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Title	University governance reforms in European Higher Education; some reflections on the roles and interventions of external governing board stakeholders in Portugal and the UK
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Background

In this paper we examine whether and if so to what extent recent governance reforms to European higher education institutions which involve the greater presence of external lay governing board members ((Shattock 2014)) are affecting how and who in universities tackles multiple challenges such as strategic decision making and quality assessment of teaching mechanisms and enhancement. Governance reforms in European HE were originally based on normative assumptions associated with the need for universities to be simultaneously open and relevant to the social and economic fabric but also to have increased institutional autonomy, thus enabling a speedier response to changes in organizational environment and the need to improve performance. The reforms have led to less emphasis on collegial academic decision-making and a greater emphasis on boards' involvement in a wider range of decisions (Rowlands 2013). We illustrate our arguments with reference to Portugal and the UK, which have governance systems that emphasise external stakeholders' importance, and where there have been recent changes to the role of governing boards. In the Portuguese system external stakeholder governors still appear to occupy a relatively passive role as 'non-interfering friends' (Magalhães, Veiga et al. 2016), whilst in England, alterations to how teaching quality audit is conducted are pointing to a more interventionist role in decision making and institutional oversight.

Theoretical framework

Theoretically we make use of networked governance theory (Jones, Hesterly et al. 1997, Newman 2001) and new managerialism (Deem, Hillyard et al. 2007, Deem 2017, Magalhães, Veiga et al. 2017). This combination allows us to focus on the informality of networked governance relationships where who someone is and who they know may be as influential as formal bureaucratic structures and roles but also to analyse how different forms of new managerialism ('hard' and 'soft') have led to variations in ideologically-driven forms of governance and management of universities. New Managerialism, whilst always stressing the primacy of management in higher education organisations, varies in emphasis from 'hard managerialism' with hierarchies, performance indicators and measurement of outcomes to 'soft managerialism' using distributed leadership, collaboration and negotiation. The latter may work better in focusing on the importance of the student experience to the organizational health of universities (Baranova 2017) but the former is often preferred by leaders for driving academic performance in research (Leisyte, Enders et al. 2008) and in England, is now impinging more on teaching with the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework (Department for Business Innovation and Skills 2016, Robinson and Hilli 2016). We also locate our paper in relation to research specifically examining the role of external stakeholder governors (Veiga, Magalhaes et al. 2015, Magalhães, Veiga et al. 2016).

Methodology

We draw on examples taken from Portugal and the UK which offer contrasting practices in implementing governance regimes, using policy documents, media coverage and auto-

ethnographic accounts (Chang 2008) of university level governance in both countries. We use our illustrations to demonstrate the differing roles of external stakeholder governors and how what they are asked to do makes a big difference to their engagement in the university concerned, both to overall power relations and to the balance of governing boards', management and academics' involvement in institutional and strategic decision making. Existing research, as noted, has been pointing out the idea of external stakeholders as non-interfering friends (Veiga, Magalhaes et al. 2015, Magalhães, Veiga et al. 2016). But this is now being challenged in UK settings as more intervention by lay governors is encouraged, especially in connection with quality assurance mechanisms and enhancement.

Findings

There are significant differences both in terms of the proportions and roles performed by external stakeholders across European HE systems. For instance, in UK, Senates or Academic Boards still retain some collegial academic power while the Board of Governors external stakeholders 'ensure that governing bodies can meet their obligations to their wider constituencies inside and outside the institution' (Shattock 2006) p. 52, with power over finance, estates, strategy and staffing. But a radical change to quality assessment in 2016 in England from periodic institutional audit visits by an independent agency to a supposedly risk-based system based on annual provider reviews whose content to some extent mirrors metrics being used in the new English Teaching Excellence Framework exercise, has the requirement for Boards to sign off the quality assessment approaches used in their institutions. With the shrinkage of size in UK governing bodies knowledge of education matters amongst external governors has almost vanished so most have no understanding of how students are taught or what quality assessment means in educational settings. In Portugal, in spite of the more visible presence of external stakeholders in Boards, their actual influence in managing internal quality assurance processes and mechanisms remains to be seen (Rosa and Teixeira 2014). External board members are co-opted by the members elected by the university constituencies and are accountable to the Ministry of Higher Education and, in the case of the 5 university-foundations, to the board of trustees, composed of external members nominated by the Ministry after consultation with the institution. But they do not have the capacity to intervene in purely academic matters that English HE boards are now acquiring. In 2000, external stakeholders could be seen as being the Portuguese higher education institutions' imaginary friends as at that time they had no legal mandate to influence universities' strategies (Magalhães and Amaral 2000). Magalhães et al (2016), drawing on an 2011 survey on the perceptions of Rectors and Senate members from 26 European higher education institutions, found that external members of boards were viewed as representing societal interests and bringing broader views to the university. Notwithstanding, Rectors/Presidents preferred to see board members' having a non-interfering role in internal activities. But this view is now being challenged in UK settings as more internal intervention is encouraged by policy changes. However, perhaps the unpopularity of Brexit in Europe and UK HE's struggles with it (Mayhew 2017) will prevent the policy-borrowing which has so often led to wide copying of UK HE policy measures in the past.

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