Whither the Academic Profession?

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- First phase: Interviews in eight UK HEI case studies with eight individuals in each (Autumn/Winter 2017/18)

- Institutions chosen according to geographic region, type (pre/post-1992), disciplinary profile

- 69 interviews, of which 49 were 'rank-and-file' academics ie not members of senior management teams; majority in mid-career on open-ended contracts

- 20/49 had worked outside higher education, evenly spread across institutional type

- Second phase: Surveys of all staff in 5/8 of HEIs (Spring 2019)

- Third phase: repeat interviews with 'rank-and-file' academics to pick up career development   (Autumn 2019-Spring 2020) - 39 interviews

Conceptual framing/findings

- Extension of boundaried/boundaryless view of roles and careers via 'morphogenetic' process between institutional structures and the individual (Archer 2000) - individuals not only enact formal career pathways, but offer "unscripted performances" in interpreting these

- Facilitated by diversification of workforce - professions/practice/extended academic activity

- Choices represented by interaction between institutional and internal 'career scripts'

- Institutional scripts driven by eg promotion criteria; performance review; work allocation models; visible/quantifiable measures

- Internal scripts driven by personal strengths/interests, professional practice, work-life balance; articulated via eg (less visible) informal conversations, personal development plans

- Creative tension between the two scripts, driving activity

Formal and informal 'institutional economies' 🏛 UCL

- A metaphorical frame referring to the production and exchange of academic and associated activity, to which a value is ascribed by the individual

- Formal 'economy' (driven by institutional career scripts)

- Informal 'economy' (driven by internal career scripts)

- Shift in balance between the two evidenced by:

- Willingness of individuals to articulate personal strengths, interests, professional and work-life considerations

- Promotion of self/individual and unique contributions via networks, social media, mentorship, influence of line managers

- Collective shift towards more fluid, open-ended approaches

- Evident in both pre-and post-1992 institutions; across disciplines

Shift towards more fluid, open ended approaches to the professional formation of academic staff

Traditional elements of the professional formation of academic staff :	Shifts in the professional formation of academic staff:
Primacy of discipline as identifier	Discipline no longer sole identifier; incorporation of other dimensions such as the student experience, community and public engagement, impact initiatives
Influence of institutional structures/progression pathways	Creation of alternative, self-made options; playing to strengths/interests/work-life considerations
Formal discourses	Informal understandings, relationships and networks
Valuing of academic freedom/autonomy	Valuing of general working conditions: flexibility, colleagueship, equity, well-being, availability of options
Good citizenship within own university	Emphasis on good citizenship withIn the wider community

Who wants to leave the HE sector?

I want to leave H.E.	Coef.	P>|z|
Experience in other education level	-1.23424	0.009
Experience in HE (years)	0.035867	0.291
Education: PhD (1 Yes)	-1.05367	0.002
workhours (weekly)	-0.01774	0.314
I am asked to do extra function (1 Yes)	0.626959	0.019
I do overtime	1.810501	0.008
Academic track: traditional academic	-0.68559	0.047
Academic track: teaching-only	-0.22625	0.612
I have a good Key Relationship with my Dean	-1.06352	0.005
Sex (1 Male)	1.015741	0.000
Age	-0.04788	0.012
Studying (1 Yes)	-0.84279	0.021
_cons	0.265241	0.823

In context: Before Covid-19

- Increase in 'teaching-only', 'teaching specialist' or 'teaching and scholarship' roles (but by less than the increase in students)

- Increase in the proportion of 'teaching-only' etc. academics who are casual

- Increase in fixed-term researchers

- Extension and redefinition of 'early career academic'

- Some mid-career academics' careers stalling

- Decrease in the proportion of 'teaching and research' roles

- Increase in proportion of professional staff (and more involved in core academic work)

In context: Since Covid-19

- Significant restructuring of staffing of HEIs: by stealth? by 'accident'?

- Dismissal of 'casual', 'sessional', fixed-term teachers

- Shift to online, hybrid and new blended learning; limitations on research; BUT increase in homeworking/flexibility; increased access via online communications

- Loss of fixed-term and part-time researchers

- Loss of professional staff and move to the 'centre'

- The gender, race, class, etc, dimensions of these trends have yet to be confirmed by empirical analysis

- Increased workloads for all remaining academics and professionals, especially those teaching and involved in core academic work

- Those on teaching and research contracts may be becoming *de facto* 'teaching-only', or at least 'teaching-intensive'

Likely impact of 'more fluid, open-ended' approaches to career-making

- Loss of significant proportion of academics and professional staff from HEIs: Will they ever return? How attractive is a career in HE now? Is there an 'academic career'?

- The academic and professional staff who remain have had to develop strategies for survival and success

- Faith in the formal institutional economy is likely to decline

- This formal institutional economy needs:

  – to acknowledge innovative work

  – to be reformed in order to realign with the lived reality of academic roles and careers in the mid-21st century

  – to negotiate a new psychological and social contract with academic and professional staff in HEIs

Thank you for your attention

Questions?