Una Europa Future UniLab Instruments Cluster

What should be the management models of the university of the future?

Some initial thoughts about university:

- Responsibility—understood as the need for greater integration and interaction with social needs.
- Impact—connected with responsibility: the impact the university should have on society/external stakeholders.
- Demographic and political constraints—also affecting academic freedom.
- University as a caring place, institution as a good place to work and study.

1. One of the main problems of modern universities is freedom and the role of academia in securing academic diversity (not to be mistaken for a mere diversity of opinions). The University should support "academic tolerance": we need to learn to differ in opinions by supporting discussions based on arguments. (The case of COVID policies in Belgium and other countries was one of such examples: quite often we have experienced a tendency to silence some people/opinions). The duty of the university is to teach people how to make well-argued decisions, thus, critical thinking remains a vital aspect of the university.
2. The most innovative outcomes in university practice are results of extensive collaboration among different fields of studies (this also applies to the case of COVID policies that should encompass experts from health studies, public policy, political science, public management, virology and such). The ability to combine efforts and experience of distant disciplines (e.g., hard sciences and art) could result in elaborating the most innovative solutions to the existing problems. Therefore, there is also a space for the university management itself: the management should provide infrastructure to moderate university activities and to provide paths for

interactions with the society. The management should also focus on creating a safe space for people to meet.

We should notice, however, that respect for diversity should not stop our quest for the uniting force. The example of US universities shows that there are so many initiatives supporting minorities that sometimes they tend to overlook what they have in common. As a result, the overemphasizing of the importance of diversity (over unity) fools up the debate.

3. The university should be like a healthy ecosystem, accommodating various cultures of various faculties. There should also be even a larger ecosystem of different universities, because there is a need for different players in the society, something we can call "Civil Society", with the universities being integral part of the Civil Society. Unfortunately, in some countries universities are still more like part of the state (not Civil Society).

4. The university as an active player in Civil Society should care about the impact it can achieve. But while talking about the impact, we should understand that institutions are well prepared to get the results they are expected to get, so we should go a step further (or earlier) to understand what the DNA of the university is. The theory of systems organizations shows that the initial distinctions deeply influence later history of the organization. But the Enlightenment changed the initial foundation of the university: we learned to use knowledge and the pursuit and dissemination of truth was no longer the university's main aim. So now, we should support diversification of academic institutions (purposefulness of knowledge along with the "pure" pursuit of truth).

5. Appreciating the role of the university's impact, we should notice a problem of who should steer/overview the intended impact of the university. It is the responsibility of the university to put the facts on the table, to broaden the understanding of the role of political debates. The university should make other players consider the facts. Referring to the purposefulness of knowledge and pursuit of truth: to solve many problems we need technology, but the technology itself does not solve the problem: this opens the stage for the university to intervene. Modern university, however, is not governed by a single power (such as a president/rector). The university is limited by many restrictions (e.g., the way it is funded) that makes such single power not possible.

6. The university is not a factory and the university's management should be different. E.g., we have different missions for faculties and/or research groups, so, the key question remains how to organize the work of such different groups. We can propose **a project that** is limited in time but that might be carried out by an undefined fluctuating group of people. Projects as a kind of *ad hoc* team might help in creating healthy diversity, but after some time it might happen that we will have a certain group of people involved in every project while some others remain not active at all. Although we use the term **project,** we should avoid further **projectification** of the university and science, that is—overemphasizing the role of measurable results of *ad hoc* teams' work.

7. Yet another challenge of modern university is a "silo problem" of various departments/faculties: they focus more on their own goals and missions than on the mission of the university as the unifying force. In the recruitment procedures the university should consider examining broader portfolios of candidates: not every person needs to have an identical "ideal" profile (e.g., we could look for the "specialization" in civic impact). Thus, we can fill in the gaps in our organization, reflecting the university mission's trillema (teaching, research, impact).

8. If we want to promote universities having an impact on the society, we should understand that being unselfish at the university all but too often leads to burnouts. Moreover, financial constraints experienced by many universities lead to lack of job stability. This results in losing intergenerational connections—the younger generation is leaving university, also because they see no space for personal and professional development. Thus, to respond to such functional problems we should ask candidates: what are you bringing with you? We need to define the priorities of the university.

9. To have a university with impact we need people unbiased, rigorous (not neutral because this is a bit problematic term; at the university people do not need to be neutral, they can take strong positions, but always based on rigorous analysis). The university has great potential for indirect impact on the society, and it has its societal responsibilities (e.g., Sustainable Development Goals). The culture of the university is based not on forcing but on engaging people of the university. Everybody should be part of the team of the university. This applies also to the professors engaging with students, because students are the essence of the university. Facilitating and encouraging engagement of students is the core of the teaching process. The university should be the place of engagement, but… the universities are not organized according to the challenges of present times.

1. The university still can be an attractive place to work, however, not because of the salary it could offer. We cannot compete with the world outside academia (business) in financial terms we should emphasize other advantages:

     a. Freedom of thought
     b. Open-mindedness
     c. The university not being a gain-oriented institution has its "Unique Selling Position", that is the engagement, the ability to have impact

All these could sound attractive for future applicants. This could increase the attractiveness of the university and help the university flourish in the future.

As the result of our work, we suggest some point for further consideration of Future UniLab and Una Europa:

1. Universities across Europe face many financial constraints and challenges, therefore one of the key problems of the future of the university is to secure diversification of funding. One of the possible means that future European University should consider is: stronger collaboration with alumni (the US universities are great examples). Alumni could provide not only financial support to the universities they graduated, but they could also be invaluable support in expanding the impact of the university.
2. Una Europa should consider establishing a Mobility Center: a special inter-university office to support research and teaching mobility among the consortium members. Having all the necessary information (and decision-making) in one place could boost the mobility and research collaboration among Una Europa faculty members.

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