

Globalisation and the Regulation of Academic Careers

The case of the UK

Outline of the Paper

- **A case of major and rapid change and significant continuities**
- **New policy and governance frameworks have re-shaped the arena in which universities and academics work in the UK**
- **University autonomy still important but it has been redefined in a changed context**
- **New context for regulation of more diversified academic careers but here new frameworks just emerging**

1970s

- **University academics an elite, highly secure occupational group**
- **More a “guild” than a profession**
- **Relatively cohesive and uniform though with unacknowledged inequalities**

- **Binary system**
- **Only 33, 265 full time university academics**
- **3 main career positions:**
 - **Professor (12%)**
 - **Senior lecturer or reader**
 - **Lecturer**

1990s - present

- **Massification**
- **Binary system abolished**
- **All polytechnics, together with many HE colleges became universities**
- **Now 118 universities**
- **Academic workforce more than trebled**

New policy frameworks

- **Economic instrumentalism**
- **Neo-liberalism**
- **National competitiveness in a global knowledge economy**
- **Innovation and research excellence dominant themes**
- **Other agendas: widening access to HE; professionalisation of teaching; skills**

New governance frameworks

- **State regulation: various means but NB “power of treasure”**
- **Competition**
- **Managerial as well academic self governance in universities**

Consequences

- **Recreation of elite group of universities**
- **Explicit stratification of institutional academic status, resources and power**
- **Unequal rewards and constraints**
- **Official attempts to polarise functions**
- **But universities adopt complex diversity of functions and positionings (global, regional (Europe), national, local)**

Redefining and re-justifying institutional autonomy (1)

- *Academe as sovereign, bounded territory, occupied with its own specialist concerns, gives way to ideals of engagement**
- *Universities as “axial structures” of society and work within a variety of external relationships.**
- *Use of knowledge as important as knowledge itself**

Redefining and re-justifying institutional autonomy (2)

- **No longer negative freedom**
- **Positive freedom or enhanced capacity to maximise control over futures within complex pressures, relationships and choices**
- **Achieved through:**
 - managerial governance
 - idea of university as “corporate enterprise”;
 - multiple sources of income
- **Institutional autonomy not granted by the state but earned by the institution**
- **Relative and conditional.**

Redefining and re-justifying institutional autonomy (3)

- **Many universities have been able to act more decisively, strategically and collectively in the face of the complexity and scale of the challenges. But:**
- **the terms have been set by government**
- **academic values and authority may in the process have been reduced. See Shattock (2002) (and Clark (1998)) arguments for “shared governance” as opposed to “corporate governance”.**

The Regulation of Academic Careers: changes and continuities

- **Universities still (more or less) free to select staff... and to determine the conditions under which they remain in the university**
- **Influence of institution-discipline combination remains strong**
- **Few mandatory employment regulations/constraints apart from:**
 - **Abolition of academic tenure**
 - **Recently reformed national salary structure, which allows for local negotiation and application**
 - **Wider equality laws. More transparency & equity.**

Regulation of Academic Careers: qualifications

- **Partial attempt to professionalise academic work – teaching**
- **Still no mandatory academic qualifications**
- **But in practice eligibility criteria for appointment to core academic posts are more rigorous and age of first appointments to such posts is higher.**

Changes in the Academic Workforce

- **Size**
- **Diversification of roles and tasks and knowledge bases**
- **Inequalities of status, security, reward, academic freedom**
- **Flexibility of the academic workforce is an underlying imperative**

- **Security and status**
 - **Full time/ part time balance**
 - **Permanent or open contract/ fixed term contract**
 - **Core academic versus research-only/ teaching-only appointments**

Pressures on traditional concept of academic function

- **Research**
 - **Competitive drive for research excellence**
 - **Changing research organisation**
 - **Enlarged definition of research competence**
- **Teaching**
 - **Massification and new needs**
 - **New technologies and new theories**
 - **New roles**

New Career structures?

- **These developments put pressure on definitions of academic work and on boundaries between academic and non-academic roles/ appointments**
- **Current value given to research is not reflected in career structures, although this is beginning to change**
- **Management and new career pathways**