competing in a market with other universities.

3.4 Result is tempered autonomy in German higher education – but why?

Insecurity regarding the effects of current reforms

The enacted reforms are broadly a combination of Peters' market government and deregulated government models. Regarding the issue of error detection or correction Peters ascribes this task either to the market, according to the market government model, or prescribes “accept more errors” according to the deregulation model. There seems to be little willingness to do this in Germany.

Competencies for appropriate action

The need for new skills and competencies emerges in connection with the new division of labor between universities and the state. The new responsibilities require the acquisition of new skills at university and state levels. Only then can they avoid falling back into their old roles out of lack of competency.

4 Conclusions and reflectiuons

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Possible limitations of this actor-centred approach

- operational issues occur irrespective of specific approaches
- assumption of the policy-makers as “prime-mover”
- do the actors act purposely?

Strengths of approach

- a policy-maker tends to start out from an assumption of cause and effect
- policy can only be evaluated on the basis of goals and objectives

Peters' states his goal is to make the implications of the choices facing governments more evident.

We have used his approach to investigate whether the goals which governments profess for higher education are really being enacted.