Transformation of University Management: Co-evolving Collegial and Managerial Values

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Abstract

This thesis explores some of the processes involved in the transformation of a university as it moved from a conventional collegial style of decision-making towards a more corporate one. Much of the mainstream literature in higher education management tends to polarise these styles as ideological opposites and as either good or bad.

The themes which arise in this work include the tension which exists between collegial and managerial values, co-evolution of these values through processes of interaction within the organisation and the modulation of these processes by changing power relations.

For centuries, universities were administered by academics who reached senior positions following election by their colleagues and who behaved as 'first among equals'. Ideally, the community of scholars made progress following decisions which were reached by consensus. While such processes were appropriate in times when stability, budgetary certainty and the absence of competition prevailed, their shortcomings became increasingly obvious in the past quarter-century when the external environment for universities became progressively more hostile and competitive. Universities responded to the new requirements for accountability, revenue generation and competitive positioning within a market system by reforming their approach to many aspects of the running of their organisations.

I argue that in importing a way of thinking which is largely based on cybernetic control systems, inadequate account has been taken of the importance of human interaction in the generation of strategy. While mention is made in the mainstream higher education management literature of the importance of collegial processes in implementing strategy at the academic coalface, and regret is expressed for the 'lost art of conversation', there has been little previously written about the microscopic details of the daily interaction which constitute strategising in universities. My

argument is based on a series of reflexive narratives which describe my experience of organisational change and on a study of relevant literature. In addition to mainstream literature on higher education management, I have drawn on the work of Stacey, Griffin and Shaw and their perspective of complex responsive processes of relating as a way of understanding how organisations change.

I conclude that collegial and managerial values can only evolve through processes of interaction between participants in university life and that this interaction often will involve tension, anxiety and conflict. I further conclude that the conversations which constitute such interaction can be facilitated by those with the power to do so, to provide real opportunity for the emergence of novelty.

Acknowledgments

Tir-na-nOg is the land of the ever young and is an island visited by various figures in Irish mythology, most notably by Oisin and his muse, Niamh. It is a place where eternal youth and beauty reign. Here, music, strength, life and all pleasurable pursuits came together in a single place. Few people get the chance to visit Tir na nOg in middle age and have an opportunity to dispute the notion that youth is always wasted on the young. Re-entering formal education, having been around the track of life a few times, and doing so entirely out of curiosity, has been a truly exhilarating experience.

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Introduction

My research question concerns the values of collegiality and managerialism and how they are evolving together in the contemporary university. This interest was initially provoked by my experiences as dean of a faculty for six years, during which I attempted to implement an ambitious change agenda and it was amplified as the university itself moved into a period of rapid transformation. I was involved in a number of substantial change projects and these experiences and my observations on them form the basis of the research.

Collegiality is a tradition in university administration which is based on the ideals of collaboration, debate, consensus and democracy, which has often included the appointment of senior university administrators following election by their faculty colleagues. Collegial approaches are idealized by many in university communities, without acknowledging that this tradition often allowed for a range of power plays, influence and the techniques of the old boys club by those with superior political skills. It also frequently resulted in slow decision-making, stalemate or decisions which were never implemented. In the past quarter-century managerial styles have become dominant and these are characterized by strategic focus, target setting, executive decision-making and performance review. This change has resulted in dramatic changes in power relations and considerable disquiet in university communities.

My observations are made at a pivotal period in the life of one university when a dramatic change in power relations takes place with the appointment (as opposed to election) of a new President. A more centralized approach to managing the affairs of the university quickly emerges and this is followed by the development of a new strategic plan and a radical re-structuring of the entire organisation. These changes result in some disaffection and conflict and I argue that this is substantially about the dominance of the new managerial values which are contrasted with a 'golden age' of collegial life which may never have existed. While there has undoubtedly been a move towards managerial approaches, my observations suggest that collegial values still exist and that acknowledgement of their continued existence in tension

with managerial values is important for university leaders. I argue that the co-evolution of these values within the university is dependent on re-discovering what McCaffery (2004) calls the lost art of conversation. My research is predominantly about the microscopic daily experience of the role of conversation as a primary vehicle for assisting with the strategic advance of one university. I have tried to consciously avoid polarizing the values of managerialism and collegiality by working constantly with them both in tension. If values are, as Joas (2000) puts it, fundamental aspects of self, represent voluntary compulsions to choose one action over another and arise in intense interactive experiences, then I argue that as we struggle for better ways of going on together in the university, that this process of interaction is crucial. If such processes are not adequately attended to, then my observations coincide with others in the literature to suggest the outcome will be disaffection, anomie and the dissipation of effort into point-scoring.

The Projects

Project 1 is a description of a key experience during my deanship, which I now understand as representing the end of an era in my university. Some of the research questions which guide my enquiry begin to emerge.

Project 2 is a description of my attempts to establish a new research institute at the university and how I utilize a number of unusual methods to try to engage my new colleagues in dialogue to advance the project.

Project 3 is an exploration of the experience of being involved in a major re-structuring exercise in the university and its effects on those involved. The tensions between collegial and managerial approaches and the resultant conflict become evident.

Project 4 concerns my involvement in a project to secure new infrastructure for science in the university. I explore further changes in power relations and consolidate my thinking on the importance of communication and dialogue.

Synopsis and Critical Appraisal: The Synopsis draws together the key themes (power relations, values and dialogue) which have emerged in the earlier projects. My argument is that the values of collegiality and managerialism are in a process of co-evolution, in tension with one another and that this evolutionary process depends on the quality of the conversations which constitute it. I argue that those in leadership positions must use some of their recently acquired powers to enable such conversation to take place.

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1 Not Just Another Day at the Office

I. Introduction

One morning in January of 2002 I opened a meeting of the executive committee of the faculty. I was in the final six months of a six-year term as dean and I was feeling reasonably pleased with the progress which had been made during the six years. We had begun to implement a radically new curriculum, we had recruited some high flyers into the faculty, I had raised €42 million for a new school, which would be ready for occupation within a few months and we had agreed a five-year strategic plan. We were entering the final stages of agreement on what organisational structures would be appropriate for achievement of the mission and vision I had so proudly shepherded through the Faculty, following our first ever 'away-day' with a man from IBM consulting. I was regarded as an innovator in the university and had been asked to give presentations to other Faculty Executive committees on certain aspects of management and administration. The former President of the university described me, in a referee's report to support a job application, as 'the best of the deans'.

The first item on the agenda for the January meeting of the Executive Committee was the proposal on structural change. The proposals had been carefully prepared by a small sub-committee under my chairmanship; we had presented them to the senior officers in the university and had their approval. I had presented them at two lunchtime seminars to all the staff in the faculty with the University Registrar (Deputy President) in attendance so that issues relating to general university policy could be addressed. I had made some minor amendments to the proposals following these lunchtime meetings and the amended proposals were now to be discussed by the Executive Committee prior to being put on the agenda for a full faculty meeting.

What followed was one of the most difficult and humiliating episodes of my life. It became clear that a spokesman had been appointed; Kevin was the senior professor in the faculty who had taught me as an undergraduate and had been one of the advisors on my PhD project. Kevin proceeded to point out to me that there was profound unhappiness in the Faculty with the way the structures debate had been handled, that there had been nothing like the amount of consultation required for such a major change, that it was completely unacceptable for proposals to be given to the senior administration in the university without local discussion, that there was widespread anxiety in the faculty about career structures, roles and responsibilities, academic leadership and an assorted range of other matters. As this polemic was delivered, it became clear to me that this was a highly orchestrated event and that I had seriously misjudged the mood of the faculty. Kevin had been selected, or selected himself, to make these points publicly. It was also significant that this was an ambush since I was accustomed to colleagues coming to visit to talk about policy issues on which there were misgivings. I quickly realised that I (and the sub-committee) was in serious difficulty. I acknowledged the fact that there was unhappiness about the proposals and tried to move the discussion on to what we might do next to advance the debate. Kevin came back three more times to re-iterate his points in the classic impersonal academic style, which everyone recognised as highly personal. I later described it as kicking the corpse three more times to make sure that it was dead. Eventually we agreed that a great deal more consultation was required and that I would try to meet everyone in the faculty to discuss the proposals. Somehow I got through the remaining items on the agenda and brought the meeting to a close.

I left the building and went to a coffee shop on the street to reflect on my predicament. I did not keep a journal at that time so I can't recall with any accuracy the thoughts that crossed my mind. When I tell this story in company now, I say that I sulked for an hour or so and eventually decided that the only thing I was sure of was that I had to go and make my peace with Kevin. I found him in his laboratory and we had a short conversation. I said that I felt I had to start to try to salvage this process and that I needed to see him first. I knew that

despite what had just happened, Kevin was a generous man who had spent most of his career working seven-day weeks for our school. It was a somewhat faltering conversation, but he agreed that we had to move forward and that he would help in any way that he could. I felt relieved that I had, at least, prevented the start of a personal feud and had made the first step towards resolving the structures problem.

I have reflected on this episode for the past couple of years and tried to understand how it happened. I was invited to speak at a number of seminars within the university on change management and I told this story as part of my presentation. I have been deeply impressed by the positive reception it has had from colleagues and have wondered why it has had this effect. On one occasion, I met the Professor of Equality Studies in the car park afterwards (a formidable woman in her own right) who said that she found it extraordinary to hear a man, in a position of authority, admit to any vulnerability. Some months later I sent a draft of a paper on change management, in response to an invitation from the organisers of a meeting of the European Universities Association, which included this story with a few reflections. I got an email by return asking if it would be possible to use the paper for some organisational development work that was being done with a German DIY chain which was setting up in Poland. This astounded me. What could my experiences in a university have to do with the concerns of a retail organisation in Eastern Europe? I believe that a rigorous analysis of this episode, using approaches of which I have been totally unaware until recently, could help me understand better what happened and the reactions of those who have heard me tell the story. It could also help position me to critically evaluate the ways in which universities are managed.

I now believe that that January day was the day when my faith in systems thinking began to falter, even though I did not realise it at the time. Of course, if I had any understanding of what systems thinking was, it was a rudimentary one. My route to becoming a passive systems thinker was not a conventional one and started with enlisting for some management training prior to taking on the role of dean. My career to that point had followed a fairly classical pattern but I decided to take some management training before taking on the role of dean.

I obtained my certificate in management from the Open University over a three year period by distance learning and studied modules called 'The Effective Manager', 'Accounting for non-financial Managers' and 'Marketing'. For someone coming from a background of four years in private practice and an academic career which involved the standard mix of teaching, research and 'administration', these provided a very helpful framework for helping me to understand my life in a large organisation. I came across terms like organisational culture, leadership development, change management and a plethora of others which left me feeling like I knew something about the job I was about to embark on. I knew that I was expected to develop plans, put appropriate structures in place and strengthen the research culture, all based on my vision of where the faculty should be at the end of my term.

Within six weeks of taking up my post I had received a highly critical report on the Faculty from an external accreditation board which provided me with an official manifesto and I set about managing change with some enthusiasm. Not only had I the tools to be a change manager, I had an external peer review of our school, which would provide all the prompts I needed to make a difference.

II.   Higher Education Management – The Landscape

It is important to describe the university as an organisation at that time (mid 1990's). It was and is the largest university in Ireland with a wide range of faculties and disciplines. It was run at that time along very traditional lines. The President was elected by the Governing Authority at the end of an intensely political process, much business was processed by committees, deans were elected by their faculties, decision-making was a tortuous process and change happened at a rate which was barely perceptible.

Cohen and March describe the American university

> as a prototypic organised anarchy. It does not know what it is doing. Its
> goals are either vague or in dispute. Its technology is familiar but not
> understood. Its major participants wander in and out of the organisation.

These factors……..do make it [the university] a problem to describe, understand and lead. (Cohen and March, 1986, p3)

Dobson and McNay describe the collegial academy from a British perspective:

……… (it represents) the ideal of a past golden age of self-regulating academics working in the same place but independently and autonomously, indulged as elite intellectuals by the state, somewhat akin to state patronage of arts activities as an essential civilising influence in a civilised society…..Any leader here has to travel carefully; people want a right to be consulted and are content without a regular vote, provided they can operate a veto when management steps out of line'. (Dobson and McNay, 1996)

Cohen and March (1986, p121) also describe the process of decision-making in universities as more of a status certifying experience for those involved than true decision making; most people in a college are most of the time less concerned with the content of a decision than they are with eliciting an acknowledgement of their importance within the community.

Collegiality is to be found in its most undiluted form in the academic *demos* of Oxford and Cambridge, institutions which have no lay-member dominated council or board of governors, being universities where the academics are self-governing and, at least in the constituent colleges, unhierarchical (Warner and Palfreyman, 1996, p18). The culture is one where the individual academic makes choices about the way courses are taught, reflects privately on the quality of the teaching and selects a research area which reflects the interests and passion of the individual. Loyalty is often much greater to the discipline than to the organisation; the self-image of the individual academic is based on 'reputation' i.e. national or international standing, which in turn depends on the quality of published work, invitations to speak at conferences and numbers of graduate students. Many academics see the function of the university as providing the resources of time, support staff, library facilities, laboratory space and equipment to further their career. It is increasingly difficult to persuade staff

to take on administrative positions such as headship of department, because it is seen as being a three-year term of drudgery, which takes one away from the core activities of research and teaching. Despite some attempts to re-evaluate priorities in universities (Boyer, 1997), promotions procedures reward research excellence in most universities and it is widely believed that promotions committees pay only lip service to contributions made in teaching and administration. Those who are really successful and win large amounts of research funding become virtually independent of the university, spend much of their time travelling to international meetings, do very little teaching, if any, and are frequently approached by rival institutions which try to entice them away with offers of higher salaries, less teaching, more laboratory space and a larger equipment budget.

Managing such an organisation presents many challenges. The academic 'employees' are highly talented individuals who have worked extremely hard at undergraduate, postgraduate and post-doctoral level to achieve sufficient standing to get a full-time post in a university. Their career advancement is determined by their continued success in winning research funds, publishing in good journals and building a research team which has sufficient critical mass to have international impact. Successful research groups can wield very significant power in a university; if they are lured away to another organisation it can have a major impact on the financial health of the organisation, since formula funding depends in large measure on research success. If they indicate that they are being wooed by another college, it can have the effect of siphoning resources away from other less successful parts of the organisation.

Houck likened the modern university to

> a feudal society in which departments are separate feudal kingdoms, chairs hold kingships and full professors are landed barons controlling large and small tracts of intellectual geography. Rigid class distinctions prevail in this society with a hierarchy of bishops and archbishops (deans and vice-presidents). The president is akin to the pope and is aloof, distant, often

seen speaking and waving from distant podiums. (Houck, cited by Crowley, 1994, p 135)

While I assume this description is primarily whimsical, it has pointed me towards re-reading Elias (1939) on the figurations of power in medieval Europe. The centripetal forces which led to the atomisation of power, and the predominance of individualism as a driving force in the university resemble in some ways the feudal societies of France, where a large number of small social units competed for the means to social power. In the university social power is established at the individual and team level by peer review outside the institution, while the achievements which lead to one's reputation are dependent on maintaining or developing an empire within the host institution. The rise of managerialism (see below) has some parallels with the monopolisation of power as described by Elias (1939, p 263-5). While the monopoly does not now derive from power struggles between the constituent parts of the organisation, but more usually from governmental edict, the outcome is concentration of budgetary and decision making power in the hands of a president and senior management team. The academic barons and kings can be expected to resent this power and to make attempts to resist and thwart it.

There have been many changes in the way universities are managed over the past twenty-five years. Birnbaum (2001) describes the ways in which the American university system has had serial exposure to a range of management fads including Planned Programme Budgeting System, Management by Objectives, Zero-based Budgeting, Strategic Planning, Benchmarking, Total Quality Management, and Business Process Re-engineering. He also describes the environmental factors (especially state and federal influence) and the psychological processes that encourage university managers to adopt fads and even to support them as they fail. While most fads create significant educational and organisational problems, Birnbaum describes them as a source of good ideas which can be of great value to universities.

In the UK the commitment of the Conservative Government to reducing public expenditure resulted in stringent cuts in funding for the university sector from

1981 and this had the effect of forcing universities to adopt a more proactive approach in determining their own futures (Thomas, 1996) and to take more cognizance of the external environment. Pressure was exerted by the Secretary of State for Education through the University Grants Committee which forced universities to submit detailed planning documents, complete with financial forecasts, in order to describe their own futures. Over the succeeding two decades the result has been a very significant move towards what is described, with some disdain within the academy, as 'managerialism'. This can be described as a move away from committee based systems of making decisions to a system of central decision making, responding to external pressures (especially from Government, as the paymaster), a diminution of the powers of academic councils and senates and responses to national accountability measures which require major institutional effort to ensure the compliance on which continued funding depends.

In Ireland, the universities continued to operate in traditional ways throughout the 1990's. However, this was accompanied by the so-called Celtic Tiger boom in the economy, when Ireland experienced unprecedented growth rates. This growth was primarily fuelled by the location of foreign manufacturing companies attracted by low corporation tax rates, a steady supply of young well-educated workers at reasonable wage rates and ready access to European markets. However, it was soon realised that competition from the developing world and increasing wage costs would threaten Ireland's competitiveness; there was increasing talk in political circles about developing a knowledge based economy. The universities were nudged towards developing a planning culture by legislative means and by the influence of a major US donor who invested in excess of €750 million in the Irish university sector over a 10 year period. In addition, unprecedented amounts of research funding became available to universities on a competitive basis from the mid 1990's. Successful bids for this funding were absolutely contingent on linkage to detailed institutional strategic plans and demonstrable contributions to Irish society.

I was elected as dean in 1996; I had my certificate in management from the Open University, I was enthusiastic and ambitious for my school and set about

implementing a change agenda. Many of the projects went well and I believe I used the traditional committee systems to reasonable, if somewhat tardy effect. For example, a review of our curriculum took two and a half years before agreement was reached and this involved many reverses, vetoes and alternative proposals. For as long as I honoured the traditional approaches to management, while I behaved as 'first among equals' rather than executive officer of the faculty, my colleagues were prepared to collaborate with me. It was when they sensed a move to 'managerialism' that they became intolerant and I have believed that this was the explanation for the boardroom nightmare I describe above. Since then I have read more widely and I have decided to engage in research on organisational change which includes perspectives on complex responsive processes of relating (Stacey, 2003, p408-423). I now believe some rather different analyses of my experience are possible.

III Power

The administrator in my office frequently remarked on how uptight I was in advance of meetings of the executive committee. She was right; I felt a great deal of anxiety before these meetings and when they were over I usually went for a coffee on my own to 'come down' from the anxiety peak I had felt. A good part of my anxiety had to do with feeling that I had to be control, that the success of these meetings depended on my carefully structuring the agenda, being on top of my brief, doing the right political work on the corridors and in offices, and chairing the meeting towards decisions (as prescribed in my management training). The event I have described fulfilled my worst nightmare. I was chairing the meeting ('in control') and yet for me the meeting was out of control. I had failed to understand the depth of feeling in the Faculty about what I was proposing and my colleagues were now attacking me in a way which made me acutely uncomfortable; a if I were to find a label for the way I felt, I think shame would be the best word I could use. When people commented on my career successes, I often responded that it was only a question of time before I got 'found out'. The fateful day seemed to have arrived. The temptation to somehow get to the end of the meeting and then quietly forget the whole business was very strong (after all I had chalked up significant successes already

and the end of my term was only a matter of months away). Despite the acute physical and emotional discomfort I felt, I couldn't bear to give up on this particular quest. There were too many things wrong; the faculty was, in many ways, an administrative mess.

The eventual approach I took to dealing with the impasse I found myself in was one that comes easily to me; I accepted personal responsibility for what had happened (as opposed to sharing the responsibility with my planning committee) and invited suggestions as to what might be done next. The minutes of that meeting record, in their anodyne way, that it was agreed that a great deal of further consultation was required and the proposals under consideration would provide the basis for the next stage of the debate. Perhaps I regained some control of the meeting by taking the blame for what had happened and we did in fact, agree what the next stage might be. It seemed to point to, or perhaps be a symptom of, the paradox to which Stacey (2003, p 391) refers, of being in control and not in control at the same time. Was I, in any sense, in control in the faculty or was I merely being tolerated by my colleagues up to the point where I was seen to be adopting an unacceptably 'managerial' stance, which threatened the 'small tracts of intellectual geography' in the hands of the 'landed barons'. Since my introduction to the work of Stacey and his colleagues, my anxiety levels about such events are less. I no longer feel the need to have all the answers, to have prepared for every possible eventuality, to predict how certain personalities are going to react to certain ideas and I welcome conversational turns which are completely unexpected.

Elias and Scotson's (1994) perspectives on 'the established and outsiders' as a result of the work in the Winston Parva community provides some additional illumination of what was happening in advance of the meeting. It was clear that as dean, I was in a position of some authority, but this was being contested for reasons which I enquire into below. I heard reports of conversations taking place between individuals who rarely had anything to say to one another. I now believe that our planning committee was perceived to be in some kind of 'outsider' position and that others (especially the heads of departments whose territory and status was most likely to be affected) perceived themselves to be

the insiders. This feeling would have been reinforced by the discovery that my planning group had gone to the university administration for approval and support in advance of the discussions with the faculty. In the planning group we talked about the 'heads' as being the problem; they were obsessed with territory and status. A colleague later told me that he had heard heads saying things like 'Who does he think he is, trying to shove this stuff down our throats?'. Rumours, gossip and anxiety were rife in the faculty at the time and some of this had to do with genuine anxiety about the effects of our proposals on career structures and the integrity of subject areas in the curriculum. Elias and Scotson (1994, xxi) describe the situation in Winston Parva as follows:

> Structural characteristics of the developing community of Winston Parva bound two groups to each other in such a way that the members of one of them felt impelled, and had sufficient power resources, to treat those of another group collectively with a measure of contempt, as people less well bred and thus of lower human value, by comparison with themselves.

I believed that the power balance was tipped in my favour; what I was proposing was rational and in conformity with what was the norm in most other schools, I had the support of the university administration and I had survived, apparently unscathed, two outings in the bear-pit of open staff meetings. I now believe that I seriously underestimated the way in which my colleagues would develop moral arguments drawing on the tradition of shared governance and the sanctity of the collegial tradition, the eloquence of their chosen representative and the virtual certainty that the university administration would back down in the event of real trouble emerging. I had the position power associated with being dean of the faculty, however limited that was (and I believed I had altered the perception of what the dean's power was over the five years); however my colleagues knew that they had elected me and that my role was that of 'first among equals'; they did not perceive me as having any executive authority. Soliciting the support of the senior management group in the university was perceived as treachery of the worst kind and the faculty clearly had engaged in a series of private conversations (to which I was not privy) which presumably culminated in a

resolution that 'something's got to be done about this'. This resulted in the selection of Kevin as the most ferocious debater in the faculty to represent their views. I also believe that since I was in the last six months of my tenure as dean, there was a strong feeling that if they could filibuster for long enough, this problem would go away, so my power such as it was, was temporally finite too.

What power did I have during the boardroom encounter? Clearly I was being shown where the limits of my power lay but instead of arguing that there had been lots of consultation, that what I was proposing was the norm in most schools in the English speaking world, that re-structuring in the way I proposed would result in significant administrative savings etc., I accepted that I had misinterpreted the mood of the faculty and invited them to suggest what we might do next. I feel sure my colleagues saw this as the dean rolling over in the face of stern opposition and a good part of me feels that this was the case. However, despite the extreme discomfort I felt in the meeting, I still believed that the faculty was in such an administrative mess that some of the proposals had to be salvaged, even if the departmental amalgamations had to be dropped. I instinctively asked for their suggestions on what we might do next. We agreed on a further round of consultation and eventually the majority of the proposals were agreed at my last faculty meeting. Shaw (2002, p31) in her book on conversation as a key part of organisational change indicates that being able to identify 'what to do next' at the end of any encounter is a useful achievement. However, even though our executive committee did agree to continue with the struggle to find solutions to the issues which had emerged, it still felt very much that it was my problem. I was being given another chance to sit the exam and I certainly did not leave the room feeling that we had agreed to work together in any significantly different way.

There is another aspect to this story. Two of my heads of departments had been in post as head for 17 years at the time of the structures debate. There was profound unhappiness in both departments with the management style; indeed, one of the departments was described by a staff member as an administrative ghetto. Both of the heads concerned had statutory rights to headship of the department until the age of retirement by virtue of their terms of appointment.

Consequently, they could not be removed from these positions without great difficulty. Ironically, both were great teachers, excellent scholars and had demonstrated huge commitment to the school for a very long time but their skills in dealing with people were very poor. Both adopted an authoritarian approach with very little flexibility and this was a source of great frustration to their colleagues. One of them was called Kevin! Thus we were engaged in a structures debate, but there was a topic which could not be mentioned (evident unsuitability of some senior faculty figures for leadership/management roles). How was I to proceed in overcoming this problem? Remember my position; I was elected to administer the affairs of the faculty; not to make decisions about removing senior members of the electorate from office who happened to have statutory rights to age 65 years.

I decided to confide in the President, appraise him of what we were trying to do and ask his help. If we were to go from eight departments to three as I was proposing, it would clearly require some of my colleagues to relinquish their rights and title to headship. I asked the President if he would call the heads in after a faculty meeting and request their co-operation, particularly the heads who had such rights. My colleagues agreed without demur and we went on our way. This occurred in advance of the formal proposals being made to the senior management team or the staff in the faculty.

Two years later, I was told that one of the reasons the structures debate came off the rails was that Kevin had reflected on the encounter with the President and had figured out, without any difficulty, what was going on; that it was an attempt to 'sideline' him. I believe that this provides some additional explanation for the ferocity of the encounter during the meeting. However, it never surfaced in any verbal way. It was not what Stacey (2003, p364-74) would call a legitimate theme to be pursued in that forum. It was probably too difficult to bring up in any forum, even in a private conversation in the culture which existed in the organisation. However, I now believe it was a very powerful shadow theme which was clearly discussed somewhere, since my informant was able to tell me about it two years later. When my deanship finished, Kevin took early retirement and the other head stepped down voluntarily as head of

department and concentrated on teaching and research. The mood in both places is now described as very different. It seems fairly obvious that the timing of these decisions was also an exercise in power differentiation. They had both seen me off the stage before making their respective decisions. Collegiality, complete with the power of veto, was alive and well.

IV The University in 2004

The university has recently appointed a new President who has set out a vision for the university as being research intensive (among the top thirty in Europe), modularisation of all courses by 2005, the need for tough decisions to be made, has spoken in the press about not being in a popularity contest and has made it clear that he 'means business'. In his inaugural lecture, he set out his ambition for the university as being internationally competitive, agenda shaping and fostering excellence in research and teaching.

Within a few months he had instituted many changes including the selection of senior office holders by his own nomination or by competitive processes (rather than election), appointed six vice presidents with a range of portfolios and invited a group of external consultants to review the activities of the university with a view to suggesting priorities and indicating what structural changes were required.

At around this time I met Michael Shiel, a graduate of the D Man programme. After a short conversation, he told me that, in his estimation, I was 'ripe' for involvement in this programme. I found myself reading Stacey, Griffin and Shaw (2000) and booking a place on the 2003 summer meeting hosted by the Complexity and Management Centre. I was attracted by the ideas in the book, but completely mystified by the process. The style of the meetings seemed very odd; people sat in a large circle and seemed to wait for the spirit to move them before speaking . It was rather like what I imagined a Quaker meeting to be. I said nothing in the large group; I wondered quietly if I had found myself in a strage cult but I did enjoy participating in the smaller group discussions. I read most of the series of books written by the faculty at the CMC, in addition to

becoming fascinated by the work of Norbert Elias and I decided to apply for the programme and was accepted. I now have the challenge of trying to design a programme of work for myself over the next three years.

The university looks like a very interesting place for me to engage in the kind of research which is required for the MA/DMan project. I have been given the responsibility for developing the university's capability in the field of environmental research. This will involve bringing people from a wide range of disciplines together into some new structure called an institute. It will involve significant change. The change will take place against the backdrop of a very different organisation in terms of management style. In six months, the university has made a radical change from being Birnbaum's Flagship University (decision making as a mysterious and labyrinthine process which often didn't reach conclusions) to a place where the power has been centralised in a very significant way. This looks like collegiality replaced by 'managerialism'. The university system in the UK made this kind of change 20 years ago. It has not been a happy experience for all.

I propose to argue that collegial decision making (at least in the form that I have experienced it) is not an appropriate way for a large organisation to make its mark in what has become a highly competitive environment. I will quote at some length from a book called 'Universities: The Recovery of an idea' written by Gordon Graham a philosopher at the University of Aberdeen, who describes collegiality as follows:

> The etymological root of the word college implies a 'gathering together'. The dictionary defines college as 'a society of persons joined together for literary or scientific purpose.' Accordingly collegiality is a form of governance by which decisions are taken collectively for the benefit of the society's purposes. Broadly speaking, collegiality in this sense marked the government of universities for a long time, which is why their governing bodies were generally made up of councils of 'fellows'. That is bodies comprised of all those directly concerned with promoting their objectives. Such bodies were invariably headed by presidents, provosts, or principals.

> It is worth noting that the express function of such people was not to act in
> an independent executive capacity, but to convene and to chair the
> collective decision-making body.   (Graham, 2002, p87-88)

He goes to reflect, with some regret, on the changes which have taken place since the crises in higher Education in the UK of the 1980's, but does concede that external circumstances and the scale of the budgets dictate that heads of universities are now likely to behave more like chief executives than previously.

However, he does go on to concede that heavy dependence on Government for funding, increasing accountability requirements and greater competition for students and research funds has meant that universities have in effect become 'big business' and that the old collegial government style had become outmoded. However, the concerns that many academics express would be reflected in statements like 'This is not a Coca-Cola bottling plant'. While accepting that the older styles of governance and management are no longer appropriate, many would wish for a greater input to decision-making and believe the quality of the decisions could be significantly improved as result.

Whatever view one might take of the changes which were experienced in the higher education sector in the UK since the 1980's, the reality would seem to be that the sector in Ireland is about to experience its most significant upheaval in a very long time. Skillbeck (2000) has reviewed the challenges facing the sector on behalf of the Higher Education Authority and concludes that continuing growth in demand, recognition of increased economic returns following investment in education, the expanding and shifting frontiers of knowledge, continuing search for cohesion justice and equality in social arrangements and more enriching and inclusive cultures are some of the drivers of change in the higher education sector. The OECD (2004) has submitted a major report to the Irish Government which makes radical proposals on funding mechanisms, governance, staff retention, tenure, accountability and recommends that, such is the importance of the sector to Ireland's economic future that a committee chaired by the Taoiseach (Prime Minister) be established to assist with strategic direction and assessment of outcomes.

In such circumstances, it seems incontrovertible that the structural limitations of governance by committee and its inability to respond speedily and flexibly to rapidly changed circumstances and moments of crisis (Graham, 2002) render the classical collegial system useless to universities which wish to compete effectively for scarce resources and students. It has been replaced in the UK by centralisation of power and the development of a cadre of academic managers with executive powers and has succeeded in alienating substantial numbers of academic staff (Gordon Graham resigned from all university committees as a protest against what he experienced). These descriptions of the experience resonate with Stacey's (2003) reference to the loss of autonomy for individuals who are required to submit themselves to the larger whole, the greater good. They are required to submit themselves to the visions and values revealed to them by their leaders; participation becomes participating in the leadership of the leaders. The tragedy of Thames Valley University, the first UK university to come close to collapse (McCaffery, 2004 pp 234-9), was attributed to inadequate consultation, a failure to anticipate the full effect of reforms, opting for a big bang approach to change rather than phasing them in and a vice-chancellor who had an overly top-down approach to the reforms.

In recent weeks the actions of the leadership at the university have provoked some staff into open dissent. A 'Platform for Constructive Involvement' (PCI) has emerged. A number of professors and lecturers have offered themselves for election to the Governing Authority (the ultimate policy making body for the university) on the platform that 'it is essential that our colleagues are motivated to participate in constructive change' and they will be guided by the principle that the views of academic staff must be properly reflected in the Governing Authority's decisions. An email from Gordon Graham has been circulated with permission, which starts 'Welcome to the world of madness'. Yet the election leaflet states explicitly that all of the members of the platform support 'progressive change in the achievement of excellence in teaching, learning and research'. They want to work towards 'a practical consensus on what needs to be changed and how to bring this about'.

Thus it seems to me that the university over the next three years will present a real opportunity to reflect on a major change process. I will have a role as a part of that process with the challenge of bringing part of the university towards the goal of being more competitive in attracting research funds and making national and international impact. My style will be markedly different to that of the senior management team of the university. Given that I have no expertise in the field of environmental research, a command and control style would seem entirely inappropriate. An even greater obstacle to my adopting this style is that I would find it personally very difficult. I do, however, have concerns that the pace at which my style operates will be perceived as too slow. I have heard indirectly of our President's scorn for 'democratic' processes. One long-serving dean has already been relieved of his post (something which has never previously happened in this university) and there is a mood of real anxiety around the university. The newspapers carry articles and editorial comment, on a very frequent basis, on the need for rationalisation and prioritisation within the Irish university sector; everyone in the organisation knows there will be radical change and many fear for their discipline and some for their jobs.

V   Why engage in research at the Complexity and Management Centre?

I would like to return briefly to Michael Shiel's assessment of me as 'being ripe' for involvement in the research programme of the CMC. While I struggle with some of the literature and the shift in research methodology (it represents a huge change for me with twenty five years background in the biological sciences), my belief is that the 'complex responsive processes of relating' approach offers great potential in terms of deeper understanding of what happens in my daily work. My experience with the structural change project brought me up against the limitations of the training I had received in classical management techniques. I have referred earlier, however, to a more successful project on which I believe I took a different approach and this approach would reflect fundamental beliefs I hold about the ways in which people can interact successfully with one another.

The project was the Faculty's response to the need for 'radical curriculum overhaul' as described in the external review in 1996. This started with the

establishment of a Faculty Education Committee under my chairmanship, which met on over 60 occasions. A number of seminars and workshops by visiting educationalists were organised. A series of subject committees worked on the detail of each of the subjects to be taught. The Education Committee had oversight of the whole process and took the responsibility for producing draft proposals, which were then reviewed by faculty and suggestions for amendment were made. All major policy changes were discussed in person with key stakeholders (particularly heads of departments) before being proposed in any formal way. I recall on one occasion presenting some ideas to a senior professor, who disagreed vehemently with our suggestions and offered the view that our proposal would take us back to 1985 and undo everything that he had achieved in the meantime. My colleague and myself who had made the proposal looked at one another in great dismay after he left the room in full professorial dudgeon and we wondered if 10 am was too early to break out the whiskey bottle. This was a major setback since the support of this individual was key to success. A few days later I was taking lunch in another part of the school and fell into conversation with a colleague who had heard about the difficulties. After the obligatory teasing on the rumours of our disagreement with the professor, he asked if we had considered the Glasgow approach to teaching on a body systems basis. This suggestion sparked off an entirely new way of approaching our problem and eventually provided a solution. As the ideas gelled we circulated informal proposals for comment and, eventually, formal proposals were agreed by Faculty. The entire process took two and half years and was marked by seemingly endless discussion, but all of the issues were resolved. A recent external review described our school as being 'visionary in its implementation of educational innovation'.

Graham (2002) declares that 'the activity and success of a university depends directly on its academic 'workers' in a way that is not true of commerce and industry and the role of those who manage its resources, and its personnel for that matter, is not to direct this activity, but to support it'. I believe that this is what I achieved in this project.

Before I heard of the CMC, I had thought a great deal about these various events and their different outcomes. I believe the two projects described above were characterised by a genuine spirit of open-ended enquiry; what in the university is described and valued as collegiality. There was a willingness to engage in discussion and see where it might lead; the purpose was to find solutions to the problems of an outdated curriculum and a festering organisational issue. The solutions emerged eventually and were agreed, but this did not happen without conflict, argument, reverses and also the excitement of new ideas emerging apparently out of nowhere. I am thinking of the curriculum conversation in the tea- room which started out as my being teased about the Pathology Professor's walk-out on the original proposal. Out of this came the Glasgow information and the bones of the next proposal. This could be regarded as serendipitous; but it wasn't entirely so. I had made it my business as dean to try and visit the parishes in the faculty as frequently as possible and I used these occasions as opportunities to develop informal discussion. Stacey (2007) writes about 'actively constructing the future as the living present and the future being unknowable in advance'. I believe something like this was going on during these discussions and that I was in some ways allowing this to happen, even though I had no theoretical framework on which to base it. In contrast, during the structures debate, I had taken a 'strong hand on the steering wheel' and found myself in awful trouble. What was going on there? I had pre-determined a set of solutions for the faculty's problems; I was the theatre director referred to in Shaw (2002, p117) who decided in advance on how the play would be done without the input of the actors; I was a deadly man.

VI Insights

The theoretical notion that one first plans strategy, then designs structures, and finally implements, stands almost totally at odds with what happens in a university, leading to the conclusion that either the universities have it all wrong or that the strategy theoreticians do (Hardy et al 1983). This has to do with the fundamental conflict between the concept of planning, and pluralistic democratic forms of decision-making (Schmidtlein 1990, cited by Birnbaum, 2001, p74). If I had read those sentences three years ago, my reaction would

have been one of relief; at least I wasn't alone with this experience. At the time the events described in this paper were taking place, my actions as a manager drew heavily on the rudimentary training I had received as a management diploma student of the Open University. I had learned that the manager's job was to formulate strategy in an inclusive way, to design structures which would ensure the strategy was delivered, and to use techniques such as force field analysis to ensure that the desired changes took place. My capacity for reflecting on what was really going on was limited to the reading I had done and when things went wrong I assumed that I had failed to implement what I had learned in the correct way. Why did I take a different approach with the structures challenge to the other projects? I knew it was going to be very difficult and that the prospects of failure were high. I decided deliberately that a robust approach was necessary to get the required result. I also knew that since I was near the end of my tenure, no real harm could come to me in the event of failure. I also think part of me was curious to see what an attempt to 'exert power' might be like.

As I move on to write more about my work in university middle management, I think my capacity for reflecting on what is going on as it happens has improved. I am beginning to come to grips with a new literature which offers other ways of interpreting events and which has already started to inform my way of 'going on' as a manager. I pay more attention to the ordinary activities of every day; in meetings I do not go for 'closure' at the earliest opportunity; I think about what is happening as it happens and I participate by asking questions, offering opinions and views in ways which I didn't previously, as facilitator or chairman. I look forward to writing about what has been happening during my work on the initiation of a new research institute over the past few months, where I have consciously tried to act in ways which might allow the emergence of new ideas. It is particularly interesting to think about these approaches in the current climate in the university which is undergoing what one retiring colleague referred to recently as a management tsunami; the centralisation of power in the university over the past year has been quite extraordinary and there is a widespread awareness that the era of the self-regulating individual who could enjoy academic freedom in whatever guise seemed attractive is over.

The most useful reflections I have had have been those on the way in which power is distributed and used. My conceptions of power were limited to those in the mainstream literature (position power, personal power etc.). I believe my initial readings of the work of Elias have given me a richer understanding of the ways in which power relations contribute to the complexity of daily life in a university.

I am convinced that the old 'collegial' way of doing business in the university is no longer appropriate in the competitive environment in which we find ourselves, but I have great concerns about the 'managerial approach' which was largely adopted in the UK in similar circumstances over the last 20 years. I believe the complex responsive processes of relating approach has considerable potential to describe alternative ways for the highly talented and creative people who work in universities to interact with one another and to succeed.

2   Experiments in Collegiality

.....central to our argument is the belief that although without collegiality, institutions of higher education may survive or even expand, they cannot flourish (Tapper and Palfreyman, 2002).

I Introduction

I finished my first project by declaring my belief that classical collegial decision-making methods were no longer appropriate for many of the challenges currently faced by universities but I expressed concerns, which are replicated in the literature, about the value of replacing it with what, in the academic world, is called 'managerialism'. I also expressed enthusiasm for the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating as described by Stacey, Griffin and Shaw (2000) in understanding some of my experiences. As I was writing that first paper, an opportunity arose to explore the possibility of using some of the latter perspectives in understanding my own organisation, through an invitation from the President of the university to work on the development of a new research institute. In this paper I will describe an intensely collegial process which took place over a period of months, in response to a request to initiate a significant strategic change in the university.

I could find only one study of cross-disciplinary university research initiatives. Frost, Jean, Teoderescu and Brown (2001) in their study of a series of intellectual initiatives at a US research university looked at the origins, evolutions and challenges faced during the development of cross-disciplinary research activities. They studied twelve such developments and found that the key factors associated with success were the passionate commitment of scholarly leaders, access to timely and multiple resources and the presence of collegial networks to help these programmes successfully navigate across traditional academic boundaries. Tensions such as the conflict between

traditional departmental structures and collegial styles of decision-making led to some challenges relating to coordination and communication, time, resources, reward structures, and leadership transition. They employed a qualitative case study approach in their study, based predominantly on interviews of leadership figures which were taped and transcribed. Considerable care was taken at the study design stage to include the advice of faculty on interview protocol and data analysis. Despite this they list a number of limitations of the study including the size of the dataset (twelve clusters within one university) and express caution about the generalisability of the study to other universities.

Part of my reaction to the President's invitation was to see it as a research opportunity. It came at a time when I was beginning to think in a different way about how universities function as organisations and it seemed to present an opportunity to try to work in a different and possibly more adventurous way. This confidence was underpinned by a growing understanding of theoretical concepts with which I was beginning to feel more familiar. There is a sense in which, during this part of my research, I was conducting an experiment, but this was a wholly different kind of experiment to those in which I have been involved in my research as a scientist. I have had to accept that there would be no numerical data for statistical analysis, that my role as designer of the experiment is far removed from that of external agent observing the project, following a carefully designed intervention. I also accepted that while the hoped for 'output' would be a successful proposal for the institute, my primary interest would be in the journey towards that endpoint. What I am interested in is a detailed examination of the plans, activities and outcomes as a process, what Stacey and Griffin (2005) describe as taking my experience seriously. The essential methodological move (and struggle) for me is from the reductionist and quantitative research perspective of a scientist, to a qualitative approach to generating knowledge. I will deal with the issue of method in some detail later.

II Background

I described the economic and political circumstances in which the Irish university sector finds itself in my first project. In summary, the Irish

Government has decided, in common with many others, that Ireland is to become a knowledge society and that the universities are to play a major role in this transformation. It is against this background that our new President has declared that, in ten years we will be the leading university in Ireland, and reckoned among the top thirty in Europe. The Governing Authority has approved a new strategic plan and the university is currently going through the final stages of a major re-structuring exercise.

The process currently in train in the university is not in any way unique and was replicated many times in the United Kingdom over the past twenty years. Success, survival even, became contingent on being competitive and meeting or exceeding targets set by regulators in teaching and research. Funding follows success and this has resulted in competition for the best academics (and their research teams) and the emergence of an elite group of universities which attract the greatest share of the funding. It soon became obvious that traditional 'administration' by elected senior figures with all of the associated paraphernalia required for collegial decision-making was not going to deliver success. These lessons in the modern history of higher education are well known to anyone in the sector with even the slightest contact with colleagues in the UK. It has become increasingly obvious and explicit that those holding the funds in the Irish system are keen to introduce more competition in the sector by managing the ways in which the additional funding is distributed, while wishing to avoid the excesses of the UK Research Assessment Exercise. It is hardly surprising that our new President should adopt the path of planning, re-structuring, performance measurement and rewards for success. Indeed, this is only reflecting the approach being taken by the Government through the Higher Education Authority.

The President rarely makes a speech of any kind without referring to the university as being research-intensive and his vision of being in the top thirty in Europe. Here is a major change in values and style. The previous two administrations were dominated by scholars from the humanities, who while paying lip service to the research agenda, seemed to accept that the university's primary role as the largest in Ireland was to provide undergraduate education to

the masses. They were, no doubt, encouraged towards this view when they remembered that more than 80 per cent of its budget came from the state and was based on student numbers. Hess (2005) declares that there are no universities on record which have been able to achieve what we are setting out to do i.e. become a leading research university while providing mass undergraduate education. However, while this indicates some of the disquiet in the organisation, there has been far greater coverage of the President's message and it has, by and large, been welcomed publicly.

As I think about what is happening in Ireland, both in the Higher Education sector and in this organisation and I think about the ambitions and values that are being promoted, I reflect on Mead's enquiry into the meaning and application of values:

> The psychological technique of maintaining such a cult is the presentation by the imagination of a social situation free from the obstacles which forbid the institution being what it should be, and we organise social situations which in every way favour such a frame of mind. (Mead, 1923)

Mead also argued that in order for such values to be realised their functional value must supersede their ideal value in our conduct; their realisation must always include negotiating the obstacles which are not mentioned in the description of the ideal. Griffin (2002) describes cult values as grist to the mill of everyday social interaction in which they become functional values as the source of the conflicts which both sustain identity and bring about change. The university, in the person of its President, has declared for itself a vision which is fully congruent with national objectives and which conforms to the kind of ideals the best universities espouse. This vision has been promoted actively in the university and in the outside world. All that remains is to make it happen, to functionalise the values which have been so clearly and frequently enunciated. This realisation will include negotiation of the obstacles and will involve the thousands of people working in the organisation interacting with one another as human beings to sustain that which already exists (teaching quality, current

research) while moving through the inevitable conflicts towards achieving the vision of the President.

III A New Challenge

In the summer of 2004 the President asked me if I would take the lead on an initiative to establish a new environmental research institute at the university. The university already has a number of such institutes and there is a strong history of such 'organised research units' strengthening the research reputation of universities (Geiger, 1990). There is substantial research capacity in environmental science in the organisation but in the past, there has been insufficient co-ordination of efforts to win appropriate levels of national and international research funding. There is huge public interest in environmental issues such as climate change, pollution of water supplies and sustainable agriculture at international, European and national levels and this interest is matched by increasing availability of research funds. My organisation has fallen behind several other Irish universities, which have succeeded in winning major national funding to set up research institutes and the President is convinced that we are punching well below our weight in terms of research funding success. I asked him for a job outline which would help me understand exactly what was expected of me and assumed, given the diversity of interest in environmental topics, that there would be some formal announcement to the university community that I had undertaken this role. Neither of these happened. Meanwhile I continued with my other work. I was experiencing at first hand what Frost et al (2001) record as the difficulties faced by the leaders of cross - disciplinary initiatives while wearing 'multiple hats' and being 'spread too thin' across research, teaching, and service duties within their home departments.

My knowledge of environmental issues is no greater than the average reader of the Irish Times and my own research background is far removed from this field. Despite being flattered that my 'leadership skills' could usefully be employed in achieving this objective for the university, I knew that my lack of credibility as a scientist with relevant expertise would present some difficulties and anxiety for me while working with my new colleagues. This work would also take place

against the backdrop of the major structural changes taking place at the university.

I realised that there would be no job description or formal announcement of my role; that I would just have to tell people myself that I had undertaken the job. I felt that this weakened my position further; not alone did I not have the scientific credentials for the job, I wouldn't enjoy, even briefly, the benefits of having been 'anointed' by the President. I arranged a meeting with the deans of three of the faculties and described what had happened. All three of them were enthusiastic that we move forward on the environment project, agreed to nominate faculty who would participate in a working party and indicated that they would share the costs of a research assistant for me. They agreed with my suggestion that there be a series of open meetings in the different parts of the university to introduce the proposal and invite participation. They made the point that support from the university administration would be key to the advancement of the project. I arranged a meeting with the Vice President for Research, which took place at 5.30 on a Friday evening. He was late and first needed to check his emails before we could begin to talk. It transpired that he knew virtually nothing about what I had been asked to do and we had a conversation about incinerators and other current Irish environmental concerns. It was more like a polite conversation that might take place at a dinner party. I found this episode very depressing and over the weekend I seriously considered withdrawing from the project. I met the Professor of Environmental Studies for lunch on the Monday to talk about my disillusionment but he encouraged me to continue, that it was important for the university. He also spoke about his own unsuccessful attempt to do something similar a few years ago, but said that the time was now right.

The deans and I had agreed that support from the administration was essential to the success of this project and Frost et al (2001) describe university support for cross faculty initiatives as being crucial for such initiatives, yet I didn't feel that the VP understood, much less felt like supporting, our endeavour. I began to doubt my own capacity to lead this project, perhaps I am not the passionate scholar that Frost et al describe as a key ingredient for success. I also understood

that the VP Research was not long in post and had a very large portfolio of existing activities to which he has been giving priority, but it was still surprising that he seemed to know so little about this project. He was also deeply involved in planning the structural changes and has undertaken a major overhaul of his own office. While I could understand much of this, I had an almost overwhelming feeling of not knowing what to do and I was very tempted to return to my 'day job' which I knew was well within my comfort zone. Frank's encouragement to continue provided me with enough support to move to the next stage.

In the middle of all of this I had been doing some of the reading required for the residential part of the CMC graduate programme and I re-read Shaw's book (2002) on the importance of conversation in the life of organisations. I thought about how I might manage the process of trying to develop ideas and proposals in a field in which I have no professional competence and concluded that, in part, my role was that of facilitator/consultant. I recognised that it would not be easy to bring such a diverse group of faculty together and generate a cohesive proposal while also acknowledging that such diversity presented real opportunities for creativity.

I decided that I would not adopt the role of chairman (which now comes very easily to me) but to take on the role of facilitator, while also being a participant in the discussions. I also experienced some conflict in these roles. I recognised that part of what I was doing was attempting to replicate the approach that Shaw described in her role as a consultant to organisations. I was concerned that I was using her approach in the same way as one might use a cookbook, while my research experience as a scientist taught me from a very early stage that the methods described in published papers were often very difficult to replicate and frequently didn't work. Yet I could not think of other ways in which to approach this project. At the back of my mind I was also conscious that I have to write this second paper as part of my project work and I visualised the work I was about to do almost as an experiment on which I could report later.

However, there was more to it than this. I was trying to find ways in which to enable my colleagues to bring their undoubted individual expertise to a forum where this diversity could be harnessed and unleash some creativity.

IV The Work Begins

I started to work with my new group. The first meeting was a 'why are we here?' discussion where the members talked about the project from the viewpoints of a rural economist, an archaeologist, a civil engineer, a zoologist, an ecologist, a geographer. At the second meeting I introduced the templates used in an earlier round of national research funding which might provide a focus for our discussion. We agreed that we should aim for a major funding bid, but that we should also work on a longer game which would bring more coherence to the university's environmental research programme and greater international impact for its work. Most of us had only a vague notion of how much work is involved in developing a large proposal of this kind. We knew that it must be very detailed and must be capable of withstanding peer review at the highest international level.

The third meeting of the working group was strikingly different in tone. We had agreed at an earlier meeting that members could send alternates if they were unable to come to our twice weekly meetings. On this occasion three new people turned up. Some one mentioned river catchments as a vehicle which could be used for a whole range of studies including geology, water pollution, sociology, archaeology, policy development and many others. The idea is that a river system, from its origin to entry to the sea, could provide a range of habitats, social settings, agriculture types and geological formations which, if appropriately instrumented, could provide the basis for the long-term studies which are needed for the development of appropriate policies. I told the group about a conversation I had with a senior manager in a food processing company in which he told me that the biggest single headache he had was compliance with the legislation on environmental protection. He was intrigued that the university was considering this development. The discussion became animated

and I felt a measure of excitement; I asked the group to try to write down what they thought had happened.

The key to creativity is diversity (Stacey 2003, p 375). The presence of three different people who had not been part of the earlier discussions made a real difference and when the suggestion of the river catchment arose, the newcomers expressed real enthusiasm. My story about the manager of the food company seemed to add to it and I left this meeting feeling some real hope that we had found something that would help us to move on. I wanted the participants to try to capture for themselves what had happened rather than write it up myself, to see if this diversity could be further used to generate ideas.

The notes arrived by email and I distributed them at our next meeting. The enthusiasm was still there and members reported that their colleagues were equally enthusiastic. We decided that we would try to use these notes for an early draft of a proposal for the vice-president for research using the template from the national funding agency; we agreed to organise two open meetings; one in the Science Building and the other in the Arts building. There was a debate over whether we should use the working draft as the starting point for the open meetings. I felt it would not be appropriate and stated the view that it was a working document which would be open to radical review based on the outcomes of the meetings; that we should allow these events to be as open as possible so as to garner useful or creative ideas. The meetings were well attended and there was enthusiasm for moving forward.

However, we then seemed to get stuck. The draft document was turgid and bland and we decided that the problem was that we did not have coherent research themes. I began thinking about the methodology which was used at our first residential meeting at Roffey Park as part of the MA/DMan programme. We introduced ourselves on Day 1 with a small amount of biographical detail; a couple of days later we organised ourselves into groups. I wondered aloud if, given our declared position that inter-disciplinarity was likely to be the key to success, we could organise some kind of loose meeting where faculty might get together in a non-directed way and see what emerged. I was surprised and

relieved when a zoologist said that he once participated in an event like this in Brussels. Each of the scientists at the meeting was invited to make a one-minute presentation on their work and then clusters got together based on what they had heard. There was some disquiet about such an event being chaotic and delivering nothing. I gained some confidence from my colleagues support and said that the event in which I participated was also successful, but without saying what it was. Slowly the group came around to the idea. The rural economist felt that we needed to have very clear outcomes in mind and that we should have a list of 'deliverables'. I sat this out. I felt the meeting was moving towards agreeing on a very unusual university event. We could decide about the deliverables later.

We met again a week later and I was struck by how many of our group were now talking about how the ideas will emerge. I suppose I must have started using the word emergence in our last meeting. The group was now excited and the need for specific 'deliverables' was no longer mentioned. Ironically it was the rural economist who was now talking most about the emergence of new ideas. We discussed whether we should invite the Vice President for Research to open the meeting. I felt very strongly that this would be a mistake; I recalled that in my earlier meeting with him he had suggested that I 'go climb a mountain and come down with a big idea'. I felt that the kind of event we were discussing would seem like anarchy to him and that we might be cowed into doing something else. Later I sent an email saying I had decided not to invite him. Stacey's perspective on what was going on here could probably be encapsulated in the following excerpt:

> Official ideology is themes organising what may be openly and safely talked about. Official ideology legitimises some kinds of conversation and banishes others. Unofficial ideologies are themes organising the relationships and conversations banished from the legitimate arena. They may either collusively support current power relations or potentially undermine them. (Stacey, 2003, p 359-60)

I had formed the view that the ideology which pervades the thinking of the senior administration of the university was that the visions, ideas, the master plan needed to come from those 'charged with leadership'. This was most exemplified in the 'go climb a mountain' suggestion from the VP. I was certain that however long I spent on a mountain I would not come down with a major proposal for an environmental research programme; I was equally certain that I desperately needed the support of the senior management team for this initiative, yet felt that I could not risk the VP's presence at the meeting. I was persuaded that change would come from diversity, free-flowing conversation, abandonment of rituals and habitual ways of going on (Stacey 2003) and that the VP's presence would constrain rather than enable the day's events. The fundamental requirement for transformation is non-average, deviant, maverick or eccentric behaviour on the part of entities comprising a system (Allen 1998, 1999, cited Stacey 2003) and despite the fact that the university was aiming for transformation, the approach we were advocating might be perceived as too eccentric, too risky, lacking control. While I was acknowledging that the official ideology of the university might not condone the kind of 'conversation' we were planning, I was also persuaded that in another way, the products of the 'conversation' would support rather than undermine the basic ideological principle that we could become a leading research university. While engaging in 'shadow' or potentially 'illegitimate' activity which might seem in some ways to undermine power relations, we were at the same time trying to find ways in which we could support the President's ambition.

We agreed that the meeting should open with a presentation describing what we were trying to do, what had happened so far and what we hoped to achieve on the day. The last slide describes what we planned:

- Invitation to present 1 acetate on each participant's area of interest
- Break out into self-organising thematic groups
- Lunch
- 5 minute presentation from thematic groups
- Plenary discussion

We had agreed on a list of ten research themes, but I suggested that we hold this slide in reserve as insurance in the event of revolt. This was agreed. Antonia, my new assistant commenced work on the day of the meeting and helped with setting up the room. I felt like I was about to sit my final exams again. Fifty people turned up and began to settle themselves. I made my presentation (leaving out the slide with the suggested themes) and invited individuals to come forward with their acetate; an archaeologist opened the proceedings and the session got going. My anxiety began to abate, but then it became apparent that it is impossible for individual faculty to describe their work in 1 minute. Eventually I had to ask if colleagues would try to keep closer to the time; several of the speakers mentioned presentation fatigue at the start of their talk but I had a very strong sense that there was no such fatigue; in fact it felt like the opposite, that people were intrigued. Several mentioned how useful it was. A geographer who is new to the university and whose research is on the rehabilitation of brown field sites told me later that she now knew several chemists who could add to her research. Another who is interested in indoor air quality discovered a colleague who was working on radon gas as a pollutant in homes. A meteorologist noted my aspiration that we would move into self-organising groups at the next stage and hoped that the whole event would not degenerate into chaos.

The presentations finished, I stood to bring this part of the proceedings to a close and invited the participants to go to another room to commence small group discussions where the configuration of the groups was entirely up to the participants; I really struggled not to use the slide that suggested the thematic areas the smaller group had devised. I acknowledged the meteorologists remark about the possibility of chaos and referred to the possibility for real creativity at the edge of chaos. Several people were now desperate for coffee; I had arranged lunch but I had forgotten about the ritual of mid-morning coffee. However, when I reached the room, having ascertained that the local coffee shop hasn't yet recommenced business after the Christmas break, I noticed that there were several groups already engaged in animated conversation. I moved from one to another and mostly listened. The first group were agreeing with one another that nothing whatever could happen without the university making a large sum of

money available; someone else suggested that if we waited for this to happen we would never get anywhere. I moved on and I noticed others moving around too. I let the discussion run for one and a half hours and by then it was lunchtime. The conversations continued over lunch. I had asked the services people to arrange the chairs in a large circle (48) and when we sat down I issued an open invitation to talk about what happened earlier and said that the smaller working group really needed their help with advancing the proposals. A silence followed. I found it very hard to resist my inclinations to move into undergraduate seminar mode ('Well, Pat there was an interesting discussion in your group on policy development, do you want to fill us in on that?'). A very wide-ranging discussion eventually commenced and the discussion covered research themes, management and governance of a new institute, funding opportunities and how the ideas might be advanced. When I read Antonia's notes of the discussion later, I was astounded at the number of topics we discussed and I realised how anxious I had felt during this event. My anxiety was preventing me from engaging as fully as I could have done and I now realise that I spent a good part of the time feeling slightly queasy, wondering if this experimental approach would collapse entirely and leave me looking like a complete fool. I sat out two or three more silences and eventually I decided that we really had run out of things to say. I thanked everyone for participating and said that it has been really helpful in terms of advancing the proposal, although at this point I had no idea how it had been helpful.

V   Emergence, Self-organisation, Chaos

When the meteorology professor said that one of the possible consequences of a meeting based on the principles of emergence and self-organisation was chaos, he was probably making a joke. It seemed like a very significant point to me and my tentative riposte some time later (to do with real creativity occurring at the edge of chaos) probably meant little to anyone. I'm not sure that it meant very much to me at the time other than a vague memory of some of the reading I had done for this research programme. Earlier in this paper I mentioned that one of the reasons for my greater confidence and the evolution of my practice was increased familiarity with a new literature. However, despite the fact that I had

done some reading on 'complexity', had attended a couple of conferences on the subject and felt that I had some grasp of the concepts, it now feels as if I were doing the equivalent to driving a car with very little understanding of what was going on underneath the bonnet. I was working on intuition and acting before thinking. My instincts told me that when I had worked in this way in the past, interesting things happened.

The ways in which the complexity sciences can be used to help understand how human organisations function has been described in detail by Stacey (2000, 2007) in his descriptions of the development of the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating. It is not my intention to describe in detail the development of this perspective, since it is readily available elsewhere but I will provide my own understanding in a brief overview. Complexity theory deals with complex, nonlinear, and non-equilibrium systems and emergence (of novelty) requires the presence of non-linearity, self-organisation, far from equilibrium states and the presence of attractors (Goldstein, 2000). A complex adaptive system consists of many interacting agents and during the processes of interaction they adapt to one another and produce order in an emergent way. Each of the agents is acting according to its own rules and the order emerges in a self-organising way. The process of emergence will take place in a non-linear way which is characterised by small events which may have large effects and large events which may have small effects. It cannot be predicted. It is through this local interaction between independent agents that global patterns emerge. In the natural sciences such systems are called complex adaptive systems. The possibility for amplification of random events is greater in states which are far from equilibrium. Such states are also referred to as states of bounded instability where predictability and unpredictability, order and disorder are intertwined. One requirement for the development of such states is diversity of the agents interacting with one another.

When I suggested the January 6th meeting, what I had in mind was the creation of conditions which were far from equilibrium, with many diverse agents who through their random self-organising interactions during one day might enable the emergence of new ideas which might provide the next steps in realising the

President's vision of research excellence for this part of the university. My own lack of knowledge in the field of environmental science meant that any kind of visionary, top down approach to the challenge was not a viable choice for me. I needed to somehow harness the creativity of the individuals across the university to produce something which was much greater than the sum of the parts which were there already. I felt that the emergence of such an outcome might come from the generation of conditions (an unusual meeting with a diverse group of participants) which enabled the possibility of 'creative, self generated, adaptability seeking behaviour'. The design of the meeting was such that it felt very much like it was in a non-equilibrium state, a state of some instability. The energy which was pushing it along was the desire of many of the participants in our working group to create something. Yet the meeting would finish that day, the participants knew that the worst that could happen was the loss of a day at a slow time of the year. There was a boundary to the instability. It felt like stability and instability intertwined (Stacey 2003 p 221).

My action in engineering this unusual event could be seen as an external force pushing the event towards instability, yet by virtue of my participation, I was also very much internal. To regard the days activities as a system on which I could exert influence as a dispassionate external observer seems untenable. I have already indicated the methodological move I have had to make to enable me to continue in this research programme. This paradox of the Kantian autonomous individual and the systemic whole (Griffin 2002) seems real to me now. I was conducting the experiment and yet I was an experimental subject too. My involvement was also very much affected by my anxiety about the methodology and the feeling that my colleagues expected *something* to happen. The most anxious part of the meeting was when I assembled the large group and adopted a passive approach. My intention was to hold everything open, avoiding closure, which was to do everything which went against my instincts and training as chair of a meeting. This was undoubtedly the most difficult part and my anxiety prevented me participating fully and I became preoccupied with knowing when to bring it to a close. Eventually there was one pause too many, I broke the tension and decided that the meeting was over.

Does the deployment of the ideas from complexity as metaphors have any value in understanding this experience? It seems clear that I had been influenced by them in advance to some extent, even if my understanding of the theories then and now is limited by a lack of knowledge of complexity science. What I was trying to achieve was to create conditions out of which novelty might emerge through self-organisation of the participants and that if we were lucky, some small changes might have large effects.

Next day I got some emails from members of the working group and others which were very positive about the event. We de-briefed at the next meeting of our small group. One person regretted the directionless nature of the large group discussion, another said the most useful bit was the one minute presentations, the rural economist says that it was good, but we didn't get the result that we wanted. Another suggested inviting the large group together again for a similar discussion to enable the emergence of more ideas. I had a very strong feeling that we were in danger of being perceived as slipping into a mode of chronic exploration, especially by the university administration. My suggestion that Antonia and I begin work on a draft proposal was accepted and we circulated a draft which contained the research themes which came out of the January 6th meeting and some notes on organisational structure. Group members suggested that we circulate this to everybody who attended the meeting, but I was reluctant to do this. I felt that the senior administration must get sight of what we are doing and that circulating what we had at that point might raise expectations in an unrealistic way. I sent the document to the President. He met me very soon afterwards to say that he really liked the proposal and would bring it to his senior management team the following week, and that I could convey this enthusiasm to the rest of my team.

I was excited by this response felt that the approach we had taken had been vindicated and that the processes we have used to allow the emergence of ideas had borne fruit. It felt to me that we had engaged in an intensely collegial series of activities of a very unstructured kind, that probably would not have been endorsed by the VP for Research.

Following discussion with the senior management team the reaction was reduced in an e-mail to 'considerable enthusiasm'. The next step was a meeting with the VP for Research who requested more focus and advised that we needed to reduce the number of people involved; 'getting them out later on will be even more difficult'. I reported back on this encounter to my group. I was very tired and may have given a more downbeat report than was appropriate. The mood at the meeting was tired; perhaps I infected the others. The river catchment as a skeleton on which the project could be hung arose again and was the only topic which seemed to arouse any interest. I wondered if we had become a settled group, stuck, working within boundaries which we had implicitly set for ourselves and that the document had become the physical representation of the boundary. The fact that we had produced this document was now limiting our imagination and inducing this feeling of deadness. We agreed to investigate funding opportunities, send out the proposal to all interested parties and to arrange further meetings to work developing the proposal.

At the next meeting I produced a template and suggested that we organise meetings under thematic headings (Climate Change, Biodiversity etc). Frank suggested that we write to everyone and invite them to self-select into research clusters, to come back with proposals and to produce written work using the template provided by Science Foundation Ireland. People now expressed anxieties about the whole thing falling apart. Some were happy with the loose emergent style; others felt the need for more focus. I now felt a profound need to bring focus to this endeavour, yet I welcomed Frank's suggestion since I recognised that this group was unable to do it. We agreed to send out an email inviting groups to self-select and to come back with proposals by March 23rd. This was an important meeting as far as process was concerned and the conversation was given some edge by the fact that Frank had just come back from New York where he had visited the Earth Institute at Columbia University. Frank's contributions were key to the outcome of this meeting. We sent out the message inviting the initiation of discussions and I made a few calls to the members of the working group to encourage them to initiate activity. An exciting flurry of emails arrived including phrases such as 'great enthusiasm' 'The timing is right' 'You can certainly count me as being very interested in any

further discussions'. The meetings and writing went on for a number of weeks and resulted in a formal proposal for pump-priming funds. It proved impossible to meet the Vice President before he went on holidays so I sent the proposal to him in the internal mail. I had planned a week's holiday myself and left for France.

A few weeks later I met the VP for Research while walking across the campus and we engaged in conversation about a range of topics. The tone of the conversation was markedly different to those we had previously. He raised the issue of the environmental institute and I told him that we had developed the ideas further, but there was a lot more work to be done. I also said that I was having a good deal of difficulty in motivating the key people to take it seriously because they couldn't see where it might lead and that the project desperately needed some oxygen from the senior administration. He indicated that he would attend a meeting of the group to hear the current set of proposals and help decide what might happen next. I circulated an email to my group indicating that the project was still alive and that the VP was now interested.

This was a chance meeting while walking across the campus and yet it looks like the most significant of the three encounters I had had with this man. The tone was friendly and constructive. It seemed like the university re-structuring had been a significant factor in the lack of attention being paid to our efforts. I felt that I was not an outsider in this conversation, but part of the establishment. I assumed that this had something to do with my being part of the senior management team while Bernard was away. I felt for the first time that I was not an underling reporting to royalty, but closer to being an equal. The power differential between us had been reduced. The fact that this was not a formal appointment, but a chance encounter, helped with lightening the tone. It was also clear that he had had conversations with the Chief Science Advisor, which had affected his perception of the importance of environmental research in a national context.

> . …to the extent that the inequality in the strengths of the two players
> diminishes, there will result from the interweaving of moves of two

individual people a game process *which neither of them has planned*.
(Elias 1970, p.82)

Suddenly, in a chance encounter, I realised that this proposal might now come alive. I had been steeling myself to writing its epitaph; that the only novelty, from a research perspective, might be that of being the sponsor of an interdisciplinary university initiative who was prepared to describe a failure, in contrast to those who were prepared to be interviewed by Frost et al (2001). Some weeks later I received a formal request to make the bid for funding to support the project.

VII Discussion

Collegiality is a value which is greatly treasured in the academic community and it includes an emphasis on consensus, shared power, common commitments and aspirations, and leadership that emphasises consultation and collective responsibilities (Birnbaum, 1988, Dobson and McNay (1996), Harris 1998, Graham 2002, p87-88),). It is a cult value which idealises the university as a place where intellectuals share their wisdom in a collective attempt to develop their field of research and deliver quality teaching programmes. I have referred in my first project to some of the limitations of collegial decision making processes in advancing the fortunes of universities in the competitive external environment which now seems to exist universally.

Tapper and Palfreyman (2002) trace its origins from the establishment of the ancient universities of Oxford and Cambridge in which the constituent colleges had financial and academic independence. This 'collegiality of the colleges' has remained largely confined to these two institutions and Tapper and Palfreyman describe how, even here, the independence of the colleges has become subject to external pressures funnelled through central university governance. They also describe how versions of the collegial tradition have seeped out of Oxford and Cambridge to universities far and wide. This can vary from academic self-governance in the classical sense to tokenism and use of the word collegiality as

a slogan either by opponents of 'managerialism' or by university leadership to indicate that the essentials of academic *demos* still exist in their institution.

Tapper and Palfreyman (2002) also refer to intellectual collegiality, that 'stimulates academics of different ranks and interests to pursue in common very difficult intellectual goals' and suggest that this may be a more widely expressed form of collegiality. Jarzabkowski (2003) concludes, following a study of 'practical activity' in three UK universities, that strategy emerges between actors within these organisations and their contexts. She also concludes that collegial activity, which increases interaction between senior management teams and other players in the university, has a significant role to play in advancing strategy as practice and in advancing the fortunes of the institutions and that further micro studies of strategy are important for extending this field of research. While such micro studies pay attention to the details of decision making and strategy development over time, they are retrospective and rely on research methods such as interviews and analysis of minutes of meetings over a period of time. Research informed by the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating takes a different approach and includes paying detailed attention to acts of communication, relations of power and questions of ideology as they happen (Stacey and Griffin, 2005).

I have described in some detail the acts of communication which took place during the development of this project, whether they were conversations, presentations or emails. Each of these acts of communication provoked another, which in turn generated others. Our interaction with the WAG provoked me to think about how I might initiate conversations which could lead to bringing colleagues together to talk about environmental research in a variety of ways with a particular interest in maximising opportunities for the interaction of faculty with diverse interests; the January 6th meeting being the most adventurous of these. But this meeting was, as my rural economist colleague suggested, only part of a dialogue which had been going on for weeks and would continue afterward. Out of the local interaction between a highly diverse group of individuals in a wide range of venues, new patterns of activity and

conversation emerged which eventually culminated in a proposal which received support from the senior university administration.

I have described how I felt that the absence of a formal announcement of my role in leading this project left me feeling somewhat isolated. Yet it was clear to some of my colleagues that, despite this, the fact that the President had asked me to do it meant that it had institutional significance. I wondered on many occasions why they stayed with the project for as long as they did. Clearly I had some power; it was known that I had been asked by the President to do this job, I called the meetings, I indicated the direction I thought we should take at a number of junctures, I decided on the point at which a more directive approach was required and began to be very much more assertive about how we should progress. The fact that I had succeeded in making the new buildings for my faculty a reality, probably helped those who wondered if I knew what I was doing to stay with it for longer than they might otherwise have done. On several occasions during the institute discussions I was told that the reason the process continued at all was because I was 'leading' it. When I probed more, I was told that this was because I was perceived as an honest broker, that I had no vested interest in any part of the project and this was why such a wide range of faculty continued to participate. Previous attempts had been perceived as less balanced. So here was another potential constraint on the collegial ideal, some faculty in the past were prepared to engage in sharp practice to further their own particular agenda. Since faculty are also human beings who behave in a wide range of ways, it should not be surprising that the collegial ideal and ethic can sometimes come second to capitalising on opportunities for short-term tactical gain. My perceived integrity gave me some power. The anxiety which pervaded the university as a result of the changes taking place was also a factor; colleagues knew that their performance as individuals and as groups was certain to be under a great deal more scrutiny than ever before. They knew that if this proposal were to succeed it would substantially increase their chances of success. There was a sense in which they depended on me, even if they thought my attempts to advance the project were not very effective.

Collegiality is a cult value (Mead 1923) in that it represents an ideal which is widely espoused. It is perceived by many to be in conflict with the cult of 'managerialism', which is frequently described by opponents as the thoughtless introduction of practices from the corporate sector. However, both of these values are often discussed in superficial ways which are characterised by great hostility and vehement rhetoric which does not take account of the complexities of working in large organisations. The process in which we engaged during the development of the proposals was intensely collegial in nature and I describe the many obstacles and reverses we encountered on the route to functionalising this value. It (collegiality) is perceived to be under threat by some in this organisation since the appointment of a new president who takes his responsibilities as chief executive of the university, as set out in the Universities Act, very seriously. He has declared another set of values which he believes to be appropriate to the demands of the national and international environment and has embarked on a radical programme which includes the setting of ambitious targets for achievement and major structural change. This will also include accountability measures, performance indicators and a resource allocation model, which will be linked to strategic objectives. Birnbaum (1988) would describe this as a bureaucratic model of governance, while others would describe it as managerialism. The president is attempting to functionalise his values and aspirations for the university by using techniques which are widely adopted in the corporate world. I propose to examine my own experience of the working out of some of these changes in some detail in my next project.

I can now see this narrative as being about a group of human beings, who happen to be university faculty, attempting to develop a cross disciplinary initiative, relating to one another in a range of different configurations in which ideas and proposals emerged from the interaction. I was part designer, participant and observer from within the process. Eventually it began to seem like a project that was destined for failure, until a chance encounter with the vice-president, who had independently been participating in a series of other interactions outside the university, seemed to provide the oxygen supply the project had lacked from the beginning. Circumstances then demanded that I pass the leadership role on to someone else before it was completed. Yet I can now

see the work we did as patterns of interaction which will provoke and inform further patterns of interaction under the new leadership and that this will take place in a context in which the vice presidents differing perspective which will change the dynamics again. My colleagues' interpretations of what has happened up to now in the project will change in light of new circumstances. My successor will find new ways of constructing the future of this project as the participants work with him to interpret the past and move on to creating the next phase together.

The report of Frost et al (2001), with which I started this paper, now seems to me to be constrained by being written in the format of a standard journal article and by the need to adopt standard research methods in the quest for validity. Somehow it feels like the real story is missing. It is what Stacey (2005) describes as a highly rational, de-contextualised account with a hindsight view. When I spoke to the founding dean for the Environment School at Duke University about his experience of establishing an environment institute, he talked about similar issues to those raised by Frost et al, yet somehow I felt during the conversation that I was getting closer to what it really meant to try and realise a project like this. He was describing the uncertainty, emotion, messiness (Stacey 2005) which I could recognise and acknowledge from my own experience. When he talked in detail about the way he felt after the President asked him to go out and work with the university community at Duke, it told me a lot more than the rather passionless prose used to describe similar events at Emory by Frost et al.

Do I believe that what I have described has any value or validity as a piece of research? It has value for me, since I believe I am developing my practice as a manager in my own organisation. I will continue to work on new projects and to use the reflexive approach to my work that I have begun to develop here as I explore what collegiality might mean in the modern university setting. In my next project I will describe my experience of a series of encounters in which collegiality and managerialism were interwoven as themes, as I worked with a range of colleagues and consultants on the 'change process' in the university.

3 Radical Reform at the University

The money-changers have invaded the temple of the intellect and it will take more than whips to get rid of them (Harris 1998)

Introduction

The university is currently undergoing the most radical change in its 150 year history. This reform is in response to changing external circumstances and a series of critical reports on how the university plans and organizes its affairs. The change programme picked up momentum during 2005.

Since starting to write this thesis I have become aware of a great sense of ambivalence in regard to my own position in the collegiality/managerialism debate. When I was dean, I became acutely aware of the limitations of the collegial approach to decision making and on occasion longed for the power to make decisions without having to engage in endless persuasion and debate in attempts to gain 'consensus'. In my first project I described how I felt this need most acutely during an attempt to re-structure the faculty. Ironically, in the summer of 2005 I became part of a major re-structuring exercise at the university which was led in a very determined way from the top of the organisation, heavily supported by consultants and the eventual outcome (at least on paper) differed very little from the president's initial vision. What I want to explore in this project is as follows:

- My experience of involvement in a major change project, in which I was a participant in the implementation process rather than the instigator.

- The experience of the change process at a number of different levels in the university and the way in which the distribution of power is changing.

- The way in which the changes have polarised the university community into established and outsider groups.

- I will explore the idea that what has been going on is changes in power relations and that the polarisation is based on the clash of ideologies underpinning both managerialism and collegiality.

II Public Sector Change as a Global Phenomenon

Clarke and Newman (1997) in their book 'The Managerial State' describe how the New Right in Britain and the USA amalgamated a series of arguments about alleviation of waste, reducing taxation and improving quality in order to challenge the welfare state, not alone as an economic drain but an active agency in national decline. These arguments were supplemented by attacks on the 'looney left', liberal welfare professionals, trendy excesses in egalitarianism, anti-discrimination policies and moral relativism. They then trace attempts to resolve the crisis of the welfare state in the UK through a programme of reconstruction following the election of Margaret Thatcher's government in 1979. 'Neo-Taylorist' management processes involving the setting of targets, performance indicators, strengthening and incentivising line management and rewarding those who got results, became prevalent. There was a significant move away from discussion of a system based on the practices and values of public administration, to value for money and efficiency. The role and values of professionals (social workers, doctors) became intertwined with and subservient to new, externally derived values of efficiency, customer satisfaction and value for money with the ultimate objective of limiting public spending. The progressive language of missions, visions, radical transformation, the need to embrace change resulted in a ' tyranny of transformation' which helped legitimise the processes of state restructuring and was accompanied by massive investment in management training, extensive use of consultants and the introduction of techniques such as strategic planning and business process re-engineering. They state that managerialism has not just been an instrument of change, but that the managerial discourse has helped push the change process along by making it seem inevitable, that there was no other way. A range of narratives were used to persuade; cautionary tales based on the bleak prospect of failure, heroic formulations based on the vision of charismatic leaders and

enticing descriptions of the benefits of getting to the promised land. The reputation of organisations become dependant on being seen as 'business-like' and 'well managed' and this helped legitimise the need for strategic plans, organisational re-structuring, re-branding and the resources required to comply with audit and other monitoring requirements. Doctors, head teachers and policemen become managers and attempted to integrate traditional professional values with a managerial role in order to deal with all of the conflicting demands and expectations that accompany such dual responsibility. This managerial approach has become dominant in the public sector in the UK, USA, Australia and New Zealand.

The advent of managerial approaches in university administration has been written about extensively and has been the subject of much controversy in most parts of the world. This advent is universally attributed to the need to respond to external pressures and the rapid pace of change by both its advocates and critics. Wilson (2001), writing from the viewpoint of an academic union official, describes the proletarianisation of academic labour in the UK as being characterised by a diminution of trust and discretion, growing division of labour, stronger hierarchies of management control, greater conflict, growing routinisation of tasks, bureaucratisation and worse conditions and facilities. He also refers to less easily described subjective aspects of the process, such as changed class identification and different ideological outlook but does not investigate these. Shelley (2005,p 222) interviewed a range of university employees and describes the 'realities of working in universities', how work is made less attractive as it is bureaucratised and routinised and loss of control despite the retention of the appearance of a working environment in which autonomy and opportunity prevail. He describes the demoralisation which comes with low pay, high workloads, reliance on goodwill to get work done with reducing resources, insecurity and lack of recognition and career development opportunities. Gumport (2000), writing about the changing discourse in the USA warns of the dangers of submitting too fully to market pressures and managerial rationales which could lead to damage to the long term educational legacies and democratic interests that have characterized American public education. Hellstrom (2004) writes of the need for an acceptable

psychological contract or 'pre-contractual relationship' with the constituent parts of the academic organisation to modulate the harder managerial attempts to 'simulate market conditions'. Shelley (2005, p 233-35) points to deficiencies in the training of managers in the university sector and suggests that management development will help managers work in 'radically different ways' as opposed to 'muddling though'. He also suggests that managers need to develop greater ethical sensitivity, the capacity to develop effective relationship building attributes and a sense of responsibility and moral courage. Sarra (2006) however, while describing his own experience of working in the National Health Service in the UK, doubts that individuals can be taught to behave in particular ways and acquire the kind of traits prescribed by Shelley and believes that such beliefs do not take adequate account of the complex relational nature of organisational life. Williams (2006) is also critical of notions which 'imbue leaders with supra-normal powers of communication', which enable them to mobilise organisations to move through time towards the achievement of predetermined goals, and of leadership development programmes which start out from this premise. Both Sarra and Williams believe that the complexity of organisational life can better be explained by taking up the idea of complex responsive processes of relating (Stacey 2003) which Williams (2006) understands as 'the way in which our experience (conscious and unconscious) as human beings emerges from the patterning of interactions occurring as we interact with others socially together in a living present'. Sarra (2006) and Williams (2006) describe how decisions and ideology developed at the macro level (national, global) have significant implications for the way in which local interaction is patterned within organisations and frequently lead to perverse outcomes which were not anticipated by their originators. These global decisions and ideologies have profound effects on the lives of those working in organisations affected by them and both Sarra and Willaims describe the anxiety and alienation felt by those exposed to a 'performance culture.' I will describe how global patterns in thinking about the roles and function of universities have had similar influences on patterns of interaction in my own organisation and how ideas on 'managerialism' and 'collegiality' have become polarised as opposing ideologies.

I referred in my second project to Meads notion of cult values and described much of the work going on in the university as attempts by many of us to negotiate the obstacles encountered on the way to achieving the president's vision for the university: the cult value of being known as a leading research university. The value system associated with collegiality could likewise be described in cult terms. Mead (1934, p155) in his book *Mind, Self and Society*, developed the concept of 'the generalised other' and illustrates the concept by describing the difference in small children between games and play. Play is not bound by any rules and the child can do as it pleases, especially when it is alone, but as soon as the child begins to play organised games at kindergarten, it must begin to take account of how others are participating. The moves and tactics adopted by the other players come to determine the way in which the player reacts to the others. Mead describes this as taking up the attitude of the generalised other:

> The organised community or social group which gives to the individual his unity of self may be called the generalised other. The attitude of the generalised other is the attitude of the whole community. Thus, for example, in the case of such a social group as a ball team, the team is the generalised other in so far as it enters – as an organised process or social activity – into the experience of any one of the individual members of it….The self-conscious human individual, then, takes or assumes the organised social attitudes of the given social group or community (or of some one section thereof) to which he belongs toward the social problems of various kinds which confront that group or community at any given time (Mead, 1934, pp154-156)

The national and international context of the university can be seen as a social object or generalised other; the yearning at national level for a knowledge-led economy, the perception of research as one of the solutions to the flight of manufacturing industry, research intensive universities as being 'better' than those which concentrate on teaching and learning. These are taken up by those at the top of the organisation as cult values or the 'generalised other'. Professional norms, dialogue and democracy in determining the shape of the future are cult

values for those whose lives have been shaped by collegial processes, which Mead would also see as generalised other, an 'assumption of the organised social attitudes of the given social group or community'. Elias (1970, p128) would see the social process of the playing out of these opposing ideologies (or figurations) as a constant to and fro movement while the different factions influence, enable and constrain one another. The identity of the members of each is determined by how they see themselves in relation to the others, but, interestingly, Elias does not see such identity as being fixed. Just as individuals change, so do groups and societies change through interaction. I will draw heavily on Elias' work on established/outsider relations to illustrate my understanding of what is happening in the university. Thus, what I will describe in this project is the playing out of opposing ideologies, how each side is influenced by the other and how the dominant ideology is the one which seems to possess sufficient power to hold sway. All of this takes place under the guise of a 'rational' planning and restructuring process.

III Global Influences Become Local

While I was on holiday in June 2005, I received a phone call from Bernard, the interim principal of the new College of Life Sciences (CLS). He asked if I would consider becoming vice-principal for teaching and learning reporting to him and, in the short term, acting in the role of 'change co-ordinator' in the run –up to September 1st. When I got back I arranged to meet him and agreed to take on this role with immediate effect. He also wanted me to act as deputy principal in his absence (he was leaving on holiday for three weeks within a few days). Bernard spoke about how he trusted me 'totally' even though we hardly knew one another. The difference between our positions became starkly clear to me when he stated at a meeting of the CLS heads of school, that he knew 'that we all think the same way here'. At the same meeting some exasperation was expressed by the Head of the School of Chemistry about the way 'things were going around here' referring to the way in which decision-making was being centralized. The prevailing view was 'well that's the way things are around here now'. The movement of power towards the centre of the organisation was almost palpable.

Almost immediately I discovered that there was a team of consultants working on IT projects, website re-design, branding, communications plans, modularization (conversion of traditional year- long teaching programmes into semesterised units) and timetable development and organisational structures. The Director of Strategy has 'done a deal' on behalf of the university. These consultants are known in the College of Arts and Celtic Studies as 'the Mormons'. Jerry was one of these consultants who was working closely with Jason on the structures and organisation charts and had frontline responsibility for developing proposals which would then be reviewed by Jason and senior management. During my first transition co-ordinators (TC) meeting, I listened to a detailed presentation on the modularization project. This was followed by a series of 'issues' which had been raised by my fellow co-ordinators from their 'issues logs'. I quickly realized the enormity of this change project and that I was three weeks behind everyone else, despite having the largest and most complex college in which to 'co-ordinate the change'. Bernard had mentioned several times in our meeting that CLS alone was bigger than two of the other universities in the greater Dublin area.

Later that day Jerry and I met; he described the series of sub-projects for which he was responsible and how he used Microsoft Project to manage all of them. The scale of the project seemed overwhelming, particularly when there were only eight weeks left to make it all happen. A few days later, at the next TC meeting, the 'communications plan' was on the agenda. I stated my view that there was an enormous gap between the rhetoric issued to the press and the average academic at the frontline; that there was a huge challenge for all of us in implementing these changes. Alex, the communications consultant intervened to tell me that she would help me with a communications plan. I had a very strong feeling that the gap between the public position of the university and the realities for the staff was enormous. Many people I spoke to a daily basis were behaving as if nothing would change, yet we were now only seven weeks from September 1st. When Alex and I met later, she asked what I would like to communicate. My response was 'I have no idea, I've been in this job three days'. We agreed to arrange a mass meeting (there are over 700 staff in CLS) on modularization

and timetabling, because 'that's what the other co-ordinators were doing'. I was made to feel that I had to communicate something, since I was the one who mentioned the gulf between rhetoric and reality. Since Bernard was now on holiday, I also attended all of his meetings as deputy principal in addition to being change co-ordinator.

In my second meeting with Jerry he described how he went about the change process in other organisations, showed me some slides he had about the thought processes people had during major change projects, how they moved towards compliance, commitment or non-compliance based largely on self-interest. The process of dealing with non-compliant individuals was to examine their power base and decide if they should receive attention or be ignored. I stated that rolling out the President's vision to 2500 staff and expecting widespread commitment was going to be impossible and Jerry agreed.

Universities are very complex organisations and their management is shared between government, the vice-chancellors and the professoriate (Wilson 2001). He describes as a fundamental problem the fact that commitment in the academic world derives from a value system which transcends the enterprise and is deeply rooted in the notions of professionalism, academic standards and collegiality. Jerry's understanding of these ideas could not but be very limited and I decided that I would try very hard to introduce these topics into our discussions whenever possible. My feeling during my first conversation was that Jerry knew he was working with a cookbook and recognized that the approach was manipulative and without much depth, but that his job was to deliver a 'result' for September 1st . At the end of this conversation we agreed that I should concentrate on the structures in Life Sciences and that he would work closely with me. We also agreed that since CLS was the most complex of the colleges, it would make sense for him to start there.

I started to work with heads of school individually and collectively on the organisation charts for their schools. At the first meeting the Head of Medicine produced a chart and declared that the Medical school needed a degree of autonomy and could not be held back by bureaucracy. He then left the meeting

early for a meeting with the President. This felt almost like a declaration of UDI, reinforced by the announcement that he was going to meet the President. Others agreed to bring forward charts for their schools. Peter from Molecular Sciences sent me a draft which I asked Jason to look at. When Jason approved it with some minor changes I asked Peter to send it around to the others for information. At an away day substituting for Bernard, I raised my concerns with the senior management team about the lack of understanding of what was going on, even at head of school level and suggested that a similar event for heads of school to the current away-day would be very helpful in developing understanding of the multi-faceted nature of the change project.

I had to leave the away-day for a couple of hours to meet with my heads of school about organisation charts. In the preceding days I had had conversations with a number of them about their proposed structures. I could see that some of them had very large executive committees (occasionally with elected members outnumbering the selected group) and we explored how the dynamics of power would work in such situations, especially when the president regarded the head of school as personally responsible for planning, outcomes and accountability. During the discussion we talked about some of these issues and the variability in the dispositions of the eight heads in CLS. Several were standing on the old collegial ground, while also acknowledging at the same time that collegiality was not going to be any kind of excuse for lack of success in the new culture. Some felt that participation by colleagues in decision-making was crucial. Others felt elected members were crucial. But Paddy also talked about buy-in, that feeling involved is important for faculty, to which I said that holding elections isn't any kind of guarantee that this would happen. The Head of Chemistry (who worked in Canada for many years) stated that you can make any decision or give any order you like, but if 'they' don't like it, 'they' won't do it. Paddy agreed, but we didn't develop the point. I mentioned in passing that this conversation represented a microcosm of a more widespread debate about collegiality and managerialism and everyone laughed. I had a strong feeling that we were all a bit at sea here, not knowing quite what was the right route to take, and yet it seemed like a rich discussion where we were talking overtly about power, collegiality, roles and functions of heads of school in the new structures.

I also felt quite strongly that the president had quite a strong presence in the room as we debated these issues. Peter remarked at the end on how different it was being in a meeting when I was in the chair.

At the next meeting of the TC group, I again raised the issue of the gap between the administration building and the frontline staff, who I described as being in a fog. I spoke positively about a heads of school away-day which had happened a few days earlier following my suggestion and suggested that they needed some help with communicating key messages from the centre to staff in their schools. The registrar had returned from holidays and showed particular interest in what I was saying. The issues logs then took up most of the meeting and I found myself impressed not alone at how well the 'issue log' process was working, but also at how quickly decisions were being taken by senior management. The big problem was getting these decisions out to the schools. It was now mid July; the new structures were to be operational in six weeks and most people I met said that they hadn't a clue what was going on. I felt like a broken record when I brought this up again at the senior management team meeting, but I could see the principals of Human Sciences and Arts nodding vigorously in agreement. I mentioned that Harry, internal communications officer and I were making a presentation to administration staff on 'what was going on' and that a version of this might be suitable for heads of school; this updated version eventually appeared after I nagged both Harry and Alex several more times.

By now I was ready to turn in the organisation charts for the eight schools and this resulted in a series of meetings with Jerry and Jethro (former management consultant, now on staff). One of these meetings took up most of a day and we spent most of the time debating and arguing the rationale for the proposals being made by CLS. The documents provided the basis for the discussion but we had an intense debate about how decision-making takes place, the value that is placed on participation, how troublesome the word manager is. I found myself continually explaining what was meant by the various lines, arrows and boxes in the organisational charts and as we did this I began to recognize what a shallow and impoverished representation of relationships in the workplace the organisation chart is. The debate was intensely collegial in its tone and yet we

spent the day talking about one of the icons of bureaucracy (Birnbaum, 1988). We concluded by acknowledging the next steps which needed to be taken. Overnight Jerry re-drew the charts to take account of the previous day's work and had listed thirty three questions which arose during the previous day's debate and which needed answers before we could move on. I remarked to myself how different this approach was to what might have happened only a few years earlier. At the end of the meeting there would probably have been a diary exchange, where we might have found that we couldn't get together for at least a week and much of the impetus would have been lost.

Jerry had answers to most of the 33 questions within 48 hours. Jethro had looked at a new statute which sets out in legal terms what must happen and he had uncovered a number of constraints on our ideas. These included requirements to hold large assemblies of faculty at school and college level and described voting procedures etc. I tried to explain that these were important vehicles for communication, even if they were not effective decision making entities. Jerry said 'OK, so let's give them a sandpit to play in'. I took exception to this description and we argued further.

After a couple of hours I got weary. We had spent a day and half debating the organisational charts. As we parted company I wondered aloud to Jethro how long people would spend thinking about these charts, in which we and the heads of school had invested so much effort. Most of the time had been spent talking about interactions between people and power relations. The charts seemed like a fairly stark and brutal representation of these relationships. Jethro's response was that it often takes a long time to prepare a good meal, but it gets eaten in minutes!

Around this time I found myself 'crash-testing' some of the ideas we generated with David a technician from whom I have taken counsel for nearly thirty years. As we spoke I began to realize the enormity of what was to be achieved over a five week period. It was starkly obvious that some of the decisions which had been taken were not viable, but there was a great measure of fatalism about doing anything to remedy the problems. My own school was to consist of a

merger of three very diverse disciplines. There would be 95 academics reporting to the head of school. All of the administrative structures were to change, yet nobody knew anything of how it was to work.

On September 1st there was a message waiting in everyone's voicemail from the President talking about the major change which had been achieved and looking forward to us all moving forward together. Some made jokes about how good he was to have stayed up all night leaving these messages on our phones; others remarked on how hollow it seemed to use technology to affect personal contact by this person who was rarely, if ever spotted on campus. Still others remembered sardonically his statements about the 'mature collegial debate' which had taken place during the change process.

IV Some Early Outcomes of the Change

As I walked around the university during September and October, I could sense a great deal of anxiety and unhappiness. The university had reduced the number of departments and centres by two thirds. The re-structuring had resulted in profound changes, many of which were felt to be destructive and without necessary replacement structures. People complained about not knowing how to get a cartridge for their printer since departments had been abolished, the head of the business school resigned and was quoted in a student newspaper as being disillusioned with the centralization of power and many academics talked about how the values of the university were changing and feelings of powerlessness. My concerns were amplified when the Registrar (deputy president) said that the view on the top corridor was that the re-structuring was done now and that we were ready to move on to the next phase. Certainly this was the tone of the public announcements from the university (re-structuring had been a success) and the re-structuring achievement was very much welcomed by politicians and the press.

A few weeks after the new structures were implemented, reports of unhappiness in my own school were so widespread that I felt I had to instigate a meeting in which representatives of the different parts the school could describe their

concerns to the new head of school. The issues raised at this meeting included loss of identity and international standing, old structures swept away with nothing useful in their place, rumours and gossip being the main communication methods, teaching being sidelined as a marginal activity, centralization of power (described as dictation), faculty responding to the 'research intensive university' vision by closing their doors and getting on with their own scholarship and not wanting to be disturbed by administrative work. Most of these views were re-iterated at a university-wide open meeting organized by one of the unions, but additionally, one professor described an atmosphere of fear in the university which meant that people were afraid to speak out about what they saw happening because of the perceived risk of being marginalized as troglodyte change resistors. The narrative here was one of raw power being exercised by a ruthless new regime with surly compliance (at best), fatalistic acceptance of the changes and the eclipse of collegiality and democratic governance as the prevailing values. This discourse spilled over into the Vincent Browne column in the Irish Times:

> Earlier this week I received the following message in an e-mail from a contact at UCD: "Like the general public... you (like the Times and the so-called Independent) seem to be completely uninterested in the demise of the notion of University in Ireland. Just today at UCD**,** we were delivered new contracts, in which all previous reporting relationships (typically to a democratically elected Head of Department) were superseded (without our consent) by reporting relationship to the Head of School (a direct appointee of the President). In effect, Fascism has been imposed. This heralds the official end, in Ireland, of University as social institution. Unscrupulous Multi-nationals (and foreign political interests) and the politicians they support are now safe from open criticism, as Ireland's former Universities have now become (like-minded) corporate entities themselves. Congratulations. By your apathy and unwillingness to take a stand, you are a party to this. For shame."
>
> I (*Browne*) replied: "I do not understand how requiring lecturers to be responsible to the head of a school equals fascism, the end of university as

a social institution and the intrusion of unscrupulous multinationals into academia. My failure to understand this accounts for my complicity."

This prompted the response: "I can tell from the tone of your response that you obviously have no concern about the notion of the social role of a University. To my way of thinking, a place which is merely somewhere for the wealthy to send their children for free job training, in order to perpetuate their advantage, is not a University". (Browne, 2005)

So, in the pages of the Irish Times, the debate about ways in which universities are managed was played out in caricature with academics attempting to defend the apparently indefensible and the mystified journalist not even having to move towards New Right ideology to make the stance of the academics seem ridiculous. A week later a further article, written by the new head of the School of Sociology appeared, in which he stated that 'in UCD we have experienced the corporate model of governance being imposed on us at great speed and the last vestiges of academic self-management swiftly removed' (Allen, 2005). He goes on to deplore the establishment of pseudomarkets, cost centres which compete with one another, benchmarks, key performance indicators and states that, unfortunately for this kind of thinking, some things are unquantifiable (meaning, presumably, much of what goes on in universities).

A few months later, an apologia for the changes written by the Principal of the College of Human Sciences (with whom the head of sociology is said to have had a widely overheard row on the way the university was changing) appeared in the same newspaper. She referred to the call for change in the sector from the Minister for Finance in his budget speech and described the reasons for radical structural change, which included strengthening the centre of the university to deal with 'veto players' and enabling it to plan its future (Laffan, 2006). It is intriguing to me that this debate is taking place in the pages of the Irish Times rather than in the university.

A number of other narratives were playing out in parallel to these. I met a zoologist who complained that there were too many colleagues jostling for

position on the high moral ground; that they would be far better off 'getting on with it' and capitalising on the new opportunities which were available. Others, who were destined for success according to the emerging criteria, endorsed the president's vision and supported the changes. The university communications office was doing a very effective job of positioning the university and the president as innovative and shaping the agenda for the Irish higher education sector, having re-structured a somnolent and unsuccessful organisation into a more manageable and streamlined entity. Stacey (2003) refers to legitimate and shadow discourses which take place in organisations. The official discourse is the organisation as represented on its website or in press releases, while the shadow discourse takes place outside of official channels and frequently consists of conversations in corridors after meetings or gossip in tea rooms. I have had a sense of the importance of the shadow discourse for some time (cf Project 1), but my awareness of its importance is increasing all of the time and I have a strong sense that the current administration's insensitivity to this part of organisational life is a major shortcoming. This lack of sensitivity has led directly, in my view, to the debate spilling over to the newspapers.

I was involved personally in this change programme as a change co-ordinator, in which I attempted to advance a role for collegial processes, so I feel some responsibility for what has happened. I feel an intuitive sympathy for those who experience the changes as oppressive, devaluing and associated with a loss of identity, which may have some basis in experiences in my early life, and yet I vividly recall the exasperation which I have felt when trapped in collegial processes without the capacity to make any kind of progress until 'everybody was on board'. It was distressing to see so much unhappiness following a project in which I was so intimately involved.

V Foucault and Power

Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* has been used by criminologists, feminists, sociologists and philosophers to discuss the ramifications and consequences of disciplinary power in modern society (Hull, 2000). Indeed, it has been used by a wide range of authors to illustrate the exercise and experience of power in the

workplace, including universities. Anderson (2001) states that, in the discourse employed by academics experiencing such changes, the word managerial is overwhelmingly employed in a way that emphasises the negative effects on those below the management hierarchy. The experience described by colleagues at my own school and by some of those at the union meeting has some resonance with Foucault's description of the effect of the exercise of power on human bodies:

> The body is …directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs….the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body. (Foucault, 1975, p 25)

My colleagues are feeling put upon by the new regime, by their exposure to the 'management tsunami' which has overtaken the university and is putting in place many standard techniques designed to improve productivity, to 'carry out tasks' to 'perform ceremonies' with a view to creating 'docile bodies' and 'useful bodies'. They could probably identify with Kunda's (1992:11, cited by Newton, 1999) view that the change programme 'seemed to signal new forms of normative control designed to elicit and direct the required efforts of (organisational) members by controlling the underlying experiences, thoughts, and feelings that guide their actions'. Foucault writes about Benthams prison design, the panopticon, in which the warders are centrally placed with cells illuminated from behind. The warders can see everything going on in the cells; the prisoners cannot see the officers; they can know only that their every action is visible to the authorities. The prisoners internalise the reality of being visible at all times and physical punishment is no longer necessary. Roberts (2005) suggests that contemporary technologies and power bases ensure that people and groups can be made visible and thereby compared, differentiated, hierarchised, homogenised, excluded. Foucault describes how such visibility assures the hold of the power that is exercised over them:

> He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously on himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (Foucault, 1979, pp202-3)

There is no doubt that the way in which power is exercised in the university has changed radically and it is tempting to describe the experience of many of my colleagues in Foucauldian terms. The idea of the 'panopticon' of accountability, space audits, student enrolment for individual courses, numbers of publications and research income has resonated even with me at times during the current process. The lack of any obvious concerted effort to resist the changes and the apparent fatalistic acceptance of what was going on by many could be taken as indicating the academics 'becoming the principle of their own subjection'. However, it has been argued that many of these perspectives prematurely lament the end of employee recalcitrance and exaggerate the magnitude and totality of organisational controls, generating over-managed and over-controlled images of individuals, organisations, and societies (Gabriel, 1999). Others have also found the image of 'docile workers' derived from Foucault to be unconvincing and state that such readings overlook the place and practice of resistance in the workplace (Newton 1996, Thompson and Ackroyd 1995). A recent example of resistance within the organisation followed a *volte face* on the part of the administration on some of the criteria to be used in the next round of promotions. An academic active in one of the unions retaliated almost immediately by making a freedom of information request on the procurement processes used by the university during the hiring of a group of consultants, in order to evaluate their compliance with university procurement policies. This tactic is designed to inflict inconvenience and embarrassment on the administration in the event of non-compliance and could become yet another public irritant (leaked, no doubt, to the Irish Times). Giddens (1984:16) argues that it is inappropriate to think of power structures 'grinding out docile bodies' but that there are dependencies between the actors in social interaction and that subordinates can influence the activities of their superiors, even if it is to direct them to spend time on the possible flouting of university procurement policy. He

refers to this as the 'dialectic of control' in social systems. I am not convinced that academics will become 'docile bodies' for very long and believe that the sites which Foucault used (prisons, mental institutions and schools) are rather different to universities and so I would wish to examine the power relations from other perspectives.

Ramsden (1998) declares that the weaknesses of traditional collegial approach are too great for a time when rapid decisions have to be made and where quick responses to external stimuli are required. Yet he too has concerns about the failure of managerial systems to adequately address the fundamentals of academic work and states that they often reward passive responsiveness. He caricatures managerial and collegial approaches as follows:

> The presenting symptoms on the one hand include belligerent and arbitrary management tactics, complete with admonishing statements about academics ostrich like unwillingness to 'accept reality' and on the other, eloquently expressed acrimony, enmity and nostalgia for a better, freer time when the fatal disease of corporate management had not invaded our universities. (Ramsden, 1998, p22)

He then goes on to call for a better understanding of the phenomena of collegiality, academic autonomy and academic bitterness as an essential step towards finding a suitable treatment for these problems. This too is my interest, and it is my belief that invoking Foucault does not provide an appropriate basis on which to develop this understanding.

VI Rational Management

Stacey (2006 p31) suggests that in the UK the basic approach to public sector governance is based on a simple form of systems thinking known as cybernetics. This is a theory of control which has been imported into the social sciences from the world of engineering, the most frequently cited example of which is the central heating system. These are self regulating systems in which simple feedback mechanisms are designed into the system by an engineer. The user of

the system then decides on performance levels for the system and as in the case of the central heating system, adjusts the thermostat which turns the boiler on or off depending on the room temperature. Stacey (2006) states that all planning and budgeting systems are cybernetic systems which involve managers, leaders and external agencies in their application, and they place a great deal of emphasis on control:

> This emphasis on control focussed attention on procedures, bureaucracies and paper trails to such an extent that the fundamental importance of human interaction, trial and error, and the highly political ways in which private sector organisations, in fact, function tends to be obscured. We could say that the ordinary day-to-day rather messy nature of managing in commercial organisations became invisible, cloaked by a myth of calculating rationality.   (Stacey, 2006, p30)

He goes on to state that rational approaches to planning and implementation place most of the emphasis on the content of the strategy and does not pay sufficient attention to the processes involved in the development and implementation of strategy. However, this university is legislatively required to engage in strategic planning and the universities have had vague promises of rewards for restructuring for the sake of effectiveness, so what is management to do? Ignore these requirements and risk its future funding? Senior management has had little choice but to go the route of planning and restructuring, and has gone about it by enlisting the help of consultants who are accustomed to routinely implementing such projects in an unquestioning way through the use of templates, which will ensure that the project is delivered on time and on budget. Birnbaum (2001) describes how the university system in the United States has similarly been subjected to a series of management fads including strategic planning over a forty year period and how they adopt these under state or federal influence, even while the private sector is abandoning them. Mintzberg (1994) is critical of the unquestioning adoption of strategic planning outside of the machine organisation and, in particular, in universities:

> Almost all (books and articles about planning in universities) rely on the conventional assumptions of planning, namely that strategies should emanate from the top of the organisation full blown, that goals can be clearly stated, that the central formulation of strategies must be followed by their persuasive implementation, that the workers (in this case professors) will (or must) respond to these centrally imposed strategies. (Mintzberg,1994, p404)

He goes on to state that the strategic analysis has a major role to play in the professional organisation, but that this analysis is conducted by the professionals themselves 'not so much for central control and coordination, as in the debate and interplay that make up the collective process of decision-making' (ibid p406).

Stacey (2006) states that since 'marketisation and managerialism have become the dominant ideologies of public sector governance, these particular power figurations seem natural, indeed quite unquestionable'. The dominance of this ideology, based on rational forms of planning, which take little account of process, is so great and so unquestioned, that even in universities, its canons are accepted without question. But even in the medicine field, the adoption of new approaches based on 'evidence' has been shown to be, to some extent, socially constructed, subject to the attitudes and intuition of the practitioners to 'movement within indeterminate or ambiguous relationships' (Wood et al. 1998).

VII Changing Power Relations

I recall speaking to Bernard and one of the consultants about how I felt about what was going on. I referred to the organisation charts in which we had all invested so much effort and which I thought of as a crude representation of the relationships between the people working in the university. I realize now, six months later that I have never looked at them again and my guess is that others have not done so either. Giddens (1984) criticizes 'functionalist' understandings of such structures:

> Structure….is naively conceived of in terms of visual imagery, akin to the skeleton or morphology of an organism or to the girders of a building. Structure appears as external to human action, as a source of constraint on the free initiative of the independently constituted subject. (Giddens 1984, p16)

I have occasionally used a medical metaphor which describes the university as a patient being ministered to by the consultant (the president) and his two registrars, bolstered by the views of diagnostic services (consultants of various hues) and supported by junior clinicians (change co-ordinators) and the contract nursing staff (external consultants). The patient is seen as separate, and unlikely to have much understanding of the procedures which were necessary to save its life. The consultation with the patient to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of the complaint is necessarily brief because of pressure of other business and little effort is spent on describing the treatment plan because of the urgency of the whole situation.

It will not help to push this analogy much further, but the point I am trying to make is that the president is treating the organisation as if it were a patient or a system, with a malfunction on which work needed to be done. Seeing the organisation as a thing is a key part of the treatment plan and his actions represent a further stage of the functionalisation of his vision that we make our way into the top thirty universities in Europe. This took shape as the development of a new strategy and its implementation through appropriate structures, but these structures, in Giddens words, were seen as external to human action (consisting of the lines and boxes I described earlier) and in my view insufficient account was taken of human agency throughout the process. Giddens argues that 'human agents never passively accept external conditions of action, but more or less continually reflect on them and reconstitute them in the light of their particular circumstances' (Giddens, 1991:175).

So, if following those who bring the thinking of Foucault to bear on such issues seems inappropriate, because I don't believe it reasonable that my academic

colleagues can be described as products of a discursive regime, as a 'kind of Lockean *tabula rasa* in latter day Foucauldian garb' (Benhabib 1992, cited by Newton, 1999) then, other approaches need to be investigated.

VIII Norbert Elias

The work of the sociologist, Norbert Elias brings a number of useful perspectives on the situation in the organisation. In contrast to Foucault, he argued for a relational theory of power which was not stable, nor one in which the power was exercised by one party and experienced by the other. He believed that a power relationship can only exist where one party does not have complete control over the other, where both depend on one another to some extent, even if there is a great asymmetry about the distribution of the power. People or groups, which have functions for one another, exercise constraint over one another (Elias (1998, p120). If I am the holder of budget, for example, then I can expect that those who report to me and depend on me for resources are, in some sense, in my power. But I in turn, depend on them to use the resources appropriately, so they have power over me. If one of my colleagues succeeds in winning a major research grant with some discretionary spending, then my power over that person is substantially reduced; he does not need what I have so badly any more, so the power relationship changes. Elias describes such relationships as 'power figurations' and they are characterized by constant movement and change. He uses the analogy of a game (Elias 1970, p81-83) where the players always have control over one another, even where one player is much better than the other; he will always have to respond to the second player's moves, even if they are not very threatening, so though the outcome may not be in doubt, the way the game plays out cannot be predicted. A process 'which neither of them has planned' will ensue. He then goes on to examine what happens if there are two or more players and how the game becomes much more complex, because each player has to respond to the moves of many others. Each is bound to the others in an interdependent way and the more players, the more complex the game becomes. So when a historian I met in the senior common room described his weariness with the 'new regime', he also mentioned that the president is likely some day soon to raise major funding for one of his special projects: a new

research institute. But the historian also feels there is a possibility that his colleagues may say they are not interested in 'the presidents institute', since they haven't really been asked what they think of the idea. So the president could work extremely hard to achieve a major objective for the university, but since he can't run the institute himself; he is constrained by the historians. He is bound to them in a relationship of interdependency, in a 'structural clinch' (Elias 1970, p170).

In his major work The Civilizing Process, Elias (1939) uses the term figuration to describe social processes where human beings have developed long and complex chains of interdependence networks and he has described in great detail the sociogenesis over many centuries of a number of human traits such as the control of violent urges and increasing shame over bodily functions. One of his crucial points is that these have developed through the interactions of many individuals over very long periods and were not the result of any grand plan and in this work he describes how constraints on 'animalic behaviour' have been internalized by individuals through processes of shame. He also describes how as a child begins life it not alone 'inherits' the beliefs, values, behaviours of its own family and others it encounters, it also inherits generations of figurational development and he claims that it is impossible to understand the psychogenesis of adult make-up separately from that of the sociogenesis of civilization.

I recall my first encounters with university life when I returned as a young academic in the 1970's; departmental meetings which were characterized by lively intellectual debates, occasional conflict and bitterness but always with an eye to the highest standards in teaching and research. These debates were moderated by a man who seemed impossibly wise, who knew when to draw the debate to a close and to invite his colleagues to make a decision, and who effectively brought the decisions to the next level in the hierarchy or ensured their implementation locally. Our little department was the most successful in the school and in many ways it represented the collegial ideal. My own values and beliefs about how universities should function were formed here in my experience as an 'infant' academic, and yet I was seeing and absorbing more than the behaviours of my colleagues. I was also being exposed to generations of

the academic *demos* as described by Tapper and Palfreyman (1998) and which had its origins (or sociogenesis to use Elias' language) in the great medieval universities. I was inheriting a value system which had to do with the importance of the debate in academic life. Decisions were being made by pooling the communal wisdom and many academics have inherited these values. My emotional response to the one and half day debate on structures with Jerry and Jethrro was rooted in this 'upbringing'. We had a fine debate about the relationships which might take place in the College of Life Sciences, I was able to make my points about dialogue and collegiality, Jethro and Jerry parried with the need for 'getting things done' and eventually we agreed. The debate was an important one for Jerry (he was moving on to similar debates with other colleges) and he acknowledged this. It was intensely collegial activity yet it was accompanied by rapid decision-making by the senior administration.

It is my belief that much of the alienation, unhappiness and distraction in the university at this time is to do with not taking account of this deeply held value of the importance of dialogue and debate. Yet collegial debate is frequently open to manipulation, craftiness, veto by those likely to be discomfited by decisions, and exclusion from 'favoured' groups (Ramsden 1998: 23). Most would acknowledge the need for a different *modus operandi* but feel a deep need for some involvement in the decisions and are deeply affronted by the 'Taylorisation' or proletarianisation (Wilson, 2001) of the university workplace by a management which they perceive to be inflicting decisions on them and micromanaging the affairs of the university to an unacceptable degree.

In his essay on the established and the outsiders, Elias (Elias and Scotson, 1994) describes in considerable detail his interpretation of a study of two groups of people living in an industrial town ('Winston Parva') in the midlands of the United Kingdom. A new housing estate was developed adjacent to a group of established residents who lived in a similar estate in the town for generations. On the surface it was difficult to see differences between the residents of either estate in terms of education, income or type of employment and yet a dynamic developed whereby the established group closed ranks against the 'outsiders' and stigmatized them as people of lesser worth. Elias described this as

illustrating a universal theme characterized by groups which are stronger than others in terms of power and see themselves as better, as the aristocracy. The established group in the town refused to have any social contact with the newcomers apart from that which was absolutely essential, they attributed superior human characteristics to themselves and the distance between the groups was supported by social control mechanisms such as praise gossip about the established and blame gossip about the 'others'. Examples of blame gossip of this kind from university life include what has been called the "the Rambo style of management accompanied by aggressive language – talk of kicking heads, 'fingering' people, colourful threats and curses" (Hellstrom, 2004).

In Winston Parva, exclusion and stigmatisation of the outsiders by the established group were powerful weapons used by them to maintain their identity, assert their superiority and keep the others firmly in their place. Elias writes about the fear of pollution by such groups through contact with the outsiders. The president's invisibility on campus, his decision to avoid the Academic Council and most other venues which might involve contact with the rest of the community must reflect this phobia; there cannot be any modification to the treatment plan through unnecessary contact with the patient; the treatment will be administered by others under instruction. Power differentials of this kind are also characterized by different cohesion rates in the two groups. Thus in Winston Parva the established group was much more integrated and succeeded in reserving many of the socially important positions for its members, thereby enhancing the power differential. Clearly in this university, the senior management team has been highly assiduous in reserving key positions for ideologically similar individuals (can there ever have been a university with three medicine graduates holding the three top administrative positions?) with a view to developing a cohesive view.

According to Elias a further 'regularity' of established groups is their capacity for attributing to the entire outsider group the bad characteristics of its worst members, while attributing to all its own the traits of its 'best' members. This further increases cohesion in the established group and provides a continuous stream of 'evidence' of the 'goodness' and 'badness' of the respective groups.

The outsider group, because of the asymmetry in the power relations between the two groups, is less coherent, less able to organize itself and, to some extent, the blame gossip enters the self-image of its members. Thus another ex-dean and I found ourselves in a car park a few months ago wondering if we were now part of the problem, as opposed to our former role of being the providers of solutions. The union meeting which was attended by a couple of hundred people had little impact. Attempts at orchestrating the election of 'dissidents' to the Governing Authority have had only modest success. There is no forum in which the community can engage in meaningful exchange with the administration which is likely to have any impact. Counter proposals are described as being against 'university policy' and that's an end to the matter. Small wonder, then, that the debate has moved to the pages of the Irish Times.

Elias was interested, not in which was wrong and which was right in Winston Parva, but in

> which characteristics of the developing community of Winston Parva bound two groups together to each other in such a way that the members of one of them felt impelled, and had sufficient power resources, to treat those of another group collectively with a measure of contempt, as people less well bred and thus of lower human value, by comparison with themselves. (Elias and Scotson, 1994 xxi)

The old residents of Winston Parva had known one another for generations and had established among themselves a common set of norms and the influx of the newcomers was seen as a threat to their way of life. While up to now I have been describing senior management at the university as the 'established' and this is undoubtedly the case as I write, at the time of the president's appointment the rest of the academic community were the established to whom he represented a threat. His predecessor had delegated all authority to deans and heads of department, who took this responsibility more or less seriously and these knew that if they made enough noise, any initiative coming from the administration could be delayed or even vetoed. The new president's inaugural lecture three weeks after he took office made it very clear that the power relations were about

to change significantly. This was not a man who would, like his predecessor, throw up his hands and say he had no money, that the resources had been distributed to the deans and he had no discretionary funds. Over the succeeding two years it has become more and more evident that the distribution of power has been largely reversed and that the established have become the outsiders. Those who were accustomed to wielding power through the manipulation of collegial approaches were now discovering that the new president was taking the authority conferred by the Universities Act very seriously.

The blame gossip ('research inactive', for example) means that an outsider can be shamed because he does not come up to the norms of the established group and, in their terms, he is considered alienated, anomic. Outsider groups cannot retaliate with an equally stigmatizing term (although a newspaper reference to Stalinist regimes in Irish universities did draw a response from the president). Allegations of managerial tsunami, inadequate consultation, unwarranted micro-management 'do not mean anything to them, they have no sting'. So what do the outsiders feel? Elias wonders if it is deprivation of value, of meaning, the capacity for self-love and self-respect. I frequently felt that I ought to make an appointment with the president to talk to him about what I could see and hear around the university and suggest to him that making himself more available would dramatically increase his 'power', but I was discouraged by some who were close to him. My conviction about this was not entirely personal; there is empirical evidence that presidents who are known to be capable of listening to their colleagues are more successful (Birnbaum 1991: 97)

Wilson (2001) has stated that the governance of universities is shared by the state, vice-chancellors and the professorate. The state, as represented by those working for the Higher Education Authority and the Department of Education have an agenda which is increasingly being informed by international trends towards accountability, value for taxpayers money and the role of more active styles of management. The idea of a university where academics can function as autonomous individuals following their own interests is anathema to these administrators who are driven by the need to move Ireland 'up the value chain' towards a 'knowledge economy'. The president's academic acculturation took

place at an Ivy League university in the USA, one of the world's leading research universities, and he sees the opportunity for us to take a more exalted place in the international hierarchy based on greatly increased national research funding opportunities. Many in the academic community share this ideal, but are faced daily with heavy teaching loads and increasing amounts of 'administrivia', while at the same time knowing that they need to make unprecedented levels of progress with their research in order to have any chance of gaining the approval of the established group. Ivy League universities have enormous endowments and very high tuition fees; this is a public university charged with mass education which derives the greatest part of its income from the state for teaching undergraduates. Thus the state, the president and the academic community are bound to one another in a structural clinch characterized by a range of conflicting aspirations and values. Elias would say that the emotional coherence of each of the groups is of a kind which only develops among humans who have lived together through a group process of some duration (Elias and Scotson, 1994: xxxviii). Thus the state officials have a great awareness and group solidarity, based on their own daily interactions around the decline in manufacturing industry and the need for a more highly educated workforce and research which will 'drive innovation'. The president and his team have 'grown up' in an Ivy League research atmosphere and have definite views on how the university should be changed to help it capitalize on the new opportunities. The approach they are using concurs closely with current discourses on public management. The academics are attempting to adjust to new structures which they experience as having many limitations while their budgetary position remains the same or worse. Many of them face classes with 400-600 students who must be educated for 'life-long learning, innovation and excellent communication skills'. They are the ones at the frontline attempting to functionalise the cult values espoused by the president and many are disillusioned, distressed or infuriated by a management style which largely excludes them from the decisions which affect their daily lives in profound ways. A recent survey of staff attitudes, which was leaked to a student newspaper, provides further gossip which tends to reinforce the views of the disaffected.

Towards the end of his essay on established and outsider relations Elias writes of what happens when the 'we-image' of a group begins to break down because of changed circumstances and he offers the example of once powerful nations whose superiority in relation to others has declined. He describes we-image as a personal version of collective fantasies (Elias and Scotson 1994: xliii) and states that this fantasy can live on for generations after new realities have taken hold. I would now see the attachment of academics to 'old collegiality' (Elton 1996) as a collective fantasy, attachment to which can have very few benefits in the academic world which now exists. Elias would describe it as a collective illness:

> The rewarding belief in the special virtue, grace and mission of one's own group may for generations shield members of an established group from the full emotional realization of their changed position, from the awareness that the gods have failed, that the group has not kept faith with them. (Elias and Scotson, 1994: xlv)

However, he also warns of the need to think about the temporal character of groups and to think of their relationships as processes in the sequence of time if one wants to understand the boundaries that people set up by distinguishing between different groups. It is important to remember that the change process has been in train for a very short time in the life of this university which has just completed the celebrations of its 150th anniversary. It is likely that here has always been asymmetry in power relations in this and other universities, but such relations are not fixed in stone (Newton 1999). What I describe is a highly personal account of what has been happening in the university over a period of months; already I can see colleagues adjusting to the changes; new relationships are developing, different people are taking up positions of responsibility and others are moving to accommodate to the changes to see if they can position themselves effectively. And yet, while I am in the middle of all this some measure of detachment is also necessary:

> To acquire insight into human figurations, it is necessary to achieve considerable intellectual detachment from the figuration of which one is a member, from its tendencies to change, its 'inevitability' and from the

forces which interlocking but opposing groups exert over each other (Elias 1970, p165)

And so I find myself beginning finally to understand what reflexivity might mean in this research programme. I am in the paradoxical position of trying to develop some level of detachment while being right in the middle of the 'tsunami' which is engulfing the organisation. The position of the totally impartial observer is impossible, and yet I am trying to make sense of what is happening as it happens from the inside.

Senior management in the university has made radical decisions about how the organisation would develop and be shaped in order to best secure its future. This was done by adopting in an unquestioning way, the processes of planning and structural re-organisation while paying insufficient attention to the processes of interaction, changing power relations and the highly political way in which the organisation functions. In my role as change co-ordinator, I was attempting in meetings, conversations and chance encounters to make sense of what was happening with those that I met. I instigated meetings and executed conversational turns which were seen as unusual by colleagues and consultants. This reflects how my understanding of the ways in which the organisation functions is deepening through my reflecting on events as they happen and, later, through different iterations of writing in a reflexive manner about what is going on.

IX Conclusion

In this project I have described my experience of being part of a change management team at a time of radical change and some of the immediate outcomes of that change. I have taken up the perspective of Elias as one which is helpful to me in making sense of what is going on and this has been especially helpful in terms of understanding relations of power in the organisation and outside it. It now seems to me that my experience has been one of interacting with individuals and groups who are also trying to make sense of what is going on. What we are trying to make sense of is the dramatic change in roles and

functions which has resulted from the change in leadership in the university. The leadership has espoused an approach to change which is based on formal strategic planning and structural change which is largely template driven on the basis of advice from consultants and, in my view, does not take adequate account of the need of academic people to be involved in decisions about their own destiny. At the same time the approach which is being taken is being lauded by Government ministers and officials who have their own ambitions for Ireland and who see what is happening in here as fitting in well with a discourse on management in the public sector which has become dominant in the last 25 years

In the concluding section of the postscript to his book *The Civilising Process*, Elias (1994: 482) uses the metaphor of a dance to illustrate the interdependency of states, families and monarchs and says that this allows an understanding of the relationship between the dance and the dancers, or individuals and society. One is not possible without the other; there can be no dance without the dancers and vice versa. As the dance changes, the dancers change, they occupy different parts of the floor, groups of dancers are influenced by the moves of those within the group, but also by those of other groups. No individual can predict exactly what another individual, or another group influenced by the individuals comprising that group might do. So the politicians and civil servants are dancing steps informed by world music, global trends, the disappearance of manufacturing industry, the urgency of developing the knowledge economy; the president is dancing to tunes learned at Harvard and to others provided in a formulaic way by consultants, many of the academics are dancing to an older tune which has gone out of fashion everywhere else and they complain that it's impossible to dance to this modern stuff. Yet they are all on the same dance floor. The academics could do with the president explaining some of the new steps and how, soon, no-one will want to dance with us in the old ways. But he just keeps asking the musicians to play tunes they can't comprehend.

So what's to be done? Where can I take a discussion on collegiality and managerialism? Is there anything further to be said about it? Those outside the academy ask why the university can't be more like a business. Academics see

the intrusion of many business practices as repellent and anathema to the very idea of the university (money changers in the temple of the intellect etc.). Elton (1996) described what he believed to be a new collegiality which looks like an amalgam of romantic notions of what the university could be like if only certain conditions were changed. He calls for wider dissemination of information, decisions to be made by teams, more knowledgeable academics (through training and development), replacement of hierarchies by greater trust and equal valuation of all academic tasks. While even he concedes that this represents an ideal world which unlikely to be readily attained, it seems to me to be hopelessly romantic.

Lohmann (2004) takes a more measured view of what might be possible and acknowledges that there are ways of going on in both communities from which both could learn.

> Businesspeople sigh, Can't the university be more like business. The Faculty complain about business values crowding out academic values. The truth, I contend, lies in the muddy middle. In some respects the university is becoming more like business, and in other respects business is becoming more like the university. The university would do well to emulate business on some dimensions, and business would do well to emulate the university on other dimensions. The worst case scenario is for the university to move away from those of its non-businesslike qualities that are worth preserving even while it apes business precisely on those qualities business is giving up. (Lohmann, 2004)

Ramsden (1998) while holding the view that collegiality has had a rather better press than it deserves also states that:

> Autocratic decisions by senior managers, lack of consultation over matters such as staff reductions and closure of departments, crisis-making as a form of legitimising centralised power, vice chancellorial statements that …deadlines leave 'no time for democracy', have created a backwash of resentment and a longing for a better time when academic managers were

first among equals. Most of this could and should have been avoided by better management of people. (Ramsden, 1998, p24)

My interest now is in looking more closely at some of the questions left hanging by Elias in his essay on the established and the outsiders, questions such as the deprivation of value, of meaning, the capacity for self-love and self-respect and loss of identity and how such deprivation might be addressed in universities which seemingly have no choice but to manage their affairs in different ways. Academics believe passionately in the importance of dialogue and feel an intense need to creatively sustain the academy as a living tradition; they must feel able to fashion their own position within the arguments which have to do with constituting and re-constituting the tradition (Shotter, 1993:183). How can the problem of there 'not being enough time for democracy' be addressed and what kind of dialogue is required to enable the academic community to feel more engaged in the affairs of the organisation? These are questions I would like to explore further, while perhaps moving away from the polarized debate which positions collegiality and managerialism as irreconcilable ideological contestants for supremacy.

4 Communicative Action and the Achievement of University Strategy – Re-discovering Dialogue.

Dare to grope around, dare to be tentative, to hesitate, to try different ways of expressing the 'it' that seems to be 'there', awaiting our further creative development of it within our lives together. Dare to creatively stumble around in words.

Shotter, forthcoming

I The Enterprise University

Burton Clarke's (1998) book entitled 'the entrepreneurial university' was a study of five European universities which had made substantial progress by refusing to accept that changes in Government support or a hostile external environment meant that decline was inevitable. While the pathways to the organisational transformation which occurred were quite different in each case, Clark described a number of features which the universities had in common and made a series of recommendations designed to help similar institutions towards transformation in an era when government support was in decline:

1. **The strengthened steering core.** This is an argument for strong leadership to counteract the drift and lack of direction which characterised traditional forms of governance and management. This core must 'reconcile new managerial values with traditional academic ones'.

2. **The expanded development periphery.** This refers to the development of centres of activity whether research, consultancy or teaching which focus on and react quickly to opportunities in the external environment.

3. **The diversified funding base.** This involves aggressive targeting of research funding and development of other streams of income through relationships with industry, non-traditional courses which generate fee income etc.

4. **The stimulated academic heartland**. The attitude of the academic departments, schools or centres where the actual work gets done is crucial to any transformative effort. It is here that the greatest possibility of failure

exists for the organisation.

5. **The integrated entrepreneurial culture.** Enterprising universities develop a work culture that embraces change. Simple institutional ideas can become elaborated into a set of beliefs which, if diffused in the heartland, becomes a university wide culture.

One of the universities in Clark's study was Warwick, which 'faced down hard times' in the 1980's to become a leading research university whose dependence on state funding was greatly reduced through increased research funding, collaboration and consulting with industry and a range of other sources of 'third stream' income. The success has been sustained and is attributed to the five prescriptions listed above, but prospective imitators are forewarned that the creation of a positive organisational culture is a lengthy process which cannot be achieved overnight.

Michael Shattock was one of the architects of Warwick's success and is now joint director of a new MBA programme in higher education management at the University of London. His book 'Managing Successful Universities' (Shattock, 2003) draws on his experience at Warwick and his subsequent consulting career. It is a thoughtful and measured book which acknowledges the complexity of universities as organisations, the difficulties in identifying what success means and the different histories of universities in the UK system. He does contend however (ibid p23), despite the advantages and disadvantages of history and context, that management represents an 'integral and perhaps in some cases a determining factor in achieving institutional success'. He places great emphasis on the importance of two-way communication and the building of trust and notes that:

> Many universities have adopted structures that seem to owe a great deal to an earlier industrial age where top management teams, answerable to external boards, adopt a strongly top-down, non-participative, non-empowering style of management. (Shattock, 2003, p 31)

He acknowledges the dependence of universities on departments and schools for

success in the core businesses of research and teaching and that

> this places an absolute premium on good communication, mutual trust and respect between academic departments and the centre and calls for exercise of sophisticated academic judgement and tactical and strategic skills in human resource management in the centre working with and through a network of contacts and decision-making processes. (Shattock, 2003, p 33)

He has little time for lengthy strategic planning documents other than as vehicles for compliance with external requirements, describing such plans as like trying to use a roadmap while lost in a swamp. In their stead he advocates a plan which is more akin to a compass and which is likely to have more use in the rapidly changing circumstances which universities now face. He places great emphasis on decision-making which takes place following robust debate in which the academic community is included, as opposed to decisions made in isolation by a small number of senior managers who become increasingly data-driven and remote from activities at the departmental coal-face. He advocates 'an open environment where legitimate argument and challenge is never far from the surface'. Bensimon and Neumann (1993 p106-107) state that the building of effective university teams depends less on instrumental skills than the capacity to engender 'connected, collaborative, interactive and inclusive group work….setting a tone which welcomes openness'.

Jarzabkowski and Wilson (2002) using a different methodology studied strategic action at Warwick University and found that the combination of 'strong centre/strong departments was underpinned, inter alia, by 'localised routines of short lines of communication' between the centre and departments and by overlapping membership of strategically important committees. They place great emphasis on the importance of social skill and competence in the management of the emerging activities which moves the organisation towards the desired outcomes and go on to suggest a number of areas of interest for further study in university and other contexts:

- Top Management Team (TMT) thinking and acting.

- Characteristics of organisational context.

- Practices which both arise from, and form the interplay between, the TMT as agents and the organisational context.

Marginson and Considine (2000) conducted a study of 'power, governance and reinvention' in the Australian university sector. They prefer the term 'enterprise university' and describe the intensity of reform in the sector which is characterised by executive power, central use of management instruments, by passing of traditional university disciplines and great amounts of imitation which give rise to concerns about the lack of diversity. While being scathing about traditional collegial management and its failings, they also point to concerns about the effect of strong central leadership and, in referring to Clarks work above, they point to the 'stimulated academic heartland' as the point to which more attention needs to be paid. They claim that 'strengthened steering cores' have enabled efficiency gains and smoothed institutional reform, but at the price of shutting most people out. They hold the view that the dimension underdeveloped by contemporary university governance is 'the building of collaboration; the underexploited resource is that of shared institutional purpose' (p 250).

None of the above authors describe exactly what was going on in the universities they studied as the changes were taking place or the micro detail of daily goings on in the organisation, in the way in which Stacey and colleagues encourage participants in this doctoral programme. In this project I will describe and analyse a series of activities which took place in a university undergoing radical change in which I became intimately involved. My thinking and actions are underpinned by the experiences I described in Projects 2 and 3 and are characterised by my intention to engage in what could be described as political activity, which I believed was more likely to lead to a successful outcome. This activity was an attempt to engage in genuine two-way

communication (as advocated by Shattock) with the academic community at several levels with a view to building the trust required for the success of a major change project.

II Contrasting Conversations

On the way back to work I caught an item on a popular phone-in show which involved a disgruntled student complaining about the fact that one of the courses on which he had been anxious to enrol had been cancelled. The professor (Ciaran) who was responsible for the course joined in the discussion and declared that in his view it was an important course, but it had been cancelled 'for financial reasons', that the university was now driven almost entirely by financial considerations and that courses of national importance (in this case a course in the Irish language) were being deleted for these financial purposes. He attributed all of the difficulties to the 'authorities' in the university and described problems with 'communication' in the organisation. An hour later I was in the university administration building and encountered the president's assistant in the office I was visiting. I asked if she'd heard Ciaran on the radio. 'I've got the transcript on my desk' was the response.

On the following day I was part of a group travelling to an external venue to award honorary degrees. Included in the party were the president, the vice-president for public affairs, the chair of the governing authority and Bernard, Principal of Life Sciences. The previous day's broadcast was a topic of conversation as we waited for the president to arrive from another function. The Chair of the Governing authority, who had been chief executive of the Industrial Development Authority, expressed his amazement that a colleague could make such public criticisms of the organisation which employed him. As we spoke there was a trailer playing on the radio for that day's show, announcing that there would be further coverage of the 'situation in UCD'. This turned out to be another student complaining about course offerings and who said he believed that the academics did not speak out about the situation because of 'fear'. The next caller was the president of one of the unions who attempted to start a

discussion about the contracts of casual staff and linked this to the cancellation of courses. At this point the show ran out of time.

The Vice-President for Public Affairs immediately phoned the university press officer who had also been listening to the show. Her advice was to remain calm and issue a press statement to the newspapers clarifying the real situation in the university. She also advised that asking anyone from the university to go on the Joe Duffy show was unwise, since any topic could arise from anyone who had a personal gripe; 'very rarely did anyone come off the Joe Duffy show with their reputation enhanced'. Despite this, the president said he wanted someone to be identified who could be on standby for the following day's show. A little earlier the Vice-President had told me that he was organising a wide-ranging interview with the Irish Times for the President a few days later. I said that I thought this was a bad idea and would be perceived as further megaphone communication into the organisation and that, in my view, the external constituencies were in good shape. I asked him if there was any chance the president would do a similar live interview on campus with the university community in attendance. 'Maybe in another year' was the response.

A few months earlier I had received a phone call to arrange an appointment with the president. During this meeting he asked me if I would lead a project designed to refurbish and develop the science infrastructure at the university. The project would last at least five years and would involve the expenditure of €300 million. Although I was aware of the project's existence, I was not expecting this. The conversation took a number of different turns; I deliberately raised the difficulties I had had with the Environment Institute project where I had not felt adequately supported from the centre and where my lack of credentials seemed a significant barrier to success. He expressed regret if this had been the case, but surprised me by stating that what I had achieved was to bring into the open the fact that there was a leadership deficit in that field in the university. It felt strange to know that that was his perception of the work I described in Project 2. I also took the opportunity to talk about the question of decision making in the university and the need for dialogue (I already knew that this was now a real concern at the top of the organisation).

Later that day I met the Buildings Officers who both expressed great anxiety that I should take on this project. Their view was while there were outline plans for a very ambitious building project, the academic rationale for this was not visible. In addition, the complexity of the project was enormous with many difficult decisions to be made; I knew that burgeoning disciplines would gain space and thrive, while waning disciplines would fare less well. A friend who was close to the project advised me 'not to touch it with a forty-foot pole', that the prospect of failure was too great.

The following day I met another senior member of the administration with whom I had a most interesting conversation, but only following a promise of confidentiality. He confirmed many of the points made earlier in this thesis about a need for more dialogue, how executive style decision-making of the kind which had taken place in recent years was no longer tenable without revolt and that the 'enormous respect' in which I am held in the university meant that I could contribute in a significant way to the repair process while working on the science project. Part of my job would be to try and bring the 'old' and 'new' university into greater alignment.

I texted the president to tell him that I would do it and arranged to meet him a few days later to discuss the details. He described himself as delighted that I had agreed to take on this role. My colleagues at the buildings office had provided me with some suggestions on topics for discussion in this meeting and I again brought up the question of the need for dialogue; he responded by saying that he was glad I had raised it during our previous conversation and we wound up agreeing that part of my new job would be trying to better align the old and new university and to bring the good and bad news from around the university into his office. I got him to agree to come and hang out in some tea rooms from time to time. When I said that one way of looking at the current situation in the university was that the 'sheriff had gone on ahead staking out the territory, but the posse were still back in town trying to figure out what to do next', he seemed to like the analogy. Of course it (intentionally) flattered his leadership and achievements and perhaps endorsed a view that the university community just

needed help to catch up with him. He seemed genuinely intrigued to hear about the project which I had intended to be the subject of this chapter (i.e., the intention to do something radical about teaching (and learning) in large first year classes). The project looks at this point as if it will develop in an interesting way and I told the president of my intention to continue with it. I later discovered the reason for his interest. The vision for the new science centre includes 'transforming the undergraduate experience', 'flexible and responsive life-long learning programmes' and 'development of a new paradigm of science teacher education'. I bumped into the Buildings Officer in the canteen an hour later and described this discussion; when he expressed surprise at some of the topics I had broached I replied that having nothing to lose in career terms provided a great sense of freedom. As I said this I knew it was only part of what was going on. It seems obvious to me now that power relations had shifted once again. It was now clear that I had things the President needed; my reputation for delivery on large projects and my willingness to engage actively with novel teaching and learning methods. We both knew that integration of developments in teaching and learning with research activity would be crucial to developing the brief for the iconic new buildings which are planned and that moving old, pre-re-structuring ways of doing business in the university would not enable the community to get the best from the new buildings. The president seemed to be openly agreeing that this could not happen by issuing further instructions from the control tower.

I had accepted a number of challenges with my new post:

1. To lead a project on the design and construction of new buildings;
2. To utilise this project to change aspects of the university culture (especially with regard to the ownership and utilisation of space);
3. To use this project to develop better channels of communication between the centre and the university community.

The core part of the project is the development of a brief for a design team and interacting with the team and the science community in the university to develop a master plan and detailed design. While this is a project which is large, complex

and likely to have many difficulties during its lifetime, the other aspects are even more challenging. I was now part of the established group about which I wrote in Project 3!

III Communicative action

'Communication' is a topic which is debated endlessly in organisations and is one which has taken up the attention of the university community at all levels in the past couple of years. Everyone is in favour of 'good communication'. Shattock (2003) insists that it is key to university success. I have taken on a role in which I've committed to trying to make communication in the university better somehow. What does this mean in a large organisation like a university? Earlier in this thesis I have drawn on Mead's notion of cult value while writing about collegiality and his argument that realisation of these values must always include negotiating the obstacles which are not mentioned in the description of the ideal. It seems equally applicable to the notion of communication within the organisation. Even within the confines of Science, it will be impossible for me to communicate personally with every individual if I am to get any work done. I have no choice but to be selective in deciding who I interact with and what methods of communication I choose. Much of what follows is a detailed description of my attempt to navigate a way around or through the obstacles which arose in the early stages of the project.

Axley (1984) described what he called the conduit metaphor for communication in organisations and how much of what we think of as communication is described in terms of the transfer of ideas or information from one person's head to another. He provided excerpts from the communication chapter of standard management texts current at the time which illustrated this principle and listed metaphors for communication such as 'getting ideas across', 'putting thoughts in words' and 'writing being full of insight'. A foray into similar territory, with perhaps less determination to make the same point, indicates that while it is possible to find many references to the sender/receiver model of communication, other insights are also available in the management literature:

Managers spend over 75 per cent of their time communicating (Gibson, Ivancevich and Donnelly, 1994, p 577).

Communication is the transmission of information and meaning from one party to another through the use of shared symbols (Bateman and Zeithaml, 1993, p 503).

Communication is successful only if the communicator transmits that understanding to the receiver (Gibson, Ivancevich and Donnelly, 1994, p 577).

Communication is the process of communicating information from one person to another. Effective communication occurs when the meaning of the message received is as close as possible to the meaning intended (Barney and Griffin, 1992, p 655).

Transmission issues initially focussed on the technical problems of transmitting a signal from one point to another in spite of various interferences that would affect the signal….Because meanings grow out of social interaction, the meaning underlying a message is influenced by both the information itself and the content of the message (Bowditch and Buono, 2005, p 103).

It is the *recipient* who communicates (Drucker, 1974, p 391).

The communications gap within institutions and between groups in society has been widening steadily – to the point where it threatens to become an unbridgeable gap of misunderstanding (Torrington, Weightman and Johns, 1989, p263)

…..In the meantime there is an information explosion (Drucker, 1974 p 390).

Managers seem to attach no importance to employees feelings, defences and inner conflicts. In organisational life there is often no satisfactory alternative to face to face conversation, and the substitutes may simply dissatisfy both the senders and receivers.
Moreover leaders focus so earnestly on 'positive' values – employee satisfaction, upbeat attitude, high morale – that it would strike them as destructive to make demands on employee awareness (Argyris, 1996 p 316).

The authors in the lower half of the box above begin to point towards some of the challenges that seem to me to be integral to attempts to achieve the objective of communicating effectively and to the failure of the sender/receiver model to achieve very much. Some of the authors note that feelings, defences, inner conflicts come into play, that the recipient of the message has an influence and, most importantly, there is Bowditch and Buono's declaration that 'meanings

grow out of social interaction'. These are the challenges which need to be negotiated while attempting to functionalise the ideal or the cult value of communication. I will return to this later.

Lee and Heath (1999) examined managers' choices of communication media and the receivers' perspectives on these media and found, following a series of interviews, that there was strong preference for 'rich media' (those with a strong social presence) when involved in evaluating information for urgent decision-making tasks. Rich communication media include face-to-face and telephone conversation while more impoverished forms include circulars, email communications, newsletters etc. While it seems banal and obvious to make such distinctions, it does serve to point up how frequently communication within and between organisations relies on relatively impersonal means of communication. The advent of electronic mail has meant that it is possible to send out deluges of 'communication' which frequently seem to be either scanned superficially or completely ignored. When I receive an email which has several megabytes of attachment and has been sent to hundreds of people, I sometimes think about the time not so long ago when someone had to be asked to stand by a photocopier and stuff several hundred envelopes to achieve the same end. While such communications also felt like a nuisance, there was less of it. Now I hear colleagues say 'Well at least they can't say they haven't been told ' as they issue a further 'communication' to a distribution list. I also notice how frequently colleagues remark on the ritual nature of many meetings, how increasingly they are becoming dominated by lengthy data driven presentations and how little time there is left for any kind of discussion, much less the kind of discussion which might enable any kind of novelty to emerge. Fidler and Johnson (1984) recommended that in conditions of high risk and uncertainty, successful implementation of change requires a heavy investment in communication effort but they also acknowledge that organisational capacity to communicate sufficiently may be a limiting factor on success. Short deadlines, 'which leave no time for democracy' (Ramsden 1998 p 24) present great challenges to those in leadership positions. Whatever about the value of electronic distribution of information, it is hard to imagine communication taking place through the newspapers or radio shows as meeting any of the

criteria described above for effectiveness or creating the opportunity for meaning to emerge. Experience shows that such 'conduit communication' serves only to polarise conflict even more, as each faction attempts to get its version of the truth established as the real one. The conversation in the car on the way to the Ryder Cup was an extreme example of enthusiasm for 'conduit communication'. The conversations I had with the president in his own office seemed to have something to do with 'stimulating the academic heartlands', 'developing shared institutional purpose', 'integrating the culture' (Clark 1998). They seemed to leave open the possibility of something interesting happening.

IV Getting Started

The first steps I took after agreeing to take on my new post was to meet as many of the heads of school in science as I could, introduce myself and try to understand something of their needs and aspirations. My first visit was with the head of Computer Science; he described their position as being close to collapse because of the success they continued to have in attracting research funding. They had 75 PhD students and every grant they submitted seemed to be funded. The school was bringing in 10 per cent of the university's research funding, but soon he would have to tell his staff to back off from writing more grants because of space constraints. In addition he was trying to assemble a new group to establish a centre on complex adaptive systems and this represented the university's best chance of achieving major national funding for a new research cluster.

As I was engaging in this conversation, Ardal, the Buildings Officer, was having a coffee with a contact in the real estate business, who made him aware of the availability of office space in a business park adjacent to the campus. When we got together later, I was able to tell him about my conviction that Computer Science was where the university needed to take urgent action. Much to my surprise, Ardal later described this as a transformational moment. Until then he had not been able to distinguish what was urgent and what was part of the constant academic clamour for more space and better facilities. He then revealed his news on the availability of the office space. A few days later we went to look

at it. It turned out that the space was already configured as a call centre and would ideally suit postgraduate students who only needed a computer workstation. The head of Computer Science professed himself happy with it and the senior management team agreed to rent the entire building at a cost of just under a €1 million per year. We now had 2000 sq metres of high quality extra space without having any evictions and upsetting many more people; the head of computer science believed that I had superhuman capabilities to have delivered such a spectacular solution to his problem within a couple of weeks. At a subsequent meeting with the VP Research we were told that he was planning a press release which would describe, not that the university had rented space to solve a problem, but that the university was establishing a group of new research clusters in areas which were key to the university's plans, the development of Ireland's 'knowledge society' and would coincide with major announcements by two different multi-national companies about investments in information technology in Ireland. All of this happened while I was still assembling the names of those to be on the steering committee for approval by the President and his team.

Shortly after this I had a meeting with the internal communications officer of the university and we discussed how I might manage the communications aspect of the Science project. I told him of the President's enthusiasm for a dedicated website in which the projects progress could be tracked. He offered to draw up a template for routine emails to report progress which he had found helpful in another context. Another person suggested that an e-zine or a blog would be very contemporary ways of communicating with colleagues and 'might grab their attention' in the midst of the e-storm in which we all find ourselves every morning. In the end I relied on personal interactions with key people and occasional emails to all staff which summarised progress and later a website was developed.

Since commencing this research I find I pay attention to different parts of my daily work than I did formerly. Thus I now regard the conversations which I had with the head of Computer Science and the subsequent conversation with Ardal in Buildings, though not part of any formal process or strategy, as being of much

greater significance. Out of a series of unplanned conversations, while I was still establishing the names of those who might serve on the steering committee, came a proposal which resulted in a very significant change in the physical circumstances for a large number of people. What was interesting about these conversations and what implications do they have for how I might manage the rest of this project? What role can they play in what has been described as the challenge in universities of helping 'butterflies to fly in formation' as opposed to the futility of 'herding cats'?

V Social Interaction and the Creation of Meaning

I briefly referred above to Bowditch and Buono's (2005) declaration that meanings grow out of social interaction and I will now explore this a little more, drawing on the thinking of Habermas, Mead, Shotter and Bahktin. During the conversation with the head of computer science it was possible for both of us to engage in what Habermas called communicative action, in which 'reason is construed in terms of the noncoercive intersubjectivity of mutual understanding and reciprocal recognition' (O'Donnell, 1999). Communicative action relies on a cooperative process of interpretation in which participants relate to something in their objective, social and subjective worlds (Habermas, 1987 p120). Participants in the activity of communication 'relativise their utterances against the chance that their validity will be challenged by the other actor' and coming to an understanding means that the participants reach an agreement or recognition of the validity claim made by one of the participants. Habermas (1987 p120) defines the objective, social and subjective worlds as follows:

Objective world	The totality of entities about which true statements are possible
Social world	The totality of legitimately regulated interpersonal relations
Subjective world	The totality of experiences to which a speaker has privileged access and which he can express before a public.

If I were to examine the conversation I had with the head of computer science according to this schema, I could describe the objective world as one where Ireland had established the development of information and communications technology as a priority and where his claims to success in this world were indisputable. The social world we inhabited at that point was one where the president had promised that something would be done before September, where the skepticism about the likelihood of its happening was clear and one where I had been handed the challenge of delivering on that promise. The subjective world was the lives he and I had lived up to the point where we met and how those experiences informed the communicative action, the impressions we were getting of one another and attitudes towards the claims to validity being made. In a very short period I accepted his claim that one of my first tasks should be to do something about the squalor in which one of our most successful groups was accommodated. Later, when Ardal and I discussed the problem, I was able to share my impressions of the encounter with computer science.

Habermas, in developing his theory of communicative action deals at some length with Mead's theory of communication, which I will now try to summarize briefly. Mead's development of this theory was based on evolutionary and behavioural principles where communication between animals consisted of non-verbal gestures. The animal initiating the 'dialogue' makes a gesture to which the other animal responds and this process continues as a series of gestures and responses until that particular sequence concludes. His example of two dogs in a fight is frequently cited to illustrate his thinking.

> I have given the illustration of the dogfight as a method of presenting the gesture. The act of each dog becomes the stimulus to the other dog for his response. There is then a relationship between these two; and as the act is responded to by the other dog, it in turn undergoes changes. The very fact that the dog is ready to attack another becomes a stimulus to the other dog to change his position or his own attitude. He has no sooner done this than the change of attitude in the second dog in turn causes the first dog to change his attitude. We have here a conversation of gestures.

(Mead, 1934, p 42-43)

Meaning then, for the participants in this scene, comes from interpretation of the gestures and responses of both parties, but the meaning changes with each gesture. The gesture and responses 'constitute the matrix within which meaning arises, or which develops into the field of meaning (Ibid p 75). However, the range of gestures employed is sufficiently limited to allow the organism responding to the initial gesture to have a reasonable idea of how the encounter might conclude – there is a typical meaning to most gestures. This he describes as 'taking the attitude of the other' and illustrates what he means by internal dialogue, internal 'conversation' in which gestures, symbols are deployed to attach significance to external events. He declares that gestures become significant symbols as 'they implicitly arouse in an individual making them the same responses which they explicitly arouse or are supposed to arouse in other individuals, the individuals to whom they are addressed' (Ibid p 47). There is an expectation that a particular gesture will evoke a particular response (i.e., have a certain meaning for the second participant).

Mead then goes on to describe, as one moves up the evolutionary scale, how gestures such as these take a linguistic turn. Initially, as with small children, single words come to have significance. As language becomes more complex it forms an important medium for the gestures which go to make up social interaction. So the sharing of gestures including language, bodily movements, signs of emotion are important in terms of creating meaning. I am convinced that senior management being perceived as 'aloof, distant, often seen speaking and waving from distant podiums' (Houck, cited by Crowley, 1994 p 135) is at the heart of what is making the transformation of the university a difficult process. If the President (or myself as his appointee on a major project with the explicit label of transformation attached to it) cannot engage in the discussion, argument and conflict which are essential to the process of transformation then it will, at best, be a token form of transformation. Of course it can be declaimed as transformation on the university website, in press releases and from the lips of the person sent in to bat on the Joe Duffy show. What I am suggesting is that the closer we can get to the exchange of gestures of the kind Mead describes, the

more likely we are to jointly create a meaningful understanding of what it is we have to do to move the enterprise forward. This is the basis on which I have approached my new assignment, which is attempting to orchestrate the transformation of Science.

Shotter and Gustavsen (1999) have written about the role of dialogue conferences in regional development and draw on the work of Bahktin to argue that such conferences enabled the participants to exhibit practical understandings of one another in their spontaneous responses and that such understandings are inevitably novel.

> Something very special happens when people from a region come into living contact with each other, face-to-face. In responding not only to each other's uniqueness, but also to the unique features of their shared surroundings, they create between them, first-time events that are a rich mixture of all these influences. Aspects of these events can, if they are attended to and developed, function as the beginnings of new and productive relations in the region. Researchers can help regional members set the scene for such meetings, help to draw attention to the creative events to which they give rise, and, by an appropriate use of language, help participants articulate their relations to their surroundings in ways which take account of local particularities and details.
>
> Shotter and Gustavsen (1999)

The above statement comes close to articulating what I was trying to do in the various encounters with my colleagues in this project and point to the profound differences between conduit style communications and what Bahktin describes as dialogic discourse. Voloshinov/Bahktin (1994) states that 'to understand another person's utterance means to orient oneself with respect to it, to find the proper place for it in the corresponding context' and he states that for each word of the utterance that we are in the process of understanding, we as it were, lay down a set of our own answering words. Meaning does not reside in the word or in the soul of the speaker or in the soul of the listener but is the effect of repeated interaction between speaker and listener produced via the material of

particular sound complexes. These ideas seem to me to be very similar to those expressed by Mead, even if coming from the background of linguistics rather than social psychology. Voloshinov/Bahktin (1994) uses an intriguing metaphor when he states that the 'current of verbal intercourse endows a word with the light of meaning'. The opposite of this is of course the email, policy statement, press release or presentation which so often consists of no more than collections of words. Without the opportunity for dialogue, they can seem like light bulbs without current.

VI The Steering Committee

In the first meeting I gave a presentation which included the challenge for the group in designing the new facilities, illustrations of possible phases in the building programme and some indications of current thinking in design of science research buildings in the US. I was struck once again by how disabling a PowerPoint presentation can be for discussion. It seems to limit the initial conversation to endorsement or rebuttal of the points being made and yet when I thought about doing it, it seemed like an obvious and speedy way of bringing the group up to date with what had been going on over the past few months. A physicist objected to one of the basic tenets of current design in what seemed like some kind of 'no surrender' stance. I had heard vaguely about Physics having been targeted in the past as having a lot of surplus space. We didn't explore the issue on that occasion. I felt a good deal anxiety about the short time frame in which we were required to produce our first piece of work and asked them to agree to my schedule of producing three drafts of the brief for a design team by the end of the year. When we agreed to this I promised to produce the first draft within a month. Our second meeting used this draft as the agenda for the meeting and I found myself driving the meeting along, asking the steering group to undertake tasks, making sure we covered the document's contents with a view to identifying the information needed for the next draft. Towards the end of the meeting I offered the impression that this group was now 'on the inside of something' and that the majority of our colleagues in Science were outside it and mentioned my desire to do something about this. I saw several nods of agreement and understanding. We agreed that I should indicate some plan for

formal communication with key people and that I should start the process with an email to all staff with an outline of the project and inviting contributions to the debate. At the end of the meeting my new colleagues from Buildings complimented me on the efficient way I had run the meeting. I was less comfortable. It felt like the way I had run many agenda heavy meetings in the past and, while seeming to reach a successful endpoint, I felt that there was very little real discussion.

After this I had a meeting with the university bursar who was extremely unenthusiastic about our notion of a large Phase 1 which might cost €200 million. He urged us to scale back our ambition. Before the next meeting of the steering group, I had to report on progress to the president's Large Capital Projects Group. When we presented the Gantt chart describing a less ambitious Phase 1 and the projects eventual completion in 2014 (based on financial projections from the Bursar) the President grew very agitated. Based on a recent meeting on new funding availability, he now saw that the university would need to succeed in hiring 10-15 new investigators (each with a research team) over the next five years. 'If we don't have the space to hire these people, then we will have lost the opportunity to develop to our competitors, who have new buildings close to completion'. He urged us to drastically cut the time scale. The Bursar remained silent. In a telephone conversation later that evening Ardal wondered 'where's the money going to come from?'

Ten minutes after the meeting with the president I was in the third meeting with our steering group. Only six people turned up (out of a possible nineteen). A mathematician asked how long the meeting would last and appeared for most of it as if he wished he wasn't there. The primary objective was to review the data on staff and student numbers (which were essential to developing a schedule of accommodation) and school profiles I had asked for and to discuss a communications plan which I had developed. Early in the process I described the encounter with the president that had happened a little earlier. As we moved on to talk about the communications/decision-making plan I had circulated, discussion began to wander. I noticed this happening and made no attempt to stop it. The question of how we might scale up the project arose. The physicist

again raised the problem of generic space not being suitable for some of their work and, based on other discussions I was able to reassure him about that. I deliberately raised the contentious option of somehow clearing the physics building to enable a much more ambitious development programme. The problem with lack of mobility of some large pieces of equipment arose and a fatalistic 'well I suppose we'll just have to shut down that area of research' was the response. I suggested that I needed to engage with the investigators and head of school on this to see if there was a way out of the problem. During this discussion a chemist said 'There is some space in Chemistry, you know, which might help with this'. An academic acknowledging that there might be some surplus space in his or her jurisdiction is regarded as almost treasonous. This smaller group, which had not been stopped from going off-message was now beginning to think about solutions as well as problems. I noticed the mathematician get increasingly edgy, but purposely ignored it and encouraged the conversation to continue. I suggested that what needed to happen was a series of meetings between the heads of schools, steering committee members and myself. We agreed to this and I felt very happy that I knew how to go on. I now had an opportunity to engage in potentially 'rich' communication with the key players in Science. This meeting of the steering group could have been labelled a failure (most people couldn't come, no tangible progress was made that I could brief the president on), yet it seemed like the most useful event that we had had because an opportunity for free flowing conversation took place. As I write this I see what a change has occurred in my practice as a manager since I began my research in this doctoral programme.

VII A further conversation with the President

As the project moved on, it became clear to me that the complexity of developing a design brief for the whole of science was beyond my ability as an academic even with the help of an extremely competent young engineer. I invited two professionals with whom I had worked on an earlier project to come and discuss the project. Paul and Fred came over from the UK and we met for dinner to discuss the project. I described how the university had changed since we had last worked together. I had sent them the proposal (what is now being

called the 'transformative resource document'). They had been impressed by its ambition and recognised immediately that it was not just about a complex construction project; that the intention was to radically alter the way in which science was done in the university. I offered my understanding of some of the shortcomings of the ways in which business was now done in the university and described how I found myself somewhere in the middle of a major change process. We reminisced about some of the conflict in which we had been engaged during our last project. Paul and Fred described similar projects which they had managed in other universities. We seemed to share an intuitive understanding of what it might take to deliver a successful outcome on this part of the project.

I met the President a couple of days later to brief him on progress and to ask for his help. He agreed with my suggestion that it would help the project for him to meet with the steering group and that allowing the group to see the passion he felt for the project at first hand could inspire my team to more active participation. I asked that we organise it as a discussion for an hour without any formal presentation and that he invite the group to become partners in this project which, if it were successful, would deliver something really spectacular for the university. I felt this was especially important as we had by then been invited by the Higher Education Authority to provide a more developed version of the original proposal, which no-one outside the senior management team and a few others had seen. I was surprised at how readily he agreed, but wondered if the format I proposed would be changed after he thought about it.

A couple of days later I met with a group who had agreed to come together to help with identifying priorities on the teaching side. I described in narrative form how I had come to be involved with the project, how it had evolved since then, how we had dealt with similar issues during the design of the vet school project. The discussion was very unstructured, apprehensions about how we might think about buildings which might have a life of 50 years, how teaching programmes might evolve, what flexibility might mean in the design of teaching laboratories, how conflict might arise during the process. It was clear that everyone there was interested and anxious to do the right thing, yet none of us

knew exactly what we needed to do other than assemble as much information as we could about current programmes and what was needed for their delivery as a starting point. Again this was another meeting with an agenda which could have been perceived as losing direction and not achieving very much. But we did manage to agree what to do next and nobody seemed concerned that it was not that clear where we would finish up. I concluded by asking them to initiate conversations anywhere they could (school meetings, tea-rooms) about this project with a view to generating ideas on how we might move it forward.

A few hours later I prepared a progress report for the President's monthly Capital Projects Group meeting and supplied information on 'key actions since last meeting' and 'expected outcomes over the next three months', complete with a Gantt chart describing milestones up to 2012! It did not feel strange to be doing this and I did not feel uncomfortable providing acceptable material in the language we expect in such reports. It would not have been possible to indicate under 'key actions' that I had had a conversation with the president which had the primary objective of persuading him to meet with my steering group, without a PowerPoint presentation, to invite them to join him in his aspirations for Science. Nor would it have seemed appropriate to describe an apparently aimless conversation with a group who were enthusiastic about teaching. Yet, in my view, these were 'key actions'. I was trying to facilitate the 'stimulation of the academic heartlands' (Clark 1998) and the arguments which have to do with constituting and re-constituting the university tradition (Shotter, 1993).

The president opened the proceedings by telling the story of the Science project, even if in a halting way. I almost felt guilty for having taken away the walking aid that PowerPoint seems to have become for so many of us. He described the urgency of getting the project moving, the crucial importance of the university competing effectively for new national funding and said that if the university does not do well in this round, it would never recover. He talked about how the university's collaboration with industry was seen very positively by Government and that we needed to do more of that. He talked about radically changing the undergraduate experience. I reiterated the point that what was planned was not just new buildings, but a transformation of how science teaching and research

were done in the university and that, in my view, this was an enormous task. There was an exchange between myself and the Chair of the BSc degree programme board which while spoken in code, left neither of us in doubt of the enormity of the task of 'changing the undergraduate experience' which meant redesigning hundreds of modules delivered by a very large number of faculty who were also being told at the same time that promotion would come from success in research. Someone else mentioned an email I had sent around with information on a 'Superlab' which had been developed at a UK university where science teaching had been revolutionised and that we should 'get them over' to talk about it. Within an hour of the end of the meeting a half-day workshop had been arranged on 'Superlab'. Towards the end a chemist spoke about what he saw as a magnificent opportunity for the university and later told me how exasperated he was with the passivity and negative attitude of his colleagues. I noticed the President was nearly the last to leave the room; he had engaged in a number of different conversations when the meeting was over.

The reaction from those I spoke to afterwards was positive. They had had an opportunity to interact with the main man, a chance to hear from his own lips the challenges the university faced, what he thought about how we should approach them, opportunities to suggest alternative approaches, but most of all a sense of knowing that we had to move forward somehow. When I suggested the next steps of a further half-day's work to begin to make these aspirations real, it seemed like most of my colleagues now had an appetite for it. I regard the Presdident's presence at this meeting as very important for the project. The opportunity to interact personally with him was terribly important to them. In the half hour before the meeting I had to deal with a number of calls from people who felt they had been excluded from the meeting; I invited them all.

VIII Complex Responsive Processes of Relating

Earlier, I identified research questions posed by others which, if answered, might help us understand better how the university might be enabled to face the challenges, turbulence and demands for accountability by which the higher education landscape is now characterised. Jarzabkowski and Wilson (2002)

suggested looking more closely at the characteristics of organisational context and the practices which form the interplay between Top Management Teams and that context. Marginson and Considine (2000) suggest that the dimension underdeveloped by contemporary university governance is the building of collaboration; that the underexploited resource is that of shared institutional purpose.

Cohen and March (1986 p 3) describe the American university of that era as an organised anarchy. Goals were problematic, vague or in dispute, it discovered preferences through action more often than it acted on the basis of preferences and was characterised by lack of understanding of its own processes and fluid participation through varying amounts of time and interest on the part of the faculty who wandered in and out of decision-making processes. The concern of many was as much with the status certifying nature of their contributions as it was to the quality of any decisions made. This description and that of the 'garbage-can' decision making processes seems to describe many of the ways in which the university operated until the recent past. They define garbage-can decision-making as the admixture of choices, problems and potential solutions in arenas (typically committees) where problems may find solutions, or *vice versa*. Power is distributed throughout the organisation and senior figures (including presidents) have limited powers. A similar position seems to have held in France at around the same period (Bourdieu, 1984) where individual professors held very great powers. Stacey (2007) points out that this view of decision-making processes in universities has been almost totally supplanted with the advent of managerial approaches. He also challenges the view of how decisions can be characterised by emergence in such situations.

> The sequence of specific choices can shoot just anywhere because important constraints provided by unequal power, clear hierarchies and job descriptions have been removed. Action is then the result of habit, custom or the unpredictable influence of others. It is impossible to predict the choice without knowing all the small details of the context. Intention is lost in the flow of events and goals are the product of sense-making activities after the event. What they are talking about here is emergence but they

ascribe it entirely to chance and assume that clear hierarchy, clear roles and clear tasks would prevent decisions "just emerging". (Stacey, 2007, pp155-156).

What Stacey is adding to the earlier material on the creation of meaning through conversation/dialogue from Mead, Shotter and Bahktin above is the role of power relations. In the contemporary university, power relations are tilted in favour of those in senior positions. They have the capacity and the responsibility to make decisions. Shattock (2003) states that the quality of those decisions and the likelihood of their being implemented successfully is greatly increased if the academic community is included in the making of them.

The narratives in this chapter indicate clearly that decisions do emerge in a university with a hierarchical system, in which I have executive responsibility for delivery of new infrastructure for Science. I have described how decisions, solutions and new problems arose in formal meetings, conversations in corridors, visits to colleagues in their offices and other settings. I have described how such outcomes emerged from a combination of the vision of the president who is in daily contact with national aspirations and opportunities and the combination of enthusiasm, apathy, paranoia, hostility and fatalism among my colleagues who would be the eventual beneficiaries if the project is successful. Shaw in her book 'Changing Conversations in Organisations' (2002) summarises her exploration as follows:

> I have been asking 'How do we participate in the ways things change over time?' meaning 'How at the very movement of our joint sense-making experience are we changing ourselves and our situation?'. This means enquiring into the local situated communicative activity between experiencing bodies that give rise to intentions, decisions and actions, tool-making and tool using. (Shaw, 2002, p171)

My daily work has undoubtedly been influenced by the perspective of 'complex responsive processes of relating' developed by Stacey and colleagues at the Complexity and Management Centre at the University of Hertfordshire.

According to this perspective, organisations are regarded as continuing patterns of interaction which are iterated as the 'living present'. Interaction produces nothing but further interaction. Thus, from this perspective, the narrative of the Science project to this point can be seen as a series of interactions which influence and pattern one another. The President engages with Government and develops a 'vision' for Science, appoints me to develop the project and during the appointment conversation I draw attention to the communication deficit perceived in the organisation and invite him to help me with advancing the project by interacting with my colleagues. My first move is to engage in conversations with the heads of school, while simultaneously, Ardal was talking to a property consultant. Three months later, several hundred people were moving in to greatly superior accommodation. The steering group assemble and we begin the task of writing a brief for a design team, but this throws up more challenges including mixed attitudes to the entire project. How are we to create space to allow the refurbishment to commence? Our initial proposal is too timid for the President who asks us to think again. I invite him to meet the steering committee and heads of school to try and generate a little more momentum and next day the tone of the meeting with Physics is substantially affected by the narrative brought back by the Head of School from the meeting with the President. Stacey and Griffin (2005) state that it is through these ordinary everyday processes that people in organisations cope with the complexity and uncertainty of organisational life and, as they do so, they perpetually construct the future together as the living present.

Complex responsive processes of relating consist of acts of communication, relations of power and the value systems espoused by those involved. Stacey and colleagues draw on the thinking of Mead, as outlined above, in relation to the gestures and responses of communication and how meaning is created. The social process of communication is where meaning emerges. What I described in Project 3 was what happened when the social process of creating meaning is deleted or severely diminished by the predominant use of impoverished forms of communication (emails, E-zines, press releases, sound-bites, PowerPoint presentations). Such methods are based on the sender-receiver model of communication and while they have important roles to play in organisations, the

need for 'rich media' (i.e., those with a strong social presence (Lee and Heath, 1999) becomes intense). No matter how effectively a colleague might have performed on the Joe Duffy show, it could never compare with the President himself engaging eyeball to eyeball with the academic community.

The process of interacting or communicative action is, according to the perspective of Stacey (2007) suffused with relations of power and he draws on the thinking of Elias to develop this aspect of the perspective. All relationships are constrained and enabled by these power relations and by their nature, these relations are not constant. I have referred above to the way in which the nature of my relationship with the President changed when it emerged that I had something he needed. It immediately enabled me to raise issues which were exercising the university community about communication and decision-making style which it would not have been possible for me to do, had I not been in his office and had he not believed I was the most qualified person available for the job he had offered me. I have written at some length on how groupings emerge in terms of power relations and the dynamic of inclusion/exclusion in my third project. Of course the dynamic of established/outsider relations is also beginning to arise in different format now as I initiate conversations about the new facility. The identity of schools is closely involved with the space which they occupy and schools feel safe if they have 'their own space'. In the study of established outsider relations by Elias and Scotson (1994) on which I drew in Project 3, ownership and occupation of space was contested through the established group congregating in certain areas and holding that space for each other, as a matter of preserving current identity and future legacy. What is about to happen in the university is that there will be no 'owned space' and the new resource allocation model will result in schools being charged for the amount of space they occupy, thus attempting to convert space into a commodity without acknowledgement of its importance in maintaining identity.

What I am consciously doing also is working in the shadow organisation, that part of the university which is outside of formal processes as well as the legitimate organisation. Stacey (2003) has argued that self-organising processes are to be found primarily in the shadow parts of an organisation, i.e. the complex

web of interactions in which social, covert political and psycho-dynamic systems coexist in tension with the legitimate system. When I met a man in Physics who had accused me of acting immorally in the coffee shop a couple of days earlier, he told me that he was organising a little group to look at some exciting possibilities and that I needed to be able to access groups like this, since the 'official leadership' was often not able to identify or support such ideas or groupings. I encouraged him to continue, while also wondering if what emerged from that particular grouping would be helpful or otherwise. The more I describe to colleagues how I am working, the more they tell me that the real action takes place in the corridors and tea-rooms and that what happens officially in committee rarely gets close to what is 'really going on'.

In his essay on established outsider relations, Elias describes the experience of the outsiders as that of the deprivation of value, of meaning, the capacity for self-love and self-respect and loss of identity. I am arguing that what I have glimpsed in recent weeks is what happens when the university community is given an indication that they are valued (the project was shown to be worth an hour of the President's time to come and meet with my steering group), when they have an opportunity to create meaning though the exchange of gestures with one another and with leadership figures and that this results in an increased sense of self-respect and identity. This is more than 'getting people to buy in' or the creation of cynical status-certifying opportunities; it is about having the opportunity to contribute to the debate without a need to be victorious on all occasions. In the words of one academic

> …And when we walk out of those sessions, I know that I may have lost
> my point, but I do walk out of the door supporting the decision that has
> been made. (Bensimon and Neumann, 1993, p 107)

I am also arguing that this can take place in a context that is characterized by short timelines, stretch targets, executive decision-making and great ambition.

A couple of days after the first meeting with Physics, we appointed Paul and Fred as consultants and set out a schedule of informal meetings of various sizes

and kinds with the steering committee and heads of school. The meetings had the objective of understanding what kinds of strategies were needed to deliver the 'transformation of Science' which had been promised to Government by the President. I attended most of these meetings with the intention of facilitating further arguments about how we might 'transform' Science in the university.

IX   Conclusions

There is little doubt from the literature I have cited in earlier projects that many universities have moved towards a corporate or managerial style without a great deal of reflection on the appropriateness of this approach. In this project I have examined my own experience as an academic responsible for a major change project with a view to contributing some novelty to the ways in which we think about how we manage our affairs in higher education. I have taken up the challenge of previous writers on university management to examine the interplay between the top management team as agents and the organisational context (Jarzabkowski and Wilson, 2002), the building of collaboration and the underexploited resource of shared institutional purpose (Marginson and Considine, 2000) and the development of good communication, mutual trust and respect between academic departments and the centre (Shattock, 2003). The project was ostensibly about the provision of new infrastructure for science but it was initiated against the backdrop of major institutional change and significant differences of opinion on the ways in which the change was being managed. At the heart of most complaints was a need for 'better communication'. The dominant form of communication in the university in recent years has been that of the sender/receiver model where major decisions, policies and other information has been delivered to the university community through formal presentations, emails or press briefings. Senior management of the university has not been perceived as adequately available for discussion or debate and many in the university community (in common with others around the world in the past 25 years) believes that there has been a lurch towards top-down managerial approaches to decision-making.

Shattock (2003, p88) argues, from a position of some strength, that the principal benefit of collegial style of management in universities is 'quite simply, that it is

the most effective method of achieving success in the core business'. He further declares that participation of academics in decisions which have a major effect on future directions of the organisation is much more likely to lead to implementation and success than a corporate decision-making style more appropriate to manufacturing industry. However, he is at pains to make clear that he is not advocating management by consensus. Neither am I. Decisions must be taken and waiting for consensus will frequently mean that the opportunity has been taken up by someone else.

I have deliberately engaged in processes which generated discussion, rumours, gossip, occasional conflict and some surprising outcomes which could not have been predicted at the outset. I have tried to engage with as diverse a population of academics and others as I possibly could. I have paid as much attention to conversations in corridors and tea-rooms as I have to those which took place in formal meetings. I encouraged conversations which seemed to stray a long way from the official meeting agenda or I organised meetings with no agenda at all. In addition we used many standard project management techniques (and the help of those with such expertise) which ensured that our proposal to the Higher Education Authority was delivered on time. Changed power relations meant that I was able to broach topics with the President which I could not have done earlier. This is not unlike the approach I took as Dean and which I described in my first project; the crucial difference is that everyone in the organisation now knows that decisions will be taken without waiting for consensus.

I commenced this project at a stage in the university transformation when it seemed to be recognised that it was not possible to continue with the corporate way which had characterised the past three years. There was explicit recognition that my 'style' had a potential role in advancing the university's fortunes. I have tried to reflect in this project on what this 'style' is based and a starting point for this reflection has been Bowditch and Buono's declaration that meanings in organisations grow out of social interaction. This is reinforced by the literature on the importance of rich communication methods at times of change. For me, rich communication is a process where two or more human bodies engage in conversations which are characterised by the use of words and gestures,

unconscious communication signals, emotions including excitement, taking of offence, anxiety and shame. Above all it is about taking risks and the possibility of opening the cans of worms which are almost certainly there. I believe that this points to the possibility for universities to make a return to more collegial approaches to decision-making while maintaining the sense of urgency that is required to succeed in an increasingly competitive environment.

5 Synopsis and Critical Appraisal

I Introduction

I embarked on this work primarily out of a sense of curiosity, which had been provoked by the experience of attempting to 'manage change' for six years as a dean in a university which had a very traditional style of management. At the time of my election I was ambitious for the faculty and set to with great enthusiasm to implement the learning which I had attained during my formal management training at the Open University. I finished my term able to claim a number of successes, but became intrigued by one of the change initiatives which had not gone well (the attempt to re-structure the faculty which I described in Project 1). My interest was whetted further by the reaction to my descriptions of this experience, in narrative form, at a number of local meetings and an international conference. Based on the audience reactions, there seemed to be something unusual and interesting about what I was describing, and how I described it, to my peers in university management. Eventually, I decided to enrol in the doctoral programme of which this thesis is an integral part and ironically, as I commence the writing of this synopsis, I have been invited to present my story again to an audience of deans, on the theme of 'Managing People at the Faculty Level: Strategies and their Implementation'. My approach to this synopsis and critical appraisal will be guided to some extent by this invitation: What have I learned from three years reflecting on my practice as an academic manager in this doctoral programme that could be useful to my peers, who struggle daily with the challenges of 'herding cats' or trying to persuade 'butterflies to fly in formation'? How can I build on a well-received presentation from three years ago, and offer a different and possibly richer understanding of the daily activity of being a manager in an academic setting, than can be got from the mainstream literature on the subject? I commenced this programme with my confidence faltering in the prescriptions I had been taught as a part-time student at the OU and some awareness that the collegial tradition, in which I had grown up as an apprentice academic thirty years ago, had serious limitations in the present era. My early readings of the literature on higher education management seemed to indicate that it fell broadly into three categories: 'how

to' books which were very like those in the standard canon of organisational literature, passionate advocates of the 'golden era' of collegial self-governance and equally passionate critiques of the managerialism which has become dominant in the past quarter century. It is tempting to cast the latter two traditions as polar opposites, one bad and the other good, but it seems to me now that this is too simple an approach to take. Neither am I trying to advocate managerialism 'lite' which might be managerialism softened by an appropriate amount of 'consultation'. The title I have chosen refers to the co-evolution of collegial and managerial values and indicates my belief that the two traditions co-exist, even if that co-existence is marked by tension and conflict from time to time. It is now my belief that they co-exist in a paradoxical way and that as the management of universities develops, it is from the tension between the two sets of values that novel ways of going on will emerge.

In this section of my thesis, I will discuss the role of universities in the twenty-first century, the methods I have used in my research, current thinking on the place of collegiality in universities, the advent of managerial approaches and the tension which results from interaction of these with collegial values. I then go on to discuss the genesis of collegial and managerial values and how they co-evolve through processes of communicative action, which are, in turn, modulated by relations of power within the university. At the end of this synopsis, I describe how my practice as an academic manager has changed as a result of engaging in this research programme, I set out the conclusions I draw from my research and suggest how these preliminary findings might be developed further.

II Role of the University
Much has changed since Newman wrote his seminal work 'The Idea of a University' in the nineteenth century, and despite the fact that it is still a key text for students of higher education, many of its precepts now seem archaic. He advocates a complete separation of the activities of teaching and research and suggests that research be the role of separate organisations known as academies.

> To discover and to teach are distinct functions; they are also distinct gifts and are not commonly found united in the same person. He, too, who spends his day in dispensing his existing knowledge to all comers is unlikely to have either leisure or energy to acquire new…..The greatest thinkers have been too intent on their subject to admit of interruption; they have been men of absent minds and idiosyncratic habits and have, more or less shunned the lecture room and the public school. (Newman, 1889, xiii)

Since Newman's time a belief system has emerged that teaching and research go hand in hand, that the best researchers make the best teachers (with very little evidence to support this claim) and that the reputation of universities depends in large part on their research achievements. Indeed, universities are now seen as key instruments for the achievement of the holy grail of a 'knowledge economy' in most developed countries.

Reichert (2006) offers four contemporary views of the European university and while doing so, points out that not alone can a single university hold all of these views, they can also be held simultaneously by the same individual.

The sober view: the university is just another knowledge based organisation within a region, perhaps with a broader range of expertise, whose role is the exchange of knowledge.

The social view: the university is an important counterbalance to dominant forces and attitudes and would seek to lead change through dialogue within its region and would offer solutions to the problems of society.

The creative view: the university is a place where individuals and teams maximise their creative potential and thereby that of their region.

The purist or Humboldtian view: the university maintains a critical distance from day to day activity in order to maximise its early warning potential, objectivity can be compromised by closeness to real-world concerns and that criticisms of ivory tower status will eventually be overturned by recognition of

the university's long-term contribution to the well-being of society. Knowledge transfer in this model is unidirectional.

On the other side of the Atlantic Graham and Diamond (1997), in their book on the rise of American research universities, describe a world where the reputation of these organisations has soared since World War II as measured by numbers of Nobel Prize winners, international applications for student admission and academic jobs or by reputational surveys. They attribute this success to the uniquely competitive and decentralised nature of the higher education marketplace. Despite this they describe American universities as being complex and resistant to rapid change and rooted in systems of academic tenure. Success for private US institutions has been through the enormous scale of their endowments (which depend on the generosity of graduates and philanthropists) as compared to state institutions which depend on public support and political networking by senior administrators.

Universities worldwide envy the success of the American system and have tried to emulate it by a variety of means. In the UK and Australia, universities had been traditionally supported by the state as essential parts of national infrastructure but in the past twenty five years they have been swept along in a 'reform' process which affected all branches of the public service which has become known as managerialism. This has been characterised by target setting, inspection, re-allocation of budgets based on performance and the emergence of elite groups of research universities and other groups of universities which concentrate on teaching and receive little by way of research funding. The most important change was a progressive reduction in state funding, which compelled universities to go out into the marketplace and generate funds to deal with the shortfall. New activities included marketing courses abroad and online, developing relationships with industry and approaching alumni and philanthropists for donations. All of this propelled universities towards different ways of managing their affairs and corporate methods more and more became the norm. Much has been written about the move from traditional styles of academic governance to more managerial approaches. This managerial approach now dominates thinking in the management of universities, but it is repudiated

by many of those who work in the sector, who look back longingly to a time where consensual decisions were made in a measured way, where the word manager was unheard of and those who took up the role of administration functioned as 'first among equals'. My research has been into my own experience of one university's transition from a predominantly collegial tradition to a managerial approach and how this played out in the details of daily life over a three year period. I was closely involved with three substantial change projects during this time and the dominant themes to which I paid attention were ideology and values, power relations and what McCaffery (2004) refers to as the lost art of conversation. The form which my inquiry took was dramatically different to my experience of research in the sciences, so at this point it is appropriate to include some discussion on methods.

III Method

Tsoukas and Chia (2002) state that the traditional approaches to change in organisations have been dominated by assumptions privileging stability, routine and order and that change itself is exceptional rather than natural. They argue that change is pervasive in organisations, indeed that it is of the essence of what organisations are and that *organisation* is the *outcome* of change. They describe organisations as sites of 'continuously evolving human action' where a process of reweaving actors' webs of belief and habits occurs through processes of interaction. Such a view demands that organisation scientists pay much more attention to *microscopic* change because such change occurs naturally through 'creep', 'slippage', and 'drift' as well as 'spread' and it is subtle, agglomerative, often subterranean, heterogeneous and often surprising. They recommend looking at organisations from within, in order to examine carefully how habits and beliefs are rewoven as circumstances change and managers attempt to intervene. This thesis is an attempt to do just that in a university which is undergoing rapid change.

Giddens (1976, p161)) states that the sociological observer cannot make social life available as a 'phenomenon' for observation independently of drawing upon his knowledge of it as a resource whereby he constitutes it as 'a topic for

investigation' (his emphases). He goes on to state that 'immersion in a form of life' is the necessary and only means whereby an observer is able to generate such characterizations. The challenge thereafter is to convert the experiences or descriptions of it into social/scientific discourse.

Stacey (2007, p405) takes the view that organisations consist of patterns of interaction between people who are influenced by ideology, norms, values and relations of power. I have chosen to use this understanding of organisations as a starting point for my research in which I viewed the microscopic change process in my own organisation and I will argue that universities are hotbeds of conflicting values, that communicative action of various kinds is integral to processes of change and that changing power relations have a major influence on what changes and how it changes.

I have spent most of my academic life in research in science and all of my publications reflect a reductionist approach to understanding patterns or mechanisms of disease. Adding to the body of knowledge in my world consists of designing projects or experiments (frequently with the help of a statistician) which will generate data that can be used to add to the understanding of mechanisms of disease and have some practical application. 'Truth' is established though rigorous methodology, presentation of statistically valid evidence and subjection to the scrutiny of peer review. I 'grew up' in a research tradition which values objectivity, validity, repeatability, peer review and, finally some practical application. This fits Alvesson's (2003) profile of the neo-positivist researcher who is 'eager to establish a context-free truth about reality "out there" ….minimising researcher influence and other sources of bias'.

From the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating, organisations are viewed as patterns of interaction between people in the 'living present' (Stacey, 2007) which may be understood as acts of communication, relations of power and the application of values. These patterns of interaction are characterised by complexity, self organisation and emergence. Stacey argues that it is only possible to really understand an organisation from within the local interactions which constitute the organisation and research consists in the

researcher's reflection on the micro detail of his/her interaction with others. My initial exposure to the research methodology in the DMan programme was very troubling for me. It quickly became clear that the approach was radically different to anything I had experienced before. It seemed that I could not have gotten involved with anything which could be further from the research training I received during my own academic formation.

I first encountered the work of Ralph Stacey and his colleagues when I attended the June Conference of the Complexity and Management Centre in 2003. The 36 hours I spent at this meeting seemed bizarre, almost surreal. I arrived slightly late, so I joined a group of 30 or 40 people sitting in a large circle. Group members delivered themselves of thoughts or ideas in an apparently random way, sometimes these would get picked up and a discussion would commence; at other times silence would descend. The randomness of the proceedings could not have been more different to the data-driven PowerPoint presentations to which I was accustomed. Furthermore, it was not at all evident which of these people was Ralph Stacey; it transpired that he was the man who looked at his watch, at what turned out to be the end of the session, and said 'Well, that was very interesting; it's 10.30, we should finish now'. The rest of the time was spent in smaller groups discussing the research of some of the previous participants in the programme. As the day progressed I thought that, of all the ways in which I could have spent £350.00, this had to have been one of the most bizarre. After dinner, I found myself in conversation with Patricia Shaw at the bar and described what I thought would have happened to me had I done something like this at one of the conferences I organise from time to time; I was pretty certain that there would have been a sequence of extremely disgruntled delegates looking for their money back. On the following morning there was a small session with Ralph Stacey for delegates who thought they might join the programme. It was at this point that I came to realise that Ralph did somewhat more than sit in a sphinx-like manner in the large group. I don't recall much of the conversation, but I do remember thinking that what I heard him say got me interested in finding out a little more. I remember saying that I had regarded myself as a reflective academic manager, but that this programme seemed to

offer the possibility of deepening my understanding substantially. I started to read some of the publications of the CMC.

The basis of the DMan research programme is encapsulated in the phrase 'taking your own experience seriously'. The programme requires participants to be active in organisations which are undergoing change processes and to write about their experience. Initially this consists of writing a narrative account of an event or series of events which is shared and discussed with a supervisor and a group of other students (typically four) in a learning set. The student then proceeds to investigate the events described in the narrative through reading relevant literature and writing a series of iterations of each project. With each re-write the topic is explored in more detail and from a variety of points of view. This approach is described as reflexivity and emphasises the reality that the researcher is part of the social world that is studied and that this calls for exploration, self-examination and conscious and consistent efforts to view the subject matter from different angles (Alvesson, 2003). The ideal here is to maintain an awareness that there is more than one good way of understanding something. So, in Project 3, when I declared that I was beginning finally to grapple with the concept of reflexivity, I had explored the re-structuring process from a number of points of view until I found one which I found more satisfying to me. Koch and Harrington (1998) contend that researchers bring to their research the data generated, a range of literature, a positioning of the literature, a positioning of oneself and moral socio-political contexts. Reflexive research for them is characterised by ongoing self-critique and self-appraisal and the research product (the writing) can be given shape by the politics of location and positioning. Koch and Harrington (1998) suggest that if the product is well signposted the reader will be able to travel easily through the world of the participants and maker of the text (the researcher) and decide for themselves whether the text is believable or plausible. Stacey and Griffin (2005) express dissatisfaction with this individualistic view of reflexivity and describe it as a social accomplishment which requires reflexive researchers to locate their thinking in historical traditions of thinking.

In addition to the writing, the programme also requires attendance at a series of five-day residential schools which include a full day's work and commence with a meeting of the whole group. A variety of themes were discussed during the residential meetings, but while methodology was referred to, there was nothing that resembled the kind of training that one might have expected at the start of a conventional doctoral programme. The style of the morning meeting is informed by practice at the Institute of Group Analysis and has a similar format to the conference meeting I described above. There is an obligation on students to attend these morning meetings and the objective here is that students obtain some communal experience of social reflexivity. While my own contribution to these meetings was very limited, they frequently provided real insights into how a group of people can interact with one another and how conversational gestures get taken up in surprising ways. It was especially interesting to begin to notice these as having relevance in the organisational setting and to see how the large group was, in fact a kind of organisation. There were many similar experiences in the smaller learning set where analysis of patterns of interaction within the group itself enabled insights, not alone into the project work of the students, but into how such interaction mirrored what happens in organisations. The learning set of which I was part was, for the most part, harmonious and most of the interaction was measured and quiet, with the notable exception of a conflict which resulted in the departure of our first supervisor from the programme. As the one who may have, at least in part, precipitated this change by adopting a hostile position towards the supervisor, I felt significant anxiety about the future well-being of the group. This experience itself was interesting when seen in terms of the learning set as a small organisation whose placidity was disturbed in a very significant way which caused substantial anxiety about the future of the group and the individuals comprising it. As we adjusted to our new supervisor, it felt very like the concerns which exist with the appointment of a new chief executive. In retrospect, I can see all of these experiences as being helpful in terms of gaining an understanding of the methodology of the programme by providing opportunities for reflecting on experiences which the group was sharing together, as opposed to commentary on the experiences of group members from their own organisations. By virtue of the fact that they

were shared experiences, it was possible to reflect on them in a way which allowed the nuances and intricate conversational movements to be noticed.

Stacey (2005) states that the move from positivist quantitative research methods to qualitative interpretative methods is no longer contested. It took me some time to get to grips with these methods and to begin to believe that observations made from a position other than that of the objective observer could have any validity. Silverman (2000) in the kind of handbook which might have served as the basis for an introductory series of lectures on methodology in a more conventional programme, indicates that there is a variety of qualitative research methods and that selecting an appropriate method depends on the research problem. One of the key pieces of advice he offers is to find a 'settled theoretical orientation' which will provide a basis for inference and data analysis. By the time I commenced the programme, I had read a number of the publications of the CMC group and was particularly taken by the approach of Shaw (2002) on the role of conversation in organisational life. My interest in a narrative approach was provoked by the response I mentioned above to the informal presentations I had given at staff development courses and at the European Universities Association conference. The response to these presentations surprised me. They were free of data, other than my highly subjective accounts of the happenings I recounted in Project 1, and they were well received. So even before formally commencing the programme, I was beginning to understand that narrative combined with interpretation was as capable of affecting an audience as new data from the field or laboratory. My story 'rang true' to the delegates at the conference. So, despite my misgivings on methodology at the commencement of the programme, my early reading had somehow moved me towards a theoretical orientation with which I felt some comfort, even if I wasn't yet convinced by all of its canons.

A key difference in methodology between my two research endeavours has to do with my own role. In my role as a scientist, the ideal is to remain apart from the topic under study and to design surveys or experiments to generate data which will not be influenced by the researcher. The data are collected carefully and subjected to analysis, which is most frequently numerical and then subjected to

statistical analysis. The results will be regarded as valid if they have statistical significance (i.e. not due to chance) and the discussion will centre on how these results compare with related research in the field. The importance of the research is frequently gauged by the prestige/quality of the journal in which it is published. The likelihood of getting further research funding depends on the *curriculum vitae* of the researcher (and especially on numbers and quality of publications). By way of total contrast, my role in this doctoral programme is one of very close intellectual and emotional involvement with the topic being researched, while at the same time trying to achieve some measure of detachment.

Silverman (2000) declares that the methods used by qualitative researchers can provide a deeper understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative data through the investigation of inner experiences, language, cultural meanings or forms of social interaction. This can be achieved through a number of qualitative research methods including observation (through extended periods of contact), examination of texts and documents, interviews and examination of audio/video recordings or transcripts. These methods are used to build a descriptive narrative with a view to understanding the events or activities described. All of these methods still rely on the researcher/observer being outside the system being examined and retain some of the elements of the positivist approach.

Questions of reliability and validity arise with these methods. Reliability has to do with the ways in which the observations are assembled and categorised; accurate documentation of the research procedures followed is essential in order that the reader can clearly understand and, hopefully, be persuaded by it. Reliability refers to the degree of consistency with which instances are assigned to the same category by different observers or the same observer on different occasions. Validity is another word for truth (Silverman 2000) and Denzin and Lincoln (1994) refer to *internal validity*, the degree to which findings correctly map the phenomenon in question and *external validity,* the degree to which findings can be generalised to other settings similar to the one in which the study occurred. One possible source of validation is to get feedback from the

subject of the research (Silverman 2000), despite fears of 'contaminating the data with experience of the subject'. In the middle of the programme, I presented the work in Project 2 to colleagues as part of a strategic planning exercise; the audience included some of those who were 'subjects' in this project. It was reassuring to be told afterwards that my account was a convincing one for them. The recent invitation to present to a meeting of European deans suggests that my approach continues to be of interest to my peers in academic life.

Action research as the term implies, combines acting in the world combined with research on this action and acknowledges the fact that the researcher has an engagement with the research which is different to the third-person, supposedly dispassionate, approach of positivism. Action research takes account of the subjectivity which positivism deplores and makes it visible to the reader. Participative enquiry and co-operative enquiry are two forms of action research, where the researcher is working with rather than on the material or subjects under study (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Reason and Bradbury, 2001).

Stacey and Griffin (2005) state that action research and the perspective of complex responsive processes have many interests in common, including the unsuitability of positivist methods in social research and their focus on participation and relationship. However, they differ on a number of counts:

- Action research is built on a metaphysical foundation that the cosmos is an integrated systemic whole that is integrated, interacting, self consistent and self-creative whereas complex responsive processes is a temporal process theory which argues against spatial metaphors such as 'inside' and 'outside' and systemic wholes.

- Action research understands the social as a system at one level constructed by individuals at another level, whereas complex responsive processes, informed by the thinking of Mead and Elias,

understands the individual and the social as part of the same phenomenon.

- Action research starts with ideology which includes cooperation, collaboration, liberation and challenges to existing power structures as given. Complex responsive processes idealises human interaction itself which includes conflict and difference as well collaboration and agreement; this is only worked out in local interactions and is constrained and enabled by the values of the participants and the behavioural norms of that environment.

Despite earlier misgivings, I have chosen to engage with the research method of complex responsive processes for the following reasons:

- My experience has suggested to me for some time that conventional understandings of how universities work are based on simple mechanistic models and do not take adequate account of human interaction.

- If this is the case, a qualitative research methodology which acknowledges the reality of all kinds of human interaction, including conflict, in organisations seems more likely than other methods to provide the appropriate means of developing a better understanding of how universities function as they change.

- My work has resulted in insights which, based on limited dissemination, seem to have resonance for the academic community and thereby may be of more general interest.

If I were to be critical of one aspect of the methodology espoused by Stacey and colleagues, it would be for the tendency to publish their work primarily in book form rather than in journals. This seems to apply also to the work of students in

the programme. This leaves the programme open to accusations of by-passing the rigours of the peer review process. In scientific fields, it is regarded as desirable to have published some papers in good journals in advance of thesis submission. This serves the purpose of advancing the prospects of the research programme itself, in addition to boosting the *curriculum vitae* and confidence of the student in advance of the *viva voce* examination. I would argue that the approach to publication could leave the perspective of complex responsive processes on the margins of thinking about organisational dynamics.

I am in the somewhat unusual position of being about to present a second doctoral thesis. My PhD work from 25 years ago resulted in five publications in international journals, which would be regarded as normal in the sciences; this is the kind of criterion which is used to academically evaluate a doctoral piece of work. McNay (personal communication, 2007), when he read my Projects 3 and 4, remarked that it was more like work presented for a professional doctorate than a research doctorate, which of course is exactly what is. A survey of professional doctoral programmes suggests that work in such programmes is likely to be carried out by practitioners who are more interested in the application of advanced theory in the workplace than in the generation of new theory or pure academic research, thus suggesting that the bar is not set quite as high in terms of the need to present work which is 'original' or ground-breaking in nature. Nonetheless, I will claim below that I have contributed in a real way to the understanding of some of what is involved in the transformation of a university and that this requires thinking in a different way about the tensions which exist between collegiality and managerialism.

IV Contemporary views on Collegiality

I reviewed much of the literature on collegiality in my first project and, in my third project, I described my own academic formation in a department which lived up to many of these ideals. Pierre Bourdieu (1984) analysed the social background and the activities of the French academic world in his book *Homo academicus*. The world he describes may now seem arcane with its population of all-powerful professors who control 'reproduction' or continuity in

disciplines through a range of power plays, influence and the techniques of the old boys club, but is not far removed from the experience I describe in Project 1. Those who accumulate 'academic capital' through research and scholarship vie with those who concentrate on academic administration and whose power is seen as some kind of substitute or consolation prize. Bourdieu acknowledges the amount of time and effort which goes into rituals, ceremonies, meetings and displays in order to accumulate academic capital of the administrative kind, which is known as a 'reputation for academic worthiness'. He analyses in detail the infighting which goes on within and between disciplines and how subtle political games are played out constantly to ensure advancement and enhanced prestige. This represents the darker side of collegiality, where the ideal of developing consensus on the best way forward becomes subverted by the ambitions and desires of the more skilful or powerful players.

In the US, Cohen and March (1986) developed the notion of universities as organised anarchies they had first mooted in an earlier paper (Cohen, March and Olsen 1972). The American university

> does not know what it is doing, its goals are either vague or in dispute, its major participants wander in and out of the organisation, it is a collection of choices looking for problems, issues and feelings looking for decision situations in which they might be aired, solutions looking for issues to which they might be applied and decision-makers looking for work.
> (Cohen and March, 1986, p3)

They describe a garbage can process by which decisions are made; problems and solutions are admixed with participants and choice opportunities. Decisions are made by oversight (decisions made without reference to the problems), by flight (choices become unsuccessfully associated with problems, leave the problem and make a decision possible) or by resolution (decisions which resolve problems). University decision making frequently does not resolve problems; choices are more likely to be made by flight or oversight. Problems are often resolved, but rarely by the choice to which they were first attached. The matching of problems, choices and decision-makers is partly controlled by

content, relevance, competence, particular combinations of garbage cans and overall load on the system. While this is a more sophisticated account of collegial processes of decision-making, the style of leadership appropriate to such decision-making described by Cohen and March now sounds genteel, quaint almost, and bears little resemblance to a world where executive decisions are made by senior management teams based on 'hard' data provided by university IT systems.

Later, Birnbaum (1988) describes the cybernetics of academic organisation and leadership. He sees a college as a system with a series of subsystems which are loosely coupled and it is this loose coupling which gives rise to the non-linearity experienced in such organisations. He draws attention to the fact that thinking of these systems as simple and amenable to simple interventions is inappropriate. Even sophisticated mechanical metaphors are unsuitable as aids to understanding how such systems work (p38), since the 'parts' (participants) have intentions, preconceptions and wills that change over time. He urges university administrators to complexify their thinking about how their organisations work, to move away from simple linear expectations of cause and effect to more complex ones, towards an understanding of how the amplifying and stabilising loops of the cybernetic system serve to modulate one another. Such models may help to understand why the results of administrative actions not be direct or long lasting and that new problems will continually emerge and require attention. He holds (p179) that the role of President, while involved in many activities, is to respond rather than initiate; the number of variables within the organisation is so great that no one person could assimilate them. Organisational stability is maintained though cybernetic controls; self-correcting mechanisms that monitor organisational functions and provide attention cues or negative feedback to participants when things are not going well. Coordination is provided by the 'spontaneous corrective action of the college's parts'. He uses the thermostat metaphor to help illustrate his view. The only times when more robust action is required is at times of crisis or serious underperformance, but the use of shocks to disturb the system can have large scale unpredictable effects. He holds the view that transactional leadership is often more valuable than the transformative kind, since colleges are more in need of 'chronic

rebuilding' than complete transformation. While this cybernetic view of how colleges function seems rather passive and unlikely to gain much support in circumstances characterised by rapid change, resource scarcity and severe competition between colleges, I have described in Project 3 how most contemporary managerial models of management rely on the principles of cybernetics. The notion that colleges have self-correcting cybernetic controls which kick in as appropriate seems rather at odds with contemporary versions of leadership where the president as CEO is expected to be 'in charge' and to have the data to hand to make the tough decisions when required. Indeed it is this replacement of the 'spontaneous corrective action of the college's parts' by the robust corrective actions of senior administrators which has been the principal difference in the cybernetic model of university management in the past quarter century. Birnbaum's work marks the introduction of mainstream organisational theory into the university and reifies the organisation as something to be manipulated in the same way as a central heating system. He does however point to the fact that rational cause and effect approaches, with expectations of linear change, frequently result in surprises.

The value of collegiality has also come under attack. Ramsden in his book '*Learning to lead in higher education*' (1998) declares that it has had a better press than it deserves and Marginson and Considine (2000) are scathing about the limitations of traditional forms of management. In an environment with higher expectations, reduced budgets and intense competition, it now seems that the old collegial ways are no longer up to the task of ensuring survival or advancement of universities. Ramsden (1998) states that leaders must now create environments where bold moves, innovation, imagination can hold sway, even in an atmosphere where change is constant and that such leadership must draw on good practice in other organisations.

V A Clash of Values

When I attempted to reduce the number of departments from nine to three, I was making what I perceived to be a reasonable attempt to rationalise the administrative affairs of the faculty. However, it was perceived as an outrageous

attack on the territory of the professors. With departmental territory went a budget, decision-making and, as several perceived it, the identity of the discipline and the professor. Threatening the professors in this way provoked the outrage which became manifest at the meeting with Kevin's attack on me. At the time, of course, my own thinking was that the structural reform I was proposing was rational, that my research had shown that it was the norm in many other places and that it would make more effective use of resources. I had not paid nearly enough attention to the effects these proposals would have on the people who would be most affected by them, in terms of the threats to identity, discipline and power bases. Project 1 was particularly instructive in terms of understanding the power relations which exist in collegial systems of governance. As I read my four projects, I can see an increasing sophistication in terms of the attention I have paid to the issues of power relations, values and patterns of interaction.

The other interesting aspect of Kevin's attack was that it was all about my infringement of the collegial values of consultation/consensus decision-making and the treachery of my discussing the plans with the university administration before I did so formally with the faculty. There was no mention of budget, power relations or threats to identity. The former are what Stacey calls legitimate themes while the latter are shadow themes. Thus it was acceptable for Kevin to complain on behalf of himself and his colleagues about my infringement of the values of collegiality and consensus decision-making, but he would not have drawn attention to aspects of the issue such as the diminution of his own power base or the attack on his identity. I had justified my approach to myself on the basis that there was little point in spending time securing agreement at faculty level if it would not get sanctioned by the administration at a later stage. What I could not admit to my colleagues was that I was also attempting to generate support for it at a higher level to improve its chances of approval locally. Here I was deliberately applying Lewin's (1947) technique of Force Field Analysis. This is a technique whereby the manager analyses the strength of the forces for and against the proposed change, and then works to reduce the strength of those forces against the change and *vice versa*. This is represented diagrammatically as arrows of varying thickness acting on the

change process. This mechanical process took no account of the emotional effects of threats to budget, territory and identity mentioned above and, as I wrote in Project I, I began to realise that my thinking about was going on at the time was rather limited in its scope.

I also recorded the feelings of shame that I felt at being 'caught out' and being accused of not living up to the values of consultation and collective decision-making. Here is movement in my thinking from what I had previously understood after my management training. Emotions such as anxiety, shame and embarrassment were not mentioned at any point and yet it seems obvious to me now that such emotions are integral parts of daily life in the workplace. I described how much of my deanship was spent suffering great anxiety and it is clear to me now that much of this was based on the relations of power which were playing out over the six years. For most of that time I was the youngest person in the executive team and two of the people I was supposed to be 'leading' had been my PhD supervisors; several others had taught me as an undergraduate. I now recognise that such emotions are routine parts of daily life in organisations and I try to take account of them as they affect myself and others.

I would now see this central episode in Project 1 as representing the end of an era. It is utterly impossible to imagine such an event happening in my university five years later. The change in the way in which power is distributed has been quite dramatic and the speed with which it happened with the appointment of the new president was also remarkable. Key parts of this were the university decision to use a selection process, as opposed to election when he was appointed and the statutory changes which meant that the President was explicitly described as chief officer of the university, with formal responsibility to government for reporting on how resources are used.

Project 1 also illustrates the collision between an academic *habitus* which was characterised by democracy and joint decision-making and my very mild attempt at orchestrating structural change. This attempt was doubly quixotic of course, because the senior management of the university at the time were also

heavily steeped in the same democratic tradition. The experience I describe is exactly that of professors engaged in the protection of their disciplines, territories and ultimately, what they saw as their identities, in the face of a lunge towards managerialism by a dean they had elected to 'administer' the affairs of the faculty with their consent. My best attempts to gain 'buy-in' through consultation and discussion were, at best, only partially successful. At the time I explained this to myself as my own failure to correctly implement the nostrums of conventional change management techniques correctly. In Lewin's (1947) terms, I had not succeeded in unfreezing the existing culture nor had I successfully moderated the forces for and against my proposed changes, while consciously using his force field model. As I began to read a little more widely, I began to draw on Elias for a different understanding of the power relations that might have existed at the time and his theory of the established and the outsiders seemed to have the capacity to shed substantially more light on what was going on than the conventional descriptions of power relations that I had read in the mainstream literature. I contrasted the structures episode in Project 1 with two other change projects which had gone rather better and my conclusion at the end was that the quality of the participation of my colleagues in the latter two projects was greater. Despite the fact that I had not kept a diary, I remembered particular conversations which had taken place outside of official meetings and which in retrospect seemed to have special significance. As I was writing this I was reading Stacey (2003) and Shaw (2002). Both of these authors regard ordinary conversation as very important in the life of organisations and this seemed to be rather more than the 'managing by walking about' which is prescribed in the mainstream literature. By the end of Project 1, I had found two themes (power relations and the emergence of novelty from ordinary conversation) which would become of much greater interest to me in the succeeding projects. I did not yet know where they would take me in terms of understanding the relationship between collegiality and managerialism but I already felt that I was looking at how universities work from a perspective which was more helpful to me than the mainstream literature which I had consulted up that point.

VI Changing Views on Collegiality

McCaffery (2004) recommends tapping into the value of collegiality in his higher education manager's handbook, while working with, rather than against the organisational culture. Ramsden (1998), while stating that collegiality has had much better press than it deserves, goes on to call for a better understanding of the phenomena of collegiality, academic autonomy and academic bitterness as an essential step towards finding a suitable treatment for these problems. Clark (1998) calls for stimulation of the academic heartlands: the attitude of the academic departments, schools or centres where the actual work gets done is crucial to any transformative effort and he warns that it is here that the greatest possibility of failure exists for the organisation. However, Marginson and Considine (2000), in critiquing Clark's work, state that the greatest failure in terms of his prescription has been at the level of stimulation of the heartlands. McCaffery (2004), in my view, points to an important component of such stimulation when he states that the art of conversation is a core process in the achievement of success:

> Significant change depends on dialogue and commitment as much as imagination and perseverance. That what is conventionally regarded as the 'soft stuff' of the process (i.e. how we talk to one another, when we do it, the way in which we do it and most critically how we value it) is ironically the hard stuff in managing change successfully. (McCaffrey 2004, p 243)

It is this process of dialogue, conversation and its basis in the deeply held value of collegiality that began to interest me more as my research developed.

As I wrote Project 1, I began to see elements of my practice which seemed to have better outcomes than others and I was convinced that this had quite a lot to do with the way in which I approached the curriculum project. While I was writing Project 1, I was asked by the new President to take up the challenge of developing an Environmental Institute and it was this which comprised the narrative material for Project 2. I gave this the title 'Experiments in Collegiality', not because I was experimenting on my colleagues, but to try to indicate that I was experimenting with new ways of trying to engage with them.

I was deliberately trying to create what Stacey (2007 p286) describes as more fluid, spontaneous types of conversation, with a view to creating conditions where some novelty might emerge. Since I had no credentials whatever as an environmental scientist, it was going to be impossible for me to adopt any kind of 'command and control' position in this project. It soon enough became clear that previous attempts to achieve what I had been asked to do had not been very successful, that this was associated with apparent vested interests and lack of trust and that this had been the predominant reason for the conversation becoming 'stuck'. I began to deliberately organise a series of encounters of various kinds with colleagues from all over the university, the most unusual of which was the one-day workshop which I described at some length. This event was directly inspired by the early part of the DMan programme, in which the learning sets were established by a process of interaction between the members of the cohort. This event took place in a large room where the students were invited to self-organise into groups of four which would then work together for the three years of the programme. I managed to persuade my colleagues on the steering committee to organise a similar event where after very short introductions, colleagues would be invited to do something similar to try to identify the themes which might become the skeleton around which the institute might coalesce. Thus, I found myself in a room with around fifty people, who each spent a minute or so introducing themselves and their research interest and I then invited them to adjourn to another large room where they could self-organise into groups of whatever size they wished to discuss research themes. Stacey, drawing on the work of Foulkes, the founder of group analysis, states that:

> Given the power relation of the leader to others, he or she is in a particularly well –placed position to create opportunities for conversation that may foster greater spontaneity. Such spontaneity is likely to be fostered through the manner in which a leader handles a situation, encouraging others to create and shape the situation rather than simply giving instructions. (Stacey 2007, p286)

I described in the narrative the extreme sense of anxiety I felt before and during

this event; I felt this most particularly during the second phase of the day's activities where I deliberately re-arranged the furniture into a large circle and invited my colleagues to begin to discuss what had happened before lunch. Again, this was modelled on one of the activities of the residential programme, where the students and faculty gather in a large circle each morning to discuss anything that might be of interest or importance to any one of them. It is rather ironic that I found myself actually organising an event which was almost identical in character to the one of which I was so critical at the CMC Conference only eighteen months earlier. Here I found myself volunteering for the role of sphinx in a large circle of academic colleagues, inviting them to open a conversation on what had happened before lunch. My own anxiety was largely related to the likelihood of my colleagues feeling as perplexed as I did at such an event, but it seemed like this was not universally the case. Certainly the reaction from the members of the steering committee I had cajoled in to risking this event was that it had been worth doing and when I read the notes made by my assistant the following day, I was astonished at what had been discussed. One of the most interesting statements during this entire process came from the rural economist who had initially been very unhappy with my proposal and had wanted us to compile a list of deliverables in advance of the day's work: he came to the view that the day was only part of a dialogue which had been going on for weeks and would continue afterwards. He was correct of course, and I now see the entire project in exactly that way. It was initiated by the President's request to me to take up the challenge, I took it up by engaging in conversations if various kinds with those I identified as having likely connections with such an institute out of which came the idea for the 'experimental' day, which resulted in further discussion and eventually in the production of a proposal which found favour with the university administration. It is striking that my colleagues came to this interpretation of events without prompting from me which is so close to the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating, which describes organisations as patterns of interaction between the members which stimulates further interaction.

So if collegiality is at least partially about engagement of the academic community in the co-creation of the future and in the lost art of conversation,

then I believe what was going on here was a deliberate attempt to do just those things. This was going on at a time when the new administration was finding its feet and beginning to radically change the way the university was managed. This was most typified by the VP Research advice to me to go climb a mountain and come down with a good idea. Clearly, regardless of my personal view of such an approach, it would have been preposterous in the circumstances in which I found myself. I have referred earlier to the fact that there are legitimate and shadow discourses frequently going in organisations. The entire event which was central to the Environmental Institute project took place in the shadows since I chose not to invite the VP Research to open it, and yet the work that was done that day was legitimised in a formal proposal to the university a few weeks later. I took the deliberate decision not to invite this man to open the day's proceedings because I thought the design would have looked so anarchic, so bizarre to him that we could not have proceeded with it. I think I would have felt compelled to organise a very different kind of event. This was an occasion where the paradox of co-existing values was apparent. I was attempting in McCaffery's (2004) terms to 'tap into the value of collegiality' while organising the day's events, but this was also taking place as part of a deliberate managerial attempt to organise the university in a new way. I had accepted the challenge of trying to help achieve this, but was doing so in a way which I believed might have more acceptance by the academic community than the equivalent of 'going to the top of a mountain'. It was clear that the university administration had a specific managerial objective in mind which would generate scientific momentum, increase synergy, income and productivity. It was also clear that there was a specific way in which they thought it might be achieved. There is no doubt that my reflections in Project 1 prompted me towards the approach I took and that I believed that those very objectives could be best met by engaging in activity in the academic heartlands which could best be described as collegial in nature and which relied primarily on conversation to achieve its aims. Nonetheless, this activity was taking place in an arena in which the approach to management was changing rapidly within the organisation.

VII   Managerialism

I reviewed in some detail in Project 3 the genesis of the discourse of managerialism which is now dominant in public sector organisations. This is characterised by target setting, performance management and accountability and is underpinned by techniques such strategic planning and structural reform. Nothing less than transformation is called for and those charged with management responsibility are required to somehow blend their professional values with those espoused in the managerial approach. This change commenced around 25 years ago and has replaced earlier professional approaches to administration in many organisations. Thus policemen, doctors, social workers and others find themselves acting as managers of people as opposed to practicing their core profession. There is a plethora of management courses and consultants available to 'support' such people in their new roles. Indeed, the programme for deans at which I will present my own work later this year is part of that industry. The challenge for such managers in the academic world is exacerbated by the fact that administration, or management is not usually a career move; in fact the position is not too far removed from that described by Bourdieu (1984) in that it is frequently seen as the opposite of a career move. The norm would be for academics to take on a role such as head of school or department for a three year term, usually without any training and with minimal support. It frequently becomes an exercise in trying to complete the three year assignment with as few enemies as possible, ensuring as much compliance as possible with whatever quality assurance or research funding targets are in place, while simultaneously trying to maintain a research programme and apply some of the old collegial values. This is Shattock's (2003) coalface of academic life and Clark's academic heartlands; it is here that the experience of high organisational expectations, differing values and changing power relations frequently generate tension, anxiety and conflict.

In Project 3, I described the experience of being in the cauldron of a major re-structuring programme. The objective was to reduce the number of departments and centres in the university from ninety five to thirty five schools, to abolish the eleven faculties and create five large 'colleges' in their place. The overt objective was to rationalise the administration of the university and to bring

cognate disciplines together in order to enhance research synergies. This took place while the university curriculum was in the middle of its own 'big-bang' change. This involved re-structuring all university courses from year-long entities into 12 week semester length modules. Students would be able to design their own degree programme and there would be substantial opportunities for choosing modules outside of their core degree subjects. Achieving this required dramatic changes in IT infrastructure, orientation and training of staff in all of the new ways and somehow ensuring that everything didn't collapse when the systems went live in September 2005. The re-structuring programme ran in parallel to the curriculum reform and was 'completed' on September 1st 2005. The President left a message on every telephone extension congratulating everyone on the achievement of the changes and looked forward to an exciting future as we moved on together.

I can think of very few people who would argue that the university was not in need of some fairly radical administrative tidying, but the widespread disaffection and unhappiness which I encountered during and after the re-structuring exercise was a direct result of the way in which the process was carried out. In addition to commencing while a major curriculum change was underway, its scope and the speed with which it took place created the confusion and alienation which I described in the narrative. I drew on Elias and Scotson's (1994) theory of established and outsider relations to describe how such feelings might be grounded in deprivation of value, of meaning, the capacity for self-love and self-respect and loss of identity. This is similar range of feelings to those I attributed to the professors in Project 1.

I argued in Project 4 that what was going on was a template driven, consultant-led process which, rather like my own attempt at re-structuring a few years earlier, had not taken adequate account of the likely emotional reactions to the changes. This had results ranging from mere nuisance through to complete abolition of entities which had existed for a century, including the faculty of which I had been dean. It was possible to do this because of the change in the distribution of power in the university and the capacity and willingness of the President to make decisions which would have been very difficult in the past. I

referred earlier to Clarke and Newman's (1997) description of managerialism which includes deploying the progressive language of missions, visions, radical transformation, the need to embrace change which has resulted in a 'tyranny of transformation' which in turn, helped legitimise the processes of state restructuring and was accompanied by massive investment in management training, extensive use of consultants and the introduction of techniques such as strategic planning and business process re-engineering. They state that managerialism has not just been an instrument of change, but that the managerial discourse has helped push the change process along by making it seem inevitable, that there was no other way. A range of narratives were used to persuade; cautionary tales based on the bleak prospect of failure, heroic formulations based on the vision of charismatic leaders and enticing descriptions of the benefits of getting to the promised land. The reputation of organisations become dependant on being seen as 'business-like' and 'well managed' and this helped legitimise the need for strategic plans, organisational re-structuring, re-branding and the resources required to comply with audit and other monitoring requirements. It is possible to see much of the above in what happened at the university during the re-structuring project. There was pressure from the Government for the higher education sector to modernise and re-structure, strategic planning is a statutory requirement, there was a belief that the university would be seen as progressive and business like if it succeeded in this radical change and there were consultants willing and able to press their change management templates into service. The changes were well received publicly with the assistance of a dedicated communications office and other universities are now commencing similar processes.

Thames Valley University came close to collapse when a visionary vice-chancellor attempted an equally ambitious change programme and McCaffery (2004) attributes this to inadequate resources, especially in information technology, inadequate consultation, a failure to anticipate the full effect of reforms, opting for a big bang approach to change rather than phasing them in and a vice-chancellor who had an overly top-down approach to the reforms. This university, while there were many hair-raising moments where collapse seemed imminent, did not descend into chaos. By the end of Project 4, I was describing

how colleagues were adjusting to the changes, how some were capitalising on them to move ahead and how others were left feeling stranded and alienated. In the two years since that time, the university's research income has increased dramatically, the new curriculum is mostly functional and the institution has developed a reputation for being capable of change. The difficult question is to do with how closely the outcomes are related to the strategy. It also happens to be true that national research funding increased during this period, that the new curriculum may appear to be more radical than it is and that the university's new communications department is highly effective at placing good news stories. Birnbaum (2001) amusingly describes the 'omelette speech' which he at one time gave and of which he later became a recipient. The speech was about the necessity for breaking eggs. It may seem churlish to speculate on whether the success of the university is a result of the changes that have taken place; if it is, then the omelette speech may be appropriate. However, in Project 4 I recount how there was burgeoning doubt at the centre of the university on the viability of continuing with the approach which had been put in place for the first three years. The tension between traditional values and 'the need to get things done' was becoming apparent at the centre too.

VIII   Values, Norms, Ideology

Since the title of this thesis refers to the co-evolution of two contrasting sets of values, it is important to discuss what the term 'values' might mean in a university. Reichert (op cit) has described the range of contemporary views of the role of universities and the fact that, not alone is such diversity of views likely within the same university, but that individuals can hold a number of these views simultaneously. Thus there is not alone tension between individuals holding different views, but this tension can exist within an individual person.

Reamer (1995 p 11) describes the term value as difficult to define but offers a collection of definitions retrieved from the literature including 'anything capable of being appreciated', 'a conception, implicit or explicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection of available means and ends of action', or 'the desirable end states

which act as a guide to human endeavour' or 'the most general statements of legitimate action which guide social action'.

Universities have traditionally been driven by values indicated by words such as personal growth, intellectual development, scholarly community, humanism, improving society and liberal education but when these give way to discussion of products, markets, accountability, cost-benefit analysis, customer service they distort views of the purposes of the institution and lead to faculty opposition (Birnbaum, 2001, p226). In the Dearing Report (1997) there is a declaration on the 'values which are shared throughout higher education and without which higher education, as we understand it, could not exist'. Such values include:

- a commitment to the pursuit of truth;
- a responsibility to share knowledge;
- freedom of thought and expression;
- analysing evidence rigorously and using reasoned argument to reach a conclusion;
- a willingness to listen to alternative views and judge them on their merits;
- taking account of how one's own arguments will be perceived by others;
- a commitment to consider the ethical implications of different findings or practices.

In the mission, vision and values section of its current strategic plan, it is stated that the university that it will cherish the following values in all its activities: excellence, rigour and integrity; fairness, equality and inclusiveness; freedom, creativity and innovation; service to the local, national and global Irish communities.

I have focussed on the values of collegiality and managerialism. In project 1, I reviewed the origins and definitions of collegiality; it is based broadly on the principles of democracy and collective decision-making for the benefit of the organisation as a whole and is frequently referred to as an ideal in universities. I

have dealt with the limitations of collegiality as a means of advancing the fortunes of universities when, in its undiluted form, it can result in failure to make decisions at all or make them at too slow a pace. Despite aspirations to democracy and consensus, it is highly susceptible to the vagaries of power relations in ways which favour politically well organised groups or those who have learned to play the game more effectively.

When I look now at my first project, it seems clear to me that it represented in microcosm a clash of collegial and managerial values. I was influenced by the management training I had received at the Open University and I was attempting to implement what I believed would be helpful streamlining of the administration of the faculty. The most vocal complaint was about my flouting the normal decision-making procedures and not adequately consulting the academic community. While this was what was complained about overtly, I described how the changes would significantly affect the territory, influence and budgets of a group of senior professors and how they in turn exerted political and academic muscle to ensure that the most significant changes did not take place. This illustrated clearly the relationship between values and power. In dramatic contrast to that, three years later not alone were departments merged, but the entire faculty of which I had been dean was abolished by *fiat* of the new administration. The managerial values being espoused here were efficiency, generating a critical mass of researchers and merging cognate disciplines. While this was achieved in relatively short order, I described in Project 3 the disturbance and alienation which resulted from it. The new President and his team used the executive authority derived from the Universities Act to ensure that their view of what was appropriate was sustained and the narrative further illustrates how power relations and values affect one another in organisational life.

Stacey (2007) describes how we make value judgements in acts of communication and power relating and he draws on the work of Elias and Joas (2000) to differentiate between norms and values and how together they constitute ideology.

Norms, the right, morals, the 'ought' are obligations or restrictions which have emerged over long periods through processes of interaction between people. Elias' '*Civilizing Process'* describes in great detail how, over centuries, restrictions on behaviour became internalised in individuals as societies developed. The most striking development is the curtailment of the use of violence. Each of us is therefore socialised to take on the restrictions which have emerged and these have become habitual. We operate these in our daily lives and deviation from these norms is not acceptable to that society. In the university, for example, it is not acceptable for students to bring notes into an exam hall or for faculty to inflate conference travel expenses; I have chaired numerous disciplinary committees where such infringements resulted in the imposition of penalties up to and an including exclusion from the organisation. Life in the university is constrained by such norms, as is life in every other sphere.

However, values, according to Joas (2000), are fundamental aspects of self and represent voluntary compulsions to choose one action over another, give meaning to life and are fundamental parts of identity. They arise in intense interactive experiences, become internalised in individuals as ideals and generate really strong commitment. In Project 3, I described my own experience of 'growing up' in a small academic department where all topics were the subject of vigorous discussion, where a passionate commitment to high academic standards in teaching and research underpinned all such discussion and where agreement was frequently reached on what the appropriate next steps were to activating these values in our daily lives. This had a powerful influence on all of us in the group and generated a commitment which, I believe, was borne out of the intense experience of dialogue in a setting where passion, tension and conflict were possible. This was my experience of the collegial ideal, represents a 'voluntary compulsion' and has influenced me in a significant way for my entire academic life. When I look at the values which the university will 'cherish in all of its activities' it is hard not to see them as somehow formulaic, as some kind of 'greatest hits' compilation that you'd expect to see resulting from a survey of the best university websites. I recall no 'intense interactive experiences' which resulted in the list of values officially espoused

by the university but what I have described in this thesis is the interactive processes, tension and conflict which take place as a university community attempts to reconcile different and often conflicting values:

- Research intensive versus teaching quality
- Executive decision-making versus 'consultation' and collegial processes
- Academic freedom versus accountability
- The preferences of industry (secrecy, patents) versus traditional research values (dissemination, sharing knowledge)
- Global player versus commitment to the local region

Birnbaum reflects on value systems in higher education in the US as follows:

> In the United States, the educational narratives of the past have been stories of personal virtue, civic participation, democracy, and social justice. The narrative gods of the present appear to be economic utility, consumerism, and technology—a weak foundation on which to build a just social order or excite the imagination. The idea of higher education as a social institution has been displaced by higher education as an industry (Birnbaum, 2001 p. 266)

As an attempt to open up discussion on values in higher education, Robinson and Katalushi (2005) compiled a book with contributions from a very wide range of university staff. Recurring themes throughout the book are that values are not fixed but shaped by continuing discourse, the need for interdisciplinary dialogue and the university as a learning organisation based on constant reflection on its role in society. Globalisation results in an increasingly polyvocal community of students and faculty with consequently increased tension not just from value plurality, but also increased opportunity for learning and the evolution of value systems. As an example, they suggest that the sheer scale of the university enterprise, which is based on values such as wider access and equality, has an inevitable effect on the quality of relationships between staff and students and on the learning experience. This raises the question of how academic standards can be maintained with wide ranges of ability. The

value of accountability, which is based on the public's need to be reassured that its money is being spent appropriately, can result in the quality of the teaching and research becoming secondary to the survival of the academic unit and the game playing which results from the need to meet externally imposed targets. The establishment of internal markets within universities, which was designed to improve internal accountability can result in a diminution of the sense of community and common purpose. Subdivision of teaching programmes into modules with the objective of providing range and choice can result in an entrepreneurial approach which is designed to maximise revenue and result in fragmentation rather than coherence in the learning experience. These examples illustrate clearly that the negotiation of values in the university is a complex matter and will inevitably involve tension and occasional conflict.

I believe the literature I have surveyed provides convincing arguments on the importance of dialogue in universities in the evolution of values and the ways in which universities are managed or administered. There is an equally compelling set of arguments which have to do with public views on the role of universities in society and their being accountable for the funds which the state invests in them. My thesis is that there is an evolutionary process going on here which is characterised by interaction, tension and occasional conflict between the various players both within and outside the organisation. Providing opportunities for interaction in order to enable such evolution to occur is an important part of the role of those in leadership positions.

It is interesting, for example, to note in a report on a conference organised by the Society for Research into Higher Education, that a

> generation gap is opening between a new breed of ambitious young career-minded academics who embrace a performance-management culture and their older peers who cling to traditional notions of autonomy, collegiality and scholarship. (Tysome, 2006)

while another view from the same conference would hold that

..for them, being an academic has become much more about getting ahead in their career than advancing knowledge. We have allowed things to fragment around us, and we have not defended universities as major social institutions. We have let ourselves be undermined. (Tysome, 2006)

This is a contemporary example of the tension between value systems. An example of an earlier debate is given by Robinson (2005, p228). Up to 1850, Oxbridge was dominated by the Church of England and the majority of students were candidates for the clergy; by the end of the nineteenth century the Anglican community had begun to lose its grip and the charters for new universities reflected a much more secular set of values; 'religion simply did not figure in the value systems of these universities'. More recently universities are finding ways to enable the possibility of a spiritual component to university life, even if this is most frequently done under the guise of student pastoral support.

I have referred on several occasions throughout this thesis to Mead's concept of 'cult values'. By this he meant values which are presented as lofty ideals or visions which do not take account of the difficulties which will inevitably be encountered while trying to implement them. The realisation of these values must always include negotiating the obstacles which are not mentioned in the description of the ideal. Seen in these terms, the values listed above by Dearing and on the university website are cult values. Griffin (2002) describes cult values as grist to the mill of everyday social interaction in which they become functional values as the source of the conflicts which both sustain identity and bring about change. The literature on values in universities and the narratives in this thesis indicate that, not alone is there difficulty in functionalising values which are agreed and widely held, but that there are many values which are in direct conflict with one another. It would seem that the collegial tradition of robust debate has something to contribute here, but it must evolve to a point where it can contribute usefully to a managerial need to make decisions in a timely fashion. Stacey (2007 p343) makes the point that the values espoused in vision and mission statements, even though carefully crafted, are cult values because they have not yet been functionalised; they have no meaning on their

own. Thus the collegial values of democracy, participation and managerial ones such as accountability, effectiveness and relevance have no meaning until attempts are made to make them operational. In Mead's terms, they are gestures made into the organisation or to the world via public statements whose meaning does not become evident until a response occurs. Thus when our President repeatedly talks about being a 'top 30' university, about being research intensive, about recruiting the best staff in the world he is publicly declaiming cult values. It is for him and others in the organisation to navigate the rapids of engaging others in finding the resources, doing the re-structuring, providing the infrastructure which will be attractive to international academics. None of this can be achieved without the tension or conflict which accompanies the functionalisation of these values. This functionalisation involves power relations including the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion and acts of communication.

IX Power Relations

Mainstream descriptions of power relations in universities are very similar to those for the corporate sector. Birnbaum (1988, p12-14) describes power, compliance and control in conventional terms and defines power as the ability to produce intended change in others, to influence them so that they will be more inclined to act in accordance with ones own wishes. Power is essential to coordinate and control the activities of people in universities. He describes five types of power:

1. Coercive power is the ability to punish if a person does not accept one's attempt at influence.

2. Reward power is to do with the capacity to give or promise rewards for compliance.

3. Legitimate power is based on acceptance of hierarchical structures.

4. Referent power results from willingness to be influenced by another because of identification with that other.

5. Expert power results from acceptance of another's special knowledge or competence.

He goes on to describe how the exercise of the first three types of power is not just unlikely to be successful in universities, but is also likely to result in alienation. Colleges, in Birnbaum's view, rely on referent and expert power to achieve their ends. Offering monetary rewards or giving orders are less likely to have a favourable outcome than in other types of organisation and are likely to result in alienation; academic managers need to take a different approach to those taken in other kinds of organisation. McCaffery (2004) also lists hierarchical, expert, resource and personal power and provides prescriptions for maximising power through completion of checklists and political positioning. Ramsden (1998) links power with trust. Centralised power leads merely to compliance, erodes trust and leads to concentration on the signs of performance rather than on substance. He advocates the sharing of power through the delegation of tasks to teams and thereby achieving wider distribution of power and leadership. He describes the paradox of sharing power as actually increasing one's own power and that such empowerment generates respect for the leader's authority. Trust is a close relation of power and must always be won; it only comes from promises being kept and 'academics will give you their power' when they can see that 'you mean what you say'.

In Project 3 I took up the views of Elias (1964) who offers a rather different interpretation of power relations than any of the above authors. In Elias' view, power is not something that is held by one person over another, but is a property of all relationships. Relations of power enable and constrain these relationships and determine which ideology is dominant. This dominance is sustained through patterns of gossip which reinforce the views of established groups and provide them with an identity. Thus when I attempted to re-structure the faculty the professors (who in that case represented the established group) the gossip patterns went along the lines of 'Who does he think he is, trying to shove this

stuff down our throats'. My re-structuring attempt was seen by them as an affront to the ideology of collegial decision-making, an unacceptable move to constrain their power and thereby damage their sense of their own identity. They reacted in a robust way which illustrated how the power was really distributed. Such power can change dramatically with changing circumstances and I described how power relations changed in the university with the appointment of the new President. The re-structuring programme was delivered on target without any effective opposition. The faculty which I was merely attempting to re-structure was abolished and merged with another and the professors seemed powerless to do anything to change the course of events. However, I described how this adoption of an executive style was, and continues to be, marked by significant unhappiness and some alienation. This could be seen as a version of Birnbaum's 'coercive power' or Ramsden's 'centralised power'. Trust is lost and I described how anomie, alienation and prioritising self-preservation became more prevalent during the re-structuring programme. This is the established-outsider dynamic which I described in some detail, but an important point is that this can change. In Project 4, in a further illustration of the fluidity of power relations, I described how I was able to raise conversational topics with the President which would not have been possible were I not in the position of having something that he wanted from me. Thus I succeeded in persuading him to attend a meeting without a PowerPoint presentation and to engage in conversation with my colleagues on the Science development project. It was possible for me to have a conversation with him in which I was able to make a suggestion like this because of earlier conversations in which it was clear that I had something that he needed (my presumed capacity to deliver on the Science project). When he came along to the meeting, it was quite a different experience for many of the participants to see him 'personally showing the passion he felt for this project' as I had asked him to do. In that encounter he increased his power with my colleagues through his participation. In Ramsden's terms this was the academic community giving him part of their power because they appreciated his presence, saw the sincerity with which he was trying to solve the infrastructure problem and thereby trusted him a little more.

X The Lost Art of Conversation

The term 'co-evolution' of values in the university is a metaphor with strong biological connotations and evokes a vision of an ecological system which is comprised of a physical environment (topography, climate) containing plant and animal species, continuously evolving through small changes in individual characteristics which enhance their fitness or improve their competitive position. Allen and Varga draw on complexity science to discuss how, in social and economic systems, aims, goals, values and knowledge of agents constitute their identities and that the diversity and heterogeneity of these are the driving force of the co-evolutionary change of reality:

> ..evolution is generated by the internal diversity of the population types, and the mechanisms that generate new characteristics and behaviours. There are multiple dimensions of possible difference, firstly in location, but also in age, size, strength, speed, colour etc and also in skills, knowledge, experience and axiology so this means that behaviours that re less successful in any particular situation will tend to decline, while, those with high pay-offs will be amplified. Of course this is only a tendency, not an absolute rule, and in human systems would depend on people defining success according to their axiology and correctly associating successful outcomes with particular aspects of behaviour. Allen and Varga (2006)

They explain how traditional science was based on the idea that there was an objective reality 'outside' which we could study using experimental methods, but that biological and social reality frequently consists of situations which are historically evolved and evolving and 'lack any generic behaviour or laws'. We must accept uncertainty and admit that our cognition, models and descriptions are incomplete and temporary props to our understanding.

Cutright (2001), makes an attempt to invoke chaos theory and complexity science to understand better how universities might be led and how they might develop plans and policies. This was borne out of a desire to replace earlier notions such as Taylor's organisation as a machine, Cohen and March's 'garbage can' and Weick's loosely coupled systems. Chaos theory holds that

many seemingly random activities and systems show complex replicated patterns and their behaviour is non-linear. Predictability is limited to short time frames. These systems show extreme sensitivity to small changes and such patterns as develop are a result of the influence of attractors. The presence of attractors is also responsible for self-organisation or the capacity to recreate patterns. Self-similarity is exhibited at various levels enabling a view of the whole in part of the system. A chaotic system is one in which apparently random activity is, in fact complexly patterned. Cutright, in his introduction, cautions the reader about the extension of such metaphors from science to social systems, but nonetheless urged his contributors to 'look to chaos first' rather than complexity theory to explore the topics raised in the book (Cutright, 2001 p6).

In the same volume, Ronald Barnett (2001), who is a researcher and consultant in higher education in the UK, writes a compelling piece about the challenges of managing universities in an age of supercomplexity. He provides a list of the complexities facing the university under three headings;

Conceptual complexities are concerned with values, ends, purposes, ideas, concepts and goals. All of these are contested and open to challenge on a regular basis

Environmental complexities include external uncertainty and unpredictability (income streams, stakeholders and competition from rivals, whether local or global).

Relational complexities are concerned with relationships, modes of communication and associated identities of persons. Relational complexities are important both within the university and in its interactions with its external environment.

Barnett is critical of the notion that chaos theory contributes usefully to understanding or dealing with what he calls the supercomplexity of the issues facing universities in the modern world. Attempting to distance ourselves sufficiently from events to discover patterns of order or beauty under the chaotic

surface is futile. He describes complexity as an overload of entities, forces, or data which cannot be assimilated in the time available; as attempts are being made to assimilate them, yet others arrive. Supercomplexity refers to conceptual and framework relationships; the frameworks of meaning by which individuals might understand themselves. Such frameworks compete with one another and generate conflict. He cites some examples: accepting a clause in a research contract with a company which forbids publication; glossing over deficiencies in a self-assessment report for external evaluation being incompatible with declarations about honesty in its dealings with the community; allowing academics to establish their own companies to generate additional income being incompatible with notions of equal opportunity. He declares that managing universities is less about securing knowledge and making rational decisions and more about the generation and exploration of new frameworks of institutional understanding and the negotiation of their mutual differences. Management is about creating opportunities for debate, keeping the organisation's self-understanding under constant review, encouraging staff to embrace new understandings, investing huge amounts of effort required in enabling staff to come together to explore matters relating to goals and values, while at the same time recognising that tensions relating to values and assumptions may not be easily resolved. The university must continue to have an enlightenment function and a critical function. Creating the dialogical space for institutional reflection to encourage the assimilation of new frameworks will also provide the space for critical encounters where values are contested.

Dever also tempers the euphoria in the same book by introducing some words of caution about the use of chaos as a metaphor:

> However remarkable a job chaos theory does in accounting for and helping to foresee to the extent possible the course of natural phenomena and however clarifying and helpful it is to apply comparable analysis to social organisations, weather systems and higher education remain entities of fundamentally different stripes… the key difference to keep in mind of course is the role of human agency. (Dever 2001, p 196)

He makes the point that colleges and universities are founded and sustained with distinctively human ends in mind and their operations are influenced by the whole gamut of human reason, emotion, will, intellect, ignorance, anxiety and lassitude.

It is at this point that the perspective of complex responsive processes of relating is helpful for me in terms of drawing some of these ideas together. From this perspective organisations are viewed as patterns of interaction between people in the 'living present' (Stacey, 2005) which may be understood as acts of communication, relations of power and the application of values. These patterns of interaction are characterised by complexity, self organisation and emergence.

If universities are characterised by 'supercomplexity', 'polyvocal' communities of staff and students and the tension resulting from conflicting values, I argue that it is through acts of communication that the co-evolution of values takes place. I have been arguing that the kind of communication which enhances this evolution involves conversation which enables the emergence of novelty and can be characterised by anxiety, tension and conflict for the participants. Such acts of communication are influenced by the values of the participants and by power relations. In project 4 I described how 'sender/receiver' models of communication have become dominant, to some extent, due to the availability of the technology which enables mass communication with great ease. I argue that this has reduced the perceived need for rich communication, which of course, is much more time consuming than sending an email message to large numbers of people via a distribution list. Less helpful again is communication into the organisation via the mainstream media and I have shown how removing the opportunity for what Barnett describes as

> creating opportunities for debate, keeping the organisation's self-understanding under constant review, encouraging staff to embrace new understandings, investing huge amounts of effort required in enabling staff to come together to explore matters relating to goals and values, while at the same recognising that tensions relating to values and assumptions may not be easily resolved. (Barnett, 2001)

In Project 4 I wrote about how my understanding of what communication constituted was changed by my engagement with the thinking of Mead, Bahktin and Shotter. In terms of understanding the anatomy of acts of communication, Mead's description of how meaning emerges in a conversation of gestures was especially helpful. The essential notion here is that every interactive encounter is characterised by the parties making conversational gestures, to which the other responds. The first gesture, however is modulated by the person's understanding of the 'generalised other', that is, the innate knowledge through previous experience of what the likely reaction of the other party is likely to be. Thus the second party's likely response is already being taken account of before the primary utterance is made. However, the actual response from the other is unpredictable and can result in surprise. It is through repeated iterations of gestures and responses that new meaning emerges. These gestures and responses can be calm and reflective or fractious and difficult, but unless they can occur then the evolutionary process will slow down or stall and result in polarisation and conflict. I find myself constantly referring back to this way of thinking about how meaning emerges in the act of engagement with colleagues and it provides me with the encouragement to continue, to keep the conversation open to the potential for the emergence of novelty.

Project 4 was the third change project which came my way during this research programme and offered me the chance to work with yet more new people and to thank about what I was doing with the benefit of the experience, reflection and learning which had taken place while writing the first three projects. I entered this fourth project with very different understandings of the role of values, power relations and conversation in my daily work. If Project 2 represented a deliberate move towards a different way of practising in an academic leadership position, then Project 4 was where I began to implement this approach with more confidence. If I were to draw an analogy with my life as a scientist, the environmental institute project could be seen as the pilot experiment which generated preliminary data, which in turn was based on hunches from my earlier experience. In Project 4, while I did not deploy the same approach in as deliberate a way, I was able to engage with another new set of colleagues

without feeling the anxiety I did in Project 2.

The voluntary compulsion that collegial values represent for me began to find opportunities for expression in ways which took account of, but did not denigrate the managerial values which were so espoused by the administration. The paradox of living with these values in tension is evident throughout all of the projects. In project 1, I am the one advocating the managerial ideology of efficiency and rationalisation which precipitates conflict with my colleagues. In project 2 I find myself engaging in 'experiments in collegiality', while attempting to implement the new administration's rationalisation plan and in Project 3 I describe the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion which result from a major re-structuring programme.

Thus in Project 4 I see myself consciously utilising the change in power relations to make points or achieve outcomes which would not have been possible earlier. I find myself working consciously with managerial and collegial values in tension with one another, but trying not to polarise them as being either good or bad. Thus when I report to the capital projects group on 'significant achievements since the last meeting' and 'the number of milestones which have been met on the Gannt chart', I can do so with recognition that these are useful tools for project management. At the same time I can acknowledge that some of the more significant events which took place were conversations which were allowed to wander off the agenda or my persuading the President to come and take tea with some of my colleagues to 'just talk about the science project'. I believe that this is what McCaffery (2004) is pointing to when he describes conversation as being perceived as the 'soft stuff' of management, when in fact it is the 'hard stuff'.

If the values of collegiality and managerialism are co-evolving, then in Allen and Varga's (2006) terms it will rely on agent diversity to provide the potential for this to happen. Stacey (2007 p 230) states that such diversity, in human terms, amounts to deviance and eccentricity. I have little doubt that there would be some who would regard much of the narrative and reflection in this thesis as eccentric and possibly deviant. I have been able to live with this potential

through conducting some of this work in the 'shadow' part of the organisation, while also complying with the 'legitimate' expectations of others in the organisation.

XI   Movement in my practice

While the inclusion of further narrative is discouraged in this part of the thesis, I would wish to refer briefly to two episodes from my recent academic life which indicate clearly to me how my practice has developed during my work on this DMan thesis. They also illustrate how my reliance on some of the techniques and tools I had learned during my management training has lessened.

The first was a request for me to chair a workshop on future research strategies at an international conference and the second was a similar invitation to facilitate a discussion on how Bord na Gaeilge [1] might move forward. On both occasions I persuaded the organisers to give me a free hand on how the event might take shape. Both exercises took place after the large and anxiety provoking event I describe in Project 2 where I brought a fairly large group of academics together to try to figure out jointly how we might advance the Environment Institute project. As I reflected on that, I wrote about how my own anxiety about what *might* happen resulted in my not noticing what actually was happening and my surprise when my assistant produced notes on the event 24 hours later. The two assignments I mention here did not have the same overtones of anxiety and I found myself acting in ways which were quite different to those expected of routine 'facilitation'. In the discussion on the Irish Language (a topic which is heavily laden with issues of both ideology and identity) I went back on a promise made to the organisers to allow all the participants to identify themselves at the start of the meeting and, instead, my first remarks were on the fact that there had been only 18 responses to the email which went out to the entire university community of 3,500 people. Surely, I said, this indicated that interest in the works of Bord na Gaeilge was minimal to non-existent. Adopting such a controversial stance was unusual for me and for someone in my role; it

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[1] The board charged with implementing statutory policies on the Irish language in the university

was responded to initially by the grandson of one of the revolutionaries from Ireland's War of Independence with a very sophisticated contribution which provoked an active discussion. The organisers were very anxious about one of the attendees who was very hostile to the notion of Irish language having any role in university life. I awaited his intervention with great interest. He eventually joined the discussion with a measured and appreciative contribution which took account of the earlier speakers and surprised everyone. The debate went on for a couple of hours with a coffee break included. My contribution was to allow the discussion to flow, to interject with opinions of my own and to encourage diffident participants. After the coffee break I asked if there were any ideas emerging during the break which merited development in the larger group; one participant eagerly brought up an issue which moved the discussion on through another phase. I summarised at the end what I thought were five streams of conversation which might be continued somewhere else by the executive group.

I adopted a very similar role at the international conference. Those who attended these events reported afterwards that they had been useful and different to what they expected. What I was trying to achieve was as follows:

1. To move away from the notion of the facilitator as one who does not partake actively in the conversation with views of his/her own or who has fixed views on what the outcome or 'deliverables' might be.

2. To encourage debate which might spill over into disagreement or even conflict, including taking controversial positions myself.

3. To minimise power differentials between myself and the participants by discouraging remarks like 'through the chair, if I may'.

4. To emphasise that the particular event was not isolated or any kind of end-point, that it was part of a process which must continue if anything useful were to happen.

The vignette above illustrates how my practice as a participant in university life has developed over the past three years. At the time of the events I describe in Project 1, my approach was characterised by attempts to orchestrate events in advance of meetings to minimise, or preferably eliminate, the possibility of conflict. I usually achieved this by engaging privately with key participants in advance of meetings, by preparing the agenda carefully and by taking a robust approach to chairing the meeting itself. I had taken seriously the view expressed to me by a Deloitte consultant some years earlier that it was best to work on a 'no surprises basis'. In events described above, I was enthusiastic about the notion of surprise and had had sufficient experience to be able to work with the possibility of surprise without the anxiety I would have felt in the past. I gave the title 'experiments in collegiality' to Project 2 and I would now see this project as key to my learning in this programme. As I wrote about my earlier experiences in university management during Project 1, I began to understand something of the importance of everyday daily interaction and this coincided with the opportunity to take some risks in my new role as co-ordinator of the Environment Institute project. With the help and encouragement of my learning set colleagues, I set about working in what was a radically different way for me. This included a full day workshop which was designed to encourage the possibility of novelty emerging and included creating opportunities for academics who had never met one another before to interact in unusual ways. I was sufficiently encouraged by this experience to continue to try to work in what would be regarded as unusual ways in the university, and it would not have been possible for me to do so had I not been involved in the DMan programme. The reading, reflection with colleagues and the writing of progressively deeper reflections on my work made it possible for me to continue. However,I continue to use what Shaw (2002) refers to as 'tools' (agendas, minutes, project management techniques etc) for ensuring that things actually happen. It is when there is a need for exploration, for identification of new directions that I believe the kind of meeting I describe above is appropriate. Stacey proposes a role for leaders which is based on the premise that innovative strategies are more likely to emerge from more fluid, spontaneous conversations. This promotes active participation

that awakens interest and communication in an atmosphere enabling people to search for meaning for themselves. Such participation includes the leader. However, the fact remains that a leader who takes up this role, even though he may seek to minimise power differentials within the group, does remains more powerful and has the capacity to make decisions for the group. (Stacey, 2007, p 286-7)

This comes close to what I now try to achieve in my daily work as a manager and I would contend that this approach provides a greater likelihood of the emergence of decisions of a higher quality.

The Pragmatist John Dewey, offers the following test of the value of any philosophy:

Does it end in conclusions which, when they are referred back to ordinary life-experiences and their predicaments, render them more significant, more luminous to us and make our dealings with them more fruitful? Or does it terminate in rendering the things of ordinary experience more opaque than they were before, and in depriving them in 'reality' of even the significance they seemed to have? Does it yield the enrichment and increase of power of ordinary things which the results of physical science afford when applied in everyday affairs?

…experience is what James called a double-barrelled word. Like its congeners, life and history, it includes *what* men do and suffer, *what* they strive for, love, believe endure, and also *how* men act and are acted upon, the ways in which they do and suffer, desire and enjoy, see believe imagine – in short processes of *experiencing*. (italics in original) (Dewey, 1929, p9-10)

Later this year I will present my invited lecture to a collection of European university deans. The challenges the organisers have set themselves for this conference include the following:

Major changes are currently taking place in European Higher Education which have a direct impact on the roles of deans and other senior academics, requiring them to interact as 'managers' and 'leaders' with academic and other staff rather than as 'colleagues'. These changes and new environmental factors are well known.

How, then, can people be managed in academic environments ? Should they be managed?   What is distinctive about such management in academic environments? Can we learn from and adapt approaches from other sectors? How can human resource strategies be designed and implemented to support the overall university mission and strategy? (DEAN Programme, 2007)

The topics to be covered include 'strategy formulation, leadership issues, ownership and gaining commitment, change management and competence building'. This is very like the chapter headings in my OU managers handbook. The title I have given to the conference organiser for a session on implementing strategy is 'Conflict, Values and Power Relations'. It certainly stands out on the programme as being different! My intention is to utilise the central narrative on Project 1 as the vehicle for introducing the topics in the title and to see what it evokes in the 30 minute discussion at the end of the session. By the time I reach the point of my thesis defence, I will be in a stronger position to address questions on whether my research has been a solipsistic excursion to an engrossing literature which I never knew existed, or whether it might contribute something to the thinking of the cat-herders as they engage with their own 'living presents'. I feel some confidence that, in Dewey's words, it might 'end in conclusions which, when they are referred back to ordinary life-experiences and their predicaments, render them more significant, more luminous to us and make our dealings with them more fruitful'.

XII   Conclusion

I stated at the outset that my research was curiosity led and that it was provoked by my experience of apparent failure in the application of mainstream

management techniques to a small-scale organisational re-structuring project. As I began to examine this experience in a more reflective way, I had opportunities to engage in a number of university change projects over the three years of the programme. These projects were part of an initiative to transform a university and place it in the first rank of European research universities. The transformation programme was based on strategic planning, organisational re-structuring, appointment rather than election of senior administration figures and centralisation of decision-making.

My research was based on narrative accounts of my own role in this transformation programme, in which I described the micro-detail of daily interaction within the organisation. These narratives were then examined in the context of relevant literature on higher education management, values, power relations and communicative action. It was guided by the thinking of Stacey and colleagues at the Complexity and Management Centre at the University of Hertfordshire.

I have concluded that higher education management is deeply influenced by mainstream management thinking and that managerial approaches have now become the norm through the dominance of this approach in the public sector. This dominance is based on the perceived need of developed countries to move rapidly towards being 'knowledge based economies' with reliance on universities as key providers of the knowledge. Values such as accountability, transparency, efficiency and the need for competition between third level organisations drive these processes and universities have responded by changing from older collegial methods of decision-making towards a more executive style. These methods make their way into universities through legislative requirements to use techniques such as strategic planning, by utilising the services of management consultants, by movement of personnel between organisations, through training of personnel in these methods and imitative behaviour. They are predominantly based on cybernetics. It is striking that such techniques are frequently adopted without the kind of questioning one might expect from research-led organisations about evidence for their success.

I argue that while universities move from older and rather ineffective ways of managing their affairs towards more a more executive style, attention must be paid to issues such as changing relations of power and values and, in particular, to the communicative action which is the means by which these evolve. I suggest that if thought is given to these aspects of organisational life by those in leadership positions as they go about their daily work, appropriate opportunities can be created for the dialogue which is required for the values of collegiality and managerialism to evolve together. I also provide evidence for what happens if inadequate opportunity is provided for such interaction and how this results in anomie, disillusionment and the diversion of effort into point-scoring which can spill over in to the public arena.

However, I am not calling simply for more 'management by walking about', for more consultation, or empowerment of staff though involvement in decision-making. While each of these may be outcomes of what I advocate, they are often techniques used in attempts to get 'buy-in' to strategies which already exist as the creations of senior management, and frequently generate cynical responses about tokenism. I argue that, if a university is not a bottling plant in which 'Taylorisation' of knowledge production and dissemination is appropriate, but is a community of talented scholars who recognise their own need for involvement in the co-creation of the university tradition, then those charged with leadership have a responsibility to engage with the richness and diversity of thought in the organisation in order to further its development. This will take place through providing opportunities for real conversation to take place, whether in formal meetings or in less obvious places where freer discussion can take place. This is the only way in which contesting values can evolve. However, such conversations will be encouraged in the knowledge that, while there is real opportunity for novelty to emerge, that conflict is also likely. The challenge for leaders is in adding to the anxiety load which is part of their daily life, by deliberately creating opportunities for even more conflict and in making the time available to engage in such activity. My argument is that making this time available is essential and that the benefits will significantly outweigh the disadvantages.

My research has been limited to the perspective of one person occupied in university middle management, so it could be claimed that much of my critique of the approaches of senior management is ill-informed and limited because of my position. In addition, as a scientist, I cannot resist pointing out that it is limited by the 'n=1' problem. This work is the perspective of one researcher and really does need to be followed by further and deeper attempts to describe the dynamics of universities as groups of people who interact as they go about the business of developing the organisation. At the time I applied to participate in this programme, I was short-listed for the position of President at another university. Had I succeeded in this bid, I would have been in a position to conduct my research from a rather different vantage point and thereby contribute in the way that Williams (2006) and Groot (2007) have done, respectively, to the understanding of organisational dynamics in further education and in a large transport company. It is my hope that dissemination of my research findings may result in further work by others in more senior positions which could add substantially to my descriptions of 'what's really going on' as we go about the job of trying to improve our institutions.

My principal conclusions are that collegial and managerial values can only evolve through processes of interaction between the participants in university life and that this interaction often will involve tension, anxiety and conflict. I further conclude that the conversations which constitute such interaction must be facilitated by those with the power do so, despite the additional anxiety it may generate, to provide real opportunity for the emergence of novelty.

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