

CHAPTER 7

THE IMPLICATIONS
OF A DIVERSIFYING
WORKFORCE FOR
INSTITUTIONAL
GOVERNANCE AND
MANAGEMENT IN
HIGHER EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

THIS chapter will draw on three research projects undertaken by the author and colleagues between 2013 and 2018:

- (1) Staffing Models and Institutional Flexibility (Whitchurch and Gordon 2013a, 2013b; 2017), funded by the UK Leadership Foundation for Higher Education.
- (2) Shifting Landscapes: Meeting the Staff Development Needs of a Changing Academic Workforce (Locke et al. 2016), funded by the Higher Education Academy.
- (3) The Future Higher Education Workforce in Locally and Globally Engaged Higher Education Institutions (Locke et al. 2018), funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

Together the three projects involved a total of twenty-three case study institutions in the United Kingdom, and 183 interviews with senior managers, middle managers, and early and mid-career staff. Expert witnesses were also consulted by phone or by Skype from a range of other countries including Australia, the United States, Ireland, South Africa, and Hong Kong. These were senior higher education managers such as vice-chancellors, pro-vice-chancellors, heads of administration, and researchers with an international reputation in higher education studies.

From all three projects there emerged, *inter alia*, issues around the relationship between a diversifying workforce and institutional structures, and following on from this the challenges arising from increasingly devolved management and governance arrangements. One key finding was that the role of middle managers such as heads of department and principal investigators of research teams emerged as critical in interpreting and modulating institutional policy. Their impact on individual lives could be disproportionate, both positively and negatively. At the same time there was a growing bottom-up dynamic as staff negotiated the structures they encountered to meet individual strengths, requirements, and aspirations, including factors such as work–life balance, caring responsibilities, and partner careers. Sometimes these were adjusted seamlessly in consultation with a line manager, sometimes with an element of paying lip service to formal processes and structures while working round them. This could be interpreted in different ways, from demonstrating pragmatism to, at times, a sense of subversiveness. Nevertheless, the interpretation and ownership of institutional policy at ground level with respect to, for instance, terms and conditions, rewards and incentives, and career development, emerged as critical to individual motivations and outcomes, as well as to institutional profiles and reputation.

What also seemed to be the case was that institutional managers, as represented by senior management teams, and often despite their professed best intentions, tended to be behind the curve in observing and responding to these trends, and in moving towards what might be seen as community governance (Benington 2011; Feldman and Khademian 2007; Ferlie et al. 2008), based on partnership as well as top-down communication. However, it was also clear from the narratives that ‘traditional ways of representing collegial and managerial governance as polar opposites or a dichotomy do not reflect accurately the realities of contemporary university structures and processes’, and that ‘the evolution of network governance means that academic governance no longer takes place only within universities but also in other, intra-institutional spaces’ (Rowlands 2016: 111).

CONTEXTS

As shown in Whitchurch and Gordon (2013a, 2013b), institutions are experimenting with more flexible structural arrangements to meet less certain environments and to reduce institutional risk. These adjustments do not necessarily operate solely in the

interests of the institution, and cater in different ways for different constituencies. For instance:

- Annualized contracts, whereby individuals' hours can be varied to meet peaks and troughs in demand and also assure individuals on such contracts of a regular monthly salary.
- Benefit packages that offer financial and other types of reward and are tailored to meet individual needs including flexitime, off-campus working, and trade-offs between pay and leave entitlement.
- A broadening of criteria for promotion that can recognize and reward, for instance, achievement in teaching, scholarship, pedagogical research, professional practice, and links with the community or the business sectors.
- Flexible career tracks that can accommodate, for instance, teaching and research, teaching and scholarship, professional practice, innovation and/or knowledge exchange at different points in an individual's career.
- Employment contracts that do not distinguish between academic and non-academic roles and give professional staff equivalent status in undertaking work with academic components such as tutoring, programme development, institutional research and development.

Such mechanisms enable institutions to make adjustments on an evolutionary basis, as a result of, for instance, developments in competitor institutions, a new senior management team, bottom-up pressure from staff and/or their line managers, or internal restructuring. Institutions are likely to be driven to respond, not only to market forces in an effort to reduce their cost base, but also to new ways of working as a result of pressure from staff themselves. In turn, local managers are likely to be instrumental in how moves towards greater flexibility are presented and perceived. Thus, whatever organizational models are chosen, their dependence on facilitative relationships, and on interpretation of the formal contract of employment rather than the precise letter of the contract itself, is likely to be critical. Therefore, flexibility may be provided by custom and practice as much as by formal provision, and adjustments to the employment equation may also involve what one respondent described as 'trade-offs'. A key responsibility for institutional managers, therefore, is in assessing the point at which local arrangements might be optimal, in the light of a range of considerations. The changes described have therefore put pressure on the concept of the generic academic with a balanced portfolio of teaching and research, and the continuation of the apprenticeship model of the full-time, sequential academic career. Out-with what might be seen as a core of staff who have a balanced teaching, research, and knowledge exchange portfolio, there are a significant minority of staff whose experiences, needs, and expectations diverge from this norm (Locke et al. 2016). Higher education institutions have begun to develop distinctive career pathways, and these might be extended in future to include, for instance, the student experience, professional practice, or international roles.

Key points that arose out of the three studies included:

- The impact on both institutions and individuals of a diversifying workforce, with an increasing range of career histories and trajectories.
- The impact of a greater range of employment contracts and models on institutions and those working in them.
- The discretion available to local managers in interpreting institutional policies in ways that meet the needs and develop the potential of those for whom they are responsible.

However, the studies also showed that there could at times be a disconnect between policy and practice at the level of governance and management, the day-to-day understandings of rank-and-file staff in early and mid-career, and at times, their line managers such as heads of school and department.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Horvath (2017), drawing on a recent literature review of what governance means for contemporary higher education institutions, drew attention to the relationships among governance actors, the means that different actors have to negotiate for their goals and interests, what formal and informal rules restrict or enable their actions, and how such rules are communicated, implemented, and enforced (Horvath 2017: 13). The way that governance is enacted, therefore, and the need for flexible governance that recognizes and is sensitive to a variety of local conditions, is increasingly pertinent in the light of the changing structural contexts of institutions. In particular, issues of achieving a balance between institutional and individual aspirations, channels of negotiation, and the location of decision making would appear to be paramount in a higher education setting. Ideas about the significance of spatial configurations of people as opposed to linear and historical views of structures, in particular social networks at the borders of recognized spaces (Castells 2000; Soja 1996), suggest that formal arrangements might increasingly need to take account of these. The aim would be to achieve what might be termed more iterative forms of governance, in which senior management teams, heads of school and department translate, facilitate and enact policy, whilst ensuring that legal, financial, and ethical obligations are met.

On the one hand, there was in the studies acknowledgement at the most senior levels that decisions needed proper consultation and discussion in order to achieve a balance between supporting the institution's overall employment proposition and motivating staff in ways that would do this. An over-bureaucratic committee structure could encourage a silo mentality, militating against joined up approaches in which every member of the governing body contributes to its collective value. On the other hand, concern was also expressed in more than one institution about the need to be able to

respond rapidly to external demands, and this had involved, for instance, reducing the number and balance of the governing body membership, increasing frequency of meetings, reducing sub-committees and the increasing use of correspondence for decision making (including email). Thus:

our existing governance arrangements are really not fit for purpose for the flexibility needed in times to come... they risk hindering institutional decision making... we should [in future] have a more flexible, more responsive, fleet of foot, capability at that level... so that should yield a balanced Council, but one that's much more focused on the job in hand. (Chair of governing body)

Some institutions had established an executive that met, say, once a month, with a wider forum meeting, say, three times a year. Frustration with bureaucracy and the inability to move quickly was also a common theme among department heads and programme leaders, particularly in relation to appointments to posts and programme approvals. Again, this had to be weighed against the consultation and timescales required in relation to, for instance, the adjustment or phasing out of a teaching programme, as well as issues of fairness and equity.

In terms of their focus on staffing issues, it was suggested that governing bodies were more likely to be concerned with performance and equity in an institution than with future staffing profiles. Thus there was more interest in 'a backlog of unmet capability issues, people not tackling performance... more [about] getting what's there working properly, rather than thinking about what could or should be there instead' (vice-chancellor). The accent was therefore more likely to be on matters of probity and justice than workforce trends and forward strategies. At the same time, although governance procedures might be seen as offering protection for staff, a number of respondents also pointed out that institutions are in any case bound by employment law, in that they are obliged to have a contract with employees, consultation processes, and procedures to deal with grievances and dismissal on disciplinary grounds. Thus, an appeal to the governing body could simply delay matters in ways that were not necessarily beneficial to individuals:

all it really does, in many cases, is prolong the outcome to a formal resolution, because it gives so many... predefined layers of consideration... All [individuals] have is more rights to time and process. (Head of administration)

Thus there is a delicate balance to be struck between fair governance and the way this facilitates good practice in relation to management, as opposed to creating what many referred to as 'bureaucracy'. A stark example of the latter, representing a mechanistic relationship between individual and institution, is typified by the way that automated systems create inappropriate alerts:

they're supposed to warn you a few months before your contract comes up... if you receive a letter in the post with your Pay As You Earn (PAYE) form, it doesn't exactly send the best message, does it?... For example... just under a year ago I was made a permanent member of staff but officially my contract for... would have ended in

March, and when I came in on the 1st April, my staff login didn't work because basically Human Resources hadn't told the IT system that I was still a member of staff. (Early career academic)

Structures such as workload models could also be the source of significant dissatisfaction in that they did not necessarily reflect the reality of the time it took, for instance, to provide pastoral care for students:

workload models have caused massive problems... and there is a project... on how to counter some of the criticisms... it's not [so much] about the amount of work, it's about a number of other things, some of which is cultural, some of it is because we've got no processes or procedures, so actually, to get anything done you have to go round 3 or 4, you know, times so everything, even the simplest things, takes a lot of time, and that's a legitimate complaint and we need to sort that. (Director of human resources)

Therefore if not tempered by a more personal relationship there is the danger that the individual's relationship with the institution can become defined by formal structures and processes and dislocated from human contact. The lack of a bespoke and 'intelligent' relationship between individuals and institutions is demonstrated in the following statement, which also reflects a mismatch between an 'accounting' and an 'entrepreneurial' culture:

we work as a very commercially oriented research group and do very well because we've got good industry links, we get lots of sponsorship from industry, so it's a nice little team that we've got going... I find compared to working in the... private sector, it's a very sort of clunky bureaucracy... So I think that's the biggest hindrance, the amount of bureaucracy and the hoops and hurdles you have to jump through to get anything done. (Mid-career academic)

In these contexts, a key aspect of governance is to take account of the impact of policy on a range of constituencies and the variables that are likely to affect this at the implementation stage. These might include, for instance:

- Institutional or sub-institutional mission, including balance of teaching, research, and knowledge exchange activity.
- The size of the institution. Smaller institutions tended to see this as an advantage in fostering collaborative working, as well as commitment to institutional goals. At the same time, there may be issues about a lack of critical mass, the ability to provide cover, and equity between staff in different faculties who may know each other.
- Disciplinary mix of staff, including professional practitioners, and number of part-time and hourly paid staff.
- Relationships with local trade unions and/or staff forums.
- Locale of the institution, for instance whether co-located with other tertiary providers who could become partners for collaborative teaching or benchmarking, more likely in large urban conurbations and some regions.

- Student mix and mode of study, for instance the extent of work-based or online learning.
- The existence of outreach and overseas campuses, and associated staff contracts, which may differ from those in the home institution.

In what Krull (2017) terms ‘creative governance’, appropriate adjustments can facilitate a different worldview among staff by:

- providing a stimulating environment
- encouraging risk-taking
- allowing for failure
- establishing high-trust relationships
- creating research-friendly governance structures, and
- enabling individuals to see things differently.

Facilitators for these conditions are described as timely and transparent decision making processes; communication and cooperation; building a common sense of identity; and decision making assigned to those who are able to take responsibility for outcomes. Krull goes on to identify four domains of institutional governance:

- Overarching governance, including the participation of external experts in its decision making and advisory bodies such as governing boards and evaluation committees.
- Internal governance and the interaction between the various stakeholders.
- The university–government relationship and how the respective legislation is being put into practice.
- The university–society relationship and the social dimension of the institution.

This chapter focuses on the interaction between the first and second of these, overarching and internal governance, and the balance between the two. Despite perceived gaps and dissonances, adaptive governance would appear to work best where an iterative relationship exists between institutional policy and practice. In some cases practice may be ahead of policy, and although there may be a time lag before policy catches up, practice is likely to have a bottom-up influence. In that sense practice could be seen as a critical force informing policy, even if this is not explicitly articulated or acknowledged.

At the same time, adjustments necessarily take place within structures and the interaction between individual roles and institutional strategy is likely to be reworked on an ongoing basis:

actually what we should be doing is, I think... be a little bit more organic and being able to say, ‘For us as a university right here, right now, that is really valuable and in order for us to retain that, or recognize it or whatever, we’re going to promote, we’re going to reward, we’re going to recognize you for it’ and we should be confident as managers to be able to say, ‘And the reason that we did that for that individual... we’re doing it because that’s really important for us right now’ and, you know, if the world

changes in 2/3 years' time then that person over there who's doing that other stuff that might be really valuable at that moment in time, we'd look at that kind of stuff and that way of promoting and progressing. (Director of human resources)

Much therefore depends on the role of senior and middle managers in interpreting and adjusting policy made by senior management teams in the light of their knowledge of the potential contributions of staff in schools and departments.

The issue of managing expectations on both sides was one that recurred, although there was a nice distinction between being overly prescriptive in those expectations, allowing space for individuals and roles to grow, and providing no guiding frameworks. Thus, when responsibilities were devolved, there was a balance to be struck between delegating authority and ensuring that institutional requirements were met:

if you want heads of department to take on that sort of role, you've got to have a system or approach which enables them to adapt to circumstances... [However], if you give discretion to line managers, but you don't give a frame within which line managers can operate... you are not giving discretion, you've fully devolved, delegated, and in some cases potentially abdicated responsibility at an institutional level.
(Head of administration)

This could involve, for instance, decisions around the balance between deteriorating staff–student ratios and pressure on individual workloads. This might be seen as being in subtle contrast to what is traditionally seen as a collegial approach, the difference being that local managers are now more likely to interpret job descriptions and criteria in relation to departmental and institutional, as opposed to purely disciplinary, agendas.

The studies therefore demonstrated that 'The landscape of practice is... not congruent with the reified structures of institutional affiliations, divisions and boundaries. It is not independent of these institutional structures, but neither is it reducible to them' (Wenger 2010: 131). In turn Shattock concludes that successful institutions 'have developed an organisational culture which gives them the resilience to continue to rely on trusted constitutional arrangements, on the virtues of academic participation in decision-making and on the exercise of consultative leadership' (Shattock 2017: 393). In practice this is likely to be an iterative process involving listening and interpretive skills on the part of local managers that help to build confidence among their staff, and an exchange relationship built on what one director of human resources described as a 'something for something' basis.

THE PUBLIC SERVICE/MARKET DICHOTOMY

Not only has the workforce diversified, but the United Kingdom, and other countries such as Hong Kong and Australia, have also been subject to an increasing market orientation as a result of successive government policies, which coexists with, but may at

times be in tension with, traditional public service agendas. These conditions affect the funding regimes for both teaching and research, and are characterized by performance assessment of programmes and individuals, as well as an increased emphasis on knowledge exchange activity, the production of employable graduates, and the contribution of higher education to national socio-economic agendas.

Examples of mechanisms reflecting practices drawn from the private sector, and therefore influenced by a market orientation in the institutions in the studies, included the use of short-term or hourly based contracts related to, for instance, recruitment to a specific degree course or programme; increments based on increased responsibility and/or performance, rather than being awarded automatically year-on-year; and reward packages that can be individualized if necessary to attract appropriate and high quality recruits. Such market-oriented approaches tended to use motivation and reward mechanisms aligned to institutional performance against competitors, with an emphasis on being able to respond rapidly to market changes. They therefore rely on staff appreciating the positioning of the institution as a market player, and being willing to contribute on the basis that institutional success is likely to lead to improved benefits for all, creating a transactional relationship. Such a model is more likely to be accepted when an institution is perceived to be successful and staff feel that they have a stake in that success.

One person who had worked on short-term contracts at other institutions, though currently on a permanent contract, contrasted this with the treatment they had received elsewhere, saying that they had felt insecure and even exploited. By contrast they felt that their current institution 'has invested in me'. However they acknowledged that the earlier posts at prestigious institutions had been instrumental in helping them to obtain the permanent job. Thus, after a trajectory that had been uncertain and difficult, 'there's been hard work and everything else, but on the other hand, it's been fun and... I still can't believe I get paid for reading and writing, it doesn't seem like a proper job, to be perfectly honest' (early career academic). As a result, short-term posts had, in retrospect, seemed like a necessary rite of passage, which had paid dividends but had required an act of faith. Thus the impact of the market meant that an element of risk was increasingly likely to be built in at the beginning of an academic career, as opposed to individuals being able to rely on a pre-ordained career ladder.

Institutions have also experimented with outsourcing, shared services, and partnership arrangements. Therefore an increasing consideration for institutional governance has been to incorporate a variety of arm's-length arrangements. These can include the use of private companies for certain non-core activities, so that personnel are employed either by an external contractor, or by a company owned partly or fully by the institution. Not-for-profit companies owned or partly owned by higher education institutions have been established to deliver self-funding programmes including professional and continuing education, master's degrees, higher diplomas, and short courses. Examples of market-oriented approaches also suggest that there may be benefits for students as consumers and for staff themselves, although this could be a delicate balance. An employee partnership model could be a halfway house to outsourcing, as in the following instance where

staff had been transferred to a private but university-owned company. It was anticipated that this would offer both cost and service benefits:

one of the things that comes with having your staff directly employed is the loyalty that that engenders... There's a dividing line between getting something that is competitive and appropriately procured, and the loyalty and ability of the staff to be able to do anything that you care to ask them... While value for money and cost efficiency [are] part of the mix, they're not the entire story. The other part of the mix is about delivering service levels and key performance indicators that are appropriate to the business. (Estates and facilities manager)

There are also examples of shared services in the sector, and within the concept is the potential for a range of models, described by one respondent as 'a continuum from an institution designing services that others can buy, all the way through to a more integrated delivery model with everyone having an equal stake around it' (head of administration). In practice this model was more likely to be successful in large conurbations between institutions who had similar profiles, quality standards, and business models, for instance in relation to the joint use of IT infrastructure for student records. This type of model also raises questions of how staffing structures might be standardized across institutions in order to facilitate cross-delivery of information:

If you have three different sets of staff in three institutions, if they're delivering a standard service, then you're going to need them to be structured and behave in a very similar way, otherwise that doesn't work. (Head of administration)

There was also a feeling that strong interest groups within institutions could militate against the use of shared services, especially if this was seen as signifying a loss of independence.

Thus, business incubations associated with, say, employee partnership, would be likely to lead to 'a different set of corporate structures, so we won't just have the university, we'll have a whole range of other corporate sub-structures within that, and that will require flexibility in employment practice. And that is where it will creep in, on the periphery' (chair of governing body). The sense was that although boards of governors might not actually be constraining more flexible staffing models, they could perhaps be more imaginative in facilitating them. Furthermore, all these types of market sector models have a potential impact on the nature of the psychological contract with staff, whereby employers are expected, on the one hand, to provide a legal agreement representing an economic exchange in the labour market; and on the other to observe unwritten understandings about expectations and obligations on the part of both employer and employees. Both sets of obligations are likely to be articulated via job specifications and also the day-to-day relationship between line managers and staff. Hands-off relationships with other organizations, whether in formal partnership or not, require careful negotiation and management in ways that both satisfy staff and motivate multiple constituencies and types of employee. At the same time relationships are continually

being made, adjusted, and adapted for the purpose in hand. As new contractual approaches are introduced there is an experimental aspect as they are established, tried, and tested.

Approaches to internal governance are illustrated in two case studies from the Future Higher Education Workforce Study, of a pre-1992 campus institution and a pre-1992 multi-faculty institution in the United Kingdom.

CASE STUDY: PRE-92 CAMPUS

Pre-92 Campus is a campus university with devolved management structures. A comparatively low turnover contributes to a relatively conservative culture, and there was awareness among the senior management team that they were at times ‘behind the curve’ with some of the changes occurring in the sector, particularly in relation to giving credit for teaching in staff promotion, rewards, and career development: ‘Actually there’s a very good positive spirit about the place but it does mean that sometimes it’s hard to get change embedded as quickly as . . . you have to be able to given the speed that the sector is moving at the moment’ (pro-vice-chancellor). Practices were therefore less defined by some of the more market-oriented models described above. Nevertheless, the strong practitioner orientation of academic programmes meant that approximately 9 per cent of staff were on part-time and hourly paid contracts. This arrangement both suited practitioners and enriched the programme for students. However, the institution was aiming to move to annualized contracts as far as possible: ‘I think we do have to face up to the fact that there is the need for a flexible workforce, how big should it be and what is our obligation to that flexible workforce’ (director of human resources).

From a management point of view the extent of devolution was an issue. This could lead to inconsistency, for instance in recruitment decisions: ‘In terms of the workforce the university needs . . . Perhaps the tail wags the dog a little on that in terms of . . . the role I need might be defined by the person that I know who might go into the role’ (director of human resources). Matters such as workload issues were dealt with locally within schools and departments, and depended on heads of department. Again consistency of practice could be an issue. There could also be difficulties around poor performance, what one person called ‘wilful incompetence’, e.g. in teaching, whereby the responsibility for teaching tended to be passed to good teachers, who then became overloaded, so that it became difficult to find time for research.

Career tracks, currently defined as teaching and research or teaching and scholarship, were under review. Other possible components, such as an orientation towards research, citizenship, leadership, or professional practice, were being considered to ensure that staff making a range of contributions had the same expectations of advancement, including the opportunity to obtain a chair. Furthermore, it was acknowledged that a strategic approach to governance also needed to take account of soft, morale-raising factors, such as the built environment and the quality of the surrounding estate. Policy

intentions were therefore translated, sometimes implicitly and with a light touch, by local practice which could be adjusted in the light of specific conditions and considerations, with local managers such as heads of department acting as mediators.

From the point of view of academic staff there was some frustration with what was seen as institutional bureaucracy, for instance with turnaround times for assessments and inflexibility in workload models. At the same time some individuals tended to find their own way round the structures, sometimes bypassing processes and procedures. Others incorporated interests such as voluntarily running extra-mural classes for students, mentoring colleagues, and professional body activity into their academic lives. Generic job descriptions meant that individuals were able to mould their activity, at least to some extent, according to their own preferences. One said the time allocations between teaching, research, and other activity were based on ‘understandings’ and assumptions of one-third research, one-third teaching, and one-third administration, or at least ‘that’s what I’ve been told but . . . one hears different things’ (mid-career academic). Interestingly, another person in the same department quoted 40 per cent research, 40 per cent teaching, and 20 per cent administration. By allowing things to be a little unspecific, however, particularly with respect to workload models, it was possible to allow one activity to compensate for another, both at a particular point in time, and over a period of time, giving implicit flexibility on an individual basis.

CASE STUDY: PRE-92 MULTI-FACULTY

Pre-92 Multi-faculty is an inner city institution on multiple, geographically dispersed, sites. Although the senior managers see the market and Research Evaluation Framework as key drivers, a strong teaching and research culture militates against rapid change, for instance in embedding teaching and innovation career pathways. Some individuals with teaching-focused roles were confused about the precise scope and nature of these, especially if they were on professional as opposed to academic contracts. There was also a lack of consistency between roles with similar titles, and there could be a mismatch between job descriptions and actual roles in that people were asked to undertake tasks not in their job description. This also affected workload allocations, which again did not necessarily reflect reality. Thus, despite an avowed intention to develop a reward system for teaching, and clarify different types of teaching appointment, the institution was still ‘trying to get to grips’ with this. Similarly although leadership development was ‘in the pipeline’ for early and mid-career staff, this was embryonic. It was acknowledged that the perception was that promotion was based on research rather than teaching or innovation, although ‘we’re trying to make a dent in that’, and also that more could be done to ‘divert central resource’ to help with teaching development (pro-vice-chancellor). These were not, however, high profile shifts, and some rank-and-file staff did not seem to be aware of them, so that ‘the culture is still stuck a little bit in the way that it used to be’ (pro-vice-chancellor).

In such a large dispersed institution individuals could be isolated, for instance in a remote laboratory, and did not always receive departmental information, relying on informal networks in order to obtain information. Some were quite proactive about this, joining key committees or working groups in order to hear what was going on. Such geographical factors could exacerbate a sense of isolation among some staff in relation to formal structures, who drew support from informal networks, and often felt a stronger affiliation to their ‘non-hierarchical’ school or department than the ‘hierarchical’ institution (early career academic). A lack of communication between the centre and the periphery about issues such as the value placed on, for instance, innovation, community work, equity, and widening participation, meant that mixed messages could result. It was not unusual for individuals to be encouraged to take on management roles at a relatively early stage as a way of getting on. Sometimes this was sold by a line manager as being good for a career, even though an individual might want more teaching experience. Furthermore, in order to obtain promotion, some individuals spoke of obtaining an offer from elsewhere and then negotiating.

Moreover senior management team thinking was influenced by the impact that changes to terms and conditions, such as the closure of the final salary pension scheme, and assumptions about protected research time, will have on the psychological contract. It was suggested that in future staff were more likely to be interested in ‘cash in hand’ in negotiating salaries, for instance in relation to relocation and housing expenses. They also wanted greater flexibility in the way they worked to take account of, for instance, dual careers, child and elder care, and their concerns were likely to be more about the here and now than the future. Although there appeared to be more strategic thinking than at Pre-92 Campus about some of the broader, market-oriented frameworks within which the institution was operating, the pace of change in relation to implementation of institutional policies was similar.

Comparative Summary of Cases

Pre-92 Campus might be described as a village community in which governance was enacted not only through institutional policy making but also through word of mouth, facilitated by relatively short lines of communication on a cohesive campus. The fact that policy intentions were not always explicit, with an element of fluidity, meant that while some factors, such as the value accorded to teaching, could be ambiguous, there was also an element of built-in flexibility so that adjustments could be made relatively easily by line managers, or the individuals themselves, to meet local circumstances. There was therefore an iterative element to governance. A possible drawback to this was that loose understandings could be interpreted in different ways, and people did not always know what the formal position was, for instance in relation to what they had to do to gain promotion. On the other hand, a more *laissez-faire* approach had allowed some individuals to develop their own interests in innovative and fulfilling ways without hindrance, and an element of ambiguity allowed for subtle adjustments at local level.

By contrast, Pre-92 Multi-faculty might be described as a metropolis with long and complex lines of communication, with less of an overall sense of collective community. Senior managers implied that in order to bring together, and possibly control, this sprawling ‘empire’, formal policies needed to be documented, proclaimed, and publicized. These were influenced by market considerations underpinned by a clear bottom line of costs, as well as success in the Research Evaluation Framework and league table positioning. However, although clearly articulated, such policies covered a wide range of staff with different contractual arrangements, and were not therefore necessarily fit for purpose in relation to specific cases. This could lead to dissonance and strain for individuals. In some cases people felt locked into inappropriate structures from which they could not escape, for instance in teaching-only contracts. There therefore appeared to be less scope for negotiation or adjustment in the emphasis of a role, and less top-down, bottom-up iteration.

Although senior managers in both institutions expressed a clear intention to be more explicit about establishing career pathways and reward structures for excellence in teaching and their activities as opposed to research, and were developing policies to this end, in Pre-92 Campus there was the sense that this was most likely to be achieved by nudging practice as the opportunity arose, whereas in Pre-92 Multi-faculty there was the impression that top-down initiatives, aimed at putting formally documented specifications into practice, could be impeded by long lines of communication.

CONCLUSION

As found in other studies (Locke et al. 2016; Whitchurch 2018; Whitchurch and Gordon 2017), these trends are not likely to be restricted to the case institutions described, although they will vary in emphasis in individual institutions. Rank-and-file staff may increasingly seek other avenues to boost their chances of advancement, including for instance community engagement and work with professional bodies. It is also apparent that, despite well-documented promotion policies, people can become lost within governance structures at both early and mid-career level, and one respondent mentioned the need for an ‘exit plan’. Notwithstanding workload models intended to ensure equity, there can also be resentment among peers about poor performers who were seen as ‘stealing’ academic time from others when, for instance, teaching was taken away from poorly performing teachers and others had to do more to compensate.

Furthermore, central institutional claims about what counts for career advancement are not necessarily fulfilled in practice. Some people spend hidden time on projects that might or might not attract funding in due course. There was often a lack of precision about contracts and how much time should be spent on teaching, research, and other activities, and it was not therefore clear how much effort was being put into them, or how much might be appropriate. Fluidity could be productive but also lead to frustration about how to position oneself for the future. Similarly the academic autonomy of

individuals could be seen as a double-edged sword if there was no one with whom to discuss workload, or the future. A critical element of governance, therefore, as translated into day-to-day activity via line managers, is how to take cognizance of existing processes and structures, and avoid people simply working round them (what one respondent called the ‘Maginot line’ approach). In turn this means clearly communicating written policies but allowing scope for negotiation at a local level. This is also likely to involve taking account of issues of size, the extent of devolution, and achieving congruence with staff expectations, as well as the balance between enterprise and accounting cultures, teaching, and other activities. Structural issues may include acknowledging resentment if, for instance, allocation formulae highlight differences between research income across science faculties and the humanities, with a sense that individuals are being played off against each other in an internal market. In practice new forms of governance and management are likely to be required as public and private sector considerations are blended in ways that are optimal for both institutions and their staff. This is, in turn, likely to influence perceptions of institutions as, for instance, safe havens or restrictive bureaucracies.

There is therefore a sense that governance is likely to continue to evolve in response to agendas that reflect the amalgam of psychological contracts referred to by Watson (2009). What might be termed iterative governance is likely to involve a balanced approach:

[it’s] the constant balance between, are these processes enabling you to find and appoint and recruit the right people...are they enabling you to flex around the operational needs of the institution, or are they just creating a burdensome bureaucracy around it that actually can’t...give flexibility back to staff. (Head of administration)

This could include, for instance, tacit recognition of working over and above the workload model requirement, via informal exchange based on mutual understandings of possible future career development. Although implicit acknowledgement of such activity is likely to be appreciated, and may lead to opportunities being provided, managers again need to be aware of maintaining perceptions of equity. Thus new ways of working are likely to reflect wider employment trends, in that boundaries and artefacts such as job descriptions and positional career structures may no longer be universal. An iterative approach to governance is likely to be needed in managing the tension between considerations of the market and those of public service, accompanying a shift from career trajectories that are relatively secure and predictable to ones that may be more fluid.

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