

Impression of WSAN seminar 24-25 September Helsinki
The 21th Century Paradox: between efficiency and social responsibility
Lidaine Bremer 15.10.10

Organisation

The seminar was very well organized by the active local organizing committee of five Finnish alumni. Arrangements of facilities and marketing website were excellent.

Participation

The participation was good: 31 participants, of which most from recent Winter Schools, which goes to show WSAN succeeds in attracting the newest generations.

WS 2010	7
WS 2009	4
WS 2008	5
WS 2007	2
WS 2006	3
WS 2005	3
WS 2004	5
WS 2003	2
Total	31

Predominantly from Finland, UK and the Netherlands, but also one Cypriot, one Swede, one German, one Italian, and one Czech.

Content of the seminar

Aalto university presentations

The strong vision on the future of the new merged institution created momentum for implementing major changes in administration (new IT systems; external heads of central units; also academic VPs for services) and for obtaining the necessary additional government funding. The keyword *innovation* of the new institution matched well with both political and business needs. The decision to centralize IT systems was taken independent of the merger process. A step change in quality needs a step change in cost. Ambitions are to implement an international tenure track; make use of research input in administration; clearly define responsibilities in administration. Risks are that the international recruitment will not work; that the new Aalto brand remains fuzzy; that there will be too much bureaucracy; and staff will lack stamina for sustained change; and that IT projects will stagnate.

Lunch session with Heads of Administration

The message from Kari Suokko's long career at Helsinki U was that in order to manage the workload and responsibility, you need to be honest and to put something of yourself in.

Warwick session and groupwork

Administration: the stress should be on output: not administration for its own sake, but services to the customers. Warwick held many process review workshops, using the

6Sigma technique. Staff were trained to be moderators. Two case studies focused on the merger of two academic departments and on service delivery in the IT department. No one organizational model is always good; nor is permanent change; perhaps the discussion about organizational models, the being challenged, is the central good thing. Keep to the core principle of the service and stick to it.

Group work: which shared services will work and which will not?
Local-national-international shared services are possible. Payroll is an example; as is student enrolment; institutions should be similar of scale in order to be able to invest jointly.

Ethics presentations

First rule in medicine: don't do harm. There are international principles of responsibility. Ethics versus efficiency is not an opposition in the long term, only in the short term. In the long term, the scope is enlarged and all consequences are clear.

Decisions should be based on principles and on evidence.

A long term vision often runs counter to short term popularity. There should be trust in leadership; you earn trust by predictability.

There is no training required to be a university leader.

Disciplinary background is important for the style of decisionmaking.

Identify the central issue, and stick to it; be consistent.

Integrity, intuition, and courage (conviction).

Ethics groupwork

The ethics groupwork discussed a variety of ethical approaches:

Utilitarian; Egoistic; Care; Communitarism; Code; Individual freedom; Virtue ethics

Concluding that while all are relevant and present in practice, in administration perhaps ethics of code are the cornerstone, and we might need more utilitarian and virtue ethics.

Business section

The WSAAN business section briefly summarised the history of the network. The network is the product of its participants; all are invited to contribute actively. The key feature is to share in a spirit of openness and trust and to broaden the professional horizon to include other European experiences. For 2011, the aim is continue the model of the annual seminar, and to professionalise support and improve communication (website, newsletter).

Evaluation

The feedback as supplied in evaluation forms (about 65% response, organizers not included) suggest that participants valued the seminar, in particular the group spirit, and took home relevant insights. Participants quoted different presentations as being most interesting, underlining diversity of background. Improvements may be made in interactivity, e.g. in an alternate way of giving plenary feedback on groupwork: either by giving single individualized comments or by re-mixing discussion groups and providing feedback in this format.