A Qualitative Case Study Exploring the Nature of New Managerialism in UK Higher Education and Its Impact on Individual Academics' Experience of Doing Research

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Abstract: *New Managerialism (NM) has been used as an analytical framework to help understand the changes within the UK Higher Education Sector. This project sought to extend that work by undertaking a case study of an English university. Using the theory of NM, the study combined organisational description, strategic document review and in-depth interviews to qualitatively explore the extent to which research management practices could be considered New Managerialist and their impact on individuals' experiences of doing research. This project discovered that management practices could be characterised by a hybridised version of NM. Impact on individuals related to key themes: research funding; performance measurement; academic freedom and control; fragmented organisation and mixed messages; research culture. It was found that individuals consciously engaged in 'informal' strategies to pursue their own research agendas within 'formal' management frameworks. An implementation gap between strategic plans and operational practices created space for individual autonomy, but led to tensions arising from conflicting values at the level of the organisation, department and individual. It was suggested that further investigation could lead to greater insight into how researchers make sense of their role and work environment and, from a management perspective, how best to motivate and support research work.*

Keywords: *research management, new managerialism, research funding, research culture, academic freedom, strategic planning, operational practices, implementation gap, performance measurement*

Introduction

UK Universities are very different places to work in than they were 30 years ago. The Higher Education Sector within the UK has undergone a major shift in terms of its fundamental role and function within society as well as the mechanisms through which it is delivered. This pace of change continues as the Government increasingly looks to the HE sector to provide innovation, and a skilled workforce, in support of national economic competitiveness (Lambert, 2003; Leitch, 2006; Sainsbury, 2007; DIUS 2008; BIS 2011). What was once a fairly independent sector is now subject to a range of different pressures arising from being situated somewhere in between nationalisation and privatisation (Tight, 2006, p.254).

These developments have been analysed through a New Managerial (NM) framework. The concept of NM was originally developed in the context of changes to the way that governments approached the organisation and delivery of public services. NM suggested that the public sector was organised on the basis of neoliberal ideologies associated with economic competitiveness within a global market place, and that greater efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of services was sought through the use of management practices derived from the

corporate world (Politt 1990; Clarke & Newman, 2004; Hursh, 2005; Davies et al 2006). Many studies suggested that changing management practices had primarily negative effects on universities and academics (Deem et al, 2000, 2007; Shelley, 2005). This was associated with challenges to the professional position and identity of the academic as well as increased stress, bureaucratisation, marketisation, corporatisation and performance measurement within the academic work environment.

However, the concept of NM itself has been problematised with the suggestion that it has changed over time, and that its application within HE in particular has been either hybridised or is incomplete (Deem et al 2007; Clegg, 2008). In addition, given the negative impacts identified, it is unclear why individual researchers appear to continue their research activity with apparent enthusiasm and success. Moreover, it is unclear how universities seemed to adhere to NM ideologies and practices whilst upholding more traditional academic values and customs. This questions the actual nature of NM in universities and, consequently, how this impacts upon individual academics. Other studies focus more directly on the experience of the individual academic. These studies indicated that academic workers engaged in strategies that enabled them to pursue their own agenda and attain ideals of academic freedom in spite of management regimes (Bennich-Bjorkman, 2007; Archer, 2008; Clegg, 2008, Kolsaker 2008; Akerlind, 2008).

Further exploration was therefore undertaken to try to understand the particular nature of management practices being applied to research activity, and how these practices affected the working lives of university researchers. This article presents a qualitative case study investigating the impact of New Managerialism (NM) on the perceptions and experiences of individual researchers by exploring what it is like to do research work within a selected English university.

New Managerialism in UK Higher Education

New Managerialism

Attempts to define NM have arisen as commentators have sought to understand, describe and explain the changes taking place in the provision of public sector services since the late 1970s. It has been defined as:

- an ideology, legitimizing the development of new organizational forms and relationships;
- a practical ideology of 'being business like' in order to make the new arrangements work. (Clarke & Newman, 2004, p. 32)

The concept of NM therefore seeks firstly to explain the socio-economic and political reasons behind why particular organizational regimes have been developed and, secondly, to describe the ways in which public services are now being delivered.

The NM legitimisation of new organisational forms originated from a view that professional-bureaucratic modes of organisation were inefficient and could not cope with the challenges arising from increasing globalisation (Pollitt, 1990). This provided a context of crisis in which supposedly inevitable forces of globalisation required a fundamental restructuring of public

service provision around a neoliberal ideology of deregulation, privatisation and free market mechanisms (Clarke & Newman, 2004, pp. 8-13; Davies et al, 2006, p. 305; Hursh, 2005, p. 13; Lazeretti & Tavloetti, 2006, p. 32). To achieve restructuring, business-like practices based on a neo-Taylorist view of work were appropriated. Organisations were thought to operate most efficiently by planning ahead, breaking down tasks and allocating responsibilities to find the most efficient way of performing each task (Handy, 1999, p. 21) Work tasks are monitored and controlled to improve productivity, motivating individuals through financial reward (Mullins, 2002, pp. 55-58). Efficiency is thought to be driven by having to meet customer needs within a competitive market place.

NM as a concept and set of practices has not, however, remained static. Early neo-Taylorist versions have been replaced by a neo-technocratic variant (Deem et al, 2007). This is linked to the changing practices associated with New Labour's modernization agenda which moves away from a purely neo-liberal framework. Whilst greater cost-effectiveness using business-like mechanisms is still sought, there has been a movement away from purely market based mechanisms to drive efficiency, to contractual mechanisms and performance measurement through audit (Clarke & Newman, 2004, p. 80). Furthermore, 'consumers' are recast. Not only should they have choice regarding where and how they receive services, but they should be actively involved in determining what services should be provided (Deem et al, 2007, p. 15). This represents a fundamental shift in terms of how the role of public service provision is conceptualised and the relationship between government, public sector organisation and 'consumer'.

However, discussion of the impact of NM in the past has tended to focus on an ideal type (Alford, 1993, p. 136). No ideology or set of management practices is necessarily applied in its entirety and the current version of NM has inherent tensions. Neoliberalism requires self-regulating competitive markets and promotes competitive individualism (Roberts, 2007, p. 360). However, practices associated with neo-technocratic managerialism constrain the market through government intervention (such as standards and reporting) and social inclusion objectives (Hursh, 2005, p. 11). An emphasis on social diversity and regulated standards does not fit with neoliberal ideals. In addition, the introduction of performance management and measurement leads to issues regarding what exactly to measure, whether specific measures are appropriate and how these should be interpreted (Cutler & Waine, 2000, pp. 325-329). Thus neo-technocratic managerialism itself appears to be a hybrid concept trying to merge neoliberal ideals of markets and business-like practices with alternative ideologies associated with social agendas and government controls. These tensions within the NM model question both how, and the extent to which, it impacts on actual service provision and providers.

The Impact of New Managerialism on Higher Education and Academic Workers

Traditionally made up of self-governing state funded organisations, universities have historically been relatively removed from Government influence. However, in spite of a neoliberal advocacy of decentralisation and deregulation, the sector has been brought increasingly closer to Government and is now subject to growing control through a variety of management mechanisms derived from the corporate world. Indeed, the influences of NM thinking can be traced through government initiatives and policies for HE over recent decades and have

resulted in a fundamental change in the role and practices of UK HE. These changes have resulted in a number of pressures. In particular, the increased size of the sector and reduced public funding has created a resourcing crisis and the context in which conditions were 'ripe' for the implementation of NM, mirroring developments in the wider public sector (Pollitt, 1990, p. 28). Analysis of key reforms indicates a number of new managerial practices that are now in evidence within the sector:

- A neoliberal legitimization of organisational forms.
- The need to respond to, and be successful within, a competitive external environment.
- A requirement to conform to external performance indicators.
- An emphasis on income generation.
- The emergence of marketing strategies.
- Increased customer oriented administration.
- Increased bureaucracy.
- Increased performance management and evaluation against outputs.
- Transparent measures of performance.
- Clearer demarcation of teaching and research.
- Concentration of resource in pursuit of efficiency and effectiveness.

In addition, however, universities themselves have appropriated a range of management practices as a way of developing and managing themselves within a changing and increasingly complex environment. In an attempt to understand why these changes have taken place, how universities are now being managed and how this affects people working in universities, the framework of NM has been used.

For instance, Deem et al (2000) examined the extent to which NM was perceived to have permeated the management of UK universities. The findings from this study suggested that the UK higher education system could now be characterized as being highly managerial and bureaucratic, with declining trust, discretion and self-governance by academics. It was found that HE displayed hybridized forms of NM that had variable impact. They posit that UK universities and British Higher Education policy are now driven by neo-technocratic managerialism, and that 'institutionalized distrust' has replaced 'regulated autonomy' as the key co-ordinating principle (Deem et al 2007, p. 189). Beyond the UK, other commentators have noted similar trends. For example, Robinson (2009) suggests that 'academic capitalism' increasingly prevails in academic science in the US with the result that researchers are adopting progressively managerial work styles (conforming to industrial norms), and academic freedom and autonomy are being eroded by revenue generation imperatives. Moreover, it is suggested that an emerging tension between opposing academic values (into which scientists are socialized) and capitalist values (to which scientists are pressurised to confirm) becomes a source of tension for the individual.

Other studies such as Shelley (2005) aimed to provide a commentary on work in universities in order to discover 'the reality' of work for staff and to examine how managers and staff respond to the situations in which they work. Shelley suggested that 'cost reduction and more efficient

exploitation of labour may be the real agenda behind the use of marketised, competitive and customer-based control strategies' (Shelley, 2005, p. 69). He concluded that there was a 'staffing crisis' within HE which resulted from work being more bureaucratic and routinised, high workloads and inequality, lack of recognition, reward and equity in performance management and career development opportunities (Shelley, 2005, p. 222).

The findings of such studies portray a bleak view of HE resulting from increasingly managerial practices at policy, sector and institutional level. This is also mirrored in the sector's press, which tends to focus on stress, over-work, administrative burdens and a range of negative impacts arising from NM practices (Baker, 2007). Nevertheless, criticisms have been leveled at earlier studies looking at the influence of NM within HE. For instance, there can be a tendency to contrast current practices with a more 'golden age' that has now passed. However, it has been suggested that clear space for research, free from bureaucratic, political or funding pressures has always been a dream, never a reality, and so the university of the past should not be romanticised (Roberts, 2007, p. 362). Furthermore, it has been posited that the traditional, now lamented, academic identity associated with collegiality and autonomy was never shared equally by all, but emerged from elite positions whose bearers were 'mostly white, male and middle class' (Clegg, 2008, p. 331). In addition, detractors of NM related practices have been criticised for ignoring the 'outside world and the need for strategic change and institutional positioning' (Dearlove, 2002, p. 258). As an alternative, it has been argued that in increasingly turbulent and differentiated environments in which universities now operate, it is essential that they are able to position themselves proactively and act strategically in a way not possible under traditional styles of university management (Meyer, 2002). Some studies of the 'modern' neo-liberal university have also concluded in a more balanced way that whilst there has been considerable change, both old and new systems of governance maintain their own advantages, disadvantages, inefficiencies and systemic faults (Davies et al, 2006).

Clearly, there are a range of differing views about the affects of NM on today's universities. Nevertheless, there is broad agreement about the neoliberal underpinnings and corporate practices that are now associated with the management of universities. What is not so clear is the impact on individuals working within universities. Larger scale studies have tended to explore the system level, thus capturing the 'public' rather than 'private' lives of universities (Trowler, 1998 p. 147). Smaller in-depth studies have developed more nuanced conclusions relating to the impact of NM.

Davies et al (2006) found that academic workers were very aware of the state of financial crisis their universities were in, were concerned about the corporatisation of universities which they felt was forcing them to do inferior work, and often felt under considerable stress particularly given the increased bureaucratic workloads associated with audits. This would agree with the findings of Deem et al (2000) and Shelley (2005). But, in spite of this, they talked about academic work as a reward in itself and often worked long hours to achieve their own intellectual objectives (Davies et al, 2006). In the same way, all interviewees taking part in recent study on academic identities 'spoke with great passion about one or more aspect of their work' (Clegg, 2008, p. 335). Participants were aware of, and regretted, the changes happening

around them, and had a sense that university values were being eroded by marketisation and enterprise. However, they continued to 'act in accordance with their own values' (Clegg, 2008 p. 340). Thus, the suggestion is that whilst the organisational context is by nature managerial, individuals are continuing to maintain an alternative academic value system. Clegg (2008) suggested that this could explain how universities continue to operate in spite of the conditions bemoaned within the literature.

Similarly, in a study looking at academic professionalism, Kolsaker has emphasised that whilst there is evidence that universities are becoming increasingly managerialist, there continues to be debate concerning the extent to which this has displaced collegiality. She asks whether academics have actually lost power and authority, or whether managerialism has 'simply changed the ways in which power is exercised in English universities today' (2008, pp. 515-516). The suggestion here is that whilst critics might 'decry the "corporatisation" of universities . . .the pragmatist might be less concerned' (Kolsaker, 2008, p. 515). The findings suggest that academics are making sense of, and adapting to the changing environment, whilst retaining their professional identity (Kolsaker, 2008, p. 523).

This is illustrated by a study looking specifically at academic freedom for researchers. It is often claimed that managerialism curtails individual academic freedom. However, it has been suggested that what is most interesting in the context of these changes is 'how the researchers themselves view the possibilities open to them of attaining the ideal' of academic freedom (Bennich-Bjorkman, 2007, p. 335). This study concluded that:

- all researchers attributed great importance to the norm of academic freedom which was defined primarily as being able to choose their own research problems;
- interviewees did not feel subject to direct control, but felt they enjoyed the freedom to choose themselves;
- a major preoccupation of their work life related to research funding.

Therefore, whilst NM did have an impact on them and their research work, they still felt they enjoyed academic freedom. It was argued here that they were more likely to have 'negative' freedom (freedom to be left alone) instead of 'positive' freedom to do whatever they want primarily because of the exigencies of the research funding system (Bennich-Bjorkman 2007, p. 345). However, it was not assumed that researchers were passive recipients of change. Instead, they developed 'resistance tactics' to provide them with space to follow their own areas of interest in spite of having to meet funders' specifications, there was in effect a 'double book-keeping' and dexterity in 'packaging research depending on the audience' (Bennich-Bjorkman 2007, pp. 351-356). In much the same way as suggested by Kolsaker (2008), the key idea is that individuals adapt their actions to achieve their goals within the particular management practices of their work environment.

The different conclusions arising from these various studies suggest two areas of caution. Firstly, a linear relationship should not be assumed between management strategies and objectives with individual behaviour. As the studies above indicate, a passive model of academic response to change should not be assumed. Responses to management changes have been shown to

range from compliance, resistance, coping strategies through to 'attempts to reconstruct the policy during the implementation stage' (Trowler, 1998, p. 153). Intended policies can thus actually change when they are delivered. Furthermore, strategic plans tend to be stronger on intention than planning, particularly in organisations like universities where 'bureaucratic and top down authority is weak in a consent-based organisation of professional employees' (Dearlove, 2002, p. 266). Consequently, even if the sector or a university could be described as new managerial, this does not mean that individuals necessarily act in ways dictated by its ideologies and practices. This leads to the second point of caution which relates to the need to be aware of the 'line of sight' into an organisation. The distinction between the 'public' and 'private' lives of a university (Trowler, 1998) hints at the informal and formal levels of an organisation (Appendix 1, Figure 3). The perspective taken will influence the kind of findings that arise. Assessing policies and practices at the formal level are likely to give rise to different perspectives from an assessment of the informal level.

Discussion of studies considering the impact of NM on HE has indicated a complex interaction between academics and their work environment. There is broad agreement that NM and its neoliberal underpinning are apparent within the sector and individual universities, and that current management practices can be explained and understood by recourse to both the ideology and practices of NM. However, the concept of NM has inherent tensions. Moreover, understanding the extent to which university management practices are 'purely' NM, and how they impact upon individuals, is less clear. There has also been limited discussion of this in regard to research work in particular. The following study was intended to address those gaps.

Research Methods

This project employed a qualitative case study method. The main purpose of a case study is not to understand other cases, or to identify 'typical' findings and generalise results. Instead, the purpose is to maximise what can be learned about the specific case under investigation (Stake, 1995). It is concerned with the 'complexity and particular nature of the case in question' and a single case can lead to in-depth findings (Bryman, 2001, p. 47). Furthermore, this methodology is particularly appropriate when: the key research questions focuses on 'how and why'; the researcher has little or no control over behavioural events; and, the focus is on a 'contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context' (Yin, 1994, pp. 1-3). It provides an opportunity to describe the context for the particular case and explore individual perceptions and experiences within that case to build a complex and holistic picture (Cresswell, 1998, p. 15). The objectives were to:

• Provide an overview of the concept of New Managerialism (NM) and consider its impact within Higher Education (HE).

• Describe the case study university and use semi-structured interviews to gather 'insider' accounts to ascertain and describe participants' understandings, perceptions and experiences of doing research.

• Consider the impact of research related management practices and policies on the experience of individual researchers and the delivery of research.

The Case

The 'case' was an English Higher Education Institution (HEI) given the pseudonym 'Mears'. The choice of institution for the case study was primarily intrinsic (Stake, 1995, p. 3) resulting from an interest in finding out more about the specific workings of researchers within this University in the current climate of changing research management practices. The university was also, however, an exemplifying case in that it shared characteristics with other similar organisations and could be taken as a suitable context for researching this particular issue (Bryman, 2001, p. 56).

Secondary Data Collection

A case study usually involves the collection of a wide range of data: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct and participant observations and physical artefacts (Cresswell, 1998, p. 63). Given the scope of this study, it was decided to limit the data to documentation (strategies, written policies and procedures) to enable an assessment of the stated research management practices at various institutional levels. The review targeted current strategies (not historical) to explore the 'here and now' as fits the case study method (Yin, 2003, p. 5).

To consider the University's formal management practices, it was decided to target corporate strategies and related action plans that describe an organisation's 'sense of purpose' and its map for the future direction against which resources can be allocated (Lynch, 2000, p. 7). Such documents convey a strong statement about how an organisation's leaders view its purpose and identity, and how they want it to be viewed by others. Those strategies most directly linked to research activity were identified:

- University Research Strategy;
- University Knowledge Transfer (KT) Strategy;
- Strategies of individuals Departments within the University from which participants were recruited.

Primary Data Collection

Semi-structured interviews were used as they are particularly suited to exploring the specific stories and understandings of participants (Arksey & Knight, 2007, p. 34). It enabled the interviewer to guide discussion towards particular areas of interest, but also to allow interviewees to raise their own views and issues. In addition, unstructured follow up questions were used to enable participants to provide further elaborations and to check meanings (Akerlind, 2008). This also allowed for constant comparison between the data and concepts being developed to support rigor and minimise research bias (Bryman, 2001, p. 542). The aim throughout each interview was to enable participants to discuss their views and experiences of the issues under discussion.

Data Sample

The target interviewees were employees in permanent positions on the academic staff. Individuals were purposively sampled on the basis of existing contacts and snowballing from

interviews. This allowed for selection of participants on the basis of emerging concepts, and to obtain rich and thick data as well as maximum variation to gain multiple perspectives (Cresswell, 1998, p. 120). Specific categories were used to inform participant selection.

Work Role

The scope of this research was specifically focused on those categories of staff able to develop and pursue their own research agenda within their existing academic post. The category of 'academic' was therefore further refined into: academic lecturers, readers or professors. These categories of staff have teaching, research and administrative responsibilities. They are usually in a position to develop their own areas of research which inform their teaching programmes. They may work in isolation, the 'lone scholar', or be members of and/or lead a research team. They are able to apply for funds to develop new research projects, to develop their own research projects, agendas and teams. These responsibilities were identified in the University's generic role profiles. They were intentionally distinguished from contract researchers who are on fixed contracts and are engaged to work on specific research projects, usually externally funded. Such researchers tend to be less well integrated into the academic management structures and are less likely to be able to set their own research agendas outside of the particular project(s) on which they are working. Some of the participants were in a research management position. Research has already been undertaken looking at the emerging role of 'academic managers', why academics take up these roles, what they do in these roles, their experiences and interactions with others (Deem et al, 2007). It was not intended to replicate that here. However, it was expected that position within the organisation's management structure might be significant for individuals' experiences.

Career Stage

Participants were recruited from varying career stages as it was expected that experiences would be affected by their length of time in post and/or in the sector.

- early career – one to five years
- mid-career – six to fifteen years
- advanced – more than fifteen years

Academic Department

This had not originally been a recruitment criterion. However, during the first few interviews, it soon became apparent that it would be important to recruit interviewees from different Departments. It was clear that individuals' experiences varied significantly depending on the Department in which they were based. In effect, they seemed to represent different 'organisations' within the University. Each Department has its own senior management team, strategies and culture. This appeared to affect not only the management framework within which the academic works, but also their perception of what it was like to work within the University.

Discipline

In recognition of the centrality of discipline to an academic's identity and experience of work, participants were recruited from different disciplines. In her discussion on 'becoming an academic', Henkel divides her discussion between 'science' and 'humanities and social sciences' on the basis that sciences have traditionally had a more progressive and structured career structure, whilst humanities and social sciences have tended to be a more casualised labour force (2000, pp. 169-170). Additionally, the Research Excellence Framework (REF) divides discussion of research between Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects and the arts and social sciences (SSH). To avoid any possibility of being able to identify individuals in the study, this broad disciplinary distinction was used instead of specific disciplines.

Gender

Deem notes that 'knowledge work and knowledge management have some unexpected dimensions in respect of gender' (2007, p. 91). Although the focus of this study was not specifically on gender, it was felt that gender related issues might affect individuals' experiences and their interaction with management systems and processes. Six males and four females were therefore recruited.

Data Collection Process

A pilot interview was undertaken to identify any problems with the interview schedule and process. During the pilot, the following issues were identified:

- questions which were unclear;
- problems relating to the flow of topics being discussed;
- issues relating to the interview process itself.

The interview schedule was revised after the pilot. After each interview, a contact summary sheet (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 51) was completed to note any particular issues or considerations which arose during the interview, and any points of interest with regards to analytical notes, or questions to be included in future interviews. A diary was also kept throughout the process for noting any key thoughts, questions, decisions which fed into the data collection and analysis process, and to facilitate reflexivity. Each interview was transcribed verbatim and then checked for accuracy. Transcripts were coded and data transferred into a matrix for thematic analysis.

Data Analysis

Secondary Data

A framework of NM within HE was established on the basis of an assessment. The strategy documents selected were then qualitatively analysed, searching for the key underlying themes which fell within or outside this framework (Bryman, 2001

p. 529). Outcomes were summarised in a table to give an overview of the extent to which selected policies could be considered to be new managerialist.

Primary Data

The intention behind the interviews had been to gather information on individuals' perceptions and experiences of management practices which relate to their research work. Data for each interview was sorted against the themes and sub-themes arising inductively from the empirical data (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 65). At each interview, additional themes were identified as necessary and earlier interviews revisited to identify whether there was additional material there relating to new themes. This information was sorted using a thematic matrix. In addition, data sorting and analysis was tested by a second academic using inter-coding comparison to test analysis and support reliability (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

As an intrinsic case study, it was decided to follow the analytical stages expounded by Stake (1995). This involved noting any *direct interpretations* of meaning arising from individual instances and then establishing any *patterns* (categorical aggregation) where there may be a correspondence between two or more categories, and correspondence between interviewees. Subsequently, any naturalistic generalisations which could be learnt about the case study were identified (Cresswell, 1998, p. 154). These are generalisations which are identified in relation to the case rather than ones which may necessarily be transferred to other cases. The idea here is that people receive generalisations (or conclusions) from their own knowledge and others' experience (Stake, 1995, p. 85). The conclusions drawn by the researcher in relation to this case would allow the reader to gain insight into the specific case and also to associate this with their own knowledge or experience. Where possible, quotes from the interviews have been included to try to give interviewees a 'voice' and minimise researcher impact.

Ethics

The researcher followed the British Sociological Association (BSA) statement of ethical practice (2002). The study received ethical approval from both the Open University (OU) and the Ethics Committee of the case study organisation ensuring appropriate research governance. Based on the BSA (2002) provisions, the project was designed to meet requirements relating to informed consent for participants, ensuring privacy and confidentiality, avoiding any potential harm to participants, and meeting data protection provisions.

Results

Documentary Review

A thematic review of the University's Research and Knowledge Transfer (KT) and selected Department strategies was undertaken to identify the extent to which they could be characterised as New Managerialist. The findings of this review related to the legitimisation of organisational forms and use of 'business-like' practices and are presented here.

'Business-like' practice	Research Strategy	KT Strategy	Dept Engineering	Dept Health	Dept Information Systems	Dept Sport	Dept Social Sciences
Operating in a competitive external environment	strongly referenced	strongly referenced	strongly referenced	not referenced	referenced	not referenced	referenced
Increased internal competition	strongly referenced	strongly referenced	not referenced	not referenced	not referenced	not referenced	not referenced
Requirement to conform to external performance indicators	strongly referenced	strongly referenced	not referenced	referenced	referenced	not referenced	not referenced
Emphasis on income generation	strongly referenced	strongly referenced	strongly referenced	strongly referenced	strongly referenced	strongly referenced	strongly referenced
Use of marketing strategies	strongly referenced	strongly referenced	not referenced	not referenced	weakly referenced	referenced	not referenced
Increased customer orientation	not referenced	strongly referenced	referenced	referenced	referenced	not referenced	weakly referenced
Performance management – evaluation against output	strongly referenced	strongly referenced	strongly referenced	strongly referenced	strongly referenced	strongly referenced	strongly referenced
Clearer demarcation of teaching and research	not referenced	not referenced	not referenced	not referenced	not referenced	not referenced	not referenced
Concentration of resources in pursuit of efficiency and effectiveness	strongly referenced	strongly referenced	referenced	referenced	referenced	weakly referenced	not referenced

Legend:
- strongly referenced
- referenced
- weakly referenced
- not referenced

Figure 1. Summary Findings - Review of Research Related Strategies

Legitimising organisational forms

These strategies posit a need for change within a global, competitive economy. Organisational forms are legitimated by presenting them as the only way to respond to political and socio-economic changes and the resulting challenges they present to the University. These external forces are identified as relating to:

- The alignment of governmental scientific and innovation policies resulting in greater governmental control of research agendas and a focus on the role of research in relation to the economic wealth of the nation.
- Increased competition for funds resulting from: research funding focusing on large, multi-disciplinary projects being required to address 'grand challenges'; concentration of resources on multi-disciplinary world class resource; reduced state funding and need to develop alternative sources of funding.
- Requirements to engage with research users and for research to have demonstrable impact.
- Differentiation and marketisation of universities.

These themes are apparent across all the strategies reviewed, although there is a variable emphasis. This legitimisation tends to be more strongly found at the institutional level, with Department strategies focusing more on issues relating to internal organisation and goals.

Being 'Business-Like'

The review suggested that the use of 'business-like' practices is more strongly articulated at the University than Department strategic level. However, the two areas that come through extremely strongly across all plans was firstly a focus on income generation and, secondly, performance management through evaluation against output measures. This suggests that these aspects of the NM agenda have been strongly internalised by the organisation. Interestingly, there is no apparent demarcation between teaching and research which the literature suggested is increasingly apparent within the sector.

Discussion

The review of selected strategic documents suggests that these research management strategies can largely be characterised by NM in terms of how organisational forms are legitimised and the types of business-like practices being promulgated. NM therefore appears to have had a significant impact at the formal level of the organisation. However, a more in-depth reading of these strategies suggests the articulation of a distinct version of NM. For example, although there is reference to 'increased customer orientation', 'customers' are not conceived here as recipients of a service or product in a 'one-way' relationship. Instead, they are framed as 'stakeholders' with whom the organisation develops strategic and productive relationships. In addition, whilst NM influences within the sector are increasingly pressing for a split between teaching and research, this is not evident here. Indeed, this is neither explicit nor implicit in any of the strategies reviewed. The link between teaching and research appears to be strongly held by the institution and would suggest a more traditional view of the role of HE than that suggested by more managerialist approaches.

Furthermore, it is also interesting to note that there is an emphasis on areas which the literature would suggest are being squeezed out by NM practices. In particular, the Research Strategy aims to ensure collegiality and to support research in the best way for the particular type of research and/or discipline. A commitment is also made to striving to tailor support services to meet academic needs. Similarly, the KT strategy expresses a strong community ethos which is articulated both in terms of relations between all members of the University, and between the organisation and its local and regional communities. Within Department Plans, there is evidence of similar ideas, such as developing research in the most appropriate way for the researcher (Information Systems), or developing a shared sense of research enterprise and recognising the value of each others' work (Sport), or developing and sustaining an enriching work-environment in which creativity and ideas can flourish (Social Sciences).

Thus there appears to be a distinct ideology behind the variant of NM found within the University. Earlier discussions about NM suggested that there were a number of tensions inherent in neo-technocratic NM. These arose from the appropriation of new managerial practices to achieve social as well as economic goals. The same appears to apply here. Neoliberal

logic informs the legitimisation of organisational forms and business-like methods are being used to improve performance. However, this appears to be based around fundamental academic values associated with collegiality and freedom in research. This questions the extent to which these competing values and practices impact upon the individual researcher. This will now be explored through analysis of the primary data.

Individuals' Experiences

Findings and Discussion

Theme Impact	Research Funding	Outputs & Performance Measures	Academic Freedom & Control	Fragmented Organisation & Mixed Messages	Research Culture
Enabling	Opportunity to enable the development of personal research goals. Development of pragmatism - accepting it as integral to the life of a researcher and exploiting funding sources to pursue personal goals.	Internalising an understanding of research defined by sector and policy metrics. Developing personal strategies to pursue own research goals in spite of performance measure 'tick boxes'.	Relative sense of freedom compared to working on non-university environments.		
Restricting	Increased pressure on researchers to achieve annual income targets and associated peer recognition and career progression. Challenge to individual sense of academic ideal associated with independent pursuit of knowledge.	Feeling subject to a reductionist view of research. Sense of overemphasis on meeting targets rather than producing high quality research.	Senior researchers feel less in control of their day-to-day activities as a result of increasing management and leadership responsibilities. Too much freedom arising from absence of effective management leading to frustration and a sense of isolation. Perception that more effective, targeted management practices would enhance research experiences.	Espoused academic related values found at the institutional strategic level do not translate into operational management practices, leading to frustration and disillusionment. Predominating 'business-like' practices had a negative impact on the individual, either because they were poorly implemented, or because they were disassociated from espoused objectives. Tension for the individual researcher caught between conflicting institutional and departmental level policies.	Sense that articulated strategic and institutional position on value of research does not equate with vibrancy of research culture 'on the ground'. Perception of vibrant research culture as critical for the individual researcher, but experiencing a fragmented and patchy research culture in reality. The gap between the formal and informal organisational culture(s) needs to be bridged.

Figure 2. Summary Findings – The Impact of Management Practices on Individual Researchers

Research Funding

One of the major outcomes of NM on the HE sector has related to reduced funding. Combined with the enlargement of the sector, this has meant increased competition for funds and that universities have had to diversify their income sources. It is clear that Mears has a strong focus on output measurement and sets clear income targets for academic staff. This has had a significant impact on the life of individual researchers. It has become part of their daily life and there is a sense that this leads to pressure on individuals. A Departmental Research Director notes that:

> "20 years ago there was much less pressure on attracting a research income. Research was almost er.. a choice, you could if you wanted to do research then you could, there would be no pressure for all academics to do research.... And now I see whole Universities are seeing research as an income generator as well as a motor of the work. . .so we are all trying to think of how we can diversify ourselves" (Professor [Engineering], p. 12/34-35; p. 13/1-2,9-11).

Indeed, there was a sense of lamenting a time past when HE was seen as being a much more independent world. This was even felt by younger researchers who were not working then:

> "I think probably ten years or so ago it was a lot easier but now it's a lot more competitive." (Senior Lecturer [Engineering], p. 7/9-10).

All interviewees had a strong awareness of the increased competition for research funding which made it not only more difficult to secure funding, but could also impact upon career progression in terms of meeting personal targets and achieving recognition within one's field:

> "That's something I've noticed over the last twenty years, it's so hard now to get funding. It's being quite clever about getting lots and lots and lots of small contributions to your purse . . . But if you want to get noticed, irrespective of whether you are successful, your career will suffer unless you go for the big ones" (Reader [Information Systems], p. 14/2-8).

All participants identified that they had to secure funding for their research and discussed personal income targets. This appeared to be a major preoccupation for all the researchers and in some cases could lead to stress:

> "I mean, I do lose sleep at nights sometime thinking about ummm . . . you know, that I'm not keeping the funding and its worrying about getting the next thing" (Reader [Information Systems], p. 14/20-22).

Furthermore, this can have an indirect effect over what research an individual chooses to undertake. Both Lecturer [Sport] (early career) and Reader [Sport] (mid-career) work in areas in which there is limited external funding. They describe the implications of this:

> "in a way it has been a strategic move, in part, to move into doing the kind of work I am doing now because I can get money, influence policy, blah, blah, blah". (Lecturer [Sport], p. 14/35, p. 15/1-2)

"more and more you're having to tailor your research to the funding . . . So I am now looking at other types of research that might be less interesting but more likely get the funding". (Reader [Sport], p. 3/11-12)

However, only these two participants suggested that they would change their area of research to secure funding. Instead, the other researchers discussed how they tried to find funding without sacrificing what they wished to achieve (Senior Lecturer [Engineering], p. 8/8-10; Professor [Social Sciences}], p. 6/17-20). For example:

"But really, what I was doing all the years I was trying to find calls or funding organisations that they, that my research will fit with their priorities rather than trying to change my priorities to fit in a call" (Professor [Engineering], p. 7/7-10).

There was, however, quite a pragmatic sense across all interviews that this is now a 'way of life' for a researcher and is not unique to Mears:

"funding is frustrating, but is also a reality of doing research" (Professor [Health], p. 4/5)

"I think it [research funding] has become a little bit worse, but this is not unique for Mears, I mean with the full financial costs, and everybody has got more pressure to bring more money" (Professor [Engineering], p. 7/31-33).

However, this did seem to lead to two major concerns for individuals. The first area of concern was the researchers' sense that the University seemed to want them to obtain money for its own sake. This was associated with a sense that research itself was undervalued and that research success was equated with research income rather than more qualitative considerations. This concern arose from researchers in both STEM and SSH disciplines and at various career stages.

"Again it comes down to money I think, that's, that's all, the perception is that that is all management is interested in is 'how much do you bring in'?" (Senior Lecturer [Engineering], p. 18/18-19).

"by the university, it's just you're being judged by how much money you bring in. I don't think it's about the research I think it's just if you're bringing in money . . whether you do that research well or not is neither here nor there" (Lecturer [Sport], p. 12/30-33).

"I do wonder whether, there is too much emphasis of being seen to get money for the sake of getting money. And that's not unique to Mears by any means, but there is a big difference between getting research grants and being a good researcher (Professor [Social Sciences], p. 8/4-5)

However, it is interesting to note that this was expressed differently by the professor who is a Research Director.

"I think that the most objective part is by looking at research income. If you accept that the proposals will only be funded if they are of sufficient technical merit or scientific merit then how much income you attract is a good measure". (Professor [Engineering], p. 9/2-4)

This would seem to suggest that the institutional view is one of income being a proxy to demonstrate the quality of the research within the institution. However, if this is the case, that does not appear to be the message that is being received by the researchers, in particular, those who are not operating at more senior, cross institutional level.

The second major concern was the sense that the funding environment was making research more 'corporate'.

> "that can be very frustrating because it is, it is a shift away from the traditional academic way of doing things where it's your research that drives you . . . which does take us closer to a kind of corporate world of, of research" (Professor [Social Science], p. 6/34-35, p. 7/1-3)

One Senior Lecturer was a mid-career researcher who had been successful in securing several small grants and, more recently, two substantial Research Council grants. However, the real impact of this sense of 'corporatisation' appeared to be personal, challenging his sense of himself as a researcher:

> "it just sort of taints that for me because I have this, sort of, scientific idealism in my head that I kind of think if it's a good idea and it's pushing the boundaries, then it should go forward and it shouldn't be dependent on how much money is available (I3, p. 7/9-12). "As I said to you, it's almost prostituting yourself to get money" (Senior Lecturer [Engineering], p. 7/25-26)

In spite of this challenge to his idealistic views of how research 'should be', he appears to remain pragmatic about the current reality of research work:

> "But that's what I came here for and I knew that was part of it. It just makes you feel a bit more like a consultant than I'd like, really (Senior Lecturer [Engineering], p. 7/26-28).

Not all experiences of research funding, however, were negative. Some researchers did express enjoyment in the funding process itself and the opportunities funding created for them. This related to a love of the creative process of writing research proposals (Lecturer [Sport], p. 3/22-24; Lecturer [Social Sciences], p. 4/14-15) and also the resulting participation in research projects (Professor [Engineering], p. 7/10-12). This latter point is particularly illustrated here:

> *"That's a funded project?* Yes, and it's a great consortium. Yes, it's going back to this commitment to work. We're already writing [Project Name] and the call hasn't even come out yet. WOW! Getting a consortium like that . . . I'm incredibly lucky to get involved" (Reader [Information Systems], p. 5/35 – p. 6/1-2).

Funding thus has a major impact on the individual. It challenges their sense of what it means to be a researcher and the academic ideal associated with the independent pursuit of new knowledge. It can lead to pressures associated with annual income targets and peer recognition and, consequently, career progression. However, it can enable them to pursue their own projects and some researchers do enjoy the process of securing funding and the opportunities it can create. In addition, there is a sense of pragmatism – funding is recognised as being part

of the life of a researcher and individuals actively seek ways to use the system to pursue their own research projects and advance their own careers.

Outputs and Performance Measures

In addition to funding targets, all interviewees talked about having annual targets set by the University as part of its line management system. There is a shared understanding of what constitutes a measure of 'successful' research activity within the sector which individuals appear to have internalised. As one mid-career researcher puts it:

> "because strategy is publish, complete PhD students and bring money in. No matter how you want to post it, that is what it is. And I know that, and I know that internally, so I just need to get on and do that. I mean that is what a research active institution should be doing" (Reader [Sport], p. 11/1-4).

However, there is a concern that attempts to measure research outputs have lead to a fundamental shift in how research is treated and that it is now viewed as:

> "something that can be quantified reduced to outputs, products, cash raised, numbers of students supervised, and I think that is, as an approach, is quite pervasive now, and I think that has, that may well have gone too far (Professor [Social Sciences], p. 16/27-30).

In spite of this, individual researchers did not necessarily equate such performance indicators with high quality research and these targets would not necessarily drive what research they decided to do:

> "So we could very consciously focus on the development of what we consider to be good research and not focus on how we tick the indicator" (Professor [Health], p. 17/1-3).

Even more than that, however, individuals consciously engage in strategies which enable them to achieve required outputs and, consequently, give them the freedom to pursue their own research agendas (Reader [Information Sytems], p. 13/21-25; Reader [Sport], p. 11/16-17). This sense of working to achieve one's own research goals in spite of output requirements extends to the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). There is considerable discussion within the sector about the RAE and it had been expected that this would be a key factor in relation to individuals' experiences. Whilst it was widely recognised that the RAE had played a significant role in affecting the UK research culture and the sector within which they worked, individuals did not talk very much about it impacting directly upon their working lives. Where direct impact was identified, this related to how they used their research outputs rather than directing the nature of their research (Professor [Engineering], p. 17/10-11).

Indeed, few researchers appeared to be aware of, or concerned about, the detail of the proposed changes to the RAE, with the development of the Research Excellence Framework (REF). Most seemed to be quite phlegmatic about it (Reader [Information Systems], p. 9/14-16):

> "So I suppose from that point of view you do start thinking about where you're going to target, your publications and stuff. But umm… no, I mean my view on that kind of thing

is to just sort of get your head down and get on with it. They will probably have changed the goal posts again anyway before we get there, because they just seem to be constantly doing that" (Senior Lecturer [Engineering], p. 21/10-14).

The main exception to this was the Research Director who expressed concern about the potential for increased game playing around the use of citations. However, even he notes that this is the standard measure from which, like it or not, we cannot escape:

"so there is game playing and we should be careful of this system and, of course, no system is foolproof" (Professor [Engineering], p. 9/29-30).

Clearly, outputs and performance measurement are also part of the daily life of a researcher. Researchers are very aware of what outputs they need to produce in order to be successful in their career. However, whilst this seems to shape the world and research culture around them, researchers do not appear to be driven by these outputs. They engage in strategies which enable them to tick the relevant assessment boxes, whilst pursuing their own research goals.

Academic Freedom and Control

The literature suggests that one of the main ways in which NM is impacting upon universities is limiting academic freedom and the extent to which academics can control their own work. Freedom here is understood as academic freedom, namely that a researcher is free to pursue their own lines of enquiry. Alongside this, however, is the idea of control which was associated by participants with the ability to decide what they do on a daily basis. These two notions are distinct but appear to be closely linked within the individual's experience.

The assessment of Mears' research related strategies suggests that the university still values academic freedom and seeks to provide an environment in which this can flourish. For many of the participants the main factor that originally attracted them to research in academia was associated with intellectual challenge and creativity, and the freedom to pursue their own areas of research interest. This might relate to a satisfaction in personally learning new things (Professor [Health], p. 3/20-23; Senior Lecturer [Engineering], p. 5/14-15), the "thrill of the chase, starting out on something and not quite knowing where you are going to end up" (Professor [Social Sciences], p. 5/23-24), the challenge of staying at the forefront of one's field (Lecturer [Social Sciences], p. 4/23-31), or because a scientific career is less boring than a business career (Professor [Engineering], p. 1/13-18; I10, p. 2/5-19). Indeed, most had spent time working in private sector organisations before joining the university. One early career researcher had been working for a private research agency but wanted to come back to the academic world because she missed the creative thinking and control over her work. She seemed to be much happier as an academic and felt that now: "basically I can do whatever I want" (Lecturer [Sport], p. 14/21-22). Similarly, another early career researcher had been working in industry for several years and was drawn back to academia because:

"I just preferred the intellectual freedom . . .the stuff with industry . . I just sort of found too much of the time my hands were tied" (Lecturer [Sport], p. 2/8-11).

Another early career researcher notes:

> "I could do anything. I really research for ever what I really want to do. And I think that really, it doesn't happen often in many jobs that you can really do what you want to do (Lecturer [Social Sciences, p. 4/16-18).

It would be reasonable to assume that all individuals are constrained to a degree by their work environment in terms of what they can or cannot do, and how. Indeed, it could be questioned how far there can ever be 'absolute' freedom given the range of interests and actors which make up a 'work community'. In this case, participants seem to feel they have more freedom and control working within the university than in other organisations. Thus there is a sense of relative freedom.

In terms of their daily working life, most participants felt that they did have control over what they did:

> "I also like the academic, the freedom that an academic environment gives you. Other than my teaching, I come in and what I do on a daily basis is up to me" (Reader [Sport], p. 2/33-34).

> "Yes, I am in control, yes, yes, yes. . . . I mean, it is left up to me to pursue the best avenue to support my research (Professor [Engineering], p. 14/12-17).

This appeared to some degree across all career stages and discipline types. Where the sense of control seemed to lessen was for those in more senior positions, or for those individuals who did not seem to actively engage in self-management. One professor felt that she did not have control over her work: "Do I have the control? I don't now because I just don't have the time" (Professor [Health], p. 8/23). In spite of this, however, she still had the freedom to pursue her own lines of research: "nobody dictates what I do my research in. . . I don't feel that I have any obligation, any sense of obligation to go one way or another" (Professor [Health], p. 9/8-9).

The Research Director suggested that he currently had little time for research as much of his time was taken up with administrative tasks "and sometimes it's the number of meetings I have to go to which is the worst part" (Professor [Engineering], p. 2/30-31). However, there was not a sense that this was a new phenomenon, it was seen as 'part of the job' as one becomes more senior (Professor [Engineering], p. 12/18-20).

It was interesting that some interviewees expressed their level of freedom in a negative way in that they felt their freedom in part arose from poor management practices.

> "but certainly, in my Department we get away with blue murder. Umm . . . which is great because you can, it gives you an enormous amount of freedom, but it is also pathetic because it means things aren't co-ordinated and they're not coherent (Professor [Health], p. 13/21-23).

> "setting me targets around papers is highly irrelevant because that, that will just happen . . . whereas I could have been set some quite interesting targets" (Reader [Sport], p. 12/7-10).

There is a sense of frustration that although such management practices can result in increased freedom and control for the individual, more appropriate or effective practices might actually enhance their research experience by providing a better research environment. In addition, some of the researchers who expressed a high level of freedom and control link this to a sense of isolation within the University.

> "Yeah, on a personal level definitely and I've created my own niche and my own networks and my research areas. I don't feel I fit into a bigger picture in Mears" (Lecturer [Social Sciences] p. 14/34-35).

> "Nope, I do my appraisals once a year otherwise I have nothing to do with [Head of Department] at all, I'm invisible" (Professor [Health], p. 16/16-17).

> "Department wise, I don't feel there is any support at all"; "I feel I swim very much on my own here". (Lecturer [Social Sciences], p. 11/7-8).

This tended to be expressed as more of an issue in three Departments where the research culture appears to be less well developed. This is discussed further in paragraph 2.5 below.

For all participants, there was a strong sense of retaining academic freedom in their work and they did not feel overly constrained by either the institution or requirements such as research funding. Whilst research funding could limit positive freedom (being able to do exactly what one wants), all interviewees expressed a sense that they had more freedom and control than they would have working elsewhere. Issues of control seemed to depend on the individual's capacity for self-management and career stage. Within three Departments, there was a sense that better management practices would actually support the research activity and enhance the individual research experience.

Fragmented Organisation and Mixed Messages

Throughout all accounts, the University appeared to be experienced as a fragmented organisation. Participants' views and experiences tended to be extremely localised to their own Department. No participants actually felt able to comment meaningfully on the University as a whole, although they had very strong views about their own Department. For example:

> "It's fragmented I think. I think there's lots of people doing good research in pockets. . . my comment around it being fragmented, I'm not sure whether that's a true reflection of the institution or a greater reflection of the Department. It's certainly true within the Department . . Actually, I'm not that aware of the research culture of the University" (Reader [Sport], p. 8/18-27).

Interestingly, many interviewees had quite positive views of the University which contrasted with their negative views of their own Department. This early career researcher's view of her Department, compared with her view of the University, is an interesting example:

> "[the Department] seems quite bitchy, and back stabbing and that has an impact upon your job and how motivated you are for your job and whether you want to work with

colleagues or whether you want to stay at home and work" (Lecturer [Sport], p. 10/31-32).

"So you know, Mears, I'm quite, you know, happy being here, because you know it does give me the scope, and they want you to be doing the research" (Lecturer [Sport], p. 11/26-28).

It is perhaps not surprising that alongside this organisational fragmentation, there was a strong sense of 'mixed messages'. For example, in the case of this young researcher who has been successful in meeting research targets:

"it's kind of ironic . . .I've done well on the research front, which the University has been pushing, but still they won't give me a permanent contract, so there's . . . you kind of get mixed messages. (Lecturer [Sport], p. 34/11-12).

Indeed, this inconsistency of message appears to be quite structural and was expressed by all interviewees, for example:

"But I've become more aware of, sort of, competing pressures at various levels of management want you to do research and various levels of management want you to do teaching. . . .I suppose my perception of it is, it's very much the, the higher levels of management that are sort of pro research and it seems to be just a bit of a Chinese wall somewhere that it doesn't filter down necessarily to this kind of level" (Senior Lecturer [Engineering], p. 14/29-32).

Analysis of strategic documents has demonstrated a strong formal organisational identity and focus in relation to research. However, this focus appears to be lost when it is mixed with the other day-to-day activities within the Departments. For example, one mid-career researcher felt that a particular challenge relates to creating a vibrant research environment. Whilst he felt that this would be understood "higher up in the University", "in this Department I think there is a lack of understanding of what it takes to create that environment" (Reader [Sport], p. 5/33-35).

The only exception to this was the Research Director who appeared to have a sense and experience of the University as a whole. For the rest, who did not operate at the institutional level, the impact of this institutional fragmentation and mixed messages appeared to be significant. It seems to create a tension for the individual who is caught in between conflicting University and Department priorities. Moreover, there was a sense of frustration and disillusionment since achievement on the research side did not seem to be valued within Departments, and it was felt that more effective management practices would better support the individual and collective research activity.

Research Culture

For individuals, the experience of the fragmented university aligns closely to issues relating to the research culture. Through its strategies, the university presents itself as being research intensive with a strong message regarding the role and value of research to the institution.

However, at the level of the individual, it is not clear that this necessarily equates with having a vibrant research culture. For all participants, the research culture was identified as critical to being able to undertake good research.

> "if you're not part of the vibrant community of researchers I think that you can't do good research. Umm..., it absolutely has to come down to the institution" (Professor [Health], p. 21/3-5)

Interestingly, the concept was distinguished from widely accepted indicators of 'culture':

> "And if somebody is actually producing publications, hopefully supervising good students who complete and getting in the research grants and that's taken as being research culture, and I don't think that is research culture, I think it's only part of it" (Professor [Social Sciences] 13/9-11).

Instead, individuals associated the idea of research culture with having a shared research identity on the website (Professor [Health] 9/2-9), or being able to openly share and discuss ideas without fear (Reader [Sport] 9/11-13); feeling supported and valued as well as constructively supporting others' grant proposals (Lecturer [Sport] 7/1-2, 13/24-25). This appeared to relate to an underpinning value of collegiality.

There was some sense that there had been an improvement in the University's research culture following moves to develop the University's research status. However, there did not seem to be a sense among any participants that they were working in what they would consider to be a 'research intensive' institution. Most interviewees felt that the research culture was patchy and 'fragmented' (Reader [Sport], p. 8/19) with 'pockets of excellence' (Professor [Health], p. 13/14) and they were unsure whether the description of the university being 'research intensive' was an accurate one (Senior Lecturer [Engineering], p. 12/28-35). This successful mid-career researcher (Senior Lecturer [Engineering] was based in a large successful Department with the strongest research track record and culture within the institution:

> *"So what do you understand by research intensive then?"* Yeah, I, I think, my understanding from the VC's message is that we have arrived and we are a research based institution. Again, I don't have all the facts but I don't think, to my mind, that that is an accurate picture . . . there is not the, the infrastructure or the staffing to support that" (12/26-35).

His experience suggests there is a gulf between the University's stated policies and individuals' perceptions and experiences. As noted by one of the Professors, the existence of strategy does not necessarily result its effective implementation:

> "but I think, as with many such strategies [referring to the Research Strategy], there was a gap between the strategy and the implementation and I think that gap is, is sometimes quite large" (Professor [Social Science], p. 13/27-29).

In some areas, this gap between strategies and practice appears to have had a significant, and largely negative, impact. Notably, 9 out of the 10 participants struggled to express a sense of

the culture of the University. Instead, their experience of the University was very much based on their experience within their Department where, in the main, a strong research culture was felt to be lacking. For example:

> "my comment around it being fragmented I'm not sure whether that's a true reflection of the Institution or a greater reflection of the Department. It's certainly true within the Department. Umm.. Actually, I'm not that aware of the research culture of the University so my comments are probably more, more closely aligned to the Department. The Department's research culture is very, very fragmented there is a lack of understanding between key members of the management. (Reader [Sport] 8/15-29).

> "But, I think there is a bit more a departmental culture there [where interviewee used to work] and I think that is really important because it's the sense of being part of a department that fosters a research culture. Umm.. And we don't really have that here, I've tried very hard here to create it and I think things are better than they were, but that's still limited" (Professor [Social Sciences 13/1-11].

> "I know it's our fault and I'm not blaming the Department but everybody just comes in and does their two days usually just goes home and nobody invests in [Mears] from my, into the research culture of [Mears]"; "And I've learnt, one bad thing I've learnt in my five years here, is to basically protect my time more and more and not to volunteer for things. ."; "And basically what I've done is I've outsourced my networks and research cultures" (Lecturer [Social Sciences] 10/1-2; 10/1-17; 11/14-16).

The main exception to this arose from the Engineering Department, where there was a general sense of a more positive and supportive research culture. This is, perhaps, not surprising given its more established track record of undertaking research:

> "I mean Engineering was one of the few areas that they were carrying out research before the final initiatives. So this is something that has, as I would say, it was always strong within Engineering, so it has not changed really" (Professor [Engineering] 12/13-16).

In addition, the nature of the research being undertaken means that researchers are more used to working in teams and securing research funding and are therefore better able to implement these types of university strategies. Furthermore, the Research Director for that Department, who plays a role at the institutional level, felt there were many positive initiatives that supported the development of collaborative working between colleagues through mechanisms such as research centres and networks, internally peer review for grant proposals and mentoring for early career researchers (Professor [Engineering] 8/15-31; 4/30-35).

The absence of what individuals felt to be a strong research culture had a significant impact on their working experience. Experiences were variable across the Departments, but at that time were largely felt to be negative and adversely impacted individuals' sense of community within the institution, their levels of motivation and their perception of support for their research activity. Furthermore, the gap between the values and objectives advocated in University strategies, and those experienced operationally, caused frustration and, in some cases, disillusionment.

Conclusion

This project further developed understanding of the nature of New Managerialism (NM) within Higher Education (HE) and what this means for individual academics doing research work. Discussion of the impact of NM on HE provided a framework which was used to consider a single University. It was found that at the formal level the University displayed a hybridized version of NM. The legitimisation of organisational forms and use of business-like practices were being appropriated to support core research related values associated with collegiality, academic freedom in research and the symbiotic link between teaching and research.

Key themes impacting upon the individual experience were identified as:
 • research funding;
 • performance measurement;
 • academic freedom and control;
 • fragmented organisation and mixed messages;
 • research culture.

It was evident that individuals were aware of the nature of management practices and how these affected their research environment. However, all interviewees spoke about their research with commitment and enthusiasm, and informally valued the relative freedom they experienced within the University to direct their own research activity. The impacts of identified management practices on the individual researcher were classified as being either enabling or restrictive. They were enabling, however, only in the sense that individuals could negotiate their engagement with university systems in order to pursue and achieve their own research goals. Researchers could achieve their goals in spite of management practices, rather than because of them. This is distinct from the notion of enabling as actively empowering or facilitating researchers in their work. However, it does suggest how researchers continue to pursue their research with apparent enthusiasm and success (a result of enabling impacts), in spite of negative views on, or experiences of, particular management practices (a result of restrictive impacts). Indeed, the restrictive impacts had a notable, and primarily negative impact on individuals' research experience. They could feel isolated, under pressure, undervalued in relation to other imperatives, subjected to an overemphasis on meeting targets rather than trying to produce high quality research.

Furthermore, the findings support earlier studies by suggesting that the management environment for HE can be characterised by New Managerial ideologies and management practices (Davies et al, 2006; Deem et al, 2000; Shelley, 2005; Henkel, 2000). However, it does extend the understanding of how NM has been translated within HE by exploring the particular hybrid nature of NM at Mears University. In addition, the experiences of Mears' researchers corroborate studies suggesting that individual academics continue to maintain their own academic value system and engage in strategies that enable them to pursue their own agendas within current managerial regimes (Archer, 2008; Clegg, 2008; Bennich-Bjorkman, 2007). Moreover, the findings suggest that academics now accept many of the practices associated with NM as part of the daily life of being a researcher, thus supporting the

assertion that making a stark distinction between current NM related practices and previous more academic based practices may no longer be relevant (Kolsaker, 2008). In conclusion, NM is now an integral part of the HE environment and not a separate influence distinct from academic management.

However, undertaking a targeted case study provided an interesting opportunity to consider what hybrid NM practices meant for this university and its researchers. Experiences at Mears University suggested that there was a strategic implementation gap. It had been expected that this would mean that NM practices apparent at the strategic level would not filter down to the individual experience and therefore have limited impact. However, what this meant in practice was that the softer academic values found at the institutional strategic level did not appear to be translated into day-to-day management practices. Interestingly, this meant that harder 'business-like' practices seemed to have more of a negative impact on the individual, either because they were poorly implemented, or because they were disassociated from the core values they were intended to support. Researchers appeared to feel that they were successful in their research in spite of management practices at the Department level, rather than because of them. Indeed, this supports recent suggestions that the success of research strategy implementation will be determined in part by the extent to which 'espoused' values (what an organisation says it will achieve) matches the 'objectives-in-use' (what an organisation is perceived to be seeking) (Bilot & Codling, 2011, p. 106). In this instance, a mis-match was highly detrimental to researchers' motivation and sense of commitment to the University.

In addition, it could be speculated whether management practices based on NM are necessarily the most appropriate tools with which to organise research activity. Individuals' discussion about the motivations for, and process of, doing research strongly suggests that this type of work does not fit the neo-Taylorist assumptions upon which NM is based. It can be questioned to what extent such practices take into account the particular nature of 'doing research', and whether they effectively harvest the motivation, creativity and ability of academic staff to deliver research activity (Billot & Codling 2011). As both Government and universities increasingly try to manage and control research activity, it may be timely to consider the nature of research work in more depth in order to identify the most effective management techniques.

Methodologically, it was proposed that the findings of earlier studies had been informed by their particular approach. This related to the extent to which they pursued a realist or interpretative method. It was suggested that this may have been one reason why studies resulted in differing conclusions regarding the extent to which NM management practices had positive or negative effects. Although the main thrust of this study was interpretative, situating individual experiences within their organisational context was an attempt to recognise that individual meaning-making takes place within particular frameworks to which individuals respond. Using a case study method to explore this proved to be appropriate, demonstrated by the thick and rich data gathered from which clear conclusions could be drawn. In addition, it made it possible to identify that individual perceptions at the informal level varied significantly from the formal view. Reviewing strategic level documents (formal) and the individual experience (informal) was intended to address this. The experience at the informal level was

informed not only by management practices, but also by personal values and beliefs, relations and networks, power structures, individual motivators, perceptions and norms. Such factors were shown to influence the interaction between individuals and management practices and consequently, the impact of the latter. Although this is beyond the scope of this project, more in-depth investigation around this could lead to further insight into how researchers make sense of their role and work environment and, from a management perspective, how best to motivate and support research work.

Next Steps – Developing Practice

It is recognised that in order to effectively facilitate and support research work, it is necessary to understand the effects changing practices, values and norms have on the individual (Robinson, 2009, p. 109; Wimsatt, Trice & Langley, 2009, p.71). This is both a challenge and an opportunity for research managers. This particular case study enhanced our understanding of how particular management practices, and their associated values, were impacting individuals. It was consequently possible to develop practices to proactively enable researchers, whilst minimising restrictive impacts of wider university practices. This included measures such as:

1. Enhancing research cultures by building new research communities and reinforcing institutional level values through:

   • The development of thematic interest groups to build enabling environments that foster productive research cultures, the development of new collaborations and preparations for future funding calls.

   • Foregrounding strategic level values by celebrating and raising the internal profile of research successes.

2. Tailoring support measures to meet researchers' needs:

   • Offering a bespoke Grant Academy Programme to less experienced researchers to develop research funding skills and confidence, receive mentoring and establish internal research networks.

   • Developing a masterclass workshop series to provide flexible support to academics, tailored to their articulated needs.

3. Supporting academic freedom and control:

   • Building opportunities for academic research leadership by establishing a Strategy Group that cuts across operational management structures to drive and co-ordinate targeted research development activities.

   • Working one-to-one with researchers to help them navigate operational management structures and processes to achieve their research goals.

By delivering such activities, the Research Office can try to close the strategic implementation gap. The next challenge is to embed such measures and values more widely within the University in the context of its multiple and complex agendas.

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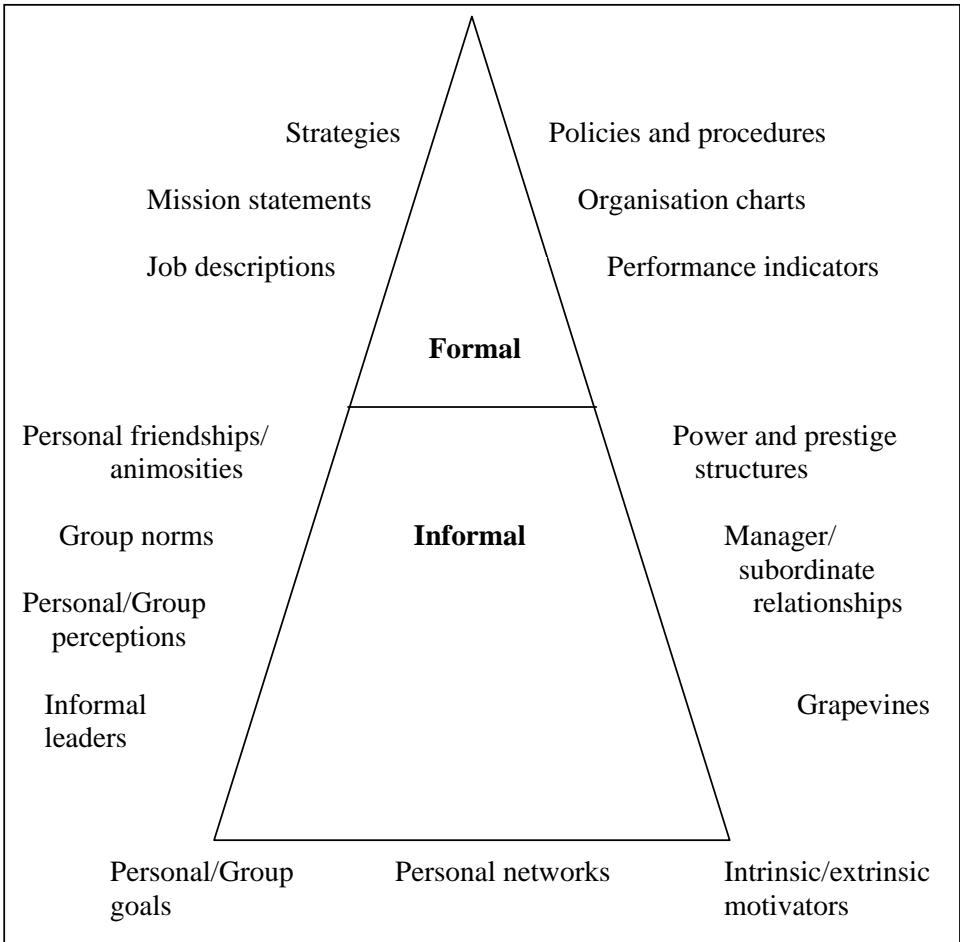Email: alicen.nickson@brunel.ac.uk

Appendix

Figure 3. Formal and Information Organisation
(Adapted from K. Lysons 1997 cited in Mullins, 2002, p.99)

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