The original publication is available at www.springerlink.com

10.1023/A:1015565112209

Published in *Higher Education* **44:** 91-114, 2002

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Merging Divergent Campus Cultures into Coherent Educational Communities: Challenges for Higher Education Leaders

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Abstract

This paper presents mergers in higher education as a sociocultural issue. Concentrating particularly on mergers in Australia during the late 1980s and beyond, highlighted are some of the cultural challenges that arose and the strategies adopted by institutional leaders in trying to create integrated communities from the merging of campus cultures that were historically and symbolically un-complementary. By viewing a number of cases, how hoped-for post-merger integration or 'coherent educational communities' were and were not achieved is a specific focus. A strong theme of this paper is the importance for leaders of newly merged campuses to understand the nature and important role of cultural differences and to manage these sensitively and proficiently.

INTRODUCTION

While there is no one prescribed method to ensure that mergers are managed successfully, there is much to be learned from the experience of countries such as Australia where new higher education institutions formed from a series of mergers over a decade ago. Amid major systemic and organisational upheaval in Australian higher education between 1987-1991, new institutions emerged from a number of often highly contested and controversial mergers. Despite many positive benefits voiced by proponents of these mergers, around the system reactions are still mixed as to how successful these have been, especially 'vertical' mergers (Goedegebuure 1992, p. 24) that occurred between university and non-university institutions. In many cases

post-merger integration has been painful, messy and protracted and in one case, the merged partners of one newly created institution broke apart.

Merger as a policy issue in public higher education has attracted a particularly large deal of scholarly interest over the last twenty years or so, possibly because of the way national governments have used mergers to effect systemic change and the way institutions that are affected react to these pressures. Structural issues, procedural and linkage arrangements, typologies, leadership and management of mergers and stages in the merger process have also received a fair share of treatment in the higher education literature (see Pratt, 1977; Harman, 1986, 1991; McKinnon, 1988; Meek, 1988a, 1991; Goedegebuure, 1992; Pritchard, 1993; Martin and Samels, 1994a; Dahllöf and Selander, 1996; Wilson, 1996; Wyatt, 1998). It is noted however, that little attention has been paid to merger as a sociocultural issue. This is surprising given that managing the cultural dimension of mergers is such an important element in helping to ensure integration, creating a sense of loyalty to the new institution and in addressing likely high levels of conflict and stress. Perhaps this dimension has been vastly understated or ignored because of the elusive and hard-to-pin-down nature of culture and because of the time needed for culture building and consolidation to occur in newly created institutions.

In newly merged higher education institutions a large proportion of senior executives appear also to neglect the nature and importance of the cultural dimension. This involves such important elements as managing the diverse academic orientations, values and attitudes of staff, integrating different student cultures, creating a strong research culture, and building morale and a sense of community that helps develop loyalty to the newly created institution.

Elements of managing mergers that have received by far the most treatment in the higher education literature on mergers to date are governance and administrative structures (legal structures, composition of governing boards or trustees and their sub-committees and academic governance structures), financial management structures and business planning, external relations (liaison with accreditation agencies, industry and government agencies, consortia and affiliated institutions, unions and alumni), human resource and industrial relations dimensions (selection, promotion and possible redundancy of staff), consolidation of information technology and library resources, and planning for academic excellence (curriculum revision of programs and awards, quality assurance in teaching and research, and professional development).

Merger as a management issue has attracted considerably less attention (Carlson, 1994; Martin and Samels, 1994b; Beverland and Bretherton 1998). Some studies that are of interest here are Burke's (1987) work on managing the human side of corporate mergers, Rowley's (1997) assessment of input factors and process variables in over thirty tertiary mergers in the UK, McClinchy's (1999) study of over 200 corporate mergers in North America, Australia and New Zealand and Dalzell's (2000) study of the merger between Massey University and Palmerston North College of Education in New Zealand.

The art of managing mergers has been a theme of some works. For example, Martin, Samels & Associates (1994) produced a handbook for managers of institutions in the United States involved in mergers, consolidation or resource sharing. While the authors concentrate chiefly on issues dealing with governing boards and strategic planning for growth, discussion is limited mainly to private institutions and to a 'horizontal' model of merging (Goedegebuure 1992, p. 24) for mutual growth between 'mission-complementary institutions'. The merging for mutual growth model is predicated on the greater possibility of integration and articulation of the goals and visions of the institutions in question. This of course raises the question of what happens when institutions that are culturally un-complementary, unequal or diverse in their missions are forced together? This kind of 'vertical' merger is certainly familiar to those cognisant of higher education initiatives in the UK, Australia and Norway for example. The UK 1983 merger between the New University of Ulster and Ulster Polytechnic to form the University of Ulster gained considerable international attention at the time because of its cross-sectoral, vertical nature (Meek, 1988b, p. 163).

The challenges of merging unequal partners is a theme picked up by a number of writers. In Australia Scott (1988) describes the political and cultural dynamics of the cross-sector merger between James Cook University and the Townsville College of Advanced Education and, from a senior executive perspective, McKinnon (1988) relates the process of 'integration' between the Wollongong Institute of Education (a CAE) and the University of Wollongong. Commenting on cross-sectoral mergers in the UK Meek (1988b) highlights the importance of 'the human factor' in the successful mergers at Warwick, Loughborough and Exeter between universities and colleges of education. Cantor (1988) provides a more detailed account of the merger process at Loughborough. Issues arising from attempts of private companies in the United States to integrate un-complementary cultures are examined by Buono and Bowditch (1989).

As noted before, however, merger as a sociocultural issue receives little, if any, attention. Exceptions are the works of: Buono and Bowditch (1989) whose eight year study of five private company mergers focusses on the impact on the human and cultural elements of merger during the post-merger period of organisations; Pritchard (1993) who comments on the style of leadership needed for morale building and developing new loyalties; and Martin, Samels & Associates (1994) who stress the importance in the post-merger phase of 'consolidation and community building' especially in institutions created from an amalgam of unequals. Commenting particularly on the potent force of different institutional cultures colliding in the merger process, Buono and Bowditch (1989, p. 142) point out that,

> *The full potency of organizational culture can be seen during a merger or acquisition when two disparate cultures are forced to become one…organizations that may appear to be highly compatible on the surface and that seemingly should be able to achieve valuable merger synergies can have underlying cultural differences that seriously threaten their integration…Organizational members are usually so embedded in their own culture prior to major organizational changes that they rarely fully realize its influence on their behavior.*

Before launching into the major themes of the article, the Australian merger scene is portrayed in the broader international context of mergers. The terms 'merger' and 'amalgamation' are used synonymously throughout, the definitions provided by Goedegebuure (1992, p. 16) and Pritchard (1993, p. 81) having been adapted for this purpose. An institutional merger is taken to mean an amalgamation of two or more separate institutions that surrender their legally and culturally independent identities in favour of a new joint identity under the control of a single governing body. All assets, liabilities and responsibilities of the former institutions, including the human elements, are transferred to the single new institution.

Concentrating particularly on the Australian experience of the late 1980s and beyond, highlighted here are some of the cultural challenges that arose and the strategies adopted by institutional leaders in trying to create integrated communities from the merging of campus cultures that were historically and symbolically un-complementary. How hoped-for post-merger integration or 'coherent educational communities' (Martin and Samels 1994a, pp. 229-231) were and were not achieved is a specific focus.

THE AUSTRALIAN SCENE IN BROADER PERSPECTIVE

There are noticeable similarities between a number of countries in how their governments have effected major structural change in higher education over the last twenty years or so. Goedegebuure (1992), for example, notes the striking parallels—political, economic and cultural—between the way the Dutch and Australian governments used mergers in the 1980s with the creation of the non-university (HBO) sector in the Netherlands and creation of the Unified National System (UNS) of universities in Australia. The mergers that have occurred across the non-university sector in Norway following the recommendations of the Ottosen Committee in the late 1960s to form *distrikts-hogskoler* (regional colleges) (Cerych and Sabatier, 1986) and those that have since taken place, are other examples.

In the 1970s in response to growing economic and social pressures and growth and diversification of demand in their respective countries, the British and Australian governments used mergers to create their systems of polytechnics and colleges of advanced education (CAEs) respectively. In Australia, in the non-university sector single-purpose professional training institutions such as teachers' colleges were merged with other vocationally-oriented institutions to create multi-purpose CAEs. Creation of the CAE sector meant that a binary system of higher education in Australia emerged—on the one hand, CAEs which could teach up to the masters level but were not funded for research, and universities on the other. The rhetoric at the time was that CAEs were 'equal but different' to universities.

In Australia in the late 1980s, however, when ideas of a knowledge-based economy and the demands of industry were utmost in government thinking, mergers occurred between a number of institutions, both university and non-university. Government intervention was most noticeable through the setting of minimum sizes for institutions and by actively encouraging mergers through financial incentives (Harman 1993, p. 123). Given these conditions were met, all higher education institutions could become universities. As a consequence, a scramble for partners ensued and a variety of institutional liaisons resulted. The old binary policy supporting a university-CAE divide was thus dispensed with and created in its place was the Unified National System (UNS) of higher education. Virtually overnight and following many instances of 'shotgun marriages' and often torturous labour, the 19 publicly funded universities and around 44 CAEs gave birth to 35 universities.[1]

The major principles underscoring the government initiative to create the UNS were provision of greater academic depth and diversity, and economies of scale and management. These were to occur in an environment that promoted greater competition for funds and students. Likewise in

the UK the policy paper of 1991, *Higher Education: A New Framework* which set out to abolish the binary divide, was based on the principles of cost effectiveness and increased scope for coordination and rationalisation across the system in a more competitive environment (Pritchard 1993, p. 80). Cynical observers of the Australian scene would argue that since creation of the UNS there has been very little evidence, if any, of economies of scale especially as management structures have grown out of all proportion in universities with accompanying managerial salary structures. For vocationally-oriented students such as teacher educators and social workers, expansion of course offerings has been beneficial. However, the competitive policy environment has ensured that academic diversity between institutions is yet to be realised across the system.

While some mergers from the late 1980s in Australia have worked well, others have not. Those that have worked well have been typically well managed by competent senior executives who established integrative structures that kept structural and cultural divisions to a minimum. Two examples of mergers that have been successful because of capable leadership, human ability and foresight are the University of Wollongong which was created in 1982 from the integration of the nearby Institute of Education into the University of Wollongong (McKinnon, 1988) and Charles Sturt University (CSU) which was formed from the amalgamation of two regional multi school CAEs in New South Wales—the Riverina Institute and the Mitchell CAE (Massingham, 1994; Hodgson, 1996).

There has been only one divorce—the multi-campus federated network University of New England (UNE) which broke up at the end of 1993. After many years of often embittered struggles against amalgamation and with strong political pressure at both State and Federal levels, the merger between the old UNE and its new partners finally occurred in 1989 with the creation of the UNS. The federated network UNE was a vertical merger of unequals where an established research university was merged with three CAEs (two ex-teachers' colleges and one agricultural college). Following the break-up, two former partners became autonomous universities—Southern Cross University (created from the former Northern Rivers CAE and the Coffs Harbour campus of the 'old' UNE) and the reconstituted UNE (the merged old UNE and local CAE). The other partner, previously an agricultural college, was absorbed into the University of Sydney. The merger which occurred in Armidale between the CAE and the old UNE remains intact. Many and complex reasons exist for the break up, not the least of which were the powerful personalities involved and inappropriate structures that gave too much power to individual campuses (Harman and Robertson-Cuninghame, 1995).

In Australia creation of the federated network University of New England is a good example of a structurally and symbolically un-complementary merger where, apart from other considerations, a collision of organisational and academic cultures occurred. More detailed reasons for the cultural schisms at UNE will be taken up later. Other cross-sectoral mergers had occurred between James Cook University and Townsville CAE (1981) and between the University of Tasmania and the Tasmanian State Institute of Technology in the early 1990s. In the early stages of the latter two mergers, political antagonism and cultural resistance were the order of the day.

CHALLENGES OF MERGING DIVERGENT CAMPUS CULTURES

Attempts to merge un-complementary campus cultures into a coherent, workable system in a newly merged institution present sizeable challenges for higher education leaders. As illustrated earlier, the role of entrenched culture cannot be underestimated. The 'thicker' the culture where a greater degree of shared beliefs and values is evident, the more potent will be the culture's influence (Buono and Bowditch 1989, p. 147).

Central to both sociological and anthropological interpretations of culture are the notions of custom and tradition, generally shared, which are transgenerational, cumulative and symbolic (Buono and Bowditch, 1989 p. 136). The cultural or symbolic realm which permeates organisational life on campus underscores the occupational life and work of members of the organisation at different levels of structure. Unlike organisational structures which can be concretely depicted, organisational cultures are elusive, ubiquitous and difficult to render intelligible. They represent historically transmitted patterns of meanings expressed in symbolic form through the shared commitments, values and standards of behaviour peculiar to members, as well as the traditions, myths, rituals, language and other forms of expressive symbolism which surround them (Harman 1989a, p. 36). These symbolic elements are deeply embedded and are not easy to unfreeze or turn on and off at will.

Many organisational analysts use culture to mean the shared beliefs, ideologies and ideals which serve as a normative guide for behaviour within the group or the organisation. Consciously or unconsciously, they use the term in such a way as to ignore divisiveness and conflict within the system and tend to make the assumption that culture can be created and manipulated with the aim of creating improved organisational effectiveness and a more cohesive organisational climate. This kind of definition lacks analytical bite especially when applied to universities which are

probably unsurpassed as homes for contested views, contradictions, debate and intellectual conflict. Indeed, universities do not merely house these but generate them.

To illustrate how different campus cultures operated in different academic settings in Australia, it is useful at this point to differentiate cultural aspects of academia that typically existed in universities from that in CAEs at the time the UNS was created (newer loyalties tied to market forces, competition and entrepreneurship might now present a different picture). These can be seen to relate particularly to role ambiguity and conflict, comparative values associated with teaching and research, reward structures, disciplinary and institutional loyalties and governance styles and structures as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Loyalties and values of academic staff in universities and colleges of advanced education

	UNIVERSITIES	**COLLEGES**
Academic role	Roles ambiguous and marked by divided loyalties	Roles more clearly prescribed
Professional loyalties	Loyalties directed more to the disciplines and learned societies	Loyalties directed more to the institution and the respective professions
Teaching versus research	A strong research culture and less value ascribed to teaching	Less emphasis on research but teaching highly valued
Reward structures	Research a key criterion for scholarly recognition and promotion	Teaching and service to the profession the key criteria for promotion and recognition
Governance	Collegial, democratic decision making structures highly valued	Structures more hierarchical and bureaucratic

As a professional group, university academics were characterised (and mostly still are) more by divided loyalties, role ambiguity, heterogeneity, anarchical tendencies, conflict and self interest, than probably any other professional group such as doctors, lawyers, engineers and the like. Despite their overall commitment to the idea of the university and what it stands for, academics in major research universities varied greatly as to the directions in which their professional loyalties were directed. In professional schools in particular, where the cultures of scholarly academia and professional, client-oriented practice intersect and inherently conflict, teaching staff are pulled in different directions, constantly attempting to balance tensions which arise between the two (Harman 1989b, p. 506). Such role ambiguity was not so rampant in CAEs.

In terms of loyalties, Gouldner's (1957-58) concept of 'cosmopolitans' and 'locals' is particularly pertinent here. That is to say, loyalties of university staff were typically cosmopolitan in that they were more attached to aspects of their disciplinary affiliations and learned societies rather than to their institution. These ran counter to the allegiances of CAE academic staff who tended to be attached more locally to their institution and to serving their respective professions.

Greater value placed on research in universities created a considerable cultural divide between the reward systems of staff in universities and CAEs. Whereas in universities research was a key criterion for promotion and scholarly recognition, CAEs (which were not funded for research), placed greater emphasis on teaching and service to the professions for promotion and recognition. In addition, apart from the scholarly research of a minority, the traditional norms of scientific universalism associated with university research—commitment to disinterestedness, peer review by experts in the field and openness in disclosure and dissemination of new knowledge—had little place in CAE culture.

Managerial style and structures also presented a cleavage between the CAE and university cultures. University academics believed strongly in collegial, democratic decision making, two guiding principles being that intellectual authority derives from the disciplines and that truth is no respecter of status and hierarchy. This unifying and powerful myth derived from the 'community of scholars' ideal, reflects the dominant ethos of the medieval guild—collegial decision making by a body of equals in an unhierarchical and collaborative enterprise—a concept that Charlesworth (1987) depicts as 'the mythical university'. While such myths serve largely to explain a kind of reality that tends to ignore or obviate some of the more negative or disintegrative features of academic life, hierarchy and bureaucracy were nevertheless not (and still are not) tolerated easily by university academics. CAEs, by contrast, were structured more bureaucratically with lines of authority much more defined and formal hierarchies an accepted mode of operation.

When CAEs and universities merged in Australia, facets of their un-complementary cultures collided head-on in many institutions. Managing culture became a considerable challenge for leaders especially in the process of strengthening academic programs, enhancing research profiles, and consolidating policies pertaining to professional development, recruitment and promotion. The challenges of morale and community building and dealing with cultural

cleavages also loomed large. How these challenges were addressed in some institutions is the theme of what follows.

PLANNING FOR ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Strengthening overall academic offerings

Strengthening academic programs in institutions formed from different missions and cultures is no easy task. However, achieving academic excellence involves not only strengthening academic offerings but building new innovative programs and developing a more sound financial base. These are seen to be key benchmarks (Martin and Samels 1994b, pp. 14-15).

Understandably during curriculum review processes that involve restructuring of academic programs, cultural, territorial and seniority-based conflicts coupled with anxiety and confusion, occur amongst both faculty and administrative staff alike. Whether the new structures decided on are based on a more traditional departmental model, a schools model or a more innovative model, will depend on what is needed, what is in the corporate plan in terms of the desired mission and culture of the new institution, and what were the real identities and offerings of the institutions being merged.

When the multi-campus Charles Sturt University was formed in regional New South Wales it was found that both its predecessor institutions had a similar curriculum and delivery profile. They were both major distance education providers, offered similar curricula and, consequently, there was a great deal of duplication. A senior manager who was involved in the process of amalgamation at the time saw the main challenges as coordination, communication and rationalising academic activities (Hodgson, 1996, p. 103).

In order to address these problems an ‘integrated faculty model’ was set up that spanned the campuses (Hodgson, 1996, p. 78) and academics within these were given the responsibility of rationalising the inherent duplication themselves. The rationale was that these were the people who had to live with the decisions made. Funding for academic programs was devolved to faculties from the centre. Establishment of university-wide cost centres was also a clever device to minimise inter-campus rivalry and guard against disintegration. This decentralised integrated model adopted and enforced by the new Vice-Chancellor, was fiercely resisted at first, but strong leadership from the top and new appointments of senior management who shared the vision ensured that the model worked. Essentially the autonomy of the old campuses and allegiances to

their structures and cultures were consciously attacked by the new approach. Most observers of the new universities created from merger would agree that CSU is a success story in that it is not only now solidly welded together but has managed to get that way without getting into debt.

Enhancing the research profile

Building or consolidating a strong research culture after merger, especially in institutions where research was not one of the primary goals for one or more of the partners, is another challenging exercise. Institutions which hope to develop a reputable research capacity, in particular those aspiring to become universities, need to ensure that staff who are not already doing so, pursue research-based degrees, and that there will be a respectable group of postgraduate programs and students, infrastructure to support the research enterprise, and a professoriate comprising senior research leaders and managers.

An example where a research culture was developed 'from scratch' is portrayed by Beverland and Bretherton (1998). They explain how The Centre for Applied Management at the Institute of Technology in Auckland, New Zealand (UNITEC) attempted to do so. As a polytechnic aiming for university status in the year 2000,[2] UNITEC needed to develop a much stronger research profile. An internal report in the mid 1990s observed that research was conducted by a few enthusiasts but was something that was considered extra as opposed to the normal duties of teaching staff.

In its bid to develop a strong research-based culture the Centre acted strategically and developed a plan to stimulate research. A major challenge was to create a climate that produced quality research but at the same time did not see any decline in the quality of teaching. Aided by strong leadership, they began by establishing clear objectives, individual goal setting and gaining access to financial resources. By legal requirement of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) anyone teaching on a degree level course must engage in and contribute to research as government funding for these students includes a portion for research. The NZQA also requires that academic staff set clear definitions as to what constitutes research. In 1995 members of the Centre met and put into action the following scheme. They:

- appointed a research mentor from a research university;
- provided a specific time allowance of 15 days per annum for research within people's contractual agreements;
- stipulated certain requirements for supervision of students' research projects (number of hours contact hours per year);

- organised a series of seminars to stimulate activity and commitment (a new dean acted as an important catalyst here);
- developed a 6 step model of research profiles (see Table 2) initiated by the new dean and committed resources in order to move staff from Level 1 to Level 6 as soon as possible;
- recruited two new staff with research track records;
- restructured the department and appointed a new head who provided resources for research support, especially for staff to attend research conferences;
- negotiated with the head of Centre on specific research outputs—at least 10 outputs from the 12 staff in the first year;
- started to use students' work as another source of research output as more staff became involved with supervising students;
- provided incentives for professional development and upskilling of staff (six weeks time release available for PhD study);
- developed research management plans for 1997 onwards which involved detailed research outputs giving schedules, titles, publications sought and budget requirements with necessary resources subsequently built into the budget; and
- appointed a program coordinator to oversee all research-based projects in the Centre, look after the budget and develop research resources.

The strategic process has built in important review mechanisms. In summary it:

- sets an overall numerical goal for the Centre as a whole;
- provides the necessary resources to meet the goal;
- negotiates with staff over the number and type of outputs;
- monitors the performance of each staff member;
- provides feedback via performance review; and
- reviews its strategy as a whole on a regular basis.

(Adapted from Beverland and Bretherton 1998, pp. 45-48)

At the individual level, academic members were encouraged with a specially devised six-point continuum of research development. This ranged from the dangers of complacency to becoming a mature, successful researcher. Table 2 illustrates these stages.

<u>Table 2:</u> Stages in developing research profiles at the Centre for Applied Management UNITEC West Auckland, New Zealand

			4	**5**	**6** Undertaking more extensive

1	**2**	**3**			
Not interested in research Do not perceive research as part of the academic role	Cognisant of the need to research but not yet able to translate ideas into publication Unsure of what to investigate and write	Forms or joins a team of researchers (maximum 4) to stimulate ideas, provide motivation, guidance and manuscript checking Conference attendance, initially not as a presenter but to observe, then with confidence as a presenter	Submitting papers, initially to professional publications and writing performance or book reviews Writing for refereed journals Becoming fully acquainted with the full body of literature and fellow researchers Book preparation	Establishing research objectives and conducting discrete research projects Maximising student contributions Receiving organisational support Writing invitational chapters International replication and collaboration	research pro-grams, often of a longer duration Contributing significantly to the field Attracting external funding International reputation gained Organisational recognition
Be careful of complacency	**Be careful of procrastination**	**Be careful of conference dependency**	**Be careful of limitations on funding**	**Be careful of not maturing in scholarship**	**Be careful of becoming too successful**

Source: Adapted from Beverland and Bretherton (1998, p. 56)

The Centre's quest was also aided by what was happening at the institutional level. By the end of 1997 a real commitment to research permeated UNITEC from senior management through to lecturing staff and the environment had become facilitative and supportive. The output target is now around two papers per person per year and over 50% of the staff in the Centre are now enrolled in PhDs.

The development was not without its problems and all did not go smoothly at times. There were tensions over issues such as developing collaborative research as opposed to individual research projects, trying to get research teams to work together and being too dependent on the mentor for driving projects after they had started. While there is no ideal model for developing a research culture the one adopted in the Centre at UNITEC seems to have worked well overall. With a carefully planned strategy that supported incumbents, a 'weaker' set of values was dispensed with in order to achieve what was needed. This case represents a 'takeover' by a dominant set of university research values under the directive leadership of a new dean imbued with these values.

The story is different for the UNE-Armidale campus experience. From the start, the merger on this campus was marked with antagonism coupled with entrenched rivalries and opposing academic values. The merger involved all staff of the CAE who taught in the areas of education,

nursing and professional studies joining with the old UNE Faculty of Education staff to form the new Faculty of Education, Nursing and Professional Studies. From the start this new structure was set up for conflict especially as the CAE staff outnumbered considerably the university staff, a situation which often caused considerable angst when issues came to the vote. Also, as the CAE had not been funded for research and teaching quality and experience as well as service to the profession formed the key criteria for promotion, no strong research culture had developed although some individuals had engaged for some time in individual research projects. It is no wonder then that enhancing the research profile of the new Faculty where the old CAE culture dominated, proved a difficult task. A big challenge for the newly created Faculty was to ensure that the old CAE staff were given every opportunity to engage in research, to upgrade their qualifications to doctoral level and develop a respectable output of publications over a reasonable time. Special provision was made by way of small seeding grants for getting interested people without a research track record started on research.

As it happened, turning non-researchers into researchers was easier said than done. However, some areas such as nursing which had previously had little opportunity to engage in research, benefited a great deal. As nurses had previously had very heavy teaching loads coupled with time-consuming clinical components in hospitals, they celebrated in the chance to research and resulting from their efforts, considerable advances have been made in the fields of nursing and health studies.

CONSOLIDATING HUMAN RESOURCE POLICIES

Support for teaching and research

If research capacity is to be developed and teaching is to take more prominence in newly merged institutions whose component partners traditionally valued research and teaching differently, conditions need to be worked out and policies put in place that support professional development in both these important areas. Such policies need to provide incentives for novice teachers to develop their skills, for established teachers to upgrade theirs and for novice or non-researchers to engage in research (as in the case at UNITEC).

To help develop research capacity and to ensure quality, newly merged institutions typically provide support such as mentoring programs, and workshops that concentrate on learning 'the tricks of the trade' in writing grant applications to secure external funds for projects and acquiring skills in writing for publication. Policies providing for reduction in teaching loads and release time for upgrading qualifications of staff, funds for seeding grants, sabbatical leave,

conference support, individual support such as teaching fellows and research assistants, and monitoring the effectiveness of these at regular intervals, have all aided in building research capacity (Martin, 1994). These kinds of policies are typically developed at the Faculty or School level.

When the multi-campus university of Charles Sturt University was formed academic staff felt impelled to do research. However, while many believed that their professional lives were enriched, arguments ensued over what component of research should be included in their overall workloads. They argued that while teaching and its associated administrative chores counted as workload, those who researched were carrying inequitable loads compared with their colleagues who did no research (Hatton 1997, p. 16). This issue is a problem still in the (now) UNE Faculty of Education, Health and Professional Studies. It is clear then that where research is a highly valued institutional goal and an important criterion for recruitment, promotion and performance reviews, workload policies are needed that take account of the research component in order that people's workloads are defined more equitably.

In the early days of the newly created CSU, the value ascribed to teaching generated much concern and heated debate. A number of academic staff, particularly those from the former CAEs, argued that teaching was not valued highly in the new university. To some extent this was true, inasmuch as teaching typically involved substantial contact hours involving much group work as opposed to lecturer-centred delivery. The new university decided that the CAE mode of 'overteaching' was to go and that teaching contact hours were to be reduced as moves towards more self directed learning were encouraged and the amount of research by staff was expected to increase (Hatton 1997, p. 16-17). More economical modes of delivery and those which enhanced student autonomy in learning such as resource-based teaching, advances in distance learning and delivery on the Web, were favoured. These moves were supported by provision of innovative teaching colloquia that assisted teachers to reflect on their own practice and develop their skills (Hatton 1997, p. 18). While a limited number of pre-merger universities in Australia had provision for professional development of teaching, one positive outcome of mergers has been the greater emphasis now placed on teaching. Another has been that all universities in Australia now have teaching and learning centres or the capacity to provide upgraded skill training for staff especially in the use of new technology.

Consolidating academic recruitment and promotion policies

Developing agreed-on conditions and criteria for recruitment and promotion that were underscored by shared values was no easy task for newly merged Australian institutions. At the earlier career levels in particular, gauging the proper balance and weighting between criteria such as higher degree qualifications, quality of teaching, track record in research and service to the institution, professions and/or community at large, became an extremely challenging task in the post-merger period. The 'old' universities traditionally took more account of research than their non-university counterparts. In the non-university sector, criteria for the research component was far less rigorous and in institutions where scholarship and research were differentiated, scholarship was given more prominence.

Promotion criteria at the University of New England were substantially modified following merger. Whereas before, the research component at the University was heavily weighted for promotion from Lecturer (Level B) to the more senior rank of Senior Lecturer (Level C), teaching quality and leadership in teaching were given more prominence post-merger. In assessing applications for promotion at all levels, promotion committees consider applications against the following four criteria 'at a level commensurate with discipline norms' (UNE 2000, p. 7):

(a) formal qualifications or progress towards these;
(b) research, scholarship, creative achievement and professional activity;
(c) service to the University and to the community; and
(d) experience and achievement in teaching and curriculum development, including leadership in teaching.

Within set percentage limits, applicants need to specify the weighting they wish their committee to ascribe to each of the last three criteria. Applicants also need to provide the committees with assessors' reports and properly organised teaching profiles that give details of peer, student and independent assessments of teaching quality, course development activities, supervision effectiveness, quality of teaching material, professional development courses undertaken, special awards obtained, innovative practices and the like. For promotion to the more senior levels of Associate Professor and Professor, although more weighting is now ascribed to teaching and service, greater weighting is still on research. Gender equity considerations, especially for women who have had time out of the workforce during their academic career, have not yet been factored in at UNE.

MANAGING THE CULTURAL DIMENSION

Post-merger morale and community building

In any process of rapid organisational change, people tend to feel disoriented, unsettled, frustrated, unprepared for change and unable to compete with the demands of the newly created institution. Academic and physical restructuring necessitate long-term investments and results are not likely to be immediate, a situation which undoubtedly affects morale of faculty, administrative and service staff and students. Professor Ken McKinnon, as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Wollongong at the time the nearby Institute of Advanced Education was integrated into the University, was very much aware of the importance of morale building. Writing six years after the merger, McKinnon (1988, p. 119) had this to say:

> *I have come to realize that academic insecurity is endemic, so I cannot claim that morale is good or easily sustainable…But it is probably more robust than morale in most institutions.*

Much of the literature supports the notion that most institutional mergers, apart from being wasteful of human and material resources, inflict pain and anxiety, are disruptive and can take years to settle down (Meek 1995, p. 134). Writing on aspects of the 1989 amalgamation of the Kuring-gai CAE and the University of Technology Sydney, O'Neill (1997, p. 97) observes that,

> *… an amalgamation is successful if staff and students do not experience significant pain and extended disruption as a result of it. To put it another way, a successfully amalgamated institution exhibits fairly stable organisational features.*

In any merger there will be both winners and losers and the impact on individuals will be mixed. But if the settling down period is not managed effectively and with super-sensitivity, the impact of merger on morale and loyalty of staff can be devastating.

Merging differing academic cultural orientations and values of pre-merger staff and different governing cultures of their institutions have a number of implications for leadership. In successful mergers leadership in the early stages is typically strongly directive as was the case at CSU and the University of Wollongong. However, as the institution changes over time, the style of leadership needs to change from being less controlling from the top to more building morale and developing loyalty. As noted earlier, McKinnon (1998) was all too aware of the importance of morale building in the post-merger phase. In her case studies of mergers in the UK, Pritchard (1993, p. 85) comments on the importance of morale building and eliciting loyalty. Such actions

draw on the skills of transformational leaders who have vision and can persuade members to share and work towards the new vision (Buono and Bowditch 1989, pp. 221-2). If the new institution is to survive and prosper in the post-merger consolidation and community building phase, especially in the face of an often changing hostile political and economic environment, then building a culture that elicits loyalty and a sense of community is crucial. In many cases old local loyalties need to be broken down and redirected to the newly created institution, a task which poses no easy task for leaders. In addressing this challenge, leaders need to create images of the new organisation that elicit new loyalties.

The Vice-Chancellor of the newly created CSU focussed on building integrative organisational structures and funding mechanisms, appointing new managers and a professoriate who shared the new vision, and developing a corporate image that constantly reinforced the oneness of the institution. In 1994 the University of Central Queensland designed and implemented a new corporate image and changed its name to Central Queensland University, both of which symbolised a new unity and a strong association with the geographic region (Wilson, 1996, p.111). Developing new name, a new coat of arms and new honorary doctorates were symbolically important in this process at CSU (Hodgson, 1996, pp. 59-61). The new order there consciously broke up the old power structures and loyalties. The period of consolidation that followed, although disruptive for many, was crucial in developing a sense of community in which loyalty to the new institution was important. This strategy fits with the idea of Martin and Samels (1994b, p. 20) that post-merger planning could be seen as the first major community building activity to draw peripheral departments and areas closer to the centre of the new institutional identity.

Managing academic schisms

Cultural conflict has proved to be the norm in the post-merger phase of most institutions and was (and still is in some) typically more apparent where an amalgam of markedly different cultures occurred. Scott (1988) illustrates well the cultural and political forces at work during the merger of James Cook University and the local CAE. The CAE staff resisted strongly their loss of identity when one set of university values and procedures took over (Scott, 1988, p. 25). Where entrenched values and attitudes of merger partners persist, working to create a common culture of attitudes and allegiances and a strong sense of community, presents no easy task for managers at all levels of the institution. Buono and Bowditch (1989, p. 192, p. 194) point out that efforts to change culture are fraught with difficulty—

> *... during the postmerger period, the development of a new culture that deals with a large share of individual needs and anxieties, facilitates interpersonal relations, accommodates conflicts, at the same time adapts to new circumstances is an inherently difficult and time-consuming task ...*
> *Simple prescriptions such as 'change the culture' often ignore the time and effort involved in the change process.*

While factors such as good timing, appropriate processes and style of leadership seem to facilitate successful post-merger integration, cultural factors can act as powerful constraints. Buono and Bowditch (1989, pp. 162-3) go so far as to say that the task of coordinating and integrating different organisational cultures

> *is one of the most demanding, complex, and problematic aspects of mergers and acquisitions... "strong" or "thick"... cultural orientations can significantly limit what organizational members are willing to accept and do in a merger ...*

Such deeply embedded cultural orientations acted as constraints in the UNE-Armidale merger. Reflecting on the break up of the federated network University of New England in 1993, Meek (1995, pp. 130-131) depicts the main tensions between the old UNE and the Armidale CAE as culturally-based. In terms of loyalties for instance, Meek points out that the cosmopolitan views of UNE staff vied strongly with the local views of the CAE staff. Other cultural cleavages were based on academic status. The fact that principal lecturers from the CAE were automatically ascribed associate professor titles was resented by UNE staff and some of the recipients of their new status were not happy that they were seen by their UNE counterparts as 'lower class' academics. Belief was rife amongst old UNE staff that this 'rebadging' exercise lowered the academic standing of the University.

In addition CAE staff valued more a team approach to teaching and a more structured work environment as opposed to the University staff who worked in an environment with more fluid and disjointed arrangements. College staff were also used to working with hierarchical structures, unlike the University staff who typically shunned (and still shun) hierarchy and bureaucratic forms of governance.

A critical source of tension (which still exists) was over the value of teaching versus research and the weightings each should receive in considering recruitment and promotion criteria, and overall workload. Again, the cosmopolitan-local divide was evident as Meek (1995, p. 132)

points out, 'Cosmopolitans teach, but build their national and international reputations and allegiances through research. Locals mainly teach.'

The different cultures of UNE and CAE academic staff showed up particularly in the allegiances of the latter. Whereas University staff tended to vote on issues in a more fragmented way, college staff tended to vote as a block. Where key decisions were decided on by vote, those from the CAE who far outnumbered their university counterparts, exercised considerable power. This kind of action was often a great source of annoyance and frustration for old UNE staff.

DISCUSSION

Whether institutions come together because of external pressure or by choice, the challenge of developing from disparate cultures an integrated culture of shared loyalties, values, attitudes and conditions is very real for leaders. But integration does not necessarily mean assimilation. While a common misconception is that there must be total assimilation of different cultures, many different models and levels of cultural integration are possible.[3] The degree of integration desired in the newly created institution and the consequent cultural implications are important consideration for leaders.

The concept of an integrated corporate culture where all interested parties agree amicably on everything is not a realistic or useful way to view institutional culture. It is not possible nor desirable in any academic community to have a culture where this kind of consensual 'happy family' agreement exists. If a common culture means that people can agree on a basic framework of values but disagree on some technical issues, then this is a good starting point. Conflict is an inherent characteristic of all healthy higher education institutions and compromises do have to be made.

When embedded cultures of un-complementary institutions collide, they become a potent force that can retard or prevent organisational change. It is clear from some cases of Australian mergers, the federated network UNE for example, that culture played a major role in acting as a barrier to change. Managing proficiently and sensitively the cultural dimension in the post-merger phase of institutions welded together from contested missions and cultures or unwilling partners, is certainly a critical key to achieving successful integration and organisational stability. Bold policy decisions regarding academic programs, building research capacity, improving teaching and resource and staffing matters are not likely to please all stakeholders. In this task, the importance of first-rate, visionary (transformational) leadership

cannot be underestimated. As Temple and Whitchurch (1994, p. 222) note, managerial vision that can create opportunities from threats and provide special incentives to grow and develop is critical to success.

Effective leadership and management from the top is seen as the most important factor in assuring the success of a merger. Commenting on this aspect, Carlson (1994, p. 64) observes that the chief executive needs to perform a macromanagerial role and must become the conceptualiser for the whole organisation in terms of vision and assessing carefully the forces that will affect the destiny of the new institution. In this transformational role and in keeping with traditional university culture, the chief executive of a newly merged institution would do well to put the human factor high on the agenda if the merged institution is to grow healthily in the post-merger period. This would involve consulting widely, empowering subordinates, delegating authority extensively, engaging in morale and community building and managing cultural differences sensitively and proficiently .

Understanding the bases of cultural differences is a vital first step for leaders who have the task of creating in newly merged institutions with disparate missions and cultures a coherent educational community characterised by new loyalties and broadly accepted attitudes, values and conditions. Building morale, new loyalties and a sense of community means for leaders appreciating inherent and subtle differences of contested cultures and exercising sensitive judgment in managing conflict. Conflict management is a constant dilemma for leaders of higher education institutions who are by definition, managers of conflict. Leaders who are aware of potentially dysfunctional conflict are more likely to develop mechanisms that can successfully defuse hazardous situations before they erupt into open warfare (Harman 1989b, p. 506). Sensitivity to issues such as the rate at which change might be implemented, inherent stresses and tensions related to different academic cultures and historical contexts, economic and political pressures and the professional-scholarly divide, are all important dimensions to consider.

It is clear that a big challenge for any managers of change in higher education institutions is to capitalise on promoting forces, identify and manage effectively resisting forces and to try to work towards a cultural shift that is strategically determined and has wide acceptance by all key stakeholders. Looking to see how other institutions of similar attributes have responded successfully to this challenge would be a useful first step in developing their own policies.

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Notes

1. In 1994 Southern Cross University came into being following the de-amalgamation of the federated network UNE. SCU was created from the former Northern Rivers CAE and the Coffs Harbour campus of the old UNE.

2. Another ploy by UNITEC in order to gain university status was to forge strategic links with the Australian technological university, RMIT, in Melbourne. However, the granting of university status has now been put on hold as the New Zealand Minister for Education in May 2000 placed a Bill before parliament there that seeks to limit the number of universities to the current number of eight.

3. Buono and Bowditch (1989: 143-146) suggest four levels of cultural integration: (1) *cultural pluralism* which allows different partners to operate autonomously; (2) *cultural blending* which occurs in mergers of equals; (3) *cultural takeover* where the dominant culture takes over, a situation which demands strong, decisive leadership and skilful management of emerging cultural crises; and (4) *cultural resistance* which occurs where there is a lack of understanding or attention paid to the cultures of the merger partners.

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