

CHAPTER 9

FILTERING DOWN THE MANAGERIAL AGENDA THROUGH HEADS OF SCHOOLS

9.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter it was established that deans are no longer able to provide sufficient academic leadership because of their focus on managerial responsibilities; new heads of schools are now in a better position to provide academic leadership. The aim of this chapter is to discuss whether this is indeed the practice of heads of schools by considering: the creation of this new position, the roles and responsibilities of heads of schools and their managerial practice. The argument pursued in this chapter is that, while the position of head of school could be an effective alternative for providing the intellectual and academic leadership previously provided by deans, in practice it has rather been a conduit, which filters down the executivism or managerial agenda that dominates the emerging modes of management. Consequently, alternative avenues through which academic leadership can be provided have to be considered.

9.2 The Roles and Responsibilities of Heads of School

Before the 1999 restructuring exercise the university had 99 departments and heads of departments.⁶⁰⁹ With restructuring, departments were merged and schools formed.⁶¹⁰ The merger of departments and the formation of schools as the basic organisational unit in a university have become common in, for example, Australia since the mid 1990s, whereas during the 1980s departments were still the most basic organisational unit.⁶¹¹ The consequence of the formation of schools, as discussed in Chapter 6, is the lack of recognition by the institution and therefore the lack of power of heads of department and the creation of the new position of head of school.

The duties and responsibilities of heads of schools are given as follows:

The Head of a School is, ex officio, a member of Senate, the relevant faculty Executive and Faculty Board.

While the Head of a School is fully accountable and responsible for the academic activities and management of the School and has a duty to represent the interests of the School, he/she will ensure that functions and activities within the School are carried out in accordance with the faculty's and University's policies and procedures and that the wider interests of the faculty and the University are taken into account.

While a Head has formal authority (subject to the faculty's and University's policies and procedures) in managing all aspects of the School's activities, he/she will exercise this authority with the assistance of a school executive and such other committees as may be necessary (for example, research, timetable and workload, finance and budget) and which will report to the executive. The Head will ensure the transparency of decision making processes except where confidentiality is essential to protect an individual and the interests of the School.

The Head also has a duty to consult staff members throughout the School, formally or informally, in order to ensure that policies and important decisions are properly canvassed and debated.

⁶⁰⁹ Within the new organisational structure the position of head of department no longer exists.

⁶¹⁰ The details of this were discussed in Chapter 6.

⁶¹¹ Moodie, G. (2002). Fish or Fowl? Collegial processes in managerialist institutions. *Australian Universities Review*, 45(2), 18.

The Head of School will be required to undergo such training programmes as are provided from time to time to assist him/her in carrying out necessary duties and responsibilities. The degree to which the Head is directly involved in and wholly responsible for carrying out those duties will vary according to the function and circumstances and, where appropriate, he/she will receive assistance from the Dean and other members of the School's and faculty's staff, for example the human resources and financial managers of the Faculty.

Heads of schools will be encouraged to retain and practise their teaching and research skills.⁶¹²

In short, the primary objectives of the head of school are to

provide the academic vision and leadership required to enable the School to establish and maintain a position of excellence within the University and in the wider educational context lead and manage the School in meeting its and the faculty's strategic goals, participate in University-wide decision making processes towards achieving the University's strategic goals.⁶¹³

A comparison between the previous head of department position and the new head of school shows: (i) heads of department were elected on a rotational basis for a period of three years after which they would return to an academic post; heads of school remain in this position for between three and five years and are not guaranteed an academic post after completion of their contract; (ii) heads of department received a few hundred rand extra, while heads of school earn approximately R3 500 per month more; and (iii) heads of department were responsible for a specific department and therefore had a limited administrative load; heads of school are responsible for many "departments" and therefore have a much larger administrative load.

⁶¹² University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management Standing Orders, S2004, 1146A, University Archives, Senate House, p.6.

⁶¹³ University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management Standing Orders, S2004, 1146A, University Archives, Senate House, p.6.

9.2.1 Managerial Responsibilities and Academic Leadership

Given the emphasis upon managerial responsibilities of the new deanship, the next level at which academic leadership can be provided is heads of schools. Here the experiences of heads of schools are discussed.

Most heads of school refer to their vast and exhausting administrative workload and the fact that they are therefore unable to remain research active.⁶¹⁴ It seems that one of the assumptions they made, later to be proved unfounded, was that their administrative work would be similar to the previous Head of Department. According to them:

Before it was 50%/50 % or 60%/40%, with administration being the heavier weighting. Now it is 20%/80% towards administration. And that extra has come about basically since this became a school. I am teaching still on the same course but I am no longer course coordinator. It is not a satisfactory situation as far as I am concerned.⁶¹⁵

I'm going to tell you that it's a lot more work. I spend huge amounts of time on admin. I sit in many more meetings than I used to sit in. I have much more paper work than I used to have and I have far less time for research, supervision and teaching. But I guess the job is meant to be that. I'm not meant to be doing research, supervision and teaching.⁶¹⁶

What is expected is superman from people who have never been heads of school. So I look at it⁶¹⁷ and I do my best. I looked at it once.⁶¹⁸

I have questioned myself about what is expected of me. So when you read the roles and responsibilities of heads of school; anybody with a whole amount of intelligence can tell that no single person can execute this thing. The scope of what we are supposed to be...is huge. It ranges

⁶¹⁴ 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).

⁶¹⁵ Interview with Professor Patrick Dickson, Head of School of Accounting, University of the Witwatersrand, 17 March 2003.

⁶¹⁶ Interview with Professor Shirley Pendlebury, Head of School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, 4 March 2003.

⁶¹⁷ Here the reference is to the policy document on roles and responsibilities of heads of schools.

⁶¹⁸ Interview with Professor Wolter Te Riele, Head of School of Process and Materials Engineering, University of the Witwatersrand, 25 March 2003.

from academic leadership to administrative efficiency. In fact our biggest jobs are communicating, coordinating and then monitoring and reporting.⁶¹⁹

Others have described their administrative or managerial function: “my job entails watching people”,⁶²⁰ “Most of my time I spend with personnel things.”,⁶²¹ and “I’ve done virtually nothing by way of academic leadership”.⁶²² Most heads of school stated that they spend a great deal of time working and that the time during the working week is just not enough if they want to keep themselves research active and still teach. They work at night and over weekends with the working week stretching to 65 hours per week on average. Heads of schools tend to portray themselves as victims of the system when they essentially decided to take on the jobs and earn substantially more than any other senior academic.

The implications of focusing upon managerial responsibilities were starkly evident in the selection of a new head for the School of Education at the end of 2004. One of the candidates shortlisted for the position was Mary Metcalf,⁶²³ who had been an academic at Wits previously, then a public servant for numerous years within the education sector and Minister of Education in Gauteng. This marked the dominance of managerialism with regard to management positions, as managers with experience in the public sector and not only seasoned academics were considered to be capable of managing academics and particularly leading the School of Education out of its dismal financial position in the Faculty of Humanities.

⁶¹⁹ Interview with Professor Nhlanhla Twala, Head of School of Literature and Languages, University of the Witwatersrand, 27 March 2003.

⁶²⁰ Interview with Professor Helen Laburn, Head of School of Physiology, University of the Witwatersrand, 14 July 2003.

⁶²¹ Interview with Professor Patrick Solomon, Head of School of Economics and Business Economics, University of the Witwatersrand, 24 March 2003.

⁶²² Interview with Professor Bernard Moon, Head of School of Geography, Archaeology and Environmental Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, 28 March 2003.

⁶²³ Notification via email to staff in the School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, November 2004.

While heads of school assist deans in implementing their managerial duties, heads of school are assisted by the School Executive Team which is composed of senior academics of the professoriate.

From the experience of heads of school, their burdensome administrative load distracts them from providing academic leadership at school level. This is an issue many heads of school grapple with as they had hoped that they would be able to continue with their scholarly commitments while in this new post. The weight of their administrative load differs across the institution depending upon the size of the school. For example, in schools with large departments and large student numbers, such as the School of Social Sciences, the administrative load is more burdensome than in schools with smaller student numbers. The size of the school also affects the extent to which heads of school are able to retain contact with intellectual developments across the disciplines. Furthermore, in some instances the extent to which heads of school strive to keep their research alive is informed by how close they are to retirement age, as they are not guaranteed a job after the completion of their contract within the faculty.

The administrative workload of heads of school is related to their greater levels of responsibility. While heads of school mention an array of managerial responsibilities, such as performance appraisal and workload models, they tend to emphasise their financial responsibility for the school.

So it's looking to see that everybody gets the right sort of financial increments every year, to see that all the performance appraisals are done, to see that all the probation reports are filled in. To have a **control over the financial status** of the various departments within the school.⁶²⁴

Well they were much smaller because there was a smaller number of staff although I still had to do regular things such as draw up a budget and think about work loads, and think about allocation of staff to

⁶²⁴ Interview with Professor Patrick Dickson, Head of the School of Accounting, University of the Witwatersrand, 17 March 2003; Interview with Professor Helen Laburn, Head of School of Physiology, University of the Witwatersrand, 14 July 2003; Interview with Professor Cramer, Head of School of Anatomical Science, University of the Witwatersrand, 8 July 2003; Interview with Professor Jacky Galpin, Head of School of Statistical and Actuarial Science, University of the Witwatersrand, 2 July 2003.

courses, I didn't have as **big a responsibility for the budget** as I have now.⁶²⁵

I suppose the divide is the pressure on management to deliver things like bigger classes and more **financial efficiency**.⁶²⁶

9.2.2 The Tension between Managerial Responsibilities and Authority

Despite the increased levels of responsibility of the heads of school, they do not have the authority to make decisions. They consistently express their frustration with this, particularly in financial matters.

The financial control has not been successful. One of the reasons I took the job is because I felt that I could do the job because I was told I was going to be given a one-line budget. I was going to be told; there is your money for the year; you can do with it what you like. I don't have control of the salary budget; the faculty controls it. I've got no room to deal with that. So what happens is that they must continue to cut, cut, cut and they say you can't have another member of staff there, and you can't do this, you can't change that. The head is now responsible and accountable for running the school and equipment money, however, they want people to be responsible but they won't give you the authority to meet that responsibility.⁶²⁷

In theory we are controlling budget, in practice we are not because we have no budget, because they are still trying to work out, three years down the track, they are still trying to work out budget saturation. So in theory I control an expenditure budget, in theory I control a staff budget. We haven't got that either. So I don't have that to control, but I still have to go through all the motions of doing it and actually you know I'm sort of in theory responsible for something which I have no control over.⁶²⁸

In other words you have a budget, you have autonomy; but my responsibility is of course to check you against procedures. I don't see any more freedom for us at all. You know I think that there is a ghastly

⁶²⁵ Interview with Professor Shirley Pendlebury, Head of School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, 4 March 2003.

⁶²⁶ Interview with Professor Belinda Bozzoli, Head of the School of Social Science, University of the Witwatersrand, 11 July 2003.

⁶²⁷ Interview with Professor Bernard Moon, Head of School of Geography, Archaeology and Environmental Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, 28 March 2003.

⁶²⁸ Interview with Professor Patrick Dickson, Head of the School of Accounting, University of the Witwatersrand, 17 March 2003.

phenomenon, which takes place when you devolve. If you are in a structure, which has centralised authority, and you have to then devolve, you've got to be very clear that doing that means losing control to a larger extent. But we have been able to check control. You know the initial feeling is that I would lose control; therefore you tend to try to over-bureaucratise the process. I cannot for one moment understand why, for instance, the university can't say to a school; this is your budget; there is a bank account; cheers! And now run the school.⁶²⁹

Well I have not seen a great deal of the devolution, and yet the impression is that in fact there is very little because it's so, so conscribed. An example is that out of the blue, I had a meeting with my Dean yesterday who said "sorry, four posts that are earmarked for you have been frozen". No discussion, no give and take. And with immediate effect. So devolution is a joke and I am told in a most inappropriate manner that something which is lifeblood academics is suddenly curtailed. I am sceptical because it's very rare that an organisation from within would be able to do this. So people at the higher level are clinging to power.⁶³⁰

Therefore even though heads of school end up in practice focusing upon their managerial duties at the expense of providing academic leadership, they are not afforded the managerial authority to fulfill these duties in the ways they initially thought.

9.3 Heads of School and the New Accountability Culture

Heads of school are involved in university level issues and policy discussions. This allows for greater levels of consistency throughout the university.

As heads of department we didn't contribute to the central issues and governance across the faculty in the way that we do now. And I think the other major thing that has happened is that heads of school are drawn into many more of the university level meetings and the meetings of a much bigger faculty than we had when we were still a relatively small faculty. So I think that I'm much, much more involved in our decision making that affects the faculty and in think tanks along the direction of

⁶²⁹ Interview with Professor Ian Jandrell, Head of School of Electrical and Informational Engineering, University of the Witwatersrand, 8 April 2003.

⁶³⁰ Interview with Professor Wolter Te Riele, Head of School of Process and Materials Engineering, University of the Witwatersrand, 25 March 2003.

the university more than I was before and that the staffing responsibilities are much, much bigger.⁶³¹

You have stronger accountability at the faculty level. We've got a more formalised system of accountability and what you've also got is a greater level of consistency across the faculty of how we keep financial records and what the reporting requires.⁶³²

It is understandable that heads' involvement in larger policy discussions would allow them to consider themselves as contributing to the leadership orientation of the institution, the faculty and their school.

What I saw as the difference was that there is now far more accountability as opposed to the previous system. The big difference for me has been the better definition, if you like, of the job description. It provided heads with some sort of structure. Being a head of department there was a sense of just continuing work, which was being done without necessarily a vision of where the department was moving or developing. I find it deeply satisfying from the point of view of now in a sense having been enabled by quite a lot of training and by my own input into that whole experience of now trying to be a leader rather than just the head of department who has certain responsibilities. So I believe that restructuring gave us more of a purpose in that sense, of being leaders in the academic and perhaps managerial sense.⁶³³

However, heads' leadership is circumscribed by their accountability to the dean and in turn the dean's accountability to SET and the VC, which can be labelled as a culture of executivism or upward accountability. Through meetings such as those with the dean, heads of school are able to report on developments within their schools, share discussions taking place at school level and problems experienced within their schools. This provides heads of school with an opportunity to share their experiences and to become familiar with developments across the faculty. From the dean's perspective, these meetings are important forums at which standard procedures, practices and processes can be discussed,

⁶³¹ Interview with Professor Shirley Pendlebury, Head of School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, 4 March 2003.

⁶³² Interview with Professor Shirley Pendlebury, Head of School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, 4 March 2003.

⁶³³ Interview with Professor Kathy Driver, Head of School of Mathematics, University of the Witwatersrand, 26 June 2003.

established and formalised. They are forums through which university wide policies are reported upon at faculty level and carefully monitored and evaluated. These meetings are critical to facilitating a new culture of upward accountability and the filtering down of managerial practices into schools and departmental structures. As Johnson and Cross (2004) state:

The danger is that a particular form of socialisation in management practice is developing at the faculty executive level, which seems to be filtering down into school and departmental structures as well — with detrimental effects on collegiality. Instead of being academic leaders, Heads of School are increasingly becoming agents of a managerial culture in their schools. We are faced with the phenomenon of “executivism” in schools, the only repositories of collegiality. This phenomenon is evident wherever heads of schools tend to see executive deanship in its various nuances as a suitable management model for efficient faculty management.⁶³⁴

More than the deans, heads of school are confronted by the dilemma of having to secure the confidence of the senior executive team on the one hand and of the faculty on the other, as it is the heads of school who find themselves in closest contact with academic staff. Similarly to the deans, they can be thought of as ‘conveyers of interests’, ‘translators’, ‘diplomats’ and ‘boundary persons’.⁶³⁵ Heads of school, much more than the deans, can only secure the confidence of staff by sustaining their academic leadership, which is increasingly under threat and places them then in an extremely vulnerable position, as they are not necessarily able to secure and maintain the respect and confidence of academic staff.

⁶³⁴ Johnson, B.J. & Cross, M. (2004). *Academic Leadership under Siege: Possibilities and Limits of Executive Deanship at the University of the Witwatersrand*. Paper delivered at School of Education Seminar at the University of the Witwatersrand, p. 19.

⁶³⁵ Johnson, B.J. & Cross, M. (2004). *Academic Leadership under Siege: Possibilities and Limits of Executive Deanship at the University of the Witwatersrand*. Paper delivered at School of Education Seminar at the University of the Witwatersrand, p. 2.

In schools in which the restructuring process has had very little effect, such as within the Faculty of Built Environment and Engineering and the ‘roll over’ schools such as Mathematics within the Faculty of Science, heads of schools notice very little difference from the previous situation.⁶³⁶

Actually, the job of head of department, which became head of school in January 2001, hasn’t really changed very much at all. The difference is that the place you go to deal with specific items of what you normally do as part of your work has changed. For example, instead of ringing somebody up on the sixth floor of Senate House about human resource problems or an issue to do with human resources, you now deal with somebody in the Faculty Office.⁶³⁷

9.4 Managerial Concerns at the Coalface: Where Are The Resources For The Core?

Throughout the institution, student numbers have increased. In some schools there have been greater increases than in others. While increases in student numbers mean that schools and faculties have been able to improve their financial viability, this has also brought increased pressure upon institutional infrastructures. As a consequence, heads of schools feel the pressure directly as they have to deal with the increase in student numbers but do not have sufficient staff or space to accommodate these increases.

One of the greatest concerns for heads of schools is that, even though the university has gone through an extensive period of restructuring which was meant to make more resources available for the business within the core,⁶³⁸ this has not happened.

⁶³⁶ Interview with Professor Huw Phillips, Head of the School of Mining Engineering, University of the Witwatersrand, 17 June 2003.

⁶³⁷ Interview with Professor Huw Phillips, Head of the School of Mining Engineering, University of the Witwatersrand, 17 June 2003; Interview with Professor Patrick Fitzgerald, Head of School of Public and Development Management, 20 June 2003.

⁶³⁸ This has been discussed in Chapter 6 as part of the rationale for restructuring.

I am asking myself if there was a benefit in devolution, and I must put a cynical view...where was the benefit? You know the benefit as I understood it, the benefit was sold to the university in terms of the savings that would be accrued, the ability to put more money into the coffers and from what I see there is less money available in the coffers. Maybe it's an unclear comment but we don't see any evidence that there is more money in the coffers to do the real things like teaching and the research. Where are the resources for that? That hasn't been delivered.⁶³⁹

So I have to deliver to them (referring to academics), but I don't have the resources to deliver to the academics the rewards that they need for complying with those demands. So I can deliver, but I can only deliver at the expense of the academics and they aren't. There's nothing on the table to reward them for what they're being asked to do. So therefore I suppose other heads of schools are management really. So I can't deliver it. I just basically have to say to them, "You've got to work harder. You've got to work harder." And that's a tough thing to have to say.⁶⁴⁰

The problem however, with increasing student numbers is that the stationery expenditure increases, while the funding has not been increased. Another consequence of the increase in student numbers is that more staff is required and this is not forthcoming.⁶⁴¹

The result of this has been a huge increase in costs and increasing pressure upon staff's time and therefore staff work very hard.⁶⁴²

The focus upon managerial concerns is also clear from the structure of the quinquennial review reports⁶⁴³ of the various schools. The reports focus upon

⁶³⁹ Interview with Professor Ian Jandrell, Head of the School of Electrical and Informational Engineering, University of the Witwatersrand, 8 April 2003.

⁶⁴⁰ Interview with Professor Belinda Bozzoli, Head of the School of Social Science, University of the Witwatersrand, 11 July 2003.

⁶⁴¹ Interview with Professor Patrick Dickson, Head of the School of Accounting, University of the Witwatersrand, 17 March 2003.

⁶⁴² Interview with Professor Bernard Moon, Head of School of Geography, Archaeology and Environmental Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, 28 March 2003.

⁶⁴³ Shattock & Rigby (1985) note that the notion of quinquennial reports was introduced in UK universities already during 1967-1972 as an attempt by universities to emphasise long term planning and the application of quantitative techniques. This system replaced the VC or the VC council's finance committee taking financial decisions with a more elaborate committee structure concerned with implementation and planning. The key concern in the quinquennial process is student numbers along the lines which funding was to be allocated (Shattock, M. & Rigby, G. (1985). *Resource Allocation in British Universities*. Conference of University Administrators Resource Allocation Group, Research into Higher

evaluating the quality of teaching staff, their qualifications⁶⁴⁴ and changes within staff equity profile, research output and relations with research units, for example, Sociology of Work Unit (SWOP), Centre for African International Relations (CAIR) and History Research Group (HRG) in the School of Social Science, the financial viability of schools and cross-subsidisation and governance since the formation of the school.⁶⁴⁵

These areas are directly relevant to the managerial responsibilities of heads of schools which is to ensure that university policies and new processes have filtered down to school level. What is markedly absent in the quinquennial reports is a systematic elaboration upon academic leadership, for example, the presentation of seminars, intellectual projects and other collaborative initiatives among staff within and across departments, schools and faculties.

Academics' aversion to this managerial orientation of the heads of school is expressed in their lack of co-operation with heads of school as they feel they are increasingly treated simply as employees:

I've had more disappointments than positive experiences...And I also found it a bit disappointing that a number of people are not really team-players; they don't want to get in there to do something every day to make the place better. And I was previously in the academic department

Education Monographs of Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE). Guildford University, Surrey. p.7).

⁶⁴⁴ This seemed to be a particular concern in the College of Education and the School of Education.

⁶⁴⁵ University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, S2003/2115E; University of the Witwatersrand, External Assessor report on Quinquennial Review of the School of Social Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, 1999-2004.
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, Review of the College of Education, S2004; Report of the External Assessor on the School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, 21 June 2004.
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, Faculty of Humanities, Quinquennial Review 2004, School of Education; Quinquennial Review Report, School of Human and Community Development, 7 and 8 June 2004.
External Assessor's Report: School of Human and Community Development; Review of the School of Human and Community Development, S 2004.

there wasn't any of that attitude; everybody was going flat out to really work.⁶⁴⁶

...We definitely have a new culture in the school and in the university and that is the culture that says; if you want to get on in the academic world of work there are just two things that you need to do; one is higher degrees; and the other is to write for publications. That's it and the rest doesn't matter at all. Before that there was a certain amount of credit given for people who were playing a supportive role in the school and who were developing courses and people who played a coordinating role in courses even if their research was not that good. The result is that people are not keen to do those things. And we're moving towards a situation certainly here that people are very clear that they must say no to whatever they can say no. They must just say no to teaching, no to coordination, no to anything except their own research...

We used to have a much more co-operative environment where people actually want to develop the school, develop courses, develop programmes and are prepared to put their own time and effort into it...People don't do that, they just do what's needed.⁶⁴⁷

Access by staff to heads of school is also much more difficult and largely restricted to staff meetings, whereas before discussions and debates would take place in seminars with heads of school. What this reveals is that the meaning of staff meetings differs across the institution just as what is meant by a 'school' differs. For example, in the School of Social Science, school staff meetings do not take place whereas in the School of Education staff meetings do take place.

9.5 Corporatisation of School Headship

Heads of schools experience pressure to become more corporate or financially shrewd, as they are responsible for transforming their schools into business units. This is extremely difficult as although responsibility rests with them, they do not have the authority to make financial decisions. In addition to this, they are

⁶⁴⁶ Interview with Professor Bernard Moon, Head of School of Geography, Archaeology and Environmental Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, 28 March 2003.

⁶⁴⁷ Interview with Professor Patrick Solomon, Head of the School of Economics and Business Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, 24 March 2003.

required to make sense of their financial standing, remain accountable to their staff and retain accountably to more senior powers.

What they also tell me is that I've got too many staff to the number of students. And so when the model comes in I'm going to be in serious trouble, and they'll say; well, you're share of this pie is that, there would not be enough money to pay you...So when they go to the...model, they might have to make some hard decisions. Do we still want archaeology; for example. Shut it down, I don't know. ⁶⁴⁸

We have been told that the faculty is running at a loss which means that the university cannot afford engineering and therefore it is not viable and then why run it. It's very hard to imagine that we can be sustainable under those conditions. We happen to be the strongest faculty in the country. But it doesn't look as though we're gonna be able to sustain it; because if we cannot get funding to finance new posts to deal with the immense pressure we're under and the fact that the external accreditation bodies have warned that unless we can get more staff to address the number of students, we will not have a chair. ⁶⁴⁹

Given the change from the previous situation, heads of schools are under tremendous pressure from the powers above them to address their financial limitations while not compromising quality. Given their proximity to the 'chalk face' they are certainly most susceptible to being tugged in all directions.

Under these conditions of increasing pressure to meet financial obligations while also fostering their financial potential, heads of schools are particularly interested in retaining as much of their individual sources of funding as possible and are concerned with the financial implications for their school if cross-subsidisation persists.

Nobody seems to be quite clear that accountancy actually keeps the university afloat. ⁶⁵⁰

It brings out the worst in people...Even if units have more money than they need, it would make sense for them to build up a research; RINC⁶⁵¹

money is reserve money. So I don't know how cross-subsidisation would work because the people that are generating the money are going to say 'we want it'.⁶⁵²

There are lots of bones of contention caused by the funding model. Right now we are one of the main cross-subsidisers of some of the other programmes and faculties on campus. Whilst we don't mind doing some cross-subsidising given the competition in our market, we are under a lot of pressure.⁶⁵³

I don't like cross-subsidisation. I've got to be very honest with you I think you expose yourself to dangers if you admit to cross-subsidisation. And then you get the pressure of other faculties looking at you and saying: "Yes, we're cross-subsidising Humanities" and, you know: "Look what they've got". And I think that's unfortunate. So my view is that if the college wants to exist as an entity, then the college must balance its books. Simple!⁶⁵⁴

However, cross-subsidisation may not always be clear cut.

I am confused by what cross-subsidisation means in this university because we hear about cross-subsidisation in two contexts. Well people in the Sciences want to hit the Humanities, or in management and so on; they say that the Humanities cannot carry their costs and are subsidised by them. But when you go to research, the people in Humanities are saying we are subsidising the people in the Sciences because that

⁶⁴⁸ Interview with Professor Bernard Moon, Head of School of Geography, Archaeology and Environmental Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, 28 March 2003.

⁶⁴⁹ Interview with Professor Ian Jandrell, Head of School of Electrical and Informational Engineering, University of the Witwatersrand, 8 April 2003.

⁶⁵⁰ Interview with Professor Patrick Solomon, Head of the School of Economics and Business Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, 24 March 2003.

⁶⁵¹ RINC – Research Incentive Scheme

⁶⁵² Interview with Professor Bernard Moon, Head of School of Geography, Archaeology and Environmental Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, 28 March 2003.

⁶⁵³ Interview with Professor Mike Ward, Head of the School of Business Administration, University of the Witwatersrand, 25 March 2003.

⁶⁵⁴ Interview with Professor Graham Hall, Head of Johannesburg College of Education, University of the Witwatersrand, 24 June 2003.

equipment is so expensive. So you know I am always confused, I think that we all cross-subsidise each other.⁶⁵⁵

This focus upon income generation, cost cutting and securing income through limiting cross-subsidisation transforms the heads of school not only into managers but also, more specifically, into corporate style managers.

9.6 The New Position of School Headship: What Value Does It Add To Wits?

What the above discussion points to is the following: (i) even though at a policy level heads of schools are required to fulfill both a managerial and academic leadership role, in practice they are overwhelmed with managerial responsibilities; (ii) while their managerial responsibilities include a vast spectrum of areas such as human resource management and academic administration, heads of schools tend to be most concerned with financial management issues; and (iii) even though they have increased levels of responsibility, they have not been given the authority to make decisions at school level. Therefore if heads of schools are neither given the opportunity to provide academic leadership nor have managerial authority within the new devolved organisational structure, what value do their posts add to the university? This question is debatable.

All we have is another layer of bureaucracy above the department heads, which is now the schools and the school infrastructure, which I'm not sure that that was necessarily adding anything. Whether it does or not will often depend on the individuals. But on the other hand if you have individuals who try to protect their turf, who don't believe in this, who think this is just sort of managerialism or restructuring for the sake of restructuring, then they are not predisposed to looking to make it work. And then I think you find that in practice things just go on the way they were with one extra layer of bureaucracy in the hierarchy.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵⁵ Interview with Dr Nhlanhla Twala, Head of the School of Literature and Language Studies, University of the Witwatersrand, 27 March 2003.

⁶⁵⁶ Interview with Professor Max Price, Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, 13 January 2003.

Many of them have said: "Well, you know, it's just adding another layer of administration, why bother to go into a school?" You have a department, a school and a faculty.⁶⁵⁷

It has added a whole new layer of bureaucracy. It has destroyed the social cohesion of departments, which are the organisational form of the disciplines. So the whole idea of getting rid of heads of departments has been a disastrous exercise, very destructive and the case of Social Sciences, there are three new people below the head of school, so that is a whole new layer of bureaucracy and four additional salaries and a very confused authority structure in terms of the relationship between the head of department and the head of school. We still have departments but they are sometimes called divisions, disciplines.⁶⁵⁸

We've got two more staff members, but the academic staff has to do more and more administration at the expense of their time on research etc. and then people wonder why we've got no time for, or we're not producing more research.⁶⁵⁹

While many argue that heads of school do not add any value to academic work, others stress the managerial value they add.

One of the problems before was that my faculty - this faculty - had 34 departments and in the previous structure all 34 heads thought that they should have direct access to me. And I was trying to manage a span of control of 34 people plus there are other people who are not department heads but the faculty office, the registrar, etc, finance, HR - all of that - so I might have had fifty people reporting to me directly because there was no hierarchy, I mean there's no pyramid. And that wasn't a good thing - that wasn't working in fact. So I think it was necessary anyway to insert a level of management in between so that there could be better management. But I think I wouldn't have previously created schools, I would have probably created deputy deans and said: "Okay you're this deputy dean you're going to look after those five departments and this deputy dean look after those five departments."

⁶⁵⁷ Interview with Professor Belinda Bozzoli, Head of School of Social Science, University of the Witwatersrand, 7 April 2003.

⁶⁵⁸ Interview with Professor Jacklyn Cock, previous Head of Department of Sociology, University of the Witwatersrand, 13 January 2004.

⁶⁵⁹ Interview with Professor Boden, previous Head of Department of Construction Economics, University of the Witwatersrand, 24 June 2003.

So I think it was desirable and necessary to introduce another level of management anyway into this faculty.⁶⁶⁰

It is easier in helping heads to manage their staff. I think it's easier to have a head of school than to have a dean because I'm nearer; I'm more able to...I'm right in the school; I'm able to see problems as they arise and to be like a **hands-on manager**. The old dean was not. Developing interdisciplinary courses is something that we've worked towards. Now we've got new interdisciplinary programmes, development studies, demography, that's been easier because a head of school can bring departments together whereas before they were like little mini-empires and didn't talk to one another much.⁶⁶¹

Adding managerial value to the university furthers the interests and tendency towards the upward accountability structure and not necessarily the interests and concerns of the intellectual, academic or knowledge project. However, the head of school position is still needed, as various schools within the Faculty of Humanities will come under increasing pressure to attain a financially viable position within the university. A focus simply upon managerial responsibilities is inadequate. As one academic stated:

I just feel that for the amount of money that is spent on the head of school, I'd rather get two new academics and rather not have a head of school. I think it would make no difference not having a head of school; all we need is an administrator and having an academic in this position is actually a waste of an academic.⁶⁶²

⁶⁶⁰ Interview with Professor Max Price, Dean of the Faculty of Health Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, 13 January 2003.

⁶⁶¹ Interview with Professor Belinda Bozzoli, Head of the School of Social Science, University of the Witwatersrand, 11 July 2003.

⁶⁶² Focus group discussion with academics in the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, 19 February 2004.

9.7 Executivism and School Headship: Implications for University Management

The creation of this new position of head of school has a number of implications for management practice. Firstly, a vast administrative workload has been duplicated at a lower managerial level. Secondly, the position replicates the roles and responsibilities associated with the executive deanship at school level. Thirdly, with heads of schools, in practice, focused upon their managerial responsibilities at the expense of providing academic leadership, they end up assisting deans in executing their enormous levels of responsibility acquired as a result of the devolved new organisational structure. Fourthly, the tendency to focus upon managerial responsibilities places pressure upon heads of school to account upward and therefore to sustain the centralisation of power within the management of the institution. Fifthly, even though heads of schools are under a great deal of pressure to perform managerial functions, they are particularly pressurised to take responsibility for the financial wellbeing of their schools but they do not have the authority to make financial decisions. This transforms heads of schools into corporate style managers concerned first and foremost with the future of their own schools. The danger is that this concern with unit specific financial viability and health may lead to the new headship encouraging competitive, individualised relations at the expense of collegiality across schools and faculties. Lastly, the head of school position transforms the relationship with staff, as relations are dominated by managerial concerns of monitoring and evaluation and not intellectual engagements. This entrenches hierarchical relations and undermines and constrains previous collegial relations with staff.

From the above, it can be seen that, heads of schools find themselves at a crossroads - either being increasingly stripped of their traditional power and authority derived from their academic leadership (though they are expected to sustain their academic leadership and build collegial relations) or being provided with bureaucratic and hierarchical authority from above concentrated in managerial responsibilities.

As Moodie (2002) states:

The junction of predominantly managerial values imposed from above and predominantly academic values pressed from below is the head of school.⁶⁶³

This has caused a serious vacuum in academic leadership in the university. The consequence of this is fragmentation of all projects, a loss of collective energy and isolated, frustrated individuals falling through the cracks and between projects. The new managerial structure is incapable of addressing the challenge of providing academic leadership within the university.

How can academic leadership be pursued? Academic leadership could be provided by establishing a chair in a particular field. This does not help the sad loss and waste of valuable intellectuals and academics to ‘puny’ administrative duties. This could be addressed in other ways.

The head of school position could be accepted as an administrative or managerial post and therefore does not have to be occupied by an established academic, but rather by someone who has significant managerial experience with insight into the nature of academic work. The head of school would then have to be supported by the senior professoriate in providing academic leadership across the institution whether in research groups, units or, clusters of disciplines through ‘distributed leadership’. Here projects are developed in different forms and spaces across the institution allowing for coordination but voluntarism, informalism and spontaneous growth, key ingredients to foster collegial relations.

Another approach could be that instead of ‘wasting’ a valuable academic on managerial responsibilities, these should be shifted from the head of school position to a deputy head of school, freeing up the head of school to focus on academic leadership. In other words, the head of school position would continue to be the kind of position occupied by the head of department.

⁶⁶³ Moodie, G. (2002). Fish or Fowl? Collegial Processes in Managerialist Institutions. *Australian Universities Review*., 45(2), 20.

Local conditions would have to be considered, as one model may not be applicable in all the variety of contexts across the institution. For example, where schools are larger (such as the School of Social Science where there are 70 staff members), it may be more feasible for heads of disciplines to provide academic leadership because of the variety of disciplines that have been clustered within this school. In the School of Education, where disciplines no longer exist and there are 44 academics, it may be better for clusters or research units to be established along various aspects of educational research and teaching.

9.8 Conclusion

It has been argued in this chapter that, even within the most basic organisational unit of the university, heads of school are unable to provide academic leadership because of the pressure upon them to perform managerial responsibilities. The new organisational structure therefore tends to undermine academic leadership and promotes managerialism. The danger of this new arrangement is that heads of schools cannot simply rule academics, as they are peculiar knowledge workers who have been encouraged to develop and express independent opinion and their expertise remains knowledge, the source of their power. On the other hand, although heads of schools are drawn from the professoriate, their inability to sustain their intellectual endeavours or provide academic leadership undermines their credibility among academic staff. This creates optimal conditions for managerial relations instead of collaborative and collegial relations, the foundations for knowledge production and dissemination. The only way to address this is to provide academic leadership.

In Chapter 10 I discuss the implications of the new organisational structure for managerial and academic practice.