Administrative Managers – A Critical Link

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Abstract:

Institutional responses to changes in the higher education environment have caused movements in the roles and identities of administrative managers in UK universities. These shifts have highlighted the problem for individuals of balancing traditional public service considerations of administration with institutional innovation and development. Administrative managers find themselves not only acting as independent arbiters, giving impartial advice on the basis of professional expertise, but also becoming involved in political judgements about institutional futures. They increasingly undertake an interpretive function between the various communities of the university and its external partners. As the boundaries of the university have become more permeable, administrative and academic management have inter-digitated, and hybrid roles have developed. In undertaking increasingly complex functions, therefore, administrative managers play a critical role in linking the academic and executive arms of governance in the university.

Introduction

While considerable attention has been paid in the higher education management literature to the impact of increasingly complex environments on academic identities, less attention has been paid to changes in the roles and identities of administrative managers, who underpin the governance of academic activity. They have been in the front line in dealing with the pressures of mass higher education, new forms of knowledge, market competition for resources, and the communications and information revolution (Gibbons et al 1994; Scott 1995). Yet understandings of their role in the 'quiet revolution' (Hassan 2003) that has taken place in universities over the last twenty years, in particular the extent of their alignment with government policy and with the 're-forming' of higher education (Scott 2000), are not well developed. The Dearing Report (Dearing 1997), for instance, based its comments on a disappointingly small and unrepresentative sample of administrative managers (Thomas 1998), and the 2003 White Paper avoided direct reference to them.

However, there are signs that their profile may be changing. In the report leading to the establishment of the Leadership Foundation in 2003 (Middlehurst 2002: 3), there is an acknowledgement of increasingly hybrid roles, and the need for "provision for developing cross-functional capabilities, … to break down functional boundaries to career progression, … infrastructure to enable professional networks to contribute to general management development….". Positive comments about the importance of management development for university administrations are also made in the Lambert Report (2003) (paragraph 5.9), particularly in relation to partnership and team-working.

The HEFCE consultation paper on Leadership, Management and Governance further proposes that greater "esteem and recognition" should be given to these functions (HEFCE 2003), and Shattock (2003) concludes that "management in its broadest sense represents an integral and perhaps in some cases a determining factor in achieving institutional success." A clearer definition of the space they occupy within the university community appears, therefore, to be timely.

This paper, therefore, focuses on those groups of staff in universities, referred to as 'administrative managers', who do not hold academic posts, but who have responsibility for functions such as student services, finance, human resources, estates, enterprise and external relations. They correspond broadly to staff in the 'Managers and Administrators' category in a report by the Institute for Employment Studies/Higher Education Staff Development Agency (2002), and represent around 8% of the total workforce. They may be located in the corporate centre of the university or in Burton Clark's (1998) 'academic heartlands', and are likely to inter-digitate with rank-and-file academic staff, academic managers, and other groups of professionals, such as those in teaching and learning support and information systems and services.

Three features of changing administrative identities are considered. Firstly, traditional regulatory and 'civil service'-type roles have been joined by roles requiring specialist expertise and knowledge management, where independent and even political judgements are called for, often involving decisions around levels of risk. Secondly, new specialisations have been created within functional areas as support services have

become more sophisticated (for instance marketing, hitherto an offshoot of student recruitment and/or external relations, has become an activity in its own right). Thirdly, the boundaries between what are increasingly termed 'professional service' staff and academic staff, with or without administrative and managerial responsibilities, have become less clear-cut, and their activities interlinked in increasingly complex ways. This has created 'hybrid' forms of staff, with a mix of roles and backgrounds.

An identity crisis?

The administrative function in the pre-1992 universities has its origins in a public administration tradition, which tolerated elements of ambiguity to support the requirement for impartiality and disinterestedness:

"It is difficult to believe that a Registrar can advise a VC on one line of action but be neutral in the Senate debate on it and then record and implement the Senate's amendments or rejections - faithfully and thoroughly" (Lockwood 1979: 309).

This point is illustrated by the Committee of University Chairmen's Guide on Governance (CUC 2001), which recommends that the Secretary of an institution's Governing Body (usually the Secretary and Registrar) should have a direct reporting link to the Chair of the Governing Body, as well as a responsibility to keep the Vice-Chancellor apprised of its business. Ideally the Chair, the Secretary and the Vice-Chancellor work harmoniously together. However, there may be (and have been) occasions when the Secretary is been obliged to alert the governing body of action which conflicts with the institution's Financial Memorandum with the Funding Council. This degree of independence, which goes beyond the role of simply giving impartial and disinterested advice, has been highlighted consistently by respondents in the fieldwork

undertaken by the author as critical to the preservation of the "community of interest between governing bodies, vice-chancellors and senior management teams" (Shattock 2002: 7).

The difficulty of finding terms to describe contemporary administrative identities in universities was noted in the Lambert Report (2003: 94).

A complicating factor arises from the variable meanings now attached to the terms 'administrator' and 'manager'. The term 'administrator' has become devalued in the sense that rather than conferring the ethos and values of public service, it now refers more often than not to routine clerical tasks. Secretarial staff have become 'administrative assistants', and faculty registrars are now given more 'managerial' titles such as 'business manager'. Whether the role of 'school business manager' is substantially different from that of the 'faculty secretary' it replaced, and whether individuals within such roles actually take on new styles and values, is debatable. Nevertheless, it could be argued that such people differ from earlier forms by an increased participation in executive decision-making, managing budgets and associated risks. As noted in Lambert (2003: 94), and possibly in order to avoid these problems of nomenclature, administrative managers as a collective are increasingly subsumed under the generic functional title of 'professional services', the management of which are becoming increasingly visible. For instance, institutions have a heightened awareness of the impact of the built environment on student recruitment, bringing previously 'hidden' estates and facilities functions to the fore.

The academic literature does not offer clarity on the subject of administrative roles and identities. While partnership between academic and administrative staff may be valued on a local and individual basis (Hare and Hare 2002), this is not necessarily reflected in views of collective 'administrations' or 'managements', especially when administrative managers become identified with the implementation of government policies that have developed a 'life of their own' and created additional roles (and therefore costs), such as quality assessment and audit. Middlehurst (1993) and Rowland (2002) note resulting "fault lines" between academic and other staff groupings. There is also a concern about an increasing separation of the academic and managerial work of the university, with a perceived shift of power and influence towards management (Halsey 1992). Furthermore, despite a feeling that academic staff have become increasingly overburdened by the demands of marketisation and accountability (Henkel 2000; Prichard 2001), there is ambivalence about the devolution of tasks to dedicated managers:

> "...academics want to govern themselves but they rarely want to manage; they are often poor managers when they do manage; and yet they deny rights of management to others" (Dearlove 1998: 73).

It would seem also that administrative managers may be subject to competing identities. If they adopt a service mode, they may be regarded as "docile clerks" (Scott 1995: 64), but if they contribute to decision and policy-making, they may be perceived as being too powerful. There are further tensions in Clark's (1998) 'core' and 'periphery' model: if administrative managers pursue an agenda supporting the interests of their academic colleagues in the 'academic heartlands' they are at risk of being accused of 'going native'

by their administrative and managerial colleagues at the centre; if they pursue a 'corporate' line, they can be seen as prioritising what are perceived as managerial concerns by academic colleagues. Thus, the interface between staff 'in the field' and their specialist colleagues at the institutional centre creates potential for both collaboration and competition. There can be, therefore, dissonance between implicit (local and personal appreciation of value) and explicit (public expression of value) understandings of the positioning of administrative staff. Despite these doubts and uncertainties, Scott (1995) noted "an upgrading of managerial capacity" and a professionalisation of university administration, in which corporate and strategic planning initiatives driven by administrative managers were "one of the most significant but underrated phenomena of the last two decades" when

> "A managerial cadre began to emerge, ready to support a more executive leadership, in place of the docile clerks, who had instinctively acknowledged the innate authority of academics". (Scott 1995: 64).

Knowing how and when to connect with governance structures, therefore, is a critical path for administrative managers to tread.

The practitioner literature is more optimistic. The effect of the new market environment on the public service administration tradition in universities was picked up in the 1990s:

> "Administration, which had been largely seen as recordkeeping, committee servicing, accounting, stewardship of the university estates and ceremonials was suddenly faced with severe managerial problems requiring managerial solutions." (Hayward 1992:2).

Holmes (1998: 112) describes a professional administrator who has a facility to move about intellectually and organisationally:

> "becoming more chameleon-like – changing his or her spots to fit into and make a contribution to changing management teams and structures, and the different skills and attributes their academic and other colleagues bring to the table … the administrator/manager has an obligation to contribute ideas and policy as well as to follow legitimate instructions …all university administrators and managers, as well as academics, must now become not just facilitators, but also initiators."

Nevertheless, a possible sensitivity around the use of the word 'management' in a university context may lie behind the suggestion that:

> "…good [university] management means recognising and distinguishing what is best left relatively 'unmanaged' from what must be firmly managed." (Holmes 1998: 110).

This provides some indications of the complex and overlapping nature of administrative managers' roles. The significance of the connection between environments and roles is developed by Lauwerys (2002), who highlights the huge increase in size of the system, the pace of change, the rapid expansion of legislative and accountability requirements, and the consequent complexity of the tasks to be carried out, individually and collectively, against retreating levels of trust in public institutions. He recommends discarding the use of 'administrator' in favour of 'manager' for professional identity purposes, as individuals increasingly pursue mobile, portfolio career patterns, in which traditional career paths have been modified by work patterns that are more mosaic than

linear. Rapid obsolescence of experience militates against the building of a career in a linear trajectory, with predicable and visible goals. Staying at the edge of developments, be they technology, new government funding regimes or local regeneration policies, becomes the priority. The value inherent in maintaining records or systems, however well-crafted, increasingly fails as a badge of office.

Specialists and Generalists

Administrative managers have always been characterised by one major differentiating factor, namely whether or not they possess a professional qualification in specialist functional areas such as finance, personnel or estates. Those outside these specialist areas have been categorised traditionally as generalists. Even the broad descriptors of specialist and generalist, however, fail to capture administrative managers in tidy boundaries. For instance, there still remain some heads of specialist functions without a professional qualification, who learnt their craft on the job (Metcalfe 1998), although as they work their way out of the system they are invariably replaced by people who are formally qualified. In that sense specialist functions are becoming more clearly bounded and excluding of individuals who do not fit specific criteria.

Generalists typically enter an institution with a degree but no specialist training, except perhaps a few years' experience in a comparable sector. Up to the 1980s they were likely to undertake a broad range of tasks from academic appointments to research grant administration, student services to curriculum development, committee servicing to publications. However as specialist activities have became more sophisticated, generalists have gradually retreated to registry and secretariat functions and, more recently, special

projects such as quality and widening participation. They are increasingly likely to have postgraduate qualifications and people now entering such roles sometimes wish to develop a distinguishing portfolio, involving products or outcomes with which they can identify more closely than was possible with traditional, process-oriented administrative tasks.

Changing Locales

The organisational model devised by McNay (McNay 1995), Figure 1, reflects the impact of environmental changes from the late 1980s onwards, describing the emergence of corporate and enterprise cultures alongside traditional collegial and bureaucratic cultures. The idea of administration drawn from the public administration tradition, in which executive administrators deliver policies created by lay governors

, would draw it into the bureaucratic segment. The idea of management drawn from the neo-liberal literature would locate it primarily in the corporate and entrepreneurial segments. This model does not, however, take account of the many interlocking variables now surrounding individual decisions and activities. The data from the author's study suggests that what has become increasingly important in raising confidence levels in operational decisions is the knowledge possessed by the actors in each quadrant of likely outcomes in other quadrants. Thus the strongly differentiated constructs in McNay's model struggle to reflect the messier positionings on the ground, in which staff are moving across boundaries and devising new domains and ways of working. A revision of cultures might incorporate the idea of a value chain, a sense of engagement with others,

greater inclusiveness, and an open-ness to external as well as between internal constituencies.

Thus the "Collegium" might be re-formed for contemporary purposes as "Community", "Bureaucracy" as "Service", "Corporation" as "Reputation", and "Enterprise" as "Partnership". The following extract from an internal university newsletter illustrates the idea that universities are communities in the widest sense, and that their multiple objectives can only be achieved through equally valued, but different, contributions from their diverse staff groupings:

> "[The University of] Warwick's view of the university [is] as a community made up
>
> not just of academics and students, but of thousands of people who contribute in all
>
> kinds of different ways. A campus is a little microcosmic city …we have secretaries
>
> and administrators and financial experts and technicians with a huge range of skills
>
> … All these people interact on a daily basis…" (Bassnett 2003: 8)

The idea of public service supported by a reliable bureaucracy ensuring consistent standards has been extended by the concept of customer service, the recipients ranging from students to research funders to regional agencies. Corporate image and management can be seen to have expanded into the broader field of reputation, which depends not only on good public relations, but a host of formal and informal factors such as success in teaching and research assessment exercises, league tables, and the student grapevine that a university is a 'good place to be'. Entrepreneurship is increasingly moderated by partnership arrangements and the building of customer-supplier links, such as those with

local industry, further education and Regional Development Agencies, to develop stronger 'products' for the market and loyalty to them.

Not only have the cultures in the McNay model become conceptually broader and less clearly-bounded, but the shape of the model has become less rigid and more free-form (Figure 2). The cultural zones may coalesce and sometimes detach from each other. This has implications for structures, plans and decision-making processes. Administrative managers play a central role in this process, understanding the potential knock-on effects of action in relation to different zones, and interpreting the reasons for agreed action to different constituencies.   As well as the creation of expanded cultural 'zones' within the university, new organisational relationships have emerged between institutions, their environment, and the activities required to support and, latterly, to promote and extend academic functions.

Figures 3, 4 and 5 illustrate the evolution of new spaces available to professional staff. In the 1970s (Figure 3), the university sector was characterised by discretely bounded institutions with well-defined academic administrations. These administrations carried alongside them the basic functions required to maintain essential infrastructures: finance, personnel and estates. All such operations were likely to be located in one building, known as 'the administration', with possible out-posting of staff in faculty, school or departmental offices. Staff who performed these kinds of roles were described typically as 'support' staff. They facilitated collegial decision-making processes by providing factual information, and acting as gatekeepers in respect of the regulatory aspects of

proposals. Identities were stable and distinguishable from each other, by professional specialism and/or by affiliation to an academic location. At this stage, therefore, the identities of both generalist administrators (such as registry and secretariat staff) and specialist professionals (such as finance and personnel staff) were reasonably clearly defined in terms of the tasks they performed, the way in which they performed them, and their relationship with colleagues and with their institutions. A hint of future complexities lay in the dual relationship that some administrators had with academic managers such as Deans, and with their professional line manager in the academic administration.

In the 1980s internal and external boundaries became more permeable as institutions addressed the challenge of increased self-reliance, and sought to engender a cultural shift within their own academic sub-structures. Figure 4 illustrates the effect of devolving management responsibility within institutions. Although the precise form of arrangements varied according to the size and shape of individual institutions, academic managers at all levels were required increasingly to manage budgets and to produce local business plans, as well as to give academic leadership. This move was balanced by the creation of senior management teams, who retained strong lines of control, through planning and budgeting timetables, to the academic periphery. These control mechanisms were reinforced by dedicated assistance to budget holders by professional specialists. Such people might be physically relocated, part-time or full-time, to work 'in the field'.

The overlaying of traditional consultative processes and hierarchies with a facility to take executive action gradually refocused the relationship between the most senior institutional managers and the middle levels of academic management. This relationship was brokered by Pro-Vice-Chancellors, with cross-boundary institutional portfolios, whose number and influence increased during the late 1980s. The traditional organisational pyramid was reconfigured by Burton Clark (1998), so that senior managers were at the centre of the institutional map rather than at the top of a hierarchy. As time went on, and the speed and number of universities' operations multiplied, it was not in practice possible to maintain tight oversight and control of academic and service units. It might also be argued that this was increasingly unnecessary since all sub-institutional units were judged year-on-year by their performance, and simply would not survive if they did not demonstrate value-for-money in QAA, RAE or business output terms. Organisational players could move around more freely within that kind of frame and for all these reasons internal working patterns were less regular and predictable. In practice therefore the organisational map became multi-dimensional, so that the flat, static model in Figure 4 became more dynamic.

A snapshot of these increasingly fluid arrangements is given in Figure 5. The institutional boundary, where it exists, has become soft and free-form. In places it is a completely open system. Employees of partner organisations may work within its boundaries and likewise university employees may work elsewhere (for instance the NHS, overseas campuses and franchise operations). Internal units of activity are on a loose rein and

some have no direct connection to the senior management team. The fluidity of the situation means that the influence of individuals in (re)-defining and pushing boundaries is increased. Core infrastructure functions such as finance, human resources and estates are packaged in a 'resource' envelope and are considered as an entity, as decisions about one increasingly impact on the others. Areas of work such as marketing, which were embedded in an established functional area such as external relations, float off to have a life (and budget) of their own. Some, such as widening participation, may attain independence, but be liable to a tug-of-war from interested predators such as external relations and student recruitment. As these new functions acquire independence, they become attractive to new types of would-be employees, offering them a clear identity.

Collapsing Boundaries

This less prescribed, more complex environment created potentials for dialogue across traditional boundaries. It also released possibilities for increased team working, reconfigurations of personnel, and a re-packaging of functions and roles. Hybrid roles emerged, which subsequently developed their own boundaries. Planning and quality management are examples. Partly driven by Funding Council demands for institutional plans in the 1980s, dedicated data and IT managers were joined by managers who could take a more strategic view, linking management information with resource and academic considerations to produce integrated plans. Likewise, institutional quality specialists, who were likely to have originated in the academic registrar's department, over time developed a sophisticated levels of expertise whereby they could read the minds of quality assessors, and act as interpreters and gatekeepers between the Quality Assurance

Agency and their institution. While each broad specialism has its own traditions, cultures and ways of behaving, therefore, the emergence of hybrid forms highlighted the need for new ways of communicating across functional areas. The role of interpreter, therefore, increased in prominence. For instance, finance staff need to be able to translate for the senior management team the resource and opportunity costs of new modes of curriculum delivery.

An early attempt to redefine administrative identities came in Supplementary Report 4 of the Dearing Report (1997), which acknowledges the significance of non-academic staff, though it bases its view of them on a small sample of eight individuals including technical, computing and library staff as well as administrative staff. Nevertheless the categorisation of these groups of staff into *niche-finders, subject specialists* (both of whom place a high premium on working in a university environment and expected to stay there) and *new professionals* (who placed a greater value on using their expert knowledge to develop new roles, and on their future mobility) is an attempt to re-frame traditional conceptions of a heterogeneous group of staff. The significance of the Report is that it recognises that roles have changed as a result of information technology, business approaches, and the greater involvement of support staff in the planning and delivery of teaching. It also highlights the need for effective management, as a discrete activity in itself, to compensate for reduced state funding.

Since Dearing there have been indications that the interface between different types of administrative role, and also between administrative managers and academic colleagues, has evolved. There appears to be increased inter-digitation between academic and

administrative staff, with responsibility for building organisational capital rippling through the institutional community:

> "What is often forgotten is that over the past few years there has been increasing traffic across the administrative-academic divide. Some academics move into administration, and many administrators have higher degrees." Bassnett (2004: 3).

This view is corroborated by the interview data of the author's project. One Vice-Chancellor pointed out that it was not of concern to the recipient of a service (eg a talk about how to use the library) whether it was delivered by an academic or another professional, as long as it met the need, and another said that it was increasingly difficult to make the distinction between traditional academic administrators, those providing what he called "expert functions", and academic managers, as they all made a contribution to strategy. These examples also reflect the emergence of "new professionals" associated with the support of teaching and learning, "who are neither wholly lecturing nor technical nor support staff" (Gornall 1999).

The movements described above are reflected in the creation of posts that cross administrative and academic boundaries. For instance, an advertisement for a Pro-Vice-Chancellor (External Relations) (Times Higher, 20 February 2004), brings together under an academic title, glossed as 'Commercial Director', a package of functions in external relations, industrial liaison, regional partnership and business development. These are roles that hitherto would have been likely to have been contained within separate administrative offices with separate senior managers. It is not clear whether this role

would be filled with someone with an academic or managerial background, from within or outside the sector, leaving options open. Such hybrid roles are further exemplified in a series of posts advertised in the THES between January and June 2004 for:

- Business Development Managers

- Director of Corporate Affairs

- Academic Administration Managers

- Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Corporate and Business Development

- Director of Corporate Communications and Development.

Whether or not they occupy such explicitly hybrid roles, administrative managers are increasingly involved in roles hitherto reserved for academic staff, such as chairing meetings and constructing bids for funding.

A Re-framing?

While there is some acknowledgement in the literature that roles are no longer clear cut, no comprehensive appraisal has been undertaken of administrative managers' re-positionings. It has been suggested that they may be perpetual travellers:

> "a national (and international) cadre of mobile and unattached senior managers without loyalty but with their own (not an institutional) portfolio – the new portfolio successional career managers who have no loyalty to an institution or its uniqueness" (Duke, 2002: 146).

This provides a hint that, like academic staff, administrative managers may also have allegiances to a knowledge community beyond the borders of their institution, by which they define themselves, and indeed must prove themselves, in order to progress.

Furthermore, Duke suggests that a distinguishing feature of administrative managers' contribution might be their ability to work with, and through, unprecedented levels of uncertainty and unpredictability:

> "… university managers – more traditionally called administrators – must live with inordinately high levels of role ambiguity and embrace paradoxical contradictions. They must tolerate uncertainty and accept the contradictory plurality of what is true, right and expedient". **(**Duke 2002: 32).

A framework is required that can track administrative managers across such boundaries, and their interactions with the cultures, knowledges and actors they encounter. Their growth as professionals can be described using Archer's (2000) conceptual framework linking structure and agency. Archer's theoretical analysis hinges on the balance between external societal influences absorbed by the individual, and their capability to exercise firstly, independent judgement, and secondly, influence, on the structures and cultures with which they interact. The data suggests that a key element of administrative managers' identity is the ability to empathise with the intrinsic academic values, and also to be able to comprehend their exchange value in the outside world (Archer's "natural order" (page 162)). To carry this off in practice, they must hold on to both sets of values while pursuing institutional goals, and managing the interchange between the university and its environment (Archer's "practical order"), in a way that is sympathetic to those values (Archer's "social order"). This involves a process of negotiation, interpretation and continuous adjustment with internal and external constituencies. These adjustments, for

instance over the terms of contracts and partnerships, reflect Archer's "amalgams of 'practices' which oscillate... between voluntarism and determinism" (page 6).

Administrative managers' changing relationship with formal organisation structures such as committees and regulatory functions, and their positioning vis-à-vis the exercise of independent judgement, are defining features of their growth and maturation. Providing custom-built solutions, and moving on from that to reshape agendas for the future, requires a self-consciousness and creativity not found in the traditional performance of prescribed roles, for instance that of the committee secretary who gave advice when asked, but did not have an active voice in decision-making. Contemporary administrative managers more likely to write their own scripts, and this may be the point at which "administration" becomes "management":

> "Unscripted performances, … need an active agent who is enough of a self to acknowledge her obligation to perform and to write her own script to cover the occasion" (Archer 2000: 7).

Thus in terms of the movement of the profession as a whole, administrative managers might be said to have moved from being members of a profession with clear conditions of service, salary scales and promotion points, taking structures and values from well-defined institutional Administrations, to being members of a profession in which individuals are freer to negotiate their own work profiles.   In Archer's terms they have moved from being Primary Agents ie "members of *collectivities* who share the same life chances" (page 11), to Actors who "acquire their social identities from the way in which

they personify the roles they choose to occupy" (page 261). At the individual level, administrative mangers may position themselves differently as they move through their career over time and across different institutional and sub-institutional locations. Beyond the level of the individual, whose performance is unique, groups of administrative managers may be considered in terms of their development as Corporate Agents (Archer 2000: 11), with the ability to transform (institutional) structures and the distribution of resources. Corporate agency may involve alliance with either administrative and/or academic colleagues.

Conclusion

The binary division of institutions into academic arenas of activity, and 'an administration' that served them, has been superseded by more complex, multi-dimensional models. The concept of 'service' has developed from being essentially subsidiary to academic endeavour to something that incorporates a degree of independent functioning, particularly where it offers specialist expertise and, increasingly, political skills. It includes the ability to assess the appropriateness of strategies by which the university engages with the external world, to assess and translate the potentials each have for the other, and to work in partnership with colleagues inside and outside the university.

As government and management imperatives have impacted upon higher education the idea of 'university administration' has expanded and diversified. It now incorporates clusters of discrete specialties alongside traditional activities, and is increasingly

characterised by a greater permeability with other sectors and knowledges. Understandings around the words 'administration' and 'management' have become more fluid and the functions merge into each other. The gradual dissolution of a well-defined and understood caucus of administrative staff has been accompanied by the emergence of new, often hybrid identities, across a range of activities and contexts.

The implications of these changes in governance terms has been to highlight the potential for a drift away from the traditional functions of a regulatory administration in the civil service sense, with well-defined rules and procedures, towards a focus on the provision of 'expert' opinion to aid decision-making about institutional futures. The further involvement of administrative managers in risk-laden judgements about university policy takes them into uncharted territory. However, a balance must be struck between ensuring the regulatory, legal and ethical aspects of the university's business, and facilitating new initiatives and directions, so that its essential academic purposes are enhanced.

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