

# The UDW fees crisis of May/June 2000: A linguistic analysis

**Richard Consterdine**

The fees crisis at the University of Durban-Westville (UDW) started on 4 May 2000 and ended on 8 June 2000. However, a high level of tension and confrontational rhetoric relating to the implementation of the Government's transformational and educational policies pre-dated the start of the fees crisis.

UDW was closed for the Easter vacation from 22 April to 2 May 2000. Towards the end of this period, thirty-seven staff members (mostly academics) suddenly received redundancy notices. These were to come into effect immediately. The news provoked strong reactions from the staff unions, the Combined Staff Association (COMSA) and the Academic Staff Association (ASA), who immediately began making representations to management on behalf of their dismissed members. The SRC also protested on behalf of students who were left without teachers as a consequence of the redundancies four weeks before the end-of-semester examinations were due to commence. Consequently when UDW re-opened on Tuesday 2 April 2000 confrontation between management on the one side and staff and students—now united by a common grievance on the other—was already well under way.

On Thursday 4 May management deregistered nine hundred twenty-four students for failing to pay their initial registration fees, thereby exacerbating an already tense situation. The same day the deregistered students and their fellow-student sympathisers began demonstrating outside the administration block. After a very lively meeting the Student Representative Council (SRC) handed over a list of fifteen demands to management, among which were calls for the reinstatement of both the de-registered students and the dismissed staff members. Management gave the defaulting students another twenty-four hours to pay the outstanding registration fees but by the end of the next day (Friday 5 May) none of the defaulters had paid and, with the administration block beset by demonstrators, they would have found it extremely difficult if not actually dangerous to attempt to enter the building and pay their fees. The same evening the police were called onto campus to prevent demonstrators from carrying out their threat to disrupt a graduation ceremony.

On Monday 8 May the students resumed their protest demonstrations which soon deteriorated into serious rioting. Despite a written undertaking from the SRC not to disrupt lectures, militants invaded classes in progress, assaulted students attending them and forced those they could to join in the demonstrations and boycott classes. All academic endeavours at the university now virtually ceased.

The next day (Tuesday 9 May) management responded by calling in the Police Public Order Unit to prevent further vandalism and violence. Management attempted to hold talks with the SRC but these broke down and the demonstrations again degenerated into disorderly conduct. On the same day the ASA held an emergency meeting of concerned academics and later issued the following document addressed to all staff members and students of the University of Durban-Westville. The document is signed by the then president of the ASA Dr. M. Maharaj.

I give the document in full followed by an analysis of it, using the Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) of Halliday (1995) and Hasan (1978)<sup>1</sup> and my own interpretation of the data produced by the SFG analysis.

---

### **A Message to our University community from the Academic Staff Association**

Our University has once again been plunged into crisis by managerial ineptitude. The Students' Representative council has initiated a boycott of classes to express deep-seated grievances regarding the way in which Management has handled the issues that they (SRC) have raised in their communiqué of 8 May.

The situation on campus has become so critical that the ASA feel compelled to make public the views of academic staff members on the roots of the current malaise.

Senior Management has a long-standing history of failing to act in the best interests of our University Community. Current examples of this failure that have precipitated the present crisis are:

1. The Dentistry debacle: students who were registered for courses in February and to date have not yet received any instruction. This is despite our University having been aware of the situation from the outset. Management's glaring failure to rectify the situation timeously has laid our University open to possible legal action.

---

<sup>1</sup> See also Butt (1995), Gerot & Wignell (1995), and Gerot (1995).

2. Fine Arts: the bizarre situation has arisen in which members of the Fine Arts Dept were retrenched in the middle of the teaching programme, leaving ten senior students without tuition four weeks before their mid-year examinations. This is despite representations by us in which we proposed a simple solution that would, at no extra expense to our University, allow these and students in other departments that have been closed to complete a full year of study. Our University's action to forcibly relocate some of these students not only has incurred extra expenses but has traumatised them to the detriment of their academic performance.
3. Retrenchments: loyal and in many cases long-standing staff members (several of whom have served our University for over twenty years) have been summarily retrenched. The manner in which the University proceeded has been fraught with irregularities. It has ignored Departmental plans to redress their financial problems (which Management themselves demanded), as well as ignoring the Council directive that staff be redeployed.
4. University council: we firmly believe that our University Council, as the highest decision-making body, has failed in its duties by abrogating control of and responsibility for the preservation of Management integrity. Council's repeated procrastination in addressing the deep concerns expressed by the academic community, and their disregard for established policies and procedures has led to a dictatorial management style that has lost the faith and support of all University stakeholders, as evident in the development of yet another campus crisis.

In order to urgently resolve these issues we call upon

1. The Minister of Education to investigate the underlying causes of the recurring crises at UDW.
2. The Management to immediately put into effect the Council directive calling for a meeting between students, staff and management to air and resolve the root causes of the present crisis.

We are gravely concerned that the continuing state of affairs at UDW will damage and tarnish our University's reputation, detrimentally affecting our rating in the new Shape and Size exercise undertaken by the Department of Education. The summary closure of certain UDW departments pre-empting the release of this report further exacerbates our situation.

## **The Current Situation**

In a meeting of concerned academics held today (09/05/2000) sympathy was expressed for several of the student grievances. Support was also expressed for the right of students to engage in peaceful protest and the Academic Staff Association therefore urges all parties to conduct themselves in a manner befitting an institution of higher learning. We caution all parties to act responsibly and refrain from any acts of violence or anything that could be considered intimidatory.

The academic staff is committed to programmes of study and modules presented at UDW and will endeavour to make up any study time lost as a result of the present crisis.

---

## **document description**

The ASA document contains 661 words and was internally generated by the UDW fees crisis. It is dated 9 May 2000, not in the heading, but only incidentally within the body of text, in the first line of the penultimate paragraph. The heading consists of one line typed in bold, lower case letters with all nouns and adjectives capitalised. The main body of text is slightly smaller than the heading and consists of seven main paragraphs. Paragraph 3 has four numbered paragraphs subordinate to it and paragraph 4 has two numbered sub-sections. There is one sub-heading. It stands before the sixth paragraph and is typed in the same format as the main heading at the top of the page. The entire text is on one side of a standard A4 white sheet of paper. The hand written signature (and designation as president of the Academic Staff Association) of M. Maharaj lies below the last paragraph of typed text. The document bears no official crest or letterhead.

## **analysis of field**

Process types. There are 45 main processes in this document. 20 are material processes (44.4%), 14 are projecting (31.1%) and 11 (24.4%) are relational processes. According to my analysis the main material processes at clause rank are: 'has been plunged, has initiated, were registered, has laid open, has arisen, were retrenched, has incurred, has traumatised, have been retrenched, has failed, has led to, to investigate, to put into effect, will damage, (will) tarnish, exacerbates, to conduct themselves, to act, (to) refrain from and will endeavor to make up'.

Similarly the main projecting processes are: a) verbal: *to express, to make public, have not ... received any instruction, proposed, demanded, call upon* (twice),

*was expressed* (twice), *urges, caution*. b) mental: *feel, has ignored, ignoring, believe*.

The relational Processes are: a) Identifying: *are* (4 times). b) Attributive: *has become, has been, are*. c) Existential: *is* (twice) in the phrase '*this is despite*'. d) Possessive: *has*.

Participants. The two most common Participants, which occur with equal frequency, are 'we' and the noun *failure*. The latter always forms part of a large nominal group which is usually associated with the management of UDW (or one of its constituent branches) as the author of this failure, e.g. *Management's glaring failure to rectify the situation timeously*. Since, however, the document itself comes from the ASA (the Academic Staff Association of UDW), *we* and the Participants *The ASA, The Academic Staff Association* and *The academic staff* (twice) have the same meaning. So, in effect, *we* and its referents (9 times in all) constitute the main Participant as Actor, Sayer, Senser, etc. *The situation/ the state of affairs* form another Participant grouping, as do *Senior Management, It* (i.e. the University), *Management themselves, our University Council. Students/the students' Representative Council* occurs three times as Participant but only once as Actor. *Members* appear twice as Goals. Most of the Material Processes in the text are attributed to *failure, Management* or *situation* as Actors. *We/the ASA/academic staff* as Participants are mainly Sayers and Sensers. Other Participants used as Goal or Identifier are: *boycott, grievances, debacle, our University, Fine Arts, solution, retrenchments, plans, University Council, dictatorial management style, situation, the underlying causes, the minister of Education, etc.*

Circumstances. Very few Circumstances in this text are placed before the Processes, so the position of the very first Circumstance, *once again*, must be intended to be highly emphatic. The only other two of note placed before their Process are *in order to urgently resolve these issues* and *In a meeting of concerned academics held today (09/05/00)*. These too must be emphatic, though less so than the opening Circumstance.

The majority of the Circumstances are placed after their Processes. They are mostly in the form of nominal groups, often containing embedded clauses, preceded by a preposition and express time, manner, place or reason for the actions given in the Processes e.g. *into crisis by managerial ineptitude*, which express both place and cause after the same Process.

Two types of Circumstance struck me as worthy of comment because of their awkwardness of expression. These are: 1. A Circumstance introduced by *despite* after the twice-occurring existential phrase *This is* and 2. The use of verbal forms ending in *-ing* to start Circumstances in: *leaving 10 senior students without tuition four weeks before the mid-year examinations* and *detrimentally affecting our rating in the new Shape and Size exercise undertaken by the Department of education*. In type 1 a material process would normally precede a Circumstance starting with '*despite*'. E.g. 'This failure occurred,' 'Management did this' or some such clause. In type 2 the ambiguity is inherent in Modern English because of the functional polyvalence of the *-ing* ending, which does duty as active participle (past and present) and verbal noun (gerund). In these specific incidences it is the anaphoric reference of '*leaving*' and '*affecting*' which is unclear. Does *leaving*, for instance, qualify one of the antecedent nouns *situation/members* or the Process *were retrenched*? It makes eminent sense with any of them, so much so that the syntactic ambiguities created here could be regarded as creating possibilities for greater richness of semantic implication.

**Experiential domain.** The document calls itself 'A Message' from the academic staff to the rest of the university community of UDW, both workers and students. It does indeed give information in an account of the nature and origins of the UDW fees crisis (from the viewpoint of the ASA). Accordingly most of the material Processes are used in the narration of the actions of Management and to a lesser extent of those of the students and some staff members. Conversely, most of the projecting Processes are what the ASA thinks and says. One of these, the first use of '*we call upon*', is an appeal to an outside party not mentioned as an addressee in the heading, namely, the Minister of Education. Therefore the document is more than just an internal information pamphlet. It is an appeal for help to a higher, external authority in order to resolve the internal crisis.

**Short-term goal.** The document's purpose is to give an historical account of the UDW student fees payment crisis from an anti-management perspective. Hence most of the material Processes refer to the actions or failures to act on the part of management, while the projecting Processes express the judgements and advice of the ASA.

**Long-term goal.** This is not as readily apparent as the short-term goal. The condemnation of the actions and policies of UDW management and the appeal for outside intervention suggest that the future reduction of management's power over university staff and student affairs is a serious consideration. Also it was at the

Government's insistence that the University of Durban-Westville had initiated much more rigorous accounting policies than it had previously used. The subsequent closure of financially non-viable departments and the de-registering of students who had not paid their fees thus stem from Government. Therefore, a second long-term goal of the document is probably to influence government to relax its political control over tertiary institutions in general and UDW in particular.

### analysis of tenor

Political control of the Historically Black Universities (HBU's), through a strongly dominant management consisting of government appointees, had long been a common power strategy of the Apartheid regime, which staff and students at UDW had vehemently opposed for decades. The apparently even more energetic application of the same strategy under the new post-apartheid dispensation was widely regarded by many of the academic staff at the University of Durban-Westville as a betrayal of the anti-apartheid struggle and all it stood for. A professor of history (herself Soviet trained) referred to it in a Senate meeting as 'blatant stalinization'. In the Tenor analysis of the document I search for linguistic evidence of this attitude of staff resistance to Management's policies and actions.

Mood selections. All the Finites with one exception are in declarative mood. The one exception, *be in that staff be re-deployed*, is, in traditional grammatical terms, a third person jussive subjunctive, so it is an imperative mood finite. *Have not* in 'Students ... have not yet received any instruction' is the only finite with negative polarity. There is some modality in the text: *would ... allow, will damage, (will) tarnish, could be considered and will endeavor*. The finite *be* in *be re-deployed* can, in my opinion, be regarded as both modulation and modalisation because although it is an indirect command, which makes it modulated, the context makes it clear that the action never occurred. So it could also be an example of impossibility, which would make *be* simultaneously modalised. I find the modality in *would allow* problematic. It appears in the clause complex: '*we proposed a simple solution that would, at no extra expense to our University, allow these and students in other departments ... to complete ... study*'. The wider context again makes it clear that this did not happen. At first I viewed this as a grammatical error by the author(s), i.e. they had used a type 2 conditional when a type 3 conditional, 'would have allowed', was required. If, however, at the time when this document was produced the authors were convinced that the matter was still negotiable, 'would allow' is easily understood as a *constructio ad sensum*. If so, the modality here is good evidence of the authors' attitude. They are not prepared to accept Management's actions as *fais accomplis*.

**Attitudinal lexis and lexicogrammar.** From my analysis I find that this document is replete with attitudinal lexis and lexicogrammar.

The use of declarative mood virtually throughout with only one negative polarity reveals strong conviction on the part of the author(s) concerning the truth of their narrative and the rightness of their opinions. Most of the document is an exposition of how the then current fees crisis arose and who is to blame. Hence of the 33 main finites, 13 are in the present perfect tense to indicate present results of past actions. There are another 7 present perfects in the embedded clauses. The present tense verbs either describe aspects of the resultant crisis or express the current thoughts, opinions and utterances of the ASA. The 20 present perfect verbs allow plenty of room to assign blame for the resulting situation and indeed the first 3 main paragraphs are devoted to a highly rhetorical, condemnatory exposition.

The first clause of the document illustrates well how the present perfect is used to assign blame. '*Our University has once again been plunged into crisis by managerial ineptitude.*' In addition the use of the passive voice makes it abundantly clear that *our University* is the victim and highlights it by its position first in the clause. The body of the monstrous perpetrator, namely management, is here attacked as a whole.

The impressive peroration of this invective (at the end of sub-section 4 of paragraph 3) makes a direct assault on the monster's head:

Council's repeated procrastination in addressing the deep concerns expressed by the academic community, and their disregard for established policies and procedures has led to a dictatorial management style that has lost the faith and support of all University stakeholders, as evident in the development of yet another campus crisis.

The use of the active *has led to* reverses the order of victim and perpetrator found in the opening clause of the invective, thus creating a wonderful chiasmus (i.e. ABBA). The last clause is in essence a repetition of the first. It even echoes the simple syntactical structure of the first clause in its use of the present perfect flanked by perpetrator and victim. It is the change of voice from passive to active which creates the chiasmus mentioned above. This echoing of content and structure and the far greater weight of the two long nominal groups in the last clause create a telling crescendo of sound, semantics and especially of affect.

Attitudinal lexis permeates the whole of this document, but it occurs most frequently in the speech of the first three paragraphs. I give some examples: *plunged into crisis, managerial ineptitude, deep-seated grievances, the roots of the current*



*malaise, The Dentistry debacle. Management's glaring failure, the bizarre situation, traumatizes, fraught with irregularities, we firmly believe, repeated procrastination, dictatorial management style.* The lexis alone clearly indicates the position the ASA takes towards the UDW fees crisis of 2000 and who it blames for it, i.e., management.

The remaining 4 paragraphs contain far less strongly affectual attitudinal lexis and this in fact decreases from paragraph to paragraph, thus creating a diminuendo of intensity, which prevents the document from being dismissed as a purely emotional, unconsidered and unprofessional outburst. At the same time the calmer tone of the last 4 paragraphs, realized by the avoidance of strongly attitudinal lexis, highlights the intensity of the previous invective by its contrast in tone.

The last paragraph is: *The academic staff is committed to programmes of study and modules presented at UDW and will endeavor to make up any study time lost as a result of the present crisis.* The comparatively bland reasonableness of this stands in stark contrast to the tone of the rhetoric of the first 3 paragraphs and leaves the reader with the impression that the document was penned by responsible, sincerely well-intentioned people.

I am of the opinion that the lexis also shows that the ASA sympathised with the student boycott (*deep-seated grievances*). It even holds back from condemning student violence explicitly, even though they were in fact the instigators of it in the first place. The rioting and intimidation of the militant students is only alluded to in the rather vague phrase *all parties* in '*we caution all parties to refrain from any acts of violence*'. Given the explicitness and vehemence of the anti-managerial invective this failure to condemn student violence must surely be significant. In the Apartheid era the staff and students of UDW had always adopted a joint stance against the management as representing the hated racist regime. I suspect that in this document the silence of the ASA concerning the students' behaviour partly reflects this traditional alliance of students and staff against management. It also reflects the need felt by the ASA to make overtures to any power group opposed to the management of UDW in the hope of forging an alliance, no matter how objectionable their behaviour might be. This in turn could indicate how powerless the academic staff felt themselves to be when faced with the power of the state-backed managerial juggernaut.

Agentive roles and status. The main Agent throughout the document is UDW management. It appears in the lexicogrammar as the Subject or part of the noun group forming the Subject of most active verbs and the Agent of many passive verbs. Other agentive roles are filled by students and members of staff, but they mostly appear as victims of management activity. Though the author(s) of the

document appear frequently in the text as *we*, *the ASA*, *academic staff*, they act only as observers, commentators or at best, advisers. This agentive role is admittedly characteristic of traditional Academia, but here the highly affectual attitudinal content shows this passivity to be of a different nature. The frequency of verbs in the Present Perfect tense with management as the Actor/Subject reveals the culprit who, in the ASA's opinion, caused the fees crisis. The first clause of the text is a good example. '*Our University has once again been plunged into crisis by managerial ineptitude.*' Nowhere does the ASA appear in an agentive role with this verb tense. It is a tacit admission of their own impotence and management's complete dominance. There is no trace of detached observation here or of the suspension of judgement so essential to the traditional academic *modus operandi*. The vehemence of the invective is perhaps as much an expression of frustration at the ASA's own marginalised position as it is one of anger at managerial incompetence.

The assessment of status relations in this document is made difficult by the ambiguous reference of the word '*university*' in this text. It occurs 12 times, either as Thing or Classifier, and is preceded by the deictic '*our*' 9 times. This strongly attitudinal use of '*our*' is completely clear when *university* functions as Classifier in the nominal group '*our University community*'. Its first occurrence is in the heading: '*A Message to our University Community from the Academic Staff Association*'. Here, the ASA is identifying all those who work or study at the University of Durban-Westville as members of one and the same Community of Practice<sup>2</sup>. *Our University* is contrasted strongly with *Management*, which is portrayed as lacking this sense of community membership to such an extent that it is actually hostile to it. The first 3 occurrences of *our University* have this contrastive meaning of '*we, the UDW Community versus the Management*'.

Then, in the first 3 sub-sections of paragraph 3, the meaning seems to change and actually become synonymous with *management*. E.g. 1: '*Our University's action ... has traumatized them [i.e. students] to the detriment of their academic performance.*' E.g. 2: '*The manner in which the University proceeded has been fraught with irregularities*'.

In the sentence following example 2 above the meaning seems to shift yet again: *It* (i.e. The University) *has ignored Departmental plans to redress their financial problems (which Management themselves demanded)*. This seems to imply that *management* here refers specifically to the Management Committee (MANCO), which is headed by the vice-chancellor and supervises the day to day administrative duties and decision-making involved in running UDW. MANCO derives its

---

<sup>2</sup> For community of practice theory see Wenger (1998) and Holmes & Meyerhoff (1999).

authority from the University Council, to which it is theoretically answerable for its actions.

The last occurrence of *University* (in paragraph 5) changes again and reverts to the original meaning of all staff and students together forming one Community of Practice: '... *the state of affairs at UDW will damage and tarnish our University's reputation*'. This semantic vacillation surely reflects a collective, internal *psychomachia* (battle of the soul) on the part of the author(s) of this document. They spent years fighting against Management because it was politically appointed by the Apartheid regime, had all the clout and in fact was the only part of the university which 'counted'. Subconsciously the author(s) still feel like outsiders in their own university even though consciously trying to free their self-identity from this deeply inculcated agentive role. The type of discourse emanating from Management shows little evidence of a similar struggle for inner transformation. This intransigence must also have done much to confirm the staff in their own sense of marginalisation. Thus the author(s) as *we, the academic staff*, etc. and the management appear as the main Agents in this document. The vehemence of the detailed invective suggest to me, once again, that the chief intended recipient is probably the Minister of Education, for the simple reason that most of the staff and students of UDW were already fully aware of the events and held similar views about management.

Social distance. Not a single person is mentioned by name in the document. This could indicate a great social distance between the authors and all the interest groups mentioned in the document. On the other hand this anonymity can be regarded as an ellipsis typical of Community of Practice discourse. Why mention the names when everyone on the inside knows who is meant? From my own insider status and from conversations with the author(s) of this document I know this to be the truth, at least in part. Another important factor is the desire to avoid legal action for defamation and libel. UDW management has taken its own staff to court frequently and spends large sums on litigation. The social distance is not as great as the lack of named individuals would suggest, but neither is it as close as one would expect in a functioning Community of Practice. The social distance springs from perceived ideological differences and the real imbalance in power relations.

## **analysis of mode**

Thematic choices. There are many unmarked topical Themes in the ASA document. E.g. *Our University, The Student Representative Council, Senior Management, the bizarre situation, we* (5 times), *The academic staff*, etc. There is only one clause as

Theme: *in order to urgently resolve these issues*, and only two Circumstances as Theme: *and to date* and *In a meeting of concerned academics held today (09/05/2000)*. These three are therefore the only clearly marked Themes, but in my opinion some of the topical Themes containing embedded clauses are so long and emphatic that they too should be considered as marked. E.g. *Current examples of this failure that have precipitated the present crisis, Management's glaring failure to rectify the situation timeously, and loyal and in many cases long-standing staff members (several of whom have served our University for over 20 years)*. The most noteworthy example of them all however must be: *'Council's repeated procrastination in addressing the deep concerns expressed by the academic community, and their disregard for established policies and procedures'*. This Theme is remarkable not only for its striking array of classifiers, epithets and qualifiers which accompany the two nouns in this complex grouping, but also for the mass of alliteration and assonance using the letter 'p'. According to classical rhetoricians this sound, when repeated, indicates exasperation and dismay. I think that is precisely the affect conveyed here at the end of the attitudinally highly charged expository invective of the first 3 paragraphs of the text.

Lexical cohesion and thematic progression. There are four main Themes pervading the entire text: 1) the 'victims' represented by staff and students, 2) the 'perpetrator' represented by Management and Council, 3) the fees crisis, and 4) the University itself, which is only erratically perceived as the entire body of people working and studying at the University. Sometimes *University* is used as a synonym for *Management*. As I discussed above, this is a symptom of uncertainty about personal identity and about the identity of a Community of Practice.

The lexical cohesion in this document is pretty good. E.g. *crisis* appears not only in the first and last clauses but also throughout the text, often as *the situation* and once as *the state of affairs*. Similarly: *The ASA, students, we* (5 times), *(academic) staff, members of the Fine Arts Dept, the academic community. Management* appears 8 times.

The role of language is constitutive and the type of interaction is a monologue. The medium is graphic. The rhetorical thrust is for the most part in the form of an exposition but towards the end of the document this changes to procedure. The lexical analysis shows that the last two paragraphs contain far fewer Classifiers and Epithets than the rest of the document. This creates more neutral, decontextualised affect.

Role and type of language. Apart from the proposals at the end, the focus of the document is kept consistently on management's sins of commission and omission.

The discourse style is thus very topic-centred. Transitions from one sub-topic to another are usually made explicit and the arrangement of material facilitates the smoothness of ideational flow. Elaborate noun groups clustered around grammatical metaphors carry much of the semantic load. All these features make the discursal style well written and the result of considerable skill in the use of 'main-stream' literacy. The occasionally awkward manner of expression is proof of unedited spontaneity, not lack of competence in 'schooled' literacy. In my opinion this document exhibits a high level of discursal skill.

## **conclusion**

The ASA document is a fluent and generally sincere outpouring of dismay and indignation at the perceived faults in policy making and incompetence in the expediting of those policies. The highly judgmental attitude of the document is revealed time and again in the lexis, particularly in the epithets, classifiers and qualifiers clustered around the nominalisations.

The aspects of formal procedure in drafting a committee motion are present in the numbered sub-sections and in the closing proposals. This supports the stated genesis of the document in 'a meeting of concerned academics'. The powerful, rhetorically very well structured invective of the first 3 paragraphs on the other hand must surely be from a single pen. Committees just cannot produce discourse with such strong, contextualised affect or such good internal structure. I have indicated above why I consider this discourse to be informed with sincerity. It clearly reveals, no doubt consciously, the abhorrence of the academic staff of Durban-Westville at the turn of events in the fees crisis of May 2000. Their complete inability to do anything about it is just as clearly portrayed. The SFG analysis successfully pinpoints the data which subconsciously conveys the fact of the marginalised position of the teaching staff in the power relations which dominate their institution<sup>3</sup>.

It is a sad fact that contemporary state-controlled tertiary education is far removed from the ancient gardens of Akademos, the medieval cloister and even the Muscovite Lomonosov university, places where the teachers were central to learning, not disposable peripherals. It is a world-wide trend, but political domination of universities, which was once condemned by the international community as a strategy typical of the racist oppression then being perpetrated in South Africa, now seems to be the norm in many parts of the global village. The only difference between the old and the new forms of academic tyranny in this

---

<sup>3</sup> See Geslin (1995) for a related account, and Janks (1992).

country at least is the excuse offered for it: then it was political ideology, now it is financial constraint.

School of Languages, Literature and Cultural studies  
University of Durban-Westville

## References

- Butt, D, R Fahey, et al 1995. *Using Functional Grammar. An Explorer's Guide*. Sydney: National Centre for English Language Teaching & Research. Macquarie University.
- Fairclough, N (ed) 1992. *Critical Language Awareness*. London: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Gerot, L & P Wignell 1995. *Making Sense of Functional Grammar*. Sydney: Stabler.
- Gerot, L 1995. *Making Sense of Text*. Sydney: Stabler.
- Geslin, N 1995. Ideology in Crisis on a South African Campus. *Language and Literature* 4,3:193-197.
- Halliday, MAK 1994. *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Hasan, Ruqaiya 1978. Text in the Systemic-functional Model. In Wolfgang Dressler (ed): *Current Trends in Text Linguistics*. Berlin: de Gruyter.
- Holmes, J & M Meyerhoff 1999. The Community of Practice: Theories and Methodologies in Language and Gender Research. *Language in Society* 28:173-183.
- Janks, H & R Ivancic 1992. Critical Language Awareness and Emancipatory Discourse. In Fairclough, N (ed): *Critical Language Awareness*. London: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Wenger, E 1998. *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.