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## Re-envisioning the Academic Profession in the Shadow of Corporate Managerialism\*

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### Abstract

This article argues that global and South African changes to universities have resulted in change being led by corporate managerialism. This has created new roles and new difficulties for academics, who display signs of stress and low morale. The article examines the case of UNISA, together with international and South African evidence on academics. The changing class status of academics is also examined. The negative yet pervasive psychological consequences of intrusive bureaucracy are discussed. The concept of ‘knowledge production’ is then subjected to a critique to outline a core academic role involving, firstly, using disciplinary rigour to open up debates and facilitate openness to the density of the real world, and secondly, working through transferential dependences in teaching and research. It concludes by recommending the formation of a ‘critical collegial movement’ which will explore what new academic role is appropriate to the new situation, and which will take action to empower academics through increased collegiality.

### Résumé

Dans cet article, on soutient que les mutations opérées dans les universités dans le monde et en Afrique du Sud se sont traduites par un changement dû à l’application des modèles de gestion des entreprises. Ceci a engendré de nouveaux rôles et de nouvelles difficultés pour les universitaires qui montrent des signes de stress et de démoralisation. L’article examine le cas de l’UNISA et les témoignages sur les universitaires faits au niveau international et en Afrique du Sud. Le changement de condition sociale des universitaires est également étudié. Les conséquences psychiques négatives, et pourtant omniprésentes, de la bureaucratie qui s’impose sont

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\* This is an edited version of an inaugural lecture at the University of South Africa delivered on 10 October 2006.

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examinées. Ensuite, on passe à l'analyse critique du concept de « production de connaissances » pour souligner un rôle académique fondamental impliquant, premièrement, l'utilisation de la rigueur dans le domaine des disciplines pour ouvrir les débats et favoriser l'ouverture au monde, et deuxièmement, le travail par le biais des dépendances dans l'enseignement et l'apprentissage. En conclusion, l'article recommande la formation d'un « mouvement collégial important » qui étudiera le type de nouveau rôle académique approprié à la nouvelle situation, et qui agira afin de responsabiliser les universitaires par le biais d'une collégialité accrue.

### Introduction

If we have irrevocably moved to an era of the knowledge-worker and the energetic domination of university affairs by management is there any sense in attempting to reconstruct a notion of academic professionalism? In the modern, neoliberal era, the academic role seems invisible to the corporate manager's eye.

In this paper, I engage with some of the debates on international processes which are changing the academic role and profession, and also with debates on changes in the South African context. This paper argues that the changes in the situation and function of universities have produced an environment in which evolving differential academic identities are constantly under pressure from managerial attempts to determine aspects of these identities. In this context, I believe, many academics have become increasingly passive and reactive, rather than engaged and creative.

This paper further points to the need for a review of the core of academic roles. This is not only because academic roles are changing, but also because previous imaginaries of academic professionalism were entangled with privilege and strategies of symbolic domination (cf. Bourdieu 1988; Robbins 1993).

Finally, I advocate the initiation of a 'critical collegial movement' among academics to address these issues.

In investigating this topic, I will not go into a number of crucial debates, such as those concerning institutional autonomy, reform of management, national policy as regards funding and mergers of tertiary institutions, curriculum and research funding. While these debates are central to the way forward for universities, they have tended to sideline and objectify the role of academics. The Council on Higher Education's (CHE's) website, for example, has some seventy publications listed, many of which deal with issues of tuition and research; but none of them is directly concerned with the changing academic role and working environment, nor with the politics of collegiality. Similarly, the University of South Africa's (UNISA's) *2015 Strategic Plan: An Agenda*

*for Transformation* (2005), which contains many salutary and necessary objectives, including those of service to students, reflects no concept of academic collegiality, other than a broadly-stated intention to ‘create a culture of academic debate and interdisciplinary discourse’ (University of South Africa 2005:23). The only admission of the pressures on academics comes in the form of a factor impeding research output. A physicalist approach to staff well-being predominates in formulated targets. Yet, academic work defines six of the seven characteristics listed under ‘Our institutional type’ (5). Academic concerns are the first two items of UNISA’s self-perceived mission (7). In the strategic objectives of the Plan, the centrality of academic concerns is relegated to productivism in teaching and research in the form of expanding the ‘academic product range’ and ‘addressing research strategic priorities’ (15-16).

### **The case of UNISA**

Inevitably, my experience of UNISA, as a distance-based mega-university with a particular institutional history, will colour my perspective on these issues.

When I came to the University in the late 1980s, several colleagues told me that most UNISA teaching staff were ‘amptenaars’, employees with a civil service mentality, good at running the system, bureaucratic, unimaginative. This was not entirely true: there was significant diversity in politics, involvement in research, commitment to teaching, and in the display of high or low cultures. But it was true that significant numbers had modest academic aspirations and fitted into the sturdy administrative culture of late-apartheid UNISA.

The academic staff was overwhelmingly white and Afrikaans-speaking; many lecturers had family members working in administrative jobs at UNISA. UNISA comprised a significant niche in the white, middle class economy of Pretoria for several decades. But even today, while there has been a deracialisation of top management and a significant growth in the appointment of black academics, academic staff are still mostly white (72%), especially at professorial level (over 80%), where white males strongly predominate (University of South Africa 2005).

Compared with other South African universities, UNISA is further down the road of massification, digitalisation and distance learning, factors which, in some visions, are characteristics of future higher education scenarios (Altbach 1999). For many years, UNISA staff has adapted, in a variety of ways, to an already bureaucratised institution of mass learning. Thus for many academics at UNISA, particularly older ones, the problem is not so much getting them to co-operate with technocratic administrative systems; they have done so for many years. In the face of mushrooming workloads and systems of monitoring, and in the face of vastly reduced discretionary power over the allocation of

time and the form of academic labour, the problem lies in getting them to recognise a more creative, autonomous and expansive academic role.

From about 1996 onwards, perennial paroxysms of change have been felt at UNISA. These waves of change included conformity to SAQA and employment equity; the merger of departments with perceived disciplinary affinities; the merger of small departments; modularisation and semesterisation; the implementation of research output obligations and National Research Foundation (NRF) ratings; an expansion of short learning courses and UNISA's enforced merger with Technikon South Africa (TSA); further rationalisation of departments, modules and qualifications; the advent of an Integrated Performance Management System; the beginning of a new digitalised interface with students and digitalised file movements. Further, UNISA plans to establish a vast tutor system which, while potentially of great benefit to students, will move academic labour at UNISA firmly towards a two-tier system. These changes are occurring in the context of a huge rise in student numbers, from some 131,000 students in 1995 to 244,000 students in 2006, while in the same period, teaching staff decreased by 5 percent from 1,410 to 1,339, the student/staff ratio rising from 93 to 182 (University of South Africa 2005). In 2006, this context and the merger contributed to dysfunction in assignments, despatch, printing and various other UNISA systems.

The merger of institutions was followed by an assault on conditions of service for UNISA staff. Management argues that a change in conditions of service is necessary for cost-saving and for securing the university's future viability; but this comes at the expense of the direct benefits accruing to academic and other staff members. First in line has been the payout (at a third to a half of its potential value) of post-retirement medical aid benefits, which is laid down in the contract of permanent employees. (This issue is still being contested.) Other proposed changes to conditions of service, currently being debated in the arguably co-opted new bargaining forum, include forced retirement for new staff at 60 rather than at 65, increased office working hours for academics, and the elimination of the previously granted fifty days of recess which allowed academics to work at home or elsewhere on research and related tasks.

The impact of changes felt by academics at UNISA has been varied. Some have performed very well in the new research regime; some have found creative roles in expanding academic management structures; others have had lucrative involvement in courses offered to private interests and to government. UNISA has reduced the number of people employed in temporary/contract positions over the last ten years. The imperative of deracialisation of the institution has

led to some deeply positive changes. UNISA has also managed, by and large, to preserve functional academic department units.

At the same time, certain academic functions have become grossly overloaded. Chairs of department have a massive administrative overload, punctuated every few days by summary demands from above. This administrative overload also spills over to other academics involved in academic administration. In many department, junior academic staff have tuition, academic administration and even supervisory loads which greatly add to the difficulty of their completing degrees or publishing. In departments which attract masters and doctoral students in great numbers, there are excessive demands on staff to supervise large numbers of theses.

If these factors are added to the reality of the constant disruption of systems by change, and to the sense of a threat to working conditions, and to the troubled labour representation of a majority of academic staff, it is not surprising that there is a sense of malaise, stress and cynicism among many academic staff, and that new initiatives and directives by management are greeted with suspicion, disdain and exasperation.

These developments at UNISA mirror processes not only in other South African universities, but processes which started in the industrialised capitalist countries a decade earlier than here. What is happening to universities?

### **The university and mass education in the informational economy under neoliberalism**

Our current world is dominated by informational capitalism (Castells 1996) and an ideology favouring corporate business above public interest. It is further characterised by a hierarchical global political economy in which the Lockean heartland controls and co-opts allies and contains and undermines Hobbesian contender states (van der Pijl 1998). These inequalities are historically fused with inequalities of race, class and gender; and struggles over global and regional economic and political spoils reconfirm or contest these other hierarchies. Simultaneously, informational capitalism has a spatially deconcentrating and network-forming effect on business and other social processes.

This has had a number of consequences for universities. The changes that have occurred in universities in countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America revolve around a rapid rise in student numbers and the retreat of states from underwriting this expansion, while making universities in large part pay their own way. In the neoliberal climate of the late 1980s and 1990s, which involved opening up previously protected and publicly owned areas of economies to the blast of global competition and

opportunity, universities turned to the corporate business model as the proven private sector means of managing cost-cutting and profit-making while externalising costs onto society at large. Institutions have diversified with different market strategies, pursuing students with diversified 'client needs', offering diversified training options and exploring diversified markets for research. Universities and their subunits are expected to become entrepreneurial. Corporate-style managements have attempted to instil business culture and ethos throughout university structures.

Yet it can be persuasively argued that universities as institutions rooted in society of necessity have a different logic to that of ersatz business organisations.

Many of the changes in the global north are now rampant in South African universities. The rapid expansion of part-time and informalised faculty in North America, the development of a two-tier academic labour system (Rajagopal and Farr 1992), and the full digitalisation of university processes (Hazemi, Hailes and Wilbur 1998) are examples of the shape of our university system to come, if an entrepreneurial model predominates.

Changes in universities have greatly affected the academic work environment. This is reflected in accounts of faculty in North America (Altbach 1999; Bennett 1998; Huber 2003; Rajagopal and Farr 1992), Britain (Ozga 1998; Preston 2002; Readings 1996) continental Europe (Enders 1999), and Australia (Churchman 2002, 2006; Marginson 2000).

### **The case of South Africa**

African universities are compromised by deficient funding, difficulties related to language of instruction, low research outputs, and the brain drain, given an unequal international economy of higher education (Teferra and Altbach 2004; Zeleza and Olukoshi 2004). Academics have to contend with poor salaries, poor working conditions, weak institutional management and political interference (Altbach 2002:11–15). South Africa has the additional problem of a low skills base in an economy demanding high levels of skill, and specific issues of deracialisation and diversity (cf. Cross et al. 1998). Further, in the global context, South Africa has an intermediary position: it has to absorb economic and political injunctions from the North; but its intermediary position allows for some South-South 'loyal opposition' debate, and economic dominance over large zones of Africa.

As Jansen (2004) and Subotzky and Cele (2004) have outlined, while South African higher education has been under pressure from global forces within the educational field, tertiary educational policy here has allowed the play of market forces, which elsewhere in the world has led to corporate managerialism.

At the same time, it has imposed on universities a new set of regulatory imperatives and limits, reflecting the government's agenda of equity, redress and national development. Government intervention has created the conditions for corporate managerialism through constrained funding policy, a strong demand of institutional accountability, the rationalisation of higher institutions from 306 separate institutions to 72, the introduction of outcomes-based education and a focus on interdisciplinary, practice-oriented 'mode 2' knowledge (Martin and Etzkowitz 2000:11ff).

Amidst this heavy-handed steering, there are still spaces within government advocating autonomy, critical and integrative thinking, improvement of standards of teaching and research, and social relevance. This constructive role of government, manifest in many of the documents published by the CHE, derives from clusters and individuals within government who through engagement with the struggle and South Africa's political transformation, are committed to a transformative and critical view of society (Badat 1999, 2001). This takes effect together with other more ambiguous forces, particularly the exacerbation of a managerial model of education and the imposition of cost-cutting measures and rationalisation.

What then are the main changes to the academic work environment in South Africa? Jansen (2004) lists the following points which together, he says, have changed the lives of academics in a dramatic, disruptive and alienating way:

- There is a much increased sense of the need to compete, both inside universities and with regard to competing universities.
- Greater vulnerability from the erosion of job security, and fears of employment equity among some whites.
- An increased sense of having to perform, in the context of surveillance through performance management and quality assurance systems and the institutional benchmarking of a wide variety of outputs.
- There is more awareness of students as 'clients' and as resources to be pursued (Jansen 2004:309–310).

At the same time, Jansen highlights some constants in this turbulence. Academic staff has remained predominantly white; and professors and active researchers are predominantly white, male and aging. Further, the 'institutional cultures' of higher education 'still bear their racial birthmarks in terms of dominant traditions, symbols and behaviours' (Jansen 2004:311).

Other studies confirm the alienation and disruption found by Jansen. Writing on staff perceptions at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johnson (2006) notes the perception of having to do more work for less pay, of being forced to compete with colleagues, of the disintegrating 'fabric of the department', and



a deepening alienation from university management. Olivier et al. (2005), writing on the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University, also mention 'dissatisfaction with the management system'; 'diminished job satisfaction'; 'low morale of employees'; and the recourse to coping strategies such as the use of tranquilisers. Webster and Mosoetsa (2001) find similar themes to those mentioned above, and also discuss the issue of the 'increase in emotional labour'. By this, the authors mean 'the management of human feeling, during social interaction within the workplace, as dictated by organisations' (16). In the new university context, this may involve academics changing their 'self-concepts as professional academics to 'units of resource ... and ... auditable bodies' (ibid.).

One can rightly scrutinise the negative perceptions of academic staff as part of a process of institutional change. Fourie, for example, portrays the negative perceptions and behaviours of academic staff, such as denial, bargaining and depression, as phases analogous to those of terminal illness, which will be followed in time by acceptance (1999: 286). The objective negatives that beset academic jobs today are accompanied by continuing advantages of these jobs. However, these advantages, such as tenure, being able to structure work and time flexibly, and being able to pursue open-ended research, are all under threat. Furthermore, the new situation has brought new opportunities for engagement with the private sector (Webster and Mosoetsa 2001), for community work and research (Fourie 1999; Subotzsky 1999), for designing curricula to engage with current issues, for black and female academics, and for new avenues for engagement with students (Fourie 1999). But the problems academics face are real, and these issues cannot be merely medicalised, as Fourie (1999) and the University of South Africa's *2015 Strategic Plan* (2005) do.

### **The change in the academic profession: False status to white collar**

The conception of the academic job as a profession, already compromised by the comparatively low salaries enjoyed by academics, is also thrown into question by current changes in academic working conditions. Nicholas Boyle (1999) and others have argued that most academic and other skilled jobs, which are not key to the new, globalised form of capitalism, have been subordinated to managerial surveillance and coercion of output, the leeching of benefits and the erosion of job security.

In reality, however, the changes to the academic profession effected in recent years cannot be seen as a move from appropriate professional status to blanket conditions of proletarianisation, though the casualisation of certain academic jobs, that strips them of benefits and burdens them with heavy teaching loads, comes close to proletarianisation. Firstly, the emerging situation will



create a new academic elite who will escape the currents of Taylorisation and informalisation faced by the rank and file. Secondly, the old status was in large part a false one, false both in that it did not reflect the mass of academics outside the financially and politically secure elite of the world's universities, and false in that it worked through the symbolic capital of the ones who know, whose knowledge is sealed and rarified by the academic gown and the inaugural lecture. A century ago, George Bernard Shaw was already of the opinion that professions were a 'conspiracy against the laity'.

The decline of an imaginary of inbuilt honour and the rise of a discourse of performance and compliance-based honour have bifurcated academic professionalism. On the one hand, it gets away from the false mystique of academic status residing in a position or post, and more justly depicts prestige as dependent on current outputs. On the other hand, it shores up the hierarchy from junior lecturer to full professor that still exists and is the object of competitive struggle. New hierarchies have emerged such as the enlarged gap between management and academics; the status of being rated as a researcher by the NRF, or not; and the government-created hierarchy of differential funding levels for different disciplines and institutions based on output levels.

### **Perverse investments in authoritarianism**

Building on Webster and Mosoetsa's (2001) concept of 'emotional labour', on Huber's discussion of the 'audit culture' (2003:6), and Ozga's amplification of a British debate on 'colluded selves' (1998:150), I wish to advance further arguments on the pathologies that can be engendered by arbitrary and undialogic authority and management styles.

Eric Santner, in *The Psychotheology of Everyday Life* (2001), shows how modern authority and law, expressed through the state, institutions, policing and new forms of leadership, are linked with patterns of passivity in individuals which are sustained through superego-based phantasies of aggression towards or submission to authority. Such psychic processes, while producing some intense behaviours to try to instantiate authority or to resist it, are disconnected from the here and now of context, relationality and politics. This fantasy-based interaction with authority is exacerbated and put into crisis in massively organised systems, especially where actions have force but no coherent meaning, and where management enforces its own often arbitrary designs rather than articulating a common, meaningful project through dialogue. Kafka's fictional accounts of the terror of unavoidable bureaucratic entrapment provide an image of this (Santner 2001).

To the extent that staff are dependent on the authority of rules, management decisions and government policies—as opposed to playing an autonomous,

constructive-critical role—they are likely to engage in an economy of fantasy of the kind described by Santner. By the same token, if management pre-empts academic decisions and objectifies academics as dependent, obstructive, passive and ignorant (rather than as a differential field of agents with weaknesses and systematic potential), management is involved in the same institutional fantasy but as a ‘Big Other’ who exercises arbitrary authority and who through spectacular action carries out enjoyment on behalf of those who are dependent. This is the unfortunate outcome of university managerialism exerted over a professional or semi-professional class, many of whom look to authority to confirm their shaky status.

Mere knowledge of one’s entanglement with arbitrary authority does not provide a way out. This situation is structured like the well-known joke beloved of Slavoj Žižek about a madman who thought he was a grain of corn; after being finally cured and sent home, he immediately returned to the mental institution in a panic. He explained to the doctor, ‘On the road, I met a hen, and I was afraid it would eat me!’ The doctor exclaimed, ‘But what’s the problem now? You know you’re not a grain of corn – you’re a man, who cannot be swallowed by a hen!’ The madman answered, ‘Yes, I know I am no longer a grain of corn, but does the hen know it?’

While there is fearful entrapment, there is also the option of collusion. From a scan of recent editions of the *South African Journal of Higher Education*, it would appear that many lecturers in education departments nationally have a strong tendency to side with managerial discourse, and make academics the passive object of the subjective dynamism of the new systems of managerial injunction. Indeed, one proposal from this stable views a renewed academic professionalism as consisting of mastery of the new systems regulating academics (Fransman 2001).

Good work, be it teaching, course development, research or supervision, can produce a positive academic ethos, even if it is governed by many rules and assessment procedures. Whether achievement feeds hierarchical struggle and envious mimesis, or whether it feeds synergetic and inclusive practice, depends on the degree of freedom from both connivance and *ressentiment* in relation to authority and the systems of rules. The negative dynamic created by an ecstasy of authority needs to be constructively resisted.

### **The academic profession as post-knowledge work and teaching**

In the paragraphs that follow, I attempt to retrieve the argumentative and trans-ferential aspects of the academic role, by mounting a critique of the concepts of knowledge production, knowledge producers and knowledge itself, understood in its commodified form. There are important and ongoing debates on

what constitutes valid knowledge. However, a proportion of debates on knowledge are overly influenced by the economic rationale of neoliberalism (Peters 2003:156ff). The World Bank has been one of the main culprits in spreading an objectivist and apolitical notion of 'knowledge production'. When applied to the university setting, this way of looking interpellates academics as productivist and individualist workers, who heroically add to national development and corporate value by producing a series of knowledge commodities, which, coincidentally, are easy to measure in performance appraisal.

The South African government's attempts to align the output of universities with national development goals have mixed unhappily with the dominant ideology of neoliberalism in defining the academic job, or at least a major component of it, as 'knowledge production' and academics as 'knowledge producers'. Bringing down academic work from a protected cultural niche to the level of knowledge production means swapping one alienation for another, tying us to the ungiving surfaces of a biopolitical order in which work, culture and pleasure are substantially commodified.

This process has shaped educational discourse in South Africa. Even otherwise excellent South African appraisals of the 'knowledge enterprise' (Muller 2005) and 'new models of alternative knowledge production' in universities (Subotzky 1999) are entrapped by the gravity of these massive political forces which obscure the transferential, dialogical and adventitious nature of teaching and research.

This jargon of 'knowledge production' utilises the current dominance of instrumental reason. Techniques, technologies, systems, high level handbooks and databases of 'how to do' tasks in a field—one might say the polytechnic/technikon and industry mode of know-how—are important in all disciplines, especially so in scientific and technical fields. However, when this jargon is wielded to define academic work, it subordinates the more characteristic university processes of debate, scientific research, the critique of knowledge-claims and the unfettered opening up of enquiry, whether in teaching or research. This is not to side with the 'canonical position' (Muller 2005) in which economic considerations have no role in interfering with pristine academic freedom. Rather, it is to say that good teaching and research require both individually autonomous and collegial processes, while the academic task at aggregate level should tie in with national objectives of skills development and research related to national development, in addition to the successful functioning of the university.

What is the core of academic work? It is surely teaching and research, and community service emanating from these activities. Teaching and research have

a common aim of fostering open understanding and of using and working through authoritative knowledge.

In the university system, both students and academic staff should be seen as engaged in long-term trajectories from matriculation to degree and doctorate, from beginning academic to generative mature scholar, in moving from the cacophony of ideology and ignorant discourse, through conceptual and disciplinary rigour and the rigour of the plain and the empirical, to the cacophony and cornucopia of the real and its unknowns. Though in our work, finite and authoritative knowledge is sometimes produced, it is subsidiary to the broader process of using academic discipline to unlock the amazing diversity and dynamism of real processes and to enter the openness of attendant debates, both in teaching and research.

Undergraduate modules should be seen as stepping stones along this trajectory, rather than as units of hard or terminal knowledge. Similarly, research articles are inserted into debates; only metaphorically can they be called 'knowledge products'. In our economy, knowledge and its production only take visible form in the light of profitability, cost-saving and the rationalisation of systems.

We open up and debate knowledge, knowledge-claims and discourse, and take this debate to conclusion in a variety of ways, few of which produce disparate items of knowledge.

While it is a minority of academic relationships that take the conventional form of transference, such as when students idealise lecturers or lecturers place themselves under the authoritative wing of another scholar, there are more diffuse, yet powerful, forms of transference which permeate the academic environment. These revolve around the judgements academics make of students, their charismatic role as 'the ones who are supposed to know', and the sombre authority of expert knowledges of various forms. Kistner, in an article in this journal, argues that any real learning in a student and teacher relationship requires a form of charisma that plays itself out in a transference relation of a special kind. In a related process, some of the best academics start off by identifying strongly with certain schools of thought and authors, and place themselves filially under these horizons.

For both students and academics placing themselves in relations of tutelage, the university is the site for working through such 'transferences', most effectively through personal interaction and debate, to enable the scholar to encounter open questions, rather than deferring to an overbearing system of expertise.

Academics often do not adequately perform this core function of enabling themselves and students to face the myriad worlds in open and systematic inquiry. This core area is best reformed firstly through collegial relations and

individual academic learning. The state and institutional management must protect and nurture this process.

### **A critical collegial movement**

A move towards a renewal of the ethos and purpose of academics must come from academics themselves. At the same time, academics are divided through apathy, mutual dislikes, and the like, which impede the formation of such renewal. I believe that, in order to address some of the issues raised in this article, some form of collegial movement should be formed.

Peter (2002) examines the Weberian notion of collegiality essentially as decentred power countering centralised bureaucratic power. He adds Veblen's view that collegiality also has a cultural dimension involving an environment of freedom which is 'incompatible with the business ethos' (Peter 2002:33). Peter argues that 'while Veblen acknowledges that business methods have their place in fiscal affairs and the care of material equipment, he firmly believes that they corrupt the higher learning when they turn to instruction and research, as they inevitably do' (Peter 2002:33–34). Thus, for Veblen, discussing American academic capitalism a century ago, 'collegial bodies, practices and attitudes should be responsible for protecting the academic sphere from the business ethos' (Peter 2002:35).

In a more lengthy text, Bennett (1998) provides an investigation of the notion of 'collegial professionalism'. He puts this forward as a counter to the individualist model of the academic role, which is rooted in a long history. Collegiality, in Bennett's conception, is relational, stressing intellectual community, working together and co-mentoring. Bennett advocates a systematic reworking of academic roles, through both convivial and coercive means, to a communitarian and collegial ideal.

I would wish to counterbalance Bennett's (1998) strong communitarianism with Bill Readings' notion of the contemporary university as 'a community of dissensus', a view of community 'that abandons either expressive identity or transactional consensus as a means to unity' (Readings 1996:192). Rather, the community is of people with different thoughts and strong irrational dependence on others, a community able to make productive use of differences.

Readings' conception locates community at a vulnerable level of unadorned relationality. The health of this level of community can be taken as a prerequisite for both creative autonomy and collegiality.

### **The general purpose of a critical collegial movement**

A collegial movement could catalyse the empowerment of academics vis-à-vis managerialism exercised by university managements and government. This could inspire academics with a new sense of their role, not prescribed from above, such that they are able to intervene creatively in their university context—university politics, academic relationships, teaching and research—to re-establish an academic force in university politics, to promote collegial structures and debate, and to reach decisions on university policy.

A collegial movement could also re-instil in academics a sense of sanity and ethical connection in a workplace where positive and negative staff identities are all too often formed on the basis of a fantasy-based engagement with official injunction, and sometimes from the punitive *jouissance* of authorities entering the trade of fantasies.

A provisional agenda for a critical collegial movement could include some of the following:

- Reinstating fully collegial processes in the university, including reinstatement of academic decisions and debate at Senate and of voting for chairs of department; and including in collegial processes academic interest groupings, junior staff, doctoral students, and tutoring and temporary teaching staff. Having an academic principal alongside a financial affairs principal in each university could be seriously discussed.
- Educating academics about patterns of university change and their academic impact, especially the commodification of education and the uncritical use of business practices.
- Developing a new professionalism. This new professionalism could involve:
  - reworking our symbolic status beyond both old symbols and new performance ratings;
  - reinvesting teaching with practical and symbolic importance;
  - developing disciplinary expertise and research excellence;
  - cultivating a general academic expertise;
  - directing a professionalism towards creatively doing one's job, in a situation where academics neither connive with the excessive managerial injunctions nor resent this authority;
  - promoting a culture of honour and equality among different levels of academics, between lecturers and students and among academics, administrative and support workers in their institutions;

- promoting an 'Afropolitan' academic culture which is Africa-centered without resentment, aiming 'to redeem the breaches and terrors of a broken history' (Mbembe 2006:8). Afropolitanism may be taken as a cultural space which will be filled and developed, principally by Africans, in an academic commitment to the African context and to the openness of knowledge;
- promoting a gender-conscious academic culture;
- developing/ articulating a 'community of dissensus' (Readings 1996).

### Conclusion

The re-envisioning of the field of academic roles should be led by academics, but should eventually involve government and university managements, acknowledging their incapacity to create an academic ethos from the top. Some academics may be slow to adapt and resistant to necessary changes. But these changes will have a low rate of success if academics are not energetically creative, if they do not enjoy respect from management, and if academic decisions are made without a collegial academic voice equal in power to the voice of financial management.

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