



# The Changing Nature of Research Management in Universities: the case of South Africa and the Netherlands

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## Starting Diagnosis: Two Opposing Perspectives

- Modern university under attack:
  - efficiency & relevance (new public management)
  - managerialism undermining academic freedom
  - research enterprise playing handmaiden role to the market.
- University in (yet) another phase of reforms
  - Contestation about the nature of universities as organisations and their role in economy and society
  - Direction of change not yet certain





## Research management overview (Literature)

- Literature on research management:
  - Sparse and scattered
  - Mostly US focused
  - More of “how-to” recipes than analytical
  - Research management a “practice in search of a theory?” (Gabriele, 1998)
- What would be the starting points of such a conceptual framework: the nature of universities as organisations (are they organisations of a ‘special type?’);



## Research management overview (Practice)

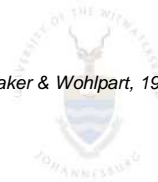
Most common research management functions:

- Developing policies, procedures and structures (3<sup>rd</sup> stream income; IP management; etc)
- Managing externally-funded (research) projects
- Developing (research) management information systems
- Promoting and marketing research

*(Association of Commonwealth Universities, 2001)*

- Grant Administration
- Research Administration (research facilities management; MIS)
- Legal/Ethical Oversight

*(Baker & Wohlpert, 1998)*





## General Findings from both South African & The Netherlands

### External context exerts strong influence

- Transformation imperative
- National priority-setting initiatives (promoting efficiency and impact through selectivity and consolidation)
- HE landscape more 'marketised' – increased competition for resources
- Mimetic isomorphism? (OECD & new public management; Rankings)



## Findings: South African case studies (1)

### Impact on university governance and management:

- 3 steering responses: Entrepreneurial; Symbolic conformity; Directive
- Formal vs Substantive Steering
- Changing role of deans:
  - Professional/managerial dean (“strong dean”)
  - Intermediary (ambivalent dean)
  - Collegial/*Primus inter pares* (weak dean model?)





## Findings: South African case studies (2)

### Impact on research enterprise

*A triumph of managerialist over collegial forms of (research) management?:*

- Resource mobilisation capacity
- Entities of research excellence and relevance
- Research culture



## Findings: Dutch case studies (1)

### Impact on university governance and management:

- 2 steering responses: Entrepreneurial and Symbolic conformity
- Broker and Buffer roles
- Changing role of deans:
  - MUB Act and professionalisation of deanship
  - Formal/legal powers enhanced
  - Lack resources to steer (more administrative than strategic oversight)





## Findings: Dutch case studies (2)

### Impact on research enterprise

- Resource mobilisation capacity
- Entities of research excellence and relevance
- Residual culture of strong 'Vakgroep'



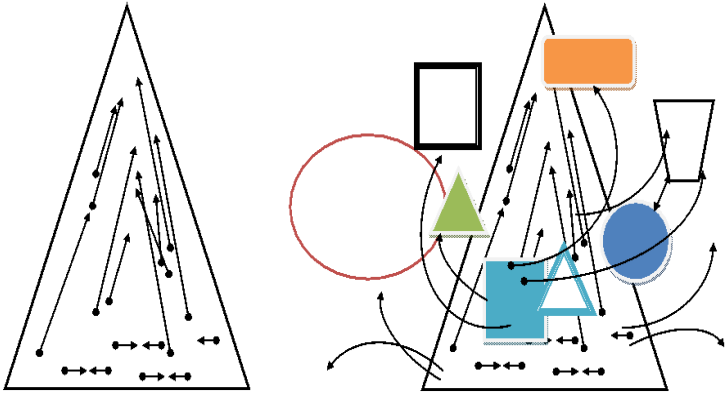
## Conclusion

- Increasing role of senior management in strategic decision-making
- Shift from research administration to (strategic) research management
- Strong drivers to this shift:
  - *external factors*: national steering instruments (research prioritisation) & new public management
  - *internal factors*: emergence of centres of excellence and relevance
- Impact on research enterprise variable



# From modern to post-modern university?

From modern to post-modern university (Rip, 2008)



Thank you



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## Research Design/Case study selection

- Shift in focus from research administration to strategic research management
- 3 types of universities (resource dependency = adaptation strategy)
  - *Classical elite*
  - *Enterprising*
  - *Niche-occupying*