

Research Management – the development of a new profession in academia (0133)

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Until very recently universities were seen as solely the field of the academic and university staff were divided into 'academics' and 'non-academics'. This binary division implied 'non-academics' lacked something. However there was little research on how the various sections of the academy worked together, what the 'non-academics' lacked, or whether other professions were emerging. Higher education is being reshaped (Barnett, 2005) and is undergoing a series of transformations. New roles have developed and this paper adds to the body of work on the emergence of new professional groups in the sector.

During the last two decades higher education in England has been dominated by financial constraints and quality assessment. Key governmental policies have transformed research funding mechanisms as well as the accounting processes for research. The RAEs and the forthcoming REF, the means by which the distribution of research monies is decided, together with the increase in audit culture, has resulted in universities investing resources in the management of the research process. The management of research has become the key mechanism for delivering research goals (Bushaway, 2003).

Research into the type of work and responsibilities of research managers and administrators (Shelley, 2008, 2010) explored the cultural changes, managerial changes and the changing research processes and systems that took place in the sector. Academics had become more open to accountability and power relations between academics and administrators were less stable as the boundaries moved (Kogan, 2002; Henkel, 2000, 2005; McInnis 1998). New central research offices and local departmental research offices appeared, research director and research co-ordinator posts were created to strengthen research activity and optimise research grant capture and publication output (Henkel, 2000). Institutions and their research support structures changed and evolved, and whether support was offered from the centre of the university or was more locally based, there were an associated range of behavioural changes and cultural issues that needed to be handled (Carter, 2006).

Research was seen as a vehicle that could be used to influence the health and wellbeing of both individuals and nations, and a university's research record was important in determining not only the success and prestige of the university but also of academics (Lucas, 2006). Gradually research management and administration began to receive a higher profile. The management of research in the sector by academics (Deem, 2007), the life-worlds of research administration (Allen-Collinson, 2007, 2009) the new identities of professionals in higher education (Whitchurch, 2008, 2009), and the professionalization of research management (Green and Langley, 2009) indicate the significance of the transformations that are occurring in higher education workforce.

This paper adds to those debates and offers further consideration of how the roles of research managers have developed. It presents a case study of the development of the professional research manager. It uses baseline data from interviews conducted in 2005 with a purposively selected group of senior experienced research managers (Shelley 2008) and compares this with follow up interviews with those same research managers as part of a small-scale qualitative study 5 years later. The study uses Bourdieu's theory of social practice. The boundaries of the research manager field and the academic field cross over each other, and the area they map onto becomes a critical space. The analysis of the original interview data with research managers and research academics, and research directors, identified this space as holding research cultural capital that was to some extent shared

between the research academic and the research manager. This space I described as the 'shifting arena'. This paper will explore the 'shifting arena' and consider whether research capital has remained constant or has evolved. The previously identified research capitals in the 'shifting arena' included: work on research grant capture; RAE involvement; management of research projects; research bidding experience; writing research policy and strategy; networking with research policy makers; and membership of research council boards.

The study will consider if the positions the research managers hold in the field, and have moved into over the five-year period, are a reflection of their accumulation of, and the value of, the research capital they hold. The research will also explore and re-visit other key themes identified in the original study such as: research manager's sense of professionalism; development of their roles; aspirations for future careers; impact of research manager roles on organisational structures and how their research support teams have evolved.

It is hoped that the paper will facilitate discussions on how research managers and research academics can enhance working practices in the 'shifting arena'. The research cultural capitals come from a shared endeavour but the specific capitals and their value are always dependent on the location in the field. The critical point is that although the capitals are different because the academics and research managers occupy different fields, they all share the 'shifting arena' and this space can act as a catalyst for change. How these opportunities for change develop will be, to some extent, dependant on how the academy responds to the changing landscape. It will also be dependant on the recognition the academy awards to research managers and the roles they could hold.

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