LNVH Spring Symposium April 10 2015
Developing and Promoting Leadership in Academia – Session results

Setting:

The LNVH Spring Symposium was held on April 10, 2015 at the Muntgebouw in Utrecht. Theme of the day: Women in Science – Academic Leadership Roles Redefined. In the last session, the audience was asked to reflect on existing leadership programmes at universities. After an entire day of lectures, workshops and inspiration: what would you like to take 'home' and what would you like to see changed or addressed within your own organisation? HR policy advisors (representing 3 universities) presented several statements, each in small groups of approximately 15 audience members. Esther Mollema (Direction Europe) moderated the general discussion. The following outcomes are based on a lively discussion and on input from both the audience and policy advisors.

Policy advisors:

- Kristina Raab (implementation manager of the action plan for gender balance at corporate HR of Wageningen University and Research Centre)
- Dicky Tamminga (programme manager Talent development and leadership development at University of Groningen)
- Lucette Teurlings (policy advisor Talent Development at Utrecht University)
- Sylvia The (manager learning&development at Wageningen University)

Statements to engage in dialogue and discussion:

1. The development of leadership skills is sufficiently and efficiently promoted within my university/organization.
2. Leadership programmes within my university/organization are accessible and consist of the right elements/training.
3. There are leadership themes talked about today that I would like to see further explored by my university/organization. Also: are there any recommendations or aspects on leadership we did not discuss today, that you would like to see developed within your university/organization?

Remarks discussion group Dicky Tamminga:

Observations discussion group:
- Issues of leadership programmes at 'kennisinstituten'. Often great and interesting programmes are being offered, but there is no way or possibility of moving up in the hierarchy of the organisation (Glass ceiling?).
- Since an active implementation of leadership programmes is not that obvious, people tend to appreciate leadership programmes in terms of personal development (and are taking leadership courses outside of their home organisation of university).
- People in permanent or fixed positions (e.g. seniors) do not see the need for leadership programmes.

Improvements needed:
- There need to be more flexible leading positions to overcome problems mentioned above (see metaphor football: there's a risk of losing your 'own' well-trained staff to organisations where growth is possible).

- Teaching about gender bias needs to be more prominent.
- Although HR departments are in general well-connected (both within as between universities), there are still some missing links on departmental level (visibility of programmes).
- Management and senior staff do not seem to appreciate the importance of sponsorship, mentoring and coaching.

Remarks discussion group Kristina Raab and Sylvia The:

Observations discussion group:
- There is attention for personal development within tenure tracks: e.g. coaches are assigned.
- The way leadership programmes are being offered, promoted, and perceived as researchers' responsibility differs greatly within and among universities and research organisations.
- Seeing oneself as a (potential) leader is step 1. Being given the opportunity to have this view, and discovering personal needs are an important part of leadership development.
- Leadership can be scientific as well as managerial, it is important to be aware of this rather than considering science and leadership as a contradiction.

Improvements needed:
- Information and communication on leadership programmes can be improved. There seems to be a mismatch between supply (HR) and demand (researchers).
- HR and academic staff should collaborate more in order to bridge this gap, for example in offering regular events on leadership(?).
- Leadership programmes are often offered only starting at high level: leadership is, however, an issue in all career phases.
- In leadership programmes, there is a tension between exclusivity (focusing on talent) and inclusivity (appealing to the entire demographic) which results in mixed messages on target audience.
- Senior staff/professors are responsible for the personal development of their group members/staff. This is often not reflected in the attitude taken by seniors, or in the implementation of existing guidelines on practises to facilitate this task e.g. personal development talks (R&O gesprekken). Senior staff should be held responsible and accountable for the sponsorship and personal development opportunities they give to their group members/staff.

Remarks and recommendations discussion group Lucette Teurlings:

Observations discussion group:
- The concept of leadership (and relating problems) is being recognized at universities, be it on different levels. Some universities tend to focus on the 'newcomers', others are working with leadership concepts on a more senior level.
- The momentum in offering leadership programmes seems to be really important: at what level do you start offering programmes? Also, should the programme be internal, or cross organizational?
- Leadership programmes should be about setting goals, developing talent, finding your purpose and introducing different leadership styles. Also: becoming aware of hierarchical systems and dynamics of bottom-up and top-down leadership.
- The LNVH can be used as a resource and sparring partner in offering leadership programmes.

Improvements needed:

- Selection procedures for participants in leadership programmes are not transparent (enough), which can effect quality.
- Staff should be trained in coaching: this does not always comes naturally. Universities should support their senior staff/researchers in this.
- There should be more room for (discussion on) different perceptions of leadership.

Recommendations:

On offering leadership programmes:
- Leadership programmes should become more visible (promotion etc.) and sustainable (effort and responsibility of HR department as a whole, and not the responsibility of 'only' one HR policy advisor). Departments need to strengthen their communication lines (on all organisational levels).
- Information is key: investing in the right means of communication can resolve the mismatch between leadership programme developers (supply) and users (demand).
- Leadership programmes, as well as other HR initiatives, should be offered in English as well.

On targeting leadership programmes:
- Every new PI gets a personal invitation, preferably signed by a board member, to engage in leadership programmes.
- Leadership programmes should target all levels (from PhD to professors to university boards).
- A management course for larger grants should be offered for first-time recipients, preferably centrally by NWO/VSNU, as soon as recipients (junior or senior) obtain the grant.

On mentoring and coaching in general:
- Universities should stimulate senior staff to sponsor and mentor junior staff and provide appropriate support for these activities.
- Tools and measures concerning staff's R&O ('resultaat en ontwikkeling') need to be (further) developed and implemented.

On diversity:
- Gender diversity competences should be a condition in recruiting (management) personnel.
- Gender components should be implemented in ranking mechanisms and systems.
- Presidents of universities should take on the position of Chief Diversity Officer, by default.

From recommendations to action:
[as far as reasonable/possible within limits of resources and means]

HR departments:
-make leadership programmes more visible, accessible and sustainable
-invest in communication/PR of leadership programmes
-develop leadership programmes for all levels of 'management'
-engage new PI's in leadership programmes
-provide support for senior staff in mentoring and coaching junior staff
-further develop staff's R&O in context of discussion results
-explore possibilities of including gender diversity competences in recruiting (management) personnel
-in meetings with NWO/VSNU: discuss need for training first-time grant recipients

LNVH:
-support in communication/PR intra- and interorganizational leadership programmes

-continue in teaming up with external partners in offering coaching
-proceed with mediation in mentoring, matching mentors and mentees across universities
-in meetings with university boards: call for action/consideration in engaging PI's in leadership programmes
-in meetings with university boards: further stimulate discussion on possibilities of including gender diversity competences in recruiting (management) personnel
-in meetings with university boards: discuss taking up the role of Chief Diversity Officer by a board member
-in meetings with NWO/VSNU: discuss need for training first-time grant recipients
-explore gender components in ranking mechanisms, e.g. connect with women networks abroad in dealing with this issue