Building ideal types of faculties according to the new public management

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Abstract

Due to the reforms of the New Public Management (NPM) faculties are obliged to compete and to budget scarce resources. This leads to more management tasks and to new positons for deans and new professionals (NPs), which result in new organizational structures (OS). This paper aims to show effective organizational solutions in dependence of different situational requirements.

Types of different organizational configurations are built and related to criteria of effectiveness (CE). They show that positions for NPs provide flexibility and environmental orientation, but require more coordination and may nurture conflicts. A full-time dean has a high degree of centralization, requirements for a good decision quality, less conflicts and coordination effort than a part-time dean with support from further deans or NPs.

Connected to the variables of situation, ideal minimum and maximum types are deduced which show ideal solutions in terms of the idea of fit within the contingency approach.

Keywords: academic reforms; new public management; organizational design; effectiveness.

1. Introduction

NPM has increased the pressure for faculties to compete and to professionalize their management. To succeed in competition, they must change their organizational setting towards more effective structures [1]. Deans as faculty leaders must accomplish more management tasks. Therefore there are new functions in faculties of German universities like vice-deans, deans of study (DS) and deans of research (DR) as well as new positions – so called NPs. This affects the OS. Until now it isn't clear, which type of OS is most effective depending on different situational requirements. Aim of this paper is to build ideal types using dimensions of OS and CE to figure out compatible organizational settings for faculties in different contexts. So, the concept of fit within the contingency approach is explained as an adaption of the OS to existing situational requirements. Different types of structure are formed and evaluated by CE. On this base, an ideal typical fit of situational influences and OS is derived.

2. The fit concept of the contingency approach

According to the basic model of contingency approach shown in figure 1, the interrelation between structure, situational context and organizational success is interpreted by the fit, which terms the compatibility between variables of structure and situation. It is assumed that situation influences the formal structure [2]. Organizations have to adapt their structures to existing situational requirements to be effective [3].
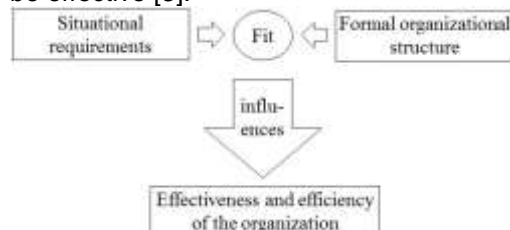

Fig. 1. The concept of fit [4].

Situational requirements are operationalized using size of university and faculty (number of students and study programs) and profile [2], [5]. Fundamental constructs for the types derived in chapter 4.1 are "OS" and "effectiveness" and will be transferred to faculties in the following chapters.

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2.1 Dimensions of organizational structure

To operationalize the OS, analysis focusses on dimensions based on Weber's model of bureaucracy [6], [7]. In Table 1 they are related to faculties.

Dimension	Description	Meaning for the faculty
Centralization	Degree of centralization of decision competences	High: full-time dean doesn't delegate decisions, low: part-time dean delegates many decisions
Specialization	Division of task fullfillment into specific roles	High: many specialized job profiles like positions for marketing, public relations or study course coordinators
Configuration	Form of the OS	Highly developed: managing directors have executive positions and create further hierarchical levels, advisors and assistants are on staff positions [8]
Formalization	Written fixation of rules or processes	Organization chart on the homepage

Table 1. Dimensions of OS.

2.2 Criteria of effectiveness

The following CE are crucial for the design of OS as a system of formal rules [3]. Table 2 shows these criteria and their meaning for faculties.

Criterion	Description	Meaning for the faculty
Environmental orientation	Consideration of situational requirements	External fundraising; rankings; service for students by student advisory service or evaluations
Efficiency of resources	Economy of costs and time	Performance of employees in relation to the requirements
Decision quality	Decision-making competences on positions with enough information	Information supply to executive positions must be correct
Communication, information supply	Conditions for high decision quality	Provided by positions for managing directors and specialists on staff positions [8]
Conflict handling	Rules to avoid conflicts like clear areas of responsibility	Conflict potential between staff and line positions or overlapping job profiles
Flexibility	Adaptability to changing situations	Fostered by representation positions like vice-deans; more employees can react more flexibly to changes [3]

Table 2. Criteria of effectiveness.

3. Method

Well complementing combinations of characteristic values and dimensions of OS are formed to types and evaluated by the CE as a preliminary stage of ideal types. Characteristic values of the variables of OS are *dean* (full-time/part-time), *number of vice-deans, DS, DR* and *number/type of positions for NPs* [5].

Typologies are theoretical deduced configurations, which mean specific forms of organizations regardless of consistency and organizational success. Typologies help to reveal connections of variables by providing configurations in which variables are acceptably connected [9]. In chapter 4.1 reflections are made to figure out which variables are complementary and whether there are dependencies. Therefore, concentration on few variables may be sufficient, although reality is more complex. Variables of situation are constant and not considered yet.

In chapter 4.2 ideal types are formed. They outline an exaggerated picture to make differences visible. The concept of ideal types according to Weber is the fundament for the method of typification [10]. It

has utopian character and is gained by intellectual abstraction of certain elements of reality to a theoretical construct [11]. It leaves the level of empiric phenomenon [10].

By the method of logical argumentative conclusion these types are related to the variables of situation in the form of ideal types. A fit is derived using the CE as fit criteria.

4. Organizational design of deaneries

4.1 Typologies

Type A: Full-time dean

A full-time dean handles more tasks than a part-time dean because he hasn't obligations in teaching. Centralization is high because he doesn't delegate much and needs no support of other employees. The degree of configuration is low. Not much coordination effort is necessary. Less conflict potential leads to high information and decision quality. The organization reacts less flexible on changing situations because there aren't other employees with different qualification and specialization profiles to provide flexibility. Hence environmental orientation in terms of customer and student proximity is low.

Type B: Part-time dean

A part-time dean has less efficiency of resources than a full-time dean due to his parallel work in teaching. Because of less workload, more support by other deans or employees is necessary. Results are a high degree of configuration and high coordination demands. Having less time for student advisory service and less strategical focus towards competition, his environmental orientation is limited. Information supply may not be ideal due to his part-time activity. This reduces decision quality. To manage the same amount of tasks as a full-time dean, he needs support which leads to type C and D.

Type C: Big number of deans, low number of NPs

This constellation relieves the dean. More employees lead to higher coordination effort, but also to more flexibility because vice-deans allow more representation possibilities [3]. There are more qualified and specialized employees to manage tasks. The degree of specialization is high due to different tasks concerning study and research. Both facts lower the centralization degree, because the dean delegates more decision-making competences.

In contrast to the configuration with many NPs there are less hierarchical levels and a lower configuration degree. Mostly being professors, deans have more knowledge and experience regarding research and teaching, but possibly less specific management knowledge of the NPs if they don't attend training programs.

Many DS manage more tasks regarding study and examination regulations. The better student advice enhances environmental orientation. Many DR indicate a high extend of tasks regarding research coordination. The faculty is profiled and strong in research. If they are engaged in faculty marketing, competitive orientation will be high and foster environmental orientation.

Type D: Big number of NPs, low number of deans

Many NPs manage strongly differentiated tasks: specialization and distribution of tasks are high. Centralization is low: many employees decide within their scope of duties. Further executive positions increase the number of hierarchical levels, which extends the degree of configuration. NPs can be employed on larger scale than deans [5]. Need for coordination raises since collaborative processes must be aligned to organizational goals. Problems with information transfer could reduce decision quality. Thus, demands on communication are high. Positions like faculty managers improve communication by a better linkage from general administration to faculty. Conflicts may occur between staff and line positions as advisors and assistants often work on staff positions and if tasks and responsibilities aren't clearly defined [3]. Many NPs manage more tasks like marketing, study guidance or third-party funding to establish student and market proximity. Flexibility increases because more staff members with specific expertise can better react to changing environmental conditions [3]. NPs unburden the deans but can't replace them completely. They bring specific information and competences into the organization by specialized qualification profiles.

4.2 Ideal typical fit between organization and situation

After the types were explained regarding dimensions of OS and CE, they are related to the situational requirements according to the idea of fit.

In the ideal minimum model the situation is given by a small size of university and faculty with low number of students and study programs and a traditional profile without NPM-elements. The faculty is characterized by a part-time dean (type B) without support and task-sharing by other employees. Complexity of configuration is low. The dean has decision-making authority, so centralization is high. He needs no support because he fulfills the demands on information provision. Furthermore, decision quality is good. Positions for marketing specialists or study advisory service aren't needed because pressure of competition is low. Also efficiency of resources is good. The low number of students doesn't necessitate course and study coordination. Research and direct contact to students are more valuable. So, there is a fit concerning environmental orientation.

University and faculty of the ideal maximum model are modern, highly profiled, open-minded for innovation and leading in research. It has a profile according to the entrepreneurial university and technical focus which requires contacts to industry. A high number of students and study programs in the field of natural science or engineering characterize the situation. The full-time dean (type A) has some vice-deans as representations (type C). DR bring the research focus in accordance to profile. DS cope with heavy workload regarding study and teaching. There are many positions for highly qualified NPs with differentiated, highly specialized job profiles (type D). Faculty managers with further employees work on marketing and acquisition of external funds to gain a strong competitive position. Business economists and legal experts care for personnel recruitment and employment contracts. Professional student advisors and study coordinators support the DS. Additional hierarchy levels enhance the degree of configuration and formalization. The situation demands highly developed CE. Efficiency of resources, environmental orientation and flexibility must be high because the situation is competitive and requires a good position in competition for students, employees, professors and funds. There is a fit to the OS concerning the CE due to highly qualified and specialized employees. Demands on communication, conflicts, information supply and coordination are high to obtain good decision quality. Tools like intranet foster communication.

5. Conclusion

These reflections show that NPs are effective in situations that require flexibility and environmental orientation like in scientific or engineering disciplines that require more industrial contacts. A full-time dean may be suitable at big humanistic orientated faculties, where a high amount of work needs to be done and less environmental orientation and flexibility are required. Limitation of this study is the theoretical focus: Further research should investigate if these ideal types exist in reality. Can they be found in pure or intermediate forms? How far can the types empirically be confirmed? Can design recommendations be given if a faculty isn't optimally set up in the sense of fit? Findings from qualitative expert interviews could support the forming of hypotheses and find further operationalization for the investigated constructs, which should be tested using quantitative methods and statistical procedures.

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