

## **CHAPTER 8**

# **THE ADVENT OF EXECUTIVISM<sup>556</sup> IN ACADEMIC DEANSHIP: POSSIBILITIES AND CONSTRAINTS**

### **8.1 Introduction**

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the implications of the new roles and responsibilities of the deanship, brought about by the new organisational design for their management practice. The issues discussed here are: How have the new organisational design and the changed role and responsibilities of deans affected their management practice? What emerging patterns or features can be identified that characterise the deanship at Wits? In which ways has the deans' management practice been affected in relation to the Vice-Chancellor (VC) and the newly created positions of heads of school and faculty? The argument pursued in this chapter is that, following the restructuring process and the establishment of executive deanship with changed roles and responsibilities, a new mode of management is taking shape which places emphasis on managerial and corporate practices, at the expense of intellectual and academic leadership traditionally associated with the role of academic deans. This assumes different nuances depending on the dynamics in each academic unit and the personalities and backgrounds of the deans themselves.

### **8.2 The Changed Roles and Responsibilities of Deans**

A university policy document entitled, 'Responsibilities and Competencies of a Dean' outlines the new responsibilities for deans. It stresses that the dean has to be

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<sup>556</sup> By "executivism" is meant the adoption of a corporate style management with greater domination and control by managers over staff.

competent both in academic management and his or her respective discipline. The dean is now responsible for the implementation of all policies within faculties approved at a senior level, that is, by the faculty board, senate, SET and the council. The duties of the dean include responsibility for devolved functions such as ‘human resources, finance, student and curriculum administration, and marketing and faculty facilities’.<sup>557</sup>

Twelve items are listed as areas for which the deans should be responsible:

The adoption of a *faculty mission statement* and the development and implementation of a *faculty strategy plan*.

The development and implementation of an *academic plan* for the faculty.

The preparation and implementation of a *financial plan* for the faculty.

The formulation and implementation of *teaching and learning policy*.

The formulation and implementation of broad *faculty policy for research and research training*.

The coordination and *strategic alignment of the activities* of the faculty’s constituent schools.

The administration of the *registration and academic records* of students registered for the degree and diplomas awarded by the faculty on the central database.

The administration and management of a two-line (recurrent and non-recurrent) budget allocated by the SEG (Senior Executive Group)<sup>558</sup> in accordance with *financial norms and policies*.

The promotion and coordination of *multidisciplinary teaching and research* programmes both within the faculty and between faculties.

The promotion and development of *marketing, income generation and fund raising activities* that will contribute to the sustainability of the faculty and its component schools.

The *recruitment, appointment, promotions and equity issues* that will be managed within renewed policies and procedures.

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<sup>557</sup> Responsibilities and Competencies of a Dean - HRS/5, Human Resource Management, Senate House, p.17.

<sup>558</sup> The Senior Executive Group is the same as the Senior Executive Team.

The *delegation* of such functions as necessary and appropriate.<sup>559</sup>

The focus of these responsibilities is upon planning, policy formulation and implementation, administration and management, income generation, marketing, fund raising and staffing. The new set of roles and responsibilities of the deans differs in considerable ways from those prior to the restructuring. Interestingly, the deans themselves differ on how they interpret this change. For some, the change revolves around the power and authority they have received to effect change in their faculties. According to one dean who had the benefit of both experiences:

It was not expected of deans to provide leadership or to change the direction of the faculty or to try to make plans that would take five or ten years to implement because they were just **caretakers**<sup>560</sup> for two or three years and they just had to perform a whole lot of official functions - graduation and chairing exam committees and sitting on selection committees.<sup>561</sup>

The new set of responsibilities differs markedly from the past system in that deans are not only expected to perform a caretaker role but have to perform a leadership role which could change the direction of the faculty.

Playing a caretaker role in the past meant that deans were in their positions for two or three years but are now required to remain in the position for much longer, given their expanded responsibilities.

For others, the massive organisational structure of the new faculties and the integration of deans in SET pose strong constraints on the academic and leadership roles of the deans. In the face of the multiplicity of functions and tasks they have to perform, corporate or managerial approaches, that is, managerialism, becomes almost inevitable.

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<sup>559</sup> Functions, Responsibilities and Competencies of a Dean – HRS/5, Human Resource Management, Senate House, p.1-2.

<sup>560</sup> By 'caretaker' is meant that the deans were in these positions for a limited period of time and their positions were not considered to be a career path.

<sup>561</sup> Interview with Professor Max Price, Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, 13 January 2003.

Nonetheless, the changed nature of the roles and responsibilities of deans has affected their management practice in the following ways: (i) deans increasingly spend more time on managerial responsibilities; (ii) their managerial responsibilities are becoming more of a corporate nature; (iii) the lines of accountability have shifted; and (iv) their roles as academic and intellectual leaders for the faculty are constrained.

### **8.2.1 Academic Leadership and Management Vis-À-Vis Managerialism**

Management restructuring was initially followed with optimism and enthusiasm among the newly appointed executive deans. The deans I interviewed during 2002 were optimistic as they felt that, given the powers and the authority vested in them, they would be able to fulfil their two responsibilities - academic leadership and management - more effectively:

Probably half my time is in management and administration but the other half I think would count as giving academic leadership - it's creating new programmes, creating plans, even new systems which allow one to change the academic activities. When you came in we were trying to refine a resource allocation model within the faculty to allocate funds within the faculty which will completely change what programmes grow and which ones shrink, or redirect what people do because of that certain funding.

So it's management in one sense but it's about strategic planning to change the academic profile or programme of the institution, which I would call then leadership.<sup>562</sup>

I think it is a combination of the two.<sup>563</sup>

In some instances this optimism did not last long. The deans interviewed during 2003 stated explicitly that they had discovered that there is no balance between

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<sup>562</sup> Interview with Professor Max Price, Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, 13 January 2003.

<sup>563</sup> Interview with Professor Colin Wright, Dean of the Faculty of Science, University of the Witwatersrand, 14 January 2003.

their academic leadership and management responsibilities and that in fact they spend most of their time on managerial responsibilities.<sup>564</sup>

I am still continuing with some research - not as much as I wanted to - but it is primarily management...I haven't been trained as an academic manager neither has any of the other deans. We are here simply because we have been reasonably successful as academics and we have been promoted. But to call us professional managers - I think is madness. We spend most of our time on management issues that is true, but we are still academics and I think that that's very important. I mean you go to DVC level that's it, I think that's probably where you cut it. But at our level we should still be academics and certainly heads of schools should be.<sup>565</sup>

I knew coming into this post as reconstituted or reconfigured it is more of a leadership and administrative role. Let me qualify what I mean by academic. I certainly do not mean ignorance of academic excellence, what is quality, what is required by industry and professions. I mean what defines me as fulfilling my role. If you look at a professor, that professor must be active in research to maintain his respect, but would you expect me to be active in research to maintain my role as dean? I don't have the time that is the truth. I have in fact tried to balance both but I still supervise my PhD students, I still tried to attend conferences; last year I had two external examinations. I tried to publish last year, its madness. I have very little time for myself. Should I carry on like I did last year? I had no weekends. It was as if I was doing my MBA. It should be a short term contract of leadership and administration role and I should be required to be research active. Don't expect the incumbent to be research active.<sup>566</sup>

## 8.2.2 Corporatisation of University Management

The corporatised nature of the managerial responsibilities of deans is evident in the following: (i) the creation of responsibility centres with devolved operational functions, (ii) the creation of semi-autonomous business units and (iii) through limiting cross-subsidisation. These issues have been discussed in Chapter 6.

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<sup>564</sup> This is a feature that has been identified by others such as Bessant (Bessant, B. (1995). *Corporate Management and its Penetration of University Administration and Government. Australian Universities' Review*, 1, 59- 62).

<sup>565</sup> Interview with Professor Neil Garrod, Dean of the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, 14 January 2003.

<sup>566</sup> Interview with Professor Nkado, Dean of the Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering, University of the Witwatersrand, 13 January 2003.

### 8.3 Creation of Responsibility Centres with Devolved Operational Functions

The implication of the creation of responsibility centres<sup>567</sup> means that deans are now responsible for a new layer of office staff as a consequence of the devolution of operational functions.<sup>568</sup>

It is quite a different job. The human resource office we never had here before. We've created a human resource office, which was devolved within a couple of months of my becoming dean. I had to set up an office; I had an extra person reporting to me, which was the HR manager. Similarly finance was devolved to some extent, but it isn't completed. But we appointed a finance manager. The finance manager is a person who reports to me - a post that didn't exist before in the faculty.<sup>569</sup>

The other operational functions that have been devolved are academic administration and research. These have been discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6. The inclusion of all these functions has meant much greater pressure upon deans to fulfill an expanded managerial commitment as they have a much larger layer of units to manage. The devolution of these operational functions has all been for the purpose of shifting the nature of academic entities to become semi-autonomous business units. Their semi-autonomous status has been achieved in some ways but not in others, specifically with respect to financial devolution. Deans have more autonomy than they had before, especially with respect to the staffing and promotions committee...

like appointments and things related to salaries. Now it is just so much easier because I've now actually got an infrastructure that enables me to

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<sup>567</sup> The creation of responsibility centres has been discussed in much greater detail in Chapter 5.

<sup>568</sup> This was discussed at length in Chapter 5.

<sup>569</sup> Interview with Professor Max Price, Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, 13 January 2003.

do it a lot quicker. I mean I can make appointments in five minutes now if I want to.<sup>570</sup>

My understanding was that under the old system, deans looked after the administrative and academic issues affecting the faculty but they had to hire resource requirements from the centre. If you wanted to hire any new academic staff you would have to send your motivation for this to the HR directorate or committee as a central body before you could get your way, and promotions were equally administered so the deans were the old order deans who were in a sense champions of the faculty and took the cause of the faculty to the centre to get approvals. That has largely changed because the centre of decision making is now at faculty level so you would have to give the reasons to committee, for example, the staffing and promotions committee which is composed of heads of schools within the faculty and representatives from other faculties so you are not really free to do as you please; but decisions would be taken at the faculty level, so there are more of semi-autonomous business units now than in the past, and so I feel that the deans are given more responsibility and have to be careful about how they go about what they do because if something goes wrong it would be very embarrassing for the dean. I have to be very careful that I do not present the faculty in bad light.<sup>571</sup>

With regard to the financial devolution, many deans tend to express their frustrations.

Unless you devolve finances you can't devolve decision making. So the fact that we still have this arcane grace and favour budgetary system means that they say that they have devolved the entire process - no they haven't - because every time I want to appoint somebody I've got to take a case to a central committee which approves it or does not approve the position. So nothing's devolved because your salary budget is set centrally. We generate research funds, we generate fees - we are not given those monies, we have to argue for everything that we get. So therefore the whole decision making is not really devolved in a significant way. Basically devolution means they give me a budget and I go for it, I can do what I like within the confines of the university but I don't have to talk to anybody about whether I buy a pizza, whether I'd employ a secretary, whether I employ a professor. Within my budget if I can afford it in discussion with heads of schools, we make the appropriate decisions and I am held accountable for the result.<sup>572</sup>

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<sup>570</sup> Interview with Professor Colin Wright, Dean of the Faculty of Science, University of the Witwatersrand, 14 January 2003.

<sup>571</sup> Interview with Professor Raymond Nkado, Dean of the Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering, University of the Witwatersrand, 23 January 2003.

<sup>572</sup> Interview with Professor Neil Garrod, Dean of the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, 3 May 2002.

If you ask the finance division, they think they've been devolved, if you ask the faculty... The faculties have got a different point of view. My business manager's view is that central finance has just devolved all of the problems. He's got a completely different view from the people at the top...His view (and I agree with him) is that the faculty should be defined as a business unit and it should be given responsibility for managing its affairs and the business of the centre is to lay down policy and to oversee and audit what we do.<sup>573</sup>

I have no doubt that that will happen this year. I would agree that if the finances are not devolved we would be constrained because all decisions tie back to the finances, but even so finance is part of a collection of items for decision points. For instance, amendments to the curriculum and introduction of new programmes are decisions that can be made by the faculty and those are devolved to the faculty now.<sup>574</sup>

Even though devolution seems to be limited, deans still shared some positive opinions with respect to devolution and the creation of semi-autonomous business units: (i) devolution of human resource is seen as working particularly well, as individual staff members have easier access to human resource managers and their queries are dealt with much more efficiently; (ii) there is more financial management support within the faculty through the faculty financial managers who are accountable to the deans and who can take care of the financial management, especially with respect to the accuracy of budgetary allocations from the centre; (iii) with the devolution of the staffing and promotions committee decision making has been more efficient, and (iv) devolution has meant that deans have more responsibility and to some extent more control over their environment.<sup>575</sup> While this may be regarded as valuable from a managerial

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<sup>573</sup> Interview with Professor Colin Wright, Dean of the Faculty of Science, University of the Witwatersrand, 14 January 2003.

<sup>574</sup> Interview with Professor Raymond Nkado, Dean of the Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering, University of the Witwatersrand, 23 January 2003. The other Deans expressed a similar opinion.

<sup>575</sup> Interview with Professor Raymond Nkado, Dean of the Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering, University of the Witwatersrand, 23 January 2003.



perspective, it forces increased formalisation and compliance and therefore a string of reporting and paper work from academics.<sup>576</sup>

## 8.4 Creation of Semi-Autonomous Business Units

The devolution of financial management systems has particular significance for the creation of semi-autonomous business units. Part of the devolution of financial management systems is the implementation of a new economic model across the various academic units referred to as the Attributable Income and Expenditure Model. The system works in the following way:

The budget we get now is basically the same as the budget we got five years ago taking account of inflation. There has been no significant change and no increase. And we are the ones waiting for the increase because we heavily cross-subsidise some other faculties. The faculties have always been cost centres and we've always had to work within that financial system. What we hoped would change was that a funding model would be introduced which would be what we call an 'attributable income model' - that the money we earn through subsidy or fees or other things, would come to the faculty and we would be able to spend it. And we would then be able to choose things like do we want to put up the fees and earn more or not?<sup>577</sup>

The Attributable Income and Expenditure model allocates incomes and expenditures to the various faculties and schools.

As one dean described the system:

First of all it assigns the direct income, which is generated from faculties to those faculties, that is, subsidy and fees and things of that nature. And then assigns costs to faculties, whether they be direct costs, things that you can actually measure like salaries and specific costs and running expenses, and then attributes the overhead costs of universities to faculties on the basis at the moment of three drivers, namely, student numbers, staff numbers and the space - the square meterage - that a

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<sup>576</sup> Focus group discussion with academics in the Faculty of Science, University of the Witwatersrand, 12 February 2004; Focus group discussion with academics in the Faculty of Humanities, 19 February 2004.

<sup>577</sup> Interview with Professor Max Price, Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, 13 January 2003.

faculty occupies. And that model actually is an assessment of the viability: rands and cents cost effectiveness of each faculty.<sup>578</sup>

What this model does is that it allows for planning...You can actually look at that model and you can say well last year my faculty spent x million rand more than it generated and you can do a prediction as to where your faculty will stand next year. And there's an agreement that faculties must lie within a certain band.<sup>579</sup>

By allocating the actual costs and expenditures to the various faculties and schools, the management of the institution is able to establish what the different faculties and schools cost in relation to their incomes and expenditures as discussed in Chapter 6. Currently the system is being taken further in relation to actual budgets to allow management to monitor expenditures and propose areas for further cutbacks. This shift in attributing incomes based upon revenue generated by responsibility centres, and the probable further decline in government subsidy allocation, introduces the necessity of strategic planning at faculty level and therefore the necessity of having financial and business managers at faculty level and monitoring the performance of staff.

The reason for the slow implementation of the new economic model was suggested in the following terms:

They're frightened because they're going to be exposed in public as being a deficit unit, deficit faculty and I think that they see that as a *mark of shame* or something, you know, I just don't understand that...we are wasting time. They're giving very philosophical arguments as to why they need this, that and the other and I am sorry I'm very crude about it but I say, "I'm not going to engage in any sort of philosophical debate because the bottom line is if these deficit units do something and get support from the university to do it, it's my people that suffer." My people teach bigger classes, they teach more classes; they have students sitting on the floor because the rooms aren't big enough. This is the reality of it. So I'm sorry, I'm not prepared to enter into philosophical debate about whether a new machine in engineering or something is necessary. I'm not prepared to pay for it. You can outvote me but I am not prepared to pay for it. Now if you put it all upfront and we can debate the extent to which we should or we will cross-subsidise then

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<sup>578</sup> Interview with Professor Colin Wright, Dean of the Faculty of Science, University of the Witwatersrand, 14 January 2003.

<sup>579</sup> Interview with Professor Colin Wright, Dean of the Faculty of Science, University of the Witwatersrand, 14 January 2003.

that's fine. But let's not...We are pussy footing around at the moment because we are not accepting the fact that *expenditure in certain faculties is paid for by somebody else's hard work.*<sup>580</sup>

One of the implications of creating faculties into 'semi-autonomous' business units is the drive to search for additional funding, referred to as 'third stream' funding. 'Third stream' funding is obtained through non-traditional ways, for example, through the delivery of short courses or programmes.<sup>581</sup> While discussions and implementation with respect to this area are fairly new and differentiated given the nature of disciplines, this is an area which is carefully being considered as a source of income.

For example in engineering, it is felt that because of the nature of the discipline, it is unlikely that short courses will be introduced. There has been an expansion in consulting work, however, which accounts for approximately 20% of the faculty's income.<sup>582</sup>

The Endowment Chair within this faculty is seen as an opportunity for industry to become involved in determining the research agenda of the faculty and for the faculty to obtain additional funding. Companies such as Anglogold, ESKOM and Sasol can pay R300 000 per year over a three to five year period for a chair which will become part of a particular school. If research concerns emerge within their industry, the school would need to research the area required by industry. Through this process, the curriculum is being changed by industry so that industry can ensure that academics produce the kinds of students industry needs.<sup>583</sup>

In addition to 'third stream funding', it appears that a new form of funding that can be referred to as 'fourth stream funding' is being introduced and is

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<sup>580</sup> Interview with Professor Neil Garrod, Dean of the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, 3 May 2002.

<sup>581</sup> This has been dealt with in much greater detail in Chapter 6.

<sup>582</sup> Interview with Mrs Magda Potgieter, Finance or Business Manager Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering, University of the Witwatersrand, 12 March 2003.

<sup>583</sup> Interview with Professor Nkado, Dean of the Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering, University of the Witwatersrand, 13 January 2003.

particularly evident within the Business School. Short courses are offered, the proceeds of which are allocated both to the institution and to individual academics who are involved in teaching these courses. Furthermore across the institution, funding accrued from journal publications is now being shared between the institution and the individual with 80% of the proceeds being allocated to the individual academic writer, or approximately R3 600 per journal article.<sup>584</sup>

#### **8.4.1 Competition and Constraints on Faculty Cross-Subsidisation**

During the interviews with the various deans, cross-subsidisation featured as a key concern. Faculties such as Health Sciences and Commerce, Law and Management feel that they cross-subsidise the rest of the faculties.<sup>585</sup> The pressure placed upon the top management of the institution by surplus faculties is for them to accrue their actual incomes which are more than what the top management is currently allocating to their faculties. The pressure upon deficit faculties, whether by the management of the institution or the surplus faculties, is to contain their expenditures and generate additional income so that they are self sustainable. Deans complain about the level to which they are losing subsidy to other faculties. According to one dean:

In my faculty we generate in excess of R20 million. Now I think that is too high. It goes to the university basically. I don't have a problem with cross-subsidy because I would cross-subsidise within the faculty as well, but I think it is completely unreasonable that that's not on the table; it's not open, transparent and debated.<sup>586</sup>

On the other hand, faculties such as the Built Environment and Engineering are very conscious about the expensive nature of the courses they deliver but also mindful that a great deal of resources are consumed by the central administration.

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<sup>584</sup> Interview with Professor Edward Webster, University of the Witwatersrand, 2003; Discussion in the School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, September 2003.

<sup>585</sup> The figures presented in Chapter 6 based on the Income Statement of 2003 illustrate this point.

<sup>586</sup> Interview with Professor Neil Garrod, Dean of the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, 3 May 2002.

It looks to me that engineering is an expensive programme and the underlying reason for why we may at worst be breaking even is the way that the government funds or subsidises the students of engineering. I do not believe that the government funding comes close to the costs of funding an engineering student... To be blunt about it – The costs of the VC, DVC; the senate house, CNS, alumni office all those central offices that serve the university community, are central costs and they are top sliced out of the university. If the university tells us that we are costing them more money than we bring in, then we would say that they had better look at their costs. I had to invite the DVC to address the faculty board to address this concern because this is a serious concern in the faculty. Central costs need to be looked at if we have to achieve efficiencies and before the university draws the conclusion that this faculty's programmes are costing it money. They would have to look at their central costs as well.<sup>587</sup>

Even though deans would like to see their faculties becoming 'semi-autonomous' business units, they are cautious about the implications of abolishing cross-subsidisation by wiping out financially non-viable faculties through market competition between faculties, and furthermore losing their research focus by becoming solely market orientated.<sup>588</sup>

It is for this reason that deans still see themselves not merely as managers but also as academic leaders, which distinguishes universities from industry in so far as managers within universities are charged with the task of managing professionals or intellectual workers. Not being dragged into a completely industry driven direction, which is fairly easily achievable, is particularly the concern in the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management.<sup>589</sup>

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<sup>587</sup> Interview with Professor Raymond Nkado, Dean of the Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering, University of the Witwatersrand, 23 January 2003.

<sup>588</sup> Interview with Professor Raymond Nkado, Dean of the Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering, University of the Witwatersrand, 23 January 2003; Interview with Professor Colin Wright, Dean of the Faculty of Science, University of the Witwatersrand, 14 January 2003; Interview with Professor Neil Garrod, Dean of the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, 14 January 2003.

<sup>589</sup> Interview with Professor Colin Wright, Dean of the Faculty of Science, University of the Witwatersrand, 14 January 2003.

Briefly, cross-subsidisation is a contentious issue as far as the extent to which academic entities should be cross-subsidised. The danger is that as cross-subsidisation is decreased, faculties and schools will be under constant review to reduce costs where programmes and courses are financially non-viable, and constantly driven to respond to market demands by creating new short courses that may be financially viable on a short term basis.

## 8.5 Meeting the Challenges of Executive Deanship: Capacity Development Issues

The increased responsibilities of deans bring the question of capacity development back to the agenda. In a separate paper with Cross (2004), the writer of this thesis referred to the factors that may contribute to effective performance of these responsibilities.<sup>590</sup> First, it was argued that the way in which each dean plays out his or her role is directly dependent on **personality** which includes talents and dreams, professional profile and personal and academic life trajectory—in other words, the dean’s biography and background. These could be either an asset or a liability. Second, it was argued that meeting the challenges of deanship depends on the **institution** concerned: its history and culture, its own peculiar ethos, the particular constellation of internal relationships, and a specific connection to a concrete social location. Third, it was pointed out that deanship depends on the social environment or the people within the institution, who are usually referred to as **stakeholders** (faculty, support staff, students). They are the most important factor that determines the success or failure of a dean - the “resources” or “stumbling blocks”. These factors call for a context based in-service management training.

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583 Johnson, B. & Cross, M. (2004). Academic Leadership under Siege: Possibilities and Limits of Executive Deanship at the University of the Witwatersrand. *South Journal of Higher Education*, 18(2), 34-35.

Currently there are two dimensions to management training. These are familiarising deans with the higher education context and specific skills required to manage a faculty at Wits (such as the LRA), managing performance appraisal and financial management information systems.<sup>591</sup> Deans expressed different views as to what training they regarded as being of value.

There were a number of them I mean some of them were totally useless.<sup>592</sup>

I have been on two SAUVCA<sup>593</sup> dean's programmes. The first one was okayish and very helpful because it meant I could meet other deans. The second one was a complete and utter waste of time. It was useless as most of the others there agreed. Government policy, the role of the executive dean...I mean it was bullshit [sic]. It was very pleasant to meet the other deans again and chat to them and so forth, but they could have halved the length of the programme, not invited any of the speakers and just let us chat for half a day. I have heard others who have been on other courses, SAUVCA courses, saying similar things.<sup>594</sup>

The director of the Centre of Learning and Teaching Development, however, maintains that the training currently provided is more knowledge and skills orientated for the kinds of activities academics can easily acquaint themselves with. She argues that the softer skills, such as conflict management, are more critical in assisting deans to deal with areas such as tensions among staff, particularly since the amalgamation of a range of disciplines and faculties.<sup>595</sup> The significance of this training is that deans were introduced to performing more like managers than academic leaders to cope with their managerial duties. The background of the first group of deans since the 1999 restructuring initiative shows strong academic leadership abilities with less emphasis on management;

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<sup>591</sup> Interviews with deans, University of the Witwatersrand, 2003.

<sup>592</sup> Interview with Professor Colin Wright, Dean of the Faculty of Science, University of the Witwatersrand, 14 January 2003.

<sup>593</sup> SAUVCA (South African University Vice-Chancellors' Association)

<sup>594</sup> Interview with Professor Neil Garrod, Dean of the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, 3 May 2002.

<sup>595</sup> Interview with Professor Margaret Orr, Director of the Centre for Learning and Teaching Development, University of the Witwatersrand, 16 February 2003.

the new kind of deanships require a corporate management style of managing faculties. This suggests that the new deans have to be far more astute in their management abilities than in their academic leadership abilities.

To address this need, the university is considering an individual customised coaching programme for deans and other executive managers who require daily support in their work. Because this is expensive, it is still under discussion. These programmes are regarded as more effective than the generic training offered during a structured programme.<sup>596</sup>

## 8.6 Executive Deanship: Emerging Features

The changing nature of deanship has resulted in interesting patterns and trends. First, given the complexity of their roles and responsibilities, deans hold their positions for a period of five years instead of the previous two to three years. Second, emphasis tends to be placed on managerial responsibilities (for example, corporate related activities such as cost containment and income generation) above intellectual and academic leadership, and the traditional roles as representatives of the faculty are becoming increasingly blurred. Third, while operating in a narrow managerial framework, deans are expected to undertake forward planning or strategic planning and therefore potentially change the orientation or direction of the faculty. Fourth, as members of the Senior Executive Team (SET), they have more power based upon their positions<sup>597</sup> and rely on a larger layer of managers under their authority within the devolved organisational structure. Lastly, within the logic of efficiency and fiscal discipline underpinning the new organisational strategy, the deans' success depends largely on their ability

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<sup>596</sup> Interview with Professor Margaret Orr, Director of the Centre for Learning and Teaching Development, University of the Witwatersrand, 26 February 2003.

<sup>597</sup> The centralisation of power within SET through the incorporation of deans into SET has been discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7 and is the primary reason for the increased power of deans.



to generate income, make savings and strengthening their faculty's financial position in relation to other faculties within the university.

## **8.7 Executive Deans Vis-À-Vis the Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellors**

As already pointed out, decentralisation through deconcentration of the functions of the vice-chancellor's office has resulted in the integration of the deans into senior management structures. Important patterns and trends can also be identified at this level. Firstly, deans are directly accountable to the VC who is ultimately responsible for the appointment of deans. The ultimate 'boss'<sup>598</sup> of the dean is the VC and not necessarily the faculty. It is recognised, however, that if the dean is to operate effectively within the faculty, he requires the support of the faculty. Secondly, because the deans are ultimately responsible to the VC for their daily managerial operations, the VC handles their performance appraisals. Thirdly, while deans are ultimately responsible to the VC, they are responsible for the implementation of specific policies to the various DVCs.

It's interesting, deans...If you think of the structure, the management structure of the university, it is actually a matrix kind of structure where deans are sort of line managers that manage faculties. And then you've got deputy vice-chancellors who are not line managers but they manage functions. So you've got a DVC Research who runs across. So deans interact with DVCs but on a functional basis. So I interact with one DVC around research, I interact with an Executive Director: Finance about finance.<sup>599</sup>

Fourthly, deans have become more directly involved in external bodies which are of direct relevance to the profile of their faculty.

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<sup>598</sup> I find that many interviewees refer to those to whom they are accountable as their 'boss'. This change in discourse is extremely powerful in engraining altered power relations and a creation of a new sense of 'us' and 'them'.

<sup>599</sup> Interview with Professor Colin Wright, Dean of the Faculty of Science, University of the Witwatersrand, 5 June 2002.

I have to spend most of my time working with and influencing the Department of Health - which is a provincial government department - and the hospital superintendents, CEOs and the national Department of Health and the Health Professions Councils, other deans of medical schools in the country, because we need to form a lobby and caucus and we need to have a fairly united front if we are going to be effective. So I need to, if I think something should be done, I need to influence them. So a very substantial part of my time and my job is externally directed rather than internally in the university and, and those are the sort of bodies that I'm trying to influence or deal with. Also donors are a big group and certainly a key part of the job is to raise funds.<sup>600</sup>

A lot of the high level interface and I think it's quite right you've got to ask yourself the job, the question why do we actually need the vice-chancellor's office? What do deputy vice-chancellors do now, with devolution and deans having much more managerial responsibilities? In fact, at one point in time people said heads of departments became heads of schools and they took over the jobs that deans used to do, and deans have taken over the jobs that deputy vice-chancellors do - now what's the deputy vice-chancellor supposed to do?<sup>601</sup>

Fifthly, by incorporating deans into the Senior Executive Team (SET), deans have a much closer relationship with the VC than they had previously.<sup>602</sup>

## 8.8 Relations between Heads of Schools and Faculty

The position of head of school, occupied by professors, is a newly established managerial position in the university.

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<sup>600</sup> Interview with Professor Max Price, Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, 13 January 2003.

<sup>601</sup> Interview with Professor Colin Wright, Dean of the Faculty of Science, University of the Witwatersrand, 14 January 2003.

<sup>602</sup> This is discussed in Chapter 7.

As such, heads of schools are directly accountable to the dean. Within the three tier organisational structure,<sup>603</sup> they form the lowest layer of management in the academic entities. They play the primary role of assisting deans in communicating policies down to the faculty level. As a consequence, deans have to meet regularly with heads of schools so that they are able to keep pace with developments within the different schools.

Relationships between deans and heads of schools are not necessarily without problems. An example of this is the relationship between the Dean of the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management and the Head of the School of Management. There have been struggles by schools to retain authority over school process as if they were faculties, despite their merger into the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management. As already indicated the dean expressed this as follows:

One of the debates I have with some of the heads of school – that they're very insular and they say: "Oh well it is a 'them and us' approach." I don't think so. I said: "Look you don't like it, I'll take it private. I don't mind. I will lead the charge that you as a school want to leave Wits and become a private institution." "No, no, we can't do that, you know, the Wits name is important."<sup>604</sup>

This dean clearly felt isolated and has theorised the position he used to occupy as follows:

I suspect that it's because I'm really the only outsider. Everybody talks about this and that and they have all got history, I've got no history in this place. And I think this is why it has taken a long time to convince other deans. In all of the research and theory it says that you need a champion and you need to bring in some new blood to drive the process, to actually, you know, sit down with a group of ten people who've been in the same institution for ten, fifteen, twenty years and say: "Okay, now we are going to change."...It is difficult. Understandably so, because basically you are saying that you're last ten, fifteen, twenty years are wrong. Now that's not true because the environment changes so you know you need to respond. But all change is uncomfortable, we all want

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<sup>603</sup> This was discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7.

<sup>604</sup> Interview with Professor Neil Garrod, Dean of the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, 3 May 2002.

to stay as we are because it is easier and consequently it is very, very difficult to get mindsets to change.<sup>605</sup>

Even so this dean eventually left the institution.

With the increasing focus on the part of deans upon their managerial responsibilities, their relationship with their faculties has changed. Their managerial responsibilities translate into concerns with the performance of faculty, assessing workloads of faculty in relation to establishing parity across the various schools, ensuring that various university policies are complied with, for example, and human resource management policies. According to a member of staff in the Faculty of Humanities:

The dean has become more removed from academic staff and one of the possible reasons for that is the formation of schools. You now have a head of school that stands between you and the dean, whereas before you had more direct access to the dean.<sup>606</sup>

I think it is the amount of interaction. I don't think that I ever interact with senior management. I never see them. I never interact with them or meet with them. You see the dean now when he comes to visit the school whereas before, the dean was a member of staff down the corridor from me and now there is a different relationship with this role change.<sup>607</sup>

One needs to have a kind of informal relationship with the dean, a collegial relationship with the dean where you can walk into the dean's office and discuss issues with the dean. Now the dean seems to come in a kind of formal capacity. The dean comes to attend to business in the school and then he leaves. There are also these structures which you are made to feel accountable to which are out there. You have the performance system in which you are told if you don't do this and you don't do that then your performance is not going to be upgraded and you are not going to get more money. Even though on a matter of principle you felt that the kind of work that you are doing here can't be measured in this way. Then you find yourself in a dilemma not knowing whether to participate or not to participate. You are given a choice but it is not a choice. Just the way the whole things work. Even if you think if I were to

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<sup>605</sup> Interview with Professor Neil Garrod, Dean of the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, 3 May 2002.

<sup>606</sup> Focus group discussion with academics in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, 19 February 2004.

<sup>607</sup> Focus group discussion with academics in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, 19 February 2004.

give more time to students when am I going to have time to do my own work?<sup>608</sup>

In addition to their managerial concerns, deans must ensure that all faculty members are conscious of the necessity for them to contribute to the financial sustainability of their respective academic entities. What all this requires is regular reporting from faculty about the kinds of activities in which they have been involved; the input, retention and throughput rates of students, the research outputs delivered by faculty and any other activities engaged in by faculty. The primary nature of the relationship between the dean and faculty has therefore become to establish a regular global overview of activities engaged in by individual members of their faculty. Less time can be made available for individual members of academic staff, as the span of control of deans has increased as a consequence of interdepartmental and interfaculty mergers.

With this increasing focus by deans upon their managerial responsibilities, heads of schools are placed in a better position to provide intellectual leadership to the school.

## **8.9 Emerging Executive Deanship Trends: Implications for University Management**

The new organisational form has and will continue to bring new demands upon the concept of deanship, and increase deans' managerial responsibilities over and above those of academic leadership. This is likely to have a number of significant implications for the nature of university management.

Firstly, deans have been grappling with the dilemma of wanting to pursue their academic interests while being burdened by increasing managerial duties.

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<sup>608</sup> Focus group discussion with academics in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, 19 February 2004.

Consequently, their availability to pursue sound academic and intellectual work is being compromised. Secondly, as deans are pushed into taking on more and more managerial responsibilities, collegial relations are undermined, as decisions are taken higher up in the faculty structure. By complying with an upward accountability structure, the individual freedom and autonomy necessary for academics to pursue knowledge production is being undermined. Thirdly, the relation between deans and the various units within the faculties is likely to be altered, as the logic of the new organisational form requires units to take more responsibility by achieving more with fewer finances provided. Fourthly, the organisational form, and in particular the economic model, is likely to lead to new tensions and divisions between deans as they wrestle among themselves for more resources. These divisions may also be exacerbated by the growth of new hierarchies as the prestige of some deans associated with ‘surplus’ faculties grows in relation to those associated with ‘deficit’ faculties and so, as the economic rationality goes, fewer faculties. These arrangements could create the basis of new fiefdoms for deans themselves. Fifthly, because posts of deans are advertised and draw people from outside the university, a sense of alienation from staff may set in, especially if these deans have a strong drive towards managerialism. Sixthly, with the introduction of various levels of authority between, for example, deans and the VC and DVC on the one hand, and the head of school on the other, rigid hierarchical relations are being introduced which are contradictory to fostering a culture of ‘equality among peers’ or collegiality.

## **8.10 Conclusion**

The position of the deanship has been altered as a consequence of restructuring at Wits. While previously deans were able to provide academic leadership, they are no longer able to do so. Their roles and responsibilities have become corporatised with the transformation of faculties into responsibility centres or semi-autonomous business units. These changes in the nature of the deanship have presented new challenges in relations between faculties, in the capacity development challenges faced by deans and their relations with more senior and

junior managers. The chapter clearly demonstrates that, if deans are not able to provide academic leadership, restructuring has caused a vacuum in academic leadership at this level.

I now turn to Chapter 9 in which I discuss the creation of schools and the head of school positions and consider whether the vacuum in academic leadership at the level of the deanship, has been filled by the heads of schools.