GRIPPED BY MANAGERIALISM'S CLAW: POWER, POLICY, AND RESISTANCE IN THE NEOLIBERAL UNIVERSITY

A Thesis submitted by

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ABSTRACT

Unveiling the complex apparatus of power and resistance within the university system, this thesis examines how institutional policies have transformed universities from bastions of scholarly pursuit into corporatised entities, driven by neoliberal ideologies. Modern universities now mirror business enterprises, with vice-chancellors resembling chief executive officers and an overarching focus on performance metrics over intellectual enrichment. This transformation has not only restructured governance but also deepened the policy-practice divide, igniting vigorous debates about the dominance of managerial logic at the expense of academic freedom and integrity. Organised *by publication*, this thesis integrates three peer-reviewed studies to dissect these transformations through both theoretical and empirical lenses, offering a critical examination of the underlying apparatus of power. They identify that policy has become a faith construct, a complex interplay of faith, hope and doubt as the academy navigates the dissonance forming misalignment of managerial and academic values expressed in policy. The nuanced power structures underpinning these tensions are revealed through a Foucauldian lens and the reflective, novel, arts-based collage methodology. Visualising the hidden apparatus of power reveals its obscured mechanisms within university governance. Intertwined with ethnographic observations, the profound influence of top-down leadership on the university's policy and practice is highlighted through the world of puppetry. Study findings provide substantial insight into how institutional policies are co-opted by the ever present and ruthless presence of managerialism in the evolving discourse on university governance and highlight the chaotic calibration often inherent in contemporary leadership styles, drawing parallels between these structures and monarchies. Looking ahead, this thesis calls for a deeper empirical exploration into the often-obscured power structures within neoliberal universities, champions the expansion of innovative, arts-based research methodologies to examine complex phenomena such as power and resistance and places a challenge for the academy to influence a return to scholarly and educational missions.

Key words: higher education, institutional policy, policy-practice divide, cognitive dissonance, resistance, managerialism

CERTIFICATION OF THESIS

I Fiona Rae Margetts declare that the PhD Thesis entitled *Gripped by Managerialism's Claw: Power, Policy, and Resistance in the Neoliberal University* is not more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references, and footnotes.

This Thesis is the work of Fiona Rae Margetts except where otherwise acknowledged, with the majority of the contribution to the papers presented as a Thesis by Publication undertaken by the student. The work is original and has not previously been submitted for any other award, except where acknowledged.

Date: 21 June 2024

Endorsed by:

Associate Professor Stephen Jonathan Whitty

Principal Supervisor

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Student and supervisors' signatures or endorsement are held at the University.

STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION

I Fiona Rae Margetts declare that for the PhD Thesis entitled *Gripped by Managerialism's Claw: Power, Policy, and Resistance in the Neoliberal University*, I made the majority contribution to the conduct of the research and authorship of the following papers. The contribution of the co-authors is also acknowledged.

Paper 1

Margetts, F, Whitty, SJ & van der Hoorn, B 2023, 'A leap of faith: overcoming doubt to do good when policy is absurd', *Journal of Education Policy*, vol. 39, no. 2, pp. 191-213, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/02680939.2023.2198488.

Student contributed 80% to this paper. Collectively Assoc Prof Whitty and Dr van der Hoorn contributed the remainder.

Paper 2

Margetts, F, van der Hoorn, B & Whitty, SJ 2023, 'Playing With Power: Using Collage to Bring Reflexivity to Management Studies', in *Sage Research Methods: Business*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London, https://methods.sagepub.com/case/playing-power-using-collage-bring-reflexivity-management-studies.

Student contributed 80% to this paper. Collectively Assoc Prof Whitty and Dr van der Hoorn contributed the remainder.

Paper 3

Margetts, F, Whitty, SJ & Taylor, B 2024, 'Pulling the strings: the apparatus of university policy production', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management,* vol. 46, no.2, pp.1-25, https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2024.2344131.

Student contributed 80% to this paper. Collectively Assoc Prof Whitty and Dr Taylor contributed the remainder.

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Initially motivated by an observed policy-practice divide, the motivation for this thesis grew into a deep concern for the current and future state of higher education. I hope it can play a part in informing the conversations that shape the future of universities and higher education. I hope also that my efforts will support those labouring within university walls to realise they have the power and collective voice to counter the effects of managerialism and that pursuit of scholarly and intellectual endeavours for the benefit of society and the public good remains a worthy calling.

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DEDICATION

To Dr Shalene Werth. You encouraged me to undertake this research project. Without your inspiring encouragement I would not have undertaken the intellectual and life-changing challenge. My only regret is that I did not get to tell you how close I was to completing the challenge before your short and furious health battle ended. I hope that my dedication of this thesis to your memory is in some way compensatory. I am buoyed in the knowledge that, through your students and fellow members of the academy, your impact lives on.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease
EVLN Framework	Exit, Voice, Loyalty, Neglect Framework
FL	Frontline Staff
HRE	Human Research Ethics
HREC	Human Research Ethics Committee
MM	Middle Manager
NM	New Management
NPM	New Public Management
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SL	Senior Leader
TEQSA	Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency

Hatching Managerial Vice-Chancellors: Exploiting Academic Values in the Chancellery

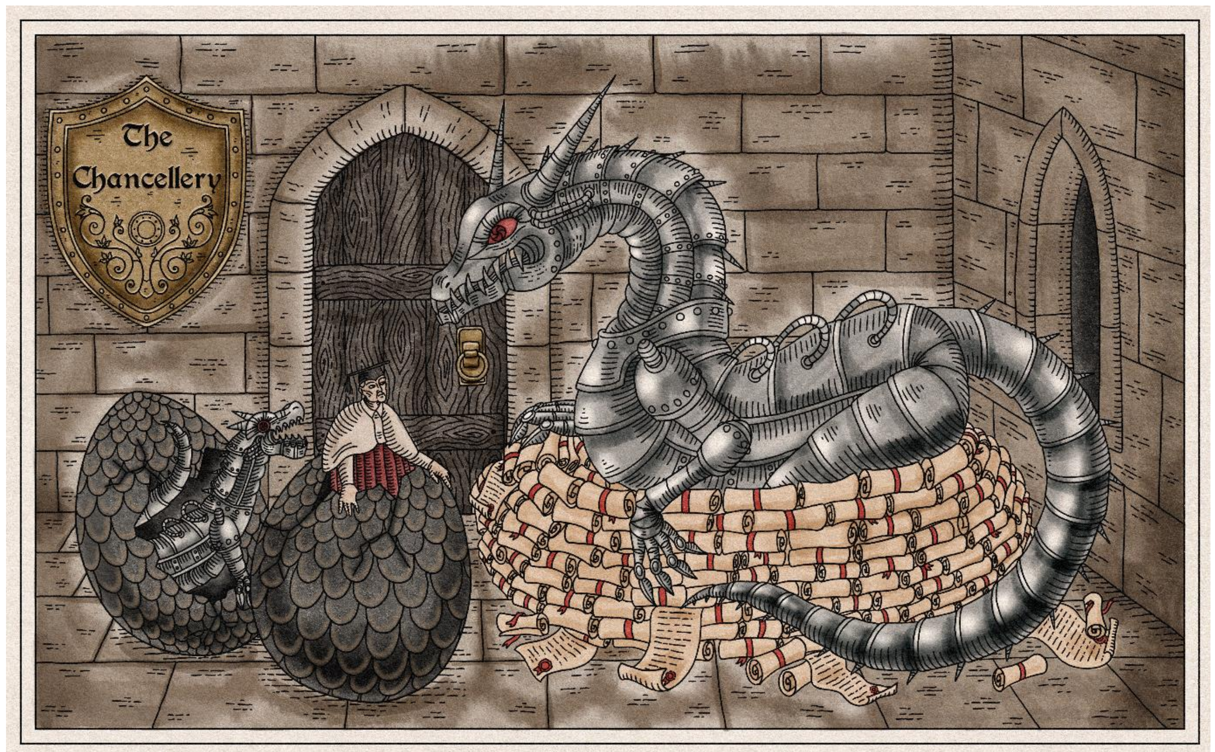

Plate 1: Hatching Managerial Vice-Chancellors: Exploiting Academic Values in the Chancellery

Plate 1 Interpretation

Plate 1 foreshadows the overarching theme of the thesis, highlighting the entrenched presence of managerialism within the university and the consequences thereof.

The figure shows a mechanical dragon – representing managerialism – giving birth to additional dragons and vice-chancellors, suggesting that university leadership is increasingly a product of managerial culture. The dragon has made its nest within the university, with its use of degree scrolls as nesting material symbolising the devaluation of academic achievements.

The image serves as a commentary on the deep-rooted influence of managerialism in university governance. It implies that academic values are undermined and discarded by those who rise to leadership positions; they align themselves with managerial principles, rather than upholding academic ideals.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This thesis had its genesis in a gap I observed as a policy actor charged with implementing a university meta policy (the policy framework or *policy on policies*); i.e. the outcome of a political activity or process within a university's polity or institutional structures and processes. The gap was the space between that which is stated within university institutional policy (hereafter policy) and that enacted in practice – the policy-practice divide. This study was undertaken to understand why this gap existed and to investigate how it may be bridged. Many policy actors saw virtue in the study, and I was buoyed by this. They too had observed the divide and sought to understand it. The search for answers began with the initial aim of confirming the observed policy-practice divide and understanding its nature and cause. Of course, only then would it be possible to test how the divide might be bridged, draw insightful conclusions and potentially make valuable contributions to the theory and practice of policy in universities and the public sector.

Over the course of the first study, it became increasingly apparent that the policy-practice divide was inherently founded in a potentially harmful cognitive dissonance experienced, particularly by the academy, but potentially all university staff who are expected to enact policies reflective of values inconsistent with their own. The study became not about finding a solution to bridge the divide, but about carefully representing the stories of policy actors charged with implementing unimplementable policies. It became about understanding the observed relationship between policy and power, revealing the manifestations of power and their impact on the academy and the silent but pervasive influence of managerialism within universities.

Furthermore, it became apparent that, viewed through a different lens, the policy-practice divide provides a space within which the tension between policy and practice gives voice to academic values and cognitive dissonance is resolved. The Exit, Voice, Loyalty and Neglect Model provides a way of conceptualising the actions taken by policy actors in response to this dissonance. This and the revealed delicate balance of power within universities suggests that, through resistance and collective action, power

can be harnessed to redress the neoliberal influences within universities and their governance structures and once again return them to places of scholarly pursuit.

1.2 Why this thesis should matter

This research comes at a time when higher education is at a crossroads, particularly within Australia under the Universities Accord processes. Now is the time to consider whether further corporatisation of universities will add societal value. This thesis provides critical empirical evidence to inform this consideration, and the outcomes of my research are provided within three published papers forming Chapters 4 to 6 of this thesis. They have revealed thus.

A leap of faith: overcoming doubt to do good when policy is absurd. This is the title of the paper within Chapter 4. It confirms that policy is experienced differently by policy actors and often viewed as reflective of the values of an institution and, by extension, its members. When faced with the task of policy implementation, however, policy actors often experience potentially damaging cognitive dissonance emanating from value misalignment. It is this misalignment that creates the divide or gap between a policy's stated objectives and its practical implementation.

Chapter 5 is entitled *Playing with power: using collage to bring reflexivity to management studies.* It draws on Foucault's insights into the concealed nature of power and demonstrates that the mechanisms of power as revealed by ethnographic observation can be visualised and analysed through the arts-based method of collage. Strongly resonating with the tradition of Annunciation art from the 15th century which used symbolic elements to depict the origins and dynamics of divine power, the collage methodology acts as an archaeological tool to reveal the underlying power relations within university policy-making.

Pulling the strings: the apparatus of university policy production is the title of Chapter 6. It exposes the intricate power dynamics within university governance, identifying a central authority figure who champions and enforces managerial values, thereby shaping the policy landscape. This figure, occupying the highest position within the academic hierarchy – barring the university's top governance body and the Australian Government – exerts control over the enunciative field of policy creation. Their influence, both diffuses and directs and manipulates 'power strings' to orchestrate a

narrative that systematically side-lines academic input in favour of managerial objectives.

Chapters 4 to 6 are preceded by a comprehensive literature review within Chapter 2 which summarises relevant research across the university policy and governance contexts. It provides a reflection on the current state of universities and the academy and highlights the practical and theoretical manifestations of power from various philosophical positions. Kierkegaard's concept of faith, hope and doubt, the divine right of kings and the influence of Annunciation art in the visualisation of power are explored in the literature review.

To observe and reveal the nature of power within university discourse Foucault's concepts of knowledge/power and discourse, are also addressed and, to provide contrast, the Bourdieusian perspective is explored. Given the empirical research identified an overwhelmingly strong presence of managerialism within university governance structures, a review of relevant literature is provided. Included in this literature is the impact of managerialism on performance and reward systems, the cognitive dissonance experienced by the academy when their academic values misalign with those of managerialism and, as mentioned, the range of actions taken are explained by the Exit, Voice, Loyalty and Neglect Framework.

The literature review is followed by the research aims, design and methods in Chapter 3. This chapter outlines the research framework and methodological approaches engaged to answer the question: *How do power dynamics within university governance structures influence the policy-making process and contribute to the policy-practice divide in higher education institutions?* It supplements the research methods included in Chapters 4 and 6 and illuminates the significant role of the arts-based method of collage in visualising the power structures within policy discourse and governance, as then further discussed in Chapters 5 and 6.

A fulsome discussion follows in the preceding Chapter 7 and identifies thesis contributions and new insights revealed through the research. The current state of universities and their governance systems is discussed, along with the observed power in the system. The analogous nature of vice-chancellors in universities to kings and

queens within monarchies is observed; vice-chancellors are likened to 'manarchs' reigning within 'manarchies' and observations made about the delicate balance of power. The role of managers and the tools of managerialism in effectively silencing the academy is identified and countered by the potential for power through collective action in the concluding remarks.

Concluding remarks in Chapter 8 reflect on the current state of corporatised universities in Australia and reiterate that the academy's capacity to display the values of collegiality and democracy and make meaningful contributions to society are being lost to the values of managerialism and the preference for managerial knowledge over intellectual knowledge. This chapter highlights the areas for future research and reflects on the potential for policy to be used for *good*, as highlighted by the visualisation of power and identification of the potential for power to be harnessed through resistance and collective action. The challenge is placed to harness this power to redress the managerial nature of universities and their governance structures and ensure they are once again aligned with scholarly and educational missions.

1.3 Research contributions

The research developed through my candidacy contributes to the current literature in the following ways:

- It conceptualises policy as a faith structure based within hope and doubt
- It provides empirical evidence of the policy-practice divide within universities
- It demonstrates the value of arts-based methodologies to bring depth of understanding to complex constructs (policy) within complex environments (higher education)
- It confirms that policy is an expression of managerial values, and the academy will resist or work around policy in order to resolve cognitive dissonance resulting from value misalignment
- It 'unearths' the power structures that give rise to and sustain managerialism within universities
- It identifies the need for further research into the ethical and practical implications of leadership that thrives on controlled chaos

- It identifies the need for empirical research into a governance model grounded in transparency, open dialogue and free debate

1.4 The plates

At the beginning of each substantive chapter I have included an image or 'plate'. They provide a visual overview of supplementary observations and are accompanied by an adjacent description of the elements within the plate and an overall interpretation of the presented imagery. These retrospectively developed images are included to assist the reader in grasping the complexity of the conveyed messages and to introduce each chapter.

The unique imagery provides depths of meaning and insight, otherwise difficult to convey and the contribution of the artist, Puka Muriska, is acknowledged. Thank you for your original, creative and thought-provoking contribution to this thesis in the illustrative plates.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This thesis represents my research directed towards understanding the policy-practice divide within universities. As mentioned, this is a study undertaken by publication and substantive Chapters 4 to 6 contain the published papers and summaries of relevant literature. This chapter, however, offers a review and summation of the extant literature drawn upon to expand upon these findings and the discussion in Chapter 7.

2.2 Policy context

2.2.1 The current state of Australian universities

Universities in Australia have changed significantly since the Dawkins reforms of the 1980's that saw universities formed out of colleges, massification of education, introduction of fees and an international outlook, and 'vice-chancellors [turned] into corporate leaders [and] teachers into teachers and researchers.' (Sharrock 2013, p. 1). They are now complex, '[c]entrally located at the intersection between knowledge, industry, professions, government and social networking…' (Marginson & Considine 2000, p. 233) and, as a result of the Bradley review in 2008, are increasingly regulated and compete for funding in a demand and performance driven system (Calma & Dickson-Deane 2020).

As further explored in Chapters 4 and 7, higher education is a highly competitive, global market with a strong performance orientation. Universities are entrepreneurial entities, adopting innovative approaches to remain competitive. University governance 'has become the point of origin for those strategic manoeuvres and reinventions'. Students are now 'consumers' of the knowledge economy and seek 'value for money' rather than the '…older educational values of knowledge, ideas and personal development.' (Marginson & Considine 2000, p. 234); a current state confirmed in the extant literature (Shattock 2010; Antonowicz & Jongbloed 2015; Marginson 2018; Marginson & Yang 2023).

These reforms have attracted much commentary and debate in the literature. Authors suggest that they are indicators of managerialism, an ideological belief in

management's power and tight management control within an organisation a symptomatic of neoliberal influences in higher education (Klikauer 2014; Bottrell & Keating 2019; Sims 2019). Their impacts and relationship to this study are further explored in Chapters 4 and 7.

2.2.2 The current state of the academy

The academic context has significantly changed due to the higher education reforms. As mentioned in Section 2.1.1, universities are now competitive, corporatised, globalised entrepreneurial entities with strong market orientations. The pressure to perform and the pervading presence of managerialism has been created an environment in which the academy is experiencing high levels of stress with resultant physical and mental health issues (Ablanedo-Rosas et al. 2011; Jerg-Bretzke et al. 2020; Mohammed et al. 2020; Ohadomere & Ogamba 2021; Blackmore 2022). The stress and burnout experienced by the academy frequently attracts the attention of the media and stories were published in prominent outlets as this thesis was being finalised (Bita 2024; Morley 2024). To make any inroads into redressing this state it needs to be understood.

The academic literature warns of a 'culture of escalating managerialism' and diminished collegiality (Lee et al. 2022, p. 58). It is attributed to unrealistic workloads, reduced staffing, lack of or loss of decision-making power, job insecurity, casualisation of the academic workforce, low status in the academic hierarchy, poor financial remuneration, deteriorating work-life balance, corporatisation of academic governance and a resultant dissonance between management and the academy (Sahlin & Eriksson-Zetterquist 2016; Blackmore 2022; Lee et al. 2022; Wesley 2023). This is not a new issue. Gmelch, Wilke, and Lovrich (1986) wrote of the perceived dimensions of stress among university faculty in the United States of America and identified these as: reward and recognition, time constraints, departmental influence, professional identity, and student interaction.

Several authors make a direct correlation between the mental health of the academy and institutional policy, noting its causal nature and capacity for management to *control* staff through policy (Bezuidenhout 2015; Ohadomere & Ogamba 2021; Blackmore 2022; Ryan et al. 2022). It is also suggested there is an opportunity to improve the

situation through policy intervention (Bezuidenhout 2015). The findings of this study call this into question.

Still others point to the larger issue of neoliberalism and its impact on managerialism within universities (Rowlands & Rawolle 2013; Bottrell & Keating 2019; Raaper 2019; Croucher & Lacy 2020; Cairo & Cabal 2021). The current situation within universities has been related to an autocracy and Sims (2020) presents a challenge to the academy to fight back. To fight back one needs to understand what one is fighting against.

2.3 What is policy?

Many authors writing in the public policy arena – that is those policies developed by governments – offer definitions of policy. There is general agreement that policy takes the form of text-based artefacts and discourse (Ball 1994; Colebatch 2000; Bell & Stevenson 2006; Ball 2015a) and that it is an expression of action or inaction (Codd 1988; Ball 1994). There is some agreement that it will represent a position, stance or decision (Harman 1984; Colebatch 2000). Helco (1972, p. 85), however, prefers to consider it '…as a course of action or inaction rather than specific decisions or actions.'

It is commonly held that policy is not definitive or absolute, but a 'messy', 'organic and complex' phenomena (Smith 1976; Prunty 1985; Nicoll 1998; Colebatch 2000; Trowler 2002b, p. 2; Hoppe 2018). It is invariably an expression of values (Kogan 1975; Prunty 1985; Codd 1988; Gale 2003) or priorities (Kogan 1975; Reynolds & Saunders 1987), goals or objectives (Jenkins 1978; Codd 1988). Easton (1953, p. 130) aptly describes policy as a 'web of decisions and actions that allocate values'.

Policy is also attributed to 'control[ing] institutional behaviour' in ways not addressed by organisational strategy and structure (Stensaker & Fumasoli 2017, p. 271) and the role of policy in the distribution of power is acknowledged by Bennett and Lumb (2019), Reynolds and Saunders (1987), Prunty (1985) and Bell and Stevenson (2006). Bennett and Lumb (2019, p. 2) draw on the work of Fineman (2000) to suggest it is an 'emotional arena' and agree with Ball (1993) that it is discursive. Trowler (2002a) also draws on the work of Ball (1994, p. 10), to provide a concise summary of the definitional positions summarised above:

> *Policy is … an 'economy of power', a set of technologies and practices which are realized and struggled over in local settings. Policy is both text and action, words and deeds, it is what is enacted as well as what is intended. Policies are always incomplete in so far as they relate to or map on to the 'wild profusion' of local practice. Policies are crude and simple. Practice is sophisticated, contingent, complex and unstable.*

Policy is, thus, '…both text and practice; it is not only what is intended but what is enacted' (Nicoll 1998, p. 298; Trowler 2002b). Trowler (2002a, p. 2) further refers to Ball (1993) and suggests that policy is '…made as it is put into practice as important social processes necessarily occur as this happens and because unforeseen circumstances on the ground mean that actors need to exercise discretion'.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, this thesis is focussed on institutional policy (hereafter 'policy'). These are the 'policies that are established internally by universities' to operate within an individual university (Margetts, Whitty, et al. 2023, p. 3). Writing of institutional policy in Australian universities, Freeman et al. (2013, p. 3) comments on its complex nature, suggesting its meaning '…can vary depending on the context'. They offer a selection of definitions focusing on policy as:

- an appropriately approved, text-based statement of principles that rarely change and are related to the academic, services and governance functions of the university;
- the totality of all institutional policy which may range from statutes to local work instructions;
- a committee decision or management directive; and
- texts within a work unit commonly referred to as 'policy' which may supplement university-wide policies but may not be actual titled policies.

2.3.1 Policy and governance

It is accepted that policy is part of the process of governing and Colebatch (2018, pp. 376, 2) notes it is a '…continuing flow of action in a wide range of fields.' Kortantamer (2019, p. 755) observes that governance practices will be complex and enable and constrain other practices in the same 'ecology'.

In the higher education context Marginson and Considine (2000, pp. 9-11) observe that governance within universities is critical and that it is positioned between government, the primary agent in funding and in fashioning the policy settings, and academic work and community service. Governance mediates the expanding relationships with business and industry, and between teaching and research and articulates the 'internal' and 'external' dimensions within universities.

University leaders will selectively deploy external pressures to drive internal changes through policy and may also operate as agents of schools and faculties outside the university (Marginson & Considine 2000). According to Marginson and Considine (2000) there is a more recent concentration of decision-making at the point of institutional management and leadership and decisions once made by national and state government, about resource deployment, for example, have been transferred to universities themselves. A consequence is that other decisions once made by academic units are now determined by professional managers. Many see this concentration of nodal power as overdue, as essential to the effective running of universities in the manner of government departments or business firms. Others see it as the primary cause of what they perceive as a crisis of university purpose and values.

This crisis of purpose and values is exposed in Chapters 4, 6 and 7 through the observed misalignment between academic values and the managerial values reflected in institutional policy. This misalignment is reinforced by the observed and revealed presence of power and managerial values within university governance. Recent trends in university governance corroborate these observations: that is, an increase in executive power, structural innovations, enhanced flexibility in the location of power and authority, a decline in the role of academic disciplines in governance and new methods of devolution, and a shift from collegiality and democracy to executive power (Rubin 2010; Antonowicz & Jongbloed 2015). It has been observed that 'with power comes responsibility' and that new ethical regimes of governance and management are required within universities (Marginson 2007, p. 37).

The role of policy within institutional governance is expressly acknowledged by Freeman et al (2013, pp. 3, 4) who note that policy 'sits at a specific level in the institution's hierarchy of governing texts' and that policy types include 'governance

policies' requiring approval by the highest governing authority – typically the council or senate. These authors state that 'Policy is a high-status activity, an attribute of governance, and should only be set by senior staff with an appropriate purview of the strategic and regulatory situation'.

The legal basis for internal policies and related delegations of authority are set within the *Higher Education Standards Framework (Threshold Standards) 2021* (Australian Government 2021a) and individual state acts of parliament by which self-governing universities are formally established. The Australian higher education regulator expresses the need for institutional policy and an institutional policy framework within five of the seven domains that support the Threshold Standards (Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency 2021a, p. 2; 2021b, 2021c, 2021d, 2021e).

2.3.2 Policy in Australian universities

The policy frameworks required by the Australian university regulator are often referred to as the 'meta policy' or 'policy on policies' (Freeman et al. 2013, p. 6; Freeman 2014b). The meta policies set the context for development of institutional policy relating to academic, service and governance functions and need to be effectively implemented to overcome the risk of becoming '…outdated, irrelevant, redundant texts disconnected from institutional practices' (Freeman et al. 2013; Freeman, Brigid 2015b, p. 98). Chapter 4 seeks to understand the divide between policy and practice and offers a deep analysis of related policy literature and timeless pithy quotations from Stephen Ball (1994) and Paul Trowler (2002b).

The caution is offered that policy '…can be charged with both conscious and unconscious meanings' and it is suggested that often 'high' and 'unexpressed hopes' can be attached to policy, and it can arouse 'fear and resentment' (Freeman et al. 2013, p. 4). It is critically observed that the way institutions conceive policy influences its understanding of policy development and implementation (Freeman 2014b; Freeman et al. 2014).

It is suggested that policy texts 'represent the outcome of political struggles over meaning' and they do not take into account the 'broader political context within which texts are generated' (Taylor 1997, p. 32). The complex nature of policy-making and

implementation is confirmed by Freeman (2015b) and McInnis (1996). McInnis (1996, p. 99) attributes this to '…the autonomous nature of the institutional units and individuals and the complexity of institutional structures and processes'. This author acknowledges the role of group 'control systems' and suggests that academic cultures impact the 'shared meanings' given to policy and the way individuals relate to each other. Policy is an expression of values and an individual's values will also impact how they relate to policy (McInnis 1996, p. 100).

2.4 Exploring the policy-practice divide in Australian universities

2.4.1 Managerialism

Managerialism comprises managerial values, assumptions about the world, and practices that exaggerate or overemphasis (at the expense of other functions), the efficacy and power of *the manager* in an organisation (Klikauer 2023c). It has been argued that managerialism is an ideology (Therborn 1999; Klikauer 2019) but it also posits that hierarchical structures are the sole source of decision-making authority, with senior managers' decisions taking precedence (Klikauer 2015, 2023a). Employees are expected to implement these decisions with minimal input, although it can be beneficial if they believe they have some influence (Goh 2017). Performance evaluations are conducted top-down, reinforcing power dynamics and preserving the hierarchy (Fleming 2021). Additionally, managers are privileged in organisational tasks and spaces, with their voices being prioritised through various means, such as the architectural layout of offices and meeting spaces (Locke & Spender 2011; Våland & Georg 2018).

Furthermore, managerialism asserts that only managers have the sophisticated skills necessary to run organisations, and these capabilities are universally applicable regardless of the organisation's nature (Locke & Spender 2011; Klikauer 2023b). Profitability and efficiency are considered virtues, essential for maximising profit through cost reduction (Pollitt 2016; Gare 2022). The greatest virtue, however, is respecting and not questioning the decisions of superiors (Courpasson et al. 2012; Klikauer 2023a). Managerialism regards managers as moral agents, and as such they

play a vital role in organisational operations and should be commended and remunerated for their efforts (Braverman 1998; Mirvis 2014; Shepherd 2018). It is only senior managers that can appoint subordinate managers (Diefenbach 2013), and senior managers are exempt from the rules that apply to their subordinates and employees (Magee & Galinsky 2008).

The effects of managerialism are felt in the public sector by the introduction of private sector management approaches, that stress:

> *…hands-on, professional management; explicit standards and measures of performance; measurement by results; value for money; and…closeness to the customer. It is often referred to as the '3Es' of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.* (Rhodes 1997, p. 93)

New public management and new managerialism are terms that provide additional dimension to managerialism. Under new public management '…the public are clients of government and administrators should seek to deliver services that satisfy clients.' It is used by those who take the position that public sector reforms are purely a 'technical devise to achieve greater efficiency'. New managerialism acknowledges that managerialism is more complex and 'stresses the ideological component of the phenomenon' (Meek et al. 2010, p. 5). For this study the collective term 'managerialism' is used to embrace the meaning and effect of each of these terms.

Within universities managerialism evolved out of the fundamental shift from administrators as those providing a service to academia in the pursuit of teaching and research, to management as a means of control and cost efficiency (Rhodes 1997; Deem et al. 2007). With managerialism 'major decisions are…reported from the centre rather than developed through the organisation' (McNay 1999, p. 116), resulting in a separation between the executive and the academy with poor communication and a reduced sense of trust. It has been suggested that managerialism is 'not appropriate for universities' (Rowlands & Rowlands 2017, p. 116) 'because they are not, and are not like, commercial businesses or corporations.' (Trakman 2008, p. 70).

Managerialism is, however, now part of everyday life for the academy and has been on the steady increase in Australian universities since the late 1980's. As mentioned in

Section 2.1.1, it is attributed to globalisation, massification and commodification of education and was stimulated by John Dawkins' White Paper in 1988 and numerous subsequent state and commonwealth government reforms (Australian Government 2015). As referenced in Chapters 4 and 7, the corporatisation of universities and the impacts of managerialism are negatively affecting the identity and well-being of the academy (Shin & Jung 2014). They emphasise the neoliberal value and business-like operations that are reducing academics to service providers and students to consumers (Marginson & Considine 2000; Winter et al. 2000; Morley 2001; Naidoo & Jamieson 2005; Anderson 2008; Kinman 2014; Warren 2017; Bottrell & Keating 2019; Connell 2019; Bosetti & Heffernan 2021; Wheeldon et al. 2023a).

Further evidence of managerialism within universities includes: forms of governance that support the focus on measurement or performance; a focus on 'output controls' and 'performance measurement' through rankings or performativity; a focus on the student as a consumer or customer and delivery of 'products' rather than teaching and learning; a focus on 'positional goods' or the capacity of students to gain 'social prestige and higher income generation' (Marginson 2006, p. 1); a financial and reputational emphasis for personal benefit; and performance and reward systems aligned with managerial values (Slaughter et al. 2005; Deem et al. 2007; Meek et al. 2010; Robertson & Dale 2013; Ball 2015b, 2015a; Lynch 2015; Watts 2017; Bottrell & Keating 2019; Wheeldon 2022).

2.4.2 Making policy

A 'participative and collaborative' leadership approach is required for successful policy development and implementation according to Harvey and Kosman (2014, p. 89) who note the need for consultation and engagement during development prior to implementation. In an empirical research project into institutional policy practices in Australia, United States, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea, Freeman et al. (2014, p. 34) identifies a divide between policy, 'street level' practice and subsequent outcomes. The research revealed that institutional meta policy did not sufficiently cover policy implementation and review and that policy practitioners were distanced from the point of strategic decision making and operational practice (Freeman 2014c).

Also writing in an Australian context, Taylor (1997, p. 32) concludes that there are ‘many layers’ to the policy-making process with the complexity extending beyond the micro/macro or micro/meso/macro layers as previously observed by policy researchers. There is little other research in the Australian context, however the position of Freeman and Taylor is affirmed by Trowler (2002a), McCaffery (2018) and McNay (2005, p. 42) who write of a similar situation in the United Kingdom, with the latter describing the policy-practice divide as the ‘gap between the leaders and the led’.

2.4.3 Explaining the divide

Research into the policy-practice divide has been undertaken in the United Kingdom. In an education setting, Trowler (2002a) developed the *Implementation Staircase* model to draw attention to the separation between actors in the policy-making process and, while several authors refer to this model (Bamber et al. 2011; Land & Rattray 2014; Saunders & Sin 2015), including Trowler himself (2014) there is no evidence of either having been empirically tested. Kortantamer (2019) attribute the divide within major government transformation portfolios to the focus on planning rather than implementation and suggest that structuring policy and business relationships may address the divide.

In a research project into institutional policy, the divide is attributed to the ‘front-loaded’ nature of the policy-making process and the focus on production of policy text by policy practitioners who are disconnected from policy related strategic decision making and institutional operations (Freeman 2014c, p. 1). Drawing on the work of Ball (1994) the author acknowledges the significance of the contexts of ‘influence’, ‘practice’ and ‘outcomes’ (Freeman 2014c, p. 13). Ball (1994, p. 10) also refers to the role of practice noting that it is ‘sophisticated, contingent, complex and unstable.’ while taking the view that policy is ‘crude and simple’.

2.4.4 Attempts to overcome the divide

Few authors address the policy-practice divide in an Australian university context. In the public policy setting Althaus et al. (2013, pp. 168-9) reiterate that ‘good policy design’ will include implementation, suggest that the ‘gap between intention and outcome may be large’, and that the high rate of ‘implementation misfires’ recorded in

the research are either because the '…policy design was fundamentally flawed or because government agencies lacked sufficient expertise and resources'.

To avoid the previously mentioned 'front-loading' effect, Freeman (2014c, p. 1) suggested that context be considered and effort balanced across the policy cycle. Freeman (2014c) offers an idealised allocation of roles over the policy stages but there is no evidence in the literature of these having been tested.

The need to consider 'questions of meaning and interpretation – as well as validity, reliability and subjectivity' are addressed by Taylor (1997, p. 33), and Harvey and Kosman (2014, p. 89) observe that leadership and appropriate consultation play an important role. The literature is also silent, however, on any research undertaken to test these observations.

Numerous authors write of policy implementation in universities in the United Kingdom and refer to the critical role of cultural and structural issues (Kogan 2005; Trowler & Bamber 2005; McCaffery 2018). McCaffery (2010, 2018) developed an organisational cultural model supported by a questionnaire and scorecard to enhance understanding of the policy-practice divide. There is no evidence in the literature to date of it having been tested although, when researching the role of culture more generally in higher education, Bhatia and Bhatia (2019) suggested the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument was the most appropriate given its global relevance.

2.4.5 The need for further research

The role of policy implementation and, by extension, enactment within the Australian higher education setting was first addressed by Freeman et al (2014). They note that, while well researched in the Australian public sector, institutional policy in higher education is little explored. Freeman (2014b) critically observes that the way institutions conceive policy influences its understanding of policy development and implementation (Freeman 2014b; Freeman et al. 2014).

The 'many layered nature' of the policy-making process was observed by Taylor (1997, p. 32) who purports that too much emphasis had been placed on theoretical models in policy studies and that more empirical research was required to address the previously

mentioned questions of meaning and interpretation. Taylor (1997, p. 34) also takes the position that the ‘politics of discourse’ could be useful to those involved in ‘on the ground’ struggles in the various arenas of education policy making. In an ethnographic study of an English university, Trowler (2001, p. 183) highlights the role of discourse and identifies that academic staff will ‘displace, negotiate, reconstruct and create alternative discourses’.

In *What is Policy? 21 years later: reflections on the possibilities of policy research*, Ball (2015a, p. 307) reaffirms the role of context and draws substantially on Foucault’s (1972b) work on the impact of discourse and material practice on ‘…culture, subjectivity and objects of knowledge…’. Furthermore, Ball (2015a, 2021) asserts the real issues underpinning any policy-practice divide relate to power and knowledge . He challenges researchers not to reduce power to domination (as he observes has occurred ‘in much of the work that purports to be Foucauldian in educational studies’) nor to detach knowledge from power.

Consistent with the position of Fischer and Forester (1993), several authors have begun to look outside the policy sciences for a framework that will address the policy conundrum. Trowler’s (2002a, p. 142) position is that practice can be misled by relying on simple interpretations of management and organisations and prefers to draw on ‘phenomenological and pragmatic’ philosophies, and psychologies that ‘attend to the role of context and contingency’.

2.5 Understanding policy from a Foucauldian perspective

2.5.1 Knowledge/power

French philosopher Michel Foucault (Gutting 2022) posited that power and knowledge cannot be separated, that there is no power relation without creation of a related field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute power relations (Ball 2015a). For Foucault power is elusive and relational in that it is an action upon the actions of others.

> *There is no single power that can be located at a given place; it…helps us understand how subjects relate to each other and how institutions are organized. It is a relationship that can be exercised from outside inside and from inside outside...Power is not a zero-sum game: we all have some kind of power, not necessarily comparable to others…[P]ower is repressive as much as it is productive; power obliges, but also incites, mobilizes. It is embodied and enacted in our bodies and in our discourses.* (Dussel 2009, p. 29)

Foucault's view is that mechanisms of power produce different types of knowledge which collate information on people's activities and existence. The knowledge gathered in this way further reinforces exercises of power. For Foucault knowledge is not power, however there are complex relations between power and knowledge (O'Farrell 2007). Writing of the work of Foucault (1986), Ball (2015a, p. 308) quotes Veyne (2010, p. 32):

> *…knowledge is a justification for power, power sets knowledge in action and, along with knowledge, a whole set-up [dispositive] of laws, rights, regulation and practices, and it institutionalises the whole things, as if it constitutes the truth itself… A set-up thus cheerfully intermingles things and ideas (one being that of the truth), representations, doctrines and even philosophies with institutions and social and economic practices, and so on. All this is impregnated by the 'discourse' of the day.*

Foucault's concept of power/knowledge is referenced by Winkel (2012) and Gordon (2009, p. 266) who agree that it is based in language dominancy, the impact of culture, history, discourse and concepts of 'truth'. For Foucault truth is relative and not found in texts which he suggests are one-dimensional, '…flat surfaces across which one can discern patterns of order'. He prefers to refer to '"regimes of truth" as the historically specific mechanisms which produce discourses which function as true in particular times and places.' (O′Farrell 2005, pp. 17, 28; O'Farrell 2007). Gordon (2009, p. 267) reaffirms Foucault's position that historical cultural settings provide 'codes of order' and the production of 'truth', or creation of knowledge, is a result of power struggles within a social system that result in change, enabled and restricted by the discourse.

2.5.2 Policy and discourse

Various scholars have drawn upon Foucault's concept of discourse to examine policy (Nicoll 1998; Stavrou 2016; Peacock 2017; Raaper 2017b). Gaventa and Cornwall (2008, p. 5) state that for Foucault, '…power works through discourse, institutions and practices that are productive of power effects, framing the boundaries of possibility that govern action'. Taylor (1997, p. 26) relies on Foucault's theory of discourse and suggests that in the policy-making context discourse is used 'tactically' and is 'an arena of struggle over meaning…'. In his early work, Ball (1993) took the position that policy exists not only as text, but as discourse. For Foucault, discourse must be '…treated as and when it occurs' and is comprised by '…statements and events [that] reveal or conceal thoughts, representations, images, themes, preoccupations.' (Foucault 1972a, pp. 25, 138).

In his later work, Ball (2015a) reemphasises the role of discourse and overtly turns to the work of Foucault. Ball (2015a) observes that Foucault was concerned with the structures and rules that constitute discourse rather than individual pieces of text. Similarly, and in an academic policy context, Trowler (2001, p. 186) refers to discourses as being 'intimately situated in social contexts'. He quotes Foucault (1977, p. 49) who by this stage was describing discourse as:

> *...practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. Discourses are not about objects; they do not identify objects, they constitute them and in the practice of doing so conceal their own invention.*

As with discourse, policy is a complex construct and not comprised solely of the 'flat' texts stored in university policy repositories (O'Farrell 2005, p. 17). As explored in Chapter 4, it both informs and is informed by the processes, practices, power relations and governance structures by which it is created.

2.5.3 Knowledge/power in universities

Institutional policies are at the core of these power relations and hold significant formal authority and symbolic power (Bleiklie & Kogan 2007). Writing extensively about the knowledge/power relations in education through the lens of Foucault, Ball (2015a, p.

310) observes that the self-governed nature of universities, an effect of global education reform, has resulted in a 'production of freedom [that] is destructive'. He quotes Foucault (2010, p. 64) who suggests that the freedom '…entails the establishment of limitations, controls, forms of coercion, and obligations relying on threats'. Ball (2015a, p. 310) observes that this seems '…powerfully apt in the case of contemporary higher education', and that while 'The management of freedom is a relatively new art of government … the less government there is at the level of the market all the more is needed on the technical, juridical, demographic and social levels.'

In a global higher education rankings context, Pusser and Marginson (2013, pp. 544,7) refer to Foucault's 'relations of power' and observe that universities are '…political institutions…driven by power'. They suggest that the attribution of institutional rankings increasingly regulates global competition, reinforces 'new and older forms of power' and legitimises the beneficiaries of the 'growing economic inequalities that have marked the neoliberal era' (Pusser & Marginson 2013, p. 563). The key issue is, in their view, how individuals understand their position within and respond to this power (Pusser & Marginson 2013).

The potential for resistance to power in universities is referenced by Thorpe (2012). He quotes Foucault (1990, p. 95) who states, 'Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power.' There is general agreement in the literature that power will meet resistance (Lukes 2004; Clegg & Haugaard 2009; Nutley et al. 2009; Ball 2015a). Nutley et al. (2009) and Ball (2015a) attribute this to the need for professional autonomy and identity. It is in this context that the literature speaks loudly of the policy-practice divide and the capacity of academic staff to '…displace, negotiate, reconstruct and create alternative discourses.' (Trowler 2001, p. 196).

2.5.4 The Bourdieusian perspective

In addressing the prevalence of power within universities, French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (1987, 1989) identified that universities have '…long been associated with the accrual of power through status and reputation…' (Rowlands 2017a, p. 112). Bordieu provides an insightful commentary on power and social class which is distinct

from but complementary to the Foucauldian approach taken in this thesis. His work focussed predominantly on colonialisation and found that the *ruling and intellectual classes* preserve social privilege across generations despite contemporary moves to address equality and social mobility through formal education (The Participation Power and Social Change team 2011; Akram et al. 2015; Collyer 2015; Rowlands & Gale 2016).

Bourdieusian theories have been applied to analyse the impacts of numerous phenomena in higher education, including academic capital and intellectual capital, academic capitalism, student equity policy, academic voice within university governance, concealment of power relations and managerialism in Australian universities (Peacock et al. 2014; Collyer 2015; Rowlands 2015, 2018).

Complementary research into managerialism identifies that universities are 'occupied by a [dominant] management class' through which the 'subtle day-to-day machinery' of managerialism cause harm to the academy. Furthermore, it identifies a decline in democratic governance in universities and calls for a return to a collegial form of governance (Wheeldon 2022, p. i; Wheeldon et al. 2023c, 2023a, 2023b).

2.6 Governance and power

2.6.1 Governance and separation of powers

Governance within universities has, like universities themselves, evolved. The first model of university governance was collegial and originated in mediaeval Europe in 1090 within the University of Paris, formed to provide a place for scholars to pursue their scholarship (Boggs 2010). It has moved from the previous collegial model (based on professional community with an unclear policy emphasis and a leaning to policy formulation) to a political model (based on a political system with an emphasis on policy formulation, to the exclusion of execution) (Baldridge 1971).

Subsequent research into governance within universities in Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, identified that universities established since the 1990's in the United Kingdom and Australia have typically been founded with stronger 'corporate-style governance and executive authority' than their earlier

counterparts who were self-governed by the academy (Rowlands 2013a, p. 28). Consistent with the evolutionary state of universities and their governance models, there has been a move away from academic self-governance to 'managerial control' (McNay 1999; Shattock 2014; Rowlands & Rowlands 2017, p. 25). Additionally, the collective voice of the academy has been stifled in the interests of efficiency and expediency and they have been distanced from decision-making while expected to enact the decisions (Rowlands 2017b, 2018).

Governance structures are tailored to an organisation and theoretically designed to provide a separation of power, transparency and appropriate exercise of authority and accountability. Central to this is the separation of powers, a necessary feature of democracy (Rule of Law Education Centre 2024) and a concept that stems back to French political thinker, Montesquieu in 1748, who believed that the concentration of power in any single person or group of people was as a threat to liberty (Rule of Law Education Centre 2024).

Governance also pertains to relationships; those between the people within an organisation, with the organisation itself, and the ways those expectations and relationships are understood and met (Australian Institute of Company Directors 2024). As mentioned in Section 2.1.1, within universities, governance structures sit between the government and the academy and community. They mediate the relationships between industry, teaching and research and have 'internal' and 'external dimensions' (Marginson & Considine 2000, p. 8).

Informal networks of power also operate within and outside the formal meetings that partially constitute these governance structures and they are manager or leader-centric (Marginson & Considine 2000). Rowlands (2015) identifies that through the operation of these structures an observed discourse contributes to and is impacted by the organisational culture, itself comprised of many discourses. A force or power is created through its operation, information sharing, role creation and use, group formation and disbandment and access to expert knowledge. These discourses operate within the multi-layered institutional context and 'hostile external environment' which demand their existence (Deem 2004, p. 124). This is somewhat akin to Foucault's (1979, p. 34)

power network where academics are operating (fighting) ‘in the finest links of the network of power’.

Members of the senior leadership contribute to and leverage upon this power. They capitalise upon it to demonstrate a consultative approach (Marginson & Considine 2000) and to overcome the separation between themselves and academe – a symptom of rising managerialism within Australian universities since the Dawkins Era (Marginson & Considine 2000).

2.6.2 Performance and reward

Universities in Australia have had a strong performance orientation since the Dawkins era. Their reliance on the international student market was highlighted during COVID-19 when international students could not attend campuses in Australia and university profits consequently plummeted (Doidge & Doyle 2022; Parker et al. 2023).

Globally there are externally imposed obligations on universities to achieve financial targets, high university rankings and research impact measured in quality publication metrics, ‘peer reviewed publications, authorship order, journal impact, grant funding, and national or international reputation’ (Rice et al. 2020, p. 1; Kools et al. 2023; Dodd 2024; Sahlin & Eriksson-Zetterquist 2024).

The situation is the same within Australia (Moses 1986; Hao & Zabielskis 2020; Mrva-Montoya 2021; Doidge & Doyle 2022; Wesley 2023) and graduate satisfaction levels, graduate salaries and employment rates and widening participation rates are additional performative outputs prioritised and measured within universities (Marginson & Yang 2023).

University reward systems have changed to reflect this orientation. Incentives developed to encourage behaviours to achieve these targets are impacting the academy. It is very rare for quality teaching to be rewarded, however *quality* research, as determined by journal rankings, is incentivised (Ramsden & Martin 1996; Rice et al. 2020). Curiously, a recent study in the United States of America into the impact of a quality teaching reward program revealed that it only attracted the attention of untenured staff and did not significantly change teaching performance or outcomes (Johnson et al. 2021). This prompts one to wonder when the value of quality teaching will once again be highly regarded in universities.

It is clear that institutional pressures are influencing the publishing strategies of the academy (Mrva-Montoya 2021) and transparency of the reward system and the 'power of external assessment' is influencing internal policy decisions (Boyer 1990; Ramsden & Martin 1996, p. 314; O'Meara 2006; Rice et al. 2020). Several authors point to the role of institutional policy in setting reward systems and Barrow and Grant (2019, p. 139) suggest that policy constitutes a 'promotion technology'. The risk of centralising what were once traditional faculty functions is highlighted, as is the need to ensure governance at faculty level is sustained (Boyer 1990; Hao & Zabielskis 2020).

2.7 Revealing and discussing power in the discourse

As previously discussed in Section 2.2, the research has revealed that policy is a complex phenomenon or concept within which power is constantly prevalent. Policy actors experience policy and make sense of it in different ways. Chapter 4 posits that an actor's relationship with this construct is akin to Kierkegaard's concept of faith, hope and doubt. Chapter 6 reveals the power constructs at play in policy governance settings and applies Foucault's concepts of power, while Chapter 7 discusses both these concepts through the lens of *the divine right of kings* and the visual elements of Annunciation art. The following provides a summary of those concepts and theories.

2.7.1 Kierkegaard and faith, hope and doubt

2.7.1.1 Faith

Chapter 4 confirms that policy is a complex, politically infused construct and that in resisting policy, policy actors are taking a bold 'leap of faith' (Margetts, Whitty, et al. 2023, p. 191). For Kierkegaard (1986) the concept of faith is an individualistic choice and the decision to believe over one's doubts. He argues that faith can only be experienced in the context of the absurd and doubt and it is through the means, power, or possibilities brought about by the absurd that one arrives at or takes a leap of faith. For Kierkegaard (1941; 1986) the absurd is that which an individual cannot justify. It refers to the conflict between the human need to seek inherent value and meaning in life and the human inability to find it; the absurd does not mean *logically impossible*, but rather *humanly impossible*. Without the existence of the absurd, faith cannot be actualised or experienced as a means of overcoming doubt (Kennedy 2022).

2.7.1.2 Hope

True hope is attained by going through despair, facing hardship and adversity (Kierkegaard 1998). It exists outside of time and is focused on the possibility of *the good*, which is not a predetermined or objective ideal, but a personal and subjective aspiration that people must work towards to live fulfilling and meaningful lives. Hope is a form of belief that a situation will eventually come to pass and 'good' realised, no matter the situation (Wood 2012, p. 668). Hope is the ultimate prospective emotion, focused on imagining a situation beyond its current conditions (Scioli 2020).

2.7.1.3 Doubt

Doubt or moments of weakness are inherent aspects of faith and not separate from it. Faith cannot be faith if it does not hold on to doubt while simultaneously overcoming it. Doubt is not equivalent to disbelief or mistrust of one's faith, but rather it is a sensation that arises from a sense of incomplete or inadequate comprehension of the object of one's faith (Kierkegaard 1967; Wood 2012).

The mutually reliant elements of faith, hope and doubt seek to elucidate the different responses by policy actors to policy and bring meaning to policy as a construct within which power is present rather than a one dimensional or flat statement of text.

2.7.2 Foucault and power

Accounts of power in the social sciences define power as the ability to make others behave in ways they would prefer not to (Dahl 1957), or to exclude others from decision processes (Bachrach & Baratz 1962). At the most general level, Foucault sees power as a mode of action which does not act directly on other people, but rather on their actions (Lukes 2004). Power, in contrast to violence, does not aim to directly move or change the physical body (e.g., by physically moving a person into a jail cell) or other elements of the physical world (e.g., by locking the cell door). The threat of force may be an instrument of power, but the defining feature of power is the attempt to influence behaviour (Foucault 1982b). Foucault illustrates this concept through the dual meanings of the word 'conduct': one meaning being to guide or direct, and the other referring to an individual's manner of behaving (Foucault 1982b, p. 789). When we

exercise power, we essentially conduct (i.e. guide) someone else's conduct (i.e. behaviour); we pull their strings, as revealed and discussed in Chapter 6.

Power assumes diverse forms. As the 'total structure of actions' used to influence others. 'It incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely.' (Foucault 1982b, p. 789). Power is not something possessed by individuals, but rather arises from collective social interactions. 'Power exists only when it is put into action.' (Foucault 1982b, p. 788). For Foucault, power can exist without conscious intent or the awareness of those on either end of the strings (Clegg 1989; Akram et al. 2015).

Foucault takes an archaeological approach to power which seeks to unearth the concealed structures that define the actions available to actors in a specific setting. These structures establish the prerequisite conditions for action, including the exercise of power. Foucault calls these concealed structures 'discursive formations' (1972a, p. 34) or 'enunciative fields' (1972a, p. 57). An enunciative field is constituted by the interaction of 'statements' and 'monuments' (Foucault 1972a, pp. 7, 89-98). Statements combine language and symbols to evoke emotional reactions or create monuments. Monuments are tangible evidence or material remnants of past discourses, such as documents or other artefacts and structures, that can actively shape our perceptions of the past, present, and future through the historical process (Foucault 1972a, pp. 50-63).

2.7.3 The divine right of kings

The *divine right of kings* is a concept founded in the medieval idea that a monarch's authority is granted directly by God (Figgis 1896). It is a '…political and religious doctrine of royal absolutism…and implies that any attempt to depose the king or to restrict his powers runs contrary to the will of God and may constitute treason.' (New World Encyclopedia Contributors 2024, p. 1). It particularly flourished in Europe during the 15th and 16th centuries and rose to the fore under the reign of King James I (1603–25) and King Louis XIV of France (1643–1715). It played an essential part in the development of Western political theory and the theory of sovereignty (Figgis 1896). The theory of Divine Right was abandoned in England during the Glorious Revolution of 1688–89. The American and French revolutions of the late eighteenth

century further weakened the theory's appeal, and by the early twentieth century, it had been virtually abandoned.

The doctrine of divine right can be dangerous for both church and state. For the state it suggests that secular authority is conferred, and can therefore be removed, by the church, and for the church it implies that kings have a direct relationship to God and may therefore dictate to ecclesiastical rulers (Britannica, T. E. 2024). In his commentary Burgess (1992) refers frequently to the work of Figgis (1896) and draws two conclusions: that the theory of the divine right of kings was used to justify the use of royal powers in civic matters and was consensual and uncontroversial provided a number of conditions were met; that it could be used to justify the duty of obedience and to condemn resistance.

The relationship between power and the divine right to resistance sparked its application in this study. Findings confirmed members of the academy utilise the power available to them and intentionally resist policy. While we know that power is complex and omni present, it conceals itself and is difficult to illuminate and understand.

2.7.4 Visualising power

The value of visualisation and its capacity to make sense of the complex within education settings is richly covered within the literature (Prins 2015; Butler-Kisber 2019; Barry & Beighton 2021; Morris & Paris 2021; Rainford 2021b). As observed by Klein et al. (2007) visual models contribute to sensemaking and prompts deeper levels of comprehension. Collage is one of the many visual models available to researchers. Its value is further explored in Chapters 3 and 5 where its role in the process of reflection and identification of nuances within the identified power hierarchies is reinforced (Butler-Kisber 2019).

The valuable visualisations were extended to include Annunciation art given its capacity to explain the dynamics of power operating with the university governance structures.

2.7.4.1 Annunciation art

The Annunciation was painted by many prominent artists during the Middle Ages and Renaissance (Sandro Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci, Caravaggio, Duccio di Buoninsegna, Man van Eyck and Murillo) until 1914 by John Waterhouse (Savitz 2020). The scenes include the figures of the Virgin Mary and the archangel Gabriel and tell of the announcement by the angel to Mary that she would conceive a child to be born the son of God. The ornate paintings of this era were used to convey philosophical and theological meaning and often reflected the artists' predilections (Hendrix & Carman 2010; Savitz 2020). While the setting of each painting varies and the roles of Mary and Gabriel interchange between standing and bowing, Savitz (2020, p. 1) notes 'the basic composition and many of the symbols and motifs, remain the same.'

The role of icons heightened in the Christian faith in the 4th and 5th centuries when the focus moved from relics to Marion icons (figures of Mary). They depicted the presence of God in the depiction of Mary through the power of divine motherhood, hereditary power, mediating power, power in war and the ultimate power of the cross (Pentcheva 2006; Nicolas 2023). As noted by Pentcheva (2006, p. 11), 'The political potential of the figure of Mary attracted imperial patronage in the 5th century.' Recent studies by Salvador-Gonzalez (2020, 2023) confirm the role of icons in the Annunciation to visualise power.

The role of collage and iconography in identifying the presence and structures of power was also identified in this study and is further explored within Chapters 5 and 7. The invisible nature of power and its value in visualising 'the unseen' and providing depth of insight into complex phenomena is illuminated. Chapter 7 draws on Foucault's concept that power is most effective in the discourse when it is invisible. The discourse will, however, also produce and reinforce power and undermine and expose it. (Foucault 1998). Cognitive dissonance is one manifestation of power in the discourse.

2.8 The impact of power in the discourse

2.8.1 Cognitive dissonance

Chapter 4 identifies that the policy-practice divide is a consequence of power and cognitive dissonance in the policy-making process. Policy resistance is seen as an expression of values and a dissonance reducing response to the gap between academic and managerial values. 'Cognitive dissonance has been one of the most enduring and successful theories in the history of social psychology.' (Cooper 2019, p. 1). Its originator, Festinger (1957) and subsequently, Festinger and Carlsmith (1959) discovered during an experiment with university psychology students that, if an individual is placed in a situation where they have thoughts or sentiments that conflict with their personal attitude or values, they will adjust their attitude towards the conflicting point of view to reduce the dissonance or psychological discomfort.

Much was subsequently published surrounding the theory of cognitive dissonance and its popularity ebbed and flowed. There has been a recent return to this fundamental social psychology theory, however, and its pertinence to this study is covered in Chapter 4 (Hock 2009; Gawronski 2012; Festinger 2019; Harmon-Jones 2019).

In the higher education context cognitive dissonance theory is referenced in varying contexts including marketing (Wilkins et al. 2018), higher education reform (Saukh & Chumak 2018), concealed weapon policy (Franz 2017) and the use of pre-selected study materials by university professors (Zaidi 2020). Vanarsdale (2020, p. iii) addresses the weak take up of student-centred learning policy in Europe and attributes this to a discrepancy resulting from rhetoric on the one hand and 'reality on the ground'. In a similar vein, Stack (2020) draws attention to the tendency for the top five universities in North America and the United Kingdom to celebrate academic stars while at the same time promoting equity policies – each producing a form of cognitive dissonance.

In the Australian higher education context, Winter et al. (2000) write of the presence of strategic dissonance in universities. Pitman (2012, p. 771) observes that there is a dissonance resulting from symbolic enactment of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) policy in several identified Australian universities and 'a type of cognitive dissonance

at the habitus level' as universities simultaneously address equity and quality agendas. In an economic review of managerialism and quality within Australian universities, Aspromourgos (2012, p. 49) observes that the measures taken are not delivering a quality university system but undermining '…the traditional academic norms and ethics that are necessary to its provision.' In a case study of one Australian university, Spratt (2008) identifies that the academy have created structures of indifference to address cognitive dissonance resulting from the marketisation and globalisation of higher education. He observes that they do this to find the intellectual and emotional capacity to work within the system. Nursey-Bray (2019) explores the cognitive dissonance that members of the academy have to resolve between air travel (seen as a marker of prestige and viability for promotion) and an ethical responsibility to moderate travel.

In the higher education context more broadly, cognitive dissonance is generally identified as an outcome of the corporatisation of universities and a dissonance for the academy to resolve. Davids and Waghid (2018, p. 1), however, suggest that, by its very nature, dissonance 'ought to be ubiquitous to higher education'. He suggests it is necessary for universities to fulfil their purpose and Kolsaker (2008, p. 513) observes that in English universities there is a constructive interplay between managerialism and academic professionalism and that academics are exploiting structures of power to 'reconstitute their self-concept within an evolutionary context'.

This brief literature review has confirmed the existence of dissonance within universities and a direct corelation to the corporatisation of universities under neo-liberal pressures. The way individuals and the academy respond will determine the degree of dissonance that remains in the system and how individuals fare within the corporatised university.

2.8.2 Exit, voice, loyalty and neglect framework

The exit, voice, loyalty (EVL) model was conceptualised by Hirschman (1970) to describe human behaviour in the face of satisfaction or dissatisfaction within economic and political contexts. It identifies that consumers or constituents will exit or withdraw from a relationship in the face of dissatisfaction, voice their concerns to repair or

improve the situation, or passively accept the situation without challenge, thus remaining loyal.

In the 1980's Caryl Rusbult and colleagues (Rusbult et al. 1982; Rusbult & Lowery 1985; Rusbult et al. 1986) extended the model to include personal and organisational relationships. They added the consideration of neglect; that is the passive degeneration of a relationship. The subsequent EVLN model was applied to understand the behaviour of public sector employees who responded to the 'Federal Employee Attitude Survey, 1979' (Rusbult & Lowery 1985) and identified that 'Consistent with their model, higher levels of employee satisfaction and greater degree of investment size encouraged tendencies toward voice and loyalty while discouraging exit and neglect. Also, higher quality job alternatives promoted exit and voice while inhibiting neglectful tendencies. Contrary to predictions, better alternatives also encouraged loyalist responding.' (Rusbult & Lowery 1985, p. 80).

The model was further extended to give light to cognitive dissonance, notably within the fields of commerce and economics (Akerlof & Dickens 1982; Kocamaz & Karadeniz 2020), development in third world countries (James & Gutkind 1985), organisational management, consumer satisfaction in local government, education and health care (Campbell et al. 2007), economic psychology (Brady 2014), organisational management (Turnley & Feldman 1999), impact of voice within organisations (Bashshur & Oc 2015), organisational behaviour (Ng & Feldman 2009) and organisational politics (Gibney et al. 2009).

To a much lesser extent this been considered in the context of higher education, however the models have been applied to give light to cognitive dissonance as relates to organisational identity within a university in India (Jafar et al. 2022), bullying within academic in the United States of America (Longaker 2017), job satisfaction within private higher education providers in India (Shikha & Parimoo 2013), grade inflation within higher education (Hassan et al. 2020) and the impact of political position on employee silence and maintenance of the status quo (Usmani & Ramayah 2023).

There is little in the literature about the role of institutional policy in the creation of the cognitive dissonance, although it is observed by Usmani and Ramayah (2023, p. 378)

that 'Powerful games underlie the silence of employees. Managers indirectly tell employees not to challenge organisational mandate and policies.' They undertook a study into the impact of political position on employee silence and maintenance of the status quo within Pakistani institutions. Adopting Rusbult's model, these authors observed that *exit* and *voice* are active reactions while *loyalty* and *neglect* are passive and thus synonymous to remaining silent and endorsing the status quo. The impacts of silence and acceptance of the status quo are attributed to impacting individuals and groups, including 'perceived lack of control' and cognitive dissonance. It was observed that social dominance within universities can result in employees at 'lower managerial levels' remaining silent and committed to the status quo to remain aligned to the 'top executives or CEOs' to gain promotion (Usmani & Ramayah 2023, pp. 386, 400). The EVLN framework has been included to help policy actors understand their responses to dissonance creating policy.

2.9 Conclusion

The important themes that are developed and discussed by this thesis have been highlighted in this chapter and, while the thesis refers to the role of public policy in Australian universities and confirms there is a policy-practice divide, the observations made about this phenomenon are confined to institutional policy and the policy-making process.

Freeman (2014c) and Reynolds and Saunders (1987) have identified the policy practitioner separation from key components of the policy-making environment and the 'front-loaded' nature of the process, but the role of discourse and the values and priorities of those at different stages have not been addressed.

The need for further research into the constrained academic voice within university governance, the concealment of power relations and manifestation and impacts of managerialism within Australian universities has been highlighted within this chapter (Peacock et al. 2014; Collyer 2015; Rowlands 2015, 2018). A challenge is placed by Sims (2020) to the academy to 'fight back' and a call is made to return to a collegial form of governance (Wheeldon 2022, p. i; Wheeldon et al. 2023c, 2023a, 2023b).

This thesis responds to the calls for empirical research and further action. The related research aims, research approach, research findings and fulsome discussion follow in succeeding chapters.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides further context around the research framework applied throughout the thesis culminating in three published research papers comprising Chapters 4 to 6. While details of the methods engaged in each study are contained in the individual chapters, this chapter provides a complementary commentary on my overall research philosophy. I initially discuss the overall research aim, present the key research question and then explain the overarching theoretical framework applied to answer that question. To identify and analyse the power mechanisms at play, this included application of a Foucauldian lens through a critical realism paradigm. The research method, collection and analysis techniques applied across the three studies are then explored.

3.2 Research aim

The overall aim of the research was to understand how power dynamics within university governance structures influence the policy-making process and contribute to the policy-practice divide experienced in higher education institutions. To achieve this end it was necessary to confirm existence of the divide and its causal factors, if so confirmed, and identify where and how power was manifesting in these structures.

The research aim originated in my first-hand observations of a gap between policy and practice and a resultant and frequent angst and disquiet. It was my desire to reduce that angst and see policy achieve *good* in the university setting, a desire seated in my deep belief in the value of education and the societal *good*. To achieve my research aims, it was necessary to understand the nature of power and institutional policy within higher education institutions and to explore the relationship between policy, the academy, university management and university governance structures.

The aims are best summarised in the research question: *How do power dynamics within university governance structures influence the policy-making process and contribute to the policy-practice divide in higher education institutions?*

The question is answered in the following chapters. Chapter 4, *A leap of faith: overcoming doubt to do good when policy is absurd* confirms the existence of a policy-practice divide and reveals that policy is experienced differently by individual policy actors. When faced with the need to enact policy they can experience a misalignment between their own values and the values of managerialism as expressed through policy. The resultant dissonance is frequently resolved through policy resistance or policy circumnavigation.

Chapter 5, *Playing with power: using collage to bring reflexivity to management studies* draws on Foucault's insights into the nature of power and adopts the novel, arts-based method of collage to reveal the underlying power relations and social dynamics within university policy-making.

Chapter 6, *Pulling the strings: the apparatus of university policy production* exposes the intricate power dynamics within university governance, identifying a central authority figure who champions and enforces managerial values, thereby shaping the policy landscape.

Chapter 7 brings these findings together in a discussion that furthers understanding of the power dynamics and structures within universities, their contribution to the policy-practice divide, and their impact on the academy. Parallels are drawn between universities and monarchies and the conceptual *divine right of kings* to bring deeper understanding to dissonance experienced by the academy and the policy-practice divide. The fine balance of power maintained within universities is identified, along with the role of the managerial reward systems in maintaining that balance. Application of the Exit, Voice, Loyalty and Neglect Framework helps *make sense* of the dissonance reducing actions taken and, critically, shines light on the collective power held by the academy.

3.3 Overarching theoretical framework

To achieve the research aim and bring understanding to the policy discourse a Foucauldian lens was applied and supported by critical realism.

3.3.1 Foucauldian lens

This theoretical framework provides the language required to identify the mechanisms of managerialism (Klikauer 2023c) and managerial power and bring understanding to their impact on policy actors. In Chapter 4 Foucault's concept of discourse provides understanding of the policy-making process and the policy-practice divide. It follows the example of authors in education and higher education contexts (Taylor 1997; Ball 2003; Gale 2003; Ball 2015a, 2015b; Pekkola et al. 2018; Bennett & Lumb 2019).

Foucault's knowledge/power theory also provided depth of understanding to the nature of power and the 'enunciative field' in which it is exercised. The reflexive nature of the arts-based methodology of collage, the subject of Chapter 5, aligns with Foucault's understanding of the enunciative field as a stage where the choreography of power unfolds and brings light to the power plays and discursive dominance that often remain unseen.

These power dynamics are observed within a university governance structure and are explored in Chapter 6. The power theories of Foucault and Arendt provide insight into how power is derived from and sustained by both social and physical structures, including those that shape thought processes and discourse.

3.3.2 Critical realism

The critical realism philosophical paradigm grounded the thesis, aligns with ontological realism and epistemological relativism and provides for conceptualisation of '…what could happen, what should happen and what isn't happening which gives the researcher prompts for further investigation' (Vincent & O'Mahoney 2018, p. 4). Critical realists agree that humans act as though their activities have meaning and that this occurs within social structures characterised often by unobservable power and effects. Critical realists take the position that these structures have properties that emerge and endure to affect resultant actions, similar to cultural discourses which also interplay with social

structures and reflexive actions (Elger 2010). We see here reflections of Foucault's understanding of discourse and for these reasons critical realism was selected to work in conjunction with Foucault's concept of discourse to explore policy:

- **Ontological Depth:** Foucault's focus on visible power dynamics is enriched by critical realism's exploration of underlying structures, offering a rich understanding of power in university governance.
- **Epistemological Relativism:** Both paradigms acknowledge multiple ways of knowing, allowing for diverse perspectives on power dynamics and recognising that knowledge is shaped by discourse but underpinned by structures that 'appear' to be real in different ways to different people.
- **Reflexivity**: Both approaches emphasise reflexivity and enhance the selection of the collage methodology to make hidden power dynamics visible and encourage ongoing critical reflection.

Application of the critical realism paradigm through a Foucauldian lens thus aligns to the qualitative nature of this study (Porter 2002; Elger 2010; Vincent & O'Mahoney 2018). The risk of researcher bias was an accepted and understood component of the paradigm and is discussed below (Section 3.4.1).

3.4 Research method, collection, and analysis

This thesis draws upon the two research projects, with each receiving human research ethics approval. Their alignment to the following chapters and subsequently published papers is provided in Table 2 (below).

Table 1: Research projects and Human Research Ethics (HRE) approvals

Approach	Study title & HRE approval	Thesis chapter
Qualitative investigation	Bridging the policy/practice divide in Australian universities – Study 1 – H19REA239 (Human Ethics Committee, University of Southern Queensland)	Chapter 4 A leap of faith: overcoming doubt to do good when policy is absurd
Qualitative ethnography	Bridging the policy/practice divide in Australian universities – Study 2 – H20REA129 (Human Ethics Committee, University of Southern Queensland).	Chapter 5 Playing with power: using collage to bring reflexivity to management studies
		Chapter 6 Pulling the strings: the apparatus of university policy production

The method and data collection and analysis techniques for each project are addressed separately below, with further details provided within each published chapter. They each drew on a single case study investigation. Case studies are useful for exploring complex phenomena (Yin 2003; Creswell 2007). Due to the sector's complexity, this method is frequently applied in higher education research projects (Cai 2018; Ng & Nyland 2018; Bennett & Lumb 2019) and particularly those examining the role of discourse in higher education, a focus of all the studies (Bowen 1992; Ramsay et al. 1998; Sellar et al. 2010; Peacock 2013). The case study approach is consistent with the qualitative nature of the studies and the theoretical approach in the critical realism paradigm as it seeks to investigate power mechanisms through close examination of a particular case, rather than taking a positivist approach which would establish causation from a comparative analysis based on correlation between independent and dependent variables (Leavy 2017).

3.4.1 Study 1: Qualitative investigation

Consistent with the case study methodology, data for this study was collected via semi-structured interviews over the six-month period, January to June 2020; subsequent analysis formed themes, the basis of Chapter 4.

3.4.1.1 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews provide depth of enquiry, rich and meaningful data, qualified arguments and context-specific descriptions enabling connections and reflection, including potential for further exploration (Huff 2008; Shepherd 2015; Leavy 2017). For these reasons, studies in higher education and policy frequently use semi-structured interviews (Gale 2003; Ryttberg & Geschwind 2017; Stelitano 2018).

As outlined in Chapter 4, interviews were undertaken with 17 policy actors involved in the review of a previously approved policy. Participants were recruited from across the case study university and contacted directly by email on the recommendation of the senior leader who provided approval to focus on the policy in focus of Study 1. All participants were provided with a participant information sheet (Appendix 1). As the study progressed, additional participants were recruited on the recommendation of other participants. The consent of all participants was sought and obtained before each interview and, because this study was undertaken at the height of COVID-19 in Australia, all but two interviews were conducted online.

Participants ranged from the chair of a key academic governance group to various faculty and learning and teaching support unit staff, and professional staff involved in implementation of policy. Interviews were conducted in accordance with the Human Research Ethics (HRE) approval and questions were posed to gather data about the role of policy actors within the case study university and the policy-making process (Chapter 4, Table 4).

3.4.1.2 Thematic analysis

Data gathered through the semi-structured interviews was thematically analysed. Thematic analysis is a qualitative analytic method used to identify themes or patterns in data. It is a common form of analysis when little is known of a phenomenon and when 'important concepts' need to be captured (Ayres 2012, p. 2; Hawkins 2018). It seeks to find '…commonalties, relationships, overarching patterns, theoretical constructs, or explanatory principles' (Lapadat 2010, p. 2). It provided the deductive approach required to allow for the complex and nuanced nature of policy and the policy-making process (Braun & Clarke 2006) and is frequently used to research phenomena in higher

education (Dooley, A. 2007; Freeman et al. 2014; Brown & Davis 2015; Freeman, B. 2015; Freeman, Brigid 2015b; Chilvers et al. 2018; Thornton et al. 2018).

3.4.1.3 Data collection and analysis

A digital recorder was used for the two face-to-face interviews and for the remaining 15 interviews the online Zoom recording tool. Each was transcribed into individual Microsoft Word files with the aid of the online transcription service, *Sonix (Sonix 2024)*. To find the insights required for analysis within the critical realism paradigm transcripts were subsequently analysed with the aid of the qualitative data analysis tool, *Nvivo* (Lumivero 2023). This aided in the collection of researcher-assigned nodes that were subsequently themed and underpin the findings in Chapter 4 (Chapter 4, Section 4.11).

3.4.1.4 Study 1 key findings

The nature of a semi-structured interview was critical to the findings in this study. It allowed for nuanced enquiry to gain deeper understanding of the complex policy construct and revealed that policy is being resisted or worked around. Through the depth of enquiry afforded by semi-structured interviews I was able to deduce that cognitive dissonance is resulting from the misalignment of managerial and academic values as expressed in policy.

Overall, this study brought a depth of understanding to the nature and impact of the policy-practice divide to inform the remainder of the study.

3.4.2 Study 2: Qualitative ethnography

An ethnographic approach was taken in Study 2 to determine the Foucauldian power apparatus used by authority figures to influence policy-making meetings. Findings are recorded in Chapters 5 and 6 and have their basis in 10 observed meetings related to the development of an academic freedom policy.

3.4.2.1 Real time ethnography

Ethnography has its roots in cultural anthropology and produces ‘written text about culture’ based on field observations taken over a long period of time in the setting of

the observation (Leavy 2017, pp. 259,134). An ethnographic approach is frequently used by researchers exploring the policy-making process within the educational setting and is consistent with a case study methodology and critical realism paradigm (Levinson et al. 2009; Paulsen & Smart 2013; Peacock 2014; Peacock et al. 2014; Robinson 2015; Peacock 2017; Bevort et al. 2018).

Real time ethnography has '…more power to elucidate the uncertainties and contingencies the actors experience in the course of deciding and acting' (Hoholm & Olsen 2013, p. 6). Observations can be taken digitally or visually and may be participatory or non-participatory (Leavy 2017). In this non-participatory study of the development of an academic freedom policy real time, written observations were made, and subsequently converted into visual collage (Chapter 5, Section 5.8). As outlined in Chapter 5, data collection took the form of real time observational notes made during the meetings of a governance group involved in development of the academic freedom policy.

3.4.2.2 Arts-based interpretation

The observational notes were undertaken in accordance with HRE approval and provided an opt-out approach as described in the participant information sheet (Appendix 2) provided to all members at the commencement of the study. Consistent with the approval, I made a brief presentation regarding the purpose of the study and the nature of the observations at the first observed meeting and subsequently took a non-participatory approach. Each meeting was observed for the relevant agenda item only and observations were made with reference to previously identified participant observation criteria and recorded (typed in real time) within a tailored Microsoft Word template (Appendix 3).

The observational notes were reviewed as soon after the observed meeting as time allowed and refined to record additional recalled nuances that revealed power in the discourse. Ethnographic vignettes were simultaneously written in the form of acts and scenes – one act for each observed meeting, comprised of multiple scenes. Each scene was then recreated in tailored, handmade physical collages with iteratively designed and scaled felt pieces representing the actors and observed power apparatus (Figure 1).

This provided a visual model of the actors and artefacts which allowed for interpretation and analysis of their interactions.

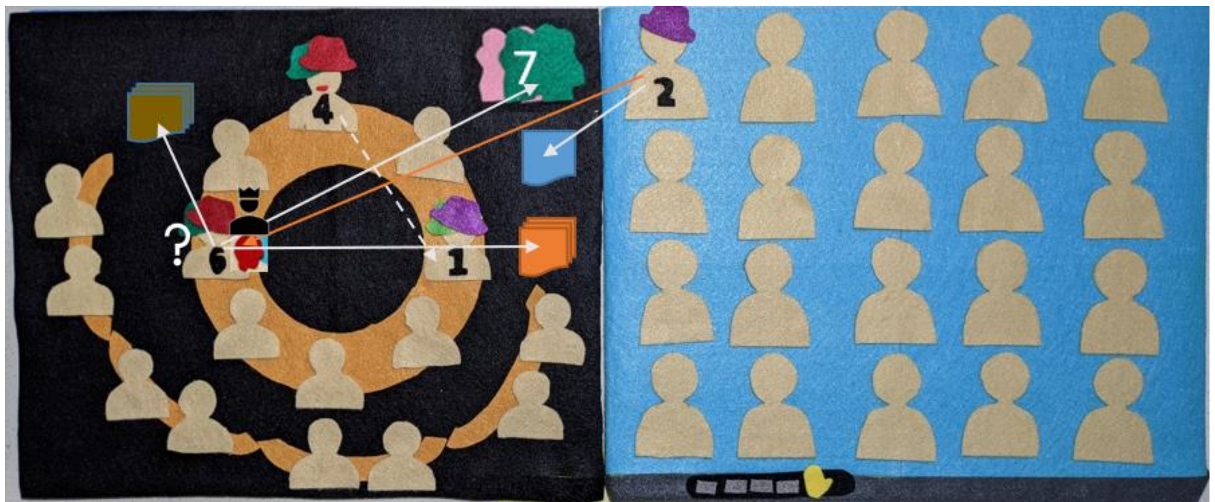

Figure 1: Sample scene collage

A collage iconography key provided a list of the physical appearance of each felt piece and its intended role and was maintained within an Excel file (Appendix 4). Policy actors were identified by number on the felt pieces and a de-identified list of the policy actors maintained within a separate Excel file. This was the source of policy actor grouping and coding for Study 1 participants; it is not appended to comply with Human Research Ethics requirements. As new actors or power icons were observed new felt pieces were created and the collage iconography key and the de-identified policy actor list updated. Each visual collage was subsequently photographed by the researcher, systematically named and stored within a secure university-hosted location to provide for the analysis undertaken in Study 3.

The arts-based method of collage was adopted to construct meaning, challenge the status quo, illuminate complex power structures, provide a mechanism to 'make the familiar strange' (Ybema & Kamsteeg 2009a, p. 102) and 'fight familiarity' (Mannay 2010, p. 95). The tactile nature of collage was necessary to heighten sensemaking, slow thinking and prompt reflexivity, improve cognitive performance and provide depth of insight (Given 2008; Whitty 2013; Prins 2015; Takken & Wong 2015; van der Hoorn 2020; Wengel et al. 2021). Further insights into the value of collage and arts-based methodologies are provided in Chapter 5.

3.4.2.3 Study 2 key findings

In this study the arts-based method of collage pivotally revealed the power and social structures within the observed setting. It slowed my thinking sufficiently to help me *see* the power dynamics at play. I was then able to visually depict how certain individuals, often senior leaders, dominated the conversation and represented this by larger, centrally placed figures in the collages and unique felt *power icons* representing the preferential position of some compared to the deferential position of others; for example, the silent and invisible voters depicted in Act 3 Scene 6 – the clock is ticking (Figure 13).

The visual vignettes were the basis for the ethnographic analysis in Study 3.

3.4.3 Study 3: Qualitative ethnographic analysis

The previously collected data in Study 2 was analysed with a Foucauldian lens within this study to identify the power apparatus used by dominant managerial authority figures. Detailed findings are recorded in Chapter 6.

3.4.3.1 Arts-based data analysis method

To reveal the nuanced nature of power a novel, arts-based method was adopted. As mentioned above (Section 3.3.3), embracing the arts-based method of collage ensured the familiar was made strange and new insights were gained (Mannay 2010; Margetts, van der Hoorn, et al. 2023). Chapters 5 and 6 explain in depth how it combined with Foucauldian analysis to unearth and visualise power relations based on the ethnographic observations. The mechanisms of managerial power were identified in the collages by posing Foucauldian questions to each of the vignettes (Appendix 5) and subsequently recorded in iconographic overlays upon the digitised versions of the physical collages created in Study 2.

3.4.3.2 Reflective analysis

Additional reflective analysis of the written vignettes and digitised collages identified the less visible actors (individuals and groups), those *hiding* in the background and omitted from the initial ethnographic record made in Study 2 (Section 3.3.2). They were added to the digitised collages to ensure all actors were visible. The authority and

power mechanisms revealed through this additional analysis, resulted in the creation of additional iconography, and the collage iconography key and de-identified policy actor list were systematically updated to provide a total of 42 icons within the iconography key (Appendix 4) and 33 policy actors and 17 groups within the policy actor list; the latter is not provided to comply with Human Research Ethics requirements.

Reflexive analysis of the revised digitised collages identified how individual policy actors, often the senior leaders, were invoking the previously invisible power apparatus. This was visualised by inserting digital *string lines* between each of the actors and the invoked power apparatus. This additional reflexive analysis afforded easy identification of the meetings where power was most frequently invoked (i.e. collages with the most string lines) (Figure 1, above). These were supplemented by an ethnographic observational timeline (Figure 2, below), iteratively developed to summarise the observations and analysis across the 11 separate acts and 35 scenes. The final version provided at Figure 2 includes the post hoc Act 0 Scene 0 which was based on subsequent policy development insights. Vignette titles were also updated and reflective of the evolutionary nature of the analysis of the policy-making stages, the subject of findings within Chapter 6.

3.4.3.3 Study 3 key findings

The creation of collage and visualisation of all the elements in the observed policy-making process were foundational to the analysis and findings. The method revealed the hidden power structures and less visible policy actors. Through this approach I was able to develop a comprehensive suite of icons that captured the nature of the hidden elements of power and I was able to reveal how individuals, often senior leaders, were connected by string lines to these elements of power; such as key policy decisions, historical artefacts and influential sub-groups.

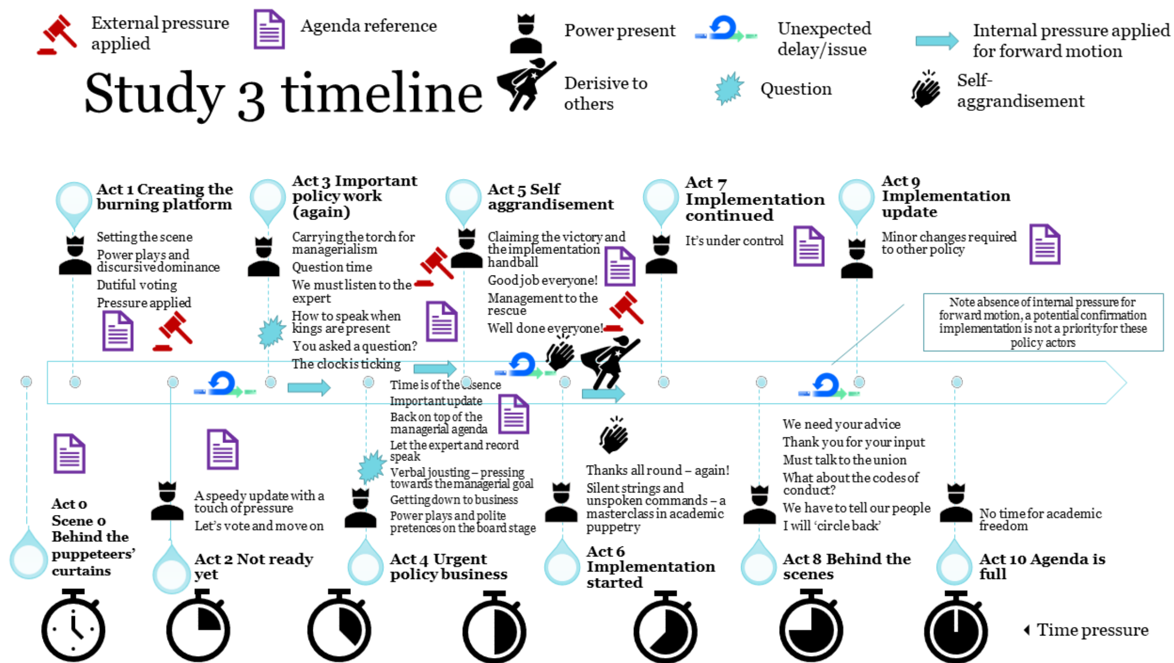

Figure 2: Reflexive ethnographic observations

3.5 Limitations, reflections and disclosures

Typical of all research, there was potential for researcher bias and there were limitations to the study.

3.5.1 Researcher reflection

The risk of researcher bias is an accepted and understood component of the critical realism paradigm. I actively managed this through regular journalling of the research experience and monthly reflection sessions with the supervisory team (Leavy 2017). These periods of reflection were grounding and provided the scaffold for subsequent research activity. My limited study of philosophy provided initial challenges. This was gradually addressed through periods of deep and reflexive reading and note taking, followed by discussion with the supervisory team. The outcomes of these reflections are included in the forthcoming chapters.

3.5.2 Limitations

The use of a single case study is a potential limitation however this approach was intentionally selected due to the complexity of the policy construct and the sector within which it was to be examined. The study was further limited by the researcher not being able to undertake ethnographic observation of an additional critical governance body for Study 2. In hindsight, a formal, rather than informal, approach to this body may have resulted in a different outcome.

The arts-based method of collage was a pivotal development in the study, but it was labour-intensive due to the small scale of felt pieces. Researchers using this method may wish to consider a larger scale. The quality of the photographic record is also only adequate. More attention could have been paid to producing quality photographs.

3.5.3 Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s) of the published papers constituting Chapters 4 to 6.

The Leap of Faith: Led by Hope to Traverse Absurd Policies for the Public Good

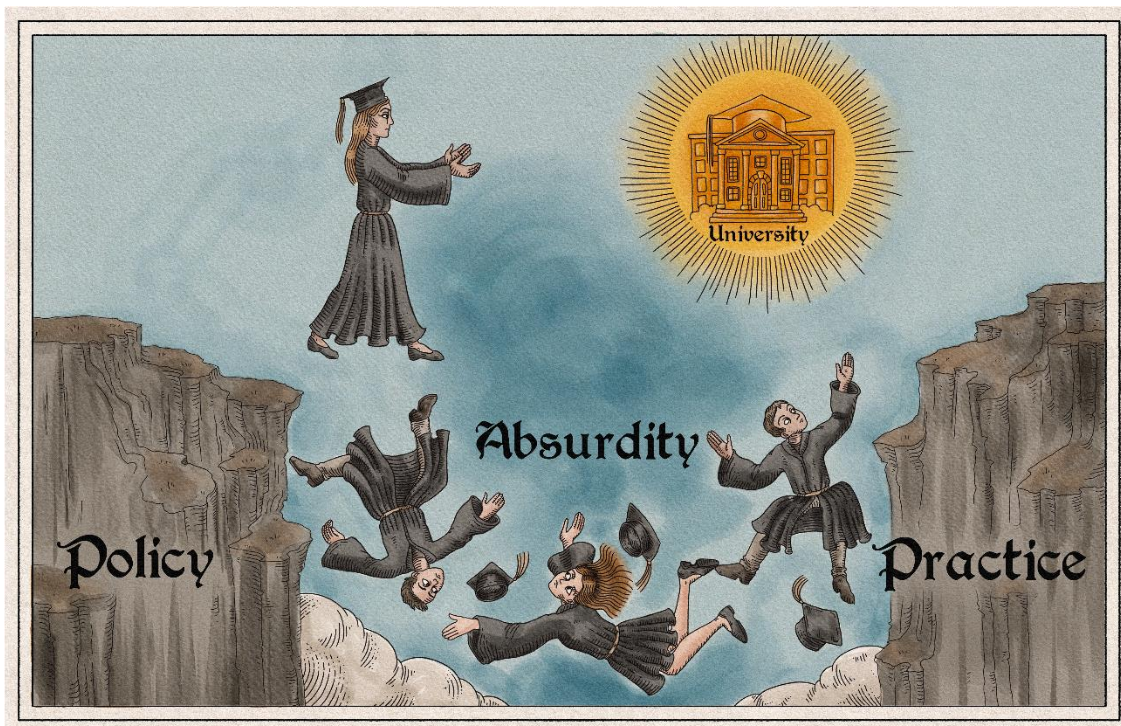

Plate 2: The Leap of Faith: Led by Hope to Traverse Absurd Policies for the Public Good

Plate 2 Interpretation

Plate 2 illustrates the *leap of faith* taken by policy actors who, in their commitment to align their actions with their values and the perceived interest of students, confront the absurd chasm between policy and practice.

Emblematic of the divide between the ideals of institutional policies and the tangible realities of their application, the gap between the cliffs highlights the Kierkegaardian absurdity inherent in attempting to implement policies that are disconnected from practical realities.

Cloaked in academic regalia, the figure in midair is taking a *leap of faith*, signifying the choice to act in accordance with one's moral convictions despite the presence of doubt.

Amidst the surrounding absurdity, the shining university emblem symbolises the hope held by those who take the *leap of faith* - in the possibility that *the good* will prevail and that, one day, institutional policies will align with academic values and the university will ultimately serve the public good.

Those who have conformed to the dictates of policy are represented by the descending figures. Having silenced their doubts, they ultimately find themselves alienated from their personal and academic values. Their descent into the absurd reflects the turmoil and cognitive dissonance experienced when policy adherence overrides ethical considerations.

This portrayal of the *leap of faith* emphasises a positive form of resistance within the university sector against the implementation of absurd policies and exposes a flaw in managerialism's attempt to control the academy through policy. The image also speaks to the dual reality of faith and doubt in policy enactment, capturing the essence of Kierkegaardian philosophy, in which the act of taking a leap of faith is motivated by hope, which itself is directed towards the pursuit of *the good*, even in the face of doubt.

CHAPTER 4 A LEAP OF FAITH: OVERCOMING DOUBT TO DO GOOD WHEN POLICY IS ABSURD

4.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the full manuscript for the first peer reviewed paper developed as part of this doctoral research (Study 1: Qualitative journalistic investigation). The paper is titled *A leap of faith: overcoming doubt to do good when policy is absurd*. It is published in the *Journal of Education Policy* and answers the question: *If policy is absurd what is the nature of the relationship between policy and university management, and how do those who enact policy deal with this absurdity*?

In terms of the overall thesis, this paper confirms that policy is experienced differently by individual policy actors and often viewed as reflective of the values of an institution and, by extension, its members. When these actors are tasked with enacting policy, however, they frequently face a misalignment with their own values, leading to resistance or strategies to circumvent the policy. This misalignment creates a significant gap between the policy's stated objectives and its practical implementation. Existing literature has acknowledged these gaps across various institutional policy domains, but this study ventures further, revealing that the resistance or circumvention by policy actors is not merely a reaction to misalignment. Instead, it represents a deliberate, value-driven choice to ensure their actions - and the resulting outcomes - better align with their personal ethics and what they believe is in the best interest of students.

4.2 Key relevance to this thesis

- Policy is a complex construct reflective of values
- Policy is dissonance creating, thus creating a policy-practice divide
- Policy is imbued by faith, hope and doubt.

4.3 Citation and co-author details

Table 2: Citation details of original Chapter 4 publication

Citation details	Published
Writing	Fiona Margetts (80%) Dr S. Jon Whitty (10%); Dr Bronte van der Hoorn (10%)
Data collection and analysis	Fiona Margetts (100%)
Quality review	Fiona Margetts (80%) Dr S. Jon Whitty (10%); Dr Bronte van der Hoorn (10%)

4.4 Abstract

University institutional policy is poorly understood. While policy is required by law for universities to accept funding and is revered for articulating values, mitigating risk, and guiding practice, policy is frequently considered absurd and resisted in practice. This is the policy-practice divide. To gain a better understanding of this divide and the nature of the resistance, we asked policy actors (Giddens 1979) to describe their experiences with policy development, implementation, enactment, and review. We asked: If policy is absurd, what is the nature of the relationship between policy and university management, and how do those who enact policy deal with this absurdity? We discovered that university management has an infinitely regressive self-fulfilling relationship with policy because they intentionally exclude the workforce from policy-making and see themselves as solely responsible for policy interpretation and implementation. However, when Kierkegaard's concepts of absurdity, faith, hope, and doubt are applied to policy actors' experiences, we see that resistance can be characterised positively as a *leap of faith*, where those who enact policy overcome their doubts and reinterpret it to achieve some semblance of good. This is an unintended consequence for managerialism, as deliberately creating a policy-practice divide solicits resistive *good* practices from policy actors.

Key words: higher education; institutional policy; policy-practice divide, cognitive dissonance

4.5 Introduction

Policy is absurd! This paraphrasing of both Ball (2021) and Webb (2014) is simultaneously declarative, imperative, and exclamatory, as it expresses the problem encountered when discussing the subject and nature of an acknowledged policy-practice divide within the Anglo (North America, United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia) university sector that suffers the embrace of managerialism (Deem 2004; Marginson 2013; Shattock et al. 2019; Croucher & Lacy 2020). The Camusian subtext of the statement infers that 'we rational beings are the problem', as it is we who experience the tension between yearning for an explanation as to what policy is and the indifference policy has to satisfy this yearning (Camus 1955). It is a plea then, to resolve the situation – please! It also conveys our strong emotions and feelings about the complex and political nature of policy, particularly in the education (Trowler 1997; Ball 1998, 2003; Ball et al. 2011; Clarke 2012; Ball 2015a) and higher education sectors (Marginson 1992; Gale 1994; Trowler 2002b; Meek et al. 2010; Marginson 2013; Raaper 2017a).

The perception of policy absurdity is influenced by the current state of higher education, which is characterised by its global, regulated, market-driven, and performance-based nature. Reputable reviews of the history and present condition of the Australian higher education sector (Gale 1999; Marginson & Considine 2000; King et al. 2011; Croucher & Lacy 2020), all indicate that neoliberalism overlooks how universities contribute to society's common good. This *good* emphasises the importance of promoting the overall well-being of society. Moreover, in response to universities' corporatisation, the Anglo university sector's leadership has embraced a form of managerialism referred to as 'new public management' (NPM) and 'new managerialism' (NM) (Deem & Brehony 2005, p. 218; Rowlands & Rowlands 2017; Parker et al. 2019), with negative impacts on the identity and well-being of the academy (Winter et al. 2000; Morley 2001; Naidoo & Jamieson 2005; Anderson 2008; Kinman 2014; Warren 2017; Bottrell & Keating 2019; Connell 2019; Bosetti & Heffernan 2021; Wheeldon et al. 2023a, 2023b).

In the quest to find meaning in policy, thereby answering the question of what is policy to 'policy actors' (Ball et al. 2011, p. 626) and reconcile ourselves with the *policy is*

absurd declaration, Ball (2021) invites us – calling on Camus – to *engage* with the absurdity of policy. We believe that this appeal to Camus requires investigation. According to Camus (1955), absurdity is an experience that manifests from discordance. To experience the absurd, mix one intrinsically irrational world with one person attempting to make sense of it. Absurdity is therefore located in the tension between our yearning for unity and the indifference the world has to this yearning, as the world is uninterested in our theories (Camus 1955). To *engage* with the absurd Camus (1955) offers three choices, of which he recommends the third. First, commit physical suicide; life is too much. Second, take a leap of faith, which for Camus is a form of philosophical suicide because it rejects both physical suicide and rationality. Third, abandon faith in favour of acknowledging the impotence of our theories and rebel against them; embrace anxiety and live with mystery.

Tragically, some academics have committed physical suicide as a means of dealing with the absurdity of university policy (Bhardwa 2018; Grove 2019). However, our enquiry aims to understand how academics deal and continue to live with policy despite its absurdity. The existing literature suggests that individuals who have learned to live with the absurdity of policy do so by rationally resisting it, as proposed by Camus' third choice. We instead examine Kierkegaard's (1986) second choice – a leap of faith – as a nuanced perspective on how policy actors respond to policy absurdity through resistance. In this study, we use Kierkegaard's concepts of faith and hope as an analytical tool to understand how these concepts enable an individual to overcome doubt and transform an absurd situation to achieve good. By adopting a Kierkegaardian perspective, we can explore a new approach for addressing the absurdity of policy. By allowing themselves to act in accordance with their convictions, our emphasis on faith and hope offers a novel perspective on how policy actors resist implementing absurd policy.

This study aims to contribute to empirical research on institutional policy-making in higher education worldwide. It provides a new Kierkegaardian framework for understanding the relationship between university management and policy as an infinitely regressive self-fulfilling structure, where absurd policy is, in reality, absurd management. The study reveals that those who enact policy deal with its absurdity by

viewing it as a faith-based structure, which enables them to transform their absurd policy experiences to produce something good. Our study findings indicate that similar circumstances are encountered globally, as demonstrated in studies conducted in the United Kingdom (Maton 2005; Evans et al. 2019), Ireland (Skerritt et al. 2021), Israel (Sapir 2021) and Europe (Stavrou 2016; Raaper 2017a; Peruzzo 2020; Jayadeva et al. 2021).

We begin by describing the institutional policy context and how the policy-practice divide manifests in terms of dissonance and cognitive dissonance. We found that policy enactors prefer policy-practice harmony over division, but they can only live with policy in a managerialised university if policy and practice are inherently dissonant. Next, we establish the theoretical framework for our Kierkegaard lens. Then, according to our study's methodology, we present our findings regarding how policy appears to those who enact it, as well as how they relate to and behave in its presence. Finally, our discussion synthesises our findings to reveal the nature of the relationship between policy and university management, as well as how those who enact policy deal with its absurdity.

For the purposes of our study, *implementation* refers to when what is prescribed in policy is either actually carried out or planned to be so, whereas *enactment* refers to what was really done in light of what was prescribed (Snyder et al. 1992; Ball et al. 2012).

4.6 Institutional policy context

Institutional policy (hereafter *policy*) refers to the policies established internally within the structures and processes of universities (their polity) through a political process or activity (Palonen 2003; Grossler 2010; Luescher et al. 2016). Meta policies (also known as policy frameworks or *policies on policy*) provide for the development, implementation and review of policy (Devlin & O'Shea 2011; Clark et al. 2012; Freeman 2012, 2014b; Freeman, Brigid 2015a; Freeman 2018; Carlson & Freeman 2019; Rainford 2021a). These meta policies are mandated by the Australian higher education regulator (Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency 2021a) and define the institutional policy instruments, their classification and application, specify

approval authorities, and establish the ‘cycle for policy development and review’ (Freeman et al. 2013, p. 9).

4.7 The policy-practice divide

The policy-practice divide refers to the multifaceted and political nature of policy-making. Many scholars have written about this divide, aiming to identify and address the issues that arise from it (Taylor 1997; Becher & Trowler 2001; Trowler 2002c; McNay 2005; Morley 2010; Freeman 2014a, 2014c; Harvey & Kosman 2014; Singh et al. 2014; McCaffery 2018; Baak et al. 2021; Skerritt et al. 2021).

In higher education, the policy-practice divide is typically characterised by the exclusion of academic staff from the policy-making process (Sabri 2010) as well as their resistance to policy (Becher & Trowler 2001; Petersen 2009; Raaper 2016; Jayadeva et al. 2021). However, we argue that this characterisation oversimplifies the relationship between policy and policy actors by suggesting that academics have a moral obligation and ‘ought’ to implement policy, and that any resistance is inherently wrong.

We challenge this characterisation of the policy-practice divide and emphasise the need for a more nuanced understanding of policy implementation and resistance in higher education. We propose that there may be instances in which policy actors view their resistance as a legitimate expression of their values.

4.8 Dissonance and cognitive dissonance in higher education

4.8.1 Dissonance

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (2023, n.d.) defines dissonance as an ‘inharmonious or harsh sound or combination of sounds’ or discord – a ‘Want of concord or harmony (between things); disagreement, incongruity.’ This discord is experienced in emotional, social, political, ideological, epistemological, cognitive and/or philosophical forms also (Fisher-Ari et al. 2017). But how cognitive dissonance is resolved is of interest to this study, and it is one of the most enduring theories in the history of social psychology (Gawronski 2012; Cooper 2019).

4.8.2 Cognitive dissonance

According to cognitive dissonance theory, people adjust their belief systems to align their behaviours such that they reduce dissonance; people have an aversion for dissonance and a desire for harmony. If an individual is placed in a situation that conflicts with their personal values they will engage one or all of the following cognitive dissonance reduction techniques: (1) change a dissonance-creating cognition; (2) add cognitions that are consistent with the behaviour; or (3) trivialise or reduce the importance of a belief (Festinger 1957). Any or all these techniques adjust an individual's attitude towards the dissonance. In doing so they take a leap towards harmony to reduce their psychological discomfort.

4.8.3 Cognitive dissonance in higher education

The everydayness of higher education is fraught with cognitive dissonance generated by the corporatisation agenda, regardless of geographic location. There are many examples of this. For instance, the top five universities in North America and the UK showcase their academic stars, who are largely white men, while also pledging their dedication to policies of equity and inclusion (Stack 2020). In a broader sense, populism and unrealistic goals are frequently found in university prospectus and slogans, which confuses prospective students (Saukh & Chumak 2018). Due to the ambiguity of the professorial chair role, academics are reluctant to take it on and feel torn about their managerial and academic responsibilities (Freeman et al. 2020). Some academics inflate grades to increase student retention and save their programs, which leaves them with feelings of guilt (Hassan et al. 2020). While universities promote online proctoring technologies (timed assessments) as neutral and convenient, academics are aware that these tools support punishment-based pedagogies, (Logan 2021). Academics likewise struggle with the conflict between their positive self-perception as enthusiastic scholars and the unfavourable stereotypes about them that institutions do nothing to change (Sommerfeldt & Kent 2020).

To continue the list of cognitive dissonance-inducing conditions: academics who study sustainability are pressured to travel by plane in an effort to improve research outcomes (Schrems & Upham 2020; Bjorkdahl & Duharte 2022); academics who implement

decolonisation policies in African universities are compelled, against their humanitarian values, to internationalise their programs for commercial gain (Bamberger et al. 2019); academics must work with policy that prioritises grades while they value learning (Alghazo & Pilotti 2021); and while policy mandates the use of textbooks, the academics believe textbooks are unnecessary (Zaidi 2020). It appears that dealing with cognitive dissonance is the lived experience of policy actors, from diverse areas, and throughout many nations.

4.8.4 Cognitive dissonance in Australian higher education

Organisational change is a significant trigger for dissonance in the Australian higher education sector. Despite a university's high external rankings, academic staff react negatively to mandated behavioural changes (Lewis 1994). And when expected managerial behaviours clash with an individual's ideals, dissonance increases, particularly for leaders with a relational leadership style (Patton 2021). Due to the influence of corporate managerial practises and neoliberal ideology, some Australian university deans and school heads experience daily emotional contradictions between their beliefs and role expectations (Bosetti & Heffernan 2021).

4.8.5 Policy – as a dissonance-creating construct

It is not that policy is described as dissonant when its language lacks agreement with practice, it is that policy is a dissonance creating construct (Imbeau 2009). For those who enact policy, policy feels unresolvable and therefore absurd, which creates a cognitive dissonance that is subsequently somehow resolved (Campbell 2011) or even left unresolved (Davies 2000), effectively leading to acts of resistance (de Gooyert et al. 2016). Survival within a managerialised university is, in other words, a political act of resistance on the part of academics; our study reveals the nature and manner of this resistance.

The degree of dissonance that remains in the system is determined by how individual academics and the academy as a whole respond to the dissonance emanating from the corporatisation of universities and their deviation from their original intention to serve the public good. How this dissonance manifests and how it affects individuals within the academy is the subject of our research question: *If policy is absurd (creates a policy-practice divide) what is the nature of the relationship between policy and university management, and how do those who enact policy deal with this absurdity*?

4.9 Theoretical framework

We propose that to address this research question and to reveal new insights, a Kierkegaardian lens offers a unique perspective. This lens employs the concepts of faith, the leap of faith, hope, doubt, and the absurd. Faith is seen as an individualistic choice, a decision made by the will, and experienced in the context of the absurd and doubt. The *leap of faith* is the choice made to believe over one's doubts, a means of overcoming doubt and transforming the absurd into the non-absurd. Hope is a personal and subjective aspiration that is centred on the *possibility* of *the good*, which represents the significant values that motivate people to strive for a fulfilling and meaningful life. Doubt is an inherent aspect of faith and not separate from it, a sensation that arises from a sense of incomplete or inadequate comprehension of the object of one's faith. And the absurd is what an individual cannot rationally justify or explain, but it is through faith that one can transform the absurd into the non-absurd. In short, faith is the act of accepting something *as-if* it is true in the face of absurdity, and it enables one to overcome doubt and hold onto the hope of the good.

4.9.1 On Faith

The faith which we aim to observe is not merely the reliance that one places upon God, as Aquinas (1950) has written. Although the method may be similar, it is rather an act of choice, a decision made by an individual. Saint Augustine (Swindal n.d) conceives faith as 'an act of the intellect determined not by the reason, but by the will'. Aquinas (1225-1274) (1950 : II–II. q.1. art.4) characterises faith as 'the intellect assents to something [gives permission for something to be so], not through being sufficiently moved to this assent by its proper object, but through an act of choice'. He states that

‘faith requires that what is to be believed be proposed to the believer’ by themselves or others. From an epistemological perspective then, any truth claims about policy, in terms of what policy does or what it is for, requires the individual or others to say or infer what policy is, and for the individual to *choose* to place their trust in that.

Kierkegaard (1986) reinforces the concept of faith as an individualistic choice or one of free will (O'Connor & Franklin 2022). He refers to the decision to believe over one’s doubts as a *leap of faith*. He argues that faith can only be experienced in the context of the absurd and doubt. For him the absurd is different to that of Camus, such that the absurd is that which the individual cannot rationally justify. The absurd is the impossible made possible, akin to winning the lottery without the purchase of a ticket. It is through the means, power, or possibilities brought about by the absurd that one arrives at or takes the leap of faith. Therefore, without the existence of the absurd, faith cannot be actualised or experienced as a means of overcoming doubt.

In order to explain the individualism inherent in the leap of faith, Kierkegaard (1986) considers the biblical narrative where God directs Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac. This directive causes great fear in Abraham, as it contradicts his deep love and devotion for Isaac; nevertheless, after much contemplation, Abraham overcomes his doubts and chooses to obey, only to be stayed by an angel. Kierkegaard (1986) argues that Abraham could only choose to perform this unfathomable and incommunicable action because he took a leap of faith, which for him meant setting aside his doubts and ethical reasoning in favour of a higher telos. Faith is therefore situational (motivated by the absurd), subjective, and aligned with an individual’s beliefs and values. Through taking a leap of faith, one can overcome doubt and transform the absurd into the non-absurd. Faith is the capacity to comprehend, for oneself, what others cannot rationally explain, nor can one rationally explain it to others.

Ontologically and epistemologically speaking, faith is *the act of accepting* something *as-if* it is true (Beyleveld & Ziche 2015). This acceptance is subjective and directed towards objects or entities in the present moment. Faith is therefore a product of our construction, influenced by our own authority and the testimony of others, be it a prophet or the nostalgic longing for education as a public good. In short, we assert our

faith by taking a leap of faith to overcome doubt in the face of the absurd. More poetically, we weave our faith from the fabric of our hope.

4.9.2 On Hope

'To relate oneself expectantly to the possibility of the good is to hope' (Kierkegaard 1998, p. 249). True hope is not the same as optimism; instead, it must be attained by going through despair, facing hardship and adversity (Kierkegaard 1998). Since we cannot specifically name the object of hope, we can only say that it exists outside of time and is focused on the possibility of *the good*, which for Kierkegaard is not a predetermined or objective ideal, but rather a personal and subjective aspiration that people must work towards to live what they perceive to be a fulfilling and meaningful life. Hope then, is a form of belief that *this* (situation) too will eventually come to pass – whatever *this* situation is (Wood 2012) – and then the good can be realised. Nietzsche provides another way to grasp hope, characterising it as 'the rainbow over the cascading stream of life'. By 'rainbow', he suggests something elusive, a brief apparition of an otherness; *a good* that keeps withdrawing itself from our grasp (Bidmon 2016, p. 188). Therefore, hope is the ultimate prospective emotion, focused on imagining a situation beyond its current conditions (Scioli 2020).

4.9.3 On Doubt

'When the believer has faith, the absurd is not the absurd – faith transforms it, but in every weak moment it is again more or less absurd to him. The passion of faith is the only thing which masters the absurd – if not, then faith is not faith in the strictest sense, but a kind of knowledge' (Kierkegaard 1967, p. 7). Doubt or moments of weakness are inherent aspects of faith and not separate from it. Faith is blind and not true if it does not hold on to doubt while simultaneously overcoming it. Doubt is not equivalent to disbelief or mistrust of one's faith, but rather it is a sensation that arises from a sense of incomplete or inadequate comprehension of the object of one's faith (Wood 2012).

4.10 Methodology

We chose a qualitative case study approach as this is useful in exploring complex phenomenon (Yin 2003; Creswell 2007). The case study is also frequently used to enhance understanding of the policy-making process in the public sector (Molloy 2010), and is applied in higher education research projects (Yumusak et al. 2015; Cai 2018; Ng & Nyland 2018; Bennett & Lumb 2019) and studies on discourse in the higher education context (Bowen 1992; Ramsay et al. 1998; Sellar et al. 2010; Peacock 2013).

Due to the depth of enquiry afforded by semi-structured interview (Huff 2008; Shepherd 2015; Leavy 2017), 17 interviews were undertaken with policy actors, ranging from the chair of a key governance group to various deanery roles, staff from a learning and teaching support unit, and professional staff involved in implementation of policy. Studies in higher education and policy frequently use semi-structured interviews (Gale 2003; Ryttberg & Geschwind 2017; Stelitano 2018). Informed written consent was obtained from all participants prior to commencement of the study. Each participated in a recorded interview guided by the analytic stages of discourse (Sharp & Richardson 2001; Alldred & Burman 2005; Peacock 2014).

The first set of questions gathered data about role title, role fit within the broader organisational structure and involvement in the selected policy development and implementation. Following that were a series of semi-structured questions that are summarised in Table 4, and the interview closed with an open question that prompted participants to reflect upon the interview and share anything else they considered pertinent to the research.

Table 3: Interview questions

Question
From your perspective, what is the ultimate goal of having this policy?
Do you and people in your role agree with this goal? Why/why not?
How did you come to hear about the policy? What was your initial response? Why?
How do you feel your peers in a similar role to yours feel about the policy? Why do you think they feel this?
Have you had the opportunity to influence the development and implementation of the policy? If so, how?
Do you consider the implementation of the policy has been a success? Why/why not? What is the evidence for this?
Were there challenges in developing/implementing/using this policy? If so, what were they?
Have you found yourself either actively wanting to support or resist the policy? If so, please describe and explain why and how you supported/resisted.
Are there ways you see the policy being actively supported or resisted? If so, please describe, and explain why you think this is the case.
Who has supported or resisted the policy? What is the evidence of this? Why do you think this is the case?
Does this policy help you in your job/role/situation? Why/why not?

Interviews were transcribed and, consistent with human ethics approval, participant data was anonymised; it is confirmed that these alterations have not distorted the scholarly meaning. Inductive thematic analysis of the transcripts allowed for the complex and nuanced nature of policy and the policy-making process (Braun & Clarke 2006). The qualitative tool *Nvivo* allowed for detailed analysis of interview data. The generated nodes were grouped into six themes, which appear in the findings, and this informed a deductive analysis of participant data. The participants (policy actors) do most of the speaking from this point on, and coding provided and described in Table 5 is used to signify their voice.

Table 4: Policy actor coding

Policy Actor Code	Title	Descriptor	Examples
SL*n*	Senior Leader	Direct positional influence on development, review and implementation of policy	Chair of governing body, head of school, faculty manager, pro vice-chancellor
MM*n*	Middle Manager	Indirect influence on development, review and implementation of policy	Associate dean, associate director
FL*n*	Frontline Staff	Minimal influence on policy development, and review and are either directly or indirectly involved in implementing policy	Coordinators, analysts

Most of the time we have paraphrased policy actor comments, but sometimes we quote them directly in '…' quotation marks to express their exact position on the matter.

The six themes constitute the actors' accounts of their experiences of policy in terms of how policy *appears* to them. Each theme includes how they experience policy and how they subsequently comport themselves in the presence of policy. Where possible we place these accounts in dialogue with existing policy perspectives.

4.11 Findings

This study identified six main themes regarding policy: 1) policy is regarded as valuable for its *potential* to align values, articulate expectations, set standards, ensuring safety, and bringing about positive change; 2) influence on policy is role dependent, with senior leaders having more influence than middle and frontline actors; 3) policy implementation is considered the responsibility of senior leaders and middle management; 4) policy development and management roles are inextricably linked; 5) policy dissonance prompts introspection and value alignment among policy actors; and 6) policy actors resist due to learned ignorance and conflicting values.

Theme 1: Policy has value

Our policy actors agree that policy could align values or provide a 'reference point' for value articulation (SL1). It can be an 'expression of aspiration', an articulation of 'expectations and standards', endeavours 'to keep everyone safe' (MM6) and 'supports good practice' (FL3). Policy is a 'construct…open to interpretation and different uses' (FL3) and its review processes can be used to 'hopefully change practice and people and culture and ways of doing things' (SL1), implying that policy has the potential (hope) to bring about beneficial change for some good.

Theme 2: Policy influence is role dependent

Our policy actors revealed that their influence on policy was role dependent – either their formal role or role in the committee approval process. One middle manager expressly observed that their capacity to influence policy had reduced since ceasing to serve on a key governance group. Others confirmed they were able to participate in

policy-making processes by virtue of their role, describing their role as one of 'liaison' or 'wheeling and dealing' (MM3) or 'negotiation' and 'influencing' (MM4), while MM9 described it as 'navigation and negotiation'. Reflecting on their capacity to influence the process, middle managers stated:

> *...just reflecting on my own experience, [moving up the management levels], the higher you sort of go up that ladder, the more strategic your view becomes (MM1).*
>
> *…there probably does need to be a bit more work around that implementation space. And I guess this is where [the MM role] and that middle layer…is where their power lies and where their ability lies. You know, we can make this useful. We can be the people that drive. …this is what it means, and this is how we can use it…as that tool for good, I guess. And I don't feel like we're there with it. So maybe – maybe – that's a missed opportunity (MM9).*
>
> *I think by definition, in the [MM] role and any leadership role, you're an advocate or a champion for the policy procedure (MM4).*

Senior leaders, however, appear to have a disproportionate influence in setting the scope of policy and influencing policy outcomes. As observed by one middle manager 'some stakeholders' views carry more weight' and their influence is '…not always in a good way' (MM8). While '…sometimes it feels like it's at the whim of an individual's perspective' (MM8).

Staff who do not hold positions in the committee structure or who are at school level notice their limited ability to influence policy. And frontline actors are particularly reliant on senior leaders to serve as their guide on policy.

> *I probably have no clue unless it was something that was communicated via…the [redacted]…and even if there are processes where there's a framework...I'm not necessarily going to engage with something I have to look up, so it's good that a communique is sent out (FL2).*

Theme 3: Policy implementation is the role of senior leaders and middle management

Academic staff at school level also believe that it is the function and role of senior leaders to channel policy to those responsible for implementing it.

> *So, when something's new, when there's a new policy – particularly – I think it's critical that that work [senior leaders interpreting policy] happens with the people on the ground who are really primarily responsible for seeing the outworking of it (MM7).*

Some senior leaders and middle managers agree that it is they who have a responsibility to implement policy.

> *It's in discourse. The [redaction] committee, which I chair, which is part of [redaction], that policy has been discussed. It's been talked about. The policy has been approved. It hasn't been forgotten… it's still very much in front of centre of people's mind[s] that we need to implement it (SL1).*

Theme 4: Policy development and management roles are inextricable

Several middle managers acknowledged that policy and their role in middle management/leadership are inextricable. Managers were seen as 'enactors of different policies' (MM9) and those who need 'to pay more attention to policy' – more than they did when working solely as an academic. 'So, because you do have to follow process in those roles to ensure that things happen as they should, it does bring a different focus to the way you engage in a university' (MM9). Reinforcing policy is a way a manager can demonstrate their loyalty and engagement with the leadership, and middle managers also displayed informal power in the policy-making process. They were able to 'filter' or interpret information to determine 'what things are helpful back at the school level' because 'sometimes in schools things happen and you don't really understand why it's happened' (MM9). Furthermore, middle managers played a role in 'helping to bridge that gap' to 'have impact on the work and life of an academic…and what that means for their courses and for programs and for quality…' (MM9).

Despite this display of power, policy actors in middle management roles agreed they did not hold formal power (Magretta 2013). Their 'power' and 'abilities' lay in their mandate to implement policy (MM9). For middle managers without formal power, they

interpret policy as a ‘quality lens’, and perceived it as a tool for providing ‘oversight’ ‘to facilitate and navigate’ internal processes (MM9). This participant saw their role as ‘facing up’ and ‘facing down’, while balancing the ‘push and pull’ to ‘work with that rather than stressing anybody out or being resistant to change as well’ (MM9).

> *So, you’re kind of looking up to whole university policies and procedures and change and direction and then you’re helping to kind of apply that or help people understand this is what’s being looked at at senior leadership levels and this is how we have to then consider things as we’re going through, in my case, [redacted] processes with people. So, it’s kind of a conduit role, I guess as well. And you’re there to represent the faculty and also, I guess, support the work of the [role redacted] of that faculty (MM9).*

Following policy ‘to the letter of the law’ without considering ‘nuances’ may also create issues such as ‘an inequity for students’ (MM4). Undivided reliance on policy is also seen as taking ‘the easy way’ or shows ‘an insecurity with people’s knowledge bases’ as

> *…sometimes it’s not there, and you have to be able to act appropriately, of course, and sometimes you don’t have a policy that’s telling you step by step what to do. You’re interpreting that policy within your delegation (SL5).*

Simply put, many of our interviewed policy actors would not have their positions and privileges in the university setting were it not for the texts and discourse of policy, both of which are somewhat divorced from practice.

Theme 5: Policy dissonance prompts introspection and value alignment

While policies can cause dissonance, according to one middle manager, they can also serve as a catalyst for reflection on personal values and an examination of how well they mesh with role responsibilities.

When referring to the policy under investigation they acknowledged that it

> *…creates less dissonance for me in my role. But I think it’s important to understand that we’re often … required to support things where there might be a bit of minor dissonance where … if it was left up to us, we probably wouldn’t want to support it (MM6).*

Similar to this middle manager, policy actors may engage in an introspective process to examine their values and beliefs and determine whether they are consistent with the policies that their role requires them to support. Therefore, by responding to the introspection – prompted by policy dissonance – policy actors can act in ways that are consistent with their own values and advance what, in their perspective, is a *good* outcome.

Theme 6: Policy actors resist due to learned ignorance and conflicting values

For our policy actors, resistance to policy was due to two main reasons: learned ignorance of policy (FL2) and experiencing policy as absurd (SL6). At the school level policy is only referenced when necessary or when there is an issue to resolve. 'It's kind of like a backup thing that if we get in trouble' (MM7). As Ball (2015a) puts it, resistance in the form of refusal might be *deliberate*, and as such policy can be resisted 'up to a reasonable level in the university' (SL6), and by employing it deliberately out of context to oppose change or to support a specific position, as in a political sense. Policy can thus be deliberately 'put through a particular filter' and academic staff will interpret their practice through that filter 'because they are defending the way they do things' (F1). Staff can 'bypass and mutiny against policy' (SL6) and 'go rogue and do whatever they like' (MM2), especially if policy is 'creating difficulty' (MM4) and not aligned with their notion of the good; staff may feel 'managed by policy or constrained by policy' and 'resist policy in terms of its intent' or 'twist it around to their own means' (MM4).

4.12 Discussion

We believe our findings help answer our question: *If policy is absurd what is the nature of the relationship between policy and university management, and how do those who enact policy deal with this absurdity?*

4.12.1 The relationship between policy and management

Together, themes 2, 3, and 4 (policy influence is role dependent, policy implementation is the role of senior leaders and middle management, and policy development and management roles are inextricable) speak to the relationship between policy and

university management, which put bluntly is: *Policy is absurd; ergo, university management is absurd.*

This highlights one of the required conditions for academics to survive at a managerialised university and is an extension of our opening statement. Our policy actors, many of whom are university managers, acknowledge that senior leadership and middle management, as well as other friendly staff they utilise to promote their efforts, have a disproportionate influence on policy-making. Furthermore, management believes it is their responsibility to function as policy translators and interpreters, implying that policy is created for them. As a result, university management is placed in a chicken-and-egg relationship with university policy, in which there is an infinitely regressive self-fulfilling relationship between what appears to be two separate objects/entities (university management and policy), when in fact these are two parts of the same thing. Butler (1878) reframed this type of relationship as, perhaps ‘a hen is only an egg’s way of making another egg’. By extension then, we can say that both the following statements are true: policy is only university management’s way of making more university management; and university management is only policy’s way of making more policy. But as we argue later, this is a necessary condition for universities, and academics, to survive neoliberalism.

When taken together, themes 1, 5, and 6 (policy has value or the potential for delivering the good, absurd policy creates dissonance that prompts introspection, and those who must enact absurd policy resist it) illustrate, through the Kierkegaardian lens of faith, hope, and doubt, how policy actors reconcile themselves with the absurdity of policy. They hold a deep commitment to the university sector and generally support the decisions made by university management. These actors have a great reverence for policy, seeing it as a potential means of achieving good. Despite experiencing cognitive dissonance from implementing absurd policies, they maintain a faith in the potential of policy and hope that its promises will eventually come to fruition.

When confronted with the task of reconciling the absurd demands of policy with its pragmatic implementation, our policy actors demonstrate their conviction and actualise their faith by taking a *leap of faith* in the hope of achieving some good from the situation. They take this leap of faith with the expectation that if the university’s

policies were aligned with practice, then it would serve the public good. Through activating this potential for action, policy actors can reconcile the divide between policy and practice, thus – in their eyes – transforming the absurd into the good.

To unpack the nature or form of resistance policy actors apply, we consider how Arendt (1998, p. 201) regards resistance as a 'potentiality for action', a power which even if it foregoes violence is almost stronger than the force it faces. Ironically resistance is often considered passive, yet resistance 'is one of the most active and efficient ways of action ever devised, because it cannot be countered by fighting…only by mass slaughter in which even the victor is defeated' (Arendt 1998, pp. 200-1). Jefferson (1787, p. 364) coined this a *held in reserve power of revolution*, 'what country can preserve its liberties if their rulers are not warned from time to time that their people preserve the spirit of resistance'. Our policy actors are not being passive. They are taking resistive action by working around policy.

> *…when you get down to school level and discipline levels, things may not be enacted exactly the way they should be [in policy] because the policy and procedure don't work (MM2).*

> *…[staff] will try and negotiate or navigate their way around it [policy] in some form. They don't necessarily fall foul of the policy…but they'll try and avoid it in whatever way that they need to…just so that they don't have to deal with it because they just don't agree with it (MM4).*

Consistent then with the markers of methods for reducing cognitive dissonance (Festinger 1957), an individual's acts of resistance to absurd policy is always situational, subjective, and dependent on how these align with of influence 'their beliefs and values' (MM4). Consequently, we contend that those who resist absurd policy do so by acting on their convictions, meaning they take a leap of faith in themselves to endeavour to achieve some potential good from the absurd situation.

> *So, if somebody is a really strong student advocate and they feel in their heart of hearts that a student is being disadvantaged by something in policy, they'll maybe try and do something a bit under the radar to help that student (MM4).*

4.12.2 Policy awakens faith, hope, and doubt

4.12.2.1 On Faith

The policy enactors experience a strong cognitive dissonance when contending with policy, which they attempt to reconcile or explain away, despite doubts stemming from challenges in policy development, implementation enactment and review, and a divide between policy and practice that is often acknowledged. Nonetheless, they retain faith in policy's potential, believing that it could work if development and review processes were made more inclusive, as it has the capacity to provide a '…shared understanding, shared expectations, [and] a sense of shared purpose and direction of what we need to do' (SL1).

> *I think we believe [in policy]. I don't think we quite understand the positive benefits of good, forward thinking, innovative policy that is written for students, that is easily understood by students, which gives them the clarity of thought that articulates their obligations and our obligations. What that would do for us in our role and for students in their student journey I think can't be underestimated (SL6).*

However, these aspirations for policy are founded on faith, as a promise with the *potential* to be fulfilled, rather than being actualised through experiences, which indicates an intriguing ontological and epistemological framework of policy and a particular way of perceiving faith. Policy, for those who enact it, is not merely a textual or discursive entity that shapes objects and subjects (Ball 2015a); rather, in its absurd state, it is a faith-based construct that stimulates people's faith, hope, and doubt.

> *Someone will come back to me and say, 'We have to say no, because this [policy] says this [something SL6 considers absurd].' And then [I] go back and say, 'Well, actually I'm going to say yes, and I'm going to take responsibility for that. Because as you can see, outside of that one phrase [in policy], the intent of this procedure is to achieve this [subjective ethical good]. And I'm going to take responsibility and make a decision, because my interpretation of that is this [a way of achieving the ethical good] (SL6).*

4.12.2.2 On Hope

In the accounts of many policy actors, we observe the interplay between hope and faith. Despite acknowledging the imperfections in the policy development and review process, these actors remain devoted to policy, holding onto their faith that policy will

eventually fulfill its intended purpose. The *if-then* (faith-hope) sentiment around policy is that, *if* a benchmarking process has taken place and the policy has been collaboratively developed, and there were no reasons provided why the proposed change would not work, *then* a policy can be potentially relied upon and is 'good' (MM2). More broadly, policy production processes (Gale 2003) are supported 'because they've been through a consultation process, they've been approved by the respective authorities' (FL2) and are 'there for valid reasons', so policy will *then* 'support innovation' (FL3).

Two middle managers affirmed their faith and hope in policy, acknowledging that the 'majority' of university staff 'at all levels' are 'intelligent' and 'passionate about their work', 'with strong views' (MM3). For these managers, policy creates a space that allows for collegial (Ball & Olmedo 2013) and 'constructive debate', and expresses a hope for a future where there is 'robust discussion around the value of what's going to be put in the document to negate the risk of creating more problems than are solved' and to ensure students are not 'disadvantaged' (MM4).

4.12.2.3 On Doubt

Several policy actors expressed doubt regarding the current role and function of policy as they reflected on these interview moments.

> *So perhaps it goes back to - are policies relevant, are they current and what's the purpose they are serving, and is that purpose being served by the function of a policy as opposed to it being something else?' (MM8).*

As with Bacchi (2000) they believe policy is a tool for change, yet its current application was questioned.

> *[I think about change in organisations as being driven from policy] yet we continue to talk about problems for years on end, then – something's not happening correctly in terms of policy driving change (FL3).*

4.13 Conclusion

In recent years, the policy-practice divide in higher education has been the subject of much debate and discussion. Many scholars have argued that this divide is a deliberate strategy of the neoliberal managerial class to impose market-driven values on

academics and to exclude them from policy-making. However, our investigation reveals that this exclusionary manoeuvre harbours a fatal flaw, a hamartia of the managerialist strategy, because when faced with policy absurdity academics respond by drawing on their faith and hope for a future in which their university will serve the public good, despite doubting the efficacy of current policies.

Our study has shown that policy actors have found a way to transcend the absurdity and impracticality of the policy-practice divide by taking a leap of faith, a political act of resistance that enables them to exercise their values or sense of the common good. This type of resistance is related to how they use faith to overcome cognitive dissonance caused by policy that, in practice, makes no sense to them. Yes, policy is absurd, but this type of absurdity is more Kierkegaardian than Camusian. They resist policy by exercising their 'potential for action,' and as such they exercise some control in their daily practice by transforming the absurd into something that leads them to the good. As a result, these acts of faith-based resistance are expressions of their hope.

Our claim then is that the managerialisation of higher education has led to a situation where institutional policy can only exist as a faith-based structure. However, policy absurdity paradoxically provides an opportunity for academics to act in accordance with their convictions and academic values, and to resist neoliberal exploitation of universities. By taking a dialectical leap of faith, policy actors can transcend the policy-practice divide to achieve some semblance of good. This form of resistance should be seen as a form of political action against the current state of affairs in Anglo universities. Speaking hopefully, from a realm where absurdity reigns, we find it heartening to know that there are still those who fight for the values and principles that make higher education truly meaningful.

Collaging Power: Visualising the Hidden Forces in University Policy Development

Plate 3: Collaging Power: Visualising the Hidden Forces in University Policy Development

Plate 3 Illustration

Plate 3 depicts the power dynamics within university governance and the researcher's method of revealing and analysing them through ethnographic observation and collage.

The cauldron represents the restrictive environment in which the academic board operates, pressured by external managerial forces, while the vice-chancellor, shown fanning the flames, symbolises their role in intensifying policy-making pressures, using policy as a tool to exert power.

As with Plate 2, the mechanical dragon embodies the pervasive influence of managerialism, fuelling the policy development process, as does the fixation on the agenda reflecting how the academic board's discussions are controlled and directed by the vice-chancellor and managerialism.

The woman observing through the window is collaging the 'articles of power' represented by the elements on the table. This symbolises the researcher's role in analysing power dynamics through an arts-based method. The window depicts the limited view and opportunity available to the observer and academic staff, highlighting the controlled nature of the observations.

CHAPTER 5 PLAYING WITH POWER: USING COLLAGE TO BRING REFLEXIVITY TO MANAGEMENT STUDIES

5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the full manuscript for the second peer reviewed paper developed as part of this doctoral research (Study 2: Qualitative ethnography). This paper took the form of a case study and is titled *Playing With Power: Using Collage to Bring Reflexivity to Management Studies*. It is published in *SAGE Research Methods: Business*.

This chapter draws on Foucault's insights into the concealed nature of power through application of the arts-based method of collage. Collage strongly resonates with the 15th century tradition of Annunciation art in that it uses positioning, symbolic objects, light and colour, gestures, and architectural elements to reveal underlying power relations.

Foucault described power as omnipresent yet subtle, often operating beneath the surface; the collage methodology used in this study aligns with Foucault's understanding of the enunciative field as a stage where the choreography of power unfolds. This method reveals how managerialism shapes decisions, bringing to light the often-hidden power plays and concealed structures in university governance. In effect, collage acts as an archaeological technique or tool to unearth the power mechanisms within the university policy-making (Section 7.3).

In terms of this thesis, this paper reveals that arts-based methods do lay bare the mechanisms of power within complex situations.

5.2 Key relevance to this thesis

- Revelation of the mechanisms of power within complex situations
- Allowed for deep insight into the mechanisms of power
- Provided a means to fight familiarity, identity nuances and explore ideas.

5.3 Citation and co-author details

Table 5: Citation details of original Chapter 5 publication

Citation details	Margetts, F, van der Hoorn, B & Whitty, SJ 2023, 'Playing With Power: Using Collage to Bring Reflexivity to Management Studies', in *Sage Research Methods: Business*, SAGE Publications Ltd, London.
Writing	Fiona Margetts (80%) Dr Bronte van der Hoorn (15%); Dr S. Jon Whitty (5%)
Data collection and analysis	Fiona Margetts (100%)
Quality review	Fiona Margetts (80%) Dr Bronte van der Hoorn (15%); Dr S. Jon Whitty (5%);

5.4 Abstract

This case study explores the use of collage, an arts-based technique, applied within an ethnographic study of institutional policy-making for a university's academic freedom policy. The study forms part of my research portfolio centred on exploring an acknowledged policy-practice divide in university settings. In this case I describe my use of an arts-based technique to derive new insights regarding the interactions and relationships between policy actors and how their behaviours shaped decision-making. I describe how I chose and applied an abstract collage to translate and analyse observations of the policy-making process. The created collages provided me with a useful tool to: recreate and reflect on my observations, perform nuanced analysis of the power structures, reveal the dominant voices, and identify how particular views may become privileged. This case study reveals the 'value of play' (Chesterton 1936, p. 45) during qualitative data analysis, drawing attention to the power of abstract collage as a reflexivity tool and vehicle for challenging entrenched patterns of thinking and assumptions. I also discuss the challenges encountered and necessary mindset adaptations to maximise the benefits of the arts-based technique of collage.

5.5 Learning outcomes

By the end of this case study, readers should be able to:

- Describe the benefits of arts-based methods to support reflexivity during data analysis.

- Judge the suitability of the described method to apply in their own research project.
- Evaluate the challenges that may be encountered when using collage.
- Implement strategies to overcome those challenges and potential barriers.

5.6 Project overview and context

As a higher education policy practitioner and project manager I was perplexed by how institutional policies were frequently not implemented following their development and approval. In addition, 'on the ground' (Taylor 1997, p. 34) or 'street level' (Freeman et al. 2014, p. 49) practice was often at odds with policy provisions and the literature confirmed this was an issue (Trowler 2002b; McNay 2005; McCaffery 2018). Referring to the phenomena as a 'gap' or 'divide', it is often attributed to implementation challenges. This is well researched in the public sector (Althaus et al. 2018; Althaus et al. 2021), however the policy-practice divide is but briefly mentioned within institutional policy literature in Australia and empirical research into how to address the phenomena within higher education is scant (Taylor 1997; Freeman 2014c).

The research project in focus of this case study was focused on exploring how the policy-practice divide manifest itself in the case study university. It is part of a series of studies that I hope will extend the understanding of and, if relevant, bridge the policy-practice divide in universities.

This case can be classified as an ethnographic study of a new policy development and was comprised substantially of observations of a policy's progress through a key governance body. Ethnography has its roots in anthropology, allowing for observations to be made through 'field work', documentary analysis or interview, and results in the conveying of culture into written form (Leavy 2017). Ethnography is applied increasingly in studies investigating power issues in management (Ciuk et al. 2018), as are arts-based analysis methods, such as collage (Plakoyiannaki & Stavraki 2018; Finley et al. 2020), the focus of remaining sections.

The policy development under observation was focused on free speech and academic freedom – an element of higher education that allows for exploration and conversation

about the complex and contemporary challenges that face society (Stein 2021). Its germination was spurred by a nation-wide request of the Federal Education Minister. In a commissioned review of freedom of speech in Australian Universities, The Hon Robert French AC (2019) recommended a model code, and its implementation was subsequently reviewed by Professor Sally Walker (2020). Universities were expected to have their academic freedom policies in place by the end of 2020. This study focuses on the development and implementation of this high-profile policy in a case university, the policy being selected due to the strong external impetus for its development and the potential for deep and long-lasting impact on the fundamental value of academic freedom.

Preliminary findings have identified varying levels of power within the policy-making process for this policy. Ranging from informal to formal and derived from within and outside the university, these factors influenced the role and behaviour of actors and the policy's progression from requirement to development, approval and implementation. The manifestation and impact of the observed power networks will be explored in a future paper.

5.6.1 Section summary

- This case study is focused on the examination of the policy-practice divide in Australian universities.
- Data collection aligns with an ethnographic approach; however, a novel arts-based method was chosen to support the analysis.
- The analysis reveals the complexity of power plays in the policymaking process.

5.7 Research design

I designed the study to allow for ethnographic observations, data capture, and reflection over a period of 12 months – the anticipated timeframe for the policy-making process. This allowed for the development of a comprehensive dataset (elicited primarily through observation of meetings) and, importantly, provided time to reflect upon each capture. Collage, an arts-based data analysis method, was selected for the deep analysis of observed complex power structures and dynamics.

Arts-based research and data analysis draws upon the arts and humanities to study lived experience. Arts-based methods take different forms and share a family resemblance rather than a strict definition. They inspire creativity and reflection and provide a way to explore the politics of power and control of knowledge (Wengel et al. 2021). Arts-based methods include building with Lego blocks, creating comics, painting, handmade craft, and collage (Coughlan & Brydon-Miller 2014; Prins 2015; Finley et al. 2020; Rainford 2021b).

An abstract collage was my chosen arts-based data analysis method and, while it can be constructed of multiple objects, for this study materials were limited to felt. I chose this method of analysis to immerse myself in the study, challenge preconceived ideas, and entrenched thought patterns and illuminate complex power structures (Butler-Kisber 2019). It is also a proven analysis method to assist researchers 'construct meanings about the research question and/or process, the participants, and emerging themes' (Given 2008, p. 1). It provides a means to 'make the familiar strange' (Ybema & Kamsteeg 2009b, p. 101) or 'fight familiarity', overcome the linear nature of text, and explore ideas or identify nuances (Mannay 2010, p. 95; Butler-Kisber 2019). I therefore adopted collage to visualise and understand the social structures and power dynamics at play within the observed meetings, and the roles played by each of the actors – as on a stage.

According to Erving Goffman's (1959) theory of social interaction, life is a theatre in which people are in their everyday lives the actors – as on a *social stage* - acting out a variety of identity forming roles that vary according to the social setting (Goffman et al. 1967; Barnhart 1994). Theatre is a useful vehicle for exploring social interactions in business (Bircht 2018). I drew on this *social stage* concept in my study as each observation was *played out* by the participants (the actors) in a university social setting. Whilst I was immersed in the social settings when making observations, I also needed to *immerse* myself in this social setting when undertaking the analysis in order to answer the research question and gain depth of insight.

Collage-making is tactile and provides depth of insight. The nature of making objects by hand heightens sensemaking and meaning creation and improves cognitive performance (Given 2008; Prins 2015; Takken & Wong 2015). My use of collage was

grounded in composition or materiality theory. This purports that researchers are shaped by the tools or materials they use, and that these can highlight shifting identities, distribute cognition and provide depths of insight (Prins 2015). It also provided the sought after immersive experience and space to accommodate prior knowledge I brought to the situation (Rainford 2021b).

Constructivism theorises that individual learners will bring their prior knowledge to and construct their own knowledge and understanding from a situation (Piaget 1955). As a researcher I am a learner; I used collage as a tool to construct understanding of the observed situations and relationships and to overcome barriers such as familiarity (Mannay 2010). This creative method of analysis encouraged a connection between my hands and mind to slow my thinking and prompt my reflexivity – conditions that are ideal for tackling understandings around topics that may yield issues of power or sensitivity, or where there might be difficulty in articulating tacit understandings of a phenomenon (Whitty 2013; van der Hoorn 2020; Wengel et al. 2021).

The inevitable resistance to power and complex institutional structures create a research environment in which it is difficult to find meaning (McInnis 1996; Ball 2015a). It is commonly held that universities are complex and political institutions driven by power (Pusser & Marginson 2013). It is also commonly held that policy is not definitive or absolute, but a conceptual, messy, organic and complex phenomena that plays a role in the distribution of power (Bennett & Lumb 2019). Thus, the study was designed to include the arts-based methods of collage to provide for the necessary deep analysis of complex power structures and dynamics, recorded in a series of acts in which the actions and behaviours of the actors were played out – as on a stage (Tuomi et al. 2020).

5.7.1 Section summary

- Arts-based analysis methods provide you with a tool to become immersed in research data and have the capacity to reveal deep and illuminating meanings.
- Collage supports constructivism; it is an arts-based method providing the capacity to record and illuminate complex relationships and power dynamics.

- The ‘hands-mind’ nature of collage provides time to reflect, detect nuances, and challenge entrenched patterns of thinking and assumptions to bring new understanding to otherwise familiar circumstances and actor behaviours.
- Collage provides a capacity to identify dominant voices and how they are portrayed in a university context.

5.8 Research practicalities

Research observations were made of human participants and subsequently subject to Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) review. An application was made to a registered HREC and approved through an expedited process. This outlined the nature and form of observations to be made, the participant ‘opt out’ process, and included the templates to be used to capture the observational data (National Health and Medical Research Council 2018, p. 19).

Research observations were initially written as a series of acts, each comprised of a synopsis and number of scenes. A de-identified *cast list* of actors and the degrees of observed power was maintained in Microsoft Excel, including the actor alias, their formal role in the observed governance body and the degree of formal and informal power observed. The Excel spreadsheet also recorded the key to felt pieces; a physical description of the felt piece and what it was intended to communicate, for example:

- light brown figure represented an actor who was present in the observed meeting
- white figure represented a referenced actor not present in the observed meeting.

Observational notes (the acts and scenes) were captured in a Microsoft Word template that provided for the capture of meeting and participant information (Table 7) and observational notes (Table 8).

Table 6: Observational note template - meeting and participant information

Meeting information	**Participant alias/key role**
Meeting name:	Actor 1:
Date:	Actor 2 (etc):
Location:	Group 1:
Style (formal/informal):	Group 2 (etc):
Meeting topic:	
Chair:	
Number in attendance:	

Table 7: Observational note template – observational notes

<table>
<tr><td>Actor/Alias</td><td>What is their viewpoint?</td><td>Dominance (rank) of viewpoint?</td><td>How did the viewpoint gain supporters?

E.g.: What mechanisms and who</td><td>How did the viewpoint get dismissed?

E.g.: What mechanisms and who</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Is consensus/resolution achieved? If so, how?</td><td colspan="2">Are any impacted voices unrepresented?</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Scene synopsis (description, f-t-f, zoom (backgrounds), differences, expectations, interplays, roles, what played out, response to questions, what were the pieces, how did pieces come together, atmosphere, ‘costumes’, acts, forms of control (agenda/recommendations), demeanour of actors with reference to other actors, tools)</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Physical scene (to tell the story) – drawing/pictures/figures – static photos (before/after) – retell/record – mood/position</td></tr>
</table>

I refined my observational notes as soon as practicable after each observation to ensure optimal recall. A total of 26 scenes across seven acts were created. A physical collage was developed for each scene, each comprised of a series of scaled felt characters. Determination of scale was a process of trial and error involving the download of free clipart shapes obtained online which I subsequently scaled, printed and adjusted until achieving a balanced visual appearance (Figure 3).

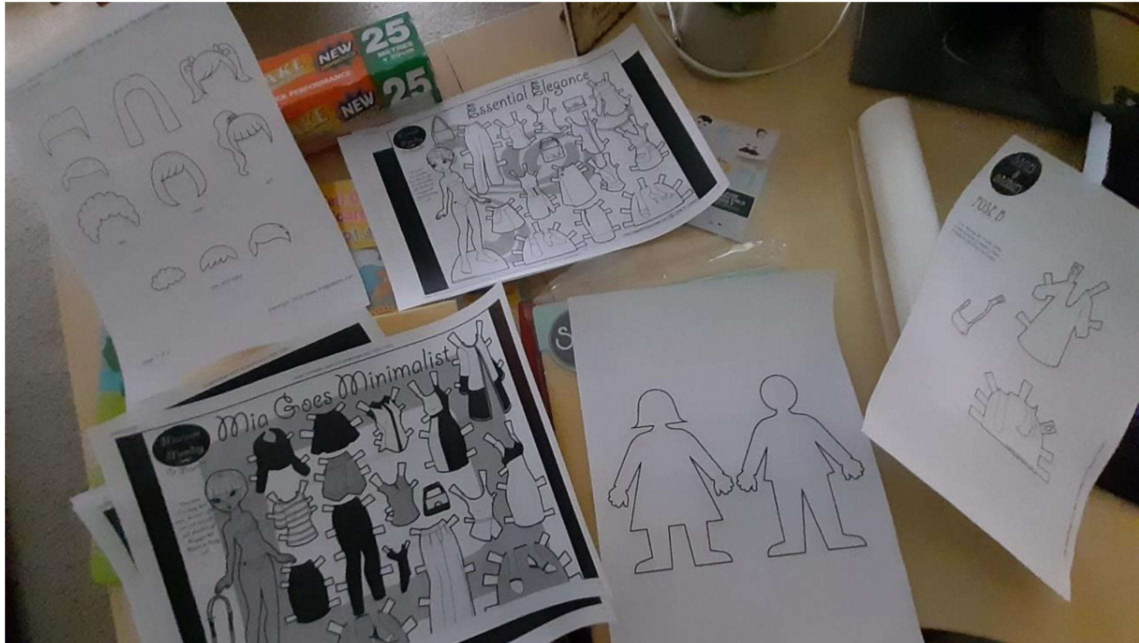

Figure 3: Scaled characters developed by trial and error

Previous sewing experience also came into play as, once the appropriate scale was achieved, I created paper templates for each piece (as in a sewing pattern). For the one-off *set* pieces such as the round and curved tables in one meeting room, basic kitchen items were used to form the piece templates and I sought the assistance of a family member with engineering experience to draw and cut these pieces accurately (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Set pieces developed accurately

Over the course of observations, I created:

- 2 felt boards sets representing different meeting settings
- 133 felt figures representing the actors
- 22 felt 'power' hats of varying colours which represented the degrees of informal and formal power held by the actors and groups.

My previous experience creating hand-made crafts also proved helpful, but not essential. Creation of the felt pieces was time consuming and somewhat tedious as it involved pinning each paper template on the felt and cutting around it with a small and large set of scissors. An estimated 38 hours were committed to creation of the sets, felt characters and curation of the abstract collages. Minimal financial expense was incurred to create the collages (less than AU$100). Cost was limited to the purchase of two felt boards (originally designed for child play) obtained from an office supply company and several packets of coloured felt obtained from a fabric and craft store. A key consideration in my selection of materials and determination of scale was the space it would take to store the felt boards and pieces. Minimal storage space was required as the boards measured 38 x 32cm and the average size of a figure was 4.5 x 4.5 cm.

Collage proved to be a flexible analysis tool. I was able to easily adapt the felt boards to reflect the changing physical settings of the observed meetings. Initial observations were made when COVID19 was at its height and meetings were held virtually. As working arrangements changed, the observed meetings moved to a hybrid arrangement. Some members joined virtually, and others met in video-enable meeting rooms across university campuses. The collages were easily adapted to reflect the changing physical circumstances of the meetings and they were easily photographed with the standard camera on my mobile phone. Photography is not my strong suit, however, and I did find it difficult to get the lighting and aspect correct. My photos were by no means perfect, but they were readily converted into a 'rough cut' movie in Microsoft Video Editor. While I have limited experience with video or movie software, I found this to be a simple product to use to adapt my series of physical collage into a single digital artefact that informed further observations to be the subject of a future paper.

5.8.1 Section summary

- Collage is a simple, practical, and affordable method for recording complex social structures and settings.
- As part of research planning, allow for the time required to prepare the felt boards and pieces.
- Collage can be easily adapted to reflect the changing nature of observational settings.

5.9 Method in action

The path to selection of collage as my arts-based data analysis method was not necessarily straight. Initially I explored digital storyboarding and tested a one-dimensional electronic *Post-it* note approach with a whiteboard collaboration tool (Figure 5).

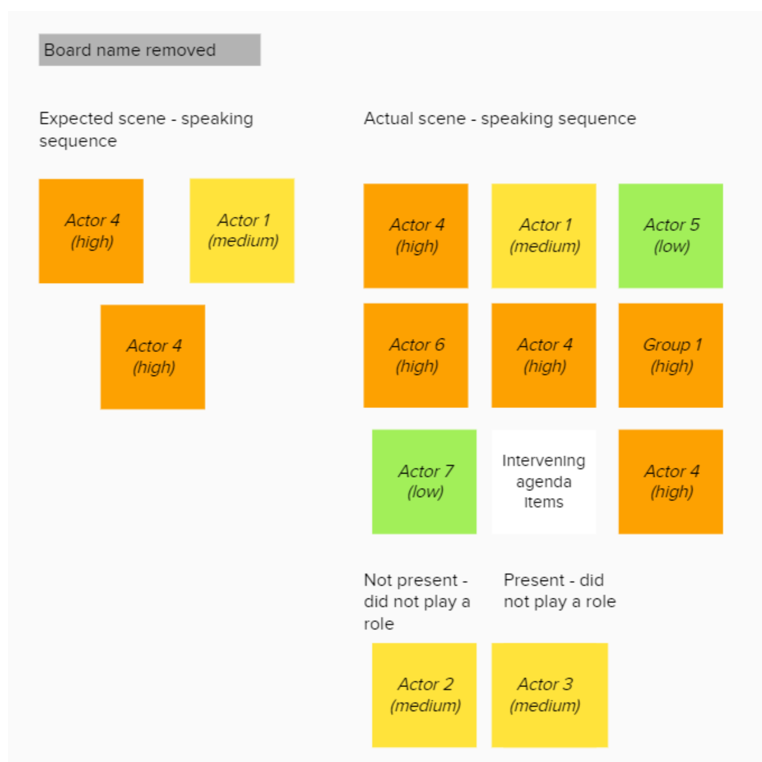

Figure 5: Initial story board

The simple, linear and one-dimensional nature of the *Post-it* notes did not capture nor convey the nuanced observations and degrees of power that were being observed. I did

not find this medium sufficiently reflexive and immersive to challenge my biases and entrenched thinking patterns and assumptions nor did it bring new understanding to otherwise familiar circumstances and actor behaviours.

A foray into the philosophy of play and the value of learning through play reminded me of the felt boards used to tell stories when I was a child. The significant amount of literature on the value of Lego Serious Play also encouraged me to explore creative ways to challenge my thinking and analyse the captured data (Fink et al. 1968; Zosh et al. 2017; Hayes & Graham 2019; Ajibade & Hayes 2020; Tuomi et al. 2020).

It was Gilbert Chesterton's (1936, p. 45) quote that really struck the strongest chord, however. He confirmed the need to reach outside my usual set of tools:

> *On the **value of play** '...but I for one have never left off playing, and I wish there were more time to play. I wish we did not have to fritter away on frivolous things, like lectures and literature, the time we might have given to serious, solid and constructive work like cutting out cardboard figures and pasting coloured tinsel upon them.'*

Foundational to the creation of collage, my version of Chesterton's (1936, p. 45) 'cutting out cardboard figures and pasting coloured tinsel upon them' was the adoption of a simple but consistent process (Figure 6).

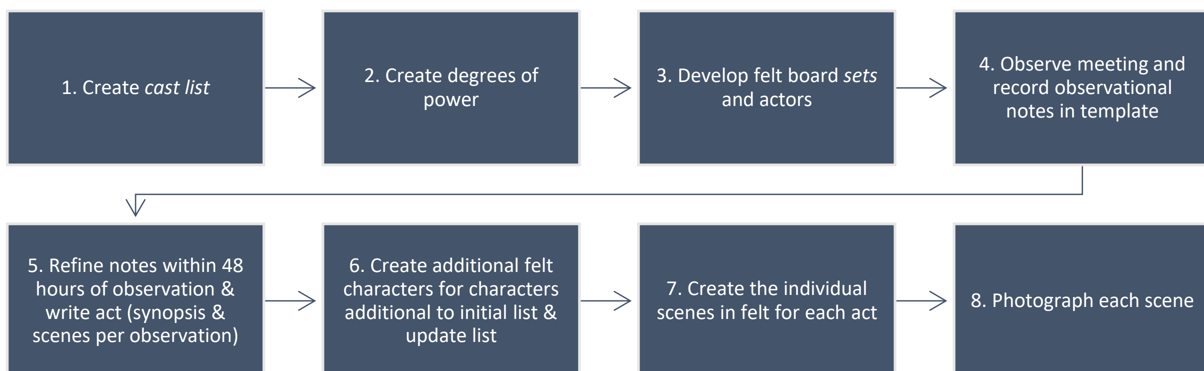

Figure 6: Felt board creation process

5.9.1 Steps 1-2

An initial *cast list* was created in Microsoft Excel – a uniquely numbered and deidentified list of expected actors based on the publicly available membership of the observed committee. The list expanded as the policy progressed through the policy-making process. Recorded also in a spreadsheet were the degrees of power used to explain the observed behaviours and the colour of *power hats* applied to each actor when they displayed that degree of power (Table 9). As I was interested in the way power was influencing the policy development, I choose to represent this as a variable in my abstract collage of the scenes. I could equally have selected other variables (for example, gender) if that had been a focus of the study.

Table 8: Actors power hats

Hat colour	Power level
Red	High positional power
Purple	Medium positional power
Pink	Low positional power
Dark green	High informal power
Medium green	Medium informal power
Light green	Low informal power

5.9.2 Step 3

Scaled felt boards or *sets* were created for the anticipated meeting settings along with a series of felt characters for each actor and the identifying unique numbers from the *cast list*.

5.9.3 Steps 4-5

Observational notes were recorded during each observation in a Microsoft Word template (Appendix 3) and refined within 48 hours to ensure accurate recall. From the notes an act was written for each observation and comprised of a synopsis and series of scenes, the number and length of which varied according to the length of the observation.

5.9.4 Step 6

Frequently new actors would emerge who had not been identified in the initial *cast list*. Some were present in the observed meetings; others were referred to only. They were added to the list (refer Steps 1-2), allocated a unique identifying number, and a new felt colour introduced to represent the actors not present (Table 10). Groups other than the committee being observed were also identified in the observations and the *cast list* was modified to record the group name, allocate a unique group number, and assign a colour to represent the degrees of power observed (Table 10). Policy and procedure other than that which was the subject of this study were also referred to and a felt shape introduced to record when they were referenced (Appendix 4).

Table 9: Other structures, actors and material

Description	**Power level/definition**
White figure	Actor not present
Red group	High power
Purple group	Medium power
Pink group	Low power
Yellow book	Referenced policy/procedure other than that the subject of the study

5.9.5 Step 7

I then created an abstract felt collage for each scene and they critically allowed me to record and 'try to make sense of actions and events' (O'Reilly 2009, p. 3) and observe dominant voices within each discourse (Alldred & Burman 2005). The time taken to create these visual, multi-dimensional and interactive felt boards allowed me to reflect and detect nuances such as the need for the majority of actors to raise their hand to speak, and the privileged position of some to not have to do this. I was also able to start seeing the complex relationships and power dynamics. Actor dominance was initially reflected by figure size (Figure 7, Actors 5 and 7) however I realised this was adding unnecessary complication and degrees of power held were better represented by the *power hats* (Table 9). Where multiple degrees of power were observed, multiple hats were applied to the heads of the actors (Figure 7, Actor 5). Examples, not reflecting actual observations, of the abstract collage are provided in Figures 7 and 8.

Figure 7: Felt board – virtual meetings

Throughout observations I needed to adapt the sets to reflect the changing COVID19 restrictions. Figure 7 indicates that meetings were being held completely virtually. Figure 8, however, demonstrates various settings in the one collage. Most actors were meeting face to face by this stage (left panel), a group were meeting in another location (right panel) and some continued to participate virtually (centre panel). While creating the felt boards I was able to immerse myself in the observed proceedings, connect with and reflect on the role of the actors and their behaviours and gradually build the series of acts in which I could identify the dominant voices inside and outside the observed settings.

Figure 8: Felt board - hybrid meetings

5.9.6 Step 8

Each felt board was captured with a still photograph and stored in a series of Microsoft OneDrive folders ordered by the date and context of the observation. The photographs were converted with Microsoft Video Editor into a quickly timed *rough cut* movie. From this the appearance of power networks across the different meetings were made more clearly visible.

5.9.7 Section summary

- Test your data analysis approaches before over investing in them. Be prepared to adapt at the outset and during the research project.
- Challenge yourself to consider new ways of learning, gaining new insight or fighting familiarity. The *value of play* cannot be underestimated.
- Collage provides a flexible, immersive, and nuanced way to stimulate thought, but you have to be prepared to invest the time.

5.10 Practical lessons learned

As I reflect on the research subject of this case study, I am grateful that I challenged myself to find a new tool to *fight familiarity*. An abstract visualisation of my data in the form of a collage proved to be a very effective analysis method for me. It slowed my thinking, prompted my reflexivity and 'made the familiar strange'.

While the observation of meetings was not unduly time consuming, conversion of the observational notes into acts, synopses and scenes was and required almost immediate attention to ensure observed nuances were appropriately recorded. As time passed, I was surprised by how each observational setting melded into the next and detail would have been lost if I was not vigilant about quickly recording observations. I would suggest to future researchers that they allow time to undertake follow up work within a maximum of 48 hours of observations.

Collage is also, by necessity, time consuming. Commercial felt sets are not tailored to the business setting and need to be customised. This took time, as did the actual cutting out of felt pieces used to form the collages. I would suggest that the researcher needs to accept this as an investment, rather than a cost, and build in blocks of time to undertake the process. I do not recommend passing this task to another as partial value of the process would be lost.

Part way through my study I realised that initial observations had excluded the role of various groups in the policy-making process. They had quietly entered from left of stage. I had to adjust the *cast list*, consider, categorise, and define the power held by these groups and introduce new felt pieces (Appendix C). As the observational phase of the study drew to a close the process of visualising the forms of power held by actors and groups also revealed that the originally identified degrees of formal and informal power were insufficient to explain the observed power networks and complexity within and between groups. This additional reflection and categorisation of observed power resulted from the use of collage and is now reflected in my analysis and is the stimulus for a future paper.

Through this study I learned that it is important to use analysis methods (in my case collage) that allow for expansion and adjustment. As the research progresses and understanding of the research question matures, initially defined analysis categories and definitions may need to be adapted. Your analysis methods need to be designed to allow for adaptation. It is also essential to document any changes and rationale for same as your memory of the detail will fade over time. Organised electronic files with good version control will assist.

Be prepared for criticism! Not everyone in your life will appreciate the value of this data analysis method. The reactions from those close to me ranged from humour and curiosity to a degree of derision. Collage is not a typical undertaking for those in business and management research. You may need to explain the rationale to those around you to aid their understanding. Some, like Chesterton (1936, p. 45) will see 'the value of play' and have their interest piqued. Others may not, but press on as Chesterton proved right! It is an extremely worthwhile and illuminatory process to construct an abstract collage of observational notes, and I would strongly encourage researchers to consider this or similar arts-based data analysis methods.

5.10.1 Section summary

- Record your observations as soon as possible (and in as much detail) after each meeting.
- Be prepared to adapt your analysis method as the study progresses to include new categories of information. Make sure you consider adaptability in your study's design.
- Be sure to document all the processes undertaken and changes made. Version control of files is critical.
- Be prepared for some *curious* inputs from those around you. Collage is not a typical undertaking for those in business and management. You may need to explain the rationale to help those around you understand its purpose.

5.11 Conclusion

This case study has examined my use of collage, an arts-based data analysis technique. Arts-based techniques are being increasingly used in business and management research to bring depth of understanding and insight to complex phenomena. My research study was investigating an acknowledged policy-practice divide in Australian universities. It is commonly held that universities are complex and political institutions driven by power and policy-making is broadly accepted as being a complex process. I needed to find an analysis method to help me embrace this complexity and see what was happening on the observed *social stages*.

The tactile and necessarily time-consuming nature of creating collage slows one's thinking and prompts reflexivity. These are some of the features of collage that make it a good data analysis method for understanding complexity and power and how they play-out in the lived experience. It gave me space to arrive at levels of realisation and understanding that I would not have otherwise and brought a new appreciation of the *value of play* during qualitative data analysis. Observations were records of actor behaviours on a series of *social stages* that were familiar to me. The creation of abstract collages made the familiar strange, however, and challenged assumptions to provide rich insight into the dominant voices, power dynamics and the overall policy-practice divide.

As the impact of power and power dynamics on the policy-practice divide became evident I adapted the study to not only include the entry of unexpected actors, but reflect additionally observed degrees of power, the latter to be the subject of a future paper. Fortunately, the study design allowed for adaptation, so these changes had minimal impact and allowed for deeper observation. I did need to adjust my mindset, however. As the study progressed, I began to resent the number of hours devoted to the data analysis method of collage. Through a process of reflection and self-examination I realised and accepted that the time taken to develop a scale, prepare collage elements and create the actual collages was an investment in slowing my thinking and arriving at a deeper level of understanding to address the research question and future research outputs. Valuable research findings surfaced that were completely attributable to the reflexive and innovative methodology of collage.

5.12 Discussion questions

This paper took the form of a case study with the intended use as a learning tool. It was thus augmented by classroom discussion questions and multiple-choice quiz questions, as provided in Sections 5.12.1 and 5.12.2 below.

5.12.1 Discussion questions

1. What are the benefits and drawbacks of using arts-based methods in complex research contexts?
2. What would you do differently as the researcher if you were adopting this method?
3. Beyond the exploration of power dynamics, can you identify research contexts that may benefit from a *playful* approach?
4. What are the benefits of using tactile data analysis methods over technological solutions?

5.12.2 Multiple-choice quiz questions

1. Collage is *best* described as what type of analysis method
   A Positivist
   B Quantitative
   C Arts-based [CORRECT]
2. What value did Goffman's theory of social interaction bring to the study
   A Adoption of a material approach to data analysis
   B Identifying that behaviour occurs on social stages [CORRECT]
   C Recording observations in a tabular format
3. Which statement best describes the time associated with using collage for analysis
   A Collage is a quick means to generate new insights about data
   B Collage is time consuming, but this is part of the reflection that derives new insights [CORRECT]
   C Collage is time consuming, so it is worthwhile outsourcing the creation of the felts to a research assistant
4. Which statement is most accurate in terms of collage as data analysis
   A The collage is a literal depiction of the observational setting
   B Collage is only useful if you have a consistent set of actors across the observational settings
   C Different types of felt cut-outs could be used to represent concepts beyond levels of power [CORRECT]

5.13 Further reading

The following additional reading resources were provided to case study readers.

Ajibade, BO & Hayes, C 2020, 'An Insight Into Utilising LEGO® Serious Play® to Explore International Student Transitions Into a UK Higher Education Institution', *SAGE Research Methods*, viewed 1 March 2022,<https://methods.sagepub.com/case/lego-serious-play-international-student-transition-uk-higher-ed-institution>.

Zosh, JM, Hopkins, EJ, Jensen, H, Liu, C, Neale, D, Hirsh-Pasek, K, Solis, SL & Whitebread, D 2017, 'Learning through play: a review of the evidence', The LEGO Foundation, viewed 1 March 2022, <https://akcesedukacja.pl/images/dokumenty-pdf/Insight_and_Research/LEGO-Foundation---Learning-through-play---review-of-evidence-2017.pdf>.

Blezinger, D & Van Den Hoven, E 2016, 'Storytelling with objects to explore digital archives', *Proceedings of the European Conference on Cognitive Ergonomics*, pp. 1-7, viewed 20 June 2020, <https://dl.acm.org/doi/pdf/10.1145/2970930.2970944>.

Ciuk, S, Koning, J & Kostera, M 2018, 'Organizational Ethnographies', in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Business and Management Research Methods: History and Traditions*, SAGE Publications Ltd, 55 City Road, London, p. 21 https://sk-sagepub-com.ezproxy.usq.edu.au/reference/the-sage-handbook-of-qualitative-business-and-management-research-methods/i1914.xml>.

Dittmer, ML & Hutzelmann-Persson, MS 2013, 'Where is the heart? A qualitative study on how storytelling and transparency can be used to strengthen an organizational culture', University of Gothenburg, Gothenbur, Sweden.

https://gupea.ub.gu.se/bitstream/handle/2077/33921/gupea_2077_33921_1.pdf?sequence=1

Orskaug, IS & Nesseth, MM 2015, 'The use of storytelling in middle-level management in the case of Telenor', Oslo School of Management, Oslo.

https://kristiania.brage.unit.no/kristiania-xmlui/handle/11250/2357939

The Ruthless Claw: Managerialism's Hidden Influence in University Boards

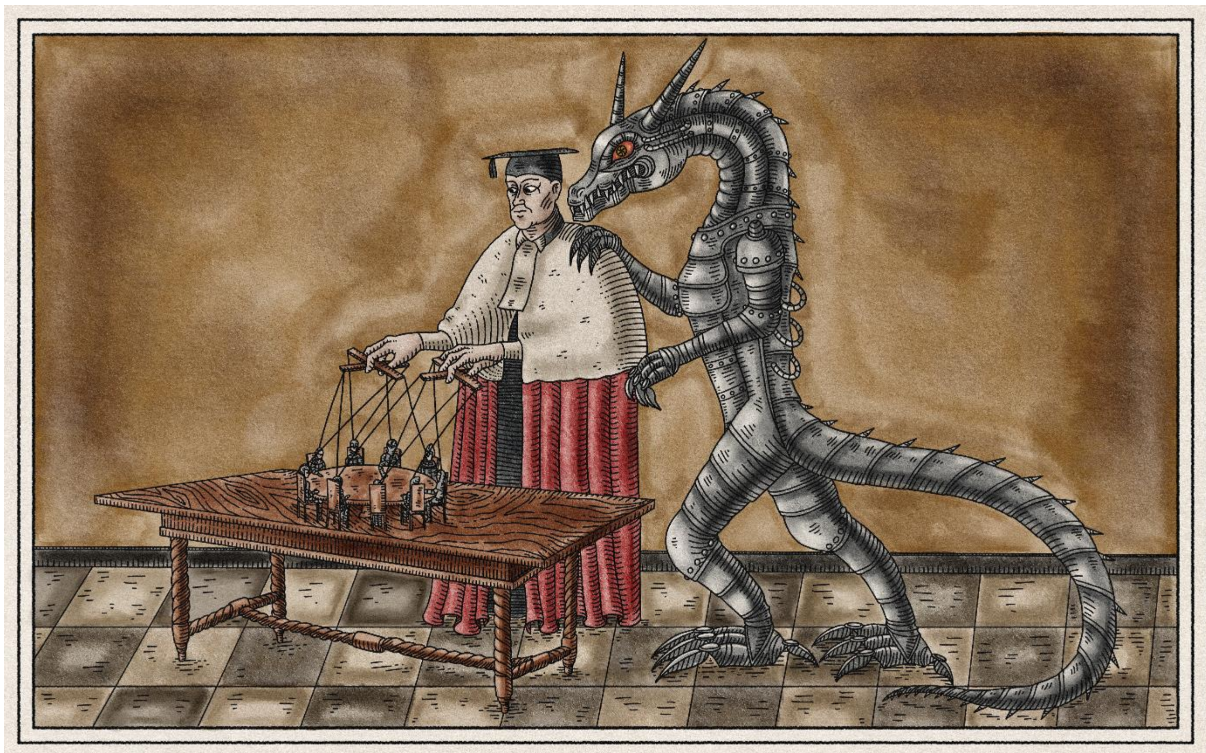

Plate 4: The Ruthless Claw: Managerialism's Hidden Influence in University Boards

Plate 4 Illustration

Plate 4 captures the power dynamics within a university's academic board, highlighting the hidden influence of managerialism on decision-making processes.

The mechanical dragon represents managerialism as something which is created by humans but holds power over them.

It is created in a way which ensures hierarchical decision-making, with managers alone holding authority. Employees retain responsibility while being excluded from the decision-making process. It ensures only managers evaluate performance, asserts management principles as universal, champions profitability and efficiency as virtues, yet is really about sustaining managers and praises managers' decisions as morally commendable. It maintains panoptic surveillance through the possibility of audits and grants senior managers immunity from following the rules applied to everyone else.

Authority figures, such as the vice-chancellor, who appear in control but are actually manipulated by managerialism, are represented by the Marionette puppeteer. The vice-chancellor's role is subjugated by the power of managerialism, turning academic board members into puppets controlled by the ultimate force of managerialism.

The dragon's claw, firmly placed on the vice-chancellor's shoulder, symbolises the ruthless pressure of managerialism, reminding us that even top authority figures are subject to its grip and can be easily discarded if they do not comply.

This illustration suggests that the academic board, intended to uphold academic values, has become a puppet show, with deliberations and decisions ultimately guided by managerialism. The invisible yet powerful presence of managerialism looms over the entire scene, dictating actions and outcomes.

CHAPTER 6 PULLING THE STRINGS: THE APPARATUS OF UNIVERSITY POLICY PRODUCTION

6.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the full manuscript for the third peer reviewed paper developed as part of this doctoral research (Study 3: Qualitative ethnographic analysis). This paper is titled *Pulling the strings: the apparatus of university policy production.* This paper is published in the *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*.

In terms of this thesis, this paper exposes the power dynamics of university governance, identifying a central authority figure who champions and enforces managerial values, thereby shaping the policy landscape. This figure, occupying the highest position within the academic hierarchy, barring the university's top academic governance body and the Australian Government, exerts control over the enunciative field of policy creation. Their influence, both diffuses and directs and manipulates 'power strings' to orchestrate a narrative that systematically side-lines academic input in favour of managerial objectives.

6.2 Key relevance to this thesis

- Power dynamics within university academic governance are revealed
- The role of power in the policy-practice divide is exposed
- The influences of managerial domination are investigated.

6.3 Citation and co-author details

Table 10: Citation details of original Chapter 6 publication

Citation details	Margetts, F, Whitty, SJ & Taylor, B 2024, 'Pulling the strings: the apparatus of university policy production', Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/1360080X.2024.2344131
Writing	Fiona Margetts (80%) Dr S. Jon Whitty (10%); Dr Brad Taylor (10%)
Data collection and analysis	Fiona Margetts (100%)
Quality review	Fiona Margetts (80%) Dr S. Jon Whitty (10%); Dr Brad Taylor (10%)

6.4 Abstract

University governing bodies, especially academic boards, play a crucial role in policy formation. However, due to the predominance of managerial values over academic values in the policy-making process, a persistent divide exists between policy formulation and implementation. This divide results from the marginalisation of academics and the dominance of managerial authority figures within these bodies. Our study investigates the latter to determine the precise Foucauldian apparatus used by authority figures to influence policy-making meetings. Using an innovative arts-based method, we analyse ethnographic vignettes through a Foucauldian lens and transform them into collages depicting the apparatus used by authority figures: Strategic Managerial Monumentalism, Managerial Historical Revisionism, Managerial Discursive Dominance, Managerial Panoptic Surveillance, and Managerial Normalisation. We contend that only a well-defined separation of governance powers can effectively counter the encroachment of managerialism and uphold the democratic representation of academic values in university policies to bridge the policy-practice divide.

Key words: Higher education; institutional policy; policy-practice divide; managerial discursive dominance; managerial normalisation; managerialism.

6.5 Introduction

In the theatre of life, we often find ourselves playing the part of either the puppet or the puppeteer. Our title borrows the term *pulling the strings* from the world of puppetry, as it effectively captures the dynamics of power described by Foucault (1972a, 1982b) and those observed in our research. Foucault's theory of power describes a complex interplay of control and submission pervading all social interactions. Our actions are constantly being shaped by the actions of others (we have our strings pulled), and our own actions also shape the choices of others (we pull the strings). All of us, on the Foucauldian view of power, alternate between being a puppeteer and a puppet, and this often happens without conscious knowledge or intent.

Universities (being part of society) are a site of power relations (Deem et al. 2007). At the core of these relations are institutional policies, often required by government

regulation (Australian Government 2021b) and endowed with formal authority and symbolic power (Bleiklie & Kogan 2007). However, a gap exists between the articulated policies and the practices of academic and professional staff. This is known as the policy-practice divide (Shore & Wright 1999; Margetts, Whitty, et al. 2023) and manifests as resistance to policy requirements by both professional and academic staff. This paper focuses on the experience of the academy; i.e. all academic staff. The existing literature espouses the academy's limited sway within governance entities that are responsible for the development and approval of these policies (Kolsaker 2008). Consequently, institutional policies often project an image of aligning with academic values while, in reality due to the policy-practice divide, they do not (De Boer et al. 2007).

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the policy-practice divide, the literature calls for empirical research into the power dynamics present in university governance practices, specifically academic boards and their equivalents (Rowlands 2013c). This is the aim of this paper. Based on an ethnographic study of the process of policy development over several academic board meetings, we combine a Foucauldian analysis of power relations with the arts-based technique of collage (Margetts, van der Hoorn, et al. 2023) to visualise the power relations at play. This allowed us to capture how power relations were established and how they influenced the discourse that unfolded on what was akin to a theatrical stage during the 'production' of a new policy by an academic board.

Our findings reveal a stage filled with actors who, depending on the circumstances, exert control or are controlled. Puppeteers exercise power when pulling the strings of others, but their behaviour is structured, enabled, and constrained by internal and external pressures which serve to reinforce the values of managerialism. While it is known that university academic boards produce institutional policies that reflect managerial rather than academic values (Giroux 2002; Shattock 2005), our findings shed light on the power mechanisms and strategies employed by senior figures to influence the actions of others and steer the course toward managerial outcomes.

6.6 Academic boards and the policy-practice divide

Numerous scholars have analysed the policy-practice divide (Trowler 2002c; Morley 2010; Freeman 2014a, 2014c; Harvey & Kosman 2014; Singh et al. 2014; McCaffery 2018; Maassen & Stensaker 2019; Baak et al. 2021; Skerritt et al. 2021; Margetts, Whitty, et al. 2023). In higher education, this divide is frequently attributed to two factors: the exclusion of academic staff from the policy-making process (Sabri 2010), which leads to resistance to policy in practice (Becher & Trowler 2001; Petersen 2009; Raaper 2016; Jayadeva et al. 2021; Margetts, Whitty, et al. 2023), and the dominance of senior actors over the operation and decision-making processes of the policy-making bodies (Rowlands 2013d).

Empirical research suggests this dominance takes the form of governance and organisational structural change leading to tighter 'vertical steering' and 'tightly coupled' organisations through which the move to 'organisational policies' 'has been less successful' (Maassen & Stensaker 2019, pp. 456,65). On these views we would posit the modern university has been captured by a managerialist ideology which has coercively excluded traditional academic values. Additionally, these portrayals potentially oversimplify the issue and may disregard the intricate interplay of power dynamics, ideologies, and latent structures. These elements intricately shape the policy process 'behind the scenes' to assert influence and control. If these subtle forms of power remain in place, the quest for greater academic involvement in decision-making may prove futile.

A key governance mechanism of all Australian universities is the academic board (also called academic senate or academic council) (Rowlands 2017a). As the case study university is Australian-based, we use the term 'academic board'. These boards are perceived to serve several purposes, including the maintenance of academic standards and, particularly within the case study university, the review and provision of advice on the development and effectiveness of policy relevant to teaching and research.

Typically, academic boards consist of members appointed by the university council and those elected by academic staff (Dooley, A. H. 2007). They are often conceived as an independent body that functions to balance the authority of university councils and

executive management, despite these other entities also maintaining a presence on the board. In this regard, academic boards are considered 'the embodiment of bicameral governance' (Dooley, A. H. 2007, p. 5), hailed as 'the voice of the academy' (Winchester 2007, p. 1).

6.7 Theoretical background

6.7.1 Power

We often think of power in terms of conscious and overt control. This view aligns with many influential accounts of power in the social sciences, which define power as the ability to make others behave in ways they would prefer not to (Dahl 1957), or to exclude others from decision processes (Bachrach & Baratz 1962). This type of power is no doubt important, but power can also be exerted in more subtle ways (Lukes 2004). Foucault provides a useful framework for conceptualising and identifying these less visible forms of power.

At the most general level, Foucault sees power as a mode of action which does not act directly on other people, but rather on their actions. Power, in contrast to violence, does not aim to directly move or change the physical body (e.g., by physically moving a person into a jail cell) or other elements of the physical world (e.g., by locking the cell door). The threat of force may be an instrument of power, but the defining feature of power is the attempt to influence behaviour (Foucault 1982b). Foucault illustrates this concept through the dual meanings of the word 'conduct': one meaning being to guide or direct, and the other referring to an individual's manner of behaving (Foucault 1982b, p. 789). When we exercise power, we essentially conduct (i.e. guide) someone else's conduct (i.e. behaviour); we pull their strings.

Power assumes diverse forms. As the 'total structure of actions' used to influence others 'it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely' (Foucault 1982b, p. 789). Power is not something possessed by individuals, but rather arises from collective social interactions. 'Power exists only when it is put into action' (Foucault 1982b, p. 788).

Power does not simply flow downwards from rulers to the ruled but is a force exercised by everyone over everyone else. Power is a fundamental aspect of social existence, not an anomaly to be removed in the pursuit of justice. Thus, when we claim in this study that one actor exercises power this should not be taken as a condemnation of their actions. Since power exists in all social relations, one cannot criticise a social relation simply by pointing out that power is involved. This is not to say that *particular configurations* of power cannot be criticised; only by identifying power relations can they be questioned and resisted (Foucault 1982 pp. 791-792). From a normative perspective, our concern is focused on enduring and oppressive patterns of power, not power as such (Foucault 1982b, pp. 791-2; Hindess 2006, p. 116).

For Foucault, power can exist without conscious intent or the awareness of those on either end of the strings (Akram et al. 2015, pp. 356-7). This crucial insight shapes our analysis. When we claim that one actor exercises power over another or perpetuates power through processes like monumentalisation, we are not claiming that this occurs with deliberate awareness or intention. Instead, following Foucault, we claim that actors are influenced by the discourse and institutional context in which they are embedded. This influence often elicits actions that inadvertently reinforce existing power (Foucault 1982b, pp. 30-3; Lukes 2021).

6.7.2 Enunciative fields

To provide a framework for our analysis of power relations within the context of an academic board, we must acknowledge Foucault's *archaeological* approach (Foucault 1972a), which seeks to unearth the concealed structures that define the actions available to actors in a specific setting. These structures establish the prerequisite conditions for action, including the exercise of power. Foucault calls these concealed structure 'discursive formations' (1972a, p. 34) or 'enunciative fields' (1972a, p. 57). We opt to use the latter term.

The enunciative field is constituted by the interaction of 'statements' and 'monuments' (Foucault 1972a, pp. 7, 89-98). Statements are not mere utterances; rather, they combine language and symbols to evoke emotional reactions or create monuments. Statements direct our thoughts and behaviours to serve the interests of the power

structure. Consequently, the enunciative field emerges as a structure that sets the limits for what can and cannot legitimately be stated.

Monuments are not passive relics of the past, but rather tangible evidence or material remnants of past discourses, such as documents or other artefacts and structures, that can actively shape our perceptions of the past, present, and future through the historical process (Foucault 1972a, pp. 50-63). Monuments serve as crucial anchors within discourses, providing coherence and stability, and influence the boundaries of discourse, manifesting in various forms such as statements within documents, architectural arrangements of meeting spaces that highlight preferred behaviours, and institutional frameworks that dictate what should be discussed.

Foucault (1972a, p. 137) argues that history is a tool wielded by power entities, as it is the process by which they select significant monuments and use them to form new statements about the present. He describes the practice of history as 'historical retro-version[ing]' (Foucault 1978, p. 150), in which an authority figure constructs a truth of the past by strategically summoning monuments into the present to influence our thoughts and actions. Consequently, monuments can serve as potent historical symbols and play a crucial role in shaping collective memory. By evoking certain narratives more than others, monuments determine which narratives endure and obscure an alternative historical perspective, a process known as historicising or historical revisionism (Krasner 2019).

To explain how the enunciative field relates to power, we draw an analogy from dramaturgy (Goffman 1959): imagine the enunciative field as a theatrical stage, complete with props, costumes, lighting and sound design, as well as the rigging and machinery of the backstage area. This space, or field, as Foucault calls it, functions as an apparatus that shapes and regulates what can be said and done (enunciable), while at the same time acting as a mechanism that restricts or prevents other possible performances from occurring. Foucault (1972a) argues that if one holds the controls over an enunciative field – the apparatus – not only can one control what is said and done, but one can also craft what is recognised as historical knowledge, which exerts a profound influence on our interpretations of both the past and present and acts as a monument or guide to our future actions.

Foucault (1972a) believed that discourse unfolds within an enunciative field guided by established norms, similar to a theatrical production in which actors adhere to scripts and cues to convey a narrative. In this context, a discourse can be viewed as a choreography of ideas, concepts, and subjects that shapes our understanding and interpretation of the world; a stage on which power struggles are enacted through a series of interconnected statements and monuments.

6.8 Theoretical framework – A Foucauldian analysis of university managerialism

The discourse of contemporary university policy has come to be dominated by the assumptions and values of managerialism. In essence, statements, monuments and practices are managerial because they exaggerate or overemphasise (at the expense of other functions) the efficacy and power of 'the manager' of an organisation (Klikauer 2023a).

In higher education, academics experience the effects of managerialism through the implementation of 'absurd' policy which does not cohere with academic values or the day-to-day realities of teaching and research (Marginson & Considine 2000; Deem 2004; Marginson 2013; Webb 2014; Shattock et al. 2019; Croucher & Lacy 2020; Ball 2021; Margetts, Whitty, et al. 2023, p. 1). Managerialism in the contemporary university emphasises neoliberal value and business-like operations, reducing academics to service providers and students to consumers (Marginson & Considine 2000; Winter et al. 2000; Morley 2001; Naidoo & Jamieson 2005; Anderson 2008; Kinman 2014; Warren 2017; Bottrell & Keating 2019; Connell 2019; Bosetti & Heffernan 2021; Wheeldon et al. 2023a). It also centralises operations and installs an audit culture of performance monitoring which privileges quantifiable outcome measures (Deem & Brehony 2005; Parker et al. 2019; Jones et al. 2020). This undermines the academic values of knowledge-seeking, open and critical discourse, and collegial decision-making (Wheeldon et al. 2023b, 2023c, 2023a). Of note is that senior academics do take on academic leadership roles and may lead policy development. This complication is acknowledged but is outside the scope of this paper.

As we emphasised earlier, power in the Foucauldian sense is an inherent part of social life. We argue, however, that managerial discourse in contemporary universities has produced a stable and repressive set of power relations. To provide a theoretical framework for our analysis, we take a Foucauldian lens to university managerialism an identify its basic commitments. We call this *the managerialist charter*. It can be divided into three Foucauldian elements: the monumental, the historical, and power relations.

6.8.1 The managerialist charter

6.8.1.1 Monumental beliefs

Monumental beliefs ascribe monumental significance to the manager as a subject and emphasise their power and authority.

- **Managerial hierarchy as the sole source of decisions:** Only managers organised in hierarchical structures have decision-making authority and the decisions of senior managers take precedence (Klikauer 2015; 2023a, p. 78).
- **Implementation, not influence**: Although never explicitly stated, employees are only responsible for implementing decisions and should have very little input in decision-making processes; it can be beneficial if they believe they do however (Goh 2017; Margetts, Whitty, et al. 2023).
- **Intra-hierarchical evaluation**: Performance evaluations flow from top down, with senior managers evaluating those who directly report to them; this reinforces the power dynamics and preserves the hierarchy (Fleming 2021).
- **Privileged voices and spaces**: Managers are solely responsible for certain organisational tasks, and their voices should be privileged through various means (Locke & Spender 2011), such as the architectural layout of offices and meeting spaces (Våland & Georg 2018).

6.8.1.2 Historical beliefs

Historical beliefs maintain and uphold the universality, virtue, and moral rectitude of the manager as a necessary and beneficial force to be valued by society over time.

- **Universality of managerial capabilities:** Only managers possess the sophisticated skills and abilities necessary to run organisations (Locke &

Spender 2011). Their capabilities are universally applicable to all types of organisations because differences in the nature of the work are irrelevant (Klikauer 2023b).

- **Managerial virtues**: Profitability is a virtue (Gare 2022). And for the purpose of maximising profit through cost reduction, efficiency is also virtuous (Pollitt 2016). However, the greatest virtue is to respect and not question (Courpasson et al. 2012) the decisions of superiors (Klikauer 2023a, pp. 176, 201).
- **Morally commendable**: Managers play a vital role in the operation of organisations by making decisions that affect the lives of many (Mirvis 2014); consequently, managers as moral agents have the right to manage (Shepherd 2018) and should be commended and remunerated for their efforts (Braverman 1998).

6.8.1.3 Power relation beliefs

Power relation beliefs highlight the establishment and perpetuation of the hierarchical managerial system, with an emphasis on power concentration at senior levels and differential treatment between levels. These beliefs also emphasise surveillance, control, and senior-level immunity.

- **Panopticon of managerial hierarchy**: It is only permitted for superior managers to appoint subordinate managers (Diefenbach 2013). Consequently, managerial values permeate organisational layers, resulting in the formation of a surveillance network in which individuals serve as both the subject and the agent of power.
- **Senior immunity**: Senior managers are exempt from the rules that apply to their subordinates and employees (Magee & Galinsky 2008). Power is exercised through a series of subtle micro-practices, such as ignoring meeting protocol and speaking without directing comments through the chair.

6.9 The case

Like other Australian universities, our case university operates within an increasingly regulated environment (Marginson & Considine 2000) and its constituting act requires that the university's council establish an academic board, determine the membership and decide who is the chairperson. The university's academic freedom policy is the focus policy of this research study. It investigates the development process by an academic board and its self-appointed working group, as tasked by the university council in response to a request by the Australian Government's Minister for Education. The request was that all universities develop an academic freedom policy (Department of Education 2021) and base it on a model code (French 2019). This was subsequently followed by the 'Review of the Adoption of the Model Code on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom (Walker 2020).

6.10 Methodology

We combine the arts-based method of collage (Mannay 2010; Margetts, van der Hoorn, et al. 2023) and Foucauldian analysis to unearth and visualise power relations based on ethnographic observation. As Foucault (1978, p. 86) puts it: power 'mask[s] a substantial part of itself' and 'is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms.' By using collage to visualise the Foucauldian apparatus, we can reveal the mechanisms of managerial power within a policy-making body.

Following collage techniques of Margetts, van der Hoorn, et al. (2023), ethics approval was obtained and the policy's development was observed through ten meetings of an academic board. Field notes were gathered and transformed into corresponding vignettes provided in the findings (below). This provided a detailed and rich description of specific moments and interactions, including nuances, contextual information, and emotions, especially those that portrayed the social dynamics and power relations at play. By subjecting each vignette to our Foucauldian questions (Appendix 5), each vignette was transformed into a reflexive collage (Figures 9 to 18) and assigned a thematic Act and Scene emulating the structure of a performance. Each Act represents a meeting that was observed, for a total of six selected meetings that fundamentally correspond to the policy development phases (Althaus et al. 2018); there is no Act 2

because no developments were reported at that meeting. Scenes visually depict the progression of activities within each Act and present the Act's narrative from beginning to end.

As part of the collage-making procedure, we derive questions from Foucault (1972a) to analyse the language, rhetoric, and behaviour portrayed in the vignettes. The questions sought statements that reflected and reinforced managerial values, investigated the power dynamics wielded by authority figures in the meetings, and probed how these figures framed discussions and decision-making processes. In addition, they investigated how dissenting voices or alternative perspectives were silenced or discouraged, and how authority figures controlled the enunciative field by applying the power they held to influence the perception of issues and decisions to align with managerial values. To improve the visual representation of the findings, we created collage iconography (Appendix 4).

6.11 Findings

Following the creation of the collages, we were able to apply our theoretical framework and search for the manifestation of managerialist beliefs: the monumental (monumentalising), the historical (historicising), and the power relations. Our findings, presented in Acts and Scenes, reveals each of these and we draw attention to the relevant icons in brackets.

6.11.1 Act 0 Scene 0 – Behind the puppeteers' curtains

Figure 9: Act 0 Scene 0 – Behind the puppeteers' curtains

This vignette was based on post-hoc policy development insights. The collage was developed retrospectively to reflect the stage, props and policy development structures. The management of academic board meetings involves subtle mechanisms through which managerialist values are reinforced. These performances create the impression of open and inclusive leadership for the university's highest academic governance body (Group 4) and the Australian Government (Group 7 and Actor 29).

The spatial arrangement of the physical meeting chamber monumentalises the managerial hierarchy by positioning senior members in the inner circle equipped with microphones (Figure 9, left panel). Voting is generally conducted through the raising of physical hands, making conduct visible. The board's executive committee (Group 8) controls the agenda (purple book) for all meetings. This allows them to shape the enunciative field by favouring in-person meetings and controlling the topics and motions under discussion. These factors allow senior managers to exercise power over others in the meeting chamber to garner their support. The appearance of collective decision-making is maintained, but in reality, the stage is set to steer the board towards managerial outcomes.

The transition to online Zoom meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic (Figure 9, right panel) temporarily disrupted this staging and challenged the hierarchy. A meeting

protocol (purple document) was developed to *guide* meeting behaviours, including the muting of microphones unless asked to speak and use of the 'raise hand' button if seeking to speak. During these meetings, only the individual administering the vote (Actor 7, committee support person) could see individual polling choices, reducing the pressure to support the motions put to the meeting by the chair (Actor 4) from the agenda (purple book). Meanwhile, the chat function allowed members to communicate privately with one another.

6.11.2 Act 1 Scene 2 - Power plays and discursive dominance

Figure 10: Act 1 Scene 2 - Power plays and discursive dominance

When Actor 5 seeks permission to speak and questions the policy consultation process (question mark icon), Actors 1 and 6 quickly intervene, bypass the chair (Actor 4) (red face icon) to defend the approach and refer to standard process and the authority of Group 4 (white line icon) to ensure the policy moves forward. This disregard of meeting protocol reveals the immunity of senior managers and clearly signals a gap between 'de facto' power and 'de jure' authority within the context of the meeting. The capacity to intervene at will suppresses alternative viewpoints and prioritises managerial perspectives.

Actor 6's defence of the work of Group 4 also involves historicising. Past events are interpreted favourably to justify the approach and are, like all actions in academic board meetings, recorded in the meeting minutes. This has the effect of validating actions and

alters the context of future meetings, shaping the enunciative field and creating discursive resources which can later be drawn on. Actor 6 is thus creating monuments which bolster their future authority and influence (monarch icon and dark red *power* hat).

6.11.3 Act 3 Scene 1 - Carrying the torch for managerialism

Figure 11: Act 3 Scene 1 – Carrying the torch for managerialism

Actor 6 is absent from this scene, and they are not explicitly mentioned. Nevertheless, the managerial values they had previously expressed and monumentalised were carried forward by Actors 4 and 1. Actor 4 (chair) referred to Group 4's role in approving the policy and Actor 1 (working group chair) used authoritative and persuasive language to emphasise the significance of the policy, adding weight to this by referring to numerous validating documentary artefacts, including government documents, legislation, the policies of other universities, the university's policy repository and previous policy drafts (document icons).

In Foucauldian terms, this scene illustrates the intricate linkage between knowledge, power, and the enunciative field. Documentary artefacts like legislation, policies, scientific findings, and expert judgments are perceived as objective knowledge and authority. However, their impact on behaviour is contingent on their application within

specific social contexts, thus serving as a tool of power. Here, it is important to remind ourselves that power in the Foucauldian sense is omnipresent and often benign. The use of evidence and arguments to put one's case forward is an exercise of power in the sense that it attempts to influence the behaviour of others, but it is also in an obvious sense consistent with academic values. The fact that power is being exercised here is not itself a problem. However, since access to the instruments of power is unevenly distributed, the result may be one of dominance.

Three prerequisites underscore Actor 1's invocation. First, the availability of authoritative documentary artefacts within the enunciative field. Second, Actor 1's knowledge in procuring and utilising these artefacts. Lastly, the audience's acceptance of these artefacts as proof of the statement made.

In this context, the use of artefacts with epistemic or normative force exemplifies 'ideational power,' as defined by Carstensen and Schmidt (2016, pp. 326-7). This form of power involves the use of evidence and persuasion to validate an idea or compel an audience to accept an idea, even without complete conviction (Carstensen & Schmidt 2016).

The material conditions under which statements are made play a pivotal role. According to Foucault (1972a), statements must be understood in relation to their discursive environment and the material conditions of their existence. For instance, a senior manager or a working group chair derives authority from their title, which also presents opportunities to gain knowledge of available discursive resources (Margetts, Whitty, et al. 2023). The other board members, who are working academics, may not have the resources or incentives to acquire such knowledge, thus emphasising the unequal distribution of power.

In one sense, the uneven distribution of knowledge and the subsequent variance in influence should come as no surprise and should not necessarily raise objections. Particularly in academic settings, the strength of arguments should ideally steer debates. However, a concern arises when those with greater access to authoritative knowledge wield it to advance a particular set of values and interpret evidence in a manner that

favours their perspective, potentially leading to the dominance of their viewpoint within the discourse.

6.11.4 Act 3 Scene 4 - How to speak when kings are present

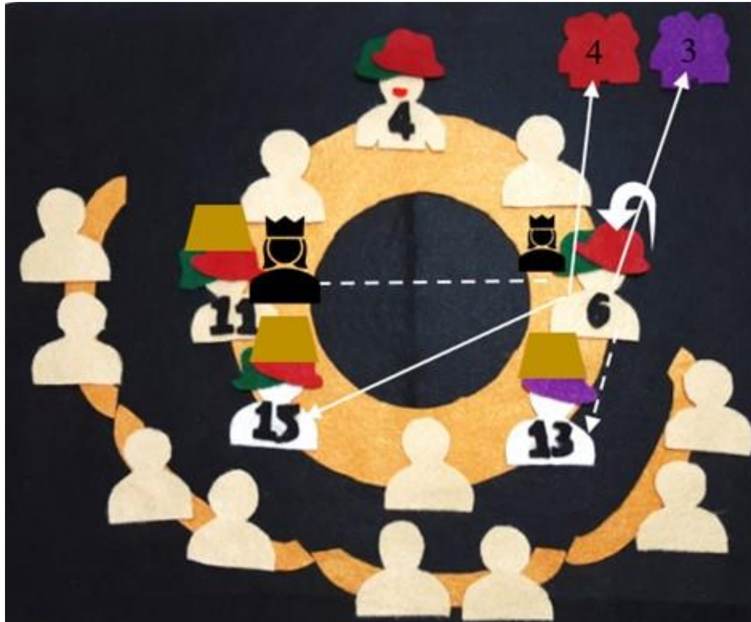

Figure 12: Act 3 Scene 4 - How to speak when kings are present

This meeting reveals a change in power dynamics with the presence of Actor 11 (large monarch and gold hat), a member of the powerful Group 4. Actor 6 had previously disregarded meeting protocol in bypassing the chair but now follows protocol. Actor 6's deference to and praise for Group 4 and its members (Actors 11, 13 and 15) (solid and dashed line icons) can be interpreted as further monumentalisation of the group.

The previous disregard by Actor 6 of meeting protocol contrasts starkly with their current behaviour of waiting to be invited to speak by the chair (Actor 4). This can be interpreted as historicism where present conduct influences perceptions of history when Group 4 is present. In terms of revealing power relations, Actor 6's altered behaviour in the presence of Group 4 members indicates that Group 4 possesses substantial power (dark red group icon), with a dominant figure (Actor 6) now having their strings pulled.

6.11.5 Act 3 Scene 6 - The clock is ticking

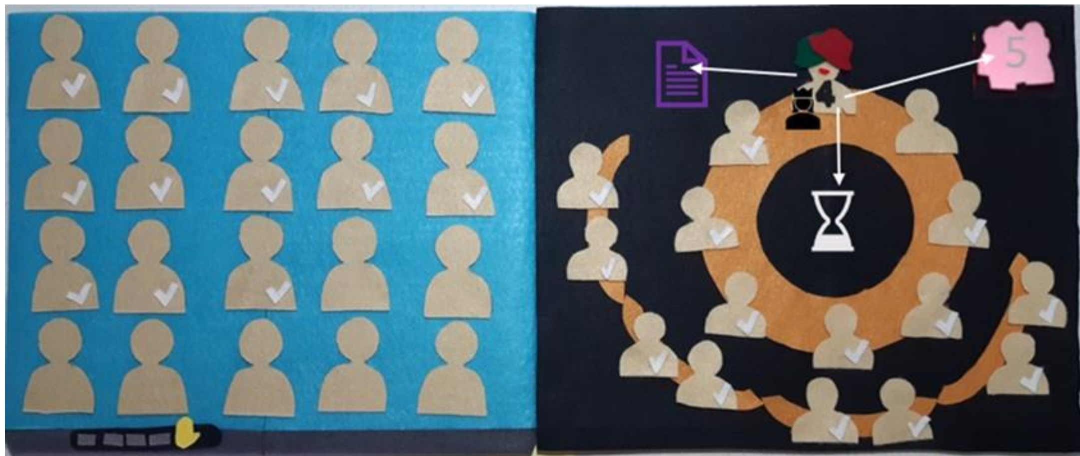

Figure 13: Act 3 Scene 6 - The clock is ticking

In terms of power relations Actor 6 seemingly relinquishes discourse control and voting to Actor 4 (chair) however Actor 4 is guided by an agenda (purple book), set by a group comprised of actors who form the board, including Actor 6. As previously mentioned, this group is comprised of senior leaders and can decide what is and is not up for discussion and decision, and the sequence of those considerations. They formulate the motions that form monuments and manifest as the second dimension of power.

Actor 4 also engages the pressure of time and political pressure from Group 7 (Australian Government), tactics which from a Foucauldian perspective steer members to take a certain course of action – to vote in favour of the motion, which they obligingly did (white ticks).

As discussed above, power relations in the meetings had already narrowed the range of allowable discourse and discouraged contrary views. The additional discursive constraints of the agenda and the time pressure further limited the range of possibilities and steered the process towards the preferred outcome.

6.11.6 Act 4 Scene 2 – Back on top of the managerial agenda

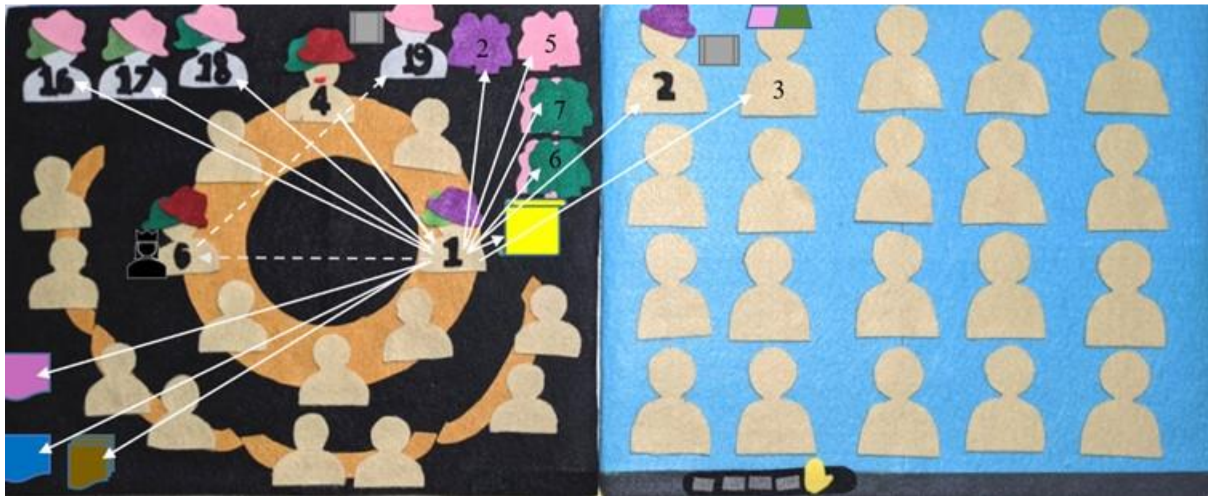

Figure 14: Act 4 Scene 2 - Back on top of the managerial agenda

Actor 1 enthusiastically expresses gratitude to Actor 6 (dashed white line icon), monumentalising and reinforcing the authority of the latter. Actor 1 again invokes the authority of several powerful groups (Groups 2, 5 and Group 7) and documents to affirm the importance of the policy. They particularly referred to the work of Group 7 (Australian Government) in reviewing the implementation status of academic freedom policies in Australia's universities. Actor 1 also emphasised past achievements and endorsed past strategies in the policy process, historicising to put a positive spin on history as recorded in the meeting minutes and collective memory.

6.11.7 Act 4 Scene 5 - Verbal jousting: Pressing towards the managerial goal

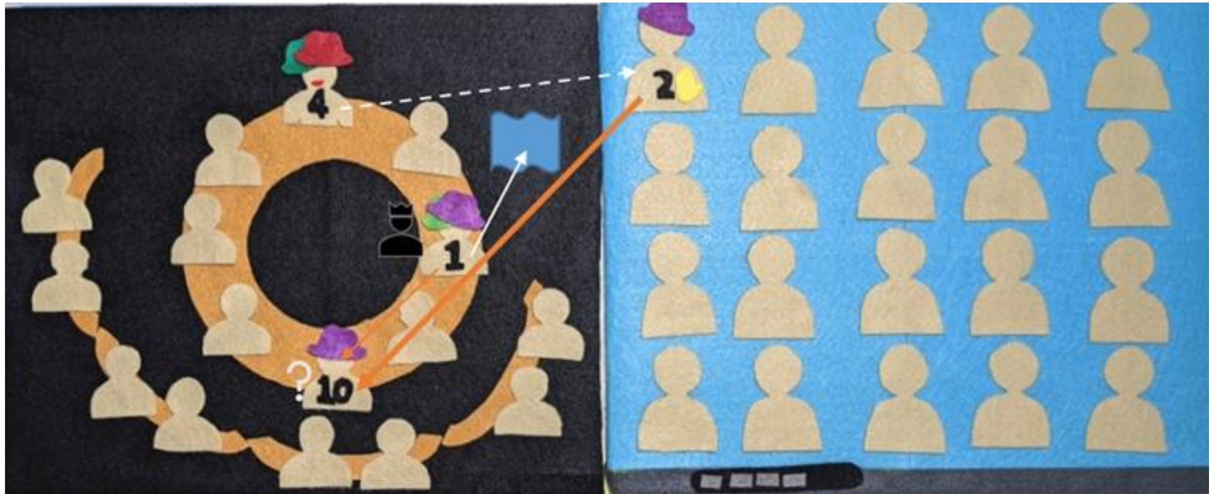

Figure 15: Act 4 Scene 5 Verbal jousting: Pressing towards the managerial goal

Actor 4 invites questions from the meeting in this scene. A specific and potentially challenging question (question mark icon) is posed by Actor 10 (elected member) about the policy. Actor 1 (working group chair) responds dismissively and poses a rhetorical question. Actor 2 (working group member) seeks permission to speak through Actor 4 (chair) and provides a substantive response to the question along with some additional background to reassure Actor 10.

The contrasting discursive styles of Actors 1 and 2 are noteworthy. Actor 1 transparently asserts power through condescending and dismissive language (fine orange line icon), while Actor 2 uses knowledge and accepted forms of conduct (thick orange line) to placate the same potential challenge. Both are pursuing the same end of purporting to upholding the legitimacy and quality of the policy process, but with very different apparatuses of power. For Foucault (1982b, p. 789), power is the 'total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions' and can thus take many forms. Actor 1 incites while Actor 2 seduces.

Additionally, Actor 2's alternative strategies indicate a challenge to the power of Actor 1, hinting at the ongoing struggle for influence within the institution. There were no further questions in response to Actor 4's invitation.

6.11.8 Act 4 Scene 7 - Power plays and polite pretences on the board stage

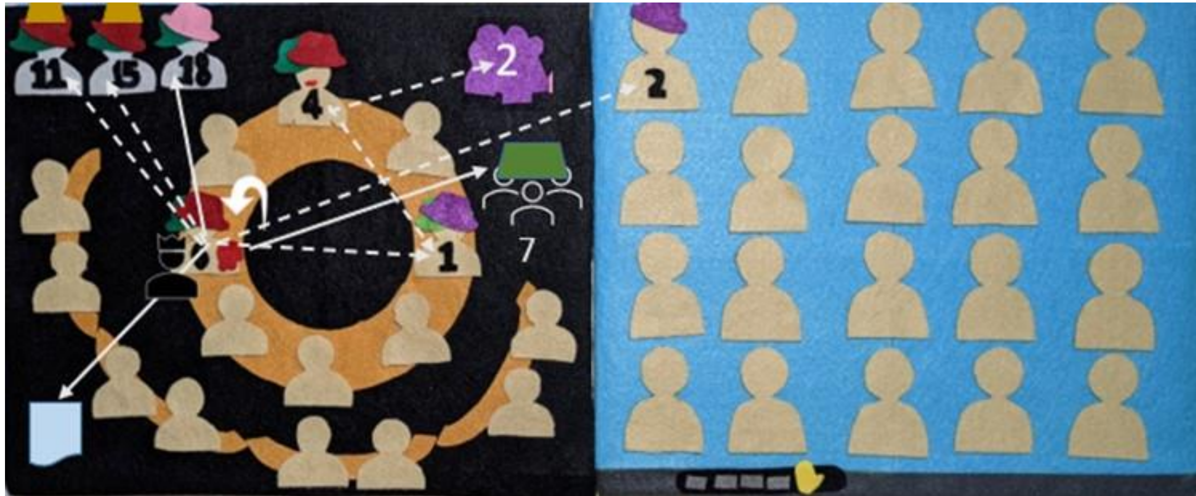

Figure 16: Act 4 Scene 7 - Power plays and polite pretences on the board stage

Actor 6 speaks without directing comments through Actor 4 (chair) and expresses profuse appreciation to Actors 1 and 2 and acknowledges the contribution of powerful members of the governing body (Actors 11 and 15) in the policy's development (dashed white lines). The possible risk of negative feedback from Group 7 (the Australian Government) is simultaneously averted and Actor 6 notes they have had input (curved arrow) into an external report (light blue document). All other members remain silent except for Actor 4 who extends additional thanks to the Group 2 (working group) and notes that endorsement and recommendation of the policy to the governing body at the previous meeting had been a positive outcome.

6.11.9 Act 5 Scene 3 – Management to the rescue

Figure 17: Act 5 Scene 3 - Management to the rescue

Actor 6 speaks without directing comments through Actor 4 (chair) to update the meeting on the policy's progress and alert members to some possible negative attention from Group 9 (external media). Members are reassured that any reports of delayed completion are erroneous - unlike some members of Group 10 (all other Australian universities) - and the policy will be submitted by the required deadline (hourglass) set by Actor 29 (Australian Government minister/red gavel), as earlier advised by Actor 6 to Actor 29 and Group 11 (external review panel). The meeting is updated on plans for implementation and gratitude is once again extended to all contributing parties.

This situation presented an opportunity for Actor 6 to monumentalise themselves as a source of power and authority. Their display of power was in their uninvited update on recent information circulated by the media and reassurances to the meeting that the university was compliant and not on the *bad list*. Here Actor 6 monumentalises their ability to handle challenges effectively and protect the university's reputation – whereas the academic board could not. This intervention was a form of historising, as Actor 6 positions themselves as a problem-solver and saviour, a role that might historically have been attributed to the board.

6.11.10 Act 6 Scene 2 - Silent strings and unspoken commands: A masterclass in academic puppetry

Figure 18: Act 6 Scene 2 - Silent strings and unspoken commands: A masterclass in academic puppetry

Enter for the first time, Actor 20 (ex officio member of the board and governing body) who expertly influences Actor 4 (chair) to provide an update on an external meeting related to Actor 4's role as chair; i.e. Group 12 (national academic board chairs). A somewhat miffed Actor 4 quickly recovers, provides the requested update and takes the opportunity to congratulate the case study university on its satisfactory development of an academic freedom policy, incidentally noting that other members of Group 10 (all other Australian universities) were not so well placed. Actor 4 notes that the case study university had met the timeframe set by Actor 29 (Australian Government minister/red gavel), and referred to the roles of Group 9 (external media) and Group 7 (Australian Government). They again express thanks to Group 2 (working group) for helping achieve this outcome.

Here we see both power relations and monumentalism, as Actor 20 directs Actor 4 (chair) to shape the discussion in a particular way, demonstrating Actor 20's use of power and authority to strategically influence the outcome of the meeting. Historicising is evident in the crafting of a positive perspective by Actors 4 and 20, limiting any receptivity to diverse viewpoints. This subtle act reminds and revises the meeting's perception of power dynamics and decision-making processes. The scene highlights the influence of perhaps previously hidden *higher authorities* in the strategic decision-

making processes within the academic board, challenging any previous assumptions members may have had about its powers.

6.12 Discussion

Our aim in this paper has been to identify the Foucauldian apparatus (the strings) that senior managerial figures used to influence academic board. This is important because when a person in a position of institutional authority is involved in the policy-making process, but not presiding over it using direct governing methods (Bacchi & Goodwin 2016), they can strategically direct and control the enunciative field through a variety of means.

The ideal of the academic board is to provide an academic voice into institutional policy development. If academic boards provide the appearance, but not the reality, of academic inclusion in this process they may in fact reinforce rather than moderate the power of managers and the dominance of managerial values. Much like 'managed democracies' use rigged elections to provide the appearance of, but not the reality, of democracy (Wegren & Kinitzer 2007), an academic board which is 'managed' toward managerial outcomes may in fact disempower those it claims to represent. Managed academic inclusion may legitimate managerial outcomes by obscuring the power relations which give rise to them.

This management of inclusion need not involve any malicious intent to undermine the independence of the board. On the Foucauldian account, power is omnipresent and is often exercised without any conscious awareness or intent through established practises, norms, and discourses which define the boundaries of accepted knowledge and behaviour. Power in this sense is not a purely negative force. Although it can be repressive, power is also a precondition for any form of knowledge and collective action.

Using a Foucauldian lens to create collages that visually represent key moments in the policy-making process, we have identified five elements of the apparatus, which we refer to as: Strategic Managerial Monumentalism, Managerial Historical Revisionism,

Managerial Discursive Dominance, Managerial Panoptic Surveillance, Managerial Normalisation.

First: authority figures strategically build managerial monuments through discursive framing (Fairhurst & Sarr 1996) by employing emotionally charged statements (Foucault 1972a). This strategic managerial monument building is accomplished by fashioning statements that invoke higher sources of authority to influence their perception and significance. These statements are transcribed into written records, thereby enshrining them as historical monuments, such as agendas and documented minutes of meetings. It also simultaneously prohibits the building of alternative monuments that may challenge or oppose their viewpoint (Mettler 2016). This strategic act of monument building by an authoritative figure serves not only to define current priorities but also lays the groundwork that will, in due course, wield considerable influence in shaping the board's history. We coin the term *Strategic Managerial Monumentalism* to describe the deliberate building of enduring monuments by an authority figure to consolidate their influence and control over a body over time.

Second: authority figures deliver interpretive statements about existing monuments, thereby reinforcing the prescribed interpretations, and controlling the narrative. While this practise of delivering interpretive statements about existing monuments is known as *Historical Revisionism* or memory politics (Wulf 1989), our study revealed how an authority figure performs this by utilising statements that invoke currently standing managerial monuments or higher-ranking managerial authority figures. This practice, which we call *Managerial Historical Revisionism*, enables them to reconfigure the present within the context of historical monuments to suit their purposes, to remind participants of what was important and by inference what was not, and to influence narratives to maintain or shift power dynamics as required. It is also a method for creating the appearance of consistency and coherence in their actions. Act 3 Scene 1 was an example of this, as Actor 1 emphasised the policy's historical significance by referencing past efforts and developments, thereby justifying its significance within the university's larger story, and reinforcing its monument-like status and authority.

Third: from a Foucauldian perspective, our analysis uncovers a phenomenon we term *Managerial Discursive Dominance* in the behaviour of authority figures. This

manifestation involves a strategic exercise of managerial control over discourse. By intertwining language with their authoritative physical presence, they construct themselves as an institutional monument *within* the designated enunciative field. This monument resonates with the essence of their language, reinforcing their identity and position as a symbol of authority within the institution. Within this framework, an authority figure's discourse becomes a tool for asserting power and shaping discourse itself, aligning with Foucault's (1972a) insights into the intricate interplay between power, discourse, and the establishment of monuments within the enunciative field.

Fourth: authority figures employ Foucault's panopticon-derived *Managerial Panoptic Surveillance*. This is accomplished by devising means to make the membership of such bodies feel as though they are under constant surveillance by authority figures, especially during voting and preamble discussions. To avoid potential consequences, individuals are more likely to conform to the dominant discourse when they are aware they are being observed.

During our observations, we determined that it was preferred that members be physically present during voting and discussion preceding a vote. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, virtual meetings presented difficulties for this mechanism, as they were unable to continue in the panoptic spatial configuration of the meeting chamber, and the ability to monitor voting and member interactions diminished. Due to an insistence on the resumption of in-person meetings, the concept of Managerial Panoptic Surveillance was revealed more explicitly, highlighting its role in maintaining control within the enunciative field.

Fifth: when viewed through a Foucauldian lens, our investigation reveals a final layer of observation – *Managerial Normalisation* - in which authority figures uphold communication guidelines, behavioural standards, and interaction models that align with their managerial beliefs, but believe they are exempt from these norms. In our study, while board members waited to be acknowledged by the chair before speaking, Actor 6 almost constantly did not follow the protocol.

This reinforcement of existing hierarchical power dynamics not only regulates discourse but also marginalises voices of dissent, preserving the dominance of senior managerial figures. This dynamic suggests that members of these university bodies have internalised, or been conditioned, to communicate and engage in meetings in manners sanctioned by those in power. This signifies a form of disciplinary control, echoing Foucault's insights on how institutional mechanisms shape behaviour and establish the boundaries of acceptable participation. In practice what this looks like is that members of these academic boards know no other ways of behaving.

6.13 Concluding remarks

Our analysis inspires a nuanced perspective that transcends the characterisation of any one actor as a lone antagonist. Instead, it highlights the intricate web of power dynamics that ensnares all senior members of the university administration under the pervasive influence of managerialism. They operate within a discursive framework in which conformity to managerial norms is crucial to maintaining their positions and salaries. Viewing the actions of Actor 6 as responses to the disciplinary mechanisms embedded within managerialism acknowledges their dual role as both puppeteer (agent) and puppet (subject) within this larger managerial apparatus.

One of the most notable characteristics of managerialism is the absence of a separation of powers (Clarke & Newman 1997; Davies 2003; Deem et al. 2007). This is reflected in the hierarchical committee structure adopted by universities, that allows governing bodies such as academic boards to be managed by university executive officers like vice-chancellors. The terms of reference for academic boards often imply that these bodies advise the university executive, which puts senior actors in a power position where they can exert their dominance of the decision-making processes and operations (Rowlands 2013d). Our study's visualisation of power dynamics within policy-making meetings has lifted the curtain on the very apparatus through which these authority figures consolidate their dominance. It reveals the intricate interplay between managerialism, institutional structure, and individual behaviour. It exposes how authority figures wield power while simultaneously being shaped by its constraints.

This study stands as a call to action, echoing Foucault's stance on understanding and critiquing power dynamics. It urges a reconsideration of how universities structure their governance to ensure a separation of power. Only then will we see a recalibration of power structures and any meaningful change where academic values are embodied in policy. Until then, managerial values will predominate, and the policy-practice divide will persist.

The Plank of Loyalty: How Policy Sustains the Delicate Balance of University Power

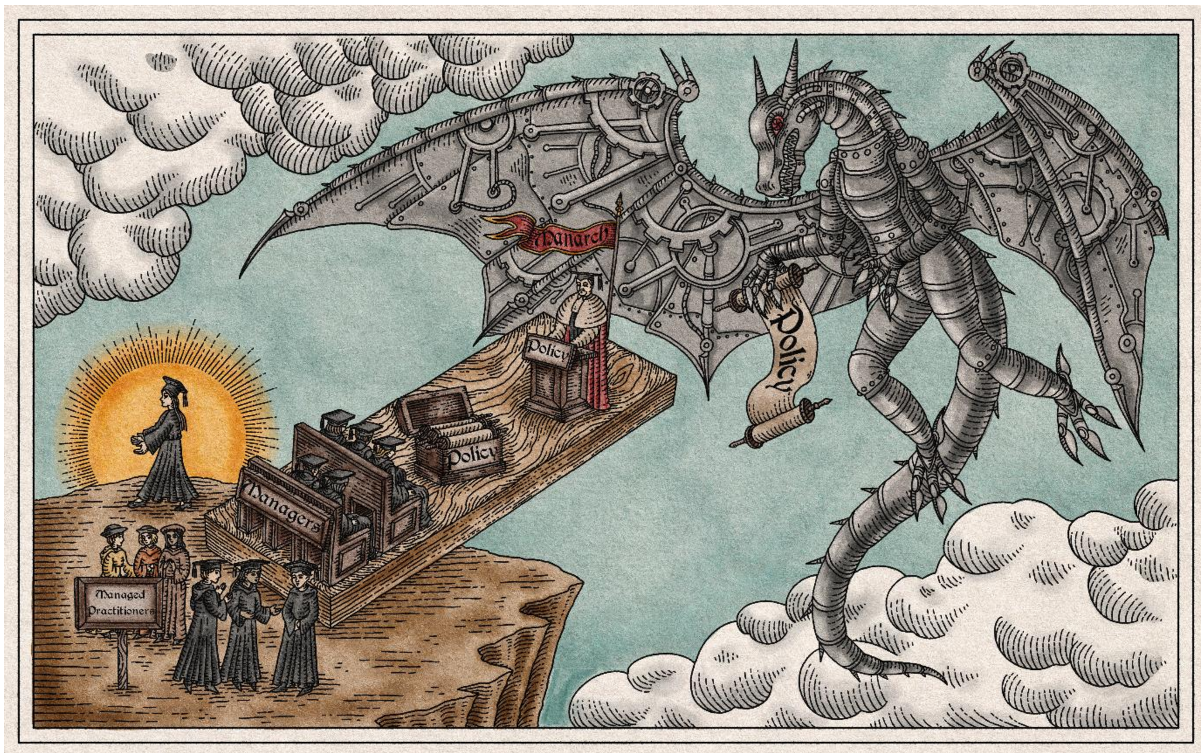

Plate 5: The Plank of Loyalty: How Policy Sustains the Delicate Balance of University Power

Plate 5 Illustration

Plate 5 depicts the broad patterns of power relations within the university, using symbolic imagery to reflect the themes discussed in this thesis. It reveals the covert ways in which power operates and how these power structures are constructed, exposing their vulnerabilities. Symbolically, the plate has a hierarchical structure.

The dragon represents the machine-like qualities of managerialism and looms over the entire structure. The Manarch (all vice-chancellors) are a manifestation of the dragon made real within the university and enforce managerialism in the material world, while the University Managers, positioned below the Manarch, interpret and enforce policy for the Managed Practitioners at the bottom.

The Managed Practitioners are represented as academics and students. They are not on the plank, signifying their marginalisation in the decision-making processes. Despite this, they still hold within them a set of academic values - marginalised but not eradicated.

The self-referential and precarious nature of power in the managerialised university is represented by the platform (plank). Constructed by the Dragon, it shows how the Manarch maintains power through a structured system beneath them. By delegating authority to a subordinate class of managers, the Manarch ensures loyalty through the threat of exclusion from power and the promise of rewards such as esteemed university titles and significant remuneration packages. This mutual dependence creates a 'plank of loyalty' that strengthens the Manarch's hold on power.

Surrounded by the light of *hope*, the figure in the light represents the ideal that universities will once again embody academic values. This individual has taken a 'leap of faith' and stepped off the plank, symbolising academics who transcend the absurdity of university policies and place faith in their own values, prioritising student wellbeing and the public good over compliance to managerialist policy.

The flying dragon signifies the enduring nature of managerialism, which can persist and relocate its influence, remaining unscathed if the Manarch and those on the plank fall.

The illustration highlights the precariousness of the Manarch's power and the pervasive nature of managerialism. As more academics experience cognitive dissonance and choose to exercise their personal values, more will step off the plank, potentially plunging the Manarch into the abyss of absurdity.

CHAPTER 7 DISCUSSION

7.1 Introducing the discussion

This thesis investigates the evolving dynamics of power and governance within an Australian university, highlighting the pervasive impact of managerialism and its manifestation through policy. While the study is focused on a single university, its findings highlight the broader trend of managerialism affecting universities worldwide.

This research contributes significantly to understanding by explicitly examining the policy-practice divide, where there is a disconnect between institutional policies and their practical implementation. The study's genesis was in a desire to understand the divide and potentially identify and test interventions to bridge said divide. It revealed, however, that it may indeed be the space within which a potentially harmful dissonance is resolved – a space where, often by resistance, the academy reconciles a misalignment between academic and managerial values, as expressed in policy.

Through empirical grounding provided by detailed ethnographic studies and interviews, the research confirms that external government pressures, often rooted in neoliberal ideologies, are channelled through policy and governance structures by senior university leaders. These leaders then apply internal pressure, often to the detriment of academic values and faculty participation, perpetuating the divide between policy formulation and practice.

Neoliberalism leverages managerialism by embedding market-driven principles, efficiency, competition, and accountability into university governance. This alignment transforms universities into pseudo-corporate entities, where senior leaders adopt roles akin to business owners or chief executive officers, prioritising economic goals over academic values. As argued in Chapter 6, specific mechanisms of managerial power, such as Strategic Managerial Monumentalism, Managerial Panoptic Surveillance, and Managerial Historical Revisionism, are employed to reinforce these principles. Conversely, managerialism benefits from neoliberalism by securing compliance through reward systems that offer senior leaders substantial financial incentives. While these leaders are ostensibly at the mercy of neoliberal policies - facing career repercussions for non-compliance - we should not pity them entirely as they are

simultaneously rewarded with significant remuneration packages. This compensation system not only encourages adherence to neoliberal policies but also suggests that senior leaders often subscribe to managerial values, showing little concern for academic values.

In the section *Policy and power* (Section 7.2), the findings reveal the specific forms and nature of this pressure, using the arts-based methodology of collage to unearth the mechanisms of power. It exposes how senior leaders influence the academic board's agenda, orchestrating proceedings to limit and sometimes suppress the academy's voice under the guise of efficiency and expediency. This transition from collegial decision-making to managerial control consolidates power and distances the academy from critical decision-making processes, despite their ongoing role in enacting policy.

Revealing power – the role of iconography (Section 7.3) considers the historical and metaphorical dimensions of power within universities. By drawing parallels with Annunciation art and the concept of 'divine power', it critiques the modern university's hierarchical structures, revealing how these are co-opted by managerialism to perpetuate a belief in the inherent wisdom of those at the top. This examination is crucial for understanding the deeply ingrained belief systems that sustain current power dynamics.

In *Divine power and the dissonance of hierarchical wisdom* (Section 7.4), the thesis explores the metaphorical comparison between the *divine right of kings* and contemporary university governance. It highlights the critical dissonance between the ideals of hierarchical wisdom and the reality of managerial actions, shedding light on how these perceptions influence decision-making and governance within universities.

The discussion of *Monarchical and Manarchical Rule* (Section 7.5) further investigates these historical parallels, drawing on Andrew Marvel's critique of monarchical power to analyse the self-serving nature of managerialism in universities. This subsection is important for contextualising the strategic manipulation of power and discourse by senior university leaders, as illustrated through empirical examples from the research.

Structures and Power and Reward Systems in Universities (Section 7.6) examines the nuanced and often concealed nature of power within university governance. It highlights how managerialism operates through mechanisms such as discourse manipulation, organisational structures, and policy to maintain its dominance, subtly excluding alternative academic values. This analysis is vital for understanding the systemic challenges faced by the academy in asserting their values within a managerial framework.

Exit, Voice, Loyalty and Neglect Framework (Section 7.7) provides a comprehensive categorisation of policy actor responses to managerial pressures and value misalignment. By categorising these responses into the four framework elements, the thesis offers insight into how academic values persist despite managerial domination. This framework is essential for interpreting the varied strategies employed by the academy to navigate and challenge the pressures of managerialism.

Finally, in *Power, resistance and collective action* (Section 7.8) the reader is challenged to consider how the visualisation of power dynamics has revealed the very fine balance of power within universities and where the potential power resides. It considers the value of collective action and presents a call to challenge the *monarchical* reign in universities.

Overall, this discussion contributes to knowledge by dissecting and revealing the intricate power mechanisms and dynamics within Australian universities and their governance structures, highlighting the ongoing tensions between managerial and academic values, and offering a critical examination of the structural and psychological impacts of managerialism on the academy. By way of its innovative methodologies and critical analysis, it provides a foundation for future research and potential pathways for reclaiming academic governance and values in higher education institutions. The hope is that by foreshadowing the details of this discussion, the stage is set for an in-depth exploration of how power is exercised, resisted, and potentially reformed within the modern university context.

7.2 Policy and power

Within Australia, and since reforms in the late 1980s, universities have become increasingly corporatised. In the interests of efficiency and expediency there is a greater emphasis on the role of vice-chancellors serving as chief executive officers and a decline in faculty governance and the collective voice of the academy. Concerningly, these changes have also crept into university governance structures, leading to growing concerns about the predominance of managerial knowledge over intellectual knowledge (Marginson & Considine 2000; Lukes 2004; Harman & Treadgold 2007; Rowlands & Rowlands 2017; Rowlands 2018; Blackmore 2022; Wesley 2023).

My research has confirmed that external government pressure is channelled through governance structures by senior university leaders who then apply internal pressure to achieve ends that suit the managerial agenda. The establishment of Australian universities under individual acts of parliament creates the legal mechanism for institutional policies, related delegations of authority and complex corporate and academic governance structures (Marginson & Considine 2000; Rowlands & Rowlands 2017). These structures are in effect providing the vehicle for the almost invisible operation of power by senior leaders within universities.

The arts-based methodology of collage allowed me to *unearth* the specific mechanisms of power at work within these structures and employed within universities to achieve managerial ends. It revealed how the vice-chancellor and other senior leaders influence the agenda of the academic board and the underlying power relations within university policy-making revealed power mechanisms of: strategic managerial monumentalism, the construction and perpetuation of narratives celebrating managerial achievements, thus elevating managerial priorities within the university; managerial historical revisionism, involving selective interpretation or rewriting of university history to favour managerial perspectives, thus reshaping institutional memory; and managerial panoptic surveillance, the mechanisms that monitor academic behaviours to ensure alignment with managerial goals (Section 6.8).

In the interests of expediency and efficiency, senior leaders are orchestrating proceedings to an agenda constrained by time to limit, diminish, and sometimes

suppress the voice of the academy. This is alarmingly consistent with the move away from collegiality to a system where professional managers make, or influence decisions once made in academic units by the academy. It represents managerial consolidation of power and further distancing of the academy from decision-making while still expecting them to implement policy and hold responsibility for its outcomes.

The reassignment of power from the academy to the manager has been gradual and is a symptom of managerialism. In short, university institutional policy is a manifestation of managerialism. My study has revealed that policy is acting as a *power technology* with managers ensuring it reflects managerial values and using it to apply undue influence to achieve managerial outcomes. The reflexive nature of the collage method allowed me to dissect and interpret the intricate power plays and dynamics that are at the core of the policy-making process and to see how policies are symbolically constructed to maintain managerial control.

This managerial control and the resultant misalignment of managerial and academic values is having detrimental effects within universities. Psychological harm and cognitive dissonance are rife within the academy. As this research draws to a close, the literature and media is pointing to an alarming increase in work-related mental stress, burnout, and sickness among the academy (Bhardwa 2018; Grove 2019; Jerg-Bretzke et al. 2020; Ohadomere & Ogamba 2021; Lee et al. 2022; Bita 2024; Morley 2024). Directly attributed to the effects of globalisation, new public management, neoliberalism, managerialism, and related reward systems in universities (Currie 1996; Bhardwa 2018; Sims 2019; Mohammed et al. 2020; Sims 2020), these discussions do not point, however, to how this is occurring and what mechanisms of power are being leveraged to achieve the outcomes required of the neoliberal university.

My study reveals that policy is one of the mechanisms of power used in universities that is causing damaging cognitive dissonance and the increase in work-related stress.

7.3 Revealing power – the role of iconography

It is accepted, and confirmed within Chapters 4 to 6, that power pervades universities and their management and governance structures (Marginson & Considine 2000; Shattock 2010; Shattock et al. 2019). It is also accepted that power conceals itself and often the most effective and enduring exercises of power are covert (Foucault 1979). I needed to challenge the familiar and reveal the otherwise unseen power structures within the university policy-making process. This prompted adoption of the novel, arts-based research method of collage. And just as Annunciation art from the 15th century used symbolic elements to depict the origins and dynamics of divine power, the collage methodology and the adopted iconography revealed the underlying power relations in the policy-making process.

Adoption of a form of iconography with its foundations in the visualisation of divine power through Annunciation art was not to suggest a divine presence within the university's hierarchy, nor was it to suggest participants act as if such a presence governs their actions. Instead, it revealed how current university power dynamics are capitalising on a deeply ingrained, almost innate, belief in the natural order of hierarchical structures, as corroborated by the extensive evidence from psychology and anthropology that humans have a tendency towards hierarchical organisation (Rubin 2000; Koski et al. 2015). The research has revealed it is this tendency and these structures that are co-opted by managerialism to achieve its own ends.

7.4 Divine power and the dissonance of hierarchical wisdom

The notion of divine power as stimulated by Annunciation art is evoked, not in its traditional sense, but as a metaphor for the belief that those at the pinnacle of a hierarchy are, by virtue of their position, imbued with greater wisdom and, consequently, greater decision-making authority. The findings support the view that those 'at the top' exploit the participants' intuitive acceptance of a hierarchical order as the ideal framework for societal and organisational governance. This justification, which claims greater accountability, regularly fails to manifest in the face of poor decision-making, further highlighting a critical dissonance – this time not a cognitive

dissonance, but a dissonance between the ideals of hierarchical wisdom held by the laity and the reality of managerial actions (Shin & Jung 2014; Lee et al. 2022).

The study the subject of Chapter 4 provides empirical evidence of the belief in hierarchical order. Participants confirmed their capacity to influence policy was role dependent and that power lay in the 'middle layer' with the middle managers ('The Managers', as depicted in Plate 5). The middle managers were of the view that their 'power' lay in the mandate to implement policy. The superior role of the senior leader was acknowledged as they set policy scope, influenced outcomes and carried 'more weight'. The expectation was that senior leaders would promulgate and implement policy – a view equally held by the senior leaders, as their 'divine' right *per se* (Section 4.11).

Continuing with this notion of the divine, the *divine right of kings* is a concept founded in the medieval idea that a monarch's authority is granted directly by God and that it descends from the divine to the earthly realm rather than emanating from the consent of the governed (Figgis 1896). This mirrors the structure within modern managerialised institutions like universities. The portrayal of the vice-chancellor at the pinnacle of an academic hierarchy, suggests a secular transposition of the divine right, implying that certain positions of leadership are endowed with inherent wisdom and authority; this is observed in Chapter 6 through the deferential actions of the academic board members, irrespective of the vice-chancellor's physical presence. This phenomenon aligns with observations from Chapter 4, indicating a perception among some academic and professional staff that the vice-chancellor's authority is to be revered. Such reverence points to a belief in a higher wisdom guiding the vice-chancellor's decisions, placing them beyond the realm of ordinary scrutiny - akin to a monarch's unquestionable authority.

Academic governance structures similarly once held authority. It is now accepted within the literature that the role of academic board has been diminishing since the corporatisation of universities (Rowlands 2013b, 2017c; Rowlands & Rowlands 2017; Rowlands 2018). The perpetuation of *divine power* through university governance structures to maintain the status quo, where managerial discourses dominate, and the academic board's role is relegated to that of a ceremonial body, is a unique

consideration, however. This critique exposes the chasm between the perceived infallibility of the vice-chancellor and the reality of managerialism, where power is wielded not through inherent wisdom but through the strategic manipulation of the perception of today and history, and the control over discourse (Foucault 1972a). This study has revealed an intricate web of power that is arranged to maintain and perpetuate its structure. It has underscored the multifaceted nature of power dynamics.

Plate 5 highlights these power dynamics. It exposes how the concept of authority - ostensibly sourced from the populace and theoretically empowering - becomes entangled in complexity. As revealed in Chapters 4 and 6, universities are required to comply with external regulation and public policy and pressure is applied to vice-chancellors (*the manarch*) to ensure equivalent institutional policy is developed. The vice-chancellor, as revealed in Chapter 6, leverages the power apparatus at their disposal (*pulls the strings*) and empowers *the few* (*the managers*) to ensure policy comes to pass and is applied in practice by *the many* (the *managed practitioners*).

Complexity arises as *the few* subtly manoeuvre these structures to their advantage, often at the expense of *the many* – the academic and professional university staff in this instance. As discussed in Chapter 4, such manipulation reveals a stark contrast between the values and ideology of *the many* and *the few*, with resultant dissonance for *the many* as the current system favours the adoption of managerial values and incentivises their reproduction. Conscious intent to manipulate or pursue personal gain is not required from either *the manarch* or *the managers*, however. The system, as construed by managerialism, favours outcomes which advantage *the few* and disadvantage *the many*.

That being said, *the divine right of kings* is a concept or belief structured around a hope. It is particularly evident in Chapter 4 where participants share their *hope* for a future state, their vision for the university's future - a future firmly rooted in academic values. This hope is that, eventually, the mechanisms of governance will (again) recognise and prioritise the pivotal role of universities in serving the public good; a hope originating from a deep-seated faith in the inherent wisdom and virtue of universities and the leadership positions within them, as opposed to individual leaders themselves.

The *divine right of kings*, is not merely a historical curiosity but a foundational concept that has shaped the political and philosophical understanding of authority. It encapsulates the enduring tension between divine ordination and communal consent, between the sanctity of office and the ethics of governance, particularly considering the encroachment of managerialism. This tension is mirrored in contemporary discussions on institutional authority, where the legacy of divine right and the impacts of managerialism influence perceptions of leadership, from monarchies to universities, suggesting a deep-seated belief in the hierarchical, wise nature of power that continues to influence modern governance and its critiques.

7.5 Monarchical and Manarchical rule

Further drawing on the observed parallels between monarchies and universities, Andrew Marvel, English metaphysical poet, satirist and politician 'favoured the toleration of religious dissent and attacked the abuse of monarchical power' (Britannica 2024, p. 1). In his poem, *Last Instructions to a Painter* (1667), he portrays kings as exploiters of their own authority. In the poem, England is depicted as a vulnerable woman seeking aid from her king. However, instead of offering solace, the king (Henry VIII), aroused by her situation, exploits her vulnerability. This act symbolises a grotesque inversion of the expected monarchical duty. Marvell's critique illuminates the moral decay of the ruling elite, whose self-serving actions can eclipse the welfare of the community (Fitzhenry 2020; Britannica 2024). This mirrors contemporary analyses of power dynamics, akin to those by Foucault (Foucault 1972a; Watkin 2018).

Interestingly, the king's perverse thrill in the nation's distress reveals something about the monarchy and monarchism; that it was for the monarch alone. Everyone else, from dukes to peasants, were cogs in the monarchic machine; a machine for the monarch to exploit any situation to further their agenda. While confronting, this historical critique found a modern parallel in Chapter 6, specifically in *Act 5 Scene 3: Management to the Rescue*. Academic board, informed of impending negative press, witnesses the vice-chancellor emerge as a problem solver, a role traditionally expected of the academic board but now usurped due to its disempowerment through managerialism. As observed in Chapter 6, the vice-chancellor's intervention serves to monumentalise themselves and advance their own power, mirroring the king's exploitation of vulnerability for

personal gain. This scenario reveals managerialism not as a mere organisational structure providing privileges to the management class, but it is posited, as *manarchism*– a system serving *the manarch* (the manager at the helm of the manarchy); *the managers* and *the managed practitioners* are merely cogs in a *manarchical* machine.

Also in Chapter 6, and as portrayed in *Act 3 Scene 1 – Carrying the torch for managerialism*, we see how *the managers* utilise statements and invoke currently standing managerial monuments to gain authority. Using this practice which we badged *Managerial Historical Revisionism* they reconfigure the present to suit their purposes, remind participants of what was important, influence narratives to maintain or shift power dynamics and emphasise the policy's historical significance by referencing past efforts and developments, thus reinforcing its monument-like status and authority.

Continuing this explorative parallel, the concept of *manarchism* suggests that for a power structure to facilitate the exertion of a manarch's will, it must be maintained in a calibrated state of distress. This parallel provides deeper understanding of what the vice-chancellor (*manarch*) is doing by strategic managerial monumentalism, managerial historical revisionism, managerial discursive dominance, managerial panoptic surveillance, and managerial normalisation (Section 6.8). The vice-chancellor needs to balance the system delicately to ensure that it is pliable enough to be manipulated to achieve desired ends, yet resilient enough to avoid collapse.

They do this by incentivising *the managers* to maintain the balance of power. *The managers* in turn use a reward system to ensure *the managed practitioners* achieve the desired outcomes. This nuanced form of managerialism is exemplified in the depiction of Henry VIII's reign, as explored in Marvel's poetry, where the monarch's pleasure, derived from the country's turmoil, illustrates a profound interplay between power and personal indulgence. The operational dynamics of the country – or any governed system under *manarchism* – are therefore designed and iteratively adjusted to operate within a spectrum of distress that caters to the manarch's desires, highlighting the intricate relationship between governance, power, and personal will (Foucault 1972a). This insight invites a deeper exploration into the ethical and practical implications of

leadership that thrives on controlled chaos, an aspect not included in this study but identified for future research.

It is contended that Marvel's incisive satire alongside the insights of Foucault, compel us to acknowledge that the dynamics of power and the mechanisms of authority and governance within universities are intricately shaped and perpetuated by their underlying structures. The *manarch* gives power to *the managers* to maintain the balance of power. The *manarch* cannot exist without *the managers* and they cannot exist without *the managed practitioners*. It is this realisation that prompts a critical examination of the structures that dictate the distribution and exercise of power within universities.

7.6 Structures, power and reward systems in universities

It is apparent that power, especially in the context of university governance as explored in Chapter 6, operates in a nuanced and often concealed manner. This chapter highlights that power endeavours to keep the nature of its influence somewhat concealed, operating through mechanisms that normalise its dominance without explicit acknowledgment or consent. Facilitated by *the managers*, this concealment is facilitated through the strategic use of discourse, the manipulation of organisational structures, and the subtle guiding of decision-making processes in ways that may not be immediately apparent to *the managed practitioners* – such as the use of policy.

Through the creation of visual vignettes that employed the collage method, the study in focus of Chapter 6 was able to shed light on the social dynamics and power relations at play within the governance structures. It took this very novel and creative approach to explore how the now all too familiar managerialism functions, under the guise of these formal organisational structures and processes, strategically manipulates decision-making to sustain its dominance, subtly excluding dissenting or alternative academic values.

The chapter also highlights other observed managerial technologies such as strategic use of the discourse through regulation, committee charters and agendas, role titles and

related status, room aesthetics, access to technology and institutional frameworks and policy. This dynamic of technologies is consistent with Michel Foucault's understanding of power as something that operates not just overtly but also through subtle, systemic channels that shape perceptions, behaviours, and outcomes within institutions, including institutional frameworks and policy (Foucault 1979, 1982a; O'Farrell 2007).

A critical key managerial power technology within universities is their reward system or 'promotion technology' (Boyer 1990; Barrow & Grant 2019, p. 139; Hao & Zabielskis 2020). The reward and promotion systems in universities are a compelling example of institutionalisation of value. Reinforced through policy, they reflect the entrepreneurial orientation of universities and encourage and reward behaviours that contribute to the achievement of high university rankings, research impact measured in *quality* publication metrics, high graduate satisfaction levels, widening student participation rates and salaries and employment rates. Policy is thus a tool of managerialism, playing its part in the creation of complex power dynamics - almost invisible networks of value systems that influence or dictate the behaviour of all actors within them.

The complex nature of policy and its ever-present role in these networks is illuminated in Chapters 5 and 6. While policy actors confidently stated that policies *should* reflect academic values, when tasked with enacting policy, as observed through ethnographic observations, members of the academy (*the managed practitioners*) frequently faced a misalignment between the managerial values expressed through policy and their own values; they had limited capacity to influence policy outcomes, however. This value misalignment and absence of capacity to influence is symptomatic of the dynamics of power and managerial discursive dominance. While a response to this misalignment may have been to influence policy change, the research revealed it instead gave rise to resistance or strategies to circumvent the policy – not a surprising response it is posited given the governance and management structures are so strongly influenced by managerial values and provide little space for the voice of the academy.

My ethnographic observations and the empirical research confirm that indeed the voice of the academy is at least partially, if not completely, silenced through the policy-

making process. As discussed in Chapters 4 to 6, observations revealed that questions in academic board were frequently silenced or addressed outside the meetings and, while the policies in focus of the study had direct relationship to the academy, the members in the room had little apparent input in the policy's development unless their role was sufficiently close to that of the vice-chancellor. Sadly, those structures intended to ostensibly give voice to the academy and ensure a separation of powers, are not providing the mechanisms through which members of the academy can express their academic values. They are, however, consciously or otherwise making choices in response to their dissatisfaction with the value misalignment attributed to cognitive dissonance in Chapter 4. Application of Hirschman and Rusbult's Exit, Voice, Loyalty and Neglect Framework provides insight into these choices.

7.7 The Exit, Voice, Loyalty and Neglect Framework

The original Exit, Voice Loyalty Framework (EVL Framework) was developed to explain responses to consumer satisfaction/dissatisfaction (Hirschman 1970). It was extended by Rusbult et al. (1982) to include neglect to become the EVLN Framework. It is applied here to further consider the impact of misalignment between academic and managerial values as expressed through policy, resultant dissonance and consequent action. This framework has been adopted as a sense making tool for policy actors. With the intention of helping policy actors *make sense* of their responses to the complex policy construct, it identifies when a policy actor is likely to act and depart (exit), give voice to their dissatisfaction and resist (voice), passively accept the situation without challenge (loyalty) or passively allow the situation to degenerate (neglect).

7.7.1 Exit, Voice, Loyalty and Neglect Framework elements

Policy actors involved in this study took varying actions to resolve dissonance that can be aligned to the EVLN Framework. Following is a description of the typical policy actor features within the Framework elements (exit, voice, loyalty and neglect).

7.7.1.1 Exit

Policy actors who chose to exit do not accept policy. They may initially challenge and ask questions and vocalise their non-acceptance and disagreement but will depart to

resolve dissonance emanating from managerial and academic value misalignment. By exiting, actors can better their own position, but this does not in general benefit those left behind. Indeed, if those most likely to exit when given the chance would otherwise be among the most vocal critics and advocates for change, exit may be detrimental to the functionality of the system and the interests of those left behind.

7.7.1.2 Voice

Policy actors who give voice to their dissatisfaction will individually or collectively resist policy, challenge decisions and the need for *more* policy. The policy actors who give voice to their dissonance are taking constructive action to change university processes and align policy with academic values. They actively resist the managerial values expressed in policy to resolve their dissonance.

7.7.1.3 Loyalty

These policy actors are loyal to the institution and its managerial values. They accept policy without question and/or *hope* that things will get better. This reduces cognitive dissonance by shifting values to align them with the behaviour demanded and incentivised under managerialism. This tends to reinforce managerial values and is potentially destructive of academic values and the traditional social purpose of universities.

7.7.1.4 Neglect

These policy actors have a passive relationship with policy. They are disconnected from policy and ignore or are unaffected by policy generated managerial interventions. They neither accept nor actively oppose managerial values, and from the outside appear neutral. Study findings would suggest, however, that given the dominating presence of managerialism they may unconsciously default to behaviours that preference managerialism as the path of least resistance.

7.7.2 Study policy actors in the Exit, Voice, Loyalty and Neglect Framework

As explored in Chapter 4, policy actors are experiencing cognitive dissonance in response to managerial values expressed through policy. They are taking action to

reduce the associated psychological discomfort to comfortable levels. Based on ethnographical observations and the findings in Chapters 4 to 6, their actions are aligned with the EVLN Framework elements and discussed below.

7.7.2.1 Policy actor action: Exit

Policy actors choosing to exit do not accept policy and may challenge and question its intent. They change their behaviours in response to policy-inducing dissonance and depart but may initially resist the managerial ruleset on an *ad hoc* basis by ignoring policy. They are the policy actors within Chapter 4 who do not follow policy 'to the letter of the law' and consider the 'nuances' so as not to create 'an inequity for students'. They do not take 'the easy way' or display 'an insecurity with [their] knowledge [base]' and make decisions consistent with their academic values (Margetts, Whitty, et al. 2023, p. 11).

While the research did not extend to include policy actor action in response to dissonance, it is hypothesised that the choice to depart may derive from a preferencing of personal over academic values, as to depart rather than remain and give voice to concerns is to minimise personal challenge and disruption. This choice may also be reflective of battles previously fought and lost, or of previous unsuccessful dissonance reducing measures.

7.7.2.2 Policy actor action: Voice

Policy actors who give voice to their dissonance openly change their behaviours to align with their academic values. They preference their academic values over silence and acceptance of managerial values as expressed in policy and give voice to the concerns that give rise to the dissonance. They are the policy actors observed within the study in focus of Chapters 5 and 6 who publicly questioned policy developments, not once but twice, despite managerial silencing activities (Margetts et al. 2024). Through their resistant behaviours, these policy actors give voice to their concerns, ignoring any potential consequences applied through the power and reward systems (Section 7.6). They upheld their academic values and chose to vociferously act in accord with them when giving voice to their academic ideals.

The research did not extend to include policy actor action in response to managerial silencing behaviours, however it is hypothesised that the dissonance may have been sufficient to compel them to speak the second time and advocate for their academic values. Alternatively, they may have been compelled to exit to resolve ever increasing dissonance or quietly resign themselves to the situation, accept policy change and become loyal to managerial values.

7.7.2.3 Policy actor action: Loyalty

Policy actors who remain loyal to the institution and its managerial values are passively embracing the managerial values expressed through policy and suitably aligning their behaviour. They are the policy actors in Chapter 4 who believe that policy provides a 'reference point' for value articulation, that it is an expression of 'expectations and standards', 'keeps everyone safe' and 'supports good practice' (Margetts, Whitty, et al. 2023, p. 9). They fundamentally believe the institution has their best interests at heart, there is no need to question the motivation behind policies, and they adapt their behaviour (Terlazzo 2022) to ensure value alignment and adoption of policy in practice.

Loyal policy actors are aware that managerial values may be expressed in policy, but they quietly endure or resign themselves to the institution's policies in the *hope* that things may get better or in the knowledge that they can very quietly resist the policy intervention to resolve their dissonance. These are the policy actors identified in Chapter 4 who are resting on their faith in the *good* policy can achieve and the *hope* that it can 'change practice and people and culture and ways of doing things' (Margetts, Whitty, et al. 2023, p. 9). They potentially live in the quiet hope that universities will return to their original purpose and values rather than being dictated to by the demands of government regulation, corporatisation and managerialism.

7.7.2.4 Policy actor action: Neglect

Policy actors in this category take varying dissonance reducing behaviours. They, like the policy actors referenced in Chapter 3, may experience the absurdity of policy and only use it as a '…backup…if [they] get in trouble'. They may challenge, question, doubt, and overtly resist policy. They are the policy actors who 'bypass and mutiny against policy', or 'go rogue and do whatever they like', especially if policy is 'creating

difficulty'. This is in response to their feeling 'managed…or constrained by policy' and they can 'resist policy in terms of its intent' or 'twist it around to their own means' (Margetts, Whitty, et al. 2023, p. 12).

As discussed in Chapter 4, policy actors are acting in response to the cognitive dissonance caused by the managerial values expressed in policy. Some are actively resisting through their use of voice or departure. Others are passively responding and remaining loyal to managerial values or overtly resisting when they believe it is the only option available. No matter the action taken, managerial values (or managerialism) as expressed within policy are a key contributing factor to the policy-practice divide; by extension, the policy-practice divide is a symptom of neoliberal influences through managerialism and the academy's resistance to managerial values (Margetts, Whitty, et al. 2023; Margetts et al. 2024). The Exit Voice, Loyalty and Neglect model provides a framework and language to express the range of actions being taken by policy actors in response to managerialism and related value misalignment – actions ranging from loyal acceptance or resignation to active and collective resistance. Although this research did not explicitly consider the responses of policy actors to cognitive dissonance, the framework is useful in conceptualising the range of possible responses and is a promising way of framing future research on academic behaviour in the managerialist university.

7.8 Power, resistance and collective action

When considering the nature or form of policy actor resistance, the concept of collective action was considered in Chapter 4. Arendt (1998, p. 201) regards resistance as a 'potentiality for action' - a power, even if it foregoes violence, which is stronger than the force it faces. While resistance is often considered passive, '…[it] is one of the most active and efficient ways of action ever devised, because it cannot be countered by fighting…only by mass slaughter in which even the victor is defeated' (Arendt 1998, pp. 200-1). The policy actors in this study are not typically passive. They are taking resistive action by ignoring or working around policy.

Kierkegaard's exploration of faith and individual choice, also in Chapter 4, emphasises the inner conviction and authenticity that guide personal actions, challenging the

external validation of authority, no matter its source. This perspective, when juxtaposed with Arendt's views on power as emanating from collective action and the necessity of public discourse for legitimising authority, can offer a nuanced critique of what can appear to those in universities as traditional and inevitable (the way it has always been) power structures. These structures often masquerade as inherently righteous or mandated, obscuring the original basis of their authority before managerialism made its home in universities; that is, the consent and active participation of the community. The mechanisms of managerialism actively obstruct genuine participation and dismantle the foundations of consent. This obstruction not only prevents individuals from accessing vital information but also actively inhibits their ability to connect with, and operate in ways that are consistent with, their inner conviction and values.

Chapter 6 illustrates a modern manifestation of this critique within the context of university governance. It exposes how managerial structures, under the guise of managerialism, engineer a facade of consensus and legitimacy. This facade is maintained through strategic manipulation of discourse and the orchestration of decision-making processes that limit genuine participation and obscure the distribution of power. The scenario where physical meetings are preferred over virtual ones, despite the latter offering more unfiltered communication channels to the board members, exemplifies the deliberate structuring of interactions to curtail the academic board's autonomy and suppress dissenting voices. Similarly, the constant pressure of time and the need to work to a preset agenda further limits the autonomy of the academy and its capacity to give voice to its values.

Integrating Kierkegaard's and Arendt's insights with the empirical observations from Chapter 6 enriches our understanding of power dynamics within institutions and their governance structures. Arendt argues that authentic authority in any social structure or institution emerges not from unilateral decrees but from the consent and proactive involvement of its community. Leaders may shape the narrative to appear as though they inherently deserve power, subtly manipulating discourse to this end. This view intersects with historical debates on the *divine right of kings*, highlighting the vital role of political community involvement in legitimising power and authority. Arendt advocates for a governance model grounded in open dialogue, where information is

transparent, and diverse viewpoints are debated and understood. This is alongside a commitment to communal values that acknowledge and bridge community differences, while still holding on to those differences, and the necessity of mechanisms to enable mutual consent, all of which challenge the passive acceptance of unilateral monarchical or *manarchical* rule (Section 7.5).

Chapter 6 unveils a modern iteration of the dynamics Arendt describes, with the vice-chancellor exemplifying a sense of entitlement to privileges as if by *divine right*. This behaviour starkly contrasts with the theoretical reality that such privileges are conferred by the broader university community, notably by the academic board members. These members, theoretically, possess the collective agency to revoke these privileges, revealing the power inherent in their collective action and consent.

This scenario, as revealed in Chapter 6, unfolds within an organisational structure meticulously designed over the years to conceal the true source of a vice-chancellor's privileges. This design ensures that the broader university community and the academic board remain unaware of their substantial, albeit unrecognised, role in the power distribution process. Such obscurity perpetuates the vice-chancellor's unilateral exercise of power, simultaneously disempowering the very entities that fundamentally support the institution's governance. Despite the facade of autonomy, vice-chancellors do not own universities, however the meticulously arranged system crafts an illusion that they do. This misleading perception undermines the collective agency of the university community and the academic board, who, if united in dissent, possess the collective power to challenge and potentially overhaul the prevailing power dynamics.

Such a revelation aligns with Arendt's assertion that genuine power is rooted in collective action and the consent of the governed, challenging the passive acceptance of unilateral or monarchical rule by highlighting the active, though often overlooked, role of the university community and academic board in legitimising (or challenging) authority and governance structures.

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUDING REMARKS

As confirmed by this research and that of innumerable other scholars, universities are complex, political, highly regulated enterprises. Their original focus on scholarship, service and acquisition of new knowledge has been lost to the effects of neoliberalism, including globalisation, massification and competition. The resultant need to comply with a highly regulated environment and measure performance and meet targets are typical indicators of an entrepreneurial business or corporatised university. It is also well acknowledged that managerialism has quietly and almost invisibly infiltrated universities to the point that its presence is not seen or acknowledged, particularly within governance structures. This study has responded to the call for empirical evidence of managerialism's presence and impact within academic governance structures and the policy-making process. With the aid of the novel, arts-based method of collage, it has revealed the hidden and covert power relations and structures within university policy-making and further revealed how managerialism has taken up and remains in residence within universities.

Policy has been revealed as a complicated, faith-based construct articulating values, mitigating risk and guiding practice. It is experienced differently by different policy actors and, at times, borders on the absurd given the belief that it *should* achieve certain ends when policy actors acknowledge that it most often does not. They nonetheless exercise their *potential for action* and take a *leap of faith*, resting in the *hope* that its purpose might be achieved while *doubting* that it will and believing in the resultant *good* from resistive actions. The policy-making process is an equally complicated, socially constructed, power driven process, similarly imbued with faith, hope and doubt, but continues to be relied upon by university regulators and senior leaders. One wonders who or, more precisely, what policy is serving within universities.

That policy and the policy-making process are manifestations of power within universities are clear outcomes of the research. Using Foucault's concepts of knowledge/power and discourse, the nature of power within universities was revealed to preference managerial values over those of the academy. The balance of power within universities is, however, delicate.

Drawing on Foucault's position that power is concealed, and the tradition of Annunciation art and its use of symbols, visualisation of the mechanisms of power within a governance structure revealed an intricate web of power. There is, however, no one lone figure directing and manipulating the enunciative field to orchestrate a narrative that sidelines academic input in favour of managerial objectives. All members of the university administration are ensnared within the web and the balance of power resides with the policy practitioners – those charged with implementing policy. The novel and deeply reflective method of collage revealed itself as an extremely effective approach for understanding complex phenomena and revealing depths of insight including a potentially destabilising power held by policy practitioners that is currently masked by managerialism.

Managerialism's disregard for the doctrine of the separation of powers is but one of its most notable characteristics. Hierarchical committee structures, and the composition of academic governance bodies provided through their terms of reference, are empowering the university executive to dominate the decision-making process and operations. Pre-constituted and engineered agendas are controlling the discourse, and this is aided by the physical structure of meeting rooms and the preferencing of face-to-face over virtual meeting participation.

Institutional policy is yet another of the unearthed tools of managerialism. Created by universities in response to their highly regulated environment, governance bodies commission the creation of policy to achieve their own ends and satisfy external demands. This study has revealed it is responsible for a harmful cognitive dissonance experienced by university staff, particularly the academy. Emanating from the misalignment of academic and managerial values as expressed through policy, responses range from loyal, quiet acceptance and resignation to vociferous resistance. Policy avoidance and circumnavigation is a common response, and decisions are being made by policy practitioners that align with their academic values and benefit the student, thus the policy-practice divide.

Explained as the space between policy's stated objectives and its practical implementation, the policy-practice divide, like policy, is viewed differently by different policy actors. Senior leaders see it as a gap to be bridged, maybe through

additional compliance requirements, more regulation, or even more absurdly, *more* policy. Members of the academy, however, are more comfortable with the divide and see it as representing a deliberate, value-driven choice to ensure their actions, and likely outcomes, are better aligned with their personal ethics and what they believe is in the best interests of the student.

The impact of managerialism on students was beyond the scope of this research, however for those members of the academy who have become increasingly disengaged to reduce the dissonance creating value misalignment, one must question the impact on student learning. And for the members of the academy who feel they have no option but to leave the sector, their students are left with an interrupted learning experience, at best, or an unquantifiable learning deficit. While, typically, the sectoral response is to introduce more regulation and policy, it is posited that is but another managerial mechanism that will exacerbate the impacts of managerialism.

This research has come when higher education is at a crossroads, particularly within Australia under the Universities Accord processes. It is imperative to signal that this government-led initiative is unlikely to free universities to legitimately operate within their bounds of academic freedom and freedom of speech. Instead, as suggested by history and recent commentary, they will likely be gripped even more tightly by the ruthless claw and pressure of managerialism and bound further by new regulation, increased bureaucracy and reporting obligations, and *more* institutional policy.

Nonetheless, consistent with the *hope* held in policy, it is timely to observe that, while the policy-practice divide in focus of this thesis has been viewed by university senior leaders as a negative symptom of the policy-making process, this study has revealed that, within a university, the home of debate and challenging thought, it is almost a necessary, if not healthy byproduct, of the policy-making process. Indeed, the divide is an active expression of academic values within universities; it is an expression of academic freedom.

Universities openly attest to their commitment to academic freedom and freedom of speech. Enthusiastic debate, critical thought, scholarly enquiry and academic rigour are typical traits of *true* academic freedom. By extension then, the policy-practice divide

can be interpreted as an expression of academic freedom. To attempt to bridge that gap (by forcing compliance, for example), would be to the detriment of the academy, university communities, scholarly communities and society at large. As discussed in Chapter 6, however, the silencing of the academy in the production of an academic freedom policy is deeply concerning. Of equal concern is the seemingly oblivious and submissive participation in these managerial supporting mechanisms by some members of the academy. This can only be reflective of the extensive and invisible reach managerialism has into university governance structures. It is time to step out from amongst the shadows of the managerial structures within universities, shine a light on the damaging and detrimental effects of managerialism and engage the potential power held in research and collective action.

Policy is contributing to a harmful dissonance and it would be deleterious if the findings in this thesis did not prompt further research. This study has revealed the need for deeper exploration into the ethical and practical implications of leadership that promote policy and thrive on controlled chaos. Additionally, it has exposed a fault with the theoretical separation of powers within university governance structures and proposes empirical research into a governance model grounded in open dialogue, where information is transparent, and diverse viewpoints are encouraged, debated and understood.

Reassuringly, this study has also revealed that policy's real potential lies, not in its capacity to be used as a conduit of managerial power, but in its capacity to be used for *good*. Members of the academy are choosing to resist policy and/or apply it in ways that achieve the best results for students, aligning their actions with academic rather than managerial values. These resistive actions are an expression of *hope*; an expression of hope in the future of education, hope in a return to academic missions and hope that *one day* there may be a returned focus on scholarship, service and the common good.

In concluding, the policy-practice divide is to be embraced! The motivation for undertaking this study was to understand why a gap exists between that stated in policy and what is happening in practice and to investigate how it might be bridged. Findings have revealed, however, that although symptomatic of managerialism and undesired by those who preference managerial values, the tension between policy and practice is not

surprising and is a potentially welcome and necessary space within which voice is given to academic values and the principles of scholarship and service. Additionally, the visualisation of power within university governance structures has revealed a delicate balance of power within universities and that policy practitioners do have destabilising power at their disposal. Through resistance and collective action this power can be harnessed to redress the managerial nature of university governance and align it once more with scholarly and educational missions.

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APPENDIX ONE – STUDY 1 PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Project Details	
Title of Project:	**Bridging the policy/practice divide in Australian universities**
Human Research Ethics Approval Number:	H19REA239 (v1)

Research Team Contact Details	
Principal Investigator Details	**Supervisor Details**
Mrs Fiona Margetts	Assoc Prof Jon Whitty
Email: [redacted]	Email: [redacted]
Telephone: [redacted]	Telephone: [redacted]
Mobile: [redacted]	

Description

This project is being undertaken as part of a PhD by Publication.

The overall purpose of this project is to explore and attempt to understand the reason for the divide between policy and practice in Australian universities. It will also attempt to identify and trial an intervention that may go some way to redress that divide.

The researcher requests your assistance because you have been involved in the review, approval and subsequent implementation of the [redacted] Policy (now [redacted] Policy) at the case study university. A scholarly investigation of this policy review and implementation forms part 1 of the overall study.

Participation

Your participation in this study will involve:

Part 1:

- An interview (focused on the policy review) that will take approximately one hour of your time

- Potentially, prior to the interview, collection and subsequent provision of copies of documentation related to your role in the review of the policy project (this will be further explained at the time of making the interview booking)
- Potentially a follow up call at a mutually agreed time and of a mutually agreed duration may be required to clarify interview data.

Part 2:

- An interview (focused on the policy implementation) that will take approximately one hour of your time
- Potentially, prior to the interview, collection and subsequent provision of copies of documentation related to your role in the implementation of the policy project (this will be further explained at the time of making the interview booking)
- Potentially a follow up call at a mutually agreed time and of a mutually agreed duration may be required to clarify interview data.

The interviews will take place at a date, time and location convenient to yourself and can be in person or via video/audio link (Zoom).

Questions will address your role in and experience of the policy review and its initial implementation. It will also include your observations about any resistance to the policy project in question.

The interviews will be video and audio recorded. If you do not wish for the video recording to occur, please advise the researcher.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, you are not obliged to. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you are free to withdraw from the project at any stage until completion of data analysis. If you do wish to withdraw from this project or withdraw data collected about you, please contact the Research Team (contact details at the top of this form).

Your decision whether you take part, do not take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will in no way impact your current or future relationship with [redacted].

Expected Benefits

It is expected that this project will potentially benefit you in your future engagement with policy and policy practice more broadly in the university. It also has the potential to benefit policy practice in other Australian universities and other entities which experience a policy/practice divide.

Risks

In participating in the study, there will be minimal risks to you, limited to the:

- Inconvenience of having to make time to participate in interviews and collect and provide relevant documentation
- A risk of potential identification (by deduction) when the results are published
- Risk of a prejudicial treatment or conflict of interest between the Principal Investigator and yourself due to the staff role held by the Principal Investigator
- Risk that the Principal Investigator or member of the wider research team will hold a position of influence over you or that you may hold a subordinate role to the Principal Investigator or members of the research team
- Risk of reflection upon your role in policy raising uncomfortable feelings.

This will be mitigated by

- Selecting a time/style of interview that is most convenient to you.
- Ensuring that a mutually agreed and realistic time period is provided for you to locate any documentation related to your role in the policy development/review project
- De-identifying your information and using aliases
- Not divulging your position or role
- Treating your activity in the policy project carefully so as not to lead to identification
- Intentional separation by the Principal Investigator between the research and staff role, and maintenance of respect for you at all times
- The Principal Investigator or members of the wider research team will not maintain a position of influence over you and you will not hold a subordinate role to the Principal Investigator or members of the research team
- Providing the referral outlets (below).

Sometimes thinking about the sorts of issues raised in the interview can create some uncomfortable or distressing feelings. If you need to talk to someone about this immediately, please contact the Employee Assistance Program [link redacted] (if you are a staff member) You may also wish to consider consulting your General Practitioner (GP), Lifeline (https://www.lifeline.org.au/about-lifeline/contact-us) or BeyondBlue (https://www.beyondblue.org.au/about-us/contact-us) for additional support.

Privacy and Confidentiality

All comments and responses will be treated confidentially unless required by law.

It is noted that:

- The interviews will be video and audio recorded (unless you advise the Principal Investigator that you do not want to be video recorded) for the purposes of transcription and analysis.
- Transcription will be undertaken by the Principal Investigator or a commercial transcription service (with appropriate confidentiality provisions) and the following online voice transcription services will be used by the Principal Investigator to produce the initial audio transcript:
  - *Sonix* transcribing service
  - Zoom (USQ paid account) Cloud Recording Audio Transcription Service
- The transcripts will be de-identified during transcription.
- You will have an opportunity to review and verify the accuracy of the interview transcripts prior to inclusion in the project data.
- You will be provided with two weeks to review and request any changes to the transcripts, following which time the data will be included in the project for analysis.
- You will be advised that no response to the request to review and request changes to the transcript will be taken as verification of the accuracy of the interview transcript.
- The recording will not be used for any other purpose (i.e. as a teaching/ instructional tool).
- The Researcher, supervisors and transcription service will have access to the recording and that data will be appropriately stored and encrypted when transferred.
- The Researcher will take notes during the interviews.
- Any paper-based or electronic copies of documentation you provide that related to your role in the development/review of the policy project being investigated will be stored in accordance with University policy and procedure.

Your data will be available to the Principal Investigator only for future research purposes that are similar in nature. During the course of this research project the data will be stored in re-identifiable form, but always de-identified for the purposes of publications with reference made to generic policy roles only.

If you would like a copy of results summary, please advise the Principal Investigator.

Any data collected as a part of this project will be stored securely as [redacted] Research Data Management policy [link redacted].

Consent to Participate

We would like to ask you to sign a written consent form (enclosed) to confirm your agreement to participate in this project. Please return your signed consent form to the Principal Investigator prior to participating in your interview.

Questions or Further Information about the Project

Please refer to the Research Team Contact Details at the top of the form to have any questions answered or to request further information about this project.

Concerns or Complaints Regarding the Conduct of the Project

If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project, you may contact the [redacted]. The [redacted] is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an unbiased manner.

Thank you for taking the time to help with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.

APPENDIX TWO – STUDY 2 PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Project Details	
Title of Project:	**Bridging the policy/practice divide in Australian universities**
Human Research Ethics Approval Number:	H20REA129

Research Team Contact Details	
Principal Investigator Details	**Supervisor Details**
Mrs Fiona Margetts	Assoc Prof Jon Whitty
Email: [redacted]	Email: [redacted]
Telephone: [redacted]	Telephone: [redacted]
Mobile: [redacted]	

Description

This project is being undertaken as part of a PhD by Publication.

The overall purpose of this project is to explore and attempt to understand the reason for the divide between policy and practice in Australian universities. It will also attempt to identify and trial an intervention that may go some way to redress that divide.

The researcher requests your assistance because you are involved in the development, approval and/or subsequent implementation of the [redacted] Policy at the case study university. An ethnographic study of this policy development and implementation forms part 2 of the overall study.

Participation

Your participation in this study will involve:

Observation

The Principal Investigator may attend meetings at which you are present, for the purposes of making observations related to the development, approval and implementation of the [redacted] Policy. The meetings will not be recorded and observational notes will be made using aliases.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. If you do not wish to take part, you are not obliged to. You are free to withdraw from the project at any stage until completion of data analysis. If you do wish to withdraw from this project or withdraw data collected about you, please contact the Research Team (contact details at the top of this form). If you withdraw during the data collection phase, the Principal Investigator will make no further observations or observational notes about your participation in any meetings related to the [redacted] Policy project.

Your decision whether you take part, do not take part, or to take part and then withdraw, will in no way impact your current or future relationship with the [redacted].

Interview

Possible interview/s comprised of one or two parts -

Part 1:

- An interview (focused on the policy development) that will take approximately one hour of your time
- Potentially, prior to the interview, collection and subsequent provision of copies of documentation related to your role in the development of the policy project (this will be further explained at the time of making the interview booking)
- Potentially a follow up call at a mutually agreed time and of a mutually agreed duration may be required to clarify interview data.

Part 2:

- An interview (focused on the policy implementation) that will take approximately one hour of your time
- Potentially, prior to the interview, collection and subsequent provision of copies of documentation related to your role in the implementation of the policy project (this will be further explained at the time of making the interview booking)
- Potentially a follow up call at a mutually agreed time and of a mutually agreed duration may be required to clarify interview data.

The interviews will take place at a date, time and location convenient to yourself and can be in person or via video/audio link (Zoom).

Questions will address your role in and experience of the policy development and its initial implementation. It will also include your observations about any resistance to the policy project in question.

The interviews will be video and audio recorded. If you do not wish for the video recording to occur, please advise the researcher.

Expected Benefits

It is expected that this project will potentially benefit you in your future engagement with policy and policy practice more broadly in the university. It also has the potential to benefit policy practice in other Australian universities and other entities which experience a policy/practice divide.

Risks

In participating in the study, there will be minimal risks to you, limited to the:

- Inconvenience of having to make time to participate in interviews and collect and provide relevant documentation
- A risk of potential identification (by deduction) when the results are published
- Risk of a prejudicial treatment or conflict of interest between the Principal Investigator and yourself due to the staff role held by the Principal Investigator
- Risk that the Principal Investigator or member of the wider research team will hold a position of influence over you or that you may hold a subordinate role to the Principal Investigator or members of the research team
- Risk of reflection upon your role in policy raising uncomfortable feelings.

This will be mitigated by

- Selecting a time/style of interview that is most convenient to you.
- Ensuring that a mutually agreed and realistic time period is provided for you to locate any documentation related to your role in the policy development project
- De-identifying your information and using aliases
- Not divulging your position or role
- Treating your activity in the policy project carefully so as not to lead to identification
- Intentional separation by the Principal Investigator between the research and staff role, and maintenance of respect for you at all times
- The Principal Investigator or members of the wider research team will not maintain a position of influence over you and you will not hold a subordinate role to the Principal Investigator or members of the research team
- Providing the referral outlets (below).

Sometimes thinking about the sorts of issues raised in the interview can create some uncomfortable or distressing feelings. If you need to talk to someone about this immediately, please contact the Employee Assistance Program [link redacted] (if you

are a staff member) You may also wish to consider consulting your General Practitioner (GP), Lifeline (https://www.lifeline.org.au/about-lifeline/contact-us) or BeyondBlue (https://www.beyondblue.org.au/about-us/contact-us) for additional support.

Privacy and Confidentiality

All comments and responses will be treated confidentially unless required by law.

It is noted that:

- The interviews will be video and audio recorded (unless you advise the Principal Investigator that you do not want to be video recorded) for the purposes of transcription and analysis.
- Transcription will be undertaken by the Principal Investigator or a commercial transcription service (with appropriate confidentiality provisions) and the following online voice transcription services will be used by the Principal Investigator to produce the initial audio transcript:
    - *Sonix* transcribing service
- The transcripts will be de-identified during transcription.
- You will have an opportunity to review and verify the accuracy of the interview transcripts prior to inclusion in the project data.
- You will be provided with two weeks to review and request any changes to the transcripts, following which time the data will be included in the project for analysis.
- You will be advised that no response to the request to review and request changes to the transcript will be taken as verification of the accuracy of the interview transcript.
- The recording will not be used for any other purpose (i.e. as a teaching/ instructional tool).
- The Researcher, supervisors and transcription service will have access to the recording and that data will be appropriately stored and encrypted when transferred.
- The Researcher will take notes during the interviews.
- Any paper-based or electronic copies of documentation you provide that related to your role in the development of the policy project being investigated will be stored in accordance with University policy and procedure.

Your data will be available to the Principal Investigator only for future research purposes that are similar in nature. During the course of this research project the data will be stored in re-identifiable form, but always de-identified for the purposes of publications with reference made to generic policy roles only.

If you would like a copy of results summary, please advise the Principal Investigator.

Any data collected as a part of this project will be stored securely as per [redacted] Research Data Management policy [link redacted].

Consent to Participate

We would like to ask you to sign a written consent form (enclosed) to confirm your agreement to participate in this project. Please return your signed consent form to the Principal Investigator prior to participating in your interview.

Questions or Further Information about the Project

Please refer to the Research Team Contact Details at the top of the form to have any questions answered or to request further information about this project.

Concerns or Complaints Regarding the Conduct of the Project

If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project, you may contact the [redacted]. The [redacted] is not connected with the research project and can facilitate a resolution to your concern in an unbiased manner.

Thank you for taking the time to help with this research project. Please keep this sheet for your information.

APPENDIX THREE – STUDY 2 OBSERVATION CRITERIA AND PROFORMA

Participant Observation Criteria

Observation criteria for a real time ethnography of case study institution participants involved in the selected policy under development and implementation. Observations to be conducted during meetings of the approval body and endorsing body/ies.

Aim

'…to observe, notice, record and try to make sense of actions and events.' (O'Reilly 2009, p. 3)

Explanatory note and opt out

- Written consent will not be obtained, however the option to opt out will be available at any stage prior to completion of data analysis
- Participants will be provided with an explanatory note prior to the first meeting attended by the Researcher detailing:
    - The nature of the study
    - How observations will be made
    - How to opt out
    - How opt out will be addressed by the researcher (refer Observation Explanatory Note attached separately to this application)
    - Noting the opportunity to ask questions at any stage.

Observation criteria

The Principal Investigator will observe:

1. Formal relationships between actors
2. Informal relationships between actors
3. Degree to which implementation issues are considered
4. Degree to which 'on the ground' practice is considered
5. Degree to which those who are responsible for implementation are involved/consulted
6. Degree to which needs of those responsible for implementation is considered
7. Demonstrations of formal/assigned power (by virtue of role)
8. Demonstrations of influence/informal power
9. Demonstrations of support and resistance
10. Consider rights and responsibilities of actors
11. Consider the understandings that form connections between and among the actors. Consider whether there are alternative versions of these relationships (discourses) (Alldred & Burman 2005)
12. Consider the values and institutions that are reinforced or undermined by the discourse (Alldred & Burman 2005)

13. Consider who gains and who loses within each discourse, and map any relations of hierarchy, including of knowledge or authority. (Alldred & Burman 2005)
14. Consider whether these discourses allude to alternative accounts and what this suggests about how they function culturally. (Alldred & Burman 2005)

Reflect upon the political values and relations (discourses) that enabled articulation of the last three stages, and the personal investments in these perspectives and this particular analysis. (Alldred & Burman 2005).

Observation Proforma

Meeting name: ___________________ Meeting style: __________________________

Date: ____________ Topic: _______________________ No. in attendance: ________

Actor/Alias	**What is their viewpoint?**	**Dominance (rank) of viewpoint?**	**How did the viewpoint gain supporters?** E.g.: What mechanisms and who	**How did the viewpoint get dismissed?** E.g.: What mechanisms and who

Is consensus/resolution achieved? If so, how?	**Are any impacted voices unrepresented?**

APPENDIX FOUR – COLLAGE ICONOGRAPHY KEY

Icon	Indicator
Light brown person	Participant
Light brown larger person	Formal role in meeting (not used consistently)
White person	Not present at meeting
Red mouth	Constantly unmuted
Red face/mouth/megaphone	Speaks without seeking permission through the chair or with unexpected authority
Red cross on mouth	Positive feedback
No mouth	Muted (required to press button to indicate desire to speak)
No tick (when voting)	Observational status
White tick	Invisible voting for Zoom meetings
Red hat	High institutional power
Purple hat	Medium institutional power
Pink hat	Low institutional power
Dark green hat	High informal power
Medium green hat	Medium informal power
Light green hat	Low informal power
Yellow hand	Raised hand seeking permission to speak
Group red/red hat	Group with high power
Group pink/pink hat	Group with low power
Group purple/purple hat	Group with medium power
Yellow book	Referenced policy/procedure other than in-focus policy
Gold crown	Member of higher authority (Group 2)
White line	Invoking authority
Dashed white line	Acknowledging contribution
Yellow scroll	Policy Library (policy repository)
Blue document	French Report (draft code)
Orange documents	Meeting record
Blue double wave	Relevant literature
Light blue document	Academic freedom report
Grey subprocess	Implementation activities (unseen)
Black queen/king	Actor with most evident power in scene
Large black queen/king	When two powerful actors, actor displaying most power
Brown documents	Legal documents/legislation
Pink document	Enterprise bargaining agreement of case study university
Green documents	Policies of another university
Question mark	Number of questions asked by questioner
Orange line	Derisive question answerer
Thick orange line	‘Real’ question answerer
White curved arrow	Self-reference as expert
Hourglass	Time pressure invoked by actor pointing to hourglass
Red gavel	Applying external pressure to finish policy
Purple lined document	Motion in agenda
Purple document	Zoom meeting protocol

APPENDIX FIVE – FOUCAULDIAN QUESTIONS POSED TO THE VIGNETTES TO ASSIST WITH COLLAGE CREATION

1. Statements and Monuments

- Does the language and rhetoric employed by actors influence the framing of discussions and policy directions, shaping the discourse within the meetings?
- Are there recurring statements or phrases used by actors that reflect and reinforce managerial values, contributing to the formation of specific discursive patterns?
- Do the monuments (e.g., policies, decisions, documents) generated within the meeting reflect the influence of specific actors and emphasise managerial values, solidifying their power in the institutional discourse?

2. Power Relations and Authority

- Does the presence of any actor or actors influence the power dynamics within the meeting, shaping the hierarchies and determining who holds the authority to speak, propose ideas, or influence decision-making?
- In what way does the institutional authority of a dominant actor impact the distribution of power and authority within the meeting?
- Are there instances where an actor's position of authority is used to shape the discourse and suppress alternative viewpoints, controlling the narrative within the meetings?

3. Framing of Discussions and Decision-Making Processes

- Does an actor influence or shape the framing of discussions within the meeting, shaping the formation of knowledge and discursive practices?
- Are certain topics or perspectives prioritised or marginalised based on an actor's influence, and does this reflect the power dynamics at play?
- In what ways does an actor advocating for their own will and/or managerial values impact the decision-making processes, and how does this shape the overall discourse?

4. Control of Discourse and Receptivity

- Do specific actors control the flow of discourse within the meetings, employing mechanisms or practices to limit what can be said or discussed?
- Are dissenting voices or alternative perspectives suppressed or discouraged in the meetings, shaping the overall receptivity to diverse viewpoints?
- Do other members of the meetings respond to the directions of a dominant actor, and what factors contribute to their apparent receptivity or resistance to those directions?