Chapter 5
The Slippery Slope Known as Federalism

Introduction

Besides the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, there are two British universities that can claim to have federal structures of governance: the University of London and the University of Wales. With reference to these two universities, and more especially to the former, the purpose of this chapter is to explore interpretations of the federal concept of governance. As with the previous chapter, there is no pretence that a contemporary history of either university is being presented for the primary goal is conceptual refinement. However, given how in recent years the model of governance at both universities has shifted radically, new in-depth contemporary histories are undoubtedly overdue.

There are a number of questions that have to be addressed by this interpretative analytical approach. Precisely what does a federal model of governance mean and why was it adopted at these two particular universities? In what ways have the federal models evolved over time, and how is the pattern of change to be explained? That is, what are the pressures for change as well as the trajectory of the change process itself? Within this context it will be important to compare these developments with those that have reshaped the federal models at Oxbridge. At the outset it can be said that they appear to be moving in diametrically opposite directions. How is this to be explained?

In our earlier chapters we made the claim that a federal model of governance was an intrinsic characteristic of the collegiate university. But does federalism have to assume a particular form before a higher education institution can justly describe itself as a collegiate university? Moreover, is it possible for a university to be federal in terms of its structure of governance but nonetheless have limited commitment to the collegial tradition? What, therefore, is the relationship between federalism and collegiality?

T. Tapper, D. Palfreyman, *The Collegial Tradition in the Age of Mass Higher Education*, DOI 10.1007/978-90-481-9154-3_5,
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Why Federalism?

In a lecture delivered as part of Nuffield College's celebration of the 15th anniversary of its college charter, Halsey – one of the college's eminent fellows – remarked, 'In fact Oxford was not created: it emerged'. And, quoting the historian Richard Southern, went on to say, 'It emerged after a long period of discontinuous and fitful scholastic activity, which only gradually received the stamp of corporate identity in the first quarter of the thirteenth century' (Halsey, 2008, June 7). But the point should not be overstressed because the collegiate model that is currently to be found at Oxford and Cambridge owes much to political intervention in both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The collegiate university may have emerged over time but its more recent development has most definitely been steered, with much of that steering coming from outside the universities.

Nonetheless, in spite of this cautionary note, the contrast with the foundation of the Universities of London and Wales is startling. Both London and Wales are the products of official intervention, created by parliamentary legislation almost at a stroke rather than emerging out of a long and slow process of historical distillation. The University of London acquired its Royal Charter in 1836 establishing it as the examining body for both University College (founded in 1826 as the University of London) and King's College (founded in 1829). The University of Wales received its charter in 1893 and incorporated three colleges: the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth; the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire; and the University College of North Wales, Bangor. Henceforth the colleges would award degrees under the auspices of the University of Wales rather than the University of London's external degrees.

It is fair to say that the creation of the University of Wales was widely welcomed in the Principality as a manifestation of the revival in Welsh culture that had marked the final quarter of the nineteenth century. But one could not say, at least not with the same degree of confidence, that this was equally true of the University of London. The Universities of Oxford and Cambridge were bitterly opposed to both King's College and the original University of London foundation (which became University College) being granted the authority to grant degrees in their own right, which certainly the latter desired (Harte, 1986: 68–76). Unlike Oxford and Cambridge, both the Universities of London and Wales were formally created (as opposed to emerging through a slow process of evolution); but all four universities exhibit a common characteristic of federal models – the balance of institutional authority is never completely resolved.

Sheldon Rothblatt, in another of his powerful overviews of the historical development of higher education in Britain, has stressed the importance of principle in driving the creation of the federal model:

> The division of labour and responsibilities was perhaps greater than it had been in centuries, or at least clearer. Universities examined; that was mechanical. Colleges taught; that was nurturing... The separation of teaching from examining within the federal university constitution can be called the 'Cambridge principle'... It is not surprising, therefore, that the Royal Charter of 1836 creating the examining University of London referred to a 'Board

> of Examiners . . . to perform all the functions of the examiners in the Senate House of Cambridge', or that the new governing body of London should have drawn as many as ten of its founding fellows from Trinity College, Cambridge (Rothblatt, 1987: 156–157).

Thus both London and Wales are constructed around the principle of federalism by which '. . . is meant the habit or practice of relating different segments of a higher education organization or system to some larger whole or centre. . .' (Rothblatt, 1987: 151).

But as is so often the case when principle is evoked politics and practical concerns are not far behind. In the case of University College and King's College there was the division between secular and Anglican interests, the challenge to the hegemony – at least in England – of Oxford and Cambridge and the fear of a different definition of the university taking root and prospering. While the central control of examining may have protected standards, as well as shaped the curriculum, this was also a practical concern for the colleges themselves. It was important to establish an identity that carried both weight and respectability. Indeed, it is the prestige of the University of London, a brand with an international appeal, which has proven to be its most enduring selling point. Smaller colleges could find a refuge in the brand name and within a federal context they had the opportunity to create alliances with similarly placed institutions. Thus, in the nineteenth century higher education was increasingly driven by competing interests (pluralism) and federalism was devised as the means for constructing compromise and a measure of consensus amongst the competing parties (Rothblatt, 1987: 157). However, the nineteenth century constitutional lawyer, A.V. Dicey, saw federalism as resulting in weak government, producing conservatism and encouraging legalism (Dicey, 1982: 97–100), which have perhaps also been the hallmarks of federal universities.

Although a federal model of governance invites discussion on what the respective balance of responsibility between the universities and the colleges should be, it has also proven to be very resilient and generates considerable loyalty. Nonetheless, it may be not so much a question of 'looking to the past' but rather 'entrapment by the past'. In a recent consultation paper on the very future of its federal structure the Vice-Chancellor of the University of London:

> Throughout the University's history there has been an ongoing debate about its constitution and role. Yet for more than 150 years, there has been steady support for the federal University of London amongst both the Colleges and their academic staff and students (University of London, 2005, February: 3, para 7).

Some 35 years ago, at yet another 'crisis point' in the history of the University, the 'Final Report of the Committee of Enquiry into the Governance of the University of London' (the Murray Report) asserted that: 'The evidence submitted to us does not suggest any disposition to attack or undermine the principle of federation' (University of London, 1972: 79). And it would not be too difficult to find numerous quotations expressing parallel sentiments. Harte, in what amounts to an official history of the University (*The University of London, 1836–1986*), should be permitted to make the final affirmation of the point: 'Serious consideration had to be given to such views, and to other criticisms [raised by University College in the mid-1960s].

The University approached them heartened by the clear expression of the desire to maintain the federal organization' (Harte, 1986: 263). But the question was, on what terms would the federation be sustained? Would it continue to be recognised as a meaningful federation?

Federal but Not Collegial?

While the examining powers of the University of London may have been, to use Rothblatt's phrase, a manifestation of 'the Cambridge principle', in other critical respects London purposefully rejected the collegiate model of the university as represented by Oxford and Cambridge. The colleges may have been teaching institutions but there was little stress on the importance of college residence, either for students or for faculty, in creating a particular ideal of the purposes of higher education. Even after the reforms that were introduced at Oxbridge in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the colleges retained a critical role in educating 'the cultivated person'. There continued to be so much more to an Oxbridge undergraduate education than obtaining a degree, although clearly that was assuming a greater significance. London provided the means for a local bourgeoisie to cement its social status as reflected in the strong emphasis on professional training with medicine and law to the fore. This was the training of experts rather than the education of well-rounded, cultivated gentlemen.

Barnes has argued that, 'For the civic universities, the rise of professional society only served to confirm their status as second-tier institutions. In an educational system increasingly geared towards producing (and reproducing) professional elites, Oxford and Cambridge possessed an unassailable advantage' (Barnes, 1996: 303). And that 'unassailable advantage' was 'the cultivation of character', which owed so much to the Oxbridge colleges. While neither the University of London nor Wales are civic universities, much the same socio-cultural variables would shape their place in society. However, this is to tell only part of the story for the undergraduate recruitment base of Oxbridge would continue to be socially distinctive, and the two universities were reformed (or were forced to reform) in response to the changing economic and social character of Britain, and without those reforms it is dubious whether 'the cultivation of character' alone would have been of much benefit to most of their students. Moreover, professional society was not homogenous but contained its own status hierarchy. The issue is how significant was an Oxbridge education in obtaining and cementing an elevated niche in that hierarchy.

The main overlap between Oxford and Cambridge on the one hand and London and Wales on the other is their federal structures of governance and administration. But how do they interpret this facet of collegiality? Historically the governance of both Oxford and Cambridge was de facto in the hands of the colleges symbolised

by the fact their vice-chancellors were heads of college, serving their short-term tenures (2 years) in rotation. Moreover the formal sovereign bodies of both institutions were (and still are) Congregation (Oxford) and the Regent House (Cambridge) for so long dominated by college fellows wearing their university hats. Although in both respects Oxford and Cambridge have changed, and certainly their respective administrative structures have become more potent bodies, they still resist the predominance of lay representation in their Councils and still insist upon the claim that ultimate authority for making university policy resides in Congregation and the Regent House (although it has become more of a reserve power rather than one that is exercised on a regular basis). Although the picture has changed over time, both the Universities of London and Wales (as well as their respective colleges) have been led by executive bodies composed of a majority of lay members, which exercise ultimate responsibility for the financial management and policy direction of their institutions.

As is common in all British universities, the control of academic affairs in the Universities of London and Wales resided formally in bodies composed of the academic members of the two universities. However, in the context of a declining role for the two universities this has less significance over time, but within the colleges the principle is still retained. Nonetheless, given that financial decision-making and the determination of institutional policy is not under academic control, the principle becomes more a question of taking responsibility for ongoing programmes (which invariably will permit a measure of departmental flexibility) rather than dictating the direction of the institution's overall pattern of academic development. And, as we will see in the next chapter, this is a general trend in British higher education.

It is also of significance that in both London and Wales, the tradition of showing deference in academic matters to the professors was established practice. In other words, it was quite the reverse of what prevailed at both Oxford and Cambridge in which college fellows were for so long the dominant pedagogical force and, arguably, had the greater status at least within the colleges, if not within the universities. Thus, in terms of three critical variables – the extent of lay representation on executive bodies, the formal location of institutional sovereignty and the weight attributed to professors in determining academic policy – both London and Wales have operated a contrasting federal model from that of Oxford and Cambridge, leading to a very different interpretation of how it should function and whose interests it most forcefully represents.

Although particular colleges of the University of London will share the responsibility for managing their joint degree programmes, there are no all-embracing inter-collegiate bodies – as there are at Oxford and Cambridge – to consider issues in which they have a common interest. Although Oxbridge may lack an overall structure of governance that binds colleges to agreed policy lines, there are college bodies that manage important inter-collegial interests such as undergraduate admissions, the organisation of college teaching and – at one time – college fees.

However, as one would expect of a federal model of governance the London colleges are formally represented in the University's governing structures. According to the latest statutes (in force since 1 August 2008) the 14 members of its Board of Trustees (the university's executive body) includes 4 heads of colleges (as does Cambridge's Council) who are chosen by the Collegiate Council. The latter body, which advises the Board of Trustees (it has the authority to make recommendations on a number of key issues), incorporates all the heads of the colleges who, with the addition of the Vice-Chancellor and the Dean of the School of Advanced Study, comprise its total membership (University of London, 2008, August 1: 9.1, 11.1). Again this illustrates the point that the federal model at London functions around the interaction of key leadership roles (including eminent lay persons). By comparison, while still over-representative of 'the great and the good', the Councils of Oxford and Cambridge are composed of more elected members drawn from a wider range of the academic body at large, including student representation, and as such they are more inclusive bodies and more broadly reflective of the 'academic demos'.

The Pressures for Change and the New Model of Governance

Internal and External Pressures for Change

If over time the federal models of the Universities of London and Wales have come to represent a 'fitter and leaner' mode of governance, the question is whether they can still be described as federal universities? Does the current interaction of universities and colleges in the delivery of their core academic functions merit the description of federalism in action? This is the question that this section of the chapter will address but it is important to place it in the context of the fundamental structural problems that the two universities have to handle and how these have been intensified by contemporary developments in the governance of British higher education.

It is not uncommon to read that federal universities are Byzantine institutions with a veritable maze of labyrinths that only the well-informed insider can truly understand and appreciate. Evaluation oscillates from empathy, through bewilderment to impatience or even hostility. We have noted that Rothblatt saw federalism as a means of responding to pluralist pressure, but those pressures are to be found not only within the broader societal context but also within the collegiate university itself. If you look at the University of London and to a lesser extent (because of its smaller size) the University of Wales they can only be described as diverse (to put it politely) institutions. For London the contemporary mix is as follows (and it should be remembered that this is after a period of rationalisation following a number of amalgamations and the defection of Imperial College).

London Colleges: Range of Academic Focus[a]

Institutions with a specialised academic focus	
The Central School of Speech and Drama	Courtauld Institute of Art
Heythrop College	The Institute of Cancer Research
London Business School	Royal Academy of Music
Royal Veterinary College	St George's
The School of Pharmacy	Institute of Education
Institutions with a broad, although still bounded, academic remit	
School of Oriental and African Studies	Goldsmith's College
London School of Economics	Royal Holloway
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine	Birkbeck College[b]
Institutions with a diverse academic range	
King's College	Queen Mary and Westfield
University College London	

[a]The precise categorisation can be disputed but not the point it is designed to make. It should be noted, however, that the Institute of Education has developed over time a much broader academic remit, thanks to the expansion of its graduate programmes.
[b]Birkbeck College is also distinctive because of its commitment to students who want to study part time.

Besides the above 19 colleges, the University encompasses a School of Advanced Study (SAS), which is composed of 10 institutes, and also has responsibilities for the University of London Institute in Paris and the University Marine Biological Station at Millport. And, as if this were not enough, the University still continues with a considerable programme of examining and awarding its degrees to 'external' students (most of whom are now students resident overseas).

Because it is not so large, the University of Wales is less complicated to dissect, although similar divisions appear, albeit not to the same intensity. The Universities of Aberystwyth, Bangor, Swansea and the University of Wales Institute, Cardiff, have a diverse range of academic programmes while the focus at the Universities of Glyndŵr, Swansea Metropolitan, Lampeter and Newport along with Trinity College, Carmarthen, is more restricted, but not so specialised as in the smaller London colleges.

The internal institutional variety at the University of London can only be described as remarkable. It is not simply that the size and academic diversity of King's, UCL and, to a lesser extent, Queen Mary and Westfield College (the latter more on a par in terms of the range of its academic programmes with Aberystwyth, Bangor, Swansea and the University of Wales Institute) would entitle them to the university label in their own right but the sheer gulf in size between them and the smaller colleges is enormous. Moreover, it is not only that the smaller institutions have narrowly defined academic foci but also the fact that these are very distinctive in character from one another, giving rise to specific institutional identities. It

should also be remembered that many of the colleges place considerable emphasis on professional training, which inevitably draws in the appropriate regulatory bodies, and in the case of medical training, the National Health Service in its various bureaucratic forms.

Not surprisingly, college heads have been known to trumpet institutional weight and distinctiveness and none more so than the current Provost (Malcolm Grant) of UCL:

> UCL proudly embraces a range of inquiry across all disciplines and a remarkably wide variety of subjects. . . . It is the broadest possible community of scholarship. . . . It has strengths in basic science, and in translational and applied research; in theory and in practice. . . . And it pursues an approach to teaching that is rooted in original research (Grant, 2004: 6).

Indeed, in Grant's *The Future of the University of London: A Discussion Paper from the Provost of UCL* scant reference is to be found to any positive functions that the University may perform, and his call was for 'a radical settlement' of the relationship between the colleges and the University (March 2005). In view of the fact that since the publication of his paper new statutes have been enacted, the Provost's wish appears to have been granted but whether the changes have been sufficiently radical to suit his tastes remains to be seen.

A few simple statistics on student numbers alone are suffice to demonstrate the magnitude of the variation. King's College has the largest number of students (21,230) followed by UCL with 19,385. In vivid contrast, the Institute of Cancer Research, the Central School of Speech and Drama, Heythrop College and the Royal Academy of Music all have less than a thousand students. The Institute of Cancer Research, the Institute of Education, the London Business School and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine provide courses for only postgraduate students. All the other colleges have a significant wedge of postgraduates with some selected figures for 2006/2007 as follows:

	Postgraduate Nos.	Total Student Nos.
LSE	5,205 (57.6%)	9,030
SOAS	2,050 (43.4%)	4,725
UCL	7,580 (39.1%)	19,385
Goldsmith's	2,670 (35.0%)	7,620
King's College	7,220 (34.0%)	21,230
Royal Holloway	2,375 (28.5%)	8,335
Queen Mary	3,230 (25.7%)	12,585

Source: Higher Education Statistical Agency (2006/2007): Table Oa.

No doubt a close examination of the two ancient collegiate universities would reveal considerable variations amongst their colleges with respect to a range of variables: date of foundation, overall student numbers, the balance between undergraduate and postgraduate representation, the range of degrees for which their students are studying and – perhaps most significantly – the size of their endowments and the incomes these may generate. The contrast with the University of

London is in terms of the sheer magnitude of its internal differentiation. Moreover, the framework within which these differences are contained is more confined geographically as well as by their differing sizes – Cambridge in 2007/2008 had 18,307 students of whom 6,216 (34%) were postgraduates (University of Cambridge, 2008 October 9: 4), and at Oxford there were 18,798 students as of 1 December 2007 of whom 7,461 (39.7%) were postgraduates (University of Oxford, 2008, July 9: 1343). However, more critically important are the historical links (academic, social and cultural) between the colleges coupled with a more interwoven model of federalism. But inevitably internal structural differentiation will exert tensions in its own right, even at unitary universities.

Although both the histories of the Universities of London and Wales have been fraught with regard to the continuation of the federal model, nonetheless they still survive as federal universities. Writing in 1971 Halsey and Trow claimed: 'London, too, has a collegiate structure though the autonomy of the colleges is less complete than in Oxford and Cambridge largely because they are individually not so well endowed and depend more on government money which is distributed among the schools by the university Court' (Halsey & Trow, 1971: 103). While this judgement relies far too heavily upon the internal distribution of university income, if the centre was potent in 1971, and the past teaches us that regardless of the reoccurring crises the federal model has always prevailed, then why should this not continue indefinitely?

The first and most obvious point is that recently the University of London and Wales have each lost one of their flagships, respectively, Imperial and Cardiff. Whilst it may be possible that both universities can continue to draw succour from the belief that they have internationally recognised brand names, it becomes more difficult to sustain this self-image if your leading colleges take flight. Of course within a federal model there is always the theoretical possibility of secession along with the acquisition of new members. However, it is important to reflect on the relative value of what are you gaining in comparison to what you are losing.

The University of Wales may wish to seek comfort in the fact that Cardiff University remains an affiliated institution:

> ... two of the University's longer-established members found themselves in the position of having to prepare for secession from membership. In 2003, Cardiff and the College of Medicine ... decided to merge with effect from 1 August 2004 under the formal title "Cardiff University"... Because it is not deemed to be possible, under the present legal and policy framework, for an institution that bears university title in its own right to be a member of another university, Cardiff and the College of Medicine have been obliged to withdraw from membership of the University of Wales. Cardiff University retains a connection with the University as an Affiliated (Linked) Institution and has indicated that it wishes to continue for the foreseeable future to enrol students onto University of Wales undergraduate schemes in medicine, dentistry and some related areas (University of Wales, 2009, February 8: 10–11).

However, this situation could hardly have occurred inadvertently for the various parties must have been aware of the consequences of the change in title. It was not, as the Historical Notes imply, an almost unforeseen occurrence. Presumably Cardiff

felt that the title of 'Cardiff University' was so critical to its future success that this counted for more than remaining a full member of the University of Wales. And, equally, it can be inferred that the decision to continue, at least for the time being, to enrol students in medicine, dentistry and related fields in the programmes of the University of Wales has a similar pragmatic basis. This raises the interesting question of what determines loyalty to a model of governance? How do the pragmatic considerations interact with deep-seated loyalty and, possibly, even inertia? It is hard to believe that the merged institutions could not have selected a title that would have allowed them to continue as full members of the University of Wales if the political will to do so had been present.

The desertions of Cardiff and Imperial are in fact symbols of a process change that threatens to imbalance the federal model on a wide front, including how it functions at Oxford and Cambridge. First, there is the flow of public money, in particular the annual grant from the funding provided by councils (with respect to English and Welsh institutions, which means HEFCE and HEFCW) into the colleges and universities. Except for Imperial College, Halsey and Trow were correct in their observation that the funding provided by the then University Grants Committee was allocated to the University of London (and, incidentally, also to the University of Wales) as a block grant, which was then distributed amongst the colleges. As we have noted, at the time UCL chaffed bitterly at the fact that it did not have the same 'privileged' position as Imperial College.

Although the distribution was determined by a negotiated formula, the appearance that the colleges were in tutelage to the university was difficult to avoid, and the university's hand was strengthened considerably in the negotiations to cover its own costs given that it was the initial recipient of the funding. This is perhaps how it should be within a federal model, but (as Halsey and Trow noted) the fact that the colleges had few alternative sources of income undoubtedly generated resentment in some quarters. If you felt that the activities of the colleges were responsible for the income, and the returns they received from the services provided by the university were not worth the costs they incurred, then you were likely to be especially aggrieved. And so there was consistent pressure, with respect to both London and Wales, to make the colleges the direct recipients of state funding with the costs of university services underwritten by a tax on the colleges, again determined by a negotiated formula.

The 1992 Further and Higher Education Act merged the then separate funding councils of the polytechnics and universities (to create funding councils for England, Scotland and Wales) and, thus logically, allowed the polytechnics to acquire the university title. The consequences for both the Universities of London and Wales were critical. It meant that there was no substantive obstacle to their colleges instigating the procedures to acquire the university title, which would have meant (as we have seen with Cardiff) a legal requirement to leave the university. Moreover, once an institution of higher education acquired the university title it had the right to award degrees and so, with respect to the polytechnics, the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) could be wound up as the 'new universities' acquired this responsibility. The inevitable, if delayed, response from the University of London was to

relinquish its absolute right to award degrees to the students of its constituent colleges. The colleges can assume this right should they wish to go down this route. In effect it is a strategy to forestall the possibility of secession, although as we have seen it was insufficient to mollify Imperial College. But for other institutions the appeal of the brand name, 'The University of London', could be sufficiently strong to persuade them that they should retain the university as the examining body and continue to award its degrees. Alternatively, they could award their own degrees but contrive to have 'The University of London' appear on the degree certificate in some shape or form!

Yet another critical development has been the emergence of the quality assurance agenda, spearheaded since 1997 by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). The difficulty for the University of London is that, although it is in effect an examining rather than a teaching body, it has some responsibility for the quality of the teaching and learning process in its constituent colleges. How can the university be sure that its colleges are offering a teaching and learning experience of a sufficient quality to justify the awarding of its degrees? If it is not monitoring the learning experience in its colleges, is it taking too much on trust? Matters came to a head in June 2005 when the QAA issued its 'institutional audit' report for the University of London.

Although the QAA's Report recognised that the University of London was a federal university and the colleges exercised responsibility for '... the academic standards of the University's awards and the quality of the programmes of study to which they lead', nonetheless the Agency's audit trail did '... assume that the University's responsibility as an awarding body covers all its awards wherever and however they are offered'. On the basis of the auditing of the individual colleges (undertaken between 2003 and June 2005) the QAA concluded, '... broad confidence can be placed in the management, by the individual constituent Colleges of the academic standards of awards and the quality of programmes offered in the University's name'. But there was a sting in the tail: 'However, only limited confidence can be placed in the soundness of the present and likely future management by the University, as a corporate institution, of its specific responsibilities as an awarding body under the current statutes and ordinances' (all the quotes immediately above are from, QAA, June 2005: 1). In the judgement of the QAA, the colleges were performing their responsibilities adequately but the same could not be said of the university. Either the university had to change its procedures or the then statutes and ordinances needed to be modified to reflect current practices.

Not surprisingly, the University of London responded robustly to the QAA's strictures. In effect it blamed the Agency for misunderstanding the operation of its federal model:

> Under our federal system the Colleges and other constituent elements of the University have an individual and collective responsibility for maintaining and guaranteeing the quality and standards of the University of London degree – it is they that constitute the University of London. The audit has produced a set of recommendations which appear to have been made on the basis of a misunderstanding of these arrangements (University of London, 2009, February 8).

But the University also indicated that it intended to respond to the Agency's recommendations 'by amending its relevant Ordinance'. Thus the QAA's Report and the issuing of the vice-chancellor's consultation paper on 'the future for the federal University' are almost entwined.

The pressures upon the University of London's federal model that have been presented so far are reasonably precise in scope: the shift in the allocation of public funding from the university to the colleges, the opportunity for the colleges to acquire the university title and with it the concomitant right to grant degrees and the apparent confusion of the relative responsibilities of university and colleges in the quality audit trail. A much broader force, but exercising a subtler impact, has been the introduction of the research assessment exercises (the first undertaken in 1986). The colleges of both the Universities of London and Wales were evaluated individually (given the structure of both Oxford and Cambridge it is inconceivable that they could have followed this route), which raises the possibility of making invidious – although perhaps not unfair – comparisons between colleges, so exacerbating potential institutional rivalries (for a summary of the outcomes for individual institutions, see RAE 2001, 2009 August 24). However, and perhaps more importantly, RAE 2001 (more relevant to this chapter than RAE 2008 in view of the fact that by 2008 London had a new set of statutes in place, and Imperial College and Cardiff had flown their respective nests) demonstrated the national standing of both Imperial College and UCL across a broad academic spectrum, with the London School of Economics showing parallel eminence but within a more restricted range. Imperial College made 22 submissions of which all but 2 were ranked 5 or 5*; LSE made 13 submissions with only one being less than 5/5*, with UCL recording 5/5* for 41 of its 48 submissions (and Cardiff was in the same league with 28 submissions and all bar 4 being awarded a 5/5* grade).

What the research assessment exercises demonstrated is that certain colleges had research reputations that merited, at the very least, a national standing (and if this is the comparative reference point then several other London and Welsh colleges could be added to the list), indeed even international standing. For comparison, the figures for the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford were, respectively, 51 submissions of which all but 3 were graded 5/5* and 46 submissions of which but 4 were graded 5/5*.

The chapter has referred to the strength of the University of London as a brand name and how in part this was the appeal of membership for the colleges. What the research assessment exercises have enabled the colleges to do is to brand themselves as leading universities in their own right. It could be argued that Imperial College, like the University of Wales, Cardiff (as it was formally titled), had acquired a status that enabled them to construct a brand name that had as much, if not more, appeal than their respective universities. It is not that the federal models were destined to collapse (indeed the University of Wales has increased its institutional membership), but the reasons for membership were changing. If the prestigious research-led colleges could create a positive international identity in their own right then there was less reason to belong to a university especially if you felt membership increasingly incurred more costs than it conferred benefits.

Significantly, the external pressures that augmented the leverage of the colleges in both London and Wales vis-à-vis their respective universities worked in precisely the opposite direction in both Oxford and Cambridge. There is protracted internal wrangling at both Oxford and Cambridge to determine the distribution of public funding but these are resources that go directly to the two universities, which has been augmented recently by the fact that college fees (albeit reduced) are also now paid directly to the universities rather than to the colleges. Both universities take responsibility for organising their strategic approach to the research assessment exercises and the demands of the QAA. The QAA's institutional reports (QAA, February 2008 (Cambridge); QAA, March 2004 (Oxford)) were both broadly supportive of the procedures the two universities had in place to monitor the quality of their programmes and highlighted some good practices while making some – essentially minor – recommendations for improvement. In view of these favourable reports, there is a certain irony in the fact that both universities had been in the forefront of resistance to the more intrusive procedures of the QAA that were in place post-1997 (Tapper, 2007: 174–184). And the thought that colleges would take possible advantage of the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act to declare independence, acquire the university title and award their own degrees is frankly absurd. Within Oxbridge itself, and the world into which it is intimately meshed, there is undoubtedly a college status hierarchy but the universities labels are far from tarnished.

New Statutes

The new statutes of the University of London (in effect since 1 August 2008) define its goals as: '. . . to promote education of a university standard and the advancement of knowledge and learning by teaching and research; and to encourage the achievement and maintenance of the highest academic standards'. And 'In pursuit of these objects, the university will serve and support the interests of the Colleges' (University of London, Statutes 2.1, 2.2). The question is whether the university can pursue these objectives without also serving and supporting the interests of the colleges? In other words, does it have a significant independent role to play? Moreover, will the colleges also serve and support the interests of the university? Or, is this essentially a one-way relationship in terms of who will support whom? Is the University of London no more than the agglomeration of the interests of its colleges? The very general university objects convey sentiments with which none of the institutional parties – university or colleges – would disagree. The issue is how the university and colleges share responsibility for the delivery of these broad goals.

The 2008 Statutes affirm that: 'The University has the power to grant degrees and other awards and to do all things permitted by law which are necessary or desirable to promote its objects' (University of London, Statutes 3.1). Article 16.2 goes on to state, 'Each College shall be entitled to award degrees of the University, and (provided it has the power to do so) may award its own degrees subject to any protocols that the Board of Trustees may establish'. However, even if the colleges acquire this

right they may not as yet actually exercise it, an issue that is currently in the process of being resolved. Nonetheless, it is conceivable that in a comparatively short period of time few, if any, of the colleges will decide to award University of London degrees, which would surely put the university in an invidious position – forsaken by its members with respect to the core function that justified its very foundation.

In terms of its relationship to the colleges (as opposed to its responsibilities for its external degree programme and the School of Advanced Studies – SAS) the University (besides its right to grant degrees) performs what can best be described as support functions for its colleges and their students. The most important of these are as follows:

- the provision of halls of residence, located mainly in Bloomsbury
- responsibility for university-wide computing facilities (University of London Computing Centre)
- maintenance of the Senate House library
- a careers service
- estate management, with some properties used, at least in part, by certain colleges

With the exception of the maintenance of the Senate House library (note that colleges also provide their own computing services and libraries) these can scarcely be described as core academic functions. Even the right of the university to confirm the colleges' senior academic appointments by the colleges has been swept away. The contrast with Oxford and Cambridge could not be more striking where the two universities at least share with the colleges, or are the dominant partners in: awarding degrees, examining, the provision of teaching facilities, the promotion of research, the employment and promotion of faculty, the admission of postgraduates, and the distribution of public monies, besides providing parallel support functions to those that are the responsibility of the University of London. In view of the considerable geographical dispersal of its colleges, the University of Wales is not even in a position to provide the services that the University of London makes available. In a review of its own history the observation is made, 'It [the University] will, in future, focus on its roles as a degree-awarding authority for institutions in Wales and beyond and as a leading body involved in the protection and promotion of the language and culture of Wales' (University of Wales, 2008, February 8). While its degree-awarding authority may have stronger grounds for survival compared to London, this is scarcely the basis on which to sustain a vibrant federal model.

Conclusion: The Federal Model and the Collegiate University

With reference to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, Rothblatt has written:

> The only 'hold' of the centre over the periphery was the importance attached to degree-taking and, as time went on, it was virtually the only control of the whole over its parts (Rothblatt, 1987: 154).

As the importance of 'degree-taking' increased, the power of the centre (the universities) vis-à-vis the periphery (the colleges) was enhanced. However, the move towards a federal model of governance was dependent upon the development of a greater role for the centre than just its degree-granting powers as significant as these may have been. In his analysis of the Franks Report, Halsey has argued that:

> The ancient syndicalist arrangements survived and the central authorities could still, justly if satirically, be described as the executive committee of the collegiate class. Franks left the public life of Oxford as he found it, quietly led and controlled by the private life of its colleges (Halsey, 1995: 166).

However, formal changes in the machinery of governance have to be set in the context of wider developments. Although little of substance may have changed at Oxford in direct response to the Franks Report, the weight of balance within the collegiate university has steadily shifted to the centre, and this was a process set in motion long before the Franks Enquiry. Undoubtedly the undermining of the collegiate class has speeded up in recent decades, thanks to a combination of changing academic and social values (internal pressures) and financial and political demands (external pressures generated mainly by the state). The Universities of London and Wales responded to these forces differently from Oxford and Cambridge because they had contrasting models of federal governance that had emerged well before the halcyon days of the post-war years evaporated.

The chapter commenced with the argument that the federal model of governance as represented by the Universities of London and Wales was based upon a clear separation of two key functions – the universities examined and awarded degrees, the colleges recruited students and then taught them. Because both the respective functions were of critical importance and responsibility for them followed separate and clearly demarcated institutional lines, a confederal model of governance was created.

But the business of higher education is never static: research, as opposed to either teaching or examining, becomes a key academic pursuit; graduate student numbers expand; the state provides increasing amounts of funding and is not above changing the rules that determine its distribution; issues regarding the appointment and promotion of faculty have to be resolved; there are demands for greater accountability that require a response from the universities; and (at Oxford and Cambridge) the expansion of science results in the development of a major teaching role for the universities. The question then is how these developments impact upon the model of governance. The argument is that at Oxford and Cambridge they have been resolved in a way that steadily (more swiftly at Cambridge) turned the two universities into federal universities: both sets of players – universities and colleges – have retained a monopoly of certain critical roles while sharing other roles, some of equal importance. Although there have been changes over time, and there will continue to be changes, contemporarily (and for the foreseeable future), the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge will remain federal universities.

The prognosis is more equivocal for the Universities of Wales and London. It appears that the University of Wales will retain its examining and degree-granting powers vis-à-vis its colleges, a sufficiently critical function to suggest that it

sustains its role at the centre of a confederal model. But if the colleges acquire, and act upon, their right to assume degree-granting powers then the current Cardiff University could provide the model for the future, with the University of Wales disintegrating into a number of unitary institutions. Perhaps the most pertinent question is which institution will be next to desert the ship? An interesting conundrum is the role of the Welsh Assembly, which has looked favourably upon the idea of a planned higher/further education sector in Wales. Would the Assembly see the University of Wales as a means for enhancing that goal or as an obstacle that impedes it?

Much the same uncertainties surround the future of the University of London. It is likely that for most of the colleges the University's degree-awarding powers will continue to be attractive and it performs a number of services that enable it to retain the aura of a potent central force. But there is a considerable imbalance in the authority of colleges and university in terms of their respective contributions to core academic functions. As with the University of Wales, we can anticipate the perpetuation of a confederal model, but the likelihood of the centre declining still further cannot be ruled out at either university. Are Imperial and Cardiff exceptional cases or harbingers of the future?

Although both London and Wales can be described as collegiate universities because they have confederal models of governance, it is evident that they did not embrace collegial values on a wide front. Indeed, London saw itself as purposefully countering the Oxbridge tradition of higher education. Moreover, besides the absence of residential colleges, the University of London always genuflected to professorial dominance when it came to determining academic matters. Nonetheless, in spite of these equivocations, it would be unwise to see the future as evolving without a significant input from grassroots academic opinion. Dorothy Wedderburn, in an interesting analysis of the merger of Royal Holloway and Bedford Colleges, has written:

> The collegial character of both institutions made these conflicts [driven by the merger process] acute at times, but in the end was an asset . . . that same collegiality provided the base from which a strong new institutional identity has developed (Wedderburn, 1991: 152).

Thus, the idea of the collegial tradition – like the idea of the collegiate university – is open to interpretation. The question is in what form, and how deeply, the collegial tradition was embedded in Royal Holloway and Bedford Colleges, and now in the new college of Royal Holloway, University of London (its current title). The collegiate university may disintegrate because the federal model collapses, but the collegial tradition can survive in different institutional settings. Indeed, in his *Towards a Vision and Strategy of the Future of UCL*, the Provost claims that the college's 'strong spirit of collegiality and loyalty' is 'a most remarkable characteristic of UCL' (Grant, 2004: 7).

Perhaps a more interesting question than the evolution of the University of London is how the wider London map of higher education will develop. London Higher, with a membership of over 40 universities and colleges in the London area, was created with the 'long-term aspiration . . . that London will be universally

acknowledged as the knowledge capital of the world' (London Higher, 2007–8: 3). Is it possible that some of the existing universities in the London area may wish to become members of the University of London once the issue of university titles is resolved or perhaps even merge with current colleges (note that at one time it was proposed that Royal Holloway should link up with Brunel University)? And, of course, there is every reason to believe that the present colleges within the University of London will continue to develop joint degree programmes; indeed it is hoped that the new statutes will actually encourage this process. Perhaps what is emerging is a multiversity, with fluid institutional boundaries, spread across the parameters of a great city. Are we returning to the nineteenth century with those fascinating structures that brought under one roof institutions based in different northern conurbations? If this is a map for the future, with higher education in other cities following the same path, then the concerns with federalism and collegiality may come to be seen as rather parochial – issues for a dying past rather than the future.