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ACADEMIC MIDDLE MANAGERS AND MANAGEMENT IN UNIVERSITY COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IN BELGIUM*

1. INTRODUCTION

Some years ago, Shattock (1999: 279) wrote with regard to the situation in the British universities: “under the present requirements of institutional accountability and financial constraint a university’s central authorities whether led by governing bodies or by vice-chancellors and other university offices are bound to act in a more managerialist and interventionist mode”. *Mutatis mutandis*, it is reasonable to assume that higher education in Belgium is facing similar problems. Indeed, this development is often seen as a consequence of neo-liberalism in society (Codd 2005: 200), and Belgium, lying in the heart of the European Union, is certainly not immune from the pressure of international ideas.

Until 1991, the universities were governed by the laws enacted in the 1970s, which had opened them to more democratic participation of all their internal stakeholders (De Wit and Verhoeven 2000). The Law of 1994 was very important for the university colleges for it moved in the direction of their recognition as institutions of higher education. So that these university colleges could be large enough to attain the new objectives, they were compelled to merge. At that time there were 163 colleges; that number has been reduced to only 22.

The question is whether the Flemish government through the laws of 1991 and 1994 had created a structure in which neo-liberalism (Apple 2001) could be applied and managerialism could develop. Although the government spoke about a radical extension of autonomy and responsibility in the educational sector, it did not withdraw entirely. The government wanted

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to stress some minimal goals (Van Heffen, Verhoeven and De Wit 1999). In the 1990s, we conducted a number of case studies of universities and university colleges (De Wit and Verhoeven 1999) concerning the relationship between higher education policy and the economy. To a certain extent, they applied more and more of the principles of managerialism, but the principles of a collegial organisation were nourished as well.

Recently, other actions have been taken by the government to create a better climate for managerialism. The principle of management by objectives is clearly supported. For instance, the institutions can obtain more support from the government when they present an 'educational development programme' and also when they establish 'innovation projects', though they have to be accepted by the government. Moreover, at present, the government is preparing a new system of financing higher education, in which a very important principle is that the institutions will be financed according to research output and the number of students (or, more specifically, the number of credits earned by the students). The more credits students earn, the higher the allocation for the institution. Thus, it is reasonable to take as a hypothesis that managerialism might well be part of the current management approach in higher education in Flanders in Belgium, not only among vice-chancellors and general directors, but also among the academic middle managers. Moreover, it could be assumed that, because of these new political steps, middle managers would be aware of the change in management style and apply the same principles. But before answering these questions I want to describe how managerialism is conceptualised in this chapter.

2. IN SEARCH OF MANAGERIALISM

Although the idea of increasing managerialism in institutions of higher education is widespread, it is not easy to describe clearly. The problem is that managerialism has many meanings. Before going into detail about the definition of managerialism, however, I want to reconstruct the basis of my choice. The picture of managerialism that emerged from some 15 papers and books was blurred. Two examples may give an idea of the conformity and the confusion in the literature concerning this concept but also of what might belong to managerialism. As a starting point, I take the book *The Higher Education Managerial Revolution?* (edited by Amaral, Meek and Larsen 2003). In the introduction to the book, Meek (2003: 8) links the concept of managerialism immediately with the concept of 'New Public Management' (NPM) (see also Salminen 2003: 55–56; Mok 1999: 118). Therefore, he refers to Keating (2001: 145–146) who links NPM to an economic logic and characterises this

phenomenon as follows: i) results should be obtained efficiently and the service should be of high quality; ii) management should be decentralised in order to bring decision making closer to the point of delivery of the services; iii) competition between the public and the private sector to better serve the clients should be enhanced; iv) the focus should be on cost-effective alternatives in a market system; and v) accountability for results should be paramount. Nevertheless, these principles were not used by the editors to force all of the contributors to the book into the same conceptual straitjacket. At the end of the book, Amaral, Fulton and Larsen (2003) conclude that most of the contributors accepted some common characteristics but did not agree on all of them. The following are mentioned: accountability based on performance, target setting, funding based on results, collegial leadership and decision making replaced by individual leadership and decision making, marketisation, commercialisation, bureaucratisation, appointment of business leaders and more external members to the central governing body, and a loss of professional autonomy for the academics and their accompanying deprofessionalisation. Still, they recognised the presence of characteristics linked to the old collegial type of governance.

Turning now to the first characteristic of managerialism, we note that it is clear that both definitions stress the interest of managerialist thinking in the performance of the organisation and of the managers. Managerialists want a task to be fulfilled *efficiently* and want to know whether the activity reaches a level of *effectiveness* prescribed by the actors. These ideas are shared by several other researchers (Saunderson 2002: 380; Mok 1999). Deem and Brehony (2005: 224), for instance, consider the ‘efficiency model’ as one of the four models British universities have gone through. The central idea is that the universities have to ‘do more with less’. Meek (2003: 8) contends that: “efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery will be achieved through the use of private sector management techniques, such as specifying service objectives and competition for customers, performance measurement, decentralisation of decision making and the use of markets to deliver services”. This means that, in such an organisation, collegiality is less important than it was and that the members of the organisation give much more attention to mission statements, output, appraisal, auditing and the like.

In addition to their concern for the efficiency and performance effectiveness of the organisation, managerialists are interested in the protection of the roads that have to be followed by the members of the organisation in order to attain their prescribed targets.

Therefore, they ask that special consideration be given to the process of *quality assurance*, a second characteristic of managerialism.

Codd (2005: 2001) distinguishes between quality control and quality assurance. Quality assurance is defined by Winch (1996: 10–11) as being “concerned with ensuring that the production processes are such that defective products are not made in the first place, so that the need for extensive quality control mechanisms at the end point of the production is not pressing”. In other words, quality assurance wants to prevent the output of education from being what was not targeted, that is, to prevent the learning outcomes of the students from being less than what was planned. Therefore, many authors (Deem and Brehony 2005; Santiago et al. 2006; Simkins 2000; Meek 2003; Fulton 2003; Gleeson and Shain 1999; Mok 1999) consider quality assurance to be an important instrument for effectively attaining institutional targets.

Quality assurance is not purposeless. Biesta (2004: 236) puts it this way: “accountability and its corollary quality assurance are the main instruments of the new managerialism”. Quality assurance not only serves the providers of education but also guarantees for all stakeholders that the education offered meets the standards. Managers of the institutions of higher education have to demonstrate that the money and instruments provided to offer education are being well used. In our present neo-liberal society, they have to be accountable (Deem and Brehony 2005; Santiago et al. 2006; Meek 2003; Fulton 2003; Gleeson and Shain 1999; Saunderson 2002; Codd 2005). This is the third characteristic of managerialism that was the subject of this research.

Like many other concepts, *accountability* appears in different forms. Vidovich and Slee (2001: 432) cite the characteristics presented by Corbett (1992) and Ball, Vincent and Radnor (1997). Corbett (1992) defines *upward* accountability as the accountability of public servants imposed by law and constitutions and also by the courts and administrative tribunals; *outward* accountability involves respect for client groups and other community stakeholders; *downward* accountability is provided by a manager to his subordinates; and *inward* accountability is the accountability of a person to his personal conscience. Ball, Vincent and Radnor (1997) mention market and managerial accountability and political accountability – the former is when actors justify what they do to their consumers; the latter is when a person has to answer for what he or she has done to an electorate.

With regard to the British educational system, Ranson (2003) distinguishes between professional accountability (late 1970s) and four other kinds arising from the neo-liberal era (commencing in the 1980s in the UK and later on the Continent). *Professional accountability* concerns the professional because of his or her specialist knowledge and is the subject of internal reports. Neo-liberalism provides four forms of accountability: first, *consumer accountability* requires that the responsible actors take market competition and the choices of consumers into account; second, *contract accountability* requires that schools are accountable for their costs and efficiency and that assessments are governed by technical efficiency and cost criteria; third, *performative accountability* requires schools to achieve national standards and targets as assessed by test scores and league tables (see also Tight 2000); and, fourth, *corporate accountability* makes schools accountable to a private person or corporation (such as a public-private partnership) that uses profit to measure policy success. Most of these different forms of accountability will be considered in this chapter (see below).

Finally, there is the concept of *decentralisation*. Keating (2001) stresses that decision making in NPM is brought closer to the consumers. Units closer to the consumers are given the right (or duty) to decide about the production of the services. The advantage is that this would enable the responses of the consumers to reach the production managers more easily than would otherwise be the case. Amaral, Fulton and Larsen (2003) speak in this context about the ‘individual leadership and decision making’ that is replacing traditional collegial forms of decision making in institutions of higher education. For many scholars, decentralisation is an element of the higher education policy in their country. This is the case, for instance, in Finland (Salminen 2003: 64), Norway (Larsen 2003: 76; De Boer 2003: 104), Portugal (Santiago et al. 2006: 221) and the UK (Fulton 2003: 160), although this does not mean that their institutions of higher education are governed by pure managerialism.

Although decentralisation is seen by many scholars to be part of managerialism, the principle as such is seen by Meek (2003: 9) as being opposed to the rationalisation principle in NPM. Indeed, if an organisation wants to attain its targets, it may well be necessary to have a decision-making unit that can oversee all the steps taken by the lower-level units. Nevertheless, many believe that decentralisation with power and authority given to the subordinate units can diminish bureaucracy and hence improve production. Moreover,

granting responsibility to the lower units might make them more accountable. Whether these principles really contribute to higher performance levels still needs to be confirmed.

Many descriptions of managerialism allude to the pejorative aspects of this phenomenon, although many practices labelled 'managerialism' could also be considered as good management. Therefore the label 'managerialism' seems to be used to refer to extreme forms of self-determination, quality assurance or other symptoms of managerialism. Nevertheless, the literature does not offer guidance on how to draw a clear line between good management and managerialism.

3. DO MIDDLE MANAGERS OF INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION RECOGNISE CHARACTERISTICS OF MANAGERIALISM?

3.1. Presentation of the Questions and Research Design

Some characteristics of managerialism in institutions of higher education were already present in the 1990s (De Wit and Verhoeven 1999). The question to be answered here is: Can similar characteristics be identified among middle managers at present? The definition I use is this: managerialism is a style of management that is focused on efficiency, effectiveness, quality assurance, decentralisation of decision making, and accountability. Whether middle managers actually adhere to these principles would best be determined by observation, but this would have been impossible within the time limit set for this chapter so I opted for a web-based survey. Therefore, this report will not be about behaviour but rather about the descriptions of some aspects of managerialism as presented by middle managers in the questionnaire.

The dependent variable of this project was the opinions of these middle managers on efficiency, quality assurance, decentralisation and accountability of management. We also hoped to be able to form an idea of the efficiency of management as it was experienced by these managers, the quality assurance of the institutions of higher education, the accountability, and decentralisation of decision making. This aspect of the study offers a picture of some managerialist characteristics as experienced by the middle managers. All of the items were analysed using principal component analysis in order to discern communality among the items. Where appropriate, a Likert scale was developed.

Items were generated based on previous research. In order to capture something of the aversion towards the extreme forms of managerialism, some items requested comparisons between forms of managerialism and good management at odds with managerialism. Some examples: “I find satisfaction of students more important than an efficient organisation” (table 3); “I think we should spend more time on offering good teaching than on organising quality assurance” (table 4). The downside of this approach is that items did not always fit into a scale.

The independent variables were taken to be the age of the respondents, their diplomas, the field of study in which the diplomas were earned, the fields they managed, the position of the manager, the experience as a manager, the time spent managing, the size of the institution, the specific unit managed, the management training of the manager, and the style of decision making in the organisation.

This chapter will concentrate on the opinions of the middle managers and whether there is a difference in these opinions in terms of position and institutional affiliation: whether the manager was associated with a university or a university college.

Who participated in the web-based questionnaire and on the basis of which criteria were they chosen? Both universities and university colleges were investigated. The largest four of the six universities were selected. They accounted for 59,940 students out of 62,314. From the 22 university colleges, 11 were selected on the basis of information provided by previous research (Devos et al. 2001; Verhoeven et al. 2002). The selection of the colleges was based on one important criterion: the legal basis of the colleges, which determines the mode of governance of the colleges. University colleges in Flanders may be established by the government (public colleges), private bodies (private colleges) and the provinces (provincial colleges). The largest group of the three are the private colleges. In the sample, three public colleges, two provincial and six private colleges were selected. At the time, they accounted for 60,787 of the 106,014 students enrolled in university colleges in Flanders.

We defined the population in the university colleges as all the heads of departments and all the programme coordinators. A head of a department runs a department in which more than one programme may be organised; the programme coordinator manages a programme. In general, it may be said that the head of a department manages larger units than a coordinator.

Almost 60% of the coordinators have no staff to support them, while all heads of departments have support staff. While 72% of the heads of departments spend more than 75% of their time on management, the coordinators devote only 18% to it. In the universities, the population was composed of all the deans, heads of departments, programme coordinators and directors of research of most of the faculties.[†] Although the title of dean is different from the head of department of a university college, there are many similarities between them. Like the head of department in a university college, a dean is responsible in a university faculty for the organisation of teaching and research. Unlike the heads of college departments, however, only one out of the 19 deans spent more than 75% of their time on management. They devoted much time to teaching and research. In most of the universities, a faculty, led by a dean, is composed of different departments or ‘*vakgroepen*’ (sections), and these two bodies are often split up into several research units. Because the members of departments or sections not only do research but also teach, in the four universities special organisational units are provided for the organisation of teaching. All of them were invited to respond to the web-based questionnaire. The collection of data occurred during the period 1–21 March 2007. Compared with other research, the response rate was good. Here are the results.

Table 1. Response percentages

	<i>Number of managers receiving a questionnaire</i>	<i>Number of answers</i>	<i>Response percentage</i>
University colleges	349	247	71%
Universities	584	362	62%
Total	933	609	65%

The comparison of percentages for each of the 15 institutions responding to the questionnaire and the percentage of each institution in the sample yielded no substantial deviances ($\chi^2 = 6.7$; $df = 14$; $p = .946$). Only one institution had a deviation of more than 1%.

3.2. Vision on Some Aspects of Managerialism

One of the characteristics of managerialism is decentralisation: middle managers want the right to decide important parts of decision making themselves (Amaral, Fulton and Larsen 2003). This right certainly was highly appreciated among academic middle managers. On a scale of one to five on most of the indicators (see table 2), these managers scored almost 4. It

[†] The following study areas were excluded from this research: social and political sciences, social health sciences, medicine, dentistry, veterinary medicine, applied sciences (engineering) and applied biological sciences (bio-engineering).

is also interesting to note that most of the managers were convinced that they needed the support of their colleagues in order to achieve their targets (score 4.39). Only one indicator scored lower: they were not sure whether the content of a programme should be determined independently by the provider. Deliberation was considered important in the construction of a programme.

Table 2. Preference for personal decision making by managers

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std dev</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Individual decision making ¹	598	3.98	0.85	1	5
1. "I find it important that a researcher be able to choose his research himself."	590	3.95	0.88	1	5
2. "I find it important that the lecturer himself be able to choose what he wants to teach."	595	3.02	1.11	1	5
3. "I find it important that decisions be supported by those who have to fulfil them."	596	4.39	0.72	1	5

¹Individual decision making or autonomy constitutes a variable composed of four items. For example, "I find it important to decide as much as possible about spending the budget of my unit". Three similar items were presented: one concerning human resource management, one concerning the content of research, and one concerning the content of teaching (Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$).

Since the universities and university colleges differed in their development and traditions, it might be expected that decision making among their managers would also differ. However, in both the universities and university colleges, we see that the middle managers preferred individual decision making just as much (4.0 and 3.9, respectively) and are equally convinced that it is important that decisions be supported by those who have to implement them (4.4 and 4.4, respectively). But there are differences. The middle managers in the universities (score: 4.2) supported much more the idea that researchers should be able to choose their research topics than did their colleagues in the university colleges (score: 3.6) ($t(588) = -7.5$; $p < .0001$). Moreover, not only did the middle managers not want to give the lecturers total freedom to determine the content of their courses, but also this stance was stronger in the university colleges (score: 2.7) than it was in universities (score: 3.3) ($t(593) = -6.9$; $p < .0001$).

Since the positions of middle managers in the university colleges and universities differ, it could be expected that different positions would have different expectations as far as independence of decision making about the spending of the budget for research and teaching are concerned. Using variance analysis, we expected to see the differences among the scores on the scale of autonomy and three other items. However, in the university colleges, the

scores on the four variables in table 2 for the heads of departments, the programme coordinators, and other middle managers are almost the same.

This picture is different for the universities. The different managers do not share the same opinion about individual-based decision making ($F(4,336) = 4.51$; $p = .002$). The scores are between 3.76 and 4.27. The Tukey test shows that the heads of departments (score: 3.77) are less keen on individual autonomy in decision making than the research directors (score: 4.19). The data also show that the middle managers in the universities have a different opinion about the thesis that teachers should have the right to decide for themselves about the content of their teaching ($F(4,332) = 2.68$; $p = .03$), but the differences are rather small.

Let us turn now to the second characteristic of managerialism: the efficiency of the functioning of an organisation. An efficient organisation is considered to be very important for attaining targets. In order to know whether this was an important issue for middle managers, we asked them four questions. These four questions could not be used to construct a scale. The mean scores show that efficiency is not the most important goal for middle managers. Does this mean that these managers are reluctant to be efficient? I think this is uncertain. Each item asked the respondent to make a comparison between efficiency and the feeling of satisfaction among students or lecturers. The answers show that these managers were still very sensitive to the attitudes of the students and lecturers. Therefore, it is reasonable to think that efficiency was assigned a rather low score. Only one item scored higher than three on a five-point scale. On all other items, efficiency was scored less than the middle of the continuum.

The fourth item in table 3 is also interesting: the middle managers seem to be confused about their choice of a collegial or a professional relationship with the members of their unit. In the university colleges, 38% of the managers chose a professional relationship, but in the universities only 28% chose it. The managers of the university colleges (score: 3.1 out of 5) preferred significantly more a professional relationship than did the managers of the universities (score: 2.9) ($t(589) = 2.53$; $p = .012$). It could be suggested that the merging of the university colleges widened the distance between the managers and teachers compared with that in the universities. The three other items in table 3 do not present significant differences between the scores of the university managers and those of the university college managers. Even the scores of the different types of decision makers in the universities and

university colleges are not significantly different for the first three items in table 3. Only item 4 shows a different opinion among the different types of decision makers in the university colleges ($F(2,233) = 3.53$; $p = .03$). The heads of departments (score: 3.53) preferred more professional relations over collegial relations than did the programme coordinators (score: 2.98). This preference of the heads of departments for a professional relationship with the lecturers may be a consequence of the large groups of lecturers in the departments and of the merging of the departments.

Table 3. Attitude towards the efficiency of the organisation

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std dev</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
1. "I find satisfaction of students more important than an efficient organisation." ^{1*}	596	2.75	0.95	1	5
2. "I find the satisfaction of lecturers more important than achieving the targets of our organisation." [*]	597	3.26	0.91	1	5
3. "I prefer a delay in achieving some targets of our organisation above unsatisfactory lecturers." [*]	595	2.19	0.83	1	5
4. "For myself, I find a professional relation with the lecturers more important than a collegial relationship."	591	2.98	1.01	1	5

¹When an item in the questionnaire was negatively phrased, the scores changed. The mean score in the table is the expression of the new scale going from one to five, where five expresses the highest valuation of efficiency.

Managerialism is also characterised by the concern shown to quality assurance. This certainly became part of the management attitude of the decision makers in the universities and university colleges. Item 2 in table 4 gives a score of 4.15 out of 5. However, quality assurance did not receive an absolute value, which is illustrated by item 3 in table 4. The score expressing an option for quality assurance if the manager has to choose between quality assurance and other things is only 3.27 out of 5. When we asked managers to choose between quality assurance and preparing good teaching, the score in favour of quality assurance is even less (score: 2.3). Moreover, these managers seemed to believe that quality assurance was not commensurate with the amount of effort of all those involved in achieving it. Of course, these critical reflections contributed to the lower general score for quality assurance (score: 3.1).

Quality assurance was appreciated more in the university colleges (score: 3.3 of 5) than in the universities (score: 3) ($t(600) = 4.339$; $p < .0001$). The different categories of the decision makers in the universities had no different appreciation of quality assurance ($F(4,337) = 1.5$; $p = .20$). For the university colleges, the situation is different ($F(2,238) = 5.22$, $p = .006$). The heads of departments (score: 3.49 out of 5) were more in favour of quality assurance than were the programme coordinators (score: 3.15).

Table 4. Attitude towards quality assurance

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std dev</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
1. "I think we should spend more time on offering good teaching than on organising quality assurance."*	597	2.30	1.06	1	5
2. "I find it important to pay constant attention to the assurance of the quality of the work of this unit."	598	4.15	0.77	1	5
3. "If I have to choose among my obligations, I surely will choose to assure the quality."	592	3.27	0.94	1	5
4. "The organisation of quality assurance demands more of the members of this organisation than it yields benefits."*	593	2.70	1.12	1	5
Total quality assurance ^o (four items; Cronbach's $\alpha = .67$)	602	3.10	0.71	1	4.75

^oWhen some of the items in a scale were not answered by some respondents, the score of the scale was calculated using all answered items (with a minimum of two).

Accountability can take on different forms (see above). To measure the attitude towards accountability, we used three items (see table 5). Principal component analysis did not show evidence of a relationship between the three items. However, the scores in table 5 show that the managers were relatively eager to be informed about the work of their colleagues (score: 3.8) and they also agreed that they had to show they were doing their jobs properly (score: 3.91). However, they also realised that accountability might be an instrument only for obtaining information about such things as teaching behaviour. If this is the case, they valued much more collaboration between the lecturers than they valued systems of assessment (score: 2.21).

The attitude towards accountability among middle managers in the universities and in the university colleges was almost the same. On only one item did the opinions differ. In the university colleges (score: 3.91) more than in the universities (score: 3.72) ($t(594) = 2.37$; $p = .018$), the managers stressed that the lecturer must be able to account for his or her work at any time (item 2 in table 5).

Measured by using the three items in table 5, the different managerial positions in the universities seem to share the same attitude towards accountability, except for item 2 in table 5 ($F(4,334) = 2.61$; $p = .04$), but the differences are small. In the university colleges, there were different opinions concerning item 1 in table 5 among the different positions ($F(2,237)$

= 4.47; $p = .013$). The **rest** category[‡] (score: 2.6 out of 5) scored higher than the course coordinators' (score: 2.1). As far as the other items are concerned, there is no significant difference between the opinions of the different decision makers in the university colleges.

Table 5. Attitude towards accountability

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std dev</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
1. "Good cooperation between lecturers is more important than a good system for lecturers to give account of their work (e.g. SET)."*	597	2.21	0.96	1	5
2. "A lecturer has to account for his or her work at all times."	596	3.80	0.98	1	5
3. "Each manager has to account for his or her work to his or her colleagues."	598	3.91	0.87	1	5

One item that was not discussed in one of the previous instruments is the item referring to students as clients. Asked to give their opinion about the statement: "I find it important that students be seen as clients", middle managers of university colleges scored 3.84 out of 5, whereas their colleagues in the universities scored 2.89 ($t(594) = 9.04$; $p < .0001$) (see also Simkins 2000: 321; Gleeson and Shain 1999: 467; Biesta 2004: 235). The university colleges seem to be more open to managerialist terminology than are the universities. Nevertheless, this opinion is not shared by the different decision makers by position ($F(2,236) = 3.54$; $p = .03$). Heads of departments (score: 4 out of 5) and programme coordinators (score: 3.9) are more apt to use this terminology than the residual category (score: 3.3). In the universities, the pattern is different ($F(4,333) = 2.31$; $p = .06$). No significant differences between the positions became visible.

3.2.1. Summary

Academic middle managers are pretty positive towards decentralisation, quality assurance and accountability. Although they scored low on the scale of efficiency, we doubt that this score expresses their attitude towards management efficiency. Indeed, efficiency was in each item compared with other valuable principles. Middle managers of universities and university colleges appreciate three characteristics (individual decision making, efficiency and accountability) almost equally, but differ in opinion about quality assurance. This could be the consequence of the different history and time of the establishment of quality assurance systems in universities and university colleges. Sometimes different opinions of the four

[‡] This category is composed of the managers who did not fit in one of the two other categories (heads of departments or programme coordinators). They may be assistant heads of departments, quality assurance officers, and the like.

characteristics of managerialism are expressed by those belonging to the different management positions (e.g. in universities: individual decision making; in university colleges: efficiency, quality assurance). But, sometimes, opinions are shared amongst the different management positions (e.g. in university colleges: individual decision making; in universities: quality assurance).

3.3. Some Forms of Managerialist Performance

Apart from the study of the attitude of middle managers towards some characteristics of managerialism, it is interesting to examine the perception of the fulfilment of these characteristics of managerialism by the different middle managers. I will now provide an overview of the perception of managerial performance by the middle managers. The following characteristics will be discussed in turn: i) decentralisation of decision making; ii) efficiency of management; iii) quality assurance; and iv) accountability.

3.3.1. Decentralisation of Decision Making

It was noted above that middle managers in both universities and university colleges are eager to make decisions themselves and that they also believe in the usefulness of decision making being carried out as close as possible to the person who has to perform the task. The question now is whether middle managers felt that they could decide many issues by themselves.

To get a picture of the decision-making process, the following questions were asked:

1. In your institution, what authorities are in your opinion the most important *for making policy proposals* for the financial and material policy of your unit (e.g. the budget)?
2. Apart from the board, the general council, or the academic council, what authorities in your institution have in your opinion a *significant influence on the decisions* made in relation to the financial and material policy of your unit (e.g. the budget)?
3. What authorities in your institution are in your opinion the most important for *monitoring the execution of the decisions* concerning the financial and material policy of your unit (e.g. the budget)?

The same questions were asked concerning education policy, human resource management and research policy. The respondents could give the following answers: i) a higher council than the council I am chairing or a higher authority; ii) myself; iii) the council of my unit; iv)

lower situated councils or authorities; v) I don't know; and vi) not applicable. Based on this information, 16 scales were constructed. Each scale expresses the intensity of the involvement of a particular authority in the chain of decision making. For instance, the scale of SelfEduc (see table 6) offers a score between 0 and 3. The mean score for SelfEduc is 0.76, which means that, according to the respondents, their personal influence on decision making concerning education policy is low. The majority of the respondents believed that the decision-making process for education policy can be found in councils or authorities situated higher than themselves (HighEduc = 1.5). For the other variables see table 6.

Table 6. Opinion about the involvement in the decision-making process of the different levels of management (score from 0 to 3) (N = 609)¹

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std dev</i>
HighEduc: ² decisions about education policy in the hands of a higher authority (a)	1.50	1.14
HighFin: decisions about financial and material policy in the hands of a higher authority (b)	1.75	1.11
HighPers: decisions about HRM in the hands of a higher authority (c)	1.75	1.14
HighRes: decisions about research policy in the hands of a higher authority	0.97	1.12
SameEduc: ³ decisions about education policy in the hands of council of respondent	1.41	1.17
SameFin: decisions about financial and material policy in the hands of council of respondent	0.97	1.07
SamePers: decisions about HRM in the hands of council of respondent	1.03	1.14
SameRes: decisions about research policy in the hands of council of respondent	1.22	1.25
SelfEduc: ⁴ decisions about education policy in the hands of respondent (a)	0.76	1.07
SelfFin: decisions about financial and material policy in the hands of respondent (b)	0.75	1.04
SelfPers: decisions about HRM in the hands of respondent (c)	0.81	1.11
SelfRes: decisions about research policy in the hands of respondent	0.89	1.18
LowEduc: decisions about education policy in the hands of a lower authority ⁵	0.21	0.61
LowFin: decisions about financial and material policy in the hands of a lower authority	0.11	0.40
LowPers: decisions about HRM in the hands of a lower authority	0.10	0.42
LowRes: decisions about research policy in the hands of a lower authority	0.30	0.80

¹The scores of the scales marked with a, b, and c differ significantly ($p < .001$) from each other.

²Cronbach's alphas for the 4 High scales are: .65, .63, .68 and .73, respectively.

³Cronbach's alphas for the 4 Same scales are: .69, .65, .73 and .81, respectively.

⁴Cronbach's alphas for the Self scales are: .77, .73, .79 and .83, respectively.

⁵Cronbach's alphas for the Low scales are: .72, .51, .77 and .87, respectively.

Table 6 shows that middle managers in higher education institutions experienced a hierarchical structure. The lower authorities were rarely mentioned as significant authorities in the decision-making process. The general pattern is that the higher the authority, the more decision-making power it has. There is one exception: as far as decision making about research policy is concerned, we find the highest score (1.22) in the council of the respondent and not in the hands of the respondent herself or himself or a higher authority. Moreover, higher authorities (score: 0.97) do not score significantly higher than the respondent (score: 0.89) ($t(608) = 1.12$; $p = .63$). I will return to this issue later.

When the results from university college respondents and university respondents are compared, a similar pattern emerges. Hierarchy is clearly present in both types of institutions. Self-determination is generally weaker than the determination by the council chaired by the respondent or by a higher authority. Nevertheless, there are two exceptions. First, in university colleges, the score for HighEduc (1.25) is not remarkably higher than the score of SelfEduc (1.15) ($t(246) = .994$; $p = .321$), but both scores are less than the score of SameEduc (1.84). Concerning education policy, the university college middle managers seem to position decision making more in the councils they chair. In the next step of this analysis, it will be shown which council is important for the decision-making process. Second, in the universities, research policy was more determined by the respondent (score: 1.01) and even more by his or her own council (score: 1.26) than by higher authorities (score: 0.75) ($t(361) = -3.59$; $p = .002$). In the university colleges, the scores for decision making about research policy are 0.71, 1.17 and 1.29, respectively. These scores refer to a widely spread principle that research is centrally organised in university colleges.

In relation to decision making in financial and material policy, the scores for SelfFin (UC = 0.72; U = 0.77) and for SameFin (UC = 1.00; U = 0.95) are very close. Decision making about financial and material policy seems to occur more by higher authorities in the university colleges (score: 1.92) than in the universities (score: 1.63) ($t(607) = 3.194$; $p = .002$).

The last question we want to answer is whether the different positions in the university colleges and in the universities have different perceptions of the authorities involved in decision making with respect to different types of institutional policy. The heads of departments, programme coordinators and the residual category of the *university colleges* shared a similar opinion about their significance in relation to education policy ($p = .20$) and research policy ($p = .392$) but had different opinions about their position in relation to financial and material policy ($p < .0001$) and human resource management ($p < .0001$). Financial and material policy was perceived by the heads of departments (score: 1.57) and the residual category (score: 1.23) more as a domain where they made the decisions themselves in comparison with the programme coordinators (score: 0.40). Human resource management is also seen much more by the heads of the departments (score: 1.57) to be their domain than by the programme coordinators (score is 0.78).

The heads of departments, programme coordinators, and the others have almost the same opinion about the significance of their own councils for research policy in the university colleges, but they have different opinions about the significance of the councils of their units in relation to education policy ($p = .003$), human resource management ($p < .0001$) and material and financial policy ($p < .0001$). The heads of departments (score: 2.24) perceived education policy to be more the domain of the departmental council than did the programme coordinators (score: 1.66). The data show the same relationship for financial and material policy (the scores are, respectively, 1.75 and 0.73) and for human resource management (1.86 and 0.74, respectively).

Looking at the data of those who thought that a higher authority made the decisions, the figures show that the heads of departments were convinced that decisions are taken by themselves or by the department council while the coordinators (HighEduc = 1.47; HighFin = 2.21; HighPers = 2.07; HighRes = 1.42) placed the authority for decision making concerning the four domains in the hands of a higher authority.

Variance analysis suggests that the five different positions in the *universities* produce different opinions about the impact on decision making in the four domains. Close analysis of the data revealed significant differences with regard to financial and material policy and research policy. The research directors (score: .96) perceived that they had a greater impact than did programme coordinators (score: 0.28) in financial and material policy ($F(4,339) = 3.99$; $p = .004$). The same phenomenon is apparent in the realm of research policy ($F(4,339) = 6.37$; $p < .001$); the scores being 1.4 for the research directors, 0.5 for the deans, 0.8 for the department heads, and 0.7 for the programme coordinators.

A similar pattern was found in relation to the opinion of the impact of the related councils of the different decision makers on decision making. In relation to education policy, the related council of the respondent scored significantly lower among the research directors (score: 0.76) than among the deans (score: 1.79), heads of departments (score: 1.4) or programme coordinators (score = 1.6). The scores have almost a similar pattern for financial and material policy (0.75, 1.47 and 1.25, respectively) and human resource management (0.76, 1.63 and 1.41, respectively). This is not the case for research policy. The research directors (score: 1.21) scored lower only than the heads of departments or sections (score: 1.81).

Higher authorities have a different impact on the education policy and research policy according to the different decision makers in universities. These middle managers share their opinion about the impact of higher authorities on financial and material policy and human resource management. The faculty and/or department councils have an important impact according to the heads of departments (score: 1.73) and the research directors (score: 1.86) on education policy. Both of these scores are significantly higher than the score given by the deans (score: 0.95) to higher councils. In relation to research policy, the deans (score: 1.37) gave importance to higher authorities. Their score is much higher than that of research directors (score: 0.6) and programme coordinators (score: 0.56). It is possible that the deans, because of their central position, pay more attention to university research policy while the lower ranks devise their research policy themselves.

3.3.1.1. Summary

In university colleges and universities, middle managers experience a hierarchical structure. The higher the authority, the more decision-making power it has. This is not so for decision making about research: the council of the respondent is the most important decision maker. In spite of some differences, this pattern of decision making is found equally in universities and university colleges, but it might be different depending on the subject of decision making. For instance, decision making about research in universities is mainly the prerogative of the council of the respondent, but in university colleges this is more the field of a higher authority. The opinions of the different actors in universities and university colleges with respect to most of the influential decision makers varied according to area of decision making.

3.3.2. Efficient Management

Managerialism includes efficient behaviour by the members of an organisation. Eight items were used to find a common indicator for efficient behaviour. Principal component analysis showed that only two items could measure the same dimension (Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$) and, although principal component analysis suggested that items 2, 4, 5 and 6 in table 7 could give an indicator for efficient behaviour, Cronbach's α was too small (.51) to use it as such. Thus, I will discuss the items separately.

The first variable refers to deliberation and decision making and is founded on two items. The first one expresses the conviction of the respondent that deliberation is efficient in his or her unit; the second item refers to the opinion of the respondent that the members in his or her

unit arrive efficiently at a common decision. Most of the middle managers think that decision making in their unit happens quite efficiently (score: 4.02), but this conviction is more visible in the universities (score: 4.11) than in the university colleges (score: 3.90) ($t(593) = -3.302$; $p = .001$). Among the middle managers in the universities and university colleges, the opinion about efficient deliberation and decision making was no different. The deans, heads of departments, etc. seem to be equally convinced about the efficiency of these processes.

Table 7. Self-assessment of the efficiency of managerial action

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std dev</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
1. "In my unit, quality assurance is not efficiently organised."*	579	3.69	0.88	1	5
2. "In my unit, we don't have the instruments to manage the human resources efficiently."*	569	2.36	1.14	1	5
3. "In my unit, we can apply a financial policy efficiently."	563	3.09	1.13	1	5
4. "In my unit we can organise education efficiently."	579	3.78	0.92	1	5
5. "In my unit we can't organise research efficiently."*	561	3.47	1.13	1	5
6. "In my unit we can organise social services efficiently."	563	3.40	1.00	1	5

*When an item in the questionnaire was negatively phrased, the scores changed. The mean score in the table is the expression of the new scale going from one to five, where five expresses the highest valuation of efficiency.

Less positive is the self-assessment of the efficiency of management action as shown in table 7. The scores do not rise above 3.78 out of 5, and the lowest score is 2.36, which indicates that human resource management is a problem for quite a few of the academic middle managers. In the university colleges, 57% admitted that this was a problem, and at the universities 55% of the managers shared this opinion. In this questionnaire, the respondents were not asked about the reason for their responses, but it is generally recognised that universities and university colleges complain about a shortage of personnel (Verhoeven, Van Petegem and Dom 2000).

The managers of universities and university colleges shared almost the same opinion concerning items 1, 2 and 4 in table 7 but not for items 3, 5 and 6. The score of the university managers (score: 3.2) on item 3 is significantly higher than the score of managers of university colleges (score: 2.96) ($t(561) = -2.061$; $p = .04$). This confirms the constantly recurring complaints of the university colleges that their funding is insufficient. The figures for item 5 in table 7 also confirm that there was more doubt among the managers of the university colleges (score: 3.04) than of those in the universities (score: 3.75) ($t(559) = -7.527$; $p < .0001$) concerning the organisation of scientific research. The same critical standpoint is more pronounced with regard to the delivery of social services: the managers of

the university colleges scored lower (score: 3.27 out of 5) on this item than did those of the universities (score: 3.55) ($t(561) = -3.297$; $p = .001$).

It could be expected that the different positions occupied by the managers in the two kinds of institutions would be the determinant of different opinions about the efficiency of their respective units. This was not so in the universities, but opinions in the university colleges concerning some of the items in table 7 did differ. The reactions to item 2 in table 7 depended on the position of the respondent ($F(2,228) = 11.9$; $p < .0001$). The programme coordinators (score: 2.16) were more concerned with the instruments for efficiently managing human resources than were the heads of departments (score: 2.92) and the residual category (score: 2.9). Opinions also differed about the possibility of having an efficient financial policy (item 3 in table 7) ($F(2,212) = 11.94$; $p < .0001$). The heads of departments (score: 3.33) and the residual category (score: 3.7) had more confidence in the possibility of having an efficient financial policy than did the programme coordinators (score: 2.72). The last item that shows different opinions among the different positions in the university colleges is item 5 ($F(2,208) = 4.47$; $p = .013$). Research has not been an important target of the university colleges. Recently, the government pushed them more in that direction,[§] but a large group of these managers think that they do not have the instruments to organise research efficiently. This is more the case among the programme coordinators (score: 2.88), then among the residual category (score: 3.55). The opinion of the heads of departments did not differ significantly from the opinion of the programme coordinators or from that of the residual category.

3.3.2.1. Summary

Middle managers believe that decision making is rather efficient and this belief is stronger in universities than in university colleges. They complain the most about instruments to manage human resources efficiently and this is equally so in universities and university colleges. These managers are more positive about the efficiency of the organisation of quality assurance and education, an opinion shared in universities and university colleges alike. They are more critical about the efficiency of financial policy, the organisation of research and social services. Managers of university colleges are less positive concerning the three last fields of policy than those of universities. In universities, deans, chairpersons of departments

[§] About 12% of the managers of the university colleges did not answer this question.

and others share the same opinion about efficiency. In university colleges, actors evaluate the efficiency differently depending on the field of policy.

3.3.3. Quality Assurance

Although quality assurance has long been an obligatory part of university and college management, it is not highly appreciated by the middle managers, at least if we let the managers chose between quality assurance and other important purposes. However, when we asked them whether they found it important to pay constant attention to quality assurance of their units, the score is quite high (4.15 out of 5). Thus, quality assurance was an important issue for these middle managers. There is not only a positive attitude towards quality assurance but also there are indicators that it should be very well organised, and the different parts of the organisation positively evaluated. In the web-based questionnaire, nine questions concerning the organisation of quality assurance and organisational evaluation were asked. Principal component analysis detected two dimensions. In table 8, we can see that the respondents considered that the functioning of quality assurance is well organised (score: 3.67), but they were more reserved with respect to the consequences of the current quality assurance system (score: 3.21).

Table 8. Assessment of quality assurance functioning and of the consequences of quality assurance¹

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std dev</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
Quality assurance functioning ^o	587	3.67	0.73	1.00	5
Quality assurance consequences ^o	585	3.21	0.67	1.33	5

¹Quality assurance (QA) functioning (Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$) is composed of four items: 1. In my unit, QA is well organised; 2. Every member of my unit is involved in QA; 3. In my unit, action is regularly taken to assure quality; 4. In my unit, attention is paid to the measurements of QA. QA consequences (Cronbach's $\alpha = .63$) are composed of five items: 1. The QA of my unit puts a lot of pressure on some members;* 2. The QA of my unit needs revision;* 3. The QA of my unit is insufficient to assure the quality of teaching;* 4. The QA assures sufficiently the quality of research of my unit; 5. The QA of my unit is too demanding on the members of my unit in comparison with the benefits of QA.* The number of respondents who responded to these five items was rather low. QA might be organised on the level of the faculty, the department or a smaller unit. A number of respondents thought that these questions were not applicable to their situation. Because research does not belong to the tradition of the university colleges, about 19% of the middle managers of these colleges considered item 4 as not being applicable to their situation.

^oWhen some of the items in a scale were not answered by some respondents, the score of the scale was calculated using all answered items (with a minimum of two).

In the university colleges, the middle managers (score: 3.74) identified more actions that protect quality than did their colleagues in the universities (score: 3.62) ($t(585) = 1.861$; $p = .06$). But two items of the quality assurance functioning index are very interesting in this respect. About 85% of the middle managers of university colleges agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that steps are regularly taken in their units to assure quality. In the universities, this figure is only 61%. Paying attention to the measurements of quality

assurance functioning, item 4 is supported in the university colleges by about 70% of middle managers, while the figure is only 59% in the universities.

The consequences of quality assurance were appreciated more positively by university middle managers (score: 3.29) than by those in the university colleges (score: 3.10) ($t(583) = -3.415$; $p = .0007$). Two items show a big difference between the opinion of the middle managers in the universities and of those in the university colleges. About 57% of middle managers in the university colleges agree or strongly agree that quality assurance generates a great deal of pressure for some of their unit members (item 1), while this figure is 44% in the universities. In the universities, about 64% of middle managers believe that the current quality assurance is satisfactory for guaranteeing the quality of research; in the university colleges the figure is no more than 33%. The latter figure is a consequence of the growing interest in research in the university colleges.

In the university colleges the heads of departments, programme coordinators and the residual category obviously share similar views on the application of quality assurance ($F(2,237) = 2.44$; $p = .09$). This is not the case as far as the consequences are concerned ($F(2,236) = 7.57$; $p = .0007$). The heads of departments (score: 3.29) and the residual category (score: 3.44) were more positive towards the consequences of quality assurance than were the programme coordinators (score: 2.99). In universities, research directors (score: 3.51) believe less in the good functioning of quality assurance than programme coordinators do (score: 3.92) ($F(4,323) = 3.66$; $p = .006$).

3.3.3.1. Summary

Although the functioning of quality assurance got a positive score, academic middle managers believe that quality assurance can be improved, and this opinion is stronger in university colleges than in universities.

3.3.4. Accountability

In section 2, it was stressed that accountability could be linked to different stakeholders. Therefore, we presented to the respondents 10 items in which different stakeholders had a function. Principal component analysis generated three dimensions (see table 9).

Table 9. Assessment of the instruments to measure accountability, expectations towards lecturers concerning accountability, and concerns about the accountability of the unit

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std dev</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
SatInforAccount ^{1o}	587	3.70	0.72	1.20	5
ExpectAccount ²	481	4.28	0.72	1.00	5
ConcernAccount ³	471	4.23	0.67	1.50	5

¹SatInforAccount (Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$) is composed of six items: 1. My unit has sufficient information to account for its policy to the academic authorities; 2. My unit does not have sufficient information to account for its policy to a higher level;* 3. My unit has sufficient information to account for its policy to its clients; 4. My unit does not have sufficient information to account for its policy to the members of this unit;* 5. I do not have enough time to account for my policy acts;* 6. I do not have enough information to account for the education policy acts.* This index suffered from a high proportion of respondents who answered "not applicable". For instance, 20% of the university managers responded to item 3 with "not applicable".

²ExpectAccount (Cronbach's $\alpha = .81$) is composed of two items: 1. I expect each lecturer to be accountable for his or her teaching; 2. I expect each researcher to be accountable for his or her research. This index also suffered from a high proportion of respondents who answered "not applicable". For instance, 23% of the university college managers responded to item 1 with "not applicable" and to item 2, 27%. For reasons for this, see above.

³ConcernAccount (Cronbach's $\alpha = .61$) is composed of two items: 1. It is my job to see to it that my unit can account for the spending of the available money; 2. It is my job to see to it that my unit can account for the research policy acts. For the same reasons as before, about 23% of the college managers responded "not applicable" to item 2.

^oWhen some of the items in a scale were not answered by some respondents, the score of the scale was calculated using all answered items (with a minimum of two).

Referring to the different stakeholders, the middle managers seem to have been reasonably satisfied about the volume of information on policy accountability (SatInforAccount = 3.70). The majority stated that they wanted to keep that level because they very clearly expected lecturers and researchers to be accountable for their work (ExpectAccount = 4.28). Moreover, they stressed that they really cared that lecturers and researchers should be accountable for the money made available and for research policy (ConcernAccount = 4.23). Accountability seems to belong to the culture of the institutions of higher education, but it should not be forgotten that research policy is seen by many middle managers in the university colleges as not part of their task.

There is no significant difference between the opinions of the middle managers in the universities (SatInfoAccount = 3.72) and the opinions of those in the university colleges (SatInfoAccount = 3.72) as far as the appreciation of the volume of information to support accountability is concerned ($t(585) = 0.4$; $p = .69$). But the expectations of the middle managers concerning the accountability of lecturers were significantly higher in the university colleges (ExpectAccount = 4.42) than in the universities (ExpectAccount = 4.19) ($t(479) = 3.41$; $p = .0007$). For example, 91% of the middle managers of university colleges agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that each lecturer should be held accountable for his or her teaching. In the universities, only 78% agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. On the other hand, the middle managers in universities (ConcernAccount = 4.31) seem to promote the impression that they cared more about accountability than did their colleagues in the university colleges (ConcernAccount = 4.06) ($t(469) = -3.78$; $p = .0002$).

In the university colleges, the heads of departments (ExpectAccount = 4.43) and the programme coordinators (ExpectAccount = 4.41) shared almost the same expectations as far as accountability is concerned ($F(2,177) = 0.16$; $p = .85$), but they had different opinions about the volume of information required for accounting for their management ($F(2,234) = 8.79$; $p = .0002$) and different concerns about the application of accountability ($F(2,148) = 7.24$; $p = .001$). The heads of departments (4.06) scored a little higher than did the programme coordinators (3.95) on the scale SatInfoAccount and on the scale ConcernAccount (3.91 and 3.68, respectively).

As far as the satisfaction about the amount of information required to account for management in universities is concerned, the opinions of the various middle managers are rather similar ($F(4,326) = 1.33$; $p = .26$). This is also the case for the concerns they have about being accountable for the spending of money and for research policy ($F(4,301) = 1.76$; $p = .14$). Nevertheless, the expectations of the middle managers towards the researcher being accountable for his or her research and the lecturer being accountable for his or her teaching differed (ExpectAccount). The difference between the managers is most striking, between, on the one hand, the programme coordinators (ExpectAccount = 4.58) and, on the other hand, between the heads of departments (ExpectAccount = 4.12) and the research directors (ExpectAccount = 4.13) ($F(4,283) = 2.41$; $p = .049$). Although the two items of ExpectAccount concern teaching and research, close analysis of the data shows that the programme coordinators (score: 4.55) actually expected more accountability from lecturers and researchers than did the research directors (score: 4.12). The reason for this difference in attitude has yet to be determined.

3.3.4.1. Summary

Middle managers seem to be relatively satisfied about the available information necessary to inform the different stakeholders. On the other hand, their expectations towards lecturers and researchers are significantly higher, as are their feelings concerning the accountability they expect from others. These middle managers see themselves as bearing a lot of responsibility. In universities and university colleges, satisfaction with available information is the same. The expectations of lecturers and researchers and the concern about being responsible,

though, are higher in university colleges. Middle managers in university colleges seem to worry more than their colleagues in universities about being accountable.

4. HAS THE SITUATION CHANGED?

Comparison of these perceptions with earlier research would have been interesting, but the data of previous (qualitative) research did not allow this. To resolve this problem, another method was chosen. Five questions were asked (see table 10), and the respondent could answer whether a phenomenon was less, equally or more present than five years ago. Although not everybody answered these questions, most of the respondents did, indeed, recognise much change, mostly concerning management efficiency (item 1), target setting (item 2), and quality assurance (item 3). Delegation of tasks and accountability had changed but not as much as the three other elements.

Table 10. Changes in management according to the middle managers (score from 1 to 3)

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std dev</i>
1. In comparison with five years ago, do the managers pay more or less attention to the efficiency of the management of your institution?	532	2.75	0.53
2. In comparison with five years ago, do the managers of your institution pay more or less attention to the achievement of the targets?	547	2.77	0.49
3. In comparison with five years ago, does your institution pay more or less attention to assuring the quality of teaching?	561	2.80	0.46
4. In comparison with five years ago, are the managers of your institution more or less willing to delegate some of their tasks?	474	2.28	0.74
5. In comparison with five years ago, do managers have to account more or less for their management?	511	2.48	0.68
Assessment of change (composed of items 1 to 5; Cronbach's $\alpha = .69$)	422	2.62	0.40

Because the university colleges had to adapt to new rules (merger), it could be expected that they changed much more than did the universities. Indeed, the middle managers in the university colleges scored significantly higher than their colleagues in the universities on three items: target setting, delegation and accountability. No differences emerged as far as efficiency and quality assurance are concerned.

5. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of this chapter was expressed in terms of three questions. First, it was important to obtain a clear idea of managerialism as the literature about managerialism is vast and not univocal. Based on the study of these sources, we defined managerialism as a management style that is focused on efficiency, effectiveness, quality assurance, decentralisation and accountability. Tasks in a managerial climate are supposed to be fulfilled efficiently (*inter*

alia Keating 2001; Deem and Brehony 2005; Meek 2003; Amaral, Fulton and Larsen 2003). Moreover, the actors should try to achieve the targets of the organisation with a certain level of effectiveness. Therefore, the organisation needs a quality assurance system that focuses on the production of the educational products that meet certain standards (*inter alia* Keating 2001; Biesta 2004; Santiago et al. 2006; Simkins 2000; Meek 2003; Codd 2005). Engagement in these activities is not merely of interest to the manager – as many of the stakeholders as possible should also be convinced that the managers have made the right decisions and steered the organisation in this direction. In other words, managers have to be accountable to the stakeholders (*inter alia* Keating 2001; Meek 2003; Biesta 2004; Vidovich and Slee 2001). Whether this can be achieved by decentralisation is a point of discussion (Meek 2003; Fulton 2003). Nevertheless, many authors hold that the results will be attained more effectively if the decision-making process is as close as possible to the person who has to perform the action (*inter alia* Keating 2001; Amaral, Fulton and Larsen 2003). Possibly, individual decision making is replacing traditional collegial decision making.

The second question we asked was whether academic middle managers of the universities and university colleges thought and acted according to management principles. A web-based questionnaire was sent to them with the purpose of obtaining a description of their perception of some managerialist indicators observable at that time in the universities and university colleges. Third, we were interested in change or continuity of opinions about managerialism.

As far as the managerial values were concerned, this survey delivered the following conclusions. First, individual decision making was relatively highly valued (3.99 out of 5) (Amaral, Fulton and Larsen 2003) in the universities and university colleges alike. Efficient management was certainly one of the targets. Quality assurance was considered part and parcel of daily life for most middle managers (score: 4.15 out of 5), and more so for middle managers in the university colleges than in the universities. They also expected the lecturers and other colleagues (score 3.91 out of 5) to be accountable for their work, but not at all times.

The next question we asked was whether these middle managers acted according to managerialist principles. First, although the middle managers stated that decision making should take place as close as possible to the person who has to perform the task, they did not apply this principle in practice. Actually, the middle managers experienced a hierarchical

structure (see also Santiago et al. 2006: 221). Second, as stated above, the middle managers in these institutions were relatively strongly convinced (score: 4.02 out of 5) that decisions in their organisation were efficiently made and supported by general opinion. These ideas were expressed more by respondents in the universities than by those in the university colleges. Third, although the middle managers considered quality assurance to be a very important part of their task, they were less optimistic about the application of quality assurance systems. Fourth, accountability was highly valued (Biesta 2004). The middle managers expected researchers and lecturers to be accountable, and cared strongly about accounting for budget expenditure and for research policy implementation, but were not so satisfied about the quality of information available to account for different forms of policy development and implementation.

It is clear that academic middle managers have an open mind with respect to managerial principles but not at the expense of academic values in general. Most of them are certainly not supporters of extreme managerial thinking. Asked to express their attitude towards efficiency of the organisation in comparison with other values, they make clear that they prefer more the satisfaction of students above an efficient organisation, a delay in achieving some targets above unsatisfactory teaching, and a collegial relationship above a professional relationship. Moreover, they think that they should spend more time on offering good teaching than on organising quality assurance and they are afraid that the organisation of quality assurance unduly demands more of the staff compared with the results. They also think that good cooperation between lecturers is more important than a good system for lecturers to account for their work. Middle managers do not locate decision making in their own hands but more in the hands of the council they chair or a higher authority. Collegial negotiation is part and parcel of their role. They have the feeling that they do not have the instruments to effectively manage human resources and have doubts about the possibility of achieving efficiently in the management of financial policy. Quite a lot of these middle managers complain about some dysfunctions of quality assurance. For instance, they fear that quality assurance puts a lot of pressure on some staff and about one-third of these managers think that quality assurance is too demanding on the staff relative to the benefits. More than one-third fear that they do not have enough time to account for their policy-related duties.

Universities and university colleges have different histories, attract different types of students, hire different types of teachers and researchers and offer them different career paths, have

different missions, etc. Hence, it was reasonable to hypothesise that middle managers in the different types of institutions would have different opinions about the principles of management and would accordingly act differently. The data from the survey confirm some aspects of this hypothesis, but not others. Take, for example, management approaches to research. According to recent new regulations, university colleges are more than before supposed to invest in research (academisation, see Verhoeven 2008). Nonetheless, the data show that there is still a difference between universities and university colleges. On several items concerning the management of research, middle managers of university colleges answer that these questions are not applicable or they simply do not answer. More than one-quarter of the middle managers of university colleges told us that they are not accountable for research in their unit. Indeed, programme coordinators are responsible for the coordination of teaching, not for research. The equivalent response in universities is about 6%. Whatever the position of a middle manager in a university, they are supposed to do research. Other issues also are approached totally differently in universities than in university colleges. For instance, only 14% of the middle managers of university colleges find it very important that the researcher him or herself chooses the field of research, whereas in universities this figure is 38%. In university colleges, 37% of the respondents think that research is efficiently organised, while in universities about 67% have this opinion. About one-third of the middle managers of university colleges believe that the quality assurance system is sufficient to secure the quality of research; in universities this figure is about 64%.

Although it was fruitful to work with the hypothesis that differences in managerialist thinking and action could be explained by the type of institution to which the middle manager belongs or by his or her position in the institutional hierarchy, it is not a totally satisfactory explanation. First, the proportion of the variance in the different forms of managerialism explained by type of institution or position of the manager is very small. Second, no check for spurious relations was done. Future analysis might show that the relations are vulnerable. Moreover, a provisional check of other independent variables (gender, age, qualification, etc.) only explains a small proportion of the variance. A first glimpse of the results of a stepwise multiple regression analysis confirms the rather weak impact of these independent variables. More variance could be explained by attitudes towards some aspects of managerialism or some managerial practices. This brings us to the hypothesis that managerialism is more determined by the organisational culture of an institution and less by position, experience, qualification, age, gender or other similar variables.

To conclude, I want to remind the reader that the purpose of this chapter was to describe whether some characteristics of managerialism could be identified in the universities and university colleges. The answer is in the affirmative and, according to the middle managers themselves, this has increased during the last five years. However, this research also demonstrates that managerialism is not present in its extreme forms as defined at the beginning of this chapter. A relatively large group of middle managers of these institutions still prefer a collegial approach, and they criticise some of the less pleasant consequences of managerialism. Moreover, the analysis also shows that middle managers think and act differently depending on the field of decision making. Respondents express different attitudes towards management issues concerning research, teaching and finance. In spite of this qualification, it is also clear that taking into account future changes in the funding of these institutions, together with the positive appreciation of managerial principles expressed by the middle managers, development of a stronger managerial orientation is likely.**

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** Nevertheless, it recently became clear that all management principles will not be accepted unconditionally by the staff. After a negative assessment of the managerial capacities of the rector of a big university at the end of his first term of office by a special assessment committee, this rector had to resign. Immediately, professors, students and other members of the university started a petition. They stressed that the evaluation of a rector cannot be passed to a special assessment committee, but is the right of the university community.

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