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ALIENATION OF ACADEMICS AT SWEDISH UNIVERSITIES

Universities are organizations performing research, teaching and societal influence. They contain organizational members that belongs either to the academic profession or the supportive staff. While the organization have organizational goals, of which survival is maybe the most important one, the academic staff have professional goals, of which development and dissemination of scientific knowledge is the main goal, but also including the development of the academic, of the student and of society. The academic staff carry the academic ethos (Niziol, 2022) and have their foundation on the academic freedom.

There has always been a tension between the university organization and the academic staff as professionals. It has been handled through the principle of collegial governance where the individuals from the academic staff have been appointed as academic administrators of the organization for a limited time, for example three or four years. The academic administrators had support from the supportive staff, consisting of mainly secretaries and accountants. The management principle was that of *Primus inter pares*, first among equals. The principle of collegial governance can be expected to stress the professional groups goals and interest, and to reduce the organizational goals to means, for example survival of the organization, thus being able to pay the salaries to the academic employees. In the tension between the university organization and the academic professional staff the balance was geared towards the academic staff.

Two major developments have occurred that has tilted the balance to the advantage of the administrators.

The principle of collegial governance has eroded, mainly through a false ‘professionalization’ of the academic administration, where some academics have focused on administration, transforming the academic administrative functions of the university into a hierarchy and career path of its own. Often, but not always, the

academic staff have been the source of recruitment into the academic administrator hierarchy, but once in the administrative hierarchy, the individual tend to stay in that hierarchy, leaving academic responsibilities behind, only returning to the academic staff if the individual fail to climb the administrative hierarchy.

The career of the professional academic individual was focused on the academic professional development, with small detours to the university administration. When gaining a doctorate, the academic could make a detour to the administration by being, for example, administrative responsible for educational programs. When reaching the level of docent in the Swedish system, comparable to associate professor in the US-system, a detour could be performed to a position of prefect or responsible for PhD-education. Then returning to the academic hierarchy and eventually gaining the rank as full professor. With that title the individual could again do a detour to the university administration as a dean or even a rector.

This process of detouring, with its emphasis on the academic hierarchy, has to a large extent disappeared. Today individuals can enter into the university administration and gain promotion within the administrative hierarchy, maybe by small detours to the academic staff in order to gain, on grounds that, to say the least, are debatable, higher academic titles.

This is the separation of academic staff from the university administrative organization. It has been legitimated by the concept of professionalization, claiming that the organization needs individuals that can be specialized in managing a university. The 'de-tour'-principle of collegial governance has been replaced by the principle of 'enter administrative functions and never return', or with a reverse 'de-tour'-principle where the administrator quickly do a de-tour to the academic hierarchy in order to gain a higher academic title. Now the university administration authority is not based on the principle of *Primus inter pares*, but of control over resources. Today we can therefore find academic administrators that have rather unassuming academic credentials.

This organizational process of separation, where the academic professional staff has been separated from the governance of the university, has recently

accelerated through the establishment of the professional-managerial class in the university's supportive administration. The academic administrators, now separated from the academic staff, has claimed need of administrative support, but not of the nature that was before, to help with booking of lecture rooms, to help with accounting issues and so on. Now the academic administrators create a supportive staff that supports them but not the academic staff.

The academic administrators have created organizational processes where documents and even directives concerning policies of inclusion, sustainability, gender issues, diversity and other issues that belong to the woke movement are performed. For these activities a supportive staff has been created that support the administrators in their woke processes. Often the old supportive staff of the academic staff has been converted into this new administrator's supportive staff, leaving the academic profession with the task to perform their own support, thus partly reverting them from their original task of research, education and societal influence. When the academics of the university perform less academic activities and more administrative support of themselves, their academic efficiency decrease, and so does the efficiency of the university.

The university administration consists now of weak academics engaged in administrative careers, together with their supportive staff, consisting of individuals that is claimed to belong to a new class, the new professional-managerial class (Williams, 2022). Their actions are to a large degree oriented towards the woke agenda, even including direct political actions, such as the university as such participate in political actions, for example in Pride demonstrations. Thus, the new governance organization have become political activist, creating actions of the university that deviates from the universities core business, to create and disseminate scientific knowledge. These woke activities imply that the universities societal efficiency concerning political correctness increase.

The academics of the university reacts to this development of separation of the academic staff from the university by at least four different types of actions, representing four groups of collaborators, partisans, opportunists and passive. The

collaborators are those with political views close to the woke ideology of the administration that tend to be supportive of the development, getting engaged in the political activities, and thereby legitimizing the political actions of the administrative staff. The partisans are strongly committed to academic values, and they react with opposition, some with very strong, visible opposition, leading to them being isolated or even dismissed from the university. In between are two groups. One group are the opportunists, which is an active group of academics that tries to defend their academic freedom, safeguarding their research and education by creating isolated bubbles within the university where they inside the bubble can perform as academics, but in relation to the university pretends to adjust to the woke directives and commands, i.e., having an opportunistic behaviour. The second group in the middle are the passive, those that resign and reduce their efforts at the university to a minimum, performing just enough to not be noticed by the control system as being shirkers.

This process of separation put a threat on the academic profession, with the risk of alienating the academic profession where the original values of the university and its academic profession of academic freedom, freedom of thought, freedom of expression, meritocracy and so on, diminish from the university.

The scientific revolution was not at large performed at the medieval universities, which was burdened by the scholastic paradigm, but by researchers outside the universities. Today the same process can appear. The partisans and the opportunist will leave the universities and create new organizations, for example think tanks, where they can enjoy their academic freedom and perform their academic duties.

References

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Коллін Свен-Олоф. Відчуженість академічного персоналу у шведських університетах.

Стаття розглядає проблему зміни взаємозалежності між університетом та академічним персоналом у Швеції. Такі зміни характеризується претензіями на професіоналізацію з усуненням академічної свободи та академічних цінностей. Стверджується, що колишня взаємозалежність, спрямована більшою мірою на академічний персонал, змінилася на те, що освітні установи все більше спрямовані на відчуження академічного персоналу та на меншу академічну ефективність за рахунок вищої політичної ефективності. Вчені реагують на це різними способами: співробітництвом, опором, опортуністичною поступливістю або пасивністю. Стаття попереджає, що ця тенденція ризикує повернути університети до середньовічних схоластичних моделей, потенційно спонукаючи науковців створювати незалежні установи, які краще відповідають їхнім професійним цілям.

Ключові слова: академічне відчуження, академічна свобода, колегіальне управління, меритократія, професіоналізація, схоластичні університети.

Collin Sven-Olof Yrjö. Alienation of Academics at Swedish Universities.

The paper addresses the issue of the shift in interdependency between the university and the academic staff in Sweden. This shift is legitimized by claims of professionalization, sidelining academic freedom and values. It is claimed that the former interdependency, more geared towards the academic staff, has changed with the university organization gaining supremacy with the results of academic staff alienation and lesser academic efficiency, but higher political efficiency. Academics respond in various ways: collaboration, resistance, opportunistic compliance, or passive disengagement. The paper warns that this trend risks reverting universities to medieval scholastic models, potentially driving academics to establish independent institutions better aligned with their professional goals.

Key words: academic alienation, academic freedom, collegial governance, meritocracy, professionalization, scholastic universities.