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Workload allocation models in academia: instruments of managerial control or tools for resistance?

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Abstract

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Keywords

Resistance, academia, Foucault, panopticon, workload allocation models, managerialism, stress.

The changing academic landscape

Academic practices have changed considerably in the UK since the 1980s, whereby universities are increasingly being managed as business organisations (Sousa, de Nijs and Hendriks, 2010). These changes have greatly affected professional expectations and practices in the Higher Education (HE) context in terms of a greater emphasis being placed on the development of more market-oriented recruitment practices, the requirement for many academics to publish in top-ranking journals as well as the procurement of non-government funding, and increased concern with

matters related to cost saving and efficiency. Changes in the availability of funding for Universities over the past decade have meant that in most cases the largest income stream for higher education level institutions comes from student fees and successful bids on research funding rather than government support, so the burden of ensuring financial sustainability is placed on Universities, and as such on the academics who inhabit them. According to Barry, Berg and Chandler (2006), 'the introduction of competition and the marketization of higher education, to make universities more conscious of their rapidly expanding group of students, has been significant.' The heightening of attention paid to performance management in academic institutions can therefore be seen as linked to a wider managerial approach in Higher Education (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2000). Far from being locked away in an ivory tower, contemporary academics in the UK (in addition to their traditional roles as teachers, administrators and researchers) are required to compete for external funding on behalf of their institutions (Wigger and Buch-Hansen, 2013), show the impact of their publications, engage in knowledge exchange activities within the local or international community and contribute to widening participation agendas or developing links with external organisations. In addition, departments, and more generally universities as a whole, have been asked to develop particular forms of accountability with reference to human resource management and income generation in order to monitor efficiency and provide a quantification of the time spent on various teaching, research or administrative tasks (Clegg, 2015; Holman, 2000). Various types of workload models (also informally called WAM or WLM) have been designed, proposed or imposed (with or without liaison with the Unions) with the purpose of achieving a more effective management of people, time and financial resources.

Academics tend to be motivated by the intrinsic intellectually creative and stimulating nature of their work, rather than simply by monetary rewards and the achievement of measurable objectives. In line with Foucault's (1991) idea of power – knowledge enacted in the everyday techniques and instruments of the workplace – this paper explores power 'at its extremities, in its ultimate destinations, with those points where it becomes capillary […] in its more regional and local forms

and institutions' (Foucault, 1980:96), in the instrument used to manage people's time, tasks and performance. Business-like managerial power is enacted within this professional context through the setting of targets, the achievements of certain percentages in student satisfaction, the publication of research in specific outputs located in particular journals, and rakings of excellence in teaching and research. However, workload allocation models are instrument of control that can also be used as a form of resistance to managerialism and control which can be interpreted as 'more routinized, informal and often inconspicuous forms of resistance in everyday practice' (Thomas and Davies, 2005:686). Although this type of neoliberal academia is present on a global basis (Muller-Camen and Salzgeber, 2005) this paper focuses on the UK as an illustration of this climate.

This paper contributes to the study of academia as a contested situ of managerialism and neoliberal practices. In order to do so, we situate the discussion within the framork or power relations and control investigated throughthe lens of the Faucaldian concept of the panopticon. We apply this concept to the creation and use of workload allocation models. The paper is structured as follows: in the first section we outline the literature on the increasingly bureaucratic and managerial approach used in universities and provide an exploration of our theoretical framework. We then highlight the tension in today's academic practice between the need for transparency, equality and efficiency in using resources on the one hand and the need for academic autonomy and manageable professional practices on the other. Based on the findings stemming from two UCU reports (2012, 2016), we reflect on the use of workload allocation models as an example of resistance to academic managerialism. Although Keenoy (2005) suggests that over the past 15 years academics in the UK have grown so accustomed to academic audits that 'there is nothing to "resist"' (Keenoy 2005: 311), we contend that it is still important to critically engage with mechanisms of 'power and terror' within the current neoliberal and corporate university, and to investigate how instruments of control can be used as loci of resistance at the individual and collective level.

The context of neoliberal academia

Academics have reported that university governance is being experienced as increasingly hierarchical and managerial in nature and implementation, as well as more demanding and controlling in its practice (McAlpine and Åkerlind, 2010). Managerialism in organisations has been defined as a shift in the locus of control (Fligstein, 1996), a change in patterns of professional dominance (Shenhav, 1999) and as a mutation in the logic behind the identity of the firm (Thornton, 2004). Requirements imposed on its departments by 'the university' (embodied via the senior management team) might be perceived as top-down examples of managerialism and the exertion of power and control over a profession that has traditionally been considered in conflict with such approaches (Meek 2000; Warwick 2014). Moreover, academia is often the point of arrival for those who have made a conscious career choice to avoid such corporate environments. The imposed control on teaching and research staff, and their perceived lack of autonomy and power over their own work, can easily create nodes of resistance in a professional context that lends itself to high levels of critical engagement. This is also the case for other industries, since, as per one of Foucault's famous observations, 'where there is power there is resistance' (1990:95). Although broadly framed as 'resistance to managerialism,' we suggest that academics actually resist a number of specific factors: hierarchical power, bureaucratic and formalised practices, increased performance control, changes in work tasks that do not seem to be central to the profession, and intellectual and time constraints.

Research conducted by Anderson in Australia (see for instance Anderson et al., 2002; Anderson, 2008) highlights how similar changes in another academic context have caused a climate of anxiety. Early research by Kogan and Kogan (1983) also highlighted how issues related to quality, productivity and performance assessment can put academics under an increasing amount of pressure. The implementation of more managerial practices in academia can be considered under a broader phenomenon, often called New Public Management (NPM), whereby the public sector is influenced by techniques, behaviors and norms traditionally identified as pertaining to the private sector. While highlighting the non-consistent practice of NPM throughout institutions for higher

education, Chandler et al. (2004: 1054, citing Hood, 1995) identify 'seven dimensions of change: greater disaggregation; enhanced competition; the use of management practices drawn from the private sector; greater stress on discipline and parsimony in resource use; a move towards more hands-on management; a concern for more explicit and measurable standards of performance; and attempts to control according to pre-set output measures.' These have all become widespread traits of contemporary British academia, and in a number of institution wordwide.

Within this context, forms of governance in Higher Education that had previously been based on collegiality and 'high trust' relationships are seen as being replaced by increasingly managerial hierarchical layers (Marginson and Considine, 2000) and the corresponding adoption of 'low trust' relations (Pilkington et al., 2001). This environment of low trust can result in stress and anxiety, the response to which, according to Fisher (1994), is linked to the level of control over one's work and the perception of one's ability to take action. Empirical studies of academic work in the UK highlight the increase of work stress (Chandler et al., 2002), work degradation (Bryson, 2004) and work intensification (Ogbonna and Harris, 2004). Hyper-performativity and the 'lack' of time in academia, coupled with top-down measures of performance evaluation and accountability, are likely to have a detrimental impact on employees' wellbeing and on their relationship with the University as their employer (Kallio et al., 2016; Ter Bogt and Scapens, 2012). Research shows that UK academic staff are finding it increasingly difficult to manage the demands of their jobs (Kinman and Jones, 2004; Baty, 2005).

Panopticon: control and transparency

This need for increased productivity is now being monitored more closely within Universities and is often perceived by staff as an unnecessary tool of surveillance. In this scenario, workload models that allocate hours or points to roles and tasks carried out by academic staff are seen as conceptually at odds with what used to be the very nature of academic work. While often considered as a form of control, the allocation of set individual loads to specific roles and activities

recorded on to a workload allocation model, together with the use of open-access outlook calendars and the recording of lectures and seminars, can also be thought of as ways to increase transparency in the allocation of tasks, ease in communication and a tool to enhance students' learning. However, Foucault (1980:104) suggests that the more modern types of power are 'constantly exercised by means of surveillance rather than in a discontinuous manner by means of a system of levies or obligations distributed over time.'

In a famous conversation with Barou and Perrot, Foucault (1980) explores Bentham's Panopticon as an architectural instrument of surveillance. In this building design initially used for prisons, a central tower with large windows is surrounded by a perimeter building in the shape of a ring, which is occupied by cells that run through the whole length of the building. In this manner, light coming from a window opening out onto the outside world shines through the cell and projects shadows of inmates that can be seen, and thus monitored, by those located in the central tower. This use of space and light mean that those located in the middle can then potentially observe what happens in every single cell. Inmates cannot know at what point in time the gaze of surveillance will be on them, but the possibility is always there. This architectural form literally sheds light on people's behaviour to enhance transparency and accountability.

The Panopticon can thus be taken as a metaphor for the current managerial system of surveillance in academia, and in particular for the use of workload allocation models. Although in Benham's vision this organisation is used to reinforce control from the highest hierarchical power source, this system of a binary gaze also implies that the observer in the tower is being observed. While someone's time is measured and monitored, and tasks are allocated within a workload allocation model, that person can also use that tool as a form of comparison with others and with the set standards. As highlighted by Foucault (1980), the exercise of power comes at a real, economic and political cost. In a surveillance system of this type power is exercised continuously in 'an apparatus of total and circulating mistrust' where 'the perfected form of surveillance consists in a summation of

malveillance' (Foucault 1980: 158, emphasis in original).

Prasad and Prasad (1998:227) stress how resistance in the workplace is not only practiced in the form of a large mobilisation of workers, but also in 'a multitude of less visible and often unplanned oppositional practices in the everyday world of organizations.' According to Foucauldian approaches, although resistance happens at the macro level of political and economic movement, it also involves informal "micro-politics" that can be interpreted as the 'constant process of adaptation, subversion and reinscription of dominant discourses' which come into being as 'individuals confront, and reflect on, their own identity performance, recognizing contradictions and tensions and, in so doing, pervert and subtly shift meanings and understandings' (Thomas and Davies 2005:687). Even though resistance can be looked at as 'a hegemonic struggle undertaken by social movements' which can be divided into 'four major resistance movements that engage with management: unions, organizational misbehaviour, civic movements and civic movement organizations' (Spicer and Böhm, 2007:1667), it can also be investigated at a different inter-individual level. Scott's (1990: xii) concept of the 'hidden transcript' can be used to describe the discourse of a subordinated group that 'represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant.' This is contrasted with the 'public transcript,' which is enacted through the open interaction between the dominant and subordinated (Scott, 1990:2). The design and allocation of workloads negotiated at the individual and departmental level can be an example of this tension between the hidden/public transcript of resistance against neoliberal practices, managerial processes and the status quo. Scott (1990:184) argues that this 'off-stage discourse of the powerless' should not be considered just as empty forms of resistance in contrast with the 'real' macro-level one, nor as a mere emotional valve to let off sentiments of dissatisfaction and frustration.

A new academic profile

The above-mentioned changes to the world of academia, together with the increasingly competitive market of education providers on a national and international basis, are moulding

personal work practices and identities (Barnett, 2000; Tight, 2000). In the UK, the performance of numerous academics on research and teaching contracts happens to be mostlyjudged against student satisfaction scores and research outputs that have become progressively challenging to publish. The time needed to read, think and write in order to produce excellent teaching and such high quality publications is increasingly diminished by the higher number of students (and related marking or advising), more demanding teaching allocations, grant applications, 'administrivia' (Currie, 1996), departmental or university-wide roles, committee membership and other duties often unavoidable but not generally perceived as core to the academic identity (Grant and Sherrington, 2006).

In addition, student satisfaction surveys, conducted internally in the form of module evaluations and nationally at course level, are increasingly being used as a tool to judge teaching quality. Student assessment of modules and teaching (SAMT) in the UK tend to be mostly conducted in the form of a quantitative survey with some optional qualitative open questions, regardless of evidence collected from research which shows how SAMT are negatively biased towards women, staff with disabilities, foreign teachers and members of minority groups (see for instance Basow et al., 2006; Bavishi et al., 2010; Campbell et al., 2005; Mengel et al., 2017; Mountz et al. 2015). The language of teaching and learning has become increasingly transational (e.g. 'You said, we did') and in many institutions students are now seen as cutomers whose satisfaction must be achieved at all costs. Recent research in UK (Jabbar et al., 2017; Nixon et al. 2016; Woodall et al. 2014;) indicates that the introduction of tuition fees (and student loans) seems to have instigated customer-like behavior and transactional models of learning.

Knight and Trowler (2000:110) argue that the intensification of work in academia has resulted in the reduction of 'the time, energy and mental space available' needed to improve the craft of teaching. What is measured is not only the quality and number of final outputs, but also inputs and processes involved in achieving the former. Productivity therefore is ultimately not only measured against required and desirable outputs, but also in terms of the effective use of time and resources.

We see staff resistance in this academic context as a form of critical intellectual engagement aimed at the rejection of imposed power struggles on ones' everyday professional identity and practice. Such resistance can take the form of strikes and industrial action, as it often has done in academia over the years, but also of more subterranean forms of subtle resistance and collegial debates that refer to both practical matters and 'struggle over values—the ideological struggle' (Scott, 1985:297). Thomas and Davies (2005:683–84) maintain the importance of understanding such forms of ideological resistance in order to shed light on how individuals come to reject the way managerial discourses shape them 'at the level of identities and subjectivities.'

Resisting managerialism in academia

Academics can resist managerial discourses and processes by drawing on a range of local practices and local forms of knowledge (Barry et al., 2001; Prichard and Willmott, 1997). As suggested by Sousa, de Nijs and Hendriks (2010:1441) , 'a particularly intriguing aspect is that, as in professional organizations in general, university research managers are usually drafted from the ranks of their own profession, suggesting a continuation of the principle of professional control, rather than a loss of autonomy (see Freidson, 1984).' It would appear that, in the transition from academics to managers, colleagues stop being considered 'academics' and become the 'them' on the other side of the fence - the observers who put others under surveillance and are thus suddenly distinct from 'us'. This separation between academics who seek career progression via managerial roles and others who pursue education-oriented and research-focused pathways highlight the dichotomist discourse between managerialism and traditional academic perspectives. Very often these managerial roles are covered by staff who are not trained as professional managers, so the 'others' become 'hybrids' as academic professionals are called to manage colleagues (Fitzgerald and Ferlie, 2000). The 'university,' although mostly directed and regulated by academic staff, then becomes an abstract, disembodied and hegemonic power distinct from individual and collegial academic interests.

Clegg and McAuley (2005:23, based on McAuley, 2002) suggest four types of managerialism in UK Higher Education Institutions (HEI): 1) the 'Corporate' HEI (well-managed institution with a top-down approach) 'with a high emphasis on the capabilities of managers at every level in the organisation and in all aspects of the organisation's life;' 2) The 'Strong Culture' HEI that 'has a strong understanding of what it is to *be* this HEI;' 3) The 'Arena' HEI whereby managers, academic staff, administrators and the infrastructure experts 'constitute the arena of interest in the way the HEI "should be run"' and 4) The 'Communitarian' or 'Collegial' HEI where 'the academics are centre stage in the organisation' and 'agree with one another (implicitly, as the psychological contract for working at the HEI) that they will work with each other whilst retaining their individual interest in teaching or research.' However, universities can have a combination of different approaches to management and these can shift considerably with changes in top level senior managers and heads of department.

Managers in the higher education field are mediators between the organisational, financial, administrative and educational demands on one side, and the flexibility and time academics need for completing their research, teaching and administrative work on the other. While it would seem that workload allocation models can be used to merely control people's work and efficiency in a more 'Arena' style of organization (such as, for instance, through the periodic requirement for staff in some higher education institutions to justify the number of hours spent on various academic-related activities during three randomly selected weeks per year), these can also be seen as a weapon used by individual academics or managers to fence off unfair requests and attempts to overload staff with tasks and responsibilities. Going back to the concept of the observed observer, we can understand power here as being not only in the hands of the university's top management or head of department, but in fact as 'something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain' and 'not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power' (Foucault, 1980:98). When workloads are designed collectively, allocations are agreed in a collegiate manner and access to each other's

allocations is granted to all staff in a team or within the same department, the individual responsibility allowances and the management of those by decision makers can be agreed, criticised or questioned. A common practice within the UK Higher Education system is for academic managerial roles to rotate amongst members of staff and be in place for an average of one to three years. This process enhances the circulation of power, which is then linked to a role rather than a specific individual. Far from being powerless as subordinate passive subjects to managerialism, academics can exerted both their individual and collective power to resist superimposed managerial targets, for instance through unionized action against pay cuts, pension cuts and changes in contracts.

Workload allocation models

Far from being an isolated artefact, the use of superimposed workload allocation models is taken here as an illustration of the increased managerial and bureaucratic practices present in academia. Workload allocation models are typically a numerical representation of work based on the time or value that different types of academic and administrative tasks require. Whilst some attribute points overall to different responsibilities and roles, others have opted to include specific time allocations for teaching, preparation times, marking, administrative work, attendance at meetings, research, roles within the department, work carried out at university level or external engagements. Other activities related to the academic profession, such as attendance at conferences, grant preparation and mentoring, may or may not be allocated a load. The number of points or hours allocated can vary greatly between institutions and even amongst departments or schools within the same University. Soliman and Soliman (1997) identify a long list of tasks and roles carried out by academics.

Fairness in the measurement of work tasks

One of the most controversial issues in relation to workload allocation models is their being based on subjective and unrealistic measurement of work tasks. These quantifications of academic work are abstract and approximate representations of reality that do not reflect actual work and number of

hours spent on tasks. For instance, do all essays take thirty minutes to mark? Should module leaders get an allocation for the extra work they do in the preparation of teaching materials? Is it fair for a lecturer in accounting to be allocated three hours to work on their exams when a lecturer in management is only given two? Considerations related to the way tasks are measured are also intertwined with other themes, especially in relation to fairness and comparability, and in particular with the perceived 'real aim' of these instruments when used by 'management' (i.e. the senior management team of a university), and the suitability of workload allocation models for the quantification of work in the academic profession. It is indeed very challenging to actually quantify academic work because of its very intellectual nature and the many variables which would influence the time or point allocation of tasks. But how can these models truly represent the activity of academic staff? And why should workload allocation models be implemented at all if the representation of the work carried our is misleading?

Even allowing for more detailed allocations – for instance those that take into account more nuanced academic expriences based on the seniority and experience of a member of staff, the level and readiness of students, the amount of time and effort generally needed to complete certain applications and examples of citizenship – disagreements on quantifications of points or time are still likely to occur. For instance, differing opinions may be professed on whether it takes longer, or less effort, to teach or mark students at different levels, in different subjects and group sizes. This type of incongruences and conflict would make a general nationa-wide or even simply just and institution-wide standard workload allocation model difficult to agree on. Also, the reductionist character of workload allocation models opens up concerns in terms of quality assurance, as those instruments do not seem to discriminate against how much time it would take to complete a task or to do so *well*, since workload allocation models are focused on quantity rather than on quality of outputs.

In academia, the notion of how many hours one spends carrying out a task is highly variable, as people work, think, operate in different ways, and very little is quantifiable in such precise units as

"hours". How long does it take to write a lecture, prepare for a class, or mark an essay? Unlike other industries, academic work does not lend itself to strict time management as both teaching (e.g. marking, lesson preparation) and research (e.g. reading sources, coding data and writing) are often carried out after office hours, and academia has not been the type of industry where employees are treated as workers who need to clock in and clock out. Anderson (2006:581) suggests that the freedom of managing one's own time and working hours is crucial in academic careers which are also characterized by a strong spillover of work activities during leisure time as 'academics regularly work at night and at weekends, often subordinating their private and family lives for work' (Currie, 1996; McInnis, 1999). Anderson (2006) also explains that the two principal factors contributing to academic dissatisfaction are work intensification and increased workloads, while Winter et al. (2000: 287) report that 'excessive time pressures' and unrealistic expectations were 'major issues' for the respondents in their study.

The academic discourse employed in dissenting responses to workload allocation models is mostly underpinned by traditional concepts of the academic profession rooted in identity structures as opposed to managerial understandings of the university as an organisation. Although managed itself by academics, the institution in its embodied management form of a certain committee or steering group is mostly seen as idiosyncratic, whereby the quantitative monitoring of one's workload appears to be at odds with the very nature of intellectual academic work. Performance and auditing methods have been used for many years in academia (Sousa, de Nijs and Hendriks, 2010) and the Research Excellence Framework in the UK is a prime example of this system, in terms of research standards and outputs.

Workload models as instruments of transparency and equality

The perceived benefits of using workload models focus not only on ensuring fairness and comparability of workload and roles amongst individuals, but also on resisting top-down directives perceived as negative or even dangerous for staff. For instance, early career researchers might need more hours to

create new modules, to learn about the insitutional policies, processes and procedures, and to adjust to the new environment , so their time can be protected by the allocation of extra hours for preparation of classes and the completion of mandatory training. Middle-managers and individuals can also take advantage of workload allocation models to ringfence departmental resources more effectively without overwhelming staff, and to consider contractual obligations. For instance, a transparent allocation of tasks and responsibilities could benefit people who work part time due to caring responsibility, health issues or other commitments. Transparency in the allocation of roles, tasks and responsibilities would also support the equality and inclusion agenda in giving visibility to the unfair allocation of pastoral and less significant roles to women or minority ethnic staff. The purpose of workload models should be to achieve a fair distribution of work among colleagues and to ensure that colleagues in specific intersectional positions are not unfairly asked to do more than their colleagues.

There is a clear need for universities as organizations to manage resources (time, money and staff) effectively in order to ensure the survival of this institution within a very competitive context. Workload models are often presented by managers as frameworks aimed at ensuring efficient allocation of resources and fairness in treatment of staff. Burgess, Lewis and Mobbs (2003) considered equity, transparency and alignment of individual academic work with departmental goals as crucial factors in the perception of workload effectiveness. Although the management rationale for the movement to an hours-based system could include the implementation of effective equality in workloads by people on similar contracts together with the identification of where additional resources need to be directed, they also may be seeking to identify, again in their terms, where unutilised resources lie and then utilise them.

Resistance to lack of autonomy

Resistance to managerialism is often linked to the need for autonomy, not only at the individual, but also at the departmental and professional level. Some staff are more prone to others to accept

workload allocations without feeling able to negotiate – precarious staff, those on probation, early career researchers etc. Gleeson and Shain (1999) identified three types of 'compliers' amongst staff: those who are 'willing' (to respond positively to a managerial agenda in relation to workloads), the 'unwilling' ones (who reject this idea) and the 'strategic compliers' (who comply partially but still maintain a distance, whether personal or professional, from senior management). Departments, and more specifically departmental leadership teams, have the ability to understand the specific case of each member of staff, their needs and what is required of them. Although departments embody the first level of line management, probation and performance supervision, staff working in the department – including the head of department – seem in many cases to be perceived as distanced from 'management' (i.e. the faculty overseeing groups of departments, and the more top-level managerial positions in the institution).

Departments (or schools) may then become the main locus of resistance as they pivot between individual and collective needs. Since each department is somewhat special in its own combination of staff, habitus and historical formation, the 'one size fits all' approach to the design of workload allocation model is unlikely to be appropriate or to meet staff approval. Departments must have a level of independent judgement and authority in the design and implementation of workload allocation models as the need for transparency, collegiality, cooperation and inclusiveness in the writing and reviewing of workload models is paramount. Allowing staff to participate in the design of instruments of workload measurements can increase 'buy-in' and reduce concerns of unfairness and unnecessary control. As departments or schools also often engage in different types of teaching or research, these needs have to be articulated while considering workload allocations. Hull (2006:38) maintains that the use of workload models in academia is an example of the fact that 'the categorisation and measurement of our work removes another aspect of our professional autonomy and hence reduces the possibilities for collegiality.' This type of collegiality, however, can in some cases be considered negatively as 'an essentially self-interested means of sustaining elitism and class-based inequality within higher education' (Hull, 2006:39), and

as such become a form of resistance rather than a traditional collegiate approach to work. Although the implementation of a workload model managed at departmental level implies reduced control from the faculty or the university senior management team, it seems likely to be perceived more favourably by staff.

Stress and Wellbeing

Scholars worldwide report that academia has fallen victim of a neoliberal ideology within a globalized market economy (Deem et al., 2001; Izak et al., 2017). The increasing number of responsibilities, measurable outputs and expectations being mapped onto academic roles within this neoliberal context of higher education is deeply affecting staff wellbeing. In 2012, University College Union published a report on Higer Education staff stress by considering 'demands stressor' to measure the impact on people's wellbeing of conflicting demands, impossible deadlines, intense workload, a culture of long working hours and unrealistic time pressures. They found that in 2012 the leves of stress had worsened compared to four years before, and that academics (UCU members) were considerably more stressed than the British working population as a whole.

In addition, the staff survey conducted by UCU (2016) in the UK further highlight these pressures as staff have reported working long hours and suffering from stress. This current trend is in line with early studies by Dua (1994: 59) on the nature and effects of stress in the university context, which indicated how a vast majority (82%) of respondents reported a high degree of stress in the workplace. In fact 'cuts, together with an increase in throughput, certainly intensified workloads and put staff under considerable stress' (Davies and Holloway, 1995:11). According to the UCU report on workloads (2016), academic working across all disciplines are engaged in work tasks for an average of 50.9 hours per week, when the standard working week is recognized to be between 36.6 and 40 hours. Also, 12.8% of academic staff are working unreasonable, unsafe or excessive hours. This picture is even worse for early career academics and those with managerial responsibilities.

This investigation of UCU members conducted specifically on workloads highlighted five rather

concerning key findings: academic staff are working and average of more than two days unpaid leave every week; workloads are perceived as unmanageable and unsustainable; work involves increasingly more responsibility and administrative tasks that led to a widening of duties considered acceptable within their remit in addition to core research and teaching activities; student expectations have increased; professional and career development opportunities have decreased.

Existing research clearly shows that the management of workloads (or the lack thereof) has reached alarming proportions. Unmanageable workloads have been identified as a key stressor in today's academic environment which seems to be nurturing a 'culture of stress' (Kinman and Jone, 2003; Jabbar et al., 2017). Whilst universities are undoubtly required to focus on organizational survival and financial viability, this should not come to the expense of their workforce.This neoliberal and managerial approaches to the provision of education and research in the Higher Education implemented in order to reduce costs and increase efficiency, are proving detrimental to the levels of stress and workloads tolerated by staff. This is harmful not only to staff, but also to the provision of an excellent educational experience (Natale and Doran, 2012; Schapper and Mayson, 2004). The answer to this pandemic wellbeing issue cannot be found in a change of terminology (e.g. avoiding the word 'stress' and only using the phrase 'being under pressure') in how we speak of this condition; and, equally, offering staff a few hours training on 'becoming resilient' and 'time management' or 'productivity wizards' is not a significant and sustainable solution.

Concluding remarks

The matter of workload models remains complex in that these 'are clearly not just another manifestation of unnecessary and unpleasant managerialism, but neither can we consider them merely as benign tools for ensuring fairness' (Hull, 2006:46). Some of the main issues identified in workload models are: subjectivity in the establishment of what constitutes academic work and how to measure it; the idea in itself of what is an appropriate or fair academic workload; the realistic allocation of time to various aspects, tasks and roles, and the related implications in relation to

quality; superimposed managerial practices of control and the need for effective use of resources.

While the use of workload models may be necessary in today's neo-liberal academic context, it is the way these are created, negotiated and implemented that continues to raise concern. Professional independence and autonomy is important for departments and individuals in choosing the most appropriate framework and typology of workload allocation model. These instruments must suit specific needs and practices without adopting a one-size-fits-all university-wide model. Although establishing an average or general allocation system might be useful (e.g. benchmarking performance across the institution, the allocation of central resources, the requests for additional staffing, equal treatment across the organization) different disciplines or courses might need to discriminate in terms of inputs and processes.

Workload allocation models can be seen both as an instrument to reinforce transparency and equal distribution of tasks and responsibilities, and as a form of academic panopticon used to monitor and control academic staff. In Foucauldian terms, these nodes of resistance are interesting in the understanding of the exercise of power in 'contextually specific practices, techniques, procedures, forms ofknowledgeand modes ofrationalitythatareroutinelydeployed in attempts to shape the conduct of others' (Knights and Vurdubakis, 1994:174-5).

It has been suggested that while academics face challenges that they might find difficult to cope with, they might not be very effective at resisting managerialism or tend to do so in a quiet way (Willmott, 1995; Prichard and Willmott, 1997). In 2001, Barry, Chandler and Clark posed that academic resistance was often underplayed and that managerialism in higher education was not yet settled. The circumstances of Higher Education may have considerably changed over the past decade. Academic staff worldwide, and especially in the UK context explored in this article, have often displayed resistance, either individually or as a unionised professional group, towards a number of superimposed factors and changes (i.e. tariff of expectations, pension issues, contractual

matters and the closing of departments or functions within the university). It is suggested that in the current environment 'the increasing performance orientation is bound to clash with the traditional professional values of autonomy, collegialism and professionalism that academics embrace' (Sousa, de Nijs and Hendriks, 2010: 1441).

Although workload allocation models may not be the only one solution to stress and excessive workloads in academia, we contend that workload allocation models could effectively be used i) to resist the imposition of neoliberal marketised principles of organizing in academia, ii) to empower staff to better manage their work, and iii) to reject unfair, unequal, unhealthy or unmanageable workloads that lead to stress, burnout and decreased wellbeing. In order to do so, allocations of hours or points to different tasks, roles and responsibilities must be realistic, transparent and co-produced at different elvels of the organization. Further, we argue that although workload models may be necessary in contemporary higher education institutions in order to achieve better transparency, equality and more effective use of resources, the benefits of such systems are lost without a degree of autonomy at departmental, school or personal level. This autonomy and independent decision making, and the relevant accountability in terms of human resources management and outputs, would allow some delegation of power and control which would likely increase staff satisfaction and wellbeing. From a Foucauldian perspective, how academics deal with their performance management and workload models does not simply imply a passive reaction to changing circumstances in academia, but it concurrently involves individuals who actively monitor and help shape strategies of power that enable them to affect their work. Following earlier conceptualisations by Harris (1993) and Jackson et al. (1994), it is then proposed that workloads are negotiated at departmental, team and individual level (with staff representing various stakeholder groups such as managers, research and teaching staff, administrators, staff from minority groups, tenured staff and part-time colleagues etc.).

Further empirical research could provide richer understandings of how workloads are implemented

and resisted at the individual, collective and institutional level through the use of qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection with academic staff at various professional levels and with different managerial roles and responsibilities. In addition, it would be interesting to draw a comparison among a number of universities in the UK and in other countries.

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