

Article

At the chalk face: managerialism and the changing academic workplace 1995-2001

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In December 2000, a well-respected senior academic with an anti-apartheid track record was dismissed from her post at one of our leading universities. The 'trigger' in this sad case was student dissatisfaction with a new course that had been introduced after the merging of two quite different departments. The students alleged that marking in the course was unfair, that the comments on the scripts demeaning, and that the course lacked overall coherence. In the words of the offended academic, 'the dean accused me of racism to black students, having a sneering British academic attitude to them, and being insensitive to the difficulties of black students'.

What outraged the accused academic was the fact that the students bypassed her and went directly to the dean to complain. What happened after this, and who is to blame for 'the breakdown in the employment relationship', remains hotly contested and need not concern us here. What is relevant is a comment in the report of the Committee of Enquiry held last year into these events. Almost as an afterthought, towards the end of the report, the committee commented that, 'the tensions that are caused by the restructuring of universities and the creation of new managerial structures may perhaps result in cases such as this if not handled with sensitivity and compassion for the persons involved' (Committee of Enquiry 2000:42).

This case encapsulates the challenges facing management and academics in the new workplace:

- the changing student clientele and the need for academics to be sensitive to these needs;
- the shift away from the traditional curriculum and the resulting multi-disciplinarity and team teaching; and

- the impact of mergers of departments on traditional lines of authority.

Other examples of conflict and stress could be cited such as the case of the professor who suddenly walked out of his department, leaving his computer switched on and, without informing his family, disappeared. He was reported to have been working extremely hard, teaching and administering the department (*Eastern Province Herald*, March 6, 2001).

Stress and discontent among academics are not simply local phenomena. A study conducted by the Association of University Teachers (AUT) in the United Kingdom, reported recently that more than half of those who work in British universities are on the brink of depression or anxiety, while a quarter have suffered a stress-related illness in the past twelve months (*Times Higher Educational Supplement*, April 14, 2000). Recent changes in higher education are blamed for heightened stress levels. The researchers concluded that growing conflict between work and home life, the mushrooming of bureaucracy and job insecurity were the principal villains of the piece.

In a pilot survey of geographers in the UK, it was found that almost two thirds of contract researchers and teachers fear insecurity at work is affecting their health and well-being (*THES*, January 19, 2001). They found that 63 per cent of staff on temporary contracts complained of stress, anxiety and mental torment. The main cause was worry over the future, particularly where the next job would come from, as well as fear of isolation and financial insecurity.

In addition to growing insecurity, Frank Furedi, a reader in sociology at the University of Kent, argues that 'innovation has been stifled and professional autonomy eroded ... standardisation has encouraged formulaic teaching, conformity and superficial research. Many of us spend so much energy trying to respond to the demands of the research assessment exercise that we end up researching to order. Academics have responded to the bureaucratic pressure on their time by reducing contact with students' (*THES*, January 28, 2000).

Studies also report that the nature of the job is changing as more students with poorer high school education are accepted in universities. As the assistant general secretary of AUT said,

More and more people are coming into higher education who need more help. Universities are having to do more of the work that should have been done in schools, because of the lack of investment in the system. If you have a more broad range of people entering higher

education and standards are being maintained, then someone is filling the gap and putting in the extra effort- and I have no doubt that it is our members. In other words academics are expected to provide much greater support to a new generation of students, counselling, learning support and financial guidance. (*THES*, August 18, 2000)

Dissatisfaction is compounded by low pay. In a survey by Riley Communications, they confirm that salary is the biggest impediment to recruitment and retention in higher education in the United Kingdom. This includes not only the level of salary compared to the private sector, but also the lack of flexibility within the sector to offer different kinds of pay packages (*THES*, January 7, 2000).

Job dissatisfaction amongst academics has also been identified in universities in Africa. In the 1990s a survey was conducted on job attitudes amongst university teachers in Ahmadu Bello University in Nigeria. The researcher identified a significant increase in job alienation between 1992 and 1995. What was particularly striking was the combination of low pay and low self-esteem. The author concluded that 'since university teachers could not meet their economic needs, their self concept and self esteem was impaired hence alienation from the job' (Kolo 1997:196).

There is a growing presence of corporate interests in education. Increasingly education is seen as a private 'commodity', not as a social institution. There is growing inequality in access to efficient education. Furthermore, there is a reduction in autonomy in the education systems. Academics are experiencing the effects of a worldwide shift towards a new work order.

Globally labour markets have become more flexible creating greater insecurity in employment (Standing 1999). More workers are obliged to work long hours or 'unsocial hours', causing physical and medical problems. In Europe a new sickness has emerged - presenteeism, instead of absenteeism. Insurance companies doctors and others are reporting that workers are turning up for work even when they are sick for fear of losing their job (Standing 1999:188).

Ironically, increased labour intensity has coincided with high unemployment and a spread of part-time jobs. Stemming from this is 'burnout', the inability of those working with great intensity to sustain the pace after a few years. Stress-related illnesses have increased. Among occupational psychologists, there is a consensus that the primary cause of stress in work is lack of control over one's situation. An atmosphere of

insecurity induces stress that feeds back into labour costs, and distorts rational pursuit of occupation (Standing 1999:189).

Standing sums up the impact of work insecurity on employees:

In modern industrialised economies, it is almost as if the labouring ethic has imprisoned or drugged people. The job becomes a commitment, while home is a distraction to be avoided as much as possible, a place where 'chores' (work) must be done as quickly as possible. Work at home has become perceived as constraining labour in the job, rather than part of leisure. The result is that families try to 'outsource' family work, such as childcare, housework and gardening. Parenthood – outsourcing is a reflection of labour market flexibility. (1999:190)

The academic workplace

Although universities are workplaces in terms of the Labour Relations Act, they are workplaces of a special kind. Five distinct features of the university as a workplace were identified in 1995, the beginning of the period under review (Webster 1995:7-9).

The first distinctive feature of the university is its occupational structure. Academics are a distinct occupational group who claim autonomy over their work as the submission to the National Commission of Higher Education (NCHE) from the University of the Witwatersrand states. 'All universities are defined as universities because of their *core* activity – the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. In order to preserve the integrity of universities as institutions that pursue knowledge in this disinterested way, universities have to be autonomous, both from the state and from civil society, with regard to academic matters' (Submission to the National Commission on Higher Education, University of Witwatersrand, May 1995).

The autonomy of the academic is protected in the Constitution and preserved by Council and Senate. The primary academic body in the University is Senate where most academic matters are decided on or, when necessary, delegated to other appropriate bodies such as Boards of Faculties and Departments.

The second distinctive feature of the university as a workplace is the existence of students. Students are crucial stakeholders in the university and have an interest in the successful running of the institution. However, their stay in the university is limited although they do have a long-term interest in the quality of education at the institution. In that sense they are more analogous to long-serving customers than employees. We prefer to

describe them as *secondary stakeholders*, to distinguish them from the *primary stakeholders*, the employees.

The third distinctive feature of the university is its form of governance. The governance and the executive authority of the university is vested, by Act of Parliament, in the Council. Council is a body consisting of outside constituencies (such as central, regional and local government, business and professional organisations) as well as senior administration and representatives from Senate. Its relationship with Senate is not clearly defined although, in broad terms, Senate is concerned with academic matters and Council with the governance of the institution as a whole.

A fourth distinctive feature of the university is the low level of unionisation and the multiplicity of existing unions. Traditionally there has been low unionisation of academics in higher education in South Africa. Academics tended to be 'represented' by staff associations that were closely linked to management and were largely an extension of the managerial function. Attempts to unionise academics on a national basis began in the late 1980s with the establishment of the Union of Democratic University Staff Associations (UDUSA). But UDUSA was more of a national political association of progressive academics than a trade union. In an interview its general secretary, Mike Morris, said:

'I don't think that it would be correct to describe UDUSA as a trade union. It is very hard to organise academics into a trade union. Academics have their own historical academic traditions that make them balk at the idea of a trade union.' (Morris 1989:81)

However, the Labour Relations Act of 1995 transformed the relationship of academics to management incorporating them into the new industrial relations system as employees with trade union rights. The Act also promotes collective bargaining at sector level laying down an enabling framework for sector wide bargaining councils. In anticipation of the possible establishment of a national Bargaining Council for Higher Education, UDUSA formed in 1995 a Higher Education Employees Forum (HEEF) comprising of eight staff associations.

In the words of Jon Lewis, a past UDUSA staff member: 'While we have individual employers, we have one paymaster – the government – and we need to embark on a process of collective bargaining' ('Unity in sight for education employees', *UDUSA NEWS*, May 1995). During this period the expectations were high that a national system of collective bargaining would be introduced in higher education (Lewis and Modise 1995). In 1996

UDUSA was transformed into a national trade union, the National Tertiary Sector Education Union (NTESU).

A fifth distinctive feature is the peculiar way in which universities choose their chief executive officers. Senior management appointments are drawn from academics who are not trained as managers. They rise up the career ladder by being specialists in their disciplines. Someone who has won recognition through their scholarly publications has to deal with 'people management', finance, industrial relations and, above all, develop a vision of the institution for the twenty-first century.

By early 1995 South African institutions of Higher Education had reached a stalemate – struggles around the transformation of technikons, training colleges and, above all, universities, had created crisis situations in these institutions. Mass action by students and workers – 'hostage taking', trashing of the campuses and vandalism - had become common on many campuses. Indeed, President Nelson Mandela called on students to engage in peaceful protest and rightly condemned unprocedural actions such as 'hostage taking' and trashing.

At the core of these conflicts were a set of legitimate demands – demands shared by progressive students, academics and increasingly, university administrations.

The first of these demands was that institutions of Higher education become more representative of the population of South Africa – more representative in the composition of their student bodies, in their teaching staff, and, above all, in their governance. The second demand was that a national loan and bursary scheme be established that alleviates the increasing financial burdens on working and middle class families who send their children to institutions of higher education. Thirdly, that curricula become more relevant and that greater attention be given to the process of teaching and learning; especially for those students who had been denied access to decent schooling because of apartheid.

In a nutshell, demands were being made for the transformation of these institutions. But these demands reached a stalemate because transformation was taking place in the context of low trust relationships and obsolete forms of institutional governance. The challenge facing these institutions was how to break this stalemate. In other words, how successfully to manage the tension between transformation and declining resources in a participatory way. It was a challenge over the nature of the management of change – over institutional governance.

Successfully to negotiate organisational change, a different approach to university governance was required. To understand the approach adopted it is necessary to take a detour into the management theories of the 1960s and 1970s and the emergence of 'academic managerialism' in the 1980s (Bundy 1999).

The rise of academic managerialism

Writing in the United States in 1983, George Keller identified a range of challenges facing higher education ranging from a changing student clientele, new curricula demands, increased competition, finances, new technology, an ageing faculty, and the growing extent of external control and regulation (Keller 1999:12-26).

Keller (1999) argued that these pressures had led to a stalemate in the exercise of power on the American campus. 'University management is in shackles...Presidential power in US higher education has gradually diminished before the building up of strong faculty power and, since the 1960s, the rising power of students and outside agencies' (Keller 1983:27). What was required, he concluded, was strong management. 'Colleges and universities clearly need to plan for these - and other - upheavals and to construct a more active, change-oriented management style. The era of laissez-faire campus administration is over. The era of academic strategy has begun' (Keller 1999:26). Higher education, he suggested, 'needs to transcend the current faculty-administration stalemate, to take its own management more seriously, and create new forms of institutional decision making if it is to cope with and help shape the new environment in which it finds itself' (Keller 1999:39).

The tools to do this task were drawn from the new academic disciplines in organisational studies, industrial psychology and operations theory. Colin Bundy, ex-vice chancellor of the University of Witwatersrand has summarised the institutional innovations introduced in university management in North America and the United Kingdom in the 1980s:

- the creation of a strategic plan;
- the establishment of new organs of decision making that brought together the university executive, key administrators and senior academics;
- a shift towards stronger leadership power at the center;
- decentralised budgeting, in which a block sum, would be allocated to basic units;

- closer collaboration with industry and commerce;
- technology became an integral part of management;
- an explicit training programme for managers and administrators. (Bundy 1999:5-6)

In the 1990s organisational theorists have argued that there has been a paradigm shift towards post bureaucratic forms of organisation. This is captured in the diagram below.

Table 1: A post-bureaucratic organisation

Old	New
Stability	Disorganisation / Chaos
Rationality	Charisma, Values
Planning	Spontaneity
Control	Empowerment
Command	Participation
Centralisation	Decentralisation
Hierarchy	Network
Formal	Informal / Flexibility
Large	Downsized / Delayered

(Thompson and McHugh 1995:167)

In practice, the neo-liberal agenda has impacted more powerfully on university management than post-bureaucratic theory would suggest. Paul Hoggett argues that in Britain three fundamental but inter-linked strategies of control have been implemented in universities over the last decade:

- first, there has been a pronounced shift towards the creation of operationally decentralised units with the simultaneous attempt to increase centralised control over strategy and policy;
- second, the principle of competition has become the dominant method of co-ordinating the activities of decentralised units;
- third, there has been the development of processes of performance management and monitoring.

Hoggett concludes that, taken together, these three strategies do not describe a simple movement from a bureaucratic to a post-bureaucratic form, rather they combine strong elements of innovation with the reassertion of a number of fundamentally bureaucratic mechanisms (Hoggett 1996).

In the words of Gary Rhoades, 'social relations on campus are increasingly corporatised as faculties find their time, work, and the products of their labour increasingly controlled by managers, who have extended their

discretion at the expense of professional autonomy and arguably of the public interest' (Rhoades 1998). 'The broad trend of change', Bundy summarises, 'has been the development of a self consciously more corporate style of university executive management, one which draws directly upon the vocabulary, precepts and practices of the private sector' (Bundy 1999:8).

This marketisation of higher education can be illustrated through the example of Murdoch University in Western Australia. According to Jan Currie, Associate Professor at the School of Education, Murdoch University, the university appointed a United States manager as vice-chancellor in 1996. Consultants were brought in to create a new class of managers, bypassing the senate, and increasing the workload of academics leading to a drop in morale. Many academic programmes were closed down, key functions were outsourced and the executive powers of managers significantly increased (Currie 2001).

This led eventually to a breakdown of trust and a vote of no confidence in the vice chancellor. The vice-chancellor (referred to privately as Venture Capitalist) earned an annual salary of 342 000 US dollars. The wide spread introduction of fast food outlets on the campus led critics to label the university as McMurdoch University!

Academic managerialism in South Africa

Historically South Africa has had a sharply divided higher education system in which the historically advantaged institutions (HAI) benefited by better resources available to the white community, while the historically disadvantaged institutions (HDI) were disadvantaged and seen largely as teaching institutions. The two university systems were also governed differently: the HAIs followed a collegial model in which university professors were the key decision makers. Although over the last three decades there had been growing bureaucratisation in these universities, the power of the professor remained more or less intact. The HDIs, on the other hand, were creatures of apartheid and were tightly controlled by apartheid managers. Academics on these campuses did not exercise the same degree of power as those in the HAIs.

While clearly South African universities have their own distinctive institutional histories, the shift towards academic managerialism begins in South Africa a decade later than the developed world. The first stirrings of a more managerial mode of governance is in the early nineties when a

number of universities begin to develop strategic plans and mission statements. Jakes Gerwel, Vice Chancellor of the University of the Western Cape in the early 1990s seems to have been something of a pioneer in recognising the need for universities to adapt to a changing external environment. However it is only after the advent of democracy in 1994, and South Africa begins to experience the direct impact of globalisation, that management acquires the legitimacy to act decisively to break the stalemate on campuses.

The changing institutional and legislative context however, has set the broad parameters within which academic managerialism has been introduced in South African universities. Indeed, in many cases amendments to the labour law have made it difficult to dismiss or change the conditions of employment of members of the university staff. This has constrained management capacity to unilaterally restructure.

The key institutional change was the introduction of a new labour relations regime beginning with the passage of the Labour Relations Act in 1995. The key features of this Act for the academic workplace were:

- it brought all employees into one industrial relations system;
- it promoted collective bargaining by providing for organisational rights for unions in the workplace ;
- it led to the creation of the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA), where disputes over dismissal could be referred;
- it provided, through section 189 of the Act, for a system of consultation over retrenchment.

There were a number of other components of the new labour relations regime. In 1998 an Employment Equity Act was introduced which made it compulsory for all establishments to produce an equity plan and recruit from 'designated groups'. In 1999 the Skills Development Act was passed which made it compulsory for all establishments to develop a skills plan. Finally the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) now applied to academics and the conditions laid down for leave, for example, applied to academics.

A second institutional change was the creation of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA); a body designed to bridge the gap between the world of work and the world of learning. In terms of SAQA, National Standards Bodies (NSBs) and Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs) were set up to approve 'the outcomes' of universities. These bodies, on

which all stakeholders are represented, gives SAQA the power to influence curriculum planning, as well as to review the academic performance, of universities.¹

The third institutional change is the creation of one educational system with a director of higher education under which all universities fall. Accompanying this attempt at integrating previously racially divided system is the requirement that each university should produce a three-year 'rolling plan' outlining their plans to make the university more representative and cost effective.

It has been argued that government policy on higher education has been fundamentally shaped by the analytical framework developed by the logic of a group of influential policy analysts, Gibbons et al and Scott (Kraak 2000:17). For our purposes two recommendations of the National Commission for Higher Education (NCHE) are of particular relevance:

- the need for a greater emphasis on programmatic provision rather than disciplinary-based provision;
- the need to create an enabling environment where mode two – problem oriented, trans-disciplinary, trans-institutional and socially useful knowledge – research can flourish.

Much of the public debate around transformation has centred around the impact of 'outsourcing' of the support sector on the support staff. There has been very little focus on the impact of restructuring on the academic workplace. Our findings of a preliminary survey of academics conducted in February and March 2001 suggest profound changes are taking place in the academic workplace.

Research Method

There are 36 higher education institutions in South Africa, 15 technikons and 21 universities. There are a total number of 14,811 academics in these institutions, 3538 in the technikons 11,273 in the universities (South African Universities Vice-Chancellors Association).

We attempted to reflect the diversity of institutions in the higher education system. Due to time constraints we were only able to focus on six institutions: two Historically Advantaged Institutions (HAIs), three Historically Disadvantaged Institutions (HDIs) and a technikon. There are a total of 2 625 academics in these six institutions (South African Universities Vice-Chancellors Association). We excluded our own workplace, the University of the Witwatersrand, from the sample.

We decided to keep the sample anonymous as the interviews were conducted under strict conditions of confidentiality. There are clearly institutional differences that impact on the academic workplace as 'academic managerialism' is more advanced in the HAls than the HDIs. Furthermore, within the HDIs, there are sharp distinctions between those in the former homelands and those that were not. However, since we have identified what we consider a generalised model of university governance that emerged during this period, we have decided to capture the general trends in the academic workplace, rather than attempt to highlight the obvious institutional differences between them.

In each institution we interviewed a staff representative and a human resource manager. In addition we interviewed 24 individual academics and 31 academics in three separate focus groups. In other words, a total of 55 academics were interviewed in the six institutions.

Academics were chosen through a purposive sampling technique, ie respondents were chosen because of certain characteristics. The characteristics we were looking for in these interviews were academics who had been on the staff for more than five years. In some cases we used a snowball sampling technique where staff members would refer us to colleagues who had been at the institution for over five years.

We decided to reflect in our sample a mix of academics at these institutions, including the different disciplines such as the natural sciences and humanities. In the event, 28 of the respondents were white and 27 were black. The respondents were interviewed from a semi-structured questionnaire in an open-ended manner for approximately an hour. Three different questionnaires were used: one for the staff representative, one for the human resource director, and one for the interviews with academics.

Survey Results

Responses from management

Partial shift to Human Resource Management

Over the last ten years the vocabulary for managing the employment relationship in South African universities has undergone a change. 'Personnel management' has increasingly given way to human resource management. This shift is captured in this response:

In 1993 the department decided to change the focus of its work. We no longer wanted to be a paper -pushing department but wanted to be a strategic unit. We had to adapt to running this university like a business

unit. We had to comply like all businesses to the Labour Relations Act. We had to educate managers about the labour legislation. There were problems with academics having to act like managers, to train and develop staff, recruit new students and do performance appraisals.

Another human resource manager commented:

Seven years ago we were just a filing department keeping records for the university. We have become more specialised now and involved in strategic planning for the university. We have to make sure that the university complies with the Labour Relations Act. We also developed an equity plan for the Department of Labour.

However, the fact that human resource managers are not part of the executive team meant for some of those interviewed that the university had not fully embraced the shift to human resource management. One human resource manager commented:

This is not a true human resource department. It is only called a human resource department for glamour purposes. We still do administration and paper work. We are also not consulted on some decision and are not part of the process.

When asked what the difference was between human resource managers in universities and the private sector, respondents mentioned the difficulty in persuading academics that they are line managers. In the words of one manager, 'Academics do not want to be line managers. In the universities you have prima-donnas who earn respect as academics not as managers'. Or in the words of another manager: 'Academics need high maintenance. They are hyper sensitive. If there is a slight to their professional qualification or status they get very offended'.

Responses from academics

It is possible to identify two distinct categories of responses: the pessimists and the innovators. In this section we summarise the responses of the pessimists, and in the next section we will deal with the innovators.

Extension of managerial control

We asked respondents how their relationship with management had changed over the past five years? The overwhelming majority of respondents felt that their relationship with management had been reconfigured in a way that now defined them as employees rather than colleagues. This feeling is captured in this response to the question:

I did not see them as management before, I saw them as colleagues. Now I feel I am on the other side of the divide. I am now an employee

and could be found guilty of insubordination. My idea of a university is premised on the assumption of a community of interests, where we are taught to question and not to obey.

The respondents expressed a surprising degree of antagonism towards management, suggesting a wide gulf in a relationship, which they described as one of 'them and us'. In spite of a determined attempt by management on many campuses, to inculcate a new set of attitudes through workshops, briefing suggestions and 'bosberaads', respondents felt that these attempts were 'a waste of time'.

This scepticism is captured in the response to the question from a veteran academic. 'The "us and them" syndrome that the institution wanted to do away with has resurfaced again. We have gone through a full cycle and now we are back to the "us and them" syndrome'.

Many respondents expressed feelings of frustration, disillusionment, and deep cynicism towards management's intentions. In the words of one respondent, 'I feel alienated from so many processes in the university'. At the core of this feeling of alienation is a sense of increasing control by management and being under constant surveillance. 'They want results and they want one to justify the existence of his or her department. So that brings about a stressful relationship. You have to apply for everything, sick leave, day offs, etc'. A number of respondents mentioned the fact that they had to apply to do private work and resented the fact that they were expected to give a proportion of this income to the university.

Although the intention behind the shift towards managerialism is ostensibly to improve efficiencies, respondents felt that what was emerging was another layer of bureaucracy. Where heads of departments existed before and academics could develop a personal relationship with the head, they now had a more distant relationship with a head of school. This feeling was expressed particularly strongly by previous heads of departments, who felt that their authority have been undermined. In one case, for example, the ex-head of a department no longer participated in the probation process – a key component of staff development – ceased to have a budget, and no longer determined recruitment. She commented, 'I feel undermined and fear for the future of the discipline'.

Respondents felt that their professional autonomy was being undermined and their status reduced. For example, at some universities, professors are no longer entitled to a seat on Senate; instead different constituencies are represented on Senate in a much-reduced body. In another example, the

faculty board has been restructured with management, not academics, in the majority.

While the impression we gained from the majority of these interviews was one of pessimism it was accompanied by a sense of inevitability and, in some cases, of nostalgia for a largely mythical 'collegial past'. It was accompanied, in some cases by a sense of fear of victimisation if they were too outspoken.

Increase in the intensity of work

There has been an intensification of work, for some it is a result of an increase in students but for most, it is because of the changing nature of the job. Respondents felt that students were not adequately prepared for university. As a result more demands are made on the time and emotions of lecturers. For example, one respondent said he was expected to 'nurse maid' students who could not get to grips with the subject. This meant that he had less 'discretionary labour time' to pursue his own research interests. One respondent, involved in a distance programme said she could not leave her office because she had to be available for constant counselling. Furthermore, she had to account for her time. She could not go, for instance, to the library to 'browse'.

It was also felt that lecturers had to be more responsive to students' needs as they were now seen as clients that lecturers had to compete over. One respondent suggested that the workload had increased because lecturers had to offer more variety in their teaching. The introduction of interdisciplinary programmes has led to lecturers having to redesign their courses to meet demands for vocationalism.

There was widespread agreement that there was greater pressure to publish in accredited journals. This is captured in this comment, 'yes there is greater pressure to publish, but only in accredited journals. We simply have to work harder'.

Respondents also felt that academics were expected to do different kinds of work and develop new skills. As one lecturer commented,

The nature of our work has changed. It used to be defined by the autonomy of the job. I now feel I am losing control. This is leading to stress. We have become marketers. I now have to try and attract students into the university. The responsibility has become that of the individual academic.

For all respondents, their working week had increased. Some spoke of working ten to 12 hours a day, six days a week. Others mentioned working

on Saturdays and Sundays and at night, averaging more than ten hours a day. In part this is a result of taking on private work because of declining incomes. It is also because of access to email. One respondent described how he would come in an hour early to read his email messages. Another described how the email intruded on his home life as he worked on his home computer on weekends. However, it is the increase in 'paper work' and the number of meeting that all respondents emphasised.

There was widespread agreement that there has been devolution of administrative functions, while at the same time a decrease in support staff. For example, in the words of one respondent, 'we used to have an assistant, who used to do photocopying and assisted in stationery and collected documents for us. This has disappeared. Now we have to walk across the university to get a signature on a document. We have to do all our own administration work'. Another commented, 'we have to be efficient and competitive but administration staff have been retrenched and now we have to take on their tasks. We are doing double the work. We are lecturers as well as administrators'.

Loss of shared identity and sense of community

We detected a strong sense of a loss of shared identity in many of the interviews. In part this is a response to mergers of departments. This often meant a physical move from one part of the university to another, which some have found traumatic. But in general, we identified a decline in a sense of community. One respondent described how, at his university when he arrived there 12 years ago, there were two staff clubs and they were full every lunchtime. Now he says, there is only one staff club and it is virtually empty. Instead, he said, staff members buy sandwiches for lunch and eat them in their own offices. There also used to be, he said, a university forum, where critical public debate was encouraged. 'I feel,' he said, 'an acute sense of loss. My relationships have become increasingly "virtual relationships", that is I communicate with people across the world by email daily'.

A staff representative commented, 'Academics do not feel that fellow academics are running the university. They feel very insecure and feel that they are being monitored. There is no longer that sense of community and trust in the university'.

At the core of the change in relationships is the increase in competition between staff. There is a strong sense, one said, of self-preservation. 'This

makes one less amenable to helping one's colleagues. It seems to have become a matter of survival with the Sword of Damocles hanging over us. This creates uncertainty and anxiety'. Tension had also been intensified in some departments by the introduction of two types of employment relationships: those on permanent staff and those on fixed term contracts. This creates, it was suggested, resentment between staff.

Feeling of powerlessness in the face of change

The incorporation of academics into the industrial relations system has led to a growth in academic unionism over the last decade. However, unions have not become involved in the process of restructuring and have instead focused on 'bread and butter' issues such as salaries and benefits. In particular, unions have been effective on certain campuses in representing academics facing retrenchment and insisting on a fair procedure. Indeed, in a number of cases, they have taken management to the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) or the labour court and, in some cases, have been awarded compensation for unprocedural retrenchments. There has also been an increase in union involvement in disciplinary cases including that of sexual harassment.

However, academic unionism remains weak and most grievances are dealt with on an individual level. In the words of one staff representative interviewed, 'academics generally do not like the idea of a trade union. They do not see themselves as workers and going out on strike to solve their problems'.

On some campuses the union is growing but the union representatives feel that the growth of contract employment will undermine this. Indeed on one campus we were informed that the rapid growth of casual staff had created resentment and tension between those on the permanent staff and those who had fixed term contracts.²

In general respondents felt that there had been a lack of consultation over restructuring and that the union had not played an effective role. As one staff representative commented, 'We are never taken seriously by management because we are never consulted. Things are not done out in the open. We are just there to put a stamp on management issues and that causes tension between the union executive and its members'. However it was pointed out by one of the union representatives that the union lacked the capacity to engage effectively in restructuring issues. Another commented that staff had been 'railroaded' and that now management wanted their co-operation to make the new workplace effective.

Increase in emotional labour

In order to maintain a competitive edge, academics are having to change the quality and nature of their service. Indeed, in some cases, the consistency of 'the product' is monitored through surveys of student attitudes. In other words, teaching increasingly requires the standardised display of feelings. We believe that the concept of emotional labour captures changes taking place in the academic workplace.

Following Hochschild, this term refers to the management of human feeling, during social interaction within the workplace, as shaped by the dictates of organisations. Analyses of emotional labour are crucial to fully appreciating the new academic workplace (Hochschild 1983:33).

At the core of the concept of emotional labour is that employees are expected to change the way they see themselves. This point has been made convincingly by two British anthropologists who argue that an 'audit culture' has emerged in British universities which is actively changing the way in which academics see themselves (Shore and Wright 1999:561) by changing their self concepts as professional academics to 'units of resource whose performance and productivity must constantly be audited, to become auditable bodies' (Shore and Wright 1999:563). Professionalism is being eroded, and replaced with 'the new auditable competitive performer' (Shore and Wright 1999:569).³

Respondents indicated considerable scepticism about performance related pay. On the one hand it was felt that it fostered divisions and resentment, on the other hand it was argued that it is difficult to compare the different tasks that make up the academic work process. This lack of clear definition can lead to patronage with academics 'cultivating' the head of school or the dean.

The innovators

Over the past five years significant changes have taken place in the academic workplace. Many academics feel that the autonomy that has always defined their occupational culture is being eroded and they are increasingly being defined as employees. Their role in decision-making has been reduced through changes in the composition of Senate to allow non-academic stakeholders representation. Students are no longer secondary stakeholders but see themselves as customers, and therefore, primary stakeholders.

The legacy of cosy staff associations side by side with the association of progressive academics, has been overtaken by 'bread and butter' academic unionism that focuses on service to its members at each university or technikon rather than national level collective bargaining or engagement with management over restructuring. There are currently four unions organising amongst academics: ⁴

- National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union (NEHAWU) – (academic membership unavailable);
- NTESU currently has 1200 members spread across ten branches;
- National Union of Technikon Employees of South Africa (NUTESA) – (academic membership unavailable);
- South African Parastatal and Tertiary Institutions Union (SAPTU) – currently has 2 800 members.

Above all, senior management in the universities has become increasingly professional, drawing its top staff from career academic managers. This shift to a corporate style of management has widened the gap between the salaries of academic staff and senior management. Vice-Chancellors now earn on average R688,428 per annum, well over double the highest academic salary. The highest salary, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of the North, is R912,624 per annum (*The Star* August 12, 2000).

Table 2: Comparing the academic workplace: 1995 and 2001

1995	2001
1. A degree of professional autonomy	Autonomy being eroded – becoming employees
2. Students as secondary stakeholders	Students becoming customers – primary stakeholders
3. Academics locus of power in senate	Senate downgraded
4. Cosy staff associations and a broad association of progressive academics	'Bread and Butter' academic unionism and wide spread apathy
5. Vice-Chancellors drawn from academics	Vice-chancellors become corporate style professional managers – drawing on academic managerialism

We have suggested that these changes in the academic workplace are redefining the nature of academic work and, indeed, the very identity of academics. We have used the concept of emotional labour to attempt to grasp these changes in the nature of their work. The growing demands placed on academics have created stress and low morale is widespread. 'We', in the words of one respondent, 'are being asked to do a number of jobs, and we do not have the capacity to do them all'.

Scholars in higher education echo these conclusions on academics elsewhere in the world. 'Demands on universities', writes Californian academic Burton Clark, 'have outrun their capacity to respond' (Clark 1998:129). The broad streams of endless demand converge to create, says Clark, enormous *demand overload*. Clark's solution to these demands is to actively seek innovation. He calls this the *entrepreneurial response* that contains five elements: a strengthened steering core; an expanded developmental periphery; a diversified funding base; a stimulated academic heartland; and an integrated entrepreneurial culture (Clark 1998:5-8).

While most academics we interviewed were pessimistic of the future, only a few evoked the past as a model. They were largely dismissive of what they described as a mythical collegial past. Most accepted the need for transformation but did not seem to recognise the extent to which the economy and society was being restructured in a way that demands new skills and different career trajectories (Benner 2001). Those who did, and they were few in number, were academics who were making links with organisations outside the university. These are examples of the innovative responses that Burton Clark (1998) describes as 'entrepreneurial' in his book, *The Entrepreneurial Universities*.⁵

We identified a number of innovative responses to the changing workplace. In one case staff had increased the number of graduate students from fifty-seven to seventeen hundred by introducing a 'mixed mode' of service delivery whereby staff now produced modules for trainers in the field all over the province.⁶ In another case a staff member in the department of history is successfully marketing a course on the history and use of information technology. In another case the professor of philosophy has 'reinvented' himself as an expert on business ethics and established a center generously funded by the private sector.

Arguably the most innovative response was an example of a research unit that engages in problem solving research, what Clark calls 'the expanded developmental periphery'. It is this 'developmental periphery', Clark believes, that is a 'halfway house to the outside world' becoming the organised location 'within a university for the entry and absorption of whole new modes of thinking' (Clark 1998:139). These units, he says, are established precisely to go beyond disciplinary definitions: they extend university boundaries to bring in the perspectives of outside problem-solving groups; they are prepared to take their lead from the outside and to work close to application. Importantly, however, for Clark these units must

be linked (closely or loosely) to the 'steering core and the heartland departments' (Clark 1998:138).

This last point seems to have been misunderstood by a number of universities who have developed programmes that are 'narrowly vocational and without disciplinary foundations' (Department of Education 1998:5-6). As Muller states, 'whatever else happens, the importance of mode one undergraduate training should never be in question' (Muller 2000:80). He goes on to issue a powerful warning of the dangers of undermining the disciplinary foundations of knowledge in a developing country such as South Africa:

In the end, the pervasive unstated assumption in Gibbons and Scott's advocacy of mode two is that, somewhere and somehow, mode one will continue. This is perhaps a safe bet in the developed countries, but not quite so safe in South Africa and other late developing countries where universities are part of the state run system. If a funding and incentive regime were to take Gibbons and Scott to heart and incentivize a wholesale move to mode two, the meager mode one base on which it all rests will collapse. (Muller 2000:85)

Conclusion

We have identified in this paper the rise of what we have called academic managerialism. Management is a vital part of the workplace and should not be dismissed simply because universities have been badly managed in the past. The efficient coordination of the work process, the need to motivate, monitor, and reward employees, the need for proper financial planning, budgeting, and credit control are a vital part of developing a productive academic workplace.

When we use the term managerial-ISM, we are suggesting that the style of management is inappropriate, not that the university does not need good management. Academic managerialism, for us, means that the university has uncritically adopted the discourse and logics of business to higher education and too readily accepted the 'laws' of the market economy. It has not adequately recognised the distinctive occupational culture of academics or the specificities of public sector institutions.

We have suggested, furthermore, that academic managerialism has led to a demand overload. Faced by these conflicting demands many academics have become deeply pessimistic about their future in the academic workplace. Some are attempting to exit, either by leaving the university for the private or public sector, or by moving into managerial jobs in the

university or full-time research posts. This is an *avoidance mechanism* and not a solution to the demands facing academics at the chalk-face. How widespread this flight from the chalk-face is, and how this trend could be reversed, requires further investigation.⁷

We have also identified a small group of academics who have responded to these demands in innovative ways.⁸ The difficulty, however, is ensuring that these activities strengthen what Clark refers to as 'the academic heartland'. The challenge, in the words of Colin Bundy is to 'fuse managerial imperatives with academic priorities' (Bundy 1999:11).

Academics, along other occupational groups, need to be accountable to society. Traditionally they have only been accountable to their peers. In some cases this has led to abuse and an 'ivory tower' mentality. The need for reconstruction and development in our society requires that academics meet the demands to overcome the legacy of apartheid. This may mean spending more time with students and mentoring those disadvantaged by apartheid. This is an acceptable and necessary demand.

What is clear is that any solution to the demands facing academics in the changing workplace will need to take seriously the views of academics and be sensitive to the specific features of their occupational culture. After all, teaching is the core business of the university and without the commitment and active co-operation of academics there will be NO University.

Notes

1. In theory SAQA could be highly intrusive and encroach on academic freedom. In practice the impact of SAQA on curriculum planning for universities has been minimal. Universities have simply supplied the details of their curriculum and there is no evidence of SAQA trying to interfere with universities.
2. Amendments to the Labour Relations Act make it difficult for management to casualise the staff, as the law requires contract staff to be made permanent if the contract is renewed.
3. This summary is drawn from a letter by Robert Thornton, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Witwatersrand, to his colleagues in the proposed School of Social Science, on the September 14, 2000. We would like to thank him for permission to cite the letter.
4. It is difficult to determine the number of academics who belong to unions, as neither NETUSA nor NEHAWU keep separate membership lists for academics and support service staff.
5. It is worth noting that academics are not comfortable with the term entrepreneurial as they see it as a concept that describes self-seeking profit

orientated activities. We prefer to use the concept of innovation. By innovation we mean responses that combine the strengthening of the 'academic heartland' (the core business of the university, ie teaching and development of the disciplines) with making links with outside organisations and engaging in problem solving research- consultancy.

6. Some academics raised questions about the danger of looking at innovation simply in terms of an increase in the number of students. This could lead, it was suggested, to a drop in the quality of education and a 'race to the bottom' where universities competed at the lowest common denominator.
7. There is anecdotal evidence of an increase of a reversal of the flow to the public sector and even in some cases the private sector. In both sectors there has been downsizing and in some cases disappointment with the direction of public policy.
8. It would be interesting to analyse systematically examples of innovation to ascertain whether innovation is introduced by a younger generation or whether it is not related to age.

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