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Abstract

As market-led higher education systems become the 'new normal', a wider variety of organisational forms is likely to emerge. This paper reports on the findings of a qualitative and historical study that aimed to explore the meaning of collaborative governance in a unique and long-standing higher education joint venture in England. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with senior-level stakeholders from both participating institutions: architects of the joint venture, institutional leaders and faculty managers. Interviewees frequently referred to the metaphor of marriage and described the institutions as partners who don't live together but have responsibility for the children! The paper offers reflective insights on governance, leadership and management and highlights the tensions of balancing mutual interests, the use of metaphor to make sense of critical incidents and the role of micropolitics of enacting leadership at multiple levels. The paper contributes to conceptual understanding and knowledge of collaborative governance in higher education. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)