

## 'New Managerialism' and Higher Education: the management of performances and cultures in universities in the United Kingdom

ROSEMARY DEEM

Lancaster University, United Kingdom

**ABSTRACT** The paper examines the applicability of recent theories positing the existence of new approaches to the management of public sector institutions, to current organisational forms and management strategies in universities in the United Kingdom. The term 'new managerialism' is generally used to refer to the adoption by public sector organisations of organisational forms, technologies, management practices and values more commonly found in the private business sector. Particular attention is paid to the writings of John Clarke and Janet Newman. Their discussion of organisational forms (including Newman's attention to the gendering of such forms), technologies and narratives under 'new managerialist' regimes and of the tensions between managing cultures and performances in organisations operating under 'new managerial' regimes, are then drawn upon to analyse two different instances of organisational regimes and management practices in universities. The first of these is based on an exploratory study of a small group of feminist academic managers in higher education, where questions are raised about the possible links between feminist values and what Trow has termed 'soft' approaches to management, as opposed to the 'hard' management practices of 'new managerialism'. The second example is an insider account of changes to organisational forms and technologies resulting from a severe financial crisis at Lancaster University, where a shortage of resources seems to have precipitated at least some moves in the direction of 'new managerialism', even if the attempt to change organisational cultures has so far been uneven.

### Introduction

Until quite recently, the notion that the activities and cultures of universities either required managing or were, in any meaningful sense, 'managed', would have been regarded as heretical. Universities were perceived as communities of scholars researching and teaching together in collegial ways; those running universities were regarded as academic leaders rather than as managers or chief executives. However, as the higher education sector in the United

Kingdom has grown in extent, it is also increasingly being required to justify the expenditure of public funds and to demonstrate 'value for money'. Those who run universities are expected to ensure that such value is provided and their role as academic leaders is being subsumed by a greater concern with the overt management of sites, finance, staff, students, teaching and research. Universities are also being exhorted to raise both the standards of educational provision, and the quality of their teaching, learning and research outcomes, whilst prevailing government and funding council policies also require annual so-called 'efficiency gains' to be made, resulting in a declining unit of resource per student taught, less money for equipment and a decrease in research resourcing. At the same time, the emphasis on competition between universities for students, research income and academic research 'stars', has also served to stress the extent to which higher education can be described as operating under quasi-market conditions (Le Grand & Bartlett, 1993).

One of combined the effects of current funding regimes, government policies and quasi-market conditions is that staff in higher education organisations are finding themselves under pressure to do more work but with fewer resources (Smyth, 1995; Cuthbert, 1996). The pressure comes both from outside and inside their institutions. Externally the pressure is exerted through a range of quangos (such as higher education funding bodies and the Quality Assurance Agency) which control both resource allocation and quality rankings. Internally, pressure on academic staff appears in the guise of the activities of academic managers and administrators re-organising, controlling and regulating the work of academic staff and the conditions under which those staff work (Trowler, 1998). It is, of course, also possible to speculate about the range of the wider economic, social and political factors which are causing western democracies to restructure their welfare and public service provision (Robertson, 1992; Hill 1993a; Hill, 1993a, b, 1996; Held 1995; Brown & Lauder, 1996) but this is something well beyond the scope of this article.

In United Kingdom-based higher education institutions, it would appear that the explicit and overt management of academic staff and their work by academic managers and career administrators is becoming more common. The former binary line between universities and polytechnics, though theoretically dissolved in 1992 (Pratt, 1997), is still relevant to understanding some of the different forms this may take. Thus in the pre-1992 universities, many of which were established as elite institutions, explicit management practices seem to be replacing rather more laissez-faire ways of organising teaching and research. What is being replaced includes the collegiality of academics of equal status working together with minimal hierarchy and maximum trust, and the rather 'hands-off' but also 'gentlemanly' governance practices which were once widespread in that sector.

The former polytechnics and colleges of higher education emerged from a rather more bureaucratic and hence more hierarchical and rule-bound local authority tradition than their more collegiate competitors. Nevertheless, in the

1980s and before, the polytechnics had a range of employment conditions and practices which afforded academic staff at least some professional autonomy, trust and discretion. In England, these conditions and practices were swept away first by the removal of the polytechnics and colleges from local authority control in 1989 and then in 1992 when polytechnics were permitted to use the title of university. The conditions, original status of the institutions and the timings were somewhat different in Wales and Scotland but the end result for staff has been very similar. The connections of the former polytechnics to, and funding by, democratically-elected local authorities, had previously ensured a degree of openness in their governance. This was largely lost when they became corporations and were required to appoint their governors mainly from the private sector, sometimes without adequate representation of staff and students on those governing bodies.

Nevertheless, despite the differences between the pre- and post-1992 universities and the retention of some differences in missions in each of these sectors, some similarities between the approaches to managing are beginning to appear in all those institutions (McNay, 1995), especially as they are now located within common funding frameworks.

### Examining New Managerialism in the Context of Universities in the United Kingdom

This article examines recent theoretical developments in the analysis of public sector management, particularly in relation to concepts of and theories about 'new managerialism', and tries to relate this to changes in the United Kingdom's higher education policies as well as to more specific changes in the organisational regimes and management of individual institutions. The absence of much creditable or detailed academic research on the topic of higher education management in the United Kingdom makes it difficult to be anything other than tentative at present. However, the author and three colleagues are about to embark on a more detailed study of higher education management.[1] A key question asked both here and in the new project is about whether ideas about 'new managerialism' are appropriate for analysing the management of universities in the United Kingdom and understanding the organisational forms and cultures of those universities. There is also an attempt to consider whether 'new managerialism' is a gender-specific set of practices and values, both infused by masculinities and developed by male managers (Collinson & Hearn, 1996), or whether it is equally applicable to women managers and to management practices which are permeated by both feminisms and by femininities.

'New managerialism' represents a way of trying to understand and categorise attempts to impose managerial techniques, more usually associated with medium and large 'for profit' businesses, onto public sector and voluntary organisations (Reed & Anthony, 1993; Clarke et al, 1994; Clarke & Newman, 1994, 1997b; Itzin & Newman, 1995). The techniques highlighted

by 'new managerialist' theorists include the use of internal cost centres, the fostering of competition between employees, the marketisation of public sector services and the monitoring of efficiency and effectiveness through measurement of outcomes and individual staff performances. Other features include attempting to change the regimes and cultures of organisations and to alter the values of public sector employees to more closely resemble those found in the private 'for profit' sector. Clarke & Newman (1997a) suggest that 'new managerialism' can be detected in the organisational forms, cultures and narratives and management technologies of organisations. Researchers investigating similar attempts to change cultures and values in schools have found that what may emerge in organisations subjected to such changes is a kind of bi-lingualism, whereby two or more sets of values and cultures exist side by side and are invoked in appropriate contexts (Gewirtz et al, 1995). Whether this is so in higher education remains to be seen.

Newman suggests that the development of 'new managerialism' may be closely linked to particular kinds of organisational forms (Newman, 1995). One is what she terms competitive public sector organisations. This is where a business ethos is introduced by exposing part or all of the organisation to external competition (for example, as in compulsory competitive tendering) or by establishing internal competition through the introduction of internal markets. The emphasis is on short term goals and successes, often achieved by risk-taking and entrepreneurial zeal. There is no strongly gendered division of labour but women must prove that they are as tough as men if they are to survive life in competitive organisations. Competitive organisational forms and regimes are contrasted with more traditional public sector organisational forms, regimes and cultures, with the latter having an administrative and professional value-orientation far removed from industry and commerce, and a division of labour based on stereotyped ideas about gender roles, with women in 'caring' and servicing jobs, and men occupying more high status roles. Newman also suggests a third type of organisational form, the transformative, where work is more team-based, hierarchies are flattened and considerable attention is paid to long-term goals and to the management of organisational cultures. In such organisations, women play a supposedly equal role but because of the emphasis on caring and people skills, may often end up taking more than their share of responsibilities.

None of these three forms is immediately recognisable as applicable to universities as they stand but the pre-1992 universities display a number of elements of the traditional model, whilst some of the former polytechnics have features of the competitive form. There are few signs that the transformative model has yet been adopted by universities in the United Kingdom. What is happening in higher education management probably represents a considerable degree of hybridisation, drawing on a number of different ideas and organisational types and forms. The shift from both the collegium and from professional autonomy and discretion have been hastened not only by stringent critiques of professional power and the so-called poor quality of

public services but also by attempts to reduce public expenditure and impose tighter monitoring and auditing on the remaining areas of expenditure. 'New managerial' changes have been linked to various developments in economies and business, including the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism (a shift from mass production systems of highly differentiated, deskilled and inflexible use of labour towards much more flexible, multi-skilled and team-based use of employees, with forms of regulation and control becoming less visible). A few researchers have tried to apply Fordist and post-Fordist analyses to schools (Menter et al, 1997), and to higher education (Rustin, 1994). It is much more difficult to claim that higher education, especially in those more elitist institutions which developed at a time when mass higher education seemed unlikely, has ever been Fordist. However, the development of post or neo-Fordist flexible forms of organisation of academic and non-academic labour remains a possibility as universities respond to national policies on higher education, national and global competition for students and a range of other social, political and economic forces (Brown & Lauder, 1996; Ozga & Deem, 1996).

Implementation of the organisational practices and techniques associated with 'new managerialism' in higher education often requires considerable compromise and the retention of some long established administrative and management regimes alongside the new ones. Thus senior management teams and quality managers may exist side by side with more traditional forms of university administration such as semi-autonomous departments and peer review processes (as in the refereeing of research bids). The hybridisation process itself is fraught with contradictions and inconsistencies. As Jary & Parker point out, there are real ironies in professionalising university management in order to attack the power of an established professional group, and in introducing new bureaucratic techniques as a means of reforming the allegedly already over-bureaucratised university (Jary & Parker, 1994). Furthermore, academics - particularly those in disciplines where they are accustomed to working as autonomous individuals - do not necessarily respond warmly to attempts to erode that autonomy, as in the pressure to publish more in order to enter research assessment exercises (Henkel & Kogan, 1996) or to make their supervision of research students more open and accountable (Deem & Brehony, 1997). Activities like these, which once symbolised academic freedom, are increasingly becoming symbols of the academic performances universities need to retain public credibility in higher education. In so doing, the meanings of teaching and research to those academics who undertake them (and the motivations for so doing) are perforce also liable to change.

Changes to organisational regimes and attempts at increased control of academic labour are, of course, sometimes resisted. Here masculinities and femininities may play a role in shaping the form and extent of such resistances to erosion of academic autonomy and introduction of much more administrative responsibility. Traditionally, women did not form part of the

academic labour force and even now they are better represented among the ranks of temporary and casual staff than as permanent employees of universities. Hence women might well take a different stance on what is being defended in resisting new managerialism in the form of the regulation of academic labour. The content of women's work as academics may differ from that undertaken by their male peers. Acker and Brooks note the extent to which women academics in the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Canada are more likely than their male counterparts to take on (and to be encouraged by managers to take on) considerable administrative, committee and student-related responsibilities in addition to their teaching and research (Acker, 1996, 1997; Brooks, 1997). Some male colleagues who do not take on such extra responsibilities may well resist them because of the perceived erosion of academic autonomy in research and teaching compared with the past, a time when few women academics were employed in universities. Women, as relative newcomers to academe, may not be so attached to the autonomy and collegiality which once pervaded the traditional elite universities, since they were never really a part of it. This is particularly likely if the effects of the so-called collegiality are perceived to 'give' women heavier workloads than those male colleagues not disposed to academic good citizenship and to emphasise women's marginalisation within higher education (Bensimon, 1995).

'New managerialism', if it exists in universities, is likely to place considerable pressure on roles and individuals, especially where the tensions between the logic of managerial control and the conventions of professional autonomy become especially acute. Clarke & Newman suggest that the cultural and performance aspects which 'new managerialism' attempts to manipulate, are themselves often in tension (Clarke & Newman, 1997a). Here, research on the management of the Further Education (FE) sector (Ainley & Bailey 1997; Randle & Brady, 1997; Prichard et al, 1998), which as the major focus for non-degree post school education has been subjected to even more far reaching changes in organisational forms, cultures and management/staff industrial relations than universities, is very relevant. This research indicates that the greatest pressure seems to arise at the lowest levels of management, where curriculum managers must exhort staff to teach more students with less resources. It is equally possible that this is also the case in universities, where the role of heads of departments involve academics, themselves still significantly involved in teaching and research, putting pressure on other academics to achieve high quality teaching and research. Thus control and regulation of academic labour seem to have replaced collegiality, trust and professional discretion. The shortage of resources has been an important conditioning factor for managers. Thus Trow notes the way in which the recent Dearing report on higher education (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997) emphasises that 'better management must replace the missing resources' (Trow, 1997, p. 26) without asking whether this is appropriate for every institution.

In understanding the conflicting pressures and hybridisation of managerial processes in universities, the distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' managerialism (Trow, 1993) is also a useful one. Trow defines 'soft managerialism' as the recognition of inefficiency and ineffectiveness, and the invention of rational mechanisms for the improvement of university performance, with the explicit agreement and consent of all those involved. Though this is not collegiality, it is not entirely incompatible with it. 'Hard managerialism', on the other hand involves the imposition of discourses and techniques of reward and punishment on those employees who are considered by those managerial positions to be fundamentally untrustworthy and thus incapable of self-reform or change. These forms of management involve different cultural assumptions about the nature of who and what is being managed. Whilst it is too simplistic to see hard management as 'new managerialism' and soft management as an adaptation of collegiality, nevertheless these two alignments appear to have some significance. As we shall see later, women managers in particular are often associated with 'soft management' and male managers with 'hard management', although whether such polarisations are largely imaginary remains unclear (Yeatman, 1990, 1994, 1995; Deem & Ozga, 1996, 1997; Ozga & Deem, 1996; Deem, 1997; Prichard et al, 1998). It is, however, becoming evident from such studies and those on male managers (Collinson & Hearn, 1996) that masculinities and femininities permeate the management practices of both sexes, albeit to differing degrees. The extent of this appears dependent on the values of the individual managers as well as on their gender.

A final aspect of importance to the 'new managerialism' analysis is Cowen's argument, drawing on Lyotard, about the extent to which visible performativity is now significant in the management of academic labour in universities (Cowen, 1996). The measurable performance of core activities, or the appearance of such performativity in the form of measurable products of research, student learning outcomes and student and quality inspector assessments of teaching, is becoming increasingly centre-stage in higher education in the United Kingdom. In thinking about performativity, it is likely that here too gender plays a role, since as women academics interviewed in both Acker's (1996, 1997) and Brooks's (1997) studies indicate, women may do more of those things which are not easily measured or even noticed, such as extended pastoral care for students, than men. Performativity lends itself to being linked with the management of cultures since it is assumed by managers that changing cultures will thereby encourage a higher level of performativity, replacing the more risky and uncontrolled collegiality and trust which used to inspire and surround academic activity. The visibility of performativity may also be strongly gendered as Acker (1996) and Brooks (1997) note. Finally, as Clarke & Newman (1997) observe, the management of cultures and performances are often in tension with each other, and gendered cultures may be amongst those factors which both help and hinder the 'new managerialist' project.

Theoretical concepts of 'new managerialism' then, appear to offer considerable explanatory potential to help us understand what is happening in universities in the United Kingdom in respect of current management practice, organisational regimes and cultures, and the control of academic labour processes. However, we do not yet know whether the actual management practices and organisational forms in universities can usefully be analysed in this way. We may be able to discover this both by examining contemporary ideas about managing universities and by examining the relationship between organisational forms and regimes and cultures (including the gendering of those cultures). Other important factors to consider include institutional power relations (including gender power relations), how managed and managers interact, the selection and social composition (including the gender composition) of academic managers, the construction of academic management careers, and the control and regulation of academic performances in teaching and research. The second half of this paper represents an exploratory attempt to apply concepts of 'new managerialism' to what is currently happening in the management of universities.

#### Examining 'New Managerialism' at the Meso and Micro Level

Two examples are utilised in order to illustrate different aspects of contemporary university management. The first example is a piece of small-scale research on women academic managers in further and higher education, which was conducted by the author and Jenny Ozga in 1996.[2] This study draws attention to the extent to which academic management is still largely a male preserve and underlines the significance of gendered power relations and organisational cultures in universities as constraints on more women entering academic management (Deem & Ozga, 1996, 1997; Ozga & Deem, 1996; Deem, 1997, 1998; Prichard et al, 1998). At the same time, the data also suggest that some women academic managers in HE may have different strategies for and conceptions of academic management as compared with their male counterparts. These approaches are not necessarily best explained by concepts of 'new managerialism' as presently theorised and hence may have different kinds of organisational consequences, as well as differing implications for the reshaping of gender and other power relations inside higher education establishments.

The second case drawn upon is an insider account of the organisational and management consequences of a recent severe financial crisis at Lancaster University, a small but academically successful pre-1992 university situated in a semi-rural area of north-west England. At the time of the crisis, the prevailing organisational forms of the institution were rather loosely coupled together (Orton & Weick, 1990) and the various organisational cultures created an impression of an institution located somewhere between semi-autonomous collegiality and mild anarchy. These characteristics may have helped foster a climate in which the taking of a range of financial and

other risks by the university were both possible and not easily recognised as having potentially severe resource implications (Rowe, 1997). Equally, the self same conditions could also be seen as facilitating the high quality of the academic and creative achievements of the institution's staff and students.

Since the financial crisis first began in mid-1995, the emphasis on overt management has increased and the extent of the organisational loose-coupling has been reduced. There has also been an attempt to change the nature of the prevailing organisational cultures to those which fit the new managerial ethos more closely. It is not yet clear how far the new regime at Lancaster corresponds to concepts of 'new managerialism' nor is it yet evident how successful are the attempts to supplant collegialism and anarchic tendencies. However, what is more apparent is the attempt to use increased emphasis on the management of academic performances and cultures as a panacea which compensates for having considerably reduced resources.

The analysis here focuses deliberately on what is happening inside the universities in the United Kingdom rather than on more macro levels of analysis. This is consistent with the methodological and theoretical approaches employed in the research used to illustrate the arguments made here. There is no attempt to deny the importance of more macro-levels of analysis concentrating on national and global trends in education, employment and labour markets (Brown, 1995; Brown & Lauder, 1996). However, the study of these trends does not obviate the requirement to look at the meso and micro levels of the organisations implicated in those more macro levels of analysis. The conditions of higher education institutions in the United Kingdom undoubtedly owe much in general terms to the kinds of global economic pressures experienced in recent years by Western economies. In addition, other relevant factors include the desire of Western politicians to be seen to be tough on higher education as a major consumer of public funds and changes but one which caters for relatively privileged students and staff. Further influences include the changing structure of industry, commerce and their associated labour markets, as well as associated pressures to upskill the labour force through education and training, and the greater facility of middle-class people to use their cultural capital to good effect in accessing higher education and subsequently pursuing professional or business careers (Brown, 1995). But assessing all of these other factors is beyond the scope of this paper.

It is more straightforward to evaluate the perceived effects of continued resource constraints, as public expenditure on higher education is subject to annual scrutiny and so-called 'efficiency gains'. These cuts and greater regulation seem more linked to culturally-specific ideological debates about the value of higher education than to globalisation. The rapid expansion in undergraduate and postgraduate student numbers during the late 1980s and early 1990s without a concomitant increase in staffing levels, has increased the workload of academic and support staff. Finally, the gradual development of a series of a series of regular audits and quality assessments covering research,

teaching and administrative systems, have both added to academics and administrators' workloads and increased the overt regulation of academics' performances and academic labour processes. The audit culture has also made the activities of higher education institutions much more publicly visible and hence more likely to be criticised. It is partly this criticism and partly the resource shortages which together led in 1996 to a comprehensive review of the funding and purposes of higher education.

### Higher Education in the United Kingdom and the Dearing Review

This is a particularly apposite moment to examine the management of higher education in the United Kingdom, as the sector responds to the recommendations of the recent Dearing Review of Higher Education (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997) and reflects on the implications for HE of other recent reviews of post-compulsory education, such as the Kennedy Report (Kennedy, 1997). The Dearing Review was established by the previous Conservative administration, ostensibly to provide a solution to the funding problems of United Kingdom universities. The response to Dearing's proposals by the Labour government elected in 1997, published in February 1998, does not include any financial recommendations. Thus Dearing has yet to provide significant new money, despite the fact that the decision to introduce tuition fees for undergraduates has already been acted upon by government and will come into effect in the academic year 1998/99.

The main effect of the tuition fee announcement, apart from at least temporarily reducing mature and working class student demand for HE places, has been to enable the government to try to increase its hold over higher education still further by requiring it to do as it is told both in terms of fixing fee levels and in relation to making higher education more closely linked to employment. This is ironic when we consider that not all universities are highly dependent on public funds (Shattock, 1998).

The Dearing Report itself (National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997), whilst dealing very little with issues of how universities are to be managed in the future and without putting forward any ideas about possible new organisational forms for universities, nevertheless assumes a highly managerial view of higher education rather than one based on collegiality. Martin Trow notes how strong is the committee's illusion that universities are organised like firms, bureaucratically, with clear lines of authority that can ensure that instructions down the line will be obeyed 'with immediate effect' (Trow, 1997, p. 26). The view put forward in the Dearing Report is one very consistent with 'new managerialism', with emphasis on a compliance culture for university staff, national frameworks for degree work and academic standards and measurable student learning and research outcomes. It may be that this managerial emphasis helps to explain why so

many vice-chancellors in the United Kingdom have shown themselves willing to embrace the recommendations of the Dearing Report, even in the absence of the new financial injections to higher education that they must have hoped would accompany these recommendations.

### The Case of Feminist Women Academic Managers

The research, done by myself and Jenny Ozga together with Jocey Quinn, involved interviewing 40 women academic managers, 24 working in higher education institutions in the United Kingdom and 16 in English and Welsh further education colleges. Here the focus is only on those women working in higher education. All of the women interviewed expressed a commitment either to feminisms (Weiner, 1994), or were strongly committed to the pursuit of equity policies in higher education. We wanted to examine the work practices, values and organisational cultural contexts of feminists working, permanently or temporarily, as academic managers. We were interested in how far such women were able to retain their feminist values and principles whilst carrying out management tasks and whether this made them, in Trow's terms, 'soft' rather than 'hard' managers. The study provided a way of exploring whether ideas of hard management and 'new managerialism' are based on gendered concepts of management emphasising masculine qualities in managers (Collinson & Hearn, 1996). We deliberately chose to focus on an extreme case: women with a strong value commitment to feminism or to the pursuit of equal opportunities. Such managers are probably best placed to practice the forms of management which are closer both to soft 'forms of management' (Trow, 1993) and to the more democratic, open and empowering kinds of management which writers like Ranson see as an alternative way forward for public sector organisations (Ranson & Stewart, 1994; Ranson et al, 1998).

Almost all of the women in HE who we interviewed felt that their gender both affected how they managed and the way that others responded to their management. A number also saw sexuality as equally important too - thus the narratives of management they provided were very much viewed through an explicitly gendered lens, something much less likely had we been interviewing male managers (Collinson & Hearn, 1996). It was also evident that women's accounts of why they were managers were not particularly about power or status or about making people do things that were perceived as unacceptable to those being managed. This constitutes further evidence of 'soft' approaches to management concentrating on consensus and collaboration:

[what I try to achieve is] a feminist way of working, collaborative and non-hierarchical...I didn't want the job title the boss but to clarify limits.  
(Director of research, new university)

Women academics, on the whole identify less with the system and unlike men, feminist academics are less preoccupied with order and power. (Women's Studies director, old university)

...the experiences of my life as a woman shaped the kind of manager I am. I've learnt a lot through bad experiences e.g. at the hands of other managers. Engagement with management literature recognising its limitations in analysing women's experience, e.g. the notion of 'feminine' manager, ...trying to write about alternatives. (Associate dean, new university)

Of course, since we were not able to visit most of the institutions in which these women worked, we are not able to judge to what extent their practices match their philosophies. Nor can we assess the extent to which sexism colours the lenses through which those women managers are seen and how they are judged, both by male managers and by those whom they manage. Nevertheless, if management jobs in higher education involve making people work harder, as they increasingly do in under-resourced universities, then women managers with 'soft' management approaches may well be utilised in order to make new or 'hard' managerial approaches seem more acceptable. Most of our interviewees were aware of this but tended to emphasise that there were also still opportunities as managers to achieve changes in relation to equal opportunities for a diverse group of staff and students despite the adverse conditions of work:

There is not an equal opportunities policy which satisfies me and this is being worked on. There is only one clear commitment -to raise the proportion of female professors to 30% by the end of the decade and this is probably achievable but this was the only thing in place. (Senior management team member, old university)

...the notion of equal opportunity is felt more keenly by women. We take every opportunity we can to raise it. (Dean, old university)

It is not, however, I would argue, simply the holding of strong values about equality which allows feminist women managers to hold relatively optimistic views about the possibilities of change and perhaps to retain their 'soft' approach to management. Management roles, especially at more senior levels, often preclude those holding such posts from undertaking any of the core activities of the organisation. This may reinforce beliefs that a 'hard' and detached approach to management can raise both the standards and extent of teaching and research without being compromised by concessions to collegiality or trust. Amongst our interviewees, although several were no longer engaged in regular teaching, all were still active researchers and so aware at first hand of the pressures on university researchers under the conditions of research assessment exercises. Indeed, the retention of an active research career may offer those women flexibility which other colleagues in senior or permanent university management posts do not have. Whether this

flexibility is evidence of post- or neo-Fordism, or rather of women's capacity to construct professional careers in different ways from men, is open to speculation.

What did the women think of the organisational forms and regimes that provided a backdrop for their work? Were these seen to be 'new managerial' in any way? Though few thought their organisations were traditional in Newman's (1995) sense, a number identified a mix of collegiality and more managerial approaches:

[there are] consensual/collegial traditions with centrist/managerial tendencies. (Member of senior management team, old university)

[the] VC likes line management but not all the managers agree; at faculty level (it is) more collegial and team based. (Head of department, old university)

Others felt that their institutions were quite clearly much more aligned with Newman's competitive organisational forms and saw these regimes as openly displaying 'hard' or new managerial characteristics:

...it's hierarchical...seat of the pants stuff. (Deputy head of research, former polytechnic)

...very male -early morning meetings, long hours, residential. (Senior management team member, former polytechnic)

...strong emphasis on line management and hierarchical model of executive responsibilities. (Assistant dean, college of higher education)

None of the women interviewed saw their institution as having any of the elements of what Newman (1995) terms transformative organisational forms or regimes, with the flatter-structured, team-based, employee-empowering networked organisational features which follow the pursuit of excellence model advocated by Peters and others (Peters & Austin, 1985). A minority thought that higher education might move closer to such a model over time. Our data suggest that the possibility of hybrid organisational forms and regimes in higher education is worthy of further exploration. The data also suggest that the gendering of organisational cultures in universities by the wide permeation of masculine values, beliefs and practices, the retention of some traditional views about the roles of women and the maintenance of highly unequal male/female power relations, may reinforce tendencies to 'new managerialism' in some institutions. Furthermore, in universities in the United Kingdom, unlike in FE, academic management has yet to become significantly feminised (Prichard et al, 1998).

In relation to the organisational technologies of management, most of the women interviewed made reference to the need to be au fait with finance and budgets. Nevertheless, none saw internal markets, harsh discipline, and line management as a means to achieve high standards of research and teaching. Instead, they continually stressed the importance of working

collaboratively with people and consulting them. Of course they may merely be stating this and not enacting it. However, such expressions of values do not sound like the bi-lingualism that Gewirtz found amongst head teachers of schools (Gewirtz et al, 1995) since that concept implies at least some acceptance of business and as well as public sector discourses and values. The range of views about management we encountered also suggests that ideas about 'new managerialism', at least at the level of publicly stated views, are not necessarily seen as attractive to women managers with feminist beliefs. But more research is necessary to establish how widespread are such views amongst other women academic managers.

Are feminist women managers and their people skills in 'soft management' explicitly being used by universities to make 'new managerial' regimes more acceptable, even when some of those managers themselves reject the premises of new managerialism? Or do our data, indicating a degree of perceived hybridisation in organisational forms and regimes of universities, suggest that more extensive studies of universities and those who manage them may reveal that 'new managerialism' has by no means yet taken over in universities in the United Kingdom?

Casey's work on private sector organisations may be helpful here. She contends that women (and some men) may be lulled into colluding with their organisations to use their people skills in ways which may both go against their principles and make other workers' lives harder, as they are urged to be ever more productive and efficient (Casey, 1995, 1996). This would suggest that our interviewees may be participants in such collusion, even if they are not prepared to declare this.

Newman offers a more optimistic view. In reviewing the relations between gender and the 'new managerialism' in the public sector in the United Kingdom, she suggests that the emphasis on cultural change, building relationships and other 'softer' skills of staff and customer management currently in vogue in the public sector 'perhaps do provide new organisational space for women' (Newman, 1995, p. 196). However, the studies of women in public sector organisations in the collection she and Itzin edited give only slight support to this (Itzin & Newman, 1995). More extensive data would be needed to underpin such arguments more firmly.

Yeatman, who has consistently supported the potential for femocrat-driven change in the face of economic rationalism in Australia, if public sector organisations are to be both reformed and retain their traditional welfare concerns, has also argued that the current context provides considerable opportunities for feminist managers (Yeatman, 1990). She suggests that women's position as outsiders and their status as the 'other' at the masculine apex of educational organisations enables them to be selected as change agents who can cut through much of the patriarchalism of the traditions of public sector organisations as well as adding new dimensions which do not necessarily resonate with 'new managerialism'. Though there is some support for Yeatman's views in optimistic interpretations of the impact

of femocrats on state bureaucracies in Australia (Eisenstein, 1991), there is relatively little evidence for her views in the development of higher education (but this may be simply because the necessary research has not been done, not because there is no such evidence available).

Maybe then, it is partly amongst the practices of feminist women academic managers that we might seek alternatives and resistances to 'new managerialism' as strategies for the future management of higher education. However, as we shall see in the next illustrative case, not all resistances to 'new managerialism' are feminist-inspired and 'new managerialism' is clearly a tempting strategy for those faced with running a resource-starved and male-dominated university.

#### Lancaster University's Financial Crisis: from loose-coupling to 'hard' management?

This case is based on the experience of living through, as a faculty dean, a period of very severe financial crisis at Lancaster University, between 1995 and 1997. It illustrates some of the ways in which under the current conditions of higher education, elements of 'new managerialism' and 'hard management' might be seen as an attractive solution to the problem of teaching and researching in an environment where resources suddenly become very constrained. Lancaster is a small residential campus-based university founded in the 1960s and located on the rural outskirts of a small town in north-western England. Despite its size, over the past decade it has been ranked in the United Kingdom's top 10 for its research and has also done well in teaching quality exercises. It is a predominantly social science and humanities-oriented university, though with some science presence; it has a strong reputation for interdisciplinary teaching and research which is of long standing. During the late 1980s and early 1990s it began expanding its student numbers and also its building stock, including, in 1992, adding a Lake District campus to its Lancaster one. This second campus was subsequently transferred to another institution in 1996, following an unfavourable inspection report on some of the teacher training carried out there.

All through the early months of 1995 there had been persistent rumours about an impending financial crisis but decisions to spend money on new building and initiatives continued. In August 1995 a serious and seemingly not just short-term cash flow problem was detected. Though during the 1995/96 academic year, various corrective steps, including a programme of early retirements and voluntary redundancies, and internal budget reductions, were taken, these had insufficient impact to curtail or contain the problem. Indeed some of the steps, those involving further expenditure, may have deepened the crisis. During the autumn of 1996, for a time there was a real possibility that the National Westminster Bank, on whose overdraft the

university was dependent for paying its salary bill, would withdraw its facility and leave the university technically bankrupt.

A more detailed account of the crisis is set out in a published report of a committee whose brief was to examine what could be learnt from the way in which the crisis occurred (Rowe, 1997). Consultants Coopers and Lybrand, called in by the Higher Education Funding Council to examine a 'deteriorating debt profile', suggested that four factors were particularly crucial in bringing about this situation: the expense of transferring teacher training to another institution, cost over-runs on new building programmes, an expensive series of early retirement and voluntary redundancies and taking out a high interest loan launched as a debenture issue on the stock exchange (Rowe, 1997, p. 3).

What is of greater relevance here than how the crisis occurred, is the way in which the crisis led to organisational and management changes and to attempts to change the prevailing cultures of the university. The financial situation precipitated an attempt to move away from a set of organisational forms and cultures best described as loosely-coupled (Orton & Weick, 1990) with collegial and anarchic tendencies. This regime did not bear a close approximation to Newman's (1995) characterisation of a traditional public sector organisation regime. What the institution attempted to move to was a hybrid form of 'new managerialism', somewhere between a much reduced and more limited form of collegiality and Newman's competitive organisational form. The attempted changes were aimed not just at avoiding future financial crises but at more overtly 'managing' staff, students, research and teaching in a situation, where collegiality seemed to be faltering and trust between staff and managers severely tested.

At the time when news of the financial crisis broke, the organisational structure of the university was one that did not seem to have been intentionally designed that way. There were three science faculties (one consisting only of one department) and four other faculties of varying sizes, with social sciences the biggest. However faculties were not always taken very seriously (for example the university statutes still do not recognise the existence of faculties) and departments remained, for many purposes, the most crucial unit in the academic organisational structure. Heads of department could quite easily talk or negotiate with senior academic managers. Though the roles of faculty deans had been growing for a few years, their power and responsibilities were variously and often somewhat contradictorily described. Hence they often found themselves in a position of having responsibility without power. The technologies of management were not well developed (for example information systems were at an early stage of their evolution) and the committee system was not always effective, in terms of making, communicating and implementing decisions. Nor, as it turned out, was the committee system a particularly good way of ensuring accountability or of remaining within budget. Lay members of council, as is common in educational governance (Deem et al, 1995; Bargh et al, 1996), had varying

degrees of involvement with the institution but were not able to prevent or even to anticipate, the financial crisis.

In 1994, a new form of managerial technology, a devolved budgeting system, had been introduced, with departments as the principal academic cost centres. The introduction of this and the model (acronym TRAM) from which it was derived, led to many questions being asked about whether central services in the university provided value for money. Questions were also raised about which parts of the university subsidised which other parts. The role of the faculty deans, for the first time, began to revolve significantly around financial resources, although with a model based on allocations to departments, there was initially little scope or legitimation for altering this. The predominant organisational cultures were ones in which academics got on with their teaching and research without much systematic intervention from senior management. Though men predominated in the managerial ranks, there was no overt antipathy to women at an official level (though there were informal academic cultures which were much more hostile to women) and an equal opportunities committee for staff had been in existence for some time. There was also a woman Pro-Vice-Chancellor in post from 1992 onwards (who subsequently left the university in 1995). However, the development of the resource model TRAM signalled the beginnings of a shift to a more entrepreneurial and possibly more masculine organisational technology, even though few other cultural or organisational changes accompanied it at that time.

It is undoubtedly the case, as the Rowe report demonstrates, that the degree of organisational loose-coupling (Orton & Weick, 1990), together with some collegial, and even on occasions, anarchic tendencies in key parts of the organisation, both fostered high quality research and teaching but also allowed a massive financial crisis to develop almost undetected until too late (Rowe, 1997). The organisational cultures of the academic work of the university were permeated and transmitted by a range of organisational narratives. Some were based on academic disciplines, others on administrative groupings, one narrated by the then Vice-Chancellor at meetings, and another carried by an unofficial but widely read email newsletter called *Inkytext*, written by a member of a humanities department.

The *Inkytext* newsletter, which has subscribers in many other universities, including some outside the United Kingdom, was the first source of rumours about the impending financial crisis, though in general its coverage was a mix of gossip, opinion and information all mixed up together, and sometimes conveyed in a rather misogynist tone. Official communications from management to staff were few in number and seldom revealed anything new of significance. As Tebbutt & Marchington have shown in their detailed study of the role of gossip in a further education college operating in an insecure and difficult financial environment, gossip can sometimes act as a basis for change as well as providing cohesion amongst those who do not want to change (Tebbutt & Marchington, 1997). However,

the latter was closer to the Lancaster use of gossip, where rumours were used to settle scores against people disliked for any good, bad or indifferent reason and where a romantic vision of the past was frequently invoked, one involving playing cricket on village greens, drinking wine and hanging rowing oars on the walls of academic offices. The extent to which the narratives and cultures of Inkytext were infused with conceptions of masculinities was in contrast to the relative absence of this at senior levels of the organisation.

Though the financial crisis began to unfold dramatically in the autumn term of 1995, it was not until well into the spring term of the 1995/96 academic year that the full import of this began to become apparent. By the summer term of 1996, voluntary redundancies and early retirements were made available and over 200 staff eventually left, though few were academics. By the end of July 1996, many staff and students thought that the worst of the crisis was over. It was only in September 1996 that the full implications of the continuing seriousness of the situation began to reveal themselves, as the National Westminster Bank and the Higher Education Funding Council called in consultants from Coopers and Lybrand to oversee further large cuts in expenditure and to help restructure the institution. The consultants were well-versed in 'new' and 'hard' management theories and despite being Lancaster graduates, were possibly more used to working within the management regimes of the post-1992 universities than with the chartered and hence more collegial universities.

Since the autumn of 1996 the loose-coupling of the previous organisational structure has been fast disappearing. The faculties have been restructured to form more even-sized units (though their academic logic is more uncertain) and reduced in number from seven to five. The role of faculty deans has been explicitly made into a line-management one, with responsibilities as resource budget holders, and it has also been made clear that heads of department should not seek to negotiate direct with senior management but rather approach them via their faculty dean. The committee system has been overhauled and slimmed down, though it is too soon to tell whether more or more effective decisions are being taken as a result. A formal senior management team has also been formed. The responsibilities and crossovers of decision-making between council (the university's governing body) and senate have been redefined and clarified.

The cultures of the new organisational model appear more overtly gendered than those of the one it replaced. The absence of any women academics at senior levels and the permeation of various aspects of masculinities amongst a number of academic and non-academic senior managers are two clues to this. The new organisational regime also has some more features of 'new managerialism', with the setting of budget targets and an emphasis on income generation and entrepreneurial activity. Though lip service is paid to equality of opportunities, the strategies which might underpin this have yet to surface. The senior management team is all male and there is still only one woman faculty dean. As I ended my term of office as

Dean of Social Sciences in mid-1997, another woman began as Dean of Humanities. The University is also in the bottom quartile of all United Kingdom universities for its number of women professors (Griffiths, 1997), although its proportion of professors to other academic staff is above average for its size.

Technologies of management other than the changed roles of deans and heads of department are currently being refined and the old resource allocation model, currently temporarily suspended, is about to be replaced by another one which will use faculties rather than academic departments as the unit of allocation. The management of performance is more in evidence than previously, and deans and heads of department are expected to pursue poor performers (of which there appear to be few) more vigorously. However, here the older cultures of collegiality and possibly other less gendered forms are fighting back. Attempts to remove academic staff rights to sabbatical leave have failed and a working party on academic performance (significantly with a gender-balanced membership) became a working party devising a rather 'softer' employment policy than might have been envisaged by some, though its progress after it left the working party became much more 'new managerial', with unions initially denied consultation.

Multiple narratives continue to flourish. There are now many more official email communications to staff but Inkytext is still most often the first to publish new developments, as well as continuing to provide opinions and transmit rumours. Gossip continues to solidify opposition to change. There is yet little other than official senior management rhetoric which provides cultural support for the organisational forms and technologies which point the way to 'new managerialism'. Trust between staff at different levels is being replaced with requirements for hard data and business plans and collegiality is strained by increasing internal and external demands for more form-filling and bureaucratic consistency in procedures. Professional autonomy and discretion is thus steadily being eroded.

The real test for the new organisational regimes and technologies being introduced at Lancaster is whether they will prove as capable as the much softer and more loosely coupled forms and technologies that they are attempting to replace, of supporting high quality research and teaching. It will also be interesting to see what happens to the gendering of the emerging cultures. Of course, whether in the past it would have been feasible to retain the loosely coupled organisational structure for academic staff whilst simultaneously having a much tighter control over senior management's decision making remains an open question. Did organisational freedom at the level of teaching and research inevitably have to mean similar (and hence not very accountable) freedom at the management level?

For the future, it is likely that academics can be 'managed' into teaching in particular ways, especially since external forces like the Quality Assurance Agency will assist in this process, though recent studies of this in other post-compulsory education settings suggest that resistance to such strategies

can undermine their effectiveness (Ainley & Bailey, 1997; Trowler, 1998). But the new more overtly 'hard' managerial regime at Lancaster has not yet been successful in changing most of the cultures of the organisation, even though it has changed some of the organisational forms and technologies. Furthermore, it may turn out that trying to manage research performances, which are heavily dependent on the maintenance of intellectual curiosity and creativity, especially when combined with a climate of much reduced resources, may not succeed in maintaining Lancaster's former research excellence. As Trow has pointed out in his critique of the 'new managerialism' of the Dearing Report, the notion that better management can be substituted for sufficient resources is not necessarily the best solution for all institutions (Trow, 1997).

### Conclusion

In this paper I have considered some of ways in which ideas about 'new managerialism' might be applied to the analysis of the actual organisational management practices of universities in the United Kingdom, currently poised for another bout of restructuring following a government-initiated review of their purposes in 1997. It has been noted that definitions of 'new managerialism' are themselves rather complex and have multiple origins. However, by using Clarke & Newman's (1997a) approach, and Newman's (1995) typology of organisational forms, it is possible, by examining organisational narratives, forms and technologies, to begin to explore whether 'new managerialism' is replacing or utilising in new ways, the previous 'softer' ways of running universities.

Two examples have served to illustrate some of the ways in which researchers might try to examine the existence of, resistance to, masking of and the incipient development of, 'new managerialism' discourses and regimes, though it will be the task of our new research project to conduct this exercise much more systematically. First, it has been suggested that 'new managerialism' as a form of management and organisational practices, narratives, forms and values, is infused with notions of masculinities. The management beliefs and values of the feminist women academic managers interviewed in the small scale study hint that some women may find 'new managerialism' as much an anathema as some of their more junior male and female colleagues. However, this is perhaps less because of a defence of collegiality of the kind that some male academics might identify with, than because 'hard' managerialism is seen to be incompatible with concerns about equity and feminist values. Nevertheless there must also remain a suspicion that the 'softer' management skills of women may be used by universities to provide a cover for the harder aspects of 'new managerialism' in concerted attempts to control both academic performances and organisational cultures as well as the more easily changed organisational structures. Secondly, the paper looked at the changes in management strategies and organisational

forms and technologies that have occurred at a university in the United Kingdom finding itself in severe financial difficulties. It was suggested that the move to new forms of managerialism may prove problematic both in respect of performances and cultures, if not in respect of organisational forms. Perhaps some of the problem is because in this instance there has been no attempt to disguise 'hard' management through the use of the 'soft' management approaches used or favoured by some women academic managers. 'New managerialism' and 'hard' management are undoubtedly appealing to managers of universities looking to deal with severe resource problems, which are affecting the whole of the higher education sector in the United Kingdom to a greater or lesser degree. Perhaps as Trow (1997) argues, it is not the only way to run universities into the next century. But changing the performances and cultures of university managers without also changing their gender and ethnic composition, selection procedures and training, may prove as intractable as changing the performances and cultures of university staff is proving to be for many existing higher education managers.

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### Correspondence

Professor Rosemary Deem, Department of Educational Research, Cartmel College, Lancaster University, Lancaster LA1 4YL, United Kingdom (r.deem@lancaster.ac.uk).

### Notes

- [1] The author and three colleagues at Lancaster University, Oliver Fulton, Mike Reed and Stephen Watson, have recently received an ESRC grant (R000 23 7661) to study 'New managerialism and the management of UK universities'.
- [2] The study involved 40 interviews with women academic managers in further and higher education. All were sympathetic to feminisms or highly supportive of equal opportunities policies and ideas. Many of the interviews were conducted by Joley Quinn, now a doctoral student at Lancaster University.

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Rosemary Deem

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