

Spring Campus, March 27 -31, 2017

Management Workshop: “Participation as Trigger for Committed University Communities”, March 28-29, 2017

Organized by Andreas Wanke and Katrin Risch

The answer to what is meant by participation varies according to political orientation and interests. In general, the concept of participation entails ‘the right to be heard and the right to be involved in the decision making process’ (see Roland Roth). There are many different approaches in theory and practice, which indicate diverging understandings of democracy, communication and power. Today, a growing number of decision makers in politics and business is aware of the value of involving interested stakeholders.

In recent years the importance of participation on the organizational level has been increasingly highlighted. It supports the structural principle of low hierarchies and involvement of employees in steering and decision-making processes. Participation can foster self-organization in institutions up to achieving the goal of building learning communities. This is especially relevant for universities, which belong to those organizations that feature very complex organizational mechanisms.

Strengthening participation is also significant for all activities in the context of sustainability, which affect nearly every faculty and entity of universities. Sustainability management aims to systematically embed aspects of sustainability within the various scientific disciplines as well as in governance and administration of the university. The necessity to embed aspects of sustainability in those areas results first and foremost from the interdisciplinary character of sustainability management and the systematic linkage with aspects of organizational development. Due to the fact that the issue is rather complex and interdisciplinary in nature, a top-down-strategy is not suitable for its implementation. Taking successful sustainability management at universities as an example, it can be seen that implementation strategies rely rather on processes concerning discourses, persuasion, networks or participation. Consequently, questions, which shall be dealt with in the combined research- and management workshop, are:

- Which insights and impulses from participation research in areas of politics and new social movements can be transferred to the university level?
- What are different starting points for successful participation strategies within universities?
- How can the success of participation strategies be measured? How can their long-term efficacy be assessed?
- Which participation methods are most suitable for different phases of participation processes?
- What kind of lessons learned and shared aspects of governance can be identified? In how far are these transferable to other universities?

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These questions will be pursued within three parallel running poster-sessions that will focus on empirical cases of success stories and innovative ideas. Methodological, the workshops will be based on poster presentations and short impulse talks. Issues will be the following:

- Leadership & Organizational Learning
- Community Building & Learning Communities
- Student Initiatives