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Appointing Pro Vice Chancellors in Pre-1992 Universities:
Different Process, Same Results?

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Presentation Outline

- Research focus and aims
- Research context
- Rationale
- Research design
- Phase One: data collection
- Phase One: key findings
- Preliminary conclusions
- Issues for further research
Research Focus and Aims

• A reflective practitioner perspective

• Exploring a real-life phenomenon:
  ▪ Changing appointment practice for Deputy and Pro Vice Chancellors (DPVCs) in pre-1992 universities

• Aims to produce outcomes of both practical and theoretical value

• Central research questions:
  1. What are the motivations for change?
  2. What are the implications for the careers of ‘next-tier’ managers and for leadership capacity building?
  3. What is the theoretical significance of change for the notion of managerialism (Pollitt 1990) in an HE context?
Research Context

• HE has been transformed over last 30 years
• Impact of new public management: focus on efficiency and a more business-like approach
• Shift from ‘administration’ to ‘management’:
  ▪ Vice chancellors as CEOs
  ▪ Emergence of the executive management team
  ▪ New cadre of professional/specialist managers
• Managerialism is perceived to have permeated universities (Deem & Brehony 2005)
• Dominant academic narrative:
  ▪ Managerialism as both pervasive and problematic
  ▪ Loss of academic autonomy/power to managers
Rationale

- In a challenging HE environment, the quality of university management is increasingly important.
- Attracting the best candidates is essential, yet little empirical work on recruitment to senior roles.
- Appointment practice in pre-1992 universities is changing (Shepherd 2011 unpublished) with potentially far-reaching consequences that are not yet understood.
- Deputy and Pro Vice Chancellors (DPVCs) play a distinctive and vital role, yet remain an under-researched and under-theorised group (Smith & Adams 2008).
- HE management is an issue of policy concern.
- Enduring perception of “leadership deficit” (Watson 2008).
Research Design

• Builds on preliminary MA study that has established the extent and pattern of change
• Qualitative research with mixed method design and multiple data sources/perspectives
• Three iterative phases of data collection:
  1. *Census* of DPVC post holders (July 2012)
  2. *Online survey* of ‘next tier’ post holders
  3. *Semi-structured interviews* with key stakeholders in HEIs with changed practice: decision makers; DPVCs; ‘next tier’ managers
Phase One: Data Collection

- Study population: DPVCs in 45 pre-1992 HEIs
- Three data collection methods/sources:
  1) University websites and other online sources (July 2012)
  2) ACU Yearbook (2006, but data for 2005)
  3) Tracking of DPVC job adverts (2006-2012) to identify external appointees
- Limited by the availability and accuracy of data in the public domain
- Permitted full coverage of the target population, albeit a ‘snapshot’ in time
Key Findings: Census of DPVCs

1. There are 213 DPVC posts in pre-1992s, an increase of 40%, or 6% per annum, since 2005
2. 96% of DPVCs (203 of 211) are white
3. 75% of DPVCs are male, compared to 79% in 2005 (for whom gender is known)
4. 88% are professors (86% in 2005)
5. 93% previously held an academic post
6. 96% come from organisations within HE
### Key Findings: External Appointees v Others

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<th>Remaining DPVCs</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non professors</td>
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<td>From non-academic</td>
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<td>outside HE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Not held academic manager post</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6.9</td>
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Preliminary Conclusions

• The majority of pre-1992 universities have moved - at least in part - to an external DPVC appointment model

• Opened up DPVC posts to competition and created a recruitment ‘market’

• The profile of appointed DPVCs nevertheless remains largely unchanged: predominantly white, male professors

• The candidate pool has thus widened, but has not led to a diversification of appointed DPVCs

• External appointees are a less diverse group
Issues for Further Research

- Does the apparent continuity in DPVC profile mask changes in who is applying/appointed?
- What are the motivations for changing DPVC appointment practice and what are the intended - and unintended - outcomes?
- To what extent are changes characteristic of managerialism or managerialisation?
- What light does the continuing predominance of academics in DPVC roles shed on the prevailing academic narrative, particularly academic-manager power relations?
References and Contact Details


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