

The Future of Academic Leadership

The purpose of this study group is to initiate a process that will lead to research projects and large scale research programs in the interdisciplinary field of academic leadership. This is done through a series of seminars and activities during fall 2012 and spring 2013.

The concept "academic leadership" is frequently used in the leadership literature but is rarely explicitly defined and it is sometimes assumed that leadership in higher education is related to a different set of challenges and demands compared to leadership in other areas.

There is however a lack of evidence for the assumption of the uniqueness of academic leadership. In spite of this relatively modest knowledge base, there is a wealth of ideas in the academy about what is different and unique with leadership in the academy. It is paradoxical that an institution that hold scientific knowledge in such high regard, tend to fall back on belief and common sense in a field of such importance. The challenge of bringing the practice of academic leadership in touch with theoretical developments and empirical research is accentuated by the fundamental changes and challenges affecting higher educational institutions.

A key theme in the work of the study group is therefore to define academic leadership based on different disciplinary frames like sociology, psychology, education, business administration and sociology of law and others. It is obvious that the multidisciplinary approach is of great value in developing a more stringent definition.

In seminars and workshops we will identify critical aspects and tensions in academic leadership. We will refer to Lund University as a case in the seminars and draw on experiences and studies covering a wide variety of activities in the university, ranging from research projects to education and administrative roles. In order to stimulate creative tension and dialogue we invite guests who are involved in on-going research concerning academic leadership and persons who have extensive personal experience of academic leadership. Our mission is thus to create a space for conversations and critical reflection in the crossroads of research and practice with the purpose of designing a multidisciplinary research program about academic leadership.

Invited guests will also give open lectures and participate in other activities at Lund University. We welcome everybody with an interest in academic leadership to participate in these activities.