



Organizing Academic Work in Higher Education Teaching, Learning and Identities

Leišytė, Liudvika; and Wilkesmann, Uwe, eds.
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Book Review

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As much as teachers would like to argue to the contrary, the university is a business, an educational business to be specific. Universities, colleges, technical schools and the like are in the business of selling learning. They sell this product to those who see the need for education beyond the formative years, whether that be training in a trade or preparation for an occupation such as medicine, psychology, or religious service. Institutions of higher learning have been in existence for around a millennium, and have served as a tent pole artifact for institutional culture – universities have either set the bar of cultural progression or have fallen behind, sputtering to keep pace with the practitioners outside their hallowed walls who are establishing new trends and raising the bar set by the university.

We seem to be in a contextual epoch that is squarely set between each of these extremes. There is still a hushed reverence that comes from finding a peer who attended Harvard, Stanford, Princeton, or Emory. Many in the academic community clamor to hear special lectures from Continental colleagues who have attended or are employed by Oxford, the University of Paris, or the University of Amsterdam. In some pockets, simply having a college or graduate degree can still mean higher pay, positional advancement, or advanced social standing.

In the United States, we seem to be living in a time of both saturation and scarcity. Higher learning institutions are continually creating new and engaging programs to prepare interested individuals for securing employment in an ever-evolving, technologically-driven, globally-emerging marketplace. And yet the number of students seems to be shrinking as many weigh the cost of attending college or find that their career choice may not even require a

college degree.

Responsiveness to the changes taking place in society and academic preparation for those changes is of concern for leaders at universities, colleges, and trade schools. On one hand, the administration crunches numbers and devises business strategies to ensure that the institution remains open. On the other hand, faculty craft courses and develop programs to ensure that teaching is what keeps the institution open. This is the discussion that editors Leisyte and Wilkesmann present before the reader. Assembling over twenty scholars from across the globe, this volume demonstrates that the New Public Management model can be used to successfully organize institutions of higher learning. In providing specific examples from Germany, China, the UK, and the Netherlands, as well as individual authors speaking out of their own experiences, this volume shows how academic managers can integrate business-based operational models with rubric-based educational models to promote academic integrity and marketplace relatability. Change will continue to be the one true constant of the educational universe, and this volume provides a good map for the road ahead.

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