

Interview with Rector Gunnar Bovim
7/8 Rector's Office – 11.00
Short summary

I arrive 10 minutes before and I am quite nervous and respectful. When I come in, Gunnar is friendly and starts an informal conversation but I quickly ask him to read the interview guide. I hope I am polite enough, I have only 30 minutes and I want to use this time properly.

Gunnar agrees that I can tape the conversation and that I can share it on my blog. He is open to talk in English but he agrees we both prefer Norwegian. The Bergen dialect of Gunnar is not a problem for me today, maybe he normalizes his way of speaking or maybe I am so interested that I understand everything in spite of the Bergen dialect.

Main Questions

How do you understand leadership?

Leadership is about trust (tillit) from them you lead and society mission (samfunnsopdrag) toward your democracy. Trust comes from seeing the employee and the student with respect. For example the student must be respected for her learning process but also for being out of home for first time and as a person. And management is about doing things right.

I am happy he mentions respect, and I comment that we have been discussing the notion of respect in our leadership course and that respect means to see once again so I like his way of seeing the student several times.

Respect is about respecting scientific disagreements that should be at the core of our knowledge production process but should not deteriorate relationships between people.

People will not respect you as you make popular decisions but as you make good decisions.

Our rector suddenly stops smiling and looks almost worried (he must have read worries in my thoughts as I am afraid to be unpopular) and tells me.

It can be lonely to make decisions. But you have the other department heads, you have your leader group.

He stands up and grabs a book titled <http://www.amazon.com/Sense-Urgency-John-P-Kotter/dp/1422179710>

You must have a direction, he says, and you have to show the way. You must know where you want to go and that you really want to go there. This means that we have to understand that we want to "change" and why.

Before I ask about education and research I ask a question that I have not planned but that I am happy I asked. I ask about how important is economy in leadership or if economy belongs to management.

As hospital director I was monitoring economy weekly and now I monitor economy a bit more seldom but that economy is important to achieve strategical goals. He mentions his Star Program (Stjerne Program) that is the result of strategic use of money that could have been divided equally.

Sub-questions

A. How do you understand leadership in Research?

B. How do you understand leadership in Education?

Time is passing quickly. Gunnar's phone is not silent anymore. I want to use his time respectfully and I am aware there are only five minutes again.

He manages to attack several important topics that are strategic objectives for him:

- invest in EU research
- attract the best students
- The digital exam and new teaching methods
- Internationalization
- help ambitious persons to fulfill their ambitions and to enable them to act as light houses for other persons (either younger or less ambitious)
- communicate the message that teaching is as important as research and breaks the myth that universities do not prize good education
- focus on basic knowledge for our students. Applied knowledge can be acquired in industry afterwards.

In the end he asks me if I disagree about anything. I mention that I would like to discuss more the role of IT as basic knowledge and the role we should have for example in EU projects. My son has started to call impatiently and my phone which is also the tape recorder shows Roberto's face and vibrates. So it is a good time to conclude with a polite invitation by Gunnar to give him feedback's in the future if I have.