Fish-Out-of-Office: How managerialised university conditions makes administrative knowledge inaccessible to academics

Abstract

Academics report feeling unable to cope in the managerialised university. To confirm these feelings are symptoms of managerialism's tightening grip, we use Bourdieusian concepts of field and capital to compare academics and professional staff experiential statements in an Australian university. We compare their field conditions and examine how their differences enable or hinder the accumulation of capital that defines their field. Findings show that managerialism requires professional staff to share work tasks and be on-campus, which enables them to accumulate the capital they require. Managerialism also permits and resources academics to working out-of-office to accumulate their required capital. Consequentially though, university operational knowledge becomes informal and only accessible to professional staff who accumulate the required social capital to access it. Professional staff are thus fish-in-water; easily accumulating social capital through day-to-day activities. But academics become fish-out-of-water (office); they flounder to access operational knowledge, which leads to feelings of not coping.

Key words: Bourdieu, managerialism, capital, academic work conditions

Introduction

The university sector faces substantial challenges (Connell, 2019; McKenna, 2020), and one symptom of this is that academics feel stressed and unable to cope (Loveday, 2018). Academics blame professional staff for increasing compliance and administrative overheads (Anderson, 2008) and the intensification of work (Chandler, Barry, & Clark, 2002; Winefield, 2008; Loveday, 2018). Professional staff blame academics, who they regard as "incompetent at managerial and administrative tasks, and never in the office when needed" (Collinson, 2006, p. 280). The literature attributes blame differently, citing the rise of managerialism in universities (Winefield, 2008; Watts & Robertson, 2011; Kinman, 2014), and argues that the root cause of academic stress is the conflict between managerial and academic values (Anderson, 2008; Kinman, 2014; Connell, 2019). The case put is that managerialism creates this conflict by

imposing business-like performance structures and pressures on all aspects of academic work (Shore, 2008).

There are many examples of how academics suffer under managerialism. Academics are restricted or denied resources, as proposals must have a business sensibility of cost efficiency and market orientation (Burnes, Wend, & By, 2014). Academics are also excluded from key decision-making bodies (Rowlands, 2015). They are measured and judged against unrealistic (Shore, 2008) or baseless teaching and research performance metrics, and face the uncertainty of student evaluation scores and the obscurity of their use (Van Note Chism, 2016). Academics experience feelings of failure from harsh scrutiny in the way of grant and promotion rejections, teaching evaluations, negative student feedback, and in many cases job insecurity (Edwards & Ashkanasy, 2018). An academic's sense of community is undermined by competing with colleagues for research funding, and politicised impact agendas (Chubb & Reed, 2018). Moreover, academics continually face employment uncertainty and precarity (Smithers, Harris, Goff, Spina, & Bailey, 2021), and find themselves responsible (i.e. required to perform activities) but not accountable (i.e. not able to determine resources) for outputs (Shore, 2008) because accountability is in the hands of senior university managers.

There are suggested solutions that could ease managerialism's pressure on academics. For example, university staff should have access to stress management techniques, be offered routines to maintain a balance of activities (Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua, & Stough, 2001), and be able to work from home (Gillespie et al., 2001; Webster & Mosoetsa, 2002; Anderson, 2006). However, these solutions shift the burden of solving the problem to the academic, inferring they are the problem. A bolder solutions advise that university management and academics should 'share governance' (Rowlands, 2015). More radically, universities should be restored to a public good (Newfield, 2016).

More practical solutions include increasing academic staff numbers, improving facilities, improving communications, and developing management skills, rewards processes, and workload reviews (Gillespie et al., 2001). At first glance one might consider all these solutions as costly, going against the cost efficiency ideals of managerialism. However, amidst these are

initiatives that address cost efficiency by assuring reliability in university administrative services. These include requiring professional staff to work in a team-based structure (Deem, 2001) and share work with other team members (Godard, 2020), and resourcing academics to work off-campus (Aczel, Kovacs, van der Lippe, & Szaszi, 2021). Individually, these might appear to be helpful for both professional staff and academics. But implemented together we suspect these solutions add to the stress academics feel.

  Our study sets out to explore the situation of why academics are still not coping under these apparently helpful and supportive conditions. More specifically, what are academics not coping with and is managerialism responsible. If so, how? Like many studies on academics and professional staff in universities (for example, (Deem, 2006; Rowlands, 2015; Byrd, 2019; Gordon & Zainuddin, 2020)), as well as Bourdieu himself (Bourdieu, 1988; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990), we chose to apply a Bourdieusian lens to our study design.

Literature Review

Characterising academic and professional staff roles

  Like many universities worldwide, Australian academics are responsible for the university core business of teaching and research, and their identity incorporates the ideals of an intellectual life with collegiality, commitment to truth, free enquiry, and public responsibility (Clegg, 2008; Macfarlane, 2015). Academic responsibilities are varied and diverse, with some having research or teaching-only appointments, or some specialise in online learning or employability initiatives (Whitchurch, Locke, & Marini, 2021). Then there are manager-academics who are generally academics with power interests who occupy many university management roles (Deem & Brehony, 2005a; Deem, 2006). University administrators are generally referred to as professional staff (Association for Tertiary Education Management, 2011; Connell, 2019). They assume operational roles and have different working conditions to academics with different career paths and pay scales (Albright, Hartman, & Widin, 2018), and a different professional identity (Whitchurch, 2018). Finally, though not a complete topology of how the university space is populated, there are third-space professionals who are professional staff working in what would previously be considered academic domains (Whitchurch, 2018).

Bourdieu's concepts of field and capital

Bourdieu's concept of field is of a 'boundaried social space' (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). He regards capital as a non-financial asset that individuals accumulate and use to secure the most advantageous position within the field. Importantly for this study, capital is only recognised as valuable if the individuals within the field perceive it to be so (Grenfell, 2014), and those who do not cultivate the required capital are constrained in the field or considered not part of it (Albright et al., 2018).

There are different forms of capital: social, cultural, and symbolic. Social capital is the influential relationships actors possess within the field (Andersen & Kaspersen, 2000), and is often recognised as 'who you know' (Lin, 2000). It refers to group membership and knowing 'who is who' to enable privileged access to resources, such as trust, relationships, and networks (Bourdieu, 1986; Luthans, Luthans, & Luthans, 2004). Trust and social networks become a form of knowledge and service exchange, as individuals share knowledge and services more readily with those they trust, and these frequent trusted exchanges promote reciprocity (Li, 2007; Cropanzano, Anthony, Daniels, & Hall, 2017). Accessibility of individuals to one another is an important enabler of social capital (Nonino, 2014).

Managerialism and the university sector

As an ideology (sets of beliefs and ideals that creates and holds together meaning (Van Dijk, 2006)), managerialism views the skills that pertain to an organisation's core business as secondary to the generic managerial techniques and skills that can be used to 'manage' an organisation (Klikauer, 2013b). Managerialism is political in nature, as it has the power to manipulate the thoughts and behaviours of those who are either directly or indirectly involved in it (Klikauer, 2013a) for the purpose of forging the idea that managers alone are best suited to run society (Roberts, 1996). Therefore, managerialism can be regarded as malignant, as those who submit to it receive favours and its influence subsequently grows, while those who resist suffer the consequences of having their decision-making powers diminished (Klikauer, 2013b).

Historically, universities have shifted from collegialism, where universities were considered a public good and where leadership was elected, to managerialism (Marginson & Considine, 2000;

Shattock, Horvath, & Marginson, 2019). By collegialism we mean a specific form of organisational structure where decision-making processes enable consensus building amongst those responsible for undertaking tasks (Waters, 1989). It also describes an organisational culture were tasks are regarded as a joint efforts (Clark, 2001), and where a 'spirit of teamwork' and peaceful behaviours exist amongst university staff (Fischer, 2009). The shift comes with the justification that universities must operate as businesses to survive (Jarzabkowski, 2002; Deem & Brehony, 2005a; Maassen & Stensaker, 2019), and there are complex dynamics that drive how universities organise themselves as the norms of a field influence them (Seeber et al., 2015). However, Wheaton (2020) likens the shift to that of a mushroom factory, where professional staff now make decisions that were once the domain of academics, keeping academics in the dark. Consequently, managerialism privileges management agendas over scholarly values, and weakens the status and power of academics (Shepherd, 2017).

Academics within the managerial university field

For Bourdieu (1988), an academic is the embodiment of an individual who accumulates a form of cultural capital called intellectual capital, which is central to the formation of an academic's authenticity, legitimacy, and subsequently recognition as a valuable member of the academy (Bourdieu, 1988; Archer, 2008). Academics are motivated to cultivate their cultural capital in the fields of teaching and research (scholarship). Within teaching, academics must accumulate high teaching scores and teaching awards, which through promotion can convert into the symbolic capital of rank and position (Van Note Chism, 2006; Halse, Deane, Hobson, & Jones, 2007). Within research, academics must accumulate quality publications, a high h-index, and grant income, which can also be converted to rank, position, and prestige in the academic field (Coate, Barnett, & Williams, 2001; Greenbank, 2006).

Increasingly, academics and their managerialised universities have divergent understandings of what a university's missions should be, and what academics are and what academic identity is (Saunderson, 2002; Chong, Geare, & Willett, 2017; Uslu, Calikoglu, Seggie, & Seggie, 2019). Feelings of academic distress and not coping are due to conflicts between managerial values and those that reflect the nature of scholarly work (Winter, 2009; Halffman & Radder, 2015; Connell, 2019). For academics across the world (Elmes, 2011), not coping is a common feeling

(Kinman, 2014), as they resent spending time on compliance and 'administrivia', which reduces the time to spend cultivating scholarly pursuits (Anderson, 2006, 2008; Gray, 2015).

One way academics cope with the pressure of work is by working from home, both in and outside paid working hours (Kinman, 2014). This strategy takes into account the recent COVID pandemic, which brought into focus the merits and challenges of academics working from home, with most finding it still ideal to work from home (Aczel et al., 2021). However, while working from home enables them to "salvage and preserve time for research", it also means they spend less time physically on-campus and consequently experience a decline in collegial and social relations (Anderson, 2006, p. 586; Aczel et al., 2021). This "fiddling" of their own time is one way academics resists managerialism (Anderson, 2006, p. 587). Yet it can also be argued that by permitting working from home, managerialism has achieved its goal of work intensification as academics work more hours than they are paid for (Kinman, 2014).

Professional staff in the managerial university field
Professional staff make up more than half of the university workforce (Graham, 2012) with the proportion of professional staff to academics continuing to increase (Croucher & Woelert, 2021). Professional staff are experiencing a shift in their identity as they take on key roles and gain more authority (Szekeres, 2011; Graham, 2012). Arguably, managerialism creates an environment where individuals seek to adopt a managerial identity (Winter, 2009). In a survey of professional staff in Australian universities, 26% imagined themselves promoted to managerial roles (Strachan et al., 2012). However, professional staff are not untouched by managerialism. As Pick, Teo, and Yeung (2012) reported, professional staff experience wide spread system-wide stressors that impact negatively on their job satisfaction and in a perceived lack of ability to contribute to change.

Professional staff are a diverse community of university workers who proactively participate in sharing, interacting, and accessing relevant resources that enable the university to operate (Gornitzka & Larsen, 2004). Managerialism favours a team-based approach to work, which is a concept embraced by universities (Deem, 2001) as it enables multiskilling, job rotation, and team-based work systems, all of which is important from an efficiency perspective as it enables

workers to share work and perform a wider variety of tasks (Godard, 2020). However, the more shared and dispersed work becomes across a team, the more who in the team is responsible and accountable for the work becomes obscured and ambiguous (B. Ryan & Gill, 2011) to those outside the team.

To conclude our review, while professional staff almost exclusively act in the operational field, additionally academics must act in the fields of teaching and research, where they must place most of their effort to accumulate their academic capital; efforts that managerialism undervalues and dismisses. Under the assertion of improving efficiency, consistency, and reliability of service delivery, managerialism favours a team-based approach to work. However, while this team-based approach allows for task sharing and job rotation amongst professional staff performing their administrative work, it also obscures 'who is responsible and accountable for what'. Conversely for academics, who are primarily focussed on accumulating cultural capital, they are trying to escape the administrative burdens of the university by working off-campus from home. However, even with off-campus working and professional staff delivering increased administrative services, academics still feel unable to cope.

Given this situation, we postulate that instead of helping academics cope, both these initiatives exacerbate the problem. To explore how, we ask three Bourdieusian questions to the data collected from academic and professional staff in a managerialised university:

1. How do academic and professional staff field conditions differ?
2. Do their respective field conditions enable or hinder the accumulation of necessary capital?
3. Could field conditions collectively contribute to the agenda of managerialism?

Method

We address these research questions through the analysis of 24 interviews with academics and professional staff at an Australian regional university in 2019. From a methodological point of view, the use of case studies to seek understanding of the experiences of academic and professional staff has substantial precedent (Pitman, 2000; Graham & Regan, 2016; S. Ryan & Bhattacharyya, 2016; Lawless, 2017).

Sample, data collection, and analysis

The participant sample was opportunistic and heterogenous (see, Shaked, 2021) with invitations sent to staff from one faculty (approx. 250 employees) within the university. Staff roles varied, as did the length of their employment (1 to 30 years) and their ages (early 20's to mid-60). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 academic staff and 11 professional staff. The interview questions (for example; What distinguishes you as an *academic/professional staff* member as being different from a *professional staff member / academic*?, What are the types of conversations and practices that keep you disconnected from your *academic/ professional staff* colleagues?) were informed by reading Bourdieu's field work with a focus on capturing insights about field and capital (Bourdieu, 1984, 1999). All participants were asked the same questions with contextualisation to the participant's role. Interviews ranged from 45 minutes up to 90 minutes. Transcribed interviews were thematically analysed by a staged framework strongly informed by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Smith, Flower & Larkin (2009). Stage 1 involved reading and rereading each transcript with initial codes. Using NVivo, stage 2 grouped the codes as emergent field and capital themes in each transcript. To address our research questions, in stage 3 these themes were connected across all transcripts to identify field condition differences, forms of capital accumulated, and field condition receptiveness to the values of managerialism. This methodological approach has validity in its construction due to its involvement of two groups of university workers, whereby the single issue of the accumulation of capital is explored across both cohorts (Yin, 2003; Creswell, 2013).

Findings

To begin, we validate the literature's position that academics continue to feel unable to cope. We then turn to the three field conditions that emerged in the narratives and indicate how both professional staff and academics strive to accumulate the necessary capital for their field and highlight how different these field conditions are for them respectively, namely: shared work vs solitary work, on-campus presence vs off-campus presence, and social rituals and events vs solitude. The number in square brackets indicates participant attribution, while the prefix A refers to academic and P refers to professional staff membership.

The nature of academics feeling 'unable to cope'

For academics, the inability to cope appears to converge around three frustrating hindrances they experience while trying to fulfil administrative tasks in their home university. The first, is not being or feeling in control of their administrative tasks:

> "It's almost like the professional staff are here to manage the academic staff, not to assist them – you need to do this by this date; and this has to be in; and don't forget to do this by this date" [A23]. "…when you get all your paperwork right and then it changes! Someone [a professional staff member] changes the form" [A21].

The second, is not knowing what these administrative tasks fully require of them, and when completed whether they are satisfactory:

> "As a professional staff member, you know your left and right. You know what you've got to do. As an academic you don't" [A15].

And third, which causes the most frustration, is not knowing who specifically amongst the professional staff can help them complete these tasks.

> "Often you go 'I don't know who to ask' and you ask a colleague, and they go 'I don't know'. And you waste so much time because there's so much staff movement in the world of this university that you thought you knew who to ask - but now you don't" [A19].

Different field conditions cultivate different capital accumulation

The thematic analysis disclosed three different field conditions that either enable or hinder the accumulation of social and cultural capital. Professional staff conditions favour the accumulation of social capital, whereas the conditions for academics hinder them accumulating both the necessary social capital required for the administrative field and the necessary cultural capital for the teaching and research field.

Differing condition 1: Shared work vs solitary work

Professional staff associate positive feelings with 'shared work', which is different to the traditional notion of teamwork, as they see themselves as a pool of workers with a similar range of skills. They take turns, rotate, and roster work tasks amongst themselves and retain the capacity to help each other out when required.

> "I always have the support of my team" [P3]. Sharing work is making "sure everyone is getting through their workload together" [P6]. Accomplishing a shared goal "pulls us together as a team. You can notice the happiness of the team" [P1].

In contrast, academics described their day-to-day work as solitary, feeling solely responsible for fulfilling their work tasks. Most of the statements about the lack of shared work amongst academics came from professional staff:

> Being an academic is a "very solo role … they spend a lot of time on their own" [P3]. There are few occasions that "brings them together" [P1]. Academics have the "responsibility of 150-200 students relying solely on them, while us as professional staff have a team of us that work together" [P7].

When academics discuss accumulating their cultural capital, they express that 'finding their tribe' was important, yet the current field conditions for academics hinders the accumulation of this cultural capital.

> "As an academic you want to build your own profile for yourself" [A13]. "If you want to survive as an academic, you have to get above the university so that your identity is known beyond the university" [A14]. It's "your academic tribe, if you will, is what separates you from the institution" [A9].

Differing condition 2: on-campus vs off-campus presence

In terms of physical presences there is a distinct field difference between professional staff and academics, as professional staff are required/expected to work physically on-campus daily,

which leads to informal and impromptu accessibility to one another and assist with accumulating and maintaining social capital, while academics are not required to work on-campus each day. Professional staff felt that shared open-plan environments contribute to useful conversations, specifically about how things are done and who is responsible for doing them, which speaks to where administrative knowledge is held: in the conversations of professional staff.

> Professional staff "tend to be here day to day" [A9] and are "expected to be there" [A13]. Professional staff "sit with their doors open" [A9] and prefer open-plan offices because they are "free flowing and just worked better" [P5].

In contrast, if academics are on-campus then they are not all there at once. Some are never on-campus but rather online. Academics describe their environments as being separated from professional staff.

> Academics are "still a bit segregated in some ways" [P20]. When they are on-campus, academics are "in there [in their on-campus office] with the door shut" [A9], giving off the appearance of "I'm so busy, please don't bother me" [P8].

Differing condition 3: Social rituals and events vs solitude

Social rituals and events feature as an important aspect of the work experience for professional staff, but this is not the case for academics. Whilst academics appreciate the importance of socialising generally, perhaps with other academics in their field, they feel that time pressures prevent them from socialising with professional staff.

Professional staff value social rituals and events, such as morning teas, celebrations, and socialising outside of work. Social rituals also involve informal activities such as a walk to get a coffee together or a chat on Facebook. These activities are expressed as 'big motivators' that keep professional staff coming to work, and act as a bonding factor, allowing professional staff to have conversations that provide opportunities for their co-workers to jump in and help each other out.

"It's the professional staff that keep the culture of a faculty or a school alive. They're the ones that are celebrating a birthday or they're always there at the farewells or the Melbourne Cup lunches" [A9]. These activities help form relationships amongst professional staff that reach "beyond the work'" and "getting to know them personally" [P20].

Academics have greatly reduced opportunity to participate in social rituals and events as they either can't afford the time and were too stressed. Academics felt the day-to-day academic community was not as strong as that of professional staff and attribute this to academics not being on-campus, citing monthly school forum as one of the few opportunities to connect with other academics, but observed that not everyone turns up

"I run 6 degrees, I teach 7 subjects, so I don't have time to waste" [A22]. "Within the institution there is bugger all [opportunity to socialise]" [A10].

Discussion

We propose that our Australian case study is of international importance, as our findings extend the literature on the impact of managerialism in higher education, particularly the dissonance between academic pursuits and the aims of managerialised universities. For example, see Deem and Brehony (2005b); Deem, Hillyard, Reed, and Reed (2007); Szekeres (2011); Halffman and Radder (2015); Connell (2019); (Shattock et al., 2019).

Connell (2019) contends that no matter where a university is situated, for a university to thrive cooperation must exist between academics and professional staff, and access to university organisational know-how must be preserved, else it is eroded by managerialised practices. Our study reveals *how* managerialism structures university field conditions to fracture academic and professional staff cooperation. Furthermore, these conditions drive university organisational know-how to be held by the social networks of professional staff. Simply put, those who control the professional staff – control the university.

Deem and Brehony (2005a) and Deem et al. (2007) argue that 'new managerialism' exists as a set of ideological principles and language, which legitimates the right of university managers to manage. Our study reveals *how* these ideological principles are enacted by university managers to achieve power by surreptitiously structuring the university environment to hinder academics accumulating their cultural capital. Because accumulating cultural capital is made difficult for them, academics acquiesce their control to university managers.

Halffman and Radder (2015) argues that public universities worldwide are occupied by a management class, in the way that hostile forces take provisional control over a sovereign territory without any legitimacy. They ask 'how did management succeeded' and list several answers, which include fostering an audit culture (Shore, 2008) and setting academics in a permanent state of competition in regard to teaching (Van Note Chism, 2016) and research (Chubb & Reed, 2018). All of which academics are accused of being complicit in. However, our study suggests that university management are far more nefarious in their actions to claim power, as they take advantage of an academic's need to accumulate cultural capital, and hoodwink them to relinquish any control they have by supporting them in their need to work off-campus.

Szekeres (2011) chronicles the rise of the role of professional staff and how they have moved into role previously reserved for senior academics, bearing in mind they still maintain an uneasy relationship with academics. Our research suggests that there is no malevolent agenda behind the climb to power of professional staff. What we see is that their day-to-day behaviour enables them to climb to power in a Arendtally (Arendt, 1973) banal way. Simply doing their job amidst the managerially set university field condition is enough to promote them through the university ranks.

To contribute to these viewpoints on managerialisms grip on universities we used a Bourdieusian lens to reveal previously unobserved university field conditions that managerialism takes advantage of to strengthen its hold. By revealing the differences in field conditions and the different forms of capital that both academic and professional staff find necessary to accumulate, we can see how these differences affect academics in such a way that they feel unable to cope with completing administrative tasks, to such an extent that they are willing to surrender their

powers to professional staff. This is *how* decision-making powers are shifted from academics to professional staff.

In sum, professional staff accumulate social capital, which enables them to keep up-to-date on a) how administrative tasks are completed, and b) who is responsible for completing them. Accumulating this social capital is relatively easy for professional staff. As Bourdieu would put it, professional staff are like 'fish-in-water' because they are immersed in the accumulation of social capital that is essential for them to access the knowledge they require. They "catch up" on how tasks are completed and who is responsible for completing them. And catching up is infused in their day-to-day on-campus shared work experiences. These opportunities to share knowledge and service exchanges between fellow professional staff members can be easily paid back frequently over short periods of time (Wang & Noe, 2010; Cropanzano et al., 2017). Trust levels consequently increase between professional staff members, which subsequently contributes to their accumulation of more social capital. This ability to tap into the expertise and help from others is particularly important in knowledge intensive environments (Cross & Cummings, 2004) and is a resource not readily available or accessible to off-campus academics.

Conversely for academics, not only must they seek recognition in their disciplines beyond the home university (Salaran, 2010; Horta, Meoli, & Santos, 2021), they must also complete rising levels of administrative tasks. However, when it comes to completing these tasks, academics feel like 'fish-out-of-water' because they are 'fish-out-of-office' – left floundering off-campus. Even after the recent COVID pandemic we know that academics would prefer it this way (Aczel et al., 2021), yet being out-of-office causes them frustration and leads to continued feelings of not coping as they are prevented from accumulating the necessary social capital that is indispensable for completing administrative tasks.

This study reveals that by requiring professional staff to share work activities, to be on-campus, and by facilitating their socialising, managerialism has made university administrative knowledge informal, dynamic, and accessible *only* to those who accumulate the social capital that pertains to it. This requirement for professional staff to be on-campus remains strong even following the recent COVID pandemic, as the return of professional staff is addressed

specifically in many publicly available 'COVID safe' plans and frameworks for the return to on-campus working (e.g. Griffith University, 2020; University of New England, 2021).

Put succinctly, university administrative operational knowledge is held across the trusted relationships of professional staff. Access to this knowledge requires a form of social capital that predominantly exists amongst those who are recognised as professional staff – by professional staff. And on-campus conditions that facilitate shared work and social rituals and events are an essential element for that recognition process.

Conclusion

Our enquiry is driven by a need to understand how despite improvements concerning professional staff delivery of administrative services and despite support being given to academics to work from home to help them reduce stress and accumulate cultural capital, academics continue to feel unable to cope. We propose that these 'unable to cope' feelings are symptomatic of a more worrying situation where managerialism further prospers from changes to university staff work conditions, which puts academics in a situation where they willingly relinquish more of their powers to university professional staff, including university managers and administrators.

We use the Bourdieusian ontology of field and capital to examine statements collected from academics and professional staff in a case regional Australian university. We asked them how they feel their experience and work conditions differed from the other, and explored if these differences enabled or hindered the accumulation of the capital that defined their field. And importantly, could we see anything about these differing field conditions that contributed to academics feeling unable to cope.

We found that while changes made to academic and professional staff work conditions appear to be driven by the desire to improve conditions for all staff, this is not the result. Professional staff derive benefits, but academics continue to feel unable to cope, and would willingly consider relinquishing their administrative powers to professional staff. By embracing these initiatives, managerialism lays claim to the decision-making powers of academics, and relocates operational

knowledge to the informal and exclusive social network of professional staff – at the expense of academics.

Limitations

The generalisability of these findings cannot be guaranteed, although there is evidence singular case studies can have transferability to other contexts when connectivity to the specific case is maintained (Simons, 2009). However, as argued in the discussion, one can see that our results do impinge on more general theories of managerialisms impact on the higher education sector.

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