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Abstract

This paper calls for a more detailed study of social practices in the analysis of governance failures. Using the Woolf report on the breakdown of governance at the London School of Economics as a case study and Wittgenstein's notion of language games as an analytic lens, the author argues that widely used institutional and structural theories of governance are necessary but not sufficient to explain how governance works and why it fails. It is also necessary to understand, through a detailed micro-analysis of talk and action, the contingent social practices occurring within and outside these structures. This matters because structural accounts of governance tend to present solutions as changes in structures, standards and procedures or measures to make academics comply with these. A language games framing, in contrast, suggests that it matters less what form the structures of governance take than the extent to which they allow effective deliberation on the numerous contradictions and paradoxes that make up their day-to-day work. The paper concludes that those charged with governing universities should maximise opportunities for individuals and groups to

14.3.2026

deliberate on, and 'muddle through', the multiple and conflicting demands and accountabilities that characterise contemporary higher education. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)