

“That’s an interesting  
question’  
The role of the  
professoriate in the  
entrepreneurial  
university

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# What is the role of professoriate in Australian universities?

- In ARC *Disrupting Leadership in Entrepreneurial Universities I* found when asked, university senior managers (Including Deans) in a Go8, Utech and Regional university responded  
“ That’s an interesting question- I have to think about it”  
All the professors not in management just laughed
- Most managers responded – prof should mentor next generation researchers and build research capacity, bring in external income and increase post graduate completions(workload calculus) and be on university committee systems (service to ensure quality)
- No mention of informing university policy and practice, or the public role of critical intellectual etc...
- How has it come to be this?



## Restructuring university sector over 30 years

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New public administration reforms or corporate managerialism have undermined the strength of the public service in terms of talking truth to power in government and across key institutions such as universities

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Governments outsourced key functions and advice to Big 4 (despite conflict of interest) and policy advisors mediate government relations with public and lobbyists ( as do VCs)

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Universities became corporatized based on NPA and neoliberal market principles of choice and shifted view of education to being a private not public good

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Increased managerialism, commercialization linking universities to economy since 1990 with little mention of public responsibility

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Governments have treated universities as a cost not investment, reducing investment in research leading to reliance on international students as a revenue source

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Little internal opposition or capacity to appeal to public because of popular view universities are elite (yet 50% with degrees) reinforced by a historical cultural sensibility of instrumentalism of education (job not citizenship) bordering on anti-intellectualism (cf Europe, Asia etc...)

# Leaderism

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- Devolved responsibility and risk to VCs- leaderism
- Focus is on the individual leader attributes and the university needs and expectations
- to perform this role leaders must be empowered by giving them sufficient room to manoeuvre—the ‘right’, or authority, to lead [...];
- Leaderism is the ‘next evolution of managerialism’, a ‘social and organisational technology’, utilized in public service reform originating in the UK, aiming to refocus the public sector towards the consumer-citizen (O’Reilly and Reed 2010, 2011), or putting students first.



Parallel  
governance  
systems  
developed

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**1980s** : Professoriate ran policy issues through Academic Boards and Senates and Convocations

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Heads of Schools and Deans elected– turn-taking

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**Mid 1990s**: Managers took over appointment processes of Deans etc (Blackmore 1996)

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Academic Boards delegated to doing the domestic labour and quality assurance and line managers controlled policy and finance (Rowlands 2006,2010)

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**2010s** : Academic Board/Senate chairs moved from part time to full time positions and included in policy and planning committees ( co-opted??)



# Power shift

Shift in power within the academy from intellectual capital, the authority earned through expertise, to academic or managerial capital, where authority is acquired through position (Marginson 2011, Rowlands 2013).

Intellectual capital is fought for and accrued over time through, for example, successful 'grantsmanship' and reputationally through publications, success premised upon the ability to play the academic game. Intellectual capital, depends on processes of legitimation in the knowledge hierarchy of universities and field of higher education. It relies on the autonomy of the scientific and intellectual order, for example, scientific prestige arising from external measures of research as accrued through impact, citations and peer review. (Blackmore 2022. ).

Academic or managerial capital is 'obtained and maintained by holding a position enabling domination of other positions and their holders' (Bourdieu 1988: 84) and 'founded principally on control of the instruments of reproduction of the professorial body' (Bourdieu 1988: 78) This means it is linked closely to the institutional hierarchy and its power distribution, and its legitimation relies on the social hierarchy and internal stratification being sustained.

# Changing pathways into and profile of professoriate

**1980s:** professors moved from being elite few who gained title through international peer review: 'Personal chair'

**1990s**

- Promotion pathway developed to professorship (Equity practitioners provided professional development etc for women career development– men would apply too early and women too late)
- VCs expected to have a strong academic and research background

**1990s** amalgamation and restructuring with unified sector

- Professorial title now linked to management positions (Heads of School and above) regardless of research or teaching background to given them necessary status ie managerial capital

**2010s**

- Research Assessment
- International rankings (attract international students)
- Establishment of Research Institutes/Centres etc to create a focus (rely on contract researchers)
- ARC create research-only pathways (Post Docs, DECRA, Future Fellow and Laureate) now ECR aim
- Policy Pressure for partnerships and external funding: universities recruit senior managers and academics out of public service and industry often without academic research and teaching- Professorial title attractive recruitment strategy
- Clinical academics: Health and medicine practitioners doing research e,g Associate professors paid for by health system but same role as other academics







## Unbundling academic work

- The unrelenting organizing of reorganizations—and splitting up professional jobs into processes that can be managed, measured, and controlled—have therefore become the quintessential specialization of management. The fact that reorganization also is the easiest means of disconnecting employees from former faculty rights—like shared governance, tenure, and academic freedom—adds to this managerial drive, furthering their organizations' flexibility (Lorenz 2012: 617).





A precarious life in the  
academy: academic  
casualisation in Australia

- Student numbers rose 2000-16 by 85.5% while FTE staff (including casual) increased 56.3%.,
  - student-staff ratios increased by 36% (NTEU 2018).
  - 2000 - 2017
    - limited term contracts increased by 83.4%,
    - FTE casuals increased by 77.9%
    - tenured FTE increased by 39.5%. (NTEU 2018)
  - 2019: 67% academics either contract or casual
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# Disaggregation of academic career paths

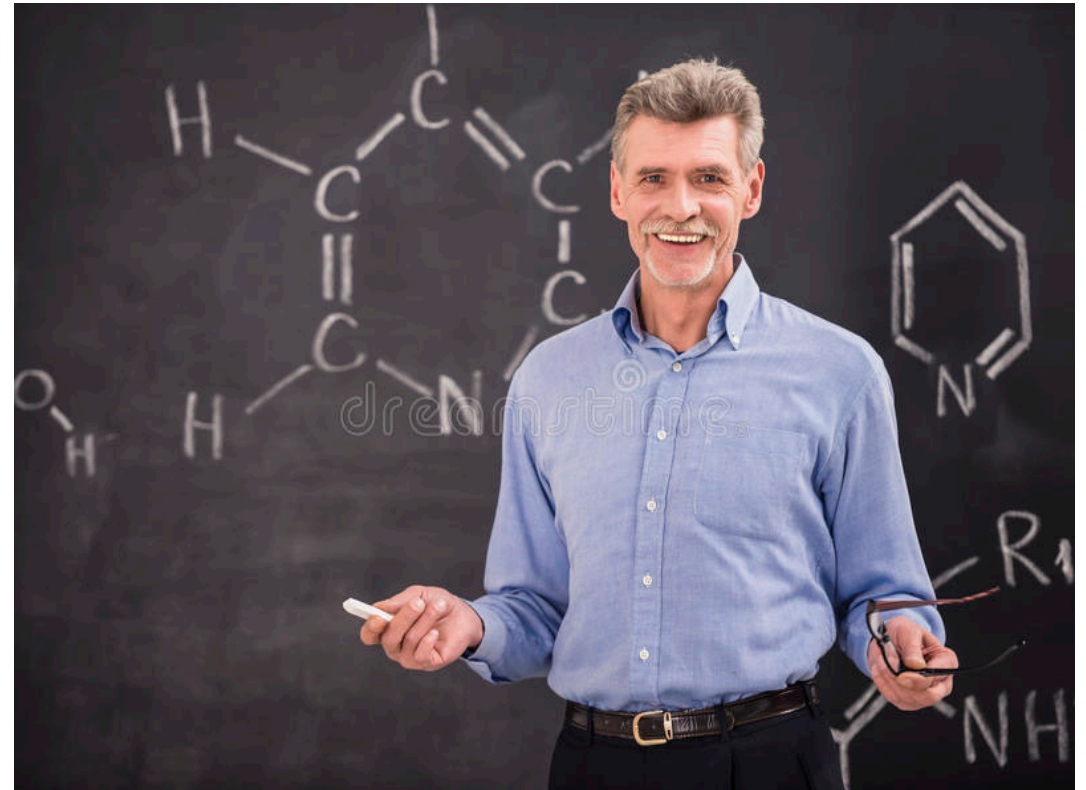
- Teaching and research roles in universities reducing while increase in research only and teaching only (exacerbated by ERA)
- Parallel career paths
  - Research:* hyper performative path of serial 3-year contracts (PDF, DECRA, Future Fellow )
  - Research and teaching:* 40/40/20, percentage reducing with tenure gone
  - Teaching only* – now emerging in EBAs- dominated by women with family responsibilities but career dead end
  - Management:* research impossible once Head of School and above, on contract, financially well rewarded, some returning to permanent professorial position
- These pathways are gendered with many women stuck as teaching only or at Associate Prof level and most effected by Covid lockdown
- STEM areas particularly difficult for women due to expectation of continuity to build CV and they are pulling out



## Epistemic bias in appointments

A senior Australian Research Council bureaucrat argued, for a DVC Research, science skills were essential because

*'this discipline is where numerical and analytical skills are developed' and a science background means a person can 'get their head around difficult concepts' whereas those from HASS humanities are 'not exposed to the same level of research activity'.*



# University Governance 2023

- Executive management (PVC DVC etc ) has increased with each new portfolio
- University executives outrageous salaries (Boden & Rowlands 2020 )
- University Councils/Senates now have on average 70% plus members who are not or have not been academics
- Multiple restructurings have led to larger faculties under the management of Executive Deans— reduced representation of HASS as universities increasingly prioritise STEM and health, with gender implications (Blackmore 2022)
- Academics including professors have little to no say in planning, policy and financial matters
- Academic Boards and their committees do ‘quality assurance’
- University workforce has been casualised to enable agility and flexibility of university (2019 70% of academic staff on contract or casual)
- In response to overreliance on international students, in 2020 university executives unnecessarily down sized and restructure with loss of 40,000 staff with long term capacity building consequences (Guthrie2022 )

# Effects

- Massification, commercialisation, marketisation, technologization and managerialism have expanded the role and responsibilities of academics producing work overload under conditions of employment precarity (Kenny 2018).
- Academics undertake significant structural unpaid overtime (60 hour weeks)(Casual academics do underpaid 'piece work'- universities now charged in Fair Work Commission)
- Academics including professoriate feel micro-managed and overworked, distrust managers, feel disenfranchised and few seek management positions
- Academics undervalued other than as measured by monetised outputs in workloads- external income earned, graduate completions and publications- which do not recognise the relational work, collegiality and indeed leadership ie gifting of our labour.
- Academic freedom is under threat due to non-disclosure clauses, enterprise bargaining agreements and threats of punitive action

# Changing profile of professoriate

- Professor is viewed as next stage in career and not seen to have any wider obligations
- Many next generation professors
  - do not have university wide experience to understand the politics
  - do not view their role of professor as a critical intellectual
  - lack capacity to inform wider university policy
- Non-academic professors have not had to move up promotion ladder (external appointments) and therefore do not understand the barriers and challenges
- Research-only pathways to professorship means often have not done both teaching and research and therefore teaching is considered less important ( yet on promotion panels)
- Teaching only positions are dead-end careers to professorship as research still valued in promotion
- Professoriate still lacks gender and cultural diversity



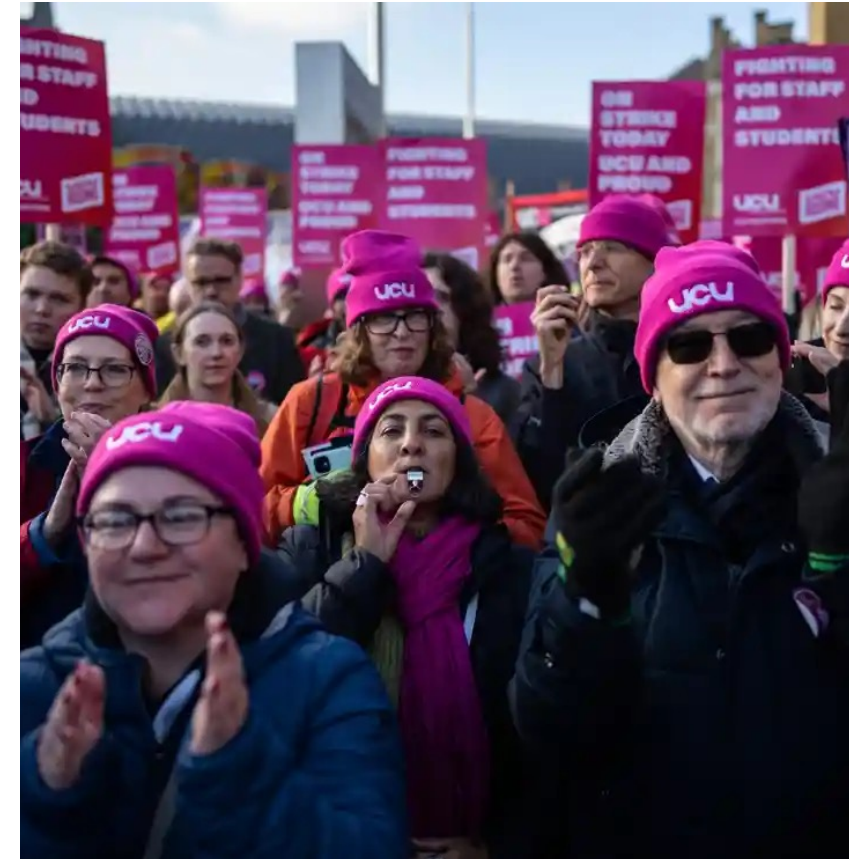


# Collective opposition

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Business model of universities is broken-reliance on international students for funds not supplied by government

- Enterprise bargaining no longer works
  - restricts strikes ( now occurring with renegotiation)
  - ratchets up increased productivity benefitting university
  - flexibility favours the university not individual
- Lack of time is a form of managerial control
- Policies (research assessment, performance review etc) leading to production of a neoliberal academic : individualistic, competitive, performative
- Fear of repercussions
- Compliance mentality
- Overwork and precarious employment discourages opposition
- Changing profile and pathway of professoriate- loss of sense of purpose of university
- Lack of role clarity of academic work practice as a profession



# Future Action of AAUP?

- Increase our membership across university sector
- Include Associate Professors – develop a stronger sense of role and responsibility of professoriate and for the public university
- Further develop and disseminate the Professional Ethics Framework e.g. induction into academia, Ph D forums and Grad Certs in Higher Education
- Develop a stronger relationship with policymakers
- Continue our campaigns for reforming university governance (Model Act including Convocation),, informing Accord, local chapter activity, submissions and media
- Work with Public Universities Australia including student organisations and NTEU

