UNIVERSITY MANAGEMENT: BUREAUCRATIC, ORGANISED ANARCHY OR ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING?

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Key Words

University students, staff, community, teaching vs research, competition, reviews, change, management, management models (bureaucratic, organised anarchy, organisational learning).

Abstract

The 'bad' managerial, rather than the 'good' collegial, is increasingly seen to dominate the internal life of Australian universities. However, the profound changes facing those universities no longer allow them to evade the necessity for good management. This article briefly examines what has changed in the world of universities that makes their management so increasingly important. The article also describes two models (rational and organised anarchy) that have been used to both understand the changes and consider what university managements might do about them. The article concludes with a third model that combines what is believed to be the best elements of both the rational and organised anarchy models, that is, organisational learning.

Introduction

The very idea of university management "sends shudders into the legs and fury into the veins of many scholars" (Keller, 1983, p. x). These ruptions occur because of the belief that the cultures of universities should, first and foremost, demonstrate the influence of their core of collegiality. The notion of the community of scholars is one that is not readily abandoned. It carries with it connotations of self-government, self-discipline, decision making by consensus, and a separate and higher system of values than that pertaining to the outside world (Bone, 1994).

In reflecting on current trends in their universities, these scholars perceive, for example, the development of sophisticated systems of steering from a distance, "whereby the behaviour of autonomous institutions and autonomous individuals is regulated by Government indirectly, using rewards, sanctions and rules of the game. ... [Yet] compliance ... is entirely voluntary; ... [it is] freedom to follow someone else's agenda" (Marginson, p.120). Techniques from the corporate world such as strategic planning, performance reviews, performance-based budgeting, and quality assurance, are seen as part of the management's acquiescence in this centralisation. It is also lamented that the number of central academic managers in universities has grown, that "central

academic management has become more specialised and professionalised" and that "the generic manager has arrived, or is arriving" (Marginson, pp. 120-121). The 'bad' managerial, rather than the 'good' collegial, is increasingly seen to dominate the internal life of Australian universities.

In contrast, others believe that these same scholars "stand on a soft sandstone block permeated with myths, outmoded positions, biases and naivete about organisational necessities, surprising ignorance about political and institutional authority, and neglect of the current realities of the academic profession" (Keller, 1983, p. 30). Keller (1983) observes: "The basic myth is that each ... university is close to an Athenian democracy of professional scholars who know each other and share a bundle of values and aspirations, which they practice in their institutional lives" (p. 30). Such a myth is cast against the fact that, as Keller (1993) notes, "Size alone inhibits the regular exercise of faculty control over their institutions" (p. 33).

> [In addition,] the power of *individual* faculty members has increased on campus while the power of the *collective* faculty has waned or crumbled. Research grants, media attention, lucrative consulting practices, academic prises from their professional associations, and student glorification have given some scholars enormous influence in their institutions. ... collectivity is increasingly rare and faculty and staff concerns are seldom for the well-being of the entire college or university or for the integrity of academic affairs of their universities, their schools, or even their departments (p. 37).

Yet, these internal features of organisational life are set against a changed external context, as Keller (1993) further indicates: "Today, the threats come not so much from ... [university managers] as from ... government leaders, commissioners of higher education, federal agency officials, unruly students, the courts, and budget officials" (p. 34).

It may seem a far cry from the idealised or collegial image to the situation today, when so many universities are jockeying for the most able students, both in their home markets and in other countries. Universities are also selling their skills in the market places of consultancy and sponsored research, and they are willing to name their libraries and swimming pools after almost anyone who will give them a suitably large donation (Bone, 1994).

The dogma of higher education institutions "as amiable, anarchic, self-correcting collectives of scholars with a small contingent of dignified caretakers at the unavoidable business edge" is seen by these contrary voices as in need of urgent and drastic review (Keller, 1983, p. ix). The organisational paradigm to meet the needs of the university in the twenty-first century is now expected to focus on: "those we serve; allocate resources on demonstrable success; provide flexibility that will permit timely responses to changing student and research needs; [and] eliminate

unnecessary layers of oversight by placing more responsibility with those we serve" (Heydinger, 1994, p. 1). In the management of universities, there is seen to be an increasing need for the exercise of leadership which takes appropriate initiatives and sets priorities and directions while maintaining a substantial element of collegiality and participatory decision-making (OECD, 1987). Said simply, the profound changes facing universities no longer allow campuses to evade the necessity for good management (Keller, 1983).

Perhaps the real situation lies somewhere between these two extreme positions. In fact, a mixture of collegiality and management has served universities well. Higher education mergers of recent years enjoy a considerably higher success rate than mergers in industry. The 10 percent failure rate reported by Rowley (in press), contrasts very favourably with the 50 to 80 percent failure rate in industry (Harman & Meek, 1988).

What has changed in the world of universities that makes their management so increasingly important? As others have focussed in depth on this issue, this article summarises just a few of the issues. It then demonstrates how these factors have reappeared in the most recent reviews of and commentaries on Australian higher education. The article then goes on to describe two models that might be helpful in understanding these changes and what university managements might do about them (the bureaucratic, or rational, and organised anarchy models). The article concludes with a third model than combines the best elements of both (the learning organisation model).

Changes in Universities

What have been some of the major changes to Australian university students, staff and community?

•   Students

In the past, small numbers of full-time students newly graduated from selective schools characterised our universities. Typically, they would have been found studying Arts and Sciences and beginning career preparation in the traditional liberal professions such as medicine and law. In more recent times however, we have moved rapidly from elite to mass higher education - 87,000 students graduated from higher education in 1995 compared with 141,000 in 1998 (West, 1997). Now there are large numbers of full and increasingly part-time students. These encompass students both newly graduated from a wide range of schools and returning-to-study as mature aged entrants. These older students are studying in a wide range of general education and career related areas throughout their lives. Increasingly, a university education has been viewed as a means of social mobility and a place for second chance and ongoing or lifelong education.

The student clientele is also changing as a result of the proportionately fewer 18-year-olds in the population as a whole and also major demographic shifts in the ethnic make up of population. The 1996 Australian Census shows that nearly 25 percent of the population were born outside Australia (ABS, 1998, p. 10). Up to one in four Australians spoke a language other than English at home (ABS, 1997, p. 3). Australia's universities have also become increasingly attractive to foreign students. Around 53,200 foreign students enrolled in 1996 and generated $1.4 billion in export income (West, 1997).

These students, whether they are from overseas or locally, are paying an increasing share of their educational costs. As this occurs, so their expectation rise in terms of good teaching, a quality learning environment, employment prospects, and improved career opportunities (Coaldrake & Stedman, in press).

Competition within higher education has also begun to intensify. Competition for students, especially those seen as among the nation's best and those from overseas and elsewhere who are willing to pay full-fees, is already evident.

•   Staff

In the past, academics tended to see themselves as communities of scholars preserving and transmitting knowledge and culture. They also pursued new knowledge in a disinterested, non-directing fashion. This view has come under question with a changing concept of knowledge and increased contestation between narrow specialisation and broad critical inquiry as well as the role and usefulness of the disciplines, especially those that are perceived as 'soft'.

While teaching is usually carried out in disciplines, public concern about environmental, health, communication, and privacy issues increasingly demands problem-driven, applied research that links universities in contractual agreements with business and government and is cross-disciplinary in nature (Gibbons, 1997). In an increasingly knowledge-based society, universities can be among the central institutions in each community - "for policemen, high school students good in science and mathematics, musicians, teachers, craftsmen hoping to start their own companies, families travelling abroad" (Keller, 1983, p. 14). However, this situation creates a dilemma for those working in higher education. Because market conditions are pressing universities to design courses and programs that students, not teachers, find attractive plus reward those faculty members who enhance institutional survival and quality as well as there own professional reputation, staff find themselves "in the awkward position of having to perform increasingly as versatile generalists for their institutions while receiving their status and financial rewards increasingly for specialized research, publications, and national attention as independent professionals" (Keller, 1983, p. 24).

A combination of enterprise bargaining, greater reliance on outside consulting income and use of market loadings has also seen the equal financial standing of the academic disciplines irretrievably broken (Coaldrake & Stedman, in press). For the first time, this means that an academic in one Australian university and/or discipline might earn a different salary from a colleague in a similar position in another university and/or discipline. This situation will only be exasperated as the age profile of staff gets increasingly older and competition for university staff both within and outside the university sector increases.

A combination of the explosion in knowledge and the rapid advances in, and uses of, information technology has seen some universities as well as private providers enter the previously exclusive teaching domain of the local university. The Open University, for example, and companies such as Microsoft and Walt Disney already have the ability to attractively and economically package courses, especially in the mass and most profitable end of the market - such as first year Commerce, Psychology, Sociology, etc. This situation may see staff in these areas having an opportunity to be more arbiters of quality and learning brokers rather than 'the experts' and sole providers. As brokers, the relationship with students changes from expert to guide and teaching changes from didactic to co-learning.

Coaldrake and Stedman (in press) not only argue that universities will increasingly find themselves competing with private education and research organisations. Further, they claim that these private organisations have a competitive advantage because they usually operate without the restrictions in flexibility and costs that come from attempting to adapt traditional university practices to the demands of the marketplace. Two examples include the blurring of boundaries between academic and non-academic work and the expectation that all academic staff should be both teachers and researchers when individual preferences and ability may favour one over the other and/or change over time (Coaldrake, 1998).

The role of a number of university staff reflect these changes. It was not surprising, for example, that there was celebration in the late 1970's, a time when an Athenian democracy was espoused as the preferred operational model in universities especially by the professoriate who saw themselves as belonging to the minority of citizens with the entitlement to participate in the democratic process, when 'god' professors were displaced. Increased devolution of authority, which has required academics to leave their gilded cages and take over increasing numbers of management functions, has see the demise of another university 'god', the Registrar or Bursar.

These developments, as well as factors such as the switch to performance linked pay, the increasing age of the current cohort of mainly male, tenured, senior staff, and the concurrent growth

of contract or part-time mainly young and female faculty, (DEETYA, 1997) has helped strengthen the argument for a reassertion of institutional values and needs over the academic profession's own values and expectations.

• Community

In the past, the university interacted with only a small section of the wider community and tended to be isolated from that community which afforded it the role as a locus of critical inquiry and a place for freedom of debate. But times have changed. At the very least universities "will have to become more open, porous institutions vis-a-vis the wider community, with fewer gates and more revolving doors" (Gibbons, 1997, p. 3).

A number of factors now see the involvement of a larger and more diverse community in university affairs. These factors include the complexity and rapid pace of development, especially in the scientific and technological fields, the profusion and accelerated obsolence of information and the interrelationship of political, economic and social issues, such as the economic importance of a skilled labour force. Credentialism, life-long learning, closer relationships between the university and external constituencies such as professional associations, and wider community questioning of the value received for expenditure of public funds continue to act as change catalysts in universities. More and more universities both offering specialised career-oriented courses and applied degrees are needing to aggregate, synthesise, interpret and then disseminate information about themselves. Increasingly this needs to be done in ways that demonstrate ever-increased relevance, competence and accountability.

The area of research provides a specific example of how universities are currently having to accommodate the introduction of new practices. "In many areas of scientific advance, knowledge production is cutting loose from disciplinary structure and generating knowledge which is so far not being institutionalised in the conventional way" (Gibbons, 1997, p. 3). The growth of research centres, institutes and think tanks both within but also, and more importantly, outside of universities at - the same time as discipline-based faculties and departments remain the preferred form of university organisation - provides a challenge to every university.

Universities can be seen to increasingly occupy a special but hazardous zone in society between the competitive profit-making business sector and the government owned and run state agencies.

> They are dependent yet free; market-oriented yet outside cultural and intellectual
> fashions. The faculty are inventors, entrepreneurs, and retailers of knowledge,
> aesthetics, and sensibility yet professionals like the clergy or physicians. ... They

conduct their business much as their European counterparts did in the Renaissance, still proud and pedantic ... ; yet modern corporations pay the to sniff out the future. They constitute one of the largest industries in the nation but are among the least business like and well managed of all organisations. Whatever, like animals in a bleak landscape, they are perpetually in search of vital financial nourishment (Keller, 1983, p. 5).

In brief, universities are no longer exempt from political, economic and other community forces (Harman & Meek 1988). Attempts by some of those in universities to externalise the blame for their difficulties by decrying government shortsightedness and/or the community's lack of understanding are increasingly finding the complaints falling on deaf ears (Coaldrake & Stedman, in press). The community now wants its say about what happens in Australian universities!

• Recent Reviews of Australian Higher Education

Many of these changes in students, staff and community are confirmed by a recent Committee of Inquiry into the management of Australian higher education (Hoare Review, 1995), the reflections of Mr Frank Hambly on his retirement after 30 years as Executive Director of the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee (Hambly, 1997), and the draft policy discussion paper of the current review of Australian higher education (West, 1997).

It was significant that the person chosen for the 1995 inquiry into higher education was a prominent figure from the business community (Coaldrake, 1996). The terms of reference assigned to the Hoare Review were wide-ranging and included issues of governance, strategic management, accountability, workplace practices and finance and asset management. Pressures on the higher education sector identified by the review included: continuing demands from government and community for more accountability and better performance; more competition with other Australian and overseas universities; the end of government-funded growth in undergraduate places; an environment being rapidly and radically reshaped by the combined impacts of new information technology and communications; mass participation and increasing diversity, linked with the requirement for economy of operations and achievement of social justice objectives; increased selectivity and concentration of research activities; internationalisation; the interest of universities to maintain their independence, preserve diversity and identify new sources of revenue yet at the same time respond to national goals; and, the increasing expectations of employees for more self-determination and flexibility in the workplace (Hoare Report, 1995).

The Hoare Review concluded that universities must be able to "balance the traditional benefits of collaboration and collegiality with an environment of increasing competition for

domestic and overseas students, staff, research funds, industry support and status" (Coaldrake, 1996, p.4).

Hambly (1997) characterised his time on the Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee (AVCC) as one of change, change that was inevitably initiated by a national review of Higher Education. Among the significant changes in the last 10 years Hambly lists: a change from 19 universities and 46 colleges of advanced education to a new Unified National System comprised of 37 universities; the introduction and then expansion of a Higher Education Contribution Scheme requiring students to meet part of the costs of their education; the introduction of educational profiles and quality enhancement processes as the basis on which universities received their funding; the encouragement for universities to diversify their funding so they would not be so dependent on Government; cuts to funding including no supplementation for properly negotiated salary increases and a ceiling on Government funded places (with future growth coming from a new category of fee-paying undergraduate students); and, encouragement for universities to change their management structure to make them more like corporations.

Hambly (1997) believed that as a result of these changes, "universities will increasingly be placed in a competitive situation. They will be competing more for ... students, for research funding, for staff ... and for overseas students" (p. 25). The move to make universities more like corporations "has dented collegial management of universities .... It has placed management and staff in a position of confrontation ... " (Hambly, 1997, p. 25). In many respects, today's universities are sharing the same future as other public sector enterprises with issues such as funding contestability, competitive tendering and quality assurance part of normal, every day operations.

The West Review's (1997) draft discussion paper points out that Australia's higher education sector has grown from an elite system enrolling 32,000 students in 1949 to an industry generating $1.4 billion in export income and enrolling 660,000 students. But it also claims that morale is low among many academics, who feel that they are inadequately rewarded for their work and are overburdened by administrative demands. The report states that while the university system has some positive attributes, the current policy and financing framework must be overhauled to allow the industry to compete in the global arena.

The 21st century is seen by the West Review (1997) as providing an environment very different from that which universities faced in the past two decades of the 20th century. That environment is likely to be characterised by: greater national and international competition from other higher education providers, including providers located outside the traditional university sector; an information and communications revolution that will not only introduce different

methods of production and delivery of educational course and materials, but will also call into question existing institutional arrangements; and, continuing, unavoidable and urgent social and economic change.

An early comment on the West Review sees it as offering " a vision of a decade of *managed* reform towards a more highly competitive, student-centred system, with more students and (probably) less public funding for each" (emphasis added, Phillips, 1997, p. 48).

It is interesting to note that for some at the centre of today's universities, managing them "is like surviving a trek through impenetrable jungle across rivers infested with Canberra crocodiles beset by famine and pestilence, and with both hands tied behind one's back ... ". (Vice Chancellor of James Cook University, Professor Ken McKinnon, as reported in Ryan, 1997, p.14) Yet there are those who believe that in the next fifty years universities will change even more drastically than they have since they assumed their present form more than three hundred years ago, when they reorganised themselves around the printed book. Drucker (1995) subscribes to this view. He argues that, "What will force these changes is in part new technology [is] ... in part the demands of a knowledge-based society in which organised learning must become a lifelong process for knowledge workers; and in part new theory about how human beings learn (Drucker, 1995, p. 79)."

• New University Management

In summary, the major changes in universities in Australia include:

• the move to mass, ethnically diverse and lifelong education with growth no longer funded from the public purse (and thus the need for universities to diversify their funding base);

• increased internationalisation /globalisation;

• intensification of competition for students, staff, research, and resources both from within and outside the university sector;

• changes in course material and production and delivery as a result of advances in information technology;

• continued pressures on staff with a questioning of the role and usefulness of some disciplines especially while they remain isolated, the need for versatile generalists as well as specialists, differential rewards both within and across disciplines and institutions, and the need for increased institutional priority-setting that may not match an individual staff member's priorities;

• increased complexity and diversity;

• increasing devolution of authority; and,

- greater interaction with, and accountability to students and the community, partly through the increased prominence of market conditions to determine both courses and research.

Some of the ingredients implied by the above changes for a reanalysis of university management include:

- finance assuming a new prominence;
- technology becoming a more integral tool;
- the future becoming as important as the present and the past;
- the external environment and the market receiving more attention;
- institutional planning, including priority setting, becoming essential; and,
- the replacing management's more passive role with a more active one.

On the other hand, the advantages of the traditional collegial system in universities suggest:

- people will be more and more important;
- the communication process will need to be increasingly open; and
- campus governance will need to take new forms, for example, the increasing use of 'the joint big decision committee'.

Are there any models that can incorporate such ingredients and assist universities to manage the changes they face? Is there any advice on how today's university is best managed or governed, especially given the lack of answers to such questions in other recent publications (eg, Richardson and Fielden, 1997; Meek and Wood, 1997)? In what follows, three models are explored for answers to these questions - rational, organised anarchy and learning organisation.

Models for Managing Changing Universities

- Rational Model

A rather simplistic approach to the management of change, labelled the 'rational model' assumes that managers: are able to establish clear, prioritised goals to which the majority of staff are committed; the most effective means to accomplish the goals can be selected often through competition and some sort of a reward system; once the means are applied, the managers can evaluate whether successful goal achievement has occurred; when problems occur, managers will make rational decisions on the way goals and/or means should be modified to correct the gap between what is desired and what is occurring (Berger, 1981). The 'rational model' often underlies books and articles on the need for formal strategic planning in universities (e.g., Dube & Brown,

1983; Doyle & Lynch, 1979). As Mintzberg (1994) points out, "It is almost as if the whole structure were supposed to be shifted to accommodate the needs of planning ... ." (p. 405)

Marginson (1997) suggests that main stream management theory's core propositions about behaviour seem overdue for critical investigation and analysis. In particular, he notes the rational model's assumptions that: "organisation is necessarily hierarchical; that collective commitment must be created from above; that human relations are necessarily competitive; that human beings are driven by fear and manipulated by tangible material rewards (p.120)." Or, more graphically, one university dean is purported to have commented that he saw university planning as 'an expanding bureaucracy, of very little assistance to me but capable of creating several structures of bullshit that I have to cope with'.

Drucker (1995) is also one who sees the need to organise for change in universities as increasingly requiring a high degree of decentralisation rather than centralisation because the organisation must be structured to make decisions quickly. He adds, "those decisions must be based on closeness - to performance, to the market, to technology, to all the many changes in society, the environment, demographics, and knowledge that provide opportunities for innovation if they are seen and utilised" (p. 80).

Are there any other models that better fit the changing situation being faced by universities, especially the need to balance centralisation and decentralisation and increased diversity?

•   Organised Anarchies

Universities have become increasingly complex as fields of study have proliferated and as amalgamations and expansion have created institutions with considerable internal diversity. In such organisations, common goals are harder to find. Indeed, what is good for one part of the university may not be for another. A rational bureaucracy has difficulties in managing this complexity and diversity.

An alternative to the rational model, based on Cohen's and March's (1974) experiences in the management of universities in USA, is the 'Organised Anarchy Model'. What are the characteristics of 'organised anarchies' and what are the implications of these characteristics for the way such organisations operate and should be managed?

Characteristics of Organised Anarchies

In 'organised anarchies' goals are either vague, ambiguous and/or in dispute. "The organisation operates on a variety of inconsistent and ill defined preferences. It can be described better as a loose collection of changing ideas than as a coherent structure. It discovers preferences through action more often than it acts on the basis of preferences" (Cohen & March, 1974, p. 3).

'Organised anarchies' also do not exhibit the close link between goals and means assumed in the rational model. (Berger, 1981) They often do not understand their own processes. The technology can be constantly changing or strongly contested. The result is that such organisations operate "on the basis of a simple set of trial-and-error procedures, the residue of learning from the accidents of past experiences, imitation, and inventions born of necessity" (Cohen & March, 1979, p. 3).

Another characteristic of 'organised anarchies' is that they are loosely coupled. In other words, there is independence of the different parts of the organisation, an independence reinforced by the professionals who work in them who constantly seek autonomy and who vary in the amount of time and effort they can devote to organisational concerns (Cohen & March, 1979; Berger, 1981; Weick, 1982). Academic staff teach and do research in almost complete isolation from one another, especially across different departments (Mintzberg, 1994).

In 'organised anarchies' even if evaluation were possible, it is unclear what would be evaluated. The result is limited supervision and evaluation with the inattention often justified as respect for professional autonomy.

These four characteristics, problematic goals, unclear technology, loose coupling, and limited evaluation, do not make organised anarchies "a bad organisation or a disorganised one; but they do make it a problem to describe, understand and lead" (Cohen & March, 1979, p. 3). They result in low issue salience, use of 'garbage cans', disorderly decision making, procedural illusions of effectiveness, and unrewarding cooperation.

Implications of these Characteristics of Organised Anarchies for the Way such Organisations Operate

By and large, issues most of the time in 'organised anarchies' have low salience for most people. Attention is a scarce factor (Simon, 1981). The decisions to be made secure only partial and erratic attention from staff. A major share of the attention devoted to a particular issue is tied less to the content of the issue than to its symbolic significance for individual and group esteem.

Any decision in an 'organised anarchy' can become a garbage can for almost any problem. The issues discussed in the context of any particular decision depends on the decision or problems involved more than on the timing of their joint arrivals and the existence of alternative arenas for exercising problems.

Decisions also do not necessarily follow an orderly process from problem to solution. Problems, solutions and decision makers are disconnected. The result is solutions looking for

problems, problems hanging around with no, or at least no continuous, search for solutions, and a decision may act as a temporary garbage can.

In effect, exclusive concern is applied to means while ends are taken for granted and left unexamined and unquestioned. The result can be the use of "procedural illusions of effectiveness" (Mulford, 1994, p. 19). As Marginson (1996) puts it, "To be a successful Australian University in this period, you must be successfully *reformed*, and seen to be reformed" (emphasis in original, p. 118).

The characteristics of 'organised anarchies' see cooperation, such as that needed for effective management, having few rewards.

Implications of these Characteristics and Operations for the Way such Organisations should Be Managed

Hort (1997) suggests that while governments have increasingly seen universities as vehicles for strategic research and vocational training the issue of their management, especially their accountability for public funds, has become an emerging issue. However, reflecting the organised anarchy model, Hort (1997, p.47) concludes, the "very autonomous, serendipitous, 'academically free' individuals that the government seeks to control demonstrate that ... managing the individuals and the sector [is] able to be likened to 'herding cats'... ."

The characteristics of 'organised anarchies' and the resultant actions can be mistakenly treated as evidence of fallible management, indecisiveness, and the need to run a tighter ship. All of these judgements result from the application of the wrong model. We tend to apply the only model we know, the rational-bureaucratic one. Yet, when we don't see the university measuring up to these standards, we look for someone to blame. Those in managerial positions acquiesce in this fiction by themselves applying the same standards to the university and their own styles of management. Seldom do we step aside long enough to realise that the task of running a university is simply not the kind of task that can be performed in a rational, bureaucratic system.

University managers need to think more in terms of loose coupling and garbage can decision making, or 'organised anarchies'. First, they need to centralise for short periods in order to make staff more like one another after which they can again decentralise to make their own local accommodations in ways that are now more consistent with a common frame of reference.

Another variation of this advice is for university managers to concentrate their efforts, to focus on one or two critical problems at a time (Berger, 1981, p. 136) and spend time on them for "Anything that requires a coordinated effort of the organisation in order to start is unlikely to be

started ... [and] anything that requires a coordinated effort of the organisation in order to be stopped is unlikely to be stopped" (Cohen & March, 1974, p. 206).

Second, university managers need to accept that there will be ambiguity somewhere, that actions may define goals. Another way of saying this is to act unobtrusively.

> If you put a man in a boat and tell him to plot a course, he can take one of three views of the task. He can float with the currents and winds, letting them take him wherever they wish; he can select a destination and try to use full power to go directly to its regardless of the current or winds; or he can select a destination and use the rudder and sails to let the currents and wind eventually take him where *he* wants to go (emphasis in original, Cohen & March, 1974, p. 212).

Third, in the management of 'organised anarchies' there is a need to identify and buffer tightly coupled areas. There are routines where there are rules, agreement on what they are, a way of checking compliance, and feedback designed to improve compliance.

Fourth, "One of the complications in accomplishing something in a garbage can decision making process is the tendency for any particular project to become intertwined with a variety of other issues simply because those issues exist at the time the project is before the organisation" (Cohen & March, 1974, p. 211). A proposal to change staff car parking arrangements becomes an arena for a concern for social justice, environmental quality and sexual inequality. "It is pointless to try to react to such problems by attempting to enforce rules of relevance. ... The appropriate response is to provide garbage cans into which a wide variety of problems can be deposited. The more conspicuous the can, the more garbage it will attract away from other projects" (Cohen & March, 1974, p. 211).

> ... the first item on a meeting agenda is an obvious garbage can. It receives much of the status allocation concerns that are part of meetings. It is possible that an item on the agenda will attract an assortment of things currently concerning individuals in the group; but the first item is more vulnerable than others. As a result, projects of serious substantive concern should normally be placed somewhat later, after the important matters of individual and group esteem have been settled, most of the individual performances have been completed, and most of the enthusiasm for abstract argument has waned (Cohen & March, 1974, pp. 211-212).

Fifth, and finally, the leader's voice and vision are two of the few things that staff in 'organised anarchies' share in common. It is important, therefore, that they articulate a realistic and achievable general direction for the university with eloquence, persistence and detail. In other

words, it is important to be attentive to the little amount of 'glue' that holds loosely coupled organised anarchies together.

As Stewart (1997, pp. 39-40) points out, this mix of rational (or bureaucratic) and anarchic creates a paradoxical situation, "From the centre, the university appears to be an anarchy, impossible to direct, let alone control. From the coalface, there is a stifling sense of not being trusted to make the smallest decisions." So, is there another model that combines the best elements of both models and therefore offers a greater likelihood of promoting effective university management? The Learning Organisation model deserves consideration (if for no other reason than that the terminology is more attractive than the over simplification of "rationality" and the oxymoron of "organised anarchy").
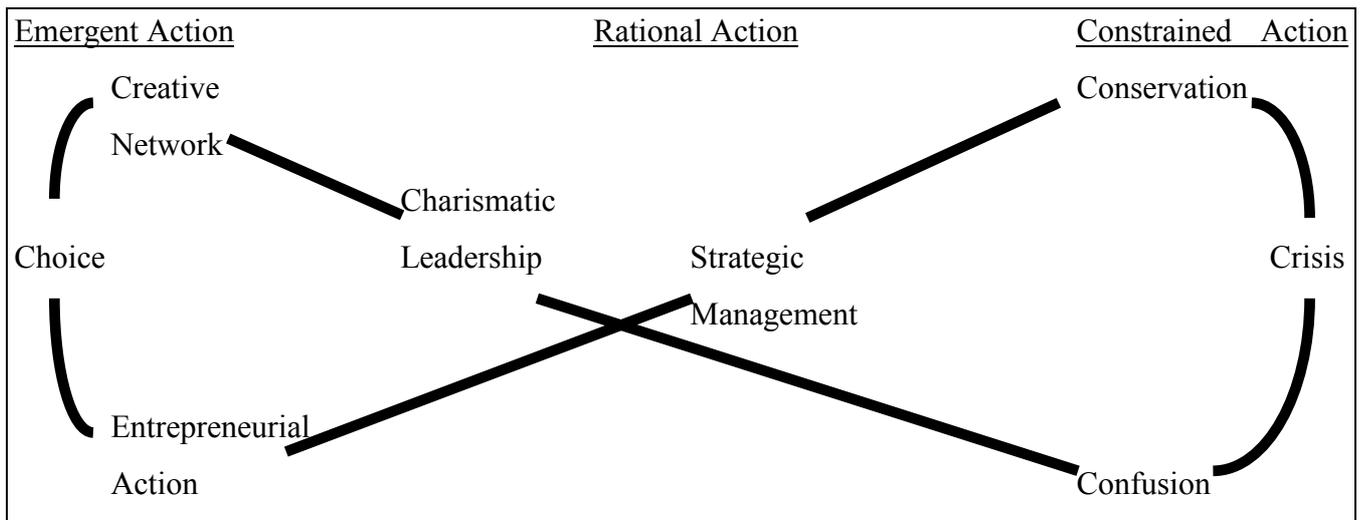
- Learning Organisation

The idea of a learning organisation has gained recent prominence because of the need for whole systems to adapt to rapidly changing environments (Marsick, 1997; Mulford, 1997). However, work in the area can be traced back some 25 years. Griener (1972) was among the earliest to speculate about the changes that occur in organisations as they get older, bigger, and find themselves in higher growth rates. Just over ten years later, Quinn and Cameron (1983) reviewed nine models of organisational life cycles from the literature, including Greiner's. They constructed a summary model of life cycle stages that integrates each of these nine models.

The behaviour of organisations can be predicted with changes following a predictable pattern that is sequential in nature. The summary model starts with "an *entrepreneurial stage* (early innovation, niche formation, creativity), [followed by] a *collectivity stage* (high cohesion, commitment), a *formalisation and control stage* (stability and institutionalization), and a *structure elaboration and adaptation stage* (domain expansion and decentralization)" (emphasis in original, Quinn & Cameron, 1983, p. 40).

Quinn and Cameron (1983) extend their analysis to demonstrate that the criteria used to evaluate an organisation's success will be different at each stage. In the entrepreneurial and collectivity stages the most important criteria for effectiveness include flexibility and resource acquisition and cohesiveness, morale and development of human resources. There is less emphasis on planning, goal-setting, and efficiency and information management, communications, stability and control. With the onset of the formalisation stage, however, there is a shift in evacuative criteria to the rational goal and internal management and control factors.

Twelve years on, Hurst (1995) has renewed interest in the topic of organisational growth by refining and extending the above work. He has developed a model of the process of organisational change consisting of two loops that intersect to form the shape of an infinity symbol. One loop is the conventional S-shaped life cycle (or performance, technical systems loop) of the Greiner (1972) and Quinn and Cameron (1983) school of thought. In its most succinct form this involves a progression from emergent to rational to constrained action, ie, from entrepreneurial action to strategic management to conservation (doing what we know and do best, sticking to the knitting). The new, reverse loop represents the process of renewal (or a learning, social systems loop of 'death' and 'reconception'). This loop also returns through constrained to 'rational' to emergent action, but this time the sequence involves crisis and confusion (the seeds of failure being contained in fruits of success), then values-based charismatic leadership (walking the talk, envisioning) and then a creative network (creating and nurturing contexts). From this point there is choice and then entrepreneurial action once again. The model, which is summarised in what follows, links both the rational and anarchy models for a potentially effective model of how universities can be better managed and thus improve.

Emergent Action   Rational Action   Constrained   Action

Creative   Conservation

Network   Charismatic

Choice   Leadership   Strategic   Crisis

Management

Entrepreneurial

Action   Confusion

A number of features of Hurst's (1995) model are worthy of elaboration in helping understand, and effectively act on, the changes university managers face. First, change is seen as continuous, although the pace and nature of it vary greatly. Second, renewal also requires destruction and is an ongoing process. Third, there are two forms of rational action, each taking the organisation in quite different directions. Strategic management in the performance loop is characterised by an instrumental, means-end rationality which leads eventually toward organisations that become tightly connected and constrained. Charismatic leadership in the learning loop, on the other hand, is values-based rationality - "action taken for its intrinsic worth in demonstrating deeply held beliefs about human relationships ... [and] develops loosely connected, creative networks from which new activities can emerge" (p. 104).

Fourth, university managers have to come to grips with both the structural and process, the rational and anarchic loops in real time, especially at the nexus of conflict, "where the two forms of rationality cross - where the demand to live our values clashes with the requirement for instrumental behavior" (Hurst, 1995, p. 167). It is where the "social vision of an egalitarian, participative community clashes with the need to run a technically rational, hierarchical organization" (p. 167). It is also where "the community may clash with individuality, as ambition vies with obligation; where cooperation meets competition; where the long run often trips over the short term" (p. 167).

And, finally, healthy university learning organisations should consist of patches at different stages of development. One can use the model "both to locate all the patches *at a moment in time* and to track the evolution of particular patches *over time* " (emphasis in original, Hurst, 1995, p. 105).

Of particular interest in the university manager's position in the renewal, or learning, loop. Hurst(1995) sees this position as analogous to that of a gardener:

... the gardener cannot make the plants grow; he or she can only create the optimum conditions under which the plants' natural self-organizing tendencies can function. The gardener has to *allow* them to grow.

This is why managers of the renewal process do not have to have any technical answers; they only have to understand the social contexts in which learning is possible. Thus, in the organizational renewal cycle, the emphasis is on *action that creates contexts for action*. On the learning loop, we have to *act our way into a better mode of thinking* . Logic is an output - an induction from successful action (emphasis in original, pp. 136-137).

All organisations learn, or they would not survive, but it is becoming increasingly clearer that those that are successful are proactive in what they do (Marsick, 1997). In brief, a learning organisation is "an aligned group, with the ability as a total system, to sense and interpret its changing environment, and to apply this shared knowledge in order to 1) continuously generate innovative products and services and 2) develop the capabilities of its people" (Marsick, 1997, p.2). What this definition recognises is that "individuals are critical to the creation of systems learning, but that everyone in a system does not have to learn everything" (Marsick, 1997, p.2).

The definition also recognises that systems need to capture learning, including ways to examine and make sense of the changing environment and generate or capture knowledge and information. However, it also means systems need to note that learning "cannot occur unless the system as a whole absorbs and utilises this learning so that it becomes shared, easily accessed, and productively utilised in service of the system's agreed-upon vision" (Marsick, 1997, p.2). To assist this to occur, university leaders need to model learning and to structure vision and strategies as opportunities for learning. They need to help the organisation develop a culture that exhibits collaboration, systems thinking, innovation, trust, and openness. Learning needs to be able to be discussed openly and shared across boundaries (Marsick, 1997).

The above models should help those in Australian universities better understand the intricacies involved in moving their organisation from where it is, to becoming an effective learning organisation. In so doing, they would see university managers recognising their main challenge as helping their organisation restructure its purpose and redefine its tasks in the face of a changing environment rather becoming more effective at the performance of a stable task in the light of stable purposes (Argyris & Schon, 1978). They should help target appropriate interventions to ensure more effective progression through the inevitable, sequential stages of development. In targeting interventions, recognition needs

to be given to the fact that actions at one stage may be inappropriate, or even counterproductive, at another stage. One such instance of this is rushing into strategic planning before there is evidence that the organisation has the ability to gather and utilise useful information.

Being effective as a learning organisation may, in fact, mean that a university recognises and understands such stages and can take the appropriate action without being 'bowled over' by the change that surrounds it. It may mean understanding that they will be evaluated differently depending on the stage they have reached. It may mean understanding the importance of balancing the rationality of the technical systems loop with the renewal involved in the social systems loop of organisational development. It may mean understanding the crucial need to link the university more closely with its wider environment, especially once it has managed to get its 'own house in order' and developed to one of the more 'mature' stages. And, it may even mean that effective university management involves being responsible without always being in control.

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Biography

Bill Mulford (Bill.Mulford@utas.edu.au) is an internationally recognised expert in the area of effective implementation of educational change, effectiveness and improvement. Has had 25 years of successful applied research experience including recent ARC funded projects. He has maintained a distinguished research and publication record despite a heavy administrative load. He has recently had a chapter on organisational learning and educational change accepted for the *International Handbook of Educational Change*. He is Director of the Leadership for Learning Centre at the University of Tasmania.

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