

The Bureaucratisation of Universities

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TEACHING, RESEARCH and the dissemination of knowledge are the primary tasks of universities. These activities also have to be administered, both by a professional apparatus and by faculty members themselves. Because large resources are used for administration, it is of substantial interest to examine how these resources are used. Universities themselves, as well as the external society, have questioned whether the administrative component of universities has now become too large. Administrative positions tend to grow faster than others at universities, and faculty spend an increasing part of their time on administrative matters. We refer to these tendencies respectively as administrative and academic bureaucratisation.

First, there is some empirical evidence for the contention that an increasing share of university resources is used for administration, and the number of administrative staff increases relatively more than the number of teaching and research staff. In the United States, administrative costs in universities have risen dramatically in the past two decades, disproportionately more than the costs of instruction and research. For example, at the University of California at Los Angeles, the number of faculty members declined by 7 per cent from 1977 to 1987, while administrative employees increased by 36 per cent. At the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, faculty members increased by 8 per cent from 1981 to 1989, whereas administrative personnel increased by 37 per cent.¹ At the University of California, the estimated increase in expenditure on instruction during a 25-year period was over 175 per cent, while expenditure on administration increased by more than 400 per cent.² This development has caused concern—three quarters of institutions in the Association of American Universities report having recently attempted to reduce administrative costs.³ A relatively larger increase in numbers of administrative staff than in faculty numbers has also been reported in Sweden,⁴ Norway⁵ and Finland.⁶

¹ Leslie, L. and Rhoades, G., "Rising Administrative Costs. Seeking Explanations", *Journal of Higher Education*, LXVI (March–April 1995), pp. 187–212.

² Gumpert, P. and Pusser, B., "A Case of Bureaucratic Accretion. Context and Consequences", *Journal of Higher Education*, LXVI (September–October 1995), pp. 493–520.

³ Leslie, L. and Rhoades, G., "Rising Administrative Costs", *op. cit.*

⁴ Lane, J. E., *Institutional Reform: A Public Policy Perspective* (Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishing, 1990); Statskontoret, *Högskolan: Administrasjon i förändring?* (Stockholm: Statskontoret, 1992), p. 8.

⁵ Gornitzka, Å. and Schwach, V., *Forskere og forvaltere* (Oslo: Institute for Studies in Research and Higher Education, 1990).

⁶ Visakorpi, J. K., "Academic and Administrative Interface: Application to National Circumstances", *Higher Education Management*, VIII, 2 (1996), pp. 37–40.

Second, it is frequently argued that administrative work takes too much time away from research. A recent international survey conducted by the Carnegie Foundation reports that considerable time is spent on such activities. On average, 15–20 per cent of faculty working hours is spent on administration.⁷ A Norwegian study found that 38 per cent of academic staff members assessed administrative work as causing great problems for their opportunities to do research—far fewer complained about a lack of research funding or any other condition that might hamper their research.⁸ A Danish study corroborates the latter finding.⁹ There is, however, not much empirical evidence that the administrative load for faculty has been increasing. An exception is Great Britain, where survey data show that the proportion of working time spent on administration and management by academic staff increased from 19 to 24 per cent between 1976 and 1989.¹⁰

Although surveys do not necessarily reveal significant increases in individual time spent on administrative work in the last decade, the large growth in faculty numbers could have led to a decrease in average time per staff member. It might be expected that increased administrative capacity would reduce such work by faculty members because administrative staff to a certain extent can substitute these duties for academics.

Empirical Data from Norwegian Universities

In trying to explain why administrative and academic bureaucratisation take place, we drew on empirical data from Norwegian universities.¹¹ Although an analysis based on developments in one country cannot be transferred directly to others, the global tendencies in this field seem to be parallel, and we believe the results are to a great extent relevant to other countries.

Statistical data are drawn from the sources for the years 1987 to 1995. The Norwegian civil servants' data register and the research personnel register provide statistics on manpower at universities. The Norwegian civil servants' data register contains salary statistics which give a survey of the number of person-years in higher administrative and office positions of persons who are paid through the basic appropriations of an educational institution. The research personnel register contains data on the number of person-years performed by all academic staff in full-time posts at higher education

⁷ Teichler, U., "The Conditions of the Academic Profession", in Maassen, P.A.M. and van Yught, F.A. (eds), *Inside Academia: New Challenges for the Academic Profession* (Utrecht: De Tijdstroom, 1996).

⁸ Kyvik, S., *Universitetspersonalets syn på sine forskningsmuligheter* (Oslo: Institute for Studies in Research and Higher Education, 1983).

⁹ Jacobsen, B., "Universitetsforskere i Danmark", *Nyt fra Samfundsvidenskaberne* (1990).

¹⁰ Halsey, A.H., *Decline of Donnish Dominion: The British Academic Professions in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

¹¹ This article is based on a larger report to the Norwegian Ministry of Education, Research and Church Affairs: Gornitzka, Å., Kyvik, S. and Larsen, I.M., *Byråkratisering av universitetene? Dokumentasjon og analyse av administrativ endring* (Oslo: Norwegian Institute for Studies in Research and Higher Education, 1996), Report 3/96.

institutions, including those with stipends and those who are externally funded. Norwegian educational statistics contain data on all students registered at higher education institutions. Data which illuminate academic bureaucratisation are mainly from surveys among all staff members with the rank of assistant professor and higher at Norway's four universities: Bergen, Oslo, Trondheim and Tromsø. These surveys were undertaken by the Norwegian Institute for Studies in Research and Higher Education in 1966, 1970, 1981 and 1991. Staff members were asked to estimate the percentage of time used for various tasks—such as university administration—in the year prior to the questionnaire.

In addition, we interviewed nearly 50 senior administrative and academic staff at the universities of Bergen and Oslo in 1995 and 1996, both faculty in elected leadership positions and administrators at selected university departments from different fields of learning at the two universities. Interviews were also conducted at faculty and central level.

A Conceptual Clarification

Administrative bureaucratisation: The concept of bureaucratisation usually takes on three different meanings. First, a Weberian bureaucracy, which entails a formal organisation where work is conducted according to formal rules within a hierarchy based on rational-legal authority, and individuals are recruited to fill roles in the organisation based on their formal competence and educational qualifications. This type of rational administration replaces other, usually more traditional, ways of organising work. Second, the everyday use of the term has strong derogatory connotations and bureaucratisation is thought of as “red tape taking over”. In many ways the term denotes a situation where the classical virtues of a Weberian bureaucracy have become perverted: rule-following becomes a purpose in its own right, predictability and equal treatment are turned into rigidity, and so on. The third treatment of bureaucratisation depicts the growth of the part of the organisation that does not directly carry out the work but which regulates, supervises and supports those who do. Administrative positions and activities increase more than productive activities and the number of staff involved directly in productive activities.

This third meaning of bureaucratisation is our point of departure. As far as universities are concerned, bureaucratisation in this sense occurs when administration increases more than teaching and research within the institution.¹² There are at least two ways in which this can be measured. Looking at the share of expenses devoted to administrative activities as opposed to “production” activities is one possibility. Our approach, however, is to

¹² Maurice Kogan points out that, in higher education institutions, bureaucratisation is also used in two other ways: the move from individual and academic power to the system or institution, and the growth of power of administrators. See his “Academics and Administrators in Higher Education”, paper for the CHER conference, Turku, June 1996.

investigate the number of administrative positions and person-years within universities, as opposed to the number of academic positions and person-years. What then constitutes an administrative position within a university?

Categorising university positions is not easy. The most clear-cut distinction can be drawn between academic positions and "non-academic" staff, but this categorisation is too coarse for our purposes. Types of non-academic positions have to be differentiated so as to single out those whose primary task is university administration. We have excluded technical auxiliary staff, such as laboratory assistants, engineers and university librarians. Likewise, we do not consider maintenance personnel, such as janitors, gardeners and cleaning staff, to be part of university administration. This leaves two basic groups of non-academic positions: clerical staff and higher administrative staff, the latter being the core administrators at universities ranging from consultants, middle and senior managers. Whether clerical workers should be considered part of the administrative staff is more open for discussion. Blau has argued that they are part of the administrative apparatus at universities: "Whereas clerks in government agencies cannot be considered part of the administrative apparatus, since many of them are line personnel (not staff) and provide basic services such as unemployment services, clerks in universities and colleges are part of the administrative apparatus, furnishing support for and not being themselves engaged in academic work."¹³

Granted that in many instances clerical functions do in fact verge on being administrative activities, we include clerks in the total administrative staff at universities. Nevertheless, we regard administrative officers as the prime constituents of university bureaucracy, and give special attention to how these positions develop at the universities. When these positions grow faster than academic positions, this will be taken as an indication of administrative bureaucratisation of universities.

The concept of academic bureaucratisation: University administration entails many different types of activities for academic staff.¹⁴ Finding a generally valid definition of the concept is not easy. There is, for example, no clear boundary between performing primary work, such as teaching and research, and administering it. Nonetheless, some forms of activity clearly lie within what may be called internal university administration, such as participation in meetings and preparing meetings for university management agencies. The Norwegian Institute for Studies in Research and Higher Education survey used the following definition of administration: "Comprises administrative work, meetings, etc., at the university. Include all administrative work at the university which has not been included in the categories above (i.e. teaching, supervision and research). For example, the time spent on evaluating appli-

¹³ Blau, P.M., *The Organization of Academic Work* (New York: John Wiley, 1973), p. 71.

¹⁴ On faculty participation in administrative work, see Dill, D.D., "Administration: Academic", in *The Encyclopedia of Higher Education* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1992).

cations for positions at your own university, evaluating students for admission, replying to minor inquiries, etc.”

The questionnaire also contained quite detailed information on the activities that should be regarded as teaching and research: for example, planning of the curriculum and research projects both contain an element of administration. However, it is more appropriate here to include them under teaching and research.

Evaluation of applications for positions at the home institution can be very time-consuming for individuals, and some might consider it as academic work. It is, nonetheless, difficult to include it in categories other than university administration. This is one example of an activity which is neither teaching nor research but which nevertheless cannot be delegated to administrators. A certain administrative load does belong to academic positions at universities. Thus, we regard academic bureaucratisation as an increase in administrative work, as defined above, done by faculty members.

Administrative Bureaucratisation of Norwegian Universities: Main Results

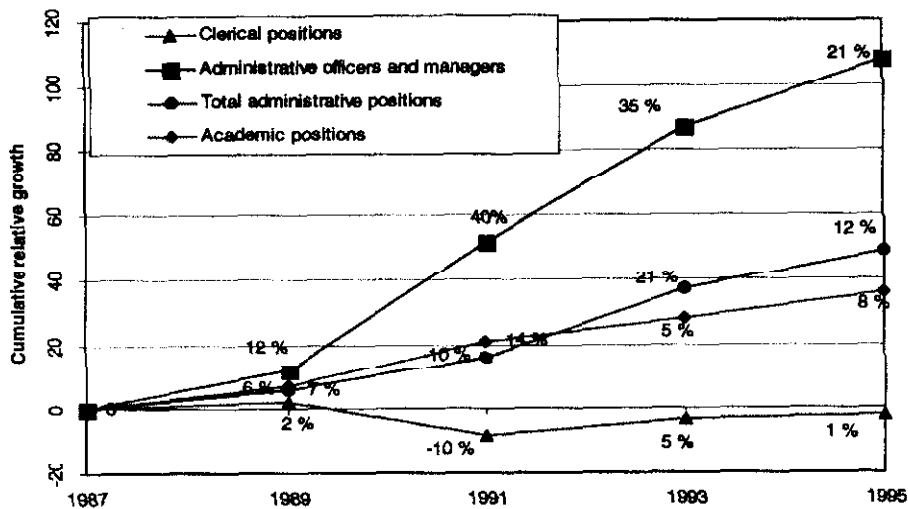
From 1987 to 1995 the number of total administrative positions increased considerably. There were differences in the relative growth rate between total administrative staff and academic staff at the four Norwegian universities (Figure I). Total administrative staff—i.e., clerical positions and administrative officers and managers—increased by 58 per cent, whereas academic positions increased by 48 per cent. More than anything this period marks the entry of a significant corps of administrative officers and managers. In 1987, 584 person-years were performed by administrative officers and managers at the four universities; eight years later the number had grown to 1,469 person-years. In this respect, the universities undoubtedly underwent a process of bureaucratisation in the late 1980s and first half of the 1990s. The extent of growth in the number of administrative officers and managers is unprecedented in the history of Norwegian universities; although such positions have steadily increased since the 1970s,¹⁵ they were hardly known before their introduction in that decade.

A significant shift within the total administrative staff at universities occurred over the same period. The number of clerical positions remained virtually unchanged while at the same time administrative officers and managers increased considerably. In 1991 administrative officers and managers outnumbered clerical positions at the universities. Consequently, university administration no longer consists primarily of secretaries and auxiliary office services, but of professional administrators.

¹⁵ Gornitzka, Å. and Schwach, V., *Forskere og forvaltere*, *op. cit.*

FIGURE I

Biannual and Cumulative Growth in Administrative and Academic Positions, 1987–1995
(percentages)



In 1993 half of administrative officers and managers had a university degree. Furthermore, about 15 per cent of the administrative officers and managers had held an academic university position. To some extent there is mobility between the two types of positions. Thus, the bureaucratisation of Norwegian universities also shows the tendency reported in other countries that senior academics become university administrators.¹⁶

Parallel to the disproportionate growth in the managerial stratum and number of administrative officers, signs of an emerging profession of university administrator have appeared. At an institutional, national and international level there are now associations for university managers and officers with a significant constituency. The replacement of clerks in university administration by administrative officers and managers indicates a "silent managerial revolution" at Norwegian universities.

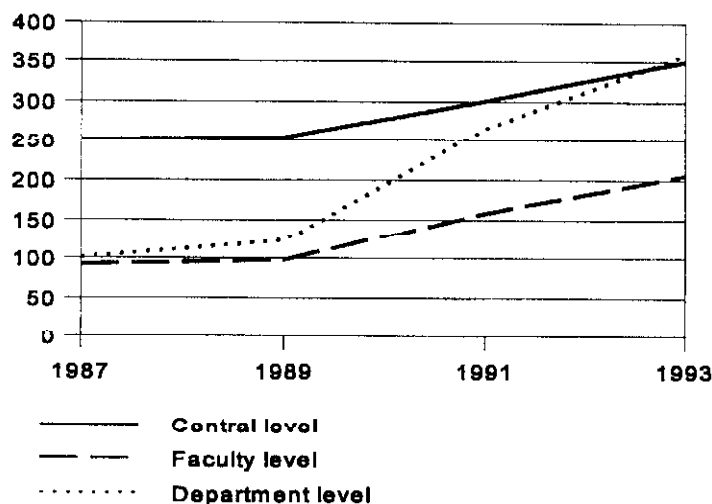
Within the group of administrative officers and managers, there is a pattern of growth that further underlines the development of a professionalised university administration. Middle management has experienced the highest relative increase during this period, together with senior executive officers. Both groups increased by more than 200 per cent from 1987 to 1995, whereas the number of top managers increased by about 180 per cent. The relative increase in junior executive officers, on the other hand, is the lowest compared to the growth of other administrative officers and managers.

¹⁶ Kogan, M., *Academics and Administrators*, *op. cit.*

University departments have absorbed the bulk of the new administrative officers and managers (Figure II). The increase has been considerable at faculty and central levels as well, albeit not as steep as at departmental level.

FIGURE II

Number of Administrative Positions at the Universities of Bergen and Oslo by level, 1987-1993



Academic Bureaucratisation of Norwegian Universities: Main Results

On average, faculty members used 17 per cent of their total working day on university administration in 1991. This is about the same percentage as in 1981 and in 1970, compared to 14 per cent in 1966. Most staff use 10 per cent of their working time for such activities—the same amount of time as the norm set by universities in Norway—but the substantial number with leading administrative positions such as department head, course administrator, head of permanent committees, etc., raises the average figures.

Even though there has been no increase in average time used for administration by tenured faculty during the last 20 years, the total number of person-years used for such activities has increased substantially with the growth of universities. On the basis of the survey data, we estimate that tenured academic staff used 575 person-years for university administration in 1993: 82 more than in 1981. This indicates that although there was a large increase in faculty members, and equally many teachers and researchers to share administrative duties, the contribution to university administration by each academic staff member has not decreased.

Other data support this picture. The proportion of tenured academic staff who were members of boards, councils and committees at their universities

(about 75 per cent), and the proportion having leading administrative positions (about 40 per cent) were about the same in 1991 as in 1981.

Three Theoretical Perspectives of Bureaucratisation

Administrative and academic bureaucratisation have occurred in a period of more or less constant growth in the size of universities, and when the social contract between society and universities is being renegotiated. In addition to maintaining their classical role as educational and cultural institutions, universities are required to be more actively concerned with the social and economic needs of society.

These changes are the background for our theoretical approach. With a basis in organisation theory we shall distinguish between three perspectives on bureaucratisation processes. The first is the question of diseconomies of scale: whether the size and growth of institutions have effects on such processes. Within this structural perspective, the size of the administrative component is regarded as a technical question determined by the overall size and complexity of the organisation. Second are external demands and pressure: administrative and academic bureaucratisation are results of state regulations and demands from society. The third question is posed from the perspective of internal processes: this regards administrative growth as a result of internal processes at universities, where both administrative and academic staff support the introduction of new administrative routines and more administrative staff which might relieve them from administrative work.

While the question of whether there are economies or diseconomies of scale in higher education has been investigated in several empirical studies, the relationship between internal and external processes and bureaucratisation of universities has been examined much less. Theories and explanations of such a relationship flourish,¹⁷ but few studies have actually tried to specify the mechanisms that link internal and external factors to growth in university bureaucracy.

These differences in knowledge status between the three perspectives on the bureaucratisation of universities are therefore reflected in the analysis. With regard to the question of economies or diseconomies of scale, we have found it important and fruitful to give an account of former findings before the analysis of the Norwegian data. The lack of solid empirical research within the two other perspectives has, however, made it necessary to go directly from theory to analysis.

Economies or Diseconomies of Scale?

A key question in our analysis of possible bureaucratic tendencies in the universities is whether institutional size is important for the relative extent of

¹⁷ See, e.g., Leslie, L. and Rhoades, G., "Rising Administrative Costs", *op. cit.*

administrative costs. This issue has concerned researchers as well as those responsible for forming and changing different kinds of organisations. Two contradictory viewpoints of the matter both build upon theoretical considerations.

The theory of administrative economies of scale states that in large organisations administrative costs will be relatively lower than in small organisations, because size in itself enables the administrative apparatus to be used more efficiently. Another hypothesis states that the larger an organisation is, the more complex it will be, and thus the higher its administrative costs, since complexity itself demands administrative resources. We call this the theory of administrative diseconomies of scale.

Administrative economies of scale: The theory of administrative economies of scale has its roots in theories on economies of scale in manufacturing companies. A common assumption is that the unit costs of producing a commodity will sink to an optimal level with increasing quantity; after this level, unit costs of production will increase again. Economic theory of production can be a useful way of looking at other sectors, i.e., higher education, although higher education is publicly financed, does not sell its products, and is not concerned with economic utility or competitiveness.¹⁸

According to this theory, a large university needs relatively fewer employees in administrative positions than a smaller one because administrative personnel can be used more efficiently in two ways: first, by applying the principle of the division of labour and specialisation to reduce the different types of task that an individual administrator performs. Second, computing systems permit a relatively small number of specialists to handle a large amount of data, so it is now easier to adjust the number of administrative personnel to the structure of the tasks and the volume of work—examples are salary, budgeting and accounting systems. Small universities need special personnel to take care of different special functions, although in consequence their competence will not be fully utilised because the number of similar tasks are too few.

Universities are exceptional organisations due to the great influence the academic staff have in governing and managing the institution. As academic and administrative staff can substitute for each other to some extent in performing administrative tasks, no strong conclusion can be drawn from looking at each separately. The theory of administrative economies of scale can, however, also be applied to analysing academic staff's participation in administrative work. The premise is that the average amount of time used for administration by faculty will decrease with an increase in the size of a university, because more faculty members will be able to share such work and relatively fewer will need to participate in boards, committees, councils and panels.

¹⁸ Sear, K., "Economies of Scale in Higher Education", in Goodlad, S. (ed.), *Economies of Scale in Higher Education* (Guildford: Society for Research into Higher Education, 1983).

Administrative diseconomies of scale: Large organisations are more complex than smaller ones, and an assumption is that they need relatively more administrative resources than smaller, less complex institutions. Complexity here can mean at least three things: first, horizontal distribution of different special functions. In a university system this will mean a distribution in many departments and centres as well as many administrative units. Second, complexity includes a vertical distribution over different management levels. At universities this includes three or four levels: central administration, faculties, departments and sometimes sections within departments. In addition, research groups often function at an informal level under departments or sections. Third, complex organisations are often spread out geographically, with different units in different places within a particular city.

According to this theory, horizontal, vertical and geographical differentiation will mean that large organisations, in this case universities, need extra administrative resources to keep the institution together. An organisation's different activities must be coordinated and controlled, and the larger the organisation, the more emphasis will be put on these tasks.¹⁹ The need for horizontal and vertical communication in the organisation will increase, which makes demands on both time and resources. The more units an organisation has, the more relationships there will be, and the more time needed to maintain them, e.g., through planning, collecting, preparing and disseminating information, conversations, reporting and meetings. Special personnel will be needed in many of the basic units of an organisation.

Faculty participation in administrative work will, according to the theory of administrative diseconomies of scale, be more extensive in large than in small universities. Increased institutional size with a more complex organisational structure increases the need for the participation of faculty in administering universities, e.g., in boards, councils, committees and panels.

Size and complexity: According to the theory of administrative economies of scale, costs for administration will decrease relatively in relation to production costs when an organisation becomes larger. This assumption is in sharp contrast to the hypothesis that large, complex institutions need relatively more administrative resources to hold them together.

Size thus has two contradictory effects on the relative extent of the administrative component. Economies of scale will tend to reduce this, while complexity increases it because of the greater need to coordinate activities. These contradictory processes have led to the hypothesis that administrative economies of scale decrease with increasing institutional size.²⁰ After a certain point, the positive effects of size in a large organisation will gradually vanish. However, as these processes can be concurrent, the net effect could be small.

¹⁹ Mintzberg, H., *Structures in Fives: Designing Effective Organizations* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1983).

²⁰ Blau, P.M., *The Organization of Academic Work*, *op. cit.*, p. 15; and *On the Nature of Organizations* (New York: John Wiley, 1974).

Blau and Schonherr, and Hall, conclude from their own studies and reviews of previous research that in general the administrative component decreases in size as organisational size increases, but, in very large organisations, the relative size of the administrative component again increases—although not to the level it assumes in small organisations.²¹ On the other hand, Pfeffer and Scott maintain that the research literature does not yield such a clear relation between organisational size and administrative costs.²²

Methodological objections have been raised about some of this literature. Pfeffer points out that it is problematic to draw general conclusions about the relation between organisational size and administrative costs without considering whether the organisation's staff has increased or decreased.²³ Similarly, Brinkman and Leslie report that the time of measuring the possible effects of economies of scale can be decisive for the conclusions reached.²⁴ If an organisation grows quickly, it can take time to adjust the size of its administration to the new production capacity. Positive effects of administrative economies of scale can gradually lessen or vanish.

Some studies show that administrative economies or diseconomies of scale depend on how the administrative component is made operational. Rushing points out that different groups can be viewed as administrative personnel—for example, senior managers, clerks, office personnel and technical personnel—and that the numbers in the various groups can be influenced by the size of an organisation in different ways.²⁵ Scott refers to several studies which conclude that the number of administrative leaders declines relatively in relation to increasing size, while the opposite is the case for technical and office personnel.²⁶

The relation between size and administrative costs has also been studied within higher education, but here only the relation between the size of the administrative apparatus and expenditure on teaching and research was investigated. These studies lack a crucial element: the time that faculty actually spend on administration. They cannot therefore give a complete picture of the administrative expenditure in large and small institutions.

Blau compared 115 American universities and colleges and concluded that economies of scale are larger than diseconomies of scale.²⁷ However, he also found that although the relative share of purely administrative positions decreased with the increasing size of institutions, the relative share of office

²¹ Blau, P.M. and Schonherr, R.A., *The Structure of Organizations* (New York: Basic Books, 1971); Hall, R.H., *Organizations: Structure and Process* (London: Prentice Hall, 1991).

²² Pfeffer, J., *Organizations and Organization Theory* (Boston: Pitman, 1982); Scott, W. R., *Organizations: Rational, Natural and Open Systems* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1992).

²³ Pfeffer, J., *Organizations and Organization Theory*, *op. cit.*

²⁴ Brinkman, P. and Leslie, L., "Economies of Scale in Higher Education", *Review of Higher Education*, X (Fall 1986), pp. 1–28.

²⁵ Rushing, W.A., "Organizational Size and Administration: The Problems of Causal Homogeneity and a Heterogeneous Category", *Pacific Sociological Review*, IX (1966), pp. 100–108.

²⁶ Scott, W.R., *Organizations*, *op. cit.*

²⁷ Blau, P.M., *The Organization of Academic Work*, *op. cit.*

personnel increased. This result, which has also been reported in other earlier studies,²⁸ raises the question about the extent to which older studies are relevant today. Over the last ten to 20 years, the use of computer technology has reduced the number of traditional office posts. Nevertheless, the need for administrators at universities has increased, partly because the state and society have placed new demands on universities to undertake new tasks, improve documentation of their activities, etc.

Blau's study has been the basis for much of the subsequent research in this field, but more recent studies only partially confirm his findings. A search of the literature covering 60 years of research on possible economies of scale within American higher education concludes that there is a positive relation between institutional size and institutional complexity and administrative costs.²⁹ A similar study at the University of California both supports and contradicts Blau's conclusions. On the one hand there have been fewer administrators per faculty member at the largest campuses than at the smaller ones at a given period. On the other hand, during the course of a 25-year period, administrative employees have increased relatively more than academic staff at the two largest campuses.

Lane used both time-series data and cross-sectional data to test the theory of administrative economies of scale in Swedish higher education.³⁰ Between 1969 and 1985 the number of administrative employees, including office personnel, increased at Swedish universities and colleges relatively more than the number of faculty members, while at the same time numbers of students and of employees grew strongly. A comparison of 34 higher education institutions in 1984 indicated a curvilinear relation between size and the number of administrative positions. The relative size of the administrative component was lower the larger the institutions were, but only until an institutional size of approximately 5,000 students. At larger colleges and universities, the relation between administrative and academic personnel was fairly similar, regardless of the number of students.

A more recent Swedish survey documents that expenditure on administration at universities and colleges continues to increase more than resources devoted to research and teaching, and that large institutions have relatively lower administrative costs than small ones, although the ratio is becoming smaller.³¹ The Norwegian data were collected from 1987 to 1995: a period when the universities grew dramatically and student numbers almost doubled, and there was also strong growth in academic and administrative personnel. The number of universities is too small to test the theories of economies and diseconomies of scale, but the results corroborate the findings from similar studies in other countries. Large institutions have had lower administrative

²⁸ Scott, W.R., *Organizations*, *op. cit.*

²⁹ Brinkman, P. and Leslie, L., "Economies of Scale", *op. cit.*

³⁰ Lane, J.E., *Institutional Reform*, *op. cit.*

³¹ Statskontoret, *Högskolan*, *op. cit.*

costs than small institutions, but all universities have over time become more expensive to administer. This result remains valid when controls are done for student numbers.³²

To what extent does the participation of faculty in administrative work affect these tendencies? At universities with a relatively large share of administrative employees, academic staff might on average reduce their time spent on administration compared with those at universities where support services are less adequate—in other words, where faculty might have to do a larger proportion of administrative work themselves. However, no significant differences were found between universities in our survey of faculty use of time in 1991.

To conclude, most studies indicate that small institutions are relatively more expensive to run than large ones, but also that when universities and colleges get more students and employees, administrative expenditure increases relatively more than expenditure on teaching and research.

How can these apparently contradictory tendencies be explained? One explanation is the different methodological approaches to the problem of size. While analyses of cross-sectional data find that large organisations use relatively fewer resources for administration, time-series analyses show that when organisations grow, administrative costs increase relatively more than expenditure on teaching and research. This tendency is also found in studies of other types of organisations.³³

On the basis of these results it is reasonable to conclude that growth in itself does not result in higher administrative costs, and that these are generated by other conditions. Clearly, the external and internal processes which might have led to increased administrative costs need analysis.

External Demands and Pressures

Norms of university self-governance run deep in the Norwegian university system. However, universities are constantly interacting with the world beyond and over the last few decades they have been under stronger pressure to satisfy external expectations. The label of “multiversity”³⁴ is a fitting description of how Norwegian universities have evolved in recent years. A “multiversity” faces increasingly complex and diverse demands and expectations from outside interests. In order to investigate the assumption that changes in universities’ relations to their environments cause administrative changes and an ensuing bureaucratisation, it is necessary to discover which parts of the environment induce internal bureaucratisation, and how external pressures and demands are linked to changes in university administration.

Theoretical perspectives drawn from the study of organisations are a helpful way of ordering environmental actors and relations. Research on how

³² Gornitzka, Å., Kyvik, S. and Larsen, I.M., *Byråkratisering av universitetene?*, *op. cit.*

³³ Scott, W.R., *Organizations*, *op. cit.*

³⁴ Kerr, C., *The Uses of the University* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963).

organisations are linked and interact with their environment draws on two theoretical traditions: a resource-dependence perspective and an institutional perspective. Both see organisational actions and choices as limited by various external pressures, and responses to such pressures as essential to an organisation's survival and well-being.³⁵ The two traditions highlight different aspects of the organisational environments and mechanisms that link environments to organisations.

Resource-dependence theory emphasises that external actors provide the resources which sustain and develop organisations' activities, and, to secure a flow of resources, organisations meet the needs and demands of those providing the resources.³⁶ From this perspective, the basic mechanism is exchange: organisations trade their output for external resources, and the focus is on the technical features of organisational environments, i.e., their tasks. When external actors control vital resources they also have power over an organisation. Organisations will and should respond to the parts of their environment that control critical resources because they depend on them. But, in addition, resource-dependence theory attends to how organisations act strategically to manage their dependency.

While resource-dependence theory stresses economic dependency, institutional theory highlights the rules and requirements to which organisations must conform in order to receive legitimacy and support. In general, this perspective has been less concerned with how organisations use strategies to manage their environment.³⁷ Institutional theory is by no means homogenous. Among the different versions particularly relevant to the study of bureaucratisation are those which focus on regulatory and normative aspects of organisational environments.³⁸ Some institutionalists see the essence of institutions as residing in the formal rules and regulations that govern inter-organisational relations. Their primary focus is on laws and regulations, and the accompanying monitoring and sanctioning that exist between organisations.³⁹ The basic mechanism is coercion through legal sanctions. The pressures ensuing from state regulations and laws are of special interest in such an approach.

Focusing on the normative aspect of environments draws attention to organisational adaptation, not as a result of either resource dependency or hierarchical pressure, but rather because organisations influence each other when values and definitions of what is appropriate disseminate between them.

³⁵ Oliver, C., "Strategic Responses to Institutional Processes", *Academy of Management Review*, XVI, 1 (1991), pp. 145-179.

³⁶ Pfeffer, J. and Salancik, G.R., *The External Control of Organizations: A Resource Dependence Perspective* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978); Pfeffer, J., *Organizations and Organization Theory*, *op. cit.*

³⁷ Oliver, C., "Strategic Responses", *op. cit.*

³⁸ Scott, W.R., *Institutions and Organizations* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1995).

³⁹ North, D., *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

Meyer and Rowan emphasise the survival value of conformity to institutionalised myths about how organisations should act and look.⁴⁰ Conformity can be a way for organisations to obtain legitimacy and support from their surroundings; organisations adopt pre-rationalised structures because they are symbolically efficient. Such myths can take the form of fads and fashions, and here organisations are open to relatively short-term swings in the collective beliefs that communicate improvements to their audience.⁴¹ Organisations often find themselves in uncertain and ambiguous situations and one way to handle them is to conform to current fashions.

A primary mechanism of change under such circumstances is imitation. In particular, organisations with similar goals tend to react in similar ways.⁴² Of special interest here is the way they imitate each other in how they are organised and in what they do. Imitation is a factor in university bureaucratisation if universities adopt organisational structures and procedures of leading universities.⁴³ An example is the attempt to copy offices of technology transfer at successful institutions like the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Stanford University and the University of Cambridge.

These theoretical perspectives lead to the question of whether internal administrative growth at universities is the consequence of state regulations, the result of normative pressures, or the effect of dependence on external resources.

Administrative Consequences of Changes in State Regulations

From an institutional perspective, administrative growth would be an expected result of adaptation to changes in university policy, and in reforms and regulations that apply to universities as state institutions.

Universities may be viewed as administrative agencies in a state hierarchical structure. Despite strong traditions of self-governance, they cannot ignore the signals and demands of public authorities. The relationship is governed by law, and it is the duty of universities to follow state regulations. Universities must relate to two types of governmental changes: in regulations and expectations of research and higher education, and in regulations pertaining to public activities generally. How have these changes influenced administrative structure and procedures within Norwegian universities?

In state directives which are specific to educational and research institutions, the growth in student numbers is particularly important. The number of

⁴⁰ Meyer, J.W. and Rowan, B., "Institutionalised Organisations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony", *American Journal of Sociology*, LXXXIII (1977), pp. 734-749.

⁴¹ Abrahamson, E., "Management Fashion", *Academy of Management Review*, XXI, 1 (1996), pp. 254-285

⁴² Abrahamson, E., "Managerial Fads and Fashions: The Diffusion and Rejection of Innovation", *Academy of Management Review*, XVI, 3 (1991), pp. 586-612.

⁴³ DiMaggio, P. and Powell, W., "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields", *American Sociological Review*, XLVIII (April 1983), pp. 147-160.

persons applying for higher education has been high over the last decade, and government has put pressure on universities to increase student numbers. From 1987 to 1995 there was an almost twofold increase in students registered at Norwegian universities. Our interviewees emphasised the increase in student numbers as a key factor in explaining administrative growth. Nevertheless, our data show that the relative growth in higher administrative person-years is stronger than the growth in student numbers. Other factors must be present.

The increase in formal postgraduate education (PhD level) is another element stressed by state directives. A doctoral degree was not traditionally viewed as a part of the educational system, but a new formal doctoral training system is placing stronger demands on universities to organise courses, take care of legal rights of students, etc. Priority is also given to the internationalisation of research and education. This has administrative consequences at the institutions, particularly with respect to participation in the European Union's student exchange programmes and the various programmes for research.

Some administrative changes apply to all state organisations. From the mid-1980s there has been much emphasis on the modernisation of the public sector. The Norwegian government's 1987 renewal programme for administrative activities was significant. The period was characterised by reform within public administration, including the universities. The introduction of result-oriented planning and cash-limit budgeting is the result of greater focus on the governance of the public sector, and both these reforms have been introduced at the universities. Authorities have also demanded more evaluation, including continuous reporting and thorough evaluations of units.

This set of state reforms is the Norwegian version of more general European trends in how governments relate to higher education institutions—a new way of steering higher education—emphasising self-control, deregulation and institutional accountability.⁴⁴ Our study shows that these new tools of governance and institutional management have contributed to both academic and administrative bureaucratisation, and are an important element in the rise of professional university administration, irrespectively of whether state policy has served to secure more autonomous universities.

Of the other changes in state regulations for public activities in general, it is significant that universities face new expectations and obligations as employers, with regard to employees and working environment. New policy here appears to have considerable consequences for units dealing with personnel issues and organisational development at a central level within universities. Government authorities have for the past ten years encouraged delegation in personnel administration. One effect is that more attention is

⁴⁴ Van Vught, F., "A New Autonomy in European Higher Education? An Exploration and Analysis of the Strategy of Self-regulation in Higher Education Governance", *Institutional Management in Higher Education*, XII, 1 (1988), pp. 16–25.

given to the professionalism of personnel administrators—which corresponds to the general pattern of increase in qualified administrative officers.

This type of internal organisational change may thus be considered the result of conformity to new state regulations within both university policy and state administrative policy. Here internal bureaucratisation is a result of state coercion, not in the sense of a specific demand, but as the by-product of laws and regulations to which universities as public organisations must automatically adapt. In our context this is an apt description of the administrative growth which is said to accompany increases in student numbers. The continual rise in applicants for university education, and the fact that the Norwegian national assembly sets the framework for how many students universities should accept, are factors outside the control of the universities. Nonetheless, there are internal administrative consequences because there is an administrative price-tag for every student who is accepted. This also applies to the increase in the number of employees in the wake of growth in student numbers. Thus, there are elements of coercion and natural adaptation in the relationship between authorities and universities which have internal administrative growth as a consequence. This is also evident within legally regulated changes in personnel and administrative policy.

We do not argue that state regulations aim at increasing the size of university administration, but rather that the universities' adaptation to changes in laws and regulations has had significant administrative side-effects—an aspect that has been largely overlooked in public policy-making.

Political decisions and changes in state laws and regulations clearly bring about internal administrative change, but there are variations and internal adjustments in universities' responses; they have latitude in how to implement reforms and handle changes in law. Laws and regulations vary in specificity and allow scope for local adjustment and implementation.⁴⁵ Our study clearly demonstrates this leeway: during interviews it became apparent that individual administrators have "favourite children", and their use of time owes more to their own priorities than to external directives. Internal administrative change thus contains a strong element of local adaptation to external demands and regulations.

Furthermore, different sections of a university have different relations and interests in regard to external actors. The administrative system and elected leaders may emphasise external signals in a different way from the academic staff. Staff may use external conditions as a basis for legitimating their own activities in relation to other groups within the university. This is especially evident when administrators use state regulations to legitimate new activities, when faced with academic staff who are reluctant to accept new administrative procedures or to spend university funds on administrative activities.

⁴⁵ Edelman, L.B., "Legal Ambiguity and Symbolic Structures: Organisational Mediation of Civil Rights Law", *American Journal of Sociology*, VI (May 1992), pp. 1531–1576.

Administrative Consequences of Normative Pressure

Imitation between universities and between public organisations generally is also a mechanism whereby external expectations are coupled to internal change. Several studies show that Norwegian universities are influenced by the public definition of how organisations should look.⁴⁶ The issue here is that what is regarded as a good and well-run university is subject to a common definition among universities themselves and other interested actors. A professional identity has gradually formed among university administrators, which clearly affects what is regarded as good university administration, and sets standards for how external expectations are put into effect locally and what the standards for the latter should be. For example, administrative personnel participate in national and international networks which disseminate ideas and norms about administrative practice. This has resulted in the expansion of different job categories such as office managers, student counsellors and research officers at a departmental level, but also in special administrative units such as research administration departments and departments for international affairs. It is difficult to discern whether this is a response to external or internal needs, or whether it arises from general changes in the norms for good administration.

We have seen this expansion in the inter-university dissemination of types of administrative positions, special types of administrative units and departments, and types of administrative/managerial activities such as newly established courses for administrative and academic leaders. A related mechanism is coupled to the development of a professional administration at universities, as documented in our study. Once administrative structures and routines are defined as the norm in the relevant profession they are adopted throughout the network of university administrators, nationally and internationally. In Norway, professional degree-holding administrators clearly hold different views and expectations of their own role from those of the clerical workers who traditionally made up the bulk of university administration. The professionals to some extent seem to have developed a common definition of the "state-of-the-art" in university administration.

A key aspect of this process is that it represents the unanticipated consequences of ordinary action in response to environmental change. "Local" sub-units have reacted to environmental and in-house expectations in the same way, i.e., by appointing more professional administrators. This seems to be the standard response to such changes, and can be regarded as the explanation for the bureaucratisation of Norwegian universities.

⁴⁶ Christensen, T., *Virksomhetsplanlegging i forsknings- og utdanningsinstitusjoner—myteskaping eller instrumentell problemløsning?* (Oslo: Tano, 1991); Gornitzka, Å., *Organisasjonsreformer ved Universitetet i Oslo i 1980-årene* (Oslo: Universitetet i Oslo, Institutt for statsvitenskap, 1989); Larsen, I.M. and Gornitzka, Å., "New Management Systems in Norwegian Universities: The Interface between Reform and Institutional Understanding", *European Journal of Education*, XXX, 3 (1995), pp. 347-361.

The process affected the development of a professional identity for university administrative staff, related to their level and qualifications. During the period studied, the four universities arrived at a common understanding of the type of administrative support system associated with good modern universities. The largest university, Oslo, set the standard—for instance, for what departmental administrative staff should consist of—and the others followed suit.

The case studies demonstrate how this common understanding of the size and shape of university administration developed; as such imitation is part of the explanation of bureaucratisation. The changes in administrative norms must be viewed as long-lasting shifts, rather than short-lived managerial fads. However the latter were important because they indirectly occasioned the pattern of administrative growth found in Norwegian universities. Many of the external demands facing universities in the 1980s and 1990s can be seen as management fashions⁴⁷ that were particular to institutions in higher education: how these were handled within universities contributed to their bureaucratisation.

Administrative Consequences of Resource Dependency

As complex organisations universities are not only concerned with government policy. Although the basic appropriation through the state budget is the primary source of income for Norwegian universities, it is far from the only one. It is now more common for universities to supplement their resources with external research funding. From a resource-dependence perspective, we would expect them to develop administrative structures and procedures to complement the structures of resource providers⁴⁸—i.e., we would anticipate administrative growth in the parts of the university engaged in extracting and cultivating external funding.

From 1983 to 1993, external funds for university research and development increased by an average of 15 per cent per year. In 1993 external research funds amounted to between 30 and 40 per cent of the total research and development activities at the universities.⁴⁹ External funding comes from different sources such as the Research Council of Norway, ministries, local authorities, industry, private foundations and foreign donors. Information about new funding systems has to be collected and disseminated within the system, applications have to be written and contracts drawn up. The demands for reporting and feedback are much higher than previously, and both faculty and administrators need more time to administer externally funded activities. In addition, the search for and maintenance of external funding has led to new administrative units at central and faculty level and special positions at departmental level.

⁴⁷ Larsen, I.M. and Gornitzka, Å., "New Management Systems", *op. cit.*

⁴⁸ Leslie, L. and Rhoades, G., "Rising Administrative Costs", *op. cit.*

⁴⁹ *R&D Statistics and Science and Technology Indicators* (Oslo: Institute for Studies in Research and Higher Education, 1995).

Thus, the change in the universities' quest for external resources has had consequences for both faculty and administrators. Interaction with external actors involves drawing up written contracts, filling out forms and writing reports. Research is increasingly an object for administrative treatment. It also appears that, for the last ten to 15 years, university faculty have increasingly been engaged in administrative work which occurs in external collegial committees. In 1991, 51 per cent of the faculty were members of external boards, councils or committees related to their work at the university, compared to 36 per cent in 1981.⁵⁰ It appears that this happened mainly because university researchers have to finance a higher proportion of their work externally, and because this form of funding has a different administrative "portfolio" than research performed via a university's own funds.

We have made a distinction between a resource-dependence theory and institutional theory. The perspectives are not mutually exclusive, but they highlight different aspects of environments. It is difficult to maintain a sharp distinction between the effects of resource dependency and rule-following; universities relate to external actors that are both resource providers and formally superior agencies. Norwegian universities are highly dependent upon public funding and failing to comply with government regulations might result in budget cuts. In this respect, rule-following and adaptation to external resources reinforce each other. However, the administrative consequences of increased external funding can be seen mainly as a result of managing resource dependency by seeking diverse providers.

Internal Factors as Explanations for Administrative Growth

Bearing in mind how groups at a university relate in different ways to external actors, how can administrative growth be generated internally? We may assume that universities consist of different groups of employees with differing roles and interests in administrative questions and tasks.

Common-sense explanations about internal sources of administrative growth usually fall into three categories. Growth is created by the administrative staff itself, or by faculty staff, or is generated at other levels than the one to which an individual belongs. Common to the three categories is that it is "the others" who are responsible for growth in administration. In a sense, these three myths have theoretical parallels. In theories on the growth of public expenditure, it is usual to distinguish between supply-driven versus demand-driven growth.⁵¹ To some extent this distinction can apply when considering university administrative growth and whether it is internally generated. However, administrative growth may also occur at the intersection between the "producers and consumers" of university administration.

⁵⁰ Kyvik, S. and Enoksen, J.A., *Universitetspersonalets tidsbruk* (Oslo: Institute for Studies in Research and Higher Education, 1992), Report 10/92.

⁵¹ Tarschys, D., "The Growth of Public Expenditures: Nine Modes of Explanation", *Scandinavian Political Studies*, X (1975), pp. 9-31.

Demand-driven growth?: Students and faculty generally demand administrative services at universities—so the demand for administrative services naturally increases in relation to student and faculty numbers. Technological changes have also altered demands for administrative services. This applies particularly to the introduction of computer technology, an important background to understanding the transition from secretarial help to professional administration. Another example is the increase in contract work and the internationalisation of research and teaching, especially in relation to various European Union programmes.

If the pattern of bureaucratisation we found is to be explained as “demand-driven”, we must look at how faculty relate to administration. Spending time on administrative activities is a poor investment for academics, if both career rewards and personal satisfaction are primarily associated with research performance. It is in the interest of faculty that others perform administrative work, that it is done by competent people, and not by academics who are often administrative amateurs. Herein lies an assumption that more professionally performed administrative and support services will ease the burden of administration for faculty. But there is also a dilemma in that administrative resources and positions do not directly benefit teaching and research.

Furthermore, we can expect a germ of administrative growth to lie in faculty’s need for administrative relief balanced against their wish for influence and control. There is “power in administration”, but it is not a career path—and it creates a dilemma for academic staff.⁵² The division of labour for administrative work includes a distribution of influence on how a university is governed. From this vantage point, it can be assumed that faculty oppose delegating administrative work to full-time administrators as this might mean that influence is also “delegated”. Faculty traditions and the desire for influence can thus contribute to the growth of total administration at universities.

Our study indicates that this is not significant at a horizontal level. Duplication of administrative work, arising because individuals do not want to lose control and influence in administrative matters, is more prevalent in the relations between levels. University departments are in general more transparent and there is considerable interaction and cooperation between administrative staff and appointed heads of department and faculty leaders. Sufficient control over administrative matters, faculty claim, is secured informally, and particularly by department administrators who are sensitive to issues of faculty control over academic policy. A remaining concern, however, is that strengthening the professional administrative apparatus at this level may channel resources to administrative positions and not directly to academic activities.

Faculty to a larger extent than before appear to value efficiency in university governance more than representation and democracy, and are more tolerant

⁵² Mintzberg, H., *Structures in Fives*, *op. cit.*

of transferring work and influence to administrative staff at departmental level. However, according to our study this shift in attitudes has not meant less participation in boards and committees, or in the time spent on administration. The total picture is thus consistent with the assumption that demand contributes to growth in the administrative apparatus because faculty seek relief from administrative tasks, while still engaging in administrative activities because in practice it is difficult to leave this to others. Ambivalence results in both administrative and academic bureaucratisation.

Perhaps this pattern of administrative growth belongs to a transition period in the sense that the new possibilities for professional relief have not yet resulted in reduced administrative loads for academics. However, faculty have themselves taken on tasks such as externally financed activities which produce new administrative work which they have to do themselves.

Our study shows that academics largely delegate administrative tasks to administrative support staff at departmental level, and the trend towards a professional administration for each department has enabled academics to entrust new administrative tasks to local administrators. Academic staff appreciate and use the new opportunities to shed such tasks. Clearly this has increased the administrators' workload and in turn has led them to push for additional colleagues.

Supply-driven growth?: Theories about producer-driven growth in expenditure rest on three main assumptions. A political understanding of supply-driven growth states that administrators will maximise growth for their own activities; the second states that administrative costs are the unintended consequences of the logics of administration and management; while the third gives weight to ideological changes among the producers of administrative services.

A widely publicised theory on the growth of public expenditure is that of budget-maximising bureaucrats.⁵³ Briefly the theory states that government bureaucrats use their monopoly over information on the true cost of supply of public services in securing budgetary output levels that are higher than the socially optimal. This gives a strategic advantage to the "bureau", and the allocation of public resources is inefficient given the preferences of the "sponsor". The theory echoes the popular sentiment that bureaucracy is inefficient and growing out of control.

Despite the criticism of the theory,⁵⁴ this perspective might have some relevance for the analysis of higher education and administrative growth.⁵⁵ In the context of a university, it means that administration will grow because senior administrators direct appropriations to their own activities. Senior administrators have a self-interest in doing this—not just because their

⁵³ Niskanen, W.N., *Bureaucracy and Representative Government* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1971).

⁵⁴ Miller, G.J. and Moe, T.M., "Bureaucrats, Legislators, and the Size of Government", *American Political Science Review*, LXXVII (1983), pp. 297–322; Mcycyl, M., *Limits to Bureaucratic Growth* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1985).

⁵⁵ Gumpert, P. and Pusser, B., *A Case of Bureaucratic Accretion*, *op. cit.*

organisational units will have more at their disposal, but because more resources increase the prestige of their own work, and employ more fellow professionals.⁵⁶ This could explain why higher administrative posts increase more than others at universities. However, the assumption is that administrators are in a position within organisations which allows them to maximise budgets for their activities, i.e., they have a strategic advantage because of "information asymmetry". An empirical study of university budgetary allocations would be necessary to test this hypothesis. Nonetheless, our interviews with both faculty and administrators indicate that the growth seen at departmental level in particular is hard to explain as the result of bureaucrats maximising appropriations for their own activities. At this level budgetary decisions are collective decisions involving both academics and administrators, and the latter have little opportunity to exercise a monopoly on information.

This illustrates the problematic aspect of applying such a theory in a Norwegian university context. Bureaucratic behaviour which might maximise administrative budgets is subject to formal constraints, stemming from the fact that faculty and elected academic leaders hold central positions in budgetary allocations within universities. Consequently, the relationship between administrators and faculty is more symmetrical than is assumed in a budget maximisation model. Furthermore, it is hard to determine what the optimal size of the administrative component of universities is and what constitutes an "over-supply" of bureaucracy, since faculty preferences are not unequivocal and faculty is not the only relevant group in determining an optimal level of administration.

Another explanation is that bureaucratisation is a consequence of a built-in logic in administrative work and the management system under which administrators work; they create work for themselves and other administrators and, in our context, also for faculty and collegiate committees. This is not to say bureaucratisation is the result of action motivated by self-interest, but rather that it is the by-product of internal processes. Most persons in such a system will agree that administrators do what they are employed to do, but "... managers typically respond to the pressures by putting demands on others, sharing the work and sharing the risk and hiring help . . . And the situation becomes exacerbated".⁵⁷

Many of our interviewees mentioned the self-perpetuating growth of university administration. Some said that when administration grows it needs a continuous increase in resources to administer itself; administrators are needed to administer other administrators. So do administrators themselves contribute to establishing new administrative routines which increase administrative costs, not only in the need for more professionals, but also in the form of faculty staff time needed for administration?

⁵⁶ Hannaway, J., "Supply Creates Demands: An Organizational Process View of Administrative Expansion", *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, VII, 1 (1987), pp. 118-134.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

The demand for higher quality in administration from its producers, new doctrines and knowledge, can contribute to administrative change. Studies of the growth of public expenditure show that the producers of public services are often at the forefront in pressing for new services and higher quality.⁵⁸ We have shown that such effects occur when bonds exist between university administrators at different universities, but they also happen within a university. It is quite usual for administrators in similar positions to meet regularly, arrive at a common definition of what different sections should be doing, and diffuse routines and standards within the university. It seems plausible to assume that such processes are at work, but they are hard to measure empirically, and it is difficult to find an empirical basis to support this explanation for the growth in the professional administrative apparatus.

Organisational Structure and Administrative Growth

Administrative growth cannot be completely explained on the basis of “supply and demand”. The distinction between supply-driven and demand-driven growth is especially difficult to maintain because faculty can also be seen as producers of university administration. A major assumption is that internally driven administrative growth arises from unintended processes which result from a mixture of different management and decision-making principles at universities—and that this condition is the key to understanding both administrative and academic bureaucratisation, as well as the relationship between the two forms of administrative growth at universities.

Theories about governance and management at universities often state that such organisations have an in-built unique dualism: a conventional administrative bureaucracy existing side by side with a collegial governing system, and the division of labour between these two systems is not obvious.⁵⁹ We suggest a third factor: university democracy, the system which not only includes faculty representation in collegiate agencies, but also students and other employees. The democratic aspect in university administration receives little attention in international literature—nevertheless, it is important for understanding administration and governance at Norwegian universities.

Norwegian universities attempt to achieve a balance between “meritocracy”, “democracy” and “bureaucracy”, and the values these carry. How the balance is tilted at a particular time affects the relationship between academics and administrators and the understanding of administrative change. It is not only significant for the roles and positions of university administrators, it is essential for understanding the participation of academic staff in administra-

⁵⁸ Hernes, G. and Martinussen, W., *Demokrati og politiske ressurser* (Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1980), p. 7.

⁵⁹ Bensimon, E.M., Neumann, A. and Birnbaum, R., *Making Sense of Administrative Leadership: The “L” Word in Higher Education*, ASHE-ERIC Higher Education Report No.1. (Washington, DC: George Washington University, 1989); Birnbaum, R., *How Colleges Work: The Cybernetics of Academic Organisation and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990).

tive matters. An assumption is that the connection between different management principles is at the kernel of administrative growth. But how does this connection take place? Legitimacy in university administration is a consideration here. In university management the results of decisions are important, but their legitimacy is strongly connected with how the decisions have been made. An administrative boomerang effect can occur if the matters generated and dealt with in the "bureaucracy" need to be handled by collegiate/democratic agencies to be regarded as legitimate. Nonetheless, the democratic organs of a university need support from administrative staff.

In this perspective administrative growth can be regarded as an unintended consequence of the duplication of work resulting from internal processes. Different decision-making principles operating side by side encourage administrative growth, but it also appears that a large kernel of this growth lies in duplication along a vertical dimension in the university structure.

Although faculty staff clearly express the need for reducing the complexity of the democratic governance structure, very little in our data leads us to conclude that growth in the number of professional administrators has entailed a reduction of either the number of democratic bodies or their significance. Furthermore, the fragmented university decision-making system has in itself clearly been a factor in the pattern of administrative growth. Judging from our data, this growth has not been part of a strategy for administrative development at an institutional level, but rather the result of many independent local decisions and actions. Moreover, as far as academic bureaucratisation is concerned, using time on administration is not the object of collective decision-making: it is largely a by-product of the decision to establish committees, boards, etc., and as such it does not show on any university budgets or demand direct budgetary allocations. The cost of academic bureaucratisation is invisible in the short run.

Vertical Forces

The modernisation of the public sector as a means of solving financial problems is a trend in most Western countries,⁶⁰ as it is in Norway. The delegation of tasks from a superior to a subordinate level has been a central part of a general policy of autonomy and accountability in higher education. Delegation is meant to increase efficiency; it is assumed that the use of resources will improve if the distance between those who make decisions, those who implement and those who are affected is minimalised.⁶¹ But organisational studies disagree on whether delegation improves efficiency: if it is to do so, the premise is that administrative resources are transferred from a superior level to local units. If delegation of tasks is not followed by delegation

⁶⁰ Metcalfe, L. and Richards, S., "Evolving Public Management Cultures", in Kooiman, J. and Eliassen, K.A. (eds), *Managing Public Organisations* (London: Sage, 1987).

⁶¹ Selle, P., *Desentralisering: Troll med minst to hovud* (Bergen: LOS-senteret, 1990), Report 90/28.

of resources, including personnel, duplication rather than efficiency could result. Furthermore, studies show that vertical delegation means individuals are less exposed and sensitive to superior political signals.⁶² In the subsequent round this increases the need for control and coordination of activities and formalisation of such processes.⁶³

Delegation from central authorities has been a key element in some of the changes in state regulations affecting universities, and it has been accepted within universities. Tasks, responsibility and authority have been transferred from central administration to faculties and then to departments, as is reflected in the fact that growth in senior administrative positions is greatest in the basic units. Delegation is given as the main explanation for the growth of departmental administration and student numbers. However, it has not been followed by reduction in staff numbers at other levels. At a central and faculty level there has also been considerable growth in administrative positions. The picture is one of duplication rather than efficiency. According to our data, there is little reason to doubt that the vertical complexity of universities fosters administrative growth.

Conclusion

We conclude that a bureaucratisation of Norwegian universities has taken place in the sense that relatively more resources than before are used for administration than for research and teaching.

What are the forces behind the growth in administrative positions? Our analysis does not give grounds for selecting any one reason. External expectations and demands have had important internal consequences for both the administrative support apparatus and the administrative work of faculty. The immense increase in student numbers has contributed significantly to administrative growth. Other changes in state university policy, such as formalising postgraduate education and developing strategies for the internationalisation of research and education are examples of state regulations and expectations to which an administrative price-tag is attached. The same applies to both university adaptation to general state reform programmes and regulations and university involvement in the external funding of research. These changes are not individually of great importance, but cumulatively they contribute to the pattern of academic and administrative bureaucratisation we have documented. These are incremental changes in administration of universities that have not been the object of coherent decision-making, either at the policy-making level or at universities.

What is the role of internal processes in administrative growth at universities? There is still a dilemma: faculty demand administrative support but

⁶² Egeberg, M. (ed.) *Institusjonspolitikk og forvaltningsutvikling: Bidrag til en anvendt statsvitenskap* (Oslo: Tano, 1989).

⁶³ Scott, W.R., *Institutions and Organizations*, *op. cit.*; Hall, R.H., *Organizations*, *op. cit.*

they need to retain control and influence, and this contributes to academic and administrative bureaucratisation. At the same time, the influx of professional administrators has contributed to changing expectations about what university administration should be. Another important internal cause for administrative growth lies in the relationship between levels.

It is reasonable to view the bureaucratisation of universities not as a process planned and regulated at a high level in institutions, but as the result of many small decisions taken at different levels and in various forums at the universities. In a decentralised and fragmented decision-making system as found within universities, there are few centres of strong and unitary leadership that might be able to curb administrative growth.

The most noticeable characteristic of the 1980s and 1990s is the change within university administration. While the number of office workers has not altered in the last decade, there has been strong and disproportionate growth in the number of administrative officers and managers. Therefore it is reasonable to conclude that despite a bureaucratisation of the universities, there are signs of an even stronger professionalisation of university administration. University administrators have diverse educational backgrounds and experience. University administration is not a profession in the sense of clear links between a particular educational background and formal gateways to a career as a university bureaucrat. However, the character of university administration has been changed significantly by the introduction of a corps of administrators, consisting largely of degree-holding officers and managers with their own professional associations and standards of administrative practice.

Administrative growth and professionalisation have been possible because Norwegian universities are in a period of general growth and internal differentiation. A concurrence of different forces has thus meant that the 1980s and 1990s are the epoch of university administration.