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Managing Contemporary UK Universities – Manager-academics and New Managerialism

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Managing Contemporary UK Universities – Manager-academics and New Managerialism

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Introduction

A multi-disciplinary project entitled 'New Managerialism and the Management of UK Universities' was conducted by a team of researchers based at Lancaster University between October 1998 and November 2000. The study was funded by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (grant no R000237661). The project was designed to examine the extent to which 'New Managerialism', a set of reforms of the management of publicly-funded services popular with many western governments, was perceived to have permeated the management of UK universities. The study also explored the roles, practices, selection, learning and support of manager-academics. The first phase of the study comprised focus group discussions with learned societies from several disciplines where respondents considered what was currently happening to the management of universities. The second phase involved interviews with 135 manager-academics (from Head of Department to Vice Chancellor) and 29 senior administrators in 12 pre-1992 and post-1992 universities. The interviews explored the backgrounds, current management practices and perceptions of respondents. In phase 3, case studies of the cultures and management of four universities enabled comparison of the views of manager-academics with those of academics and support staff.

Background

The research explored the extent to which 'New Managerialism' was perceived to have permeated

the management of UK universities. Management in UK universities has already been the subject of research but relatively little cross-institutional work exists (Middlehurst, 1993; Bargh, Boccock et al., 2000). The imposition of 'New Managerialism' has been extensively studied in public services from health (Ferlie, Ashburner et al., 1996) to local government and schools (Exworthy and Halford, 1999a) but has been little examined in higher education, except in Australia (Marginson and Considine, 2001). The concept of 'New Managerialism' informing our research project can be defined in relation to three overlapping elements. First, as a

narrative of strategic change which is constructed in order 'to persuade others towards certain understandings and actions' (Barry and Elmes, 1997 p 433) in relation to the established governance and management of public service organisations. Second, as an emergent but

distinctive organisational form that provides the administrative mechanisms and managerial processes through which this theory of change will be realised. Third, as a

practical control technology through which strategic policies and their organisational instrumentation can be transformed into practices, techniques and devices that challenge, or substantially modify, established systems of 'bureau-professionalism' (Clarke and Newman, 1997 pp 68-70).

In theory, 'New Managerialism' constitutes an alternative model of governmental and institutional order for higher education within the UK to that which existed under the compromise between corporate bureaucracy and professional association from the mid-1940's onwards (Smith and Webster, 1997; Jary and Parker, 1998). The latter shaped the post WW2 development of British Higher Education by facilitating a viable trade-off between managerial control and professional autonomy as exemplified in the organisational logic and practice of 'professional bureaucracy' (Mintzberg, 1979). This trade-off has been subject to a number of changes in policy and state intervention in recent decades (Henkel and Little, 1999; Kogan and Hanney, 2000). 'New Managerialism' is seen as a new departure because it entails interrelated organisational, managerial and cultural changes leading to a tightly integrated regime of managerial discipline and control (Reed, 1995; Reed, 1999) which is radically different from bureau-professionalism (Hood, 1995; Clarke and Newman, 1997; Webb, 1999). Professionals are subjected to a rigorous regime of external accountability in which continuous monitoring and audit of performance and quality are dominant

(Kirkpatrick and Lucio, 1995; Power, 1997; Deem, 1998; Morgan and Engwall, 1999).

The research also draws upon recent analysis of the academic profession (Altbach, 1996; Enders and Teichler, 1997; Enders, 2001b), particularly the changing environment of academic work and cultures, and internal differentiation within the profession. The changing external environment includes “massification”, resource constraint, the audit culture and globalisation. Massification changes the relationship between university teachers and students (Trow, 1974), may weaken the link between teaching and research, reduce the academic profession’s status (Halsey, 1992) and lower morale (Fulton, 1996b; Enders, 2001a). Resource constraints have led to lower per-student expenditure, increased staff-student ratios, a relative decline in salaries and conditions of work; and more fixed-term appointments. Audit cultures are claimed by some to have encouraged ‘deprofessionalisation’ or ‘proletarianisation’ of the academic profession ((Halsey, 1992) and routinisation of its labour process (Winter, 1995). However, others suggest a more varied response from academic staff (Trowler, 1998) or argue that British academics are engaged in ‘re-professionalisation’, re-articulating and strengthening core values around the centrality of research and the value of teaching (Henkel, 2000). It is claimed that global markets for knowledge encourage more entrepreneurialism in universities (Clark, 1998). There is also a contention that university research is now so central to global knowledge economies that highly successful researchers have become “capitalists” whose market power outweighs the capacity of their universities to manage them (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997).

There is also differentiation among academics (Fulton, 1998), with disciplines an important factor (Clark, 1983; Clark, 1987; Becher, 1989). However, professional values, like the balance of teaching and research and views about institutional management/governance, appear constant across disciplines (Fulton, 1998; Henkel, 2000). In the UK, differences in working conditions persist between the pre-1992 and post-1992 institutions (Fulton, 1996b) but the unified national system has reinforced pressures for convergence (Fulton, 1996c). The separation of resources for teaching and research has increased scrutiny of the performance of academics by managers (Fulton, 2001; Enders, 2001a). The increasing complexity of academic work means that simple distinctions between ‘academic’, ‘administrative’ and ‘support’ staff are blurring (Cuthbert, 1996). Financial pressures have led to a shift in the balance between permanent and temporary staff. There are also other issues of inequity in the profession, including social origin and prior

educational experience (Halsey and Trow, 1971; Halsey, 1992), as well as ethnic and gender inequalities. The latter have become highly visible in salaries (Bett Report, 1999) and in management (Deem, 1998; Deem, 1999).

Research Objectives

1.

The acquisition of new knowledge about how university academic managers perceive and tell narratives about current and recent university management and the development of theory about 'New Managerialism' which is consistent with these perceptions and narratives. Data from all three phases of fieldwork addressed this objective.

2.

The illustration of management practices and mechanisms currently found in different UK higher education institutions. Phase 1 (focus groups), Phase 2 (interviews) and Phase 3 (case study) data were all relevant to this objective.

3.

The description and explanation of current organisational forms in four case-study higher education institutions.

Although this objective was primarily addressed in the case-study phase, phase 2 interview data also proved relevant, as did university web-sites.

4.

Using analysis of the data collected to improve our understanding of the ways in which universities and their core activities may best be organised and managed and making a contribution to future policy on the selection and training of academic managers.

Phases 2 and 3 helped improve our understanding of university management and organisation, including gaining the views of 'managed' staff. We are seeking different ways of contributing to future policy on selection and training/support of manager-academics.

Methods

The project was organised in three phases. In Phase 1, 12 focus group discussions were conducted with academics, manager-academics and administrators from UK learned societies. We gathered respondents' perceptions about what was happening to the management and running of UK higher education. We included different disciplines because much research has noted the

centrality of disciplines to academic identity (Clark, 1987; Becher, 1989; Huber, 1990). We also explored views on 'New Managerialism' and changes to the context of UK higher education, notions of collegiality and accountability, and whether there was thought to be a glass ceiling for women trying to move into senior manager-academic positions.

In Phase 2, we carried out semi-structured interviews with a range of manager-academics from Heads of Department (HoD), through Deans, up to Pro-Vice Chancellors (PVCs) and Vice Chancellors (VCs), at 12 UK universities. Together with phase 3 interviews of a similar range of people in a further four universities, we conducted 135 interviews with manager-academics. The term

manager-academic is preferred to the term

academic manager

in the original proposal, as the latter could refer to professional administrators as well as academics holding management roles. We interviewed 29 senior administrators so that we could explore whether administrators and manager-academics saw themselves working for common aims. We also wondered if administrators might be a source of New Managerial influences on higher education. All interviews covered careers and selection mechanisms, training and support for management or administration, work and home-life balance, management practices and routines, views about change, work anxieties and pleasures, attitudes towards institutional management and organisation, recent developments in the external context of UK higher education, and issues related to management and gender processes. In choosing universities, we selected a mix of pre-1992 and post-1992 universities in a range of locations, with different academic emphases and sizes. We recognise the limitations of interviews, which provide a snapshot of perceptions rather than actual practice. Nevertheless, because we interviewed manager-academics from HoDs to VCs, we could compare and contrast what those at different levels said about institutional approaches to management and organisation. Our sampling strategy included both women and men respondents and a cross-section of subject disciplines. But our interviewees may not necessarily be typical of all manager-academics in UK universities.

In Phase 3 we made use of phase 2 data to select a small number of institutions for more detailed study. Our choice of four universities was based on size, type (pre- or post-1992 institution), location, number of site(s) and academic emphasis. We also chose universities where the current VC had been in post for at least three years. We first conducted a similar

range of interviews with manager-academics and senior administrators as in phase 2. We then collected and analysed documentation from each institution (e.g. mission statements, operating statements, corporate plans, published teaching reviews, annual reports). We also did on-site observation (including attending meetings) and conducted interviews and focus groups with a broad range of university employees, including support staff and representatives of Student Unions.

Data analysis

We used a combination of a relational-database (Filemaker-Pro) which allowed us to organise and store extracts of data from focus groups, interviews, case study interviews/observation and documentary analysis, and Nud•ist (which was used for phase 2 interviews). We aimed for maximum discussion of categorisation and organisation of data, and constantly reviewed contrasting interpretations.

Results

1. University academic managers' narratives about current and recent university management; the further development of theory about 'New Managerialism' Our focus group data suggested that respondents perceived the UK higher education system to be not only much more managed and bureaucratic than previously thought but also managed in a way consistent with ideas about efficiency, performance monitoring, target-setting and private-sector models of running organisations. A decline in trust and discretion placed in academics was frequently mentioned. Significant changes to the environment of universities perceived to encourage more management were the massification of student intake, a decline in the unit of resource for teaching and the rise of quality assessment for teaching and research (globalisation was scarcely mentioned). People talked of higher workloads and long hours, finance driving most decisions, remote senior management teams and greater pressure for accountability. There were widely-held perceptions that collegiality was being replaced by more overt line-management. But some respondents felt teaching and research quality assessment had increased teamwork, which may illustrate Henkel's (2000) point about the reworking of academic identities. We found, as noted in the literature on 'New Managerialism', evidence of perceived attempts at strategic and cultural change, of new organisational forms which supported this (especially cost centres) and illustration of the control technologies (such as performance review, appraisal and encouragement of self-monitoring). Respondents referred also to the use of external monitoring mechanisms such as RAE for internal management purposes too;

for example, moving non-research active academics into teaching-only contracts.

In the second phase, interviews with manager-academics and administrators in a cross-section of different universities, we searched the accounts provided both for common/dissimilar elements and perceptions/views related to 'New Managerialism'. The majority of accounts were consistent with focus group responses in identifying similar key external changes to the environment of higher education, notably funding, massification, research assessment and teaching quality review. Many interviewees were relatively positive about the effects of change on their roles and management practices. Respondents recounted their own career trajectories, their route into management roles, and how work impacted upon home life. They discussed the kinds of learning they had engaged in and support received for their management roles, as well as specifying what kinds of management approaches they thought effective with academics. They also described the anxieties and pleasures of their jobs, with paperwork, finance and staff personal problems often sources of worry and (for manager-academics) research, nurturing academic disciplines and student/staff success sources of enjoyment. Many elements noted by Henkel (2000), Altbach (1996) and others about academic identities – the continued importance of teaching, research, and disciplines – were evident. Administrators enjoyed supporting the work of academics. Almost all our manager-academic respondents tried to retain research as a parallel strand of their work identity. Gender processes were also found to be important in shaping careers, with nearly two-thirds of all respondents believing that gender had affected their own careers and that gender was relevant to management approaches adopted by women and men (Deem, 1998; Deem and Johnson, 2000). The notion that gender processes may be relevant to academic identities is largely absent from previous studies, which have tended to treat gender as a variable.

We noted three typical but permeable routes into management for academics. The first was the career track route (a minority of respondents, mostly in post-1992 universities), where an early career decision is taken to pursue a management role. This group self-identified as managers. Motivations for becoming a career-track manager included enjoying management, exercising power and institutional politics, becoming dissatisfied with teaching and research, and seeking a higher salary. The second route was the reluctant-manager route, especially typical of HoDs in the pre-1992 institutions, where such roles are usually temporary. Some had been coerced and others feared that someone else might make a worse head of department. But motivation came from seeing staff and students

succeed and obtaining good results in teaching or research assessment. Finally there is what we have termed the 'good citizen' route, where an individual chooses to take on a more senior management role (e.g. at PVC level) often at quite a late career stage, in order to give something back to their institutions. This last route may be declining, as manager-academic roles occur earlier in careers.

We also examined our interview and focus group data for perceptions of a move to a more managerial culture in UK universities. We found it helpful to do this using Ferlie

et al's four models of 'New Managerialism' (Ferlie, Ashburner

et al, 1996), arising out of their research on the health service. The models are not mutually exclusive and also represent different historical stages in the development of 'New Managerialism'. The efficiency model, often best described as 'doing more with less' and backed up by funding policies as well as by league tables as introduced to the NHS in the late 1980s reforms, was perceived by almost all respondents as having significantly permeated universities. The second model is one of downsizing and decentralisation. There was no evidence of downsizing in our study, although the sector is just now beginning to experience this. There was evidence of some decentralisation. This included devolved budgets and internal markets for space and other services, but according to our respondents, devolution was only partially realised, with budgetary autonomy over hiring new staff rare. The third model is that of the learning organisation (Easterby-Smith, Burgoyne

et al, 1999), in which there is emphasis on cultural change, teamwork, empowerment of employees and strategic scanning of the horizon. Respondents in all three phases reported attempts at cultural change. People in senior posts claimed to be engaged in strategic activity, though recent research on the gap between Vice-Chancellors' claims to do strategic work and their actual practice (Bargh, Boccock

et al, 2000) should be borne in mind. Teamwork was much mentioned in focus groups and in phase 3, but less in phase 2. Empowerment was scarcely mentioned. Indeed, some 'managed' staff felt that they were now held more responsible for their own performance without additional support. The final model, an endeavour to provide a new value-basis for public services and greater involvement of service users in deciding what should be provided (Ranson and Stewart, 1994), was not mentioned by any respondent. This may be partly because, as Henkel (2000) and others

have shown, the old values of higher education are still strongly held by academics.

The data collected has allowed further development of a variant of New Managerial theory placing particular emphasis on hybridisation (Reed, 1999). Unlike in the NHS, where early reforms introduced radical organisational changes and a new cadre of managers from outside health, in universities 'New Managerialism' has developed within existing organisational units and without significant recruitment of manager-academics from outside education. Under half the administrators interviewed had private sector experience of industry, mostly many years ago. There were almost no manager-academics with recent industrial experience, although most in the health field had experienced the NHS reforms.

The mechanisms manager-academics use to get academics and support staff to perform at the required level are subtle rather than crude (Reed, 1999). They include encouraging self-regulation of research and teaching quality (in relation to more explicit financial and performance criteria), making changes to workload allocation and establishing informal peer-scrutiny of performance. Nor had the manager-academics we interviewed easily absorbed 'New Managerialism'. For each one who had, we found three or four who felt uncomfortable about most of its manifestations. Ambivalence about management in general, however, may have implications for manager-academics' appreciation of the potential for virtual universities and their capacity to assess and take risks. For many 'managed' staff we spoke with, managerialism and management were equivalents. Concerns were raised about manager-academics over-using their authority or being poor managers, over-emphasis on finance-led decisions and senior manager-academics becoming cut-off from staff and students (Deem and Johnson, 2000).

2. Illustration of the range of management practices and mechanisms currently found in UK higher education institutions. Manager-academic respondents described their lives as full of formal and informal meetings, from large formal committees to one-to-one encounters, mountains of paperwork and email, searching for new resources and most importantly, motivating and persuading colleagues. Many saw themselves as change agents, yet few reported sufficient time to think, reflect or plan. Competing activities had to be constantly juggled, with spill-over into home life. Many reported 60-70 hours per week spent mainly on management rather than research (Deem and Hillyard, 2001). Long hours seem related to four factors. The first is the extent to which academic autonomy remains largely intact (Halsey, 1992; Altbach, 1996; Fulton, 1996b;

Henkel, 2000) despite changes to academic working conditions. Academic work is creative, like other knowledge-work occupations (Blackler, 1995) and persuasion (or 'herding cats') is widely thought to be the most workable approach. Management performance techniques varied from meetings with individual staff and appraisal or invoking of a discourse which says 'this is the real world and we have to survive in it', to mentoring and holding staff meetings in which those failing to achieve the required standards in teaching and research were exposed to peer scrutiny. The setting of income and RAE score targets was widespread. Some manager-academics described using performance-measurement techniques for research to get academics who were unsuccessful in research to 'choose' early retirement or teaching-only contracts. Techniques for teaching performance mainly involved work-allocation decisions unless, rarely, very poor performance required invoking disciplinary procedures. Tensions between academics' teaching and their involvement in research were often difficult for HoDs, who had to resolve the implications of these tensions for students and quality assessments.

The second factor encouraging long hours is that there are few monetary or in-kind rewards at the disposal of manager-academics. The reward for hard work in universities, some of our phase 1 and 3 respondents claimed, is more work. Almost all manager-academic respondents declared that carrots work better than sticks in motivating academics, but there are, as the Bett Report noted, few carrots available (Bett Report, 1999). Where there are monetary rewards available, as some interviewees noted, these are often for research, not teaching or administration. So persuasion takes up a great deal of manager-academic time. The third factor is a longstanding cultural emphasis on long hours in universities, although traditionally these hours have been spent on research, not management. We noted that some male respondents, particularly in senior posts, believed that the job can only be done with long hours. Such views may affect both the effectiveness of and the selection of manager-academics. Finally, at the HoD and Dean level, respondents reported little administrative support for their work and so had to spend further time struggling with budget details and paperwork.

3. Current organisational forms in UK universities. Both our case studies and phase 2 interviews yielded considerable data about organisational forms. The term

organisational forms does not refer only to the ways in which academic activities are grouped but also includes the organisational cultures of institutions

and how members of basic units relate to the whole. In multi-site institutions, sites far away from the main site were often not experienced as networked sites but as at best loosely-coupled (Orton and Weick, 1990; Parker, 1992). Any organisational sense-making (Weick, 1995; Weick, 2000) which went on was often confined to particular sites or units. Institutional loyalty appeared stronger amongst support staff than others and was greatest at single-site institutions.

All institutions

studied had departments and/or schools and most had faculties. We reached no firm conclusions about how important the precise mix was. To assess this fully would necessitate a different study, combining qualitative data from interviews or observation with detailed quantitative data about institutional achievements and performance indicators. There was some evidence of certain organisational changes being fashionable; for example, merging smaller departments into schools. But in phase 3, we found such changes were sometimes resisted by the staff involved. All 16 universities had some form of devolved resource model, with basic units as cost centres. Complete devolution (including hiring of staff) was rare. Thus institutions could use remote steering of policy whereby it could be declared that cost centres made their own decisions, even though in practice some power was retained by the centre.

Cultural variations

between institutions appeared stronger than we had expected. Institutional history, perceived niche and mission, absolute size, the extent of staff long-distance commuting, campus bases and the existence of multi-sites were key factors. A number of post-1992 institutions but fewer pre-1992 universities had invested heavily in management development. We saw no indications of the isomorphism in universities which some 'New Managerialism' theorists see being imposed on public service organisations by funding mechanisms, consultants and socialisation of new recruits (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991; Clarke and Newman, 1997). In the case studies there were some sharp contrasts between more optimistic stories of achievement and change told by manager-academics, especially at senior levels, and the more pessimistic accounts given by some support staff, Students Union sabbaticals and ordinary academics. Though both recounted higher workloads and more emphasis on responsibility for doing things, managed staff and students talked of poor communication, failure of senior management to listen, slow decision-making and absence of workable policies. New technologies were seen as exacerbating the gap between staff and senior manager-academics. Regular emails from senior management were thought no substitute for personal contact. Many managed staff felt that their institutions were very slow-moving,

describing them as dinosaurs or large elderly oil-tankers, and wished for a clearer sense of direction from senior managers.

4. Using the research

data to improve our understanding of the ways in which universities may best be organised and managed. Contributing to future policy on the selection and training of academic managers. Although there was considerable organisational variation among institutions, this was mainly cultural rather than structural. New VCs may undertake structural changes but it was perceived by others that the previous structures gradually crept back. However, the selection processes used for academics in management roles and the support of manager-academic learning, once in post, emerged as important policy issues.

Selection and tenure of

manager-academics for their roles varied considerably across pre- and post-1992 institutions. Whilst a formal appointment process was common for all levels (often following external advert), in all but one post-1992 university, a mix of colleague consultation (usually followed by confirmation at senior level), and simply picking individuals believed to have the relevant skills, was found in pre-1992 institutions. These patterns are not unrelated to tenure of office. In the post-1992 sector, most management roles were permanent. Temporary posts were more usual in the pre-1992 sector, although fixed-term posts at PVC level were found in both pre-1992 and post-1992 universities. Selection mechanisms are important because they determine who is excluded as well as included. Informal selection mechanisms may exclude some individuals with high potential. It was notable that the small number of women in posts above HoD level in our study had mainly only reached those posts quite late in their careers (especially in the pre-1992 institutions), and thus were not always in a position to proceed further (for example, to Vice Chancellorships). This needs further investigation. We encountered only a tiny number of manager-academics from black ethnic minority groups but this too may be a group excluded by informal selection methods from holding management posts.

The issue of temporary

and permanent management positions is important but complex. Permanent posts have the advantage of willing incumbents, properly remunerated for their work, who can build on their acquisition of skills and knowledge and are not distracted by the need to pursue a parallel career in research. However, permanent post-holders are not always perceived by other staff as being very accountable. Furthermore, permanent managers who do not move on to higher posts may gradually become less effective. Temporary posts allow academics to try out

management; some initially reluctant recruits become enthusiastic later and others return to their purely academic duties. Temporary manager-academics were more likely to be perceived by colleagues as remaining more accountable to staff. But temporary positions mean loss of talent once the post ends, and at senior levels re-entry to academic life can be difficult, especially in science subjects.

All manager-academics would benefit from more support for, and recognition of, their own learning. It is sometimes argued, by UK politicians and funding bodies that manager-academics are poorly prepared for their roles. In phase 3, some managed staff said academics did not make good managers. However, whilst only about a third of our sample had received any significant formal training for their role, most had engaged in important informal learning along the lines of the processes described by Lave and Wenger in their research about how occupational skills are passed on in communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). People explained how early experiences of running courses or research groups had helped them prepare for more onerous posts later. Individuals also drew on the particular strengths, skills and knowledge involved in their own disciplines as support for management roles. It was noticeable that many of our sample consciously sought out informal encounters where they could exchange information and experiences with others in management roles, whether inside or outside their own institution. A few learned societies also provided such opportunities. There was little indication in several institutions of the existence of appraisal of management performance. Few in our sample felt that they received adequate feedback on their management roles. In addition, many manager-academics felt overwhelmed by paperwork and email and felt that their institutions did not have an effective management information strategy in place.

Conclusion

The research data suggests that whilst 'New Managerialism' has permeated UK universities, it has, to a considerable extent, done so because of external pressures (such as teaching quality and research assessment) and policy changes (for example, expansion of student intakes). However, in the focus groups and case studies, university staff not occupying management roles maintained that universities were awash with managerialism. The picture that research data reveal is indeed a complex one which supports a view that old, established forms of university management (for example, the appointment of HoDs) have been joined by newer elements (e.g. devolved budgets, performance management), resulting in hybridised forms of New Managerialism. Thus, in the focus groups and

institutional case studies, many respondents reported perceptions that New Managerialism was rife, both in their own institutions and across the UK higher education system as a whole. But in phase two, we noted that the manager-academics interviewed did not necessarily explicitly identify with New Managerialism, even where some of their reported practices appeared to demonstrate that managerialist features were present. Many manager-academics pointed out that the greater complexity of the student intake to and the curriculum within universities, the need to attract new resources to replace falling levels of public funding, demands for greater accountability and the rise of the audit culture for research, learning and teaching, meant that explicit use of management was essential. Indeed, attempts to manage staff performance and the use of targets for income generation and research/teaching quality achievements were widely reported. At the same time, self-government was often preferred to more overt line-management, especially in the pre-1992 universities.

The term

manager-academic

covers a wide range of people working at the management level in higher education institutions, and the role itself is a mix of a wide range of skills and capacities, with the academic element still highly prominent. Whilst some manager-academics encountered by the research team were self-identified career-track managers in permanent posts, others were reluctant managers in temporary positions, especially at HoD levels. Only a minority of those questioned thought of themselves mainly as managers, with others preferring to regard themselves as academic leaders or facilitators. The selection procedures for manager-academics are not uniform, and appointment on the basis of an interview was mainly confined to the post-1992 universities. More informal processes of selection may militate against women and minority group members. Less than half the manager-academics interviewed had been given special training for their roles, but all respondents appeared to have engaged in significant informal learning about their management responsibilities. A considerable number of interviewees thought that gender processes had been relevant to their careers and that gender affected how management roles were enacted, though gender tended to equate to women and motherhood rather than to also include elements of masculinity or parenting in general.

Managerial work in the

universities studied clearly involved many meetings and personal negotiations (partly because of traditions of academic autonomy and the creative nature of much academic work). Research and teaching were difficult to sustain because of the pervasive nature of the meetings

culture. Manager-academics interviewed reported long hours of working, difficulties in separating their work and home life, and paper as well as email overload. At the same time, many enjoyed most aspects of their work and almost all were enthusiastic about trying to bring about change. Though different institutions experimented with variations of organisational forms from large schools and faculties through to smaller departments, there was little evidence that particular forms were more successful than others. In the institutional case studies, non-academic staff in particular (but academic staff too), often felt great loyalty to their institutions but often thought them poorly managed, with too little strategic direction and inadequate communication. Since many HoDs had achieved their own positions through a feeling that previous or potential HoDs were inadequate, the accusations of poor management found in the case studies may be related to the ambitions of non-managerial staff as well as to the actual management of the institutions concerned.

UK universities have, in common with similar institutions in a number of western countries, undergone considerable change over the last two decades. This study has enabled us to gain a more empirically informed understanding of how those changes have affected the management and organisation of UK universities, as well as to gauge the response of managed staff toward current management practices. Elements of New Managerialism, particularly the search for efficiency, devolution of responsibility to lower levels of the organisation, and concern to bring about cultural change, have permeated UK universities, partly introduced by external pressures, funding policies and the audit culture. Our research suggests that whilst manager-academics share some of the characteristics of other managers in public service and even for-profit organisations, the extent to which, except at very senior levels, they are still personally engaged in the activities (research and teaching) which they also manage, makes them somewhat distinctive. Policy reforms to UK higher education are continuing, so it is important that all higher education institutions pay attention to how they select and support manager-academics. Furthermore, ways of managing universities other than those permeated by New Managerialism could usefully be explored in future research.

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