

Collegiality and performativity in a competitive academic culture

Bruce Macfarlane
University of Southampton

Collegiality is one of the most symbolically significant concepts of higher education and continues to be widely espoused as a core value by members of the academic profession. However, the highly competitive and performative nature of modern higher education means that the conventional values and behaviours associated with collegiality, such as mentoring and consensual decision-making, are coming under increasing pressure. The paper reports on a questionnaire survey of academics within a Faculty of a leading research university in Hong Kong designed to understand perceptions of structural, cultural and behavioural collegiality. These perceptions vary considerably by academic rank and gender with power vested in a mainly male professorial oligarchy. Collegiality appears to be most weakly formed as a behavioural norm and, linked to this finding, the study further indicates how ventriloquizing the values of collegiality has become a performative riff in academic life which, in practice, is increasingly characterised by isolation and individualised competition.

Keywords: collegiality; performativity; gender; Hong Kong

Introduction

Collegiality is one of the most enduring ideals in higher education and is often uncritically assumed to be an integral part of the organizational culture of universities. All organizations are based on ‘a pattern of shared basic assumptions’ (Schein, 2004:17) validating a set of behavioural norms as older members teach newer ones ‘the way we do things around here’ (Deal and Kennedy, 1982:4). Academic culture may be similarly described as ‘a shared set of meanings, beliefs, understandings and ideas’ (Barnett, 1990:97). Within this culture the

notion of collegiality plays a symbolically significant part as a synoptic term for a taken-for-granted way of life. Yet, is it anything more than a myth and, perhaps more significantly, a word too frequently used to invoke a lost golden age?

At the level of the academic department a 'collegial organisation' has been characterized in the following terms:

'Collegial organizations emphasize consensus, shared power, consultation, and collective responsibilities – communities in which status differences are de-emphasized and individuals interact as equals. Members of collegial organizations share aspirations and commitments, have frequent face-to-face interaction, and use civil discourse' (Massy, Wilger and Colbreck, 1994:18).

According to Kligyte and Barrie (2014) collegiality consists of at least three elements: consensual decision-making within governance structures at both university and faculty level; a shared commitment to advancing knowledge in the discipline through collaboration with other researchers; and a 'behavioural norm' to work respectfully alongside others and contribute to service or 'academic citizenship' activities roles (Macfarlane, 2007). Beyond this threefold definition collegiality is seen as a distinguishing feature of a 'university' as opposed to an organisation working in the service of tertiary education (Tapper and Palfreyman, 2010). It is, hence, regarded as a distinctive element of what makes higher education 'special'. In perhaps one of the best-known frameworks, Bess (1988) distinguishes between three types of collegiality: structural, cultural, and behavioural. *Structural collegiality* is about shared governance within the university as an organization and implies the value of inclusivity inasmuch that all academics have a say in decision-making as an open, democratic and transparent process. *Cultural collegiality* is based on a sense of shared values (e.g. academic freedom), both at the individual level and within the context of the academic unit, and brings to fore the value of reciprocity. Finally, *behavioural collegiality* is about relationships between individual academics within and beyond the parameters of the organization based on civility and mutual respect. This might include activities such as mentoring, peer support and what is sometimes referred to as collegiality as congeniality. Tapper and Palfreyman (2000) offer a threefold classification of collegiality but this is mainly applicable to the tradition of self-governing colleges within Oxford and Cambridge and, as such, has less applicability beyond this context (Tight, 2014). However, their notion of 'intellectual collegiality' in reference to the

operation of working relationships between academics is broadly similar to that implied by Bess' (1988) behavioural collegiality.

Collegiality is a familiar part of the vocabulary of higher education. Yet it remains one of the most poorly defined and idly asserted concepts in academic life. This article will critically examine understandings of collegiality through a survey of academic staff within a Faculty in a research-intensive university in Hong Kong. The evidence from this case study helps to illuminate the ways in which the language and aspirations of collegiality exist as an enduring collective ideal. Collegiality continues to be espoused publicly even though the academic culture largely rewards behavioural norms based on competitiveness and individual performativity. Here there is a contradiction between collegiality as a collective ideal and the demands of competitive individualism. This means that collegiality remains as an ideal that is ventriloquised but less readily practiced.

Collegiality as loss

Collegiality is often identified by writers in higher education as an ancient tradition. McNay (1995:105) argues that 'the classic collegial academy' is characterized by a series of liberating absences: of regulations, inspection, of co-ordination, departmental mission, of structure. These absences enable autonomy and self-determination to thrive. It is a description of academic life that appears almost unrecognizable in modern academic life commonly characterized as one in which radical changes in the organization and management of universities over the last 20 years have resulted in more 'managerial' cultures with less consensual decision-making (McNay, 1995). This apparent shift in the culture of university life – from collegiality to managerialism – is part of this narrative of 'loss'. Collegiality is portrayed as part of a vanishing, kinder world displaced by a more market-oriented and less democratic environment that has diminished the autonomy of academics in the governance of their own affairs. Here there is a need to recognise that there has always been a degree of myth-making around the concept of collegiality (Kligyte and Barrie, 2014).

Whether real or imaginary collegiality continues to exercise a hold over the collective imagination of the academic community. Despite the appearance of pressures which place collegiality under pressure it remains an 'extraordinarily resilient idea in the academic psyche' (Kligyte and Barrie, 2014:158). It is probably one of the most idly asserted terms in academia and it is important to unpack whether its multiple meanings are anything other than a rhetorical boast, particularly in terms of claims to democratic self-governance. In a UK

context, prior to the expansion of the system in the 1960s it was unusual for an academic department to contain more than one professor. Hence, this person, invariably a man, would additionally be the head of department (Moodie, 1986). It was important for departments to be led by a professor who would, by dint of their status, also be a member of the university's senate. This meant that leadership and holding a professorial title were practically synonymous (Startup, 1976). Whilst idealised notions of collegiality emphasise academic self-governance this model did not tend to operate in practice in the manner of a fully participative and democratic forum and has been described as closer to an 'absolute monarchy' (Becher, 1982:73). Hence, while the post-war period might be considered by some as a golden age of public higher education largely free from government interference it was a time when collegiality, at least in terms of academic self-governance, was dominated by a tiny elite of male professors with few women or junior academic staff involved in university or departmental decision-making.

Hollowed collegiality

There is also a darker side to collegiality which Massy, Wilger and Colbreck (1994:19) have referred to as 'hollowed collegiality'. This phrase is used to refer to a situation at a departmental level where the vestiges or trappings of collegiality exist, such as committees, but substantial discussions leading to real change are 'dodged'. While a 'veneer of civility' may exist, open conflict is avoided at all costs and, as a result, 'the most crucial issues facing the department are never discussed' (*ibid.*:12). Massy, Wilger and Colbreck (1994) identify isolation, disciplinary specialization, superficial civility, splits between junior and senior academics, and personal politics as elements indicating the presence of 'hollowed' collegiality. Some other writers on collegiality also hint at this darker side with McNay (1995:105) commenting, for example, that there is often 'little linkage between the concerns of senior staff as managers and those involved in the key processes of teaching and learning'. Some of the trends foregrounded by Massy, Wilger and Colbreck (1994) reflect more recent debate about growth of performativity in academic life and the way in which the pressures of an increasingly marketized higher education system have resulted in a competitive ethos and a decline in consensual decision-making due to new managerialism (Deem and Brehony, 2005; Winter, 2009). These trends tend to indicate that collegiality, particularly as understood in terms of self-governance, is a value under serious strain.

The research context

In order to explore the meaning of collegiality among academic staff members research was carried out in a Faculty at a university in Hong Kong. The academic environment in Hong Kong is shaped by a number of factors. It has been a special administrative region of the People's Republic of China since the end of British colonial rule in 1997. However, under the 'one country, two systems' policy of the Chinese government, Hong Kong continues to operate its own system of universities which are funded by a separate University Grants Council. Two of Hong Kong's seven universities, the University of Hong Kong and Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, are ranked within the world's top 100 institutions (Times Higher Education, 2014) while a third, Chinese University of Hong Kong, appears in the top 200. The Research Grants Council was established in 1991 and a research assessment exercise, adopted from the UK model, has operated since 1993. A large number of international staff work at universities in Hong Kong attracted by high academic salaries and the strong reputation of higher education institutions in the territory. The position of academics in Hong Kong also needs to be understood by contrast to those in Mainland China who receive very low academic salaries by international standards and do not enjoy the same tradition of academic freedom long associated with academic life in the territory where there is legal protection for freedom of speech and assembly (Currie, Petersen and Mok, 2006). More recent developments in Hong Kong have indicated that academic freedom is under threat as the pressures of so-called 'mainlandisation' grow affecting aspects of academic governance and individual freedom of expression (Macfarlane, 2016).

International data on the academic profession provides some insight into issues related to collegiality in Hong Kong. On the basis of the 2007 *Changing Academic Profession* survey the perception of personal influence in shaping policy at the school or departmental level among Hong Kong academics is one of the lowest in the world and similar in level to perceptions in Norway and the UK (Universities UK, 2010). This data set also indicates that differences in workload between junior and senior academics are pronounced and similar in level with the US, Malaysia and Mexico. Moreover, only just over 34 percent of Hong Kong academics have a permanent contract compared with an international average of 68 percent (Coates *et al.*, 2009). These figures indicate that casualisation and work intensification are an integral part of academic life in Hong Kong. The vast majority of academics are employed on fixed term contracts without the security which tenure offers. This includes assistant professors who normally work for about seven years in such positions before applying

for tenure. The tenure system is thus a high stakes game where there are winners, associate and full professors with tenure, and losers, assistant professors who, for whatever reason, fail in their tenure application and can find themselves unemployed in mid-career.

The unbundling of academic life through the creation of separate teaching and research track positions is a growing feature of international higher education (Macfarlane, 2011). In Australia, for example, figures show that just 51 percent of academics employed in public universities are employed on combined teaching and research terms (Group of 8, 2014), a decline of ten percent between 2002 and 2012. Aping this trend, Hong Kong institutions have created ‘lecturer’ positions where contractual terms typically require teaching to take up 80 percent of academic duties. By contrast, a junior academic position below the level of assistant professor called a ‘research assistant professor’ has also been established as a mirror opposite focused on research. Holders of these posts, typically on short term two or three-year contracts, are required to devote 80 percent of their time to research activities such as grant getting and publication.

There are two main reasons for researching understandings of collegiality in this context. Firstly, Hong Kong’s universities are based on the British model of higher education as a result of being a colony until as recently as 1997. This means that the ideal of collegiality may have continuing resonance in this context. Moreover, Hong Kong universities employ large numbers of Western scholars including those from Anglosphere systems, such as England, Australia and New Zealand and these academics may have helped to ‘export’ collegiality as an ideal. Secondly, international survey data has shown that the Hong Kong academic profession is increasingly performance driven, measured in terms of rising publication rates. This indicates that academic life is highly competitive and suggests a potential conflict between collegiality and performative demands.

Investigating collegiality

The research arose out of a Faculty event examining its core values, one of which included an espoused commitment to ‘collegiality’. Feedback from the Faculty event indicated concern among some faculty members about issues connected with collegiality including opportunities to supervise doctoral students, the need for more mentoring, access to research funding opportunities, equity in the workload formula, and the extent to which the Faculty provides family-friendly working arrangements. A follow-up survey instrument was developed focused on discovering the extent to which academic members regard the Faculty as

a 'collegial' environment in which to work. Although the research arose out of a managerial context, it was established on an academic basis with an attendant need to protect the identity of participants. Ethical approval was applied for and granted by the Human Research Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Faculties of the author's home institution at the time the research was conducted (i.e. June/July 2014). Given the relatively small size of the Hong Kong higher education system, the disciplinary identity of the Faculty has been kept confidential to reduce the possibility of it being identifiable.

An online survey instrument consisting of 18 positive statements was designed using a four-point 'forced choice' Likert scale to which respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement. These statements were designed to reflect different interpretations and meanings conveyed by the term 'collegiality' based on Bess' (1988) framework of three types of collegiality: structural, cultural and behavioural. A deliberately broad approach was taken in interpreting collegiality by including perceptions about workload, the contribution of full professors, the promotion prospects of women and so on linked to Bess' framework. As the survey was prompted by concerns expressed within the Faculty in respect to how opportunities are made available through open and democratic decision-making processes most of the statements in the survey were focused on areas connected with structural collegiality and the extent to which the Faculty was perceived as providing an environment that promoted collegiality on this basis. However, some statements were also framed which sought to probe perceptions of cultural and behavioural collegiality as well (see Table 1). The intangible nature of these other forms of collegiality led to the design of statements indicative of these conditions (e.g. perceptions of barriers to the progression of female academics as one of four related to cultural collegiality). Analysis was undertaken on the basis of comparing the extent to which survey respondents agreed or disagreed with the 18 statements using descriptive statistics. A grouping of key themes emerging from the qualitative comments also took place also informed by the identifying characteristics of respondents.

Given the relatively small size of the population (129), anonymity was preserved through limiting the collection of personal identifiers related to sex and academic rank. Information with respect to sub-unit affiliation within the Faculty was not collected as, otherwise, individuals might be identifiable in subsequent reporting. While this meant that consideration of service length and departmental affiliation was excluded it served as a means to protect identities given the relatively small number of respondents.

TABLE 1
Types of collegiality by survey statement

Structural collegiality	Cultural collegiality	Behavioral collegiality
Q1: There are opportunities for everyone to contribute to decision-making within the Faculty Q2: There is adequate support for research for faculty at all levels Q3: Good teaching is recognized and rewarded Q4: The teaching load formula is fair and transparent Q11: Opportunities to undertake PhD supervision are fairly distributed Q12: The faculty provides a family-friendly working environment Q13: Salary differentials fairly reflect differences in expertise and experience Q15: There is a good balance of incentives between teaching and research Q16: Decision-making takes place largely on the basis of consensus Q17: The evaluation process for promotion and tenure is fair and transparent	Q5: There is no division between junior and senior faculty Q8: My Division provides a supportive and friendly environment Q9: There are no barriers to the career progression of female faculty members Q10: There is a strong culture of mentoring	Q6: Senior professors contribute sufficiently to teaching at undergraduate level Q7: All faculty contribute sufficiently to service tasks (eg serving on committees, school visits, etc) Q14: There is frequent and positive interaction between colleagues

Fifty responses were received representing 39 percent of the population. Lecturers (40 percent), assistant professors (43 percent) and associate professors (52 percent) were slightly over-represented whilst post-doctoral fellows (25 percent) and chair or full professors (19 percent) were the most under-represented. Academic positions in the

Faculty are divided almost equally between men (66) and women (63). In the respondent sample women (31) were relatively over-represented compared to men (19). The survey was limited to academic staff members and excluded professional support staff and administrators. This restriction was not intended to imply that considerations of collegiality do not extend to administrators, such as the importance of inter-professional respect. However, the probing of areas of academic activity, such as teaching loads and research support, were essentially relevant only to academic staff.

Collegial but divided

In general, academic staff strongly agreed with the synoptic statement that ‘overall, the Faculty is a collegial place in which to work’ (84 percent). Over 80 percent of respondents also expressed agreement with the statements that ‘Divisions¹ provide a supportive and friendly environment’ (84 percent) and ‘There are no barriers to the career progression of female faculty members’ (82 percent). The majority of respondents disagreed with just two of the eighteen statements: ‘Senior professors contribute sufficiently to teaching at undergraduate level’ (36

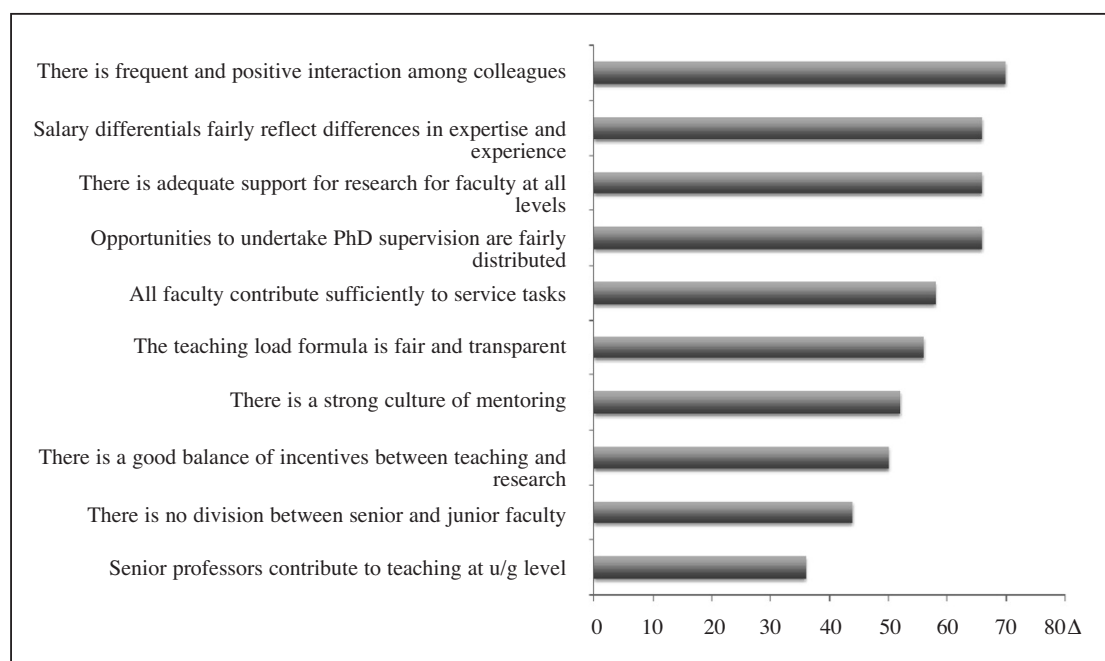


FIGURE 1
Levels of agreement with statements (36% to 70%)

¹ A ‘Division’ is a nomenclature used to describe academic units or departments within the Faculty.

percent agreed) and ‘there is no division between junior and senior faculty’ (44 percent agreed) (see Figures 1 and 2).

There were considerable differences of opinion with respect to a large number of statements on the basis of academic rank and gender including a number of statements with high overall levels of agreement. Analysis by academic rank was undertaken on the basis of dividing responses between ‘senior professorial’ staff (i.e. professors and associate professors) and ‘junior and non-professorial’ staff (i.e. assistant professors, lecturers, post-doctoral fellows and research

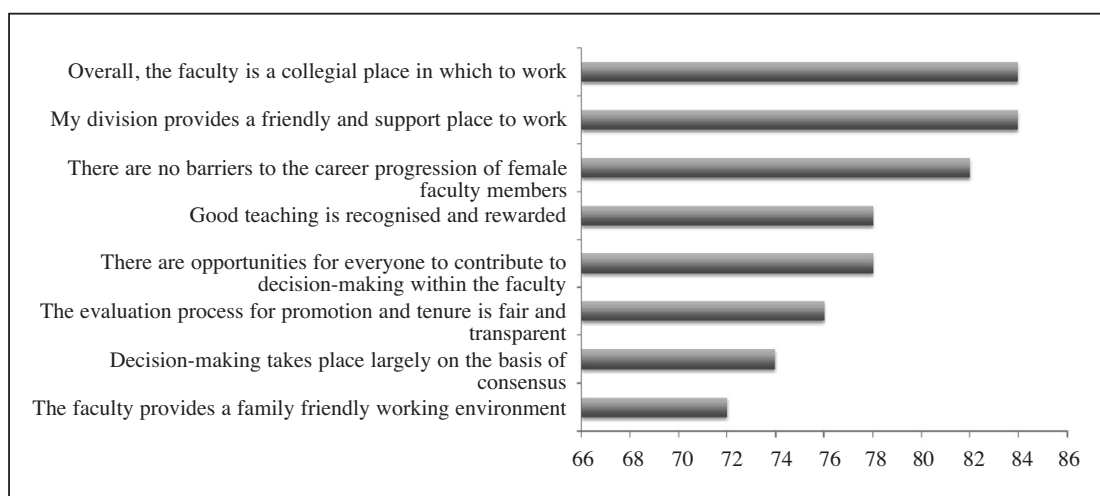


FIGURE 2
Levels of agreement with statements (72% to 84%)

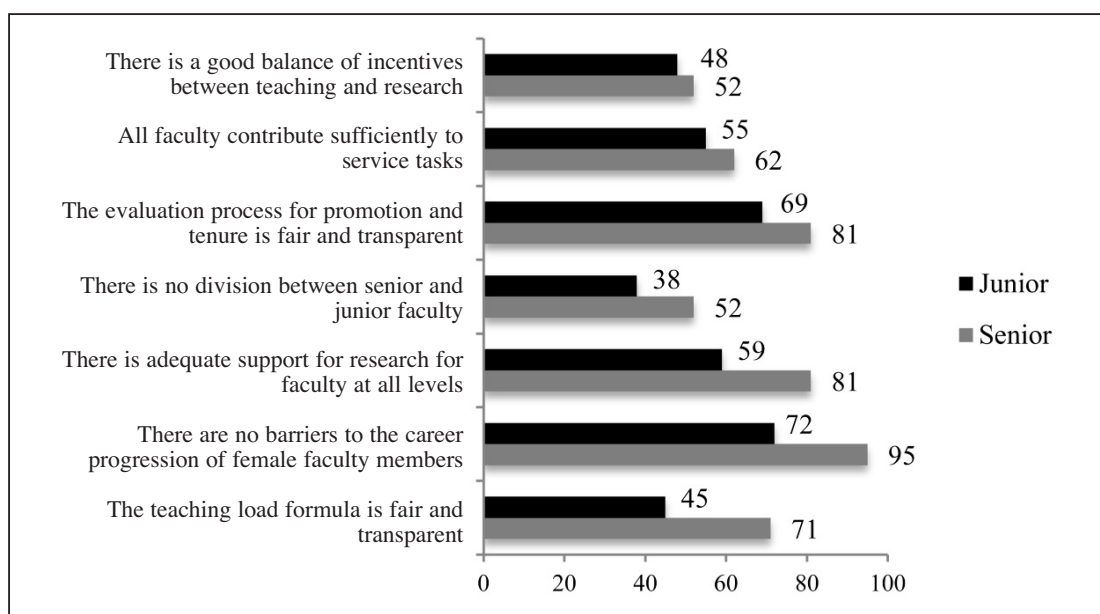


FIGURE 3
Agreement levels by academic rank (%)

assistant professors). There was a notable gap between the way these two groups responded to some of these statements. Junior and non-professorial staff took a more critical view of the fairness of the teaching load formula, the contribution of senior professors to undergraduate teaching, barriers to the progression of female faculty members, and the fairness of salary differentials. A higher percentage of junior and non-professional staff though agreed or strongly agreed that their academic unit within the Faculty (i.e. Division) provided them with a supportive and friendly environment (see Figure 3).

The differences of opinion on the basis of academic rank need to be understood in relation to their respective conditions of service. Most senior academics have acquired tenure whilst those at assistant professorial rank or below are on fixed term contracts. Hong Kong universities follow a North American style tenure model. Assistant professors normally make an application for promotion to associate professor and tenure after a number of years in post. Success in gaining promotion and tenure at this juncture is critical to their future career prospects. Hence, academic staff below the rank of associate professor do not enjoy any long-term security of employment. There are also stark differences between senior and junior academic staff on the basis of other conditions of service. For example, only senior academics have access to university housing whilst assistant professors, often more likely to have young families and thus in need of support, must find private accommodation. This can be a considerable financial burden as the housing market in Hong Kong is among the most expensive in the world. Another equally important divide is reflected by the division between those employed in research and teaching track positions. Faculty members employed as lecturers are required to spend approximately 80 percent of their time teaching and do not have access to many research funding opportunities. By contrast, the teaching load of research track, professorial staff is 40 percent. This divide is a microcosm of a wider global trend in higher education which has seen the academic role rapidly disaggregating or 'unbundling' into specialist teaching and research tracks (Kinser, 2002; Macfarlane, 2011).

Analysis by gender demonstrates a more pronounced divergence of opinion than academic rank (see Figure 4). Notably, women faculty members are less satisfied than men in respect to 16 of the 18 statements. They disagreed with five statements overall while male respondents disagreed with just one. In regard to these statements and a number of others there are considerable gaps between the perspective of female as opposed to male respondents. For example, around two thirds of female respondents (65 percent) feel that there is a division between

senior and junior academic staff compared to just 42 percent of men. Almost all male respondents (95 percent) felt that ‘there are no barriers to the career progression of female faculty members’ (Q9), while fewer than three-quarters of female respondents (74 percent) were of the same view. Further examples of sharp differences include: ‘the teaching load formula is fair and transparent’ (Q4); ‘there is a good balance of incentives between teaching and research (Q15); there is adequate support for research for faculty at all levels’ (Q2); ‘decision-making takes place largely on the basis of consensus’ (Q16); and ‘the evaluation process for promotion and tenure is fair and transparent’ (Q17).

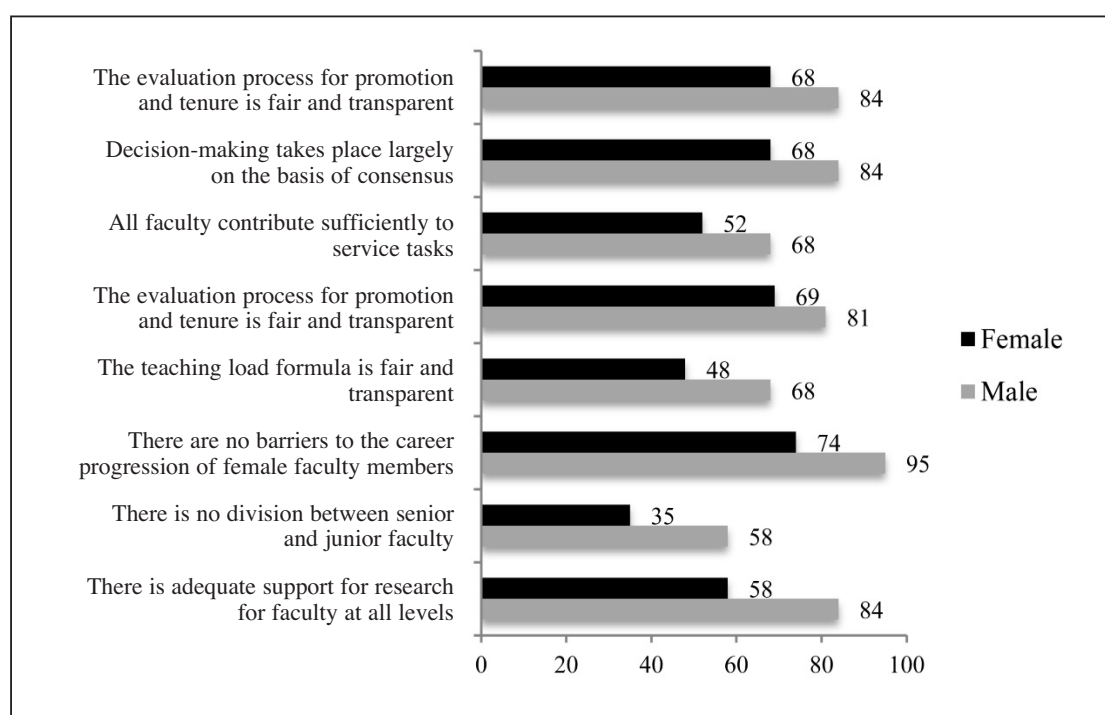


FIGURE 4
Agreement levels by gender (%)

In seeking to explain this difference on the basis of gender it is notable that women account for more than two-thirds (i.e. twenty) of the 29 junior and non-professorial staff who responded to the questionnaire. The free comments made in relation to the statement that ‘there are no barriers to the career progression of female faculty members’ (Q9) illustrate a sharply gendered divide on the matter:

‘I am not female, but I think that the females in the faculty are having all the successes they need for career advancement.’
(Male, Associate Professor)

‘Female colleagues tend to devote more to teaching and supervision than male colleagues, which can be a barrier to their career progression.’ (Female, Assistant Professor)

‘It seems that female colleagues with young children progress more slowly in their careers than male colleagues, and female colleagues without children.’ (Female, Lecturer)

Female respondents also tended to adopt a more critical attitude in respect to issues connected with promotion and tenure which asked respondents to comment on whether they thought this was ‘fair and transparent’ (Q17):

‘I think it is both “yes” and “no”. What is on paper may not be sufficiently specific and most of us rely on evidence of success cases. There are of course also cases that we do not understand.’ (Female, Associate Professor)

‘It is not explicitly clear what the (minimum) requirement required from junior members is to achieve tenure. The general perception carried amongst junior staff is that it seems that the ‘barrier’ get harder and harder to achieve each year. This has created a lot of stress and pressure, especially when it is assumed that publications is the key criteria, and yet a lot of teaching responsibilities is given to junior staff.’ (Female, Assistant Professor)

The lower levels of satisfaction expressed by females in this survey correspond with the findings of previous studies on collegiality (e.g. Austin, Sorcinelli and McDaniels, 2007; Trautvetter, 1999). These sharp differences of perception, expressed both by females and respondents of junior academic rank in this survey, are also reminiscent of a version of collegiality from the ‘golden age’ of public higher education: one dominated largely by male full professors. They further indicate a lack of trust in the published criteria and guidelines for promotion and tenure indicating a belief that there is a lack of transparency about how, and on what basis, decisions are reached.

The emphasis in the survey, drawing on Bess’ (1988) framework, was on testing out agreement levels with statements pertaining to structural collegiality. Agreement levels with the ten statements related to structural collegiality (see Figure 1) averaged 62 percent. By comparison, the agreement level in respect to cultural collegiality was

very similar (65 percent). Whilst cultural collegiality was perceived as strong at the academic unit level perceptions of mentoring and divisions between senior and junior faculty members were less positive though, particularly among women. Average agreement levels in respect to the three statements that relate to behavioural collegiality were just 55 percent with women again scoring this type lower than men although there was no difference in perception on the basis of level of seniority. This suggests that while there are some challenges in relation to structural and cultural collegiality for the Faculty there are less positive attitudes at the individual level; a concern that appears to be linked to the pressures of performativity in modern academic life.

Collegiality and performativity

The predominant understanding of collegiality represented in free comments by respondents was expressed in terms of a collectivist ethic – to work together in a friendly and collaborative manner and to help other colleagues to develop in their academic work. The term is most closely associated with mentoring rather than other types of collegiality such as academic self-governance.

‘I think the Faculty is a collegial place in which to work if you find and seek out those who are open and supportive and friendly. I have found many colleagues who are wonderful to work with.’
(Female, Lecturer)

However, collegiality in this sense, understood as ‘intellectual collegiality’ (Tapper and Palfreyman, 2000:25) or ‘behavioural collegiality’ (Bess, 1988), demands generosity in devoting time and effort in helping others. In many respects while academics support this idea in principle, in practice they argue that increasing demands on their time as academics makes such an expectation, increasingly unrealistic.

‘Some colleagues are very collegial but the pressure of time and intensification of all big and small commitments eats up the time for even a small conversation.’ (Female, Associate Professor)

‘Only those who are very collegial take on informal mentoring roles.’ (Female, Lecturer)

‘Interaction is infrequent – people are too busy to be collegial.’
(Female, Lecturer)

‘Collegiality is limited by the pressures associated with modern academic life. These constraints are not limited to our Faculty but systemic. The Faculty may want to consider ways to promote greater collegiality but these measures need to be one’s that don’t add further time burdens on our already very busy lives.’ (Male, Full Professor)

At a deeper level of analysis, this increase in work pressure is associated with more demands on academics to comply with a competitive and performative ethos which rewards individual achievement and research productivity above all else. The overwhelming majority of comments with respect to collegiality made mention of the difficulties of realizing the ideal of collegiality in the context of performative pressures on individuals. They highlighted the irony that while collegiality is espoused as a Faculty value or commitment, in practice the culture of academic life works in the opposite direction. The high stakes nature of the tenure process by which assistant professors are required to meet individual performative expectations that will determine whether they are able to continue their academic careers at the university is part of this competitive and individualised culture. A number of respondents also spoke of how they found the work culture quite isolating:

‘The support is visible and measurable in monetary terms, but there is an absence of mentoring support or peer interest at a personal level. Since everyone’s goal is to bring about a good record in PRD [i.e. academic appraisal], it is faster to get writing done independently than asking for internal support or giving mentoring support. The system itself is discouraging of collegiality, and we tend to work in isolation. Many may like it this way.’ (Female, Associate Professor)

‘there is more of a strong culture of individual pursuit of research excellence (ie closed rather than open office doors).’ (Male, Full Professor)

‘We all keep our doors closed.’ (Male, Associate Professor)

‘Real collegiality requires some sustainable mode of work together without the threat of offending each other. To be nice to each other and keep a healthy distance is the unspoken motto of the day.’ (Female, Associate Professor)

This last comment echoes Massy, Wilger and Colbreck's (1994:12) observation about the way in which conflict-avoidance occurs in less healthy departmental cultures ensuring that 'the most crucial issues facing the department are never discussed'. The word 'competition' was used on a number of occasions by respondents to indicate the nature of the underlying academic culture in contrast with the rhetoric of collegiality. This competitive environment was explained both in terms of individuals and Divisions (i.e. academic units within the Faculty) competing for resources and prestigious elements of the academic economy (e.g. research students):

'While we have nice colleagues all are vulnerable to be turned into competitive beings once they are on [the tenure] track here. A healthy workplace is certainly desirable and pertinent for our collective well-being. It is time to think seriously and act steadily for a salient goal of improving collegiality.' (Female, Associate Professor)

'The supervision system is competitive rather than fair, in that students can choose their supervisors, and are more likely to seek out more experienced rather than less experienced faculty members.' (Female, Assistant Professor)

'We tend to promote competitive individuals – even when the procedure appears to be transparent with a clear system, it is hard to judge the fairness till we look into the criteria of assessment seriously.' (Female, Associate Professor)

'There are always competitions of resources and manpower. In order to expand the territory, there is a small Division which always grab the workload from other Divisions so that they can have a good reason of employing new staff.' (Female, Assistant Professor)

Within the Faculty individual achievements by academic staff, such as winning research grants or being promoted, are normally acknowledged through an all-staff email from the Dean congratulating the individual(s) concerned. In reference to this form of communication one respondent commented positively that 'The Dean's messages have helped to create collegiality'. However, others interpreted these messages in a negative light as reinforcing a competitive rather than collegial culture.

‘Forget about collegiality... smart awareness is the real focus.’
(Male, Assistant Professor)

‘The Dean may want to re-think about the meaning of his words in encouraging intensification for all the performance-related chores e.g. “huge success” because of good attendance, “congratulations” so that those who have not got the awards better hurry up. Values embedded in dominant words?’ (Female, Associate Professor)

This latter, less flattering interpretation of the Dean’s dissemination of success stories is seen as encouraging a performative culture which celebrates the ‘triumphant self’ (Dean, 1995:581). Accordingly, the nature of the performative culture means that academics have become skilled in ventriloquising the values of collegiality whilst practicing something different in practice. Collegiality understood from this perspective is in danger of becoming more of a performative riff, a value which academics feel obliged to pay lip service to, whilst in practice they live out a set of harder-edged values more closely associated with competitive individualism.

Conclusion

The sharp differences in perspective between academics on the basis of academic rank and gender in this small study are illustrative of an academic culture where the continuing rhetorical strength of collegiality as an ideal needs to be understood by reference to frictions that lie only just beneath the surface. The conventional academic hierarchy has always been rooted in the power of senior (usually male) full professors rather than one based on equality and inclusivity (Deem, Hillyard and Reed, 2007). This means that collegiality never was very ‘collegial’ by reference to the values of contemporary society (e.g. gender equality; participation in decision-making on an equal basis regardless of academic rank). Such hierarchies persist in modern higher education even within highly feminised disciplinary fields, such as education.

Collegiality has proven a resiliently romanticised ideal as to how academic life should be lived and shaky evidence as to the extent of its existence, past or present, means that it is uncertain whether it is meaningful to talk about its decline or ‘loss’ without slipping into a lazy form of golden ageism. What this small study does show, though, is that it is very hard to find evidence for the norms associated with the *ideal* of collegiality, such as the importance of participatory governance, mentoring less experienced colleagues, a commitment to teaching, and

a close and outwardly gregarious community life, in current academic life. What is more evident is the importance of ventriloquism – publicly espousing the language and ideals of collegiality, bemoaning its ‘loss’ whilst privately complying with a more individualised and performative working culture.

The forces of performativity have put paid to the ideal of collegiality. Success in academic life shaped increasingly by performative targets that emphasise ‘outputs’ and encourage a culture of continuous self-comparison with peers through evaluations at institutional, national and international level via peer review processes and scientometrics. These performative pressures are making academics both more outward looking in terms of identifying evidence that supports their own claims to individual excellence but, at the same time, more inward looking and isolated within highly competitive working environments. This trend is simultaneously eating away at the authority of those that occupy managerial or leadership positions turning them into local auditors of performative regimes rather than trusted and respected peers.

This survey instrument, in combining aspects of different types of collegiality as identified by Bess (1988) provides a way of investigating the ‘collegial health’ of any academic department or wider Faculty. It demonstrated, in this instance, that collegiality appears to be weakest as a behavioural norm. While collegiality may be viewed as an idealised concept the real costs of failing to provide a collegial environment in practice, indicated, for example, through low retention rates and resulting in costs and inconveniences of recruitment, are more rarely calculated. This means that collegiality is not just a romantic ideal. It is also one that affects organisational efficiency and effectiveness. While this study is small-scale and largely exploratory the questionnaire might form the basis for a larger study that would help to establish how collegiality can contribute to the bottom line, not just to the feel-good factor.

Address for correspondence

Professor Bruce Macfarlane, Southampton Education School, Highfield Campus, University of Southampton, Southampton, United Kingdom, SO17 1BJ. E-mail: Bruce.Macfarlane@soton.ac.uk

References

Austin, AE, Sorcinelli, MD, and McDaniels, M (2007) ‘Understanding new faculty: background, aspirations, challenges, and growth’, in Perry, RP and Smart, JC (eds.) *The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education: An Evidence-Based Perspective* (pp. 39-89), Dordrecht: Springer

- Barnett, R (1990) *The Idea of Higher Education*, Buckingham: Open University Press
- Becher, T (1982) *Managing Basic Units* (Report from the Institutional Management in Higher Education Programme Special Topic Workshop Paris between 23 November and 1 December 1982), Paris: OECD
- Bess, JL (1988) *Collegiality and Bureaucracy in the Modern University: The Influence of Information and Power on Decision-Making Structures*, New York: Teachers College Press
- Coates, H, Dobson, I, Edwards, D, Friedman, T, Goedegebuure, L and Meek, L (2009) *The Attractiveness and the Australian Academic Profession: A Comparative Analysis*, www.educational.policy.org/pdf/Attractiveness_of_the_Australian_Academic_Profession.pdf
- Currie, J, Petersen, CJ and Mok, KH (2006) *Academic Freedom in Hong Kong*, Oxford: Lexington Books
- Deal, TE and Kennedy, AA (1982) *Corporate Cultures*, Reading: Addison-Wesley
- Dean, M (1995) 'Governing the unemployed self in an active society', *Economy and Society*, 24(4), 559-583
- Deem, R and Brehony, KJ (2005) 'Management as ideology: the case of "New Managerialism" in higher education', *Oxford Review of Education*, 31(2), 217-235
- Deem, R, Hillyard, S and Reed, M (2007) *Knowledge, Higher Education and the New Managerialism*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Group of 8 (2014) *Policy Note: Changes in the Composition of Australia's Higher Education Workforce*, go8.edu.au/publication/changes-composition-australias-higher-education-workforce
- Kinsler, K (2002) 'Faculty at private for-profit universities: the University of Phoenix as a new model?' *International Higher Education*, 28, 13-14
- Kligyte, G and Barrie, S (2014) 'Collegiality: leading us into fantasy – the paradoxical resilience of collegiality in academic leadership', *Higher Education Research and Development*, 33(1), 157-169
- Macfarlane, B (2007) 'Defining and rewarding academic citizenship: the implications for university promotions policy', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 29(3), 261-273
- Macfarlane, B (2011) 'The morphing of academic practice: unbundling and the para-academic', *Higher Education Quarterly*, 65(1), 59-73
- Macfarlane, B (2016) "'If not now, then when? If not us, who?'" Understanding the student protest movement in Hong Kong', in Brooks, R (ed.) *Student Politics and Protest*, London & New York: Routledge, in press
- Massy, WF, Wilger, AK and Colbeck, C (1994) 'Departmental cultures and teaching quality: Overcoming "hollowed" collegiality', *Change*, 26, 11-20
- McNay, I (1995) From collegial academy to corporate enterprise: The changing cultures of university, in Schuller, T (ed.) *The Changing University*, Buckingham: SRHE/Open University Press
- Moodie, G (1986) 'The disintegrating chair: professors in Britain today', *European Journal of Education*, 21(1), 43-56
- Schein, EH (2004) *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (3rd edition), New York: Wiley

- Startup, R (1976) 'The role of the Departmental Head', *Studies in Higher Education*, 1(2), 233-243
- Tapper, T and Palfreyman, D (2000) *Oxford and the Decline of the Collegiate Tradition*, London: Woburn Press
- Tapper, T and Palfreyman, D (2010) *The Collegial Tradition in the Age of Mass Higher Education*, London: Springer
- Tight, M (2014) 'Collegiality and managerialism: a false dichotomy? Evidence from the higher education literature', *Tertiary Education and Management*, 20(4), 294-306
- Times Higher Education (2014) *THE World University Rankings*, www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/world-university-rankings/2013-14/world-ranking
- Trautvetter, LC (1999) 'Experiences of women, experiences of men', in Menges, RJ and Associates (eds.) *Faculty in New Jobs* (pp. 88-117), San Francisco: Jossey-Bass
- Universities UK (2010) *The Changing Academic Profession in the UK and Beyond*, available at www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/highereducation/Pages/TheChangingHEProfession.aspx
- Winter, R (2009) 'Academic manager or managed academic? Academic identity schisms in higher education', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 31(2), 121-131