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The Governance and Management of Teaching and Learning: The Need to Acknowledge the Role of Academics

Abstract

This paper looks at how a combination of factors has affected the governance and management and teaching and learning in universities in South Africa. These factors include the democratisation and massification of higher education, the introduction of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and external quality assurance, and the implementation of a new funding framework that includes subsidies for teaching efficiencies. Within the broad context of managerialism, these factors, in the main, have led to the emergence of highly structured regimes for the governance and management of teaching and learning. Such regimes include offices and positions of Deputy Vice Chancellor: Teaching and Learning, and Dean or Director for Teaching and Learning, Director: Quality Assurance, and Director: Academic Planning, to mention the most common ones. Although well-intended, these have resulted in responsibilities for teaching and learning being shifted away from the faculties and the academics, which are the 'natural' repositories of specialist knowledge for the different disciplines. The paper contends that such a shift has had detrimental effect on teaching and learning in the universities, as well as on teaching and learning support fields such as Academic Development.

It therefore calls on universities to exercise caution, and explore and adopt teaching and learning governance and management models that place academics, as discipline specialists, at the centre.

Keywords: Academics, faculty, governance, knowledge, managerialism, teaching and learning

Introduction

Since the middle of the last century, universities across the world have changed in response to calls for broader participation to address equity concerns (Mettler, 2005). They have also been undergoing change in response to being accorded the responsibility of producing skilled knowledge workers for the global economy (see, for example, Reichart, 2006). In South Africa, the impetus for change has been more recent and, to a large extent, has also been thanks to the transition to democracy that took place from the late 1980s onwards. Regardless of when the changes began to unfold, South African universities now face the same challenges as other higher education institutions globally concerning the need to teach more students from an increased range of backgrounds within a context of dwindling public funding for higher education.

One response to these challenges has involved change to the way the governance and management of core functions such as teaching

and learning and research in universities, are conceptualised. This *Briefly Speaking* begins by providing an outline of developments in the management of teaching and learning. After that, it argues for disciplinary knowledge and academics to play a role in the management and governance of teaching and learning. Over time, the role of academics in shaping the way knowledge is shared with others has been weakened to the detriment of universities themselves. This *Briefly Speaking* piece thus encompasses a call for this role to be acknowledged and strengthened as the higher education system moves forward.

Massification and changes to governance and management

In a seminal paper written in 1973, Trow (1973) explores the impact of growth on higher education systems and the universities that constitute them. In order to do this, Trow distinguishes between 'elite', 'massified' and 'universal' higher education systems. Higher education systems shift to being 'massified' when a participation rate of 15% is achieved, and to being 'universal' when the participation reaches 50%[1].

According to Trow, universities in elite systems are led by dominant groups which share the same values and beliefs, and they often make decisions based on informal, face-to-face contact. However, this changes as the staff and student bodies become more diverse in the transition to a 'massified' system. Of particular interest to this *Briefly Speaking* piece is Trow's assertion that, once a system reaches 15% participation, the locus of power and decision-making within institutions also shifts. Although massified systems continue to be dominated by elite groups, they are also subject to what Trow (p.12) terms more democratic political processes and 'attentive audiences' – a concept defined as parts of the general public who have special interests and qualifications, and develop a standard view about higher education in general or about some unique aspect, such as the forms and content of technical education. Trow's observations hold in South Africa. Although the shift to democracy brought enormous change to the South African higher education system, the system continues to be dominated by elite groups, evidenced in the observation that, for example, the professoriate is still overwhelmingly comprised of white academics. However, the system has come under increased scrutiny from 'attentive audiences' such as employers who comment on, for example, the perceived quality of graduates; and from taxpayers who question the amount spent on higher education in the national budget.

As higher education systems massify, universities do not only become more open to outside pressures from political forces and society at large, but their internal administrative systems also change. Trow (1973:14) explains the typical elite university as one that is:

> …… governed by part-time academics who are essentially amateur at administration. In some countries, they may have the help of a full-time civil servant or registrar to deal with routine matters or financial problems. But the head of the administration is commonly an academic elected or appointed to the office for a limited period of time.

As overall growth in a higher education system occurs, part-time amateurs working in institutional administrative systems are replaced by former academics appointed to full-time posts, and who

[1] In 2018, the South African higher education system had achieved a participation rate of about 22% (CHE, 2020) although this continued to be skewed by race with only 19% of young African people in the age cohort gaining access to a university in comparison to the 55% of White people and 46% of Indian people.

see their careers as following a higher education management path. Further increases in size then result in professionals appointed to run institutional 'sub-systems' such as information technology and academic planning.

However, it is not growth per se that has impacted on the way universities are governed and managed. From the 1980s onwards, an approach to the management of public services broadly termed 'New Public Management' (NPM) has affected how governance and management in many public structures, including higher education, are understood. NPM emerged from concerns, mainly in the United States and the United Kingdom, about the rising cost of public services such as education and health. The response to these concerns was the use of theory from economics and management to make public services more cost-efficient (Hood, 1992; Christensen & Leagreid, 2002; Olssen & Peter, 2005). As well as drawing on such theory, NPM also draws more broadly on neoliberal discourses, which 'economise' all human activity and make metrics of productivity the basis of value (Madra and Adaman, 2018), as well as on the privileging of public choice and privatisation.

South African policy produced since the early 1990s (see, for example, NCHE, 1996; MoE, 1997, 2001) has always acknowledged the need for the higher education system to be efficient given the multiple demands on the public purse. As a result of this concern for efficiency, policy documents have consistently cited the need for system-wide planning. However, it is not only the need for the system to be run as efficiently and effectively as possible that has led to changes in governance and management. From the early 1990s onwards, calls emerged for the democratisation of the governance systems for higher education institutions (MoE, 1997). According to the White Paper (para. 1.19), the principle of democratisation requires that

> [s]tructures and procedures should ensure that those affected by decisions have a say in making them, either directly or through elected representatives. It requires that decision-making processes at the systemic, institutional and departmental levels are transparent and that those taking and implementing decisions are accountable for the manner in which they perform their duties and use resources.

The result of calls for democratisation can be seen in some aspects of governance and management systems. For example, it is now common to see students and the labour unions represented on Senates and other key institutional structures. However, as this piece argues, developments in the management of teaching and learning run the risk of excluding academics from this important function.

Other changes are also evident in the way universities are governed and managed in South Africa. As predicted by Trow (1973), a set of former academics pursuing careers in university administration and leadership, has emerged. Many of this group now hold positions related to the overall management of teaching and learning. The employment of professionals to manage institutional sub-systems such as quality assurance or academic planning is also now a feature at most universities.

For many, the employment of professionals and the development of groups of people specialising in institutional leadership and management is evidence of what is often referred to as 'managerialism' in universities - a phenomenon that requires that every aspect of the academic endeavour, is 'managed' in a system that includes increased reporting and monitoring for compliance to centralised rules. The development of managerialism has not passed without critique. Macfarlane (2014:103), for example, identifies what he terms a 'moral dualism' which involves a distinction between collegiality and the

employment of more overt forms of management. According to Macfarlane,

> [c]ollegiality is a word associated with a romanticised past and has the effect of demonising new forms of university management, often referred to as 'new managerialism' (Deem and Brehony, 2005). It rarifies a golden age when academics supposedly made decisions themselves uninhibited by commercial or economic considerations and is used to reinforce the idea that a gulf has opened up between the managers and the managed or, to deploy Winter's 2009, p. 121) distinction, between 'academic managers' and 'managed academics'.

For MacFarlane, the dualism between managerialism and collegiality is misleading, not least because it assumes that old forms of collegial governance in elite systems were more democratic. This assumption ignores the fact that, historically, senates and other institutional structures have been dominated by small groups of senior academics with the result that governance and management have been anything but democratic. In the South African context, this is clearly problematic given the preponderance of white male academics in more senior levels of the academic hierarchy, a point acknowledged in the calls for increased participation in institutional and governance management structures in policy documents noted above (NCHE, 1996; MoE, 1997, 2001).

In South Africa, managerialism has been resisted more firmly in some higher education institutions than in others (Boughey & McKenna, 2016, 2021). Bunting's (2002) analysis of the governance and management of different groups of public universities under apartheid is useful in understanding these different degrees of resistance. For example, Bunting points out that historically black universities under apartheid were always subject to more authoritarian forms of management than those universities established for white social groups. At the same time, the willingness of other institutions, most notably the Afrikaans-speaking historically white universities, to accept the idea that they were creatures of the state also made them more amenable to firm management. It appears, therefore, that different kinds of institutions have been conditioned into adopting different sets of assumptions about what constitutes good governance and management. Difficulties arise when individuals move from one institution to another where historical conditioning has been completely different. This can then lead to discomfort and even attempts to introduce management forms that clash with the new context (Boughey & McKenna, 2021).

As higher education systems have grown in size, other changes also take place. Again, Trow (1973) helps point out that curricula and forms of instruction also shift. For Trow (p.7-8), elite systems are concerned with shaping the minds and character of the ruling class, as [they] prepare students for broad elite roles in government and the learned professions. On the other hand, mass systems train a broader range of elites, including the leading strata of all the technical and economic organisations of society. As this happens, the focus shifts from the development of character to the transmission of skills for more specific technical elite roles.

In South Africa, as in other countries, there is a growing interest in the transmission of skills that will allow graduates to play technology-driven roles in the workplace. The shift towards vocational and professional programmes, especially in the universities of technology and the comprehensive universities, and outcomes-based approaches to curriculum design, epitomise this movement. The development of vocational and professional programmes and the use of outcomes-based approaches have then called for management in teaching and learning to drive both processes. In some cases, structural change has also followed with traditional, discipline-focused

departments being reorganised into schools to allow for programme development and management. The position of 'Head of School' emerges from this thinking.

The introduction of teaching and learning management

As higher education systems increase in size, they also diversify. In South Africa, the phenomenon of under-preparedness or disadvantage has been a feature of higher education discourse since the 1980s (Boughey, 2007). However, the so-called disadvantage or under-preparedness is not unique to this country. As Maton (2004:221) points out, growth in the British higher education system from the 1960s onwards fuelled debate not about expansion per se, but rather about who should have access to what and where. Students admitted to universities at the time were usually the first of their families to enter higher education and came from working-class backgrounds. They were different to those who had traditionally gained access and were understood to carry problems related to learning deficits into the university (Fulton, 1966). Similarities can be drawn with the black South African students who gained access to universities in this country in the 1980s, who were understood to bear the results of their historical disadvantage.

Historically, attending to the needs of so-called disadvantaged students was left to those working in the field of Academic Development. However, by the late 1980s, dominant South African discourses constructing the learning experiences of students as due to deficits they carried with them into the universities, were being challenged by thinkers such as Vilakazi and Tema (1985) and Mehl (1988). For Mehl (1988:17):

> The questions which are being addressed have changed from how the underdeveloped are developed to examining the basic underpinning of the institutions. In the process, it is becoming clearer that in relation to the realities of present-day South Africa, it is not simply a case of students carrying various educational deficits onto the campus with them because of the socio-economic and political dispensation, but rather a case of the universities themselves, as represented by academic and administrative staff, being deficient, if the vision of a non-racial, democratic South Africa is to be realised.

This had impact on the field of Academic Development itself, and it resulted in many of its practitioners turning their attention to the development of curriculum and the development of academics as teachers (see, for example, Walker & Badsha, 1993). As the 1990s wore on, policy resulting from the shift to democracy impacted even more on the need for academic teaching and curriculum design to change. The introduction of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in the mid-1990s resulted in a need for the redesign of curricula using learning outcomes as an organising principle. This then had concomitant effects on assessment as outcomes-based curriculum design led to criterion-referenced assessment. As these changes emerged, the need for experts in teaching and learning who could support academics as they worked on curriculum development and sought to draw on new pedagogical approaches, became paramount (Boughey, 2007).

The introduction of quality assurance in the early 2000s also led to a demand for professional support for teaching and curriculum design. As universities prepared for the first cycle of institutional audits that began in 2005, the development of policies on teaching, learning and assessment became commonplace. By the time the institutional audit cycle was in full swing, most institutions had developed suites of policies to guide teaching and learning, and had also established or expanded centres or units to provide support in this area of academic practice. Even more significantly, key agents responsible

for teaching and learning, in the form of directors, deans, and even deputy vice-chancellors, began to be appointed (Boughey & McKenna, 2017).

It was not only the introduction of quality assurance that led to the emergence of structures to manage teaching and learning, and the appointment of teaching and learning managers. The funding formula for public higher education, introduced in 2004 (MoE, 2004), increased incentives for the achievement of teaching and learning efficiency. The desire to maximise subsidy earning by ensuring that students completed qualifications within minimum time, and by reducing attrition rates, also impacted perceptions of the need to manage the entire teaching and learning process. It becomes apparent that policy change and development at both national and institutional levels resulted in academic teachers facing more scrutiny and management, even though this entire process was often constructed as development. However, it can be argued that an even more significant reason for introducing attempts to enhance teaching and learning through active management relates to equity. Student performance data (see, for example, the CHE's VitalStats series) persistently shows that regardless of the university at which the students register, the qualification for which they are enrolled and the area of study, black South Africans fare less well than their white peers. Thus, improving student performance has become a key concern within universities, and from the attentive audiences (Trow, 1973:12) that observe them.

Some of the critical activities to result from attempts to manage teaching and learning have revolved around the development of staff as academic teachers. These attempts often take the form of informal short courses and workshops, and formal programmes leading to accredited qualifications. Several critiques of the forms taken by professional development activities have emerged over the years. Mathieson (2011), for example, points out that the ability of participants to apply to their classrooms what they have learned in stand-alone courses, is difficult without mediation. Critiques of courses that draw on psychologised teaching and learning accounts focused on cognitive processes and supposedly neutral learning strategies (Malcolm & Zukas, 2001; Trowler & Cooper, 2002; Malcolm & Zukas, 2001) have also become significant. Such courses tend to ignore the wide range of socio-cultural contexts in which teaching takes place (Boughey & McKenna, 2021). The most important of all are observations about how professional development activities construct academics themselves as deficient in the sense that they lack teaching skills or relevant theoretical understandings of learning. At the same time, these activities also further privilege the agency of the academics who have engaged with the training as they move back into their classrooms and attempt to bring about change.

Behari-Leak (2017) takes up the point about the privileging of academics agency forcefully by showing that academics who had completed an induction course for new appointees focusing on teaching at one South African university, were constrained in their efforts to introduce change in their classrooms because of beliefs and values prevalent amongst students and colleagues. Trowler & Cooper (2002) note how regimes of teaching and learning based on implicit theory and dominant practices condition what can occur concerning teaching at the departmental level. Behari-Leak was also able to observe this in her study. The concept of a regime of teaching and learning can be extended to faculty and even institutional level, especially since it is common for institutions to develop teaching and learning strategies and plans. Even more significantly, Behari-Leak shows how students can constrain the attempts of new academics to introduce change. Of particular concern in Behari-Leak's study was how students drew on prejudices

against a young female academic to resist changes she introduced to her teaching.

Behari-Leak's observations point to the need for comprehensive and coherent approaches to guide teaching and learning. It is not enough to encourage or require academics to engage with staff development opportunities without working with institutional and cultural systems that privilege hierarchies of different sorts.

Attempts to manage teaching and learning have also impacted on the field of Academic Development. In the 1990s, many posts were lost in the field owing to the shortfalls in funding experienced at many universities (Boughey, 2007). In some institutions, centres housing practitioners were closed completely. However, in a few institutions, most notably historically white universities, the centres and units focused on higher education development and research were maintained and have succeeded in developing their capacity even further. The first round of institutional audits conducted by the CHE from 2005 onwards resulted in the strengthening and even re-establishing entities at many institutions. The introduction of Teaching Development Grants enhanced this process. These grants later became Institutional Capacity Development Grants and Foundation Programme Grants as part of funding introduced by the Department of Higher Education and Training to improve teaching and learning. These grants have resulted in the creation of many new posts in the field. Concerning the governance and management of teaching and learning, the critical question relates to the role of these centres and units.

The take up of both student and staff development initiatives has always been a concern. For many, the experience of working in student and staff development has been that it is often those who least need help who take advantage of courses and workshops on offer. The phenomenon of preaching to the converted, referring to the fact that it is often those who are already reasonably interested in and proficient at teaching who take advantage of courses and workshops, is well known in the field of Academic Development (see, for example, Leibowitz et al., 2015). As a result, those involved in running initiatives often play an advocacy role which involves spending large amounts of time and effort advertising courses and persuading participants to attend. The fact that it is practitioners in what is now often known as 'Teaching and Learning Centres' who have responsibility for providing staff development opportunities, points to their role in supporting rather than managing teaching and learning enhancement. However, in a process mirroring the assignment of agency to academic teachers, collective agency is often ascribed to teaching and learning centres that then have the perceived responsibility of making a difference in addressing poor student performance data. Once again, this points to the need for coherent and comprehensive policies, for example, the provision of staff development opportunities that are fit for purpose, supported by changes in promotion policies to require evidence of teaching.

Although both academic teachers and teaching and learning centres undoubtedly have a role to play in supporting and enhancing the learning experiences available to students and contributing to their performance, they do not carry responsibility for the management and governance of teaching and learning. It is to the faculties that we must look for this role.

The role of faculties in the management and governance of teaching and learning

The Higher Education Act (Act 101 of 1997) and the statuses of public universities address higher education governance in South Africa. The Act makes it clear that the Councils bears ultimate responsibility for governance at an institutional

level. This means that a Council is responsible for identifying the vision, mission, shape, and goals of a university; and for monitoring its performance as it fulfils its mandate. In addition to defining the role of a Council, the Act also identifies the roles of the institutional Senate. According to the Act, a Senate is responsible to Council for the academic and research functions of a public university. It must also perform other functions delegated to it by the supreme body. Given this Act, the Senate is responsible for the academic project of a university. Still, it must account to Council for its actions through reporting, obtaining approval for policies and seeking resources.

The idea of an academic project has been discussed in another issue of the *Briefly Speaking* series on institutional differentiation. An academic project is typically captured in the mission and vision statements of institutions, and should be carried through to strategic plans, policy documents and budget allocations. The academic project is related to a niche that an institution identifies for itself in higher education. It is also about how the core functions of teaching and learning, research and community engagement will ensure that the niche is filled. As the *Briefly Speaking* piece on differentiation argued, one of the problems in the South African higher education system is a failure on the part of institutions to identify and define niches for themselves in the context of discourses privileging the construct of a world class or excellent university.

Importantly, identifying the niche of an institution means that the core functions must be shaped and guided. It is arguably the case that, in many institutions, the task of doing this is left to institutional managers and is often then experienced by those doing the teaching and learning, conducting research, and engaging with communities as 'management speak'. However, the nature of a university as an institution primarily concerned with knowledge, its creation/discovery and dissemination means that the very nature of knowledge in different disciplinary areas needs to be taken into account as the core functions are shaped and guided to drive the niche.

It is easy to see how this might work in relation to research. If, for example, a rurally-based university identifies a niche for itself in engaged scholarship that serves local communities, this leads to the development of particular kinds of research projects involving those communities. Similarly, suppose a university of technology defines itself as driven by technology and responsive to industry, it is easy to see how this will lead to particular research focus areas and relationships.

It is also possible to see how teaching and learning can drive a particular niche of an institution. For example, a rurally-based university that has identified a niche for itself concerning serving local communities could focus on teaching approaches that draw on service-learning activities. Similarly, a university that has identified a niche for itself concerning applied knowledge could develop a strategy to teaching which requires students to apply theory to practice, reflecting on this process as it happens, to create the qualitatively different kind of knowledge identified as applied knowledge (Layton, 1993).

However, the idea that this can happen presupposes that people understand teaching as something other than generic. Academic teaching emerges from disciplines and fields, and different knowledge areas have well-established ways of guiding learners into thinking that characterises them. In mathematics, for example, it is common for academic teachers to use a projector or whiteboard to write as they talk through the way a particular equation is solved. Students follow the written mathematical notation, and the academic guides them through the thinking behind it. In the sciences, a teacher might demonstrate something in front of the class and explain the principles or theory it exemplifies. In other knowledge areas, students are taken into the field to observe under

the guidance of a disciplinary expert while, in others, careful textual analysis involving modelling constitutes dominant practice. The point is that, beyond elementary and apparent principles such as, for example, the need to engage with students by making eye contact and making the language accessible, teaching is not generic. It emerges from knowledge-making processes in disciplines and fields.

Teaching and learning policies and strategies developed as part of the new approaches to managing teaching and learning informed by management theory, often focus on concepts such as 'learner centredness' or the ubiquitous 'deep approaches to learning', or some other terms. The aim is to indicate that teaching should involve more than simply lecturing or delivering information. While it is possible to see how what might be termed as discipline-informed teaching can speak to concepts such as 'learner centredness', which is often used in teaching and learning strategies, one needs to consult with and listen to experts in the disciplines with care. Doing this helps in acknowledging the specificities of the discipline. The ways of knowledge-making specific to a domain or field that inform academic teaching should not be suppressed or neglected to favour an overall approach of some sort in a one-size-fits-all fashion.

Learner-centredness, for example, is often understood as a process involving students constructing meaning for themselves. In a class, students might be invited to ask questions and express their own opinions. However, disciplines draw on different understandings of what constitutes knowledge. For example, in the sciences, knowledge is commonly understood to exist independently of human thought and action. While allowing students to express their understandings of a phenomenon might be a part of dispelling faulty knowledge, they will ultimately need to understand the established theories and principles that explain phenomena in the world around them to succeed in universities, as they are currently configured. It will hopefully be the case, at some point in the future, that alternative indigenous theories and principles will be recognised and taught, but, even then, the student will be required to draw on this established knowledge, and it will not be a case of anything goes. If students do not master theories and principles at a basic level, they will be unable to proceed further. In other knowledge areas, typically in the humanities and social sciences, academics bring a particular theoretical perspective or lens to bear on a phenomenon in which they are interested. Based on looking through this lens, people can make claims about what they believe to be true. As they do this, they describe what they see as they look through the lens using the terminology or 'language of description' (Bernstein, 2000) specific to the theory. In such cases, learner centredness does not involve allowing students to continue to make claims about what they believe to be justified knowledge on the basis of their common-sense understandings of the world. They need to learn the value of theory to see things that might otherwise not be evident and, even, to imagine worlds that do not yet exist. In this particular case, what learner centredness could mean is explaining the value and use of theory and demonstrating how it is used interactively. It would also involve showing how, in some knowledge areas, multiple theories are used to example a phenomenon resulting in what students often experience as a 'conflict of facts'. Reducing academic teaching to the generic in pursuit of a teaching and learning strategy runs the risk of denying students access to insights into how knowledge is made in different disciplinary areas critical to their development as researchers later in their careers. Another is that generic approaches to teaching run the risk of failing to acknowledge the ever-changing nature of knowledge itself.

The point of this somewhat lengthy explication of the role of the fields of study in teaching and

learning is to call for in-depth involvement of faculties in development of teaching and learning strategies, and those developing them be cognisant of, and humble in the face of the disciplines as those strategies are developed. It also calls for faculties to be willing to take an institutional niche and shape and deepen it to contextualise it within the knowledge areas that constitute them. Doing this is intellectually profound and requires time and attention from faculty members. Unfortunately, the development of niches and the strategies and approaches associated with it, are often left to the managers of teaching and learning, as academics get on with doing what they have always done. Seeking involvement of academics and faculties in meaningful ways and beyond simply seeking approval for a policy or strategy document at a faculty board, needs to be a crucial part of systems used to govern and manage teaching and learning in universities.

Unfortunately, and especially as teaching has long been a poor relation of research in academic life, getting academics to think about their teaching and help shape how their understandings of knowledge can be used to pursue the academic project, is not easy. However, institutional leaders need to pay careful attention to the need for a clearly defined academic project in the first place, and the involvement of academics in developing and shaping it rather than drawing on management strategies and plans. One way to promote this involvement would surely be to acknowledge the expertise that academics already possess because of their status as experts in particular disciplines and fields rather than to ignore or deny what academics already know as teachers.

Another point not always clearly understood in contemporary universities in South Africa is that it is the faculty that is responsible for the award of credits and qualifications. Faculties are groups of academics held together by a common interest in what can constitute an object of study. They may be organised further into schools or departments, but, certainly, in larger institutions, the faculties are the main structures that allow it to function both academically and administratively. Faculty Boards usually work as sub-committees of Senates. They report to the Senates on formal matters which may include such issues as the approval of proposals to doctoral research, and so on. These boards also discuss critical issues related to the academic project of a university.

The fact that it is faculties that are responsible for the award of credits and qualifications means that their members have to be prepared to take on some tasks. For example, faculty members need to scrutinise assessment as they are responsible for ensuring that it is fit for the purpose of ascertaining that learning is measured reliably, validly, and fairly. An institution may have an assessment policy and promote criterion-referenced assessment as part of its overall approach, but this is not very meaningful unless those in faculties are willing to scrutinise outcomes and criteria and the performance of students against them. A faculty also needs to be involved in maintaining standards in other ways, including curriculum development and review. Although many institutional policies on curriculum development and review call for the involvement of peers, the extent to which this involvement is meaningful can be questionable. Is it sufficient for the curriculum, say, in a new programme, to go before a Faculty Board for noting or should opportunities for input be sought more rigorously? In recent years, programmes at all universities have increased, and applications for new programmes are often made by professionals working in institutional planning offices or similar entities. Traditionally, the curriculum of a programme leading to qualification has been of enormous interest to faculties. Questions need to be asked about whether the shifts in understanding of teaching and learning management that now leaves programme

applications to experts working in specialist units, are desirable. While such experts can assist and support, their roles cannot eliminate the need for expert input from faculty. Sadly, what often happens, however, is that experts in specialist units who are au fait with the technicalities of programme design and application, use this knowledge to control programme development and other processes. As a result, programme design becomes a matter of counting credits and establishing rules of progression and focusing on what Lange (2017) terms the 'exoskeleton' of the curriculum, with the result that critical considerations related to, for example, the selection and pacing of knowledge (Bernstein, 2000), take second place.

Therefore, all that this means is that there is a case for considering how new understandings of the management of teaching and learning have encroached on the responsibilities of academics in faculties, and the extent to which this can, ultimately, impact quality. Academics may well want to be relieved of some of the many academic life responsibilities in contemporary universities. Managers may well see their roles as being to shoulder some of this burden. However, the nature of academic knowledge and the nature of a university, as a place where knowledge is created/discovered and disseminated, means that these moves may not be in the best interests of the institution of the university itself or the nature of academic life.

The role of specialists

Most universities now have teaching and learning centres employing such specialists with reporting lines to teaching and learning managers such as deputy vice-chancellors, deans, or directors. In recent years, several programmes focusing on teaching and learning in higher education have been developed at South African universities. An increasing number of practitioners now have specialised qualifications in the field. Programmes tend to draw on very different theoretical and ideological positions, however, with the result that practitioners will draw on a wide range of theories.

Teaching and learning centres mainly organise their work around the areas of staff, curriculum, and student development, although a survey conducted by Gosling in 2009 showed that staff development and support was by far the largest focus of work in such centres in South Africa at that time. This finding attests to the idea noted earlier in this piece that universities are increasingly looking to the exercise of agency on individual academics to address student learning problems across the sector.

Shay (2012) provides an analysis of the field of Educational Development (also known as Academic Development) that draws on the work of Bernstein (2000) and Maton (2014). According to Shay (p.321), within the focus on the development of academic staff as teachers noted in Gosling's (2009) survey, practitioners working in teaching and learning centres typically focus on teaching academics to apply principles of good practice to solve problems that arise out of their particular contexts. Examples of problems provided by Shay include teaching academics how to design assessment rubrics or how to deal with large classes of students from diverse of backgrounds. Although Shay acknowledges that there is a place for this kind of professional development and that it can, in some cases, lead to improved practice, what is being taught is essentially craft knowledge that does not necessarily lead to what Bernstein (2000) and Maton (2014) term systematic knowledge building. For systematic knowledge building to occur, principles and theories would need to be identified and lifted out of particular problems to be returned to those problems later. The use of theory and principles to analyse problems would then result in them being understood differently.

It is clear from Shay's analysis that the field of Educational Development has a long way to go in the process of systematic knowledge building, and is hampered in doing this by practical problems in the area itself. The nature of funding in the area via grants provided by, for example, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), means that practitioners are often employed on short-term contracts with the result that turnover is high as people leave to seek more secure employment. When employment is more permanent, practitioners are often classed as 'professional' or 'support' rather than academic staff on conditions that are not conducive to pursuing further qualifications and research. Also, people working in the field bring a wide array of disciplinary backgrounds to its practice because conceptions of knowledge and knowing vary along with the kinds of theory brought to bear on problems and, thus, build new theory and principles.

Observations made above require that the level of expertise available in teaching and learning centres be critically interrogated. They are also a cause for being wary of citing what is advised as 'the last word' in teaching and learning. Above all, they require practitioners and managers of teaching and learning to be cautious about the power of the knowledge available in such centres to explain and even improve teaching and learning. They require the adoption of a level of humility on the part of practitioners and managers of teaching and learning and a willingness to listen and be open to disciplinary knowledge possessed by academics.

Reynolds (2010) provides an example of the kind of practice this might involve, with her analysis of what it means to know and write in anthropology. Understanding the way knowledge in anthropology is organised and reported was derived from long-term observation of academics teaching large first-year classes and engagement with those academics as insights derived were checked. The result was a set of principles about knowing and reporting on that knowledge in the discipline of anthropology and enhanced awareness on the part of the academics with whom engagement had taken place about the principles themselves and the role they could play in making them overt to students. Reynolds' positions were initially those of observer and listener rather than teacher or 'developer'. As a result of close listening and observation, she was later able to engage with anthropologists to check what she had learned and eventually make overt to them much of what they had previously known only tacitly. The extent to which this sort of process is empowering of academics in ways the 'how to' teaching of much work done in teaching and learning centres, needs careful consideration.

Conclusion

This *Briefly Speaking* began by looking at how phenomena such as the massification and diversification of student bodies and New Public Management had impacted the management of teaching and learning in universities. It ends by raising questions about how introducing these new forms of management has resulted in responsibilities for teaching and learning being shifted away from faculties and the academics in them in potentially harmful ways. As indicated in the piece, processes of knowledge creation and dissemination are core to any university. While challenges to what can constitute knowledge and how it can be known must be acknowledged if the potential of indigenous knowledge is to be realised, there is a danger that new management practices can substitute academic knowing for the advocacy of 'how to' kind of knowing that is not rigorously grounded in theory and research, as Shay (2012) points out. Just as the potential of indigenous knowledge must be realised through the work of African scholars who can clarify its principles, so too, there is a need to develop much

knowledge about teaching and learning through rigorous theorising and analysis. Shay's (2012) work asks the question, 'Educational Development as a field: Are we there yet?'. The answer to the question is 'Not yet'.

Until more work is done, it would seem that the universities would be well-served by exercising caution concerning the way responsibility for the governance and management of teaching and learning is exercised. In particular, it would seem that the overwhelming focus on management by a group of individuals who are not necessarily specialists in teaching and learning and who, even if they are, do not acknowledge the role of discipline- and field-specific ways of knowing on teaching, have the potential to promote generic and superficial approaches to teaching where, what is actually needed, is richness and depth.

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