A Conceptual Exploration of Academic Freedom and Institutional Autonomy in South African Higher Education:

postmodernism, globalisation and quality assurance

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Policy Studies), at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

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Declaration

I , **Denyse Jean Webbstock**, declare that

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Abstract

This thesis proposes a conceptual framework for the discussion of concepts of academic freedom and institutional autonomy in a South African higher education context. A four-cell matrix is presented at the start of the thesis that distinguishes four types of understandings of these concepts. Having discussed these concepts-in-use in different contexts, the grid is used as a framework to explicate local debates on academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

Beyond the conceptual exploration, the thesis traces a variety of broader debates in higher education in an attempt to add a richness to the South African conversations relating to academic freedom and institutional autonomy. Postmodernism and its implications for higher education in South Africa is explored, as is the more recent phenomenon (or ideology) of globalisation. Finally, the advent of external quality assurance in South Africa is considered and its role in changing perceptions of academic work and academic identity through the potential circumscribing of the academic domain is explored.

My hope is that this thesis will contribute to a broadening and deepening of the current South African debates, and at the same time, offer a uniquely South African perspective on global conversations on academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

Acknowledgements

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Abbreviations

AAUP	American Association of University Professors
ABOR	Academic Bill of Rights
ANC	African National Congress
AVU	African Virtual University
CCMA	Council for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration
CHE	Council on Higher Education
CHET	Centre for Higher Education and Transformation
CODESRIA	Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa
DoE	Department of Education
ETQA	Education and Training Quality Assurer
FVU	Francophone Virtual University
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution
HBU	Historically Black University
HE	Higher Education
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEIAAF	Higher Education, Institutional Autonomy and Academic Freedom
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Committee
HESA	Higher Education South Africa
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
Natal / UN	University of Natal
NCHE	National Commission on Higher Education
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
NSB	National Standards Bodies
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
PQM	Programme and Qualification Mix
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QPU	Quality Promotion Unit

SA	South Africa
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SAUVCA	South African Vice-Chancellor's Association
SAUVCA-CTP	South African Vice-Chancellor's Association-Committee of Technikon Principals
SERTEC	Certification Council for Technikon Education
SET	Science, Engineering and Technology
SETA	Sectoral Education and Training Authorities
SGB	Standards Generating Body
SRHE	Society for Research in Higher Education
TQM	Total Quality Management
UCT	University of Cape Town
UK	United Kingdom
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UNESCO	United Nations Economic and Social Council
UNISA	University of South Africa
USA	United States of America
Wits	University of the Witwatersrand

Methodological note

In this thesis I have been deliberately eclectic in the methodologies I have followed. While some of the research reports I have undertaken and which feed into this thesis have generally used empirical methods of both quantitative and qualitative data-gathering, I chose in this thesis to focus on conceptual exploration, using a conceptual grid of academic freedom and institutional autonomy that I developed myself in the course of an extensive literature survey. In my occupation I often conduct empirical studies, mostly with an evaluative bent. Writing a thesis thus presented for me an alternative: an opportunity to think through some of the issues and concepts that concern me at a further remove than most commissioned empirical work allows.

At an early stage of writing this thesis I contemplated undertaking a narrative analysis of policy documents on higher education in South Africa, using a methodology expounded by Roe,[1] but quickly found that limiting in its focus and in the necessity to concentrate on detail. I found that I wanted to exploit the opportunity to explore bodies of literature related to my topic more widely. In attempting to integrate insights from a broad range of writings on higher education, social policy, evaluation and quality assurance, I have focused my efforts on the development of a conceptual framework for the discussion of academic freedom and institutional autonomy. This I have presented upfront in the beginning of the thesis, and tested its usefulness in my explorations of particular challenges facing higher education in South Africa (and more generally). While it sounds rather grand, my strategy and approach most approximates Theda Skocpol's description of "interpretive historical sociologists", whose approach is

> to pay careful attention to matters of conceptual reorientation and conceptual clarification, and [to] use explicit concepts of some generality to define their topical concerns and to guide the selection and presentation of historical [or contemporary] patterns from one or more case studies. [2]

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[1] Emery Roe, *Narrative Policy Analysis: theory and practice*, Durham, NC, Duke University Press, 1994.

[2] Theda Skocpol, "Emerging agendas and recurrent strategies in historical sociology", in Skocpol, T. (ed), *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984, p.369.

I use my conceptual grid to explore certain themes at a general level of sociological analysis and then look at their implications in specific situations. One of the difficulties this has presented has been to try to ensure a smooth transition from the broad and general to the specific, and back again, and to structure the thesis accordingly. In my introduction I note that the logic of the structure is therefore not linear, but resembles the spokes of a wheel, with the conceptual grid at the axis and various explorations emanating outward.

I have based some of the case study material on knowledge of my own institution. This too has presented difficulties, ironically in terms of writing freely about knowledge gleaned from a variety of sources. Much of what I know derives from confidential reports that I have written on particular academic units, confidential commissioned investigative reports on the University – to which I have access, my own research conducted among individual academics and students, and conversations with executive members, with union members and support staff members within the institution. I have not wanted to breach anybody's confidences, and thus have confined myself only to publicly available writings relating to the University, even where my own reports and presentations are concerned.

Finally, to quote Skocpol again:

> Methodological discussions all too often portray research in an antiseptic, depersonalized manner, belying the obvious and consequential truth that scholarship is always done by real people with axes to grind and projects to pursue.[3]

While I don't believe I have a particular axe to grind, as a real person I do have a project to pursue, and that is to contribute to an understanding of the forces shaping higher education in South Africa, their impact on academic freedom and institutional autonomy, and how these affect my own institution, my own working life and that of my academic colleagues. With understanding comes enlightenment, with enlightenment comes acceptance, and with acceptance comes a calm and rational guide to future action.

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[3] Theda Skocpol, "Preface", in Skocpol, T. (ed), *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984, p.xi.

Introduction

1. Introduction

Over a decade into a new democratic society in South Africa, and higher education in this country is still in the throes of a major upheaval and reorganisation, commonly referred to as transformation. The label "transformation" refers to different kinds of fundamental change in different versions of its use but, in general, it covers an unprecedented combination of major challenges. Among the challenges to higher education generally is the huge growth in student numbers, or the so-called "massification" of higher education, which has been accompanied by a growing diversity in student enrolment. This has had implications for curriculum and mode of delivery, as educational offerings are tailored to meet a new range of student needs. Many higher education systems have also been faced with funding constraints, as well as an era of calls for greater accountability. Doing more with less has become a feature of higher education. In addition, a change in institutional governance to what some have termed "the new managerialism"[4] as one response to the perceived phenomenon of globalisation appears to be widespread. Globalisation too has been cited as a catalyst in the increasingly vocational orientation of a large proportion of educational offerings in higher education. In addition to globalisation, understood in this thesis as both an empirical phenomenon and an ideological interpretation of that phenomenon, challenges have arisen from a somewhat different quarter, that is, from epistemological challenges to the status of knowledge and a fundamental questioning of the legitimacy of the university's identity. So-called postmodern understandings of the change in role and status of the university have in some instances led to structural institutional change to

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[4] See, for example, Rosemary Deem, "Globalisation, new managerialism, academic capitalism and entrepreneurialism in universities: is the local dimension still important? *Comparative Education*, 37 (1) 2001.

further interdisciplinarity and to increase the relevance of knowledge production in higher education to a multiplicity of communities in a new networking era.

Many higher education systems are facing some of these challenges, for example, the impact of globalisation on the role of higher education institutions. Few, however, can be facing all the current challenges as well as an agenda to change the composition, the form and the substance of the institutions from an apartheid-based legacy to a system that befits a new non-racial democracy. The scale of the required transition is enormous. Already much has been achieved; the demography of student enrolment has changed dramatically,[5] institutional mergers to reduce the number of higher education institutions from 36 to 21 have taken place, a national qualifications framework has been introduced, curriculum restructuring in terms of offering programmes has been attempted in many institutions, and a new way of funding institutions has recently been implemented.

2. Academic freedom and institutional autonomy

There has been much debate around each of these challenges, and about transformation as a whole, but one of the most important issues has been relatively neglected. The long-term implications of all of these large-scale changes on academic freedom remain largely unexamined,[6] yet the question of academic freedom and

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[5] There was a marked shift of enrolments from historically black institutions to historically white ones, particularly in the period 1993 to 1999. In that period, African student enrolments grew by 74% across the sector. The changes were most dramatic in the historically white Afrikaans universities (1 117%) and the historically white English universities (94%), Nico Cloete and Ian Bunting, *Higher Education Transformation: assessing performance in South Africa*, Pretoria, CHET, 2000, pp.18-19. The overall percentage of black students in the system as a whole increased from 69% to 73% between 1997 and 2000. See Ian Bunting, "Students", in Cloete, N., Maassen, P. et al (eds), *Transformation in Higher Education: global pressures and local realities*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006, p.105.

[6] There was, however, a very fierce debate raging on the issue between staff members of the University of Cape-Town in two journals emanating from that institution, *Pretexts: Literary and Cultural Studies* and *Social Dynamics*, to which I refer extensively in this thesis. Also, partly in response to this dearth, the

institutional autonomy has become acute in the wake of a changed policy environment. In 1993, Mamdani, giving a talk at the former University of Natal, outlined his view of the question of academic freedom in Africa, and pointed out some very real dangers that we would do well to avoid in the south.[7] He outlined three different phases of "colonisation" that a university such as Makerere in Uganda has experienced. Firstly, there was the initial foundation by an imperial power that saw universities in Africa being set up in the coloniser's image, for the purpose of "meeting the short-term needs of the colonial state and economy", that is, training personnel to run the colonial state and the small private sector.[8] After independence, once the colonisers had been repatriated, a new "colonisation" by the state, usually through the national political party followed. Mamdani argues that the post-independence state set up universities (most African universities were established in the nationalist fervour post-independence) to fulfil the manpower needs of the independent state as part of the Africanisation and "developmental logic" of the period.[9] He further argues that "once the university was seen as a training ground for personnel that would manage the process of "development", it was but a short step to the conclusion that the independent state must have a key role in the very management of the university."[10] Successful academics were inevitably also members of the ruling party, and arguments about academic freedom "came to sound like a figleaf for anti-national expatriate dominance, whereas the presence of state representatives in decision-making bodies appeared as a solid guarantee of national interest".[11] Where states became authoritarian and dictatorial, however, violent and repressive confrontations between students and authorities ensued over the issue of academic freedom. Mamdani argues that there is little evidence to show, however, that "this

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Council on Higher Education (CHE) launched a national project on academic freedom at the end of 2005. It is expected to be completed in 2007.

[7] Mahmood Mamdani, "University crisis and university transformation: reflections on the African experience", Edgar Brookes Academic Freedom lecture, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 26 May 1993.

[8] Mahmood Mamdani, "Introduction: the quest for academic freedom", in Diouf, M. & Mamdani, M. (eds) *Academic Freedom in Africa*, Dakar, CODESRIA, 1994, p.1.

[9] Ibid. p.1.

[10] Ibid. p.2.

[11] Ibid. p.2.

experience (of the late 1960s and 1970s) led to any significant questioning of the developmental logic embedded in the nature of university education".[12]

Once party domination had strangled academic freedom almost entirely and the states were facing major fiscal crises, a new external threat to universities was introduced – this time in the form of international capital and structural adjustment programmes, through the institutions of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and multi-national corporations. Academics' demands for better working conditions in a time of enforced financial discipline were met with state repression and the closure of several campuses. "Universities could find neither alternate funding sources at the time of shrinking state budgets, nor effective allies in their struggle for autonomy".[13]

Mamdani's tale is a legacy of unfreedom, with universities in tow to a series of different masters. Ultimately, decades of various incursions into academic freedom rendered the universities somewhat irrelevant and unable to fulfil their original developmental agenda. He writes that:

> Driven into a corner, (academics) rediscovered the local communities that had hitherto seemed no more than a natural setting and were compelled to look at themselves from the standpoint of these very communities. Against growing odds, they came to discover their own oddity: universities seemed to have little relevance to communities preoccupied with day-to-day questions of survival. Whether viewed as potted plants of questionable aesthetic value, or simply as mere anthropological oddities, academics were hard put to justify the priority of their claims.[14]

For Mamdani, real academic freedom is a right that comes with corresponding obligations – as he sees it, a broader accountability to the local community. In these terms, freedom for universities and academics would be achieved where education and research were geared to the needs of the local community, rather than being driven by extraneous outside interests.

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[12] Mahmood Mamdani, "University crisis and university transformation: reflections on the African experience", Edgar Brookes Academic Freedom lecture, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 26 May 1993, p.2.

[13] Ibid. p.3.

[14] Ibid. p.3

3. Transformation

The above discussion highlights the importance of academic freedom and institutional autonomy in ensuring that universities are functional and relevant and able to achieve their purposes. The issue is distinctly relevant in South Africa where pressing social needs and a legacy of inequality have determined a political agenda that requires a massive transformation of the entire higher education landscape in order to address those needs and provide redress for those inequalities. In some respects, (although the underlying conditions and the global imperatives are quite different), the post-apartheid period resembles the post-independence period in Africa where "Africanisation and development" were the very clear projects of the time. South African institutions similarly also need to deal with layers of colonisation on different levels. Bawa has pointed to the colonised imagination of South African institutions of higher education. He contends that:

> The historically black universities were conceptualised as the training institutions for professionals and civil servants to serve the needs of the particular [racially segregated] communities that they were meant to serve. None of these, then or now, has ever seen itself primarily as a knowledge building institution. On the other hand, the historically white institutions did indeed see themselves as both producers of civil servants and producers of knowledge. But my assessment is that they too are colonial in their construction. Why do I say this? The reason is that our institutions – in terms of their knowledge production activities – see themselves as being supplementary to the knowledge producing institutions in the north rather than being complementary.[15]

This is evidenced in constant references to the need for international approval in, for instance, publications and the external examining system. For Bawa, like Mamdani, the achievement of freedom in a post-colonial era is bound up with an institution's relationship with the community of which it forms a part. For South African higher education universities in particular, the decolonising of their imaginations will occur when they conceive of themselves as leading producers of new knowledge or knowledges through local community engagement. That production of new knowledge requires working conditions in which strong disciplinary teams can conduct research in "a

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[15] Ahmed Bawa, "The impact of globalisation on higher education – putting the fun back into higher learning", Speech to Senate of University of KwaZulu-Natal, Westville, 17 February 2004.

relatively unfettered"[16] way. It is partly the nature of that "unfetteredness" that I am exploring in this dissertation.

Clearly, the transformation project in South Africa is considered by government and policy-makers to be too large and too important to be allowed to unfold within fairly autonomous institutions whose particular interests and those of the society as a whole do not necessarily coincide. The post-apartheid era in higher education (as in all other spheres) has been characterised by a plethora of policy change and policy formulation designed to reorganise the system in all aspects. Much of the policy-making has been driven both by the need to achieve redress and to bring some rationality to bear on what was a politically engineered, fragmented and "skewed" higher education system.[17] In doing so, some aspects of higher education have become subject to mechanisms which could be construed as far-reaching government steering or reengineering of the system, while other aspects (e.g. the change in student enrolment patterns) have happened without government intervention, or perhaps in anticipation of government intervention.[18] Given such far-reaching policy change in which institutional managers and academics are struggling to keep abreast of new realities and are concerned primarily with how to implement all the different changes at once, it would be easy to neglect a discussion of

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[16] Ahmed Bawa, "The impact of globalisation on higher education – putting the fun back into higher learning", Speech to Senate of University of KwaZulu-Natal, Westville, 17 February 2004.

[17] The deficiencies of the system of higher education inherited in 1994 included, "an inequitable distribution of access and opportunity for students and staff along axes of race, gender, class and geographic discrimination", "a chronic mismatch between higher education's outputs and the needs of a modernising economy", "a strong inclination towards closed-system disciplinary approaches and programmes that has led to inadequately contextualised teaching and research", "a lack of regulatory frameworks", and a very limited contribution to "constructing a critical civil society", *National Commission on Higher Education Report: A Framework for Transformation*, Pretoria, NCHE, 1996, pp.1-2.

[18] It has been argued that the change in enrolment patterns between 1993 and 1999 was not brought about by government decree but was undertaken by the institutions themselves as part of a market logic. Cloete and Bunting note that "it is doubtful as to whether this has occurred due to a vigorous affirmative action policy or due to black students filling the vacuum left by whites who have left the public system." Nico Cloete and Ian Bunting, *Higher Education Transformation: assessing performance in South Africa*, Pretoria, CHET, 2000, p.20. While the market mechanism must have played a role, the anticipation of changed funding regimes and possible national targets must surely also have formed part of the motivation to change enrolments.

the long-term implications for the very identity, purpose, and autonomy of higher education institutions in South Africa, and for the identity, role, status and state of freedom of the academics within them. This would be easy also because academic freedom in South Africa is currently an unfashionable topic, often seen to be a concern only of the so-called ex-open universities[19] which are concerned to safeguard those institutions from the imperatives of transformation.

4. Background to concepts used

There was a time when academic freedom was something of a glossy concept, a taken for granted right usually espoused by the left or the liberals. It was a concept used to shield the pursuit of new ideas, which could challenge prevailing orthodoxies from undue external interference. There are several contexts in which academic freedom, being faced with spectacular breaches, was asserted thus. One such is McCarthyite America,[20] where, in the face of a government and legislative crackdown on suspected communist sympathisers in universities, academic freedom was advanced as a defence of the right that should allow academics to pursue ideas unfavourable to the government of the time without fear of persecution. Another is apartheid South Africa, where academic freedom was one of the battle cries of the left in creating a relatively safe space for critique of the prevailing regime to emerge. However, in the 1990s and 2000s, the concept seems to have lost its gloss, and is seen to be becoming the preserve of conservatives and anybody else who opposes change and diversity. Dworkin comments on the status of the concept in the United States' context thus:

> The phrase 'academic freedom' collects different images and associations now than it did thirty, or maybe even ten, years ago. We thought, then, about leftist teachers and McCarthyite[21] legislators and loyalty oaths and courageous and cowardly university presidents. Liberals and radicals were all for academic freedom. Many conservatives thought it overrated or even part of the conspiracy to paint America red. Now it is the party of reform that talks down academic freedom and conservatives who call it a bulwark of Western civilization. Now the phrase makes us

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[19] These are also otherwise referred to as the historically white English medium universities.

[20] For a brief discussion on the McCarthy era see Vann C. Woodward, "Academic freedom: an analysis of two breaches", *Academic Questions*, 10 (4) 1997, p.71.

[21] Ibid. p.71.

think of insensitive professors and of speech codes that might protect students from their insensitivity. We wonder whether academic freedom forbids such protection and, if so, whether academic freedom is as important as liberals once thought.[22]

Similarly, in a South African context, Higgins writes in 2000, referring to a prior conference presentation, that:

> In South Africa, I argued, academic freedom was in danger of becoming a received idea.[23] One of the signs of this was that even trying to bring up the topic in discussions of higher educational policy tended to brand the speaker as reactionary or conservative before any actual arguments were made. Precisely because of this, I suggested, one of the tasks of the critical intellectual was to keep on thinking about academic freedom: challenging its status as a received idea by thinking about it critically, historically and theoretically, the better to make a constructive contribution to current debate and policy. [24]

He continues, arguing that "academic freedom is too important to realising the ideals of a participatory democracy to give up without a fight."[25]

In these two quotes from quite different contexts, some of the major themes in the discussions on academic freedom are hinted at. The nature of the relationship of universities to the state is central to an understanding of academic freedom, as is the relationship of academic freedom to democracy. Is academic freedom only really important when it appears to be threatened by oppressive regimes, and otherwise only a defence of traditional privilege advanced by complacent professors in the face of legitimate change? Can there be academic freedom in non-democratic societies? If academic freedom is understood negatively as the freedom from interference, is every attempt by governments to regulate academic activity a breach of academic freedom, no matter what the nature of the regime in question? Is it a universal good, important in all contexts, or are there some times and places where it must necessarily give way to the ideals of social restructuring? Is it indeed central to the ideals of participatory democracy or, viewed from another perspective, might it impede the goals of participatory

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[22] Ronald Dworkin, "A new interpretation of academic freedom", in Menand, L. (ed), *The Future of Academic Freedom*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p.181.

[23] Higgins uses "received idea" in the Barthesian sense of an idea that has become such a label that the content is no longer examined.

[24] John Higgins, "Academic freedom in the new South Africa", *boundary 2*, 27 (1) 2000, p.98.

[25] Ibid.

democracy from being reached where it is used as a defence of traditional (and exclusive) privileges?

5. Structure of this thesis

This thesis attempts to contribute to a discussion on the long-term implications of the policy changes in higher education in South Africa for academic freedom and institutional autonomy. A number of conceptual issues and questions underlying the major themes of academic freedom, institutional autonomy, transformation and quality assurance are explored. Among them are: to what extent can academic freedom and institutional autonomy still be regarded as worthwhile attributes of higher education in a time of transformation in a developing country? What concept of academic freedom is most apposite to this context? Is a concern for academic freedom in this context just another "figleaf" for the maintenance of privilege? To what extent do we need a reconceptualisation of academic freedom to take account of a new reality in South African higher education? To what extent is a discussion of academic freedom at all anachronistic in a post-modern era? To what extent is academic freedom overtaken by the realities of globalisation and new research imperatives?

The logic of this thesis is decidedly not linear. Instead, its structure is more like a wheel with spokes extending outwards. At the centre of the wheel is a concern for developing an understanding of academic freedom and institutional autonomy in South African higher education, and the development of an intellectual tool to make sense of debates relating to that issue. This is the substance of Chapter One.

Chapter Two sees an application of the conceptual grid presented in the first chapter to United States, British and African contexts in general in order to compare and situate the local debates that follow. In Chapter Three, I focus on South African higher education, using the conceptual grid to unravel and explore the current debates on academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

Extending outwards from a conceptual discussion of the local debates are several lines of enquiry exploring a variety of challenges to academic freedom and institutional

autonomy more generally. One such challenge lies in the realm of epistemology. With contestations arising from postmodernism around the understanding of knowledge, and thus the role of universities, many of the foundations of the concept of academic freedom and institutional autonomy have been severely challenged. The underlying question is to examine the extent to which the broader discussions on postmodernism have relevance for South African universities. Chapter Four, thus, considers postmodernist debates and their implications for universities as organisations.

Following on from the general discussion on postmodernism in higher education, Chapter Five attempts to examine the way in which postmodernist understandings of knowledge have had implications for disciplines and disciplinarity, and how this has played itself out in a particular South African institutional context.

Extending outwards again in the next broad line of enquiry, the challenge to academic freedom and institutional autonomy arising from both the empirical phenomenon and the ideology of globalisation are explored. Chapter Six examines globalisation in relation to higher education in general, and its implications for academic freedom and institutional autonomy. One version of the globalisation argument is that academic freedom is increasingly under threat from incipient bureaucratisation and calls for accountability by the state. The other pole of the globalisation argument - that threats to academic freedom arise in the main not from the state, but from the corporatisation of the university and increasing managerialism within it, is also included. In this chapter, I posit that the perceived threats to academic freedom that are central to the rather narrow debates in South Africa can be better understood in the context of the broader sets of forces arising from globalisation affecting higher education in general. I advance the thesis that there are a multiplicity of factors affecting academic freedom in higher education; accordingly, simple dichotomies between views that regard the state as the main source of threat, or, on the other hand, that managerialism in institutions is the main limiting factor on academic freedom, fail to take sufficient account of what Barnett has termed conditions of "supercomplexity".[26] Central to my argument is that an

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[26] Ronald Barnett, *Realizing the University in an Age of Supercomplexity*, Ballmoor, Buckingham, SRHE and Open University Press, 2000.

understanding of academic freedom issues in South Africa can be deepened through recognising the complex interplay of a variety of sets of factors at a broader level.

To ground the broader discussion of Chapter Six in local realities, in Chapter Seven I investigate the relevance of the globalisation thesis for academic freedom in African and South African institutions of higher education. I further outline consequent implications for academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

In Chapter Eight, I examine the view that the state is the main source of threat to academic freedom in South Africa by undertaking an analysis of policy change in one area, that of the introduction of quality assurance to South African higher education. Quality assurance in South Africa is a relatively new phenomenon, and much policy work has been undertaken in this area. Quality assurance in many countries can be seen as the application of the logic of the market, through means of the "evaluative state",[27] to the maintenance and guarantee of academic standards, and indeed, many systems have been borrowed from the commercial sector but implemented through agencies of the state. In South Africa, the issues of redress and the need for system transformation also play a role, so that the introduction of quality assurance provides a very interesting case study highlighting the changing relationship of the institutions to the state, as well as responses to changing economic imperatives such as globalisation.

Having examined claims of increased managerialism and perceived state intervention in higher education in South Africa, in my conclusion I attempt to draw together the various themes explored in each of the chapters. I outline the conceptual grid and the issues it highlights in relation to concepts of academic freedom and institutional autonomy, and discuss the challenges to academic freedom in South Africa examined in the body of this thesis. Finally, I outline areas for possible further research that would serve to extend the main arguments presented herein.

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[27] Guy Neave, "The evaluative state reconsidered", *European Journal of Education*, 33 (3) 1998.

6. Conclusion

In this thesis, I do not set out to find conclusions to empirical investigations into whether, and to what extent, academic freedom and institutional autonomy are under threat in South Africa, or to provide definitive answers to the searching questions posed. Instead, I seek to explore a variety of themes and influences on academic freedom and institutional autonomy and to posit a conceptual model for use in explicating the debates and conceptual understandings, in order better to understand the complexity of academic freedom issues more generally and in the particular context of South Africa. My hope is that this thesis will contribute to a broadening and deepening of the current South African debates, and at the same time, offer a uniquely South African perspective on global conversations on academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

Chapter One

Academic freedom and institutional autonomy – the concepts

… in situations where everyone is under great emotional stress, indifference is unthinkable; at such times all opinions are construed as political ones. To be apolitical is tantamount to having assumed a political stance, but one which pleases no one.

Paul Bowles, Preface to "The Spider's House"

1. Introduction

Academic freedom is something of an over-determined concept. It is used in many ways and has so many referents that to some extent it has lost its meaning or meanings. Higgins,[28] as mentioned in the Introduction, refers to it as a received idea, a phrase used unconsciously and uncritically as a convenient label for an unquestioned set of assumptions. In this chapter I attempt to unravel some of these meanings and to provide a conceptual grid on which to overlay a discussion of types of understandings of academic freedom. In so doing, I explore the history and philosophical background of each of the types, their main characteristics and the metaphors that describe the relationship between the university, the state and society that underpin them. My conceptual grid is simply a tool designed to organise and explore different understandings of academic freedom and their uses. This is not to say that these types apply so neatly in reality, nor to refute that most often an eclectic and under-theorised combination of aspects of each of the types is used in arguments about academic

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[28] John Higgins, "Academic freedom in the new South Africa", *boundary 2*, 27 (1) 2000.

freedom. It is, however, an attempt to clarify the concept, and the concepts-in-use in different contexts in order better to inform discussions about academic freedom in the South African context.

2. Concepts of academic freedom

As a general concept, academic freedom is inextricably linked with considerations of institutional autonomy.[29] After all, the pursuit of academic work or scholarship takes place within the context of institutions designed for that purpose. While research also takes place in other types of institutions – large corporations, for example - the concept of academic freedom is not normally seen to apply in such contexts where intellectual property rules and the laws of contract determine the scope and ownership of that work. Thus an investigation of academic freedom necessarily also examines the nature of the institutions in which it is seen to apply.

In examining the concept of academic freedom, then, I attempt, in the first part of this chapter, to explore the historical roots of the four types I identify. I then trace the development over time of the use of the concept of academic freedom in a number of different contexts. I suggest different understandings of the nature of the university as the organisation within which academic freedom applies and relate these to the conceptual grid. Finally, I examine the institution's relationship to the state and society in each of the four types, and what analogies or metaphors can be used to describe these relationships.

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[29] At least, this is the case in three of the four types I outline. In the fourth type, institutional autonomy is there in the counterfactual, so to speak, as its denial forms part of the understanding of academic freedom used.

3. Conceptual grid

The literature on academic freedom is both dense and voluminous and, for the most part, with some notable exceptions, also under-theorised. In many instances the concept used is assumed to be part of a common-sense understanding, but that "common-sense" has, in the post-modernist discussions, been called into question. Part of my project, thus, is to offer a simple but theoretically-grounded way of thinking about academic freedom that helps to clarify its use and increase understanding of the concept in different contexts, but especially in a South African one.

In order to unpack the concept of academic freedom, I have used a very simple four-cell matrix: the vertical axis represents a continuum of uses of the concept, from those which are centred around individuals to those which are based on communitarian understandings of academic freedom. In the latter category, academic freedom is seen to pertain to groups of people e.g. academic communities, or to institutions, rather than to the individuals within them. The horizontal axis represents a continuum of understandings of freedom from negative to positive; those that are based on a negative concept of liberty, wherein freedom obtains in being left alone to pursue one's activities (freedom from); and those that relate freedom to positive action on others and the world (freedom to). This has provided a matrix of four different versions of the concept of academic freedom, based on different histories and contexts, that can be applied to organise thinking about academic freedom in a multiplicity of contexts.

Grid of Academic Freedom Concepts-in-use

1. Liberal

Individual

Characteristics: knowledge as pursuit
of truth

freedom as negative liberty

individual rights

Roots: Enlightenment, rise of science,
grand narrative of modernity, rise
of nation state

Relationship to state: separate, hostile

Metaphor: boundary

2. Civic

Characteristics: knowledge as pursuit of truth,
progress

freedom as positive liberty

Roots: German Idealists. Bildung

Relationship to state: state as facilitator

Metaphor: two sides of same coin

Negative liberty — Positive liberty

3. Guild

Characteristics: knowledge as pursuit
of truth

freedom as negative liberty

Institutional autonomy

Roots: medieval

Relationship to state: separate spheres of
influence, trust

Metaphor: gentleman's agreement

Communitarian

4. Embedded

...tics: knowledge as provisional,
...t-bound, plural, performativity

...led, one knowledge
...ame ends

3.1 The classical liberal version of the concept – Quadrant One

1. Liberal

Individual

Characteristics: knowledge as pursuit of truth

freedom as negative liberty

individual rights

Roots: Enlightenment

rise of science

grand narrative of modernity

rise of nation state

Relationship to state: separate, hostile

Metaphor: boundary

Negative liberty

Quadrant One (Q1)

Characteristics

In the first quadrant, appears the classical liberal individualist use of academic freedom (hereafter referred to as the "liberal" version of the concept). Underlying this use of concept are three important elements.

First, it is based on a belief in knowledge as the pursuit and incremental unfolding of fundamental truth about reality. Knowledge is important for its own sake, and not for utilitarian ends. Also inherent in this use of the concept is a view that the university is legitimated by the underlying idea of reason.

Second, it rests on an understanding of freedom as negative liberty, that is, the lack of interference by external authorities or markets with respect to academic enquiry and the corresponding belief that such enquiry is best undertaken by those with the expertise to do so in an unfettered way. The concept of liberty that prevails in this model can be traced back to John Stuart Mill and his conviction that non-interference defines liberty. As he writes, "the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilised community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others."[30] In all other respects, interference leads to a reduction in liberty. Furthermore, in this version of the concept, academic freedom is seen as a subset of individual human rights, and, in particular, the right to freedom of speech.

Third, there is a corresponding understanding of the relationship of the academy to the state as one characterised by two sides separated by a boundary. The academy is, in this view, somewhat separate from the state, and the cause of academic freedom is to ensure that the boundary between institution and state is rolled as far back towards non-interference by the state as possible in order to protect the individual rights of academics within the institutions.

Roots

The liberal version of the concept of academic freedom is regarded as a product of the Enlightenment, inextricably bound up with the rise of reason as the defining principle of science and knowledge. While its roots in modernity define it, it has currency in many contexts and is still arguably the dominant understanding of academic freedom. In Chapter Two, I discuss two instances of its continued applicability in the late 20th and early 21st century. One is in Britain, where it was asserted most forcefully during the Thatcherite 1980s (although the "guild" version of the concept is more applicable here), and the other is the contemporary United States of America where, despite the rise of

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[30] J.S. Mill, *Utilitarianism, On Liberty and Considerations on Representative Government*, London, Dent, 1972, pp.72-73.

different understandings locally, the liberal individualist version of the concept is most often used. In Chapter Three, I outline its use in the current South African context.

In this liberal view, academic freedom accompanied the increasing secularisation of higher education studies during the Enlightenment and was chiefly asserted against the power of the church. For instance, William Hoye writes that "typically modernity would assert that academic freedom arose during the Renaissance and Enlightenment, in other words, with the inception of the modern age."[31] As an example of this view, he quotes the *Handbuch des StaatsRechts der Bundesrepubliek Deutschland*, a respected reference work of German jurisprudence, which states that "the intellectual roots of academic freedom go back to Humanism and the Enlightenment".[32] In this text academic freedom is seen as the struggle to free scientific enquiry from theological dogmatics, beginning, in Germany, with the founding of Halle (1694) and Gottingen (1737), marking the beginning of the modern German university with its obligation to freedom of thought as opposed to its medieval predecessors. Here academic freedom is understood as a freedom from external authorities or outside coercion, which has become a predominant view in the modern conception.

Similarly, the entry on academic freedom in the Columbia Encyclopedia states that:

> Historically, academic freedom developed during the Enlightenment. Early cultures, which viewed education as a system of absorbing a well-defined subject matter, offered little opportunity for speculation. The medieval universities also operated within a field of definite scope, primarily theological, and any teacher or scholar who extended inquiry beyond the approved limits was subject to the charge of heresy. The scientific method of analysing data and establishing hypotheses, a vital concomitant of academic freedom, was initiated during the Enlightenment, mainly by scholars outside university life such as Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Voltaire.[33]

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[31] William J. Hoye, "The religious roots of academic freedom", *Theological Studies*, 58 (3) 1997, p.411.

[32] Thomas Oppermann, "Freiheit von Forschung und Lehre", in Isensee, J. and Kirchhof, P. (eds), *Handbuch des StaatsRechts der Bundesrepubliek Deutschland 6*, Heidelberg, C.F. Muller, 1989, 145 p.2, quoted in William J. Hoye, "The religious roots of academic freedom", *Theological Studies*, 58 (3) 1997, p.411.

[33] *Columbia Encyclopedia*, entry on academic freedom, their information derived from Richard Hofstadter and Walter P. Metzger, *The Development of Academic Freedom in the United States*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1955.

In these definitional understandings then, there are three defining trends in the history of the modern university that gave shape to the concept of academic freedom.

The first is the rise of science and concurrent secularism in the development of knowledge, which challenged the circumscribed theological nature of the late medieval universities in Europe. At first, as the Columbia Encyclopedia entry points out, the growth of scientific knowledge occurred outside the universities.[34] However, one of the major transitions to modernity was the incorporation of the scientific paradigm into the universities to transform their institutional identities. Universities changed in a very gradual and fraught process from being institutions whose function was the transmission of already received, primarily theological knowledge, to being sites of the production of new, primarily scientific and philosophical knowledge. Delanty writes that:

> While the Renaissance was linked with the universities, the Enlightenment was not and most of the great philosophers of the Enlightenment era – Descartes, Bacon, Hobbes, Locke – worked outside the university. The incorporation of applied science into the university did not occur until the second half of the nineteenth century and it was to prove decisive for the national economies of the leading powers, Germany, France, Britain and the United States…The Enlightenment thus became academized by a professionally organized knowledge elite.[35]

A second trend is the rise in the belief in the importance of knowledge as the pursuit of truth for the ultimate end of progress in society – the so-called "grand narrative" of modernity.[36] This belief has fundamental implications for the identity of universities as institutions. In referring to the university in the age of so-called liberal modernity, Delanty writes that:

> The modern idea of the university derives from the Enlightenment which also bequeathed the notion that the university rests on an underlying *idea* which legitimates its mode of knowledge. This idea comes from the prevailing cultural models of the age: the unity of culture and the universality of cultural values. The nineteenth century adhered to the overriding belief in the possibility of truth and the

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[34] See also Richard Hofstadter and Walter P. Metzger, *The Development of Academic Freedom in the United States*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1955, p.53.

[35] Gerard Delanty, *Challenging Knowledge: the University in the Knowledge Society*, Ballmoor, Buckingham, SRHE and Open University Press, 2001, p.31.

[36] Many writers on postmodernism refer to the narratives or stories underlying the telling of histories from different perspectives, with the modern version of the "grand narrative" of the Enlightenment as described above. See, for instance, Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1997.

> spiritual mission of knowledge. Although the various national traditions differed in their attitude to the status and function of knowledge, there was widespread support for the view that the pursuit of knowledge is necessary for the well-being of society. The university was the dominant site for the production of knowledge, which was taken out of the margins of society and placed under the supervision of the state.[37]

Delanty here refers to a third discernible trend, discussed below, which is the rise of the nation-state and the increasing incorporation of the university to its service. But first the view of the university as premised on reason bears further explication.

Readings' thesis is that the modern university has had three ideas which have functioned as what he calls its referent, or that which characterises it and provides its rationale. These have been, in turn, reason (the Kantian university), culture (the Humboldtian model) and the techno-bureaucratic notion of excellence (the posthistorical model).[38] Relevant for the discussion of the liberal version of academic freedom is the notion that the modern university rests on the legitimating premise of the Kantian concept of reason. Readings elaborates on the Kantian idea of the university as outlined in *The Conflict of the Faculties.*[39] For Kant, there are three higher faculties, theology, law and medicine, which draw their authority from outside sources: the Bible, the civil code, and the decrees of the medical profession, and which are therefore based on established tradition rather than scientific enquiry. Philosophy, however, "questions the prescriptions of the legislative power and asks fundamental questions on the basis of reason alone, interfering with the higher faculties in order to critique their grounds. The life of the Kantian University is, therefore, a perpetual conflict between established

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[37] Gerard Delanty, *Challenging Knowledge: the University in the Knowledge Society*, Ballmoor, Buckingham, SRHE and Open University Press, 2001, p.26.

[38] Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1997, p.14. The ideas of the university as an institution of culture and currently of bureaucratic excellence are discussed later in this chapter.

[39] Immanual Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, Mary J. Gregor (trans), Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1992. The first major debate on the idea of the university as a centre for liberal education was initiated by Kant in a plea to the king of Prussia to grant academic freedom to philosophers. This set of essays was published in 1798 and set the terms for a long debate on academic freedom and the idea of the university .

tradition and rational inquiry".[40]   Rational enquiry requires freedom from interference. Kant writes, "It is absolutely essential that the learned community at the university also contain a faculty that is independent of the government's command with regard to its teachings; one that, having no commands to give, is free to evaluate everything, and concerns itself with the interests of the sciences, that is, with truth: one in which reason is authorized to speak out publicly. For without a faculty of this kind, the truth would not come to light..."[41]

Readings expounds Kant's views thus:

The conflict between the tradition established in the three higher faculties … and the free inquiry of the lower faculty (philosophy) leads to a grounded rationality. Each particular inquiry, each discipline, develops itself by interrogating its own foundations with the aid of the faculty of philosophy. Thus, inquiry passes from mere empirical practice to theoretical self-knowledge by means of self-criticism. Each discipline seeks its own purity – what is essential to it. And what is essential to philosophy is nothing other than this search for the essential itself: the faculty of critique. In this sense, the lower faculty turns out to be the higher, the queen of the sciences, the discipline that incarnates the pure principle that animates the University and differentiates it from either a technical training school (a guild) or a specialized academy (a royal society).[42]

The Kantian university is founded on the autonomy of reason gained through self-criticism. It is the self-reflective nature of scholarship, and philosophy in particular, that justifies the university. This would seem to imply, given the quote from Kant above, that autonomy from the interference of the state would be necessary for such self-criticism to flourish but, as Readings notes, there is a paradox with respect to the social mission of the Kantian University. He writes that while it is the role of philosophy to protect the university from abuse of power by the state in "limiting the rule of established interests in the higher faculties", the function of the university is to produce technicians for the state, and the role of the state is to protect the university to ensure the rule of reason in public life.[43] In other words, the relationship is symbiotic.

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[40] Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1997, p.57.

[41] Immanual Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties*, Mary J. Gregor (trans), Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1992, pp.28-29.

[42] Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1997, p.57.

[43] Ibid. p.58.

Relationship of institution to state/society

Important in this discussion is the understanding of the role of the state with respect to the universities. As noted above, the third trend in the transition of the university to modernity is the accompanying rise of the nation-state and the change in the function of the university. As universities became less places of medieval theological scholarship, they became producers of 'men of affairs', a new educated bourgeois elite needed to administer modern nation-states. This came at some cost to the autonomy of the academy. As the university became central to the process of modernisation, the central question became how to balance the independence of scholarship with the right of the state to have some measure of control over the fields pertinent to running the state's affairs, that is, law, theology and medicine.[44] Hofstadter and Metzger point out that:

> … it had been, above all, the pluralism of medieval life that provided these powerful corporations [universities] with the source of their autonomy; as national states arose, sovereigns, princes, and parliaments took upon themselves the right to meddle in the internal affairs of universities, appointing and discharging professors at will and mocking at the former pride and autonomy of the masters.[45]

Indeed, after the mid-eighteenth century, in most countries of Europe, the university became incorporated to the service of the state by rulers and despots who wanted to create an administration based on formal competence and formal qualification. This was particularly the case in France in what Neave terms the Napoleonic model of autonomy where "the revolutionary doctrine of the Republic, one and indivisible, brought both state and nation together by administrative means. Teaching and learning were not conceived as independent of the state, but rather expressions of a unity that had already been achieved."[46]

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[44] Guy Neave, "On being economical with university autonomy: being an account of the retrospective joys of a written constitution", in Tight, M. (ed), *Academic Freedom and Responsibility*, Milton Keynes, SRHE and Open University Press, 1988, p.34.

[45] Richard Hofstadter and Walter P. Metzger, *The Development of Academic Freedom in the United States*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1955, p.41.

[46] Guy Neave, "On being economical with university autonomy: being an account of the retrospective joys of a written constitution", in Tight, M. (ed), *Academic Freedom and Responsibility*, Milton Keynes, SRHE and Open University Press, 1988, p.36.

As the university became increasingly important in the transition to modernity in western Europe, the patrons of the university changed from private and clerical interests to the state.[47] A new alliance between state and university developed. Delanty writes, "From the Enlightenment onwards the university developed under the auspices of the central and national state providing it with a system of knowledge, which was at the same time, a system of power."[48] It is these roots which underlie the concept of academic freedom in Quadrant Two – the civic view, which is discussed below, and which is evident in the further development of European universities.

The further development of the university in Anglo contexts was based on a much more utilitarian understanding of the purpose of the university and a separation of the university from the immediate power of the state. Neave argues that the basis on which the British theory of autonomy rests is one derived from Whig constitutional theory of the eighteenth century, reinforced by nineteenth century liberal theories of the state.[49] He writes that, unlike the experience in France and Germany, in Britain the university was neither incorporated as part of the national bureaucracy, nor was it subject to a coherent constitutional or administrative theory of the relationship between state and university. Indeed, universities (particularly Oxford and Cambridge) were viewed as private property-owning corporations that governed and regulated themselves. While some provincial universities were developed on other models, the level of self-government in British universities in general was traditionally much higher than in their European counterparts.[50]

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[47] Gerard Delanty, *Challenging Knowledge: the University in the Knowledge Society*, Ballmoor, Buckingham, SRHE and Open University Press, 2001, p.30.

[48] Ibid. p.30.

[49] Guy Neave, "On being economical with university autonomy: being an account of the retrospective joys of a written constitution", in Tight, M. (ed), *Academic Freedom and Responsibility*, Milton Keynes, SRHE and Open University Press, 1988, p.37.

[50] Ibid. p.37. Neave was writing in the 1980s; his assessment of the extent of British universities' self-government and internal self-validation may well have been different had he been writing at the end of the 1990s, after the effects of the Thatcher era onslaughts on the autonomy of universities had become evident.

Main metaphors

The relationship of the university and the state in modernity was not simply one of state domination, however, and it differed in different European countries and, as noted above, certainly followed a different trajectory in the British context. But it is the spectre of state domination that defines the version of academic freedom in this quadrant. The main underlying metaphor describing the relationship of the state and the university in this version is that of a boundary between two different spheres. In the Kantian model of autonomy, that boundary is selectively permeable. While Kant is often considered to be the Enlightenment philosopher emphasising academic freedom par excellence, his model is a dualistic one, as noted above, recognising the right of the state to intervene selectively in those areas that had a direct bearing on the administration of public order, though not in the area of philosophy.[51]

But it is really Kant's message that philosophy defines the university and that philosophy is best carried out free from external constraints that informs the version of academic freedom in this quadrant. As Delanty writes, "Kant's defence of the university as a place in which truth is reflected upon had a great impact on the subsequent history of the university as an Enlightenment design and created the justification for academic freedom in terms of knowledge as an end: the university was the protector of the nation's cognitive structures, that is, its cultural models as well as its mode of knowledge."[52] Philosophy in this view is seen as universal knowledge, and it is the function of the university to provide a safe, autonomous space within which knowledge in the form of the disciplines can be pursued for its own end. The university in this view is somewhat separated from society and the protection and flourishing of knowledge necessitates freedom from the service of political or other ends. But knowledge in this sense is pursued by individuals within that safe space and this has given rise to the view that individual academics should have the right to teach, write and research in the pursuit of

[51] Guy Neave, "On being economical with university autonomy: being an account of the retrospective joys of a written constitution", in Tight, M. (ed), *Academic Freedom and Responsibility*, Milton Keynes, SRHE and Open University Press, 1988, pp.34-35.

[52] Gerard Delanty, *Challenging Knowledge: the University in the Knowledge Society*, Ballmoor, Buckingham, SRHE and Open University Press, 2001, p.32.

truth without fear of intervention by any outside authority. This is certainly the pervading idea of academic freedom in those contexts in which academia has traditionally been regarded as necessarily separate from the state. This sense of individual rights is evident also in the version of academic freedom discussed under Quadrant Two.

3.2 The civic version of the concept – Quadrant Two

2. Civic

Individual

Characteristics: knowledge as pursuit of truth

progress

freedom as positive liberty

Roots: German Idealists

Bildung

Relationship to state: state as facilitator

Metaphor: two sides of same coin

Positive liberty

Quadrant Two (Q2)

Characteristics

In what I have termed the "civic"[53] version of academic freedom, the fundamental difference from the "liberal" version lies in its roo t conception of freedom. In terms of Isaiah Berlin's two concepts of liberty in political thought, that is freedom *from* interference in one's pursuits (negative liberty) and freedom *to* carry out a pursuit or freedom *for* a particular end (positive liberty), this version posits autonomy positively.[54] Instead of seeing freedom exercised in being left alone in an autonomous space to pursue truth, this version sees freedom consisting in being part of a facilitatory context, in order to pursue a truth that will result in the positive advancement of the whole. This concept of freedom still pertains to individuals but sees individuals as part of society, contributing to the overall well-being of that society. Individuals are not seen as autonomous moral agents pursuing their own chosen ends but as agents who are enabled to further some conception of the good life. This is the Enlightenment grand narrative of progress writ large; knowledge and hence truth are not pursued for their own sake but serve towards the overall end of human progress.

The second characteristic of this version lies in its underlying concept of the state, and the relationship of the university to the state. Rather than being seen as a 'big brother' regulator interfering in academic affairs, the state is regarded as an enabler or a facilitator of the conditions within which free enquiry can take place. More than that, the state is a guarantor of the cultural life of the nation, of which the pursuit of knowledge is an expression.

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[53] Originally I termed this quadrant the "republican" version. However, in very recent debates in South Africa the term "republican", emanating from the work of André du Toit, which he posits in opposition to the "liberal" conception, has gained prominence in the South African debates. Instead of a simple dichotomy, however, I have distilled the concept further into four different quadrants. As du Toit's use of "republican" would probably cover two of them, I have chosen the term "civic" to refer to one of these in a bid to avoid confusion.

[54] Isaiah Berlin, "Two concepts of liberty", in *Four Essays on Liberty*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1969, pp.118-172.

Roots

This conception derives from what is arguably the beginning of the modern university located in the debate around the foundation of the University of Berlin in 1810, particularly in the writings of von Humboldt. The German idealist philosophers,[55] while regarding the Kantian idea of the university and of academic freedom as essential, "reacted against the bourgeois utilitarian conception of knowledge that was emerging with the Enlightenment and saw the university as a kind of social utopia, a 'republic of letters', or 'republic of science' that would imitate the republic of the *polis* that modernity was seen as promising."[56] The understanding of knowledge was not very different from that in the version in Quadrant One, that is that knowledge, in order to be emancipatory, must be protected from the rest of society but, as Delanty points out, freedom and knowledge were one side of the coin, nation and culture the other. In von Humboldt's view the university was not just "the cradle of autonomous knowledge but also the custodian of the cognitive structure of the nation."[57] The university's role was seen as that of transmitting cultural and national heritage.

This view, elaborated above by Delanty, appears largely to be based on Readings' thesis that the modern university has had three referents, the second one being culture. For Readings, the contribution of the German idealists to the development of the modern university was "to propose that the way to reintegrate the multiplicity of known facts into a unified cultural science is through *Bildung*, the ennoblement of character. Through *Bildung*, the nation-state can achieve scientifically the cultural unity that the Greeks once possessed naturally."[58] There are two important aspects to the understanding of academic freedom based on these roots. First, that knowledge is understood not as pure

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[55] Fichte, Schleiermacher, von Humboldt, Schiller, Hegel – see Delanty p.33 and Readings pp.62-69. Also see the discussion in Chapter three based on Lyotard's outlining the different positions in the debate surrounding the founding of the University of Berlin – Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, p.32.

[56] Gerard Delanty, *Challenging Knowledge: the University in the Knowledge Society*, Ballmoor, Buckingham, SRHE and Open University Press, 2001, p.33.

[57] Ibid. p.34.

[58] Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1997, p.65.

reason but also as a process of aesthetic and moral education (*Bildung*) or the cultivation of character, thus applying to individuals. Second, that *Bildung* can, however, only be developed within a framework of tradition embodied and enabled by the state. Readings writes that "the nation-state will come to re-embody the unity that the multiplication and disciplinary separation of knowledges have imposed in the intellectual sphere, that the division of labor has imposed in the social sphere."[59] The implication for this understanding of academic freedom is that it applies to individuals, in building their moral capacity, but that development of character can only flourish within and serve the end of furthering the cultural unity of the state. Readings sums his thesis up in the following way:

> The University of Culture, instituted by Humboldt, draws its legitimacy from culture, which names the synthesis of teaching and research, process and product, history and reason, philology and criticism, historical scholarship and aesthetic experience, the institution and the individual. Thus the revelation of the idea of culture and the development of the individual are one. Object and process unite organically, and the place they unite is the University, which thus gives the people and idea of the nation-state to live up to and the nation-state a people capable of living up to that idea.[60]

There is an important caveat to Humboldt's version of academic freedom that makes it very clearly an idea of its time (and certainly pre-1968). While academic freedom applies to individuals within the appropriate external conditions for the maintenance of the freedom to pursue academic endeavours, it does not apply to them equally. In Humboldt's model, the university is not a community of equals but a descending academic and administrative hierarchy, with various degrees of institutional autonomy vested in different grades. The chairs of disciplines would have the greatest degree of autonomy, then fellow academics and then students.[61] Students did indeed have academic freedom, that is, the freedom to learn (*Lehrfreiheit*), just as academics had the freedom to teach (*Lernfreiheit*) in the community of scholarship, but not as equals. *Lehrfreiheit* is not to be understood as a critical engagement and active participation of

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[59] Ibid. p.65.

[60] Ibid. p. 65. The main contribution of Humboldt to the development of the modern university is most often considered to be his emphasis on the main function of the University as carrying out research as well as transmitting knowledge through teaching.

[61] See the discussion in Guy Neave, "On being economical with university autonomy: being an account of the retrospective joys of a written constitution", in Tight, M. (ed), *Academic Freedom and Responsibility*, Milton Keynes, SRHE and Open University Press, 1988, p.35.

students in their learning in a relationship of equality with their teachers, but simply as the right to study, albeit within a master-pupil relationship.

The relationship of the institution to the state/society

The relationship to the state and society in this view is not an antithetical or hostile one, as could be construed of the classical liberal version of academic freedom discussed under Quadrant One, although some of the Idealist thinkers, including Humboldt, are more circumspect about the extent of the role of the state vis-à-vis the university than others. But the roles are interlinked. As Readings explains:

> The University's social mission is not to be understood in terms of either thought or action. The University is not just a site for contemplation that is then to be transformed into action [as could very well be the case in the understanding of the role of the university in Quadrant One]. The University, that is, is not simply an instrument of state policy; rather, the University must embody thought as action, as striving for an ideal. This is its bond with the state, for state and University are the two sides of a single coin. The University seeks to embody thought as action toward an ideal; the state must seek to realize action as thought, the idea of the nation. The state protects the action of the University; the University safeguards the thought of the state. And each strives to realize the idea of national culture.[62]

Main metaphors

While Delanty and Readings both use the metaphor of two sides of a coin to describe the relationship of the university to the state, words such as "protect", "embody", "facilitate" and "enable" suggest a softer metaphor, rather more the enlightened guardian and mentor, the great facilitator, a buffer body. The boundary metaphor of Quadrant One is not applicable here. Indeed, the university is immersed in society which is embodied by the state, but at the same time, the university does occupy a protected space within that context in which knowledge (understood not as pure reason, but as *Bildung*) can be pursued to further the moral and cultural progress of the whole.

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[62] Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1997, p.69.

3.3 The guild version of the concept of academic freedom – Quadrant Three

3. Guild

Negative liberty ─────────────────────────────────

Characteristics: knowledge as pursuit of truth

freedom as negative liberty

institutional autonomy

Roots: medieval

Relationship to state: separate spheres of influence

trust

Metaphor: gentleman's agreement

Communitarian

Quadrant Three (Q3)

Characteristics

The 'guild' concept of academic freedom has much in common with the liberal individualist version outlined in Quadrant One. It has much the same concept of freedom, that is, that autonomy consists in being left alone to pursue knowledge, and much the same idea of knowledge, that is, that knowledge is based on scientific enquiry based on reason. However, the emphasis in this quadrant is on academic freedom applying to communities of disciplinary experts and institutional autonomy, rather than on individual academics' rights to freedom of speech, or to research and teach

unimpeded by external constraints. In this view, academic freedom is not considered a special kind of freedom of speech and, indeed, individual academics are subject to the norms, standards and practices of the discipline in the first instance, and the institution in the second. Related to this aspect is the belief in the necessity for academic self-governance in order to pursue truth effectively. As Haskell writes, "The cardinal principle of professional autonomy is collegial self-governance; its inescapable corollary is that only one's peers are competent to judge one's performance."[63] Peer regulation of the discipline is all-important and peers have the right to curtail the academic activities of individuals should they not adhere to the norms and standards of the discipline community. Academic freedom is about the autonomy and authority of scholarly communities of the competent and not about individual rights of scholars to teach, say and publish whatever they please.

Roots

While this version is undeniably also "liberal" in orientation, as in Quadrant One, it has somewhat different roots, although based in the same general trajectory of historical development of the university. The roots of this version can be traced back to the medieval world in the rise of independence for academics as a specific guild privilege, a collective protection for the community of the scholarly competent to determine the rules of their own game. Academic freedom and institutional autonomy are in this sense thus very closely aligned.

Neave, for instance, argues that the "origins of university autonomy go back to the foundation of that institution in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries".[64] He posits that there were two major models of universities embodying academic freedom, those of the Universities of Paris and of Bologna. In the Bologna model, autonomy applied chiefly to

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[63] Thomas L. Haskell, "Justifying the rights of academic freedom in the era of power/knowledge", in Menand, L. (ed), *The Future of Academic Freedom*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p.46.

[64] Guy Neave, "On being economical with university autonomy: being an account of the retrospective joys of a written constitution", in Tight, M. (ed), *Academic Freedom and Responsibility*, Milton Keynes, SRHE and Open University Press, 1988, p.34.

the student constituency and consisted in the freedom of the individual to learn. In the Paris model, autonomy applied to the academics in that it was understood as the freedom to teach. He proposes that the medieval concept of autonomy was part of a rather broader underpinning of contemporary social organisation, grouped around guilds or corporations, each of which enjoyed various privileges or exemptions in the practice of their activities.[65]

Similarly, Heer writes that:

> In the Middle Ages the word *universitas* meant primarily an association, a corporation of the kind already frequently found in urban life; the name is applicable to any kind of guild of merchants or craftsmen, or indeed to any organised group. The university in its narrower sense originated as an association of teachers or scholars for their mutual benefit during their sojourn in foreign parts … At Bologna the *universitas* originated as an association of German, French and English students. At Paris it was the teachers who came together in this way… Paris and Bologna, both of which had their beginnings in the late twelfth century, are the two archetypes of the European university; student-universities were modelled on Bologna, universities of masters on Paris.[66]

Heer describes further the fierce independence of the early Italian universities from the towns in which they were located. Referring to the students of Bologna, he writes, "these students of civil law would tolerate no sermonizing, whether from Rome or from their university professors; the university belonged to them"[67], and they "could exert powerful pressure on the city and on the professors, who at first were only loosely organised into a 'college'."[68] If the conditions in the town with respect to lodgings and accommodation were unfavourable, or if the town interfered with intellectual life, then there was always the threat of secession. Heer alleges that "the majority of the Italian law schools and universities originated in secessions of students and/or teachers no longer able to tolerate the conditions in their own towns."[69] With respect to the medieval

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[65] Guy Neave, "On being economical with university autonomy: being an account of the retrospective joys of a written constitution", in Tight, M. (ed), *Academic Freedom and Responsibility*, Milton Keynes, SRHE and Open University Press, 1988, p.34.

[66] Friedrich Heer, *The Medieval World: Europe 1100 – 1350*, London, Weidenfeld, 1993, p.196.

[67] Ibid. p.197.

[68] Ibid. p.198.

[69] Friedrich Heer, *The Medieval World: Europe 1100 – 1350*, London, Weidenfeld, 1993, p.198. For example, a secession from Bologna in 1222 laid the foundation of Padua – Jean Dunbabin, "Universities

University of Paris, Heer describes an ongoing saga of intellectual conflicts and battles against authority, and finds that "in this place [Latin Quarter, early 13th Century] the intellectual life of medieval Europe found its greatest freedom, here the love of controversy was extended to the limit."[70]

Hoye argues, in contrast, that "both the idea of the university and the idea of academic freedom can be called gifts of medieval Christianity to the modern world, albeit in secularized form."[71] He sees the birthplace of academic freedom lying in medieval Christianity, noting that the first mention of academic freedom comes in an official document of a pope. He writes:

> In 1220 the young University of Bologna turned to the pope for support in a conflict it was waging with local civic government. Pope Honorius III responded by repeatedly encouraging the university to defend its 'scholastic freedom' and to take extreme measures to resist the attempts of the city government to undermine the independence of academic life by requiring students to pledge an oath of allegiance to the city.[72]

The medieval universities were characterised by a cosmopolitan culture, with scholars coming from all over Europe to study in a particular city. Latin was the unifying factor. At base was the universal order of Christendom, rather than ties to a particular nation state, with Europe still being organised around powerful towns before the rise of the nation state. As knowledge was circumscribed to the available written texts, it was possible for

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c.1150 – c.1350", in Smith, D. and Langslow, A.K. (eds), *The Idea of a University*, London, Jessica Kingsley, 1999, p.35. Another famous secession is, of course, the secession in 1209 of some masters from Oxford to establish a university at Cambridge. Dunbabin argues that because it was the threat of secession that most guaranteed scholastic freedom, paradoxically, the institutional forms of the early universities initially necessarily remained malleable.

[70] Ibid. p.201.

[71] While there is considerable agreement that the roots of academic freedom lie in the early medieval universities, not everybody shares Hoye's view that this is a phenomenon specifically associated with Christianity. Friedrich Heer writes, for instance, that "the intellectual life developed in medieval Europe was a positive response to the broad stream of classical, Arab, Islamic and Jewish influences to which it was exposed…" and that "the medieval university owed much to the educational system of the Arabs". Friedrich Heer, *The Medieval World : Europe 1100-1350*, London, Weidenfeld, 1993, p.190. However, the more widespread view sees academic freedom as part of a medieval ecclesiastical tradition – see for instance Conrad Russell, *Academic Freedom*, London, Routledge, 1993, p.3.

[72] William J. Hoye, "The religious roots of academic freedom", *Theological Studies*, 58 (3) 1997, p.411.

scholars to gain an understanding of all spheres of knowledge. The curriculum was based on the Aristotelian organisation into the seven liberal arts (grammar, rhetoric, dialectics, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music). The primary function of the medieval universities was instruction (rather than teaching, as little reflection on the received texts was required). Without print, communication was slow and the links with the broader society tenuous, mostly being mediated through the church.[73]

The tenuous link with the broader society of the medieval universities is a characteristic of the understanding of the role of the university underlying the version of the concept of academic freedom in Quadrant Three. In this version, perhaps the caricatured "ivory tower" understanding of the university prevails, stemming right back to these medieval roots, although, as Heer remarks, "far more than the modern university the medieval university was a self-contained intellectual community: not only did the daring and the novelties it produced come from within, but the pressure for intellectual conformity also chiefly came from within."[74] But in these beginnings the importance placed on the value not only of independence, but also institutional, and especially disciplinary, self-regulation is evident.

According to Hofstadter and Metzger, "in internal matters the (medieval) universities had the prerogative of self-government. They were autonomous corporations, conceived in the spirit of the guilds; their members elected their own officials and set the rules for the teaching craft."[75] Certainly in much of the Anglo world today, the resistance to any external body attempting to regulate the affairs of a university is widespread. For instance, Russell writing in the context of late 1980s Britain, asserts that "for any academic, there is a tendency to assume that their rights to free speech are inextricably intertwined with their right to run their own affairs."[76] In this statement he runs together two different conceptions of academic freedom, what I have here termed the "liberal

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[73] Gerard Delanty, *Challenging Knowledge: the University in the Knowledge Society*, Ballmoor, Buckingham, SRHE and Open University Press, 2001, pp.27-29.

[74] Friedrich Heer, *The Medieval World: Europe 1100 – 1350*, London, Weidenfeld, 1993, p.201.

[75] Richard Hofstadter & Walter P. Metzger, *The Development of Academic Freedom in the United States*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1955, p.6.

[76] Conrad Russell, *Academic Freedom*, London, Routledge, 1993, p.2.

individualist" version and the "guild" version, but he explicates the "guild" version further in a passionate plea for the right of universities to govern themselves in an increasingly legislative and bureaucratic higher education policy context. He writes:

> It has become necessary to reassert the medieval ideal of liberties, to argue that Universities have their own independent sphere of judgement, in which the State should not meddle. The argument runs that it is only by this sort of autonomy to govern their own affairs that academics may protect a world in which they are free to exercise their basic rights of freedom of speech and of thought. It is not enough to defend these by the law of the State alone, when the State may, perhaps entirely unwittingly, take away conditions in which these rights can be exercised … The standards of the University degree, and many other things also, can only ever be defended effectively if they are recognized as purely academic matters, in which the State can have no legitimate say. It is only by defending a medieval liberty, a sphere of academic freedom in which the State does not enter, that academic freedom in a Millite sense can ever be effectively defended.[77]

Relationship of institution to state and society

Clearly, from the quotes above, the relationship of institution to the state is seen, in good times, as one characterised by separate spheres of influence underlined by a mutual relationship of trust, and in bad times, as an actively hostile one, with the state posing a threat to the continued self-governance of universities. The relationship, of course, also depends on the theory of the state that is employed. Neave would argue that in the British context, until the First World War, British political life had no concept of the state as a distributive or regulative entity. He writes:

> … the British model of academic autonomy derived not from the action of the state defining a 'reserve area' of non-intervention but rather from an absence of a concept of the role of the state which itself could serve to legitimate such a definition. Hence there could be no concept corresponding to the Humboldtian arrangement by which the state itself served as a buffer to ensure commitment to scholarship and learning. Such commitment was self-regulated by the non-written practices of academia. Nor, for the same reason, could there be an acceptable theory, within the confines of Liberal constitutionalism, of the state setting down the 'external limits' to academic autonomy, for the simple reason that such an act would have involved some measure of intervention.[78]

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[77] Ibid. p.3.

[78] Guy Neave, "On being economical with university autonomy: being an account of the retrospective joys of a written constitution", in Tight, M. (ed), *Academic Freedom and Responsibility*, Milton Keynes, SRHE and Open University Press, 1988, p.37.

Main metaphors

As in Quadrant One, the main metaphor is of a boundary drawn between state and institution. However, a metaphor that could be used to describe the relationship of institution to state in this quadrant is of two independent gentlemen [used advisedly] agreeing to conduct their affairs separately on the basis of a handshake. However, there is some mutuality in the agreement with one providing the financial means, and the other getting on with the job of educating the future generations of leaders on the basis of their unquestioned expertise. Where that relationship of trust is broken, and one gentleman tries to interfere in the affairs of the other (academics were also expected to display political neutrality), then the relationship would sour into open hostility. It is at such a moment in the history of the British university that Russell was writing, and in fact, as is explored further in Chapter Two, that moment has changed that relationship utterly, with the introduction of what many academics consider to be an increasingly draconian set of legislative measures designed to regulate and re-engineer British higher education.

3.4 The 'embedded' version of academic freedom – Quadrant Four

4. Embedded

Positive liberty

Characteristics: knowledge as provisional

context-bound; plural

performativity

postmodernism

globalisation

te: embedded

wledge producer

Communitarian
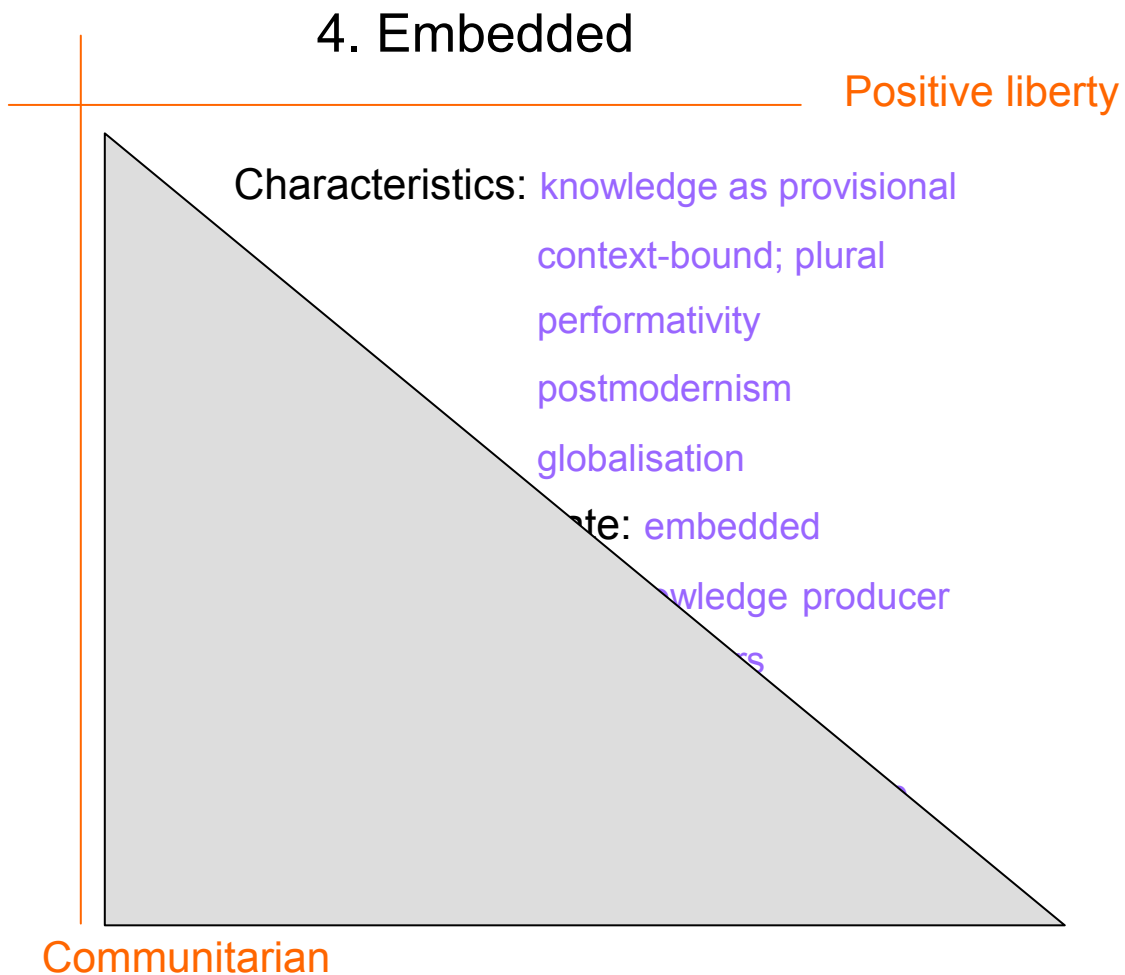
Quadrant Four (Q4)

Characteristics

The version of academic freedom in Quadrant Four is quite unlike those in the other quadrants. At base is a fundamentally different idea about knowledge, a different understanding of the role of higher education and a different perception of the relationship between the institution and the state and society, and indeed, of the state itself. In the first instance, as will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Four, the idea of knowledge has become contested and the traditional view of the university as the

location of the pursuit of knowledge as the discovery of truth has been called into question. Instead, knowledge is seen as having its source in a multiplicity of contexts and as having the character not of a body of immutable truths but provisional understanding that is applicable in those contexts. There are considered to be many knowledges and the university's role in knowledge production is regarded as necessarily being responsive to constructing and developing those local knowledges rather than propagating a particular canon of works embodying established truth. The university also becomes one of a multiplicity of knowledge producers – local communities, giant corporations, research centres – and thus loses the special status accorded it in the other quadrants, Two and Three especially, as a protected site for the pursuit of knowledge through the application of the principle of academic freedom.

A second fundamental difference with Quadrants One and Three, is an emphasis on positive freedom and in this paradigm, words such as "empowerment", "development", "reskilling", "facilitation" and "enabling" are definitive. Knowledge as a particular canon to be imparted is replaced as a concept by the elevating of previously subjugated local knowledges which are co-constructed in dynamic partnerships between academics and local communities for the express purpose of the empowerment of those individuals and the upliftment of those communities. Freedom consists in the empowerment outcome of the co-creation or co-construction of knowledge, not in being left alone to pursue one's own ends. This is the ethical impulse in postmodernism. Partly too, as a result of globalising forces, extreme individuality in academic work in this quadrant begins to give way to a greater occurrence of working in teams and partnerships. Academic freedom is closely bound up, not with solipsism, but engagement with a variety of actors and communities, a deeply reflexive criticality that is also constructive in terms of working towards ends shared by society as a whole.

A third difference relates to the permeability of the institution and its embeddedness in a plural and very diverse society. Universities in a global world are part of extremely complex network societies, acting in response to and actively influencing a whole range of external factors – constraints, influences and stimuli – whether these be market-led, state-led, knowledge-driven or simply nodes of energy in an ever-expanding and multi-layered network. Given new roles for universities in this quadrant, as global knowledge producers, or entrepreneurs, or the fuel of an increasingly technological world in

producing high-level technological knowledge and human capital, or as catalysts in the co-construction of local knowledges, or all of these simultaneously, the context in which they are embedded defines the extent and the limits of academic freedom in quite different ways from the other quadrants. In this quadrant, there can be no academic freedom without democracy and without a confluence of values and ends between the institutions and the major organs of national, regional and, to some extent, international society. Democracy is generally a precondition for academic freedom in the other quadrants too (although of course academic freedom as a concept predates democracy), but there is less risk involved. It is possible, for instance, to imagine academic freedom as in Quadrant One in a non-democratic society, as long as academics are left alone to teach and research in a protected space. The conceptions of academic freedom, and institutional autonomy, in Quadrant Four offer the best possibility of the most amount of freedom but at the same time, because of the very openness and permeability of the institutions, are subject to the greatest risk.

Indeed, Quadrant Four is all about risk. There is the risk of losing academic identity, of no longer holding a near-monopoly on knowledge production, being one player among many, of increasing privatisation. There is the risk of increasing compliance to external demands, from the state, from the markets, from a whole new range of quasi-state quality agencies, from funding bodies, from multi-nationals determining the research agenda. In this regard, there is the risk of Lyotard's "performativity-principle" (discussed at length in Chapter Four) becoming the prevailing value. Lyotard's argument is that with the advance of technology, knowledge has itself become a technology, subject to performativity rather than truth tests. Its value is not in whether it is true but how efficient and effective it is "in achieving the best possible input/output equation."[79] Performativity supplants the pursuit of truth (the legitimating idea underlying the institution in the other quadrants) and, as he writes, "Idealist and humanist narratives of legitimation are abandoned in order to justify the new goal: in the discourse of today's financial bankers of research, the only credible goal is power. Scientists, technicians and instruments are purchased not to find truth, but to augment power."[80]

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[79] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, p.46.

[80] Ibid. p.46.

In a benign society, where all players are concerned to achieve similar ends in an open and relatively "unfettered" way, the scope of academic freedom and institutional autonomy is broad, with groups of academics forging external partnerships in pursuit of the betterment of the whole. But the risk involved here is of one set of players becoming dominant and irreparably altering academic work and academic identities. In Quadrant Four, the state-institution relationship is quite different as the state, society and institutions are no longer seen as separate institutions but as part of the general whole. The general understanding in this quadrant, though this is contentious, is that the nation-state is weak and permeable too, being subject to globalising forces and is not, therefore, in a position to act as a protector of academic freedom or a facilitator thereof. At the same time, it may, certainly in developing countries, in attempting to cope with a myriad of local and global challenges, become an exploiter of its academic institutions for its own ends. Without a concept of a protected institutional space, universities are open to both benign and malevolent external forces.

For that reason, there is a shadow over Quadrant Four in the matrix diagram; this indicates the possibility of both the greatest amount of freedom and the greatest amount of "unfreedom". Giddens points out that in a globalising world, cosmopolitans welcome openness and difference but the very fabric of society can be utterly changed where that difference is experienced as threat and feeds fundamentalism and violence.[81] In ways perhaps more than ever before, academic freedom and institutional autonomy have become inseparable from the nature of the fabric of the wider society in which universities are embedded.

Roots

The roots of this particular version lie in the postmodern movement, and while not all positions within this Quadrant are necessarily postmodernist, certainly the concept of knowledge underlying it derives therefrom. The epistemological challenge arises in the

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[81] Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World: How Globalisation is Reshaping our Lives*, London, Profile Books, 1999, pp.6-19.

main from postmodernist thinkers[82] writing mainly from the perspective of first world institutions, and this is discussed further in Chapter Four.

Theories of globalisation too, the subject of Chapter Six, inform the understanding in this quadrant, in that they posit both external and internal influences on academic life, identities and work that are reshaping it fundamentally, from technological advances in communication, changes in funding patterns for higher education, changes in institutional organisation and the way in which they are managed. Deem sums up four main concepts in use in globalisation theories as follows:

> The first of these is globalisation (that is, the global spread of business and services as well as key economic, social and cultural practices to a world market, often through multi-national companies and the internet). The second concept is of internationalisation (the sharing of ideas, knowledge and ways of doing things in similar ways across different countries). The third concept is the ideology of new managerialism, that is, the extent to which contemporary business practices and private sector ideas or values have permeated publicly funded institutions and work practices. The fourth concept is of entrepreneurialism in higher education, where academics and administrators explicitly seek out new ways of raising private sector funds through enterprising activities such as consultancies and applied research.[83]

As she writes, however, "the question of whether globalisation and internationalisation of universities lead to greater diversity in higher education, or greater convergence, is still unresolved."[84]

Amid all these conditions of uncertainty and change, and what Barnett has termed "supercomplexity", the role of the university and, indeed, its very existence, is the subject of much debate and contestation.[85] Barnett outlines six conditions in a situation of great conditionality that universities will need to fulfil to be "realized" in an age of supercomplexity. These are:

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[82] I have used "postmodernism" quite loosely and broadly to include poststructuralism. Such thinkers include Jean-François Lyotard, Richard Rorty, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault (who is not in all respects a postmodernist but on whose work postmodernists draw).

[83] Rosemary Deem, "Globalisation, new managerialism, academic capitalism and entrepreneurialism in universities: is the local dimension still important?", *Comparative Education*, 37 (1) 2001, p.7.

[84] Ibid. p.8.

[85] Ronald Barnett, *Realizing the University in an Age of Supercomplexity*, Ballmoor, Buckingham, SRHE and Open University Press, 2000.

- *Critical interdisciplinarity.* Universities need to engage with uncertainty and in order to do so, they need to be structured such that fresh perspectives are likely to emerge. In this sense, the structural support for interdisciplinary responses is important. Disciplinarity and intersdisciplinarity are the subjects of Chapter Five.

- *Collective self-scrutiny.* Barnett argues that supercomplexity requires reflexivity, and the university should not be engaged in collective self-evaluation and self-regulation only as a move to keep out the evaluative state. Instead, it has a responsibility to be constantly engaged in this type of activity in order to generate new perspectives for its activities. This theme is discussed in Chapters Four, Six, and Seven.

- *Purposive renewal.* While universities need to engage in conversations of strategic planning and their positioning vis-à-vis its local, national and global competitors, and to identify and exploit new opportunities, these conversations need constantly to be re-interrogated. In a supercomplex world, statements of strategic purpose only have short-term relevance.

- *Moving borders.* Barnett argues that in the postmodern university, borders, boundaries and demarcations are impermanent and constantly challenged. Academic identities have to be formed across both epistemic and bureaucratic domains in a situation of constant change.

- *Engagement.* Barnett argues that the university needs to engage with multiple communities, other producers of knowledge and other clients, in order to fulfil the role of producing diverse and contending perspectives.

- *Communicative tolerance.* For Barnett, the university in an age of supercomplexity has to maximise opportunities for different voices to have a hearing. This is where freedom of expression becomes important. Barnett argues that "the university is saturated with organizational and epistemic power: many staff feel diffident about expressing themselves. Indeed, the 'modern' university regards silence as a sign of both high morale and that the university is operating 'efficiently'. The supercomplex university, on the other hand, will go out of its way to offer space to all to express themselves without feeling unduly vulnerable". [86]

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[86] Ronald Barnett, *Realizing the University in an Age of Supercomplexity*, Ballmoor, Buckingham, SRHE and Open University Press, 2000, pp.104-110.

Barnett's conditions are echoed in Griffin's understanding of autonomy, which fits well in this quadrant. She writes:

> Both learner and teacher are involved in a reconceptualisation of values, including the value of autonomy. Autonomy is not a 'once-off' achievement, but develops in dynamic relation to the social practices and values which may inhibit or develop it, and the individual needs and desires which may fuel it. It is not to be gained from some abstract Enlightenment form of reason but could come about through the kind of reason Dewey calls social intelligence, and Aristotle called phronesis: a form of practical reasoning which requires collective deliberation about the relative attractions of various courses of action.[87]

In summary, given the embeddedness of universities in society, the key to freedom and autonomy lies in the openness of that engagement with a multiplicity of communities, difficult as it becomes to define which are internal and which external, and the "collective deliberation" about ways to construct knowledge and social reality.

Relationship of institution to state and society

In this version, as noted above, the university is embedded in society, and the lines between society and state are blurred at best. The state is the embodiment of society and the university is one among many bodies responsive to those needs with a function to further them, although not in a simple utilitarian way. The change in the status of knowledge has a direct implication in changing the role of the university from an autonomous institution that furthers the pursuit of truth to a much more functional institution concerned with increasing its performativity. It no longer has a special place in relation to the state, but is embedded within the broader society as one among many knowledge producers. The nation-state too, is different from in the other quadrants, as in a globalising world the extent to which nation-states are still able to exercise sovereignty is open to debate. Universities in this quadrant, are, however, important contributors to the construction of new knowledges.

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[87] Anne Griffin, "Knowledge under attack: consumption, diversity and the need for values", in Barnett, R. and Griffin, A. (eds), *The End of Knowledge in Higher Education*, London, Cassell, 1997, p.3.

Main metaphors

In this quadrant, boundaries or 'gentlemen's agreements' do not apply as they presuppose separate relatively autonomous entities. While metaphors in use to describe the relationships in this quadrant are usually related to networks, and these are useful, I have thought of this more as a societal alphabet soup – the parts are related to each other, just as letters of the alphabet are, but they can either be totally chaotic or combine to make meaning in a myriad different ways. Furthermore, chaos and meaning can coexist.

4. Conclusion

In the discussion above, I have set out a simple four-matrix grid to attempt to unravel the concepts-in-use of academic freedom. While these are reasonably diverse and have different roots and histories, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive, nor consecutive. Indeed, as Barnett has pointed out, the current era is one of great complexity and it is not unusual to find, even in a single institution, all four concepts of academic freedom being used simultaneously or in a multi-layered way. What I have attempted to do is to provide a useful tool to apply in the discussions of academic freedom and institutional autonomy that follow in this thesis.

Chapter Two

Academic freedom in different contexts

True, in the beginning each division kept for a while its fragmented remembrance of a past oneness, and still made hesitant invocations to a future unity.

Ayi Kwei Armah, "The Healers"

1. Introduction

Having outlined in skeletal version a tool for understanding different uses of academic freedom and the roots on which they are based, in this chapter I explore briefly the use of these versions of the concept in three different contexts, in order to situate the local discussion in wider uses and understandings. In the following chapter, I examine more carefully those that are both central to my argument and which pertain to the South African context.

I have used "academic freedom" as the umbrella term for at least four concepts-in-use which I have attempted to disaggregate. Within that disaggregation there is a very clear distinction between the academic freedom of Quadrant One, which is understood as the right of individual scholars to pursue their scholarly activities without fear of persecution, and that of Quadrant Three, which covers both institutional and disciplinary autonomy. Although they share similar histories and philosophies, with liberalism providing the core underlying identity, they do not necessarily apply in the same contexts, nor simultaneously. For instance, it is possible for autonomous institutions to exist within repressive or interfering regimes that endanger individual scholarly liberty. This could be described as the case in apartheid South Africa, where the so-called open universities enjoyed a relatively high degree of autonomy and self-regulation, while at the same time individual academics were persecuted by the state for their beliefs or utterances. It is even possible for individual scholarly liberty to be at risk in democratic societies which accord institutions a high level of autonomy in terms of self-governance.

The United States post 9/11 is such a case that springs to mind, with individuals within autonomously-run institutions being silenced on either their pro or anti-war stance to the war on Iraq.[88] The converse is more difficult to imagine, although some European scholars would argue that even though some European systems of higher education are highly regulated, as in France, Sweden and Austria, for instance, this does not endanger individual scholars' rights of free speech, or to publish and teach what they will. Neave and van Vught write that "it may be that academic freedom is best protected in an institution enjoying great autonomy. But this is not necessarily so. Academic freedom may also be guaranteed by a government organisation which nevertheless imposes a heavy set of controls on a higher education institution."[89]

Indeed, this is the Humboldtian model as in Quadrant Two, with the state providing the protection for the right to academic freedom, while at the same time governing the higher education system through a far-reaching legislative framework. It is interesting that in the German model, which is more highly regulated than the British, individual professors have traditionally been accorded a much higher status, and therefore have an apparently greater degree of freedom to "profess" without fear of contradiction, let alone persecution.[90]

An interesting scenario resides in the following example from the United States: the American Association of University Professors' (AAUP) Declaration of 1915 suggests the importance of upholding institutional autonomy against certain outside influences, but it can be argued that far from being a defender of institutional autonomy, it has designated itself the judge of all allegations of violation of academic freedom and blacklists

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[88] See for instance, Robert Ivie, "Academic freedom and antiwar dissent in a democratic idiom", *College Literature*, 33 (4) 2006, pp.76-92 and Marcy J. Knopf-Newman, "Fair and balanced? On academic freedom in post 9/11 America", *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture*, 12 (2/3) 2005, pp.101-108.

[89] Guy Neave and Frans van Vught (eds), "Introduction", in *Government and Higher Education Relationships Across Three Continents: the winds of change*, Headington Hill Hall, Pergamon, IAU Press,1994, p.7.

[90] This does not hold in the Nazi period, however. Trow points out that after WW1, Weber recognised the danger inherent in German academics' tendency to use their podiums as political platforms, and the general collapse of all freedoms that went hand in hand with that. Martin Trow, "Californians redefine academic freedom", *CSHE Research and Occasional Paper*, 3 (5) 2005, p.4.

indefinitely institutions which do not adhere to its verdicts. As Kemp notes, "nor is the AAUP the only association which engages in such interference. Numerous instances can be found in which accrediting agencies demand organizational, curricular or resource allocation and other changes in ways that, on any objective analysis, restrict the institutional autonomy of the institutions they are supposed merely to be evaluating."[91]

This can lead to something of a paradox. In the policy field that I explore later in this thesis, that is, the introduction of quality assurance, increasing legislation can have opposite effects. In Anglo contexts, where the metaphor of the relationship of institutions to the state is one of the boundary between state and institution, it can have the effect of shifting that boundary closer to the institutions and lessening institutional autonomy (or academic freedom in its umbrella usage). The state begins to encroach into areas of institutional self-governance which is deeply resented by academics. On the other hand, in some Western European contexts, e.g. Sweden, it has had the effect of increasing institutional autonomy. Instead of being directly subject to state regulation, institutions have become more responsible for their internal governance and self-regulation in return for working with independent central quality assuring agencies. In such a context, the state has relinquished some control to buffer bodies, and increased the responsibilities of institutions of higher education for running their own affairs.[92]

It is possible for Quadrant Three to apply, but not Quadrant One, in both perfectly legitimate and illegitimate ways. Where disciplinary autonomy applies, individual scholars may not be free to teach whatever they like, or to research whatever they like, or publish whatever they like, in apparently acceptable ways. If an article is badly researched, or it deals with subjects not considered appropriate in the discipline, for example, through the lack of application of the rules of the discipline, that article is

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[91] Kenneth W. Kemp, "What is academic freedom?", http://courseweb.stthomas.edu/kwkemp/Papers/AF.pdf, November 2000, p.11.

[92] Vin Massaro, "Learning from audit? Preliminary impressions from a survey of OECD countries", *Quality Assurance as Support for Processes of Innovation: the Swedish model in comparative perspective*, Stockholm, Högskoleverket Studies, 1997.

unlikely to be published in peer-reviewed journals. The edge between acceptability and non-acceptability is, however, difficult to define. Disciplines, and institutions, can become inward-looking and concerned with self-preservation and self-replication, and silence new ideas if they do not conform to what is already accepted as the norm. In a political sense too, self-censorship can be one of the most insidious and debilitating forms of incursion into academic freedom.

All of the concepts-in-use that I have outlined in Chapter One assume something of an open society and a democratic state to apply properly. While there are some exceptions, repressive regimes tend to crush both institutional autonomy and individual scholarly liberty at the same time. There are a whole range of types of incursion into academic freedom outlined by Altbach, ranging from regimes willing to shut down universities such as the military regime in Burma, or using them as an integral part of the government apparatus as in North Korea, Syria and Iraq.[93] Often there is, in peaceful times, a fair degree of academic freedom of the Quadrant One type, particularly in the sciences, if not the social sciences, which is periodically encroached upon where dissent is voiced, leading to the loss of jobs and sometimes prosecution and imprisonment. Such examples include China, Vietnam, Cuba, Egypt, Algeria and some of the Arabian Gulf states. Altbach also puts forward a category of countries that profess a commitment to academic freedom but which periodically repress academics, such as Ethiopia, Serbia, or that create a general atmosphere of unease among academics. In this last category he places many African and Asian countries. He also notes areas of the world in which there has been a resurgence of academic freedom, those being Latin America, and Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.[94]

In this thesis, I am emphasising not the most obvious kinds of repression of academic freedom under military regimes, or dictatorships, but I am chiefly concerned with academic freedom in expressly democratic countries, of which South Africa is one, and the more subtle mouldings of academic freedom brought about either by external factors – governments, yes, but also markets – and internal factors, such as increasing

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[93] Philip G. Altbach, "Academic freedom: international realities and challenges", *Globalisation and Higher Education: Views from the South*, Cape Town, 2001, pp.1-21.

[94] Ibid.

managerialism, institutional restructurings and academic self-censorship. I am concerned with attempting to understand how conceptions of academic freedom and institutional autonomy either limit or protect such freedoms, and what effect the various challenges are having on academic institutions and influencing their futures.

In terms of academic freedom and institution autonomy in democratic societies in a postmodern and globalising era, Quadrant Four is the crux of the matter. In its most benign form, this model encompasses the greatest degree of freedom for all – for academics, state, communities, and society as a whole – because the interests of all of these constituents are seen to coincide. State policy is made to further the good of society and the universities, being embedded in society, are responsive to those needs and work in partnership with the state, corporations and communities to fulfil those societal needs. But the flip-side is very easy to achieve. If, in such a situation, a state should become more self-serving, or act in ways contrary to the good of society, institutions are immediately implicated and powerless to resist. The very openness and permeability of institutions in this understanding, where academic freedom as in Quadrant One is seen to be based on anachronistic understandings of the world, renders freedom vulnerable. The point really is to understand how to safeguard such freedoms in open, democratic states, if the needs of institutions and society should ever move out of alignment with each other, without resorting to the concepts of a past age.

2. Academic freedom in different contexts

Academic freedom has been at issue in recent years in many parts of the democratic world. In the United Kingdom much of the debate has centred on how to stop the boundary of academic freedom from being drawn ever closer to the university in favour of economically-motivated encroachment in university affairs by the state. In the United States, the concern is related more to the relationship of academic freedom to the freedom of speech, and the question of whether the introduction of politically correct codes of conduct and speech at various institutions constitutes an abrogation of that

right.[95] There are some shared challenges but also quite regional interpretations of the challenges and the debates are framed somewhat differently in each. In the discussion that follows, I have attempted to signpost the major debates in the United States, Britain and Africa, before concentrating, in Chapter Three, on outlining the debates in a South African context.

2.1 United States

With respect to contemporary American universities, there are at least three major themes in writing about academic freedom. There are writings that attempt to position academic freedom in relation to freedom of speech, those that explore the postmodern challenge to universities, and those that relate to the effect of the anti-terror climate and legislation post 9/11 on academic freedom.

In the first of the above themes, the major concern in the twentieth century centred on the relationship of academic freedom to freedom of speech, and this has spawned the largest body of writing. The 1915 *Declaration of Principles*[96] of the American Association of University Professors, written by a body founded to defend professors against repressive administrators and donors, forms the lynchpin of the discussions on that theme.[97] Implicit in this theme is a Quadrant One understanding of academic freedom, that is, that it pertains to individuals, that it involves the right of individuals to teach and research what they choose, and the right to freedom of speech with respect to the

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[95] See discussion in Ronald Dworkin, "A new interpretation of academic freedom", in Menand, L. (ed), *The Future of Academic Freedom*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996, pp.183-185. Also the alternative debate about the epistemological justifications for academic freedom – see Chapter 4 of this thesis. Another thread concerns the nature of the curriculum – the critique of the Western canon. See Edward W. Said, "Identity, authority, and freedom: the potentate and the traveler", in Menand, L. (ed), *The Future of Academic Freedom*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996, pp.214-228.

[96] AAUP, *Declaration of Principles,* 1915, reprinted in Louis Joughin (ed), *Academic Freedom and Tenure*, 1969, pp.157-176 (no publisher given).

[97] The AAUP has a standing committee which serves to protect academia and American professors' right to independence and free speech. John Dewey was one of the contributors to the 1915 *Declaration* to promote academic freedom to further the growth of political democracy. See Robert Ivie, "Academic freedom and antiwar dissent in a democratic idiom", *College Literature*, 33 (4) 2006, pp.76-92.

teaching of one's own discipline. The AAUP's 1940 *Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure* still pertains. It notes that "teachers are entitled to freedom in the classroom in discussing their subject, but they should be careful not to introduce into their teaching controversial matter that has no relation to their subject…"[98] In addition, academic freedom is also regarded by the Supreme Court as a First Amendment Right, that is, the right to freedom of speech, although the scope of that right is a matter for debate.[99]

The possibilities for tensions between the rights to free speech of academics and those of students also form part of the debate. In the freedom of speech for individuals understanding of academic freedom, the concerns hinge on what academics may or may not say, and in the existing tradition, the injunction, inscribed in the regulatory codes of many institutions, is for academics dealing with value-laden issues to exhibit political neutrality through offering alternative viewpoints on an issue and supplying so-called negative evidence as well as arguments that may support the lecturer's own views. As an example, the University of California had a regulation dating from 1934 (updated in 2003), that read:

> The function of the university is to seek and to transmit knowledge and to train students in the processes whereby truth is to be made known. To convert, or to make converts, is alien and hostile to this dispassionate duty. Where it becomes necessary, in performing the function of a university, to consider political, social or sectarian movements, they are dissected and examined, not taught, and the conclusion left, with no tipping of the scales, to the logic of the facts.[100]

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[98] AAUP, Policy documents and reports 3-4, 2001, quoted on the AAUP website: http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/policydocs/contents/1940statement.htm

[99] See *Sweezy v. New Hampshire*, 354 US 234 (1957); *Keyishian v.Board of Regents*, 385 US 589 (1967); *Regents of Univ. of Michigan v. Ewing*, 474 US 214 (1985), http://www.aaup.org. Kevin McGuiness notes that there are more that 1000 reported judicial decisions dealing with the subject of academic freedom as opposed to 6 in the UK and 9 in South Africa. This suggests that in the United States' context, academic freedom is seen as an individual right with recourse to the courts when it is considered to be breached, unlike in the UK context where the legal status of academic freedom is not clear. See Kevin McGuiness, *The Concept of Academic Freedom*, Lewiston, The Edwin Meller Press, 2002, p.4.

[100] UC Senate Regulation APM 010, quoted in Martin Trow, "Californians redefine academic freedom", *CSHE Research and Occasional Paper*, 3 (5) 2005.

The scope of freedom of speech in academic contexts is also limited in legal cases by the requirement that the speech be "germane to the subject matter".[101]

In the liberal American tradition thus, in short, academic freedom has generally been understood as a right of academics to teach as they see fit, subject to the balancing of freedoms of speech of academics and students, in that students' multiple viewpoints on an issue need to be accommodated, and political indoctrination avoided. This liberal consensus has, however, become challenged on two fronts. The first question relates to the individual nature of this understanding; that is, whether academic freedom pertains to an individual academic, to the profession of academics, or to the institutions within which they work. The second challenge arises from developments in epistemology and the so-called post-modern turn, which questions the implicit certainties about truth contained in legislative codes such as the one quoted above, and which acknowledges that truth is subject to multiple interpretations.

With respect to the first of these, Haskell argues that the focus on freedom of speech has obscured the communal nature of the concept of academic freedom originally advanced by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP). He writes:

> These 'communities of the competent' [referring to academic disciplines, and pitting academic freedom Quadrant Three against Quadrant One] were, I believe, the seed crystals around which the modern university formed. Defending their authority is, in my view, what academic freedom is principally about. What concerns me are two things that imperil that authority: the decay of the epistemological assumptions that originally underwrote the founding of disciplinary communities, and a growing assimilation of academic freedom to First Amendment law, a development that has brought immense benefits but at the expense of obscuring both the function of the disciplinary community and its intimate relation to academic freedom.[102]

Haskell thus advances a "guild" understanding of academic freedom, as in Quadrant Three, against the dominant Quadrant One view, which sees academic freedom pertaining not to particular individuals, but to disciplinary communities that have the competence and the expertise to determine academic standards in their fields. In this

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[101] Donna R. Euben, "Academic freedom and professorial speech", Presentation to 25th Annual Conference on Law and Higher Education, Stetson University College of Law and Higher Education, February 2004. http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/protect/legal/topics/prof-speech.htm

[102] Thomas L. Haskell, "Justifying the rights of academic freedom in the era of 'power/knowledge'", in Menand, L. (ed), *The Future of Academic Freedom*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p.44.

sense, individuals dissenting from the understood norms and standards established by consensus among disciplinary experts cannot claim academic freedom as a right if their views are not published in the discipline's journals, for instance. Implicitly, Haskell puts forward a view that academic freedom is not an absolute individual right, but a privilege conferred on a guild of professionals as a result of their acknowledged expertise, and thus, authority.

The other concern raised by Haskell above relates to what he terms the undermining of the epistemological foundations of truth on which academic freedom, understood as the free pursuit of truth, is based. The AAUP *Declaration* advances the argument that professors cannot serve society unless they are independent from it. As Rabban writes, one of the main principles guiding American higher education is that "the advances in knowledge that benefit everyone can occur only when professors have absolute freedom to pursue inquiry and publish the results without fear of offending public opinion."[103] The question of whether academic freedom is the same as the right to freedom of speech, a right guaranteed by the First Amendment to the United States' Constitution, or whether it is a special subset of that right applying only to a privileged few which needs to be curbed in certain circumstances, is seminal in this debate.

This question has arisen in a context in which higher education has become increasingly open to women and ethnic minorities, whose fear of humiliation by insensitive professors and possible 'hate speech' has also been seen as worthy of legislative protection. As Ryan writes, "the history of the defense of free speech within the university has until very recently been one of left-wing academics under fire from right-wing outside forces … The novelty of the present situation is that the threat to freedom comes, or is widely thought to come, from within the academy and from people who believe themselves to be radicals rather than conservatives".[104]

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[103] David M. Rabban, "Can academic freedom survive postmodernism?", book review of Louis Menand (ed), *The Future of Academic Freedom*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1996 in *California Law Review*, 86, 1998, pp.1377-1378.

[104] Alan Ryan, "Academic freedom", *Liberal Education*, 85 (2) 1999, p.52.

Ryan outlines two complaints. The first is the rise of "post-modernist" scepticism which has induced a "wholesale contempt for the truth" and which questions the very epistemological basis for academic freedom [as in Q4].[105] The second complaint he refers to is that:

> It is an excess of kindness that has destroyed academic freedom. We have moved on from the perfectly proper thought that students ought to be provided with a learning environment that is friendly, that does not expose them to humiliation, and that allows them to build up their self-confidence as they learn, to the utterly destructive thought that teachers must police their thoughts and words in order to avoid causing pain no matter what.[106]

Ryan cites so-called "critical race theory" as an example of an explicit assault on academic freedom in the development of legislative measures – speech codes, the criminalisation of "hate speech," and the threat of dismissal – to make teachers toe the line.[107] This perceived assault on academic freedom, to which Ryan mounts two powerful objections, usually hinges on the understanding of the academy as a non-politicised, or neutral space in which the truth can be freely pursued. But this very neutrality, or non-political nature, has, as Ryan concedes, become widely questioned. He acquiesces with Fish's[108] argument that "what we conventionally describe as academic freedom is itself a political achievement",[109] but asserts, as a defence of academic freedom, that "liberal societies have made a political decision that there should be places where argument flourishes and let the chips fall where they may."[110]

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[105] This "complaint" forms the basis of the discussion in Chapter Four of this thesis.

[106] Alan Ryan, "Academic freedom", *Liberal Education*, 85 (2) 1999, p.53.

[107] This is not dissimilar to the rise of "political correctness" in South Africa and the introduction of legislative measures to enforce it such as the introduction of policies on the Elimination of Unfair Discrimination etc. in South African universities. Such policies could similarly be seen to be in conflict with the right to freedom of speech.

[108] Stanley Fish can be regarded as one of the thinkers on the extreme end of a continuum of thinking on the validity of truth claims, along with Richard Rorty. Both claim that Truth does not exist. See Stanley Fish, "There's no such thing as free speech (and it's a good thing, too)", in Fish, S., *There's No Such Thing as Free Speech*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1994, p.102.

[109] Alan Ryan, "Academic freedom", *Liberal Education*, 85 (2) 1999, p.54.

[110] Ibid. p.55.

Fish, too, argues for the freedom of the profession or the guild from outside interference which includes the right to free speech, but not from the traditional position of most defences of an assumption of self-evident neutrality of the academy. He writes:

> I oppose the rhetoric that usually accompanies [academic freedom], the rhetoric of evenhandedness, open-mindedness, neutrality in the face of substantive conflict, autonomy of thought and choice. It will be my contention that these honorific phrases are either empty and therefore incapable of generating a policy (academic freedom or any other) or are covertly filled with the very partisan objectives they supposedly disdain.[111]

He argues further that:

> The practice of academic freedom has nothing (causal) to do with that vocabulary (which comes to adorn it after the fact) and everything to do with a history in which certain forces – the church, the state, boards of trustees, influential alumni and parents – are always trying to control and police what academic professionals (teachers and administrators) do. I am an academic professional and, like any member of my profession, I want the norms governing my labors to be devised by me and people like me, not by outsiders.[112]

As is evident from the above account, while the main themes in writing about academic freedom in the United States' context have mainly concerned the relationship between academic freedom and free speech, and between individual and institutional academic freedom and professional and constitutional meanings, a second strand of writing concerns the "challenge to academic freedom posed by the widespread loss of confidence in its most fundamental justification … [the assumption] of the ability of impartial scholars to discover objective truths about the real world."[113]

A third, and more recent, theme in writing on academic freedom in the United States' context is the effect of anti-terror legislation and the right-wing dominance in current American politics on academic freedom in the wake of 9/11. In some senses, the liberal consensus that all views must be respected has been turned on itself to attack the very liberal nature of the United States academy that gave rise to that consensus. The most obvious example of this is the push in 2003-2005 for the proposed Academic Bill of

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[111] Stanley Fish, "Academic freedom: when sauce for the goose isn't sauce for the gander", in *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 46 (14) 1999, p.4.

[112] Ibid.

[113] David M. Rabban, "Can academic freedom survive postmodernism?", book review of Louis Menand (ed), *The Future of Academic Freedom*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1996 in *California Law Review*, 86, 1998, p.1378.

Rights (ABOR), promoted by David Horowitz in the main, and supported by various right wing organisations including Students for Academic Freedom, a watchdog organisation that blacklists academics who are perceived not to be giving a balanced treatment to right wing or Christian fundamentalist views. There is reportedly much trepidation about determining "who has the power to define terrorism and who is allowed to speak critically about the U.S. or Israel."[114]

As Brodsky writes, the Academic Bill of Rights uses 'intellectual diversity' and 'the disinterested pursuit of knowledge' to mean the opposite of what it says, and effectively to promote "quotas and affirmative action for the right".[115] In essence, the ABOR proposals were for greater government control in the hiring of staff and on the way curriculum is organised.[116] Schrecker writes that "the current conservative environment in which American universities find themselves is conducive to calls for political intervention in certain courses, such as Middle Eastern Studies, in the name of objectivity and balance. One such is the proposed Academic Bill of Rights, which some commentators regard as a right-wing Zionist move to limit what is taught in such subjects."[117] Giroux agrees, writing that there is a right wing

> campaign to undermine principles of academic freedom, sacrifice critical pedagogical practice in the name of patriotic correctness and dismantle the university as a bastion of autonomy, independent thought, and uncorrupted inquiry. Ironically, by adopting the vocabulary of individual rights, academic freedom, balance, and tolerance, right-wing forces are waging a campaign designed to slander, even vilify, liberal and left-oriented professors, cut already meagre federal funding for higher education, eliminate tenure, and place control of what is taught and said in classrooms under legislative oversight.[118]

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[114] Marcy J. Knopf-Newman, "Fair and balanced? On academic freedom in post 9/11 America", *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture*, 12 (2/3) 2005, p.101.

[115] David Brodsky, "'Academic Bill of Rights' wrongs academic freedom, privileges right-wing power in higher education", *The Faculty Advocate No. 19*, Newsletter of the UMKC Chapter of the American Association of University Professors, 6 (1-2) 2005, pp.3-5.

[116] Robert L. Ivie, "Academic freedom and antiwar dissent in a democratic idiom", *College Literature*, 33 (4) 2006, p.4.

[117] Ellen Schrecker, "Anxious in academe: higher education in the world of Bush and Cheney", *Radical Teacher*, (77), 2006, pp.7-8.

While legislation related to elements of the ABOR have been adopted in about two dozen states, the AAUP reports that the ABOR push has greatly lost steam, though is not yet dead. The AAUP notes of the ABOR that "its measures would place decisions about faculty appointments and the content of academic programs in the hands of political officials, thereby jeopardizing not only the independence of faculty members and their institutions but also their capacity to advance knowledge and educate our students."[119]

This most recent theme arises out of a "conservative political zeitgeist".[120] While a number of commentators have likened the current situation to the McCarthy era, Schrecker argues that "even at the height of the post-9/11 furor … there were few, if any, attempts to fire individual faculty members because of their politics."[121] Instead, the threat of sanctions comes mainly from the state and from security legislation that can be used to deny distinguished scholars entry to the United States,[122] and from the drafting of legislation designed to monitor academics' teaching to make sure it is devoid of politically-biased content.[123] The overall result is that "there is a strong undercurrent of anxiety within the nation's colleges and universities, a sense that the most basic values of American higher education are under attack and that the academic community is hard

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[118] Henry A. Giroux, "Academic freedom under fire: the case for critical pedagogy", *College Literature*, 33 (4) 2006, p.2.

[119] AAUP, "The Academic Bill of Rights: proposed government oversight of teaching and learning", http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/issues/

[120] Ellen Schrecker, "Anxious in academe: higher education in the world of Bush and Cheney", *Radical Teacher*, (77), 2006, p.8.

[121] Ibid. p.7.

[122] Specific cases include Tariq Ramidan (see Marcy J. Knopf-Newman, "Fair and balanced? On academic freedom in post 9/11 America", *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture*, 12 (2/3) 2005, p.102.).

[123] Marcy J. Knopf-Newman, "Fair and balanced? On academic freedom in post 9/11 America", *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics and Culture*, 12 (2/3) 2005, p.102 mentions specific legislation in the House of Representatives – HR 3077.

pressed to defend them."[124] Indeed, the current battleground is less an attack on particular professors, though that element is there, but a more insidious attack on the nature of the academy itself, and on curriculum. Knopf-Newman writes that "the assault being waged against higher education is not simply against dissenting professors and academic freedom, but also over who controls the hiring process, the organization of curricula, and the nature of pedagogy itself."[125]

In such a climate, self-censorship becomes a key concern. Indeed, Doumani notes that "college campuses have been significantly quieter during the current Middle East conflict than during the Vietnam era."[126] The reasons for this are complex. While some have argued that the majority of academics teaching courses with less obvious political content such as maths or science do not feel affected,[127] others note the extent to which academic work in an era of globalisation is circumscribed by outside funding agencies, leaving academics loath to critique the establishment.[128]

In some senses, the mainstay of the academic freedom concept in United States' higher education, that is, the insistence on political neutrality and balance, has opened up the space for the conservative challenges described above. This may point to a fundamental weakness in the mainstream understanding of academic freedom as outlined at the beginning of this section. Ivie argues, for instance, that academic freedom is bound up with democracy and is not just about disengagement or political neutrality. Indeed, he argues that Dewey and Lovejoy founded the AAUP "to enrich democratic community by exercising academic freedom artfully against the oppression of orthodoxy

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[124] Ellen Schrecker, "Anxious in academe: higher education in the world of Bush and Cheney", *Radical Teacher*, (77) 2006, p.8.

[125] Robert L. Ivie, "Academic freedom and antiwar dissent in a democratic idiom", *College Literature*, 33 (4) 2006, p.4.

[126] Beshari Doumani (ed*) Academic Freedom after September 11*, New York, Zone Books, 2006, p.20.

[127] Martin Trow, "Californians redefine academic freedom", *CSHE Research and Occasional Paper*, 3 (5) 2005, p.4.

[128] See Chapter Six of this thesis for a fuller account of the effects of globalisation on academic work.

… thus a democratic society needs to protect academic freedom most when scholarship offends prevailing sensibilities".[129] Of Dewey he writes that:

> He recognized that engaged scholarship is subject to attack from religious, economic and political forces but insisted that genuine freedom of academic work is made more vulnerable by acting studiously apolitical and withdrawing into the ivory tower; academics, he believed, must engage matters of social concern for the sake of a healthy democratic polity and to legitimize the principle of unfettered intellectual inquiry.[130]

For Ivie, thus, academics' engagement with social issues and with the community in general is key to preserving academic freedom.

The theme of engagement is one that is current in the recent South African debates on academic freedom, where the liberal principle of non-involvement similarly is under attack, particularly in determining the roles of academics in a situation of major social transformation. Further parallels are not obvious; the contexts are very different, in that, for instance, anti-terror conservatism is not dominant in South African political reality, and the project to transform an entire higher education system to meet both global and local challenges is not a defining feature of the United States' landscape. Yet some of the arguments pertain. In South Africa there are a range of factors affecting academics' perceived freedoms of speech, and the relationship between freedom of speech and academic freedom is similarly under discussion. Using the conceptual grid outlined in Chapter One, the main discussion in the United States' context appears to be located in Quadrant One, around individual academic freedom and freedom of speech, with some challenges having been made from a Quadrant Three perspective, that is, moving towards a guild understanding of academic freedom. Clearly too, there is a postmodern challenge arising from Quadrant Four understandings. In the main, however, the discussions are firmly located on the left hand side of the Quadrant; liberal, negative liberty, pertaining to individuals or sometimes to the academic profession.

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[129] Robert L. Ivie, "Academic freedom and antiwar dissent in a democratic idiom", *College Literature*, 33 (4) 2006, pp.77-78.

[130] Ibid. p.79.

2.2 United Kingdom

Mention has already been made of the prominence of the use of the version of academic freedom of Quadrant Three (Q3), the 'guild' version, in Britain in the 1980s. Neave has suggested that until that decade, the predominant practice of academic freedom was based on a view that institutional autonomy was essential to the well-being of the academic endeavour, and this view was until then endorsed by the state. Indeed, a government spokesperson expressed it thus:

> The traditions of control in Britain show interesting differences from those I believe to be traditional in Germany. Universities, even if largely public-funded, are still private institutions, with their own governors and management. There is little tradition of direct control on their activities or even their spending. The tradition of 'academic freedom' is accepted by all interests, and is jealously guarded.[131]

The predominant view was that the state should have very little to do with the regulation of universities, beyond facilitating their functioning through providing the financial means for higher education to operate. Academics were considered best-placed to organise their own affairs which would be the greatest guarantee that truth would be pursued effectively. This view, which found sympathy with many academics, especially those operating in the institutions based on the Oxbridge model, ran counter to an increasing emphasis on institutional accountability emanating from the conservative government of the day. Under the Thatcher government, a comprehensive policy and measures of quality assurance were introduced which attempted to call higher education institutions to account, not only for their use of public funds, but to demonstrate how they assured the quality of their degrees and other educational offerings. In the British context, this was a case of a government venturing into territory previously considered the exclusive domain of academics – pushing the boundary between state and institution closer to the institution, and permeating it in significant ways.

Part of the rationale for this development lay in the need to manage the effects of the so-called massification of higher education. The rapid post-war expansion of higher

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[131] Tim Boswell, "Lecture on British universities", 15 September 1994, London, Department for Education, 1994, in Rosalind M.O. Pritchard, "Academic freedom and autonomy in the United Kingdom and Germany", *Minerva*, 36, 1998, p.101.

education was followed by a drive to increase the proportion of 18-24 year olds in higher education, mostly in response to perceived competition from other higher education systems, e.g. in Europe and the United States. Henkel, drawing on the work of Kogan, argues that there were four policy phases in higher education in post-war Britain; 1945-1963, characterised by a binary system of research-led universities and other training institutions, 1963-1975, characterised by a growth in the non-university sector, 1975-1981, with 1975 seeing the end of unfettered block grants to universities and the beginning of a reduction in funding for universities, and 1981-1997, a period of major structural and policy change and dramatic growth, or massification.[132]

The democratic impulse to diversify the student intake to include a greater proportion of first-generation students, mature students and students from previously marginalised minorities led to a concern about the maintenance of academic standards, and therefore the government's insistence on the need to develop quality assurance procedures along the lines of those already implemented in the commercial sector. This development signalled the beginning of a breakdown in the system of trust that had characterised institution-state relations, and the outbreak of open hostility between the sectors, culminating ultimately in the universities' reluctant acquiescence with the new rule-governed and accountability-driven higher education context.

Indeed, a decade ago, Pritchard noted that:

> The former relationship of trust between the universities and the government has now ended. The British university sector has been greatly expanded by the upgrading of the former polytechnics to university rank, thus leading to a much more disparate academic and political culture. Old-style interpersonal trust has become impossible to sustain, and the government's vigorous promotion of competitive market forces has set institutions against each other in their struggle to survive and prosper.[133]

Part of the shift is attributable to a change in economic policy, with the dismantling of the welfare state and the introduction of neo-liberal economics and fiscal discipline. Ironically, instead of 'rolling back the state' to achieve more autonomy, the effect was to

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[132] Mary Henkel, *Academic Identities and Policy Change in Higher Education*, London, Jessica Kingsley, 2000, p.30.

[133] Rosalind M.O. Pritchard, "Academic freedom and autonomy in the United Kingdom and Germany", *Minerva*, 36, 1998, p.103.

increase the role of the state and parastatal agencies in the regulation of higher education, as well as to introduce the market as another regulating factor. Two main features of British higher education at the time were the rise of steering by agency in a so-called 'agency proliferation', as well as far-reaching changes in funding.[134] As Henkel writes:

> The autonomy of HEIs (higher education institutions) was limited and structured by national intermediary bodies, but at the same time they were impelled to take action to reduce their financial dependence upon the state. That meant entering a range of markets. Institutions were more accountable to the state and they became open to a greater variety of values and interests. They also had to develop organisations to manage increased size and complexity; matrix structures and staff with more varied qualifications and skills. Academics gained and lost power in this process…[135]

While some academics became managers and so gained power, "academics in the basic units could find that their autonomy was reduced and that areas of work which had previously been unquestionably their preserve were now under scrutiny and even intervention by not only senior academic management but also other occupational groups."[136]

Bundy notes that these changes affected the understanding of universities as organisations and heralded the predominance of

> a new, utilitarian view of universities. The socio-economic benefits of higher education were expressed in terms of national economic competitiveness; universities were a tool, a resource, for human capital development and the production of relevant skills. In the early 1980s, the emphasis initially was on efficiency through improved governance. By the end of the '80s and into the '90s, there was a new, explicit enthusiasm for efficiency achieved by market relations within higher education.[137]

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[134] Guy Neave. "Times, measures and the man: the future of British higher education treated historically and comparatively", *Higher Education Quarterly*, 60 (2) 2006, p.123. Neave lists the Higher Education Funding Councils, the Quality Assurance Agency, the Institute for Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (now Higher Education Academy), the Learning and Skills Council and the possible addition of a Learning and Skills Leadership College and Sector Skills Councils (along the lines of the South African Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs)).

[135] Mary Henkel, *Academic Identities and Policy Change in Higher Education*, London, Jessica Kingsley, 2000, p.64.

[136] Ibid.

[137] Colin Bundy, "Global patterns, local options? Changes in higher education internationally and some implications for South Africa", *Kagisano* 4, 2006, p.4.

Within this context, the debates around academic freedom have generally revolved around the notion of institutional autonomy and self-governance for the profession as a whole, rather than individuals' freedom of speech, although increasingly the latter is becoming a concern within corporatised institutional contexts. The threats to academics' collective freedom are seen to come from both demands for accountability from the state, and from the effects of market forces on higher education in a globalising world. Academic freedom and institutional autonomy are seen to be conceptually aligned, and, it is widely believed, to be challenged by "the neo-liberal modes of governance [that] are changing the way in which we make sense of our world, as individuals, as academics and professionals", so that "traditional notions of academic freedom, autonomy and purpose, which have been central signifiers of academic identity, no longer hold."[138] With an increased emphasis on the utilitarian role of higher education, and a purpose seen in vocational terms, higher education needed to be justified by its outputs to society. In short, "the legitimation of higher education by reference to ideals of individual intellectual or personal development or cultural transmission was no longer sufficient … the justification for academic autonomy and academic control of higher education had been weakened."[139]

In summary, Bundy lists some of the changes that have occurred in British universities, among them the expansion of the system, the decline in public funding, the rise of the influence of market forces on the university and "a redefinition of the relationship between universities and the state. Historical forms of autonomy were modified by the rise of the 'regulatory state' and by the discourse of efficiency and economy. Universities have become accountable to a whole range of parastatal organs. Funding is tied to audit and review; teaching and research are subject to performance indicators and targets."[140] In Bundy's view, the effects of all these changes on

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[138] Suzy Harris, "Rethinking academic identities in neo-liberal times", *Teaching in Higher Education*, 10 (4) 2005, p.421.

[139] Mary Henkel, *Academic Identities and Policy Change in Higher Education*, London, Jessica Kingsley, 2000, p.233.

[140] Colin Bundy, "Under new management? A critical history of managerialism in British universities", in Walker, M. and Nixon, J. (eds) *Reclaiming Universities from a Runaway World*, Maidenhead, SRHE and Open University Press, 2004, p.163.

institutional autonomy, formerly so highly prized in Britain, have been deleterious. He writes that, "Accountability and the audit culture combine powerful moral reasoning with the methodology of financial accounting" and that "accountability appears to be a type of penance that is now being paid for former autonomy."[141]

The possible parallels with the trajectory described above and the South African situation are a matter of debate and are discussed more fully in Chapter Seven. Evident in the account above is a different locus of the debates from the United States' context. While the United States' debates relate most closely to Quadrant One understandings of individual academic freedom, the British debates are located in Quadrant Three in the main, with a fundamental concern being the shift in the boundary of the state towards the institutions and control in the name of the market being exercised in a much greater fashion than in the past.

2.3 Africa

Academic freedom in Africa makes for a very interesting case study, in that, in as far as it is possible to generalise over so vast a continent, the story of African universities can be told in a number of distinct phases. Most of what follows applies to sub-Saharan Africa, and not to North Africa or South Africa.

While there existed ancient universities in Africa – in Egypt, and Mali,[142] for example, the first modern universities were established by the colonial powers, very much with the express purpose of developing and training personnel to assist in administering the colonial states. They were thus set up in the image of Western institutions, often as colleges of western universities, with mainly a teaching function and little, if any research responsibilities until after World War II. Law and related fields were the favoured subjects, and the curriculum was very limited. Academic freedom, too, was limited. As Altbach writes, "the colonial powers – whether British, French, Japanese, or others,

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[141] Louise Morley, *Quality and Power in Higher Education*, Maidenhead, SRHE and Open University Press, 2003, p.53.

[142] Adebayo Olukoshi, "Facing the challenges of reform and renewal in the African university", SAARDHE Conference, Durban, 2005.

feared unrest from subject peoples. Thus when universities were established in the colonies, while otherwise modelled on the metropolitan home university, they were generally not permitted freedoms that were allowed in the metropole."[143] There was limited access to colonial higher education, and at the time of independence, the size of the academic system was very small. The language of instruction was the language of the coloniser. Indeed, in summary, "the few universities set up in the colonial period were designed with a narrow focus on cost-effectiveness and meeting the short-term needs of the colonial state and economy."[144]

At independence in the 1960s, there were a number of challenges, chief among these being nation-building, or the national unity project, and development, as well as the expectation of increased access to higher education. Olukoshi notes that the big debate of the time was autonomy versus the development agenda, and in that the political agenda held sway, so that the modern African university is a product of nationalism. He notes that, given the artificial nature of modern African countries, not built on pre-existing unified nations, the state was the sole legitimate force able to constitute national unity and development goals were mostly set by the state. In the immediate post-independence period, statist models of government were adopted in many instances. These held sway for a while, but began to unravel in the 1970s.[145]

Indeed, in the post-independence era, national education was regarded as very important, being seen as the key to national development. Mamdani sets up a dichotomy between relevance and quality in the debates of the post-independence period, quality being understood as standards determined in a Western context, and relevance meaning the application of knowledge in the advancement of the development agenda. This is not unlike the equity/quality debate in post-apartheid South Africa. He sums up the argument as follows, "For if the quest for relevance would tend to localize

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[143] Philip G. Altbach, "Academic freedom: international realities and challenges", *Globalisation and Higher Education: Views from the South*, Cape Town, 2001, p.10.

[144] Mahmood Mamdani, "Introduction: the quest for academic freedom", in Diouf, M. and Mandani, M. (eds), *Academic Freedom in Africa*, Dakar, CODESRIA, 1994, p.1.

[145] Adebayo Olukoshi, "Facing the challenges of reform and renewal in the African university", SAARDHE Conference, Durban, 2005.

universities, would it not at the same time compromise quality and standards, which to have any meaning must be understood in universalist terms?"[146] He argues that the one uncontested and unexamined assumption was that the state was the custodian of a rather narrowly understood developmental process, with the main quest in education being to make it more relevant to an African situation.

Another debate of the time outlined by Olukoshi was the indigenisation debate of the 1960s and 1970s, referring to both academic staff and curriculum. There was considerable pressure to replace expatriate staff at universities, and in this the universities were successful. For example, in terms of personnel, where the Professors at the University of Dakar at independence had primarily been French expatriates, by the late 1970s the staff complement was 100% indigenous.[147] With respect to indigenising the curriculum, the outcome was mixed. There was some success in indigenising the curriculum in the social sciences such as in African history, but not in other disciplines where there was mostly a replication of courses from elsewhere. In select disciplines there was some methodological innovation, for example in oral history, but most are still condemned to what Mazrui calls "paradigmatic dependency".[148] Mazrui argues that the real question is how to promote development in a post-colonial state without consolidating the structures of dependency inherited from its imperial past.[149]

Two other debates characterised the period. These were the question of the language of instruction, still an unresolved one, and the roles and responsibilities of the African intellectual. On the language issue, some intellectuals such as Achebe had suggested using English as effectively as possible to convey the authenticity of the African experience, that is, to enrich the English language and make it culturally rooted, but, largely because of the paucity of material in indigenous languages and the sheer

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[146] Mahmood Mamdani, "Introduction: the quest for academic freedom", in Diouf, M. and Mamdani, M. (eds), *Academic Freedom in Africa*, Dakar, CODESRIA, 1994, p.2.

[147] Adebayo Olukoshi, "Facing the challenges of reform and renewal in the African university", SAARDHE Conference, Durban, 2005.

[148] Ali Mazrui, "Towards re-Africanizing African universities: who killed intellectualism in the post colonial era?" *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations*, 2 (3&4) 2003, p.143.

[149] Ibid.

number of them in any one country in Africa, the language of instruction remains that of the coloniser.[150] Many linguists would argue that education in the mother tongue is essential for cognitive development, but logistics and feasibility undermine the potential for this to occur. As Mamdani comments, "No cultural constellation in the colonized world has a linguistic divide between working people and intellectuals as sharp as that in Africa."[151]

In the second debate, the responsibility of the African intellectual was considered to be one of leading the nation in development issues and in building national culture. Indeed, the era was initially marked by fervent intellectual activity, as Shivji fondly recalls. He reminisces about the University of Dar-es-Salaam in the immediate post-colonial era as follows:

> The university flourished. It became a hotbed of radical nationalism where researches were done to reclaim our history; where debates were conducted to debunk domination; where students demonstrated and protested against injustice and oppression, exploitation and discrimination, imperialism and apartheid. It mattered not whether the victims of injustices and oppression were white, black, brown or yellow. Human liberation and human freedom are indivisible.[152]

And, in so doing, he bemoans the current resurfacing of the colonised mind and the passing of the culture of collegiality in the new corporate management culture ushered in through international donors.[153]

Mamdani holds that at the time there was little questioning of the developmental logic embedded in the nature of university education in Africa. In his account, the immediate post-independence national development fervour began to unravel as a result of growing

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[150] On the language issue see Mahmood Mamdani, "Why an African university now?", SAARDHE Conference, Durban, 2005, and Neville Alexander, "Language policy, symbolic power and the democratic responsibility of the post-apartheid university", *Pretexts: Literary and Cultural Studies*, 12 (2) 2003.

[151] Mahmood Mamdani, "Introduction: the quest for academic freedom", in Diouf, M. and Mamdani, M. (eds), *Academic Freedom in Africa*, Dakar, CODESRIA, 1994, p.10.

[152] Issa Shivji, "Whither university?" *CODESRIA Bulletin*, (1&2), 2005, p.3.

[153] Ibid.

state authoritarianism. Governments began to take over universities as national assets and campuses became arenas of conflict between students and academics against governments. The developmental capacity of the independent state appeared to be in trouble. By the late 1970s, with states experiencing severe budgetary crises, they began moving their priorities from development to law and order.[154] A period of the denial of academic freedom began and continued in most cases until the present, although, as noted below, there are signs of change in some countries where democracy has taken root.

Mazrui relates how in the early 1990s he needed not only the permission of the Vice-Chancellor but also of the Head of State before he was allowed to give a lecture entitled "African universities and the American model of higher education" at the University of Nairobi in Kenya.[155] He outlines both the lack of academic freedom and the curtailment of intellectualism in Africa from the 1970s, an intellectualism that had been alive in the immediate post-colonial era, ascribing this to rising political authoritarianism and African countries being caught in the middle of the Cold War between Western powers and the Soviet bloc, a situation that manifested itself in sometimes contrary ways. He writes that, "while in Kenya intellectualism died partly because of the Cold War opposition to socialism, in Tanzania intellectualism died partly because of excessive local enthusiasm *for* socialism."[156] Among other cases of a crackdown on academic freedom, he cites the abduction and disappearance of Frank Kalimuzo, Vice-Chancellor of Makerere University, as well as the Chief Justice of Uganda, Benedicto Kiwanuka, under Idi Amin's military dictatorship. As he says, the "scintillating intellectual voices of Uganda either fell silent or went into exile."[157]

Indeed, the forces of repression were in those years mostly internal to the countries concerned. As Olukoshi points out, national political elites saw universities as

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[154] Mahmood Mamdani, "Introduction: the quest for academic freedom", in Diouf, M. and Mamdani, M. (eds), *Academic Freedom in Africa*, Dakar, Senegal, CODESRIA, 1994, p.5.

[155] This was no longer the case for this lecture, delivered at the same university, in 2003.

[156] Ali Mazrui, "Towards re-Africanizing African universities: who killed intellectualism in the post colonial era?" *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations*, 2 (3&4) 2003, p.138.

[157] Ibid. p.137.

instruments, as integral parts of the state apparatus. National coalitions began to fall apart with single party rule and the "fathers of the nation" idea of presidents for life. Some universities began to become detached from the people.[158] While this national challenge to academic freedom arose in the late 1970s and 1980s, accompanied by severe fiscal crises, this factor has, in most parts of, not abated. Writing in 2003, Teferra and Altbach conclude, after outlining a number of violations of academic freedom in Algeria, Kenya and Ethiopia, that "most African governments are intolerant of dissent, criticism, nonconformity, and free expression of controversial, new or unconventional ideas … In such an environment, the academic community is often careful not to overtly offend those in power. This contributes to the perpetuation of a culture of self-censorship." [159]

It is clear to Mazrui too, that "governmental involvement in university affairs is the norm … Throughout much of Africa, the head of state holds the ultimate authority as the chancellor or president in appointing vice-chancellors".[160] This is true of Nigeria, and Barrow and Ukeje note that there "the appointment of vice-chancellors, in particular, has been a bone of contention between the university unions and the federal government."[161] They note that Nigerian higher education experienced phenomenal growth in the 1980s, but then funding declined and conditions for academics worsened. Higher education in Nigeria became characterised by a resultant brain drain, inflexible management

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[158] Adebayo Olukoshi, "Facing the challenges of reform and renewal in the African university", SAARDHE Conference, Durban, 2005.

[159] Damtew Teferra and Philip G. Altbach, "African higher education: challenges for the 21st century", *Higher Education*, 47, 2004, pp.40-41. They quote Aman Attieh (2003) on serious violations of freedom of speech and expression by security forces, opposition groups and militant groups in Algeria since 1992 that have silenced not only scholars but also the citizens as a whole. They also note that in Kenya, Charles Ngome (2003) outlined unwarranted government interference and abuses of academic freedom that eroded the autonomy and quality of the higher learning institutions. A further case cited is the summary expulsion of over forty university professors from Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia in the mid-1990s (Wondimu 2003). A more recent case is the expulsion of Kenneth Good from Botswana in 2006.

[160] Ibid. p.27.

[161] Monica Iyegumwena Barrow and Fidelma Ekwutozia Ukeje, "The academic workplace in a changing environment: the Nigerian scene", in Altbach, P.G. (ed), *The Decline of the Guru: the academic profession in developing and middle-income countries*, New York, Palgrave-Macmillan, 2003, p.277.

structures, declining quality of graduates, and little inter-university traffic as a result of ethnic concerns. Not only the Vice-Chancellor, but the governing councils were appointed by the president of country. Staff unions negotiated directly with government for all institutions, staff members were all tenured, and their salaries were harmonised with the civil service. Civil service regulations for academics are common in Africa. Barrow and Ukeje write further that "Traditionally, Nigerian universities have enjoyed considerable freedom in the area of teaching and research. However, this cherished freedom had been threatened from time to time by the degree of control the government has had over university affairs, especially during the long military era, which created an adversarial relationship between the government and the universities."[162] Barrow and Ukeje go on to make the point that autonomy and self-regulation may be difficult to achieve where universities rely on government funding.

The state-institution relationship in most parts of post-colonial Africa is clearly one that does not allow for academics or universities to govern themselves. Again, perhaps the precondition for institutional autonomy is democracy, for in many democratic countries where greater degrees of academic freedom in the Quadrant Three sense do obtain, such as in Britain, public institutions are also largely funded by their governments. As Neave writes:

> It is theoretically well within the bounds of possibility to have a higher education system subject to formal state control and yet to have minimal interference or to have a degree of intervention which, if not negligible, is nevertheless perceived by those it affects as part of the natural order of things. In short, it is not State control *per se* which is the source of disquiet so much as what is perceived as reinforcing State control beyond established bounds. One is never so conscious of State control as when it assumes a dynamic which obliges central authority to take initiatives and, like Captain Kirk, to boldly go where it has never gone before.[163]

In Africa, certainly, it is apparent that there have been times when the state has ventured into those areas and made academics very aware of state control beyond 'established bounds'.

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[162]Monica Iyegumwena Barrow and Fidelma Ekwutozia Ukeje, "The academic workplace in a changing environment: the Nigerian scene", in Altbach, P.G. (ed), *The Decline of the Guru: the academic profession in developing and middle-income countries*, New York, Palgrave-Macmillan, 2003, p.291..

[163] Guy Neave, "The evaluative state reconsidered", *European Journal of Education*, 33 (3) 1998, p.270.

While the above picture in terms of governance looks bleak, there are signs of change. For example, President Mwai Kibaki in Kenya decided to give up Chancellorships of the six public universities as a symbol of "decentralisation and depoliciticization".[164] In Nigeria, there were indications that with the advent of democracy there would be moves towards a deregulated system where government interference would be minimised.[165] Barrow and Ukeje note in addition that, in 2003, the Ijalaye Panel was working on policies and legislation to ensure academic autonomy.[166] Similarly, partly as a result of experiences in Tanzania and Senegal, academics have in the past come together in a number of forums to produce Declarations on Academic Freedom that still have currency, for example, The Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility, 1990, signed by "the African intellectual community, and the Dar-es-Salaam Declaration on Academic Freedom and Social Responsibility of Academics, 1990, signed by the staff associations of institutions of higher education in Tanzania."[167] The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA) has an ongoing project on academic freedom, with occasional conferences run under its auspices, such as one on academic freedom in Dakar in 2004, and it has recently been a theme in the Journal of Higher Education in Africa.[168]

Apart from the direct attacks on academic freedom and the general curtailment thereof through governance arrangements, there have been a number of related, but different, external challenges to academic freedom in Africa as well. The funding crisis of the late 1980s led states to seek assistance from multinational lending agencies, chiefly

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[164] Damtew Teferra and Philip G. Altbach, "African higher education: challenges for the 21st century", *Higher Education*, 47, 2004, p.30.

[165] For example, the *Declaration of the UNESCO-NUC (National Universities Commission) Roundtable* on "Promoting a Culture of Reform in Nigerian universities" initiated by ex-President Obasanjo, July 2004. It remains to be seen to what extent such proposed reforms will be implemented under the new government of Umaru Yar'Adua.

[166] Monica Iyegumwena Barrow and Fidelma Ekwutozia Ukeje, "The academic workplace in a changing environment: the Nigerian scene", in Altbach, P.G. (ed), *The Decline of the Guru: the academic profession in developing and middle-income countries*, New York, Palgrave-Macmillan, 2003, p.291.

[167] The Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility, in Diouf, M. and Mamdani, M. (eds), *Academic Freedom in Africa*, Dakar, CODESRIA, 1994, p.13.

[168] CODESRIA http://www.codesria.org/Publications.htm/

the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Their conditions of lending led to the adoption of structural adjustment strategies: that is, currency devaluations, liberalisation of the economy, the removal of subsidies, deflationary economics politics and fiscal conservatism, and these together resulted in the intensification of the funding crisis of African universities. Teferra and Altbach trace the origins of the concerns for higher education to a variety of factors. They write that, "Africa faces severe fiscal crisis, as a result of 'massification' and expansion in the post-colonial era, economic problems in most countries, a changed fiscal climate induced by multilateral lending agencies such as the World Bank and the IMF, the inability of students to afford the tuition rates, or the inability to impose tuition fees because of political pressure, misallocation and poor prioritization of available financial resources."[169]

Others note that part of the problem was the prioritising of primary over higher education, a decision that inspired outrage among African intellectuals. Referring to World Bank and IMF terms and conditions which favour primary education at the expense of expenditure on higher education, Mittelman argues that:

> Literacy for the poor is a worthwhile objective, but it should not be at the expense of depriving a Third World country of investment in research and development, which is essential to increasing productivity. Conditionality not only imposes false choices, but also constrains academic freedom, for without the most basic academic support – books, journals and equipment – how can one attain an education? Under such conditions, how can educators maintain standards?[170]

The consequences of the structural adjustment programmes, which emphasised primary education and resulted in a reduction of funds to higher education, were deleterious. Indeed, in 1978, Vice-Chancellors of a number of African universities met in Harare[171] and were asked to rationalise universities as the per capita cost was too high. It was intended that primary and vocational education be undertaken locally but that tertiary level education was to be followed overseas. More than sixty Vice-Chancellors refused as they were not about to secure their own dismissal. However, there was a

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[169] Damtew Teferra and Philip G. Altbach, "African higher education: challenges for the 21st century", *Higher Education*, 47, 2004, p.26.

[170] James H. Mittelman, "Academic freedom, the state and globalisation", in Diouf, M. and Mamdani, M. (eds), *Academic Freedom in Africa*, Dakar, CODESRIA, 1994, p.145.

[171] Mahmood Mamdani, "Why an African university now?, SAARDHE Conference, Durban, 2005.

rationalisation of courses, particularly in the social sciences and humanities, as these were not directly vocational and considered too expensive in the context of the graduate unemployment that was a reality of the 1980s and 1990s. Olukoshi notes that the logic of commercialisation prevailed, that civics and citizenship were eroded and the "social responsibility of academics was sacrificed on the altar of economic considerations."[172]

The collapse in funding for public institutions of higher education resulted in a variety of ills. At the top of the list was an infrastructural collapse, particularly with respect to libraries and laboratories. There were severe financial resource constraints for basic resources like books and chemicals, given that 90-95% comes from the state, while research is mainly funded by donor agencies.[173] Funding by donor agencies meant that the research agenda was no longer controlled by indigenous academics and, in conjunction with the paucity of local resources and infrastructure, this led to the collapse of a research culture.[174] Research is crucial to the new knowledge economy, particularly in the Third World and in Africa, and there it is in a critical condition. Teferra and Altbach note the poor infrastructure, inadequate facilities, the brain drain, no research funds in university budgets, difficult access to journals as many universities discontinued subscriptions, and a weak local publishing infrastructure. One of the ironies is that, "though the state of research in Africa remains precarious, many researchers report that academic promotion depends to a large extent on publishing."[175]

Olukoshi cites as a consequence also the collapse of professional associations and journals. By the 1980s, there were only a few left of those that had thrived in the 1970s.

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[172] Adebayo Olukoshi, "Facing the challenges of reform and renewal in the African university", SAARDHE Conference, Durban, 2005.

[173] Damtew Teferra and Philip G. Altbach, "African higher education: challenges for the 21st century", *Higher Education*, 47, 2004, p.26.

[174] Adebayo Olukoshi, "Facing the challenges of reform and renewal in the African university", SAARDHE Conference, Durban, 2005.

[175] Damtew Teferra and Philip G. Altbach, "African higher education: challenges for the 21st century", *Higher Education*, 47, 2004, p.39.

Currently there is generally only CODESRIA and regional networks to provide intellectual stimulation.[176] Not only is there little publishing, but, as Zegeye writes:

> In Africa, most of that publishing is in foreign hands. Publishing is an appendage of European publishing houses. Publishing in Africa is viewed as a special area which is not expected to produce knowledge but be a conveyor belt of information developed as knowledge in other climates. Or in most cases if publishing is in African hands it first imagines its readers as European. It becomes African knowledge by virtue of marking its consumers as people living outside the borders of Africa.[177]

A further phenomenon having a negative effect on academic life in Africa is the so-called 'brain drain' to foreign countries or to the private sector, government agencies and NGOs. Many academics have moved, and continue to move, to the United States, South Africa and places such as Saudi-Arabia. Teferra and Altbach note that "it is ironic that while several countries complain about the loss of their highly skilled labour to South Africa, South Africa itself bemoans its loss of talent to other countries."[178] HIV and AIDS, too, and related health problems, are bringing about an unknown extent of loss of academic labour,[179] leading some to argue that the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS calls for concerted interventions among tertiary institutions.[180]

Apart from concerns relating to research, Olukoshi notes that teaching too has suffered. There is little or no money for tutorial systems, seminars or, with increased

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[176] Adebayo Olukoshi, "Facing the challenges of reform and renewal in the African university", SAARDHE Conference, Durban, 2005.

[177] Abebe Zegeye, "Knowledge production and publishing in Africa", *CODESRIA Bulletin*, (3&4) 2005, p.32.

[178] Damtew Teferra and Philip G. Altbach, "African higher education: challenges for the 21st century", *Higher Education*, 47, 2004, p.44.

[179] The *HSRC/Human Resources Development Review* found in a 2003 survey that 25% of Technikon students and 20% of university students had contracted HIV/AIDS. The study anticipated that by 2005, these would have increased by 10% across institutions. HSRC/HRD, *Notice of a stakeholder consultation on a research study to assess the determinants and supply of educators based in public schools and FET Colleges*, 2003. A Department of Health antenatal survey found that the HIV/AIDs prevalence rate for those under 20 was 14.8% and 29.1% for those aged 20-24 years. Department of Health, *National HIV and Syphilis antenatal sero-prevalence survey in South Africa, 2003*. Pretoria, Department of Health, 2004.

[180] See M.N. Phaswana-Mafuya, "HIV/AIDS situational analysis among tertiary institutions in the Eastern Cape", *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 19 (6) 2005, pp.1141-1142.

student numbers, much participatory education and debate. Instead, he describes universities as factory-like, running a number of shifts, including at night, and producing graduates around the clock. One response has been to admit increasing numbers of private students. Musisi reports that in 1992-3, 5% of students at the University of Makerere were paying their way, while in 2000 80% were doing so.[181] In that instance, faculties of the university were allowed to keep 90% of the tuition fees as an incentive to offset appalling salaries and working conditions, with 10% going to the university itself. According to Musisi, the consequence was faculties taking on more and more students, with staff spending 20-30 hours a week in the lecture theatres, and with numbers from 3000 to 30 000 registered in the same faculty. Competition between faculties for students increased, and the curriculum changed to offer more vocational courses, such as secretarial studies in the humanities, foreign language courses to prepare students for jobs in foreign countries, and degrees in areas such as tourism despite a very small industry. Science suffered too, with the result that there is, in Mamdani's words, no independent national intelligentsia to carry out scientific or social research for Ugandan society, other than what is paid for by external donors.[182]

With respect to student numbers and demand, there were estimated to be three and a half million (3 489 000) students in the post-secondary sector in Africa in 2000, with 150 000 academic staff in post-secondary institutions. Egypt had the highest enrolment with over 1.5 million students, Nigeria had an estimated 900 000, (5% of 18-25 cohort), and South Africa was third with more than half a million students, 55% of whom study in universities.[183] "Those who have access to postsecondary education in Africa overall represent less than 3% of the eligible age group – the lowest in the world by a significant percentage."[184] Per capita spending, as well as overall spending is very low. Teferra and Altbach comment that "Higher education is a four-to-five-billion-dollar enterprise in Africa

[181] N.B. Musisi, "Uganda", in Teferra, D. and Altbach, P.G. (eds), *African Higher Education: an International Reference Handbook*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2003, p.615.

[182] Mahmood Mamdani, "Why an African university now?" Durban, SAARDHE Conference, 2005.

[183] Task Force on Higher Education and Society, *Higher Education in Developing Countries: Peril and Promise*, Washington D.C. World Bank, 2000

[184] Damtew Teferra and Philip G. Altbach, "African higher education: challenges for the 21st century", *Higher Education*, 47, 2004, p.26.

"… For a continent of more than 700 million people, this expenditure is depressingly small. The total yearly expenditure for higher education in Africa as a whole does not even come close to the endowments of some of the richest universities in the United States."[185]

Privatisation,[186] the growth in student numbers and the lack of revenue have led to profound social and organisational change in student life. Olukoshi reports that following privatisation the induction of students collapsed, and was replaced by campus courts and fraternities, and Mamdani notes how difficult it has become for women to compete.[187] Olukoshi too, notes an increase in sexual harassment, campus violence, strikes, and authoritarian modes of governance on campuses. While at the end of the 1980s, public institutions were still the norm, by the end of the 1990s they were the exception rather than the norm. In Nigeria, he estimates there to be some 82 private institutions, offering courses mainly in vocational disciplines – banking, MBAs, certificate level qualifications – charging fees of various kinds, with little or no regulation or tests of quality.[188] As an extreme example, he cites the effects of privatisation in the case of the University of Lagos, which, in a bid to compete with the private institutions, opened a campus in Seoul. There, for $50 000, students could allegedly get an MBA certificate without attending classes or sitting exams. There has also been an increase in cross-border provision, bringing with it a new set of quality problems.[189] In Dakar, there is reportedly no shortage of United States universities charging fees for Senegalese to get

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[185] Damtew Teferra and Philip G. Altbach, "African higher education: challenges for the 21st century", *Higher Education*, 47, 2004, p.27.

[186] N.V. Varghese notes that the 1990s saw the emergence of private sector institutions in Africa, and collaboration with foreign universities. The Sub-Saharan countries have more than 100 private universities, of which 62 were established in the 1990s. N.V. Varghese, "Growth and expansion of private higher education in Africa", in Varghese, N.V. (ed), *Growth and Expansion of Private Higher Education in Africa*, International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO, 2006, p.32.

[187] Mahmood Mamdani, "Why an African university now?", SAARDHE Conference, Durban, 2005.

[188] Adebayo Olukoshi, "Facing the challenges of reform and renewal in the African university", SAARDHE Conference, Durban, 2005.

[189] See, for instance, Jane Knight, "Crossborder education in a trade environment: complexities and policy implications", *The implications of WTO/GATS for higher education in Africa Conference*, Accra, Ghana, 2004.

certificates and exit visas out of Senegal to further their education in the United States. Middle class families are emigrating and not returning, partly because the education they have received elsewhere has not been designed to assist with development at home.[190]

From the above, it is evident that there are both internal and external challenges to academic freedom in Africa. Among those external challenges is globalisation, the effects of which on higher education in Africa are discussed further in Chapter Six. Suffice to say at this point, with Mamdani, that in Africa:

> The constraints to intellectual activity are both external and internal. The task at hand is far more complicated than simply liberating a physical space (the university) from external interference. For it is a task [which is] simultaneously institutional (building an infrastructure to support innovative and inward-looking intellectual work) and methodological (liberating mental space from borrowed paradigms that often lead to social blindness).[191]

3. The conceptual grid of academic freedom applied to higher education in Africa

In applying the conceptual grid to sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa), in as far as it is possible to generalise over so vast an area, three aspects become apparent. Firstly, in the modern era, that is both the colonial and immediately post-colonial periods, where there existed some degree of academic freedom, this could be said to be largely based on the understanding in Quadrant Two: a positive idea of freedom in the development of the newly-formed nation-states, with the express purpose of building a common culture in the nascent territories. In many senses these were not 'natural' nations in that borders cut across and incorporated a variety of ethnic groups, but certainly the project of the time was national development.

Secondly, as the national project ran into difficulties and military regimes came to power, it is debatable that there existed academic freedom of any kind in many

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[190] Adebayo Olukoshi, "Facing the challenges of reform and renewal in the African university", SAARDHE Conference, Durban, 2005.

[191] Mahmood Mamdani, "Introduction: the quest for academic freedom", in Diouf, M. and Mamdani, M. (eds), *Academic Freedom in Africa*, Dakar, CODESRIA, 1994, p.13.

countries. However, the idea of academic freedom that was observed in the breach, as it were, was very much based on the Quadrant Three understanding, with students and staff pitted against government-appointed managers and the state itself in a bid to be allowed to wrest institutions from the grip of the state and to run institutions with a greater degree of autonomy than before.

Thirdly, without Quadrant Three-type academic freedom having been achieved, however, it is clear that the boundaries between state and institution already become permeable with the rise of the market in the form of donor-funded conditionality, thus starting to display the underlying conditions of Quadrant Four. In thinking about this development, it may be the case that an established tradition of 'guild'-type academic freedom is a precondition for freedom and autonomy of Quadrant Four-type to emerge. While some African intellectuals are already pointing the way towards Quadrant Four – emphasising the need to engage with communities, to find harmony in the synergies between institutional and community goals – the collective efforts to secure academic freedom through establishing Charters, and finding means of distancing the state from the governance of institutions are very much predicated on a Quadrant Three (and One) understanding. An example is Article 11 of the Kampala Declaration: "Institutions of higher education shall be autonomous and independent of the State or any other public authority in conducting their affairs, including administration, and setting up their academic, teaching, research and other related programmes."[192] In other words, the big question is how to strengthen that particular boundary. Perhaps a tradition of academic freedom of Quadrant Three type is a necessary pre-condition for moving successfully into Quadrant Four, where the boundaries become increasingly permeable, in order to avoid falling into the shadow area of that Quadrant.

4. Conclusion

In the three main contexts described above, while there are some obvious similarities in the arguments, the emphases in each are different and can be located in different

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[192] The Kampala Declaration on Intellectual Freedom and Social Responsibility, in Diouf, M. and Mamdani, M. (eds), *Academic Freedom in Africa*, Dakar, CODESRIA, 1994, p.351.

parts of the conceptual grid outlined in Chapter One. The United States debates as they have been portrayed, relate largely to individual academics' freedom of speech, which is seen to be dependent on political neutrality, placing them largely within Quadrant One understandings of academic freedom, with challenges arising from understandings of both Quadrant Three and Four types. In the British context, the main thrusts of the debates relate to the weakening of institutional autonomy with increased control from the state and markets. The arguments are generally more focussed on the autonomy of the academic profession, rather than on individual freedom of speech, placing them in the main in Quadrant Three. Similarly, however, in the British context, challenges also arise from Quadrant Four understandings of academic freedom in a globalising world. In the African context, the debates move from Quadrant Two understandings, with academic freedom related to the national development project, to aspirations to Quadrant Three-type institutional autonomy and academic freedom. While the framework outlined in Chapter One is simple, and the debates far more complex than the above conclusion would suggest, it does help to separate out the kinds of understandings and to locate the debates in relation to them, the better to unravel the complexity of the arguments. In the next chapter, the South African debates, and the parallels with those above, are examined more fully.

Chapter Three

Academic freedom – the South African debates

He has never been much of a teacher; in this transformed and, to his mind, emasculated institution of learning he is more out of place than ever. But then, so are his colleagues from the old days, burdened with upbringings inappropriate to the tasks they are set to perform; clerks in a post-religious age.

J. M. Coetzee, "Disgrace"

1. Introduction

In attempting to apply the conceptual grid of academic freedom to a South African context, in this chapter I set out something of a selective history of higher education in South Africa, focusing on aspects that have a bearing on academic freedom. For this purpose, the discussion of universities in South Africa can very neatly be divided into two large periods, pre- and post-1994, for the higher education policy context changed dramatically in the post-apartheid era. Indeed, with the advent of democracy in 1994, a process of reshaping the entire higher education system began and is still being unfolded. My concern is with academic freedom in this new context and in this examination a number of questions need to be asked. Did academic freedom ever exist? Is it still important? Can we use the same concepts as those in use in different contexts? What effect are the current policies and the new higher education landscape, as well as external forces such as globalisation, having on academic freedom, if any at all? And if it is important, how are we to understand academic freedom in a way that takes us forward in this new context? In the latter sections of this chapter the current debates on academic freedom and institutional autonomy are outlined.

In the post-1994 period, there was initially very little writing on these issues, save in the main for the rich and interesting debate between Higgins and du Toit as presented below. However, following a controversial speech at the University of Cape Town's T.B. Davie Memorial Lecture in 2004 by Jansen,[193] in which he laid down the gauntlet to the government with respect to what he perceived to be an intrusion by the new state into areas of academic endeavour that had previously been considered the territory of the institutions, there has been an explosion of writing on the subject, as well as a national project investigating the issue.[194] The latter half of this chapter thus attempts to capture these debates in order to frame the discussions that follow in the rest of the dissertation.

2. Academic freedom pre-1994

Moodie's study of the so-called open universities under apartheid South Africa, that is, the University of Cape Town (UCT), the University of Natal (Natal), the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and Rhodes University[195], suggests that those universities (unlike the Afrikaans universities and the 'Bantustan' ones which were specific creations of the apartheid state, designed to further the aims of that state) enjoyed a very high level of institutional autonomy.[196] He argues that, for the most part, these institutions were able to manage their own internal affairs, determine their curriculum, research what they wanted to, and teach in the manner that they saw fit. What Moodie's thesis ignores is that these institutions were increasingly not allowed to teach whom they chose, with

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[193] Jonathan Jansen, "Accounting for autonomy", *The 41st .T.B. Davie Memorial Lecture*, University of Cape Town, Cape Town, 2004.

[194] This is a project of the Council on Higher Education (CHE), known as the project on Higher Education, Institutional Autonomy and Academic Freedom (HEIAAF). It began at the end of 2005, and, at the time of writing, has yet to reach conclusion.

[195] Collectively, these four institutions are also referred to at the historically white English-medium universities, or the 'liberal' universities. See, for example, Ian Bunting, "The higher education landscape under apartheid", in Cloete, N., Maassen, P. et al (eds), *Transformation in Higher Education: Global pressures and local realities*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006.

[196] Graeme Moodie, "The state and liberal universities in South Africa: 1948-1990", *Higher Education*, 27 (1) 1994, pp.1-40.

ever-more repressive legislation excluding black students from them, or requiring such students to obtain ministerial permission to study there. Only very small numbers of black students were admitted.[197] Furthermore, access to certain political texts, research data and other literature considered seditious, or furthering the aims of communism, under the apartheid legislation of the time, was severely circumscribed, such that the mere possession of such material could result in sanctions such as imprisonment.

Given the apartheid complexities, the relationship of these institutions with the state was thus ambiguous. While the limitations described above were certainly intrusive, for the most part, the so-called open universities, having received their block grants from the government, were thereafter free to allocate resources with a relatively high level of autonomy. There were few regular accountability processes in place, beyond minimal statutory reporting. That these institutions were able to exercise a certain extent of autonomy against a repressive state is evidenced in their rebuttal of the attempt to introduce a quota system in 1987 designed to limit the number of blacks allowed admission. It was chiefly through the responses of two of those universities, UCT and Natal, that that proposed legislation was thwarted.[198] Indeed, Bunting argues that these universities took a strong anti-government stand during the 1980s, because

> they did not believe that their existence was dependent on the patronage of the apartheid government. Their view was that any university in any country, by its very nature, had to maintain a 'distance' from government. They regarded themselves as being part of an international community of scholars which was dedicated to the advancement and propagation of all human knowledge.[199]

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[197] This is in relation to the proportion of the black population. Bunting makes the point that these institutions deliberately attempted to bring larger numbers of black students on to their campuses, such that "the effect of these efforts was that by 1990, 28% and by 1993, 38% of the students registered at these four universities were either African or coloured or Indian." Ian Bunting, "The higher education landscape under apartheid", in Cloete, N., Maassen, P. et al (eds), *Transformation in Higher Education: Global pressures and local realities*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006, pp.42-43.

[198] Graeme Moodie, "The state and liberal universities in South Africa: 1948-1990", *Higher Education*, 27 (1) 1994, p.5.

[199] Ian Bunting, "The higher education landscape under apartheid", in Cloete, N., Maassen, P. et al (eds), *Transformation in Higher Education: Global pressures and local realities*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006, p.43.

Furthermore, apart from the across the board censorship with respect to certain reading material, there was little external control in directly determining the scientific research agenda. Bunting argues that "the intellectual agendas of the four historically white English-medium universities were set by their perception that they were international institutions engaged in the same kinds of knowledge production as universities in, for example, Britain or the USA."[200] The research funding agencies of the time did not prescribe specific research programmes or attach many non-academic conditions to funding, and certainly, any policy-related research in support of government objectives was regarded as anathema. For these universities, then, it could be said that, for the most part, institutional autonomy in the Quadrant Three sense applied – the academic 'guild' was, within the confines of apartheid law, left alone to determine research, curriculum issues, staffing, assessment and the normal workings of such institutions, with some pretence to a 'distance ' from the state obtaining.

There were, however, spectacular breaches of the tacit contract between these universities and the state, where the state attempted to crack down on individual academics' freedom to research, to determine what they would, and could, teach, and whom they would teach.[201] For these institutions, while academic freedom in terms of Quadrant Three – that is, institutional autonomy – was relatively high, individual academic freedom as in Quadrant One applied only where it suited the state to leave academics alone. Certainly the understanding of academic freedom espoused by those universities could be said to be a combination of Quadrants One – freedom of speech for individuals – and Quadrant Three, institutional autonomy. The open universities (or English-medium ones) saw themselves as repositories of the liberal idea of academic freedom, modelled on the idea of academic freedom that pertained in pre-1980s Britain. There was, of course, the one caveat – this was the legislation regarding race under the apartheid state. Southall and Cobbing argue that it is a "straightforward sociological

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[200] Ian Bunting, "The higher education landscape under apartheid", in Cloete, N., Maassen, P. et al (eds), *Transformation in Higher Education: global pressures and local realities*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006, p.43.

[201] See Teboho Moja and Nico Cloete, "South Africa", in Daniel, J. (ed) *Academic Freedom 3: Education and Human Rights*, London, Zed, 1995, for an account of the main violations of academic freedom in the apartheid era. Most notable examples are the murders of academics Rick Turner and David Webster.

observation that although the open universities may have committed themselves to liberal values, their liberalism was filtrated through structures which were racially based," and that "theirs was a liberalism which was qualified by their socialisation into, and location in, a situation of racial privilege."[202]

Nevertheless, the English-medium universities carried the torch for academic freedom in South Africa, as evidenced in the tradition of annual academic freedom lectures at UCT- the T.B. Davie series in which many eminent scholars participated.[203] Indeed, such a tradition existed at Rhodes, at the University of the Witwatersrand and at the former University of Natal.[204] The idea of academic freedom underlying these lectures was very much based on a formulation articulated by T.B. Davie in 1950, that academic freedom meant "our freedom from external interference in a) who shall teach, b) what we teach, c) how we teach and d) whom we teach."[205] This formulation is extrapolated in the following principles:

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[202] Roger Southall and Julian Cobbing, "From racial liberalism to corporate authoritarianism: the Shell affair and the assault on academic freedom in South Africa", *Social Dynamics*, 27(2) 2001, p.7.

[203] The T.B. Davie series began in 1959, coincidentally with the Extension of University Education Act of 1959, and still continues. It has included lectures by Robert F. Kennedy, Noam Chomsky, Edward W. Said, Walter Sisulu, and Gayatri Spivak.

[204] The annual Edgar Brookes memorial lecture was instituted in the 1960s. It has included lectures by Mahmood Mamdani etc.. It has not been continued at the new University of KwaZulu-Natal, formed as a result of a merger with the University of Durban-Westville on 1 January 2004, but the issue is under discussion at Senate level.

[205] The Honourable A. van Sandt Centilivres, "Thomas Benjamin Davie", the First T.B. Davie Memorial Lecture, presented at the University of Cape Town, 6 May, 1959, Cape Town, University of Cape Town, 1961, p.5. Bunting concurs, noting that: "The four institutions took academic freedom to imply that universities could teach whatever they deemed to be important, that they could admit all who qualified for admission to any of their programmes, and that they could select any suitable candidate as an academic teacher. Prior to the 1990s they had declared publicly that 'academic freedom in South Africa was dead' because of apartheid restrictions on teaching materials, student admissions and the selection of academics." Ian Bunting, "The higher education landscape under apartheid", in Cloete, N., Maassen, P. et al (eds), *Transformation in Higher Education: global pressures and local realities*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006, p.42.

> We desire at all times a) to be permitted to appoint our staff on the grounds of their fitness by scholarship and experience for the research and teaching for which they are needed, b) that the staff duly appointed shall teach the truth as they see it and not as it be demanded by others for the purposes of sectional, political, religious, or ideological dogmas or beliefs, c) that the methods of teaching shall not be subject to interference aimed at achieving standardisation at the expense of originality or orthodoxy at the cost of independence, and, lastly, d) that our lecture theatres and laboratories shall be open to all who, seeking higher knowledge, can show that they are intellectually capable of benefiting by admission to our teaching and are morally worthy of entry into the close intimacy of the great brotherhood (sic) which constitutes the wholeness of a university.[206]

Two aspects are noteworthy here. In the first instance, the conception is clearly positing or anticipating a hostile relationship with the state, and certainly a separation of institution from state, in what the van Wijk de Vries commission later characterised as the belief that the university "exists on a supranational platform with an independence free from any national bond, and any interference with its autonomy by the State, society or community is improper interference."[207] Secondly, it assumes the status of a neutral position, when it is clearly based on a conception of the university, dominant in the Anglo world at the time, as an homogenous community of like-minded male scholars, with shared values and backgrounds, who will admit others as long as they conform, morally and intellectually, with the prevailing ethos. This is a very different conception from the university as a corporation, or even as an institution with a diverse student body serving both professional and educational ends, which has become more common in the early 21st century.

Given these provisos, it is still fair to say that there has been a forty-year tradition of academic freedom in South Africa, which lived, and to a large extent still lives, in the four so-called open English-medium universities, that sees both the versions of academic freedom in Quadrants One and Three as applying.

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[206] The Honourable A. van Sandt Centilivres, "Thomas Benjamin Davie", *The First T.B. Davie Memorial Lecture*, 6 May, 1959, Cape Town, University of Cape Town, 1961, p.5.

[207] Van Wijk de Vries, *Main Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities*, Pretoria, 1974, p.26.

For the universities established in the Bantustans under the Extension of University Education Act 45 of 1959,[208] that is, the areas designated as separate 'states' for different ethnic groups under the segregationist policies of the apartheid era, it was a different scenario.[209] These were directly state creations, staffed and operated by a class of state functionaries, with a specific purpose to educate blacks only in certain areas and to a certain level. That is, critical thinking and research were not part of the agenda, but students were being prepared for professions that would keep them subjugated. In the curricula there was a predominance of religious studies and ethnic language studies, with the possibility to become teachers, nurses or administrators serving the needs of the Bantustans.[210] Science and management studies were largely absent, such that the graduates of these institutions would have little influence on directing the economy of South Africa, but would instead serve the personpower needs of the Bantustans. Bunting notes of these institutions that:

> They were instrumental institutions in the sense of having been set up to train black people who would be useful to the apartheid state, and political in the sense that their existence played a role in the maintenance of the overall apartheid socio-political agenda. Their 'useful graduates' were primarily the black teachers required by the black school systems and the black civil servants required by the racially divided civil service of the RSA (Republic of South Africa).[211]

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[208] Passed 11 June 1959. Under this extension, no so-called 'non-white' person would be allowed, after 1 January 1960, to register as a student at a traditionally white university without express permission from the relevant minister. This was the case until 1988 when it was revoked by the National Party government.

[209] There were four groups of historically black institutions. There were those linked to the so-called independent 'homelands', or Bantustans, which included the University of Venda, the University of the Transkei, the University of North West (Bophuthatswana), and the University of Fort Hare (Ciskei). There were also universities for blacks only that were under the control of the Department of Education and Training rather than 'homeland' governments. These were Medunsa University, the University of the North, Vista University and the University of Zululand. A third group comprised the University of the Western Cape and the University of Durban-Westville, controlled by different houses in the tricameral parliament. And finally, there were seven historically black technikons in three sets of governance arrangements mirroring those of the universities.

[210] Naledi Pandor, "African universities and the challenges of a developmental state", D.C.S. Oosthuizen Memorial Lecture, Grahamstown, Rhodes University, 15 August 2005.

[211] Ian Bunting, "The higher education landscape under apartheid", in Cloete, N., Maassen, P. et al (eds), *Transformation in Higher Education: global pressures and local realities*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006, p.43.

Given the provisions of the 1959 Act, separate universities were established for Indians (University of Durban-Westville) and Coloureds too (University of Western Cape).

Of the universities designated for black Africans, Indians and Coloureds, which together became known as the historically-black universities (HBUs), Southall and Cobbing write that they were, with the possible exceptions of the Universities of Durban-Westville and the Western Cape,

> characterised by grossly inferior facilities and were often as not located in obscure locations where, it was thought, the political impact of their student bodies could be contained. At the same time HBU managements prostrated themselves before government policy, endorsed official ideology, collaborated with the security forces in the pursuit of order, dismissed or squeezed out liberal academics, regularly expelled student dissidents, and carefully controlled curricula in humanities and social science disciplines which might be potentially 'dangerous'. The inevitable result was the construction of an ethos of authoritarianism in which the liberal idea of academic freedom was effectively obliterated.[212]

As in other parts of Africa, but for a different purpose, these universities were effectively part of the state apparatus.

However, Bunting notes that, despite these institutions' intellectual agendas having been set by their apartheid origins, in the late 1980s and early 1990s they became sites of struggle against the apartheid regime. As he writes, "political agendas came to the fore and many months of teaching and learning were lost at these institutions as a result of students boycotting classes and authorities responding by closing institutions."[213] By 1994, the old authoritarian governance structures had been dislodged, "but the levels of contestation in these institutions were so high that no new governance models and no

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[212] Roger Southall and Julian Cobbing, "From racial liberalism to corporate authoritarianism: the Shell affair and the assault on academic freedom in South Africa", *Social Dynamics*, 27 (2) 2001, p.5. The Universities of the Western Cape and Durban-Westville were somewhat different, in having an urban base and being managed from better-resourced government departments.

[213] Ian Bunting, "The higher education landscape under apartheid", in Cloete, N., Maassen, P. et al (eds), *Transformation in Higher Education: global pressures and local realities*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006, pp.45-46.

new administrative systems were put in place."[214]   These institutions thus moved from being servants of the state, to antagonists of the state. Their struggle was conceived as a political one for democracy in society in general, and was not cast in the same terms as a fight for academic freedom in the sense understood by the 'liberal' universities.

As far as the Afrikaans-medium universities were concerned,[215] these could be said to have been created as the instruments of nation-building specifically for Afrikanerdom, and to have been dominated by an

> academic and managerial culture [that] had been constructed around support for apartheid, and which often provided the National Party with its intellectual justifications for segregation… A few querying voices began to be heard in the 1980s when it was clear that white minority rule could not last for ever; prior to that, Afrikaner academics either functioned as vocal supporters of official policy or they silently acquiesced.[216]

There was thus some convergence around the interests of these universities and the interests of the state. Bunting puts it more strongly, "These six universities were run by executives and councils which gave strong support to the apartheid government. They accepted the government's ideology of universities being 'creatures of the state', and therefore took their chief function to be that of acting in service of government."[217] Further, they were characterised by authoritarian governance structures and

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[214] Ian Bunting, "The higher education landscape under apartheid", in Cloete, N., Maassen, P. et al (eds), *Transformation in Higher Education: global pressures and local realities*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006, p.46.

[215] These being the University of Pretoria (UP), the University of Stellenbosch, the University of Potchefstroom, the University of the Orange Free State (UOFS), the University of Port Elizabeth (UPE) (parallel medium) and the Rand Afrikaans University (RAU).

[216] Roger Southall and Julian Cobbing, "From racial liberalism to corporate authoritarianism: the Shell affair and the assault on academic freedom in South Africa", *Social Dynamics* 27 (2) 2001, p.13.

[217] Ian Bunting, "The higher education landscape under apartheid", in Cloete, N., Maassen, P. et al (eds), *Transformation in Higher Education: Global Pressures and Local Realities*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006, p.40.

instrumentalist approaches to higher education, with much of their research agenda determined by government contracts.[218]

Apart from the universities, the government created another category of higher education institution, called 'technikons'. As Bunting remarks:

> In line with its belief that higher education institutions are creatures of the state, the government further fragmented the racially divided higher education system: higher education institutions were divided into rigid groups in terms of the functions they were permitted and not permitted to perform. By the beginning of the 1980s the National Party government had in fact drawn … a rigid distinction between institutions it termed 'universities' and a new set of institutions to which it gave the new and unique term 'technikons'.[219]

In terms of government understanding, the 'essence of universities' was 'science', while that of the technikons was 'technology', or the training of students in the applications of knowledge.[220]

It could be argued, that as in sub-Saharan Africa post-independence, elements of academic freedom as in Quadrant Two applied – academics and state functionaries were working towards the same ends, such that for most of those academics on the whole, their academic activity would not have been experienced as circumscribed or lacking in freedom. As Higgins points out, there is perhaps an Hegelian notion of the university underlying the Afrikaans university in the idea of the "university's coherence with the nation and, in a narrower sense, its interwovenness with a particular community"[221], which might sound politically-correct when referring to different

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[218] Ian Bunting, "The higher education landscape under apartheid", in Cloete, N., Maassen, P. et al (eds), *Transformation in Higher Education: Global Pressures and Local Realities*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006, pp.40-42.

[219] Ibid. p.37.

[220] Given the rigid classifications under apartheid of the various higher education institutions, by both race and function, and by the peculiar device of dividing the country into so-called independent states, there was an extraordinarily high level of fragmentation, with eight different government departments responsible for various universities and technikons. See Ian Bunting, The higher education landscape under apartheid", in Cloete, N., Maassen, P. et al (eds), *Transformation in Higher Education: Global Pressures and Local Realities*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006. There were seven historically white technikons and seven historically black. There were also two dedicated distance education institutions, UNISA and Technikon South Africa. Altogether, in 1994 there were 36 higher education institutions.

[221] Van Wijk de Vries, *Main Report of the Commission of Inquiry into Universities*, Pretoria, 1974.

circumstances, but which does not when referring to Afrikanerdom and "*volksgebondenheid*".[222] Certainly, however, given the close relationship with the state for these institutions, they could not be said to have embodied a liberal tradition of academic freedom. Given the above outline, it is thus evident that at least three different practices obtained with respect to university-state relationships with respect to institutional autonomy and academic freedom in apartheid South Africa, with the strongest concept being the liberal tradition in the English-medium historically white universities.

3. Post-1994 situation

The Bill of Rights in the South African Constitution, 1996, lists "academic freedom and freedom of scientific research" among the fundamental rights of SA citizens.[223] The new democratic government elected in 1994 set out to reinvent South African society through far-reaching policy change in almost every area of life. With respect to higher education, a National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) was in 1996 given the brief to examine higher education in its entirety and to suggest future directions for a completely reengineered system. A number of consultative processes were set up to inform the respective Green and White Papers on Higher Education,[224] which led to the Higher Education Act being passed in 1997.[225] These policy documents collectively form what I have here treated as the early phase of post-apartheid policy formulation in higher education, and together they provided for a remodelled higher education system using the following principles:

- There would be a single higher education system. Whereas previously, so-called technikons and universities were subject to different funding and governance regimes, they were all to be brought under the same funding umbrella. The

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[222] John Higgins, "Academic freedom in the new South Africa", *boundary 2*, 27 (1) 2000, pp.100-102.

[223] The South African Constitution, Bill of Rights, 1996, 16 (1) d.

[224] *Green Paper on Higher Education Transformation*, Pretoria, Department of Education, 1996; *White Paper 3: A programme for the transformation of higher education*, Pretoria, Department of Education, 1997.

[225] Higher Education Act, Republic of South Africa, 1997.

differences between the groups of universities were to be lessened, and later this was to be brought about by a strategy of merging institutions, as well as the introduction of far-reaching equity legislation which required a change in the existing demographics of those institutions.

- In terms of student enrolments, the system was set to grow to accommodate increasing demand for higher education and the increase in access to the whole population, with the greatest growth intended in the technikon sector, to right the inverted pyramid of the then higher education system in which a majority of students studied at universities.
- In terms of curriculum, the intention was to grow the Science, Engineering and Technology (SET) fields, and to introduce more vocational-type courses in the humanities, for example, Media and Communications in the place of English. Certainly, an articulation between university education and the world of work was sought in policy emanating from the Department of Labour that introduced a National Qualifications Framework, a common ladder of qualification registration with the intention for students to be able to transfer credits from learning in one domain to another, and to assist in their career-pathing. Educational offerings were also to be modularised, and specific outcomes-based programmes offered rather than generic degree courses.
- The higher education system would be monitored and crises averted by the introduction of a permanent Council on Higher Education (CHE) which was to advise the minister on policy issues. In terms of quality, there was to be a buffer body between government and the universities to carry out quality assurance processes in higher education, the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC), a permanent sub-committee of the CHE.
- A new funding regime was to be introduced that would emphasise institutional planning, and which would allocate funding according to performance rather than the retrospective block grants that then obtained.

Kraak notes that there were "five key pillars" of the new framework: "a single nationally coordinated system of HE [higher education]; increased access and raised participation rates; increased responsiveness to societal and economic needs; programme differentiation and the development of institutional niche areas; and a

planning and coordination imperative."[226] In short, a new unified higher education system, catering for the needs of a newly democratised society, and redressing the ills of the apartheid system, was to be developed.

The emphasis in these early policy documents was on goals and challenges and higher education transformation needing to be achieved within "a social justice frame and following a cooperative process."[227] Additionally, academic freedom, as a constitutional right and understood as an "absence of outside interference, censure or obstacles in the pursuit and practice of academic work" was protected.[228] Academic freedom is here understood as in Quadrants One and Three, as a negative right – that is the right to be free of constraints, although it is understood as a specific subset of the right to freedom of expression. Of importance here is the notion of governance advanced in the early policy documents, that is, of a social contract between all stakeholders, with higher education policies to be carried out within a political philosophy known as cooperative governance, a "South African variant … of a state supervision approach."[229] Within state supervision, institutions were to remain autonomous and to participate in a power-sharing model of governance in higher education. The NCHE understood this approach as "an attempt to combine, in a particular South African way, more democracy with more modern management."[230] As Cloete notes, the vision of cooperative governance put forward in the early policy documents is of "a form of state supervision that relied on a political mode of coordination based on the participation of diverse stakeholders within a hierarchical system of authority, and with formal constraints on the exercise of power."[231]

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[226] Andre Kraak, "The South African context: planning and legislation in higher education", Pretoria HSRC, December 2001, p.2.

[227] *White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education*, Pretoria, Department of Education, 1997, 1.13, 1.19.

[228] Ibid. 1.23.

[229] Ibid. p.177.

[230] *National Commission on Higher Education Report: A Framework for Transformation*, Pretoria, NCHE, 1996, p.199.

[231] Martin Hall and Ashley Symes, "South African higher education in the first decade of democracy: from cooperative governance to conditional autonomy", *Studies in Higher Education*, 30 (2) 2005, p.202.

While institutional autonomy is writ large in the early policy documents, the White Paper of 1997 cautions that "institutional autonomy is … inextricably linked to the demands of public accountability",[232] and this is a theme that recurs in all the later policy documents. While the central tenets of cooperative governance are repeated in the early policy documents, a number of policy studies suggest that in later policy formulation there is a gradual accumulation of powers to the state, to the extent that the early vision of cooperative governance has become somewhat undermined. In the first instance, the Higher Education Act of 1997 gave the Minister more extensive powers to establish a higher education institution, to "merge two or more public higher education institutions into a single public higher education institution", or to close an institution after consultation with the Council on Higher Education.[233] That same Act also required that up to five council members of each university be ministerial appointees, signifying a certain level of control over the institutions.[234]

In a narratology of higher education policy in South Africa post-1994, Winberg distinguishes a difference in the 'narratives' of the early policy-making, that is, in the National Commission of Higher Education's Report of 1996 and the Education White Paper No. 3: *A Programme for Higher Education Transformation* of 1997, and later versions, that is the Higher Education Act of 1997 and its 1999, 2000 and 2001 amendments (this is, as she notes, the most amended piece of post-apartheid legislation), the Council on Higher Education's *"Towards a New Higher Education Landscape: Meeting the equity, quality and social development imperatives of South Africa in the 21st century"*, 2000, and, in particular, the National Plan for Higher Education in South Africa, 2001. In a relatively short space of time, no more than five years, she argues that the discourse on the relationship of higher education and the state changed considerably.

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[232] *White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education*, Pretoria, Department of Education, 1997, 1.24.

[233] Martin Hall and Ashley Symes, "South African higher education in the first decade of democracy: from cooperative governance to conditional autonomy", *Studies in Higher Education*, 30 (2) 2005, p.204.

[234] Ibid.

According to Winberg:

> The story which 'White Paper No. 3' tells, is one in which institutions that were fragmented, inefficient and elitist, become integrated, professionalized and democratised … The narrator's censure is reserved for the apartheid past; higher education is assumed to be a partner in the democratic state, and together they will realise the new vision and embark on the 'exciting journey' towards transformation, reconstruction and development. The authorial voice of the earlier policy documents aligns itself with the interests of higher education, at times slipping into 'us' and 'we' and 'our' pronouns: 'the policy challenge is to ensure that we engage critically and creatively with the global imperatives as we determine our national and regional goals, priorities and responsibilities'.[235]

In the early documents, higher education is seen as a partner in creating a new democratic order, and the values of democracy, academic freedom, freedom of speech and expression, creativity, scholarship and research are affirmed.

However, Winberg notes that the 'story' changes in the later policy documents, as they move from outlining the general policy direction to an implementation phase. The *National Plan for Higher Education* of 2001 "brings to a close the first or preparatory planning phase, which began in 1998 with the submission of the first set of institutional three-year 'rolling' plans. It signals the start of the second phase in which … the planning process and funding framework are aligned, and in which, specifically, the allocation of funds will be linked to the approval of institutional plans."[236] In the harder planning phase, according to Winberg, "the focus of transformation shifts. The universities are no longer perceived to be battling alongside the policy makers to transform society. The higher education institutions are themselves the problem. The heroes of the earlier policy documents now become villains."[237] Indeed, the National Plan comments on cooperative governance thus: "voluntarism has failed to encourage institutional collaboration" and "policy has been undermined by the competitiveness of individual institutions".[238] A note

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[235] Christine Winberg, "Symbolic representations of the post-apartheid university", *Theoria: A Journal of Political Theory*, 105, 2004, p.90. The quote is from the *White Paper* of 1997, Section 1.81.

[236] *National Plan for Higher Education*, Department of Education, 2001, Section 1.6.

[237] Christine Winberg, "Symbolic representations of the post-apartheid university", *Theoria: A Journal of Political Theory*, 105, 2004, p.95.

[238] *National Plan for Higher Education*, Department of Education, 2001, Sections 1.3, 6.4.

of censure has entered the discourse, as in "the Ministry will not however, allow institutional autonomy to be used as a weapon to prevent change and transformation".[239]

This change was largely precipitated by the crisis in governance in many of the historically black institutions, by dubious entrepreneurial practices of some institutions, poor graduation rates and poor outputs altogether, as well as a change of Minister of Education.[240] The CHE/HEIAAF Overview of Recent and Current Debates on Academic Freedom and Institutional Autonomy similarly argues that cracks began to appear in the consensus on cooperative governance and that "variously nuanced understandings of institutional autonomy began to emerge."[241] That report notes that the amendments to the Higher Education Act arose in response to governance crises and mismanagement. The 1999 Amendment allowed for the Minister to appoint an administrator for a troubled institution for six months, with a permissible extension of a further six months. In 2001, this was again amended to allow the Minister to appoint an administrator to take over the authority of the council or management of the institution for a period not exceeding two years. "In 2000, the Act was amended to require public institutions to secure council approval, and under certain circumstances, the Minister's concurrence, to enter into loan or overdraft agreements or to develop infrastructure."[242] The Report notes that "concern arose within the higher education sector around these amendments because they were seen to set general limits upon the autonomy of all institutions, rather than to set particular limits according to the circumstances of particular institutions."[243]

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[239] *National Plan for Higher Education*, Department of Education, 2001, Section 1.5.

[240] Nico Cloete, "Policy expectations", in Cloete, N., Maassen, P. et al (eds), *Transformation in Higher Education: Global Pressures, Local Realities*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006, p.62.

[241] *Overview on Recent and Current Debates in South African Higher Education: Academic Freedom, Institutional Autonomy and Public Accountability*, Commissioned report to HEIAAF Task Team, Pretoria, CHE, October 2005, p.8.

[242] Ibid.

[243] *Overview on Recent and Current Debates in South African Higher Education: Academic Freedom, Institutional Autonomy and Public Accountability*, Commissioned report to HEIAAF Task Team, Pretoria, CHE, October 2005, p.8.

Apart from the increase in the Minister's powers to intervene directly in institutions, the National Plan sought to establish regulation in what had been seen as a policy implementation vacuum, in a way that "seemed to emphasise efficiency and responsiveness goals at the expense of democratisation, equity and redress goals."[244] Indeed, there is an increase in steering mechanisms such as new funding formulae that allow the Minister a large degree of latitude to change the definitions and values of all the framework's components and to significantly curtail autonomous choices on the part of institutions,[245] a new enrolment planning framework, new quality assurance and accreditation requirements, control over an institution's programme and qualification mix, restructuring through mergers and incorporations and a proposed central applications process.

As Winberg notes, "the concept and practices of managerialism enter later policy texts as a means to meet the key challenges of effectiveness, efficiency and equity. For South African higher education this is a time of benchmarks, measurable and comparable outcomes, and quality audits."[246] She concludes, "in short, South African higher education is to cost the state less, and deliver more: academic staff are to do more work as teachers, researchers, community activists and administrators; they are to be monitored and evaluated, and made accountable upwards to management, downwards to students, and outwards to communities."[247]

Hall and Symes similarly trace a difference in the early and later policy documents, noting that:

> The defining trend in governance over the past decade has been a systematic increase in direct state control over higher education. For many, this has been counter to expectations. Many educational institutions had been focal points of opposition to the apartheid state through the 1970s and 1980s and many believed that the post 1994 higher education sector would be shaped around the model of the

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[244] *Overview on Recent and Current Debates in South African Higher Education: Academic Freedom, Institutional Autonomy and Public Accountability*, Commissioned report to HEIAAF Task Team, Pretoria, CHE, October 2005, p.9.

[245] Ibid. p.10.

[246] Christine Winberg, "Symbolic representations of the post-apartheid university", *Theoria: A Journal of Political Theory*, 105, 2004, p.97.

[247] Ibid.

liberal South African university, with a high degree of institutional autonomy (particularly in the use of funds and the determination of the curriculum) and a national Department of Education that would apply a light hand in steering the public higher education system.[248]

Indeed, Hall and Symes argue that these expectations were systematically eroded and the consensus on cooperative government undermined through a variety of policy measures. One such was the composition of the Council on Higher Education, originally conceived as a buffer body between the state and the institutions, which, under the Higher Education Act of 1997, was established as a body of ministerial appointees, albeit with advertised positions. Having outlined the policy changes, and noting the fading of idealism in the heat of political realities, Hall and Symes argue that "we have shown how, through a series of amendments to the legislation and a hardening of policy culminating in the 2001 National Plan for Higher Education, the state has asserted its right to be regarded as the primary and determining stakeholder in a way that was unanticipated by the National Commission."[249]

It is in this policy context that I now examine some of the main debates on academic freedom and institutional autonomy in South African higher education.

4. Threats to academic freedom – state

The main debate revolves around whether there currently exist threats to academic freedom, and from whence they come. One school of thought, exemplified in the writings of Higgins, argues that there are indeed threats, and that these emanate primarily from increasing regulation by the state.

For the line of argument that locates the source of threat in the state, the substantiating circumstances lie in an account of higher education policy post-1994, which has witnessed a trend from conceptualizing the roles of institutions and state as

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[248] Martin Hall and Ashley Symes, "South African higher education in the first decade of democracy: from cooperative governance to conditional autonomy", *Studies in Higher Education*, 30 (2) 2005, p.200.

[249] Ibid. p.208.

mutually beneficial and working together towards common goals, to one in which the relationship has become characterised by power and control by the state over the institutions.

Higgins outlines what he regards as a general chipping away at the liberal ideal of academic freedom, which, as noted above, existed in some measure in the historically white English-medium universities. He takes as his starting point the T.B. Davie formula, that is, academics' "freedom from external interference in a) who shall teach, b) what we teach, c) how we teach, and d) whom we teach"[250]. This concept fits well into Quadrant One, as it is based both on individualism and a negative concept of freedom – that is, in being left alone to pursue one's own interests without fear of persecution or prosecution – and Quadrant Three in that it runs academic freedom together with institutional autonomy, which is the right of academic institutions to be left alone to determine their own purpose and activities.

Indeed, there has been an undeniable change in the culture of the historically white English-medium universities. This is partly the result of very rapid increases in student enrolments for those institutions, and demographic change in the student body, which altered the ethos of teaching and research and academic work in those institutions in dramatic ways.[251] Southall and Cobbing describe the model of governance that existed in 'liberal' universities as one in which there were high levels of autonomy. Academic departments and the individuals within them enjoyed high levels of administrative and intellectual autonomy, for the most part characterised by mutual trust, shared values and professional ethics. It was a model of departmental autonomy that had outlasted similar models in the United Kingdom and America, in that South Africa had not undergone the

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[250] John Higgins, "Academic freedom in the new South Africa", *boundary 2*, 27 (1) 2000, p.100.

[251] Cloete notes that the change in racial composition was much faster than could have been anticipated in 1994. The proportion of black students in the total university enrolment changed from 32% in 1990 to 60% in 2000. The most dramatic changes in demography happened at the historically white universities. Cloete gives the example of the former University of Port Elizabeth (now merged with Port Elizabeth Technikon to become Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University) where the demographics changed from being 62% white in 1995 to 87% black in 2000. Nico Cloete, "New South African realities", in Cloete, N., Maassen, P. et al (eds), *Transformation in Higher Education: Global Pressures, Local Realities*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006, p.270.

same massification that those countries had experienced from the 1960s on. The increase in student numbers in South Africa came later, starting in the mid-1980s and accelerating in the 1990s. Certainly for some such institutions, it was a way of rapidly changing the demographics of the student population.[252]

Enrolment growth and institutional mergers have resulted in a changed higher education landscape in which there are fewer (21 from 36) institutions, some of which are relatively large. The University of KwaZulu-Natal, for instance, formed in 2004 of a merger between the University of Natal and the University of Durban-Westville, both of which had grown substantially in the 1990s, currently has an enrolment of nearly 40 000 students on five campuses.[253] Given the size and complexity of such institutions, there has generally been a move toward more sophisticated academic planning, financial and personnel systems, and an organisational structure in which prior levels of departmental autonomy have become eroded. As Bundy notes, "collegial self-government – to whatever extent it ever existed – is an historic form and not a current option."[254]

Given the levels of growth in student numbers and the size of the system as a whole, the new policy context in South Africa is characterised by national coordination and equalisation of universities (technikons have recently become 'Universities of Technology'), budget cutbacks and financial discipline. Institutional autonomy now must mean "not so much the realm of decision-making by academics … [but applies] to the practices and policies of the new class of professionalized university managers".[255] Not unlike the scenario in other democratic countries, the university administrator has

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[252] With the increased mobility of students after 1994, the historically black universities' headcount student enrolments dropped by 35 600 between 1995 and 2000, while the historically white Afrikaans-medium institutions gained 54 200 headcount student enrolments over the same period. Nico Cloete, "New South African realities", in Cloete, N., Maassen, P. et al (eds), *Transformation in Higher Education: Global Pressures, Local Realities*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006, p.272.

[253] University of KwaZulu-Natal website, http://www.ukzn.ac.za/visitors/visitors.asp

[254] Colin Bundy, "Innovative approaches to university management: a view from the eleventh floor", unpublished paper, in André du Toit, "From autonomy to accountability: academic freedom under threat in South Africa?" *Social Dynamics*, 26 (1) 2000, p.89.

[255] André du Toit, "From autonomy to accountability: academic freedom under threat in South Africa?" *Social Dynamics*, 26 (1) 2000, p.89.

become more central to the planning and academic coordination functions than academics themselves.[256]

There is an argument that South African universities have become increasingly corporatised, as have universities elsewhere. Southall and Cobbing ascribe this to the policies followed by the post-apartheid governments, writing that, "If the corporatisation of the South African university has borrowed heavily from the experiences of Western (especially British) universities, then it has also been closely associated with the neo-liberal strategies adopted since 1996 by an ANC-led government intent on reinserting South Africa into the global economy."[257] Indeed, Higgins argues that:

> Despite the laudable intentions of the African National Congress (ANC) of transforming the higher-educational system into one that would eradicate all traces of apartheid division and promote access, redress and the critical literacy necessary for a participatory democracy, the current policy – in the name of practicality – threatens to strengthen rather than relieve the authoritarian tendencies of previous policies regarding higher education. The current policy has less to do, in practice, with the imperatives of democratic transformation and more to do with the imposition of current neoliberal dogma. In this still evolving situation, there is a necessary forgetting of the oppositional role that the call for academic freedom has historically played in South Africa.[258]

Higgins' analysis of the policy developments with respect to academic freedom and institutional autonomy in the post-apartheid era is bleak. In his view, the conception of academic freedom as in Quadrants One and Three still has validity, but the external threat has changed from the apartheid government's political interference to the adoption of neo-liberal economic policies by the ANC government. As in post-colonial Africa, in which many countries were subject to the imposition of stringent neo-liberal fiscal policy by the IMF and other lending agencies, in this view the level of governmental regulation has pushed the metaphorical boundary and transgressed into the internal affairs of universities.

Higgins draws parallels between the stance on academic freedom in the van Wijk de Vries Commission of 1974 and in the report of the first comprehensive investigation into

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[256] See the discussion in Chapter Six on globalisation.

[257] Roger Southall and Julian Cobbing, "From racial liberalism to corporate authoritarianism: the Shell affair and the assault on academic freedom in South Africa", *Social Dynamics*, 27 (2) 2001, p.17.

[258] John Higgins, "Academic freedom in the new South Africa", *boundary 2*, 27 (1) 2000, p.100.

higher education in the post-apartheid era – the National Commission on Higher Education's Framework (NCHE) Report of 1996. He argues that the NCHE report, like its 1974 predecessor, proposes that academic freedom and autonomy are "at the heart of the debate about governance in higher education",[259] but then, like its predecessor, proceeds to qualify it to such an extent that it is in fact negated. In the NCHE Report, academic freedom, as noted above, is inextricably linked to accountability, and, in the later policy documents, accountability is asserted more strongly in relation to academic freedom.

The NCHE Report outlines three positions on academic freedom in the African context.[260] The first, which relates to the tradition of the English universities outlined above, is said to privilege the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, and is pejoratively framed and labelled as "academicism". The second is based on a view of knowledge as being in the service of socio-economic development, with institutions thus subject to the hegemony of government, and the third posits higher education as a key agent of change in postcolonial societies in promoting transformation and equity goals.[261] Higgins argues that the difference between views two and three is difficult to discern, as both render the institution subservient to the furthering the goals of the state, whether these be socio-economic or societal, such as the achievement of equity. There is a subtle difference, however. The second formulation clearly posits the institution as subservient to the state in an apparently instrumental role, whereas the third assigns the institution somewhat more initiative in a system of governance which is labelled "co-operative governance". This is not unlike the "social partners" concept that underlies much of European politics, wherein key sectors – government, civil society and trade unions are regarded as equal partners pursuing the same economic and social goals. This sets up the possibility of a genuinely cooperative relationship, as envisaged in the NCHE. For Higgins, however, the reality is that the power differentials are such that in practice institutions become, not agents of change, but instruments of the state.

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[259] *National Commission on Higher Education Report: A Framework for Transformation*, Pretoria, NCHE, 1996, p.172.

[260] Ibid. p.173.

[261] Ibid.

The NCHE bases its understanding of academic freedom on the third version outlined above, that is, a relationship between universities and the state characterised by "close collaboration, so that the university becomes an agent of change, fully engaged with the state in fulfilling national objectives".[262] Underlying this version is the assumption that government and higher education institutions are committed to the same societal goals, and in the immediate post-apartheid era this assumption may have been a valid one. For instance, equity may well be seen by both government and institutions[263] as a good worthy of pursuing to redress past wrongs, but as the society "normalises", it is possible to imagine goals diverging. For instance, government goals may be to fulfil the human resource needs of the country which would require a steering of the system to producing more science, engineering and technology (SET) graduates, whereas institutions may conceive of their goals as the formative development of individuals, which is best achieved in the humanities. And as has been outlined in the policy analysis above, the trend in South African higher education policy has been argued to have been toward greater state steering of the system than envisaged in the NCHE Report. Higgins' concern is that autonomy is deceptive if it can only be exercised in tandem with public accountability when the "political environment increasingly emphasises the instrumental purposes of the university in serving economic development needs."[264]

Higgins places the perceived erosion of academic freedom squarely at door of the post-apartheid state. He writes, "While it is obvious that there are significant differences in the contents of higher education policy between the ANC and apartheid state, it is clear that, on the level of the formal regulation of institutional autonomy, the ANC is seeking to achieve a far greater centralised control of the universities than any apartheid government dared to dream."[265] Higgins thus discerns in higher education policy a

[262] *National Commission on Higher Education Report: A Framework for Transformation*, Pretoria, NCHE, 1996, p.174

[263] Certainly, most institutions of higher education moved towards a more representative demography in their student bodies without the direct intervention of government.

[264] *Overview on Recent and Current Debates in South African Higher Education: Academic Freedom, Institutional Autonomy and Public Accountability*, Commissioned report to HEIAAF Task Team, Pretoria, CHE, October 2005, p.13.

[265] John Higgins, "Academic freedom in the new South Africa", *boundary 2*, 27 (1) 2000, p.110.

tendency towards comprehensive planning and control – a democratic centralism which arguably has become evident in government policy in many areas.

Higgins' defence of academic freedom and institutional autonomy, understood as both Quadrants One and Three run together, was written in 2000. The policy context of the time in higher education in South Africa was not conducive to this view becoming widespread,[266] given the prevailing optimism regarding the cooperative governance model of higher education and that the harder-edged National Plan for Higher Education (2001) was yet to emerge. Indeed, this line of argument is more or less silent in the debates on academic freedom until a challenge issued by Jansen[267] in 2004 to the new South African state. In a public lecture, Jansen, not easily dismissed as being a reactionary white liberal from a so-called historically white institution (for indeed, as a black academic originally from the University of Durban-Westville, though now at the University of Pretoria, he is neither of those), argued that, since 1994, state policy in higher education had increasingly encroached on academic freedom and institutional autonomy, such that levels of institutional autonomy were lower than in the apartheid era. Indeed, Jansen begins his paper with the assertion that the view of Vice-Chancellors and senior administrators is that South African universities currently enjoy less autonomy than under apartheid.[268]

Jansen argues that "quietly but steadily, the state has made significant incursions into the arena of institutional autonomy which fundamentally redefine the long-held understandings of institutional identity and autonomy" through a series of measures taken. Among these he lists: the Programme and Qualification Mix (PQM) of the Department of Education through which the state can now effectively decide what

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[266] Certainly, his main interlocutor, André du Toit, discerned in this view a wish for the maintenance of privilege. He writes, "…the call for the protection of academic freedom might well be meant as a shorthand for wholesale return to the status quo ante, when institutional autonomy had in fact been co-terminous with academic self-government." André du Toit, "From autonomy to accountability: academic freedom under threat in South Africa?" *Social Dynamics*, 26 (1) 2000, p.89.

[267] Jonathan Jansen, Dean of Education at the University of Pretoria and Administrator of the Durban University of Technology, is a well-known writer on higher education matters in South Africa.

[268] Jonathan D. Jansen, "Accounting for Autonomy", *The 41st T.B. Davie Memorial Lecture*, University of Cape Town, 26 August 2004, p.1.

programmes an institution may offer; a new bureaucratic approval process for new programmes and qualifications; the exercise of the right of the state to close down existing programmes; the controlling of student numbers taught in specific programmes and in specific institutions through the capping of enrolments; the required packaging of programmes in outcomes-based format as required by the South African Qualifications Authority for registration on the National Qualifications Framework; the application of a new funding framework that privileges certain modes of postgraduate study over others; the introduction of extensive higher education quality accreditation and audit processes; the forced mergers of institutions; the proposed centralisation of student admissions through a central applications office: and finally, the fact that the state can displace a Vice-Chancellor and "install his or her own Administrator" to run an institution.[269]

Jansen accounts for this phenomenon in part by outlining centralising tendencies in South African higher education governance, which, precipitated by the crisis in governance at historically black universities in the 1994-1999 period,[270] led to the introduction of a series of interventions, as listed above, that would not have been possible had the higher education sector been strong and well-organised. Jansen quotes Ndebele, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Town, as noting that "a weakened sector became vulnerable to determined external intervention" and found itself "caught in a whirlwind of inevitable regulation and control".[271]

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[269] Jonathan D. Jansen, "Accounting for Autonomy", *The 41st T.B. Davie Memorial Lecture*, University of Cape Town, 26 August 2004, pp.4-5. It is of no small irony that the Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, in 2006 appointed Jonathan Jansen himself as an Administrator to run the troubled Durban University of Technology.

[270] This period was characterised by "dysfunctional councils, corrupt managers, violent student protests, authoritarian leadership, financial crises, hostage taking, (and) campus occupations by private militias." Jonathan D. Jansen, "Accounting for Autonomy", *The 41st T.B. Davie Memorial Lecture*, University of Cape Town, 26 August 2004, p.6. It was also characterised by students voting with their feet and leaving the HBUs and moving to the historically white institutions. See Bunting.

[271] Njabulo Ndebele, "Higher education and political transition", *IZWI – Voice of HE Leadership*, (2), 2004, p.2, in Jonathan D. Jansen, "Accounting for Autonomy", *The 41st T.B. Davie Memorial Lecture*, University of Cape Town, 26 August 2004, p.7.

In this line of argument, Jansen, like Higgins, runs together the versions of academic freedom and institutional autonomy as in Quadrants One and Three, and locates the main threat to such freedoms externally in the state. Jansen points to the forces of globalisation as well, but the central image underlying his text is consistent with the metaphors of Quadrants One and Three, that is, of a boundary between state and institution having been shifted ever closer to the institution, allowing unprecedented interference by the state in what he conceives as traditionally university affairs such as curriculum, on a routine, bureaucratised basis.

Jansen's address unleashed a storm of protest, and spawned a vigorous and ongoing debate, ultimately leading to the Council on Higher Education's national project on academic freedom and institutional autonomy (HEIAAF), begun in late 2005 with an intended completion date of 2007.[272] In this project, the issue of whether, and to what extent, institutional autonomy was being diluted was explored in a series of regional workshops and written submissions, and taken up in a variety of commissioned research papers, in order that the Minister of Education might be advised accordingly. Many of the submissions to the project from institutions implicitly endorse Jansen's view. To quote but three:

> The focus of the DoE (National Department of Education) on being both the primary stakeholder and the 'manager' of public higher education has increased the need for enhanced institutional performance measurement. The targets as required by the DoE influence and reshape the institutional strategic and operational agenda… The DoE is missing the point. The 'management of the system' must be stopped and to a large extent institutional autonomy should be handed back to the public HEIs (higher education institutions);[273]
>
> The state has a blank cheque to establish, abolish and merge higher education institutions in order to create the exact system it wants. With this arsenal of powers the state has transformed higher education institutions into state-controlled qualification factories, with complete disregard for their academic freedom and autonomy;[274] and

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[272] See Council on Higher Education website, http://www.che.ac.za/documents/d000114/index.php

[273] Central University of Technology, Free State, *Submission to HEIAAF*, 2006, p.5.

[274] Rassie Malherbe, "The relationship between the state and higher education: issues of centralisation, academic freedom, university autonomy and accountability", 2003, p.6. This paper was sent in to the HEIAAF in 2005 as the contribution from Higher Education South Africa (HESA), the association of higher education institutions.

… a significant shift in emphasis has occurred through the five amendments to the 1997 Higher Education Act and the declaration of the Higher Education Plan … which can be said to represent a shift from a steering to a strong interventionist approach.[275]

5. The state as threat to academic freedom? The counter-claims

One of the main lines of defence in response to Jansen's attack is to concede that the state is indeed being more interventionist than before, but to argue that this is legitimate and consistent with a different conception of academic freedom entailing the right of the state to steer the higher education system in a transforming society. In short, the conception of academic freedom underlying the Higgins and Jansen position is argued to be outdated and no longer apposite to a developing economy. Higher education in such views is regarded as a national resource to be deployed for the furtherance of the good of the whole. Academic freedom is regarded as a positive liberty, to be used in service towards the same ends. The main fault line, thus, along which one of the main South African debates on academic freedom and institutional autonomy is conducted, is that between the left and right-hand sides of my four-cell matrix, that is, negative versus positive understandings of liberty.

In the debates, there are three main manifestations of the line of argument on the positive liberty side of the matrix. i) The first, often, but not exclusively, proffered from representatives of the state, argues that the transformation project is so important and pressing, and that given the past and recent history of institutions in this regard, it cannot be left to institutions to carry out in a fully autonomous way and government thus has a legitimate role in making transformation happen. ii) Another view, mainly associated with Hall,[276] argues for a compromise position on the relationship of universities and the state, that is, so-called conditional autonomy for institutions. iii) The third argues for state

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[275] University of Pretoria, *SA government involvement in, and regulation of, higher education, institutional autonomy and academic freedom*, submission to HEIAAF, 2005, p.20.

[276] Martin Hall, "Academic freedom and the university: fifty years of debate", *CHE Regional Forum on Government Involvement in Higher Education, Institutional Autonomy and Academic Freedom*, Cape Town, 17 May 2006.

intervention on a differentiated basis – some universities may need more state supervision than others, so that blanket calls for institutional autonomy are not appropriate for the system as a whole. These three defences to the argument that the main threat to academic freedom in South Africa arises from the state itself are explored more fully in the next three sections. Thereafter, I examine an argument, epitomised in the work of du Toit, that argues for a reconceptualisation of academic freedom and a location of any threats to it in incipient managerialism in the institutions themselves.

5.1 Universities seen as agents of change in transformation project

In defending the legitimacy of the right of the state to follow the policy course set out above, the current Minister of Education sets forth government expectations of the higher education sector, recognising that "the competing demands of public accountability, self-regulation and development seem to be the thorny nettles that lead to the hostile discourse we often observe in the public domain".[277] She argues that:

> Government holds the view that universities have to contribute to the progress and development of our society. They have to do this in the intellectual and development context referred to by President Mbeki ["unfettered intellectual enquiry"]. Universities cannot pretend that apartheid did not exist, that we are not in the main a poor nation, that development has to be the core focus of all public institutions, and that higher education is a critical national development resource for South Africa. [278]

Duly noting cautions from Ndebele that higher education is currently viewed as "a service producing educated workers",[279] she proceeds to sets out an Africanist development agenda with very "direct development tasks for universities."[280] In response to critique of the government's capping of enrolments in 2004, Badsha writes that:

> Unfortunately these issues [relating to the growth parameters of the system] must be confronted and cannot be willed away by the periodic assertions that government

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[277] Naledi Pandor, "African universities and the challenges of a developmental state", D.C.S. Oosthuizen Memorial Lecture, Grahamstown, Rhodes University, 15 August 2005, p.3.

[278] Ibid.

[279] Njabulo Ndebele, "Higher education and political transition", *IZWI – Voice of HE Leadership*, (2), 2004, in Pandor, N., "Africa universities and the challenges of a developmental state", D.C.S. Oosthuizen Memorial Lecture, Grahamstown, Rhodes University, 15 August 2005, p.3.

[280] Naledi Pandor, "African universities and the challenges of a developmental state", D.C.S. Oosthuizen Memorial Lecture, Grahamstown, Rhodes University, 15 August 2005, p.3.

action is infringing on academic freedom and autonomy. Surely it is time that we go beyond the rhetoric and make the distinction between academic freedom which is protected in our constitution and institutional autonomy, which is a condition of effective self-government but one which is inextricably linked to public accountability.[281]

In response to Jansen's attack on the perceived loss of institutional autonomy through the introduction of the PQM and new funding formulae, some measures of which he concedes may have been necessary and desirable, the Minister of Education, Pandor, argued that by implication, Jansen had agreed that the government was entitled to regulate higher education and to ensure greater accountability for the use of public funds. Pandor writes that "it is time to move on and acknowledge the need for state steering or regulation of higher education to ensure greater accountability for the use of public resources towards the attainment of broad policy goals … the real debate … is about the degree and nature of state steering, the balance between self-regulation and state regulation and the efficacy of the steering instruments."[282]

In these responses, there is an air of impatience from the state at the perceived recalcitrance of institutions to get on with the business of transformation, and from the institutions quoted above, a concern that a heavy hand of governmental bureaucracy is limiting their freedom to self-regulate. Habib characterises this debate as a "binary mess".[283] Mindful of the African scenario in which, once the state had been invited into institutions to advance nationalist development agendas against expatriates holding out under the banner of academic freedom and institutional autonomy, and then later refused to leave, Habib outlines the "eerie echoes" of a debate that took place in postcolonial Africa some decades ago. He writes:

> So Jansen raises the critique of the state's intervention in the university, and the response raised by the Minister of Education…is that intervention is necessary in

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[281] Nasima Badsha, "Higher education plans on track", *Mail and Guardian*, 3 September 2004. Badsha is Director-General of Higher Education in the National Department of Education.

[282] Naledi Pandor, "We cannot stand by and watch institutions collapse: universities and technikons should not use the principle of institutional autonomy as a pretext for resisting democratic change", *Sunday Independent*, 24 October 2004.

[283] Adam Habib, "The practice of academic freedom in South Africa", *CHE Regional Forum on government Involvement in Higher Education, Institutional Autonomy and Academic Freedom*, Pretoria, 24 March 2006; Bloemfontein, 4 May 2006.

order to advance the cause of democratisation and transformation. In this she is supported by a number of black academics. The debate is of course polarised. On the one hand you have politicians, technocrats and some black academics, all of whom raise the flag of democratisation and transformation. On the other hand, you have institutional managers, the white academy and some black academics, who are the flag bearers of institutional autonomy and academic freedom.[284]

To avoid going down the same path as in the nationalist phase of postcolonial Africa, and acknowledging that in this binary divide, power rests with the state, a few solutions have been proferred: compromise, differentiation, reconceptualisation, and shifting the threat and the debate elsewhere.

5.2 Conditional autonomy

One solution, compromise, hinges around the notion of 'conditional autonomy'. It arose through a CHE study of governance in South African higher education (2002), which attempted to find a compromise position between institutional autonomy and the need for the state to steer the higher education system towards national transformation objectives. The concept of 'conditional autonomy', borrowed from European state supervised higher education systems, was advanced as a means of conceptualising the institution-state relationship. This position "acknowledges that institutional autonomy may need to be exercised on condition that the institution fulfils national norms 'continually renegotiated in the light of public policy.'"[285] This was an attempt to allow flexibility of institutional interpretation in both organising and managing teaching and research and serving their obligations to the public good. Hall, Symes and Luescher take this one step further, using a concept derived from Neave and van Vught of a distinction between substantive and procedural autonomy. Neave and van Vught write that:

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[284] Adam Habib, "The practice of academic freedom in South Africa", *CHE Regional Forum on government Involvement in Higher Education, Institutional Autonomy and Academic Freedom*, Pretoria, 24 March 2006; Bloemfontein, 4 May 2006.

[285] *Overview on Recent and Current Debates in South African Higher Education: Academic Freedom, Institutional Autonomy and Public Accountability*, Commissioned report to HEIAAF Task Team, Pretoria, CHE, October 2005, p.15. The insert is from Guy Neave, "On being economical with university autonomy: being an account of the retrospective joys of a written constitution" in Tight, M. (ed), *Academic Freedom and Responsibility*, Milton Keynes, SRHE and Open University Press, 1988, p.36.

As a concept, autonomy not only has to be distinguished from academic freedom. It can also be differentiated, using the distinction between "substantive" and "procedural" autonomy. Substantive autonomy is the power of a higher education institution to determine its own goals and programs (the 'what' of academe). Procedural autonomy is the power of a higher education institution to determine the means by which its goals and programs will be pursued (the 'how' of academe).[286]

Drawing on these roots, Hall, Symes and Luescher argue:

That there is every indication that direct state control of higher education is not effective in developing countries, and may be the cause of acute disadvantages which undermine the ability of higher education institutions to promote economic development, social justice and the interests of civil society. In developing economies such as South Africa's, policy is best understood through a distinction between 'substantive autonomy' and 'procedural autonomy', defining in turn a 'conditional autonomy' for higher education institutions. Taken in comparative perspective, the evolution of post-apartheid South African higher education policy marks a path from a comparatively loose system of state steering, to a system of conditional autonomy in which substantive autonomy (academic freedom) continues to be guaranteed while the state exercises increasing control over procedures of funding and academic accreditation.[287]

This conceptual device thus separates out aspects of autonomy over which institutions should have control, and those which it is in the interests of transformation for the state to be able to steer.

In the discussions around this notion, the HEIAAF Overview reports a "fair degree of discomfort with the concept of conditional autonomy",[288] for the reasons that it does not specify the conditions under which autonomy might be limited and provides no protection for institutions from a possible authoritarian state, which would be operating from the starting point of a diminished autonomy for institutions. Without a concept of cooperative governance, institutions would be in no position to defend the state's further encroaches into their autonomy. As Moja et al. note:

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[286] Guy Neave and Frans van Vught (eds), "Introduction", in *Government and Higher Education Relationships Across Three Continents: the Winds of Change*, Headington Hill Hall, Pergamon, IAU Press, 1994, p.7. Referring to Robert O. Berdahl, in *Higher Education Polic*y, 5 (2) 1992.

[287] Martin Hall, Ashley Symes and Thierry M. Luesscher, *Governance in South African Higher Education*: *Research report prepared for the Council on Higher Education*, Pretoria, CHE, 2002.

[288] *Overview on Recent and Current Debates in South African Higher Education: Academic Freedom, Institutional Autonomy and Public Accountability*, Commissioned report to HEIAAF Task Team, Pretoria, CHE, October 2005, p.13.

> A case has not been made as to why conditional autonomy will lead to more effective governance than the cooperative governance model. Within a democratic state, there really is no choice between an imperfect model (cooperative governance) – democracy is by its very nature imperfect – and a model that fits as easily within an authoritarian state as it does in a democratic state – all depending on the vagaries of the minister of the day.[289]

On the other hand, Waghid's concern with conditional autonomy is that the notion of autonomy in substantive areas has reminiscences of the liberal idea of institutional autonomy. He states that "what Hall does not give sufficient attention to in his essay is whether substantive autonomy is unconditional and what ought to be the limits of procedural autonomy exercised by the state". [290]

A further concern with conditional autonomy is that the distinction between substantive and procedural areas is not sufficiently clearly delineated. As an example, in a bureaucratic intervention requiring certain procedures to be followed, such as registering outcomes-based programmes in a specific format, the substantive area of teaching and learning is immediately circumscribed in the way in must be carried out, in which modes, and by which providers.

In short, "there is a concern that conditional autonomy permits conditionality to a degree where it renders the notion of institutional autonomy meaningless, and a view that 'to bastardise the concept of institutional autonomy in favour of its conditionalities is illogical".[291] Further, the conditional autonomy concept "was interpreted as proposing a

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[289] Teboho Moja, Nico Cloete and N. Olivier, "Would moving from co-operative governance to conditional autonomy contribute to effective governance?", *Kagisano*, CHE Discussion Series (2), 2003, p.37.

[290] Yusuf Waghid, "Academic freedom, institutional autonomy, and responsible action: a response to Martin Hall", *CHE Regional Forum on Government Involvement in Higher Education, Institutional Autonomy and Academic Freedom*, Cape Town, 17 May 2006.

[291] *Overview on Recent and Current Debates in South African Higher Education: Academic Freedom, Institutional Autonomy and Public Accountability*, Commissioned report to HEIAAF Task Team, Pretoria, CHE, October 2005, p.17. The quote is from T. Mthembu, "Creating a niche in internationalization for (South) African higher education institutions", *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 8 (3) 2004, p.290.

one-size-fits-all governance approach for all institutions, while failing to specify the conditions, circumstances and methods that would warrant incursions on autonomy."[292]

5.3 Differentiation

The rejection of a one-size-fits-all approach led to a new notion of "differentiated steering", in other words, granting self-regulation status to particular institutions on the basis of how well they performed against a set of national performance indicators, such that those institutions performing poorly would of necessity surrender a measure of their autonomy while others would earn it. There are obvious concerns with this notion – that the classification of institutions of the past could be reinvented, that national data may not be sufficiently reliable to admit such a practice, that self-regulation in institutions may be insufficiently developed, and that it might inspire excessive competition among higher education institutions. And another fundamental concern would be who would set the performance indicators and on what basis, and if it were the state, would not a compliance culture develop within institutions?

In another public lecture in 2004, Jansen argued that:

> Pretending it is possible for all institutions to become the same thing and equally strong, and trying to achieve this by shifting around increasingly smaller pools of governmental funding among 15 institutions, is the kind of political miscalculation that now threatens the entire system of higher education in South Africa. One of the strangest and costliest mistakes made in this country was to declare technikons as universities (of technology) – this after decades in which the sector made the case for institutional distinctiveness.[293]

He makes the case for treating institutions differently in a differentiated system of higher education, and that we need to move beyond concerns that the differentiation will pan out on racial lines, as "within a few years it will be very difficult to still describe these

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[292] *Overview on Recent and Current Debates in South African Higher Education: Academic Freedom, Institutional Autonomy and Public Accountability*, Commissioned report to HEIAAF Task Team, Pretoria, CHE, October 2005, p.17.

[293] Jonathan Jansen, *When does a university cease to exist?*, Fortieth Hoernlé Memorial Lecture, Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations, 17 November 2004, p.6.

institutions (such as the University of Pretoria) in reference to their racial origins."[294] The implication for autonomy of this view is that the question becomes not whether all institutions should demand institutional autonomy by virtue of being an institution of higher education, but relates to the "prior question of the underlying conditions enabling viable institutions which might then become capable of claiming institutional autonomy."[295]

The notion of differentiated autonomy follows a line of argument developed most fully by Muller, Maassen and Cloete, who argue that:

> Unidirectional comprehensive policy has not worked in South Africa in the post-1994 period. Instead, a different notion of higher education transformation, based on a more targeted, differentiated, information-rich policy interaction between government, institutions and society has to be developed. … [This] will demand a more efficient government, together with a new approach to consultation. It will require that government is more sensitive to the self-regulating capacity of the higher education institutions and the consequences of the complex relations between higher education and society.[296]

Despite the concerns with this notion, in the developing debate there appears to be a measure of support for a differentiated policy[297] and a "reconceptualisation of governance relationships in South African higher education".[298]

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[294] Jonathan Jansen, *When does a university cease to exist?*, Fortieth Hoernlé Memorial Lecture, Johannesburg, South African Institute of Race Relations, 17 November 2004, p.6.

[295] André du Toit, "Recasting the autonomy debate: T.B. Davie in a time of accountability, managerialism and mergers", CHET Seminar, Beginning the Real Debate on Changing Governance Relationships in Higher Education, Cape Town, 1-3 March 2005.

[296] Johan Muller, Peter Maassen and Nico Cloete, "Models of governance and the limits of policy", in Cloete, N., Maassen, P. et al (eds), *Transformation in Higher Education: Global Pressures and Local Realities*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006.

[297] See CHE Colloquium on 10 Years of Democracy in Higher Education Change, November 2004. http://www.che.ac.za/documents/d000085/

[298] *Overview on Recent and Current Debates in South African Higher Education: Academic Freedom, Institutional Autonomy and Public Accountability*, Commissioned report to HEIAAF Task Team, Pretoria, CHE, October 2005, p.23.

6. Threats to academic freedom – managerialism

The compromise positions on the institutional autonomy of conditional autonomy and differentiation have been sketched above. I now turn to the reconceptualisation of the concepts, and the shifting of the debate elsewhere.

There are a variety of positions on the question of whether academic freedom and institutional autonomy are currently under threat in South Africa, and from whence such threats might emanate. The preceding section presents views that suggest that academic freedom as in Quadrants One and Three, what du Toit[299] refers to in the South African context as the T.B. Davie formula of academic freedom, which applied selectively within some institutions in the apartheid era, has come under threat from the post-apartheid state. Du Toit, however, takes issue with this account, arguing firstly that the so-called liberal account of academic freedom and institutional autonomy provides an outdated and inadequate concept of academic freedom for a transforming society, and secondly, that any threats to academic freedom emanate not from the state, but from internal sources such as increasing managerialism within institutions of higher education.[300]

He writes that:

> The traditional liberal discourse on academic freedom can no longer suffice; it is misleading in that it directs attention to supposed external threats rather than to relevant developments closer to home; it is outdated in so far as the concern with institutional autonomy does not take account of the changed circumstances brought about by the managerial revolution within the universities themselves; and it is incoherent when applied to current issues of internal accountability and academic authority within the university community.[301]

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[299] Andre du Toit, "From autonomy to accountability: academic freedom under threat in South Africa?" *Social Dynamics*, 26 (1) 2000.

[300] Ibid. There are possibly further sources of threat, unexamined in this text, perhaps more insidious than the others, such as academic self-censorship in particular contexts, for example, in United States universities in the context of terrorism following 9/11 and war in Iraq, and self-silencing of critique in post-apartheid South Africa.

[301] Ibid. p.128.

He writes further that, "the stress on institutional autonomy which lies at the heart of the liberal ideal is unable to cope with the increasing demands and regulation imposed upon universities in the quest for transformation and by the massive changes in university governance resulting from the managerial revolution over the last few decades."[302] The part of the T.B. Davie formula that is most problematic, in du Toit's view, is that referring to "whom we teach", because in the post-apartheid era, institutions have changed their demographic profiles in terms of student admissions without official prodding,[303] and recourse to 'whom we teach' may be "at best outdated and uninformed … at worst it may indicate an unacknowledged hidden and reactionary agenda … holding out … against the impact of post-apartheid social and political realities."[304]

Du Toit argues that the continued use of a definition of academic freedom that arose in opposition to the apartheid state many decades ago may, in the current context, be anachronistic at best, ideological at worst. This is because the contexts of both external reality, and institutions themselves, have changed, and the understandings of academic freedom and institutional autonomy thus need to be recontextualised in order to be useful in understanding current concerns. He points to two shifts that have framed the academic freedom debate; firstly, that from academic self-government to a managerial executive, and secondly, from structures of internal accountability and peer review to externally oriented procedures and criteria for quality assurance – in other words, external accountability concerns. He accepts Bundy's thesis[305] that the world has changed and that market-driven discourses and modes of management are a reality of

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[302] Andre du Toit, "From autonomy to accountability: academic freedom under threat in South Africa?" *Social Dynamics*, 26 (1) 2000.. p.128.

[303] On the dramatic 'Africanisation' of the student bodies following 1994, Cooper argues that "this transformation has not mainly happened because of government initiatives. Rather the process has been occurring 'on the ground' through decisions by individual African students…" Dave Cooper, "The skewed revolution: the selective 'Africanisation' of the student profile of historically white universities and technikons in South Africa in the 1990s", unpublished paper, Centre for African Studies, UCT, April 2000, p.17.

[304] Andre du Toit, "From autonomy to accountability: academic freedom under threat in South Africa?", *Social Dynamics*, 26 (1) 2000, p.94.

[305] Colin Bundy, "Innovative approaches to university management: a view from the eleventh floor", unpublished, 2000. See the discussion on Bundy's thesis in Chapter Six.

globalisation, and argues thus that it makes little sense to insist on formulations of academic freedom and institutional autonomy that are predicated on outdated notions of collegial self-government. His chief concern with the liberal formulation of academic freedom and institutional autonomy is that it is cast in terms of negative liberty – basically, leave the academy alone, for it knows what is good and right. He writes:

> Somehow an uncritical notion of the vocation of intellectuals based on universalist and positivist notions of truth and justice has survived in the era of postmodern relativism. Thus, when the interests of academia are at stake, or academic freedom is perceived to be threatened, we are told that the vocation of intellectuals is that of telling truth to power – by some of the same academics who in other contexts are fully conversant with the implications of Foucault's notion of 'regimes of truth'.[306]

For du Toit, the negative assertion of autonomy is stripped of the notion of duties and responsibilities, and he thus prefers a 'thicker' concept of academic freedom as "the effective practice of free public speech by intellectual and academic discourse communities" or what he terms "an alternative republican concept of free speech."[307] In these early papers, this alternative concept is not fully expounded, but it appears to incorporate the duties and responsibilities of academics to engage with and respond positively to external realities rather than to be 'left alone', and in this sense, such an idea of academic freedom would not be inconsistent with external accountability.

To elucidate this further, Southall and Cobbing write that:

> du Toit argues that by far the most coherent aspect of the liberal formula is its continuing emphasis upon the claim that academic freedom requires that universities should have the right to decide what shall be taught and how it should be taught. He proposes in contrast that some form of public accountability is by no means incompatible with academic freedom. Students, to put it crudely, deserve their money's worth, as indicated by long-standing practices in universities whereby external examiners or professional bodies play important roles in setting curricula and monitoring standards.[308]

Similarly, it has been said that:

> du Toit argued that academic freedom was not under threat in South Africa from an interfering or repressive state. Instead… more serious threats came at that time from

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[306] Andre du Toit, "Critic and Citizen: the intellectual, transformation and academic freedom", *Pretexts: Literary and Cultural Studies*, 9 (1) 2000, p.93.

[307] Ibid., p.98.

[308] Roger Southall and Julian Cobbing, "From racial liberalism to corporate authoritarianism: the Shell affair and the assault on academic freedom in South Africa", *Social Dynamics*, 27 (2) 2001, p.3.

within the academy … (and he) juxtaposes the 'thicker' republican conception of free speech which sees freedom of speech as a duty of citizens and a precondition for a good society … academics should exercise this positive right and duty in order to address internal threats to academic freedom. These include: the rise of managerialism; the demise of collegial faculty practices; … the failure to empower disciplinary discourse by engaging the needs of social and political accountability; and slowness to transform institutional cultures that have historically been colonised and racialised.[309]

Given the above, du Toit's proposition appears to have elements in common with the right hand side of my conceptual quadrant on academic freedom; that is, with notions of positive liberty. While it has echoes of Quadrant Two – seeing the institution and the state as two sides of the same coin working towards the same ends in a social compact model, in its location of threats to academic freedom from the internal manifestation of a global reality of market-driven managerialism, it speaks also to Quadrant Four, which recognises that the postmodern reality is of blurred boundaries. But in general, du Toit's 'republican' concept is insufficiently elucidated to make these claims with a great deal of confidence. Indeed, du Toit concludes that:

The key issue for the current practice of academic freedom is how to define and strengthen internal accountability, bearing in mind the growing pressure for forms of external accountability … If the liberal discourse on academic freedom no longer suffices, and if the T.B. Davie formula provides little guidance on the pressing issues of internal as well as external accountability, then how are we to conceive of these issues in more appropriate terms?[310]

A number of the submissions from institutions and other stakeholders to the HEIAAF task team add substance to du Toit's claims that the real threats are internal to the universities. A submission from the academic union of The University of South Africa (UNISA) alleges that the autonomy of university management has increased in relation to academics in line with the "hegemonic principles of market-oriented neo-liberal capitalism", and finds that "if university autonomy is understood to be the freedom of a management cadre to dominate academics and to allocate more and more university resources to their own activities, subservience to a government may be preferable."[311] A

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[309] *Overview on Recent and Current Debates in South African Higher Education: Academic Freedom, Institutional Autonomy and Public Accountability*, Commissioned report to HEIAAF Task Team, Pretoria, CHE, October 2005, p.12.

[310] André du Toit, "From autonomy to accountability: academic freedom under threat in South Africa?", *Social Dynamics*, 26 (1) 2000, pp.129-130.

[311] APSA UNISA (academic union), *CHE HEIAAF submission*, March 2006, p.1.

submission from the University of the Witwatersrand notes that threats and challenges to academic freedom and institutional autonomy can arise from outside and within the higher education institution and the institutions, "depending on how they implement government directives, can themselves turn 'steering' into 'interference'."[312] The submission also notes that entrepreneurial tendencies in institutions also present challenges to institutions as the power relations can shift to narrow commercial or sectarian interests.[313] Another submission indicates that there appears to be such a close relationship between some university managers and the state (a "marriage"), that there is a "noticeable lack of protest and public debate emanating from the universities on controversial issues. It is as if the academe (sic) has either lost its independent voice or that the current state of affairs is above any critical reproach". The author of this submission suggests it is the former reason as dissenting voices are seen as unpatriotic.[314] These views suggest that academics have a responsibility to strengthen internal accountability in order to lessen threats to institutional autonomy.

6.1 Individual cases

The view that the threat to academic freedom emanates from within higher education institutions themselves is also manifest in writings which take up the cases of individual academics who have in some way been in conflict with university management.[315] Southall and Cobbing, for instance, take as their starting point that the new threat is increasingly internal, with academics becoming ever more subordinated to administrators, who in turn are becoming increasingly intolerant of robust internal dissent. They point to a shift in university governance in South Africa's open universities

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[312] Senate Academic Freedom Committee, University of the Witwatersrand, *Submission to CHE/HEIAAF Task Team*, October 2005, p.2.

[313] Ibid.

[314] Central University of Technology, Free State, *Submission to HEIAAF*, 2006, p.2.

[315] Individual cases: Robert Shell, Caroline White, Malegapuru Makgoba, Ashwin Desai, Faisel Khan, Mahmood Mamdani, Robert Morrell, among others.

from what they term "racial liberalism", towards corporate authoritarianism.[316] They base their argument on a lengthy discussion of the dismissal of a leading academic from Rhodes University on the grounds of bringing his university into disrepute, among other charges, and interpret this event as a managerialist silencing of critique which should be guaranteed by academic freedom. Given that this particular dispute arose initially from a critique of the Rhodes University East London campus' staffing policies, this interpretation seems, on the face of it, to be justified.

However, other cases they cite as examples of managers infringing the academic freedom of individual academics do not necessarily serve as substantiation for this view, and indeed this is true of a number of the other instances noted here. For instance, one such celebrated case at the former University of Natal, although taken up by parts of the academic community as an instance of a breach of academic freedom,[317] arose initially because of complaints from students to the Dean about poor teaching, and from colleagues about difficult behaviour, rather than from the academic issuing a critique of the institution or in any other way exercising a right to freedom of speech.[318] In other cases too, independent external bodies such as the Council for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) have ruled in some instances that individuals who had protested alleged violations of their academic freedom, had actually committed some misdemeanour that in any ordinary organisation would have received censure. This begs the question of whether academic freedom, as understood in Quadrant One, is akin to diplomatic privilege which renders the right-holder immune from prosecution even if laws are broken. Does academic freedom in this sense include the right to teach badly, to alienate colleagues, to issue defamatory statements about individuals and factually-incorrect accounts of occurrences at a particular institution? And more than that, does this version of academic freedom hold in a democracy, where not only academics, but students have rights e.g. to be taught coherently? Is every attempt by an institution to

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[316] Roger Southall and Julian Cobbing, "From racial liberalism to corporate authoritarianism: the Shell affair and the assault on academic freedom in South Africa", *Social Dynamics*, 27 (2) 2001, p.2.

[317] See for example, William Freund, "South African academic freedom today", CHE Regional Forum on Government Involvement in Higher Education, Institutional Autonomy and Academic Freedom, Johannesburg, May 2006.

[318] In this instance the case went to court, with the academic being found guilty of misconduct.

discipline staff in an effort to balance the rights and freedoms of different constituencies a breach of academic freedom? And is the recourse to the defence of academic freedom in a transforming society with different interest-groups needing to be accommodated not in itself a conservative move? The concern in advancing individual cases of academics as evidence of threats to academic freedom is that they are case-specific – some may be evidence of intolerance of university authorities for legitimate critique, others may be ordinary labour relations cases. In the absence of full knowledge around each of these, however, it is difficult to put them all together[319] and ascribe to them a trend of management infringing rights to academic freedom. Not all issues of labour dispute between a university and its academic employees can be construed as issues involving academic freedom, but often academic freedom qua Quadrant One is invoked as a defence when expedient to do so, even as, in other contexts, it is claimed that the concept's sell-by date has passed.

Southall and Cobbing argue in defence of an individual against university authorities attempting to deal with maverick behaviour. In some senses they seem to be advocating a return to the traditional collegial model in which it was very difficult to do anything about aberrant individuals, even in instances where students' rights were being infringed, since there was limited executive power, and relationships and careers survived on trust and a laissez-faire policy. This may have been appropriate in small homogenous institutions, but it did allow for poor practices to persist in the system for a long time and prejudice the interests of other parties, for instance, students. In a transformation context, and in an era of complexity, or even supercomplexity,[320] some management and executive decision-making powers may well be necessary to drive change or transformation of institutions. Institutions have become larger and more complex to run, and increasing diversity in the student body renders the need for more management in terms of organising curriculum and deliberately changing teaching strategies and programmes of intervention to help both students and staff members to cope with increasing challenges. Increased management capacity does not necessarily

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[319] As Jimi Adesina does in "Academic freedom and institutional autonomy in South Africa: internal and external threats in the context of transformation", CHE Regional Forum on Government Involvement in Higher Education, Institutional Autonomy and Academic Freedom, Durban, 1 June 2006.

[320] See Barnett as discussed in Chapter Seven.

imply managerialism, although managerialism as a phenomenon has increased in many higher education systems. Management of all organisations can be carried out in different styles; some are more participative and inclusive of the views of different stakeholder groups, where others may indeed be more corporate in the pejorative sense of power vested in management being wielded in a top-down fashion.

The above having been noted, there are indications that managerialism is increasing in South African universities, and that threats to the academic freedom of academics as a whole, as opposed to a new management cadre, are being experienced. Perhaps the most obvious example of this is the strike by academics and support staff members at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2006 over issues of perceived increased managerialism, which saw an unprecedented participation of academics on the picket lines.[321] Habib notes that there is a new perpetrator of the crime of violations of academic freedom in "the institutional bureaucrat" and the corporatisation of the university, and like du Toit cautions that institutional autonomy could land up empowering the class of institutional bureaucrat rather than the individual academic,[322] but he also notes that senior academics themselves might also be responsible for limitations on academic freedom. He refers to an article by Desai which tracks the writing of the leading Marxist scholars of the 1980s and 1990s, and finds that their research agenda is no longer determined by themselves, but "rather by those who are prepared to buy their research and writing skills, most often either the government or the private sector." As he writes, "academic freedom in this case is said to be violated by the senior academic's propensity to sell his or her skills to the highest bidder."[323] But this is a story explored further in another chapter.[324]

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[321] See "Varsity strike hits lectures", *The Witness*, 14 February, 2006 and "Fight for a varsity's soul", *The Witness*, 14 February, 2006.

[322] Adam Habib, "The practice of academic freedom in South Africa", *CHE Regional Forum on Government Involvement in Higher Education, Institutional Autonomy and Academic Freedom*, Pretoria 24 March 2006; Bloemfontein 04 May 2006, p.1.

[323] Ibid. p.2.

[324] See Chapter Seven.

7. Conclusion

In this chapter I have outlined the recent South African debates on academic freedom and institutional autonomy. In the main they pit the left hand side of the quadrant (negative understandings of liberty) against the right hand side (positive understandings of liberty) and manifest mainly in arguments and concerns about the role of the state vis-à-vis institutions in a context of transformation. While there are attempts to reconceptualise academic freedom and institutional autonomy, these tend to be constrained by the framework of this argument. In the rest of this thesis, I attempt to situate the South African debates in broader contexts and challenges, the better to understand from whence particular conceptualizations come, and hopefully to indicate possible paths of further research to enrich understandings of academic freedom and institutional autonomy in a South African context.

In so doing, in the following chapter, I trace the roots of some of the epistemological challenges to academic freedom in postmodernism – the challenges to understandings of knowledge and truth that still pertain in the South African liberal account of academic freedom – and some of the perhaps useful more contextual understandings of knowledge that underlie attempts to reconceptualise academic freedom and institutional autonomy. Thereafter, in Chapter 5, I explore an early manifestation of the implications of postmodernism in South African higher education policy, the so-called Mode1-Mode2 debate on knowledge that informed the move towards the introduction of a programmes-based approach to higher education and engendered new forms of institutional structures to foster interdisciplinarity. I then explore academic freedom and institutional autonomy in the context of broader debates around globalisation and managerialism, focusing on the introduction of quality assurance in South Africa to examine to what extent this instance bears out perceptions of all these challenges becoming part of the South African higher education landscape. Finally, I return to the South African debates, against the backdrop of the broader explorations undertaken in the next few chapters.

Chapter Four

Knowledge production and autonomy: the challenge from postmodernism

Truth fails not; but her outward forms that bear
The longest date do melt like frosty rime…

William Wordsworth, "Mutability"

1. Introduction

In 1983, Derrida posed the provocative question, "Does the university today have a raison d'être?"[325] Similarly, in 1979, Lyotard proclaimed the demise of the modern university[326] and in 1980; Foucault announced the death of the traditional intellectual.[327] In the last two decades, a major debate on the future of the university as an institution has ensued, and the epistemological grounds for the argument of a right to academic freedom challenged. Contestation about the role and the future of the university is based on attacks on the grounding principle of reason as the legitimating factor of the university and on a rejection of universalist principles on which the university is argued to be founded. Indeed, the pursuit of knowledge based on truth has for generations been

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[325] Jacques Derrida, "The principle of reason: the university in the eyes of its pupils", *diacritics*, Fall 1983, p.3. Quoted in Peters, M., "Performance and accountability in 'post-industrial society': the crisis of British universities", *Studies in Higher Education*, 17 (2) 1992, p.135.

[326] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, p.xxiv.

[327] Michel Foucault, *Power/knowledge: selected interviews and other writings*, 1997-1984, L. Kritzman (ed) New York, Routledge. In J. Davies, "Postmodernism and the sociological study of the university", *The Review of Higher Education*, Spring 1999, 22 (3) p.316.

considered to be the defining characteristic of universities[328] but, as noted above, significant challenges to the concepts of knowledge, of truth and hence the role of the university, as well as academic freedom, have been mounted in recent years. The epistemological challenge arises in the main from postmodernist thinkers[329], writing mainly from the perspective of first world institutions in either European, British or North American contexts – and very often from the humanities faculties within those institutions. While the postmodern challenge arises from an ethical impulse to recognise and celebrate alternative narratives – the 'other', it is not immediately apparent to what extent these arguments are applicable to universities in developing countries. Most of the debates have centred on the future of universities in industrialised countries, particularly in the Anglo-American world. Nevertheless, I argue that the debates on knowledge production and the role of the university do indeed pose profound challenges to universities in the developing world as well, if they are considered to be part of an increasingly interconnected world.[330]

In the postmodern perspective, the legitimating narrative of the rational pursuit of truth in the service of the enlightenment of the individual as the defining characteristic of universities has ceased to be credible. Indeed, Lyotard defines postmodernism as "incredulity toward metanarratives".[331] Further, he finds that "to the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation corresponds, most notably, the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution which in the past relied on it. The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great

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[328] See, for instance, Conrad Russell's account of the identity of the university as being defined by the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake in *Academic Freedom*, London, Routledge, 1993.

[329] I have used "postmodernism" quite loosely and broadly to include poststructuralism. Such thinkers include Jean-François Lyotard, Richard Rorty, Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault (who is not in all respects a postmodernist but on whose work postmodernists draw). Their thinking is touched on in this chapter.

[330] Manuel Castells has argued that there are very few countries today (exceptions include North Korea), and hence the universities within them, that do not interact significantly with the global economy. "On Globalisation", seminar at University of Natal, Durban, 7 July 2000.

[331] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, p.xxiv.

voyages, its great goal".[332] In Lyotard's view, it has been metaphysical philosophy that has supplied the justification or legitimation of the existence and the role of the university, and with the challenge to metaphysical philosophy has come a legitimation crisis for the university as an institution. As Griffin writes, "this is indeed the crisis that we face in higher education today: that knowledge, as we have known it in the academy, is coming to an end".[333]

There are at least three strands in the argument proclaiming the 'end of knowledge'. Firstly, there is an apparent loss of faith in the Enlightenment project with its consequent implications for the values of a liberal democracy and hence the role of its major institutions such as the university. The second strand comprises the critiques of postmodernism on knowledge in higher education. These critiques are the lynchpin in the postmodern argument concerning the role and function of the university. The third strand of the argument is related to a view that the market-dominated consumer society has come to influence knowledge and the learning individual.

In this chapter, the first and second of these strands, as intellectual challenges to the university are explored, and their implications for the university and for academic freedom discussed. An alternative fundamental principle underlying the university put forward by Lyotard, that of performativity, is introduced to lead into an exploration of the third strand of the postmodern argument, which is more properly viewed as partly an intellectual and partly an empirical challenge.

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[332] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, p.xxiv.

[333] Anne Griffin, "Knowledge under attack: consumption, diversity and the need for values" in Barnett, R. and Griffin, A. (eds), *The End of Knowledge in Higher Education*, London, Cassell, 1997, p.3.

2. The loss of faith in the Enlightenment project

While there are a variety of postmodern perspectives and no unified postmodern theory, or even a coherent set of positions,[334] among the fundamental premises shared by postmodern thinkers is a relativist distrust of 'truth' and a critique of the doctrines of the so-called Enlightenment project. The western academic tradition is regarded as being founded on classical notions of the quest for knowledge and the necessity to subject knowledge claims to the most rigorous standards of rationality, evidence and truth.[335] Science, in particular, is regarded as having universalising pretentions to guarantee truth. In the postmodern view, this is understood as a metanarrative, both justifying the existence and role of the modern university, and, at the same time, serving to delegitimate other forms of knowledge and ways of knowing. Lyotard understands the defining characteristic of the 'modern' to be the legitimation of science by explicit appeal to grand narratives, among which he lists German idealism, classical liberalism and Marxism.[336]

Habermas, who is decidedly not a postmodernist, but a thinker who is concerned to reform modernity, outlines the Enlightenment project thus:

> The project of modernity, formulated in the eighteenth century by the philosophers of the Enlightenment, consisted in their efforts to develop objective science, universal morality and law, and autonomous art according to their inner logic. At the same time, this project intended to release the cognitive potential of each of these domains from their esoteric forms. The Enlightenment philosophy wanted to utilize this accumulation of specialized culture for the enrichment of everyday life – that is to say, for the rational organization of everyday social life.[337]

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[334] Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*, London, Macmillan, 1991, p.2.

[335] John Davies, "Postmodernism and the sociological study of the university", *The Review of Higher Education*, Spring 1999, 22 (3) p.317.

[336] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, p.xxix.

[337] Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Vol.1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, Oxford, Polity, 1981, p.9 in Best, S. and Kellner, D., *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*, London, Macmillan, 1991, p.233.

Modernity, as the above quote indicates, ranges from the philosophy of Descartes, through the Enlightenment, to the social theory of Comte, Marx and Weber.

There are three main aspects to the postmodern critiques of modernity. In the first instance, there is a distrust in the universalising pretensions of modernist beliefs. Modernity is criticised for "its search for a foundation of knowledge, for its universalising and totalising claims, for its hubris to supply apodictic truth, and for its allegedly fallacious rationalism".[338] There is a rejection of the view that the Western scientific view of the world claims to speak for all humanity and a belief that in doing so it denies the legitimacy of other ways of knowing. Modernity is viewed as hegemonic, exclusive, upholding only the validity of knowledge gained through positivist scientific method and denying the validity of narrative knowledge of the kind practised in non-Western societies where strong oral narrative traditions exist. The postmodern concern is with theories in which there is a need to seek consensus to agree on values, as in Habermas' view, as in seeking consensus the potential for dissensus and difference is eradicated.

Lyotard, in particular, writing in the wake of French post-Marxism, is concerned to avoid totalizing narratives and 'terrorist' ideals of consensus, which he discerns in the various Marxist and Communist traditions in France.[339] The danger, for Lyotard, of theories of society which rely on an understanding of society as a coherent whole, and explanatory theories of history as following a teleological path, is that such theories are too easily subverted into totalizing and destructive ideologies such as Stalinism."[340]

In writing a report on the state of knowledge in *The Postmodern Condition*, Lyotard argues that in order to know what the state of knowledge is, it is important first to "know something of the society in which it is situated."[341] He identifies two main traditions of

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[338] Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*, London, Macmillan, 1991, p.4.

[339] Fredric Jameson, "Foreword" to Lyotard, J.F., *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, p.x.

[340] Ibid. p.x.

[341] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, p.13.

thought, or discourses on society, which have been handed down from the nineteenth century. One is that society forms an organic whole, a unified totality, evident in the work of the "founders of the French school", of Parsons and of contemporary German philosophers of systems theories. This view of society "is always in danger of being incorporated into the programming of the social whole as a simple tool for the optimization of its performance; this is because its desire for a unitary and totalizing truth lends itself to the unitary and totalizing practice of the system's managers".[342] The second basic representational model of society identified by Lyotard is one that sees it divided into two, evident in the Marxist current of thinking which accepts both the principle of class struggle and dialectics as a duality operating within society.[343] Both of these Lyotard finds unacceptable.

On a philosophical level, *The Postmodern Condition* is a thinly veiled attack on Habermas' ideas of a communication society, with its injunction to seek consensus in an ideal speech situation. This Lyotard views as Habermas' attempt to move beyond dualistic views of society to reassert a theory of society as an organic whole, and this he regards as a blurring of the principle of societal division to the point of losing all its radicality.[344] Habermas' vision of an evolutionary social leap into a new type of rational society is "explicitly rejected by Lyotard as the unacceptable remnant of a 'totalizing' philosophical tradition and as the valorization of conformist when not 'terrorist' ideals of consensus". Similarly, Foucault attempts to detotalize history and society as unified wholes governed by a centre, essence or telos and to decentre the subject as a constituted rather than a constituting consciousness.[345]

A second aspect to the critiques is closely related to the first. Apart from a concern to avoid totalizing narratives, postmodernists attack the main "hero" (or villain) of modernity – that is, reason. As Best and Kellner write:

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[342] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, p.12.

[343] Ibid. pp.10–12.

[344] Ibid. p.13.

[345] Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*, London, Macmillan, 1991, p.39.

The theoretical discourses of modernity from Descartes through the Enlightenment and its progeny championed reason as the source of progress in knowledge and society, as well as the privileged locus of truth and the foundation of systematic knowledge. Reason was deemed competent to discover adequate theoretical and practical norms upon which systems of thought and action could be built and society could be restructured. This Enlightenment project is also operative in the American, French and other democratic revolutions which attempted to overturn the feudal world and to produce a just and egalitarian social order that would embody reason and social progress.[346]

Postmodern theory in general rejects the modern equation of reason and freedom and attempts to problematize modern forms of rationality as reductive and oppressive. As an example:

Where modernist theories tend to see knowledge and truth to be neutral, objective, universal, or vehicles of progress and emancipation, Foucault analyses them as integral components of power and domination. Postmodern theory rejects unifying or totalizing modes of theory or rationalist myths of the Enlightenment that are reductionist and obscure the differential and plural nature of the social field, while … entailing the suppression of plurality, diversity and individuality in favour of conformity and homogeneity.[347]

For Foucault, behind the quest for truth based on reason and the claim to speak for humanity is always the drive for power. Drawing on Nietzsche's will-to-power thesis, Foucault sees truth related to power.[348]

As Foucault writes:

Truth is a thing of this world: it is produced only by multiple forms of constraint. And it induces regular effects of power. Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true.[349]

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[346] Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*, London, Macmillan, 1991, p.2.

[347] Ibid. p.38.

[348] John Davies, "Postmodernism and the sociological study of the university", *The Review of Higher Education*, Spring 1999, 22 (3) p.317.

[349] Michel Foucault, "Truth and power", in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, Brighton, The Harvester Press, 1980, p.131.

He goes on to say that "in societies like ours, truth is centred on the form of scientific discourse and the institutions which produce it; it is subject to constant economic and political incitement … it is produced and transmitted under the control, dominant if not exclusive, of a few great political and economic apparatuses (university, army writing, media); lastly, it is the issue of a whole political debate and social confrontation (ideological struggles)."[350] Reason, as the legitimating principle for modernity's "regime of truth", thus becomes a vehicle for the suppression of 'the other'.

The third aspect of this critique is a questioning of the modernist confidence in human emancipation. Along with their problematisation of reason, postmodernists reject a view of social science as the application of rationality and scientific method to the solution of social problems, and doubt that the application of reason necessarily entails moral progress. According to McCarthy:

> The Enlightenment's belief in progress rested on an idea of reason modeled after Newtonian physics, which, with its reliable method and secure growth, was thought to provide a paradigm for knowledge in general. The impact of the advance of science on society as a whole was not envisioned in the first instance as an expansion of productive forces and a refinement of administrative techniques but in terms of its effects on the cultural context of life. In particular, the belief – for us, today, rather implausible – that progress in science was necessarily accompanied by progress in morality, was based not only on an assimilation of the logics of theoretical and practical questions but in the historical experience of the powerful reverberations of early modern science in the spheres of religion, morals and politics.[351]

Postmodernists express a disillusionment with explanatory theories of history which posit the progress of humanity toward some emancipatory telos – a Marxist classless society, or the synthesis of the dialectic in which human emancipation is achieved. In general they are sceptical of the limitless advance of science and technology, which is central to the modernist understanding of the world. In the modernist understanding, reason applied in the political sphere would lead to an assertion of the general will and the common interest while securing civil liberties. In the economic sphere, reason would

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[350] Michel Foucault, "Truth and power", in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, Brighton, The Harvester Press, 1980, p.132.

[351] Thomas McCarthy, "Introduction" in Habermas, J., *The Theory of Communicative Action Vol. 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, London, Heinemann, 1984, p.xvi.

ensure the space for the free pursuit of individuals' own interests with a continuous increase in the general wealth of society, and in terms of modern culture, reason would bring about a progressive liberation from superstition and a new non-illusory centre of meaning. Postmodernists are not alone in their disillusion with these ideals. For instance, although the progress of societal rationalisation was a hallmark of the end of the nineteenth century, Weber considered this progress to be the "ascendancy of purposive rationality, of technique and calculation, of organization and administration. The triumph of reason brings with it not a reign of freedom but the dominion of impersonal economic forces and bureaucratically organized administrations – a 'vast and mighty cosmos that determines with irresistible force the lifestyles of individuals who are born into it'".[352] Similarly, members of the Frankfurt School, Horkheimer and Adorno in particular, saw the apotheosis of reason in the rise of fascism in Europe and the result of instrumental reason as the subjugation of whole populaces (especially in America) to a thoroughly commodified and totally administered society.[353]

The postmodernist disillusionment with Enlightenment ideals stem similarly from a view that although modernity has succeeded in becoming dominant as cultural form, it has fallen far short of realising its humane aims.[354] Postmodern thinkers reject the modern idea that the intellect can direct human civilisation toward a progressive realisation of ideal forms of human existence and understanding that are "universal, knowable and achievable through discoveries and applications in such areas of science, civil governance and aesthetic expression".[355] What distinguishes postmodern disillusionment with the project of modernity from other critiques is a distinctive epistemological position – the subject of the following section of this chapter.

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[352] Thomas McCarthy, "Introduction" in Habermas, J., *The Theory of Communicative Action Vol. 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, London, Heinemann, 1984, p.xviii.

[353] Ibid. p.xix.

[354] Roger P. Mourad, "Postmodern interdisciplinarity", *The Review of Higher Education*, Winter 1997, 20 (2) p.115.

[355] Ibid. p.116.

3. Knowledge

At the heart of the postmodern critique of modernity is the view that we currently face a 'crisis in knowledge' which has deep implications for culture and institutions such as universities. Rorty outlines the traditional role of philosophy as foundational with respect to the rest of culture because culture is the assemblage of claims to knowledge, and philosophy adjudicates such claims. He writes:

> It can do so because it understands the foundations of knowledge, and it finds these foundations in a study of man-as-knower, of the 'mental processes' or the 'activity of representation' which make knowledge possible. To know is to represent accurately what is outside the mind; so to understand the possibility and nature of knowledge is to understand the way in which the mind is able to construct such representations.[356]

Rorty argues that the fundamental Western idea of knowledge, which is based on the Platonic distinction between ideal Forms, and which has been entrenched since Descartes in the 17th Century, is based on a flawed distinction between subjects and objects, or mind and reality. He also traces the idea of philosophy as the tribunal of pure reason to Kant in the 18th Century, when arguments were being made in favour of the secular over religion. In what he terms the 'mirror theory of knowledge', or the idea of knowledge as accurate representation, evident in the work of Heidegger, Wittgenstein and Dewey, the individual subject is presumed to know something through forming good cognitive pictures of external reality. Subjects, as entities characterised and identified by their particular experiences, are different from objects – entities which do not have experiences but which are themselves experienced by subjects. The individual, or subject, knows through forming representations of the objective world. Knowledge, therefore, mirrors the structure of external reality.

The advance of knowledge, and the epistemological project, is related therefore to the quest to form increasingly clearer or better pictures of external reality, by "getting more accurate representations by inspecting, repairing and polishing the mirror".[357] Rorty argues that "the attempt, which has defined traditional philosophy, to explicate

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[356] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1980, p.3.

[357] Ibid. p.12.

'rationality' and 'objectivity' in terms of conditions of accurate representation is a self-deceptive effort to eternalise the normal discourse of the day, and that since the Greeks, philosophy's self-image has been dominated by this attempt". Rorty finds the representational paradigm problematic, and insists that the attempt to advance a theory of knowledge that is a "permanent, neutral framework for inquiry, and thus for all of culture", is not achievable.[358]

In arguing against the idea of knowledge as an accurate representation of reality made possible by special mental processes, Rorty claims that knowledge is "simply a name or label for the subject of agreement among any group of humans concerning beliefs, values and action, rather than a matter of interaction with nonhuman reality.[359] A persuasive truth assertion is fundamentally a victory in argument rather than an accurate representation of reality. Blake explains that "it is not a solitary subject who attaches words to things, but rather a social group who share the same language. The developing person cannot start with idiosyncratic perceptions of her own and then create words to represent them. On the contrary, she needs a language already in order to sort out and order her perceptions in the first place."[360] Meaning is seen in this view to be socially constructed – knowledge of the world consists in learning to follow complex sets of rules and concepts in a variety of different language games. That knowledge is regarded as socially constructed can account for the sharing of knowledge; the representational paradigm fails to explain how cognitive representations of external reality can be shared. In the postmodern view, the social dimension is ontologically prior to the concept of the subject. Knowledge is the achievement of a context-bound consensus, rather than the outcome of scientific investigation. Implied in this view is the dissolution of the distinction between facts and values – facts, conceived of in the representational paradigm as external, observable realities, in the postmodern view cannot exist outside of language.

Derrida, too, opposes the foundationalist approach to language and knowledge. This he terms a 'metaphysics of presence' that supposedly guarantees the subject

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[358] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1980, p.8.

[359] Ibid. pp.156–157.

[360] Nigel Blake, "Truth, identity and community in the university", *Curriculum Studies*, 3 (3) 1995, p.268.

unmediated access to reality.[361] He argues that the idea that one can know something that exists independent of the knower is an illusion, and that such claims about knowledge and reality depend on the idea that reality is revealed to the intellect through the medium of human speech.[362] But language is itself human artifice, and the argument is thus paradoxical.

For Lyotard, to know is 'to discourse', and language is, in effect, the ground of knowledge. All human interaction can be understood as embodying different kinds of language games, which follow specific sets of rules and criteria for truth claims. Following the later work of Wittgenstein, Lyotard argues that there are various types of utterances, such as denotative ones (statements), performative ones (in which the effect on that to which it refers coincides with its enunciation) and prescriptive ones (in which the sender has the authority to require an action to be performed). Different types of utterance can be regarded as forming the basis of different language games, each with its own rules. The rules of a game arise from a contract between players, and if there were no rules, there would be no game. Every utterance can be construed as a move in the game, and the social bond is considered to be composed of language 'moves'.

The implications of this view for scientific knowledge as traditionally construed are far-reaching. Lyotard writes:

> The fact is that the Platonic discourse that inaugurates science is not scientific, precisely to the extent that it attempts to legitimate science. Scientific knowledge cannot know and make known that it is the true knowledge without resorting to the other, narrative kind of knowledge, which from its point of view is no knowledge at all. Without such recourse it would be in the position of presupposing its own validity and would be stooping to what it condemns: begging the question, proceeding on prejudice.[363]

Lyotard's concern is with who proves the proof; who decides on the conditions of truth? For him, the rules of the game exist only on account of the consensus extended to

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[361] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, (trans. G.C. Spivak), Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976, p.16.

[362] Roger P. Mourad, "Postmodern interdisciplinarity", *The Review of Higher Education*, Winter 1997, 20 (2) p.125.

[363] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, p.29.

them by the experts in a particular field. For Lyotard, there is a heterogeneity of language games – consensus is thus provisional and local. In his view, "knowledge is produced … by dissent, by putting into question existing paradigms, by inventing new ones, rather than assenting to universal truth or agreeing to a [universal] consensus."[364] The problem with modernity is that what is in effect a particular language game – science – has not only been privileged as a universal to the detriment of alternative language games, but that it fallaciously posits its neutrality and independence of particular viewpoints.

The postmodernist cause is thus an argument for a plurality of voices and narratives. Postmodern theory attempts "with its emphasis on the specific and the normative, to situate reason and knowledge within rather than outside particular configurations of space, place, time and power. Partiality in this case becomes a political necessity as part of the discourse of locating oneself within rather than outside of history and ideology."[365] Different language games, being partial, are also tied to different interests. For postmodernists, there can be no category of impartial competence.

Foucault argues that knowledge is discourse created by humans in an effort to attain power. If there are different discourses, then some have prevailed over others, which he terms 'subjugated knowledges'. In particular, scientific discourse has been dominant in Western thought. He writes:

> By subjugated knowledges I mean two things: on the one hand, I am referring to the historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systematisation … On the other hand, I believe that by subjugated knowledges one should understand something else … namely, a whole set of knowledges that have been disqualified as inadequate to their task or insufficiently elaborated: naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity.[366]

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[364] Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations*, London, Macmillan, 1991, p.166.

[365] Stanley Aronowitz and Henry A. Giroux*, Postmodern Education: Politics, Culture and Social Criticism*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p.69.

[366] Michel Foucault, "Genealogy and social criticism", in Seidman, S. (ed), *The Postmodern Turn: New Perspectives on Social Theory*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p.41.

By such knowledges he is referring to the local and partial knowledges of particular communities, of the patient as opposed to the doctor, of localised anti-psychiatric discourses – all of which are silenced to some extent by the mainstream. Central to the postmodern cause is the concern to recognise and value subjugated knowledges without attempting to

> provide a solid and homogenous theoretical terrain for all these dispersed genealogies, nor to descend upon them from on high with some kind of halo of theory that would unite them. Our task, on the contrary, will be to expose and specify the issue at stake in this opposition, this struggle, this insurrection of knowledges against the institutions and against the effects of the knowledge and the power that invests scientific discourse.[367]

4. Lyotard and performativity

The postmodern critique of modernity and knowledge, while mostly philosophical in nature, is not devoid of a socio-historical perspective. Lyotard states that:

> Our working hypothesis is that the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter what is known as the postindustrial age and cultures enter what is known as the postmodern age. This transition has been under way since at least the end of the 1950s, which for Europe marks the completion of reconstruction … Scientific knowledge is a kind of discourse. And it is fair to say that for the last fifty years the 'leading' sciences and technologies have had to do with language.[368]

He continues with a list of a range of such sciences, including linguistics, cybernetics, computers and their languages, among many others. He argues further that technological transformation, such as the development of computers, will have a considerable impact on knowledge, both with respect to research and to the transmission of knowledge, or learning. He points to a change in the status of knowledge as a result of computerisation in three respects: the translation of knowledge into quantities of information or data, the exteriorisation of knowledge with respect to the 'knower' in that knowledge will exist outside the mind, and that knowledge becomes a commodity. He writes:

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[367] Michel Foucault, "Genealogy and social criticism", in Seidman, S. (ed), *The Postmodern Turn: New Perspectives on Social Theory*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p.45.

[368] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, p.3.

> The relationship of the suppliers and users of knowledge to the knowledge they supply and use is now tending … to assume the form already taken by the relationship of commodity producers and consumers to the commodities they produce and consume – that is, the form of value. Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold, it is and will be consumed in order to be valorized in a new production; in both cases the goal is exchange. Knowledge ceases to be an end in itself; it loses its 'use-value' … Knowledge has become the principle (sic) force of production over the last few decades; this has already had a noticeable effect on the composition of the work force of the most highly developed societies and constitutes the major bottleneck for the developing countries.[369]

Given his collapsing of the metanarrative of science, philosophy and the discovery of truth into one of many language games, Lyotard posits a redefinition of traditional science as science-in-use. "The destruction of the legitimating principle permits the subjugation of science, the university and social systems to the principle of 'performativity'.[370] Lyotard's argument is that with the advance of technology, knowledge has itself become a technology, subject to performativity rather than truth tests. Its value is not in whether it is true, but how efficient and effective it is "in achieving the best possible input/output equation."[371] Lyotard writes, "The performativity principle is a major proposition which significantly affects the status of knowledge itself".[372] The crisis of narratives in postindustrial societies with postmodern cultures is that, because of a shift in epistemology, social systems have become 'performative', dedicated not to truth, but to more performative behaviour. Language games become convincing not through their truth value or accuracy of reflection of an external reality, but through strength of argument. The production of proof as

> part of an argumentation process designed to win agreement from the addressees of scientific messages, thus falls under another language game in which the goal is no longer truth but performativity. Idealist and humanist narratives of legitimation are abandoned in order to justify the new goal: in the discourse of today's financial bankers of research, the only credible goal is power. Scientists,

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[369] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, pp.4-5.

[370] Robert Cowen, "Performativity, post-modernity and the university", *Comparative Education*, 32 (2) 1996, p.248.

[371] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, p.46.

[372] Ibid. p.62.

technicians and instruments are purchased not to find truth, but to augment power.[373]

5. Implications for the university

There are implications for the university of this view of performativity at four different levels. Firstly, there are implications for the role of the university, given a change in the status of knowledge and in knowledge configuration. Secondly, there are implications for the traditionally held autonomy of the university. Thirdly, there are implications regarding the university's internal modes of self-organisation and current disciplinarity. And finally, there are implications for the role of the intellectual in a postmodern age. Each of these is examined in turn in the sections below.

5.1 The role of the university

The implications with respect to the role of higher education are clear:

> If we accept the notion that there is an established body of knowledge, the question of its transmission, from a pragmatic point of view, can be subdivided into a series of questions: Who transmits learning? What is transmitted? To whom? Through what medium? In what form? With what effect? A university policy is formed by a coherent set of answers to these questions. If the performativity of the supposed social system is taken as the criterion of relevance … higher education becomes a subsystem of the social system, and the same performativity criterion is applied to each of these problems. The desired goal becomes the optimal contribution of higher education to the best performativity of the social system.[374]

The change in the status of knowledge thus has a direct implication in changing the role of the university as an autonomous institution that furthers the pursuit of truth to a much more functional institution concerned with increasing its performativity.

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[373] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, p.46.

[374] Ibid. p.48.

The function of higher education in Lyotard's view thus becomes to create the skills indispensable to the furtherance and maintenance of the economic and social systems. On the one hand, it is necessary to develop skills designed to tackle world competition, which implies a growth in the management sciences and in the number of high level technologists. On the other hand, skills are needed to fulfil society's own need for internal cohesion, since the role of the university is no longer to educate an elite capable of leading a nation towards its emancipation, but to develop doctors, teachers, engineers and other professionals to meet pragmatic ends. In this view, the university becomes a functional body, serving the performativity needs of postindustrial and postmodern societies.

This is very different from the role of universities as traditionally understood. In unpacking the narratives of legitimation of knowledge which are undermined in this critique, Lyotard distinguishes two versions. In the first, humanity is the hero of liberty. All peoples have a right to science. The nation as a whole is supposed to win its freedom through the spread of domains of knowledge to the population. The state uses the narrative of freedom to assume direct control over the training of the nation for the sake of progress. In the second, there is a different relationship between science, the nation and the state. This version Lyotard sees arising in 1807 – 1810, with the founding of the University of Berlin, which has been extremely influential in the way higher education has since been organised. The Prussian ministry considered two proposals for the university, one by Fichte and the other by Schleiermacher. Wilhelm von Humboldt opted for the more liberal version of Schleiermacher. In Schleiermacher's proposal for the creation of the university, the emphasis is on an argument for the independence of science or 'science for its own sake'. Humboldt argues that the scientific institution "lives and continually renews itself on its own, with no constraint or determined goal whatsoever". However, in his view, the university should also orient science to "the spiritual and moral training of the nation" – the so-called *Bildung*-effect.[375] Lyotard argues that two sets of discourse are involved here, which Humboldt synthesises into one – that is, the disinterested pursuit of learning and the moral development of the nation.

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[375] Wilhelm Von Humboldt, "Über die innere und äussere Organisation der höheren wissenschaftlichen Anstalten in Berlin",1810, in *Wilhelm von Humboldt*, Frankfurt, 1957, p.126, quoted in Lyotard, J.F., *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, p.32.

Humboldt's vision is for the legitimated subject to make sure that the scientific search for truth coincides with the pursuit of just ends in moral and political life.

While Lyotard's discussion is based on the founding of the university of Berlin, he sees this model as the basis for the development of higher education in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As Usher and Edwards write:

> The impact on education of this metanarrative is to emphasise the importance of the university as an educational institution in which academics are provided with the freedom from outside influences to pursue knowledge as they see fit, guided by the movement towards speculative unity, the totality and totalisation of knowledge. They can provide critical comment on the state and society from their position of privilege but are disbarred from an active political role.[376]

Lyotard sees the legitimation requirements of modern knowledge as not only shaping the university and its division into departments and disciplines, but as also providing academics with a self-conception, a sense of common project and a common language. But the narrative of legitimation faces a challenge posed by another language game, that is, technology, whose ascendancy is legitimated by the performativity principle. The outcome for the university of both the rise of techno-science and the mercantilisation of knowledge is the subordination of educational relations and practices to the demands of performativity.[377] The effect is to make theoretical knowledge redundant. Knowledge becomes no longer an end in itself and its transmission is no longer the exclusive responsibility of scholars and students. "Lyotard concludes that the ascendancy of the performativity principle has resulted in the accommodation of the university to the needs of industry and governments, thus making the concept of university autonomy obsolete."[378]

With the displacement of the legitimating narrative of reason to one of performativity, the traditional autonomy and privilege of the academic institution becomes undermined. The principle of performativity, that of optimising performance through technological innovation, has arisen, as alluded to above, through the collapse of the legitimating

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[376] Robin Usher and Richard Edwards, *Postmodernism and Education*, London, Routledge, 1994, p.162.

[377] John Davies, "Postmodernism and the sociological study of the university", *The Review of Higher Education*, 22 (3) 1999, p.318.

[378] Ibid. p.318.

metanarrative of reason, as well as the rise of techno-science. The rapid development of technology has meant greater scrutiny from governments and the facilitation of the rise of instrumentalist views of knowledge. Lyotard explains why this should be so as follows: "Given the limitations of human senses and the increasing complexity of empirical demonstration and proof, the principle of experimental replication has become increasingly dependent on sophisticated and expensive technology".[379] This enforces a game of efficiency. The production of scientific proof costs money and therefore a maximum output (proof), minimum input (funding) model becomes increasingly more applicable. Knowledge becomes the organisation of data for immediate problem-solving, with the ultimate goal being an increase in the overall efficiency of the social system. "Technology is therefore a game pertaining not to the true, the just, or the beautiful etc., but to efficiency: a technical 'move' is 'good' when it does better and/or expends less energy than another."[380] In this analysis, Lyotard foreshadows also the rapid advance of globalisation, explored later in this thesis, which has brought about an increase in functionalist views of higher education institutions.

5.2 Implications for university autonomy

The implications of performativity for the autonomy of the university and the control of knowledge production, are, in the postmodern view, far-reaching. Harker writes that:

> While rationalism or Reason remained enthroned as the legitimating metanarrative, universities enjoyed autonomy. As Reason fragmented, legitimation passed to the narrative of those with control of the funding of universities. As all forms of coherent discourse are legitimate in a genuine postmodern world, a narrative soon transforms itself into a legitimating metanarrative, Hence, it is possible for a narrative based upon the cult of efficiency, but masquerading as excellence, to take the high ground of legitimation vacated by Reason.[381]

As Cowen explains:

> The post-industrial society and the destruction of former meta-narratives in post-modern cultures delegitimates the traditional role of the university, breaks the older (Humboldtian) social contract between the state and the university and the

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[379] Roger P. Mourad, "Postmodern interdisciplinarity", *The Review of Higher Education*, 20 (2) 1997, p.121.

[380] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, p.44.

[381] Barry Harker, "Postmodernism and quality", *Quality in Higher Education*, 1 (1) 1995, pp.37–38.

Humboldtian definition of the relation between the good and the social. In its place, a new definition of the relation between the university (among other knowledge 'agencies') and the economy and society has developed.[382]

The epistemological bankruptcy of the Enlightenment narrative, that knowledge is no longer seen as the training of minds but as a commodity exterior to minds which can be bought and sold, and that knowledge has become the principal force of production, have as an effect that learning is no longer exclusive to universities but falls within the purview of the state. "In the computer age, the question of knowledge is now more than ever a question of government."[383] The problem posed by Lyotard has as a characteristic that:

It removes from universities one of their traditional defences against co-option by the state. This is not merely a matter of institutional autonomy. In the face of the specification by the state of the need for new and different kinds of 'knowledge' performativity, for new management and supervisory practices, universities must rely for their defence by their rectors, vice-chancellors or presidents on the practicalities of politics. The historic claim of universities to have special knowledge, to be creating special knowledge and to be testing truth is undermined. They have no principle for the exclusion of a multiplicity of discourses and they have no epistemological principle for the exclusion of performativity as a definition of their main functions.[384]

While there are many language games, the technocratic decision-makers proceed on the assumption that that there is a commensurability and common ground among them and that the whole is determinable. "They allocate our lives for the growth of power. In matters of social justice and scientific truth alike, the legitimation of that power is based on optimizing the system's performance – efficiency. The application of this criterion to all of our games necessarily entails a certain level of terror, whether soft or hard: be operational (that is, commensurable) or disappear."[385] With the rise of techno-science, "the old humanist (emancipatory) narrative of legitimation has been replaced by a new ideological legitimation promulgated by the state (and written into the missions of the education corporations) in terms of the value of efficiency, which has as its goals, power

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[382] Robert Cowen, "Performativity, post-modernity and the university", *Comparative Education*, 32 (2) 1996, p.248.

[383] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, p.9.

[384] Ibid. p.249.

[385] Ibid. p.44.

and growth, rather than truth."[386] In the postmodern view, the locus of control of knowledge production has shifted from the university to the state and beyond.

In response to Derrida's rhetorical question about whether the university has a raison d'être, the postmodern view is that the game has certainly changed. A further consequence of the rise of techno-science and performativity implies, as mentioned above, is that the university no longer has exclusive control over knowledge production, carried out for the sake of the moral progress of the nation. Indeed, not only have the boundaries of the university become permeable, but so too have those of the nation-state. Indeed, these are the conditions inherent in Quadrant Four of the matrix of concepts of academic freedom outlined at the beginning of this thesis. The politics of research and teaching can no longer be reduced to a problematics based on the nation-state but must take into account "technomilitary networks that are apparently multi- or trans-national in form".[387] This raises new legal and ethical questions for the relationship between the state and the information-rich multinational corporations.

Furthermore, the distinction between pure and applied research is breaking down as it is no longer possible to distinguish in modernity the principle of reason from the idea of technology. Derrida points to the increasing external interventions into the affairs of the university from the presses, foundations, and mass media. But the greatest intervention comes from the military and the state, which can invest in any sort of research at all, either pure or more applied or 'oriented' research, and can exercise control through funding, or limiting funding. Derrida writes, "The unacceptability of a discourse, the noncertification of a research project, the illegitimacy of a course offering are declared by evaluative actions: studying such evaluations is, it seems to me, one of the tasks most indispensable to the exercise of academic responsibility, most urgent for the maintenance of its dignity."[388]

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[386] Michael Peters, "Performance and accountability in 'post-industrial society': the crisis of British universities", *Studies in Higher Education*, 17 (2) 1992, p.133.

[387] Jacques Derrida, "The principle of reason: the university in the eyes of its pupils", *diacritics*, Fall 1983, p.13, in Michael Peters, "Performance and accountability in 'post-industrial society': the crisis of British universities", *Studies in Higher Education*, 17 (2) 1992, p.136.

[388] Ibid, p.136.

The theoretical perspective of postmodernism that performativity is the new legitimating principle is consistent with other critiques of the modern university that are not necessarily postmodern in origin. Cowen points to an overlap in the critique of universities from a postmodern perspective and those emanating from public agencies. He argues that the university reform movement in the 1980s and 1990s (certainly in the Anglo world, about which he is writing) was centred on making university systems efficient and relevant. Not only is the argument epistemological therefore, but also empirical in nature. "The concept of efficiency includes measurement of university production (of knowledge) and the test of relevance includes making what is researched (and taught) useful to the national economy."[389] One of the agencies he uses as an example of issuing a critique which is consistent with postmodern views, is the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In a 1987 report, it argues that the insularity of universities and knowledge production needs to be breached. It advocates that universities should more carefully meet 'external expectations', including those of governments, and should enter into multidisciplinary research efforts in fields such as genetics, opto-electronics, high energy physics, material science and biochemistry to forge "new links between academic researchers and those who wish to exploit their findings in production, defence, medical practice and public service."[390] The report's further recommendations include a need to concentrate basic research in a few selected institutions for financial reasons, and that the trend should be to emphasise applied research and development. This is consistent with Lyotard's view that science has become science-in-use.

There is also a wealth of empirical evidence to substantiate the postmodern view of the changed role and diminished autonomy of universities. With reference to Australian and British contexts, Harker writes that:

> An examination of the trends in higher education reveals the central importance of performativity in driving the quality agenda in national higher education systems. National systems are being driven by the following forces: the move from elite to

[389] Robert Cowen, "Performativity, post-modernity and the university", *Comparative Education*, 32 (2) 1996, p.246.

[390] W. Taylor, *Universities under scrutiny,* Paris, OECD, 1987, quoted in Robert Cowen, "Performativity, post-modernity and the university", *Comparative Education*, 32 (2) 1996, p.247.

mass higher education with accompanying growth of student diversity; the international mobility of students and the consequent move to internationalise quality assurance standards; employer demand for generic work skills; the exponential growth in knowledge and the growing importance of information and information literacy to economic and social development; the influence of technology on the modes of delivery of educational services; the re-emergence of student consumerism; and increased accountability demands for the use of government funds. These forces can be seen as strong reinforcers of the 'production-measurement' approach to quality assurance.[391]

The rise of the quality agenda, the increasing use of performance indicators in managing higher education systems, and the growing role of market forces in shaping higher education further serve to substantiate Lyotard's view of the ascendance of the performativity principle.

5.3 Internal modes of organisation and disciplinarity

In the first instance, with the rise of the performativity principle comes an apparent increase in managerialism, both in the way in which higher education systems are managed and steered, as well as in institutions' internal organisation. There is much debate about whether this change should be welcomed or resisted. On the negative side of the debate, Cowen finds that:

> Above all, the university has lost or is losing, its own definition of excellence in its absorption into national research and development industries. Within the university there are new cadres of managers who are using their new 'moral technology' to pursue quality in accordance with national rules for measurable efficiency and effectiveness. The university is thus becoming quality 'fictive' and because its definition of quality is performative and external, it has also become quality attenuated. What is initially astonishing is the very large literature which has developed on the theme of 'quality' … In fact, the 'fictive quality' problem is, on (sic) Lyotard's argument, comprehensible. If the meta-narrative which links universities to a search for the truth and which places academics/intellectuals as the elite guardians of that narrative has broken down, then quality – defining it and establishing it – is a matter for managerial expertise. The university is quality attenuated precisely because quality now needs to be operationally defined and definitions of that quality and surveillance of that quality – the roles of system quality definition – are heavily located in the hands of experts outside of it.[392]

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[391] Barry Harker, "Postmodernism and quality", *Quality in Higher Education*, 1 (1) 1995, p.33.

[392] Robert Cowen, "Performativity, post-modernity and the university", *Comparative Education*, 32 (2) 1996, p.256.

On the other hand, there are more pragmatic and positive views. Castells, for instance, argues that:

> The science and technology systems of the new economy (including, of course, the humanities) are equivalent to what were the factories of the industrial age. Not that manufacturing will disappear, but the new manufacturing of the twenty-first century (as well as agriculture and advanced services) will only be able to perform on the basis of a new, highly developed cultural, scientific and technological system. If knowledge is the electricity of the new informational-international economy, then the institutions of higher education are the power sources on which the new development process must rely.[393]

One implication of this view is that it becomes crucially important for higher education to be managed well to meet the needs of the new knowledge economy.

The application of general theories and models of management to higher education institutions has been necessitated by their growing complexity and by the need to respond to growing external demands on higher education. Readings refers to this trend as the growing corporatisation of the university, evident in the increasing use of mission statements and goal directed planning, as well as the change in university management functions.[394] An example of this is the increasing use of 'executive Deans', whose job is to manage Faculties financially and otherwise, and who are no longer purely academic leaders. The trend in organising internal university structures appears to be toward compartmentalising divisions or faculties in such a way that they can be run on business lines, with an emphasis on income-generation and future sustainability, which is assured through market forces. The consequence of this has been a threatened existence for areas of study that lack immediate practical application and employability, such as the humanities and the pure sciences. [395]

A second implication for the university of postmodern views of knowledge and performativity, is a change in the organisation of the university into discipline-based structures, or fairly autonomous academic departments. In modernist views of

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[393] Manuel Castells, "The university system: engine of development in the new world economy", in Salmi, J. and Verspoor, A.M. (eds) *Revitalizing Higher Education*, Pergamon, IAU Press, 1996, pp.14-15; in Robert Cowen, "Performativity, post-modernity and the university", *Comparative Education*, 32 (2) 1996, p.253.

[394] Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins,* Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press,1997.

[395] See Chapter 5 for a more in-depth discussion on these aspects.

knowledge, the whole of knowledge could be increased through each discipline pursuing truth in its own area, without interfering with other areas. There was a presumption of disciplinary autonomy, from whence derived disciplinary authority. Sociologists approached the pursuit of truth differently from political scientists and from biologists, but none presumed to be able to comment authoritatively on the methodology followed by the other. Knowledge as a whole, however, was viewed as being advanced, and it is this project that lent the university its coherence as an institution. Mourad argues that:

> The disciplines are the manifestation of the absoluteness of the pursuit of knowledge for several reasons. First, the disciplines are generally regarded as comprising the foundations of the university in practice. Second, the disciplines as currently practiced, are primarily concerned with a theoretical knowledge of reality. Third, since theory is expressed in disciplinary terms (whether in one or more disciplines), the disciplines are the prescribed structure for intellectual activity. For these reasons, the disciplines are, in effect, generally regarded as if they were absolute. They are thought to constitute the absolute foundation for what counts as legitimate intellectual activity in the modern university. Thus, 'knowledge of reality' is, in practice, a reality that is composed of disciplines.[396]

Lyotard's theory of knowledge as a plurality of language games serves, however, to undermine the absolutist view of disciplines, regarding them rather as diffuse and changing areas of inquiry with artificially created boundaries. Disciplines function primarily as 'top-down' structures, but in a postmodern university, forms of thought or different language games would emerge from particular, local, context-bound inquiries. "Postmodern disciplines would be networks of particular inquiries that would always be subject to change, dissolution and replacement as different particular inquiries and linkages come into being and end".[397] Lyotard, in celebrating dissent and difference, argues for a proliferation of incommensurable language games, and contends that "knowledge can also be freed by giving the public access to computerised information and by mounting a multidimensional assault on artificially created discipline boundaries."[398]

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[396] Roger P. Mourad, "Postmodern interdisciplinarity", *The Review of Higher Education*, 20 (2) 1997, p.129.

[397] Ibid. p.132.

[398] John Davies, "Postmodernism and the sociological study of the university", *The Review of Higher Education*, 22 (3) 1999, p.319. See Chapter 10 for a fuller discussion of disciplinarity.

5.4 Implications for pedagogy

Postmodern views of knowledge and performativity have implications both for pedagogy and for curriculum. With respect to pedagogy, Lyotard opens up the possibility of an increasingly instrumental approach to learning, which he appears to regard as no more than teaching students how to use computers. He writes:

> What is transmitted in higher learning? … To the extent that learning is translatable into computer language and the traditional teacher is replaceable by memory banks, didactics can be entrusted to machines linking traditional memory banks (libraries, etc.) and computer data banks to intelligent terminals placed at the students' disposal. Pedagogy would not necessarily suffer. Students would still have to be taught something: not contents, but how to use the terminals. On the one hand, that means teaching new languages and on the other, a more refined ability to handle the language game of interrogation. [399]

Postmodern writers taking up Lyotard's train of thought emphasise the development of information-finding skills as well as the need to build new knowledge on existing understandings of local contexts. Pedagogy becomes thus learning how to learn, rather than the transmission of knowledge. Similarly, there are implications for curriculum. The question is no longer 'what should be taught?', but "what is useful or saleable?' or 'what skills are needed for the furtherance of the modern knowledge economy?'. Areas of inquiry are no longer confined to the boundaries of the theoretical disciplines, but include instead the previously 'subjugated knowledges' through local context-bound studies. Postmodernism stretches the boundaries of what counts as knowledge, stressing the applied areas (science-in-use), the utilitarian and the purely local. The implications for particular disciplines are deep. For instance, with the collapse of overarching narratives, the whole purpose of social science as the pursuit of overarching theoretical explanations for the social world in order to find rational solutions to social problems becomes undermined. Instead, the emphasis is on localised studies without the necessity to generalise across contexts. There are similar implications for history, in which the narrative of human progress is abandoned in favour of 'bottom-up' inquiries into specific phenomena, without locating these in a larger teleological perspective. For the sciences, the useful and applied, according to the dictates of the new knowledge economy, become paramount.

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[399] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, p.50.

5.5 Implications for the role of intellectuals

With the emphasis on the development of skills, comes a change in the role of professors. No longer the transmitters of special knowledge, they become trainers of students in how to use computer terminals. Computerisation changes the very nature of pedagogy. "For Lyotard, the crisis confronting late modern higher education is manifest in such things as the decline of the humanities and 'pure' science, faculty demoralisation, student depoliticisation, the rise of administrative power and the loss of a common purpose."[400] The loss of a common purpose changes the role of the traditional academic. Intellectual roles become diversified, with intellectual activity focused not on the pursuit of knowledge in the disciplines, but in carrying out a variety of roles such as policy consultants, contract researchers for governments or external agencies, trainers of people in public service, or partners in information-based networks. Not only do the roles of intellectuals become more diverse, they also become more specific or specialised. The traditional intellectual becomes displaced by the specific intellectual. Lyotard characterises traditional intellectuals as a self-interested and self-appointed vanguard or 'bearers of universality' who claim to speak on behalf of us all.[401] Davies writes that:

> As a result of the extension of techno-scientific culture, this intellectual role has become outmoded. In contemporary life, intellectuals occupy specific positions in hospitals, asylums and universities where they eschew universal claims in favour of activities directly relevant to their expertise. The task of the specific intellectual is to analyse and challenge the mechanisms of power within localised contexts by furthering local struggles.[402]

Increasingly, the intellectual, not carrying the burden of the moral development of society becomes politically disengaged, pursuing utilitarian ends in increasingly specialised, and non-discipline based areas.

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[400] John Davies, "Postmodernism and the sociological study of the university, *The Review of Higher Education*, 22 (3) 1999, p.318.

[401] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, p.65.

[402] John Davies, "Postmodernism and the sociological study of the university, *The Review of Higher Education*, 22 (3) 1999, p.319.

6. Assessment of the postmodern arguments

Postmodernism as a description of a particular approach to knowledge is not necessarily the same as a descriptive label for a postmodern age, characterised by an increase in techno-science. In other words, it is possible to identify a new age, of computers, of a knowledge-based economy, of globalisation without viewing this from a postmodernist theoretical perspective. In the critique that follows, I am concentrating on postmodernist ideas, rather than disputing the reality of a changed world.

Postmodern thought springs from an ethical impulse; in challenging the hegemony of Western scientific knowledge, and the cultural imperialism of regarding it as universal, postmodernism has opened up the space for 'subjugated knowledges' or alternative discourses to be heard, to be taken seriously and to flourish. The study of popular culture, begun really by the Frankfurt School theorists has spawned Cultural Studies departments separate from English Literature in many universities. Feminism and gender studies have flourished. The study of particular cultures or subcultures has allowed other voices than the traditional white male perspective to be put on the agenda. Postmodernism has opened up what counts as knowledge, and attacked what was for some the suffocating distinction between high culture and popular culture. It has helped to lead attacks on the traditional canon of works studied in particular disciplines to become more inclusive, more open to diversity and difference. The knowledge of the patient, the 'sangoma',[403] the dispossessed, the other, have become as worthy of study as traditional science. Postmodern thought has alerted intellectuals to the danger of assuming that traditional Western science and its solutions can be assumed to be best for all cultures, and has highlighted the arrogance of Western cultural imperialism. However, one of the main concerns about postmodernism is that its cultural relativism, taken to its logical conclusions, becomes self-refuting, and undermines the original ethical impulse.

Lyotard's writing is ambiguous and vague in many ways; it is difficult to discern whether he advocating and celebrating 'difference', or simply describing a new era in a

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[403] A 'sangoma' is an African traditional healer.

very prescient and sociological way. Is he describing or prescribing? He seems to revel in difference and diversity, and fragmentation – seeing that as the source of new knowledge – and in opening up the university to a plurality of incommensurable discourses. Yet, if he is indeed prescribing, this is somewhat self-contradictory, for on what basis can he argue that difference and dissensus is better than homogeneity and consensus? If we have no grand metanarratives to live by, how can we decide that difference is worthy of celebration?

Lyotard's view is that the borders of the modern university are (or ought be be?) opened, that new modes of operation are put into effect, and that the postmodern university is a different kind of organisation – open, permeable, a network of partnerships – rather than an autonomous, fairly insular institution. Whereas the university had as a raison d'être the pursuit of truth with each discipline extending the boundaries of knowledge as a whole in different spheres, the challenge to the metanarrative of reason in the advancement of knowledge has meant the dissolution of that raison d'être. There is no longer, in this view, any essential reason why any particular discourse needs to be conducted in a university. It has become harder to say what holds, or should hold, the university together. There seems no longer to be a common purpose, unless it is argued that it is a utilitarian one of performativity. But then, is that not a new grand narrative? But grand narratives are eschewed for their totalising properties.

Taken to its logical conclusion, postmodern thought embodies what Midgely has termed a 'goofy relativism',[404] and this undermines its original ethical impulse in two ways. On the one hand, there is no commensurability, therefore no overarching yardstick for weighing up the value or merit of different discourses. This is acceptable where a liberal, pluralist consensus holds, and no one discourse seeks to dominate or eradicate others. But postmodernism offers no defences against challenges arising from, say, fundamentalist impulses of whatever sort that might seek to destroy that liberal consensus. There are no grounds for arguing that a particular discourse is not ethical, or that it has no right to silence other discourses. There are no guides to distinguishing

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[404] Mary Midgely, "Visions of embattled science", in Barnett, R. and Griffin, A. (eds), *The End of Knowledge in Higher Education*, London, Cassell, 1997, p.78.

between the value or merit of different discourses, for instance of Nazism or environmentalism. This is of particular concern in a world in which various fundamentalisms and rightist thinking appear to be on the rise – witness recent European elections. In seeking to include other voices, alternative discourses, postmodernism lays itself open to being defenceless against less well-meaning discourses. For this reason, there is a shadow over Quadrant Four in the conceptual tool on academic freedom developed earlier in this thesis, for the conditions that give rise to the greatest possible extent of freedom also render that freedom vulnerable to totalitarianisms and fundamentalisms of various sorts.

On the other hand, in including many discourses and encouraging fragmentation, postmodernism runs the risk of devaluing all discourses. It is too easy to send up its difficulty in distinguishing between the trivial and the profound. This is exemplified in de Lillo's novel, *White Noise*, in which all sorts of marginal characters inhabit the postmodern university, such as the Professor of American Car Crashes and the Professor of Hitler Studies (whose deepest, darkest secret is that he knows no German…).[405] Is studying the effect of watching *The Bold and the Beautiful*[406] in rural KwaZulu-Natal as important as studying the effects of global warming? The logic of postmodernism dictates that this is so. The difficulty of distinguishing between the trivial and the profound is especially the case in the humanities and cultural studies, but also the case in the sciences, where deep clashes abound between proponents of traditional deep disciplinary study and those of new, broader interdisciplinary areas such as wildlife studies, which are viewed by traditionalists as less valuable in the long term. Logically, postmodernism requires an acceptance of whatever is part of alternative discourses or other cultures. For instance, it would not be consistent from a postmodern perspective to condemn a belief held in a certain culture that raping virgins will cure Aids. To argue with the weight of scientific evidence that this is not so would be to assert a modernist scientific imperialism.

One can sympathise with Joseph Knecht in Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game*, who is beset by doubts:

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[405] Don deLillo, *White Noise*, London*,* Picador, 1986.

[406] An American soap-opera.

'Oh, if only it were possible to find understanding', Joseph exclaimed. "If only there were a dogma to believe in. Everything is contradictory, everything tangential; there are no certainties anywhere. Everything can be interpreted in one way and then again in the opposite sense. The whole of world history can be explained as development and progress and can also be seen as decadence and meaninglessness. Isn't there any truth? Is there no real and valid doctrine?'[407]

Postmodernism appears to offer no basis for moral decision-making on important issues related to technological progress, for instance on whether the development of genetically modified foods should or should not be pursued, whether nuclear warheads should or should not be developed, whether genetic cloning is to be valued or feared. The role of the intellectual has changed, not to presume to lead on moral grounds, but rather to become something of a servant of utilitarian ends. There seems from within postmodernism to be little basis upon which critique can be offered, and no clear commitment to social justice, if all discourses are equally valid. These are the dangers which are evident when postmodern ideas are taken to their logical conclusion. However, the value of postmodern ideas is most evident where a liberal consensus exists and underlying values of mutual respect and the recognition of alternative discourses hold.

On an aesthetic level, while postmodernism has introduced the playful and the ironic, and endlessly questioned what counts as art, after the euphoria of the newness of inclusivity, it tends to run into an aesthetic cul-de-sac. Because anything holds, there is little driving force to innovate, as innovation requires asserting belief. In architecture, for instance, and in visual art and music, there is within postmodernism a reluctance to assert meaning, but a propensity to quote other buildings, other works, to sample bits of existing music in an endlessly ironic stance that is ultimately subject to the law of diminishing returns. Postmodernist ideas seem to offer little pragmatic or moral guidance for aesthetic or social change, for to assert a belief from within one incommensurable discourse over others is to undermine the spirit of difference in an apparently imperialistic move.

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[407] Hermann Hesse, *Magister Ludi (The Glass Bead Game)*, New York, Bantam Books, 1943, reprinted 1972, p.69.

7. Conclusion

On the whole, postmodernism offers a convincing and thoroughgoing critique of the 'modernist' university, and of the role of modernist, 'universalist' intellectuals. However, the weakness of postmodernism lies in being able to offer credible alternatives. On the role of intellectuals, the critique of exclusivity and elitism may very well be justified and the impulse towards inclusivity to be applauded. A concern, however, is that postmodernism is cast in such a rarefied discourse, that it itself can be seen as both marginal and marginalising through its very rarefication. The discourse is so specialised as to require initiation into it, and such initiation is only available to very few – most often only in specific parts of modern universities, such as in philosophy and literature and cognate areas in the humanities. Further, while it undermines pure theory in favour of what Gibbons *et al*[408] have termed Mode 2 knowledge production, or science-in-use, and eschews empiricism as related to the mirror theory of knowledge, postmodernism is itself highly theoretical. While grand explanatory narratives of history and social science are negated, the very fact of positing a postmodern age is something of an explanatory narrative. So, too, is it possible to regard the ideas of 'performativity' and 'incommensurablity' as overarching narratives, and in this sense postmodernism can be said to embody a logical contradiction.

With respect to the role or roles of the university, postmodernism offers alternatives as the drivers of the knowledge economy and as one among many sites of different language games. There are two main concerns here. On the one hand, as drivers of the knowledge economy, universities in the first world stand to assist in deepening the divide between knowledge-rich and knowledge-poor nations. This would seem to contradict the original critique of modern universities as embodying a universalising and exclusive metanarrative. On the other, as institutions pursuing performativity rather than truth, postmodernism delivers universities dangerously to the vagaries of market forces, with no guiding principles as to where this may, or should, lead.

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[408] M. Gibbons, C, Limoges, H. Nowotny, S. Schwartzman, P. Scott, and M. Trow, *The New Production of Knowledge: The Dynamics of Science and Research in Contemporary Societies*, London, Sage, 1994.

Similarly, with respect to curriculum, postmodernism can be seen to be providing a theoretical justification for increasing instrumentalism, of the sort that underlies attempts to package and quantify knowledge in saleable bits, and which informs national attempts to set outcomes for discrete modules of knowledge. It tends to favour concentrating on the utilitarian in what should be taught, especially in its emphasis on the development of transferable skills, and on modularity. In this sense it is indeed commensurate with market paradigms.

Most disturbingly, from the point of view of academic freedom, postmodernist views appear to offer very little defence against governmental interference in university matters. Universities ought to be open anyway to external forces of whatever sort, and there is therefore little room for critique of too many stakeholders and paymasters dictating university business. As will be discussed in the latter part of this thesis, governmental influence in forming universities' agendas has increased through many means, not least through the quality movement and a new emphasis on external accountability and performativity. The real question becomes whether, in taking account of critiques from within postmodernism, of the realities of a postmodern age, it becomes possible to argue for the preservation of institutional autonomy and academic freedom without resorting to the old liberal arguments (which have been advanced, and which appear no longer to be persuasive against the larger forces ranged against it),[409] or even whether it is desirable to do so.

Interestingly, Rorty has advanced a defence of academic freedom from a postmodern perspective. Rorty writes that:

> A number of contemporary philosophers, including myself, do their best to complicate the traditional distinctions between the objective and the subjective, reason and passion, knowledge and opinion, science and politics. We offer contentious reinterpretations of these distinctions, draw them in nontraditional ways. For example, we deny that the search for objective truth is a search for correspondence to reality, and urge that it be seen instead as a search for the widest possible intersubjective agreement. So we are often accused of endangering the traditions and practices that people have in mind when they speak of 'academic freedom' or 'scientific integrity' or 'scholarly standards'.[410]

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[409] See Chapter 2 on Conrad Russell's defence of these concepts.

[410] Richard Rorty, "Does academic freedom have philosophical presuppositions?", in Menand, L. (ed), *The Future of Academic Freedom*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996, pp.21-22.

Yet Rorty professes to revere these concepts and seeks to defend them. His argument is that there is no necessary relationship between social practices and philosophical presuppostions. He distinguishes between philosophical and empirical presuppositions (even though he admits that this distinction is "fuzzy".) Just as it is possible for witnesses in court cases to swear oaths which are taken seriously without presupposing a belief in God, so it is possible to follow practices of academic freedom without necessarily presupposing that academic freedom is based on a belief about the nature of truth. He writes, "As I see it, it is with truth as it is with truth telling: philosophical debates about the nature of truth should become as irrelevant to academic practices as debates about the existence and forms of postmortem punishment are to present-day judicial practices"[411]. Rorty argues that there are sometimes empirical presuppositions for social practices and that philosophical presuppositions are not always relevant, as follows:

> I view it as a mark of moral and intellectual progress [progress? a grand narrative?] that we are more and more prepared to judge institutions, traditions and practices by the good they seem to be doing rather than the philosophical or theological beliefs invoked in their defense. More generally, I view it as a mark of such progress that we are coming to think of such beliefs as abbreviations of practices rather than as foundations for practices, and that we are able to see many different beliefs as equally good abbreviations for the same practice. My view of the nonpresuppositional relation of any given set of philosophical convictions to academic freedom is of a piece with President Eisenhower's famous dictum that America is firmly grounded in religious belief, and that it doesn't matter what religion it is. I think that there are a lot of philosophical beliefs about the nature of truth and rationality that can be invoked to defend the traditions and practices that we call 'academic freedom', and that in the short run, at least, it does not greatly matter which ones we pick.[412]

For Rorty thus, the defence of academic freedom is a sociopolitical one, based on pointing to the good that universities do in keeping democratic government and liberal institutions alive and functioning. He believes that disinterested, objective inquiry can survive the adoption of postmodern epistemological views in, possibly, a desirably purified form. He gives as examples that distinctions between disciplines will not be drawn in terms of relative value (e.g. 'hard' and 'soft' disciplines), and that particular

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[411] Richard Rorty, "Does academic freedom have philosophical presuppositions?", in Menand, L. (ed), *The Future of Academic Freedom*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p.24.

[412] Ibid. p.24.

disciplines will be less concerned with debating methodological points than offering practical suggestions on how social institutions should be changed. He argues that:

> A healthy and free university accommodates generational change, radical religious and political disagreement, and new social responsibilities as best it can. It muddles through. There are no rules for this muddling through, any more than there are rules that our appellate judges follow when they accommodate old constitutional provisions to new sociopolitical situations.[413]

Rorty's argument can be viewed from at least three perspectives. In the first instance, he makes it seem as though postmodern arguments about truth and knowledge are simply playful, intellectual, merely academic in the most pejorative sense of the term, with little relation to reality and not to be taken seriously. But this would be to deny the force that these arguments have had and are still having in changing universities, pedagogy and curriculum. It is difficult to see how philosophical presuppositions do not in fact influence social practices, even if we agree that social practices are not necessarily based on philosophical presuppositions. Secondly, it can be viewed a classic case of wanting to have one's cake and eat it too. On what basis can we argue that the pursuit of democratic government and the defence of liberal institutions is a good, if we deny the reasons for believing them to be so? Rorty's argument seeks to defend the university against illiberal challenges and from external interference – ("the one thing that is worse than letting the university order its own affairs…" he writes, "is letting somebody else order those affairs."), while at the same time attacking the very foundations of that belief. A third perspective, however, is that this is in fact a very subtle and persuasive argument for academic freedom in a postmodern world – one that does not rest on the classic liberal notions about the nature of truth, objectivity or rationality. It is not an argument that relies for its force on finding a philosophical justification for academic freedom. Instead, it is a very pragmatic one. As long as there is intersubjective agreement that academic freedom is a good, "the traditions of civility will be kept alive within the academy and the traditional standards of objectivity, truth and rationality will take care of themselves."[414] The real concern is what happens where that intersubjective agreement breaks down? This is the question that is explored in various ways in further chapters in this thesis. I am concerned to consider what happens to academic freedom

[413] Richard Rorty, "Does academic freedom have philosophical presuppositions?", in Menand, L. (ed), *The Future of Academic Freedom*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p.28.

[414] Ibid. p.29.

in a postmodern age where, if that intersubjective agreement has not yet broken down, it is certainly under attack, and whether, and on what basis, in such an age notions of academic freedom can, and should be, defended.

The postmodern age is a complicated one. As Ovenden's biographer character in *The Greatest Sorrow*, says:

> We live in the West with two models of experience our minds. On the one hand, everything seems random and haphazard. With no god, life is a lottery. Luck is what shapes experience, and possibilities are defined by the bell curve and wherever you happen to lie under it. On the other hand, everything seems ordered and controlled. The hidden hands of nature's laws, market operations, and social structure, combine to control and determine such opportunities as we may enjoy. The state has us under surveillance when we travel, when we earn, when we are sick. Marketers know what we want, and what we are prepared to spend on it. Popular culture keeps us 'happy' from day to day. We are used, manipulated, soothed and coerced.[415]

The problem is the same for the university in a postmodern age. On the one hand, the functions of the university become random and haphazard, exploring a plethora of different language games. On the other, the life of the university seems to be becoming increasingly ordered – through governmental 'surveillance', through market forces and external accountability demands. These are the themes that underlie the discussions of disciplinarity, quality assurance, globalisation and managerialism in the further chapters of this thesis.

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[415] Keith Ovenden, *The Greatest Sorrow*, London, Penguin, 1999, p.90.

Chapter Five

Universities, internal restructuring and mergers – academic freedom and the disciplines

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The tribes of academe…define their own identities and defend their own patches of intellectual ground by employing a variety of devices geared to the exclusion of illegal immigrants.

Tony Becher, "Academic Tribes and Territories"

1. Introduction

In South African higher education, postmodernist arguments and understandings of the new permeability of the university's boundaries had their most profound expression in curriculum and in the structures that organise curriculum. In the early post 1994 policy development phase in higher education, Gibbons' analysis of knowledge moving from so-called Mode 1 to Mode 2 was taken on board in the policy documents and given almost prescriptive status.[416] In terms of this analysis, knowledge understood as truth organised within disciplinary boundaries was giving way to more applied, transdisciplinary understandings of knowledges negotiated by a variety of stakeholders. The university was no longer the sole protector and disseminator of established

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[416] At a conference on Globalisation in Cape Town in 2002, Gibbons was asked by a member of the audience whether his analysis had been meant as a description or a prescription. He replied that he had intended only to describe a phenomenon that he had observed, and it was only really in South Africa that his thesis had been used as a policy prescription. Author's observation. The Mode 1 – Mode 2 thesis comes from M. Gibbons, C. Limoges et al, *The New Production of Knowledge: Science and Research in Contemporary Societies*, London, Sage, 1994.

knowledge, but applied knowledge, developed from the perspective of a variety of disciplines and in relation to a range of other interested stakeholders, to solve particular socio-economic problems, was the future course for knowledge production at universities.

The adoption of this thesis among policy-makers of the time[417] led to two major changes in South African higher education, both of which have an impact on academic freedom and institutional autonomy. The first was the introduction of a programmes-based approach to all education, including higher education, which was a manifestation of the need to ensure the applied nature of knowledge production in the pursuit of making education relevant to solving many of the socio-economic problems inherent in the South African situation. The second was the internal restructuring of higher education institutions to promote the development of multidisciplinary programmes with a strong applied bent. While the first of these was a national policy response, organised largely through the development of a National Qualifications Framework (NQF)[418] which was predicated on outcomes-based education, the second was primarily a response of institutions themselves to perceived and anticipated policy drivers.[419]

Ensor traces two discourses shaping the structuring of higher education curricula, that is, the traditional disciplinary discourse, and a newer credit accumulation and transfer discourse. The former she understands as "a discourse about curriculum which emphasises the apprenticeship of students into largely self-referential domains which we

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[417] The Mode 1 - Mode 2 thesis is evident in the White Paper on Education and Training, 1995, the South African Qualifications Act No. 58 of 1995, the National Commission on Higher Education, 1996, and the White Paper on Higher Education Transformation, 1997.

[418] See R. Malherbe and S. Berkhout, "The national qualifications framework and the unconstitutional limitation of academic freedom, *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 15 (2) 2001, pp.62-73 for a critique of the NQF and its role in limiting academic freedom.

[419] Paula Ensor, "Curriculum", in Cloete, N., Maassen, P. et al (eds), *Transformation in Higher Education: Global Pressures and Local Realities*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006, pp.179-193. In Ensor's study, she traces the responses of three Eastern Cape institutions to these policy drivers and finds that the responses and degree of adoption of a programmes-based approach to curriculum vary not only between institutions, but within them.

call disciplines".[420] This is consistent with a modernist view of disciplines. The latter, she argues, is articulated "by those who advocate the speediest integration of South Africa into a globalising world economy, to be achieved, *inter alia*, by a university sector that orients its activities towards producing highly skilled graduates for the workplace."[421] The latter discourse is characterised by modularisation of the curriculum, outcomes used as the exchange currency for modules, interdisciplinarity and portability of credits. It gains its most obvious expression in the National Qualifications Framework. As Ensor notes of the NQF, a pivotal assumption underlying it "is the notion of equivalence of different knowledge forms, an equivalence to be established through the specification of outcomes. Specific content, so the argument went (and still goes), was to be backgrounded in favour of generic, transferable skills. Disciplinarity was to give way to interdisciplinarity, the basis for re-constituted relevant curricula."[422]

In terms of the former discourse, not only is disciplinarity the basis for the mastery of conceptual structures and modes of argument, it is also at the heart of academic freedom understood as in Quadrants One, Two and Three. The credit accumulation and transfer discourse, on the other hand, is more closely aligned with Quadrant Four understandings of the world, in which the forces of both postmodernism and globalisation render institutional boundaries more permeable and assign the university a role as only one player among many in the knowledge production process. This clearly has implications for academic freedom, for the claim to academic freedom on the basis of disciplinary expertise becomes challenged.

In this chapter I explore, on the basis of a particular case study, what implications the reorganising of internal structures of a university, brought about in response to a variety of both internal and external pressures, such as a policy orientation towards a programme-based approach to higher education, has had on academic freedom. In this case study, the former University of Natal's restructuring process in which discipline-based departments were, through a process of amalgamation, formed into larger

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[420] Paula Ensor, "Curriculum", in Cloete, N., Maassen, P. et al (eds), *Transformation in Higher Education: Global Pressures and Local Realities*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006, p.181.

[421] Ibid. p.182.

[422] Ibid. p.180.

interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary schools is discussed, as well as the restructuring process that followed that institution's merger with the University of Durban-Westville to form the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2002/3. The views of both managers and academic staff on the effects of the restructuring process on disciplines and their future are highlighted and the effects on academic identities and academic freedom discussed.

2. Internal structures, academic freedom and the disciplines

In terms of Quadrant One, Two and Three understandings, academic freedom is inherently associated with the freedom to study whatever academics deem fit to study, and, what is studied has, since the late nineteenth century, been organised into disciplines. While the disciplines emerged as areas of study over time from what was a much more holistic organisation of knowledge, there has been sufficient continuity within them for them to have become regarded almost as absolutes in the modern university. But, as Menand writes: "Disciplines depended on a kind of formalism, and formalism is no longer in high philosophical repute. The discipline of English, for example, is neither natural nor inevitable, and it is easy to see all the ways in which, by essentialising the object of its study and by marginalising non-literary approaches, it limits and even distorts the understanding of literature".[423] He outlines the link between academic freedom and disciplines thus:

> Academic freedom, as it is now structured, depends crucially on the autonomy and integrity of the disciplines. For it is the departments and the disciplines to which they belong, that constitute the spaces in which rival scholarly and pedagogical practices are negotiated. Academic freedom not only protects sociology professors from the interference of trustees and public officials in the exercise of their jobs as teachers and scholars; it protects them from physics professors as well. It mandates that decisions about what counts as good work in sociology shall be made by sociologists. And, practically speaking, "sociologists" means the department of sociology. That is the self-governing professional community.[424]

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[423] Louis Menand, "The limits of academic freedom", in Menand, L. (ed), *The Future of Academic Freedom*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p.18.

[424] Ibid. p.17.

Disciplines are primarily concerned with a theoretical knowledge of reality and are the prescribed structures for intellectual activity. Mourad explains the primacy of theory as follows:

> Intellect is a thing that seeks to know some aspect of reality, and reality is a thing that exists before and independent of the inquiry. A key element of this foundation is theory. Theory is considered to be the bridge between intellect and reality. For this reason, theoretical knowledge of reality is considered to be the most fundamental knowledge. A good theory is, among other things, a human recreation of reality in the form of an explanation of the way something is independent of the knower. In this way, a good theory is transparent; it 'mirrors' reality. The pursuit of theoretical knowledge of reality is given a special status relative to other practices in higher education. Theoretical knowledge is the foundation for practical knowledge.[425]

What lends the disciplines their rationale is an underlying concept of the rational pursuit of knowledge. As Readings writes, "The university becomes modern when all its activities are organised in view of a single regulatory idea, which Kant claims must be the concept of reason. Reason … provides the ratio for all the disciplines; it is their organising principle."[426] Blake points out that both the epistemological primacy of the idea of the disciplines and a commitment to disciplinary autonomy have endured over time. He outlines three interrelated concepts, disciplinarity, autonomy and authority, which underlie the current dominant internal university structures. Disciplines are seen as epistemologically autonomous from each other, each following their own domains of interest, methods and methodologies, concepts and theories.[427]

There are two implications arising from this assumption. Firstly, the presumption of autonomy legitimises an assumption of authority on the part of an academic, understood as the right to resist critique from outside the discipline. It is as a result of following specialist areas in particular ways that academics become experts in specific fields and, assuming authority in a particular discourse, prioritise critiques that arise from within that discourse. Secondly, an implication of mutual disciplinary autonomy is that the full realm of knowledge can grow simultaneously in different areas as cognate activities in one unified enterprise. These assumptions underlie the organisation of universities into discipline-based structures, usually departments, which, although independent of each

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[425] Roger P. Mourad, "Postmodern interdisciplinarity", *The Review of Higher Education*, 20 (2) 1997, p.127.

[426] Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1997, p.15.

[427] Nigel Blake, "Truth, identity and the community in the university", *Curriculum Studies*, 3 (3) 1995, p.264.

other, are all contributing to the overall project of the advancement of knowledge as a whole.[428] The core value of academic freedom implies in part that the pursuit of knowledge is potentially limitless.[429]

Becher argues that "the ways in which particular groups of academics organise their professional lives are intimately related to the intellectual tasks on which they are engaged".[430] In his study of the cultures of disciplines, he separates out the social aspects of knowledge communities and the epistemological properties of knowledge forms. He finds that although the "attitudes, activities and cognitive styles of groups of academics representing disciplines are closely bound up with the characteristics of the knowledge domains with which such groups are professionally concerned",[431] the disciplines do have cultural characteristics as well. Both the professional language and literature of a disciplinary group play a key role in establishing its identity. "The tribes of academe, one might argue, define their own identities and defend their own patches of intellectual ground by employing a variety of devices geared to the exclusion of illegal immigrants".[432]

The analogy of tribes has also been used by Clark, writing about campus cultures in a 1960s context, whom Becher quotes as follows: "It is around the disciplines that the faculty subcultures increasingly form. As the work and the points of view grow more specialised, men (sic) in different disciplines have fewer things in common, in their background and in their daily problems. They have less impulse to interact with one another and less ability to do so … Men of the sociological tribe rarely visit the land of the physicists and have little idea of what they do over there."[433] Yet disciplinary cultures

[428] Nigel Blake, "Truth, identity and the community in the university", *Curriculum Studies*, 3 (3) 1995, p.264–265.

[429] Roger P. Mourad, "Postmodern interdisciplinarity", *The Review of Higher Education*, 20 (2) 1997, p.131.

[430] Tony Becher, *Academic Tribes and Territories: Intellectual enquiry and the cultures of disciplines*, Milton Keynes, SRHE and Open University Press, 1989, p.1.

[431] Ibid. p.20.

[432] Ibid. p.24.

[433] B.R. Clark, "Faculty Culture", in Lunsford, T.F. (ed), *The Study of Campus Cultures*, Boulder, Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education, 1963, quoted in Becher, T., *Academic Tribes and*

differ in their level of cohesion, how restricted their areas of study are, and in the permeability of their discipline boundaries.

In terms of epistemological differences between disciplines, a variety of taxonomies of knowledge have been employed to locate them in relation to each other. Habermas has argued that the disciplines themselves fall naturally into three epistemic realms correlated with the three-way distinction between subjects, objects and social relations. This distinction roughly corresponds to normative, affective and cognitive realms.
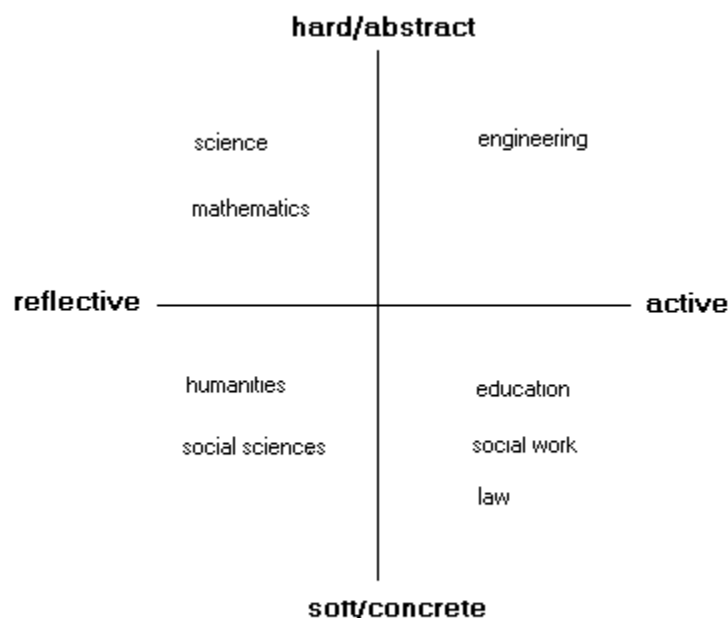
Enquiry concerning objects of consciousness constitutes the cognitive realm of the sciences. Inquiry into the realm of subjectivity, particularly in relation to expressive activity and aesthetic experience, correlates to the affective realm. The study of social and moral relations of subjects relates to the normative realm of ethics and law.[434] Becher, however, in his empirical study of the disciplines, found that the twelve disciplines he studied were best understood in terms of a combination of dimensions identified by Biglan[435] and Kolb[436]. While he does not actually sketch these dimensions, they would look something like the following:

Territories: Intellectual enquiry and the cultures of disciplines, Milton Keynes, SRHE and Open University Press, 1989, p.23.

[434] Jurgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action Vol.1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, Oxford, Polity, 1981, pp.48-53, referred to in Nigel Blake, "Truth, identity and the community in the university", *Curriculum Studies*, 3 (3) 1995, p.266.

[435] A. Biglan, "Relationships between subject matter characteristics and the structure and output of university departments", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 57 (3) 1973, pp.204-213.

[436] D.A. Kolb, "Learning styles and disciplinary differences", in Chickering, A. (ed), *The Modern American College*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1981.

hard/abstract

science   engineering

mathematics

reflective ——————————————————— active

humanities   education

social sciences   social work

law

soft/concrete

The importance for Becher of disciplinary differences is that disciplines cannot all be treated alike. His view is that in the present concern for quality or performance enhancement, it does disciplines a disservice to apply the same measures to them all. He writes that it is:

> Unjust and inappropriate to lump together for administrative purposes different institutions, different subject departments and different individuals, taking little or no account of the variety of characteristics which they may between them quite reasonably display. Bureaucratically inspired measures of performance, which may be seen as one by-product of a demand for efficiency and accountability in higher education, offer a striking instance of this tendency. They are typically designed for imposition with equally blind impartiality across a whole range of academic endeavour. But however carefully chosen the individual criteria which make up the composite instruments may be, it is not difficult to demonstrate the unevenness of their application and their varying relevance to different subject fields.[437]

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[437] Tony Becher, *Academic Tribes and Territories: Intellectual enquiry and the cultures of disciplines*, Milton Keynes, SRHE and Open University Press, 1989, p.165.

2.1 Changes in disciplinary practice

While the empirical evidence reported in Becher's study appears to substantiate a view of disciplines embodying fairly constant characteristics over time, he does point out that they are mutable. Indeed, the long-standing division of the study of knowledge into disciplines is being challenged on at least three fronts. Firstly, changes in practice are affecting the disciplines in a variety of ways. The disciplines are expanding, in some cases becoming increasingly incoherent, and the discipline boundaries are becoming more blurred. New areas of knowledge are being included in curricula and sub-disciplines are splintering off into whole new disciplines. For instance, arguments abound between computer scientists, information systems academics, and information technologists about where the boundaries of their 'disciplines' lie and in what hierarchy they should be viewed.[438] There are two implications of this phenomenon. Mourad argues that the continued existence of traditional disciplines constitutes an unjustified constraint on theoretical practice. "Although the pursuit of knowledge within the disciplines is dynamic, the reality that is already there, in the form of theories, methods, and schools of thought, largely determines what reality can mean and how it can be pursued."[439] The rigid application of disciplinary rules as to what counts as legitimate knowledge in a situation in which knowledge is expanding and changing can be regarded as stifling and exclusive.

A second effect of a change in what counts as knowledge in the expansion of disciplines is the emergence of a new kind of pluralism in academic life. Disciplines are very much related to academic senses of identity. In the last few decades, challenges from minorities of various sorts who have felt excluded from the traditional disciplines, e.g. women, gays and lesbians and people of different ethnic origins, have helped to expand what is included in university curricula to cover a variety of areas of study –

[438] Denyse Webbstock, "A report on an academic review of computer science and information systems in the School of Mathematics, Statistics and Information Technology", University of Natal, 2001. Unpublished document.

[439] Roger P. Mourad, "Postmodern interdisciplinarity", *The Review of Higher Education*, 20 (2) 1997, p.131.

'gender studies', 'African-American studies', 'cultural studies' and the like.[440] A new identity-based pluralism has emerged, most obviously in the application of 'political correctness', which, from some points of view, threatens a disintegration of university communities, a fragmentation of knowledge and an undermining of the autonomy of disciplinarity.

Blake asserts that "identity-based pluralism threatens much that the university has stood for. Its separatist implications undermine any guarantee of the growth of knowledge. Without commitment to some conception of that growth that transcends their own concerns, subject areas may cease to be fully critical enterprises which guarantee progress. They may cease, in effect, to be disciplines. Academic authority may edge closer to the authoritarianism of dogma. And it ceases to be clear why differing intellectual projects should locate themselves within the same institution. Disputes over intellectual territory and pedagogic propriety may begin to take a largely political form; whilst segments of the university may find their allegiances drawn rather to *external* groups than to mutual *academic* support."[441] Indeed, arguments abound about the apparent politicisation of the university and the claims to knowledge staked on the basis of political interest versus a view of the university as embodying the study of universal knowledge. Certainly in the United States, arguments defending academic freedom have become linked to the preservation of disciplinarity and are part of the conservative mindset, whereas in the past (in the McCarthy era, for instance) arguments for academic freedom were primarily advanced by liberals and radicals.[442]

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[440] Steven Seidman, *Contested Knowledge: Social theory in the postmodern era*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1994, p.234, writes of the effect that new social movements, such as the black liberation movement in America and the rise of identity politics in which members of the same oppressed group share a common identity (feminism, gays and lesbians, ethnic type political communities) have had in contesting the Enlightenment framework of the social scientific disciplines, and in foregrounding the formerly 'subjugated knowledges'.

[441] Nigel Blake, "Truth, identity and the community in the university", *Curriculum Studies*, 3 (3) 1995, p.275.

[442] Ronald Dworkin, "We need a new interpretation of academic freedom", in Menand, L. (ed), *The Future of Academic Freedom*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996, pp.187–190.

2.2 Epistemological challenges to disciplines

A second challenge to established disciplines has arisen from challenges to knowledge from postmodern theory, which argues against disciplinarity. Scott argues that the whole issue of disciplinarity has been thrown open to question by epistemological challenges and debates about knowledge since at least the 1960s.[443] As noted above, new areas of study, from what could be referred to as "subjugated knowledges", have been included in university curricula. Postmodernism prompted doubts about the status of knowledge – if knowledge is in question then so too must be the institutions which formulate, preserve and transmit it. How do postmodern positions on knowledge affect the practice and organisation of the pursuit of knowledge in higher education? Mourad argues that:

> If one believes that a belief in an absolute foundation pervades modern knowledge claims and that it is problematic, it would seem that this belief is also present and problematic in the structure and practice of pursuing knowledge in universities and colleges. I identify this absolute foundation, claim that it is manifested in the form of the disciplines, and argue why this characterisation of the disciplines is a problem for scholars. Drawing from the concept of cross-disciplinarity, I propose an alternative, postmodern foundation that responds to this problem by providing a philosophical basis for pursuing ideas that would be unconventional in the disciplines.[444]

For Mourad, thus, postmodern challenges tend towards alternatives that stress a change in current disciplinary arrangements towards interdisciplinary or 'cross-disciplinary' options.

Mourad's views are underlined by those of Best and Kellner, who explain that:

> The assault on all academic disciplines, the attack on disciplinarity itself, began in the 1960s and has continued to the present, helping to generate the postmodern turn. In the 1960s there was contestation of every discipline from philosophy to economics to psychology. The dominant methodologies of these fields were under siege, and their exclusions, silences, limitations and the ossification of critical inquiry was challenged. The new theories circulated in the 1960s contributed to the vitalization of many disciplines, which were forced to assimilate or otherwise deal with the challenges of Marxism, feminism, structuralism, poststructuralism, and the myriad of new discourses that would nourish the postmodern turn. The questioning of disciplinary boundaries led to calls for multi- and transdisciplinary work of the sort

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[443] Joan W. Scott, "Academic freedom as an ethical practice", in Menand, L. (ed), *The Future of Academic Freedom*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p.170.

[444] Roger P. Mourad, "Postmodern interdisciplinarity", *The Review of Higher Education*, 20 (2) 1997, p.117.

found in the postmodern theories, and this heritage of the 1960s has continued and has directly contributed to the postmodern turn in the university.[445]

2.3 The market and managerialism

The third major change affecting disciplines is the effect of market forces on what is studied within universities. The market is determining to a much greater extent what activities universities engage in, with a concomitant emphasis on applied research and on saleable teaching packages, which is in line with Lyotard's performativity thesis. The increasing expense of research and the growth of funding bodies with conditions attached to the granting of funds, and their determining of research areas have ensured that the purely theoretical content of the traditional disciplines has altered in favour of the immediately useful or applicable in specific collaborative projects. The result has been, according to Becher, that "freedom of research is in general limited by the need to persuade others that the necessary resources should be provided."[446]

Not only has the market changed the nature of the content of the disciplines, and arguably altered their hierarchical status, but a further consequence of market expansion has been

> the development of interdisciplinary programs, which often appear as the point around which radicals and conservatives can make common cause in University reform. This is partly because interdisciplinarity has no inherent political orientation … It is also because the increased flexibility they offer is often attractive to administrators as a way of overcoming entrenched practices of demarcation, ancient privileges, and fiefdoms in the structure of universities … At present interdisciplinary programs tend to supplement existing disciplines; the time is not far off when they will be installed in order to replace clusters of disciplines.[447]

Indeed, this is the major driving force behind the reorganisation of disciplines into inter- or multidisciplinary schools at the former University of Natal and the subsequent reorganisation around a "common curriculum" at the later merged University of KwaZulu-Natal, the subject of the case study in this chapter.

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[445] Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *The Postmodern Turn*, New York, The Guilford Press, 1997, p.9.

[446] Tony Becher, *Academic Tribes and Territories: Intellectual enquiry and the cultures of disciplines*, Milton Keynes, SRHE and Open University Press, 1989, p.142.

[447] Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1997, p.39.

3. A case study of restructuring at the former University of Natal and University of KwaZulu-Natal

In the post-apartheid era, the first major academic restructuring at the former University of Natal was discussed in various forums from as early as 1992 and was finally carried out by 1999. Many factors provided the impetus for change, among them the information explosion, the lifelong learning imperative, the expansion and diversification of the pool of knowledge generators and providers, the decline in public funding, and the need for the transformation of South African universities in the post-apartheid era.[448] The proposal in the *Planning Guidelines 1994-1998* document[449] was to reduce, through amalgamation, the number of faculties in this multi-campus institution from 16, and the number of academic departments, also through amalgamation, from 150 to far fewer.[450]

3.1 Rationale

In the *Planning Guidelines*, both academic and managerial advantages were envisaged. On the academic side, the intention was to counter the insularity of the departments, some of which were very small, in order to facilitate the growth of multidisciplinary studies, collaborative research and curriculum rationalisation to avoid unnecessary duplication of teaching functions. It was hoped that there would be a greater sharing of educational expertise, and that the development of a common core

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[448] David Maughan Brown, "The department is dead. Long live the school", in *Journal of Education*, 24, 1999, p.65.

[449] *University of Natal Planning Guidelines 1994-1998, Vice-Chancellor's Review Phase II*, Discussion draft, September 1993, Unpublished report, University of Natal.

[450] The University of Natal, at the time of restructuring, had some 26 000 students spread across three campuses, Durban, Pietermaritzburg and the Nelson Mandela School of Medicine. A further campus (Edgewood) was incorporated in 2000, and the University merged with the University of Durban-Westville on 1 January 2004 to form the University of KwaZulu-Natal, with over 40 000 students on five campuses.

curriculum would be facilitated. From a management perspective, it was intended to release a fair number of senior academics from the burden of departmental headship or Deanship through decreasing the number of academics directly involved in administration as a result of larger administrative structures. Budgetary devolution to large faculties would increase the scope for creative redistribution of resources, and faculties would increase their autonomy through assuming responsibility for staff establishment and compensation. There would be greater faculty parity, and no longer a disproportional representation of very small faculties on university committees. And finally, a smaller number of Deans would mean a smaller and more manageable executive and greater convergence in formulating strategic decisions.[451]

Within faculties, existing academic departments were to be restructured into larger schools, each with its own Board of Studies and carrying responsibility for a number of academic programmes, both discipline-based and multidisciplinary in nature, and organised on an outcomes-based model. The rationale here was similar: to reduce the duplication of teaching which had resulted from the existing entrenched territorial boundaries between departments; to foster multi and trans-disciplinary teaching; to reduce the administrative effort required in managing a large number of small departments; to reduce the number of academics needing to take on the responsibilities of management; and to pool and rationalise existing expensive capital equipment. While certain parameters were laid down for the restructuring process, e.g. the approximate number of academics that a school should comprise, the actual reorganisation of departments into schools was largely left to academics themselves to negotiate and to put forward proposals to the university Senate. The creation of only one or two of the forty-odd schools in the event had to be forced through by the Senate. The bulk of the restructuring was completed by 1999, with the formation of 10 faculties and about 45 schools from the existing 16 faculties and 150 departments.

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[451] *University of Natal Planning Guidelines 1994-1998, Vice-Chancellor's Review Phase II*, Discussion draft, September 1993, Unpublished report, University of Natal.

3.2 The study

An evaluative study on whether the restructuring process had achieved its aims or not after three years of operation was commissioned for the end of 2001 by a group of Deans. This was carried out by a task group comprising an executive member, three Deans and the University's Quality Promotion Unit.[452] While the original brief was narrowly focused on questions concerning the management of schools, in discussion with major stakeholder groups it soon became clear that there was a need to evaluate the restructuring process more broadly. The study comprised facilitated discussion groups with four of five (pre-selected) Heads of School at a time. Thirty-four Heads of School were interviewed,[453] and they also completed a short questionnaire. An electronic questionnaire was distributed to all members of staff to gain their perspectives on the restructuring process. Thereafter the preliminary results were sent to Deans and the Executive for their input and further discussion.

3.3 Findings and discussion

While the major findings of the study and evaluative conclusions about the success or otherwise of the restructuring process have been written up elsewhere,[454] they are only very briefly sketched here. In this chapter I am primarily concerned with attitudes and perspectives on disciplinarity and the effect of restructuring on the disciplines which also emerge from an examination of the data.[455]

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[452] In my capacity as Director of the Quality Promotion Unit, I was responsible for designing the study and the instruments used, for administering and processing the data, and for writing up the reports emanating from the study. The interviews with Heads of Schools were carried out by groups of at least three of the task team, with one particular Dean and me as the common factors in each interview session.

[453] As one of the Faculties was still in the process of restructuring, those Heads of School were not interviewed. Thus 34 of a possible 35 were in fact interviewed.

[454] Denyse Webbstock and Pete Zacharias for the Post-restructuring Audit Team, *Preliminary Report on Post-Restructuring Audit*, December 2001, Unpublished document, University of Natal.

[455] These findings were not written up as part of the reports on the study.

In general, from the points of view of the Heads of School who had been managing their schools for three years, in the majority of instances the transition from discipline-based departments to interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary schools had been very successful. In some schools, so-called threatened or marginal disciplines had been ensured of survival through having a larger and more financially stable context in which to operate. As one Head noted, a benefit has been "*the new developments and revivification of marginal disciplines.*"[456] There were many reports of the expected synergies between disciplines having been unlocked in order to create new areas of multi-disciplinary studies – in one instance a graduate studies conference involving 26 formerly separate disciplines had been held, and an increase in research output had been experienced.

In other instances, the formation of a school had enabled disparate disciplines to come together with an applied emphasis, or relating to a central research theme. Interestingly, one Head of School found that "*we discovered that the different ideological differences between disciplines in our school were not as profound as people had initially thought*". The schools that appeared to be the most harmonious were ones in which there had been a physical relocation of staff and breakdown of old departmental barriers, and in which new social spaces for collegial activity had been created. Both teaching and research across the old discipline and department boundaries were also reported. Listing the benefits, one Head said that they were that "*we have interdisciplinary initiatives in teaching and research, a community of academics and achieved some kind of critical mass, improved morale, skill sharing across disciplines, performance appraisal and efficient central office support staff.*"

However, not all schools had experienced the same level of success. Different models of structural organisation of schools were in existence, some unitary, some federal, with some schools resembling mini-faculties keeping the old departmental structures unofficially intact. There were problems reported of uniting very different

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[456] All italicised quotations in this section, unless otherwise indicated, are drawn from the raw data emanating from the study's interview transcripts as well as questionnaire responses.

disciplinary cultures, and in experiencing active resistance from the disciplines. Indeed, in some cases the disciplinary differences were considered to be "*lethal*", with dispossessed former Heads of Department, "*resenting their loss of authority*", said to be actively "*sabotaging*" the new structures. The most problematic schools appeared to be the smaller ones which were composed of two formerly separate disciplines, in which academics in one discipline felt that they had been overpowered by the other. A comment from an academic in one such school serves to illustrate this: "*No benefits from restructuring that I can discern. A shotgun marriage. The Head of School operates, of necessity, two separate outfits.*"

Of the Heads of School interviewed, 44.2% were of the opinion that the restructuring had led to greater interdisciplinarity in their school's educational offerings than had been evident in the pre-restructuring phase, with 41.2% neutral on the issue and 14.7% negative. Some commented that while there was now greater interdisciplinarity than before, they were not sure whether it was accurate to ascribe this to the restructuring process in the main. With respect to whether their schools were functioning as integrated units rather than a collection of discrete disciplines, 61.7% of the Heads of School were positive, 14.7% neutral and 14.7% negative.[457] Almost 80% found that there was an obvious underlying academic rationale for the inclusion of the particular disciplines that formed their schools. Indeed, this was regarded as the most important factor in the success of certain schools, and where such a rationale appeared to be absent, schools were experiencing difficulties in achieving an acceptable level of integration.

Almost 60% felt that there was an appropriate balance between nurturing the disciplines and developing new interdisciplinary areas in their schools, with nearly 9% disagreement on this issue. In the interviews it became evident that many schools (approximately 65% of them) had unofficially created titular posts of Heads of Discipline in addition to those recognised in the restructuring parameters, that is, the Heads of School and Programme Directors.[458] In a sense, in a number of schools there was a

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[457] There was an 8.8% no response on this item.

[458] Programme directors are responsible for the academic aspects of running both disciplinary and multi- or inter-disciplinary programmes. Many of those appointed are younger academics, and interested not only in research, but in developing teaching quality as well.

layer of "shadow" heads operating under the level of the Head, which led to a number of comments about an extra layer of bureaucracy added, when the intention had been to diminish administrative loads. The unofficial appointment of Heads of Discipline, particularly in the sciences, was clearly intended to counter a concern about the perceived weakening of the disciplines. While in some cases this appeared to be working well, in others there was very strong resentment that power appeared to have shifted from the disciplines. Some comments received from senior professors[459] bear this out: "*The roles need to be more clearly defined. Heads of School should not be commanding officers but rather seen as a (sic) coordinator and servant for the discipline heads. Discipline heads need control over their share of the budget and a strong say in probation reports*", and "*go back to the old system or give more power to Chairs and Discipline Heads. A Head of School should be acting as a Chairman (Chairperson) under the leadership of an executive committee (Chairs and Heads of Disciplines). Power should be given back to the disciplines.*" Other comments in the same vein: "*Make mini-faculties and return to disciplines run by persons appointed to do the job. Your professors with scientific background*", and "*Disciplines are losing their characters and ethos. Chair holders and Discipline Heads are powerless; they have been turned into silent stooges.*"

In comparison with the Heads of Schools, opinion from academics was less positive on the whole about whether an appropriate balance between nurturing the disciplines and achieving greater interdisciplinarity had been achieved, with 32% neutral on this item, 34% negative and 23% positive (the rest not responding to this item). There was also about 40% negative opinion on whether the roles of Heads of Discipline (where they exist) were clear. However, many comments from academics reiterated the positive sentiment towards restructuring and the facilitation of interdisciplinarity that was evident among the Heads of School. Examples of such comments are: "*there is a greater freedom to explore research and teaching among similar cognitive disciplines, far less*

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[459] Questionnaires were returned from 125 staff members, the vast majority of whom were academics. The largest group of respondents comprised senior or associate professors, many of whom had been employed at the University of Natal for 21 years or more. A second large group of respondents comprised senior academic staff who had been employed at the University of Natal for 5 years or less. The way the data have been captured in SPSS makes it possible to ascertain the biographical details (but not the name) of each commentator.

red tape, greater freedom and management flexibility, a management style which allows for input from a much wider range of people and direct lines of communication"; "*closer contact between staff across disciplines, teaching a wider range of students*"; "*staff of different disciplines have got to know each other and this can lead to a breakdown of perceived barriers*"; and "*there is now some interdisciplinary teaching and research. Also some new areas of teaching and research*".

The enthusiasm in the above scenario was short-lived. In 1998 already, Bertelson was pointing to the dangers of market-related approaches being adopted in higher education in South Africa. On the results of restructuring efforts in South African universities, she writes that "Academic confidence, loyalty and commitment are at a low ebb. So preoccupied are they with the ultimatum that they repackage their professional activity to suit the market or risk redundancy, that academics appear not to have noticed that their prerogative of intellectual authority has been assumed by management in what might best be described as a palace coup. The collegial mode of decision-making … is being replaced by a corporatist mode in which management have a 'vision' which staff are expected to 'buy in' to and implement. Academics are understandably disturbed by the expropriation of their authority, the colonisation of their core activities by business practice, and the consequent 'dumbing down' of intellectual culture, but so far have made little progress in naming this process or mounting a critique."[460]

While the first major post-apartheid restructuring at the former University of Natal was driven largely by an internal vision of making the institution responsive to an external postmodern reality that included globalisation, programmes-based education and a need to align the institution to be well-placed to produce Mode 2- type knowledge[461] to address the socio-political realities of South Africa, the second major restructuring was a response to an externally-imposed programme of institutional mergers in higher education in South Africa. Under the second post-apartheid Minister of Education, institutional mergers became part of a plan to rationalise and restructure universities in an attempt to undo some of the obvious racially-based social engineering of apartheid,

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[460] Eve Bertelson, "The real transformation: the marketisation of higher education", *Social Dynamics*, 24 (2) 1998, p.144.

[461] See discussion on Mode 1 and Mode 2 knowledge on p.213.

and also to use the limited management capacity in higher education to its greatest effect.

3.4 Merger-related restructuring

In terms of this programme, the former University of Natal and former University of Durban-Westville merged on 1 January 2004 to become the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). Merger prompted another major reorganisation – one constituent institution had been arranged into multidisciplinary schools (for the most part), while the other had been constituted of discipline-based departments. In the formation of the 54 new Schools, organised in eight faculties, in four Colleges, and operating on five campuses, some of the most successful interdisciplinary entities at the former University of Natal were unbundled and repackaged – disciplinarity again became asserted.[462] A hybrid model was adopted; the entire university would be restructured into single or multi-disciplinary schools, and a common curriculum in each discipline would be offered at each site of delivery. The motivation for the latter was largely to ensure consistent quality of programme delivery on different campuses. The implication of the common curriculum, however, was that the curriculum would need to be negotiated between different teams of academics with different pasts and loyalties, and even different epistemological approaches to their disciplines. To some extent, these negotiations were even more difficult than those in the one former institution between different disciplines.

Yet not all Schools at UKZN are single disciplinary entities and many new multi-disciplinary ones have been formed. In the multi-disciplinary schools in particular, the tensions between academic authority based on disciplinary expertise and academic management based on larger, economically viable schools are evident.[463] These tensions manifest in confusion around the roles of programme coordinators, discipline

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[462] As one Chemistry professor remarked, "I have just got used to speaking to Physicists, now I have to learn to speak to other Chemists again…". Private communication to author.

[463] Much of my evidence for this is drawn from confidential external School review reports that I have coordinated in my position as Head of the University's Quality Promotion and Assurance unit. Furthermore, some academics who have read the comments made in the 2003 study have told me that many of them still apply to the current situation.

chairs (reinstituted in the new institution) and heads of schools, with the discipline authorities and programme coordinators arguing that their academic leadership is compromised by lack of authority and direct access to budgets. In the main, the tensions highlight a university in transition from strong discipline-based identities coupled with individual authority over curriculum, to a more corporate culture, emphasising rationality and efficiency in the management of a large-scale, very complex multi-campus, multi-college institution.

That the tensions in the new institution were deep is evidenced by a two-week strike at that institution in 2006, in which unprecedented numbers of academics, generally conservative by nature, joined with the support staff in the protests. The ostensible issue was salary negotiations; however, it soon became clear that the issues were broader, revolving around academic unhappiness at a perceived authoritarian management culture, the erosion of academic authority in the decision-making structures of the institution and perceived management threats to academic freedom.[464] In many senses, the critique that Bertelson found missing in 1998 had, at least at UKZN, arrived. In the strike, many forces coalesced. It could be argued that what appeared at first to be a simple case of academics versus management was far more complex. In part it was the culmination of years of perceived erosion of individual academic identities and authority,[465] beginning with the restructuring of the institution into larger management entities rather than discipline-based departments, the introduction of a programmes-based approach to higher education (in response to national policy signals and drivers

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[464] A local newspaper editorial at the time read as follows, "More serious still is the perception among many at the university that the management style … is cold, remote and dictatorial. This is deeply prejudicial to the spirit of a university which thrives on open debate in the pursuit of truth. Usually academic freedom is assaulted by forces outside the university. It seems that this treasured liberty at the UKZN is now under threat from within the establishment itself." *The Witness*, Thursday, 23 February, 2006.

[465] One ex-Professor of UKZN locates the origins of the 2006 strike in the 1999 restructuring thus, "In the 1999 restructuring, the body of professors was largely stripped of power" and this he sees as the beginning of the battle for the "soul of the university". He attributes the 2006 strike to a collapse of a sense of collegiality and argues that "it was basically about the staff crying out to be valued, not really about the money." Clive Dennison, "UKZN: how did we get here?" *The Witness*, Thursday, 23 February, 2006. Others write that staff were angry about "the growing corporatist culture of the university" and the deleterious effects of fiscal discipline on staff conditions and teaching and learning. Janine Jellars and Shirley Jones, "Varsity strike hits lectures", *The Witness*, 14 February 2006.

such as the NQF) that necessitated team-based setting of outcomes and a move towards applied or vocational orientations in curriculum, as well as the introduction of a more managerial culture to manage an enormous change in scale of the institution. All of these in different ways served to erode academic senses of identity. These changes were not unique to South Africa – indeed they came later than elsewhere, but, as Bundy argues, they all happened in a very compressed time-scale.[466] Add to these larger forces, an entirely new management cadre post-merger, determined to deal with the inconsistencies and problems inherited from the constituent institutions that appeared to require radical intervention, sometimes in ways that were interpreted as demeaning individuals or not valuing their past contributions, and sometimes interpreted as racially motivated, and the stage is set for the outpouring of emotion that the strike became.

One of the outcomes of the strike was the introduction of processes to reassert the more parliamentary structures in the institution to temper the power of the executive ones.[467] A number of task teams looking into management and finance issues were established, and an ad hoc committee of Senate conducted a process of gathering opinion from the staff body around the issues of academic alienation and anger at loss of individual autonomy.[468] An e-mail list was set up by staff to discuss pertinent issues across the university, and in the contributions to this list, feelings of not being valued, suspicion of management and the effect of challenges to academic identities have been evident. One of the major themes in this writing has been academic freedom, and perceived transgressions thereof in relation to the disciplining processes around particular individuals that have been viewed as part of a concerted management crackdown.

Much of what has been described above follows similar patterns and experiences of institutions caught in the throes of globalisation elsewhere, and this is indeed the subject

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[466] Colin Bundy, "Global patterns, local options? Changes in higher education internationally and some implications for South Africa", *Kagisano*, 4, 2006.

[467] A number of Senate sub-committees dealing with areas of concern in the strike have since been established, as recommended by the *Report of the Senate ad hoc sub-committee looking into the causes of the industrial action of February 2006*, Durban, UKZN, 23rd October 2006, unpublished document.

[468] Some 600 staff members were interviewed or supplied written submissions.

of the next chapter, but the focus here is the effect on disciplinarity and academic freedom of restructuring to accommodate the new focus on programmes. In a study of responses to curriculum restructuring policy in South Africa, Moore notes that the most common response is resistance, with a few enthusiastic efforts at creating appropriately integrated multidisciplinary curricula.[469] He writes of the South African higher education policy focus on the introduction of programmes, that it was

> anticipating significant shifts in the nature of academic practices, in the professional identities of academics, and in the forms of authority that are invoked to regulate curriculum decisions. In particular it anticipates a weakening of the insulations between disciplines, and it suggests that academics will participate in new forms of social organisation, programme-based collectives which cross disciplinary boundaries. It expects that academics within these new collectives will relinquish a measure of autonomy to a process of collegial democracy and mutual surveillance, in order to produce curricula which serve external accountabilities.[470]

While some of these outcomes are evident in the study on the former University of Natal, at UKZN the strike would attest to academics resisting en masse a perceived erosion of their autonomy and academic freedom.

3.5 Interdisciplinarity/disciplinarity

Three main issues present themselves for discussion here. In the first instance, the polarising of opinion between supporters of interdisciplinarity and those fearing the loss of the primacy of the disciplines encapsulates one of the major tensions in higher education. In the restructuring efforts, the assumption is that interdisciplinarity is a good, and something to be striven for, and in the particular university under discussion there seems to have been initially a large measure of support for such initiatives. From a market perspective, there are issues of survival at stake (rescuing the so-called marginal disciplines), as well as attempts to find new market niches in a very competitive

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[469] Robin Stanley Moore, "Adaptive responses to curriculum restructuring policy in two South African universities: an enquiry into the identity projections of academics disposed towards change", Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cape Town, 2003.

[470] Robin Stanley Moore, "Adaptive responses to curriculum restructuring policy in two South African universities: an enquiry into the identity projections of academics disposed towards change", Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cape Town, 2003, p.19.

environment – the "*potential for unique academic directions*", as one Head put it. The question is why should interdisciplinarity be seen as a good, and why now?

From a postmodern perspective, interdisciplinarity challenges the constraints on what is studied in terms of the traditional discipline boundaries. As Mourad writes, "Cross-disciplinary inquiries are efforts to pursue knowledge without being essentially constrained by the structure and content of a single discipline, including subject matter, predominant theories, typical methods, or primary schools of thought. They imply a general desire to conceive knowledge and theoretical practice in new ways."[471] He goes on to outline two aspects of 'cross-disciplinarity' that are important for the idea of a postmodern university. In his view, a postmodern inquiry would be self-organising in that "its particular foundations would emerge in the course of an inquiry rather than be predetermined in the form of discipline-bound theories, methods and schools of thought."[472] He suggests further that:

> Postmodern forms of inquiry could move beyond the disciplines entirely toward other forms of knowledge. These other forms would not be constrained by the modern assumption that any legitimate pursuit of knowledge is essentially concerned with theories that explain some aspect of reality that is allegedly present, independent of its pursuit. Reality outside the disciplines would become something that is produced in the course of inquiry rather than an object which is essentially separate from the inquiry and which inquiry seeks to discover, accurately represent and explain.[473]

In this sense, following an interdisciplinary path and internal organisation in a university is not seen as an attack on academic freedom, but as a liberation from old constraints. It would, in Rorty's terms, break down the strictures of old phallogocentric characterisations of disciplines ("hard" and "soft" disciplines) and preserve objective enquiry and academic freedom in a purified form. [474]

Not all postmodern writers are quite as sanguine about interdisciplinarity as Mourad. Readings, for instance, has the following to offer:

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[471] Roger P. Mourad, "Postmodern interdisciplinarity", *The Review of Higher Education*, 20 (2) 1997, p.132.

[472] Ibid. p.132.

[473] Ibid. pp.132-133.

[474] Richard Rorty, "Does academic freedom have philosophical presuppositions?", in Menand, L. (ed), *The Future of Academic Freedom*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p.27.

I propose an abandonment of disciplinary grounding but an abandonment that retains as structurally essential the question of the disciplinary form that can be given to knowledges. This is why the University should not exchange the rigid and outmoded disciplines for a simply amorphous interdisciplinary space in the humanities (as if we could still organize knowledge around the figure of 'Man'). Rather, the loosening of disciplinary structures has to be made the opportunity for the installation of disciplinarity as a permanent question. The short-term projects I suggest are designed to keep open the question of what it means to group knowledges in certain ways, and what it has meant that they have been so grouped in the past.[475]

He continues with:

Instead of a new disciplinary space that will once and for all reunify the University, I have attempted to propose a shifting disciplinary structure that holds open the question of whether and how thoughts fit together. This question is not merely worthy of study; it is the massive challenge that faces us. An order of knowledge and an institutional structure are now breaking down, and in their place comes the discourse of excellence that tells teachers and students simply not to worry about how things fit together, since that is not their problem. All they have to do is get on with doing what they have always done, and the general question of integration will be resolved by the administration with the help of grids that chart the achievement of goals and tabulate efficiency. In the University of Excellence, teachers and students can even go on believing in culture if they like, as long as their beliefs lead to excellent performance and thus help the aim of total quality.[476]

Readings' main thesis is that the postmodern university has become increasingly bureaucratic in its pursuit of a Lyotardian performativity which masquerades as the empty concept of 'excellence' – a concept that has no referents. Excellent in terms of what?[477]

3.6 Disciplines and power

A second issue is that in the discourse of those who bemoan the apparent weakening of the disciplines is a fear of a loss of power. This appears to be more than the simple loss of a past "*fiefdom*" – as one Head of School explained, in the past his Faculty had been akin to a "*feudal court, with the Dean as Baron, and badly managed fiefdoms within it*" – but also a loss of the authority that Blake argues comes with disciplinary expertise. When disciplines are insular, challenges from outside the discipline can be

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[475] Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1997, p.77.

[476] Ibid. pp.191-192.

[477] See discussion in Chapter 2.

ignored, but interdisciplinarity threatens that expertise-based authority. New ways of exploring knowledge are not appreciated and are considered unworthy, as this comment illustrates, "*A drawback has been the collapse of academic disciplines with academic pedigrees and international standing and their replacement with a melange of unconnected, unthought courses.*" It is interesting that the majority of concerns about the loss of disciplinarity arose in this study from senior professors of many years' standing, and who appear to be experiencing some sense of dispossession - the "professors with scientific background" who now feel they have become "silent stooges" in a bureaucratic game that is foreign to their experience. As one professor put it, "*Academic nonsense; departmental autonomy should be restored completely; a bureaucratic structure of little value has been created. A poor response to non-existent problems.*"

When disciplines or departments are experienced as subsumed into larger wholes, the machinery of self-governance becomes more difficult to maintain. Menand argues that in this kind of scenario, decision-making is more likely to take place at the level of the Dean, and that for administrative purposes, it helps to have disciplines lose their authority and fewer staff can be spread further and there is greater administrative control over the creation and elimination of staff positions.[478] Certainly there is evidence that some senior academics at the former University of Natal felt that power had shifted and self-regulation had been undermined, and that this has become exacerbated at the UKZN.

3.7 Disciplines and identity

A third issue is related to disciplines and identity. Power and identity are closely linked, and as disciplines change or become part of larger wholes, senses of academic identity are compromised. As one academic put it, "*there is confusion about the roles of people; loss of disciplinary identification*", and another that "*a drawback has been the loss of disciplines. Students can no longer identify with what they are studying; this is further compounded by the introduction of the module system. [My discipline] looks to be very close to dead*".

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[478] Louis Menand, "The limits of academic freedom", in Menand, L. (ed), *The Future of Academic Freedom*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1996, p.18.

On the other hand, there is also greater safety in numbers and, in changing times, a need to create solidarity through the identification of a common external threat. One academic identified as a benefit of restructuring that "*dealing with the often baffling requirements of both restructuring and outcomes-based education have brought academics within the Faculty into more contact and has created more unity than prior to these upheavals (unity against the common enemy).*" There is some evidence that what is identified as an external threat has shifted, from other disciplines and critique emanating from within them, to a perceived increasing internal and external bureaucracy which has had the effect of helping to permeate the traditional disciplinary boundaries in favour of a (depressed) kind of collegiality. Menand argues, however, that specialisation and professionalism are still at the core of arrangements that make academic freedom possible, and help to determine who counts in the self-governing community of academics, and who counts as "*an external meddler in the community's affairs*".[479] The external meddler now no longer seems to be from another academic tribe, but from a perceived colonising force from without and from authoritarian management within.[480]

4. Conclusion

Menand finds that:

> The structure of disciplinarity that has arisen with the modern research university is expensive; it is philosophically weak; and it encourages intellectual predictability, professional insularity, and social irrelevance. It deserves to be replaced. But if it is replaced, it is in the interests of everyone who values the continued integrity of teaching and inquiry to devise a new institutional structure that will perform the same function. Otherwise, academic freedom will be killed by the thing that, in America, kills most swiftly and surely: not bad ideas, but lack of money.[481]

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[479] Louis Menand, "The limits of academic freedom", in Menand, L. (ed), *The Future of Academic Freedom*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1996, p.19.

[480] The reference to outcomes-based education indicates a threat from outside, in that outcomes-based education in a programme and module format was legislated by national government. See Chapter 7.

[481] Louis Menand, "The limits of academic freedom", in Menand, L. (ed), *The Future of Academic Freedom*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1996, p.19.

The restructuring of disciplines and departments at the former University of Natal and UKZN illustrates a case of a university in transition, responding to some of the challenges to disciplinarity in ways that do indeed attempt to devise that "new institutional structure". The case illustrates clearly the tensions between orthodox understandings of the role of disciplines and advocates of interdisciplinarity. While there was, inevitably, some resistance to change, many academics at that institution initially appeared to embrace the new and to find some benefit in the new structures. However, some years down the line, and the levels of alienation are much higher. While this undoubtedly can largely be ascribed to the perceived managerial culture ushered in by the change of scale of the organisation following merger and the new structures devised to manage it, it is also for many academics a continuation of the erosion of disciplinary autonomy begun in the initial restructuring process. This is perhaps consistent with Best and Kellner's analysis of a "postmodern paradigm", which, "in the current conditions of crisis and ferment, … is only emergent and is strongly resisted by modernist orthodoxy as well as being conflicted among competing tendencies…".[482]

In the above case study, the postmodern turn in South African higher education, arguably made manifest in the adoption of a programmes-based approach to curriculum which in turn inspired structural change within universities to accommodate multi- or interdisciplinarity, did not initially appear to be coupled with a discourse on academic freedom. Indeed, the initial phase of restructuring corresponded to a period of relative quiet with respect to academic freedom in the South African literature on higher education. However, as the conditions that pertain in Quadrant Four deepen, that is, as the greater responsiveness to external market forces attendant on globalisation manifest in academics' loss of individual control over curriculum, as the rise of the corporate university lessens academic authority, and as the implications of the epistemological challenges to disciplinarity become apparent, so the discourse has changed to highlight academic freedom issues. The current concern, evident in many national fora and local discussions,[483] is about the price paid in moving so quickly into a Quadrant Four reality;

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[482] Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *The Postmodern Turn*, New York, The Guilford Press, 1997, p.19.

[483] For instance, the CHE project on institutional autonomy and academic freedom, recent conferences of the South African Sociological Association, the Freedom of Expression Institute, letters to newspapers.

that academic freedom understood as in Quadrants One, Two and Three has become endangered, not only epistemologically, but also empirically.

In the following chapter, I examine more closely the effects of globalisation on higher education in general and in the next one on Africa and South Africa in particular. In these chapters I posit a link between increasing intervention by the state and increased managerialism within institutions which together constitute an effective threat to academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

Chapter Six

Globalisation, markets and managerialism

…modernism is the gothic of the information age. Dreams sharp enough to bleed, and no doubts about man's lowly place in the scheme of things.

J.G. Ballard, "The Kindness of Women"

1. Introduction

If the post-modern challenge was the major debate of the 1980s, certainly the central theme of the debates of the 1990s and into the new millennium is globalisation, both as an empirical phenomenon and as an hegemonic social ideology. The role of the university, and its future in a globalising world, is highly contested. While Webster quipped that "There has been too much comment of late that refers to the death of the university,"[484] Barnett points out that "we are not being overwhelmed by an avalanche of texts claiming the death of the university. Is the alleged death real or not?"[485] Barnett argues that:

> We can see universities. They are solid stuff, increasingly so, despite the rise of the Internet and the possible emergence of the university in cyberspace. The buildings keep going up … The student numbers remain high … The numbers of papers and academic books being published continue to increase. The university sector, in other words, seems more robust than ever. Apparently, it is wanted by

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[484] Frank Webster, "The idea of a university: a response to Delanty", *Social Epistemology*, 12 (1) 1998, pp.67-72. See also beginning of Chapter 3.

[485] Ronald Barnett, "Reconfiguring the university", in Scott, P. (ed), *Higher Education Re-formed*, London and New York, Falmer Press, 2000, p.114.

different constituencies more than ever before, constituencies which are prepared to invest heavily in it. Universities, far from being near death, are fully alive.[486]

Globalisation and its effects are both highly debated and highly divisive. There are many views about whether this is a phenomenon to be welcomed or resisted, and whether its effects on universities will signal the demise of universities as they are currently understood, or serve to breathe new life into them as critical players in the new knowledge society.

In this chapter, I analyse three different but related aspects of globalisation and the implications for academic freedom and institutional autonomy in general, and then in African and South African contexts.

The simplest and perhaps most intuitive analysis of globalisation that many academics relate to is that it is a process of spreading a neo-liberal economic ideology throughout the globe, entailing the commodification and trade in knowledge, effectively consigning universities to one type of knowledge producer among others in a market-dominated economic reality. In some accounts this has become known as the McDonaldization of higher education;[487] in other words, the commercialisation of higher education in such a way that its previous fundamental characteristics as a protected space for the pursuit of knowledge for curiosity's sake have altered irreparably. In this analysis, the two most marked effects of globalisation on higher education are the surrendering of control over the knowledge agenda to outside interests determined by the market (and the concurrent diminution of the role of the state), and the rise of managerialism in universities being run as corporate entities. This theme is the subject of section two of this chapter.

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[486] Ronald Barnett, "Reconfiguring the university", in Scott, P. (ed), *Higher Education Re-formed*, London and New York, Falmer Press, 2000, p.114. Interestingly, Barnett himself writes that "the Western university is dead. We have lost any clear sense as to what a university is for the modern age. We need a new vocabulary and a new sense of purpose. We have to reconstruct the university if it is to match the challenges before it". Ronald Barnett, *Realizing the University*, London, Institute of Education, 1997, p.1, in Robins, K. and Webster, F., *The Virtual University? Knowledge, Markets and Management*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, p.4.

[487] George Ritzer, *The McDonaldization Thesis: Explorations and Extensions*, London & Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage, 1998.

In section three, I explore a related but somewhat different analysis which sees the rise of a performativity culture and the dominance of a so-called evaluative state.[488] Readings refers to an empty referent for higher education in "excellence";[489] in a global world universities are required to perform against either state or market-determined performance indicators and benchmarks. In this view, the rise in accountability regimes such as quality assurance is an indication of the extent to which universities as institutions have lost their former autonomy as the boundaries between institutions, state and society have become increasingly blurred. The critical difference in analysis here revolves around according the state a larger role in a globalised world than the position outlined in section two.

In the fourth section of the chapter, I examine a more theoretically-informed analysis of globalisation and the so-called knowledge society, concentrating on different understandings of power and contestation around different knowledges, whether hegemonic or subjugated. This discussion relates back to the earlier discussion of postmodernism.

In the following chapter, I then attempt to relate the arguments to the South African context, and to apply the theoretical tool to analyse concepts of academic freedom developed in Chapter One to assist in understanding the effects of globalisation in each analysis on academic freedom and institutional autonomy in both South African and African contexts. Running through both chapters is an implicit concern for changing identities, both of academics and of the institutions in which they work.

2. Globalisation: the market and managerialism

Globalisation as a short-hand term is often used very loosely to describe an empirical phenomenon of increased global interdependence, chiefly through the rise of information

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[488] For example, Mary Henkel, "The new 'evaluative state'", *Public Administration*, 69, 1991.

[489] Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1997.

and communication technology. In many accounts, it is the defining characteristic of the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the new millennium. In this sense, although internationalisation and a certain level of interdependence have characterised other eras, globalisation implies something different – both in the scale of interdependence, and the nature thereof. New technologies, especially information technologies, cheaper international travel, global news broadcasts, freer international trade and finance, have all been seen to have contributed to a world become smaller and more accessible to many. For Giddens, the key difference between past eras of internationalisation and globalisation lies in the scale of capital flows. As he writes:

> The level of world trade today is much higher than it ever was before, and involves a much wider range of goods and services. But the biggest difference is in the level of finance and capital flows. Geared as it is to electronic money – money that exists only as digits in computers – the current world economy has no parallels in earlier times. In the new global electronic economy, fund managers, banks, corporations, as well as millions of individual investors, can transfer vast amounts of capital from one side of the world to another at the click of a mouse. As they do so, they can destabilize what might have seemed rock-solid economies – as happened in the [East Asian crisis of 1998].[490]

Perhaps the most profound dividing line in opinion relating to this phenomenon is whether it spells possibilities for progress (as in a "grand narrative" of progress), or whether it represents the increasing dominance of markets in determining all aspects of human endeavour and the concomitant homogenising of culture, and a resultant increase in the divide between rich and poor in the world.

In the former view, new information technologies are seen as opportunities for a "new kind of cultural and technological citizenship", and a new kind of entrepreneurial university in an integrated world.[491] For the proponents of globalisation, universities are offered opportunities to become both more cosmopolitan, rather than being locked into national contexts, and more democratic through the world-wide extension of higher education. Delanty writes that:

> The global age, with its foundations in communication technology, offers great opportunities for the enhancement of citizenship by making possible wider

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[490] Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World: How Globalisation is Reshaping our Lives*, Profile Books, London, 1999, p.9.

[491] Gerard Delanty, *Challenging Knowledge: The University in the Knowledge Society*, Ballmoor, Buckingham, SRHE and Open University Press, 2001, p.115.

participation of citizens. Universities are in a particularly strong position to exploit the advantages of new technologies and to make technology serve the requirements of citizenship. Today technology – in particular biotechnology, military technology and information technology – is becoming not only more and more important in many spheres of life but is increasingly becoming disengaged from any normative system. The challenge of universities is to occupy this new ground. Rather than retreating from technology and the market in the name of autonomy, universities should use their relative autonomy to humanize technology and to recreate new expressions of citizenship.[492]

Universities are also afforded opportunities to become more adaptable and responsive to the needs of the market, or risk anachronism, as an article on the role of the new phenomenon of corporate universities makes clear: "traditional universities are no longer the dominant players in the creation and communication of knowledge, especially in cyberspace. Just-in-case education has moved to just-in-time and just-for-you, as self-managed computer-based learning plays an increasing and natural role for individuals and families. What to teach, how to learn and issues of quality are topical again. Plato.com has arrived."[493] In describing one such corporate university, the Virtual University of British Aerospace, Kenney-Wallace writes that "The Framework (of the Virtual University) is now the enabler for present and future delivery of specific company-wide learning and research programmes and projects. It is also designed to be robust and adaptable to future expansion or shift in our business directions through mergers, acquisitions or spin-offs." Kenney-Wallace continues that:

> Corporate universities have grown considerably in number in America in recent years. There are now estimated to be 1600 in the USA in comparison to over 3 500 institutions of higher education aimed at the 18-24 year old population. This trend reflects a growing recognition across many sectors that people, knowledge and know-how are the most valuable and enduring company assets towards sustaining existing business activities, attracting investment, and winning new business, whether in global or local competition. The 'education industry' is referred to by investors as a $750 billion growth industry, in North America and Europe, of which the fastest growing segment is in the USA in distance learning programmes and software.[494]

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[492] Gerard Delanty, *Challenging Knowledge: The University in the Knowledge Society*, Ballmoor, Buckingham, SRHE and Open University Press, 2001, pp.127-128.

[493] Geraldine Kenney-Wallace, "Plato.com: the role and impact of corporate universities in the third millennium", in Scott, P. (ed), *Higher Education Re-formed*, London and New York, Falmer Press, 2000, p.61.

[494] Geraldine Kenney-Wallace, "Plato.com: the role and impact of corporate universities in the third millennium", in Scott, P. (ed), *Higher Education Re-formed*, London and New York, Falmer Press, 2000, pp.61-62.

In this view, if universities are to continue to be dominant players in a knowledge economy, they will need to become more entrepreneurial, aggressive and willing to diversify modes of delivery and course content to take advantage of the possibilities offered by the 'education growth industry'.

In the more sceptical view, which Giddens proclaims to be originating mostly from the 'old left', "the notion of globalisation … is an ideology put about by free-marketeers who wish to dismantle welfare systems and cut back on state expenditures."[495] One such view is the following:

> Globalization is a discursively constructed master discourse of uncontrollable global market forces that valorizes the economic rationality of neo-classical economics and the minimalist politics of neo-liberalism. Globalization talk pretends to certainty and truth, and particularly truth and certainty regarding the complexities, contradictions, fragmentation, and seemingly irreconcilable dilemmas of late twentieth century capitalism.[496]

In this sense, globalisation is regarded not as an empirical phenomenon unfurling with a certain amount of inevitability, but as a preponderant ideology, aspiring to, and achieving, an unprecedented level of hegemony. As Dudley continues:

> The economic narrative of globalization is a neo-classical economic rationality. It is the rationality of the market as objective reality, of the neutrality of the market forces as 'truth'. Through the positivist construction of truth – of the form of rationality called neo-classical or neo-liberal economics – alternative ways of shaping policy, alternative assumptions regarding the meaning(s) and role(s) of education in a society are silenced.[497]

Indeed, in the sceptical view, the concern is that globalisation, far from offering hitherto unavailable opportunities to access and advance knowledge, is having, and will have, the effect of leaving the dispossessed behind as they suffer from reduced access to knowledge and to markets, as well as silencing those 'subjugated knowledges', which, as argued earlier, provided the ethical impulse in postmodernism.

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[495] Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World: How Globalisation is Reshaping our Lives*, London, Profile Books, 1999, p.9.

[496] Janice Dudley, "Globalization and Education Policy in Australia", in Currie, J. and Newson, J. (eds), *Universities and Globalization: Critical Perspectives*, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 1998, p.30.

[497] Ibid. pp.29-30.

2.1 Marketisation (massification)

In their book on *Universities and Globalization*, Currie and Newson outline five areas of globalising practices: governance, accountability, funding, marketisation and the use of new technologies.[498] All of these affect the university to greater or lesser extents and in different ways. With respect to marketisation, Ruby writes that:

> Globalization clearly affects every aspect of our lives. What does it have to do with universities? Quite a bit. It affects curriculum, faculty recruitment, student recruitment, sources of food for the dining halls and of funds for the endowment, and the value of investments. These are all important, but the biggest implication is that, in this global era, education at all levels, and especially at the tertiary level, has become a tradable commodity. It is a service that can be priced, paid for and provided.[499]

This so-called commodification of knowledge has as its substantiating basis the growth in on-line learning packages, the franchising of courses and branches from institutions predominantly from the North (or Australia) in developing countries, the growth in research partnerships between universities and corporations and the increase in the use of research patents and trade in intellectual property. It is characterised further by the growth in types of courses pertaining to application in a globalised world such as management studies, biotechnology and engineering. Furthermore, curricular change and innovation in teaching methodologies, the growth of modular systems, the use of transferable credits, and courses predicated on outcomes, as well as an increasing bias towards vocationalism in higher education are aspects key to the commodification of knowledge.

There are a number of factors that have led to the commodification of knowledge: chief among these is the growth in global demand for higher education and the so-called 'massification' of higher education. In the United Kingdom, for instance, the participation rate of the 18-25 age cohort in higher education rose from 8.5% in the early sixties, considered to be an elite system, to a mass system (28%) by the early nineties, and is currently standing at 45%, with the greatest expansion having occurred from 1987-

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[498] Jan Currie and Janice Newson (eds), *Universities and Globalization: Critical Perspectives*, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 1998.

[499] Alan Ruby, "Reshaping the university in an era of globalization", *Phi Delta Kappan*, 87 (3) 2005, p.233.

1992.[500] Blair's government had a manifesto goal of raising this to 50% by 2010.[501] In South Africa, the National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE), in 1996 anticipated a participation rate goal of 30% by 2005 from the 21% in 1995.[502] In Nigeria, demand is overwhelming. Despite the phenomenal growth in numbers and institutions in the post-colonial era, from 6 federal universities in 1970 to 25 federal, 14 state-owned and three private by 1995, and from 7 709 students in 1965 to 399 812 in 1998, the participation rate then was still only 667 per 100 000 inhabitants compared with South Africa's 1 524, North America's 5 544, and Europe's 3 285. The scale of demand is immense. Currently there are some 400 000 students in higher education in Nigeria, but it has been estimated that in order to achieve a participation rate of around 20% of the 18-25 cohort by 2010, the Nigerian higher education system would need to absorb 11 million students annually.[503] In India, the growth in the number of higher education institutions in the 1970s and 1980s was exponential, currently catering for some 6.8 million students, yet even this represents only 6% of the age cohort.[504]

These few examples point to a world-wide phenomenon of the growth in demand for higher education. Sadlak estimates that the number of students participating in higher

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[500] Mary Henkel, *Academic Identities and Policy Change in Higher Education*, London and Philadelphia, Jessica Kingsley, 2000, pp.2-3.

[501] Colin Bundy, "Global patterns, local options? Changes in higher education internationally and some implications for South Africa", *Kagisano*, 4, 2006, p.3. See also Guy Neave, "Times, measures and the man: the future of British higher education treated historically and comparatively", *Higher Education Quarterly*, 60 (2) 2006, p.116.

[502] *National Commission on Higher Education Report: A Framework for Transformation*, Pretoria, NCHE, 1996, pp.89-100.

[503] Monica Iyegumwena Barrow and Fidelma Ekwutozia Ukeje, "The academic workplace in a changing environment: the Nigerian scene", in Altbach, P.G. (ed), *The Decline of the Guru: the Academic Profession in Developing and Middle-Income Countries*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, pp.273-275. Elsewhere the number of students in Nigeria is estimated to have escalated to over 900 000 by 2003. See Damtew Teferra and Philip G. Altbach, "African higher education: challenges for the 21st century", *Higher Education,* 47, 2004, p.26.

[504] N. Jayaram, "The fall of the guru: the decline of the academic profession in India", in Altbach, P.G. (ed), *The Decline of the Guru: the Academic Profession in Developing and Middle-Income Countries*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, pp.201.

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education globally increased from 51 million in 1980, to about 82 million in 1995, representing an increase of about 61%.[505] Given this level of growth and future demand everywhere, and in the developing world in particular, it is no accident that some of the largest distance education institutions, apart from the UK's Open University and those in North America, are situated in developing countries. Certainly, two efforts at increasing access to higher education in Africa are distance based – that is, the African Virtual University set up by the World Bank and the Francophone Virtual University of the Agence universitaire de la Francophonie.[506]

The growth in global demand for higher education has led, in some instances, to the rapid growth in provision, with three concomitant effects: the growth in private providers, the diversification of delivery and the diversification of the student body. In terms of the first of these, the increase in private providers has altered the balance of research and teaching in most higher education systems; given the costs involved, private providers tend not to follow a mission of research. There are many implications for research. As Currie writes:

> The commercialisation of research had led to much closer links with industry and, as a consequence, a move to more applied research agendas with the accompanying loss in curiosity-driven research and serendipitous discoveries. The privatisation of universities has packaged research endeavours and led to the commodification of knowledge. In one of its guises, the 'internationalization' of higher education, universities sell education to overseas students. In another guise, universities sell their intellectual work to industry. And in yet another guise, public universities outsource many of their services to create leaner institutions with fewer workers.[507]

It could be argued that separating the production of knowledge from its dissemination has the effect of lowering the quality of education, as the transmission of knowledge becomes ever more remote from the research that informed it.

[505] J. Sadlak, "Globalization and concurrent challenges for higher education", in Scott, P. (ed), *The Globalization of Higher Education*, Buckingham, SRHE and Open University Press, 1998, p.102.

[506] Tor Halvorsen and Gunnar G. Michelson, "Identity formation or knowledge shopping? Globalisation and the future of university education and research in Africa", unpublished, University of Bergen, 2001, pp.1-14.

[507] Jan Currie, "Introduction", in Currie, J. and Newson, J. (eds), *Universities and Globalization: Critical Perspectives*, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 1998, pp.4-5.

Diversification in delivery has entailed finding new ways of packaging knowledge for sale to an ever-increasing clientele, usually through electronic media. The number of internet-based programmes has increased substantially, as have the number of campus-based courses offering alternative means of study through either print or electronic-based media. Delanty writes that, "Given the flow of information in the global age, the traditional university may be undermined by agencies more adept at the transmission of information from producer to user. One of the implications of this is that what is being transmitted is less knowledge than information."[508] He lists some of the examples of the globalisation of knowledge and what he terms the "deterritorialization" of higher education in the following:

- Electronic mail and the internet have altered the nature of communication, locating much of knowledge in the non-places of cyberspace and eliminating time and distance as a barrier to knowledge and communication.
- Academics are travelling more often today … and networking more, and group publications with authors from different countries are increasing.
- Higher education is becoming more standardized, with the greater occurrence of exchange programmes, such as the Socrates programme in Europe.
- Students are travelling more, particularly within the developed world and from South to North.[509]

While these aspects point to an increasing internationalisation of higher education, the difference with globalisation, according to Delanty is as follows, "Where globalization entails the undermining of the national state by markets, communication and deterritorialized processes, internationalism presupposes the existence of national centres which cooperate in certain areas."[510] In this sense, the defining characteristic of globalisation lies in the role of markets in determining international information flows and the concomitant decline in the role of the nation state.

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[508]Gerard Delanty, *Challenging Knowledge: the University in the Knowledge Society*, Ballmoor, Buckingham, SRHE and Open University Press, 2001, p.118.

[509] Ibid. p.119.

[510] Ibid. p.120.

The diversification of the student body, as both cause and effect of the diversification of delivery, is a further challenge for higher education. No longer is higher education based almost exclusively on a so-called 'front-loading' model of intensive on-campus study for a fairly homogenous cohort of school-leavers, but different kinds of students – mature, working, from minority groups, from different social classes, from a greater variety of countries (Eastern Europe, the developing world) – have formed part of that growth in demand. The diversification of students is accompanied by differing expectations of higher education and different needs in terms of study possibilities. This in turn has had an enormous effect on curriculum, spawning both the growth in vocational programmes, particularly in the management and technological sciences, and in the curriculum transformation of existing programmes. The existing 'canon' of knowledge in many areas has been challenged as increasingly irrelevant to the lives and needs of a diverse student body, such that more relevant content and ways of delivery have had to be developed to keep pace with this demand. With the change in the student body has also come a trend towards packaged studies – modularised, offered over an increasing time-span – and lifelong learning, understood as continuing education undertaken at intervals throughout a lifetime, and which is usually associated with the workplace.

A further growing market in a globalised world is the market for students. Not only is the demand for higher education rising, but the need for suitably qualified, adaptable, flexible and experienced graduates is rising too. Altbach writes that:

> The most visible aspect of globalization (that specifically affects the academic profession) is the emergence of a worldwide market for academic talent, stimulated in part by the large numbers of students who study abroad. It must be emphasized that flows of foreign students and the international labor market for scholars and scientists are overwhelmingly a South-to-North phenomenon. Approximately 1.5 million students study outside the borders of their own countries – the vast majority of these students are from developing countries and their destinations are in the industrialized nations." He continues, "a significant number of students who obtain their degrees abroad do not return home, and those who do return and join the academic profession bring the values and orientations of the country in which they studied back with them.[511]

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[511] Philip G. Altbach, "Centers and peripheries in the academic profession: the special challenges of developing countries", in Altbach, P.G. (ed), *The Decline of the Guru: the Academic Profession in Developing and Middle-income Countries*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, p.7.

This last comment touches on one of the perceived deleterious effects of globalisation which is discussed below, that is the increasing polarisation of the globe into the haves and the have-nots, as this is the most important context factor as far as universities in South Africa and in Africa in general are concerned.

Implicit in the outline of the marketisation of higher education above, are the implications for curriculum, both in terms of research and teaching. The implications for curriculum in terms of what is taught and learnt, and how it is done so, have already been touched upon. The modularisation of course offerings, the vocationalisation of content, the focus on skills in the outcomes of offerings, the shift to supporting scarce-skills areas, and the growth in mixed mode education all have relevance here.

In terms of the effects on research, there are three in the main. Firstly, as noted above, the growth of privatisation has shifted the bulk of higher education activity to teaching, particularly in vocationally-related areas. Secondly, the research agenda, given rising costs and the increasing phenomenon of corporate partnerships with universities, is being determined to a large extent by the market. This has clear implications for intellectual property and academic freedom, and the collegiality of academia, where research results become the property of corporate concerns rather than published freely in academic journals. The type of research carried out, too, is determined to a large measure by the market. In a seminal study in 1994, Gibbons et al advanced the thesis that knowledge production has shifted from primarily Mode 1, or pure, research, to Mode 2 knowledge production, that is, more applied and purpose-driven research.[512] In explaining this thesis, Delanty writes that:

> In Mode 1, problems are set and solved in a context governed by a small group of scientists, generally the academic community. The university is a place of research and it is within the university that the results of research are disseminated. In Mode 2, by contrast, knowledge is shaped in the context of its application, which is generally outside the university. In Mode 1, knowledge is primarily disciplinary and hierarchical while in Mode 2 it is transdisciplinary and fluid. Where Mode 1 is homogenous and relatively autonomous, Mode 2 is heterogenous and, it is claimed,

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[512] M. Gibbons, C. Limoges et al, *The New Production of Knowledge: Science and Research in Contemporary Societies*, London, Sage, 1994.

more socially accountable and reflexive. In sum, in the expanded process of knowledge production, universities are just one player.[513]

The third effect is on the subjects of research – not only is the nature of research changing from pure to applied, but the areas that are funded for research tend to be large-scale, group projects in the applied sciences rather than in the humanities and certain social sciences. That research in the sciences is funded to a greater extent than in the humanities is not new, nor unexpected, given the need for equipment to carry out scientific research; what is different is research funding agencies pre-determining the areas of research that they will be prepared to fund. These areas are increasingly related to economic or market-related priorities. Furthermore, the size of research projects necessitated by industrial or other economic concerns has seen the growth of group-based research, and this has in turn had some impact on the identities of academics who, previously, in general were highly individualistic researchers motivated to follow their own specific research interests.

In this, the simplest version of the globalisation thesis, according to a number of commentators[514] one of the major effects of globalisation is the increasing corporatisation of universities in the way that they are managed. To some extent, this must be a function of size and complexity – many universities are larger than they were a decade or two ago, and the increase in partnerships with industry, transdisciplinary studies, restructured institutions, diversity in student body and modes of delivery among other factors, have made universities far more complex organisations to run. Furthermore, in South Africa, the legal context of new policies relating to labour relations and equity, greater litigious behaviour on the part of academics, students and institutions, and the intricacies of new national higher education funding formulae and financial constraints serve to add to the complications.

Size and complexity do not necessarily entail increasing managerialism; according to the critical perspective on globalisation, however, one of the most distressing effects of the influence of marketisation on higher education is the change from collegial

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[513] Gerard Delanty, *Challenging Knowledge: the University in the Knowledge Society*, Ballmoor, Buckingham, SRHE and Open University Press, 2001, pp.109 -110.

[514] Currie and Newson 1998, Bundy, 2006, Scott, 1998.

management styles to corporate-type managerialism, used in its most pejorative sense. This change has implications for the understanding of the nature of universities as organisations and their role, as well as the understanding of academic identities for those who work within them. As Currie and Newson comment, "… the move to create more autonomous, entrepreneurial universities has been accompanied by a move to managerial governance. This may be necessary for the competitive environment of neo-liberal societies, but it does challenge the conception of a university as a community of scholars,"[515] and changes the nature of academic work from the pursuit of a vocational calling to just another form of employment.

In Currie and Newson's study on globalising practices, the effects of managerialism are elucidated as follows:

> … the restructuring of universities into larger divisions with the appointment of executive deans, the widening gap between management and academics, the increased salaries of managers, and the lack of trust that has developed and continues to develop between managers and academics. In the responses [from academics in their survey] in both the United States and Australia, there was no doubt that decision-making was becoming more managerial.[516]

The fundamental characteristic of so-called managerialism construed as the use of business practices, is that decisions are made on economic or market-related grounds rather than purely academic ones. Currie writes that:

> Business practices have introduced greater and unrelenting competition for funds. Performance indicators are used to assess and measure individuals, departments and universities against each other by the practice of benchmarking. Corporate managerialism and line management have replaced elected deans and marginalized faculty senates and academic councils, leading to a general decline in collegiality. These business practices have led to insularity among academics, greater closed individualism, and a loss of a sense of community.[517]

Similarly, Bleiklie points out three main implications of expectations of universities associated with globalisation. Firstly, authority and power over university affairs become

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[515] Jan Currie and Janice Newson, "Globalizing practices: corporate managerialism, accountability and privatisation, in Currie, J. and Newson, J. (eds), *Universities and Globalization: Critical Perspectives*, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 1998, p.144.

[516] Ibid.

[517] Jan Currie, "Introduction", in Currie, J. and Newson, J. (eds), *Universities and Globalization: Critical Perspectives*, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 1998, p.4.

separated from disciplinary competence. All functional groups, including the professoriate, are regarded as equal interest groups who should be represented by their unions rather than by disciplinary peers. Secondly, leadership functions and administrative structures are strengthened as against representative bodies. The executive and corporate-style think-tanks become more influential decision-making arenas than the traditional university senate. University leadership takes on more responsibilities – strategic planning, budgeting and evaluation through performance monitoring, measurement and reporting. Thirdly, academic performance is redefined from an emphasis on its inherent quality to measurable quantitative aspects and performance indicators such that evaluation no longer requires the judgement of disciplinary peers but only the ability to count.[518] Halsey concurs, noting that "Managerialism gradually comes to dominate collegiate cooperation in the organisation of both teaching and research … Research endeavours are increasingly applied to the requirements of government or industrial demands. The don becomes increasingly a salaried or even a piece-work labourer in the service of an expanding middle class of administrators and technologists."[519]

This last quote refers to the perceived changing role and identity of the academic. If the organisational culture is affected by globalisation, so too is the identity of the academic within such an organisation. This has partly to do with changing conditions of service as a result both of massification and market-influences, and partly to do with changed management cultures, and in South Africa, a changed legal culture as well. As academics, "our daily lives have become and continue to become more distorted and twisted by the demands of ever-increasing workloads and by the intensification of our work, which leads to greater stress and a general sense of demoralization."[520] Indeed, in many contexts, academics are reportedly experiencing increasing workloads and teaching evermore students. At the same time they are also expected to undertake

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[518] Ivar Bleiklie, "Justifying the evaluative state: new public management ideals in higher education", *European Journal of Education*, 33 (3) 1998, pp.306-307.

[519] A.H. Halsey, *The Decline of Donnish Dominion: The British Academic Profession in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992, p.13.

[520] Jan Currie, "Introduction", in Currie, J. and Newson, J. (eds), *Universities and Globalization: Critical Perspectives*, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 1998, p.2.

research and to carry out many more administrative duties in the face of declining support services and administrative chaos. In addition, they are experiencing less stable employment conditions with the increasing use of short-term contracts, accompanied by less involvement in decision-making and less autonomy in determining their own work agenda.

3. Globalisation: performativity and the evaluative state

3.1 The diminishing role of the state

In the previous section, the simplest form of the globalisation-affects-university thesis, that is, that increased dominance of markets and a neo-liberal economic ideology have seen a rise in managerialism in universities, relies on an understanding of the state as having been diminished in role and power. In this analysis, the implicit understanding of academic freedom is that of Quadrant One in my initial unpacking of the concepts-in-use, that is, the liberal individualist version. In that understanding, academic freedom pertained to the individual, and was best secured through protecting the boundary between state and institution, creating an autonomous space within which academics can freely pursue their legitimate academic activities unhindered. In this version of the globalisation thesis, however, the state is in fact rolled back, and replaced by the market, which knows no boundaries. This is reminiscent of Mamdani's warning that, certainly in Africa, colonial masters could easily be transposed to corporate ones. As Dudley writes:

> The rationality of economic globalization is that global market forces cannot be controlled, so the logic of the market necessarily and inevitably must become the logic of all other domains: the political, the social, the educational, the environmental. The state is cast as increasingly irrelevant when confronted by the 'reality' of ungovernable international/global market forces. Nation states are essentially buffeted by global market forces, so that the era of the powerful nation-state would appear effectively to be over. National economic management, and national political and social policies are becoming increasingly irrelevant. International markets and international capital markets operate outside the control of national governments… The state is reduced to the 'night watchman' of classical liberalism…[521]

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[521] Janice Dudley, "Globalization and Education Policy in Australia", in Currie, J. and Newson, J. (eds), *Universities and Globalization: Critical Perspectives*, Thousand Oaks, Sage Publications, 1998, p.27.

That the nation-state is diminished is evident also in Readings' thesis that the university is currently in ruins. He argues that in the context of contemporary developments associated with globalisation, the relation between nation-state, national culture, and higher education is breaking down.[522] In describing that relationship under modernism, Robins and Webster write that:

> The modern university was, then, a historically specific agency, concerned with the reproduction of national knowledge and national culture. And it developed into a particular kind of national agency, shaped through the transmutation of classical and medieval scholarly principles into the codes and practices of nineteenth century professionalism. This liberal model of the university was an elite or expert institution – in its commitment to the nationalization of culture and knowledge, it was pre-eminently concerned with high or official culture. Whatever its national pretensions, it could also regard itself as a defender of higher, civilizational values – in Newman's resonant phrase, it was a 'place of teaching universal knowledge'. As with other nineteenth century professions, academic institutions were self-regulating – the principle of academic freedom was one of professional autonomy. The integrity of the profession was underpinned by a particular ethic of academic responsibility, and by the 'gentlemanly' ideal of collegiality.[523]

In a rapidly globalising world, however, that 'collegiality' has been superseded by managerialism, and the role of the university is no longer seen as a site for the creation of knowledge in an autonomous fashion within the context of the nation-state, but as one among many producers of knowledge for market-related ends.

The shift from the nation-state as reference point for the university to the global world with economic reality foremost, also represents a shift in ideas of university autonomy and academic freedom from Quadrant Two to Quadrant Four of the concepts-in-use. Robins and Webster's description of the modern university fits most comfortably into the concept-in-use of behind Quadrant Two of the academic freedom model, and implicitly uses the 'civic' conception of academic freedom. That conception, however, depends for its coherence on the thesis that the nation-state and its advancement provides the raison d'être for the pursuit of knowledge and truth. In arguing that, under conditions of globalisation, the nation-state is diminished, that raison d'être falls away, and either new understandings of academic freedom and institutional autonomy apposite to the new

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[522] Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1997, p.12.

[523] Kevin Robins and Frank Webster, "The virtual university?", in Robins, K and Webster, F. (eds), *The Virtual University? Knowledge, Markets and Management*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2002, p.5.

knowledge society will need to be developed, or academic freedom becomes no longer important. As Delanty explains:

> Globalization becomes closely linked with the rise of international finance, capitalism and technological change. In this sense, what is generally emphasized is the declining power of the state and the ascendancy of the market… This situation can be seen as leading to a market driven uniformity, homogeneity, standardization or globalization can be seen as leading to fragmentation, plurality, even chaos. For with the declining ability of the state to control the environment in which it exists and the loss of national sovereignty, social and cultural forms of integration become weakened. Such developments lead many to a perspective on globalization as entailing heterogeneity and disorder. It is clear that the market cannot be a force of integration since it is not based on a principle of citizenship.[524]

Indeed, as is evident from the above, globalisation theories generally point to a change in the relationship between individuals and the nation-state, and propose either the disintegration of ideals of nationalism and citizenship with resultant cultural fragmentation and chaos, or increasing cultural homogenisation in a world dominated by Western economic imperialism. Giddens argues that globalisation pushes and pulls in different directions simultaneously: it pulls power away from local communities and nations into the global arena; it also has the opposite effect of pushing downwards, creating new pressures for local autonomy. As he writes:

> Globalisation is the reason for the revival of local cultural identities in different parts of the world. If one asks, for example, why the Scots want more independence in the UK, or why there is a strong separatist movement in Quebec, the answer is not to be found only in their cultural history. Local nationalisms spring up as a response to globalising tendencies, as the hold of older nation-states weakens.[525]

Thus, in Giddens' view, local-level identities become stronger in an era of globalisation, and this is evident, say, in South Africa, in pressures for local relevance in terms of curriculum and behind the drive to Africanisation in local institutions.

Delanty sums up the different versions of globalisation theory and points to what unites them as follows. He writes that:

> … theories of globalization share a view that the nation state is in decline and that transnational processes are becoming more important. While views differ as to whether this will lead to a more homogenized world or one that is fragmented as a

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[524] Gerard Delanty, *Challenging Knowledge: The University in the Knowledge Society*, Ballmoor, Buckingham, SRHE and Open University Press, 2001, p.116.

[525] Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World: How Globalisation is Reshaping our Lives*, London, Profile Books, 1999, p.13.

result of the recalcitrance of the local, it is evident that some of the key determinants are linked to the diminishing role of the state. The thesis of the decline of the state has been subject to a great deal of critical scrutiny, for not all agree that the state is in irreversible decline … States are still the most powerful actors in the world context and capitalism is still largely organized on national lines. Yet, there is no doubting the massive decline in national sovereignty. Although states have retained considerable control over key policies, there are more competitors today, for instance the rise of the non-state actor, the INGO (international non-governmental organization), the rise of regionalism and the city.[526]

To discuss the shifts in the locus of power or control between state and markets and the effects on universities, I have loosely used Clark's triad of state authority, market competition and academic oligarchy as a framing device.[527] In this framework, each of the three institutions can be regarded as alternative coordinators of higher education policy and provision. The state, in almost all countries, provides funding for higher education and regulates it to some extent. The market is chiefly influential through competition and pricing, but also through commercial interests determining provision and research. Academic oligarchy refers to the autonomy of academics to determine their own research agendas, evaluate the quality of knowledge production and create a sector with shared values and practices. Implicit in this framework is an understanding of academic freedom as in Quadrant Three of my academic freedom grid; i.e. the guild version of academic freedom, which refers to freedom from interference for powerful academic guilds based on a code of self-regulation in a "gentlemanly" agreement with the state.

If Clark's triad is represented graphically, as in the figure below, the shifts in locus of coordination are represented by the arrows:

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[526] Gerard Delanty, *Challenging Knowledge: The University in the Knowledge Society*, Ballmoor, Buckingham, SRHE and Open University Press, 2001, p.117.

[527] Burton Clark, *The Higher Education System*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1983.

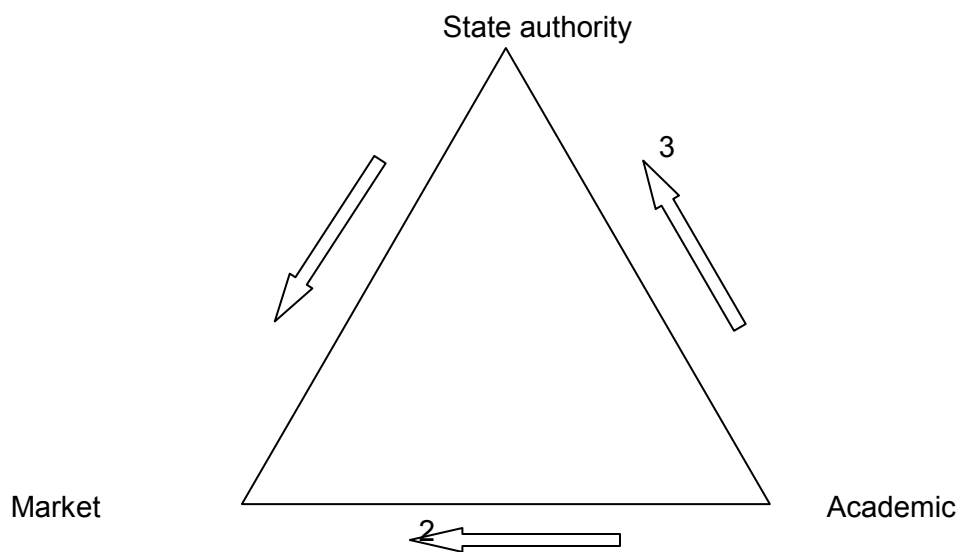State authority

3

Market

Academic

2

Figure 1: The Coordination Triad

In most versions of globalisation theory, the major shift has been described as in Arrow 1, with the decline of the nation-state and the rise in international market determination of policy. This entails also a shift in professional autonomy and academic oligarchy as in Arrow 2, with the marketisation of higher education. However, it is arguable that there has also been a shift along Arrow 3, despite the thesis of a decline in national sovereignty; in other words, the locus of coordination for higher education is shifting from academic oligarchy on two fronts. How does this apparent contradiction, that with respect to higher education, the state is both gaining and losing power at the same time, occur?

The answer lies in the thesis of the 'evaluative state', first advanced in the higher education context in the late 1980s.[528] In terms of this understanding, certainly the United Kingdom experience has been that with a move to the right in politics in the 1980s, and with the rise of neo-liberal economic policies, the traditional 'gentlemanly' accord between higher education and state (as in Quadrant Three) has gradually been eroded.

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[528] Guy Neave, "On the cultivation of quality, efficiency and enterprise: an overview of recent trends in higher education in Western Europe, 1986-1988", *European Journal of Education*, 23 (1/2) 1988.

Instead of the prior relationship of trust, the state began to apply external indicators of value for money in higher education, leading to the imposition of a much greater level of bureaucratic control and external accountability regimes than were hitherto the case.[529]

3.2 The evaluative state

The notion of the evaluative state applies to public administration in general, and not only specifically to higher education. The main characteristics of the evaluative state in public management in general are as follows:

- Separation of the government's interests as the 'owner' or financial supporter of an agency (such as a university) from its interests as the purchaser of services of that agency
- Operational specification in output terms of the performance objectives of government agencies (that is, performance measurement)
- Aligning accountability with control by delegating to agencies increased authority over inputs and decisions about resource use
- Encouraging accountability for performance through reliance on explicit contracts, competition among service providers, and privatisation within government agencies.[530]

Deem and Brehony list as characteristics of 'new managerialism' in organisations the following:

- The erasure of bureaucratic rule-following procedures
- Emphasising the primacy of management above all other activities
- Monitoring employee performance (and encouraging self-monitoring)
- The attainment of financial and other targets
- Devising means of publicly auditing quality of service delivery

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[529] See Mary Henkel, *Academic Identities and Policy Change in Higher Education*, London and Philadelphia, Jessica Kingsley, 2000, pp.29-49, who draws on the work of Kogan in examining this process in detail.

- The development of quasi-markets for services (partnerships, outsourcing).

Deem and Brehony find that "'New managerialism' is associated with new kinds of imposed external accountability, including the widespread use performance indicators and league tables, target-setting, benchmarking and performance management".[531]

Dill writes that "the rise of the Evaluative State is often interpreted as a shift from an earlier uneasy balance between professional and state control to some new combination of state and market control. In the UK, for example, the reforms of the Thatcher Government led to both increased state control and increased market competition."[532] Indeed, as will be discussed in the following chapter on South Africa, in some instances, globalisation has led to both increasing domination of university activities by the market and by the state, as the state begins to experience the pressures of increased global competition and responds in ways which attempt to increase the efficiency of its higher education system. Ironically thus, the "roll-back" of the state which accompanies neo-liberal economic policies, and which is advanced in the simplest version of the globalisation thesis, is not evident in all systems of higher education, and certainly not in South Africa, where the experience in higher education is of increasing legislation, bureaucracy and state steering and surveillance. Indeed, Deem and Brehony argue that, for theorists of both new managerialism and new public management, "it is evident that there is a perception that the move to devolved management of public services and their marketisation has also been accompanied paradoxically by both greater state regulation and fragmentation of service delivery."[533]

Neave outlines the state/market nexus in higher education well when he writes:

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[530] Adapted from G. Scott, I. Ball and T. Dale, "New Zealand's public sector management reform: implications for the United States", *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, 16 (3) 1997, pp.357-381.

[531] Rosemary Deem and Kevin J. Brehony, "Management as ideology: the case of 'new managerialism' in higher education", *Oxford Review of Education*, 31 (2) 2005, p.220.

[532] David D. Dill, "Evaluating the 'Evaluative State': implications for research in higher education", *European Journal of Education*, 33 (3) 1998, p.362.

[533] Rosemary Deem and Kevin J. Brehony, "Management as ideology: the case of the 'new managerialism' in higher education", *Oxford Review of Education*, 31 (2) 2005, p.220.

Nowadays it is routine to regard 'State control' as insensitive, inquisitorial, inefficient and a wet blanket upon the natural enterprise which individuals – and by extension – society – possess. 'State control' has assumed all the odium of bureaucratic heavy-handedness and is seen as a dampening influence upon the ability of institutions to meet the imperative, yet unpredictable demands that economic change – whether you call that change 'globalisation', or nearer home, 'European integration' – requires. Against 'the State', in a magnificent élan of repentance and contrition, we have discovered 'the market', and with it, the realisation that historic systems of verification which bound together nations within States by binding the university to the State are less than adequate to create both 'flexibility' and the skills which engender it. Yet, these are held to be the price of survival in a world deemed 'competitive' and in a society held to be on the threshold of becoming a 'learning society'.[534]

Giddens writes that:

The debates about globalisation…have concentrated mainly on its implications for the nation-state. Are nation-states, and hence national political leaders, still powerful, or are they becoming largely irrelevant to the forces shaping the world? Nation-states are indeed still powerful and political leaders have a large role to play in the world. Yet at the same time the nation-state is being reshaped before our eyes. National economic policy can't be as effective as it once was.[535]

Nation-states, despite a decrease in sovereignty, however, still attempt to direct higher education and increasingly regard it as part of national economic policy. This is evident in South Africa in tensions between the policy goals of the Department of Education and the Department of Labour, for instance. Whatever version of globalisation theory is advanced, it is evident that globalisation is not happening at the same rate everywhere. It may be the case that in those countries less directly affected by globalisation, for example, in the developing world, in attempting to become players in the global economy, nation-states may attempt to steer their higher education systems towards improving their competitive advantage, hence the paradox experienced by academics – increasing direction by the market and the state simultaneously.

How does this affect academic freedom and institutional autonomy? Looking at the introduction of so-called New Public Management[536] (or the evaluative state) in higher

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[534] Guy Neave, "The evaluative state reconsidered", *European Journal of Education*, 33 (3) 1998, p.266.

[535] Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World: How Globalisation is Reshaping our Lives*, London, Profile Books, 1999, p.18.

[536] Some theorists (e.g. Hood, 2000, Pollitt, 1999) use the term 'New Public Management'" and others 'the new managerialism', (e.g. Clarke and Newman, 1997, Exworthy and Halford, 1999) to describe the phenomenon of the increasing use of business practices in the public service. They have slightly

education, Bleiklie notes that, "In higher education, where institutional autonomy and academic freedom are fundamental values, the compatibility between the rationale of the reform policies and the substantive field in which they are supposed to operate is posed more acutely than in most other policy fields."[537] In other words, higher education is a kind of litmus test for the effects of increasing legislation and attempted state steering in an era of globalisation. In Bleiklie's view, a new set of expectations of the university has been ushered in with the advent of a new theoretical tradition on the role of the university; that is, rationalism in the narrower policy sense of efficiency and instrumental utilitarianism, which is a move away from both idealism and functionalism. For Bleiklie, "rationalism represents the normative perspective underpinning current ideas about university governance as they manifest themselves in the organisational ideal of the corporate enterprise which is promoted by the Evaluative State as a general model for all its subordinate agencies."[538] Whereas the idealist and functionalist positions lend support to institutional autonomy, the rationalist position, with its emphasis on societal control over vital socio-economic resources, may legitimise institutional heteronomy. Higher education, in the globalisation era, becomes increasingly seen as a public resource for competitive ends. As such, there is a new layer of expectations placed on higher education systems, coexistent with previous expectations, each of which implies a trend towards a different organisational ideal.

Bleiklie sets out a typology of three different organisational ideals that may in some instances co-exist, as they are not necessarily sequential or mutually exclusive. The first of these is the university as a public agency – where universities' roles are to prepare candidates for top civil service posts and the learned professions. In such a view, universities are seen as part of the national civil service and as implementers of public policy. Such an expectation comes mainly from the state, as the financially and politically responsible authority. Bleiklie notes that this is the case in traditional Scandanavian

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different connotations, 'new managerialism' being seen as a particular ideology closely associated with the political right, but they are sufficiently close to be used interchangeably in this context. Both are associated with 'the evaluative state'.

[537] Ivar Bleiklie, "Justifying the evaluative state: new public management ideals in higher education", *European Journal of Education*, 33 (3) 1998, p.299.

[538] Ibid. p.304.

university systems, which are based on the traditional German university ideal that sees the university primarily as a cultural institution. Currently the public agency role is reinforced "by the integration of universities into a unified system of management by objectives into a national programme system and in national enactment for higher education institutions".[539] The most influential factor behind this development was the growth in student numbers and the quantitative expansion of university activities.

A second layer of expectations of the university relates to an understanding of the university as an autonomous cultural institution. In the Humboldtian ideal, still adhered to by academics in the main, universities are seen as safe spaces for the autonomous conduct of research and teaching, and are organised either around academic chairs, or into disciplinary departments constituting relatively egalitarian communities. In this view, academic autonomy is writ large, and tends to clash with a third, and newer, layer of expectations which relates to the notion of the university as a producer of educational and research services. In the New Public Management or evaluative state paradigm, managerialism is uppermost, as the university becomes increasingly regarded as a corporate enterprise. Bleiklie writes:

> As a corporate enterprise, the university consists in a leadership and different functional (academic, technical and administrative) staff groups servicing different user groups which require the services the enterprise offers. Since the late 1980s, there has been a tendency to emphasise quality as a fundamental objective of the corporate enterprise … However, the most important expectation which the corporate enterprise confronts is efficiency related to the rapidity and cost at which it produces useful services, research and candidates to the benefit of users, be they the university's own faculty, administrators, employers of university graduates, or buyers of research.[540]

This set of expectations has emphasised the importance of performance indicators, and the strengthening of administrative functions to ensure a standardised and controllable management of the growing burden of teaching and research. The administrative apparatus has changed in character, too, from support for academic activity in disciplinary communities to strategic planning and management. At base, the new corporate university enterprise focuses on achieving planning goals, through

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[539] Ivar Bleiklie, "Justifying the evaluative state: new public management ideals in higher education", *European Journal of Education*, 33 (3) 1998, p.305.

[540] Ibid. pp.306-307.

mobilising resources and employing incentive systems. This is resonant with the managerialism thesis which is fundamental to the simplest globalisation-affects-university discussed above.

In the evaluative state version of the globalisation thesis, however, not only is the internal model of organisation of universities shifting to one based on measuring performance and outputs, but the way the state has taken on the value of efficiency entails a greater apparatus for monitoring and managing its own activity and that of universities. This is what is meant by the evaluative state. From a traditional ex ante regulation in the shape of established rules, practices and budget decisions, the state has moved to ex post facto control. It evaluates institutional performance in relation to deliberately formulated policy goals. Evaluative activity has changed from routine oversight, through special commissions to change the course of higher education, to the use of a panoply of strategic evaluative methods used continuously and routinely. Indeed:

> Aspects such as student through-put, qualification rates, per capita costs, institutional and departmental productivity, which earlier had only occasionally been subject to review and 'crisis management', are now built up into a highly sophisticated, judgemental mechanism, regularly applied, regularly reviewed and intimately tied to the strategic purpose of both national policy steering and at the same time to institutional self-assessment as a means for the latter to identify its own place on the national stage and to plan to improve it or consolidate it.[541]

The application of instrumental logic in the evaluative state is based on the central idea that "if state agencies are provided with clearly formulated goals and a set of incentives and sanctions invoked in response to actual behaviour, efficiency will thereby increase."[542]

Instrumental evaluation becomes a key activity. Neave speaks of a "frenzy of technicité" which accompanied the transition towards the evaluative state. Writing specifically from a European context, he notes the emphasis in the evaluative state on the increase in instrumentality in steering higher education towards what he suggests is

[541] Guy Neave, "The evaluative state reconsidered", *European Journal of Education*, 33 (3) 1998, p.273.

[542] Ivar Bleiklie, "Justifying the evaluative state: new public management ideals in higher education", *European Journal of Education*, 33 (3) 1998, p.307.

euphemistically called 'self-regulation'. Instrumentality is the key characteristic of the evaluative state. Neave notes that writings on the evaluative state concentrate on

> the technical dimension of instrumental systems of management, their repercussions upon academic productivity – whether at the establishment, faculty, department or individual level upon their consequences, in the area of power, influence and status.

He writes further that:

> It is, I think, one of the more outstanding paradoxes of the move towards what some regard as a lighter form of 'surveillance' relationship between higher education and public authorities that this self-same move goes hand in hand with a veritable orgy of procedures, audits, elaboration of instruments of administrative intelligence which, in their scope and number, bid fair to make those which upheld the State control model appear rustic, blunt and crude, if not downright simple.[543]

Neave, in the above, is describing one manifestation of the implications of globalisation in higher education in a European context in particular, where the introduction of what he regards as state surveillance through continuous strategic evaluation was seen, paradoxically, as a move to creating more independence for institutions from the highly state regulated system that preceded it. The paradox consists in the creation of so-called 'buffer bodies', or nominally state-independent agencies to carry out such evaluation – the Vereeninging der Samenwerkende Nederlandse Universiteiten in the Netherlands, the Comité National d'Evaluation in France, the Högskolverket in Sweden, the Higher Education Quality Committee and later the Quality Assurance Agency in the UK, and similarly, in South Africa, the Council on Higher Education and its permanent sub-committee, the Higher Education Quality Committee – that carry out such evaluation with the espoused intent of leading institutions towards greater self-regulation and therefore autonomy, but which induce the need for institutions to respond continuously to externally-driven demands for data and compliance with nationally set objectives. Indeed, the rise of quality assurance regimes in higher education systems, which will be discussed later, is a very obvious manifestation of state attempts to make higher education more responsive to the market, while in the process rendering them possibly less flexible, adaptable and innovative. Certainly, the notion of the evaluative state is reminiscent of Lyotard's performativity principle discussed earlier,

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[543] Guy Neave, "The evaluative state reconsidered", *European Journal of Education*, 33 (3) 1998, p.266.

in which the emphasis is on how efficient and effective higher education is "in achieving the best possible input/output equation."[544]

4. Globalisation: power, the knowledge society and academic identities

In the above sections of this chapter, I have explored theories of globalisation that concentrate on dramatic change in the socio-economic fabric, and which outline to some extent the effects of this change on universities as institutions and the people within them. For the critics of globalisation, it is an ideology that pushes downwards and has largely deleterious effects on those subject to its pressure. But there is a more hopeful, and perhaps more useful, metaphor for understanding globalisation, which comes largely through the work of Manual Castells, and that is of a knowledge society developed though a complex set of networks. Of his work, he remarks that:

> [My trilogy] is about the contradictory interaction between the process of building a network society with people. It's about a society's technology, its institutions, its culture, building a society that embraces the entire world in a very differential way. Therefore the process of homogenisation seems to me like the great march of industrialism in the 19th and 20th centuries under its two versions, capitalism and statism. On the other hand, it's also about the resistance, orientation and shaping of this process by people rooted in their specific meaning which generally are considered to be identities.[545]

Key to the hopeful note here is the emphasis on building local identities, and finding meaning in the particular. Though it has the emphasis on the local in common, this is decidedly not a postmodernist perspective. As he writes:

> Identity for me is the construction of meaning, the meaning of actions by social actors on the basis of social attributes. This very important topic has been polluted lately by all kinds of post-modern vagaries, and I will not go into that because the best thing I think one can do with post-modern theories is to be silent about them. Identity, as with everything in this world, is not made out of words or feelings or moods, it's made material, as everything else is, with the works of history and experience. We can then discuss how this experience is perceived, transformed, rearranged, but the point is, identity which is not rooted in experience is fantasy, not identity.[546]

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[544] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1987, p.46.

[545] Manuel Castells, "Globalisation, identity and the state", *Social Dynamics*, 26 (1) 2000, p.5.

The shaping of identities in a globalising world is different from that of a world based on strong nation-states, as the identity formation is no longer orchestrated from above by the state, but influenced and permeated by cross-currents from elsewhere in the network society in ways that engender innovation and adaptation to the local in the formation of very specific identities. McDonaldization thus, is fantasy, until it is adapted through particular experience to become part of a new identity. This is evident in many genres, such as music, where American hip hop in specific South African communities transforms into kwaito,[547] and in communication where SMS[548] technology develops its own specific language understandable only to particular communities of youth.

As Giddens noted above, globalisation is a catalyst in developing local cultural identities as people try to make sense of, and appropriate influences from outside their immediate frame of reference. This can be both a positive and a negative development and Giddens points to the extreme possibility where the reaction against difference can lead to solidified views. In a prescient piece of writing, written before 9/11, he elucidates this view as follows:

> The battleground of the twenty-first century will pit fundamentalism against cosmopolitan tolerance. In a globalising world, where information and images are routinely transmitted across the globe, we are all regularly in contact with others who think differently, and live differently, from ourselves. Cosmopolitans welcome and embrace the cultural complexity. Fundamentalists find it disturbing and dangerous. Whether in the areas of religion, ethnic identity or nationalism, they take refuge in a renewed and purified tradition – and, quite often, violence.[549]

He writes further that:

> Tolerance of cultural diversity and democracy are closely connected, and democracy is currently spreading world-wide. Globalisation lies behind the expansion of democracy. At the same time, paradoxically, it exposes the limits of the democratic structures which are most familiar, namely the structures of parliamentary democracy. We need to further democratise existing institutions, and to do so in ways that respond to the demands of the global age. We shall never be

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[546] Manuel Castells, "Globalisation, identity and the state", *Social Dynamics*, 26 (1) 2000, pp.6-7.

[547] A very specific South African style of music adapted from hip-hop.

[548] SMS – short messaging system

[549] Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World: How Globalisation is Reshaping our Lives*, London, Profile Books, 1999, pp.4-5.

able to become the masters of our own history, but we can and must find ways of bringing our runaway world to heel.[550]

He thus links the development of specific local cultural identities with democracy – the alternative is a world torn asunder by attempts of different forms of cultural imperialism seeking dominance through violent means – a world of war and terrorism, intolerance and "laager"[551] mentalities.

Despite the dangers pointed to above, the more positive outlook on globalisation emphasises the importance of local identity formation. As Castells writes, "… I cannot think of a more important issue than identity, identity's meaning. Meaning is what makes you live: everything else only makes you survive."[552] For Castells, the network society is one that challenges identity formation and requires innovation and adaptation not only to survive, but to find meaning. He writes further that, "That's what I try to summarise by referring to the dialectic between the net and the self as the critical dialectic of our world. It is not the inexorable march of a structure led by information technology. Rather it's the explosion and the contradiction between people deciding to be themselves, and the transformative system on the other side."[553] The network society is not a controllable one; there are too many variables and influences and factors and permutations to take into account, and as Castells writes, "institutions of the industrial era, including the state, are shaken. They are not disappearing, but they don't know what to do with all this mess. They try to interpret the oracles of global financial markets every day".[554] Uncertainty and risk are the key characteristics of the global world, and to create meaning in such conditions of complexity is extremely difficult, but only made real where identities are informed by tangible experiences. Castells sees identity formation as taking place simultaneously at different levels, and unlike many theorists of globalisation,

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[550] Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World: How Globalisation is Reshaping our Lives*, London, Profile Books, 1999, p.5.

[551] A 'laager' refers to the formation of ox-wagons used by early South African pioneers for defensive purposes.

[552] Manuel Castells, "Globalisation, identity and the state", *Social Dynamics*, 26 (1) 2000, p.5.

[553] Ibid. p.6.

[554] Ibid.

he still posits a strong role in this regard for the nation-state, particularly in the developing world.

In an address to a South African audience, he notes that:

> … you [in South Africa] are trying to construct a new state which accommodates identities and at the same time, is able to function as a nation state. You need a nation state, certainly, because it's the only tool we have to relate collectively to the process of globalisation and to other states. So any talk about the disappearance of the state is simply senseless. But which kind of a state and how it's connected to the global economy, to other states, to society, is the question.[555]

Similarly, Said points to the importance of identity formation at national level as the context for identity formation at other levels. In examining the differences in circumstances that obtain in the Middle East and in the United States, he writes that "in both a very great premium is placed on the cultural and national *identity* of the education being offered … the central importance and authority given the national identity impinges on and greatly influences, surreptitiously and often unquestioningly, academic freedom – that is, what transpires in the name of academic freedom." He further points to:

> How the specific social and cultural circumstances of the academic situation in each society define the problem of academic freedom … Certainly this is true of a society like that of South Africa, now undergoing particularly difficult and stressful transformation. But as one looks elsewhere in the world, one finds that many places are experiencing much the same contest over what the national identity is or ought to be. This contest, almost more than anything else, defines the political and cultural situation of the late twentieth century: that as the world grows smaller and more interdependent economically, environmentally, and through the revolution in communications, there is a greater sense that societies interact, often abrasively, in terms of who or what their national identities are.[556]

The redefinition of identities at national and other levels is a layered process, with each layer transparent, permeable and superimposed on another, such that within an institution in South Africa, for example, academic identities are informed by global influences, newly emerging national identities, local and regional layers of identities, discipline identities, departmental layers, as well as individual determinations and specific appropriations. Building identities is thus a very complex and multi-layered task but crucial to defining one's space in a risky, fluctuating, and unpredictable context.

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[555] Manuel Castells, "Globalisation, identity and the state", *Social Dynamics*, 26 (1) 2000, p.12.

[556] Edward. W. Said, "Identity, authority, and freedom: the potentate and the traveler", Menand, L. (ed), *The Future of Academic Freedom*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996, pp.220-221.

Identity formation is key to relative stability in a world of rapidly changing networks and for establishing the terms on which one engages in that network society.

In the foregoing discussion on identity, it is evident that academic identities are formed and informed by a multiplicity of factors, and that in a globalising world, the tension between the locally grounded identity, through say, context-specific research, and global conversations in a particular discipline is exacerbated by other layers of identity formation. In the more corporate universities in a competitive ethos of benchmarks and targets, this would be the institution and its 'brand'; and in South Africa, with the transformation imperative in higher education, this becomes manifest as social justice ends, adherence with national policy goals, and a particular kind of nationalism related to the building of a new nation-state attempting to forge a place in the community of nations. At the same time, that nation-state is not all-encompassing as a framework for identity formation in that it is thoroughly permeable by the forces of globalisation.

In the sections above, the effects of globalisation on academic work were hinted at, and they generally paint a very dispiriting environment. In research undertaken in a variety of countries, Knight and Trowler found that external pressures and internal changes in academia can combine to produce a variety of challenges. Among these are:

- Some erosion of trust as universities become more managed, so that faculty can see themselves as less 'professional', less trusted, more called to account, and required to spend more time on paper, less on what matters to them. In some cases, competition for tenure, promotion and research kudos sustain Hobbesian individualism;

- Intensification, which means longer hours of work, more assessment to be done, a pressure to publish, and increased expectancy of service. The time, energy and mental space available for improving teaching and learning practices are reduced;

- A decline in collegiality with less time to know other colleagues as teachers, researchers and people. This is partly because people spend less time in the university in order to avoid interruptions to their pressured writing schedule; and

- Threats to self-identity, especially in those institutions that have become 'greedy', asking for more without caring sufficiently for the humans who work in them. Tensions between work and private life can become acute. Alienation and stress

can result, with people fearing that they work in a cold, fragmented environment, a 'wilderness' in which 'the human element seems to be missing'. [557]

While these refer to conditions in other countries, they resonate with the current academic experience in South Africa. The erosion of trust and threats to self-identity are particularly acute, given the fact that major transformation in terms not only of demographics, but also of governance and purpose of institutions and the size and shape of the higher education system, including institutional mergers, are having to be undertaken at a time of financial stringency. As is discussed in the following chapter, the human cost is enormous, and is most keenly felt as an erosion of both academic freedom and institutional autonomy, to the extent that academic identities have become fragmented.

That identities have become fragmented is necessarily a part of a globalised world, although this can be experienced variously, as the very concept of identity based on idealist assumptions becomes challenged. But in reconstructing identities lies the way to coping with what Barnett has labelled "supercomplexity".[558] As Henkel writes, "it is possible in the contemporary context to sustain some of the meanings of identity associated with its location in modernist thought, individuation, uniqueness and continuity but within a sense of self not as essence but as project."[559] Giddens writes in this regard that "In the post-traditional order of modernity, and against the backdrop of new forms of mediated experience, self identity becomes a reflexively organised endeavour. The reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives, takes place in the context of multiple choice, as filtered through abstract systems."[560]

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[557] Peter T. Knight and Paul R. Trowler, "Departmental-level cultures and the improvement of learning and teaching", *Studies in Higher Education*, 25 (1) 2000, pp.71-72.

[558] Ronald Barnett, *Realizing the University in an Age of Supercomplexity*, Ballmoor, Buckingham, SRHE and Open University Press, 2000.

[559] Mary Henkel, *Academic Identities and Policy Change in Higher Education*, London, Jessica Kingsley, 2000, p.14.

[560] Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1991, p.5.

Knight and Trowler, in a study of academic work environments, found that even in a generally deteriorating and demoralising academic climate, there is considerable room for the exercise of agency at very local levels. Academic identities are forged in local organisational contexts. They write that "structural changes in the workplace do not alone determine how people feel and respond to changes. Human agency means that there is choice and that actions can be taken to maximise work satisfaction in the face of structural changes. The university department, or sub-units of it, as an activity system is the primary location of the operation of agency…"[561] They write further that, "cultural change for the better can occur when the focus of leadership attention is at the level of the natural activity system of universities: the department or a subunit of it. However, cultural change has to be collaborative and is therefore unpredictable. Managers work in rather than on cultural contexts and their most important skills revolve around perceptiveness towards and analysis of these contexts".[562]

Agency and identity formation through reflexivity are clearly related. Finding meaning and identity in the local, in a way that is conceived as an ongoing project rather than as an essential state to be achieved, appears to be the main offer of hope in a fluctuating world. Disciplinarity, as a local context for academic identity formation, as explored in Chapter Five, is one such possible locus for identity formation, as is the embedding of scientific research in local contexts and local networks.

5. Conclusion

In the above chapter, I have set out three different versions of the globalisation thesis. These have included what I found to be the simplest version, that sees the state being limited in its sovereignty through the rise of international market forces, with the concomitant effect on higher education being the increasing corporatisation of the

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[561] Peter Knight and Paul Trowler, "Departmental level cultures and the improvement of teaching and learning", *Studies in Higher Education*, 25 (1) 2000, p.70.

[562] Ibid. p.72.

university as an organisation. While this version posits globalisation as an hegemonic ideology, its statement of the counterfactual is itself almost ideological in its intensity and lack of empirical substantiation.

Another version of the globalisation thesis above sees the situation in more nuanced terms, with the state both losing and gaining authority with respect to higher education simultaneously. In the evaluative state version of the theory, while higher education becomes increasing permeable to market forces, thereby diminishing the role of the state in some respects, in other respects, the competitiveness required in the new global order has led to a greater role for the state vis-à-vis higher education in establishing external accountability regimes. While this version offers more explanatory power than the simplest version outlined above, they both posit the academic and the institution as victims of inexorable external forces and deny a level of agency to academics in determining their identities in changed circumstances.

The third version of the globalisation thesis discussed in this chapter, that is, of higher education being integrated into a network society, as one among many 'nodes of energy' in that network, both implicitly sending and receiving information, offers more scope for individual and institutional agency and control over identity formation at different levels. No longer hapless victims of external forces, academics and institutions become participants, albeit small ones, in a very large set of knowledge relations. Clearly, in the first two versions described above, the implications for academic freedom and institutional autonomy are deleterious. In the conditions of postmodernism and globalisation that underlie Quadrant Four of my conceptual grid, institutional boundaries are permeable and permeated, undermining the traditional defences of academic freedom and institutional autonomy, as external forces determine the working conditions and the knowledge agenda. The third version is more optimistic, however, in suggesting that freedom pertains in participating in the global knowledge network on one's own terms; that is, from a solid knowledge base that is locally relevant and locally embedded. Moreover, networks imply the embracing of fragmented academic identities; that academic identity is no longer essentialised or only disciplinary in nature, but multiple, being part of a variety of network relations at different levels.

This chapter has focused on setting out different versions of the globalisation thesis and examining their implications for academic freedom and institutional autonomy. In the following chapter, I will look more closely at the African and South African higher education contexts in order to analyse which of these, and to what extent, they apply to these situations, in order better to understand and re-examine the current local debates on academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

Chapter Seven

Globalisation and the local: African and South African higher education

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Once a professor of modern languages, he has been, since Classics and Modern Languages were closed down as part of the great rationalisation, adjunct professor of communications. Like all rationalised personnel, he is allowed to offer one special-field course a year, irrespective of enrolment, because that is good for morale. This year he is offering a course in the Romantic poets. For the rest he teaches Communications 101, 'Communication Skills', and Communications 201, 'Advanced Communication Skills.

J. M. Coetzee, "Disgrace"

1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, different theoretical understandings of globalisation, the link to markets and the phenomenon of so-called massification were outlined. In this chapter, the focus is on the impact of globalisation on higher education in Africa and South Africa, looking specifically at the implications for academic freedom and institutional autonomy. As was explained in Chapter Six, there are dichotomous views as to whether globalisation is an hegemonic force, inevitable in its drive and reach, leading to the dissolution of the local in favour of a standardised approach to knowledge production, or whether it can serve to develop and enhance previously subjugated knowledges and render them more visible on a global stage. In essence, the question here is whether and to what extent the effects of globalisation experienced elsewhere can be argued to be applicable in African contexts, and what this may entail for localised concepts and understandings of academic freedom.

2. Globalisation and the African context

In Chapter Two, threats to academic freedom emanating from both internal and external sources were discussed. In terms of globalisation, the effects seem to have been felt much sooner in the rest of Africa than in South Africa, given the relationship between African countries and international lending agencies that began in the 1970s and 1980s. Murunga notes that:

> Africa's development has been on the agenda for some time now. Yet the continent entered into the 21st century trailing in almost all important indicators of economic growth. This is confounding given the numerous attempts to explain Africa's poor development record and the equally numerous strategies designed to engineer sustainable development. Most intriguing is that Africa's slide into poverty continues to occur almost in inverse proportion to the increase in explanations, theories and strategies meant to tame the situation. The explanations are wide ranging, some focus on internal cultural impediments to Africa's development, while others study external structural constraints.[563]

Murunga argues that the external structural constraints are seminal in this process. He writes that:

> The main challenge for Africa is not development itself. It is the global hegemonic forces that hinder a responsible appreciation of the African voices in development discourses and their [African] articulation of what Africa's developmental priorities are. The hegemonic forces are not necessarily external to Africa. They mesh up (sic) different elite groups inside and outside Africa in a self-reinforcing network that constantly dominates the development discourses and directs which priority areas qualify for development investments.[564]

Mittelman concurs, arguing that "globally, three pressure points on academic freedom seem most important. These are international finance, welfare (also known as development assistance), and philanthropic institutions … by choosing which projects to fund and which ones not to fund, grant makers exercise enormous influence over those they select and support. Research agendas are shaped by grantors."[565]

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[563] Godwin R. Murunga, "A note on the knowledge question in Africa's development" *CODESRIA Bulletin*, (3&4) 2005, p.8.

[564] Ibid.

[565] James H. Mittelman, "Academic freedom, the state and globalisation", in Diouf, M. and Mamdani, M. (eds), *Academic Freedom in Africa*, Dakar, CODESRIA, 1994, pp.146-147.

For Murunga, those hegemonic forces that shape research agendas are part of the so-called globalising agenda. As noted earlier in this chapter, these can either be seen as leading to standardisation and Western cultural hegemony, or to the fragmentation and dissolution of particular cultures.

For many African intellectuals, the former argument is persuasive. This has partly to do with the intellectual life of these countries still being conducted in Western languages, and partly to do with increasing privatisation and the eroding of public universities as a result. It also, however, has to do with the state. As Mittelman writes:

> Between these global forces and African universities lies the state. The state is internalized in African universities by virtue of the intrusion of the army, the presence of police, the use of informants, the tactics (or threat) of detention or deportation, and other forms of repression. Publicly owned, publicly controlled, and publicly financed, the university is under pressure to become more of a state apparatus than a repository of the most precious values of a civilization and an arena for intellectual struggle … Meanwhile, the state no longer acts primarily as a buffer or shield against globalization.[566]

Generalisations across the continent are difficult, but it can be argued that the postcolonial state in Africa, being weak, is also, contradictorily, authoritarian.

Mazrui posits that a university has three crucial relationships in relation to the wider world. "A university has to be politically distant from the state; secondly, a university has also to be culturally close to society; and thirdly, a university has to be intellectually linked to wider scholarly and scientific values of the world of learning."[567] These latter two contradict each other considerably in sub-Saharan Africa as a result of the language question: that the language of instruction in most African universities is a Western one, this mitigates against cultural closeness to local society, but on the other hand, African intellectual life is still "colonised" to the extent that contributions to the global intellectual conversations are limited. In Mazrui's view, "Intellectual proximity to global scholarship clashes with cultural proximity to African society."[568] As far he is concerned, three

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[566] James H. Mittelman, "Academic freedom, the state and globalisation", in Diouf, M. and Mamdani, M. (eds), *Academic Freedom in Africa*, Dakar, CODESRIA, 1994, p.147.

[567] Ali Mazrui, "Towards re-Africanizing African universities: who killed intellectualism in the post colonial era?" *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations*, 2 (3&4) 2003, p.140.

[568] Ibid. p.144.

strategies are needed: "the decolonization of modernity; the domestication of modernity and the counter-penetration of western civilization itself."[569] A domestically-defined concept of relevance to cultural and economic needs of the society as a whole is called for. Mazrui further outlines the problem of the prospect of cultural autarky thus:

> For Africa to attempt a strategy of withdrawal or total disengagement would be a counsel not only of despair but also of dangerous futility. Modernity is here to stay; the task is to decolonize it. World culture is evolving fast, the task is to save it from excessive Eurocentrism. The question which arises is how this task is to be achieved."[570] Without offering many tangible solutions towards this end, Mazrui concludes that "the full maturity of African educational experience will come when Africa develops a capability to innovate and invent independently.[571]

That such innovation and development in education is important is highlighted by Teferra and Altbach's view that higher education is a key force for modernisation and development. The dawning of the twenty-first century is being recognised as a knowledge era, and higher education must play a central role.[572] With about 300 universities in Africa in the least developed region of the world, there is clearly much to be done. The capacity to innovate and develop in conditions where autonomy is circumscribed by both internal and external factors, and where the material conditions do not easily permit, is necessarily limited. As Khan notes, "… the search for autonomy requires both an autonomous working environment and independent semantic tools that avoid both imperial values masquerading as universal truths and anthropological sentimentalism that stupidly glorifies societies sliding into ruin."[573]

In the arguments above, there is a clear dichotomy between views that locate the origin of challenges in higher education in Africa in external, hegemonic, global forces, with a continued sense of subjugation, and those that see the future health of higher

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[569] Ali Mazrui, "Towards re-Africanizing African universities: who killed intellectualism in the post colonial era?" *Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations*, 2 (3&4) 2003, p.148.

[570] Ibid. p.157.

[571] Ibid. p.162.

[572] Damtew Teferra and Philip G. Altbach, "African higher education: challenges for the 21st century", *Higher Education*, 47, 2004, p.21.

[573] Amin Khan, "Algerian intellectuals: between identity and modernity", in Diouf, M. and Mamdani, M. (eds), *Academic Freedom in Africa*, Dakar, CODESRIA, 1994, p.275.

education being promoted by active participation in global conversations, albeit from a strengthened sense of local identity.

Two particular case studies of different strategies to developing on-line education illustrate the above very well. The African Virtual University (AVU), initiated by the World Bank, was set up from 1997 in fifteen countries and twenty-five institutions. The model of implementation followed, at least initially, was one that Halvorsen and Michelson have dubbed global standardisation, in that it assumes that knowledge is technical in nature, and that courses produced in the United States, Canada and Europe can easily be transposed to different delivery sites, without mediation through local academic interpretation. In the initial stages, African academics were not involved in the production of courses, and the logic of business and economies of scale prevailed.[574] For Halvorsen and Michelson, one of the main concerns is that "African universities will not be able to compete with well-known schools in the market of standardised knowledge packages. The result might be that one is reduced to passive receivers and to become franchises of global virtual university enterprises."[575]

Amutabi and Oketch argue that while the project had good intentions, such as helping Africa to catch up technologically, for a whole range of reasons the project "has failed in its infancy."[576] Van der Bunt-Kokhuis agrees, arguing that the approach taken was part of the globalising agenda of Western world, which saw education as dependent on pre-packaged materials from the North, and only in the areas of science, engineering and business.[577] Much of the World Bank grant was allegedly spent on hardware, with little development of sustainable systems and maintenance following the withdrawal of the

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[574] Tor Halvorsen and Gunnar Guddal Michelson, "Identity formation of knowledge shopping? Globalisation and the future of university education and research in Africa", Unpublished, University of Bergen, 2001, p.7.

[575] Ibid. pp.12-13.

[576] M. Amutabi and M. Oketch, "Experimenting in distance education: the African Virtual University and the paradox of the World Bank in Kenya", *International Journal of Educational Development*, 23, 2003, pp.57-73.

[577] Sylvia van de Bunt-Kokhuis, "Globalization and the freedom of knowledge", *Higher Education in Europe*, 29 (2) 2004, p.276.

donor. Given the lack of relevance of the curricula, the AVU served to create a "phenomenon of the indigenous foreigner",[578] educated for a different context and unable to apply theoretical knowledge gained in the solution of local problems.

Hall asks if it is it possible to provide access to African students to learning that takes advantage of the possibilities of the new information technology while avoiding packets of standardised information delivered at low cost and with little or no interactivity.[579] Halvorsen and Michelson outline an alternative strategy, that is, adaptation, followed in the second case, the Francophone Virtual University (FVU). As they write, "the understanding of globalisation informing the FVU project, is that while traditional time and space constraints tend to disappear, language will continue to be a major constraint of the development of the new globality … In a world where the international competition is getting more and more intense, the creation of strategic alliances is assumed to be the way to go. Accordingly, to build on the already existing network of francophone universities by building up under a common francophone identity appears to be the appropriate way ahead. Accordingly the project is based on a networking logic (and not a hierarchical logic) characterised by collaboration on equal terms and respect for local culture, knowledge and experience."[580] As such, they see greater possibilities for success in countering the isolation of African academics and offering possibilities for African contributions to global knowledge production.

How such possibilities can be realised is the great challenge for African universities, in a world in which knowledge generation is fundamental to economic development. As Halvorsen and Michelson write, drawing on the writing of Castells:

> The ability to move into the knowledge-centred economy depends on the capacity of the whole society to be educated, and to be able to assimilate and

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[578] Sylvia van de Bunt-Kokhuis, "Globalization and the freedom of knowledge", *Higher Education in Europe*, 29 (2) 2004, p.277.

[579] Martin Hall, "Realising the virtual hamburger: education and the margins of the network society", Cape Town, CHET Transformation Debates, 2000, p.8.

[580] Tor Halvorsen and Gunnar Guddal Michelson, "Identity formation of knowledge shopping? Globalisation and the future of university education and research in Africa", Unpublished, University of Bergen, 2001, p.20.

process complex information."[581] Quoting a World Bank and UNESCO Task Force on Higher Education and Society report, they observe that it is difficult to see how poor countries will cope in the global economy. They write that, "given the poor state of many systems of higher education in Africa, it is a real danger that many African countries will become even more marginalised and isolated intellectually and economically in the emerging global economy if they are not able to improve the management of their national innovation systems.[582]

The challenge to improve and develop "national innovation systems" and local knowledge is more than purely a question of economics and resources. It also means overcoming what Bawa referred to (see Introduction) as the 'colonised imagination'. As Kom writes:

> If we have not questioned the dominant discourse, have not defined the terms of our own narrative, have not conceived institutions with precise goals that correspond to our immediate and future needs, all our educational programmes, like all appointments and promotions of teachers will be exercises bordering on futility.[583]

Zeleza argues that:

> The struggle for academic freedom in Africa and African studies entails jettisoning Eurocentric theories and paradigms and developing authentic African intellectual discourses, without falling into the trap of an essentialising cultural revivalism that homogenises Africa's diverse cultures and histories and poses them in binary opposites to other cultures and histories. Clearly, the challenge is to contest the self-referential universalism of western paradigms without slipping into self-indulgent particularism, to construct a truly global epistemic universalism.[584]

In summary, the effects of globalisation on academic freedom in higher education are contradictory. In the case studies touched on above, it is evident that in some senses, they can serve to marginalise already marginalised academic communities, or to offer opportunities for overcoming that marginalisation, depending on the extent to which the engagement is based on strong senses of identity and local knowledge and research. As Zeleza points out:

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[581] Tor Halvorsen and Gunnar Guddal Michelson, "Identity formation of knowledge shopping? Globalisation and the future of university education and research in Africa", Unpublished, University of Bergen, 2001, p.7.

[582] Ibid. p.8.

[583] Ambroise Kom, "Redesigning the African university, emerging from subalternity", *CODESRIA Bulletin*, (1&2) 2005, p.7.

[584] Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "Academic freedom in the neo-liberal order: governments, globalization, governance and gender", *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*, 1 (1) 2003, p.176.

> Academics increasingly enjoy mobility between universities and other research sites outside universities, which offer them unprecedented opportunities to form networks, partnerships and alliances that can not only enhance their research capacities but also protect them from the iniquitous tendencies of the academy. There can be little doubt that the proliferation of independent research centres and NGOs has saved many African academics from the penury and repression of their structurally adjusted universities.[585]

In other words, paradoxically, harnessing the positive effects of globalisation may offer the best possibility of ensuring academic freedom rather than resisting those forces and slipping into what Mazrui above called 'cultural autarky'.

3. Globalisation and the South African context

The outline of globalisation in the previous chapter refers to a changed culture within universities, certainly within the Anglo and European contexts from which the arguments have been drawn. While this is not universally the case for developing countries, it does resonate to some extent in the South African context. In the discussion in Chapter Six on globalisation, three somewhat different strands of the thesis were identified; that is, globalisation entailing the commodification of knowledge, the rise of the evaluative state, and the birth of the knowledge society. All of these would have implications for the way universities are managed, and this is most commonly described as an increase in managerialism, the way academics experience their work and form their identities, and the way in which knowledge is packaged and sold. Whether the globalisation thesis, in whichever form, is directly applicable to a South African context is a matter for debate, as explored below. In brief, the question is whether the material conditions in a South African context are sufficiently similar to those in Europe and the United States for the globalisation thesis that arose from those contexts to pertain.

While it is clear that South African higher education pre-1994 was, like the rest of South Africa, somewhat isolated and thus less subject to possible globalising forces, the

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[585] Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "Academic freedom in the neo-liberal order: governments, globalization, governance and gender", *Journal of Higher Education in Africa*, 1 (1) 2003, p.169.

evidence from a variety of sources seems to suggest that many of the main trends and implications of globalisation have indeed become manifest in South African higher education in a very short time. To examine this debate, I have focused mainly on the area of the introduction of quality assurance to assess to what extent globalising patterns are applicable in the South African higher education context, and which versions of the globalisation thesis is most applicable. The role of the state is crucial here: does the case of the introduction of quality assurance most resemble a roll-back of the state and a surrender to market forces, an evaluative state model, or does the globalisation thesis not pertain because the material conditions are so different to other contexts?

3.1 Globalisation and quality assurance in South Africa

Technically, quality assurance in higher education in South Africa is not carried out directly by the state (other than through the accountability regimes of the Department of Education), but chiefly by an independent statutory body, the Council on Higher Education and its permanent sub-committee, the Higher Education Quality Committee. However, from the perspective of institutions, and academics who may be experiencing a loss of autonomy, this body is simply one of the external sources of threat to autonomy, and its legal relation to, or independence from, the state has little bearing on their experience. The external terrain for institutions of higher education is inordinately complex, with a range of bodies dealing with similar processes. As an example, for an institution to gain approval for the mounting of a new programme, three different external entities are involved: the Department of Education for funding approval and a determination that the programme fits into the institution's Programme and Qualification Mix (PQM), the HEQC for two phases of approval on quality grounds, and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), for the registration of qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework.

However, the HEQC and its policies are arguably the closest of the external influences to the academic terrain, both in role – in being part of the CHE, which has the statutory function of acting as a buffer body between the institutions and the state – and in nature, in that it conceives of itself as an academic entity, carrying out research as well as its quality assurance functions. This is evidenced in its having a web domain

suffix normally reserved for academic institutions (che.ac.za), and in the senior staffing of the organisation, who have largely been drawn from the intellectual left of universities that were steeped in the 'struggle'.[586] Despite its left intellectual leanings, it is charged by state legislation with carrying out functions which lend themselves to the use of 'conservative tools' (see Lange below), such as accreditation processes and monitoring and evaluation through benchmarking and performance indicators. It is thus a complex case study, embodying the tensions inherent in advancing an implementation agenda to achieve quality (increasingly understood as efficiency and effectiveness) as well as pursuing social justice goals, such as the achievement of greater equity in the system. My argument is that the path taken by this body, arguably the closest of the statutory monitoring bodies to the academic terrain, but also an advisor to the Minister of Education, in its struggles to balance competing interests gives some indication of the tenor and direction of higher education policy implementation of the state.

At a colloquium in 2004 organised by the Council on Higher Education commemorating the first decade of democratic government in South Africa, Bundy (who had been a Vice-Chancellor in South Africa and who is currently in university management in the United Kingdom), commenting on his UK experience, quipped that, "In my weaker moments, I find myself wondering if there is a civil service unit somewhere in the bowels of Westminster charged with the enactment of *The Postmodern Condition*.[587] Bundy was commenting on his experience of a pervasive and far-reaching culture of external audit and internal compliance, manifesting in "an intricate grammar of requirements and measurements [that] rests on a self-justificatory vocabulary of quality and best-practice and accountability"[588]. He writes that:

> At SOAS we submit annually torrents of data on students: how many enrol, drop out, complete, and with what grades; we report on their age, their ethnicity, on how many

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[586] From personal knowledge.

[587] Colin Bundy, "Global patterns, local options? Changes in higher education internationally and some implications for South Africa", *Kagisano*, 4, 2006, p.1. Bundy is Principal and Director, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London, and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, University of London. Previously he was Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Witwatersrand.

[588] Ibid. p.6.

come from certain postcode districts – and we repeat the exercise for faculty and staff, for classroom size and occupancy rates – and for much else besides.[589]

Bundy locates the source of external pressures on higher education in the United Kingdom as both the state and the market. He writes that:

> The defining characteristic of the governance system is 'steering at a distance' – a combination of central control and decentralised authority. Universities are simultaneously deregulated (that is, permitted to become more entrepreneurial and more competitive) and more effectively regulated, through compliance with centrally set norms. Institutions and individuals are in Foucault's words 'caused to behave' in ways consistent with desired outcomes.[590]

The link here with Lyotard's 'performativity' thesis is clear. He notes the intensification of managerialism at an institutional level. He writes further that:

> Because universities raid the same conceptual larder as the policy makers, they tend to replicate on the campus most of the features identified at the national level. Thus decentralised units compete for funding tied to centrally determined targets or benchmarks, performance is quantified and rewarded accordingly, and an 'ethos of beratement and surveillance' is replicated locally. The logic of performativity penetrates the campus and the corridors, creating 'a climate of unease and hyperactivity'.[591]

Bundy suggests that the trends he has identified – these being pressures on the university from the state, the market, and changes in the production of knowledge – are affecting universities globally in a process of convergence or mimesis. Using this lens, he analyses the South African higher education system, noting that after the isolationist years prior to 1994, the experience of higher education has

> seemed like a film projected at fast speed: the sequence is recognisable, but seems jerky, exaggerated and frenetic. It is only in the past decade that HEIs have been required to submit strategic plans to government, to contemplate quality assurance, to envisage funding tied to outcomes, or have their student and staffing profiles monitored against targets. They now compete with each other, especially for student places; but also with a burgeoning and unprecedented private sector. HEIs comply with new forms of governance, experiment with different delivery modes, admit vastly different student bodies, and tailor curricula and qualifications to a National

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[589] Colin Bundy, "Global patterns, local options? Changes in higher education internationally and some implications for South Africa", *Kagisano*, 4, 2006, p.6.

[590] Ibid. p.6.

[591] Ibid. p.7. The quoted phrases he uses come from Louise Morley, *Quality and Power in Higher Education*, Maidenhead, SRHE and Open University Press, 2003, p.160, and Chris Shore and Susan Wright, "Coercive accountability: the rise of audit culture in higher education", in Strathern, M. (ed), *Audit Cultures: Anthropological studies in accountability, ethics and the academy*, London, Routledge, 2000, p.72.

Qualifications Framework. Simply to enumerate these changes indicates the accelerated similarity of what has occurred in South Africa with what has taken place over a longer period elsewhere.[592]

He outlines further the three pillars of post-apartheid higher education policy, that is, massification to increase participation, greater responsiveness, and increased cooperation and partnerships, and in his assessment of the extent to which these have been achieved, he finds them wanting. Very broadly, he postulates that this may the result of a neo-liberal policy implementation agenda having taken precedence over social justice imperatives.

Without offering firm conclusions on the issues, he poses a set of questions needing consideration:

- What are the implications for higher education institutions in South Africa? "Within your institutions, how far have similar changes or notions already affected your working lives – and are they likely to accelerate?"
- "To what extent does the South African government's macro-economic strategy, its stated assumptions and priorities, indicate that a local wrapping of the global policy package is likely? Do discursive shifts towards 'efficiency', 'planning' and 'benchmarks' move the system closer towards the global patterns?" He notes that this is a crucial question, given that there is a policy tension in South Africa between equity and development.
- Is differentiation with respect to South African higher education institutions to occur according to "institutional mission, market allocation or by policy directives (central steering)?"
- "Will South African higher education become subject to the negative aspects associated with the audit culture everywhere? Is it possible to introduce a national qualifications system, the HEQC, and the monitoring and evaluation measures inherent in the funding/planning nexus, without importing in addition a whole set of unintended consequences?"

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[592] Colin Bundy, "Global patterns, local options? Changes in higher education internationally and some implications for South Africa", *Kagisano*, 4, 2006, p.10.

- "If massification, marketisation and managerialism have impacted significantly upon the academic profession elsewhere, will the same happen in South Africa? Will academics here experience a similar relative decline in salaries, less secure conditions of employment, less autonomy, and less esteem?" Also, "will South African universities be able to produce, develop and retain a new and demographically representative generation of scholars – or will a haemorrhage of talent to private sector and state opportunities thwart this goal?"

- "Will the post-merger landscape generate real institutional differentiation, or a newly sedimented set of winners and losers? ... Can the very real local issues of post-apartheid South Africa be translated into progressive policy outcomes, or will they be subject to the globalising tendencies of the post-industrial world?"[593]

Despite these being posed as challenging questions, the subtext of Bundy's address is that South Africa, like other countries in the world, stands to be affected by the same globalising tendencies observed in higher education elsewhere. Bundy's paper served as a warning about what the future (if not the present) holds for South African higher education institutions and policy implementation which is likely to follow inexorably down well-trodden paths. While all of these questions are pertinent to this thesis, it is the fourth that underlies this project, that is, the extent to which an audit culture is becoming a defining characteristic of higher education in South Africa and what implications this has for academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

The responses to his paper from members of the Council on Higher Education and other higher education bodies in South Africa[594] range from further engagement to critique and defence. Lange of the CHE takes issue with analyses of higher education, including Bundy's, that she argues lack "a political economy of higher education", or an analysis of the causes of the identified trends such as marketisation of academic offerings. In essence, she argues that it is asociological to extrapolate analyses from higher education systems in advanced capitalist societies to developing countries, given their very different material underpinnings. "There are specific tensions and

[593] Colin Bundy, "Global patterns, local options? Changes in higher education internationally and some implications for South Africa", *Kagisano*, 4, 2006, pp.18-20.

[594] For example, the papers in *Kagisano*, 4, 2006.

contradictions that make South Africa's 'postmodernity' very different from the UK's", she writes.[595]

Another concern she raises is with the conception of higher education institutions themselves, and their perceived lack of agency. She writes further:

> Universities are presented as divorced from their own history. It is as if change had taken place out of bureaucratic whim rather than the result of a socio-political process in which higher education institutions have played an active part. It often seems that we have forgotten that the massification of higher education was a response to broad political and social phenomena.[596]

Lange argues that the institution/state relationship in South Africa is very different from advanced capitalist societies and suggests that an updated theory of the state (particularly in South Africa) is needed to help understand the complexities of a very particular situation. In other words, the argument advanced is that 'performativity' as experienced in the United Kingdom is not inexorably the future of South African higher education, for the reasons that the material conditions are different and that institutions have some agency in shaping their histories. With this argument in mind, she defends the need for 'measurement methodologies' to be developed in a rapidly transforming society in order to track the extent of changes at system level, and argues, in outlining the CHE's conceptualisation and practice of monitoring, that it is possible to achieve progressive ends using "tools with conservative origins".[597]

Lange argues that the CHE embraced the critique of the evaluative state and saw monitoring not so much as accountability, though this was present in the proposed framework, but as self-reflection and the generation of knowledge about higher education, with progressive and reflective thought and action as the intended outcome. "This conceptualisation of monitoring was informed by an ethical conception that operates counter to postmodern wisdom: there is truth (that can be known) and there is good – particularly, there is a public good".[598]

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[595] Lis Lange, "Symbolic policy and 'performativity': South African higher education between the devil and the deep blue sea", *Kagisano*, 4, 2006, pp.42-43.

[596] Ibid. p.44.

[597] Ibid. p.40.

[598] Ibid. p.47.

Similarly, Mala Singh mounts an impassioned defence of the work of the HEQC, arguing that key role players in South African higher education have "more than a passing acquaintance with the literature on globalisation and neo-liberalism in higher education"[599] and also experience "disquiet about the negative versions of local versions of global trends in higher education."[600] However, she takes issue with Bundy's assessment that some of the directions taken in national policy, despite tilting towards pragmatism, indicate an inevitable slide towards "the service of neo-liberal imperatives".[601] In outlining some of the policy choices made in the development of the South African quality assurance system, she attempts to demonstrate that the progressive objectives of the restructuring process were uppermost in determining directions taken. She gives five examples of such choices:

- The HEQC's choice to apply a common set of quality requirements across all the different types of higher education institutions. This was done to "forge a common set of reference points for quality even as institutional missions grew more distinctive, in this way supporting the striving for a more enabling and more even capacitated national system of higher education."

- The introduction of a comprehensive capacity development programme in quality assurance, linked to equity and development objectives.

- The inclusion of 'fitness of purpose' in the understanding of quality used by the HEQC, meaning that institutions need to demonstrate their progress towards the achievement of national transformational objectives. This was "a way of locating the quality issue in the social and political purposes of the restructuring."

- The inclusion of community engagement in the quality assurance frame of reference. In this "the HEQC has opted to conceptualise quality as part of a larger social project to re-imagine and reconfigure higher education" to order to

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[599] Mala Singh, "Bundy blues: contradictions and choices in South African higher education", *Kagisano*, 4, 2006, p.66. Singh is the Executive Director, Higher Education Quality Committee, Council on Higher Education.

[600] Ibid. p.67.

[601] Ibid. p.68.

achieve the progressive purposes which are stipulated in many policy documents.

- As an independent statutory body the HEQC has an advisory role in terms of system-level trends and can point to "gaps and contradictions not only in institutional policy and practice but also in that of the state."[602]

As she concludes, "At the level of policy intent, there is a strong orientation towards achieving social justice goals as part of the broader framework of reconstruction".[603] However, given that the implementation phase is still fairly recent, and that South African policy realities are complex and messy, in her view it is premature to make what she calls "Bundy's quick and easy link of quality assurance to the descent into neo-liberalism in the restructuring agenda.[604]

The above debate sets up an interesting question regarding to what extent the effects of globalisation and the advent of marketisation and managerialism apply to South African higher education, or if the situation here is indeed so different in material conditions, so complex, and so infused with the transformational agenda, that the progressive goals of higher education on which both monitoring and evaluation and quality assurance are founded, will prevail. As Singh notes, implementation is still in its early phase. The real question is to what extent the insights, nuances and intentions of a relatively small cadre of informed policy-makers will be evident in the further reaches of implementation, and how much will be lost in translation to a larger group and several levels of policy implementers.

Singh argues that the role of academics, researchers and students in engaging with quality issues is "critical to preventing a total lapse into quality compliance", but so too is the context in which the high-level goals and processes of quality assurance are introduced. Where institutions are labouring under a plethora of new requirements and expectations, which then are translated downwards within institutions increasingly being

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[602] Mala Singh, "Bundy blues: contradictions and choices in South African higher education", *Kagisano*, 4, 2006, pp.70-73.

[603] Ibid. p.73.

[604] Ibid. p.74.

run on managerial lines, to an overloaded academic body with low morale, the prospects for real engagement are low and the likelihood of compliance high.

While the policy-makers have clearly set out to try to avoid the pitfalls of quality assurance in introducing it to South Africa, there is much stacked against them in being able to introduce a system that engenders self-reflection in an uninhibited way. This has partly to do with the nature of quality assurance and its theoretical underpinnings – Lange speaks of "conservative tools" – and indeed, there is little in the origins of quality assurance elsewhere that speaks to social justice and a transformation agenda – and partly to do with the scale of the implementation required and the difficulty of navigating a developmental course through the expectations of a variety of stakeholders – the state, the public, the students, the academics, and the institutional managers, to name a few.

3.2 Globalisation and the curriculum

Quality assurance is the area most amenable to corporate and measurement-oriented processes, yet in other aspects of higher education more generally, it can be argued that the influences of globalisation can be felt. This is no less true for curriculum than for other areas of higher education.

In terms of the so-called commodification of knowledge, higher education in South Africa has, as elsewhere, been subject to both government-inspired and spontaneous changes in nature and form. The post-1994 drive to modularise and standardise curriculum offerings in order to register them on a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and ensure portability and transferability of credits is one example. This was recognised as early as 1998, with Bertelson remarking that:

> Market norms also require the transformation of curriculum (a running course of study) into user-friendly 'modules' (units of measurement) on the mix and match principle of the supermarket. To this end, a myriad 'interdisciplinary' programmes are presently being produced on orders from management in a process that is revolutionising learning and instruction… the new-found passion for interdisciplinarity is without question of a piece with cuts in expenditure, mergers and rationalisation and is driven by economic expediency. It is no coincidence that such programmes

become the new regulatory idea and central policy of the institution, its major project for the new millennium, in a moment of financial austerity.[605]

Bertelson here thus links changes in curriculum structure and fiscal discipline in an argument that is reminiscent of the beginning of the radical changes in British higher education in the 1980s. She argues that while restructuring (interdisciplinary programmes) is done under the plausibly democratic rhetoric of 'transformation', "the change this language is used to legitimate is essentially market-driven."[606]

3.3 Globalisation and higher education policy

Cloete *et al*, in analysing the policy processes post-1994 in South Africa, make the very strong argument that while specific changes in policy are uniquely South African, in general they "fit the global higher education reform trends" associated with globalisation.[607] One of these is the emphasis on increasing efficiency in conditions of financial austerity, that is, doing more with less, in the context of the new macro-economic policy framework of Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR). The repackaging of higher education brought about by the introduction of the NQF and the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), was also partly an attempt to fit curriculum offerings to the perceived needs of the market, the market in this case being defined by skills shortages in the workforce. There were also many attempts to make higher education more penetrable by the market, for instance, in the setting up of an elaborate machinery of standards-setting and monitoring bodies associated with SAQA and Sectoral Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) which had extensive representation on them by external constituencies, with the academic sector being represented by only one voice among many. Similarly, in the governance of higher education institutions, the influence of the market through employer and other external representation on governing councils has increased, and the role of Senates similarly

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[605] Eve Bertelson, "The real transformation: the marketisation of higher education", *Social Dynamics*, 24 (2) 1998, pp.149-150.

[606] Ibid. p.150.

[607] Peter Maassen and Nico Cloete, "Global reform trends in higher education", in Cloete, N., Maassen, P. et al (eds), *Transformation in Higher Education: Global Pressures and Local Realities*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006, p.30.

decreased.[608] Cloete and Kulati write that "the new legislative framework, which coupled market competition with the emergence of new public management, put enormous pressure on institutions to devise new ways of managing what were becoming more diverse and very complex institutions".[609] Within five years, institutions were expected to dramatically increase access, diversify income streams, reconfigure missions to meet the needs of a globalising economy, forge new relationships with other knowledge producers and bring about transformation in a democratic, consultative manner.[610]

This list of challenges is not dissimilar to the challenges faced elsewhere over a longer period of time, as described in the first sections of this chapter, with the express difference of the injunction to transform and to achieve equity and redress. Indeed, the social justice aspect is the most distinguishing feature of the South African higher education policy context, and exists in tension with other, more globalisation-specific goals. The question is whether these goals can be achieved simultaneously. As Muller writes:

> Diverse as these 'transformation' policies are, they all face in one of two directions: they are directed towards equity and access … on the one hand; or innovation and economic development on the other … The redemptive longings driving higher education transformation in South Africa are salvation from the dead hand of apartheid on the one hand … and progress towards global economic competitiveness on the other. These two longings anchor the political theology of restructuring in South Africa.[611]

Cloete outlines the social justice aspect of post-1994 higher education policy development, where one of the main intended outcomes was the achievement of equity and redress, both at an individual and at an institutional level. In his analysis, the policies

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[608] Cloete and Kulati report cases in which academics have expressed outrage over "the council expanding its jurisdiction over financial matters to the appointment, or dismissal, of the vice-chancellor without adequately involving the senate, not to mention other stakeholders." Nico Cloete and Tembile Kulati, "Managerialism within a framework of cooperative governance?", in Amaral, A., Meek, V.L. et al, *The Higher Education Managerial Revolution?*, Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2003, p.244.

[609] Ibid. p.233.

[610] Ibid. p.233.

[611] Johann Muller, "Knowledge and the limits to institutional restructuring: the case of South Africa", p.1 quoted in Bundy, C., "Global patterns, local options? Changes in higher education internationally and some implications for South Africa", *Kagisano*, 4, 2006, p.15.

adopted had unintended consequences, resulting in "a more elite public higher education system: while the student population became dramatically more black, this was against an overall decrease in participation rates. Effectively this meant that while the complexion of the elite had changed, the gap between 'those with' and 'those without' higher education had not decreased."[612] He argues that this confirms one of Castell's assessments of the effects of globalisation, that is, an increase in inequality. In Cloete's view, the effect of following policies geared to a globalising agenda has been a serious downgrade in the achievement of the transformation goals of the system. Bertelson concurs, noting of restructuring in the higher education system that, "While a residue of progressive rhetoric serves to legitimate this transformation, it is the norms of corporate management that are reconstituting collegial relations, and budgetary and market pressures that are transforming teaching and research."[613]

3.4 Globalisation and managerialism

One of the most obvious phenomena attributed to globalisation is an increase in so-called managerialism. For Enslin et al, managerialism means an

> obsession with certain quantifiable kinds of efficiency, a tendency to require people to report on their activities more frequently than is appropriate and in ways that trivialize the nature of academic work, such as form-filling for compliance with criteria that are not the products of deliberation focused on the practices in question, and to that extent lack legitimacy … External bodies of regulation and control are also prone to managerial tendencies.[614]

The perceived rise in managerialism in South African higher education is well-documented and there are increasing complaints regarding an increased incidence of managerialism at South African institutions that are linked to the globalisation thesis.[615]

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[612] Nico Cloete, "New South African realities", in Cloete, N., Maassen, P. et al (eds), *Transformation in Higher Education: Global Pressures and Local Realities*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006, p.273.

[613] Eve Bertelson, "The real transformation: the marketisation of higher education", *Social Dynamics*, 24 (2) 1998, p.154.

[614] Penny Enslin, Shirley Pendlebury and Mary Tjiattas, "Knaves, knights and fools in the academy: bureaucratic control, social justice and academic work", *Journal of Education*, 31, August 2003, p.80.

[615] See John Higgins, "Inefficient efficiency", Getting Ahead in *Mail and Guardian*, 23 (33), August 17-23, 2007, p.1 in which he argues that in South Africa, managerial practices are working to distort academic reality and undermining quality in teaching through inappropriate measurement, and Peter Stewart,

As an example discussed in Chapter Five, the University of KwaZulu-Natal, a recently-merged institution catering for some 40 000-odd students across five campuses in the KwaZulu-Natal region of South Africa, recently experienced strike action by staff in which the main issues revolved around the perceived increase in managerialism at that University. The complaints regarding managerialism, however, come from across the spectrum of higher education institutions, many of them being linked to the rise of external regulatory systems that are discussed in the following chapter.

In a study undertaken of governance in South African higher education in 2002, Hall *et al* found that at least a third of institutions could be described as "management-focused" institutions, with some others in the main being democratic institutions.[616] Interestingly, the complaints regarding managerialism above also come from what Hall *et al* then categorised as democratic institutions, suggesting that perceived managerialism has become more widespread in the last five years. Hall *et al* also identify different management styles, from the purely entrepreneurial to reformed collegialism to transformative managerialism. Managerial or entrepreneurial leadership is characterised by an objective to become more competitive, the adoption of corporate management principles, centralised leadership, sophisticated management support systems, and a highly competent middle management layer. "Where others talk in terms of threats and survival in the face of globalisation and fierce competition from the emerging private higher education sector, the buzz here is about exploiting niches and developing partnerships."[617] Reformed collegialists, while pursuing transformation goals, tend to put the intellectual agenda of higher education at the centre of the change strategies, while 'transformative managerialists' drive transformation from the centre. Cloete and Kulati write that:

"Academics in the shadow of corporate managerialism", Getting Ahead in *Mail and Guardian*, 23 (33) August 17-23, 2007, pp.4-6.

[616] Martin Hall, Ashley Symes and Thierry M. Luesscher, *Governance in South African Higher Education*, Pretoria, CHE, 2002.

[617] Nico Cloete and Tembile Kulati, "Managerialism within a framework of cooperative governance?", in Amaral, A., Meek, V.L. et al, *The Higher Education Managerial Revolution?*, Dordrecht, Kluwer, 2003, p.235.

In order to push the transformation agenda through the institution, decision-making is centralised, decentralised and re-centralised. This is done by expanding the top leadership group to include executive deans and certain professionals, such as finance or human resource directors. Key strategic decisions are taken by this group, and the deans become the implementers at faculty level.[618]

Thus, in responding to different stimuli, whether the market or the transformation agenda, many South African institutions of higher education are exhibiting increasingly centralised management, increasing outsourcing of support functions and increasing gaps between the salaries of top managers and senior professors.[619]

In commentary on university governance in South Africa, there is sometimes a tendency to equate managerialism with bad management and with arguments against particular managers couched in anti-managerialist terms. However, it is arguable that anti-managerialist arguments may mask a different but related concern, one which Jansen names as the declining credibility of academic leadership. He points to the number of leadership crises there have been in South African higher education institutions. He writes that:

The appointment of leaders by councils explains much of the unravelling of stable institutions: persons were appointed because of their political credentials in many places, because of ethnic loyalties in others, and because of sheer corrupt practices in a few. As a result, higher education got what it deserved: a brand of mediocre managers without the three characteristics that distinguish world-class university leaders: the credibility of personal scholarship, the capacity for people management and consciousness of the global knowledge economy.[620]

4. Conclusion

Authoritarianism and incompetence are simply signs of poor management, whether orientated to managerialist practices or not. With that very important caveat, it is still clear that globalisation has spawned managerialist practices and tendencies in a

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[618] Nico Cloete and Tembile Kulati, "Managerialism within a framework of cooperative governance?", in Amaral, A., Meek, V.L. et al, *The Higher Education Managerial Revolution?*, Dordrecht, Kluwer, 2003, p.239.

[619] Ibid. p.247.

significant proportion of higher education institutions in South Africa, with an increasing orientation towards viewing "higher education as a commodity-providing service in which needs and priorities can be measured and monitored."[621] The measuring and monitoring aspect of the so-called new managerialism in South Africa is examined in the next chapter in discussing the implementation of quality assurance.

While Cloete and Kulati point out that in South Africa a large range of governance arrangements and management styles in response to globalisation and transformation imperatives has developed, not all of which could be classified as managerialism, managerialism is clearly evident in the system. They conclude that "the task ahead seems not to be to counter managerialism with a knee-jerk return to collegiality, but to start identifying lessons from some of the very innovative strategies and structures that are developing in different countries … in response to the new changing world."[622] Bundy's way forward is similar. He writes:

> The central challenge, to administrators as much as to academics, is to contest the excesses of managerialism, conserve the successes of management, and reconstruct the purpose, worth and value of the university. More concretely, what space exists for academics and administrators to refashion forms of governance that support rather than inhibit the kinds of research and teaching that universities do supremely well? The available solution (it seems to me) is dialectical. It confronts the reality of more highly managed universities, but interrogates and resists the logic of managerialism. If we are critical of the (mis)fit between managerialism and academy, we must identify and then work within its contradictions.[623]

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[620] Jonathan Jansen, "On the state of South African universities", *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 17 (3) 2003, p.10.

[621] Colin Bundy, "Under new management? A critical history of managerialism in British universities", in Walker, M. and Nixon, J. (eds), *Reclaiming Universities from a Runaway World*, Maidenhead, SRHE and Open University Press, 2004, p.164.

[622] Nico Cloete and Tembile Kulati, "Managerialism within a framework of cooperative governance?", in Amaral, A., Meek, V.L. et al, *The Higher Education Managerial Revolution?*, Dordrecht, Kluwer, 2003, p.249.

[623] Colin Bundy, "Under new management? A critical history of managerialism in British universities", in Walker, M. and Nixon, J. (eds), *Reclaiming Universities from a Runaway World*, Maidenhead, SRHE and Open University Press, 2004, pp.170-171.

Indeed, there are strong arguments indicating that managerialist practices, that is, a tendency towards greater measurement of performance through criterion-based systems and the management of objectives through strategic planning and performance indicators, is on the rise in South African higher education, as in other systems elsewhere. Bundy's dialectical solution suggests that a certain level of managerialism is necessary to manage complex institutions in a globalising age, but that efforts need to be made to tailor and limit managerialist practices in favour of developing specifically academic solutions to the problems it poses. These would include perceived levels of autonomy of academic staff within institutions implementing more stringent accountability measures, as an example.

While the above discussion advances the argument that globalisation is having an effect on higher education in South Africa in a variety of areas; quality assurance, policy, curriculum, governance and institutional culture, it is also clear that it has particular manifestations in this context, and that institutions, and indeed, individuals have some level of agency to take particular directions within the constraints of overall external tendencies. Part of the globalisation/managerialism problematic is that as a phenomenon it is perceived as something that is carried out by managers to render academics docile and manageable. A rethinking of management itself is needed, with a new emphasis on management as service, and a conceptualisation of management competence and efficiency as essential for the effective facilitation of the academic endeavour. The status of academics needs to be elevated, and the systems that support them made more efficient, not for the sake of the systems themselves, but to ensure that academics become less regarded as measurable widgets and better recognised as the source of the knowledge generation that gives academia its distinctive identity.

Chapter Eight

Academic freedom and performativity – the case of the introduction of quality assurance in higher education in South Africa

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'That's why I believe', he paused, in order for the word to carry the right element of force, 'that introducing a more rational system of planning and accountability to our schools and departments will be like a breath of fresh air that will sweep [this university] successfully into the twenty-first century.' 'Yes', he said, answering himself like a boomerang, 'that's the key principle here. We must have a New System for a New Age.'

A. Oakley, "Overheads"

1. Introduction

In the South African debates on academic freedom and institutional autonomy explored in Chapter Three, it was evident that one of the main questions commentators have been seeking to answer is "from whence do threats to institutional autonomy and academic freedom originate?" For some, as discussed previously, it is the state that is following a democratic centralist strategy, and which is, in the interests of securing a rapid transformation of the entire higher education system, systematically eroding institutional autonomy through legislation and bureaucratic demands for compliance. This is seen to manifest itself in the amendments to the Higher Education Act, the Programme and Qualification Mix (PQM) exercise, the new funding formula, enrolment capping, the carrying out of institutional mergers, the prescriptions relating to programme design in terms of the National Qualifications Framework, and the experience of quality processes such as National Reviews of specific programmes (MBA, Med, etc), programme accreditation processes and external institutional quality audit. For others,

and du Toit has been most vocal in this, the threat emanates from incipient managerialism within institutions, from a changed organisational culture and from the increasing commercialisation of higher education.

My argument is that this is a false dichotomy – the real question is not whether the threats are external or internal, but how are they linked, and how they combine to affect academic freedom and institutional autonomy. In Chapter Six, I suggested that the theory of the evaluative state provided a theoretical link between the increasing importance of market forces as a coordinator of higher education, and the performativity measures adopted by the state in a bid to increase the competitiveness of higher education institutions. Both are informed by rationality in the narrow sense of increasing efficiency, effectiveness and output. In using an adaptation of Clark's triad of state, market and higher education authority, I suggested that the state is both gaining and losing power vis-à-vis higher education simultaneously. In this chapter, I examine this conundrum in relation to higher education in South Africa by unpacking one area of policy implementation, that is, the quality assurance area, to examine and assess the so-called external threat. In my concluding chapter, I then assess, having examined actual situations, to what extent the theoretical grid of understandings of academic freedom and institutional autonomy is useful in aiding a deeper understanding of the issues, dilemmas, and complexities surrounding academic freedom in South Africa to emerge.

In this chapter thus, in examining the quality assurance area in particular, I outline briefly the different conceptualisations of quality used in the available literature on the debates about quality. Secondly, I extrapolate the implications of these concep-tualisations for higher education in South Africa generally, and present a brief history of the implementation of quality assurance in the South African context. Finally, I examine the role of quality assurance as one of the suggested multitude of instances of an increase in state intervention in higher education in South Africa, which has implications for institutional autonomy.

2. Understandings of quality

In this section, I examine different understandings of quality, focusing on those that underlie the HEQC's approach, in order to develop a theoretical orientation through the quality discourse, and to present an argument that the origins of particular concepts tend to predominate, even where attempts have been made to use them differently.[624]

Though the uses of 'quality' are sufficiently various and nuanced to avoid easy categorisation, in a seminal study of the available British and American literature on the subject, Lee Harvey and Diana Green of the University of Central England in Birmingham[625] identified five broad categories of conceptualisations of quality, which over the last decade have routinely been used to frame understandings of quality by academics and quality agencies alike. This is a useful starting point in attempting to understand the influences on the HEQC's approach to quality assurance, and where it attempts to set itself apart from the trajectory warned against by Bundy.

2.1 Quality as exceptional

The first category identified by Harvey and Green is one in which quality is by definition seen as something exceptional. Within this category, they outline three variations of this conceptualisation. Firstly, there is the traditional notion of quality – that is, that quality is exclusive, distinctive, inaccessible to most and intuitively recognisable without it having to be assessed. In this view one instinctively recognises it and accepts it, as one would a quality brandy, for instance. In higher education in Britain, this would pertain to the widespread recognition of an Oxbridge education as a quality one. The

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[624] Much of the discussion on concepts of quality was covered in Denyse Webbstock, "Concepts of quality in higher education", SAAAD Conference, Port Elizabeth, 1993, unpublished.

[625] Lee Harvey and Diana Green, "Defining quality", *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 18 (1) 1993, pp.9-34.

concept is an elitist one; quality exists on the basis of reputation and is assured by the very fact that it is available only to a very few.

Similarly, there is 'quality' as 'excellence', which relies less on instinctive knowing or recognising, than on 'exceeding high standards'. Such standards are necessarily attainable only in limited circumstances; that is, with the best students, best teachers, and most resources. Centres of excellence, or in other words, the best resourced, are, in this view, by virtue of their good resourcing, quality institutions, which gain reputations and thereby attract more resources. This is a conceptualisation which is not focused on the quality of the teaching and learning process per se, but on the reputation of the 'outputs'.

A third notion of 'quality' in this category is one drawn from industry – that is, that quality exists where the product has been checked against certain standards set by an outside monitoring body. These standards are then used to compare products. Harvey and Green write of this notion that "the standards approach to quality implies that quality is improved if standards are raised. A product that meets a higher standard is a higher quality product..."[626] The implication for higher education is that ensuring quality means making sure that existing standards are maintained and that "an upper second class degree in engineering continues to mean at least what it always has..."[627]

In examining these three variations, a number of observations and implications become apparent. Firstly, all three of these are absolutist in some way. The first, the traditional notion, implies that quality is an absolute which is self-evident. There is a characteristic called quality, to which institutions aspire, and which they may or may not attain, but in any event, quality is recognisable. This would seem to deny the possibility that quality is value-laden, or context-dependent, and is indicative of the certainties of a modernist age.

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[626] Lee Harvey and Diana Green, "Defining quality", *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 18 (1) 1993, p.13.

[627] Ibid. p.14.

Secondly, an implication of the above observations is that these are inherently conservative notions, as 'quality' as 'standards' is based on taken-for-granted views of existing standards by which institutions are judged. These conceptualisations offer few clues as to how to renegotiate the consensus reached on what are seen as universally applicable notions of academic excellence.

Thirdly, though this is a pervasive conceptualisation of quality, it is ultimately not a very useful one for evaluation purposes. It is a conceptualisation which does not offer criteria whereby quality can be assessed, only intuitively recognised. Even where the notion is inextricably related to standards, (one can measure against standards), the standards themselves are seen as absolutes and have no criteria against which they can be assessed.

Fourthly, the implication of at least two of the variations in this category is that quality cannot exist where the resources are not 'of the highest standard'. In other words, in this vision, an institution which does not enrol the top students cannot be a quality one. This is a contestable notion, as it seems not to allow the possibility that quality is relative to particular goals and missions set. Furthermore, as Moodie points out, it is not useful to think of quality as 'meeting high standards' as "conventional or accepted standards, in changing circumstances, may become the enemy of high quality (as established rules of composition or harmony are sometimes said to inhibit musical creativity)." It must not be forgotten, according to Moodie, that criteria for deciding whether a standard is met may well diverge from those appropriate to judgements of quality.[628]

The main concern with all of the conceptions of quality as something exceptional, relate to their roots in the liberal, modernist consensus of higher education in another age, a consensus that has increasingly become contested. It is certainly the idea of quality that accompanies understandings of academic freedom and institutional autonomy in Quadrants One and Three – leave academics alone and they will know best how to produce quality education, as evidenced in the reputations of their institutions and their graduates. It is indeed a common-sense notion of quality that is difficult to

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[628] Graeme Moodie (ed), *Standards and Criteria in Higher Education*, Guildford, SRHE and NFER-Nelson, 1986, p.4.

African Higher Education Quality Committee. In this view, quality is judged by "the extent to which the product or service fits its purpose".[631] This 'fitness for purpose' definition is a functional one rather than an exceptional one. Quality is identified in terms of the extent to which a product or service meets either the specifications of the customer or its institutional mission.

In the 'customer specifications' view, it is the customer who "must decide whether or not the product or service is of a quality suited to his or her own purposes or requirements; the supplier must establish a system and an organisation which is capable of producing products or services to the specifications identified; and an external agency or panel is also often involved."[632] While it is not necessarily immediately clear how this applies to higher education (who is the customer? what is the product? whose quality?), attempts have been made to do so.[633] The application of these views of quality to higher education has usually taken the form of particular methodologies for quality management systems derived from industry. Examples of these are the British Standards Institution (BS5750) taken from the British Defence industry, and Total Quality Management (TQM), which is derived from its widespread use in Japanese industry (although its origins were American). These quality management systems, particularly TQM, have been applied in a number of higher education institutions in the United States and in mainly the service divisions of some British institutions.[634] A TQM approach is premised on the need for customer 'delight' and involves every part of an organisation working closely together motivated by the need to produce or deliver quality.[635] The

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[631] Lee Harvey and Diana Green, "Defining quality", *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 18 (1) 1993, p.16.

[632] Robin Middlehurst, "Quality: an organising principle for higher education?", *Higher Education Quarterly*, 46 (1) 1992, p.22.

[633] Mantz Yorke, "Quality in higher education: a conceptualisation and some observations on the implementation of a sectoral quality system", *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 16 (2) 1992, pp.90-104.

[634] As an example, see L. Franklin's case study, "Quality and Equality: the case of East Birmingham College", *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 16 (1) 1992, pp.34-40.

[635] D. Muller and P. Funnell, "Initiating change in further and vocational education: the vocational approach", *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 16 (1) 1992, pp.41-49.

central concepts in this approach which appear in the literature are; 'customer delight', 'worker ownership', 'enterprise teams' and 'teamwork'.

The third variation on this conceptualisation is quality as 'value for money' – that is, attempting to achieve efficiency and effectiveness, particularly with respect to being accountable for the use to which funding has been put. This conceptualisation has arisen as a result of pressures on institutions to rationalise in the face of increased competition for scarce resources, and the exhortation to improve quality at the same time.[636] Evidence is required, in this view, of the achievement of quality, and this is gathered through the monitoring of performance through the use of performance indicators, such as admissions standards, graduate completion rates, staff/student ratios, teaching skills of staff, indexes of revenues and capital resources, and examination results. Because it is easier to measure efficiency than effectiveness (which has a more qualitative component to it), quality in this view very often becomes synonymous with cost-effectiveness, achieved through greater managerialism.

This leads on to the difficulties associated with these related conceptualisations of quality, that is, 'zero defects' 'fitness for purpose' and 'value for money', all of which derive from industry. The quality management systems based on such understandings have much to do with attempts to change the *kind* of higher education offered, as is the case in Britain where there was a response to a call for education more suited to the employment market. While these conceptualisations may be useful for that purpose, they do not necessarily help to define quality in an all-encompassing way, taking quality beyond efficiency. The fitness for purpose view of quality presupposes that whatever that purpose is, is a non-contentious issue. As Graeme Moodie writes, "it is undeniable that no informed judgement about quality can be made in ignorance of the nature and identity of what is being judged, and that purpose might be one of the characteristics by which nature and identity are specified; but that is by no means the same as defining quality by reference to purpose, or making it depend upon fitness for some known and agreed purpose … the purpose of an institution or activity may be uncertain, controversial or multiple; there may be no way of determining how far a purpose is in fact

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[636] See Ian Bunting, "Rationalisation, quality and efficiency", *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 7 (2) 1993, pp.17-27 on rationalisation in a South African context.

being furthered; and to impose or nominate a purpose from outside might have adverse effects on the institution or activity. An additional, if more straightforward, objection is that the agreed purpose of any institution of learning tends either to be so vague as to provide no guide to action or policy, or so specific as to be no longer agreed and non-trivial."[637]   Despite these potential ambiguities, in higher education, 'fitness for purpose' generally refers to the purpose of the institution as laid out in its mission, vision and goal statements, and has informed most quality assurance systems in higher education.

2.3 Quality as transformation

A further conceptualisation of quality listed by Harvey and Green is that of 'quality' as 'transformation'. This conceptualisation attempts to take 'quality' out of product-centred notions of education. Instead, education is thought of in this view not as a service for a customer, "but [as] an ongoing process of transformation of the participant, be it student or researcher".[638] This conceptualisation has components within it which have become familiar in academic development discourse; those of enhancement and empowerment.

In this view, a quality institution is one that greatly enhances the knowledge skills and abilities of its students, whatever the initial level of their abilities when they enter the institution. An institution which enrols the best students but does little to enhance them greatly, displays less quality than one which has less prepared students to start with and yet manages to enhance them greatly, such that they become empowered. Quality lies thus in the 'value added' to the participants, where adding value is seen as a transformative process.

Empowerment, in this concept, means increasing the confidence and awareness of participants, through, for instance, the development of critical thinking, and through the delegation of responsibility to the participants for the monitoring of their own progress. Furthermore, "empowering the learner, in higher education, means empowering students

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[637] Graeme Moodie (ed), *Standards and Criteria in Higher Education*, Guildford, SRHE and NFER-Nelson, 1986, p.4.

[638] Lee Harvey and Diana Green, "Defining quality", *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 18 (1) 1993, p.24.

and conceding some autonomy to collaborators, such as employers. It involves the consumer in setting standards, endorsing practices, specifying curricula, and so on. Quality is judged by the democratisation of the process, not just the outcome."[639]

For evaluation purposes, whether of an education development programme, teaching and learning in an academic department, or of an institution, the concept of quality as transformation would imply that measuring change quantitatively would not be a sufficient measure of the transformation which had occurred. A better measure would lie in the participants' perceptions of quality. "Learners should be both at the centre of the process by which learning is evaluated and at the centre of the learning process."[640]

Harvey and Green's discussion of this conceptualisation is focused largely on the transformation of the student. In South Africa it has been extrapolated to the transformation of an institution. In such a view, a quality institution would be one that, in changing circumstances, transforms itself in such a way that it adds great value to present levels of education in the country and advances the social redress goals set for the higher education sector.

An important implication of this approach is that quality is not regarded as a monolithic concept. Rather, there are different criteria for different stakeholders, all of which need to be taken into account when assessing for quality, or for a range of qualities. Quality in this view is regarded as relative and context-bound. Traditional notions of quality as something exceptional and easily recognisable presuppose an homogeneous situation, where there exists an understood consensus on what standards are, and what purpose is.

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[639] Lee Harvey and Diana Green, "Defining quality", *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, 18 (1) 1993, p.27.

[640] Ibid. p.25.

3. Quality in the South African context

In South Africa, 'purpose' is a contentious issue, although there appears to be some agreement among key policy role-players that a social purpose in assisting with the transformation project is fundamental. However, there are some voices in the academic freedom debate that argue that "academic debate has its own inherent, global authority and is not answerable to administrative, bureaucratic or political agendas from inside or outside the academy".[641] Kotecha too, as Acting CEO of Higher Education South Africa (HESA)[642], turns to Cardinal Newman for inspiration in response to Bundy's address discussed in the previous chapter, and argues for a resuscitation of the understanding of the university as an intellectual space somewhat separate from society, in which institutional autonomy is protected. She thereby reaffirms the liberal view of the purpose of higher education. She writes that "institutional autonomy can be partly understood … as the dividing off of a space – the university – which will allow … engagement to occur in the belief that the end result, the graduate, will re-enter civic society for the betterment of that society and armed with 'truth'", noting at the same time, however, that truth and knowledge have undergone transformations in "our collective understanding".[643] These voices are counterposed to the dominant discourse over the last decade, and there are few of them (partly for fear of being associated with a desire for the maintenance of privilege), but as evidenced in the academic freedom debates outlined in Chapter Three, they are beginning to challenge prevailing understandings of the role and purpose of higher education which they would argue are becoming increasingly instrumental.

Nonetheless, since 1994, the purpose of higher education in South Africa, has, in the main policy documents, clearly been linked with a social redress role, with an understanding of higher education as needing to become more embedded in society, pushing it towards the understanding of higher education in Quadrant Four of the

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[641] Christopher Merrett, "Academic freedom and the university in a democratic South Africa", Pietermaritzburg, University of KwaZulu-Natal, unpublished, 2006, p.2.

[642] The body that replaced the former South African Vice-Chancellors' Assocation (SAUVCA) and the Committee of Technikon Principals (CTP).

[643] Piyushi Kotecha, "In name only? The case of the university", *Kagisano*, 4, 2006, p.28; p.33.

academic freedom grid. The National Commission on Higher Education of 1996 (NCHE) posed as the main goals of higher education; increased participation, increased co-operation and partnerships, and greater responsiveness, that is, a "shift of higher education to a more open and interactive system, responding to the social, cultural, political and economic needs of its environment, and adapting itself to the changes in this environment."[644] While the NCHE takes a fairly long-term and open view of "responsiveness", the National Plan of 2001 takes a somewhat more instrumentalist stance in seeing higher education "as a key engine driving and contributing to the reconstruction and development of South African society."[645] The development agenda is paired with an added exhortation to contribute to meeting the challenges posed by globalisation and to the "development of an information society in South Africa both in terms of skills development and research".[646] Quoting the CHE's 2000 Report, *Towards a New Higher Education Landscape,* the National Plan sees these goals as complementary: "Higher education … has immense potential to contribute to the consolidation of democracy and social justice, and the growth and development of the economy … these contributions are complementary."[647] How to navigate the tension between equity goals and development goals is not made clear in the policy frameworks.

In the discussion on different conceptualisation of quality above, three sets of understandings, that is, quality as exceptional, concepts of quality drawn from industry, and quality as transformation, have been examined. As noted above, the first category is aligned with the liberal orientation in higher education which underpins Quadrants One and Three of the academic freedom conceptual grid. The concepts arising from industrial sources are particularly fitting in managerialist approaches to higher education in that the values of efficiency and effectiveness are uppermost. Together, they inform Readings' critique of excellence, a notion he regards as having an "empty referent" – excellent in

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[644] *National Commission on Higher Education Report: A Framework for Transformation*, Pretoria, NCHE, 1996, p.79.

[645] *National Plan for Higher Education*, Department of Education, 2001, Section 1.1.

[646] Ibid.

[647] Ibid.

relation to what?[648] This group of concepts, zero defects, fitness for purpose, and value for money, tend towards what Morley calls "a curious certainty in the midst of a postmodern world"[649]. Quality is defined by a set of criteria, and then measured against that set. Despite that set possibly having been negotiated, in practice and over time, the criteria tend to assume the status of absolutes.

The last conceptualisation, that is, quality as transformation, originally understood as a transformation in student learning, is translated in the South African context as the political project of transformation, and into the understandings of quality underpinning the work of the HEQC as "fitness of purpose", where purpose is seen to be the furthering the transformational goals of the state. In responding to the policy signals, the HEQC in its understanding of quality included three aspects: firstly, 'value for money', which is clearly an efficiency value, secondly, 'fitness for purpose', again, an efficiency and effectiveness goal, but somewhat different from advanced capitalist societies in that there is a two-pronged purpose, that is equity and development, and thirdly, 'fitness of purpose', which, as Singh notes above, provides the social justice lens to assess quality in terms of whether institutions' purposes are 'fit' to meet national transformational goals.

In its Founding Document of 2000, the HEQC outlines its approach as follows:

> The HEQC will develop a quality assurance framework and criteria based on:
> - Fitness for purpose in the context of mission differentiation of institutions within a national framework.
> - Value for money judged not only in terms of labour market responsiveness or cost recovery but in relation to the full range of higher education purposes set out in the White Paper
> - Transformation in the sense of developing the personal capabilities of individual learners as well as advancing the agenda for social change.[650]

All of these are considered within an overarching "fitness of purpose" framework. For example, the approach to institutional audits is to "consider the relationship between quality and fitness of purpose, and the manner and extent to which an institution's

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[648] Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, 1997.

[649] Louise Morley, *Quality and Power in Higher Education*, Maidenhead, SRHE & Open University Press, 2003, p.25.

[650] HEQC, *Founding Document*, Pretoria, CHE, August 2000, pp.7-8.

mission and academic activities take national priorities and needs into account, as well as respond to regional and international imperatives."[651]

In defining quality in this way, the HEQC signalled that not only were institutions required to demonstrate their accountability to the state and the public in becoming more efficient and effective, they were also to demonstrate the extent to which they were aligned with national policy and the implementation of national goals. This marked a very clear shift in understanding of the roles of universities for the four historically white English-medium universities in particular, which had considered themselves sufficiently autonomous to set their own priorities. The traditional understanding of a 'distance' from the state and its agenda was undercut. However, given that these universities' agendas in terms of increased access to higher education, greater responsiveness and increased partnerships, evidenced in the directions they took since 1994,[652] tended to converge with those of the state, an insistence on creating such a 'distance', at that particular time and context, might have seemed 'academic'. For the Afrikaans-medium institutions, an alignment with state goals and policies was already part of the organisational culture, and was thus easier to embrace, albeit that this was now a radically different state and policy framework. There was at the time, that is, in 2000, relatively little public discussion on how the approach taken by the HEQC could affect traditional understandings of institutional autonomy. Part of the explanation for the relative silence also lies in the early history of quality assurance in South Africa, and what had preceded the HEQC.

Prior to the HEQC, the technikon sector in South Africa had, since 1988, been subject to programme accreditation processes in the main, and some institutional audits, by the Certification Council for Technikon Education (SERTEC). Technikons offered a national curriculum, which was initially very tightly controlled, such that their academic freedom with respect to what they taught was very circumscribed. The universities had had no such external monitoring body. In 1995, anticipating the advent of external quality assurance, the universities set up their own external quality monitoring body, the Quality Promotion Unit (QPU), under the auspices of the then Committee of University Principals

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[651] HEQC, *Framework for Institutional Audits*, Pretoria, CHE, June 2004, p.5.

[652] Nico Cloete, Peter Maassen et al (eds), *Transformation in Higher Education: Global Pressures and Local Realities*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006, p.30.

and later the South African Vice-Chancellors' Association (SAUVCA) to undertake institutional quality audits. This was a peer-owned system, focusing on bringing about improvement in South African universities. Its existence and mode of operation were carefully negotiated among the universities, many of whom were reluctant at first to participate given the vast quality differentials between them. The model of institutional auditing used was based on the New Zealand system.[653]

Between 1997 and the end of 1998, some ten South African universities had their quality management systems audited by panels of peers in the QPU process. The Quality Promotion Unit was then, at the beginning of 1999, shut down by the very universities which had set it up. The reasons for this were multiple. There were certainly problems in the implementation of the system, as evidenced in the following:

> By the end of 1998 … concerns were being expressed about the efficacy and future of the QPU. This was in part triggered by the responses to two particular audits. In one case, the vice-chancellor quoted selectively from the audit in order to portray the institution in a favourable light. The QPU Board did not raise any objection to this use of the audit despite the fact that it was still in draft format. In a more controversial set of circumstances, another institution came under attack in the press and in a certain journal article for its alleged mismanagement, corruption and nepotism. The Council of the university responded in the press to these allegations and, in defence of the university, quoted from the audit report which has also not been officially approved by the QPU Board. The apparent mismatch between the press allegations and the (selectively quoted) findings of the QPU audit raised serious concerns for the credibility of the QPU process.[654]

Apart from the credibility and implementation difficulties, and problems of under-funding and under-resourcing, there were problems of model and status: on the one hand, being a university-owned body rather than a statutory body, the Quality Promotion Unit was vulnerable to attacks from institutions which had received negative audit reports. On the other hand, it was vulnerable too from attacks by institutions which believed that the Quality Promotion Unit, not being a statutory body, and not being set up for accountability reasons, was not in a position to apply sanctions where quality was found to be lacking. In other words, a university-owned system was considered not

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[653] Denyse Webbstock, "Shipwrecked on Scylla? Renavigating between accountability and quality improvement", *Aambeeld/Anvil*, 28 (1) 2000.

[654] J. Reddy, N. Baijnath, J. Brennan, M. Fourie, E. Genis, J. Noruwana, P. Singh, and D. Webbstock, *A Report on An Evaluation of SERTEC and the Quality Promotion Unit*, Pretoria, Interim Higher Education Quality Committee, CHE, 2000, pp.30-31.

sufficiently credible for accountability purposes. These concerns, and the fact that the establishment of a new statutory body, the HEQC, with responsibility for quality assurance in higher education was imminent, led to the closure of the QPU. In a subsequent evaluation of the QPU, almost all university interviewees found it "regrettable that the QPU had been closed as the momentum towards the development of internal self-evaluation systems had been checked."[655] It was also felt that, "with the closure of the QPU, an opportunity for universities to develop and control their own quality assurance system … had been lost. The concern was that the pendulum would now swing away from internal self-regulation to external accountability."[656] It was in this context, thus, of disillusionment with the universities' abilities to manage their own quality assurance system, that the HEQC was established.

The Higher Education Quality Committee, which is a permanent sub-committee of the Council on Higher Education, was established in 2001 according to the provisions of the Higher Education Act, 1997.[657] Its existence as an umbrella body for the coordination of quality assurance in higher education had been mooted in the NCHE Report in 1996, with an explicitly formative purpose in carrying out the functions of institutional auditing, programme accreditation and quality promotion.[658] The NCHE noted that there was a mixed response to its proposals on quality assurance mechanisms:

> They ranged from rejection in some cases, to suggestions for substantive modifications, to more or less qualified acceptance. Rejection of the proposals seems to be based on the view that quality assurance is best left to institutions or to the higher education sector. Linked to this are concerns about the centralization of state control, the negative consequences of bureaucratization and the costs of implementing the Commission's proposals.[659]

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[655] J. Reddy, N. Baijnath, J. Brennan, M. Fourie, E. Genis, J. Noruwana, P. Singh, and D. Webbstock, *A Report on An Evaluation of SERTEC and the Quality Promotion Unit*, Pretoria, Interim Higher Education Quality Committee, CHE, 2000, p.32.

[656] Ibid.

[657] The Higher Education Act, 1997, gives the HEQC the mandate to promote quality assurance in higher education, audit the quality assurance mechanisms of higher education institutions, and accredit programmes of higher education.

[658] *National Commission on Higher Education Report: A Framework for Transformation*, Pretoria, NCHE, 1996, p.109.

[659] Ibid, p.289.

As noted above, the rationale behind the introduction of an external quality monitoring body was avowedly to bring about improvement in the universities, technikons and colleges that were now to form a single, integrated but differentiated higher education system. The purpose was to be a formative one, focusing on improvement and development with opportunities to address shortcomings rather than one based on the application of punitive sanctions.

The legislation providing for the HEQC developed out of a similar dialogue among universities about the need for external quality monitoring in a situation of rapid transformation and vast disparities between the various universities in South Africa to that which had prompted the development of the Quality Promotion Unit. The concern was to improve higher education in terms of its own understanding of purpose. However, at the same time, the SAQA Act of 1995 provided for a very different kind of quality assurance regime for education as a whole, one based on monitoring standards generated within, and registered by, the South African Qualifications Authority. This legislation emerged out of a different dialogue which was conducted largely within the labour movement and the Department of Labour, and which concerned the lack of accountability among education institutions that were considered not to be providing sufficient skills appropriate for the workplace.[660]

The various constituent bodies of SAQA, the Standards Generating Bodies (SGBs), the National Standards Bodies (NSBs) and the Education and Training Quality Assurers (ETQAs) are designed to monitor the standards of qualifications registered with the body, and as such, this is very much an accountability role, enforcing compliance with regulations. In the SAQA Regulations of 1997, for instance, the definition of quality assurance is "the process of ensuring that the degree of excellence specified is achieved", and quality audit is "the process of examining the indicators which show the

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[660] Enslin et al note that "Alongside [the] range of bodies with an interest in quality assurance at universities, comes the growing influence of the Department of Labour in post-secondary education. In terms of the Skills Act (Republic of South Africa, 1998) all employers, including universities, are subject to a levy on their personnel costs, part of which funds skills development for their own staff, including academics" Penny Enslin, Shirley Pendlebury and Mary Tjiattas, "Knaves, knights and fools in the academy: bureaucratic control, social justice and academic work", *Journal of Education*, 31, August 2003, p.78.

degree of excellence achieved".[661] Higher education is seen as a producer of resources for a labour market in which scarce skills need to be developed in order to offer a better prospect of the economy competing globally. The SAQA understanding of quality is informed largely by the 'customer specifications' version outlined above. The specifications were to be set by the customers or a variety of 'stakeholders' – for example, industry, the service sector, the state, students, under the auspices of the SAQA standards generating apparatus – with institutions' performance in producing the requisite outputs measured against them.[662] Given that the HEQC was constrained by legislation to operate within the parameters set by SAQA, and in fact was to be regarded as one of SAQA's ETQAs, and that different theoretical approaches[663] underpinned each of these bodies, the stage was set for tensions to arise over territories and roles in the area.[664]

Early in 2001, following tensions and concerns from the higher education sector about the slowness of implementation of the National Qualifications Framework and perceived complexity in its structure, the Ministers of Education and Labour decided to undertake an external review of SAQA and the NQF.[665] The Study Team's Report, published in

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[661] *SAQA Draft Regulations*, Government Gazette, Notice 1240 of 1997, No 18221, p.42.

[662] SAQA, *The National Qualifications Framework and Quality Assurance*, Waterkloof, May 2000.

[663] Not only were there different approaches to quality, but the two bodies were responding to two different discourses on curriculum which were evident in the White Paper 3. On the one hand, there was the traditional disciplinary discourse, and on the other, a stronger emphasis on credit exchange and interdisciplinarity which informed the NQF. Paula Ensor notes that "While it can be argued that that the NCHE Report and the subsequent White Paper embodied elements of both credit exchange and disciplinary discourses, SAQA operates very explicitly in terms of the former." Paula Ensor, "Curriculum", in Cloete, N., Maassen, P. et al (eds), *Transformation in Higher Education: Global pressures, local realities*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006, p.185.

[664] Beyond SAQA, there are also SETAs (Sectoral Education and Training Authorities), and professional bodies which have some quality assurance role in higher education. Given all of these authorities, a further function emerged for the HEQC, which accounted for much of its time in its early inception: the coordination of the various quality assurance bodies which affect higher education

[665] Except that institutions of higher education had had to redesign their curricula in outcomes-based format for registration on the NQF in 1999. In an unprecedented flurry of curriculum activity, institutions responded variously to this demand, some complying minimally and others associating it with an entire restructuring of curriculum offerings as well as university structures such as departments, which then

2002, found that "there is a general dissatisfaction with the pace of implementation especially in respect to access, progression and redress. The architecture of the NQF, embracing policies, regulations, procedures, structures and language, is experienced as unduly complex, confusing, time consuming and unsustainable."[666] It also criticised the proliferation of bodies responsible for standards setting and quality assurance. It recommended a thorough streamlining of the architecture, including disestablishing the National Standards Bodies, and recognising the CHE as the standards setting body for all qualifications in the higher education band of the NQF.[667] Ultimately, following further proposals from the Departments of Labour and Education[668], and more critique,[669] higher education remains part of the National Qualifications Framework, albeit in a minimally compliant manner. Complexity remains in that programmes need go through three bureaucratic hoops before being approved – the Department of Education, the HEQC and SAQA – although this last is now largely only for registration purposes.

This long aside concerning SAQA serves to indicate the extent of complexity and contestation in the quality assurance terrain in the early implementation years. While the HEQC was established specifically to undertake quality assurance in higher education, the terrain was neither open nor uncontested. From the perspective of institutions of higher education, the threats to institutional autonomy from a whole range of new players attempting not only to assure quality, but to determine curriculum in terms of insisting on an outcomes-based approach and vocational articulation, were very real. Not only were the desired shape, form and purpose (expressly vocational) of higher

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became interdisciplinary schools. See Chapter Five and Ensor, "Curriculum", in Cloete, N., Maassen, P. et al (eds), *Transformation in Higher Education: Global pressures, local realities*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006.

[666] *Report of the Study Team on the Implementation of the National Qualifications Framework*, Pretoria Department of Education and Department of Labour, April 2002, pp.i-ii.

[667] Ibid, p.3.

[668] *An Interdependent Qualification Framework System: a consultative document prepared by a Joint Task Team of the Departments of Education and Labour*, Pretoria, May 2003.

[669] For example, Michael Young*, Options for the NQF in South Africa: a conceptual critique of 'An interdependent Qualification Framework System: a consultative document prepared by a Joint Task Team of the Departments of Education and Labour'*, Institute of Education, University of London, October 2003. Commissioned by the CHE.

education qualifications for the first time somewhat prescribed by an outside body i.e. SAQA, in the insistence on outcomes-based formats and credit transfer logic, but the intention was to 'outsource' the defining of standards from the academic endeavour to stakeholder bodies (NSBs and GSBs). This was an unprecedented undermining of academic authority, and while the higher education institutions ultimately managed to resist the worst excesses of the SAQA machinery, the rudiments of the system and the prescriptive approach remain intact.[670] As Enslin remarks;

> "For professional academics, then, the quality assurance regime that is emerging presents a formidable set of different bodies with influence over quality assurance procedures, an array of criteria for quality assurance that can conflict with each other, and ultimately generate a tension between the tradition of democracy, freedom and autonomy endorsed by the Higher Education Act and the transformation agenda of current higher education policy and its attendant bureaucratic mechanisms of control."[671]

4. The HEQC and quality assurance

For the universities and the technikons (which have since become 'universities of technology' and which also deal more often and more directly with SAQA and the SETAs than universities do), it is the HEQC, however, that is responsible for quality assurance in the sector. Quality assurance, along with planning and funding, were envisioned in both the NCHE and the White Paper 3,[672] as the three key 'steering mechanisms' to move towards a new higher education landscape. Singh notes that the introduction of quality assurance was

> accompanied by a discourse that is familiar from higher education discourses in many other countries – quality assurance as part of forging a new set of governance relations between government and academia, the need for higher education to meet social and economic priorities, competitiveness in a global marketplace, education and training for new skills and competencies, greater responsiveness to the world of

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[670] Ensor notes how the institutions won the battle to register whole qualifications on the Framework, as opposed to the unit standards initially envisaged by SAQA. Ensor, "Curriculum", in Cloete, N., Maassen, P. et al (eds), *Transformation in Higher Education: Global pressures, local realities*, Dordrecht, Springer, 2006.

[671] Penny Enslin, Shirley Pendlebury and Mary Tjiattas, "Knaves, knights and fools in the academy: bureaucratic control, social justice and academic work", *Journal of Education*, 31, August 2003, p.78.

[672] NCHE, 1996 and White Paper 3, 1997.

work, and the development of stronger accountabilities and efficiencies in higher education.[673]

Singh presents the challenge to a new quality assurance body, the HEQC, as follows:

> The challenge was to develop a quality assurance system which was 'fit for purpose' in accommodating a range of imperatives that included historical needs and social justice objectives as much as new accountability requirements and funding and capacity pressures – a system that ought to go beyond being a slightly modified clone of some global market-friendly model of quality assurance … the premise was that the domestic quality assurance system could take on a distinctive and strategically chosen identity even though it was using quite standard models and methodologies.[674]

That these intentions are being, and will be, realised is the key issue. In a critique of the early policy instruments developed by the HEQC, in the period of 2001-2004[675], Luckett argues that despite these intentions, there is a stronger tendency in the HEQC system design towards bureaucratic accountability than social redress through continuous improvement. In her critique, she sets up a conceptual framework of different kinds of rationality, collegial, managerial, facilitative and bureaucratic, to analyse the main policy instruments, and pinpoints a central tension in the HEQC's mandate between accountability-driven processes and improvement-based ones. She finds that despite attempts to base these processes on a facilitative rationality, they tend, in the use of standard criteria for all cases, and in the use of summative judgements to determine the granting of self-accreditation status to particular institutions, towards a bureaucratic rationality.[676]

Luckett notes that the draft HEQC policy instruments were released for comment in 2003, and received a "mixed response from the HE sector, with most criticism coming from the historically English-medium universities who have traditionally enjoyed

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[673] Mala Singh, "Bundy blues: contradictions and choices in South African higher education", *Kagisano*, 4, 2006, p.68.

[674] Ibid. p.69.

[675] These include the HEQC's *Founding Document* 2000, *The Framework for Institutional Audits*, 2004, *The Programme Accreditation Framework* June 2002, *The Programme Accreditation Criteria*, September 2003, and the *Institutional Audit Criteria* for 2004-2009, March 2003.

[676] Kathy Luckett, "A critical policy analysis of the proposed national QA system for South African higher education", 2004, unpublished.

considerable institutional autonomy".[677]   Given that the time-frames for responses were very tight, it was in the main the quality assurance managers of the institutions, rather than academics through institutional consultative processes, who responded. The joint South African Vice-Chancellors' Association-Committee of Technikon Principals (SAUVCA-CTP) response indicates that "generally, most QA managers had hoped for a more facilitative approach by the HEQC and that they discerned a shift in the proposals towards a more bureaucratic, accountability approach."[678] The institutions' joint response to the proposed audit criteria[679] indicated concerns about an emphasis on accountability which could undermine the developmental purposes of audit, as indicated in the following:

> As the emphasis on accountability increases, institutions are less likely to expose their own weaknesses. Under these conditions they tend to move into a compliance mode and engage in window dressing … The emphasis should be one which encourages the production of comprehensive and honest self-evaluation reports and which helps institutions to build and strengthen quality management systems.[680]

A criticism from SAUVCA on the Programme Accreditation Criteria document, September 2003, was the perceived prescriptive and onerous nature of the criteria. SAUVCA's response argued that:

> If a system such as programme accreditation is too onerous and the compliance requirements too prescriptive, there exists a real danger that the opposite will occur. Instead of developing a quality culture, academics and institutions may simply learn to 'play the game' … If the HEQC is perceived as being too prescriptive and unrealistic in its expectations, its credibility and the quality of educational programmes will suffer.[681]

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[677] Kathy Luckett, "A critical policy analysis of the proposed national QA system for South African higher education", 2004, unpublished, p.18.

[678] Ibid. p.18.

[679] Luckett notes that it is surprising that the fact that the HEQC was using criteria for audit at all, supposedly an open-ended process based on each institution's mission, was not questioned. Ibid. p.19. Indeed, as a member of the task team that informed the development of the HEQC's *Founding Document*, I can attest to fierce contestation on this issue in the debates leading up to the production of this document. The argument in favour of standard criteria for all institutions won the day.

[680] SAUVCA-CTP, *Response to Proposed Criteria for the HEQC's First Cycle of Audits 2004-2009*, Pretoria, SAUVCA, 2003, p.9.

[681] Ibid.

The complexity of the criteria was evident in a paper by a quality assurance manager that unpacked the criteria to indicate that instead of the original 30 (and, in later versions, 19) criteria, there were in fact some 158 with which institutions needed to comply.[682] Further concerns emanating from the sector were that the requirements were too ambitious, in that the sector lacked the necessary resources and capacity to implement many of the systems needed to meet criteria that were too close to the best practice guides[683] produced by the HEQC, rather than on minimum standards in a developing country context. The SAUVCA response continues:

> There is a fear of ever more bureaucracy that stifles opportunities for innovation and responsiveness. It is evident that too much bureaucracy imposes a compliance mode of working and a growing number of academics are unhappy about the increased steering of their activities by university management and external authorities. Academics are sceptical as to whether a profusion of policy and additional paperwork will improve the quality of academic experiences for students.[684]

The revised *Framework for Institutional Audit* and *Criteria for Institutional Audit* were published in June 2004, and the revised *Framework for Programme Accreditation* and the *Criteria for Programme Accreditation* in September 2004. As Luckett notes, while the comments from the sector had been taken into account in improving the revised versions, and the HEQC had, of all the recent government policy initiatives, made the most attempt to work consultatively with the sector, "the assumptions and rationality on which they are based and their basic approach to QA has not changed. This is in keeping with the HEQC's [intention] to first establish a threshold of quality provision in the system through imposing a hard accountability regime in … its first operational phase (2004-2009) before moving to a more facilitative approach in a later phase." [685]

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[682] Jan Botha, "The Universe of Criteria", University of Stellenbosch, unpublished document, 2006.

[683] The HEQC had started work in 2002 on a series of 7 Guides to Good Practice in a variety of areas of higher education practice in its Teaching and Learning Project. These informed the development of the criteria for programme accreditation in particular.

[684] SAUVCA, *Response to the Proposed Criteria for the HEQC's Programme Accreditation Cycle*, Pretoria, SAUVCA, 2003, p.8.

[685] Kathy Luckett, "A critical policy analysis of the proposed national QA system for South African higher education", 2004, unpublished, p.22.

5. Hard accountability

Indeed, hard accountability informed the first implementation process of the HEQC's work. Apart from regular processes of programme accreditation and institutional audit, the HEQC was tasked by the CHE, in response to calls from the Minister of Education, with undertaking national reviews of specific subject areas and qualifications in higher education, in similar vein to the programme assessments of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in the UK. The first review undertaken was of thirty-seven MBA programmes offered in South Africa by twenty-three local providers and four foreign higher education institutions.[686] In the first round, seven programmes achieved full accreditation, fifteen were conditionally reaccredited, and fifteen MBA programmes were deaccredited.[687] Among those deaccredited were some offered by large public universities, almost all the foreign providers, and a number of private providers. Singh et al write that:

> … the MBA accreditation outcomes [of May 2004] generated an enormous amount of media and public attention. The fact that about a third of the institutions lost their MBA accreditation, that well-known public higher education institutions lost their accreditation in addition to smaller private providers, that a United Kingdom and an Australian higher education institution lost their MBA accreditation, and that more than 3000 students were affected by the de-accreditation decisions, all attracted a great deal of public attention.[688]

The responses from the business schools in higher education institutions were mixed, with some, predictably those offering programmes that had been accredited, welcoming the process and the accreditation decisions, and others offering criticisms of the criteria, the process, and the communication of the outcomes.[689] In general, after the initial shock

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[686] Mala Singh, Lis Lange, and Prem Naidoo, "Evaluating the MBA in South Africa", *Quality in Higher Education*, 10 (3) 2004, p.197.

[687] Ibid. p.201.

[688] Ibid. p.204.

[689] See, for instance, Douglas Blackmur, "An Evaluation of the South African Model of MBA Accreditation", *Quality in Higher Education*, 11 (2) 2005. See also Marvin Kambuwa, and Denyse Webbstock, *An Evaluation of the Impact of the HEQC's MBA Reaccreditation Process*, Pretoria, CHE, 2005. However, given that this is an internal report commissioned by the HEQC, its interview data, findings, conclusions and recommendations do not form part of this chapter. Any evidence or data provided in this chapter come from publicly accessible sources.

of so many de-accreditations had been absorbed, the overall opinion of the process from business schools was favourable. Of importance to the argument of this chapter, however, are the concerns that related to the perceived prescriptive nature of the criteria, and the implicit single model of an MBA that informed them. While consultative processes were followed in drawing up the 13 criteria, each with on average 6-7 minimum standards, there is an argument that the CHE/HEQC criteria prompted standardisation in adopting a "one-size-fits-all" model. An example given is the insistence on a research-based MBA as opposed to a professionally-orientated one, as evidenced in the criterion stipulating a research component of either 25% or 50% (this was not entirely clear) in the students' programme, preferably using an action research method.[690] Blackmur writes that:

> It is noteworthy that a regulatory authority plays a role in defining the range of permissible research methods in institutions of higher education. Professionals engaged in, say, supervising student research projects who, for strongly felt epistemological reasons, do not think that the action research method is acceptable are nevertheless presumably allowed no choice in the matter. Important considerations of academic freedom clearly arise in this context.[691]

While this is an individual opinion not necessarily representative of the providers, certainly the emphasis on research has meant that even those MBAs that were accredited have since moved towards including more research in their programmes, and some have experienced considerable resource and staffing difficulties in doing so.[692] The standardisation of the process and the criteria underscore Luckett's earlier point that:

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[690] Douglas Blackmur, "An Evaluation of the South African Model of MBA Accreditation", *Quality in Higher Education*, 11 (2) 2005. The actual wording of the minimum standard concerned is "co-operation of an employing organisation is desirable to enable learners to conduct action research. In the absence of this, the unit should provide alternative means for the learners to carry out action research." *HEQC Criteria for MBA Reaccreditation*, Criterion 12, v. It is not altogether clear whether 'action research' here refers to a particular research methodology or is intended to refer to research undertaken in practical situations.

[691] Ibid. p.92.

[692] Other comments from leaders of business schools bear this out. One argues that "the criteria did not measure the quality of the programme in terms of how it benefited the student/manager and the company, but it focused on the standardisation of factors that might influence the quality of the final product," and another that "it is our feeling that the criteria and the measurements were done from a 'conventional' point of view, leaving very little room for creativity and innovation. Even though the survey was done under the auspices of 'quality control', standardisation seems to have been the main purpose

> A critique of quality assurance as typically practised by bureaucratic rationality [is that] this approach applies the same treatment to all and so assumes that one can validly and reliably use standardised criteria to measure performance across a system, regardless of differences in context. The focus on inputs, outputs and outcomes means that process is often ignored, leading to "black box" evaluations with limited diagnostic reach for improvement.[693]

A year and a half after the completion of the MBA re-accreditation process, the *Financial Mail* reported that "despite complaints that the accreditation process was biased against foreign business schools and that its 13 criteria forced schools to pursue too common a focus, most course directors and academics agree the process has been good for standards."[694] That the provision of MBAs in South Africa is better regulated following the HEQC exercise is evident, but the use of what the HEQC itself regarded as a high-stakes and 'high-risk'[695] procedure, with drastic outcomes for many institutions, signalled that the external authority meant business through forcing the closure of programmes.

6. Accountability, development and managerialism

Not many quality agencies have been so bold as to de-accredit programmes in the first round of review. That this was the first of the HEQC interventions must, to some extent, colour the way in which institutions respond to other processes, such as institutional audit, which, in terms of the HEQC's intentions, are designed to be improvement-oriented rather than hard accountability processes. The HEQC is currently mid-way through its first cycle of institutional audits (2004-2009), and it is thus too soon to assess the implementation of this process and the effect it is having on the way in which institutions conduct their affairs. However, an interim study commissioned by the

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of the exercise." Jocelin Kagan, "Forging a new MBA path within council guidelines", *Business Day*, 28 June 2002, p.4.

[693] Kathy Luckett, "A critical policy analysis of the proposed national quality assurance system for South African higher education", in Smout, M. (ed), *The Decade Ahead: Challenges for quality assurance in South Africa*, Pretoria, SAUVCA, 2005, p.23.

[694] *Financial Mail*, 16 September 2005, p.28.

HEQC and undertaken by Wickham et al,[696] reports a variety of responses to the experience of institutional audit among institutions. A common theme among the responses cited in the report is the suspicion within institutions of the HEQC's possible "hidden agenda" of transformation in line with state goals and a concern that the focus was limited to management and bureaucratic issues, ultimately leading to some institutions simply complying with those aspects. Wickham et al, report, for instance, at one institution that:

> Some interviewees also reported that the collegial culture at [their] institution had not been appreciated – and they reported that the emphasis given to a more managerial culture had been noted with surprise … Their experience fuelled further debates about the HEQC's agenda and its relationship with the state.[697]

While this is merely the experience of one institution, it bears out the earlier argument that in the criteria for audit, the emphasis is on policies, processes and procedures, which at the very least oblige institutions with traditionally open and somewhat collegial cultures to codify existing practice, to document procedures and to concentrate on supplying documentary evidence of systems of quality assurance. This certainly assists in shifting collegial institutional cultures towards more managerial ones. As Luckett writes:

> In order to promote its agenda in higher education, bureaucratic rationality [as evidenced in external quality agencies] normally needs to form an alliance with senior academic management (managerial rationality) who authorise and mediate the external agency's demands internally, out of obligation, or to further their own managerial interests.[698]

Among the 'big issues' that have dominated discussions among quality assurance practitioners over the last decade are the need to build credibility around quality assurance procedures among academic staff, and the need for the HEQC to negotiate its accountability and developmental roles very astutely. Smout writes that:

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[695] Mala Singh, Lis Lange and Prem Naidoo, "Evaluating the MBA in South Africa", *Quality in Higher Education*, 10 (3) 2004, p.202.

[696] Sharman Wickham, Gonda Coetzee, Barbara Jones and Anthea Metcalfe, *HEQC Evaluative Study of Institutional Audits 2006*, Pretoria, CHE, 2007.

[697] Ibid. p.43.

[698] Kathy Luckett, "A critical policy analysis of the proposed national quality assurance system for South African higher education", in Smout, M. (ed), *The Decade Ahead: Challenges for quality assurance in South Africa*, Pretoria, SAUVCA, 2005, p.23.

Not only is quality assurance in South Africa set to serve the interests of quality *per se*, but it is also to be used by the state as an instrument to further the cause of transformation of the higher education sector. The HEQC is thus an agency for development, but also performs an accountability function. There is a fear among quality assurance practitioners that the accountability function will lead to increased state interventions, in turn raising the likelihood that resistance from academics to all quality assurance activities will increase.[699]

Furthermore, the HEQC faces large challenges of implementation. Not only are institutions differently able to respond to the external demands, but issues of capacity will also challenge the HEQC itself. As Smout observed:

Its success as a national agency depends on both the recruitment of a skilled staff with a thorough understanding of higher education, and its ability to find persons with the skills, experience, standing and availability to undertake institutional audits and national reviews of programmes … The system of peer review exercises … is vulnerable, as it depends on a relatively small cohort of people.[700]

Of concern is the depth of nuanced understanding of academic institutions in an organisation such as the HEQC. While there is a deep appreciation of the issues confronting academics in the management layer of the organisation,[701] it may be difficult to replicate that nuance and understanding in a whole range of people responsible for the implementation of the sets of quality assurance policies and instruments developed. As in many South African organisations, there has been a relatively high turnover of staff in the HEQC, as those with the requisite skills and experience find more lucrative opportunities elsewhere,[702] and the risk is run that the founding intentions and purposes of such an organisation may become lost in the translation to implementation.

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[699] Michael Smout, "Introducing the decade ahead", in Smout, M. (ed), *The Decade Ahead: Challenges for quality assurance in South African higher education*, Pretoria, SAUVCA, 2005, p.10.

[700] Ibid. pp.8-12.

[701] See, for example, Singh, M. and Naidoo, P. 2003, "Audit and accreditation: unholy bedfellows or new age partners in the South African quality assurance system?", 15th International Conference on Assessing Quality in Higher Education, Cape Town, July 2003.

[702] I am personally aware of at least six members of a very small management cadre having moved on in the last two years.

7. Conclusion

In summary, this chapter has indicated that in the South African higher education arena, universities did not make the most of the opportunity for self-regulation under the QPU, a body "owned" by the sector. Instead, they opened themselves up to a new accountability regime, one that despite protestations about understanding and respecting the autonomy of the academic sector, is mandated, and prepared, to make far-reaching decisions about areas which had traditionally been self-regulated, such as which programmes may be offered. The choices made by the HEQC, argued here to be in the direction of harder scrutiny, have accompanied changes in the external government regime. As an organ with some level of accountability to the state, its methods necessarily have required the introduction of somewhat prescriptive methods and setting of criteria with a transformation agenda in mind.

Arguably, there is some level of resemblance to the evaluative state hypothesis in the South African higher education context. In examining quality assurance in more detail, I have concentrated on the least intrusive body with the greatest affinity to the academic arena, and even there there are signs of policies and procedures limiting the autonomy of academic institutions. Considering external quality assurance in general, the analysis of trends within the HEQC, in combination with other bodies such as SAQA, and specific planning and finance-related regimes such as the National Department of Education's introduction of the Programme and Qualification Mix, Enrolment Planning Frameworks, and new output-driven funding frameworks indicate the introduction of inroads into institutional autonomy and academic self-regulation.

In response, thus, to the dilemma faced in the South African debates about from whence threats to institutional autonomy and academic freedom originate – that is, primarily from the state, or internally from new management elites – this thesis has suggested that the forces are interlinked. In attempting to carry out social justice ends, as well as to respond to the pressures of being part of an international market in education in a globalising world, the state and other parastatal organisations exerting

control and regulation in South African higher education have developed systems and processes of bureaucratic control that have had to be implemented by the managers of the institutions. Yet nor are managers simply pawns in a bureaucratic game; how the rules and requirements of external agencies are interpreted and acted upon within institutions is also dependent on the style of leadership employed and the institutional cultures or contexts within which that interpretation takes place.

Indeed, the challenge for higher education managers is to negotiate a way through the managerial and external accountability pressures in a way that seeks to maximise spaces for academic agency to flourish, and to nurture academic freedom and autonomy wherever possible. Bundy argues that though universities are deeply implicated in the modern state, they

> should be conscious of and make choices about the terms of that involvement. If universities are called on to be the brains and the skilled hands of their immediate community they can also be the conscience of society. Academics may be involved in 'knowledge production' – with its echoes of the conveyor belt – but their toolkit also included imagination, scepticism and open-minded enquiry. Thus equipped, research can and should be disinterested. Teaching can and should be a moral vocation. Universities can and must link education and democracy. They must, because only they can.[703]

Barnett too, posits the possibility of expanded academic freedom in the interstices of managerialism, and the bridging of the divide between academics and administrators, of coupling effective and decisive management with the disciplinary expertise, professional pride and intellectual passion of academics.[704] He argues that:

> If a management team can reduce community and critical thought, it can also expand those features of university life through the promotion of cross-disciplinary communication … The new managerialism has only just begun. It has in front of it an even greater challenge of helping the university become the academic community it always claimed it was … The managerial role … has to be reconceptualised as opening up the possibility of academic community.[705]

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[703] Colin Bundy, "Under new management? A critical history of managerialism in British universities", in Walker, M. and Nixon, J. (eds), *Reclaiming Universities from a Runaway World*, Maidenhead, SRHE and Open University Press, 2004, p.174.

[704] Ronald Barnett, *Beyond All Reason: Living with Ideology in the University*, Ballmoor, Buckingham, SRHE and Open University Press, 2003, pp.162-174.

[705] Ronald Barnett, *Higher Education: A Critical Business*, Buckingham, Open University Press, 1997, p.59.

While Bundy's exhortations have echoes of Quadrant One concepts of academic freedom in the idea of disinterested research, both his and Barnett's formulations emphasise critical thought in a situation of embeddedness in academic and local communities. They both tend to point the way to an understanding of freedom as being realised through positive engagement and the expression of agency, rather than seeing it becoming increasingly circumscribed by external constraints. Indeed, the main elements of a Quadrant Four understanding of academic freedom and institutional autonomy are hinted at here; that is, a positive concept of freedom, and the suggestion that freedom not only pertains to, but is realised within communities.

Conclusion

1. Introduction

Issues of academic freedom are currently central to debates on higher education in South Africa. Among the concerns are whether, and if so, the extent to which, academic institutions are being constrained in their assumed right to self-regulation by forces both external and internal to such institutions, and whether individual academics are experiencing a curtailment of assumed scholarly freedoms. At the outset of undertaking the work for this thesis, however, the national debate was muted, save for a few isolated conversations within particular institutions. It has really only been since 2004 that issues of institutional autonomy and academic freedom have come to the fore. This has been prompted both by a perceived shift in governmental relations with higher education institutions, as well as changing cultures within institutions, some of which have led to high-profile cases of the apparent breach of individual academic freedom.

The debates are thus yet young, and are often characterised by conceptual confusion, both between particular concepts such as institutional autonomy and individual academic freedom, and in terms of the overall orientation of the paradigms within which such concepts arise. Part of the concern is that academic freedom in South African discourse has largely been associated with a liberal tradition which to some extent has become discredited according to those who argue for transformation, either from positions informed by postmodernist views of knowledge or from a politics that regards liberalism as a defence of the old (apartheid) order.[706] If academic freedom and institutional autonomy are important to the health of the academic endeavour, and the emotion and strength of the recent debates leads me to believe that they are, then clear conceptual clarity is needed and a new way of thinking and speaking about academic freedom that is apposite to the current age and the particular South African context.

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[706] See Introduction.

2. The conceptual framework

To contribute to such conversations, this thesis has attempted to develop a conceptual framework in order to organise discussions of concepts and debates on academic freedom. Accordingly, in the first chapter, a simple four-cell matrix was presented within which different understandings of academic freedom and institutional autonomy are situated. While these to some extent resemble Weberian ideal types, the four cells represent understandings that are historically grounded, but which may apply simultaneously in different situations. The axes of the quadrant are defined by two factors: the horizontal one represents understandings of liberty, from negative to positive, while the vertical represents orientations of the concepts, from the individual to communities. This leads to four quadrants of four different conceptual types.

The first quadrant is that of liberal individualist understandings of academic freedom; that is, the freedom of the scholar to pursue truth without undue external interference. Quadrant Two reveals a civic conception of academic freedom, still applying to the individual, but with positive liberty at its base. In this sense, the academic's freedom is attached to civic responsibility, and this notion is tied to an understanding of the purpose of the institutions in which such an individual works, that being *Bildung,* or the furtherance of the socio-economic and cultural goals of the nation-state. The third quadrant encompasses a liberal conception of academic freedom that relates to Haskell's "communities of the competent" needing self-regulation in order to function effectively. As in the first quadrant, the concept of liberty is a negative one, and implies the need for the autonomy of academic institutions in order for disciplinary expertise to flourish.[707]

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[707] In a recent talk by André du Toit he distinguishes between scholarly self-regulation in the disciplines, and academic rule in the academy. The latter equates to institutional autonomy. "Academic freedom and freedom of speech", Howard College, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, November 2007. To some extent I combined these in the one quadrant.

The fourth quadrant, wherein the boundaries between society and universities are increasingly blurred, and in which the generation and ownership of 'knowledge' and 'truth' have become democratised and the role of communities of so-called knowledge experts questioned, provides the most challenges. The major concern of this project has thus been to explore understandings of academic freedom and institutional autonomy and the challenges relating to this quadrant in particular, especially in terms of the histories and paradigms of thought that gave rise to them. I have attempted in this thesis to trace the influences of the broader contexts of discussion on our local understandings in order to situate them, and to examine the relevance of the broader contexts for South African circumstances. In so doing, I have explored a variety of challenges to academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

The first of these comprises epistemological challenges arising from postmodernism, with the calling into question of liberal certainties about truth and knowledge. While this may have been a major debate of the 1980s, the effects of these challenges are evident still in many of the policy choices made for higher education in South Africa. Examples are the move to programme-based curricula offerings and the emphasis on external stakeholder involvement and vocationalism in national qualification frameworks. Most obviously, however, the effect is evident in the shifting understandings of the autonomy of disciplines and the permeability of their boundaries, which have led to institutional restructuring processes designed to promote interdisciplinarity and increased external partnerships with government, funding agencies, other higher education institutions, non-governmental and community-based organisations and the like.

The second major challenge explored arises from both the phenomenon and the ideology of globalisation; that is, the fact of increased global traffic in terms of information and communications technology, finance, students, knowledge production and ideas that post-apartheid South Africa encountered. One of the major expressions of globalisation challenges exists in the tension between imperatives in South African higher education to succeed in a newly-entered global market, and simultaneously to bring about the transformation of the higher education system in order to ensure redress for past inequalities. The effects of globalisation in South Africa, have, as elsewhere, arguably been most evident in two broad areas; firstly, the increased role of market forces in higher education that paradoxically have led to increased bureaucratisation,

external quality regimes and intensified state steering; and, secondly, in the rise of so-called managerialism in the governance of higher education institutions which has been associated with the perceived curtailment of individual academic freedom in many of our institutions.

3. The argument

As noted above, in Chapter One the conceptual framework underlying the rest of the thesis was expounded. In the course of my exploration it has become clear to me that the dominant concepts of academic freedom and institutional autonomy, in Quadrants One and Three of that framework, are no longer entirely apposite under Quadrant Four conditions, and that new metaphors other than other than 'gentlemanly handshakes' between equal partners to describe the relationship between institutions and society or the state are needed. Indeed, given the variety of influences on academic work, nodes of energy in a complex network of interrelationships seems more appropriate. The concern is how to conceptualise academic freedom in a situation of embeddedness, where claims to distinctive expertise and privileged access to a canon of knowledge have been undermined. Academic freedom as a concept implies a distinction from other, more general freedoms, such as freedom of speech, and is specifically protected as such in the South African constitution. But where the very distinction of 'academia' from 'the rest of society' has become blurred, the values that academic freedom traditionally was intended to protect may well be threatened.

In the second chapter, I have outlined in brief some of the main debates in United States, British and sub-Saharan African (excluding SA) contexts, using the framework developed in Chapter One to identify their locus. While there are similarities in arguments across these contexts, emphases in them are quite context-specific. This exploration renders transparent the borrowings and adaptations in South African debates from different contexts. As an example, one of the ways forward suggested in the South African debates is to differentiate between substantive and procedural autonomy, using a concept derived from a European context with more highly regulated and centralised higher education systems than in, for instance, the United States. Such a concept recognises the right of a state to intervene in so-called procedural matters

such as funding, but not substantive ones such as the content of research conducted at an institution.

There are also instructive parallels that can be gleaned from this exploration. From the United States' context, it is evident that a discourse of academic freedom that emphasises political neutrality can be turned on its head in support of sectarian interests. It is also evident that levels of self-government in academia are very high, relative to, say, the European context, and that threats to academic freedom come in the main not from the federal state, but from the increasing influence of the market in higher education. The effects of globalisation in rendering education a commodity are probably felt more keenly there than anywhere else, although as certain studies have shown, some of the experiences of marketisation in higher education are more widely shared.[708]

From the British context it is possible to draw parallels with the trajectory of massification leading to increased bureaucratisation of higher education, and to some extent the decline of so-called "donnish dominion"[709] in the way in which universities are governed. It is also possible to parallel the development of regimes of external accountability and quality assurance in both contexts, and to see the influence of international consultants in the direction of South African policy development in this area. This is most evident in the adoption of the Mode1/Mode 2 thesis of knowledge production, the form of the National Qualifications Framework (though that was more heavily influenced by the New Zealand model) and the accreditation and audit functions of the Higher Education Quality Committee.

And finally, the exploration of academic freedom in the sub-Saharan African context offers a warning of the dangers of academic subservience to a range of different masters, as well as the insight that freedom may lie in playing them off against each

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[708] See, for instance, Jan Currie and Janice Newson (eds), *Universities and Globalization: critical perspectives*, Thousand Oaks, Sage, 1998; Simon Marginson and Mark Considine, *The Enterprise University: power, governance and reinvention in Australia*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000.

[709] A.H. Halsey, *Decline of Donnish Dominion: the British Academic Profession in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1992.

other. It points too, to the concern that the fight for academic freedom is not a simple one of academics pitted against intrusive governments, but that other external agencies, particularly those providing funding, can constrain and direct academic activity in ways that may produce deleterious consequences for independent scholarship. This case study is instructive in that it points to the need for a heightened awareness of the fight for academic authenticity, and that such authenticity is likely to be found in deliberate and purposeful engagement with the communities within which universities are embedded.

The focus of the third chapter is an exposition of the South African debates on academic freedom and institutional autonomy in a context of growing uneasiness about their definition and their importance, and concerns that they may be under threat. The debates thus grapple with analysing the source of such threats. To some extent they posit a false dichotomy; with some arguing that the threat to academic freedom and institutional autonomy arises from increasing state intervention in higher education, while others locate the source in increasing managerialism within higher education. In a later chapter I argue that this dichotomy is too simple a framing device, and that any such threats arise from a complex interrelationship of a variety of factors. In the debates there appears to be a growing realisation that the traditional liberal concepts of academic freedom as in Quadrants One and Three are now outdated, and there is a struggle for a new one more apposite to the current environment. However, it is evident that a new concept has not yet been realised in that there is a constant slippage in the debates, particularly in the submissions from institutions in the HEIAAF project, back to negative concepts of liberty and an assertion that to be left alone is best. There seems to be no established new way to talk about the issue, and a dire need for a new framework to organise such discussions.

In Chapter Four, postmodernism and its influence on academic freedom are the focus. The exposition highlights the importance of the roots of ideas that are current in contemporary South African higher education discourse – "empowerment", the inclusion of "subjugated knowledges" and indigenous knowledge systems – which, paradoxically, in the South African debates outlined in Chapter Three, are sometimes used to justify centralising tendencies of the state and potential state interference to ensure the observance of the transformation agenda. Postmodernism's ethical impulse, to break down the exclusivity of expertise and control over knowledge in higher education

institutions in favour of the inclusion of a variety of different knowledge forms, also renders the idea of academic freedom as negative liberty to pursue truth untenable. It also offers an explanation for a perceived move toward greater emphasis on performativity in higher education. If there is no central knowledge authority, and no longer a trust in exclusive expertise (as this may be vested in particular groups or embody only specific perspectives), then externally generated criteria are needed to assess performance. It explains a general move from connoisseur-type evaluation, such as pure peer review in terms of individual promotion, or reputations in terms of institutions, to criterion-based evaluation and a tendency for assessment of all kinds to become more measurement-orientated. The outline of postmodernism also heralds to some extent the notion of the rise of the evaluative state, utilised later in this thesis. This chapter seeks to harness different bodies of literature – postmodernism, higher education, evaluation – which are often treated separately. However, in examining the broader contexts and origins of certain policy realities in South African higher education, it is important to trace an increasing connectivity of ideas, and their transferability across diverse contexts. The discussion on postmodernism helps to understand the pervasiveness of the measurement paradigm, the introduction of external accountability and quality regimes, and the current inappropriateness of Quadrant One and Three concepts of academic freedom in Quadrant Four-type realities.

Chapter Five explored the implications of postmodern thought in the South African higher education context. Specifically, central ideas of postmodernism are useful in providing an explanation for the move towards more utilitarian ends for higher education, the increasing emphasis on vocationalism and the policy goals followed by both state and institutions in breaking down disciplinary barriers and fostering interdisplinarity and problem-based education. As exemplified in the case study undertaken in this chapter, while the first round of institutional restructuring in 1999 in some institutions was motivated by a vision inspired by postmodern ideas of encouraging the development of interdisciplinarity and developing a greater orientation towards Mode 2–type research endeavours, and the adoption of outcomes-based programmes, later restructurings were based far more on a harder managerial approach through government-mandated institutional mergers. The restructuring of the higher education system through mergers marked the final breakdown of the intended cooperative governance model in higher education and heralded a new more competitive mode between institutions and a

reliance on survival strategies. The merged institutions in particular, in changing scale so drastically, needed strong management to survive and the effect was to dilute autonomy at local levels. In the system as a whole, this was accompanied by a move towards the expectation of the demonstration of individual and institutional accountability, with institutional autonomy increasingly being tied to external accountability regimes and individual autonomy being predicated on performance management and criterion-based assessment.

In this chapter too, the relationship between disciplines and academic freedom is explored, and the effect of the postmodern and managerial undermining of disciplinary authority outlined. Bleiklie's observation that authority and power over university affairs have become separated from disciplinary competence is illustrated in the case study.[710] A challenge thus for new understandings of academic freedom is to take account of this phenomenon in a way that proposes a way forward and does not merely restate a preference for disciplinary authority to reign. The question is whether it is still possible to have academic freedom in a situation in which disciplinary authority has become eroded. Du Toit's work would suggest that it is not,[711] and that a compact is needed between university management and scholars in the disciplines to ensure scholarly freedom (and this position seems to take as inevitable that university leaders or managers are no longer scholars). He points out that disciplines are both self-regulating and exclusionary, quoting Haskell who writes that:

> Historically speaking, the heart and soul of academic freedom lie not in free speech but in professional autonomy and collegial self-governance. Academic freedom came into being as a defense of the disciplinary community … and if it is to do the work we expect of it, it must continue to be at bottom a denial that anyone outside the community is competent to pass judgement on matters falling within the community's domain…[712]

However, attaching an understanding of academic freedom too closely to disciplinarity in a world of shifting discipline boundaries may inadvertently weaken the

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[710] Ivar Bleiklie, "Justifying the evaluative state: new public management ideals in higher education", *European Journal of Education*, 33 (3) 1998, pp.306-307.

[711] André du Toit, *Autonomy as a Social Compact: research report*, HEIAAF, Pretoria, CHE, 2007.

[712] Thomas Haskell, "Justifying the rights of academic freedom in the era of power/knowledge", in Menand, L. (ed), *The Future of Academic Freedom*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p.54.

concept. On the other hand, I suggested later in the thesis that authenticity and academic identity are best pursued in being grounded in local contexts, which for some may mean discipline-based entities, for others a multiplicity of shifting disciplines. Perhaps a notion of scholarship not so explicitly tied to the disciplines but to a broad range of academic endeavour, including teaching, and that is less exclusionary, may be more apposite to a changed reality.

Having investigated some of the implications of the epistemological challenges to academic freedom arising from postmodernist thought, in Chapters Six and Seven I undertake an exploration of the other major challenge arising from different versions of the globalisation thesis. In the simplest version of the globalisation thesis, it is posited that the rise of the influence of markets is accompanied by a rolling back of the state, or a weakening of the state. This argument sees academic freedom being challenged by the commodification of knowledge, the so-called McDonaldization or growing corporate culture of the university, and the increasing influence of external funding agencies on research. Another version posits a paradoxical strengthening of state bureaucracy as a response to the increasing influence of market forces in higher education and captures this in the notion of the evaluative state. Given the analysis of the direction of policy documents on higher education in South Africa, the latter is a more appropriate reading of the current situation in which a passion for democratic centralism is evident.[713] The argument has been made that higher education institutions are losing their former autonomy and that national policy has been a catalyst in moving towards more packaged, modular forms of education, a greater emphasis on vocationalism, and a consequent squeezing out of non-utilitarian disciplines. There is some debate about whether globalisation necessarily entails managerialism (in the pejorative sense in which it is most commonly used in expounding this hypothesis), or whether corporate-style managerialism based on (outdated) commercial models is not inimical to entrepreneurialism.[714] Indeed, centralisation and potential authoritarianism may impede entrepreneurialism which may require more decentralised authority to succeed.

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[713] See, for instance, Xolela Mangcu, "The politics of centralisation: citizens and democracy", in Calland, R. & Graham, P. (eds), *Democracy in the Time of Mbeki*, Johannesburg, IDASA, 2005.

[714] See Chapter Seven.

Chapter Seven takes the general discussion on globalisation specifically to African and South African contexts to examine the nature and extent of the implications for those higher education systems. An outline of the implications for Africa in general illustrated the danger of becoming enslaved to a variety of external agendas – the state's, but also those of multinational funding agencies – and examined different approaches to dealing with the local/global tensions: either incorporating the local or imposing the global. The discussion served to emphasise the importance of entering the global conversation on the basis of strong local expertise, and provided a suggestion that authenticity is to be found in engagement on academics' own terms with due respect paid to reciprocal responsibilities.

In terms of the South African context, an argument that managerialism is on the rise was examined. One of the most interesting aspects of this phenomenon is whether it is a function of the inevitable march of globalising forces, or a reflection of the lack of management experience and capacity in a newly-democratised country. Certainly the immaturity of the democratic dispensation may account for uncertainty with respect to allowing decentralisation of authority and autonomy in decision-making, and the application of somewhat passé centralised corporate paradigms rather than more enlightened ones that allow for greater individual participation and responsibility with respect to decision-making.

There is sufficient evidence to suggest that in South Africa, academics' experiences of the changing cultures in a number of institutions bear out aspects of the globalisation theories. Such theories, however, tend to be applied somewhat uncritically, and often imply a simplistic and pejorative understanding of managerialism. In the local discussions on globalisation and managerialism, perhaps more nuance and sophistication is needed to move beyond simple dichotomies of managers and academic staff. At least three complicating factors obscure this analysis: despite the introduction of executive deans and the like, most university managers are also academics and continue to carry out research and teaching, if on a limited scale. Secondly, managers are not all-powerful *vis-á-vis* academic staff, but are subject to external constraints from both the state and the market, and operate in a network of conflicting allegiances. Thirdly, the question of institutional autonomy can be seen from a different vantage point in cases where the management of institutions is so poor that the only recourse for

academics is, ironically, state intervention through the mechanism of appointing temporary administrators to get an institution back on a sound footing.

Chapter Eight concentrated on the specific case of the introduction of quality assurance in South African higher education to explore the nature of potential external threats to academic freedom and institutional autonomy. The chapter traces a trajectory from an explicitly developmental agenda in the early policy phases to one that becomes increasingly accountability-driven in the implementation phase. Despite high levels of awareness about the more negative implications of globalisation, the trajectory seems to be going inexorably down the measurement road, ensuring compliance, and affecting not only individual academic freedom but limiting institutional autonomy as well. While the HEQC and other quality agencies hold out the carrot of a future of self-accreditation in exchange for current participation, and envisage a future of institutional self-regulation, two factors mitigate against this becoming a firm reality. Firstly, bureaucracies tend to establish themselves as permanent fixtures that are very difficult to dissolve.[715] Secondly, a recognition of the reality of vastly differently resourced and prepared institutions of higher education has led to suggestions that there is a need for differentiated approaches for institutions at various levels of development. To implement this would, however, require the introduction of even more compliance-type performance indicators and comparative measurement systems.

What is the way forward? Retreat? Re-establishing trust in institutions, honouring promises? To have quality assurance systems with a "lighter touch", as was eventually decided in the United Kingdom? The systems of quality assurance as they have currently been implemented in South African higher education appear to be tending towards the cumbersome and bureaucratic, resulting in curtailing innovation. This is especially evident in the national procedures that have to be undertaken through three different agencies in order to offer a new programme at a university. While the answers to these dilemmas are not readily apparent, this thesis has suggested that there are two

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[715] For example, while SAQA and the NQF were contested by higher education from the start, two national reviews later and the existence and role of SAQA is not in doubt. Indeed, the latest proposed legislation on the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) merely serves to extend the existing NQF to allow for a more coherent fit with higher education.

aspects of importance in this regard. Universities must embrace and demonstrate responsibilities by becoming more engaged as institutions, by constantly and consistently demonstrate their worth to a range of external communities, from government, the general public, funding agencies to specific local communities. Secondly, they need to create the kind of climate within the institution that fosters individual initiative and engagement in networks, and have the maturity to recognise that together these multiple engagements build institutional identities to further the project of enhancing knowledge and supporting what Rorty calls the public good, even if they appear to be pulling in somewhat different directions.[716] Institutions need to be conceptualised not as bounded "brands" requiring allegiance, but as nodes of energy facilitating a range of critical engagements with different and overlapping publics. Critique and critical thinking is the key. Certainly, with respect to quality assurance, adopting compliance modes without sufficient critique will result, ultimately, in poorer academic quality. Academic freedom and institutional autonomy similarly can best enhance the creation of knowledge in situations where trust is exercised and supported by bedrocks of rule-based, democratic frameworks.

4. Academic freedom and institutional autonomy revisited

The framework for discussing issues of academic freedom and institutional autonomy as presented in Chapter One provided me with a useful intellectual tool to analyse some of the current South African debates on the issue. In particular, it led to an understanding that most notions of academic freedom or institutional autonomy are predicated on liberal assumptions that may no longer hold under Quadrant Four realities. This leaves somewhat open the question of how to conceptualise academic freedom in a way that is apposite to both the time and the place of post-apartheid South Africa. Insisting on academic freedom in a Quadrant One understanding (for individuals), or Quadrant Three ones (for communities of discipline experts), belies the complexity of (post)-modern institutions that cannot operate in a separate sphere from the rest of society and hence

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[716] Richard Rorty, "Does academic freedom have philosophical presuppositions?", in Menand, L. (ed), *The Future of Academic Freedom*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p.28.

be left alone to be autonomous. Quadrant Two understandings are predicated on an overlap between the goals of academics and the furtherance of the goals of the nation-state, in a situation where the nation-state itself is intact and benign. Some conceptions in the South African debates tend towards this quadrant, especially in those arguments that locate threats to academic freedom in the state, or arguments that posit that the state, as the main provider of funds for higher education in South Africa, has a duty to engineer the transformation of institutions towards the achievement of socio-political ends.

In rethinking academic freedom and the redefining the relationship of institutions to the state, some local solutions have been proffered. Hall and Symes offer a compromise solution of conditional autonomy; some areas are sacrosanct for institutions, but the state may be involved in others, and in elucidating this they use Neave's concepts of procedural and substantive autonomy.[717] This compromise position is unsatisfactory, however, in that it fails to provide a sufficiently robust rationale for institutional autonomy under a variety of external conditions and, in granting the state the right of intervention, leaves the door open for potential external state interference in an authoritarian manner. The divide between procedural and substantive is unclear – for instance, is regulating the intake into a particular programme a substantive or a procedural matter?

Du Toit's recent work, though it builds on the idea of a distinction between procedural and substantive autonomy, offers a different proposed solution in the reinvigoration of the idea of a social compact, in fact, two compacts – one between institutions and external authorities, and one internal to institutions between the academic faculty and the university leadership to protect scholarly freedom of teaching and research. Du Toit's view is that, in a postmodern age (though he does not explicitly state this), it is difficult to defend academic freedom on the basis of an idea of principle, but it is more apposite to think of negotiated agreements between parties in the idea of social compacts.[718] Du Toit utilises Moodie's distinctions between scholarly freedom, academic rule and institutional

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[717] Martin Hall and Ashley Symes, "South African higher education in the first decade of democracy: from cooperative governance to conditional autonomy", *Studies in Higher Education*, 30 (2) 2005.

[718] Andrê du Toit, *Autonomy as a Social Compact: Research Report*, CHE, Pretoria, 2007, pp.131-133.

autonomy,[719] and ties academic freedom very closely to so-called scholarly freedom – the conduct of good scholarship that is subject to the rules and constraints of the disciplines, that is, in Haskell's phrase, the relevant "communities of the competent".[720]

While du Toit's proffered solutions are reminiscent of the pragmatic arguments of Rorty, that good socio-political justifications for academic freedom are needed rather than epistemological ones, in other words, that negotiated intersubjective accommodations of different viewpoints and interests are required, the solution presupposes disciplinary unity and authority. After all, it is within disciplinary contexts that scholarly autonomy can be practised, and it requires relatively autonomous and distinct bodies to enter into social compacts – the academic staff versus university executives, university authorities versus the state. The concern with the compact metaphor is that, while du Toit recognises changed contexts and material conditions within which higher education exists, the compact notion is still really predicated on Quadrant Three understandings of academic freedom in that it presupposes intact institutions with non-porous boundaries, nation states as integrated, autonomous wholes, and disciplines as autonomous and fairly stable unities capable of entering into compacts each on their own terms. This is of concern in a situation in which disciplines are themselves shifting, or, as Menand writes, "melting down", noting that "when disciplines and departments dissolve, the machinery of self-governance becomes more difficult to maintain".[721] Furthermore, this becomes more complicated where knowledge is increasingly being produced in partnership with a variety of externalities and institutions are less defined wholes than they may once have been, and where the state is itself not an homogenous single entity (which departments do universities enter into compacts

[719] Graeme Moodie, "On justifying the different claims to academic freedom", *Minerva*, 34, 1996, pp.129-150.

[720] Andrê du Toit, "Academic freedom and freedom of speech", Howard College, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, November 2007. See Thomas Haskell, "Justifying the rights of academic freedom in the era of power/knowledge", in Menand, L. (ed), *The Future of Academic Freedom*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p.45.

[721] Louis Menand, "The limits of academic freedom", in Menand, L. (ed), *The Future of Academic Freedom*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p.18.

with? Education? Labour? Trade and Industry? Finance? All of them? And will they all agree to the same terms?).

On the other hand, it could be argued that the forces of globalisation may not be that strong in South Africa, that there does exist a unifying state with centralising tendencies and a developmental agenda that may well coincide with the missions of universities, and concur that there is a shared transformation agenda between institutions and state and thus that they are thus able to enter into a compact to operate in the furtherance of the socio-economic good of the whole. Du Toit notes that this is certainly the position of the Council on Higher Education and the Higher Education Quality Committee, in the policy that the CHE has a right to interrogate an institution's "fitness of purpose" (the relevance of its mission), as well as "fitness for purpose" (how well it is carrying out that mission). But this has strong overtones of Quadrant Two understandings of academic freedom that presuppose that the role of academic institutions is to further the development of the nation-state; that, as in post-colonial sub-Saharan Africa, or Afrikaans universities in the apartheid era, higher education institutions have a direct role in the carrying out of the developmental agenda of the state and will be monitored accordingly. This is certainly inimical to what du Toit labels scholarly freedom.

Another solution proposed in the South African debates has been the notion of differentiated autonomy – that deserving institutions will be treated by the state and other regulating bodies with a lighter touch than those that are not managing their affairs well. While this may be pragmatic, defining the criteria for desert would in itself become a determining and a regulatory measure. Habib's answer is for academics to become more financially independent from institutions so that they can pursue their research interests, but this ignores the possibility of academics becoming enslaved to other, probably more commercial, masters.[722]

The questions of academic freedom and institutional autonomy remain vexed. The conceptual grid of Chapter One offers a means of recognising why certain arguments

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[722] Adam Habib, "The practice of academic freedom in South Africa", *CHE Regional Forum on Government Involvement in Higher Education, Institutional Autonomy and Academic Freedom*, Pretoria 24 March 2006; Bloemfontein 4 May 2006.

may be unsatisfactory and for analysing which situations pose particular threats for academic freedom. For instance, the analysis of Chapter Eight leads to a conclusion that in South Africa, Quadrant Two ideas of academic freedom are being applied in the quality arena, even in a situation in which state and institutional goals may not be coinciding perfectly. Furthermore, while it highlights the need for new concepts of academic freedom and autonomy in a situation in which the boundaries between academia and society become totally permeable, it also points to the danger of the dark side of Quadrant Four – that is, throwing out the concept of autonomy with the societal alphabet soup and the possible need for a reassertion of Quadrant Three understandings of academic freedom. What protection is there for academic freedom in a network society? All there is really to fall back on is authenticity, responsibility and engagement. If the external conditions mitigate against that, and become too controlling to admit the development of that authenticity, the outlook for autonomy is bleak, and will spoil the only things that make an academic job and identity worthwhile – that is, engagement on academics' own terms in larger conversations, and making and receiving contributions to the knowledge society through involvement in multiple networks. The dilemma rests on the pivot between systems of trust based on legal frameworks and a professional ethos, and systems of control, based on insecurity, lack of leadership capacity and the furtherance of agendas other than the creation of knowledge.

In the end it comes down to the second of Lukes' three faces of power – getting someone to do something they would not otherwise have done, determining the agenda, and holding the power of non-decision-making.[723] It is clearly important to the future of academic freedom that scholars have a hand in determining their research and teaching agendas, but that at the same time these are not made without reference to socio-political and economic contexts and needs. In a number of places in this thesis, the theme of engagement has been strong. Mamdani, Said and others have hinted at the importance of engagement with communities, and this may well be where the answer lies. This depends on a notion of the academic not as an ivory-tower figure pursuing various individual curiosities, politically neutral and above the realm of the applied. Rather, the academic becomes defined by sophisticated thinking, immersed in reality but

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[723] Steven Lukes, *Power: a radical view*, London, Macmillan, 1974.

understanding the roots of his or her own perspective, nuance, criticality, the ability to hold contradictions in his or her head, the ability to see bigger picture, even when undertaking commissioned research, and understanding his or her own implication in the broader phenomena. Such an academic will have an understanding of where he or she is making compromises, and know that these are inevitable in a network society and, in identifying nodes of energy and interrelationships in complex societal networks, will be comfortable with the limits to his or her control. Similarly, academic institutions' attempts to centralise control in a supposed corporatist manner are antithetical to the *zeitgeist* of a network society, and end up being authoritarian. Giddens' warning about attempts to create homogeneity in a runaway world leading to violence bears mentioning here. In a globalising world, survival depends not only on tolerance, but the embracing of difference.

What does this mean for universities in South Africa? Higher education leadership needs to understand the importance of criticality and to foster it; to understand the terms of compliance to external demands for information and regulation and to indicate when enough is enough, to embrace the contradiction that as institutional identities are built through branding, individuals need to be allowed to define their terms of engagement within a variety of external networks. Attempts to control those are counterproductive to fostering an institutional identity which comes about through multiple engagements on many levels, in increasingly porous institutions. The role of the higher education institution should become that of the facilitator and enabler of the construction and exchange of new knowledge, as well as the embodiment of social capital, rather than a provider of human resources or of educational offerings alone. Autonomy is related to authenticity, and authenticity consists in furthering knowledge and understanding in a way that sees benefits for the myriad communities, both internal and external, with which academics and institutions have relationships.

5. Conclusion

Writing this thesis has been invaluable in helping me to understand my own work in quality promotion and quality assurance in a South African university, in understanding the constraints of the contexts and the romanticism of pursuing developmental

paradigms in the face of increasingly regulatory forces. It has helped me further to understand and unravel the academic freedom and autonomy debates from different perspectives, and while I hope it has offered some contribution to the furtherance of these debates, inevitably much more work in the area needs to be done.

Particular areas in need of further research include relating the South African debates on academic freedom and institutional autonomy to a theory of the South African state. Understanding the state is crucial to unpacking the relationship to institutions – is it a nation state? A developmental state? Emulating an East Asian tiger? A unitary state? All of these have a bearing on understanding any possible threats to autonomy emerging from it. A second, related area for further investigation is the relationship of academic freedom to democracy and to the legal frameworks that underpin it. Barber, for instance, explores the link between autonomy, talk and strong democracy and it would be useful to extend such notions to academic life.[724] A third area for possible further research is the exploration of South African academic identities in a fast-changing environment and what impact this is having on perceptions of freedom and autonomy.

More empirical studies would also contribute substantially to understanding in this area. An empirical study of governance changes in South African institutions of higher education in the period since 1994, and how these have had an impact on academic lives, identities and academic freedom would be invaluable, as would a study of the legislative context of academic freedom in South Africa. Despite academic freedom and institutional autonomy enjoying the protection of the Constitution, there are few legal cases in which the extent and understanding of the concepts have been tested, but developments in this area would be very important to document. It would further be helpful to provide some means of distinguishing ordinary labour relations cases from academic freedom cases in a robust and generally accepted way.

Another area for further investigation would be the tenure debate, the relationship of conditions of service to academic freedom, and the pros and cons of academia being part of the public service as in many African countries. Many people regard tenure as the

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[724] Benjamin Barber, *Strong Democracy: participatory politics for a New Age*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1984.

cornerstone of academic freedom, and this is an area that has been under-explored in this thesis.

To take the work of this thesis further, however, it would be necessary to explore in detail the concept of "embeddedness" and to spell out what it would entail, in order to provide some practical advice on academic futures in South Africa. It would also be necessary to conduct some empirical research into the relationship between "embeddedness" and autonomy. Inevitably, having reached the end of a thesis, I now know where I would like to begin. That would be with in-depth explorations of the network metaphor, and of autonomy understood as a condition of being. Many works on academic freedom and institutional autonomy treat these concepts as rights or principles, with corresponding duties and obligations seen in a somewhat legalistic framework, but the thrust of the work in this thesis has led me to a different treatment of the topics, that is, an attempt to unravel and examine the forces having an impact on the well-being of academic institutions and on academic life. I remain convinced that such well-being is intimately related to questions of autonomy and freedom, but equally that freedom consists in what institutions and individuals are able, or enabled, to do, rather than being left alone to do certain things within an ever-smaller locus of non-interference.

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