

Pedagogy and new power relationships

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Abstract

Changes in Higher Education have led to lecturers being disenfranchised. The introduction of new managerialism and developments in pedagogy have contributed to this process. Performance management and the introduction of teaching and learning strategies have put issues of pedagogy and curriculum development into the realms of strategic management, whilst student-centred learning has usurped teacher-centred models of education. Based on these trends, a benchmarking tool has been developed which enables the identification and monitoring of the way that the locus of control for various teaching-related activities has changed. This tool is then applied to the case of an MBA course that was transformed from a traditional to a distance format. The issues that arise from this case are discussed, and conclusions are drawn about the implications of “creeping managerialism” in Higher Education.

Key words: Pedagogy, power relationships, distance learning, learning technology.

Introduction

Changes in Higher Education have led to the development of a system which, it can be argued, is more responsive to students' needs. This has involved increased managerial involvement in pedagogy and curriculum design and increasingly student-centred strategies for learning and teaching. The widespread introduction of Learning Technology has acted as a catalyst, accelerating this process of change still further.

This paper considers the implications of these developments. A benchmarking tool is developed that allows the impact of these changes to be analysed, and this is applied to an illustrative case. Based on this analysis, conclusions are drawn that point to the long-term implications of these trends. Central to these considerations is the realisation that, in order to empower one group, another must be disempowered.

Background

In order to understand the changes in power relationships between management, lecturers and students, several factors need to be

considered. These include changes in management and pedagogy.

The rise of new managerialism

In 1979, Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative party were swept into power on an election slogan of ‘rolling back the frontiers of state’. The economy was to be transformed, and the policies forged were arguably successful in addressing Britain’s problems of inflation and deteriorating international competitiveness. By the late 1980s, it seemed that a programme of deregulation, privatisation and tax cuts had indeed transformed the economy. The reduction of public spending complimented Thatcher’s attachment to free markets, greater choice and rampant individualism (Hutton 1995). These policies were to change the top-down, monolithic organisations of the Keynesian welfare state and alter the nature of public sector management. In parallel, there was a trend toward the decentralisation of health, education and housing. Simultaneously, important areas, such as regional policy making and the role of the Metropolitan Boroughs, were centralised. Pollitt *et al.* (1998) explain that it is perfectly possible to decentralise or devolve authority

over certain issues while simultaneously centralising authority over other issues. This led to the paradox that, whilst extensive decentralisation took place, it appears that from the 1980s and 1990s the UK State became one of the most centralised states in Europe.

The introduction of managerialism within the public sector became a central strategy. This represented a way of moving away from traditional bureaucratic paternalism (Pollitt 1990). Two varieties of managerialism have been identified. The first is described as Neo-Taylorism, which focuses on obtaining more for less. The second, the excellence school, derives from the work of Peters (1989). This combines quality, corporate commitment, closeness to the customer and entrepreneurialism. For Pollitt (1993), managerialism meant that overall control by managers was both necessary and desirable.

Rather than regarding these two varieties of managerialism as separate, Newman and Clarke (1994) suggest that they should be seen as integrated, and show how this new managerialism stresses the “right to manage”. This reflected other changes in the public sector initiated by the government, such as concern about the economic costs of welfare, a dependency culture, and the power of bureaucrats and professionals. The last of these was, the authors argue, the government’s main concern. ‘Arrogant’ professionals were arraigned alongside ‘inflexible’ bureaucrats and ‘interfering’ (local) politicians, all of whom had prevented efficient, effective and economic public services. They argued that the only way to disentangle and defuse these ‘interlocking modes of power’ was by the combination of markets and management.

A further critical approach to new managerialism can be found in the work of Exworthy & Halford (1999). For these writers, capitalism is conceptualised as a dynamic process and a knock-on effect of the inherently boom-bust nature of capitalist economies is identified as the fiscal crisis in the welfare state. As workers’ earnings slump, the demand for state services increases, yet at the same time the state is less able to meet demands because taxation

income is falling. Such processes are not party-specific; New Labour policies reflect those of the outgoing Conservative administration in that raising the tax burden is seen as unacceptable, for example. The authors argue that the state still has to fulfil its contradictory role of support for and legitimisation of capitalism but that new ways have to be found to achieve these desires. It is here that emergent forms of managerialism, with all the implications for the content and organisation of professional work, becomes important. The authors conclude that relationships between professionals and managers are constituted unevenly between and within different organisations.

Thus it can be seen that existing research focuses on quite different dimensions of the professional-managerial relationship. Exworthy & Halford suggest this contradiction is rarely acknowledged. In order to draw such relationships together, they present them in the form of a three stage analytical model (Figure 1).

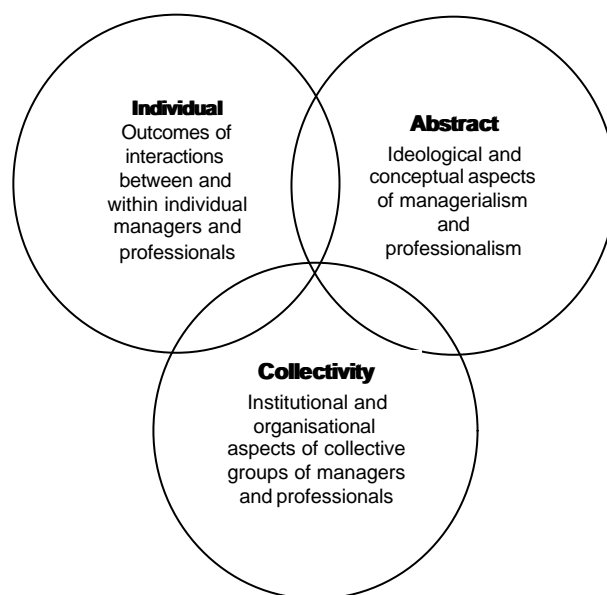


Figure 1: a three-stage analytical model of professional-managerial interactions

This model incorporates first the individual outcome(s) of professional-managerial interactions, which the authors argue will vary between and even within individual professions and managers. The individual dimension of analysis will reflect issues of changing identity, as well as job titles, tasks

and career paths. The second dimension is concerned with institutional and organisational dimensions of social groupings around managerialism and professionalism. It has as its emphasis the social capital underpinning the coherence and cohesiveness of both groups. The final dimension is the abstract, which examines conceptual and ideological efforts to define 'professionalism' and 'managerialism'.

This model is useful in the context of the relationship between 'individual' and 'collectivist' approaches and is central to the shift in power that has resulted from the introduction of new managerialism.

The implications of new managerialism for Higher Education

New managerialism seems a rational solution to calls for greater efficiency and public accountability. In particular, it has led to the increased use of performance management as a tool for setting and monitoring goals. This approach is often simplified as, "what gets measured gets done", a simplification which captures the dynamic, objective and transparent philosophy of the paradigm. However, new managerialism remains problematic: it is frequently attacked through the corollary of the simplification, which is that what does not get measured gets neglected (Blalock 1999).

This is particularly important given the complex nature of education, and the argument that many measures are superficial and over-simplistic. The choice of measures to be employed is often made by management — or, at the least, passed on from funding councils via management. This has left some lecturers feeling that the most important elements of their work must now be neglected in order to demonstrate that less important but more visible measures have been met.

However, in spite of such developments, it can be argued that Higher Education has maintained a degree of academic autonomy, particularly when compared to the centralist thrust that has been described in schools (Fergusson 1994). However, the use of central funding to promote a competitive and expansionist market in Further and Higher Education radically altered the culture of

management in many institutions. This so-called agenda of "modernisation" for higher education could be seen in turn as being part of a wider debate around performance and quality. Performance indicators provided management with both a technology and a "rational" justification for exerting increased bureaucratic control (Kirkpatrick & Lucio 1995).

Nonetheless, it has become clear that managerial power to define the content and operational goals of professional work has been increased (Hoggett 1991). For example, policy makers have argued that Universities had, in effect, become playgrounds for self-indulgent and inward-looking cliques rather than engine rooms for a post-industrial economy. Consequently, there was a greater formalisation of tasks and routines, the specialisation of roles and increasing hierarchy, more standardisation and simplification of tasks, and clearer and more objective target setting.

The strategic management of pedagogy

Further governmental policies that were intended to enhance the quality of Higher Education have added to the process of centralisation described above. In particular, pedagogy, once purely the concern of the academics directly involved in course delivery, has now become an issue for strategy. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) has linked elements of University funding to the creation and implementation of teaching and learning strategies. The consequence of this is that, in many institutions, pedagogy has been placed in the hands of strategic management for the first time.

In line with other trends towards centralisation, the establishment of such strategies seems likely to promote conformity in order to establish common standards. Moreover, the choice of pedagogic approach has become a matter of strategy rather than tactics. In order to recruit non-traditional students (a priority, given HEFCE's access funding and the importance of new student markets), approaches with vocational relevance such as situated learning and problem-based learning are being emphasised.

The implication of this development is that lecturers' primary tactic for coping with increasing student numbers is being taken out of their control. Although some degree of latitude does remain, the choice of teaching techniques is becoming constrained by the decisions of senior management.

The development of pedagogy

Traditionally, lecturers have enjoyed considerable autonomy in their approach to teaching, with pedagogy viewed as part of the remit of domain experts. However, recent years have seen a marked increase in participation in H.E., resulting from ongoing governmental intervention (Daniel 1998). In addition to the introduction of teaching and learning strategies, the government has sought to justify its policies with pedagogic recommendations for Universities. With increased participation combined with a steadily falling unit of resource, lecturers have had to adopt new pedagogical approaches in order to maintain the quality of their courses, such as resource-based learning (Dearing 1997).

However, changes in pedagogy are nothing new. From the 1960s onwards, Behaviourist psychology sought to place traditional didactic teaching techniques into a more scientific framework (Skinner 1950). The approach had considerable impact, particularly through the Instructional Design movement in America (e.g. Gagné 1977). However, recent years have seen a marked reaction against Behaviourism, turning instead towards Constructivist principles and techniques (e.g. Mayer 1996). In particular, the advent of communication and information technologies has proved to be a significant catalyst for the adoption of Social Constructivism as a guiding principle for Higher Education (e.g. Laurillard 1993). Inherent in such approaches is the change in role for the lecturer, from "the sage on the stage" to the "guide on the side" (Harasim *et al*, 1995).

What is new is the change in the locus of control for this evolutionary process. Whilst earlier developments were driven by educational and psychological research, recent changes have been instigated through government policy. This has resulted in the agenda for professional development and

practice becoming the concern of senior management, as opposed to lecturers or professional developers with background and expertise in these areas (Smith & Oliver 2000). The trend has been to move pedagogy out of the domain of professionalism and into the realm of policy.

A fundamental power shift has resulted from these changes. The traditional role of the lecturer as the authoritative source of knowledge has been eroded. The adoption of a philosophy that values the construction and critiquing of perspectives has placed the learner on a more equal footing as a discriminating consumer of opinion. In more radical revisions of the educational context, lecturers have adopted a subservient role, acting as a facilitator of students' independent learning, in marked contrast to their traditional role as a director and assessor of learning.

A benchmarking tool for the locus of control

It is possible to devise a benchmarking tool that allows comparisons to be drawn, both between institutions and within the same institution over a period of time. This tool requires the locus of control for a series of issues to be mapped, allowing comparisons to be made (Table 1).

The use of this tool will be illustrated in the next section, where it will be applied to a case study of curriculum re-development.

A case study: from traditional teaching to distance learning

An existing MBA programme became the focus of discussions between University A and a governmental initiative in another country which wanted to access distance learning courses in Business. This set in motion the development of a pilot distance course, based on the existing face-to-face offering.

The programme involved open learning materials that were run in conjunction with traditional workshops. When the decision was made to re-develop this course in a distance learning format, management gave the tutors the task of supplementing the written text with

	Student	Lecturer	Management
Choice of pedagogy			
Judging lecturers' performance			
Focus of learning process			
Development of content			
Design of syllabus			
Strategic development of course			

Table 1: The benchmarking tool

learning technology. There were clear financial constraints in place. The management team was clearly reluctant to commit further funds to a course that was yet to generate income, and which had already received funding.

Only two tutors had any experience with using learning technology. Consequently, they agreed very quickly that it was necessary to adopt a team-based approach. If students experienced materials from different tutors, they could be quick to complain about any differences in the standards or format. A shared approach would also encourage consistency, allow economies of scale through the development and re-use of templates, and encourage the less able tutors to learn new skills from their more experienced colleagues.

To meet the tight deadlines, it was decided that the first two subjects to be authored would be those taught by the most experienced tutors. This would also allow the more experienced members to overcome potential problems with the technology and cascade their experiences through to the remaining team members six months later, when the students moved on to the next two subjects. WebCT (WebCT, 2000) was selected as the medium for delivery for several reasons. This package was centrally supported by

University A and the institution's Learning Technologist had considerable experience of supporting staff using this tool. Cost was also a factor, as there were clear expectations from management that the only financial "recompense" would be in terms of staff time release. This made the evaluation of other technologies irrelevant. A clear template was developed, including standardised icons and decisions about the scale of the development work that should be undertaken.

The launch of the programme was delayed, which gave the management team the opportunity to revisit the course materials, including the WebCT site. This led to a discussion between the managers and tutors, which was started by a request for "more" to be added. This made it clear that the management team had no explicit pedagogic goals in mind, although they did set a broad agenda for the development. Of primary importance was the concern that the WebCT course should be viewed as being "value for money". The question, "What do I get for my [fees] if I am a student logging on?" seemed paramount. Their pedagogic agenda focused on supplementing this text with "interactivity", although no definition or clear examples of this were given. This agenda, which is reminiscent of the self-study, drill-and-practice didactic style of teaching (cf. Gagné 1977)

stood in marked contrast to the experiential, collaborative pedagogy that the team sought to adopt.

An additional tension arose from the management team's inspection of U.K. Open University (OU) sites. These were viewed as a standard against which the tutor's work would be judged, even though the OU's materials would have been produced by a team of experts over a period of five years. Moreover, such courses can be argued to be less, not more, efficient if quality is to be maintained. Laurillard's course appraisal model (2000) suggests that converting 40% of a course's material to an online format will increase staff time by 50% during the course and production time by 120%. What was being requested was material that was superficially similar to that of the OU, but which actually embodied a radically different pedagogic model. Moreover, the additional resources required to do justice to such a development were clearly not forthcoming; this is not altogether surprising, given that "senior management underestimate the full cost of IT" (Laurillard 2000).

Interestingly, however, management's demands were subverted by the team involved. The tutors expanded their site by extending the templates for materials to include colour co-ordination, and by adding a series of FAQs, interactive bulletin board suggestions and a "hotlinks" listing. A subsequent review of the site by the management team judged this to be satisfactory, in spite of the fact that the pedagogy and teaching aims remained unchanged.

This represents a classic example of performance goals being set and monitored without a full appreciation of their implications. The management team were not in a position to devise or assess appropriate performance management criteria, yet took on this role in order to link policy with practice. This decision represented a threat to the professionalism of the tutors involved. In response, they sought to maintain their choice of pedagogy by limiting changes to the superficial elements (style, volume of material, etc.) on which the management team was basing its decisions.

Tables 2 and 3 on page 17 use the analytical method outlined above to analyse the changes in responsibility that emerged in this case.

On this revised model, the tutors only maintain sole responsibility for two activities out of seven; other areas of responsibility are either reduced or removed. Judgement about the tutors' performance during development was based on a set of criteria that were maintained in the face of criticism, although some of these were eventually by-passed by the tutors involved. The degree of control held by tutors has been reduced by giving greater autonomy to the students.

An extension of the case

Importantly, two categories which remain under the lecturers' control are challenged by the recommendations of the Dearing report (1997). This noted the high costs of developing material and advocated the re-use of existing materials in order to improve cost-effectiveness. Also, global competition between H.E. institutions has led to suggestions that modularisation should be increased so that potential students can create customised courses.

Finally, the issue of style must be considered. Many institutions are now taking an increased interest in establishing and controlling their corporate identity, and have reflected this in the adoption of house styles for web-based materials. This reflects further centralisation within institutions, and if implemented in the case above would remove another creative aspect of curriculum development.

If the model described here were to be adopted, it would reduce the control of the lecturer still further, as illustrated in Table 4. (Note that a further category of stakeholder has been added here, representing the shift from internal responsibility to an outside source.)

In summary, the development of a more competitive model, driven by the market, adopting a student-centred approach and implemented under the paradigm of new managerialism would remove almost all responsibility from lecturers. This would have the effect of reducing their status to that of teaching assistants. Although such a model

	Student	Tutor	Management
Choice of pedagogy		Reflects tutors' expertise	
Judging lecturers' performance	Student feedback forms	Self-assessment based on feedback	
Focus of learning process	Some student-centred activities	Mainly tutor-led	
Development of content		Tutors' responsibility	
Creation of presentational style		Tutors' responsibility	
Design of syllabus		Tutors' responsibility	
Strategic development of course			Quality audit

Table 2: the traditionally-taught course

	Student	Tutor	Learning Technologist	Management
Choice of pedagogy		Subverted management requests to maintain own model		Specified teaching via web pages, attempted to specify model
Judging lecturers' performance	Student feedback forms			Performance management scheme
Focus of learning process	Student-centred	Tutor as facilitator		
Development of content		Shared responsibility	Shared responsibility	
Creation of presentational style		Tutors' responsibility		
Design of syllabus		Tutors' responsibility		
Strategic development of course				Quality audit

Table 3: the distance learning course

has not been fully implemented in the case described above, it is important to recognise that such a model represents the logical extension of the policies and contextual developments described above.

Discussion

This case illustrates the disempowerment of lecturers. Most of the control has been passed to management, with smaller amounts being given to other stakeholders such as students or Learning Technologists. However, for all areas of responsibility in this case, the shift in power is away from the tutors.

The effect of this is radically to alter lecturers' concept of their role, which poses a challenge to those in the profession. "Long established conceptions of roles, duties, rights and responsibilities are deconstructed in the face of resentment, resistance, low morale and scepticism. The least amenable leave or retire,

the most mouldable enter at the bottom of the profession" (Ferguson 1994). However, as the following quote illustrates, attempts to reject new managerialism at this stage would probably be naïve.

In teaching... as sceptical teachers submit to force majeure... they come gradually to live with and be imbued by the logic of new roles, new tasks, new functions, and in the end to absorb partial redefinitions of their professional selves. As redefinition takes hold, it is likely to be deep rooted and long lived. The greatest source of resistance will have departed, redefinitions will not be easily undone, and as young recruits who never knew anything different move up in the hierarchy, the consolidation of the new regime embeds. (Ferguson 1994, 113)

Other authors draw similar conclusions:

Increased emphasis of evaluation of work performance and greater role for the knowledge elite have been identified as crucial elements in the increased stratification of

	Student	Tutor	Learning Technologist	Content Provider	Management
Choice of pedagogy					Specified teaching via web pages
Judging lecturers' performance	Student feedback forms				Performance management scheme
Focus of learning process	Student-centred	Teacher as facilitator			
Development of content			Responsibility for implementing materials	Responsible for development	
Creation of presentational style					Central house style imposed
Design of syllabus	Students' choice				
Strategic development of course				Quality audit	

Table 4: an extension of the course

professions. Combined with the impact of managerialism in terms of increasing both the management components of all professional roles and the significance of managerial professionals, the direction would appear towards greater fragmentation. (Exworth & Halford 1999)

Such a counter-development is unlikely to occur in the current political climate. In fact, Exworth & Halford conclude that managerialism will be accepted as a key government strategy for implementation of local policy, taking precedence over the influence of the market. Within H.E., this would imply increased centralisation, perhaps even at the expense of notion of student as customer.

In terms of the three-part model illustrated in Figure 1, all this points to a clear shift in power from the individualism of professional lecturers to a collective control implemented through new managerialism as shown in Figure 2. Interestingly, another governmental policy may represent a challenge to this development. The Dearing report (1997) proposed the creation of a professional body for lecturers. This is currently being implemented as the Institute for Learning and Teaching (ILT). Although this might appear as another instance of centralisation, an alternative would be to value and support the individualism of its members, adopting an emergent model of professional practice rather than a policy-

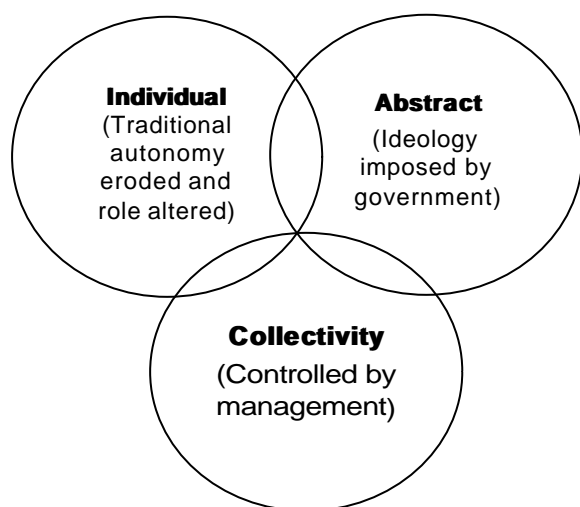


Figure 2: The shift in control resulting from the introduction of new managerialism

driven one. This would provide individual lecturers with a new rationale for their practice, based on a mutually agreed ideology as shown in Figure 3).

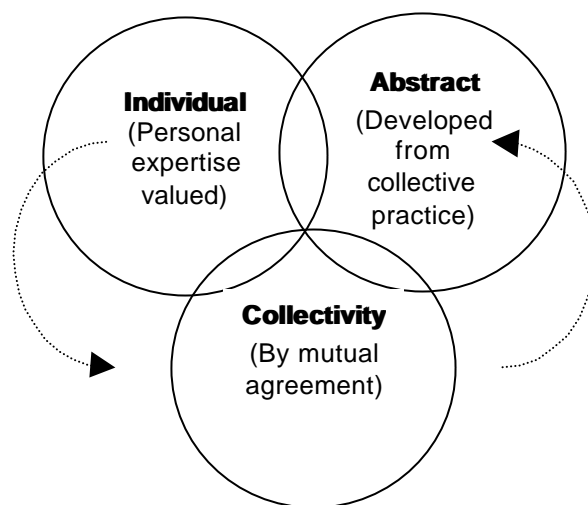


Figure 3: A potential alternative based on emergent models of professionalism

It seems likely (at least in the short term) that both models will exist. This will highlight the tension in government policy between centralisation and the need for collectivity. One of the tasks that will need to be addressed by the ILT is to establish what practice currently means for lecturers. As illustrated in the case above, style, format and presentation are currently part of curriculum design, yet these aspects of marketing are unlikely to be something of which lecturers have experience. Additionally, if Dearing's recommendations about an increase in resource-based learning are implemented, curriculum development may become as important (or more important) than teaching for many lecturers. Such changes clearly illustrate redefinition of roles described by Ferguson, above.

In summary, it seems that the influence of new managerialism is set to increase. What remains to be seen is the extent to which this can be driven by practitioners, rather than by centralised authority.

Improbable as this is in a period of political convergence, managerialism may turn out to be the most enduring legacy of the reforms. The combination of an occupational group unconfident of how far it can take its resistance without fragmenting, and a

government too weakened to achieve its more radical political objectives leaves open the way for dilute reforms and creeping managerialism capable of surviving any seriously envisageable political swings (Ferguson 1994).

Conclusions

The process of empowerment is important, but complex. Giving power to one stakeholder implicitly removes it from another. New governmental priorities have caused significant changes in Higher Education, particularly in the relationship between lecturers and their managers. This has led to a marked decrease in their ability to control their practice and working environment. The development of student-centred pedagogy, compounded by the catalytic effect of new technology, has redefined their role still further.

Consequently, traditional areas of authority have been taken away from the lecturer and given to other stakeholders. This shift has been identified through the development of simple analytical tools that map the responsibilities of stakeholders against tasks. In recognition of the changing role of lecturers, new areas of responsibility have been identified. However, it remains unclear whether these fall within the lecturers' existing expertise, or if they represent an additional threat to autonomy by requiring widespread re-training.

Are these changes sustainable in the long term? At a superficial level, it would seem that self-directed learning should require less support from expensive experts such as lecturers. However, closer inspection highlights the fact that the costs are likely to be higher than many managers realise (Laurillard 2000). Although individual contact time might be reduced, the nature of the support (addressing individuals' problems) means that this approach may well prove less efficient for large cohorts (Conole & Oliver 1998).

The establishment of the ILT also poses a dilemma in terms of control: will the establishment of a common professional body act as a driver for conformity, or will it give credibility to the diversity of its constituency?

It seems likely that the issue of who should dictate pedagogy – lecturers or managers – will be reflected in the development of the ILT.

Empowerment is an important process, and should remain on the agenda of managers in Higher Education. In this paper we have argued that the negative impact of such changes must also be recognised. In order to give power to one group, it must be taken from another; for example, in this context, the autonomy of the lecturer has been eroded as the locus of control has moved higher up a centralised administrative structure.

In the current context, changes in management policy and in pedagogy have combined to disenfranchise lecturers systematically, posing a serious threat to the future the profession. Unless "creeping managerialism" (Ferguson 1994) is recognised and addressed, the lecturing profession will inevitably find itself in crisis.

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