



Call for Participation

Training course for PhD and early-stage researchers on

Applications of Organization Theory in Higher Education Research

University of Lugano, Switzerland, 23rd – 25th February 2011

Overview

This course is organized in the framework of the European Science Foundation program *Higher Education and Social Change* (EUROHESC) with the two following objectives:

First, to provide to PhD students a selective introduction to some of the theoretical strands of Organization Theory which are relevant for studies of universities and for the context of Higher Education.
Second, to revisit in this perspective the debate on the organizational nature and specificities of universities by discussing the contributions of recent advances in Organization Theory provide to this topic, in order to suggest new insights, approaches and empirical analyses.

Course organization and participation of students

The course will include the following activities:

- Seminars on selected topics in Organization Theory.
- Presentation of key-readings in Organization Theory applied to the context of Higher Education by course participants, if appropriate with reference to the Collaborative Research Projects of the EuroHESC program.
- Presentation and discussion of the relevance of Organization Theory for Higher Education Studies.

Who should apply

- PhD students and early-stage researchers from the EUROHESC collaborative research projects.
- PhD students and early-stage researchers from other projects in Higher Education Studies and Organization Theory.

The number of participants is limited to 25 for organizational reasons.

Applicants should submit by the 15th November 2010 to martina.montauti@usi.ch the following information:

- A short statement (1 page maximum) explaining their current research project, the reasons of interest on the course and specific topics they would like to address during the course. EuroHESC project members should also identify the CRP and Individual Project they are attached to.
- A full curriculum vitae.

The course Scientific Committee will review the received applications and decide on acceptance at latest by the 1st of December 2010.

Funding conditions

Participants from EUROHESC projects will be reimbursed for their travel according to ESF rules (up to a maximum of 400 EUR), while lodging and meals will be arranged and covered by the organizers. Other participants will be offered meals and documentation during the course.

Scientific committee of the course

Ivar Bleiklie, University of Bergen

Balasz Kovacs, Centre for Organisational Research, University of Lugano.

Benedetto Lepori, Centre for Organisational Research, University of Lugano

Christine Musselin, Centre de Sociologie des Organisations, Paris.

Uwe Schimank, University of Bremen.

John Usher, University of Lethbridge, Canada.

Filippo Carlo Wezel, Centre for Organisational Research, University of Lugano.

Richard Whitley, University of Manchester

Topics of the seminars

A brief history and contemporary perspectives on organizations (John Usher, University of Lethbridge)

This session will present an historical account of the development of organization theory with an emphasis on its sociological roots. This account will then be expanded to provide an overview of contemporary perspectives on organizations, several of which will be elaborated in subsequent course segments. An organizing framework for the perspectives will be provided as well as a discussion of epistemological and research methods implications. A third paper will focus particularly upon the construction of organizations in the public sector. Finally, a direct application of organization theory to higher education will be discussed.

From power and dependency to social networks (John Usher, University of Lethbridge)

This session will provide an in-depth exploration of two linked perspectives on organizations: 1) power and dependency and 2) social networks. These approaches will be used to frame concepts that speak to the roles of politics and social capital both within and between organizations. Building on classic works in this area that have used universities as their empirical base, implications for further study of these topics in higher education will be investigated.

The New Institutionalism: Myths – Isomorphism – Agency (Uwe Schimank and Frank Meier, University of Bremen)

The session will give an introduction to the new institutionalism in organizational analysis. Based on the initial formulations of Meyer and Rowan (1977) and DiMaggio and Powell (1983) some fundamental concepts will be presented. After that the session will focus on the vivid debate on the role of actors and of agency in institutional theorizing (exemplified by the recent concept of institutional work). Finally, applications to the field of higher education will be discussed.

New theories of firms and markets and universities (Richard Whitley, University of Manchester)

Many reforms to Higher Education systems have assumed that they are organizations in much the same way as conventional firms in market economies and can be restructured as competing collective entities. However, there are a number of reasons why this view is mistaken, particularly given the inherent uncertainty and innovativeness of scientific research and open-ended nature of much university teaching. It is also important to realize that the nature of firms and their competitive strategies, vary greatly between differently organized market economies. In this session, we will discuss some recent work on firms as strategic actors in different institutional regimes and its implications for the analysis of research in universities.

Organizational fields, organizational ecology and higher education diversity (Balasz Kovacs, University of Lugano)

This session will present an overview of the development of population ecology from its original formulation by Hannan and Freeman in 1977 to its evolution towards an audience-based approach, addressing the problem of classification of organizations in terms of socio-cognitive representations by relevant audiences, thus introducing issues of languages and codes, as well as of boundaries and of partial membership. Further, the use of these approaches and concepts to address the central issue of diversity of higher education systems will be introduced, with reference both to classical work at the population-level and more recent studies at the organizational field level. Finally, implications for empirical studies of diversity in higher education will be investigated.

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