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The Future of Work in Higher Education

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Commentaries

The West Review: An answer in search of a question

Jane Nicholls and Simon Marginson
AUR Editorial Board

Simon Marginson

Jane Nicholls

This issue of *Australian Universities' Review* focuses on the changing nature of work in universities, at a time when work in higher education, and even the nature of higher education, are undergoing profound transformation.

The Review of Higher Education Policy and Funding, chaired by Roderick West and currently in train, was foreshadowed in the 1996 Federal Budget. Policy reviews in higher education have a varied history. Some are genuine exercises of re-thinking in which the outcomes are not known in advance or otherwise determined by government. Others are pressured heavily behind the scenes, or pre-empted by premature policy announcements. The West Review was announced simultaneously with the Budget's funding reductions and major shifts in HECS and fee charging. It was an odd way to go about rethinking the shape, size and character of the higher education system. If the Review were a *bona fide* exercise, policy changes of this magnitude would normally follow its work rather than precede it. Where this leaves the Review is unclear. Observant cynics might be excused for concluding that the job of the West Review is to come up with an appropriate set of 'fundamental' questions that will make the answers already chosen by the Government seem more or less inevitable.

Certainly the Government achieved many of its apparent aims in the 1996 Budget, using the tensions and potentialities left behind by Labor. Labor bequeathed a public system destabilised by market deregulation amid increasing scarcity, with a growing reliance on commercial income, fee paying international programs and postgraduate fees. The Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) was designed by Labor to balance equity objectives with fiscal clawback, but it has proved a dangerous mechanism, enabling the subsequent conservative Government to impose user costs via HECS at levels unprecedented in Australian higher education. It is a matter for shame that Australian students - for whom higher education was free only a decade ago - will now pay charges that are among the highest in the world for publicly constituted universities. In certain courses, such as business studies and law, HECS has been fixed at more than 100 per cent of the actual cost of provision.

The conservative parties have begun to dismantle universal public provision in undergraduate education by allowing universities from 1998 to charge full tuition fees up to 25 per cent of students per course. Consequent upon this change are administrative measures to loosen the requirements placed on universities by the Commonwealth during the annual educational profiles negotiations. Already relaxed under Labor, profile agreements will become still more vague and non-specific, allowing institutions to shift funded load where it suits them, expand their proportion of fee-based places, and perhaps to buy and sell places between themselves.

Thus, well before the West Committee had begun to meet, the way had been opened for universities to manipulate demand in order to maximise their market potential. One would-be Ivy League university has announced a scheme to capitalise on its prestige by taking in students from other institutions on a fee-paying basis for their final year, thus using credit transfer mechanisms to sell them an Ivy League qualification. The Coalition's decision to relax the previous Government's prohibition on the charging of 'ancillary' fees has enabled another round of deregulation. This allows institutions to charge students for anything, any service or tuition, not formally required for successful completion of their course. A second university is selling its first year economics curriculum to a private provider, so that students who miss out on a government-funded university place can study privately and, if successful, transfer into the mainstream in second year. The guidelines under

which 'ancillary' fees are chargeable are loose and provide students with negligible consumer protection.

Further prospects for market deregulation have been opened up by the possible application of National Competition Policy (another Labor initiative) to higher education. If the full logic of Competition Policy is adopted, most university activities would be exposed to competitive bidding. TAFE and the private sector would be able to tender for public funds for the provision of teaching and research services in higher education. In this context, the historical and normative distinctions between 'private' and 'public' institutions could soon become ephemeral. There would be no reason why private universities such as Bond and Notre Dame Australia, and a legion of others, could not be listed in the Higher Education Funding Act as eligible for the receipt of Commonwealth funds. The only question which remains, an issue explicitly referred to the West Review, is the circumstances under which a provider could be admitted to the list of eligible institutions.

The adoption of a system of vouchers for higher education, as originally foreshadowed in the Coalition parties' 1992 *Fightback!* manifesto, would allow the Government in one swoop to universalise undergraduate fees and integrate the private sector into a common market. Perhaps that is what the Government wants the West Review to do. It would be easier to implement a full-blown higher education market via a quasi-independent review, than for Cabinet to impose such a system directly.

Missing from the Government's statements on these matters is any sense of the potential social costs of deregulatory reform. Regulation not only constrains freedoms, but creates them. It enables democratically determined policy objectives to be achieved. Since the Murray Committee reported in 1957, the nationally administered funding of higher education has allowed the Commonwealth to secure its chosen objectives. To varying degrees at different times, institutions have been required to provide community services, and contribute to economy and equity. They have been formally and publicly accountable to the whole citizenry (not just the 'customer'). At the same time mechanisms of funding and the relations between institutions have been designed to achieve a system that has been strong, expanding, diverse, accessible and open. These objectives enjoy clear public support. It is simply laughable to expect all of this to be secured spontaneously in a deregulated market, particularly social equity.

Is the market in higher education a means to an end, or an end in itself? We suspect that for the Government it is the latter, but if the former is the case, then what *is* the end that the Government seeks in higher education, Vanstonian platitudes aside? Perhaps the West Review can provide an honest answer - if (1) its philosophical room-to-move has not been constricted in the manner its views on HECS and fees have been pre-empted, and (2) its philosophical freedom is not dependent on its freedom to address questions of education funding and student financing. The Review Committee's discussion paper is awaited with interest.

Managing academics' work: Future performance in higher education

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Linda Hort

Academics' work is about to be 'managed'.

The Higher Education Management Review (1995) (known as the Hoare report) recommended (as part of the section reporting on 'Leading Change Through People') that "All universities should phase in a comprehensive approach to performance management for both academic and general staff" (p.13).

This suggestion was reiterated by the Minister for Education, Senator Vanstone on June 25th 1996 when she said universities needed a "vigorous follow-up" of the recommendations of the Hoare report including "proper strategic planning, allied with effective performance management [...] geared to the needs of increasingly commercial operations" (reported in *Campus Review*, June 26 - July 2).

In fact, university managements have not been slow in following the Hoare recommendations. At the time of writing this paper the Australian Vice Chancellors' Com-

mittee (AVCC) is holding a three day Forum in Adelaide titled the "AVCC Performance Management Forum". At the Australian Higher Education Industrial Association (AHEIA) conference held earlier this month staff appraisal was a sub-theme of the Human Relations/Industrial Relations Challenge section.

While such intense discussion of the issue of guidance and control of performance is new, performance appraisal has been on the industrial agenda since the 1991 Award Restructuring discussions, and performance management has been initiated or reviewed at 5 of the 6 Queensland Universities as part of the 1995 Enterprise Bargaining round. Griffith University and the Queensland University of Technology agreed to establish schemes, the University of Queensland and Central Queensland

University agreed to review and streamline their existing schemes and the University of Southern Queensland agreed to investigate the development of a scheme.

The new schemes being developed, and the revisions that are being made, are often referred to as "performance management" schemes, whereas the schemes that were in existence were called "performance appraisal" schemes. This raises the conceptual question of whether performance management is or is not the same as performance appraisal.

Is performance management the same as performance appraisal?

Work in the area of human resource management, while not being entirely clear in its exposition (often using the terms 'performance management' and 'performance appraisal' interchangeably, even when supposedly delineating differences) claims that performance management is more than performance appraisal.

Performance appraisal involves an evaluation of the employee's performance against a set of criteria for performing the job. This may be a job description; a set of objectives or targets; or simply some implicit understanding of what the job entails. The process involves the comparisons of outcomes against expectations and a judgement made to determine the degree of overlap.

Performance appraisal has been with us in universities for some time, in the cases of those having contracts renewed, those being confirmed in tenure, those applying for promotion and, more recently, in the granting of annual increments to staff on incremental scales. While there are many who would agree that appraisal has had negative effects, it has been seen as a necessary evil in achieving these fundamental human resource functions and in procuring wage adjustments.

Performance management on the other hand is said to benefit, not only the organisation, but also the employee, recognising the employee's strengths, providing feedback and coaching, and giving career guidance.

According to the literature then, performance management includes performance appraisal but is more than that. The 'more' involves planning, counselling, negotiation, continual monitoring and revision of progress plans and integration with organisational needs. It is therefore seen as more benign than performance appraisal.

But for academic work, is performance management more benign?

Let me draw your attention to the word "management". In certain areas of psychology and human resource management, the word "management" has a particular connotation. It is the same connation that applies when we speak of "behaviour management". What it implied is that we are invoking the theoretical position of behaviourism. It implies dealing with observables. It implies a refusal to discuss non-observable inferred states like intentions and motivations. It implies empiricism. So, is performance management simply behaviour modification? From my analysis of the literature in human resource management, the answer is yes. The use of targets; of progress review (and interim record) along with rewards for performance approximating that required; the use of clear, measurable criteria, and the collecting of information to determine if criteria are met; and the ever present discussion of what rewards can be used to continually improve performance, are all the markers of a carefully developed and implemented behaviour modification regime.

This is not to say that behaviour modification is necessarily bad. Tens of thousands of rats and children living with star charts cannot be wrong!

However, what is its effect on the nature of academic work?

The Nature of Academic Work

The nature of academic work has always been difficult to define. In an *Australian Universities' Review* edition in 1992 (Volume 35, No. 2) in which this topic was canvassed it was suggested that changes such as the creation of the Unified National System (UNS) helped clarify the definition of academic work. This was because of the difference in academic work in the University and College of Advanced Education (CAE) sectors. In Universities teaching and research were the two valued activities. But in the old CAE sector staff tended to be engaged in teaching, and consultancy or professional practice, rather than curiosity driven research. With the development of the UNS it became important for academics as a professional group to define their job (O'Brien, 1992). They did this by claiming 'research' as a fundamental academic activity. However, the problem was that many of the old CAE staff did not engage in research as understood in terms of any of the definitions that existed at that time. A number of commentators on higher

education attempted to grapple with this problem. O'Brien cites Aitkin (previously chair of the Australian Research Committee) to say that an academic, whatever the field is "not ... just a teacher but an intellectual of a certain kind."(p 4)

Moses (1992) in tackling the same issue, lists the range of activities in which academics might be engaged. Of this vast number of different aspects of our work, she says

> *All of the above are worthwhile, necessary legitimate aspects of the role...We need to reconsider academic work, regard all legitimate functions as scholarly activities and expect that staff will perform these as scholarly, not routine activities.* (p 7)

This type of argument is reflected in the higher education literature in the discussion of "scholarship" (eg Boyer (1990) Scholarship Reconsidered. Priorities of the Professoriate). This concept is increasingly important as academic work is becoming more varied (some now say to the point at which a professional identity for an academic is difficult to sustain) but remains 'academic work' because its underpinning is scholarship.

So academic work is not defined as a set of targets, a job description, a range of tasks or any other listable set. It is defined by its underpinning quality. That is its intellectualism and its scholarship. What effect does performance management have on such a system?

Performance Management and the Nature of Academic Work

One very direct effect that will be experienced is in the work of academic managers. For those academics in "a supervisory role", performance management requires communication, monitoring, feedback, coaching, and even mentoring and empowerment. The time involvement in 'managing' the performance of 8 to 20 or so colleagues will impose considerable restrictions on the availability of academic managers for other more scholarly work.

In relation to that scholarly work, as a system of behaviour management is put in place in which observable outcomes are primary, underlying inferred principles such as scholarship, while still able to be discussed, will not be able to be documented. They are therefore at risk of being neither recognised nor rewarded.

Insofar as performance review or appraisal schemes are currently used this area is already under debate. The issues of "quality vs quantity", of "potential" in an area of research, of "reflective" practice as opposed to simply doing the job, are issues that are raised and discussed in our promotions committees and as we look to recruit and select, or confirm for tenure.

If performance management systems are put in place, which are "geared to the needs of increasingly commercial operations", as Minister Vanstone exhorted us, such distinctions will become harder and harder to maintain. At the present time it could be argued that for behaviour modification to be able to be used to shape our scholarly work that our work would have to be transformed into something not recognisable as academic work. No doubt the use of such a set of criteria could be implemented in some areas more than in others. In this respect it seems likely that the application of performance criteria will be both narrower and more intense in those areas where academic staff conduct little research and where their work is largely confined to, and governed by, the university. But this effect could become a cause, restricting the work we do to that which can be described in narrow performance terms.

It is likely then that, under a regime of performance management, academic work will change dramatically. It will change to produce those outcomes that can be directly observed and measured.

This will fundamentally change academics' work.

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Libraries, technology, the search for knowledge and digital cash

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Clint Small

Until recently, the kind of computing one confronted in libraries embodied the worst fears of most people in their first encounters with the Digital Age. Intimidating and heartless, it was everything Pink Floyd had warned you about. The fact that this put many users off should have been a signal to those vanguard libraries which had silicon resources before the rest of us to look at the needs of the user as a first priority when upgrade time came around. Instead we got a host of useless journal articles about converting cards to bits that drowned in technical jargon as unfriendly as the systems they described.

Suddenly, everywhere you turned, something else had become digital - traffic lights, your bank book, concert tickets, phone calls, typewriters, adding machines, the dole. And there was the language - bits and bytes, RAM versus ROM, hard as opposed to floppy disks. Then one day they were losing your luggage, matching your tax file to your driving record and cancelling your credit card before you'd had a chance to say, "Whaddaya mean anger's a very analogue response?"

So, to a degree, we've become accustomed to the Digital Age. We take the ability to access and manipulate masses of data for our own purposes in ways that were unthinkable even ten years ago. We live with rapidly expanding capabilities to the point where we make allowances for them when we plan for the future - "well, when digital cash gets sorted out, projected profits will blah blah blah."

In a time when even the very basis of the economy - the legal tender - is being reconceptualized as binary code - ones and zeros - then perhaps those of us who work in those anonymous, impenetrable, cash-strapped services need to redefine the role of libraries and really face up to the challenges of the Information Age. To regurgitate the cliche, the traditional image of libraries is that of worthy but dull places that house books. Musty, stale, uninviting, irrelevant. Even now libraries and books are inextricably linked in the cultural mindset, despite the fact that libraries also commonly house magazines, videos, CDs, CD-ROMs and more and more are making internet access available to the public.

In almost all cultures information storage and retrieval has been an important trade, though not always an honourable one. Pictograms, ideograms, cuneiform, oral and aural traditions that may or may not use what we westerners call music, maps, sketches, paintings, the myriad forms of photography, print and binary code, are all ways of storing and accessing information. All of these forms can be viewed artistically or technically.

The term reading is coming to encompass a wider definition, more to do with interpreting information within the medium through which it is presented rather than a particular skill confined to one medium. Art historians and musicologists know a lot about this kind of thing. They've been doing it for ages. They look at elements like form, context, subject matter and physical characteristics of the work to arrive at similar conclusions - they interpret or read the work.

Everyone knows that knowledge increases exponentially, but anyone who has seriously gone looking for specific obscure information on the internet also knows that your typical keyword search may or may not turn up relevant material. Occasionally, I do a standard keyword search for my library. Using the latest version of Netscape I link into Yahoo or Excite and diligently type in the words, "Rowden White Library," error free, and hit "enter." It used to be the case that out of the one hundred sites selected, the Rowden White Library didn't rate a mention. Now, we probably do rate a mention but I don't have time to sift through the 290,000 sites the software turns up. Information, it seems, is like the truth - out there, somewhere.

For the internet to be useful to library users, librarians must become as familiar with it as they were with their card catalogues and as they have had to become with their computerised catalogues. They need to be able to provide more than basic information on websurfing to users - particularly in an academic situation. Students don't have time to be mucking about on the various Superbyways of the Digital Age. More than ever before librarians must become hands-on information managers. They must know how the various search engines work,

the difference between listservers and newsgroups, what 'push' technology is, the difference between a bot and an intelligent agent, and be able to assist users in sifting this mire. Just as in the great bookshelf-lined halls of knowledge, librarians have to know where and how to look.

They must also become expert in 'convergence,' a word much bandied about by digital moguls and prophets. What they're talking about is the idea that all things using digital technology will operate within one integrated unit of hardware. The most common example of this is "interactive TV," where goods and services like home shopping and gambling are accessed through a machine that is a TV, computer and telephone all in one. As you can imagine, there's a lot of money in, 'convergence.'

But whilst convergence of technology is a relatively new concept, it is really the product of an ongoing string of commercial events that has led to the growth of fewer but bigger corporations that dominate international commerce. All over the world the bigger corporations are swallowing their competitors up at an alarming rate, particularly in the media field. Corporations such as News Ltd and Microsoft long ago woke up to the fact that information is more than just the form it comes in. They deal in content - not books or magazines or movies or CDs. The method of delivery is, to them, market forces aside, irrelevant. Convergence, therefore, not only means an integration of technology. It also means a concentration of ownership of both the information itself and the way that information is presented or accessed.

There are a lot of concerns about the increasing concentration or convergence of the ownership and delivery of information, but for libraries there are specific things to worry about. For example, if libraries are to remain relevant resources for their respective communities, then the boom in technology and information manipulation and ownership cannot be ignored. But it's going to cost. And by cost I mean more than the upfront costs relating to the installation, maintaining and upgrading costs of computers, modems, software, administrators, or the ongoing training of library staff. User charges will become a reality, and this means investment in human resources.

Ultimately, part of that cost will be borne by consumers, when digital cash does get sorted out by the banks and financial institutions and regulators, it's quite probable that there will be a small charge, a micropayment, every time a user accesses a piece of information in digital form. This is not the way it is with books, magazines, tapes and so on, which, once you've got them, are free of charge no matter how many times you use them. Therefore we're facing a significant shift in the culture and patterns of library use.

In my experience, people want the information and they don't care whether it's in a book, magazine or online. When someone comes in asking for a journal that we don't subscribe to I point them towards the internet terminals, show them how to do a basic search and let them go. More often than not they will find something directly related to their quest, although after 3 o'clock the cutting edge can be a bit slow.

As more stuff becomes available only in online form, the more librarians need to know (a) of its existence and, (b) how to find it. This is what I mean about libraries re-presenting themselves as services. It's such a cliché to say that technology is booming faster than ever. Yes, technology is booming, but so are the skills necessary for making the best use of this technology. Librarians need to keep up with the changes. For the foreseeable future at least, it may be necessary for librarians to spend as much time gaining the skills required by the multiplicity of information resources, old, new and emerging as they spend in customer service. Information storage mediums that were thought of as revolutionary not very long ago are already being phased out. CD-ROMs look like they're about to be replaced by DVDs (Digital Video Disc) and the internet, with its ever-increasing capacity to transmit different forms of information - sound, video and so on - is a much more complicated beast than it was a year ago.

But, unlike a lot of Wireheads, Blade-Running the Cutting Edge of the Fantastic Future, I see the internet, not as a replacement for existing media, but as a supplement to it.

Libraries need to re-present themselves as dealers in information, regardless of the medium. This is not to say that one medium is better than another No Matter What - let's leave that one to Nick Negroponte, the kids at Wired and the Lit Crit Gangs to get bruised over - but just to acknowledge that we need to reconceptualise the library not just as a place, but more immediately, as a function.

Clint Small is the Coordinator of the Rowden White Library at Melbourne University Student Union. He also teaches the Student Union's short course, "Research with the Internet". Despite his love of thing digital, Clint asserts that the resonant connection in his life still comes from mixing six strings with three chords and stirring. He also reckons that a group of musicians playing together is a far deeper interactive process than anything he's encountered in cyberland.

Class and power in the ivory tower

TOM BRAMBLE
University of Queensland

Tom Bramble

The cuts to higher education announced in last August's Budget throw a spotlight on the issue of campus politics. Prior to the 1996 Budget the NTEU and Vice-Chancellors (VCs) initiated an unprecedented Higher Education Alliance with the aim of waging a joint political battle against the Government's plans. This Alliance, which brought together the NTEU and the AVCC, as well as representatives from student bodies, alumni groups and professional associations, has been hailed as a major breakthrough by the NTEU national leadership in issues of *NTEU Advocate* over the past year.

However, even before the cuts were announced there were clear problems evident with the strategy. The VCs broke ranks early, proposing a 30 per cent hike in HECS and the introduction of undergraduate fees. All new staff appointments were frozen. Since the cuts came through, the cracks in the Alliance have become a chasm. The VCs urged the Democrats to support increased HECS and undergraduate fees in the Senate and backed the Coalition's Workplace Relations Bill. On the campuses, the VCs have become ardent exponents of the "downsizing" that has swept through Australian business since the early 1990s. Up to 500 redundancies were effected in 1996, and 1997 will bring still more.

The short-lived existence of the Alliance reflects the intrinsic tensions involved in any attempt to marry the interests of university staff, students and administration. Indeed, between staff and students on the one hand and administration on the other, there is a sharp differentiation of interests based on differing class positions. Understanding these is crucial to understanding why the Alliance strategy is fundamentally flawed.

A class may be defined as a social group identified by its position in the system of social production, defined firstly according to its ownership or control over the means of production and social reproduction and secondly according to its relationship to other classes. In all modern capitalist countries, a working class comes into being on the basis of its separation from any ownership or control over the means of production. Its mirror image is a ruling class which exercises ownership or control over these means of production and which lives off the surplus produced by workers. And a "new" middle class also develops, comprising three main groups: middle managers, "head-fixers" (traditionally social workers and teachers), and professionals (doctors and lawyers).

The social structure of the Australian university simply reflects and internalises broader class divisions in society as a whole. The overall function of the modern university is to train the next generation of skilled workers and professionals for the system. It is therefore a quintessentially capitalist institution requiring the expenditure of large financial and human resources - in 1993, the 36 public universities had a combined budget of $6.5 billion. Each institution resembles a large corporation in many key respects. The largest, Monash, had a total budget of $400 million in 1993. And these institutions make "surpluses", just like any other large business. These vary from the $23 million made by University of Technology, Sydney in 1993 to $70 million generated at Melbourne University.

The role of the VCs is essentially to supervise the process of reproducing skilled "human resources" for the system and to manage the staff and financial resources required in this endeavour. They are an integral part of the capitalist system and are paid out of the general social surplus. In essence, they manage a fraction of Australian capital and like all managers in this situation often experience conflicts of interest within their own ranks, but unite in their enmity towards the employees whom they control. Thus, although there are rows between the "Group of 8" VCs and those from the newer universities, their interests are fundamentally united in opposition to those of staff, as recognised in the existence and activities of their industrial fighting front, the Australian Higher Education Industrial Association.

The VCs on each campus surround themselves by a tight managerial cadre with control over both academic and non-academic affairs. This elite might comprise only 50 or so staff at even the largest university. These staff are situated in the ruling class proper or, in the case of faculty-based administrators, at the very top of the middle class, working at its beck and call. The loyalty of this elite to the hierarchical chain of command is ensured by the rewards that are earned by its members, starting at $110,000 and peaking at about $180,000.

Like any capitalist institution, control over the university is not vested in those who work for it. Instead, university governing bodies are crammed full of government appointees, business-people and other dignitaries who can usually be relied upon to follow the line of the

Table: Staffing (Full-time and Fractional) at Universities, 1988-95						
	Above Senior Lecturer	Senior Lecturer	Lecturer	Below Lecturer	Total Academic	Total Non-Academic
1988	4,376 (16.9)	6,688 (25.8)	9,979 (38.5)	4,892 (18.8)	25,935 (100.0)	38,202
1995	6,026 (18.3)	8,041 (24.4)	12,122 (36.8)	6,747 (20.5)	32,936 (100.0)	45,608
% increase	37.7	20.2	21.5	37.9	27.0	19.4
Of which %						
Male tenured	70.5	62.4	34.3	5.0	41.8	28.0
Female tenured	9.0	18.0	22.9	6.6	15.8	36.7
Male Contract	17.3	14.4	25.1	43.1	24.7	12.7
Female Contract	3.2	5.2	17.7	45.3	17.7	22.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: DEET *Selected Higher Education Staff Statistics 1995*, Tables 2 & 9, AGPS, Canberra

VCs, because of their common class loyalties and prejudices. In 1995 only 266 (30%) of the 900 members of university governing bodies were representatives of staff or students.

The contrast between this managerial elite and the bulk teaching staff is enormous. There are about 27,000 teaching staff in the lecturing grades in Australian universities. Like teachers, they contribute to developing the skills of the next generation of workers and therefore contribute indirectly to the production of aggregate surplus value from which the VCs draw their own inflated salaries. While for many years such staff enjoyed certain material privileges which inclined them towards a middle-class outlook, the transformation of universities into mass "degree factories" has been paralleled by a degradation of both pay and conditions for such staff.

Academic salaries have fallen in real terms by about 30 per cent since 1970 and work pressures have increased enormously in recent years. Although there are now 27 per cent more full-time and fractional academic staff than in 1988, the real growth has been in the professorial grades and, at the opposite extreme, amongst the cheapest and most dispensabl,e tutors. Casual and fractional jobs have increased amongst all staff, both academic and general, by more than 50 per cent over this period, while full-time jobs have grown by less than 20 per cent.

The growth of jobs has not kept pace with the explosion in the student population which has increased by 44 per cent since 1988. Across the system, average class sizes have increased by 20 per cent or more, and funding per student has fallen from $11,600 in 1983 to $10,800 in 1995. Pressure to perform has become more intense, and academic staff are victims of increasing casualisation, short term contracts and overbearing managerialism. The effect of these trends has been to push lecturers and senior lecturers steadily "down" the class structure towards and into the working class.

Universities are also major employers of non-academic staff and within their ranks too there is a class differentiation. The equivalent of the academic elite is the HEW Level 10 grade. On any campus, key staff such as the director of personnel, the secretary-registrar, and the chief librarian are all on this grade and all fit snugly into the managerial elite. At the University of Queensland, for example, there are only 30 such staff, and they are buffered from those below them by salary packages of between $100-150,000.

The bulk of non-academic staff, however, are workers in academic departments and faculty offices, in libraries and computing centres, in student services, in central administration offices and in buildings, plant and grounds. Such staff comprise the vast bulk of the 45,600 non-academic staff on Australian campuses and most work in blue-collar jobs or repetitious or bossed-around clerical and administrative positions. Some, such as accountants and librarians, might have professional status, but even here their relatively low salaries (librarians are usually paid no more than $35-40,000) and the lack of career path means that middle-class aspirations come up against the reality of what are in essence skilled working-class jobs. Their fate as a body of employees is determined primarily by the success of their unions in defending wages and conditions, not by individual career moves. Their relationship to those who wield power on the campuses is one of subordinate, not colleague or peer.

Finally, of course, there are the students. While most of the next generation of Australia's ruling class and upper middle class will also be amongst today's students, and while the wealth of their parents is a key determinant of who gets in, things are changing. Forty years ago, there were about 35,000 students in the Australian university system, meaning that university was little more than a finishing school for the ruling class. Now there are more than 600,000. The effect has been to make higher education a mass industry.

As campus conditions deteriorate and class sizes increase, students are being hit for the increasing cost of attending university. AUSTUDY amounts to only two-thirds of the dole for those lucky enough to get it, while increasing recourse to user-pays mean that students are

expected to make up the shortfall in government funding of higher education.

On graduating, many students go into a variety of white-collar jobs and ultimately into professional or management positions. However, large numbers also end up in relatively routine jobs in teaching, the public service, or research labs, where they may be unionised and will probably be part of the skilled working class or precarious middle class (witness the decline of the engineering profession in recent years). And many will be unemployed for a period. In short, five years extra study has put them in the same place in the job market as their parents who left school at the age of 15 or 16.

The class situation of university staff and students matters because it helps determine their political behaviour. Amongst teaching staff, the deterioration of working conditions and pay means that the ethos of professionalism which permeated the old staff associations is slowly being combined with a new air of industrialism. Academics and general staff are now regularly holding or threatening to hold co-ordinated industrial action. The result is that although many lecturers may appear to students as aloof, the material conditions of academic staff are leading them to see their interests more in common with students.

The opposite is the case with the VCs and the senior managers who are now becoming more tightly enmeshed in the ruling class the more that "market forces" turn education into a cash-based commodity. This means that despite the rhetoric of "customer focus", the managerial elite is actually more divorced from staff and students and ever less reliable as an ally in the fight against fees and education cuts.

VCs are now budding entrepreneurs who promote "their" campuses in the quest for corporate sponsorship and fee income. In 1995 the VCs lobbied hard against proposals by the academic and student unions to place a cap on postgraduate coursework fees. Little wonder - they now take in $68 million in postgraduate fees. The VCs are also now getting geared up for the lucrative "rich and thick" option of Australian undergraduate students seeking to buy themselves a place at university in 1998.

The VCs are also now looking to their blood-brothers and sisters in the business sector for mutual benefit. The Government promotes collaborative research with industry, and in 1994 the University of Queensland took in $17 million for research from business partnerships. We now have professorial chairs funded by business at a wide range of universities. Adjunct appointments of distinguished business executives are sought, and creeping privatisation is now occurring everywhere from libraries to research centres. VCs "dress for success" accordingly and adopt the manner of chief executives. Their speeches now resonate with managerial rhetoric drawn straight from the business world, with the language of "performance indicators", "quality management", and "strategic planning" becoming a dominant campus discourse.

As for students, clearly the changes in the composition of student intake, the worsening of conditions on campus, and the prospect of career uncertainty make students more likely to swing to the Left than was the case before the last War. However, this same uncertainty, when set alongside the decline of the Left in society generally, can also engender an attitude of cynicism, frantic overwork (many students now do part-time work as well) and political apathy.

Currently on the campuses we face lower levels of political debate and activity than in the 1970s, but the potential is much greater for the next student upsurge to be more serious and committed to fundamental change, not just on the campuses but in society generally. Furthermore, in the next campus upsurge, students will be able to look to support from teaching and general staff who will identify with the common fight that all groups must wage. In the meantime, the line up of the different campus groups makes clear the dangers of the NTEU's Alliance with the AVCC, a "popular front" which serves only to weaken the determination of academics and students to wage their own fight against enemies both without and within.

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Feature: The future of work in higher education

Changing discourses and practices of academic work[1]

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Abstract

This paper describes a number of "ideal types" or models of academic work and makes links between these models and changing conceptions of the roles of universities. Given that institutional change has been a significant feature of higher education in Australia (and elsewhere), an attempt is made to analyse the models in terms of Raymond Williams' notions of 'residual', 'dominant' and 'emergent' discourses and practices. The real and potential impacts of changes on the nature of academic work varied considerably across universities and across discipline areas/faculties within universities as higher education in Australia moved from a binary system, to a unified national system, then to a looser "system" of quasi-autonomous marketised/privatised institutions. It is argued that it is no longer possible for any one model of academic work to stake a claim for hegemony as universities 'no longer embody plural, but compatible, uses but starkly different representations, or meanings, which cannot be integrated satisfactorily' (Scott, 1995, p.3). Despite this situation, it will be argued the academic as sui generis still holds considerable sway as discourse. The paper concludes by briefly speculating on the forms of academic work which are likely to be associated with various sites in universities in the short to medium term. It suggests that continuing differentiation within the academic profession will see a variety of discourses and practices operating throughout internally disparate institutions within a diverse "system".

Introduction

Institutional change has been a significant feature of higher education in Australia for at least the last decade. Most notable in this regard was the abolition of the binary system of colleges of advanced education (CAEs) and universities and the establishment of a "unified national system" (UNS) consisting of thirty-six large institutions all having university status. In addition to the structural changes, such as amalgamations, which this transition entailed, there were also changes in the ways in which universities were financed, governed and managed and a change in research funding towards a more competitive model. The creation of the UNS consolidated the move towards mass higher education in Australia, but in a context of increased reluctance of governments to fully fund public activities and instead to move towards user pays models and to encourage the institutions to raise monies from other, private sources. Most recently, the 1996 Commonwealth Budget of the new Coalition Government increased (again) the costs of higher education for students and expanded (again) the need and ability of universities to raise funds from non-government sources. It is not sufficient therefore to depict these developments as simply a move from an elite to mass system - though it is surely that in the size of the age cohort now participating in higher education - they are more accurately depicted as a reconstituting of elite and mass features within and across the institutions comprising the quasi-privatised UNS (cf Scott, 1995).

Both the earlier and recent changes called into question more traditional understandings of the roles of higher education and the nature of academic work (O'Brien, 1992). As such, they generated a number of critiques (e.g. Harman and Meek, 1988; Junor and O'Brien, 1989; Penington, 1990; Hunter et al., 1991; Smyth, 1995a), many of which expressed concern about the potentially deleterious effects of the changes.

In this paper a number of "ideal types" of academic work are identified, namely academic *sui generis*, academic as professional (state, market and corporate), and academic as worker. [2] The discourses (ideological dimensions) and practices (empirical dimensions) of these ideal types are linked with particular conceptions of the roles of universities in the context of an Australian higher education policy regime which has moved from the old, largely government funded binary system, through the

Dawkins creation of a partially privatised UNS[3], to the current Coalition model of an even more extensively privatised and marketised "system" of "quasi-autonomous" universities.

These ideal types of academic work are analysed in terms of Raymond Williams' (1980, 1981) concepts of 'residual', 'dominant' and 'emergent' discourses and practices. Williams' approach is tied in with an essentially progressivist account of history which links these discourses and practices to wider social relations[4]. Our usage here is more modest. We simply use the terms to refer to the degree to which a practice is pervasive and the discourse associated with it is attractive to academics. As will be seen, however, the links between the coherence and power of the discursive features of a particular category and the pervasiveness of the practices associated with it are problematic. Also of interest are the ways in which these differing discourses and practices interact with each other. The situation of academic work now appears to be one in which a plethora of discourses/ practices are playing off against each other. We argue that, given the fragmentation both within individual institutions and across the putative higher education "system", this situation of multiplicity is likely to continue. However, at the level of discourse, it appears that the *sui generis* model remains most attractive to academics, despite the apparent disjunction between it and the reality of practice. We begin by considering this *sui generis* model.

The academic *sui generis*

Traditionally, within the Enlightenment view, the roles of the university and the nature of academic work were seen as indivisible: academics saw themselves as the university. A university was a site, as the Murray Report (1957, p. 11) put it, where people 'seek the truth, and make it known'. Society had a vested interest in supporting such institutions because the disinterested pursuit of knowledge was the basis of social progress — to interfere with this pursuit was to block the course of progress. As noted by A.H. Halsey (1995, p. 40), Thorstein Veblen was perhaps the most forceful exponent of this model:

> *For Veblen the possibility of a university was rooted in universal human nature as 'the instinct of workmanship' and the impulse to 'Idle Curiosity'. These impulses, he held, gave rise to esoteric knowledge... and therefore to a custodial function for a 'select body of adepts or specialists — scientists, scholars, savants...'*

Veblen wrote in the early years of this century but as recently as 1995, in post-Dawkins Australian universities, nine senior Australian academics were moved to write to the weekly higher education newspaper, *Campus Review* to assert that universities were 'the institutional embodiment of the disinterested pursuit of truth' (Miller, et al., 1995, p. 9) and to castigate the National Tertiary Education Industry Union (NTEU) for failing to comprehend this. This contribution is particularly interesting in that the authors included academics working in disciplines such as financial studies, information sciences, and management [5]— which are not "pure research" areas typically identified with the traditional university. Indeed, they are intimately linked to the efficient and effective working of both private and public sectors, that is, they have a clearly instrumental character. Furthermore, most of the authors were academics in universities formed by amalgamations of former CAEs, institutions which had no specific tradition of elite research/scholarship.

As Scott (1995, p. 143) notes in relation to "pure" science, the construction of academic work as the disinterested pursuit of truth has implications for the ways in which it should be supported:

> *The funding and organisation of science were regarded as public responsibilities... Practically, science had to be largely funded from public sources because pure science... was by definition pre-social and pre-commercial... Beneficiaries, and so contributors to its costs, could not be accurately identified in advance. In any case, premature identification was considered undesirable for reasons of fundamental principle. The best science, which produced the most successful innovation, was likely to be produced within an open and therefore disinterested environment which encouraged curiosity and creativity. The state was best able to provide such an environment, although as guardian of the public interest not as a direct or proxy customer for research "services"... It was also important that the professional autonomy of scientists should be similarly guaranteed, because their collective expertise validated good science.*

The academic in this model is constructed as 'nothing but intellectual' with a 'world-rejecting ethos' (Hunter, 1994, p. 99). The academic *sui generis* exists 'outside economic exigencies and beyond the limits of accountability' (Symes, 1996, p.135). Veblen's position, with its absolute rejection of a utilitarian role for universities (he opposed the location of professional schools in universities) expresses this view in its purest form, but it is also reflected in statements such as Halsey's (1995. p. 184) defence of pure science: 'that utility sometimes results... is desirable and encouraging, but not essential to the case'. Furthermore, as noted above, the ideals of disinterested inquiry are asserted even by academics working in areas and institutions where social utility is an indispensable part of the *raison d'etre.*

Nevertheless, despite its hegemony amongst academics, in the wider community this discourse was never strong enough in its own right to secure the degree of closure university-based intellectuals sought. The conditions of its practice depend, as Halsey (1995, p.135)

reminds us, on 'social scarcity'(i.e. on elite rather than mass provision of higher education) and on state sponsorship and funding. In order to secure this sponsorship and funding, it was always necessary to assert the utilitarian as well as transcendental benefits of higher education. As Halsey (1995, pp. 16-18) notes, an expansionary impulse, based on notions of social utility, has long co-existed with the exclusionary impulse. The binary system in Australia, which directed from the sixties some of the growth in higher education - purportedly in those areas with a more utilitarian focus - away from universities, can be seen as an attempt to balance, as well as quarantine, exclusionary and expansionary impulses.

Implicitly if not explicitly, the academic *sui generis* model privileges research over teaching or other activities as the *sine qua non* of academic work. Notwithstanding that Newman (1912), who is usually seen as a seminal writer in this tradition, placed teaching at the centre of the university, it is research which is seen to define a "real academic" (cf Lingard et al, 1994). As Mahony (1995, p. 107) notes, this was manifested during the transition in Australia from a binary to unified system of higher education by statements from 'the AVCC... and influential spokespersons... that the creation of the new order should not be at the expense of research, as a primary delineating function of the university'.

It could be argued that the model of academic *sui generis* presents as an example of an ideologically dominant discourse undergoing residualisation. It has roots in the nature of academic research within the pure sciences and perhaps also the arts and humanities. Within these areas, the assertion that the disinterested and curiosity-driven pursuit of truth was the central feature of academic work represented at best a highly idealised portrayal of reality. In other areas the match with epistemologies and actual practice was even more tenuous. This was evident for those who wished to see it, even under the binary system. Nevertheless, because the model was constructed as in essence pre-social, the mismatch between it and practice was clearly not fatal to its discursive appeal. The credibility of the model was also aided by the existence of the binary system, which *in theory* consigned the more nakedly utilitarian (and less prestigious) functions of higher education to the CAE sector.

A major theme of recent writings on higher education has been the undermining of the practical conditions which make plausible the *sui generis* model, namely, less public and more private funding, more students, fewer full-time staff, competitive research funding and so on. As higher education engaged more with society, one increasingly based on knowledge as commodity, as access to higher education expanded and more areas of endeavour were incorporated as academic disciplines, as the certainties of modernist Enlightenment epistemologies were challenged, the claim of academics to arcane knowledge and pristine work practices, as expressed by Veblen, became somewhat less plausible.

The status of the model at present is, however, considerably greater than simply that of an historical artefact.[6] Its remarkable imperviousness to empirical invalidation is made possible because, as Habermas (quoted in Hunter, 1994, p.165) suggests, the idea of the university is constructed as 'something universal, something prior to the pluralisation of social life forms'. Harman (quoted in Becher, 1994, p.152) is almost certainly referring to this when she notes of the University of Melbourne that from a 'babel of conflicting voices, divergent interests and divided loyalties, were aspects of a common culture which encapsulated a deeply entrenched, "unwritten" occupational ethos'. The hegemony of the academic *sui generis* model is also reflected in Mahony's (1995, p. 87) finding in relation to the UNS:

> *While official expectations were for a more diverse higher education system, influenced by the legacies of the former CAE system and those of the former binary universities, the college legacy is not perceived to be notably significant in the new order...The values of the new higher education institutions are regarded as being neither highly adaptive nor pluralistic.*

Indeed this "academic creep" preceded the abolition of the binary. Even in the absence of work conditions such as smaller teaching loads and extra research infrastructural funding enjoyed by university academics, the academic *sui generis* model provided a discourse for the aspirations of many CAE academics. The keenness of the former CAEs to adopt the trappings of the former binary universities is but one indication that the force of the model derives from something more than nostalgia and time-honoured norms and practices. Another indication is the fact that the institutions which appear to have fared best following the creation of the UNS are the former elite universities with which the academic *sui generis* model is most closely associated. However, even within "elite" sections of universities, the academic *sui generis* model continually runs up against changes in the character of academic work, such as complex and disparate career and work patterns, diverse pay conditions including varying security of employment, and differing balances of teaching, research and publication. Furthermore, and not withstanding the comments of Mahony cited above, these institutions have themselves experienced a reverse "applied creep", taking up opportunities to interface with the commercial/industrial world. Finally and relevant to both academic and applied forms of creep, is the apparent ability of the *sui generis* discourse to accommodate, adapt to, inform, transform and be transformed by a variety of practices far removed from the traditional humanities and sciences.

Whereas the *sui generis* model of academic work stakes its claim to privilege on the basis of superior knowledge alone, the notion of academic as professional stakes a claim on the basis of knowledge which is putatively both superior and *useful.* There are perhaps three models of academic as professional: the academic as state professional, the academic as market professional and the academic as corporate professional[7]. Each is next considered in turn.

The academic as state professional

Academic work shares features with what might be called state-based bureaucratic professions (or somewhat condescendingly, semi-professions), such as school teaching and nursing. This largely non-market strand of the academic activity defines itself as being 'about freely circulating scientific research and social criticism as public goods' (Marginson, 1995, p. 33), as well as the delivery of services such as teaching. Such activity has been depicted as more about the reproduction and dissemination of knowledge, rather than its production through research and scholarship. This assertion is arguable; at least some state workers are clearly involved in the production of knowledge (eg CSIRO scientists).[8]

In Australia, most academics work in public institutions - though these might now be styled "quasi-public" as universities are forced more and more into the marketplace of monies rather than of ideas. Academics are specifically state workers who have benefited from their location within the state, that is, as noted above, the autonomy of university academics is owed to a significant degree to state funding and sanctioning. This state sanctioning is due in part to the role that universities and academics play in the reproduction of culture. It is also due, however, to the struggles which have occurred relating to the role of the state itself in capitalist societies. State sanctioning and struggles within and for the state have created "spaces" for autonomous academic practice. Academics have, however, also seen and experienced state intervention as a threat to their professional autonomy.

The ideology of the state professional is one of 'public service' and, as Weber described, is technical/rational in orientation and ethos, typically manifesting itself in bureaucratic organisational structures. The public institutions in which academics work are bureaucratic organisations which stand in relation to other government bureaucracies, but bureaucratic structures with their emphasis upon hierarchy rather than collegiality have been regarded by academics as anathema to autonomous practice. Additionally, the public service ethos of state professionalism raises questions in relation to the nature of academic responsibility to "the public" and to government, and about the ways in which academics are affected by or implicated in government policy.

The growth of higher education and the progressive extension of government intervention in this sector can be seen as contributing to the increasing bureaucratisation of academic life - or, as Campion and Renner (p. 75) put it, to 'the domestication of the university'. Nevertheless, bureaucratic modes of operation have always formed a part of academic work. Additionally, academics have regularly asserted that governments ought to have an interest in higher education and have courted their attention as a means of encouraging these governments to provide greater funding. These assertions have emphasised the utilitarian (public service) purposes of universities, including, for example, their potential contribution to social and economic planning and resource allocation[9]. Recently, however, the model of academic as state professional has been undermined in the transition to the UNS, where the onslaught of corporate managerialism and marketisation have altered the objective conditions of academic work which could be seen as reflecting it.

In summary, the model of academic as state professional has long reflected the reality of at least some aspects of academic work and, indeed, it can be argued that it was the dominant paradigm of academic work *practice* in the old CAE sector; that is, it reflected much more accurately the conditions of work (eg bureaucratic rather than collegial decision-making, less individual autonomy, less focus on research and less distance from government policy) for most academics located there than did the academic *sui generis* model. Furthermore, aspects of the public service ideology have informed the rhetoric of those who sought public support for higher education even in the university sector, but this discourse of service did not provide as sound a basis for the claim to autonomous practice as did the *sui generis* model. Unlike the *sui generis* model, therefore, it was not an ideologically attractive model to academics themselves. Despite the fact that the collective service ethos implicit in the state professional model stands in contrast to the individualistic and commercial values which have informed changes to higher education in the 1980s and 1990s, it was essentially ignored by academics as a potential basis for resistance to these changes. Thus, despite the fact that it accurately depicted certain features of academic work, in ideological terms it was always a residual discourse for academics.

The academic as market professional

Alongside the model of academic as state professional has co-existed the model of academic as "market" professional. This model draws on the parallels and links between the academy and established professions such as medicine and law which comprised groups of 'entrepreneurial, self-employed producer[s]... [who] define their own work, but production for the market takes

priority over any other purpose' (Marginson, 1995, pp. 32-33). Loyalty for academics in these areas was seen as a dual one: to the academy, but also the profession. Academics in these areas were encouraged to "keep their hands in" as it were, and also augment their incomes, and loadings on university pay complemented the dual loyalties of such professionals within the universities.

The academic as market professional model could be considered as a residual discourse in that it only ever applied to a minority of academics in the binary system and within the UNS. In recent times, however, even academics outside of the established professions have received greater encouragement to act as professionals in the market via involvement, for example, as consultants to both commercial and public sector operations and through the production of commissioned and applied research for commercial and other purposes. Some "entrepreneurial scientists" (semi or wholly self-employed) are also carving out opportunities in the market and impacting upon the practice of "academic science".

This model of academic practice is informed, on the one hand, by the values of the market place (eg competition, informed self interest), and on the other, by a service ethic embodied in professional codes of practice, enforced by a professional association acting somewhat in the capacity of a producer cartel in the market. Unlike the academic as state professional model, for those academics to which the market professional model applies/applied it has/had an ideological attraction. This can be seen in the intermeshing of status hierarchies of academics and non-academics in the established professions of medicine and law. [10]

The promise of autonomous practice in an unregulated market which this model holds up has been influential far beyond the boundaries of these established professions. Ironically, while a major theme in Veblen was the incompatibility of the *sui generis* model and markets, developments since have encouraged some to see market forces as the most promising means of protecting autonomous academic practice from the incursions of the state. Less public funding in such a view is seen to mean less government "interference" and thus more autonomy. Prestigious US private universities and liberal arts colleges are held up as working examples.

The academic as corporate professional

Marginson (1995, p. 33) argues that recent changes in higher education have created another type of professional, notably, the corporate professional. The corporate professional is a 'salaried employee... albeit one who may receive royalties'. Unlike the state professional but like the market professional, the corporate professional engages with the market. Unlike the situation of the market professional, however, this engagement is under the direction of the corporatised institution in which the corporatised professional works. This, argues Marginson (1995, p.33), creates 'a crisis of traditional academic autonomy':

> *Academic labour is pulled in three directions, between market professionalism (especially in commercial research and consultancy), corporate professionalism (for example in full-fee marketing programmes) and non-market labour ranging from individualised tuition to large-scale government-financed teaching and research.*

The explicit linking in recent times of government policy in higher education with micro-economic reform, the greater involvement of private sector corporations, the creation of a competitive environment, the encouragement of fee-for-service courses and other commercial activities, the imposition of corporate managerialist strategies derived from private sector businesses and reforms in the allocation of research funding, have meant that most academics' lives have at least been "touched" by the forces of the market. The impact of the market on academic work is mediated by various factors, for example, the degree to which the individual operates as a state, market or corporate professional. This in turn varies according to discipline, type of university, level of employment and so on.

This new policy regime has been complemented by attempts by the state to assert greater control over academic work, albeit via indirect or market mechanisms rather than by 'close and direct forms of surveillance and governance... such... as legislation, prohibition and regulation' (Smyth, 1995b, p. 6). As Scott (1995, p. 80) observes, in the market model of social service provision:

> *... the emphasis shifts from the state as provider to the state as regulator, establishing the conditions under which various internal markets are allowed to operate, and the state as auditor, assessing their outcomes.*

In Australia, for example, these changes have been accompanied by a reduction in the number of collegial committees and elected positions in university departments and governance in favour of structures based on corporate managerialist principles. Within the academic as corporate professional model, the role of the senior academic is defined as fundamentally about *management* and this, of course, informs the relationship between senior and junior academic staff, emphasising its hierarchical, rather than collegial features.

That the model of academic as corporate professional is an emergent discourse which has captured the imagination of at least some senior academics is evidenced in the observations of a current deputy vice-chancellor and pro vice-chancellor:

> *The recent changes imposed by the Commonwealth [i.e. via the 1996 Budget] make it essential that we bring more "real world" commercial expertise to financial*

> *management [of universities]... We are in the market place, we deal with clients and consumers, we advertise, promote and polish our product and its brand name... We will operate in a more commercial way... I see universities with departments almost totally funded through private and commercial money (in fact, some will be totally privatised)...* (Sharpham, 1996, p. 8)

> *Universities... have already begun to think about how to plan and structure their institutions as service enterprises... Universities that regard themselves this way will be participating in highly competitive markets where there are higher potential rewards and commensurately higher risk... They will have abandoned the internal institutional imperatives that have driven most decisions... Instead... matters will be driven by the external necessity that they reach out to customers.* (Reinecke, 1996, p. 35)[11]

Symes (1996, p.133) argues that this type of thinking - 'an instrumental culture centred on galvanising the economic potential of knowledge' - has already become the 'hegemonic philosophy' of the UNS. That this hegemony applies to academics at all levels below that of the managerial elite is, in our view, unlikely. Nevertheless, as Marginson (1995, p. 32) notes, even if 'the majority of academics do not sell teaching and research... they are employed within universities engaged in the production of positional goods'[12]. Furthermore, market-based practices drive out non-market practices: '[as] the requirements of the market are managed more efficiently... the remaining non-market practices become still more difficult to sustain' (Marginson, 1995, p. 34). This situation is perhaps reflected in the changing criteria for, as well as realities of, career advancement within the universities.

The academic as worker

In common with other workers, academics work for a salary/wage and are dependent on their employer and industrial regulations in relation to a number of working conditions. As noted above, increasing government intervention in higher education and the growth of corporate managerialism have diminished academic autonomy and established a more overtly hierarchical structure in universities, accompanied by increased differentiation within the academic profession itself. The changed management structures of universities have seen the development of a new management class within the institutions, divided off in many ways from their other academic colleagues. Additionally, the entry of universities into such things as commercial operations and competitive funding arrangements — while turning some academics into entrepreneurs — has made the situation of many other academics more akin to that of other employees. This is true in terms of increased workloads, reduced conditions, deteriorating comparative salary levels and increased precariousness in employment. Of particular note is the growth in part-time, casual, temporary and contract academic positions and the increasing instances of academic "lay-offs" and "voluntary early retirement packages" as institutions cope with financial constrictions and fluctuations in market demand. In such a situation collective intervention in the market is by trade union strategies rather than by the "producer cartel" approaches utilised by established market professions.

In Australia, academics have now entered fully into the industrial relations system and have both their salaries and conditions determined through the same type of industrial processes as other workers. Unionism and industrial action are now features, to a greater or lesser degree, of academic work at all institutions of higher education. The decentralisation of the industrial relations system and failure of both the former Labor and current Coalition Governments to provide systemic funding to higher education institutions to support an increase in academic salaries has led to institution-based negotiations and a high profile series of industrial activities targeting individual institutions. Furthermore, the formation of the NTEU, which brings academic and general staff into closer conjunction industrially, has advanced to some extent the academic as worker as a positive model.

As an ideological orientation, however, an industrial (i.e. workers') perspective is one to which most academics, if no longer totally antagonistic, are still likely to be at least slightly uncomfortable. As Currie and Woock (1995, p. 149) note, it is not hard to find contemporary examples of academic writers who have expressed dismay that the relationship between academics and their employing institutions should be seen as employee/employer adversarial. As the conditions of academic work are further deregulated, however, for instance as a result of the Coalition's proposed changes to industrial relations legislation, this ideological resistance might weaken. As there is further (heavily gendered) differentiation within the ranks of academic workers, a large section of these workers will experience conditions approximate to those of school teachers and nurses. For this group of academics the academic as worker model might very well be attractive. Even for those academics who find such a development unappealing (probably still a majority), many would see it as inevitable.

The future of academic work

Prior to the formal ending of the binary system precipitated by Dawkins' reforms, the division between CAEs and universities was linked to a division of role and function and related to different conceptions of academic work, although CAE aspirations were usually in the direction of the academic as *sui generis*. Within the UNS there are now differences within and across institutions, rather than a simple binary CAE/university divide. Different practices of academic work occur in these different

sites as the system is privatised further in a number of directions by Coalition policies. A new academic managerial class has emerged, along with a highly gendered and casualised teaching force at the bottom of the hierarchy, with other academics practising the different forms of work referred to throughout and located at various positions within the hierarchy. As Kogan et al's (1994) study conducted for the OECD noted, 'it is no longer sensible to speak of a single academic profession'. Within higher education there is now a sharper and more complex division of labour, consisting of 'a plurality of occupational groups divided from one another by task, influence and seniority within the institution' (Nixon, 1996, p.8). However, with Symes (1996, p.134) we would note that all workers within universities to a lesser or greater extent now have to 'dance to the tune of the economy' which has witnessed an emphasis upon the utilitarian rather than transformative value of knowledge. And, as John O'Brien (1992, p.4) has noted, the incorporation of all academics within the industrial relations system has seen 'teaching, research, scholarship, curriculum development and administration' included, 'although in different balance and measure', in the classification descriptions for all levels.

Having noted the differences within and across institutions constituting the UNS, for heuristic purposes within this conclusion we will utilise Symes's (1996) threefold model of clusters of institutions to talk about the present and future of academic work. While Symes developed his model to examine how different universities were positioning themselves in the emerging academic market, the typology is nonetheless useful for our purposes here. We thus note that these clusters are ideal types because aspects of each are found in all the currently existing universities. Symes speaks of 'real universities' to refer to the more traditional Australian institutions which have some reasonable provenance, the 'real world universities' to refer to those which heavily emphasise the utilitarian in both research and teaching, and the 'student-centred' universities whose major focus is upon teaching. Likewise, Nixon (1996) writing about changes in universities in the UK suggests that the place of research and the extent of support for it divides the old and new universities in that context.

Now, to this point we have spoken of three ideal types of discourses and practices in relation to academic work, which in turn are linked to differing conceptions of the role of the university and its relationships with society and the economy. We would argue that academic as *sui generis* remains dominant within Symes's 'real universities', but that it is being challenged by the emergent model of the corporate professional. In contrast, the 'universities for the real world' are increasingly dominated by the corporate professional discourse, with academic as *sui generis* in a residual position. Within the teaching focused, 'student-centred' universities the dominant discourse and practice is that of the state professional with some emergent talk of corporate professionals.

We would note here that empirical work is required to ascertain the changing nature of academic work within the universities which now constitute the UNS. For instance, it would seem that academic as worker might be a reasonable depiction of those at the bottom of the hierarchy who have mainly teaching functions and little job security. Academic as state professional might be a likely characterisation of those in more secure positions within the hierarchy who also mainly teach. All the universities now have their corporate professionals who pursue funds in the private sector through commissioned research and consultancies. There are also probably differences within faculties in and across institutions. Given the ageing nature of the academic profession, there are very likely generational differences in relation to which discourses of academic work have purchase related to actual academic work experience. Furthermore, there are still those academics, largely but not exclusively in Symes' 'real universities', whose actual work practices reasonably closely approximate the discourse of academic *sui generis*.

This new and complex division of labour within academic work complicates the work of the union for academics, as does the move towards industry unionism which attempts to bring academics and general staff closer together industrially. It would seem that the likely industrial relations scenario to emerge from the Coalition Government will see a widening of differences between (and probably within) institutions in relation to both salaries and work conditions. The situation of US higher education comes to mind here where academics within the two year community colleges have been proletarianised and are heavily unionised, while those in the elite, private research universities are largely union-free.

At present, it is thus difficult to identify any of the models as reflecting the dominant practice in relation to academic work, but the *sui generis* model nevertheless remains highly influential as discourse. In our view this is not a temporary state of affairs pending the "triumph" of one of the models (or of an alternative model) as the dominant discourse and/or practice. Rather, on the evidence it appears that universities for the foreseeable future will be,

> *... characterised by radical discontinuities. They no longer embody plural, but compatible, uses but starkly different representations, or meanings, which cannot be integrated satisfactorily or for long. They are anti-organic, anti-systematic, anti-totalising... They resist all but the most ephemeral classification.* (Scott, 1995, p.3)

A current deputy Vice-Chancellor has also suggested:

Universities will become a patchwork quilt of diverse funding and the university's task will be to devise an allocation system that allows all areas to exist and flourish somewhat independently, yet within a core operation. (Sharpham, 1996, p.8)

The effects of institutional change will continue to be extremely uneven and as a consequence, as Simon Marginson (1995) has observed, academics and academic work and its constituting discourses will continue to be pulled in different directions. This might be a result of what has been called the post-modern condition, as well as reflecting the impact of globalisation and the move to knowledge-based economies globally. Certainly the discourse of the academic *sui generis* was a manifestation par excellence of modernity and the Enlightenment project, both of which will continue to be under challenge from a variety of progressive and reactionary forces. The exclusionary character will only continue to have purchase within an inclusionary mass system of higher education in which new hierarchies and elite sites are emerging between and within institutions.[13] However, because the system of higher education has been quasi-privatised there will also be pressures towards the academic as corporate professional even within these elite sites. At the same time, some of the TAFE colleges will begin to offer undergraduate programs and be staffed by state professionals akin to those within some of the largely teaching institutions of the UNS. A complex and highly differentiated academic labour market would seem to be here for some time to come as a negative feature of what we might call the mass, post-modern higher education "system". Nonetheless, the *sui generis* model appears to have the capacity to be rearticulated in these changing empirical conditions, perhaps because of its pre-social character, and thus appears to retain considerable salience and attraction for many academics. [14] Questions about the purposes of universities and how best to meet them remain relevant to ideal conceptions, as well as the practices, of academic work.

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Footnotes

1. This article develops some ideas originally examined in McCollow (1996a, 1996b). We would like to thank the two anonymous referees who provided very useful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

2. A task which is left unaddressed in this paper is a consideration of the discourses and practices relating to the work of general staff in universities. A more complete picture of the nature of university work would need to consider these and how they interact with academic discourses and practices. This is particularly relevant to post-Dawkins higher education given the increased opportunities for cooperation and conflict between academic and general staff arising from local bargaining about wages and conditions.

3. Privatisation here is not used in the sense of going into private ownership, but rather to refer to the privatisation of costs (eg reduction in the proportion of public funding, increased commercial activity, user pays).

4. For example, Williams links the dominant discourse to existing relations of social dominance, and non-incorporated discourses to embryonic alternative social formations. We reject the teleological and totalising features of Williams' analysis.

5. The other areas represented were humanities and social sciences, education, science and technology, visual and performing arts, and health and human studies.

6. As this paper was going to publication we note the remarks of the Chair of the current government's review of higher education, Roderick West, which appear to draw heavily on the *sui generis* model. (See, for example, Adey, 1997.)

7. These categories parallel those identified by Marginson (1995).

8. There are a number of debates here, for example, relating to hierarchies and codification of knowledge production, and to distinctions between applied and pure research.

9. See, for example, the description by Coombs of the arguments put to the then Australian Labor Government in the 1940s to secure support for the establishment of the Australian National University (in Porter et al, 1992).

10. Engineering is usually classified as one of the established professions along with medicine and law. However, given that most of its practitioners are not usually self- employed, engineering can be seen to be informed by a mixture of state, market and corporate professional models.

11. Reinecke is referring specifically to imperatives to do with investment in information technology, but we do not believe that quoting the passage so that it omits this specific reference misrepresents his position.

12. Marginson (1995, p.19) defines positional goods as 'places in education which provide students ...with relative advantage in the competition for jobs, income, social standing and prestige'.

13. Coalition higher education policies will most likely ensure that the student body becomes more elite.

14. There are important questions about relationships between university accountability, the conception of the university and the nature of academic work which have not been addressed in this paper. Further, questions of equity have not been considered. In our view it was government intervention rather than university autonomy which ensured that equity questions about access to higher education actually got onto the agendas of the individual institutions.

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Hearing from the forgotten workforce: The problems faced by general staff women working in universities

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Abstract

Recent research concerning the position of women on the general staff in universities has shown that these women are predominantly clustered in the lowest levels of the university hierarchy. They occupy jobs which have low status, low pay and little power, are undervalued, unrecognised, faced with limited career opportunities, and are poorly treated by managers and academics. Drawing upon the results of a recent survey conducted at the University of New South Wales, this paper adds the voices of female general staff to the research about them. The aim is to reveal what women on the general staff themselves see as the main problems they face working in a university and which might contribute to their poor status, and to recommend what needs to be done if these women are to face a better future working in higher education.

Introduction

While little research has been done about the position of women on the general staff in universities, the few studies which have been conducted have highlighted how the work they do is often invisible and undervalued. Castleman, Allen, Bastilich & Wright (1995) recently conducted a comprehensive study of the position of women in 10 universities in Victoria and South Australia, and suggest that the paucity of information about general staff women '... reflects their invisibility and second class status within Universities'(Castleman *et al* 1995 p. 20). Castleman and Allen (1995), drawing upon the same study, described women on the general staff as 'the forgotten workforce' due to the lack of literature or data about this group, especially in comparison to their academic counterparts, and to how their particular issues are often overlooked by managers. Wieneke (1991) suggests that 'the almost complete absence of research on any general staff group possibly reflects the underlying tension between academic and non-academic staff in higher education institutions and therefore the failure of academics to consider their colleagues on general staff worthy of study'(Wieneke 1991,p.55).

These and other studies (see, for example, Wieneke 1992, 1995; Butler and Schultz 1995) have revealed the under-representation of general staff women in senior management levels. They report that while women make up more than half of the general staff workforce, they are overwhelmingly clustered at the lowest levels of the university hierarchy which have low status, low pay and little power, which Wieneke (1995) suggests prevents their participation in determining the practices and worker characteristics which will be valued by the organisation.

In order to understand what contributes to the poor status of general staff women, and to bring about some change to their status, it is important to find out what the women themselves see as the problems and obstacles they face working in a university, which is the purpose of this paper. Lather (1991), a prominent feminist scholar, argues that if we are to correct the invisibility and distortion of women's experience in ways which might bring about an end to women's unequal social position - which is the goal of feminist research - we need to 'see the world from women's place in it' (Calloway, cited in Lather 1991, p. 72).

While the present study rests within feminist framework, I must acknowledge some discomfort in writing this paper, being a member of academic staff rather than general staff. I realise, however, that it is because I am an academic that I am able to do this work, and I hope that in doing so I am sending a message which acknowledges the value and importance of the work of general staff women.

The paper draws upon a recent survey of female staff conducted by the Association of Women at the University of New South Wales (WINU), a volunteer organisation made up of general and academic women with the aim to improve the position of women working at the University of New South Wales (UNSW).

The survey

A survey was the chosen methodology as WINU wanted to hear from as many women staff as possible. Reinharz (1992) suggests one of the values of survey research is that it "can put a problem on the map by showing it is more widespread than previously thought"(p79), and that feminists have used surveys for precisely this reason, "thereby dispelling the notion that the complaint of a particular woman is idiosyncratic"(p79).

The aim of the survey was to identify those areas which presented the most concern to women in relation to their employment at UNSW. The position of women general staff at UNSW closely follows the pattern discussed above where women are concentrated at the lower levels. For instance, at UNSW while women make up 72% of staff at HEW Level 3, they make up only 23% of staff at the top levels, Level 10+ (UNSW, 1995).

The survey questions were based on issues which WINU, through consultation with women, identified as being of particular importance to women working at the university. The surveys were piloted on 40 women across a range of levels, and adjusted in response to their feedback to ensure that the issues were relevant and framed in a way which would be understood.

In relation to issue or area, respondents were asked to indicate (i) their level of concern (from 'not a concern' through to 'very much a concern') (ii) their personal experience of the area, where they were asked to indicate whether they felt the issue had had an adverse effect on them (yes or no), and (iii) to explain their responses. They were also given the opportunity to raise any other concerns they may have. The survey was sent to all women staff* at UNSW in October 1995.

It is important to note that the focus upon concerns in this paper does highlight the more negative aspects of working in a University, and to acknowledge that there are many positive aspects to working in such an environment. A focus such as this is necessary, however, when the purpose is to try to understand the factors which might contribute to the poor status of women general staff in the University.

Table 1: Response rate by level of classification

Hew Level	Number who responded	% of female staff at level	% of respondees
1 to 3	112	21	27
4 to 5	141	38	34
6 to 7	97	34	24
8 and above	36	38	9
No level shown	24		6
	n=410		

Table 2: Responses of general staff women to issues

Type of concern	% very concerned	% adverse effect
Career opportunities	37	30
Recruitment and selection practices	30	26
Supervision/management practices	30	33
Job evaluation	36	34
Harassment	22	19

Table 3: Issues of concern x level of staff

Hew Level	Career opportunity		Job evaluation		Supervision/ Management		Recruit/Select	
	% very concerned	% adverse effect	% very concerned	% adverse effect	% very concerned	% adverse effect	% very concerned	% adverse effect
1 to 3	44	33	51	52	33	42	31	30
4 to 5	32	34	47	51	31	38	33	32
6 to 7	48	52	40	35	34	38	37	31
8 and above	46	39	40	39	43	47	27	26
	n=139	n=118	n=141	n=134	n=117	n=131	n=116	n=102

Results

More than 400 surveys were received back from general staff (approximately 1300 surveys were sent), which is a response rate of around 30%. Table 1 shows that a large number of women at all levels responded (seniority is shown by HEW (Higher Education Worker) classification).

Table 2 shows the areas which elicited most concern from women which were career opportunities, reclassification/job evaluation, supervision and management practices and recruitment and selection procedures (only responses of "very much a concern" are reported in each of the tables). With each of these, around a third or more of respondents indicated the issue was of great concern and felt it had an adverse effect upon them. The response to harassment is also important as any occurrence of this is very serious and needs to be addressed.

The responses by different levels of staff to these issues are shown in Table 3. Note that the percentages given in Table 3 are based on the number who responded to the

* This included academic women, whose surveys are currently being analysed.

question, rather than, as in Table 2, the number who responded to the survey, and so are higher. Response rates to questions were, however, high, ranging between 70% and 80%.

It is apparent that while each issue is a significant concern to all levels of staff, the degree of concern does vary somewhat with level.

While the figures show the level of concern, it is necessary to look to the comments made by women to try to reveal the reasons for why the area elicited the concern it has. These reasons are discussed in the following sections, illustrated by some of the comments. Comments included are those which clearly present the most common reasons for concern, or which capture the flavour of an issue.

Not all women who responded to the questions wrote comments to explain their response. A very general indication of the level of qualitative response is that approximately 40% of responses included comments (giving, on average, around 130 comments for each issue of concern).

Career opportunities

The majority of women (70% (n= 100)) who explained their concern about career opportunities said they didn't feel there were any opportunities at all, or that they were extremely limited. Typical responses were:

I am resigned - there are none (HEW 4-5).

Very limited career opportunities for office staff (HEW 1-3).

No career opportunities at all (HEW 8+).

As well as identifying the lack of a formal career path as a barrier to progression, women commented that they were not in any way encouraged to progress, that is, to seek opportunities which would make them more 'marketable', to apply for positions, or to seek job evaluation. Women also linked their lack of progress to a lack of opportunities which might allow them to broaden their skills and knowledge, such as secondments and job exchange, opportunities to act in higher positions, and training, which some said was rarely encouraged but when it was, it was mainly to gain skills which might allow them to perform their current positions better. For example:

Staff at the lower levels are not given the opportunity to gain more experience eg. to be seconded to another position for 3 months. Our tasks are restricted (HEW 1-3).

No training for promotional growth and personal growth (HEW 4-5).

Concern about career opportunities was expressed particularly by women at HEW Level 6 and higher; Table 3 shows that more that half of the women at HEW Levels 6 and 7 indicated they felt this had an adverse effect on them. While the majority commented that this could be attributed generally to the lack of career paths or opportunities, a smaller proportion (around 15%) said the problem was that there were few jobs to apply for. A similar number specified concerns about there being limited opportunities for part-time workers, where, for instance, comments were made that the University does little to encourage part-time work, which is done predominantly by women, and that this is a great source of women's disadvantage. For example:

When the VC asked last year 'What holds women back?' I felt strongly that the lack of a clear policy and clear guidelines on fractional and part time work and on job sharing was a strong factor in holding women back. Women are more likely than men to want such arrangements and have a huge amount to offer (HEW 8+).

Women across all levels commented on the need for clearer career paths, more flexibility and for mobility between different jobs, such as:

Job sharing, job advertising, cross training/multi skilling, more permanent part-time (HEW 6-7).

Greater access to secondment, introduce a system for higher duties. Introduce a system of job rotation, whereby 'schools based' staff can swap with 'chancellery based' positions for a period of 3, 6 or 12 months (HEW 6-7).

Job evaluation/reclassification

The comments made by more than 140 women across all levels reveal widespread frustration, disappointment and anger towards the job evaluation system. Percentages in Table 3 show that concern was expressed particularly by women at HEW Levels 1 through to 5 where more than half the women indicated they felt job evaluation had an adverse effect upon them. A typical comment made by a woman within these levels is:

After the last job evaluation questionnaire, I am very disappointed as I've been here at the uni for many years and my position has grown what with extra responsibilities and extensive knowledge of PC/Mac programs. My standards of work are excellent and my Uni background is extensive and varied. Yet, to 'go up' one grade is a major problem (HEW 1-3).

Around a quarter of the women who commented expressed concern that the job evaluation questionnaire was too long and time consuming, and/or that it was too complicated and hard to understand. Some said this particularly affected staff at lower levels, and staff from non English speaking backgrounds.

The recent reclassification is a joke. The only person who should decide is your supervisor - maybe a third party sitting in on face to face. The

form is enough to make a lot of capable people turn off. Also, some people can't express themselves well and can't understand the form. It should be much simpler to understand (HEW 1-3).

Frustration that job evaluation did not take account of all of the skills, knowledge and abilities women need to do their jobs effectively was evident in other comments made by women across the range of levels (12%), where areas such as workplace stress, workload, and managing a range of different tasks were cited as not being taken into consideration. Lack of recognition for degree of responsibility was also highlighted as an area of concern. For instance, situations were described where women were frequently put into positions of having to take responsibility for decisions (often due to absence of the Head of School), yet because they were not 'officially' accountable, they received no recognition for it in the questionnaire. The level of their frustration is illustrated by the following comment:

I applied for reclassification and was very dissatisfied that I did not receive it. The majority of the time I make decisions mainly because my manager is out, and use a little initiative - my decision now is if they want to pay peanuts they get a monkey to do the job - I do not get paid to use my initiative and to make decisions (HEW 1-3).

Other less common reasons put forward included lack of support to complete the questionnaire, that the questionnaire is assessed by those who don't know your job, that the outcomes are unfair and inconsistent, and that the questionnaire is too inflexible and too general, so it does not accommodate the range of different jobs it is purported to measure.

I feel that the method is unjust. That is, using the same questionnaire for all levels and types of general staff when duties are quite varied in many respects...also the classifications officer does not physically see what the employee under review actually 'does'. This means that if the employee does not express themselves well enough on paper, or expresses themself too well, the classification will be made accordingly (HEW 6-7).

Supervision/management practices

The majority (around 85%) of comments made concerning supervision and management practices at the University painted a gloomy picture of these practices where they referred, in particular, to a lack of support for training (both formal and on-the job), concern that feedback was minimal or non existent, some specifying that there was little to no positive feedback at all, and how there was little or no consultation on issues that concern them. For example:

No feedback - just snide comments - no issues tackled - training opportunities also limited to those 'worthy' (HEW 4-5).

No feedback or consultation on issues that are highly relevant to my job. Machiavellian supervision/treatment of general staff at this school (HEW 4-5).

A number of women linked their lack of progress to management practices where they receive little advice or encouragement from their supervisors in terms of career development. For example:

No initiative from persons in charge to help in being reclassified. I have been on same level for the last 12 years. I have had my duties increased, more responsibilities (HEW 4-5).

I find the assumption that women are often not worth the trouble to supervise and assist in future career roles very frustrating and disturbing (HEW 6-7).

Some comments (around 15%) did give a more positive view of supervision with comments ranging from 'excellent' through to 'adequate' supervision and support.

Selection and recruitment practices

A whole variety of reasons were presented for why this area was of concern, the most common concern (expressed by just over 20% of women) being that the outcome of selection is manipulated by managers so they can hire their preferred candidate, with some commenting that lip service only was being paid to EEO policies. For example:

I believe jobs applied for have already been 'allocated' via 'sweetheart' deals prior to advertising or interviewing (HEW 4-5).

EEO/AA appears to be a 'toothless tiger'. Different recruitment procedures and selection procedures depending on faculty requirements. VERY UNFAIR (HEW 4-5).

Some described practices where in order to avoid the normal selection procedures, managers appoint staff into short-term positions, where they are then well placed to get the job when it is advertised.

Harassment

A very startling result which emerged from the survey was that nearly one in every five women who responded to the survey indicated that they had personal experience of harassment (see Table 2). The comments made by just over 80 women referred to situations of having to deal with intimidation, exclusion, victimisation, racism and sexist attitudes through to sexual harassment.

Around a quarter of these women indicated the harassment was from staff in positions of power. For example:

Head of School's sexual harassment and remarks have been demoralising, resulting in loss of confidence in myself and loss of respect for his authority or leadership (HEW 1-3).

Sexual harassment from a man in a senior position of great power and influence (HEW 6-7).

Some included unfair practices, victimisation and sexism shown by supervisors:

As a female post grad student and research assistant trying to find information about future positions (eg. postdoctoral positions) I have experienced some sexist comments from my supervisor regarding the value of my continuing eg, you'll be married with kids in a year. I find this demeaning and frustrating given that my abilities and prospects are equal to or superior to any male postgrad in my department (HEW 6-7).

Reference was also made by some to the patriarchal nature of the University and on how 'the boys club' is still alive and well. For example:

I believe that the school I work in demonstrates the absolute dominance of its male power brokers in the lack of credit given to the work of the female-headed sections in it. I feel we have no power (HEW 6-7).

Discussion, decision making take place during 'boys sessions' which do not include female workers (HEW 4-5).

Academic/general staff relations

An area which was not specifically raised in the survey, but which was commented on by more than 40 women was the 'them and us' division between academic and general staff. While this is not a large proportion of women, that this was raised unprompted amid so many other issues might suggest it to be an area of significant concern for general staff women.

More than a third of these women referred to the treatment of general staff by academics who, they believe, neither understand nor value the work they do, and who treated them like servants. For example:

I like the atmosphere here. I also like the physical environment and the relative 'freedom'. However, there is a problem between some academics and administrative staff. No matter what, some academics see admin staff as the 'slaves' (particularly if female). We are often asked to make coffee (yes, even in these enlightened times), pick up their cars from the mechanics workshops, write envelopes. (HEW 1-3).

There is a "us and them" problem here. Too many academics believe that general staff are congenital idiots. This attitude needs to be broken down. We're all working for a common goal here (or should be!) (HEW 6-7).

One woman commented on how this problem is largely ignored:

For me, the biggest problem on campus is the difference between general and academic staff. However, this problem is never discussed anywhere!! (HEW 6-7).

The other main reason for concern, again expressed by just over a third of those who commented, was the disparity in conditions between general and academic staff where the latter has better career opportunities, and more flexible working arrangements. For example:

Should have more opportunities for general staff to have internal 'secondment' between different workunits. Academic staff have SSP opportunities....general staff do not (HEW 8+).

As a researcher I am worried that there is no similar career path to that of an academic. Indeed there is no way that I can be promoted in my current job without looking elsewhere for a new position (HEW 6-7).

Discussion

While the results of the present study are drawn from one university only, they show similarity to the findings of other studies which have investigated the position of general staff women. Castleman and Allen (1995), from interviews with 50 academic and general staff managers, report that lack of career opportunities, limited staff development opportunities, bias in promotion decisions, and lack of recognition of general staff with little systematic attention given to affirmative action for these staff in particular, have serious implications for female general staff. They also suggest that flatter management structures, which limit promotion possibilities, and a masculine culture with few women in senior positions contribute to their position. Similar results are reported by Butler and Schultz (1995) arising from a study which examined the perceptions of women staff working at the University of SA, where they too identified limited opportunities (both personal and career) and the lack of recognition as significant areas of concern for general staff women. They found, in addition, that the factors that separate women on the general staff from their academic counterparts was of great concern to these women.

These results add to the growing evidence that women in general staff positions are unrecognised, under valued, faced with limited career opportunities and are often poorly supervised and treated by both managers and academics - all of which might help to explain the poor status of these women.

The results of the survey would seem to indicate that the lack of career opportunities for general staff women is the primary problem facing these women. The highest

levels of concern shown in the survey were in areas related to career opportunities, where, as well as identifying that there were no, or limited, formal career opportunities (such as career paths), women reported concerns about poor management practice where there was a lack of support from their supervisors in areas related to their careers, poor recruitment and selection practices, and a job evaluation system which limited their opportunities to progress. The lack of career opportunities for permanent part-time work was also raised as a factor which might disadvantage women, in particular.

Unlike their academic counterparts, general staff typically do not have a system for promotion, with job evaluation being the only mechanism which might allow them to progress a limited amount within their position, if they are successful.

The problem revealed by research with job evaluation systems is that they tend to undervalue the work women do. Burton (1991), for instance, has done considerable research into job evaluation systems in Australia and reports that little effort has been made in dealing with gender bias in these systems. Wieneke (1995) suggests that job evaluation is a critical site for the undervaluing of keyboard/clerical positions in particular, which is the area where most general staff women work. She says that

> *It might be that the occupational categories of keyboard and clerical/administrative functions are a convenient shorthand for lumping together myriad skills, knowledge and qualifications that women bring to paid work and this forms part of the strategy to keep women in subordinate, support positions* (Wieneke 1995, p. 9-10).

This would seem to be consistent with the outcomes of the present research where women commented that the job evaluation system lumps together the huge range of jobs they perform, and fails to take account of and measure the range of skills, knowledge and abilities they require to do these jobs.

The lack of recognition and valuing of women's skills and experiences is well documented in the literature (see for instance, Burton 1991; Cox and Leonard 1991; Lazenby and Poynton 1992; Game and Pringle 1983). Aspects of work which Burton (1991) reports are frequently overlooked include: workplace stress from having to perform multiple roles where work must be done quickly, and in having to provide better service to several people at once; communication stress; coordinating; handling interruptions and doing many tasks at once; and responding to complaints. Many of these are typical in the day to day work of general staff women, and were evident in the comments made by women as features of their work which go unrecognised.

Concern that the job evaluation questionnaire undervalued the level of responsibility exercised in the job was raised as an issue by some women. A comprehensive study of women's skills in clerical and administrative work, conducted by the Women's Adviser's Unit at the South Australia Department of Labour (Lazenby and Poynton, 1992) identified this issue as a possible source of women's disadvantage. Lazenby and Poynton suggest that undervaluing responsibility is particularly true in service industries where the worker and the client interact directly, with minimal involvement by the supervisor; a situation which again is typical in the work of many general staff women, such as, for instance, staff who provide advice to students.

Lazenby and Poynton (1992) also report a range of interpersonal skills and written communication skills that go unrecognised and unrewarded. They argue that these skills are devalued through language, and identify aspects of the ways we talk, and consequently think, about women's skills which render them invisible. One aspect they describe is representing skills as personality, where we see women's interpersonal skills in terms of personal attributes, for instance 'you have to be able to get along with people' rather than 'you have to have the ability to communicate effectively with a range of people'. The idea that women's skills go unrewarded as it is assumed women 'naturally' possess these skills has been widely documented in the literature (see, for example, Burton 1991; Windsor 1991).

Another key area identified by Lazenby and Poynton (1992) as being undervalued is knowledge. They suggest that many women working in clerical and administrative positions possess extensive job-specific, organisational and industry knowledge which is not formally recognised or accredited, and which is often described as 'the need to have common sense'. Given that universities value 'expert' knowledge so highly in academia, it is particularly extraordinary that the expertise and knowledge of general staff women would seem to be valued so little. That the knowledge held by general staff women is usually acquired on the job rather than through formal qualifications may contribute to its lack of recognition.

The job evaluation system is clearly a factor which limits women's opportunity to progress; given the responses of women in the survey they may not even apply due to lack of confidence with the method and, given the above discussion, if they do there's a good chance they won't be upgraded anyway if it fails to recognise the skills, knowledge and abilities that they have. And even if they are successful it is very unlikely that they will progress more than one level.

The reality is that many general staff women, a lot of whom do tend to stay in one job for a long time - for various reasons, one of which might simply be that they enjoy the workplace they are in - do end up performing the job at a much higher level than classified. Often these positions are upgraded after the person has left, when it becomes evident that the job is at a higher level than classified. Given the problems with the job evaluation

system it is certainly time to review the system, but perhaps it is also time to explore the possibility of some other method of promotion for general staff. It is assumed that this cannot occur due to the nature of general staff jobs - we need to examine these assumptions and investigate the possibility of some degree of promotion within a job that goes beyond the limited incremental steps that currently exist.

Wieneke (1995) argues that institutional practices such as job evaluation, along with recruitment and selection and staff development, are designed to reproduce the dominant culture, which in universities is essentially patriarchal (the patriarchal culture of universities has been discussed extensively elsewhere, see for instance, Acker 1992; Allen 1990; Bagilhole 1990; Butler & Schultz, 1995). The perceptions and experiences described by women in relation to job evaluation would seem to be consistent with this, as would the responses of women in relation to selection practices which reported that they believe managers manipulated selection outcomes to hire their preferred candidate. The latter may fall into what Kanter (cited in Burton 1991) calls 'homosocial reproduction'—meaning the selection of incumbents on the basis of social similarity. Research suggests that universities are prime examples of 'homosocial' institutions (see, for example, Bagilhole 1993:265). Castleman et al, (1995) report a comment made by one senior woman in their study:

> *I have a pet theory about why men end up in senior appointments in this place, it's because the whole place is run by men* (p. 117).

Women in the survey also wrote of instances of exclusion, harassment and of an active 'boys club' operating and this presented the University, or at least parts of it, as a very patriarchal place. While staff committed to EEO have worked hard to remove some of these practices, it would seem that the masculine culture of universities has proven difficult to shift. Burton (1991) argues that members of target groups have a right to know whether EEO is a serious government policy or if it's a gesture, a symbolic statement without substance. Women who commented in the survey that they felt lip service only was paid to EEO policies would seem to favour the latter.

A large and ever growing body of literature shows that academic women are also greatly disadvantaged in this environment (see for instance, Allen 1990; Bacchi 1993). It is generally believed, however that women of the general staff are further marginalised than their academic colleagues (see Butler and Schultz 1995, for instance). Currently many universities are attempting to address some of the concerns of academic women and to put into place some strategies which may improve their position. While it is important not to present academic and general staff women as competing priorities, universities need to recognise that strategies which improve the position of academic women do not necessarily improve the position of all women staff, and that they need to give particular attention to general staff women.

General staff - the support staff

The concern expressed in the survey about the way general staff are perceived and treated by academic staff has recently received some attention in the literature (Castleman *et al* 1995; Butler and Schultz 1995) but, it would seem that little is being done to improve this relationship, or even to recognise it as a problem. As one Level 6 woman commented "this problem is never discussed anywhere!"

That the general staff workforce is a feminised workforce, particularly at the lower levels, might help explain this relationship, since research has revealed that occupations that are typically female are valued less than occupations that are typically male (for discussion see Burton 1991; Game and Pringle 1983).

Diverse positions are lumped together under the term 'general staff' including technical, administrative, personnel, research and laboratory. All these workers tend to be seen as being in a support role, in fact some universities actually refer to them as 'support' staff (which is only slightly better that those who refer to them as 'non academic' staff). Yet these jobs are central to the working of universities which could no more operate without them than they could without academic staff. The roles of all staff in universities, including academics, are closely inter-related and dependent upon each other.

It could be argued that the different value attributed to academic and general staff groups is reflected in the difference in conditions and working arrangements between the groups, which, judging from the comments women made in the survey, might in turn serve to perpetuate the divisions between them. While academic staff have extremely flexible arrangements, opportunities for secondment, sabbatical, flexible working hours including the opportunity to work from home, sponsorship to travel to conferences, and generally great autonomy, general staff, especially those at the lower levels, enjoy few, if any, of these. There is no reason why some of these opportunities and benefits should not also be available to all levels of general staff.

Future directions

The findings of the survey and previous research point to a number of areas universities need to urgently address if women on the general staff are to face a better future working in higher education.

- Attend to the lack of career opportunities and develop and implement a career development strategy for general staff women.

This includes examining the possibility of promotion opportunities for general staff; developing clear career paths; exploring opportunities for job rotation, acting in higher positions and secondment; and career development programs which help these women to become aware of and to describe the invisible and so-called 'natural' skills and knowledge they already possess, which they might apply to job applications and reclassification questionnaires. In addition introducing more flexible and innovative practices and policies that might better accommodate the careers of women, such as recognising permanent part-time work as being a viable career option and setting up a job sharing strategy.

- Address the problem of poor management and supervision practice and the effect of this upon women staff in particular. Training of supervisors, heads of School and managers is clearly very important, but it must be recognised that training is only part of the solution and there need to be mechanisms in place to make managers more accountable for and to the staff they supervise. At the very least, universities should require evidence of staff induction, staff training and development, support for promotion, and compliance to EEO/AA policies, information which should be made available to staff.
- Review institutional practices such as job evaluation, and recruitment and selection practices, to investigate their effect on women. It is necessary to support training in areas such as recruitment and selection in practice by policies and by mechanisms that make staff accountable for the selection decisions they make, and to make statistics on the outcomes of selection available.
- Acknowledge and value the contribution of general staff to Universities. This might include the development of the university code of conduct to address in more detail the issue of general and academic staff relations, and expectations in terms of treatment of general staff; the development of guidelines to involve general staff at all levels in decision making to ensure the contribution of general staff is heard - including, for instance, School and Faculty committees, reviews, in the development of strategic plans; and incorporating the discussion of general/academic issues into all academic leadership/management training.

Finally, it is necessary to encourage and do more research with and about general staff women, in order to raise their profile and understand their position. Some universities have successfully introduced some of these strategies, while others have done little. What is needed is evaluation of the impact of these strategies and further exchange of information about what works and what doesn't.

Universities have been able to get away with ignoring the contribution of women on the general staff for far too long already. It's time these staff were recognised for the valuable work they do.

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Academic employment: Current pressures, future trends and possible responses

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Abstract

What is happening to academic employment? Who could seriously recommend an academic career in Australia to postgraduate students? Why are so many colleagues taking voluntary separation packages? The clear trend in academic employment is towards insecurity, inequality, deskilling and downgrading. The real earnings of academics have declined and earnings relativity has plummeted (Marginson, 1989). Other professional workers such as teachers and nurses have negotiated salary increases in excess of five per cent per annum. This article examines the recent major changes in academic employment and more importantly, discusses ways in which academics can attempt to secure wage justice for their employment. The prognosis is not optimistic but we feel that all is not lost (yet).

Academic employment mirrors the broad employment trends in the Australian economy

Seven features characterise changes in the Australian labour force over the last two decades. First, the persistence of high rates of unemployment have maintained unemployment rates at around eight to ten per cent. Second, the increase in female labour force participation rates (from 43 to 53 per cent) and the increasing employment share (34 to 44 per cent) have occurred in this time. Third, there has been a shift in employment towards the services sector (62 to 75 per cent). Fourth, there has been a relative decline in full-time, permanent waged employment from 66 to 56 per cent over the past decade. Fifth, inequality in the distribution of earnings has been growing. Sixth, the proportion of employees who belong to trade unions has declined to around one third. Finally, the proportion of the workforce with post-secondary qualifications has increased (Brosnan and Campbell, 1995). Many of these developments are interrelated: for instance, the increasing female participation rate and the increasing service sector employment share are linked and there is a connection between the falling share of full-time waged employment and the declining workforce share who belong to trade unions.

The workforce is becoming polarised, casualised, insecure and de-collectivised, yet better educated. Inequalities in earnings and the distribution of working conditions is increasing and the idea of a secure long-term employment relationship with a single employer or even within a single industry or occupation is fast disappearing (Lansbury, 1994). What this means is that for many Australian workers employment is insecure, hours are irregular, earnings are low and access to minimum conditions of employment is diminishing.

Academic employment also exhibits these trends. Over 20 per cent of workers are part-time and around 40 per cent of workers are non-tenurable (limited term) workers (DEET, 1996). The clear trend in universities and elsewhere is towards more part-time and more limited term employment (Romeyn, 1994). The House of Representatives Parliamentary Report on the Workforce of the Future (1995, 13) highlighted an emerging trend of workforce division between the full-time permanent workforce and the growing bulk of part-time, casual and contracted workers. This development allows academic managers to avoid many on-costs (for example long-service leave, study leave), limits career progression (also cost-saving), allows teaching commitments to be matched to employment costs (9 month contracts), renders jobs insecure, opens up divisions within the workforce (for example tenured versus non-tenured workers) and calls into question the validity of full-time and permanent employment arrangements. The AHEIA recently called for the exclusion of clauses regulating the numbers of part-time and casual employees from future award negotiations (Healy, 1996). The tenured workforce will soon be in the minority and the conditions associated with tenure are under relentless pressure.

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Deregulation, managerialism and the flexibility imperative

Driving these employment developments is a bipartisan acceptance of two premises about the economy. First, the imperative of deregulation: that unfettered markets can deliver the most efficient outcomes, hence industry assistance and regulations should be withdrawn. Second, the role of the State should be re-defined and reduced, especially through deregulation and privatisation, individuals should be more responsible for their well being and the market should become the major determinant of the allocation of resources. Over the last decade the frontiers of the State have been rolled back as a result of this concerted ideological assault in conjunction with the perceived inability of Government to reduce unemployment and to "balance the budget."

These sentiments have spread to employment. Labour market deregulation remains the cry of those supporting individualism, smaller government and the market. These pressures have culminated in changes in the last decade that have reduced the central regulation of wages and working conditions. Enterprise bargaining, introduced in the late 1980s, has increased the diversity of wages and working conditions and has allowed, in particular, the spread of "normal" working hours to increase (ACIRRT, 1996).

Pronouncements on the role of universities have changed in the last decade with the additions of economic imperatives and the impact of managerialism and market deregulation is obvious in university structure and governance. The collegiate model of governance has been replaced by a distinctly authoritarian managerial model of governance (Meek, 1995). In 1990 the Australian Higher Education Council (1990: ix) stated that "the higher education system must continue to play its part in contributing to the vision of a cultured and competitive Australia." Higher education is being asked to play a more overt role in the solution of Australia's economic problems. As Grigg (1996: 160) comments, "government in recent times has been keen to push universities into a more competitive and market-driven posture." These views can be clearly linked to changes in methods of university operations and employment conditions. Fee-paying students, professorial chairs supported by companies, private sector funding for research are now emphasised and, on occasions, are the basis of judgement of an individual staff member's worth. Some jobs, both academic and administrative, are now held on the basis that so many dollars worth of outside funding is attracted to the university.

These perspectives on what a university should be and how to achieve this are discussed frequently in terms of making the university and its staff "entrepreneurial" (Kennedy 1996; Grigg 1996). Once these terms have been taken over from the general literature on management, most of which originates in the low unionised and employment deregulated United Sates of America, it is implicitly linked with deregulated employment conditions. Individualism rather than collegiality is highlighted and individual entrepreneurial activities rewarded.

Although academics are frequently charged with being insulated from the "market" the academic employment sector is exhibiting many of the characteristics observed across the broader Australian workforce. Higher education will continue to be subject to the dictates of market efficiency criteria which stress cost cutting, managerialism and employment fragmentation. Academics are exhorted to be flexible and productive, to adopt "best practice" teaching and research procedures and to be "innovative." Yet all this is largely a smokescreen which is premised on the belief that academic employment is inflexible and non-productive. There has never been any attempt to link real wages with productivity measures (for example student-staff ratios) and despite achieving acceptable benchmarks or best practice, academics are exhorted to do more if they wish to protect their jobs.

While the government and employer rhetoric which has driven enterprise bargaining is that greater wages will be gained as a result of increased productivity, there is no check made on this in any industrial relations legislation. Enterprise bargains are not assessed on whether they deliver any productivity outcomes. A detailed study of some agreements in the highly unionised construction industry showed that there was no relation between wage increases and any enhancement of productivity (ACIRRT, 1995). This should provide a sombre warning for those who believe that wage outcomes are linked to productivity gains in a rational way. The evidence to date points to rewards being given in a random fashion. Talk of rewards for entrepreneurialism, or anything else, will be allotted on a random basis more related to the bargaining power of the individual or the group than anything else. We only have to note the stagnation of university salaries alongside considerable productivity gains. The entrepreneurial vision is one which breaks down collectivism and collegiate relationships, and appropriates productivity gains for managerial rewards.

Will university employment become more polarised?

Atkinson (1985) laid out a model of the flexible firm in which a core of well paid and secure employees were surrounded by a growing number of insecure and external workers. While the model attracted much analysis and criticism (Pollert, 1988) it was a blue print which has served as a model for public sector rationalisation (that is, workforce reduction). Studies in both Britain (Casey, 1991) and New Zealand (Anderson, Brosnan and Walsh, 1993) indicated that this was the model politicians and senior bureaucrats followed in order to generate

efficiency dividends and prepare public sector business enterprises for privatisation. While Australian universities have not as yet been privatised, they have definitely been corporatised through the development of corporate goals, managerial decision models, managerial hierarchies and efficiency dividends. Academic departments are now cost centres and universities have mission statements. Behind this system lies exploitation and inequality. The core managerial workers are well rewarded for extracting efficiency gains from the secondary and external workers. Contract, sessional and part-time workers are extolled to improve performance if they require contract renewal and even the diminishing core workers face ever increasing hurdles if they wish to secure a career path through promotion. Whatever happened to the guaranteed career path for academics that was secured under the restructuring and efficiency principle in 1988?

Already we can observe many instances of the restructuring of the academic labour market towards the type of hierarchies associated with the flexible firm model. Senior academics are now taking on the role of corporate executives with all the salary package trimmings and with commensurate discretionary power. Within faculties and departments the senior executives attract loadings largely through appropriating the productivity gains of the junior and non-tenured staff. The managerial academic workers are largely protected through the subordination of external workers, lower level tenured academics with career aspirations and junior tenurable academics. The process could even intensify with calls for the privatisation of universities (McIntosh, 1996). This will represent the ultimate opportunity for extending workforce control and intensifying divisions within the workforce.

Will work intensification continue?

"Flexibility" is a term which is used in a myriad of ways and its use needs to be understood both as a set of loosely defined practices and as an ideology (Campbell, 1993). In terms of work practices flexibility refers to the increased ease with which management can utilise labour. Thus flexibility has been introduced through enterprise bargains by an abolition of penalty rates, an increase in the span of ordinary working hours (even to 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year) and a reduction in overtime or overtime payments, the introduction of broken shifts and so on (DIR, 1995). The term "work intensification" is being used to cover the circumstances where employees are working longer hours and are under more pressure but do not receive increased remuneration (DIR, 1995, 213-215).

Work intensification is rife in universities under the umbrella of flexibility. Longer teaching hours, more students and more research output are required without an increase in salaries. The relative position of academic salaries has declined such that while most primary school teachers in NSW will, through their latest enterprise agreement, earn $50,000 per annum (Long 1996), most academics do not earn this, despite their longer working hours, fewer holidays, greater responsibility (for instance for curriculum design), increased productivity over the last decade (larger classes), superior qualifications, and the fact that they educate the teachers.

With work intensification comes work alienation. Miller (1996) argues that increasingly the conception and management of academic work is being removed from the academic practitioner and placed within the hands of the elite of academic managers. Day to day control over working time, work procedures and work processes is diminishing. Teaching and research procedures and assessment are subject to systems of centralised control and co-ordination. The imperative of real funding cuts will force universities to look towards new ways of exploiting their staff and it will result in longer hours, more tasks and fewer rewards as academics struggle to maintain employment continuity.

Will employment become more fragmented?

Employment will become more fragmented in terms of a greater variety of employment arrangements and working conditions. As with the rest of Australia the proportion of non-permanent, non full-time academic employees is increasing. Cost cutting pressures will continue to promote new work contracts that are fractional, sessional and of limited duration and governments of both political persuasions have been promoting more flexible working arrangements in higher education.

Technological developments lend themselves readily towards increasing home working and contracting out teaching packages. Videos, CD Roms and open learning can replace the traditional lecturer. Universities could contract out all functions, from teaching and research to cleaning and secretarial services. Taken to its extreme universities could become a telephone number, fax number, email address and post office box. Indeed, the process could be global, with many teaching programs on video or CD Rom being purchased from international providers, such as is already the case with many of the open learning television packages. This will reduce the need for academic and general staff and will enable office space to be rationalised, especially on the large city campuses where rentals command a large premium.

We could see academics holding several fractional appointments (multiple job holders) as well as completing contractual work directly or for corporate providers. In the managerial jargon, academics, like many other workers, will become portfolio career holders, holding several jobs, not being tied to a particular industry and occupation, and facing a very uncertain future (Macken, 1996). Teaching/research could be combined with other

market activity such as car-washing and dish washing. This is a logical consequence of the quest for flexibility and deregulation: contemplation, scholarship and non-market research will have very little commodity value in such an environment.

What pressures will drive future changes in academic employment?

Funding cuts together with an emphasis upon greater institutional competition for the funding dollar will reinforce managerial and entrepreneurial models of university governance and place further pressure upon university employment and conditions. Political pressure to deregulate the sector and employment conditions overall will further downgrade the terms and conditions of employment. Trade unions continue to be viewed as a market impediment and individual rather than collective employment contracts will become more widespread. Governments can reduce their funding commitment by allowing more full fee paying students and introduce vouchers to reinforce the competitive process. Research needs will be driven increasingly by competitive imperatives, especially the needs of industry within the market place. Non essential (non market) research will be placed within the domain of hobbies and be left to interested individuals to pursue in their leisure time. The possibility of a globally competitive university sector where courses are delivered from locations external to the students may be on the horizon. In a global market Australia would need very few teaching institutions to deliver courses to students.

How can academics respond?

In the face of this pessimistic scenario can academics do anything? Are we an endangered species? We feel that academics can do something but they need to react quickly. The public standing of academics needs to be improved. Governments and vice chancellors are not adverse to employing propaganda to promote their message. Academics need to promote "positive" aspects about their employment and to advertise their achievements in teaching and research more widely in the public domain. We need to achieve a favourable public image as essential workers in the community; teachers and health workers have won substantial pay increases since they had community support. Who taught the teachers and nurses, engineers and doctors? Academics could publicly support industry leaders who are constantly stressing the need for increased training and education expenditure as a means of lifting national productivity growth (Salmon, 1995). Academics could point out the apparent contradiction between current higher education policies and the projections of an increasing need to educate and enskill the workforce of the future (DEET, 1995).

Trade unions, in the higher education sector as elsewhere, have been unable to prevent the deregulation of employment conditions. The apparent ineffectiveness of trade unions to stem the tide of incremental erosion to working conditions and real wages erodes the support for trade unions. While industrial action such as strikes may not exert enough pressure to achieve favourable outcomes, other actions can be tried. More subtle and targeted action such as work to rules (full holiday entitlements taken by all and no weekend work), no committee work and withholding examination results can be tried. When students cannot progress then politicians have to explain to concerned parents what is happening and why a negotiated settlement has not been reached, better conditions may be gained.

The de-collectivisation agenda, in place through the Workplace Relations Act 1996, aims to reduce trade union power, authority and participation. However, we see the possibility for greater participation at the local level. Workplace unions can appoint their own paid officials to hound vice chancellors, university human resource managers, the local media and politicians. Academic unionism has for too long been centralised, dependent on ACTU policies, dependent upon non-paid officials and remote from the participating campuses. Smith (1992, 11) argued that the deregulation of labour markets and the de-collectivisation of labour called for stronger workplace unionism, more local job delegates and an overall strengthening of workplace organisation. Local organisation, participation and membership becomes the key in an enterprise based bargaining context, and academics will have a vested interest in becoming involved.

Finally, academics will have to learn to call the bluff of governments and vice chancellors. The lack of funding and the employment consequences of wage increases is the lever used to erode employment conditions and facilitate work intensification and there is no end to this downward spiral of real wage reductions and deterioration of working conditions. The blackmail can be used in perpetuity if necessary because the tactic has been so successful to date. Vulnerable workers (casuals, part-timers and fixed term) require greater protection from exploitation. Remuneration needs to be linked to the cost of living and demonstrable productivity gains. These are not extravagant or unrealistic objectives. Governments can find money for politicians' superannuation funds, defence, the olympics and fuel tax rebates for mining companies. Universities can find money for loadings, new council chambers, public relations and numerous consultants. Let them also pay hard working academics a reasonable wage for working under reasonable conditions.

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Letters

Non-people

I do wish you would stop referring to me and my colleagues as non-persons who do non-work. Your call for papers on the future of work in higher education raises interesting and important issues. It acknowledges that the roles of university staff are changing and asks important questions about the nature of the work that may be done in universities in the future. But it persistently refers to me and my colleagues as 'non-academics' who do 'non-academic work'. I have two objections.

I do not want to be defined as a negative or in oppositional terms. It is necessary to distinguish between the university's core work of scholarship and ancillary and support activities, and it may still be necessary to distinguish between those primarily engaged in the university's core work and others. To do this I and most of my colleagues prefer to be referred to as general staff engaged in general duties or in support services.

But more fundamentally, the use of the terms 'academic' and 'non-academic' establishes a normative dualism (Jaggar, 1983:28) that begs the very question that you are raising. As Peter Spearritt and Julian Thomas argue in the same issue (1996:30) the distinction between academic and general staff is becoming increasingly blurred.

Arguably it is now more accurate to refer to academic, management, service and other roles rather than to mutually exclusive categories of work and workers. This allows one to distinguish the leadership and management duties of Deans, Deputy Vice-Chancellors and others for which a strong scholarly background is necessary; the course and project management that is increasingly being devolved to course co-ordinators and researchers; and the intriguingly complex work of librarians, instructional designers and student advisers, to give a few examples.

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