Sue Shepherd

SRHE Newer Researchers' Conference 2012

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

E·S·R·C ECONOMIC & SOCIAL RESEARCH COUNCIL

University of Kent

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- Appointment practice in pre-1992 universities is changing (Shepherd 2011 unpublished) with potentially far-reaching consequences that are not yet understood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

	External appointees		Remaining DPVCs	
	Number	%	Number	%
Females	7	12.1	46	30.1
Non-white	2	3.4	6	3.9
Non professors	4	6.9	21	13.7
From non-academic previous post	4	6.9	11	7.3
From organisation outside HE	1	1.7	4	2.7
Not held academic manager post	4	6.9	25	16.7

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

- Deem, R. and Brehony, K. (2005). Management as Ideology: The Case of 'New Managerialism' in Higher Education. *Oxford Review of Education*, 31 (2), 217-235.
- Pollitt, C. (1990). *Managerialism and the Public Services: The Anglo-American Experience*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell
- Shepherd, S. (2011 unpublished). *Change and Continuity in the Appointment of Second Tier University Managers*. Canterbury: University of Kent. MA dissertation.
- Smith, D. And Adams, J. (2008). Academics or Executives? Continuity and Change in the Roles of Pro-Vice-Chancellors. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 62 (4), 340-357.
- Watson, D. (2008). Hunting the Headhunters. *Engage* (14), 10-11.

Sue Shepherd ss780@kent.ac.uk