
The work of Gareth Williams has helped us to understand better the potential and limitations of using economic analysis and concepts in higher education and its implications for a policy orientation that privileges economic rationales. He has taught us that HEIs cannot escape the fact that they need resources to develop their activities and that they are part of the economic system. However, they need to accommodate market signals and to respond to short-term economic and social demands with a longer-term commitment to their enduring institutional mission. This is something commendable, even from a management perspective, since it is doubtful that firms can endure if they limit themselves to responding to short-term incentives and pressures, losing sight of their long-term goals. The use of economic rationality in academic management is not a means to avoid problems and difficulties; rather it is another possible criterion to organise the decision-making process and legitimise institutional decisions.