

The Quest to Re-energise Academic Staff in Higher Education in an Age of Performativity.

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Abstract

This article explores how it may be possible to re-energise academic staff within the current context of expectations of managers within higher education (HE) in England. Through use of an initial historic timeline the almost path-dependent development of the current status quo of increasing managerialism is traced which, it is argued, has led to an erosion of the value of the traditional ethos of HE via its system-immanent drive to adhere to the demands of a market economy. Here we question the use of learning outcomes as a determinant of academic success and explore the impact of the autocratic management style commonly found in the current era. Some 'pathologies' are revealed which appear to be intrinsic to the essence of such an approach and it is argued that a leadership approach would pose a valid and better alternative. The conclusion is that while such a leadership-for-learning approach puts higher demands on the managers in charge it will yield better outcomes for the students, for society, for the organisation and for the people working within such an organisation.

Keywords

* Performativity * Higher Education * Leadership * Managerialism * Learning

Introduction

Within this paper we seek to explore how it may be possible to re-energise academic staff within the current context of widespread use of learning outcomes as a determinant of academic success coupled with the expectations of managers within higher education (HE) in England.

By providing an initial historic timeline we try to trace the almost path-dependent development of the current status quo in HE, whereby academics who consider themselves as leaders of learning in their subject or discipline are being coerced into short term measures aligned with the concept of student performance on limited criteria. This discourse leads us to examining in depth one important aspect of increasing control-regimes, the emergent

dominance of learning outcomes. This artefact of the current managerial ethos we argue is evident in higher education and ultimately leads us to critically review the processes of bureaucratization and managerialism. Consequently we claim that increasing managerialism leads to an erosion of the value of the traditional ethos of HE via its system-immanent drive to adhere to the demands of a market economy.

In order to widen the insights gained from this examination, we assess the autocratic management style, which we take to be commonly found in the current era, and highlight the difficulties inherent to this approach. We do this by revealing some 'pathologies' which appear to be intrinsic to the essence of such an approach. With these steps in place we argue that a learner-centred approach would pose a valid and better alternative. Our conclusion is that while such an approach puts higher demands on the managers in charge, it will yield better outcomes for the students, for society, for the organisation and last but not least, for the people working within such an organisation.

The path into the current situation

Post-compulsory provision in England was traditionally divided between further and higher education, a differentiation reflecting Aristotle's concepts of the practical oriented *phronesis*, the practically applied *techne* and the scientifically oriented *episteme*, which is striving to reveal general and everlasting truth (Mahrtdt, 2007). Following this Aristotelian stratification, the concept of *episteme* probably captures best what HE is supposed to achieve i.e. well established knowledge and ways of knowing that provide the academic disciplines with their "own internal criteria of relevance and worth, which are deliberately detached from those of everyday life" (Edwards, 1997). In that respect *episteme* is dependent on the development of critical and abstract thought processes via individual self-development. The expansion of the university sector since the Robbins Report (1963) has blurred the edges between *phronesis*, *techne* and *episteme* in terms of degree provision, however, and changed the manner in which universities are run.

For centuries universities had been the preserve of the social elite and were focused on the teaching of subjects that had a corpus of theory and knowledge. In England the Oxbridge universities provided the basic model which emphasized residence and the close relations of teachers and taught, with a very low staff-student ratio. It was only in the 19th Century that research became a key aspect of their provision, following the developments elsewhere in Europe, particularly at the University of Berlin under the guidance of Wilhelm von Humboldt. The Humboldtian principle underpinning these universities was the 'union of teaching and research' in the work of the individual scholar or scientist. The function of the university was to advance knowledge by original and critical investigation and not just to transmit the legacy of the past or to teach skills. Teaching was to be based on the disinterested search for truth and students should participate, at however

humble a level, in this search. Hence the classic view that the university was a “community of scholars and students” engaged on a common task (Anderson, 2010).

Universities controlled their intake of students, however, and were choosing the academic elite from leading schools who, as time progressed, would be the most likely to fill posts of high social status including respected professions such as law and medicine. This practice of selecting, cultivating and utilising the nation’s human resources (Habermas, 1973) was probably most pointedly formulated by Fichte (1808: 214):

The uneducated are designated to sustain humankind on their level of achieved training, while the educated, with a clear conscious and in a reflective manner, has to forward humankind. The latter always has to be one step in front of the present, to build the future, by planting it, in order to develop further, into the present. [Translated from original German by first author]

Although this statement might not find much support nowadays, it resembles the educational ideology of instrumentalism which was actually reappearing in “The Great Debate” initiated by the former Prime Minister James Callaghan at Ruskin College. Callaghan (1976) stated:

The goals of our education, from nursery school through to adult education, are clear enough. They are to equip children to the best of their ability for a lively, constructive, place in society, and also to fit them to do a job of work.

In our examination of this period we see that this social discourse led to the situation where vocational or technical subjects which did not fit the professional model were excluded from the university sphere and were located elsewhere in HE, usually in the polytechnics (Anderson, 2010). By the beginning of the 1960s there had been little growth in the university sector with less than five per cent of the population joining. The report of the Robbins Committee on Higher Education (1963), however, proclaimed the principle that university places should be available to all who were qualified for them by ability and attainment. There was steady growth during the following decades as more occupations became professionalised, but by the late 1980s still only some 15 per cent of the school population went to universities who had managed to preserve their elite status in a government funded system that protected their autonomy. The 1988 Education Reform Act changed that status quo, however, and made the universities more vulnerable to outside pressures through stripping away the University Grants Committee which had previously provided financial security. This had the effect of inducing management at the expense of academic self-government and making universities more responsive to corporate funders, donors, and the media as well as the government.

Higher education in vocational and technical subjects until this time had been the preserve of the polytechnics in a binary system which had been introduced in 1965, with no new universities being allowed to open. The changes to financial security brought to the universities by the 1988 Act paved the way for the Conservative government of the time, driven by its market-orientated neo-liberal ideology, to remove the barriers between the academic and vocational streams of HE provision. The Further and Higher Education Act (1992) changed the funding base and allowed some 35 polytechnics to become universities, working under the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). The new mantra of the time was that learning in HE should be responsive to the needs of employment and should develop those skills that are valued in the world of work.

This approach to HE was sustained with the publication of the National Committee Inquiry into Higher Education (Dearing, 1997) which contributed heavily to the debate about the purposes of higher education. The report recommended the introduction of mechanisms that aimed to get students to “relate the learning to a wider context” and thus to think about their learning in an instrumental way. The ultimate goal of this process is for the student to “make relevant” their learning through a portfolio demonstrating the development of their skills and to be able to present it in a way that employers are able to understand the ‘employability value’ of what has been learnt. It thus appears as if Aristotle’s concept of *episteme* as the benchmark for higher education had undergone a substantial erosion, whereby acquired skills were now supposed to suffice, as long as the student is successful in convincing potential (and potentially uneducated) employers about the value of their achieved learning.

Theory and Bureaucracy

In the post-Dearing environment leadership in HE has become increasingly directive and bureaucratic, with less value being placed on collegial approaches to decision making (Furlong, 2013). Line management has dominated, and in some instances replaced, the committee structure of institutions and the influence of individual academic staff has waned significantly. Away from our aim to place this decay of professional influence on teaching – which we will try to highlight with our considerations regarding the use of learning outcomes (below) – this overall shift towards a increasing bureaucracy leads us to explore the possibility of re-configuring organisational structures in order to provide more opportunity for individual influence whilst not losing sight of the basic premise that HE institutions need to generate income in order to survive. However, in order to follow these two aims we first need to place the historically grown educational organisation within a theoretical framework.

Organisations, including those in education, are quite commonly viewed as static entities. It is important to realise, however, that any organisation cannot be understood sufficiently by applying such a narrow conceptualisation. Whilst an organisation is first and foremost an organised systematic process, aiming to maintain itself by sustaining its borders and self-identity, it faces the constant necessity for reconfiguration to safeguard its own survival in a changing environment - the process of 'adaptive radiation' (Habermas, 1973).

Luhmann's (2002) system-theoretical approach identifies the core function of any educational system, however, to be the provision of knowledge and method with the latter to be understood as a way of thinking. These educational benefits are not directly quantifiable as they are long-term and realise themselves in individual advantages. They might manifest themselves for example in increased life chances, which could, but not necessarily, lead to individual advantages in later life and with that add to the overall value of a nation's human resources. Viewed from this perspective, it is crucial to realise that no educational system can ever deliver real-time, measurable evidence of its own effectiveness. For Luhmann it appears to be an intrinsic problem of the educational system to be caught within a dichotomy of its own professional frame of reference while being dependent on a societal, market-based frame of reference which is demanding hard data as proof of its success in order to justify government spending.

Putting the neo-functionalist considerations of Habermas in relation to Luhmann's system-theory, we already encounter the problem for the educational leader to take organisational decisions regarding the safeguarding of goal-attainment (and with that organisational survival) based on performance-indicators (educational success) which are intrinsically difficult to access. Weber (2005) provided within his sociological/economic studies an account of how autocratic power becomes a socially accepted bureaucratic authority by a process of rationalisation that is structurally embedded. Hence, decisions are no longer random-individual but, by applying a frame of cognitive deliberation leading to logical conclusive reasoning, bureaucratic authority (is supposed to) becomes predictable and reliable.

Although such a shift from autocratic, individual leadership to a structural frame whereby power becomes predictable authority would open the possibility to transform the organisational structure from an autocratic to a participative leadership style (Male, 2006), this chance is not taken often enough. Bureaucratic organisations appear still to be prone to an individual accumulation and exertion of power that does not necessarily lead to participative solutions. Hence, it could be argued that bureaucracy, although it produces predictable outcomes in terms of maintenance (i.e. preserving the status-quo), may not come with the promise of possessing the needed flexibility to account for change (i.e. an evolutionary process in the form of the above mentioned adaptive radiation). Foucault (1977) provides insight into

the processes of a life lived along the invisible and tacit micro capillaries of power and describes power structures in the form of control regimes that might, at times, be controlling an individual's conduct, but more often it does not. The important point is that this sheer possibility of actual – but unpredictable – control evokes an individualised internalisation of this controlling regime, coercing the individual to conduct themselves always as if s/he would be under observation. Arguably such a Foucauldian internalisation process is providing an important bracket to hold a modern society or any organisation together. Nevertheless, the question remains as to whether these internalised control regimes are followed voluntarily or under duress. The importance of this question unfolds itself within Marx' concept of alienation for who work is the unique feature that distinguishes humans from animals:

Within life-activity the complete character of a species is founded, its generic character; and free and conscious activity is the generic character of humans. (Marx, 1844: 89) [Translated from original German by first author]

But within paid employment the employee is in danger of losing this distinguishing feature of humanity. Marx (1844: 84) explains in his drastic language:

The more the labourer works himself out, the more power the alien object-world gains, created by him, but opposite to him [...] The labourer puts his life into the object, but so this life is now longer his, but the object's. [Translated from original German by first author]

This process is known as alienation (*Entäußerung*). And this alienation via paid employment provides the basis in which a rational agent might be prone to just provide the minimum requirement of work necessary to maintain employment. This is where the question of a motivational compliance with control regimes gains gravity. If the organisational goals are a good fit with individual goals, then a participating individual is able to make the overall goals his or her own, thus perceiving working for the organisation as a means to his or her own ends and not merely as an end in itself.

This is not easy to achieve, however, in an organisational framework relying on a multitude of professions and other employees to attain its goals. Weick (2001) stresses the need of a shared organisational culture as a sense-making frame to map individuals and processes. If groups or individuals are unable to recognise or locate themselves within such an organisational map they may feel alienated and withhold labour-power. Even more critically, however, groups may detach themselves from the overall organisation and become loosely coupled (we consider ourselves as part of the overall structure – but we are different) or even de-coupled (we are *de jure* part of it, but *de facto*, we are not). In this respect commitment and compliance to an

overall core operational culture or ethos bears the chance to provide the overarching motivational bracket (Male, 2006). Failing to provide this may not only lead to a reduced individual contribution, but also to a potential rift dividing organisational sub-systems from each other or from the overall organisation with the increasing danger of system-inefficiency or even a system-maintenance threatening erosion.

Learning Outcomes or Episteme?

Given the prospects of alienation, including loose-coupling or de-coupling within the organisation, we might anticipate more regard to have been paid to academic staff desires to further knowledge within their chosen subject or discipline. Instead, it seems, many universities have followed the route of conforming to generic expectations, most significantly in our view learning outcomes, rather than *episteme*. High value has been placed instead on skill development (*phronesis* and *techne*) with simple performance measures being applied. Inspired by Lyotard (1979), we have dubbed this 'the age of performativity', a context that arises from changes to HE evident at the beginning of the current century.

A number of changes in HE practice followed *The Dearing Report* of 1997 that led to the regularisation of teaching and learning, particularly in getting academic teaching staff to think about their provision in the same instrumental way. Progression within a subject discipline or a particular domain of learning thus became of secondary, subsidiary importance. What seemingly became important was no longer the assessment of students in terms of their internal subject discipline standards, but a focus on external generic standards. Consequently learning outcomes have been promoted as valuable in the personal development of graduates, particularly to enhance their generic skills and competences (divorced from the disciplinary context in which they are learnt) and at the same time open up academic practice to ensure accountability, credibility and transparency of practice across the HE sector. Here we argue, however, that learning outcomes are profoundly ideological in nature, have a detrimental effect on the learning process and are enabling the commercialisation of HE at the expense of *episteme*.

HE now appears to be driven by the demands of the 'Knowledge Economy' with institutions bearing little resemblance to the Humboldtian principle of the last two centuries. In part this could be due to the '*massification*' of HE during the last fifteen years (Furlong, 2013: 113) which has seen growth in HE with over 40 per cent of the population going on to study at this level. We suggest that this mass production of students has led some universities to rely on learning outcomes as a measure of success as they increased the number of students while decreasing their resource-allocation. As a consequence learning outcomes have often become the principal indicator of quality provision.

Bernstein argues, however, against pedagogic practice “dependent upon the market place for its orientation and legitimation, a practice emphasising the assumed relevance of vocational skills” (2004: 196). He characterises this as ‘visible pedagogy’ that places emphasis on performance, where the learner is treated with secondary concern. The emphasis in such instances is on the external product of the learner i.e. the learner’s compliance to deliver according to the demands of generic learning outcomes, rather than the development of the students’ identity within a particular subject, discipline or *episteme*. Consequently we argue learning outcomes have not necessarily benefited students or encouraged them to take responsibility for their learning and may have actually diminished the learner-students. Equally academics have often become mere facilitators for “satisfying practices of transmission” (Bernstein, 2004: 197) or practitioners of “telematics” (Lyotard, 1979). The idea seemingly behind the use of learning outcomes in this way is that educationalists simply become providers of information concerned with the mechanics of the process instead of the process itself, leading to a mentality according to which teaching as such is deemed successful as long as it meets the required performance-indicators. In such a pedagogical context, it appears that quantitative measurement is possible and performativity is evident.

Bernstein (2004) seeks instead to discuss ‘invisible pedagogies’ where the emphases is on the intra-individual and inter-group practices which are always likely to relay integrated or disciplinary embedded skills/subjects (2004: 197). The Bernsteinian dichotomy of visible (explicit) pedagogy and invisible (implicit) pedagogy thus results in confusion in academic professional practice (Bernstein, 2000). It is argued, therefore, that for academic staff there is a pathological dichotomy of “macro” professional academics, who operate “safely” in a culture typified by the use of learning outcomes, and “micro” professionals who have internalised the rules of their disciplinary practices and for whom these are second nature. The micro professionals who realise the asymmetry of learning outcomes and disciplinary knowledge can often resist the pandemic of the learning outcome culture and thus be concerned with implicit engagement with disciplinary practices.

The “macro” professionals, however, can seemingly only work effectively if they employ many simplifications and are thus concerned with the creation of environments that employ the faithful delivery of learning outcomes in a formal way described as “security seeking tactics, with resultant physical and emotional damage” (Ball, 2003: 219). On the contrary the “micro” professional is concerned with the variety of sources, the nature of knowledge, the culture of learning and teaching, the rationale, the engagement of students and has the ability of bringing components of knowledge together to form *episteme* and induct learners into this. Consequently, the “micro” professional is concerned with the creation of learning environments that exercise knowledge in an anxious intensity where “the capacities, conduct, statuses and duties of individuals are problematised

and worked on” (Dean, 1994: 565). The micro-professional thus seems to be the one exercising his or her profession much closer to the *episteme*-ideal of classic higher education.

We argue, therefore, that reliance on the use of learning outcomes is not concerned with the axiology of *episteme*, but with the axiology of the market place and demand students as potential employees to have multiple skills. We conclude, therefore, that the micro-professional seems to practice nearer to what traditionally has been the ethos of HE.

Being confined to a generic provision, along pre-defined and even pre-worded learning-outcomes, however, can only lead to processes of alienation as described earlier. The micro-professional is unable to recognise the ethos of his chosen profession within such narrowly defined parameters and adheres to the control system only at times when the possibility of managerial control is probable enough to engage in a fake performance while otherwise struggling to get on with what s/he thinks is right. Hence, the micro-professional – under the cover of pretended compliance – is alienated and in a constant danger of de-coupling him/herself from an organisation where he/she cannot locate/recognise him/herself any longer.

We consider it to be an illusion that as academics we can ensure students reach an appropriate level of knowledge and understanding in their subject or discipline via use of learning outcomes because all they seem to do is to ask students to understand those objectives without having been through the process of learning. So, the attempt to engage students to understand their *episteme* /disciplinary knowledge, techniques and forms of expertise required through that sole mechanism (and at the same time to construct an epistemology of their own discipline) is impossible, as learning outcomes de-emphasise *episteme*-disciplinary knowledge and privilege. Instead they result in a dogmatic production of supposedly measurable, entrepreneurial and competitive obedience to the marketplace.

The “discursive and non-discursive” elements of *episteme* are thus sacrificed in the indirect forms of market’s control via the use of learning outcomes. Their application involves a reorganisation of *episteme*/discipline of which “freedom”, “autonomy” and “values” will be replaced by techniques, which we consider will leave both academics and students at a loss. It is a reductionist approach to academic capability and gives the illusion that education institutions and processes are attractive to commercial organisations. Actually, in our view, this is the commercialisation of HE, making it cheaper, vulnerable and driven by the market rather than *episteme*. In turn this leads to a process whereby micro-professionals, still driven by a traditional HE ethos, will either be alienated or withdraw their participation thus making room for macro-professionals offering their generic skills without the need of a high level professional commitment to the concept of *episteme*.

Managing within HE – the autocratic approach

Having assessed one aspect of new public managerial methods to create quality in the form of accountability it is time to widen the picture. Thus far we have only concentrated on learning outcomes, but in order to understand why there might be a growing dissatisfaction with what HE has become, especially amongst academic staff committed to furthering knowledge in their subject or discipline, it seems necessary to look at the managerial processes that have evolved.

We take this look by utilizing what was described as an *ideal type* by Weber (2002), i.e. a hypothetically created entity which possesses the typical features of the type of entity under investigation (without the need to engage in the gathering of empirical evidence) to allow for a comparative assessment with either actual entities or, as in our case, envisaged alterations against this ideal-typical creation.

Management is essentially a process of striving for goal-attainment by manipulation and allocation of equipment, materials, human and financial resources. Whilst such a definition might appear straightforward, it seems self-evident that the difficulties of managerial goal attainment will increase in relation to an organisation's complexity. As outlined earlier, universities now find themselves located at the junction formed by various, often conflicting, requirements. To add to these already massive difficulties, true goal-attainment in the form of the student's individually accomplished education is not easily accessible as discussed earlier in relation to Luhmann's (2002) claims and our discussion about the emphasis on learning outcomes. This is the field where educational/micro-professional values tend to collide with managerial/macro-professional assessment. One managerial strategy employed to make such a problem disappear is by standardising policies and introducing generic processes. Organisational sections and sub-sections are thus expected to function within this one-size-fits-all approach and are left with the problem of dealing with a variety of external (and internal) demands without recourse to alternative systems of processes. In other words, if professionals are not seen to be doing the 'right thing' then they are considered aberrant and made to conform. As outlined already, we can anticipate that this may lead to negative motivational effects for micro-professionals and on the level of the middle management as well, with all potentially withholding labour-power and committing themselves just enough to merely perform along their key-performance indicators and not willing to risk managerial attention for non-compliance.

Where to from here?

Thus the question remains how do we re-energise academic staff who may by now be inclined to alienation, being loosely coupled or fully de-coupled? The

picture is not fully clear yet as other, non-academic, factors also feature in universities of the current age. Of principal concern here is the new centrality of key performance indicators (KPI) and the requirement from the Higher Education Funding Council for England for universities to publicly display this information through Key Information Sets (KIS) which demonstrate comparable sets of information about full or part time undergraduate courses.

What we seem to be seeing now is a slavish devotion by senior managers in HE to the factors that makes up KIS and KPIs at the expense of the type of criticality and discourse that is designed, as described in the Royal Charter, "to advance education, scholarship, knowledge and understanding by teaching and research, for the benefit of individuals and society at large" (University of Hull, 1954). The attraction and sustenance of students, particularly undergraduates, appears to be of greater importance to senior managers who seem more driven by the demands of the market than by a quest for knowledge. Whilst this may be considered as good managerial activity in an economy heavily dependent on income from student fees it is 'pathological' academic leadership as it tends to suppress the ambitions of the micro-professional who wishes to be engaged in epistemic ventures. The examination of the centrality of learning outcomes and performance standards leads us to claim that educational accountability cannot be achieved solely by neo-liberal (market-forces driven) managerial approaches.

Re-energising Academic Staff in the Age of Performativity

Our mission, in presenting this paper is to find ways in which we can re-engage those academics who are driven more by their concern for their subject and discipline, and desiring to instigate this passion in their students, than by the need to satisfy external demands led by the market for graduate employees. Consequently we seek an approach which takes into account the individuals working for the organisation, but not as means to an end but as ends in themselves. This sort of approach should create individual commitment which, ideally, leaves the respective individual to make the organisational goals his/her own goals, and thus voluntarily commit themselves way beyond a mere performance guided by a managerial demand and assessment structure.

To enable such a clear frame of orientation to emerge, however, it is important that employees buy into the underlying value-set, make it their own and henceforth live it. In this respect formal leadership should go hand-in-hand with the emergence of informal leadership. Carrying forward the organisations success should become the task and goal of every employee, using his/her own competence and initiative to bring the best possible outcome about. Formal leadership should thus become less directive and more of a job to control committed agents in terms of a) their commitment (not everyone might want to buy in) and b) keeping committed informal leaders out of each other's way and out of harm's way. This last aspect is quite important

in terms of the organisational structure. A clearly defined structure with clear communication pathways maintaining a sufficient level of information at every level is important.

When viewing an organisation as a static entity, the authoritative approach based on a hierarchical bureaucratic structure may seem to possess advantages. We suggest instead abandoning this perspective and viewing the organisation as a process which allows for Habermas' requirement of 'adaptive radiation', a concept often associated with evolutionary biology whereby entities rapidly create a multitude of new forms when a change in the environment makes new resources available and creates new challenges.

Without such a culture the academic workforce, even though they may be considered as experts in their relevant field, have had to adhere to the needs of a societal justification exercise to publicly account for the governmental funding of education. Consequently, we conclude, students/learners have not been equipped with the skills of how to acquire knowledge, but have been assessed in terms of their ability to reproduce assessment-relevant contents. Whilst this may make the case for an authoritative approach, leaving everything as it is and to proceed as it was done in the past, such a fatalist perspective neglects the wider picture. Any organisation is embedded within a network of social systems and can only maintain its own identity within this environment by adapting to changes brought about by other agents.

In such a context the role and the contribution of the organisation's bureaucracy alters. Whereas the legitimising effect within an authoritative approach was gained by the maintenance of the top-layer's power, the bureaucracy's *raison de être* within a learner-centred approach would be based on the support of the relevant actors within the organisation. In this respect Weber's dictum of bureaucratic authority gains a new dimension. Bureaucracy in this instance thus becomes a means to steer and regulate the inter-organisational communication of committed formal and informal leaders, allocate resources and to connect the organisation's past with its current challenges and its prospective future. Such a bureaucracy is no longer a means to control the employees. Working with a refined system of the Foucauldian internalisation of power, a learner-centred approach emphasises the motivational aspect whereby independent agents buy into the organisation's goals and pursue them as their own instead of being coerced into compliance. Such motivated and committed agents will presumably not suffer from Marx' alienation, although academics are still 'selling their labour', as they are able to commit themselves to the goals of the organisation. Arguably a shift from mere content learning towards an enabling process, combined with a prospective shift in the current assessment-regime, will provide additional motivational impetus, most certainly for the group of the micro-professionals.

A shared learner-centred approach allows, therefore, not only the individual, but also organisational sub-sections to orientate themselves within an overarching organisational culture. Arguably such an organisational culture will prevent sub-sections from breaking away from the overall goals. This is an important aspect, as the overall system has to maintain itself within an environment providing only limited access to the resources needed to maintain survival.

Linking (albeit only superficially) these theoretical considerations we highlight three potential aspects of change here:

- a) The implementation of a clear organisational set of values, an ethos or a mission statement of an all-inclusive nature, to support academic staff seeking to further knowledge in their subject or discipline;
- b) The necessity for a differentiating approach, leaving as much power and responsibility as near as possible to where the job is actually done;
- c) The need to hire, trust and pay the committed academic staff to deliver the episteme of their subject/discipline as well as match generic learning outcomes.

Concluding Remarks

Based on the historic development of a neo-liberal, managerialist approach a learner-centred approach seems to provide the greater challenge to the management hierarchy, but appears to yield a huge organisational benefit putting the organisation, the people who work for this organisation and the students/learners who receive their education in a better place. Such an approach does not only require a specific mind-set of the organisational leader, trying to develop a specific organisational culture, it also has to have a focus far beyond any mere preservation of the status-quo. Needless to say, such an approach carries the inherent danger of mistakes being made, but this is a danger shared by all active agents, that in doing, something might go wrong, but such a danger is never sufficient excuse to remain passive and static.

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