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Presentation

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Research Context

- Transformation of UK higher education over last 30 years: expansion, globalisation; competition, tuition fees, political/media profile

- Impact of new public management reforms: focus on efficiency, accountability and a more business-like approach

- Shift from ‘administration’ to ‘management’ of universities:
  - Vice chancellors as CEOs
  - Emergence of the executive management team (EMT)
  - Recruitment of professional/specialist managers, often from outside HE

- Managerialism, i.e. ideology of management, is perceived to have permeated universities (Deem & Brehony 2005)

- Dominant academic narrative:
  - Managerialism is pervasive and problematic
  - Loss of academic autonomy/power to managers
Research Focus

First Tier
- Vice Chancellor

Second Tier
- Deputy and Pro Vice Chancellors (PVCs)

Third, or Next, Tier
- Deans of Faculty/ Heads of School
- Directors of Professional Services
Changing PVC Appointment in Pre-92s

- **Internal Secondment**
  - Appointment by invitation
  - Part time
  - Fixed term
  - Return to academic role

- **External Open Competition**
  - External advertisement
  - Executive search agencies (ESAs)
  - Full time
  - Fixed term or open ended

- 71% (32 of 45) of pre-92s externally advertised at least one PVC post (2006-2013)
- A third of current PVCs were appointed as a result of external advertisement
Research Questions

1. Who are PVCs in pre-1992 English universities?

2. What impact has the change to an external open competition appointment model had on the profile of these PVCs?

3. To what extent do my findings support the prevailing academic narrative that academic authority is declining as managerial authority is increasing?
Data Collection

Mixed methods research design utilising multiple data sources

   - Adverts in THE and jobs.ac.uk for all PVC posts in English HEIs (n=287)

   - Snapshot in time. Publically available online data. Pre-92s. (n=215)

3. Online survey of ‘next tier’ post holders (Nov 2012)
   - Identifiable ‘next tier’ managers – academic and PS Directors - whose email address could be found. Pre-92s (n=132)

4. Semi-structured interviews (May-Nov 2013)
   - Purposive sample of VCs, PVCs, Registrars and ‘next tier’ managers in those pre-92s that have advertised externally and ESAs active in HE. Predominantly face-to-face. Respondent validated (n=73)
## Profile of PVCs: August 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
<th></th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
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<td>94.0</td>
<td>Not Career Academic</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

219 PVC posts in 45 pre-92 English universities, including four vacant posts
## PVC Profile by Appointment Method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Appointed via External Open Competition</th>
<th>Appointed via an Internal Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=71</td>
<td>n=144</td>
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<tr>
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<td>%</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Career Academic</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Impact of Change on PVC Profile

- External competition has led to widening, but not diversification, of the candidate pool.
- Significant negative impact on proportion of female appointments suggestive of structural impediments for women (e.g. geographical mobility).
- Safer, more conservative appointment decisions.
- Focus on experience as indicator of quality - and the ability to ‘poach’ those already in post - has led to a recirculation of existing PVCs (39% v 22%).
- Evidence of homosociability, or the appointment of “people like us”.
- Experience outside higher education is not recognised and non-academic managers from within higher education are an invisible group.
- Main job criteria remains research track record and academic credibility.
Emergent Theory: Academic Narrative

- Belief that PVCs should be academics remains undimmed and there is clear evidence of occupational closure

- So, rather than a diminution of academic authority, there is arguably an assertion of it, albeit by a few ‘elite’ academics

- PVC role is growing and academics are taking over the management ‘jurisdiction’

- This may be a *defence* against the incursion of generic managerialism and professional (non-academic) managers, who are perceived to be gaining in power

- Academics are running English universities and arguably consolidating their authority

- Academic narrative on relative power relations is thus more myth than reality? It reflects the fact that PVCs are no longer seen as part of the academic community
Find out more

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Twitter: @sueshepherdHE
References