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# Sue Shepherd

IOE Doctoral Seminar 18 March 2014

## “Quest for the Best”?

### Drivers and outcomes of recent change to PVC appointment practice



# Presentation Outline

- Research phenomenon
- Context and rationale
- Research questions
- Conceptual framework
- Data collection methods
- Findings
- Tentative conclusions
- Theory development

# Research Focus

**First  
Tier**

**Vice Chancellor**

**Second  
Tier**

**Deputy and Pro Vice Chancellors (PVCs)**

**Third,  
or Next,  
Tier**

**Deans of Faculty or 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

# Research Context

- Transformation of HE 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)
  - New cadre of professional/specialist managers
- “New managerialism” 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 an increasingly challenging environment, the quality of university management is arguably more important than ever
- PVCs play a distinctive and vital role (Smith & Adams 2008)
- The appointment and selection of future managers is “critically important” (Deem 2007), but little empirical work to date
- Appointment practice is changing (Shepherd 2011 unpublished) yet consequences are not yet well understood
- HE management is a long-standing policy concern, as evidenced by the Jarratt (1985), Dearing (1997) and Lambert (2003) Reviews and creation of Leadership Foundation in 2004
- Enduring perception of “leadership deficit” (Watson 2008)

# Research Questions

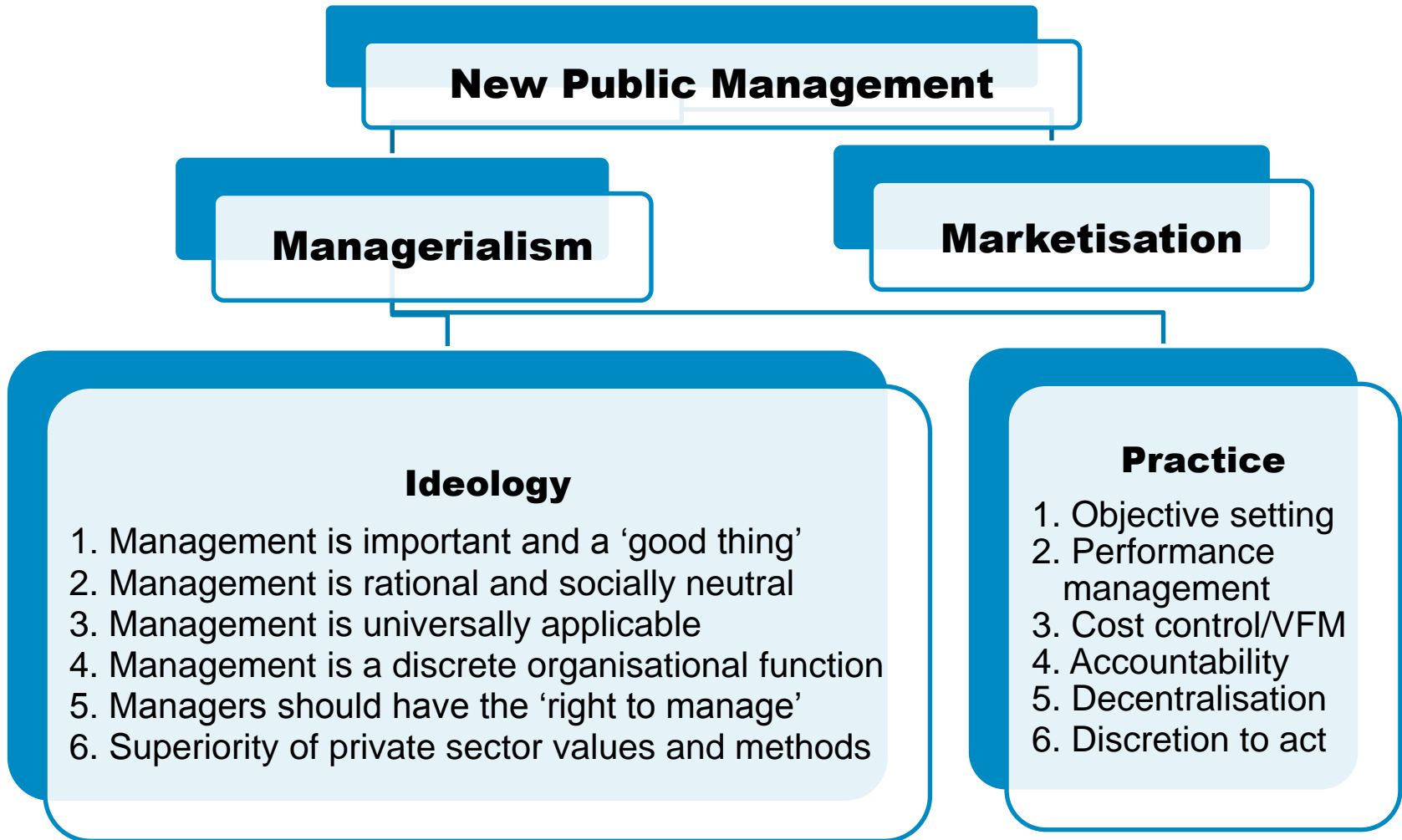
1. What is the case for change to an external open competition PVC appointment model?
2. What are the implications of change for individuals' careers and for management capacity building?
3. What is the theoretical significance of change for the notion of managerialism in a higher education context?

This will involve consideration of the extent to which the findings:

- Are symptomatic of ideal-type managerialism
- Support the prevailing academic narrative that academic authority is declining as managerial authority is increasing



# Conceptual Framework



Clarke and Newman (1997); Farnham and Horton (1996); Ferlie *et al* (1996); Flynn (2002); Hood (1991); Pollitt (1990); Ranson and Stewart (1994)

# Indicators of Ideal-Type Managerialism

Ideological Tenet of Managerialism	Implication for PVC Appointment
Management is important and 'a good thing'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Importance of PVC posts recognised</li><li>• Priority given to recruitment and selection process as a means to attract the best candidates</li><li>• A more managerial interpretation of the role</li><li>• Managerial skills and experience emphasised in person specification</li><li>• Value placed on management training</li></ul>

# Data Collection

Sequential, mixed methods design utilising multiple data sources

## 1. *Advertisement Monitoring Exercise (2006-2013)*

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

## 2. *Census of PVC post holders (Aug 2012 and 2013)*

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

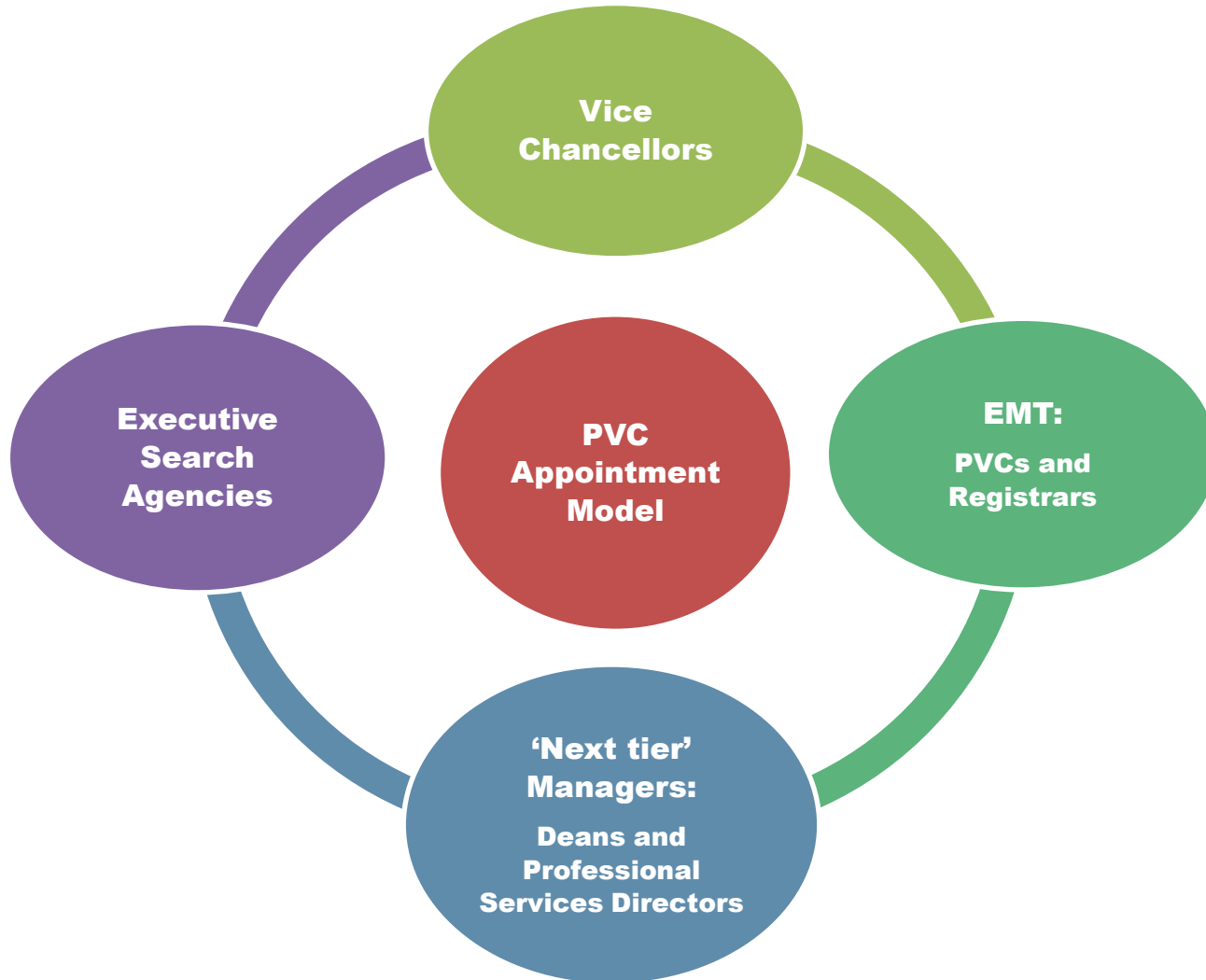
## 3. *Online survey of 'next tier' post holders (Nov 2012)*

- 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)

# Research Participants



# Changing PVC Appointment Practice in Pre-92s

*January 2006 to December 2013*

- 111 PVC posts externally advertised over the 8-year period
- 71% (32 of 45) of pre-92s externally advertised at least one PVC post during period
- Most have a mixed PVC appointment model, utilising both internal and external recruitment methods
- ESAs are used in 60% of cases (same as for post-92s)

*As of August 2013*

- A third of PVCs (71 of 215) in pre-92s were appointed as a result of external advertisement (further 9 were pending appt.)

# Drivers and Motivations for Change

## Contextual drivers:

- As HE environment becomes more complex and challenging, so does university management and the PVC role
- Management, and senior managers, increasingly important

## Motivations:

- To reach a wider pool of the best qualified candidates
- To bring in fresh blood/ideas/challenge and fill internal skills gap
- To test internal candidates against the field and 'validate' them
- To drive through a change agenda or tackle underperformance
- To increase diversity of the senior team
- To get people who really want the job

# Outcomes: Individual Careers

## Current PVCs:

- Made an active decision to take an academic management route
- Ambitious: many aspire to be a VC
- Increased personal risk for post holders: fixed term; reliant on patronage of the VC; exit strategies can be tricky
- “Going back” to academic role is neither feasible nor desirable: “sacrificing” of research career

## Next tier managers:

- Female academics don't lack ambition: more likely than men to express intention of apply for a PVC post (44% versus 38%)
- The door is firmly closed to PS Directors and they know it
- They are much less likely to apply: only one actual application

# Outcomes: Management Capacity

- Creation of PVC recruitment ‘market’ and “competitive waiting room” of candidates (Watson 2008)
- Widening, but little if any diversification, of the candidate pool
- Little change to overall PVC profile: predominantly white (96%), male (76%) professors (90%)
- External appointees are a *less* gender diverse group (15% v 28%)
- No more likely to come from outside HE or be non-academics
- Main criteria remain research track record and academic credibility
- Safer, more conservative appointment decisions
- Focus on experience: recirculation of existing PVCs (39% v 22%)
- Temptation to ‘buy in’ rather than nurture home-grown talent



# Tentative Conclusions

- Deficit case for change
- Pragmatism rather than policy: case by case basis
- Continuity in PVC profile disguises underlying change in career background and motivations of those getting the jobs
- Emergence of a cadre of 'career' PVCs replacing 'reluctant' or 'good citizen' managers (Deem *et al* 2007)
- PS managers are an invisible group in terms of PVC appointments
- Structural impediments for women: mobility; homosociability
- Temptation to blame ESAs for lack of diversity in appointments, but universities cannot outsource responsibility
- Hard to conclude an improvement in management capacity, i.e. increase in the likelihood that the 'best' candidates will be attracted and appointed from the widest possible talent pool

# Tentative Theory Development

- Some evidence/indicators of managerialism
- Not ideal-type managerialism, which holds that management is universally applicable or 'generic', but rather a context-specific 'academic' variant
- Belief that PVCs should be academics remains undimmed and there is clear evidence of professional/occupational closure
- So, rather than a diminution of academic/professional authority, arguably an assertion of it, albeit by a few 'elite' professionals
- Academics taking over management jurisdiction/territory
- Continued predominance of academics as PVCs may be a *defence* against the incursion of a generic form of managerialism and/or general managers (perceived to be gaining in power)
- Academic narrative about managerialism: part myth, part reality?

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