

CHAPTER 10:

MANAGERIAL PRACTICES AND ACADEMIC PRACTICE

10.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to discuss the implications for Wits of the new organisational design for management practice and academic work. In doing so four key questions are addressed: (i) How does management go about making decisions? (ii) How does management implement decisions? (iii) How does management influence decision making? and; (iv) What have been the implications of the changes in managerial practice for academic work? The answers to these questions highlight shifts in the mode and style of management and the implications for the institutional mission. It is argued in this chapter, by drawing on Chapters 6, 7 and 8, that both managerial practices and academic work have been transformed as a consequence of institutional restructuring.

10.2 Saving Time: Fewer Academics Involved In Decision Making

The logic of managerial domination requires that decisions be made quickly; long consultative and democratic processes are far too laborious and time wasting. Strategies to expedite efficient decision making have been introduced with respect to: (i) focused sub-committees of senate such as the academic planning committee; (ii) fewer committee structures at faculty level; (iii) cutting back on the number of senior professors involved in the faculty board; and (iv) drawing deans into SET to participate in managerial decision making on behalf of their faculties.

The consequence of these developments is that fewer members of faculty are involved in decision making processes throughout the institution, with decisions increasingly made by full time managers rather than academic staff. For this reason, consultative processes tend to be fewer, with staff increasingly indicating that decisions are made in ‘places they do not have access to or knowledge of’.⁶⁶⁴ In instances such as staff meetings, the consultative process is less characterised by open-ended discussions but rather by models and frameworks, which constrain faculties’ participation and engagement with the conceptualisation of these frameworks.

While the number of managers who participate in decision making has increased, the number of academics involved in decision making has declined; the professorate’s participation in traditional governing structures such as senate and faculty boards has been scaled down.⁶⁶⁵ Restructuring cut down on the number of professorial staff participating in the faculty boards. Academics from specific disciplines are not represented within these structures, as disciplines are not recognised and schools⁶⁶⁶ are part of the new organisational structure.⁶⁶⁷ The implication of this is that the department, which has traditionally been recognised as the organisational form of the discipline and therefore the intellectual home of academics, no longer has the same status as before because less power has been attributed to it in the new organisational structure. This is another example of managers wielding power over academics. Academics therefore know less about institutional processes and developments and are less able to respond proactively to change.

⁶⁶⁴ Focus group discussion with academics in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, 19 February 2004.

⁶⁶⁵ Interviews with heads of schools, University of the Witwatersrand, 2002.

⁶⁶⁶ Departments, the organisational form of disciplines, have been merged into schools as part of academic restructuring. This is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 5.

⁶⁶⁷ Interviews with previous Heads of Disciplines, University of the Witwatersrand, 2004.

At the most senior management level referred to as Senior Executive Team (SET) ⁶⁶⁸ fewer ⁶⁶⁹ people are involved in decision making; time wasting activities have been associated with too many people participating at this level.

10.3 New Meanings, Old Concepts

New meaning has been attached by management to the ‘consultative process’. When consultative processes are undertaken with academics they take the form of information giving as the institution’s direction is already prescribed by the state’s legislative and regulatory requirements. Deans of faculties and various DVCs visit schools to explain changes in the institution. While this is beneficial to both faculty and management, this does not enhance the levels of involvement by faculty in decision making. Consensus, when attained is a ‘farcical consensus’, ⁶⁷⁰ a restricted consensus in which the contours of consensus had already been redefined.

Concern around faculty representation in the head of school selection process in the School of Education is an example of new meanings developed from old concepts. This was the meaning the university attached to elected representatives on the selection panel of the new head of school:

⁶⁶⁸ How SET operates was discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7.

⁶⁶⁹ One of the major arguments against democratic processes is that they involve far too many people and are time consuming, given that organisations have to be in a position to respond swiftly to their rapidly changing environments (Currie, J. & Vidovich, L. (1998). *The Ascent toward Corporate Managerialism*. In R. Martin (Ed.), *Chalk Lines: The Politics of Work in the Managed University*. Durham and London: University Press).

⁶⁷⁰ Carole Pateman refers to ‘pseudo participation’ as the instance in which an interest group’s views are not expressed in the outcome of the participatory process (Pateman, C. (1970). *Participation and Democratic Theory*. Cambridge: C.U.P.).

The elected representative is not constrained by a mandate from the school/unit and is not bound to vote in accordance with the recommendation of the school/unit, although he/she is bound to report that recommendation to the committee.⁶⁷¹

Redefining the meaning of 'elected representative' in this way is consistent with attempts by management not only to redefine their own roles but to encroach upon the rights of those from whom they should receive input. This is done in the interest of greater efficiency through reducing time wasting activities associated with democratic practices.

Students were previously considered to be secondary stakeholders, with academics retaining power through their locus senate. With the introduction of restructuring, the relationship of the university to students has changed. Students are no longer regarded as secondary stakeholders, they are now considered to be primary stakeholders, as they are not simply students but customers to whom the knowledge service has to be delivered optimally.

Relations with support service workers, particularly workers who occupy positions such as cleaning and building care, essentially maintenance workers, have changed. Whereas before these workers were a sizeable part of the institution, represented by a relatively active and vocal trade union, their position has changed since support services have been outsourced. They are no longer considered to be stakeholders within the institution as the services they perform have been sub-contracted - the university is no longer directly responsible for these services. Dialogue takes place with the company that hires workers and not directly with these workers.

10.4 Declining Social Interaction and Shrinking Intellectual Space

The organisational re-configuration of five faculties and 35 schools from nine faculties and 99 department means that the university has reduced the number of

⁶⁷¹ <http://www.intranet.wits.ac.za:88/hr/hra11.htm>

senior managers and enlarged their span of control and activities. Management are responsible for making more decisions, yet has to make decisions quicker because it operates in an enlarged span of activities. Pressures are exerted by all quarters, whether members of staff, superiors or heads of academic units and research entities.⁶⁷²

Previously, the deans provided intellectual and academic leadership. They were able to attend staff seminars and engage in debates with staff on their intellectual projects. The overload of current managerial duties in the deans' portfolios has left a considerable gap in this domain that cannot be filled by the sporadic visits of deans to schools and meetings with faculties.⁶⁷³ The deans are becoming more and more withdrawn from the intellectual and academic life of their faculties beyond the tight interface provided by managerial duties. This is also reflected in relations between academics. As part of making sure that managers are able to operate more effectively within this new regime, they are insulated by executive secretaries who control access to them for ordinary members of the academic staff.⁶⁷⁴ This is evident from the constant complaints from academic staff: "Before we had more access to the dean. We can no longer go straight to the dean; we have to go through the head of school."⁶⁷⁵ This further distances staff from senior management.

Many academics also mention that their colleagues were far more available for intellectual debates and discussions on a daily basis when they gathered for morning tea. With restructuring and the increase in administrative work for individual academics, fewer academics are able to come to morning tea. They tend to spend more time on their own, trying to cope with the workload. Other

⁶⁷² Interviews with deans and heads of school, 2002 and 2003.

⁶⁷³ Focus group discussion with academics in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, 19 February 2004.

⁶⁷⁴ Focus group discussion with academics in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, 19 February 2004.

⁶⁷⁵ Focus group discussion with academics in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, 19 February 2004.

academics have mentioned re-establishing this habit after offices were relocated (as a result of restructuring or the tea lady having been fired because of the outsourcing of support staff) was not easy. As one academic put it:

We used to have a tea lady who made sure that the tea, coffee, sugar and cups were set out. With the restructuring she was fired and then the cups started slowly disappearing and fewer and fewer people started coming to tea.⁶⁷⁶

Or,

The tearoom no longer exists. Where it used to be offices have been built and we are still struggling to set up a new tearoom.⁶⁷⁷

We don't have the staff who make the tea as there was before.⁶⁷⁸

I have a big gripe with what happened to our common room. We had a very nice common room. That room was very important. It brought many people together. Then they pretty much did away with that room and we were supposed to get a new room but nothing has happened. We can't get into it. They don't offer any services. Having a nice cup of tea with other work colleagues is actually a very reasonable work requirement.⁶⁷⁹

The importance of morning tea is related to stimulating the intellectual culture and academic agenda, was essential in developing relationships between individual members of staff and for new staff to gain acceptance within this new community. As a senior academic put it, "the social fabric of the department has disintegrated".⁶⁸⁰ Instead of seeking out informal meeting places, academics are relying increasingly upon the email as a quick method of communicating. The

⁶⁷⁶ Focus group discussion with academics in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, 19 February 2004.

⁶⁷⁷ Focus group discussion with academics in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, 19 February 2004.

⁶⁷⁸ Focus group discussion with academics in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, 19 February 2004.

⁶⁷⁹ Focus group discussion with academics in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, 19 February 2004.

⁶⁸⁰ Interview with Professor Jacklyn Cock, previous Head of Department of Sociology, University of the Witwatersrand, 13 January 2004.

absence of such informal spaces creates a vacuum in academic practice in which critical discourse previously developed and flourished.

Intellectual space is also shrinking through the abolition of the head of department position. This has destroyed the power base of the traditional academic department and with it, the intellectual homes of academics.⁶⁸¹ Before heads of departments received funding and controlled budgets to develop their disciplinary projects; now there is far greater pressure to look after the interests of schools.

Hargreaves (1994) argues in his study of the changing nature of teachers' work in the classroom in postmodern times that one of the key ingredients for encouraging collegial relations among teachers is by increasing time for interaction among teachers.⁶⁸²

⁶⁸¹ Interview with Professor Jacklyn Cock, previous Head of Department of Sociology, University of the Witwatersrand, 13 January 2004; Informal discussions with members of the School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, May 2004.

⁶⁸² Hargreaves, A. (1994). *Changing Teachers, Changing Times: Teachers' Work and Culture in the Postmodern Age*. London: Cassell. p. 97,120.

10.5 Establishing Social Distance: Professionalising Management

Drawing upon the discourse of the private sector, deans were initially referred to as ‘executive’ deans. The deans at the time, however, did not feel comfortable with the blatantly crude adoption of business jargon and retained the designated title ‘dean’. This has, however, created social and intellectual distance between deans and their faculties. The extent to which they are able to bridge the tension between accountability to the senior management of the institution and their faculty depends upon their immediate context, for example the nature of their relationships with faculty.

Part of professionalising management is to establish ‘the right to manage’⁶⁸³ staff. This ‘right to manage’ is established through the dissemination of a set of ideas collectively referred to as the ‘ideology’ of management. Management derives a great deal of power from this. The ideas in this case have included the words ‘efficiency’, ‘effectiveness’, ‘cost- reduction’, and ‘financial viability’. As shown in Chapter 4, these ideas have been drawn from other experiences internationally especially that of the UK and Australia. They have been legitimised, as shown in Chapter 5, through the participation of all stakeholders, such as students and workers, in the restructuring process characteristic of this globalising or ‘travelling’ discourse.⁶⁸⁴

Management is ‘professionalised’ by attributing to it scientific knowledge and training. This is essential to ensure the effective and efficient operation of management, presumed not to be familiar to traditional academic leaders. All managers of academic units are required to undergo training relevant to all their domains of responsibility, such as human resource management and financial management. While managers are still drawn from among established academics,

⁶⁸³ Pollitt, cited in Clarke & Newman. (1997). *The Managerial State*. London: Sage Publications Ltd. p.56.

⁶⁸⁴ Amaral, A. (2003). Managerialism in Higher Education. *Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: New Trends and Innovations*. University of Aveiro. p.1.

the focus is on managerial responsibilities. Within the new managerial regime, it is unthinkable that a traditional academic (for example in molecular chemistry) would be able to be an effective manager without management training. It is presumed that through undergoing increased levels of training, managers are now more knowledgeable in areas not familiar to ‘ordinary’ members of faculty. With these increased levels of knowledge, they are able to gain greater levels of power over academic staff which may lead to increasing social distance between academic staff and management.

10.6 Commodification of Knowledge and the Intensification of Academic Work

Since academic restructuring, Wits has been advertising the institution aggressively and has attracted a large number of students. This has also had a significant impact upon staff, who have larger classes to teach and students (in some instances) having to sit in the passages and even outside the lecture halls.⁶⁸⁵ Wits’ student numbers have grown from 18 277 in 1999 to 24 381 in 2003⁶⁸⁶ and this has not been accompanied by a proportional increase in staff. This has been particularly noticable in departments where restructuring has taken place. As a consequence, academic staff feels increasingly overworked and unappreciated by the institution, as they are still required to increase their research outputs without having sufficient time to do so.

Already, and for some years, we have seen declines in academic infrastructure. Classrooms are dirty and poorly maintained. Classroom desks and seating are broken and of poorest possible quality. Lighting and acoustics are often very bad in classrooms that I must teach in. I believe that others share this experience. The library collections are now primarily of historical interest. We must teach using photocopies of

⁶⁸⁵ Interview with Professor Neil Garrod, Dean of the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, 3 July 2003.

⁶⁸⁶ *Vice-Chancellor’s Office Update*. (2004, September). Issue 5. University Archives, Senate House, p.1.

materials that staff often buy for themselves, or continue to circulate long after their 'use by' date. This attracts copyright and copying charges that cannot go into buying books or other materials, and provides inferior quality material to students. It is a vicious circle. Furthermore, academic staff are increasingly required to take on more and more work as classes get bigger (due to inability of management to track enrolments or plan effectively). We teach in poorly designed 'programmes' outside of disciplinary control and management, that attract fewer and fewer students who are often poorly qualified, and require more and more time on the part of staff who are not compensated. We do this for less and less pay.⁶⁸⁷

You have a lot of admin work because secretaries are not necessarily there the whole day. They come in the morning and they are gone in the afternoon. A lot of intellectual time is spent on things we should not be spending our time on. For example, when I came here I was told to go to this class to get a desk, a bookcase, and then you must go to room allocation. I was offered very little support in settling in.⁶⁸⁸

What has also changed is the quality of the students we have. I find myself having to mark things and re-mark and one gets tired of this. We also now have a mixed mode of delivery with the flexi BEd where there is a lot of correspondence, there is a lot of paper work and at the end of the day you are just very tired.⁶⁸⁹

The key for us was freezing the posts. So that although our numbers, that is, the staff to student ratios were going down you still had to offer the same number of courses but we did not have new members of staff. Classes were smaller but we were responsible for the same number of courses. When I first came here seven years ago there used to be ten members in our department; now there are six.⁶⁹⁰

I would say that the workloads have increased steadily since I started working here seven years ago. Part of what it was about was that there was less room to have courses that just had an intellectual value in themselves. We now had to cater to an audience; we now had to try to attract students. The students are what we call the 'customers' now and so we had to develop courses which we thought would be attractive to them and not necessarily courses, which we thought, would make the

⁶⁸⁷ Professor Robert Thornton's Response to ASAWU response to recent student protests 13 May 2004, p.2, University Archives, Senate House.

⁶⁸⁸ Focus group discussion with academics in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, 19 February 2004.

⁶⁸⁹ Focus group discussion with academics in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, 19 February 2004.

⁶⁹⁰ Focus group discussion with academics in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, 19 February 2004.

best intellectual courses. It was all about developing new courses, new options and it was all about trying to satisfy the customers. At the same time this university was becoming more corporate. Getting more administrative work like performance appraisal.⁶⁹¹

When I joined this institution, I had time to do my work, go to the library; I had enough paper, enough time. Imagine if I did not have the means to get those things, how would I do my work? I only have what the university has given me. We have this because those above have no idea of what is needed to do this work. I have R36 on my phone but if you look at what I am doing, what will I do with R36 to organise a postgraduate conference. If I stuck to R36 I would not do my work.⁶⁹²

Some academics feel that they are not sufficiently appreciated by the institution as they are offered less by way of administrative and academic support but expected to work much harder.

Similar sentiments were expressed within the school of Humanities and Community Development, for example, in which the teaching workload was regarded as being ‘absurdly high’ and accounted for low research output.⁶⁹³ In the School of Social Science, and particularly International Relations, there was significant student growth with ‘a teaching burden which is insupportable and requires additional staff resources’.⁶⁹⁴ The implication of these greater demands upon academic staff is there is less time available to build collegial relations in informal settings.

⁶⁹¹ Focus group discussion with academics in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, 19 February 2004.

⁶⁹² Interview with Professor Michael Cross, Senior Academic in the School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, 10 November 2004.

⁶⁹³ External assessor’s report: School of Human and Community Development, p.4.

⁶⁹⁴ University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, Faculty of Humanities 2004 Quinquennial Review of the School of Social Sciences, S2004, p.5.

10.7 The Increasing Focus in Managers' Work upon Managerial Responsibilities

The increased span of decision making for management, given the new organisational design, has meant that the focus of decision making has been altered too. While in the past the senior management focused primarily on providing academic leadership to the university and faculty,⁶⁹⁵ the pressure of the expanded spectrum of activities has meant that the senior management has had to re-orientate its practice increasingly towards management responsibilities. This involves generating funding and human resource management rather than academic leadership.⁶⁹⁶ Academic leadership at faculty level entailed providing adequate space for the development and creativity of faculty. At faculty level management is now pre-occupied with managing the daily activities of not only academic staff but also support service staff and is required to make decisions about the nature of staff work.

Management and staff are overwhelmed with a chain of paper that filters down to faculty in the form of workload models, quality assurance (teaching evaluations for courses), modules and programmes, leave forms and performance appraisals.⁶⁹⁷ This illustrates the increasing administrative regulation and increasing imposition from the top upon academics.

⁶⁹⁵ Interviews with deans and heads of school 2002 and 2003.

⁶⁹⁶ Responsibilities for deans and heads of school, Human Resource Management.

⁶⁹⁷ Focus group discussion with academics in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, 19 February 2004, Focus group discussions with academics in the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, 21 April 2004 and Focus group discussions with academics in the Faculty of Science, University of the Witwatersrand, 12 February 2004.

10.8 'Executivism' and the Culture of Upward Accountability

Underpinning the new organisational design is the new ethos of economic rationality, and with it the obsession to identify managers who would be responsible for decision making, and particularly resource allocation and management at the various levels of the organisational structure. This signifies the shift in the organisational structure towards implementation and predictability. For example, deans can hold heads of schools accountable while the VC holds deans accountable. As a consequence of this tendency towards upward accountability, a senior manager is increasingly referred to as the 'boss'.

Despite this tendency towards upward accountability, managers at each of the three levels of the organisational structure are located within a position of tension between faculty and more senior levels of management. They have to influence decision making upwards, downwards and horizontally within the organisational structure. These various spheres of influence require managers to take into account very different aspects of their work.

The upward sphere requires managers to exercise influence over institutional policy, the downward sphere requires managers to exercise influence over faculty in considering their interests within the confines of the institutional requirements, and the horizontal sphere requires managers to exercise influence over their peers, such as other deans or other heads of schools.

Within these spheres of influence, the manager to whom all managers are accountable on a daily basis is referred to as the 'line manager'. The manager they are accountable to for the implementation of policy is referred to as the 'functional manager'. This separation between policy formulation and policy implementation ensures that managers are located at each point of delivery. This allows for the tightening of control over the monitoring and evaluation of policy implementation. It means furthermore that at each level in the implementation process, the executive management is able to draw upon managers who are responsible for the implementation of policy at that level and thereby increase

their control over the implementation of policy. Control and surveillance over subordinate layers of management is exercised through the constant requirement to report upward on developments from the smallest to the largest academic unit.

This allows the most senior management within the institution to monitor a line of accountability for adherence to institutional wide policy and implementation. It introduces a new culture of internal⁶⁹⁸ upward accountability within the university in which different levels of management are painstakingly aware that their actions cannot simply be influenced by the opinions, positions and demands that emerge from the faculty, but have to be mediated by central institutional policies which in turn are significantly influenced by government's regulatory frameworks.

It therefore allows the institutional management to facilitate the process of decision making and regulation compliance both at the nodal point of centralisation⁶⁹⁹ and devolution.⁷⁰⁰

10.9 Devolution and Managerial Accountability

The devolution of operational functions from central administration to faculty level has meant that managers now have more people in administration for whose work they are accountable. Before, the dean only had his or her secretary to manage; now they have an entire entourage of managers and support service staff who are directly accountable to the dean.

Given the expanded nature of senior managers' managerial domains, they in turn need more managers to assist them in accessing relevant information about a

⁶⁹⁸ This idea of 'internal accountability' is inspired by Harvey's notion of External Quality Assurance and Internal Quality Assurance, in which he states that External Quality Assurance is about the institution's accountability to the external state and internal is about internally developed quality assurance mechanisms. (Harvey, L. (2002) Evaluation for What? *Teaching in Higher Education*, 7(3), 245-263).

⁶⁹⁹ 'Centralisation' means lower levels being held accountable by upper levels of management.

⁷⁰⁰ 'Devolution' means having to comply with central level policies.

range of activities within their domains, so that they are in a position to account adequately for the operations of their entity. This can be seen in the creation of executive teams at each level of the three level organisational structures. Deans have to rely upon human resource managers to assist them in implementing the human resource management policy of the institution, and heads of schools have to rely on the assistance of the deputy heads of schools to assist them in the formulation and implementation of workload models. As a consequence, senior managers and academics complain that their workload has increased significantly as they have many more meetings to attend, many more forms to complete and many more committees in which to participate.

Devolution and the creation of responsibility centres⁷⁰¹ have created more work, more managers and more work for more managers.⁷⁰²

In the words of an academic:

Generally my sense of having been here over the years is that the university has become far more managerial and corporate than it used to be. There is more hierarchy. There are more managers, managers seem to have higher status and get paid better. You know when you park your car in the garage you park next to a nice car and you will know that that is a senior manager and this is a senior academic.⁷⁰³

There is increased recognition among academics that managers occupy a different social status and receive higher pay and more perks.

In addition to the management teams, managers rely upon a range of support service units. The Centre for Learning and Teaching Development (CLTD) assists in monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.⁷⁰⁴ The Human Resource

⁷⁰¹ For more detail refer to Chapter 6 in which this is explained in greater detail.

⁷⁰² Focus group discussion with academics in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, 19 February 2004.

⁷⁰³ Focus group discussion with academics in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, 19 February 2004

⁷⁰⁴ Interview with Professor Margaret Orr, Director of the Centre of Learning Teaching and Development, University of the Witwatersrand, 26 February 2003.

Management assists in processing the performance appraisal of staff and the implementation of human resource policies and procedures.⁷⁰⁵ The Academic Planning Unit supports management in ensuring that the university complies with the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the Council of Higher Education (CHE) requirements of the state.⁷⁰⁶

10.10 Centralisation and Increasing Secrecy in Management Information Systems

To facilitate management's ability to make effective decisions, management requires access to accurate information fairly quickly. For this purpose, the institution has developed a Management Information System (MIS) located within the newly established Management Information Unit (MIU).⁷⁰⁷ Even though these new systems have been established with the sole purpose of providing accurate information speedily to the various levels of management, there have been constant complaints by managers of academic units that the information that has been provided by these units is usually inaccurate and does not allow them to act swiftly.⁷⁰⁸ On the contrary, they tend to spend a great deal of time cross checking figures, so that institutional statistics and finances provided centrally do not lead to their budget allocations being reduced unfairly.

⁷⁰⁵ Interview with Mr Richard de Villiers, Director of Human Resources, University of the Witwatersrand, 2002.

⁷⁰⁶ Interview with Ms Linda Murray, Director of the Academic Planning Unit, University of the Witwatersrand, 9 April 2003.

⁷⁰⁷ Interview with Mr Kevin McLaughlin, Acting Head of Strategic Planning Unit, University of the Witwatersrand, 24 February 2003.

⁷⁰⁸ Interview with Professor Bernard Moon, Head of School Geography, Archaeology and Environmental Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, 28 March 2003; Interview with Professor Shirley Pendlebury, Head of the School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, 3 June 2002.

Accessibility of information is, however, a two-way stream upward and downward. The most senior management requires accurate information right down to the smallest academic entity, while management at various other levels throughout the university is provided only with information pertaining to the academic entities for which they are responsible. This controls whether managers have access to information or not and the kind of information they may access is informed by their level of responsibility and their location within the organisational structure. For example, heads of schools have information pertaining to their unit only.⁷⁰⁹ It is only those in the most senior levels of the organisation (specifically the Senior Executive Team (SET)) who have access to all the information. The system operates in the following way:

This top level brings all the information pertaining to staff, students and finances, together in a summary way. The middle level here is not necessarily about bringing information together so much as about taking detailed information and making it much more easily accessible by the end user. At the top you need summary information and at the bottom level you need detail. At the top it's more integrated with more external information on strategy, competitors and so on. At the middle level it's more about current or historical information. As you get further up it's more about future orientated, summarised, external and internal information. So what we're doing is we're giving these people access to the Executive Information System as well as the Data Marts.⁷¹⁰

The system is designed in such a way that it is able to 'drill down' within the organisation. This notion was drawn from the work of Ralph Kimball Associates who develop, teach and deliver dimensional data warehouse design techniques for the IT professional community. They use the notions 'drilling down, drilling across and handling time'.⁷¹¹ 'Drilling down' refers to top management being able to access information from the highest organisational unit to the smallest; 'drilling across' is being able to access information horizontally across the organisation

⁷⁰⁹ Interview with the Acting Head of Strategic Planning Unit, Mr Kevin McLaughlin, University of the Witwatersrand, 24 February 2003.

⁷¹⁰ Interview with the Acting Head of Strategic Planning Unit, Mr Kevin McLaughlin, University of the Witwatersrand, 24 February 2003.

⁷¹¹ <http://www.intelligententerprise.com>.

regarding units that may be similar, such as research units, and ‘handling time’ refers to time needed to access specific information.

The only channel through which members of the university community (individual members of staff) can gain access to information is through their managers, and then only information to which they are permitted or which is meant to be accessible to a broader audience.⁷¹²

Some academics feel that, with the faculty board being more streamlined and representation coming from schools and not departments, they have access to less information.

If you look at the faculty board, it used to be two or three people per department. Now if you go to the faculty board it is two or three people from the whole school. So you feel much more removed from that decision making and I feel that I know a lot less about what is going on.⁷¹³

And I think that information gets distributed less widely because it now goes to heads of schools instead of it going to heads of disciplines. To me it does not always get down. We used to get more information before.⁷¹⁴

With less information available to academics, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to make informed decisions. This may be because there are numerous blockages to academics accessing information, such as staff not regularly attending meetings, not reviewing minutes of staff meetings or information not being circulated widely enough. It may also be that, because academics are caught

⁷¹² As discussed in Chapter 3 on Methodology, my efforts to gaining access to information became increasingly difficult, from 2001 to 2004. Initially individuals were prepared to share information with me either telephonically, via email or in documentary form. Lower level staff are less keen to disclose information and constantly referred me to senior managers who then refer me to even more senior management. The most difficult information to obtain is information pertaining to the financial accounts of the institution and salary ranges (not even actual salaries).

⁷¹³ Focus group discussion with academics in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, 19 February 2004.

⁷¹⁴ Focus group discussion with academics in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, 19 February 2004.

up in excessive work, they may on occasion loose touch with institutional level, faculty or school level developments.

10.11 Dominance of Economic Rationality in the Intellectual Project

Given the expansive scope and nature of decision making, as well as the increased pressure upon the management to make decisions speedily, management tends to work within the confines of predetermined frameworks which are set by the state and adapted by the institution for purposes of meeting state regulatory requirements.

The new economic model was implemented in the institution in 2004 and stretched over a three year period. The model requires all academic units (as discussed in Chapter 6) to monitor their costs and expenditures carefully. The need to contain expenditures while expanding incomes, with reference to the acceptable size and shape of the academic unit as defined by ESS: SLE ratios,⁷¹⁵ is stressed within this framework. This economic model prescribes financial viability for academic decisions pertaining to resource allocation within the academic unit. Decisions as to whether courses will or will not be delivered are measured by their financial viability and not only by their long term intellectual contribution to the project within the unit.⁷¹⁶

Ownership of cost containment has to be shared by staff to make the system of economic rationality implementable. One of the ways in which members of staff are required to share in the ownership of economic rationality is to observe their own individual financial contributions to the university through the incomes they

⁷¹⁵ For more detail refer to Chapter 6.

⁷¹⁶ Based on my own experience as a staff member of the School of Education, a Sociology of Education 1 course was no longer offered in 2004, as the student numbers had declined significantly and the school had decided to focus upon post graduate students as a key mechanism through which to increase its financial standing within the institution.

generate, and even more importantly observe and carefully monitor their individual expenditures through their utilisation of university resources (such as stationery).

While in the past supportive conditions were created for the intellectual development of staff at the pace required by staff, now staff are ‘pressurised’⁷¹⁷ to publish more and produce more outputs from which maximum funding can be accrued. One of the ways in which staff could be encouraged to publish more is by displaying their names with their publication records in general staff spaces for all to see and all to compete with.⁷¹⁸

Another significant concern within the institution is negligence in filling out leave forms. If this is not done it is possible that upon retirement or resignation staff could hold the university liable for leave payment, in the absence of formal documentation of leave. The central administration has conveyed to schools that such expenses will be taken from the schools’ budgets. Schools now ensure that staff fill out leave forms so that the employment of their colleagues is not jeopardised.⁷¹⁹

10.12 Encouraging Competition and Individualism among Academics

The responsibility for self sustainability is therefore shifted to the individual academic entities with the significant consequence that competition is encouraged between various academic entities as they struggle for resources. Under the new organisational design, new technological systems are meant to assist academics to

⁷¹⁷ This emerged as a common thread from academics in focus group discussions in the Faculties of Humanities, Commerce, Law and Management and Science.

⁷¹⁸ My experience in the School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, 2004.

⁷¹⁹ Focus group discussions with academics in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, 19 February 2004.

be more financially prudent. This is evident in the understanding of financial and business managers of their work.

We basically make sure that the faculty budgets properly; put a budgeting system in place, put the financial reporting system (both the financial side and the management side of the reporting side) into place and develop what they call a third stream of income for the faculty; that's the income outside of the teaching side of business.⁷²⁰

To get financial discipline into the faculty; at school level to look at proper management, make sure that there are budgets - normal basic type of things that you would expect. First of all that there are proper approvals for transactions, that there are source documents attached, you know those basic types of things. I think that is one of the things that became apparent that wasn't really there. People would just buy stuff without thinking of the long term effects of looking at the budget and saying yes I can afford it or I can't afford it. It was sort of a thing that ... it's my right to have a specific service or whatever and to get people basically to think about why they want it - to plan ahead. That's the financial ... On the business side with a decrease of government subsidy we cannot cope within the faculties from the government grant alone. It's totally impossible. So we need ways to actually increase our, what we call, third stream income.⁷²¹

To make sure they don't spend more than the funds they've got. To set up the faculty as a business unit.⁷²²

However, academics are not always prepared to go along with these changes.

From their side you must remember that it's change, they resist change. But also it's the unknown; their fear of the unknown. That is also...over the years they were the king of their castle...I don't want...and that is also... they are academics. Now they know that there is change coming, they fear the changes, but they also want to protect their authority. The biggest problem that we have is that they feel that you are undermining or you are now going to take their authority away from them. This is not

⁷²⁰ Interview with Mr Helgaard Holtzhausen, Financial and Business Manager of the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, 17 March 2003.

⁷²¹ Interview with Mrs Magda Potgieter, Financial and Business Manager of the Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering, University of the Witwatersrand, 12 March 2003.

⁷²² Interview with Mr Ralf Botha, Financial and Business Manager of the Faculty of Science, University of the Witwatersrand.

the case but that is where the problem comes in. So the minute you produce a piece of paper, even before looking at it, they criticise it.⁷²³

Financial/business managers see their role as educating academic staff and setting up improved financial systems. Bowen (1971) identified a number of roles for business officers who are involved in managing educational resources: (i) to assess the general financial setting; (ii) to assess and describe the economics of the university; (iii) to facilitate decision making and control; and (iv) to facilitate understanding and acceptance. These aspects constitute different ways in which finance and business managers introduce new processes and thinking to academic staff about the use of financial resources.⁷²⁴ While it is useful to be aware of all these strategies, Falender (1983) simply emphasises ‘maximise revenue, minimise expense’ while taking into account quality of instruction.⁷²⁵

10.13 Controlling Academics’ Behaviour through Technological Surveillance

In addition to the presence of managers at different levels in the organisational structures, executive managers have generated reams and reams of paper work throughout the system directed at each member of staff, to monitor individual staff member’s activities. Surveillance technologies also control budgetary expenditures, by the implementation of codes for photocopying, stricter control over the use of telephones and cutting back on stationery budgets.

Technology has become an important medium through which surveillance can be exercised. In financial management, financial accounting technologies have been implemented to monitor financial expenditures within faculties and schools. The

⁷²³ Interview with Mr Ralf Both, Finance and Business Manager of the Faculty of Science, University of the Witwatersrand, 25 March 2003.

⁷²⁴ Bowen, W. G. (1971). *The Role of the Business Officer in Managing Educational Resources*. Paper presented at NACUBO’s national meeting at The Waldorf-Astoria, New York City.

⁷²⁵ Falender, A. J. (1983). Providing Focus for Financial Management. In A.J. Falender & J.C. Merson (Eds.), *Management Techniques for Small and Specialised Institutions New Directions for Higher Education*, No. 42. San Francisco: Jossey-Boss. p. 73-83.

MPC and Commitment Accounting system has been introduced at Wits, the significance of which is its ability to cut off access to funding if insufficient funds are available.

There are two things that I am aware of; that you need to do. The one is the MPC system which is not yet up and running; there would be [values] put in...because we moved away from Fund Accounting. What they have done, they just rolled over balances so if we've got a grant from the university, a departmental grant to fund our activity here; at the end of the year if you haven't spent that money, no problem; simply keep running over in your account. And even if we run into a deficit we also run the deficit over...so MPC would now no longer allow for that. There would be better control and evaluation. On a day-to-day basis we run what we call Commitment Accounting. It is a system which checks whether you've got funding in your account before it releases any payments. If you don't have money in your account funds will not be released.⁷²⁶

The university operated on what they call fund accounting. Fund accounting is purely managing the cash flow. Now we are switching over to GAAP accounting; General Acceptable Accounting Practice. They never had an income statement and balance sheet; now we are going to have an income statement and balance sheet. Fund Accounting is where you have got one account; the income goes into that account and all your expenses go into that, whereas GAAP accounting says no; you separate income and expenses; you separate balance sheet to income statement. All the financial managers are going to play a major role, changing over to GAAP.⁷²⁷

The person who would have control over these actions is the financial or business manager. As stated by one financial or business manager:

Once MPC is up and running we would be given our target and we would, with the dean or with the heads of the school and my involvement, give them what they are entitled to. And we would ensure that they don't go over that. On commitment accounting, I have the authority to override transactions if they stop because of the funding. We're busy implementing phased budgeting for research units, and for the schools. And in my view, should something be blocked, I would first look at that budget when the money would be coming in. But they would also indicate how they would spend. If the system blocks I would go to that budget and see what's going on; what went wrong and if necessary I

⁷²⁶ Interview with Mr Helgaard Holtzhausen, Finance and Business Manager of the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, 17 March 2003.

⁷²⁷ Interview with Mr Ralf Both, Finance and Business Manager of the Faculty of Science, University of the Witwatersrand, 25 March 2003.

would contact the director of the unit and hear what the situation is; and if I believe and I am sure that we are going to receive the funds I will override it.⁷²⁸

In getting academics to change their mindset, they are under increasing pressure to expand the existing levels of incomes and to tap into new sources of income. The idea is that everyone is to become an ‘Academic Entrepreneur’, or as Slaughter and Leslie put it an ‘Academic Capitalist’⁷²⁹.

As a means of increasing existing levels of funding, academics are encouraged to produce more publications, as this is meant to attract more income than writing books or chapters in books, according to the government subsidy formula. To increase competition between individual academics, mechanisms to stimulate competition are implemented. These include placing publication outputs in public places and, providing academics with a portion of the subsidy granted by the state for research publications. These mechanisms are significant because they are gradually shifting the ethos and culture of the institution away from collective, collegial relations to deep-seated individualised structural and functional relations which could undermine supportive and collaborative initiatives.

10.14 Presenting the Inevitability of Change

Within the logic of efficiency and effectiveness, institutions are required to do more with less, on an ongoing basis. Presenting the idea of the inevitability of change within predetermined frameworks provides a prescriptive framework to influence the direction of decision making. The assumption upon which the framework rests is a ‘one size fits all’ approach, which suggests that frameworks used in other universities nationally and internationally, could be applied within any given context. As discussed in Chapter 6, the visit conducted by the senior management of the institution to Australia in 1995, headed by Professor June

⁷²⁸ Interview with Mr Helgaard Holtzhausen, Finance and Business Manager of the Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management, University of the Witwatersrand, 17 March 2003.

⁷²⁹ Slaughter, S. & Leslie, L.L. (1999). *Academic Capitalism*. Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Sinclair, shows one way in which the institution drew proposals for institutional restructuring from overseas, without considering the specific context of South Africa, deeply burdened by racial cleavages.

10.15 Creating Incentives to Gain Influence Over Academics

A certain element of ‘buy in’ or consensus has to be established with faculty for managers to implement decisions. One method of achieving this is to create a system of incentives. While not yet implemented, these are some of the methods through which ‘buy in’ could be motivated. Since the university management is concerned with improving the research profile of the institution and attracting government funding, it has been agreed that individual faculty members should be given a share of the income obtained from the state for research when they publish their work. While creating an incentive for individual members of staff to publish, this is likely to lead to increasing levels of competition between academic members of staff and the growth of a culture of individualism. In the past in some departments such as Sociology, research funding would not go to the individual but would be used to assist to develop junior members of staff, for example to send them to conferences.⁷³⁰ Less funding poses an additional threat to the ability of institutions to facilitate the development of junior members of staff and address significantly the equity imbalances across the institution.

There are awards such as the VC’s awards for excellence in teaching and excellence in research. While these awards acknowledge the work of academic staff and are an incentive for staff to improve the quality of their teaching and research, they encourage competition rather than collaboration between individual members of staff. Therefore while these incentives were in existence prior to

⁷³⁰ Interview with Professor Jacklyn Cock, previous Head of Department of Sociology and senior academic, 13 January 2004.

restructuring their significance has been altered within the new ethos of the institution.

The table below is a summary of the key features of the nature of management evident in the institution since restructuring.

Table 13: Key features of the nature of management post 1999

Erosion of professional autonomy through increased state regulation
Students become primary stakeholders as they are defined as customers
Senate downgraded
Management drawn from inside and outside the institution
Managerial posts
Managers in posts as full time managers
Notion of hierarchy and line management
Vice-Chancellors follow a corporate style of management and draw on managerialism

10.16 Academia in Crisis

As a consequence of the changes in managerial practice and their impact upon academic practice, academics are in crisis as they struggle to define their identity. McCollow and Lingard (1996) argue that, as higher education institutions in Australia have moved from a unitary system to a looser quasi-autonomous marketised system, differentiation in the academic profession has become evident.

They identify (i) the traditional academic who tends to prioritise the production of knowledge; (ii) the state professional who focuses on providing a public service and thereby the dissemination of knowledge; (iii) the market professional who

engages with the profession and the market e.g. law and medicine; (iv) the corporate professional who engages with the market within the ambit of the university and; (v) the worker whose conditions of work are on the decline and who is exposed to the vulnerabilities of quasi-market arrangements such as retrenchments and poor pay.⁷³¹ Which discourse the individual academic follows is likely to be influenced by his or her position and individually defined career path.

McInnis (1995) notes that, despite changes in the nature of academic work, similar to those discussed here, academics in Australia just as at Wits⁷³² and other South African Universities,⁷³³ remain committed to the academic profession as they continue to rank self-regulation and flexible time as the highest attractions.⁷³⁴ The extent to which managerialism has penetrated the core of academic work or can penetrate is therefore not clear. Fleisch (2003) in his study of management change in the Gauteng Department of Education maintains that, even though there were surface indicators of managerial change, this was not deep-seated and instead refers to the change as ‘symbolic managerialism’.⁷³⁵

Birnbaum (2000) makes a similar claim when he states that the consequences of management fads are not usually as dire as initially predicted by opponents, precisely because of the loose coupling nature of higher education institutions.⁷³⁶

⁷³¹ McCollow, J. & Lingard, B. (1996). Changing Discourses and Practices of Academic Work: Feature the Future of Work in Higher Education. *Australian University's Review*, 2, 11 - 19.

⁷³² Interview with Professor Huw Phillips, Head of School of Mining Engineering, University of the Witwatersrand, 17 June 2003.

⁷³³ Webster, E. & Mosoetsa, S. (2001). At the chalk face: managerialism and the changing academic workplace 1995-2001. *Transformation*, 48.

⁷³⁴ McInnis, C. (1995). Changes in the Nature of Academic Work. *Australian Universities' Review*, 1, 9- 12.

⁷³⁵ Fleisch, B. (2003). *Managing Education Change*. Cape Town: Heinemann.

⁷³⁶ Birnbaum, R. (2000). The Life Cycle of Academic Management Fads. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 71(1), 1-16.

Even though these may still be early days in the evolution of managerialism at Wits, there are clear indications of its implementation.

10.17 Conclusion

The chapter has shown that changes in the nature of management have not only had implications for managerial practices but also for academic practice. Fewer academics are now involved in decision making, as managers tend to dominate these processes as a result of the upward accountability strain they are under, causing social distance between academics and layers of managers to increase. New meanings are being attached to institutional processes established during the early 1990s, suggesting redefinition and new institutional identity. Academics are burdened with increasing workloads, commodification of knowledge and greater financial expectations. This in turn fosters competitive as opposed to collaborative relations. While these changes might have introduced increased incomes from student fees, a significant, unintended consequence has been the growing decline in staff morale.

In short, for management these changes have meant more managers and more power, while for academics they have brought about increasing social distance from managers, a decline in social cohesion and greater levels of control and exploitation. The new flawed post-bureaucratic form of organisation has placed managers in a position which requires obligatory upward accountability, while their collegial power and authority is conditioned by downward accountability practices.

I now turn to Chapter 11 to consider the new mode of management at Wits.