

**How academics respond, adapt and cope with the  
transformational changes in the Australian Higher  
Education Sector**

**Doctor of Philosophy**

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## Doctor of Philosophy declaration

"I, George Comodromos, declare that the PhD thesis entitled *Work life factors that lead to the adoption of transformational change in the Australian Higher Education Sector* is no more than 100,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work."

Signature.....Date.....

## **Abstract**

The objective of this thesis is to investigate the work life factors of Australian academics and see which of these lead to the adoption of transformational change. The context of the thesis is the Higher Education Sector and the research examines the metamorphic changes in this sector that have been mostly driven by neo-liberal and deregulation policies by successive governments over the past three decades. The thesis adopts and develops the constructivist grounded theory method. The primary data source was developed from face-to-face interviews with 33 (male and female) academics from Monash and Melbourne universities, conducted over a period of five months. These two universities were chosen from the Group of Eight (Go8) elite universities in Australia because they are highly resourced, quality branded and populated with high academic performance students. They represent Australian academics working at their peak performance and their personnel are considered the most highly regarded in the sector. Constructivist grounded theory, as presented by Charmaz (2010), was chosen as a methodology for this thesis because the ontological perspective that reality is created within a social construct and the epistemological perspective that the researcher and participants are both actively involved in the construction of the grounded theory, best suits the mindset of the researcher and the research question. The findings of the research resonate with the literature of institutional change, particularly that of Thelen and Mahoney (2010), and the typology of academics that was created from the research findings further contributes to knowledge in the area of change management theory. The intention of this thesis is to provide a platform to launch further research into the area of organisational change management, particularly in the Higher Education Sector.

## Acknowledgements

The endeavour to complete a PhD is often thought of as a journey that is undertaken on one's own but not without the sage advice of experienced mentors and academic advisors. I have been very fortunate to have had many advisors and mentors who have helped me on my journey that initially began as a perfunctory workplace requirement but ended as an inspirational, motivational force that has fuelled further academic contributions. Completing the PhD was a life changing experience not only because of the new skills and capabilities learnt along the way but because of the sense of achievement that comes from setting oneself a significant task, believing in experienced others to help you find the best path to follow and then taking the necessary initiatives to survive the long process. My inspiration came from the work that was generated along the way and my desire to complete whatever I was serious about starting. I drew the energy to continue from my parents and their migrant experience. They bravely entered a new horizon, fought to make their way through often hostile times and at the end of their lives were satisfied that their rewards were worth their valiant efforts. I also drew courage to finish from my late sister, Mary, who fought her own battle with her health, and although her life was unfairly cut too short, her love of life was my inspiration. I dedicate this work to her and my parents and the future generation of scholars: my nephews, Kosta and Alexander, and nieces Stefanie and Zoe.

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## **Publications arising from the thesis**

Comodromos, G 2010, 'A research framework that examines work life factors of academics and transformational change', *International Review of Business Research Papers*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 331-42.

Comodromos, G 2010, 'Beyond Social Exchange Theory and the Boundaries of the Workplace: A Closer Look at Workers through Examining Work Life Factors', *Global Business & Economics Society*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 265-70.

Comodromos, G 2011, 'Beyond Transformational Change: incremental transformational change in institutions', *Journal of Modern Accounting and Auditing*, vol. 7, no. 4, pp. 424-30.

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Comodromos, G & Ferrer, J 2011, 'Incremental Institutional Change and Australian Universities', *International Review of Business Research Papers*, vol. 7, no. 1 January, pp. 330-39.

Comodromos, G 2012, 'The impact of temporal and political context on institutional change', *Journal of Modern Accounting and Auditing*, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 587-92.

Comodromos, G 2012, 'How recent changes in Australian Universities have affected the work life balance of academics', *Global Business & Economics Anthology*, vol. 2, Dec., pp. 99-104.

Comodromos, G 2012, 'The impact of temporal and political context on institutional change', *Journal of Modern Accounting and Auditing*, vol. 8, no. 4, pp. 587-92.

## **Conferences**

Comodromos, G 2009, 'Work life factors of academics that lead to the acceptance of transformational change: A research strategy', Proceedings of the Eleventh International Business Research Conference, Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Comodromos, G 2010, 'Work life factors and social exchange theory,' Business & Economics Society International July 2010 Conference, Athens, Greece.

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Comodromos, G 2011, 'Understanding institutional change in the light of its temporal and political context,' Paper presented at the Business & Economics Society International Conference, Split, Croatia.

Comodromos, G 2012, 'An account of workplace changes that have affected Australian academics over the past three decades', Business & Economics Society International July 2012 Conference, Salzburg, Austria.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

The objective of this thesis is to research the different ways academics respond, adapt and cope with the transformational changes in the Australian Higher Education Sector. The context of the research is the Australian Higher Education Sector and the metamorphic changes that have occurred in this sector over a period of three decades. The epistemological framework on which the thesis will be structured is in accordance with the view of transformational change that is proffered by Thelen and Mahoney (2010). Organisational transformational change becomes manifest as a result of incremental, endogenous shifts in thinking and not simply due to abrupt wholesale breakdown (Thelen & Mahoney 2010). This thesis not only concerns itself with the incremental organisational restructure of Australian Universities that occurs with an extended trajectory of institutional change (Carnall 1986; Dunphy 1990), but in particular with the personal experience of academics undergoing that change. The extant literature includes vast volumes outlining employees' resistance to change (Coch 1948; Lewin 1951; Bennis 1969; Gardner 1987; Dawson 1994). It is mostly concerned with incremental short term change and does not address large-scale strategic change. Bartunek (1988) describes transformational change, the particular interest of this thesis, as a more basic shift in attitudes, beliefs and cultural values that has a more longitudinal impact. This approach is then further developed by Pierson (2004) and Thelen and Mahoney (2010). The gap in the literature this thesis will address is the impact changes in the Australian Higher Education Sector, have had on the work culture and work life balance of academics. In particular the focus will be on academics' personal experience responses to change and what coping mechanisms they employed to survive the change process.

The metamorphic changes affecting universities, driven by neo-liberal and deregulation government policies over the past three decades, have had a negative impact on the workloads and morale of Australian academics (Ferrer & Van Gramberg, 2009; Ferrer 2008). The new demands that have been forced on universities have impacted on academic resources and have had marked effects on academic staff (Giles & Gilmore, 2005; Harman 2003). Neo-liberal performance measures and reduced resources are taking their toll on academics, as they feel they are losing control over their three central work domains: teaching, research and administration (Ramsden 1998; Bellamy 2003). The research that Weller and Van Gramberg (2007) have conducted posits that employee involvement by academics in the Australian Higher Education Sector has diminished markedly over the past three decades. The objective of this thesis is to build on the extant literature and contribute to knowledge by providing a more detailed picture of individual perceptions and personal

experiences of change and their impact on work life balance of mostly senior academics who work in two of Australia's most prestigious Go8 universities.

The examination of academics' work life factors is the central theme of this thesis, and the data collection, findings and analysis are all interpreted with this theme in mind. The commercialisation of universities and their pursuit of financial autonomy is the resultant effect of government neo-liberal policy and, although this is a significant effect, this does not reveal the complete picture. Through the perceptions and personal experiences of academic staff who have taught for many years and who now hold senior university positions, a more detailed picture is presented in the thesis that includes perceptions of changes to work life balance and changes to the three academic work domains: teaching, research and administration. Over a period of three decades, the incremental changes in the higher education work environment and culture have impacted not only on academics and students but also on the management style of leaders in Australian universities. The style of leadership is integral to a successful change process; the greater the change, the more significant the leadership style. The research that Hart (1996) presents, investigates the notion that there is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction in an organisation undergoing dramatic change. The relationship employees have with their management has a significant effect on the success of transformational organisational change. This kind of metamorphic change needs to bring employees and management closer together as they become more reliant on each other to construct new cultures (Hendry 1996).

The research of the thesis will view the success of universities to self-manage their operations and also manage their human resources. The movement from a collegial style of management to a more managerial style characterised by more intense bureaucracy has not helped create a more efficient workplace (Coaldrake 2000). The strong emphasis on operational auditing and monitoring of performance has caused increased stress levels for academics and has alienated rather than brought them closer to management (Jacobs 2004; Tight 2010; Ryan 2012; Habermas 1984). Technology has played a catalytic role in the creation of a work climate that has seen professionalism and trust replaced with bureaucracy and control. The workload models created by university administrators, in an attempt to monitor, measure and effect productivity, have not been able to deliver what was expected of them (Davis 2001; Hull 2006; McWilliam 2004). The productivity measure for research (the research active index or RAI), rather than improve the research climate for academics, has served to limit the scope of research that is accepted. The selected journal publications

recommended to academics has changed the once-collegial research culture to one that is strategically divisive.

Academics have not coped well with the higher education changes over the past three decades, as the extant literature and the findings of this thesis will testify. There has been little resistance to change, and what there has been has been is weak and generally reliant on individual withdrawal rather than organised action (Ryan 2003; Anderson 2008; Parker & Jary, 1995; Wilmott 1995). Ryan (2013) describes the insipid resistance of academics as a form of zombification, and Barney (2010) criticises the role of the professoriate, which traditionally championed the cause of academics, as being pragmatic and self-interested, more concerned with weighing the cost of resistance rather than instigating action. Research into how academics cope with change and what coping mechanisms they employ to survive change is a key driver for this thesis, as there is a gap in the extant literature. Other key drivers of the research that impact on the work life balance of academics and their abilities to effectively respond to change are the ageing workforce and work casualisation. Research indicates that sessional employees can range from 40 to 60 per cent of the workforce (Junor 2004; Bexley et al. 2011; Sears 2003; Hugo 2005), and according to Wilmott (1995) they are part of a growing underclass that is used to camouflage the harsh realities of the contemporary academic workplace. Universities are replacing retiring academics who cannot cope with a changing environment that is becoming increasingly more stressful due to work related pressures, with a growing adjunct workforce (May 2011; Coates et al. 2009; Hughes et al. 2006).

The transformative changes that have occurred in universities since 1990s, have diminished academics' job satisfaction and motivation and ultimately adversely affected their work life balance (Bellamy et al. 2003; Harman 2003; Marginson et al. 2000). The research findings of this thesis and the extant literature will reveal that academics have, over time, gradually lost control over their work schedules and flexible working hours. One of the main reasons cited by research participants for this project for choosing an academic career was the flexible working hours: over time there has been a blurring of the division between working at home and the office, as emphasis has been placed on productivity rather than on workplace location. Academics, in order to survive change, have had to morph their working hours with their personal social/family time in order to cope with their increasing workloads. Those academics who are female, early academics or at a stage in life where personal commitments are most pressing are most likely to cope the least well with workplace pressures and maintaining a sustainable work life balance.



## The objective of the research and relevant questions

The research objective of this thesis is to further explore the effect of the changes to the Higher Education Sector over the past three decades on work life balance of Australian academics, and glean what factors are most likely to produce a positive response to this transformational change. Of particular interest will be the relationship between academics' involvement in universities and their perception of how they regard themselves. Transformational change management will be further researched in the light of academics' personal, work related and environmental factors and how these affect a more accepting perception of dramatic change. The context of the research strategy will be the Australian Higher Education Sector. The conceptual framework of the research can, at a later stage, be applied to an organisation that is considering introducing change to assess whether the organisation's employees are suited to an easy transition to dramatic change.

## The key research question will be:

How do academics respond to and adapt to profound organisational change.

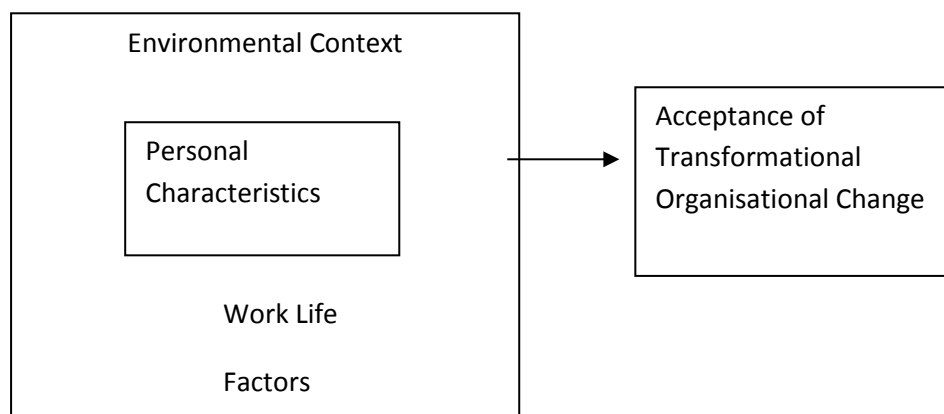


Figure 1.1 Key dimensions of research model

## Justification for the research

A key determinant in sustaining Australia's high standard of living is the reach, performance and quality of the nation's higher education system (DEEWR 2008). Higher education needs to be a major contributor to the development of a skilled workforce to ensure that Australia remains competitive in a growing international marketplace. The Australian Higher Education Sector has been dramatically transformed over the past

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three decades. There are now 37 public universities, two private universities and around 150 other providers of higher education. The OECD 'Education at a glance' key findings reveal that nearly 45 per cent of Australian aged 25 to 34 had attained tertiary education in 2010, placing Australia 9th out of 30 countries in the proportion of our population aged between 25 to 34 years with such qualifications. This may appear impressive but it is down from 7th a decade ago.

The restructure of the Australian Higher Education Sector that was begun three decades ago resulted in a movement from a privileged tertiary education system to one that catered for the masses. The increase in student numbers was characterised by greater diversity in the student body; the most significant being the large proportion of Australia's tertiary students coming from other countries. Although the objective to offer tertiary education to those who would not ordinarily have access to it was laudable, the metamorphic ongoing restructure was not, and there continues to be a lack of sensitivity to the needs of all the stakeholders who are supposed to benefit. The neo-liberal and deregulation policies that introduced a range of measures to monitor and assure the quality of the new system have shown clear signs that the educational experience for both students and their academic mentors are in serious decline, threatening the quality of Australia's biggest non-mining export (Barber et al. 2013; Hil 2012; Connelly et al. 2013).

The findings of this thesis that researched the views of a mixture of experienced as well as new academics on the change process at two of the most prestigious Go8 Australian universities reinforce the conclusions drawn from the extant literature. The originality of the thesis is in the choice of experienced academics who work in these prestigiously branded universities and the new insights into how these academics respond to change and what coping mechanisms they employ to survive. Finally, the usefulness of the thesis findings provides a platform to launch further research into the field of organisational change and change management.

## **Contribution to knowledge**

The contribution that this thesis makes to knowledge is in the application of constructivist epistemological method to change management theory. The way that transformational change is manifest, particularly as it is explained by Thelen and Mahoney (2010) is the principle key driver of the research. Organisational transformative change can be the result of an incremental, endogenous shift in thinking and not simply the result of an abrupt, wholesale breakdown. The changes that have occurred in the Higher Education

Sector have been gradual and insidious and have gradually peeled away the traditional layers of work practices that academics had been used to. What remains today after 30 years of change is a stressed workforce that is continually being challenged to adopt more of the business demands of a corporate university rather than promote the ideals of academia. The findings of this thesis resonant with the extant literature and the experienced participants, many of whom have lived through the three decades of change. The participants of the research were chosen especially for their knowledge and experience and for the credibility they would offer the research.

## **Outline of the thesis**

**Chapter two** provides the literature review and epistemological position of the thesis, that posits that transformational change need not only be as a result of abrupt, radical institutional change, but can be described as an incremental, endogenous shift in thinking that results in fundamental transformation. This theory of change is proffered by Thelen and Mahoney (2010) and seeks to go beyond a snap shot of change but seeks to investigate the long term effects of gradual and yet ultimately radical change. Thelen and Mahoney (2010) present a number of different change models but the epistemological position of this thesis is most inclined to the drift model that considers the 'moving picture' perspective of change, also posited by Pierson (2004) that takes into account time sequencing, threshold effects and causal chains.

**Chapter three** addresses the workplace changes that have occurred in the Australian Higher Education Sector, the context of the research, as a result of the gradual introduction of neo-liberal and deregulation policies by subsequent governments over a period of three decades. The commercialisation of universities, increases in student numbers, new productivity measures and the use of technology as a catalyst for change have all served to transformed traditional teaching and research universities into business entities (Ryan et al. 2012). These changes have resulted in incremental, endogenous shifts in thinking that have seriously impacted on the work life balance of academics and their ability to cope in their workplace (Bentley et al. 2013).

**Chapter four** outlines the methodology used to conduct the research and theory development. The chapter begins with an explanation of qualitative research methods and the ontological and epistemological frameworks that characterise this research method. Grounded theory was chosen as the type of qualitative research method for this thesis as it goes beyond merely describing a social phenomenon but delves deeper into the causes and causal chains that lead to its inception. The particular version of

constructivist grounded theory presented by Charmaz (2006) was the methodological guide in conducting the research and theory development as the constructivist interpretation was ontologically relativist and epistemologically subjectivist. Charmaz (2006) attributes the role of the researcher as being as significant as that of the participants of the research and so becomes co-producer of the data. The author of this research project has been working in the Higher Education Sector for over 20 years and so was able not only to provide more informed insight into the research but also to make a valuable contribution to the selection and analysis of the research metadata. The chapter ends with an account of how the research process adhered to Charmaz's (2006) methodology, including data collection, interview structure and process, coding system and finally evaluation of research methodology.

**Chapter five** is the first chapter that begins to detail the research findings. Three domains of change have been identified by the findings, namely, teaching and students, research and collegiality, and technology and administration. Each of these areas has been analysed in the light of the research findings and has revealed the specific concerns of the participants. The area of teaching and students revealed participants' perceptions with respect to the changing student cohorts, their increasing numbers, their new demands for learning styles and engagement with academics. The chapter continues with an analysis of the area of change, research and collegiality and details further workplace changes that include increased research expectations that result when academics compete against each other to increase their research profile and that of the university. The chapter continues with an analysis of the area of change, technology and administration. The chapter outlines how technology is used as a catalyst to facilitate and accelerate the change process, ultimately changing the characteristics of administration from a governance system based on trust to one that is preoccupied by measurement, regulation and control. The chapter ends with a discussion of the incremental transformative effect of the business model introduced by universities to address the neo-liberal and deregulation policies that were introduced by successive Federal Governments since 1990. The model had an all-pervasive impact on the traditional university and pervaded all aspects of the five factors identified by the research that affected work life balance, including the common factors personal characteristics, leadership and workplace pressure. The neo-liberal policy measures that were imbedded in university business plans converted traditional collegial leadership to a managerialist style of governance that focused on key performance indicators and control measures. These new forms of governance, which were more at home in the commercial world, incrementally transformed the academics' workplace, increased work intensification and

pressure, and subsequently had a negative impact on personal motivation and work life balance.

**Chapter six** continues to detail the research findings and outlines a typology of academics and their different coping mechanisms. The three types of academics identified are: seasoned, vocational and new. These descriptions are drawn from the academic's stage in life, experience and ability to 'play the game'. Seasoned academics coped best with the areas of change as they taught the least number of hours and students, and usually had a research profile that enabled publishing to be more accessible. New academics cope the worst as they have the greatest number of classes and students, and need to comply with university requirements if they hoped to attain either tenure or promotion. Academics with a vocation coped or not depending on how favourably the university strategically viewed their discipline. All three typologies of academic had to cope with the demands of technology whether the focus was on keeping up with a demanding contemporary IT learning environment or the rigours that technology imposed on administration and governance systems. Finally, all academics had to deal with 'playing the game' or attempting to appease university management while simultaneously not compromising their self-image. 'Playing the game' becomes a serious coping mechanism that can measure an academic's ability to sustain their position in the university.

**Chapter seven** details the five factors affecting work life balance that were identified from the research. The factors identified were: flexible working hours, stage in life, time management and work intensification. Some control of these factors serves to measure the extent to which academics are able to take control of their work life balance. Work flexibility is important for academics to time manage their work life balance and in particular the increased work demands that come from work intensification. The research findings identified an additional three common work life factors. These were: personal characteristics, leadership and workplace pressure. The quality and support of workplace leadership can impact on academics' workplace pressure and subsequently have a powerful effect on their personal motivation.

**Chapter eight** revisits the literature review (chapter two) and triangulates the extant literature with the research findings. The epistemological framework posited by Thelen and Mahoney (2010) for examining incremental transformative change is applied to the neo-liberal and deregulation policy changes that have been gradually introduced into the Higher Education Sector over the last three decades. The distinctive characteristics of incremental change, namely power transition, temporal sequencing and causal chains,

are reflected in the changes to academics' environment as a result of the pursuit of neo-liberal business models. Changes in academics' working conditions with respect to teaching, research and administration all begin to adopt the qualities of commercial enterprises rather than the qualities of educational institutions. Control and measurement become the focus for university management and all are governed by key performance indicators rather than pedagogic objectives. The chapter progresses by triangulating the extant literature on work life balance and the research findings. A typology of academics was created to illustrate the different coping mechanisms used by various academics, and the work life balance experiences of the research participants were compared with the Australian Work and Life Index (AWALI) 2012 and other research surveys. The findings of the research identified a gap in the literature, academics' 'playing the game'. This is an interesting coping mechanism, that merits further research as it plays a significant role in measuring an academics' ability to sustain their position in the university.

**Chapter nine** is the final chapter of the thesis and presents the final conclusions from the research. The chapter reviews the major themes of the research, discusses the limitations of the research and ends with final concluding remarks.

## **Limitations of the research**

Qualitative research and grounded theory method was the epistemological framework for this thesis as this methodology enabled a deeper immersion into the research setting and provided a more enlightened understanding of the research participants. The objective was to gain a more detailed account of the shared experiences and relationships of academics who have had firsthand experience of the changes to the Higher Education Sector over the past three decades. The participants of the research were viewed as active agents in the context of transformative change and not as passive recipients. The interaction of participants to the changing environment had a higher precedence than the structure of workplace change. The limitation of the research lies in the subjective process of the constructivist interpretative tradition. The analysis on which the theory is built remains the author's point of view and is framed with the temporal, situational and cultural context of the participants' experience.

## **Summary**

This chapter outlines the objectives of the thesis, addresses the key research questions and clarifies the contribution the research will make to knowledge. The context of the research is the Australian Higher Education Sector and the central topic is the

investigation of work life factors of academics that lead to the adoption of transformational change. The epistemological framework is structured in accordance with the views proffered by Thelen and Mahoney (2010) on transformational institutional change. The incremental metamorphic changes affecting universities, driven by neo-liberal and deregulation policies introduced by successive governments over the past three decades, have had a negative impact on the work life balance of academics. Research into this phenomenon is significant as the pedagogic and research methods used by universities and the resources governments allocate to the success of these, are going to determine the universities' future world standing. The chapter proceeds by outlining the entire thesis, chapter by chapter, demonstrating the logical flow of the research design, finally ending with the limitations of the research and assumptions made.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

#### **Incremental transformational change and institutions**

Much has been written and researched about transformational change and the exogenous events that result in radical institutional transformation. However, this research argues that the transformational change experienced by Australian universities is not a result of abrupt, wholesale breakdown, but rather an incremental, endogenous shift in thinking by institutional leaders that can often result in fundamental institutional transformations (Thelen & Mahoney 2010). The notion that institutions can undergo transformative change as a result of incremental endogenous change is reinforced by Howell et al. (2011), whose research into institutional change posits that change driven by endogenous events can be more significant over time than that caused by exogenous shocks.

This thesis aims to provide a more comprehensive understanding of institutional change by going beyond a cross-sectional view to examine significant events that lead to institutional change, taking a longitudinal consideration of these events in their temporal setting. Pierson (2004) argues that our comprehension of existing research into the dynamics of change, and the theories we employ to give meaning to these events, would be enriched if we placed the events that lead to institutional change in a temporal context. Pierson's (2004) research laid the foundation for Thelen's (2010) later research that considered a range of institutional change scenarios, including incremental endogenous shifts in institutions that often lead to transformative change.

The analysis of change in the Higher Education Sector can occur at the organisational level. Such analysis, while providing insights, needs also to be complemented by an understanding of sectoral level institutional change driven by an historical account of interlinked causes, as outlined in the previous section, about the emergence of a new neo-liberal based model of the Higher Education Sector. The analysis of organisational change, in particular transformational organisational change, focuses on a basic shift in attitudes, beliefs and cultural values. The literature on organisational change provides insight into the change process that universities have undergone in the overall transformation of the Higher Education Sector over the past three decades (Bartunek 1988; Chapman 2002). Although not all university governing bodies have been structured in the same way, the basic shift in attitudes, beliefs and cultural values can be traced to the perceptions of the main actors at



the organisational level in universities, namely Chancellors, Vice Chancellors and university councillors, and how they interpret Federal Government policy change. The Higher Education Sector is made up of different types of institutions, ranging from the traditionally elite to the new, and so different attitudinal shifts may be based on historic tradition or wealth of resources. Golembiewski (1979) categorised transformational change as a significant form of change (gamma change), which goes beyond the two other basic change forms (alpha and beta), which are categorised by alterations to behaviour within already well-established system boundaries. Gamma change is metamorphic change from the existing definition of the way work is perceived. Golembiewski's (1979) research on the different levels of change built on the previous work of Lewin (1951) and Bennis (1969), whose research was focused on incremental organisational change and its effect on individuals and groups. Subsequently, Bartunek and Moch (1987) added that incremental change does not alter the established framework. Only what Golembiewski termed gamma change, or what is now commonly termed transformational change, redefines organisational reality and alters the established framework. However, widespread institutional change in public sector organisations, such as occurred within Australian universities, driven by government neo-liberal policy change, can also be analysed from a different perspective, as put forward by Mahoney and Thelen (2010). Mahoney and Thelen (2010), writing about institutional change on a societal level, have added a new perspective to the research on transformational change by positing that slow incremental changes can also have a transformative effect on human behaviour and the substantive shaping of institutions and organisations.

Hence, in order to build on our understanding of transformational change, it is apposite to detail some of the current debates surrounding institutions, especially in the context of incremental institutional change. Mahoney and Thelen (2010) define institutions as the building blocks of social order which involve mutually related rights and obligations, thereby organising behaviour into predictable and reliable patterns. Institutions are not immutable, and they remain an arena of ongoing debate and struggle over different interests, such as those contested by unions. Here there exist also pre-existing views of the aims of universities held by university stakeholders, and it is necessary to recognise that universities are populated by many who do not embrace similar values. Knight (1992) describes institutional development as a 'contest among actors to establish rules which construct outcomes to those equilibria most favourable to them'. Moe (2003) introduces the concept of power in institutional cooperation by positing that 'cooperation makes possible the exercise of power and the prospect of exercising power that motivates cooperation'. Power and politics have always played significant roles in not only maintaining the status quo, but also in the initiation of transformative change. Such power and politics exist both on the level of

debate on government policy agendas and also in the interaction of stakeholders at the university level. Further to the power that is wielded by prominent actors such as Vice Chancellors and councillors there are a range of other actors who play a role on academic boards, such as senior staff and local NTEU representatives.

The concepts introduced by Mahoney and Thelen (2010), on slow incremental change, coupled with the ongoing power struggles over different interests in the hope of achieving hegemonic views, all help explain the transformative changes that the Australian Higher Education Sector has experienced over the past three decades.

### **New model for change**

Mahoney and Thelen (2010) provide a new model for gradual transformative change that examines five broad modes: displacement, layering, drift conversion and exhaustion. This change model does not focus on single, dramatic exogenous disruptions which bring about transformational change, but rather incremental endogenous shifts in power and thinking that may be stimulated by exogenous events, but which occur over long periods of time. The role of government policy over the past three decades and the neo-liberal policy that informs it, common to both Coalition and Labor governments, has caused a gradual and yet significant change at the university level. Piecemeal and subtle changes which unfold over extended periods of time can result in the same institutional transformative consequence as single dramatic events (Clemens & Cook 1999; Mahoney 2000; Thelen 2009; Pierson 2004).

### **Displacement**

Previous research (Collier & Collier 1991; Skowronek 1995; Huber & Stephens 2001) examined change through displacement as emanating from a shift in institutional power, where existent power is undermined or discredited in favour of a new paradigm. This phenomenon may result from increasing numbers of players rediscovering, activating or cultivating new paradigms, as occurred with the introduction of neo-liberal policy to the Australian Higher Education Sector. The increasing number of players aligning themselves with the new system can be explained by the tipping point concept (Kuran 1991). Although such sudden breakdown of institutions can involve displacement, displacement can also be a slow-moving process (Mahoney & Thelen 2010). For total renewal to be effective the force of political or social resistance to major change would need to be considered as this affects the time frame of change. Endogenous displacement is most effective, if players are prepared to withdraw resources from the existing model to meet needs of expanded bureaucracy (Deeg 2005). Radical change can occur not only as a result of a sudden event, but also by gradual endogenous shifts in power in what are seemingly stable institutions. Active players involved in endogenous evolution may also respond to external stimuli. An

example of external stimuli, in the context of Australian universities, may include government budget constraints or indexation to CPI and not real wages, which cumulatively denies universities of resources.

### **Layering**

Layering occurs, when change is imposed on top of existing systems, which prove to be intractable to change (Schickler 2001; Thelen 2003). New processes are introduced alongside immovable old ones, and although the new processes were not introduced to supplant the old ones, the combined effect starts a dynamic that ultimately leads to transformational change. Streeck and Thelen (2005) refer to this phenomenon as differential growth. In this instance endogenous change (historical institutionalism) is clearly affected by exogenous (rational choice) change. These types of changes which have a layering effect may be subject to endogenous/exogenous tensions.

### **Drift**

Since institutions cannot survive by remaining static, they need to continue to be vigilant with regard to the political and economic changes that occur in the environment that surrounds them. Drift occurs, when rules remain formally the same but their role changes as a result of shifts in external conditions (Hacker 2005). Inaction in response to environmental changes can result in drift and ultimately over time cause major institutional change. Drift need not be manifest through overt political machinations, but simply through subtle and non-confrontational manoeuvrings by the parties trying to achieve change and in relation to those defending the existing order. Drift, although maybe in conjunction with other change models, is a likely description of the change events that have occurred with respect to Australian universities. The external conditions marked by past government's initiatives to subject universities to a gradual marketisation through the process of implementation of neo-liberal ideologies have resulted in a drift from traditional university objectives centred around scholarship and research. Subsequent Federal Governments have interpreted neo-liberalism differently, ranging from the blatant to a more measured approach, similar to that taken by business councils that see universities as protected by regulation given their protected market.

### **Conversion**

Conversion occurs when rules remain formally the same, but are interpreted and enacted in new ways (Thelen 2003). The new interpretations of old rules may occur as a result of environmental changes or the assumption of power by a new political coalition that, rather than dismantle old institutions, re interprets existing rules (Selznick 1957). Conversion is manifested by institutions redirecting their resources to serve new goals; this may lead to

political contest with regards to which new goals should be served. Compromise may be considered as strategy for resolution to contend with ambiguities in rules definitions, interpretation and application (Schickler 2001; Pierson 2004).

### **Change agents**

Thelen and Mahoney's (2010) model for change finally identifies different change agents, their association with a particular mode of change, and finally their preferred strategy for change. These include firstly insurrectionaries, those who reject the status quo, and who prefer displacement and secondly symbionts, who are two types, parasitic and mutualistic. Parasitic symbionts exploit the institution for their own gain, but prefer institutional drift. Mutualistic symbionts also exploit the institution for their own gain, but prefer to maintain the status quo. Similar to the psychological versus the sociological, political and economic nexus in social theory, mutualistic symbionts balance the economic exogenous variables, such as pay and perception of external opportunity structure, with the endogenous variables of satisfaction and commitment, to influence their decision to remain in the workplace (Mueller et al. 1990). Thirdly, subversives, who wish to displace the institution by surreptitious means, work from within the system and prefer layering as a strategy. Finally opportunists, those who employ whatever possibilities exist within the existing system to achieve their own ends, and prefer conversion as a strategy. From the analysis of the research data of this thesis, a typology of academics, and their different responses to change, was identified. Use was then made of Thelen and Mahoney's (2010) typology of change agents in order to gain further insight into the effects of the change process on academics.

### **The change models and the Australian university context**

The challenge in researching incremental institutional change is trying to locate the sources of the change, and determine how these sources are manifested endogenously and whether there have been external environmental influences that have fuelled this source (Comodromos & Ferrer 2011). In addition to this, the nature of the institution needs to be examined to reveal what institutional characteristics allow for change actors to appear and in what circumstances allow them to flourish. The social psychology view of the world examines individual psychology and interpersonal relationships. However, research needs to go beyond interdependent behaviour and examine the supportive and complementary actions of many people in large organisational settings and the context in which they are situated (Katz & Kahn 1978).

The change that institutions are subject to need not only be characterised as either gradual and insidious or transformational and dramatic, but can also include incremental transformative change, which can also occur over a period of time. Whether institutional

changes have been spurred on by external politically ideological shifts, as in the case with the imposition of neo-liberal ideologies, or by long term endogenous opportunistic ventures to acquire increased resources or ambiguities in policy and process interpretation (as can be seen in the interpretation of neo-liberal policies by Vice Chancellors and their councils), the end result can still be institutionally transformative. The reaction to change by decision makers in organisations, namely Vice Chancellors in universities, can often reflect how well individual leaders can comply with the changes or how they can make the most of the change process to suit personal motivations. Individual university council members, particularly those from business, may interpret neo-liberal policies as a concerted attempt to make universities more compliant with common business practice. The reality is that Australian universities since the 1980s have gradually morphed from educational institutions into business enterprises as a result of how their Vice Chancellors and council members have interpreted the neo-liberal political agenda, which was imposed on them by government.

An analysis of their transformation can be derived by applying the drift model of change that Thelen (2004) proffers, that inaction in response to environmental changes can result in drift and ultimately over time cause major institutional change. For instance, the resistance to change in Australian universities has been passive on the part of middle management (Ryan 2012). The NTEU Union has also played a strong role, through successive Enterprise Bargaining Agreements in promoting resistance to the continuous erosion of working conditions of academics. However, the external forces for change have been unrelenting and as a result academics have generally found it less taxing to just focus on different survival modes (Ryan 2013). This analysis helps an understanding of the transformative changes that have occurred in Australian universities, but is not definitive in that a complete picture may require an overlap with the other Thelen and Mahoney (2010) models of change that are presented above. Each of these models considers the exogenous/endogenous continuum and the effect that this tension has on the individual and collective behaviour in the change process. The innovative models of change that Thelen (2004) present and which steer the theoretical model of this thesis, have also in common the idea that change need not only result from a single, sudden critical event, but can be more gradual and pervasive.

### **Institutional drift change and path dependence**

Underlying Mahoney and Thelen's (2010) analysis of the models of institutional change is the work of Pierson (2004) on the importance of temporal chains of causation, which over time can lead to major institutional change. Pierson (2004) advocates that events which lead to institutional change should be placed in a moving temporal setting, as this not only adds

to our understanding of the dynamics of change, but enriches and enhances existing research and the meaning we give to these events. Pierson's (2004) central thesis is founded on his interpretation of history and path dependence. He posits that once an institution has chosen a course of action, it becomes locked into that pathway and so other course options are less likely to be pursued. This makes the institution's actions, whether apposite or not, a crucial component in the institution's future sustainability. The success of the institution's choice is dependent on the presence of increasing returns; the process of continuous positive feedback over extended periods of time.

Pierson (2004) defines path dependence as being derived from the dynamics of self-reinforcing behaviour that is supported by a process of positive feedback. A significant characteristic of this behaviour is that once a course of action is chosen, then it becomes entrenched and any deviation is not easily reconsidered. The resultant action is a self-reinforcing dynamic that continues into the future to regenerate the initially established rules of behaviour and decision making. The connective significance of self-reinforcing behaviour to temporality may explain the inertia that institutions suffer once the initial choice of their future course is made. This phenomenon may lead to poor decisions being reinforced over time and the consequences of these decisions becoming more entrenched in institutional processes. Thelen's (2004) theory purports that the implementation of institutional policies and processes cannot be isolated from their political and social setting. The theory reinforces the claim that path dependency involves elements of both continuity and structured change. In relation to the Australian Higher Education Sector the transformation of universities involved not only the exogenous effects of neo-liberalism but in particular the long term, endogenous interpretations of neo-liberalism by Vice chancellors and their councils (Connell 2013).

The theoretical framework of the causal significance of temporally remote events and path dependence was derived from the research of Brian Arthur, Paul David and Douglass North. Arthur (1994) and North (1999) posited that processes become locked in because of the presence of increasing returns. This means that there is an institutional advantage in being the first to introduce a process and this can lead to economies of scale, which would then lead to increased returns and then future increased production. The context of Arthur's (1994) and David's (1994) research was the adoption of new technologies; it was Douglass North (1999) who applied Arthur and David's research to institutions. He could see how the presence of increasing returns or positive feedback could not only lead to inefficient institutional processes, but also those institutions that were locked into a course of action would find it difficult to disengage themselves.



Pierson (2004) builds on the research of Arthur, David and North by introducing the notion of increasing returns, or what he terms positive feedback, in the context of the political arena. Pierson's (2004) research leads him, in his descriptions of political scenarios, to include temporal ordering in the sequencing of events that influence positive feedback and path dependence. The short order and short time horizons that characterise political events make the reversal of the course of path dependence even less likely. A politician, who is up for re-election soon, will choose the most expedient option in the short term rather than one that may have more long term benefits. Although path dependence does have a dynamic, Moe (1990; 2003; 2005) points out that existing politicians who are at risk of losing the next election try to extend their political change into the next term by implementing political structures that are not easily reversible. Pierson (2004) adds to the research by considering the phenomenon of collective action and the 'winner takes all' outcome of political contests. Politics is ruthless in choosing a winning player as there is no room for players who come second. The choice of 'winning player' is not made by a single individual, but by the collective votes of a larger group and once the choice is made the party is usually locked into its course of action. The tensions and pressures that are constantly raised because of resource allocation are the fuel that fires the motivation to change existing power structures. Power struggles however do not only end in winners and losers, but often in compromises that require ongoing political support if they are to become sustainable (Thelen 2004). Compromise also needs to be considered in the light of change as, in the battle for winners and losers, compliance often blurs the lines between this simple dichotomy (Thelen et al. 2010).

Pierson's (2004) historical analysis of institutional change also provides an alternative to another version of institutional accounts of change, the 'rational' choice variant, which emphasises the emergence of institutions from embedded concrete processes. Thelen (2004) further posit that the difference between rational choice and historical institutionalism is whether preference formation is treated as exogenous (rational choice) or endogenous (historical institutionalism). Rational choice refers to individuals and groups maximising their interests, whereas historical institutionalism researchers prefer sequences of social, political, economic behaviour. Thelen (2004) can see many points of difference between 'historical' and 'rational' choice variants of institutionalism, but is proposing a new way of thinking about institutional evolution and path dependency which is an alternative to equilibrium and those approaches that differentiate the analysis of institutional stability from institutional change.

## **Rational choice and historical institutionalism**

Pierson (2004) proffers an historic perspective of change where it is apposite to take into consideration the long term temporal aspects of social events. Moving pictures, taken over extended periods of time rather than single snapshots, reveal a more enriched tapestry of social change and the resultant social outcomes and processes. According to North (1999), a more comprehensive understanding of historic events requires a deeper understanding of time, as time is the dimension in which ideas and institutions evolve. The rational exogenous approach only considers actions in the light of beliefs to best satisfy desires; the issue of how the temporal aspect impacts on social mechanisms is not considered. This approach presumes preferences have formed, beliefs are held in the light of all information and the pursuit of preferences is maximal (Cox 2002). Those who find the rational approach inadequate consider this approach as insensitive to the historical, political and cultural context where the decision making occurs. North's (1999) research on institutional change further raises issues of historical determinacy and cultural influences on action.

To only take into consideration the immediate causes of social change would be painting a distorted picture of events because consideration is not given to the temporal context and the sequence of events that precedes the event. Pierson (2004) posits that a clearer picture is developed if consideration is also given to the connectivity of events, namely their order, sequencing and time frame. He goes on to state that, in order to understand the significance of events that lead to institutional change, we need to identify the causal power of temporal connections among events. Elster (1989) posits that the size, frequency and timing of events are significant to comprehending the characteristics of human actions and interactions. Thelen (2004) further argues that political events that occur in institutions, but not in organisations, are part of a dynamic process that may have unintended consequences as disparate ongoing processes interact. This is a salient point in understanding Thelen's (2004) conception of change as being more than just a breakdown of one equilibrium and its replacement with another. The inclusion of political struggles and their deep relevance to the evolution of institutions enriches our understanding of institutional change to include concrete temporal processes as embedded in the context of particular political and social settings.

In order to fully appreciate the complex causal factors bringing about social change, we need to consider the larger temporal context. The methodology for studying social phenomena that leads to change is enriched if we consider the frequency, size and sequence of social mechanisms. More complete theoretic foundations as proffered by Pierson (2004) will result when we begin to consider how temporal aspects impact on social mechanisms. When we



consider issues of timing, sequencing, long term time frames, we are going beyond traditional rational choice analysis. Rational choice is deficient in that it explains social change in terms only of dramatic immediate socio/economic events or the impact of powerful change agents at a given point of time. According to Jepperson (1996), there may be more apposite methods for analysing certain social phenomena other than rational choice theory, as this theory has a restricted range of application and it does not fully consider the complete dimensions of human experience. Pierson (2004) presents the following themes that investigate the temporal dimensions of social and political processes: path dependence, timing and sequencing, long term horizons and causal chains. Thelen (2004), similar to Pierson (2004), is more concerned with power, politics and the temporal dimension of institutionalism rather than equilibrium order, since this is defined as the absence of any tendency to change and as such is inherently static. Institutions emerge from and are sustained by features of the broader political and social context.

### **Time and sequencing of events**

According to Pierson (2004), the timing and sequencing of events provide invaluable insight into the cause of events and also help with understanding the discrete links of these events in the passage of time. Events can be influenced by the interaction of other effects that have occurred in similar time frames. According to Aminzade (1992), understanding singular events or even a series of events, necessitates the location of these events in terms of how and where they have interacted with others and where they fit in any particular point in time. When trying to explain events that occurred over long periods of time, the temporal intersection of these events may be significant. Also the order or sequence of these events may have a formative impact on the final change outcome. Explaining the conjuncture and time sequencing of events helps progress research in social change, as it heightens sensitivity to temporal processes. Tilley (1995) posits that an understanding of when events occur can have a formative effect. More rigour in analysing temporal sequencing and on when, where and how causally significant sequences come into play, will produce a richer picture of consequences than that produced by rational choice theorists. When we apply temporal sequencing to the Higher Education Sector, we can see that over a period of three decades the traditional hierarchy that existed in universities has been broken down and replaced with a growing managerial style of governance. Connell (2013) goes further to state that vice chancellors and deans are learning to behave like entrepreneurial corporate managers, wielding more and more power that ultimately leads to greater distances between frontline staff and creates loss of trust. The gradual movement towards 'managerialism' in public institutions that was fuelled by the drive to implement neo-liberal policies, again resonates with the above mentioned theories about the temporal intersection of significant

events that lead to transformational change. The intersection of neo-liberalism and the impetus for change has not only gradually steered universities away from the older paradigm of what a university is, but also reflects the wider change to public services that has witnessed a shift to a new direction driven by neo-liberal ideas of deregulation and competition.

### **Causal chains and the new order in higher education**

The commercialisation of universities driven by the need to seek their own funding, has resulted in increased autonomy but in an alien environment (Considine 2006). According to Ryan et al. (2013), senior management in universities became passive receivers of the new business paradigm and adjusted their budgets, structure and governance, to steer their way in the new regime. Senior university management applied the same tightly controlled accounting procedures to their schools and departments as were applied to them by the government (Rainnie et al. 2013). Traditionally universities were not expected to behave as business enterprises and the re-evaluation of their mission over time has created ambiguity in whether their purpose is financial autonomy or scholastic excellence; the two are not necessarily parallel objectives. The pursuit of financial autonomy has at times compromised scholarship by creating a new environment and culture that only measures success in dollar terms (Newman et al. 2004; Niland 2008; Nayyar 2008). As the process of deregulating universities proceeds, outsourcing of core academic activities becomes possible. The creation of Melbourne University Private may be seen as a failed attempt by the university to mix the culture of business and that of academe.

The traditional 'shared governance' model where academics contributed actively in the decision making process has been replaced with the appointment rather than election of academic leaders (see Chapter 5, p120). Key performance indicators and bonuses delivered to leaders have ensured adherence to managerial directives and have reduced academics to workers instructed from above (Aronowitz 2006; Pritchard & Willmott 1997). The power imbalance between academics and managers grows in proportion to the amount of compliance of academics and the amount of compliance is greatest at the weakest level. The casuals, those on probation and those on contract are the victims of the rising levels of bullying and harassment resulting from increased levels of accountability and managerialism (Raciti 2010; Cox & Goodman 2005; Thornton 2004; Lewis 1999).

A growing culture of surveillance marked by a preoccupation with measurement has pervaded universities since the changes of the last few decades. The effect of this culture based on numeric accountability has been to measure student success through test scores, reduce teaching to supervision on an education assembly line and fundamentally extract the

human element from the education equation (Shahjahan 2011). The consequence of constant surveillance is increased stress among academics and a feeling of disempowerment and isolation (McWilliam 2004). The regulatory framework for higher education has grown piecemeal and incrementally over the past three decades, and the end of the journey of determining the best framework to achieve our national purposes has not been reached as yet (Kemp 2013). Nussbaum (2011) posits that governments in their endeavours to seek profits are causing education systems to focus only on delivering courses that are popular and heedlessly discard courses that offer life-long skills such as critical thought and an appreciation of the humanities.

### **Long term horizons, institutional drift and causal chains**

The path dependence pursued by Australian universities over the recent past is characterised by the neo-liberal ideas in 1987 of John Dawkins, the then Labor Minister for Education. The essential driver of neo-liberalism was the need for productivity growth that was seen to be promoted by market forces and competition, and was also not adverse to enforced marketisation and corporatisation of the public provision of services (Fredman & Doughney 2012). Neo-liberal ideologies provided the theoretical framework for subsequent deregulation that led to cuts in university funding, increases in academic workloads and to a managerialist style of governance (Fredman & Doughney 2012). Neo-liberal logic, introduced by the then Labor government of 1987, and continued by subsequent conservative governments to the present date, governed through a series of incentives and disincentives (Connell 2013). Rewards and disincentives were imposed by governments to lock university Vice Chancellors and their councils into pursuing courses of action that made their strategic choices path dependent on pursuing ideologies that ultimately resulted in the universities' metamorphosis into organisations driven by business imperatives.

The latest higher education government policies introduced by Minister Pyne, which reflect a radical shift in the introduction of market based student fees, might be considered a 'tipping point' in the development of deregulation policies in the Higher Education Sector and the maturing of neo-liberal ideologies (Beddie 2014).

Neo-liberalism and its characteristics such as managerialism and market based competition were the economic drivers of change in the 1980s and beyond, and their cumulative effect on university management built thresholds and triggered causal chains that have led to present day dissatisfaction levels of academics with work satisfaction and work life balance (Fredman & Doughney 2012). When we examine long term time frames of change for the Australian Higher Education Sector, as Pierson (2004) posits, we can begin to identify causal links with changes in academic's working conditions and the contextual setting of

their work environment. The causal chains that have been identified are: the commercialisation of universities, the casualisation of an increasing number of the academic workforce, governance, and productivity measures such as workload models and the Research Active Index. The causal chains identified and presented in Figure 2.1 Causal Links, represent an exogenous/endogenous continuum of external and internal changes that have affected universities and academics over the past three decades.

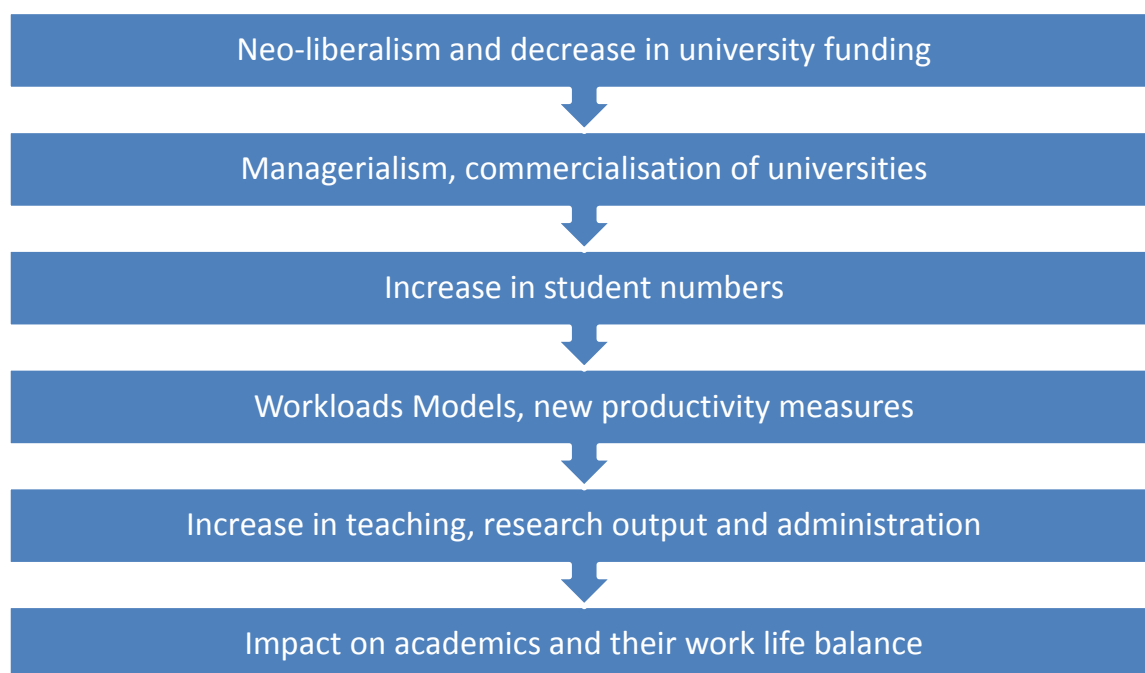


Figure 2.1 Causal links

### **The impact of change on work life balance of Australian academics**

The gradual drift, to use Thelen and Mahoney's (2010) terminology, that has resulted in the transformation of universities into business enterprises and the installation of managerialist governance of staff has ultimately resulted in the deterioration of work satisfaction levels of Australian academics with respect to their working conditions and their attitudes to senior management have deteriorated (Fredman & Doughney 2012). Coates et al. (2009) rates Australian academics as having the second lowest work satisfaction rating of the 18 countries surveyed in the Changing Academic Profession study. They rate Australian academics third worst in negative attitudes to university management (Coates et al. 2010). The changes that have occurred in the Higher Education Sector can be viewed in the light of Thelen's drift model of institutional change. The strong adherence by university Vice Chancellors and their councils to the rewarding aspects of neo-liberal policies have gradually over time transformed universities. There are strong links with the typologies of changing institutions presented by Thelen (2010) and the power politics of Pierson's research, with its

description of the changing environment of the Australian Higher Education Sector. The exogenous and endogenous changes have resulted in the transformation of universities into institutions that have become preoccupied with business rather than pedagogic ideals, and the coercion of academic staff into believing business service metrics are more significant than teacher student relations.

The work life balance of Australian academics has been dramatically affected since the 1980s, essentially as a result of government policy. The attractiveness of academia over the years has diminished with respect to status, control, prestige and salary (Bentley et al. 2013b). The boundary between work and family is increasingly becoming blurred (Currie & Eveline 2011) and job satisfaction in Australian universities has suffered and threatens the sustainability of the industry that is reliant on autonomously motivated knowledge workers (Bentley et al. 2013b). Since the Whitlam era on the mid 1970s, universities have experienced a considerable increase in student numbers that has not been commensurate with increases in government funding. Then introduction of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme was an attempt to address this funding imbalance, but subsequent governments took funding away from universities and created an environment where, as argued above, universities lacked proper indexation and the process of marketising to get other sources of funding. The efforts of governments to commercialise universities and the universities' attempts to cope with new neo-liberal policies and deregulation have resulted in compromises to scholarship and the creation of a difficult workplace for both academics and students. The marked deterioration of working conditions of Australian academics as a result of work intensification has resulted in an unrelenting invasion into their private home life ultimately negatively impacting on their work life balance (Currie & Eveline 2011) .

Causal links can be drawn with the productivity metrics, namely student evaluation of teaching and subject surveys and RAIs I(Research Active Index) that were introduced by universities to measure academics' work, and the dramatic transformation of the once-collegial work environment to a business workplace with managerialist control. The workload models, introduced by universities to account for teaching, research and administrative duties, can be linked to the creation of more stress and a more unpleasant work environment for academics. The models served to decrease job satisfaction and motivation, did not account for all academic work, and created serious work life imbalance (Bellamy et al. 2003; Harman 2003; Marginson 2000). Universities' attempts at managing their business objectives and the creation of a more flexible workforce, led to the increase in casualisation of new academic staff and more stress for the existing ageing staff. Anderson et al. (2002)

posits that increased pressure on an ageing academic workforce will lead to retirements and the loss of a workplace knowledge base.

Attempts to use technology to weaken physical and temporal boundaries between work and home has created the 'portable humanoid office' (Challenger 2002) but has done little to improve the management of work life balance. Work boundaries, according to Nippert-Eng (1996), whether they are physical, temporal, emotional or cognitive, are an attempt to limit the work from invading the borders of private space. According to Ashforth et al (2000), many organisations encourage greater integration between work and home leading to more work related flexibility. Mirchandani (1998), advocates that this does not suit all workers, particularly those who seek clear boundaries between social and working hours. Blurred social and working hours leads to work intensification, a life that becomes more complex and rushed and more challenges in dealing with work life balance (Brannan 2002). Case studies have shown that longer working hours and work intensification have a deleterious impact on health, marital relations and absenteeism on families, workers and managers (Pocock 2003; Peetz et al. 2003; Probert et al. 2000).

Globalisation and universities foray into international markets has opened the doors for movement towards a 24/7 society where working hours become more flexible and longer (Perrons 2003). Conventional nine to five hours of work do not suit this new time regime and it is often incumbent on academics to work outside conventional hours if they are to meet management requirements of timely responses to international student enquiries. These new, contemporary working hours have added enormously to work intensity over the years.

The Australian university sector has over recent years incrementally transformed into a polemic industrial relations arena as a result of vested interests and ambiguities in policy interpretation. Entrenched groups, such as unions, whose role is protecting employment conditions, have been challenged by managerialism in their efforts to strongly resist increased workloads and changing roles of their members. The changes to academics' workload have resulted in an inability to balance demands of teaching, research and administration. A key measure of such change is autonomy, which reflects the amount of control employees have over their work and remains a significant buffer against work related stress (Miller et al. 1990; Ray & Miller 1991). As a result of reduction in autonomy, academics are becoming increasingly dispirited, demoralised and alienated from their organisation (Ferrer, Foley & Van Gramberg 2009; Halsey 1992; Winter & Sarros 2002) and accordingly are in constant battle with management to arrive at more equitable solutions. Academic unions, such as the NTEU, have been actively involved in the Enterprise Bargaining process to resist the continuous erosion of working conditions, but have had

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limited success in decelerating the force of change due to the passive resistance of members and the unrelenting impetus for change. Deeg (2005) posits that the university climate is in constant upheaval as change is happening from within and players are trying to make the most of ambiguities in the existing process by applying innovative interpretations. No matter the efforts invested in work models and frameworks, successful workplace outcomes are reliant on discretionary and qualitative factors that acknowledge mutual dependency and a commitment to seeking ways to stimulate mutuality (Whitchurch et al. 2013; Dunkin 2003).

## **Conclusion**

Extant literature is inclined to describe transformational change as the result of abrupt, wholesale, radical institutional change. The epistemological intention of this thesis is to address the gap in the literature that exists in describing transformational change as an incremental, endogenous shift in thinking that results in fundamental transformation. The research focus of this thesis applies the theory of transformational change that is proffered by Thelen and Mahoney (2010), which goes beyond a snapshot of an abrupt, transformative episode, and seeks to investigate the long term effects of gradual and yet ultimately radical change. Incremental change builds on the subtle shifts in attitudes, beliefs and cultural values within organisations and is steered by the political coalitions and conflicts that characterise institutions. The result of transformational change on institutions is subject to not only the powerful forces of those driving the change but also on the resistance or acceptance of change by those who are most affected by it. Incremental change is subtle and insidious, and often the result cannot be felt until a long way down the change process. This thesis considers the theoretical models for change presented by Thelen and Mahoney (2004) and is inclined towards the drift model when analysing changes to the Australian Higher Education Sector, although a more composite model may provide a more accurate account. The thesis builds on Thelen and Mahoney's (2010) models of change to consider the temporal context of institutional change, including the 'moving picture' perspective that is posited by Pierson (2004). Pierson (2004) progresses research into complex social dynamics by moving beyond the immediate response to change by rational theorists to consider the long term temporal process that is integral to change. The exploration of the consequences of time sequencing, threshold effects and the links that result in a chain of events, fills the gaps in the transformational change literature. Finally, consideration is given to the role of path dependence and power, and the impact that these have on institutional decision making and the course institutions pursue into the future. In order for institutions to arrive at a shared understanding with the different parties that constitute their making, there needs to be a general acceptance of what is defined as the common good.

## Chapter Three: The context of the research

### Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to further research into institutional change. Its context is the ongoing government policy change to the Higher Education Sector over the last 30 years, which has resulted in a major transformation of the sector. This ongoing policy change will be interpreted in this thesis from the perspective of academic staff, as distinct from the views of Vice Chancellors and university councils. The research analyses a particular aspect of these policy changes, namely the dramatic changes to the workloads that Australian academics have experienced over the past three decades, and how these changes have affected academics' work life balance (Anderson et al. 2002; Bexley et al. 2011).

The examination of these workplace changes and how academics' work life experiences are affected by these changes is the main theme that underpins the thesis. The work life balance of Australian academics has changed dramatically over the recent past (Giles & Gilmour 2005), as a result of governments and universities pursuing the policies of economic liberalism, which have transformed the working environment in Australian universities. Economic liberalism is broadly defined by Argy (2003) as a liberal economy that relies heavily on competitive markets in the allocation of resources. Harvey (2011) defines neo-liberalism as a theory that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms within institutions characterised by free markets and free trade. Harvey (2011) goes further to state that where markets do not exist, as in education, they must be created by state intervention, and governments should assume a minimal role in their sustainability. The preference is for market-neutral intervention, as opposed to regulation and barriers to competition, to achieve social ends. The economic reforms in Australia between 1970-1990s, according to Argy (2003), introduced aspects of the free market and competition, to the public Higher Education Sector.

Table 3.1 below contrasts the main characteristics of the neo-liberal model of a university with the traditional model of Australian public universities. These two models are ideal types, and as argued above, the transformation from one to the other was a gradual process, which resulted from a complex and contested chain of policy decisions. The events as they unfolded were the outcomes of interactions between various actors, such as successive governments, unions such as the NTEU, employer bodies, policy analysts of various political persuasions and other interest groups. The reasons for promoting change did not necessarily arise from neo-liberal beliefs but were, for example, also concerned with fairness



in paying for an expanding cost of the Higher Education Sector and promoting better pay skills and jobs in the manufacturing sector.

Characteristics	Neoliberal	Traditional
Operational mode	Private	Public
Control	Managerialism, contractual specification between principal-agent, autocratic control	Collegial-democratic, professional consensus
Management	Line management, cost centres	Community of scholars, professions, faculty
Goals	Maximise outputs, financial accountability, efficiency, massification, privatisation	Knowledge, research inquiry into truth, reason; not for profit
Work relations	Competitive, workload indexed to market, corporate loyalty	Trust, professional norms, freedom of expression and criticism, role of public intellectual
Accountability	Audit, monitoring, consumer-managerial performance indicators, out-put based	Professional-bureaucratic, peer review, rule and standards based
Marketing	Centres of excellence, competition, corporate image, branding, public relations	Kantian ideal of reason, specialisation, communication of truth and democracy
Pedagogy/teaching	Semesterisation, rationalisation of courses, modularisation, distance learning, summer schools, vocational	Full year courses, traditional academic methods and course assessment methods, pure knowledge
Research	Externally funded, contestable, separated from teaching, controlled by government or external agency	Integrally linked to teaching, controlled from within the university, initiated and undertaken by individual academics

Table 3.1 Characteristics of neo-liberal and liberal models (Source: Adapted from Olssen, 2002, p45)

## Historic background of the Australian Higher Education Sector

There has been ongoing change in the Higher Education Sector since the election of the Whitlam government in 1972, when for the first time the Federal Government took full responsibility for the funding of universities. Previous to this, the Murray Committee and the Australian Universities Commission (1959), recommended that the Commonwealth (Federal Government) assume only 20 per cent responsibility for universities' total income. The years 1973-74 saw student numbers increase significantly and government spending on

universities quadruple (Andersen et al. 2002). In the mid-1970s the Whitlam Labor government's social democratic policies increased university funding to enable greatly increased numbers of students to participate in university education through free places. After the fall of the Whitlam government in 1975, the halcyon days of free university education were short lived and in 1975, when the Fraser government was elected, universities began to suffer much more stringent financial constraints under the auspices of the Universities Council of the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission.

The 1980s saw the election of the Hawke government, whose objective was to restructure the Australian economy to make it more globally competitive. The government, the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) and the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) all ran with the new competitiveness agenda. Labor introduced a number of productivity measures that included tariff reduction, floating the Australian dollar, deregulating the financial market, and taxation reform (Pierson & Castles 2002). In addition to these reforms, a number of reforms were made with respect to Award restructuring. The most significant of these reforms was the Structural Efficiency Principle. This principle was aimed at changing Award structures, which inhibited measures to improve efficiency (Carmichael 1989), and wage increases became conditional upon both industrial relations parties adopting this principle. In the early 1990s, the AIRC made a contested ruling that universities should implement performance appraisal (PA) systems, which had a developmental framework, and in 1991, these PA systems were incorporated in the Award, resulting in all academics being subject to formal appraisal processes, with any wage increases being dependent on demonstrable performance outcomes (Lonsdale 1991a, 1991b, 1998).

In 1987, John Dawkins, the then Minister for Employment, Education and Training, instigated a number of efficiency policies in the Higher Education Sector, which led to the amalgamation of Colleges of Advanced Education and universities (Dawkins 1988; Woods & Meeks 2002). The amalgamations came with new expectations for academics to contribute to the national economic growth by increasing their research output and establishing closer industry relations (Harman & Treadgold 2007). In 1988, the Dawkins white paper refocused the traditional picture of higher education by redefining universities as 'industries' and academics as 'workers/employees'. In 1988-89 the Structural Efficiency Principle was introduced as part of the wider industrial relations agenda that led in 1991 to enterprise bargaining. The new enterprise bargaining model reshaped industrial negotiations in the Higher Education Sector, and sharpened the adversarial role of academics and university management (Ramsden 1998; Altbach 2002; Eveline 2004). In 1989 the Higher Education

Contribution Scheme (HECS) was also introduced by Dawkins to contribute about 20 per cent of the cost of course delivery.

In this new industrial relations climate, universities were required to become more responsive to productivity increases that would benefit both the institution and the national good (Blackmore 2002). The result of these changes and its effect on universities was to reduce their function of education to one of economic utility (Bessant 1992). The expanding student numbers and the resultant cost of funding free student places on Federal budgets led universities to become increasingly self-funding (Anderson 2008; Bellamy et al. 2003).

According to Smyth (1991), Labor implemented a raft of higher education policy reforms that were designed to transform higher education and make it more internationally competitive. These policy reforms included the reintroduction of tuition fees, growing international student numbers to help finance the university and ensuring the economic relevance of courses (Long 2010). The changes were not well received by academics (Huppauf 2002), some viewing the changes as reducing education to economic utility (Bessant 1992) or perceiving education as no longer being for the public good (Marginson 1990; Smyth 1991). Academics were beginning to lose their highly valued autonomy, as the Minister had a greater influence in courses taught and research policy (Stretton 1989). Universities were directed to focus on more marketable knowledge rather than social knowledge (Buckbinder 1992). New terms entered the language of academia, such as 'efficiency', 'productivity' and 'accountability'. As a result of these changes, universities were starting to be seen as corporate entities and research was more influenced by national priorities, rather than just by scholastic interests. Finally, the measure of quality of higher education became paramount; although the nature of quality was difficult to measure (Long 2010). A link was created between quality and cost effectiveness and this drove government policy with respect to higher education reform (Harvey & Green 1993).

The Howard Liberal/National Coalition government of the decade after 1996 continued with the reforms of the previous government, but in a more aggressive fashion (Quiddington 2008). The Howard government pushed for performance based funding and placed a greater emphasis on teaching quality whilst devolving responsibility to the universities (Long 2010; Marginson 2008). Basic research funding declined during the Howard years, while commercial research increased (Marginson 2000). A range of micro-management reforms were also introduced during the Howard government, including the Higher Education Workplace Relations Requirement (HEWRR) in 2005. This legislation was not well received by either university management or the NTEU union, as the relevant productivity and

performance clauses were viewed as direct intervention by government into employment practices, working conditions and industrial relations (McCulloch 2004).

Since 1996, university funding has significantly decreased to the point where universities have been led to find more than half of their total expenditure. Government funding per student fell by 16.7 per cent in real terms between 1994 and 2012 (from \$11,811 to \$9,843, in 2009 constant dollar terms) (Universities Australia 2014).

Student to academic ratios have doubled over the two decades, from 13 to one in 1990 to 25 to one in 2010, as a result of the dramatic increase in student numbers and also funding constraints (Universities Australia 2014). The introduction of student fees both for local and international students has resulted in many international students having to compromise their study to seek work to pay for living expenses and university expenses. Full time students now work on average 15 hours per week during the semester; this figure is up five hours from what it was in the 1980s (DEEWR 2009). Academics have suffered loss in job satisfaction and motivation, as a result of increased work related s (Lacy 1997; McInnes 1998).

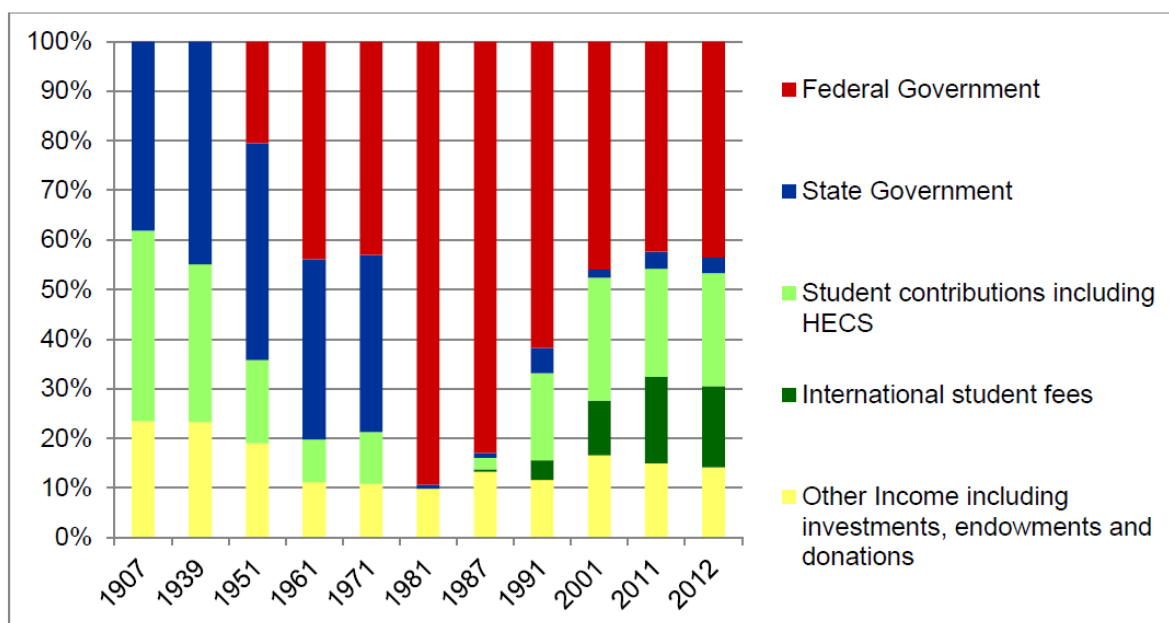
Although the percentage of Federal Government has decreased over the past three decades, the Commonwealth still remains the universities' main funding contributor. As a privilege of being the chief contributor the government retains the commanding position of steering universities in the direction of national economic objectives. Universities still remain in pursuit of scholarship, but the climate in which they pursue scholarship and the imperatives that govern their pursuit have changed dramatically (Marginson 1997, 1998, 2000; Green et al. 2002). The once long-standing view that the government's commitment to universities was based on nation-building has now been superseded with the new market liberal human capital theory, which placed the responsibility of educational investment clearly in the hands of individuals (Marginson 1997). There has been a fundamental shift away from the perception that universities comprise a community of scholars. Today universities are influenced by a new economic-based, competitive regime (Smart 1997; Marginson 2004) based on market dynamics (Marginson 1997). Since the Bradley Report (2008) and its recommendations to reform the financing and regulatory frameworks for higher education, universities have significantly increased tertiary participation targets to address the need for a skilled Australian workforce to ensure the country remains internationally competitive, and they have developed new business models to finance this shift.

The Rudd Labor government, elected in 2007, continued the reforms to higher education. The new Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative replaced the Howard government's Research Quality Framework (RQF), in an effort to improve the use of metrics to assess academics work (Cooper & Poletti 2011). The ERA initiative had its own implementation issues and the use of audit mechanisms to quantify quality raises the question of what constitutes quality (Butler 2007).

Since the Dawkins reforms of the Hawke government in the 1980s, successive governments have implemented policy reforms that have sought to align university priorities with those of the government. Higher education has paid the price of losing its autonomy and has become more and more subject to government economic policy (Patience 2000). The incorporation of commercial paradigms to make universities more profit focused, has resulted in more accountability; and the growth of accountability has not led to increased quality, but has, in fact, led to decreased performance (Long 2010). The performance indicators which measured quality and efficiency have not served the purpose for which they were intended, but, in reality, restricted universities and academics from showing initiatives outside prescribed guidelines. According to Bessant (1988), education was becoming instrumental and authoritarian, regulated by criteria created by remote authorities, often not influenced by educational objectives (Bessant 1988). The policy reforms, introduced by successive governments since the late 1980s, impelled universities to become more market oriented and this had a direct impact on the monitoring of academic performance, which ultimately affected their working conditions and work life balance.

The commercialisation of universities, and their pursuit of funds for economic survival, has resulted in research being channelled into what the universities deem strategic areas, reflect the universities' key performance indicators (KPIs). The changed orientation has also created a difficult workplace environment for academics and students. Many students have compromised their study with increased working hours to pay for university fees. New productivity models introduced by universities, such as workload models, research active indexes (RAI), Student Evaluation of Teaching and Student Evaluation of Unit/S (SET/SEU) surveys to measure academic workload have also contributed to work life imbalance for academics. It has been argued that the new workload productivity models introduced by universities have contributed to a decrease in job satisfaction and motivation, and do not account for all the work that academics do (Bellamy et al. 2003). These changes have been accompanied by the gradual introduction of a more managerial style of management, which has undermined the collegial culture of universities (Bellamy et al. 2003; Harman et al. 2007; Coaldrake 2000).

Figure 3.1 highlights the changing sources of funding for universities with Federal Government funding falling from 90 per cent in 1981 to less than 50 per cent by 2012 and student contributions growing from zero in 1981 to over 20 per cent by 2012. Overseas student fees in the same period have grown to about 18 per cent of funding by 2012.



(Source: Higher Education and Research Reform Amendment Bill 2014 p8)

Figure 3-1 Higher Education revenue by source 1907-2012

Finally, the casualisation of the academic workforce has created job insecurity for new academics and an increased administrative burden for continuing staff (Brown et al. 2010). The role of employee representative bodies, such as the NTEU, was fraught with challenges during these decades of change, as on the one hand the new accessibility of universities and pathways to professional occupations was welcomed, but on the other hand the methods of financing this new accessibility were badly affecting academics' work life balance. The pressures of new funding models, particularly those that lead to increased student and staff ratios, go beyond the working conditions of academics, whether they are union members or not, and begin to strike at the heart of quality education and research at Australian universities (Rainnie et al 2013).

### Workloads model – a major link in the causal chain

Apart from the exponential growth of student numbers which has led universities to be captured by neo-liberal ideologies and subsequently abandon their traditional organisational

paradigm, is the workloads model. The workloads model was created by universities in an attempt to provide a currency to account for academic work spent on teaching, research and administration. Not all universities use the same workloads model, as all enterprise agreements have diverse clauses that relate to workload agreements, in fact a wide scope of difference is allowed between faculties in the same university (NTEU). A typical academic would spend 40 per cent of their work allocation on research, 40 per cent on teaching and 20 per cent on service to the university or administration (Dobele et al. 2010). Measurement systems of academic work enable university management to measure academic productivity which can be points or hours. Credit is allocated for extra time devoted to either research or administration and this can offset the number of hours that are spent teaching. A teaching load can be up to 14 hours per week and can be reduced to 3-6 hours per week depending on whether an academic is highly research active or has a heavy administrative load. From a university management perspective, getting academics to teach more also allows for a reduction in the use of sessional staff. Research is considered by most academics to be the most satisfying and productive aspect of their total work and this is why extra work in this area is offset against teaching. Management also see research output as adding to prestige as well as bringing in extra funding.

A workload that reflects what an academic is most comfortable doing is at the core of work motivation and the most productive expenditure of energies. If there is imbalance this has an adverse impact on an academic's time spent on their most rewarding and productive work, namely, research (Tight 2010). Imbalance in workloads can also result in burnout, stress and lack of motivation (McInnis 2001). McInnis (2001) further posits that if workload models produce a balance between teaching, research and administration, then the likelihood of university culture becoming more effective, efficient, serviceable and pleasurable also increases. Unfortunately, over the past three decades, it has become increasingly difficult to achieve this balance as precedence is given to addressing how universities are to meet shortfall in government funding. Pressures to accommodate the increasing number of international students, the increasing number of offshore campuses, e-learning technology and the general commercialisation of core activities has meant the university's focus has moved from academics to meeting the needs of students who have become the new financiers to replace government funding shortfalls (Davis 2001). The issue of balancing workloads and the latter being used as measures of academic productivity have led some researchers to conclude that workload imbalances is a causal link that may lead to occupational health and safety risks (Hull 2006; McWilliam 2004). Hull (2006) goes on to posit that attempts to manage workloads with respect to seeking fair and transparent workload allocations models, leads to further scrutiny, measurement and control.



## **The changing nature and impact of workload models**

Research conducted by Bentley et al. (2013b) indicates the 40-40-20 workloads model does not reflect the current workload realities of academics. This is reinforced by the research of Hattie and Marsh (1996), which posits there should be a more sophisticated model to describe the teaching and research relationship and not simply a blanket approach that crudely measures academic performance in student evaluations, hours taught and research output. According to Meek et al. (1996), the university sector is in need of greater diversity and differentiation. Institutions should play to their strengths whether they are in the area of teaching or research and make these their points of differentiation. The creation of teaching only positions may be one strategy but whatever the strategy there needs to be strong, visionary and persistent academic leadership as the road ahead will be fraught with risk (Bentley et al. 2013b).

Along with new government policy and university funding initiatives have come increased quality assurance requirements for teaching, research and service to the university. The changing cohort of undergraduate and postgraduate students, and their unique demands with respect to literacy and preparedness to study, has placed new pressures on academics to work towards these students' successful completion of their course. The massification of higher education and the arrival of student cohorts from varying socio-economic and cultural backgrounds have over time created a causal link with this changing student profile and the new challenges that academics are expected to meet. The university management's response to the changing environment is to adopt a more managerialist style of control that has not been welcomed by academics (Connell 2013).

Recent research on a particular workloads model (Moensted et al. 2012) found that the overwhelming majority of academics surveyed reported that their professional values, motivation for work and work practices, were in conflict with university management demands in general and with the model in particular. Four aspects identified from the research are as follows:

- Loss of control and individual autonomy
  - Increased pressures on time, workload and morale
  - Increased academic burden at the expense of core academic tasks
  - Lack of reward and recognition for innovation in teaching and research
- (Moensted 2012)



The introduction of productivity measures like workload models, reveals that the strategic direction of universities is at odds with the professional objectives of academics. The compliance of academics is the result of coercion and if universities expect to act strategically and demand greater workplace productivity a different more inclusive strategy needs to apply (Coaldrake 2000; Taylor 1999, 2008).

The contributing factors to decreased job satisfaction and motivation are increased work demands, greater administrative responsibilities and the loss of workplace autonomy. There are also few rewards and incentives provided by workload models for academics to derive job satisfaction. The currency of the workload's model, namely the number of hours allocated to teaching and administrative work, does not engender a positive attitude to scholarship or professional behaviour. In fact, this system can be divisive and creates a causal link with an academic who is more inclined towards research being pitted against another who is inclined towards teaching. The Group of Eight (Go8) universities are more focused on research and so have created teaching only positions, Melbourne University is an example that allows the university to address the issue of increasing teaching hours as well as increase the size of tutorial classes.

Brown et al. (2010) posits that the workload model has not accounted for the increased administrative duties that academics have had to endure. A causal link can also be drawn with increased administrative duties and the raised levels of stress and frustration of academics, who believe that these duties take time away from their research (Anderson et al. 2002; Bexley et al. 2011; Moensted et al. 2012). Traditionally academics were not as involved in administrative duties to the extent they are at present, as it was considered to be part of administrators' core duties (Bexley et al. 2011), and so they were not prepared to cope with this dramatic change in their workload. Technology was thought, by management, to be an efficient and effective way of processing administrative data, and so academics could use technology to facilitate their administrative duties. This has not proven to be the case (Anderson et al. 2002; Bexley et al. 2011; Moensted et al. 2012).

### **Research/Teaching divide**

A further causal link can be drawn with the workloads system that favours research over teaching load and the division of work among academics. This was not a deliberate plot by university management to achieve this outcome, but was the direct result of strategic moves by universities to meet government funding expectations that were primarily tied to research output (Moensted et al. 2012). These long term strategic policies to seek more government funding gradually changed academics' perception of the value of teaching resulted in a belief that teaching is not valued as highly as research and that the efforts invested in producing

quality teaching outcomes are not recognised (Moensted et al. 2012). Academics spend many hours in student pastoral care and welfare, particularly since student retention has become so highly prioritised and yet these hours are not recognised in the calculation of their workload. Similarly, the creation of innovative teaching techniques, require academics to expend many hours of effort and energy but are not considered in the workload currency accounts. Other areas where accountability is contested include subject and course coordination. These latter two areas increase the administrative burden for academics at the same rate, when there have been dramatic increases in student numbers so universities can increase their revenue.

### **Research active Index**

Academics are expected to spend at least 40 per cent of their workload on research that contributes to their area of expertise. As noted above, often this time is compromised because of increased administrative duties and teaching loads. University management needs to measure the research output of academics and one such measure is the Research Active Index (RAI); in order to gain an effective RAI index in the present year, an academic would need to have published research over the previous three years. An academic can only expect to balance their workload allocation of teaching, research and administration, if they have an RAI index and this is calculated in some institutions, retrospectively. As a result the circular scenario continues where an academic cannot easily achieve an RAI, to balance their workload unless they are able to reduce their teaching and administrative duties and they cannot reduce these unless they have an RAI. The reality is that academics put themselves under a great deal of stress to do everything, teaching, administration and research, until they achieve an RAI, and then they can begin to reduce their teaching and maybe administrative load. The Group of Eight (Go8) universities, which include Melbourne and Monash, may have their own system of measuring research activity but what all RAIs have in common is the drive to push academics to increase publication output in particular in high profile journals.

Coupled with the RAI, the restrictions of the Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) journal ranking systems has hampered academic freedom to publish in whatever journal they thought their discipline would most benefit. The ERA's aim of channelling research publications to A and A\* journals has limited the type of research academics are involved in. There may not be a large range of A and A\* journals in their discipline area that focus on community action or public policy and so publication in these journals is limited. According to Rainnie et al. (2013), the ERA journal ranking system is having a negative impact on certain disciplines, such as employment relations, and may lead to the diminution of the number

Australian journals and researchers in this discipline. According to Connell (2013) neo-liberal ideologies have instrumentalised research and teaching and only research that benefits a corporate or organisational interest is encouraged. We can see the strong shift in what constitute successful teaching programs, but considering for instance, the movement away from Philosophy, a once integral university teaching subject, to programs that have more obvious career pay offs. The pursuit of commercial imperatives and neo-liberal ideologies have created causal links over time that have steered universities away from decision making based on scholastic and research ideals to decision making based on market imperatives.

### **Service to the university**

Service to the university is an expectation that the university has of academics, but its work parameters are not clearly defined and can often result in a dumping ground for everything else an academic is expected to do. It can include serving on university committees, selection officer roles or liaising with industry or community groups. The allocation of workload points or time in this area may become quite arbitrary and may lie with the discretion of those managers who allocate points or time. The distributive inequity of workload points or time in this area serves to create division and frustration among academics and may produce a climate of mistrust (Moensted et al. 2012).

Although workloads models were designed to try to quantify and measure the productivity of academics, it has failed to provide the necessary metrics or currency for accountability, to accurately account for this productivity. Workload models have not been able to either reward commensurately or measure accurately the teaching, research or administrative output of academics. Less than one third of Australian academics believe they can effectively manage their workload and just under one half of them claim that their workload is not manageable (Bexley et al. 2011). Close to half of ageing academics claim their workload is a source of considerable personal stress (Bexley et al. 2011). There is again a causal link with the deteriorating working condition and demeanour of academics and the productivity measures implemented by universities.

### **Resistance to managerialism as it affects academics and students**

Although the NTEU (National Teaching and Education Union) has tried to address workload issues with varying clauses in workplace agreements, academic resistance to the negative impact of change has been weak and generally reliant on individual withdrawal rather than organised action (Ryan et al. 2013; Anderson 2008; Parker & Jary 1995; Wilmott 1995). The reason for lack of resistance varies from academics increasing their involvement with students (Parker & Jary 1995) to a consideration that industrial activism is not effective

(Willmott 1995). Anderson's research (2008) reveals that academics are more inclined to complain to their trusted colleagues and be involved in subversive acts such as non-involvement in student evaluations and performance appraisals. The effect of academic resistance according to Anderson (2008) is only enough to prevent managerialism from becoming entrenched; Ryan (2013) describes this as zombification in the form of resistance and survival. This description of passive resistance resonates with Thelen and Mahoney's (2010) drift typology of institutional change. Thelen and Mahoney (2010), proffer that inaction in response to environmental changes can result in drift and ultimately over time cause major institutional change.

Traditionally the professoriate played a significant role in steering the direction universities were to follow but according to Barney (2010) even the professoriate is not prepared to lead any active resistance to adverse change. Engagement in politics is onerous and can be dangerous to a person's employment security. The pragmatic position of the professoriate is to weigh the cost of resistance with the uncertain benefits that may ensue. The professoriate's retreat into in action or their own world, setting the tone for quiet survival, seems to have infected the other academics around them (Barney 2010). When academics begin to feel disempowered, and their work culture has become unrecognisably transformed, the resultant effect can be a serious diminution of personal morale and personal alienation (Dill 1982).

Students have also been compromised in that universities have welcomed their increasing numbers, but have not accommodated them with the requisite resources. Full fees have also meant that many international students are spending more time at work to pay for their tuition rather than studying. Sappey (2005) posits that the forces of globalisation were changing the dynamics of the industry from one that was concerned with scholastic and research exchange to one that promoted the service encounter. The commodification of institutions begins to develop and a particular focus is given to the marketisation of the sector, competition between institutions begins to grow, the consumption patterns of consumers/students is monitored and managerialism is the order of governance (Sappey 2005; Gallagher 2000). Finally, changes in technology over the past three decades have had a metamorphic impact on the delivery of curriculum to students. The provision of online subject delivery, the recording of lectures, the monitoring of students, the recording of their results and their progress has changed the nature of traditional administrative processes. The presumption was that technology would make administrative duties more efficient and so reduce costs, but the reality was technology created more stress, duplication of resources and so little or no cost savings. New technologies have in fact lead to work intensification

and have not contributed to work reduction (Jacobs 2004). There has been a significant increase in time spent on administration since the changes made to academic work over the past few decades (Tight 2010).

### **Casualisation of an ageing workforce**

The causal links that have been identified so far have included the commercialisation of universities as a result of the strong influence of neo-liberal ideas permeated by government policy, and causal links with the adoption of business principles in the creation of academic workload models, research active indices and student evaluations to measure academic performance. Further to the commercialisation of universities, changes in their governance and ultimately the working conditions of academics, arguably the greatest change is to the structure of the workforce and mode of employment, both further series of causes of the transforming of the universities as an outcome of the logics of neo-liberalism. These significant changes are manifest in the casualisation of an ageing academic workforce (Hugo & Morriss 2010; Hugo 2008). Junor (2004) and Coates et al. (2009) have estimated that around 40 per cent of university staff are casual workers. Bexley et al. (2011) provide recent superannuation records that measure sessional staff at 67,000 or comprising 60 per cent of the workforce. This strategic business initiative by universities may superficially provide operational benefits, but it prolongs the stress for many sessional staff caused by not having constant work. New academics initially expect to work on a sessional basis and with time expect more secure work; when this is not forthcoming their stress is prolonged (Junor 2004). According to Brown et al. (2008), sessional staff are marginalised by some full time staff and their unstable income prevents them from furthering their life plans. Furthermore, increases in the workload of tenured academics has led to the exploitation of casual staff (Jacobs 2004), adding to the creation of an underclass (Willmott 1995). The growing underclass of sessional/casual academics camouflages the harsh realities of an erosion of working conditions for all academics. Paradoxically, the exploitation that casual staff experience does not impede them from continuing to try to gain tenured employment into an industry that dramatically reduced its numbers of new intakes (Edwards, Bexley & Richardson 2010; Coates & Goedegebuure 2010).

Research conducted by May (2011) indicates that most of the teaching at universities is done by sessional academics. This research supports the notion that sessional work does not provide a safe pathway to ongoing academic employment. The research further posits that depending on the discipline area, and the likely possibility of finding work in the external labour market, some sessional academics may find themselves more open to exploitation than others. The lack of future work prospects in other labour markets and the levels of

frustration with sessional academic work make some casual academics the most vulnerable to exploitation.

In parallel with the dramatic increase in student numbers of the past three decades, the Australian academic workforce has experienced a significant increase in retirement of university staff (Hugo 2008). These retirements have been indirectly linked to the changing industrial environment and the increased pressures they have brought with them (Coates et al. 2009; Hughes et al. 2006). The increased casualisation of the academic workforce coupled with an ageing tenured staff have produced a stressful workplace not only for new academics but also for tenured staff, who are ultimately responsible for training casual staff and their successful work performance (Edwards et al. 2009).

### **Summary of effects of causal chains**

The impact of neo-liberalism has been transformative in the Higher Education Sector, particularly in the light of an ageing academic workforce and the growing number of casual academics being hired to replace them (Petersen 2011). The changes to the industry have created an alien environment that encourages existing academics to want to retire early, and in which those who replace them do not have the requisite job security to want to make academia a future career. Ryan (2012) describes the change as a series of incremental waves that began in the 1980s with government induced policy, including massification and funding reform. There was a 28 per cent reduction in real government funding between 1995 and 2005 (Ryan et al. 2013). The next wave in the 1990s saw the development of marketisation and corporatisation, and in early 2000 saw greater efficiencies, compliance, quality and research measurements. The period of 2000 to 2011 saw an increase of 72 per cent in student numbers against only a 38.5 per cent increase in academics (Ryan et al. 2013). The latest wave, and maybe the final tsunami, has been marked by an uncapped student system, the strict governance of TEQSA, and the stronger demands of the Excellence in Research Australia (ERA). These latest changes come with increased external and internal measurement, and surveillance and control over universities and their academic workforce (Ryan 2012). Habermas (1984) refers to rigid political and economic steering as the mechanisms of bureaucratisation, monetarisation and managerialism. The sector is facing serious sustainability and future development issues (Bentley et al. 2013b). Rainnie et al (2013) further adds that the decrease in the attractiveness of academic careers will make the addressing of an ageing academic workforce even more challenging.

The metamorphic changes that have occurred in the Higher Education Sector have adversely affected the well-being and work life balance of Australian academics (Harman 2000; Harman & Meek 2007; Harman 2003). Academics, as a result of gradual changes to



government funding policy, no longer enjoy the comparatively low stress working landscape of a prior era (Schaufeli et al. 2008; Schaufeli & Taris 2005; Winefield et al. 2003). The transition from a collegial to managerial style of management, the workloads model, the dramatic increase in student numbers and, finally, an ageing workforce having to deal with the casualisation of the new workforce, have incrementally transformed the workplace into a place that is no longer the recognisable university that it once was (Maynard & Joseph 2008). Research, teaching, administration and service to the university remain the core activities of academics but the imbalance of these, as a result of the changes, has adversely affected academics' work life balance to such an extent that many staff have taken or are considering retirement. The replacement of these retiring academics will not be easy, as new academics are not attracted by the new casual employment policies implemented by universities. The research of this thesis closely examines the effects on academics' work life balance as a result of the incremental exogenous and endogenous that has affected the work of academics since the 1980s.

<b>Exogenous change</b>	<b>Endogenous change</b>
Neo-liberalism Commercialisation	Managerialism versus collegiality Business service culture versus scholarship and research
Decrease in government funding	Increase in student numbers Increase in teaching, research output and administration
Imposed governance and productivity measures	Workload models, SET/SEU evaluations, Research active indices (RAI)

Figure 3.2 Exogenous/endogenous change elements

## Conclusion

The Australian Higher Education Sector has been chosen as the context for the research as it has seen metamorphic institutional change over the past three decades. The seeds of change were first planted with government legislation in the late 1980s and have had a slow, incremental long term effect on academics. It would benefit research in change management to consider a long term, moving temporal context of change rather than a deep focus or snapshot view of a single, although significant, transformative event. Long term changes have seen the commercialisation of universities in an effort to compensate for the dramatic decrease in government funding. This has resulted in increased student numbers, increased staff productivity measures and technology platforms introduced for the sake of efficiency.

More than anything else though, these gradual changes over time have contributed to a dramatically changed working environment for academics who work in the Higher Education Sector. Although not all university governing bodies have been structured in the same way, the corporatisation of higher education has resulted in transforming universities into business entities that are the very antithesis of the supposedly agile organisations they were meant to be (Ryan et al. 2012).

The response of the academic workforce to the changes that have occurred in their sector over the last few decades is the area of interest for this thesis. There is a gap in the literature with respect to the way the academic workforce responds to changes in management styles, particularly those changes that slowly and gradually result in changes to the traditional culture of the university. Time is a significant dynamic in the research of gradual change, and the longer the time frame, the more subtle and yet more transformative the causal chains of change can be. Research in change can benefit from a deeper understanding of an institution's evolution by taking into account a longer historic perspective of change. The macro perspective of change will reveal a richer balance between the detailed and the general and paint a more complex picture of institutional change.

The future of universities, in particular the careers of academics, will be at the forefront of higher education discussions into the 21st century. The way progress will be conceptualised and the reward systems that will need to be put in place to provide academics with the necessary incentive to come on the journey, will mark the road ahead. The future will see more competition in the sector for providing education services, and so a need to mark a global presence will be imperative if Australian universities are to be in the race for student numbers. The frontline warriors in the new order will still be the academics and so addressing their needs at the different stages in their academic careers will mark the success or failure of the new regime (Bentley et al. 2013b).

The objective of this thesis is to not only reinforce the previous findings but also build on the extant literature by providing detailed analysis of the effect of these workplace changes on academics' work life balance.



## **Chapter Four: Methodology**

### **Introduction**

This chapter discusses the rationale for the choice of research methods in relation to the research questions discussed in the previous chapter, as well as the limitations of the methods selected. Their application to the data collection, analysis and interpretation is then described and key decisions in relation to the collection and analysis are explained.

### **Research method**

Researchers use a range of different qualitative research methods; each underpinned by different ontological and epistemological frameworks, and applied to a vast array of data forms, such as interviews, questionnaires and surveys. Qualitative method is often chosen for research studies in the disciplines of psychology, education and nursing, as it is designed to explore the human elements of a given topic, where specific methods are used to examine how individuals see and experience the world (Atkinson et al. 2001). The difference between qualitative and quantitative research lies with the ontology of reality, whether it is a social construct or is an objective reality, and this stance determines the epistemological framework of the research methodology (Guba & Lincoln 1989, 1994).

The choice of apposite methodology is generally agreed to be dependent on whether it will be effective in answering the research question (Holloway & Todres 2003; Holloway & Wheeler 2002). Grounded theory was chosen as opposed to phenomenology for this thesis as the objective was to go beyond describing or understanding a particular phenomenon as it is understood by participants (Koch 1995). The intention of the thesis was to understand the factors that influenced academics to describe the changes to their work life balance. Ethnography was not chosen as a methodology as the focus on cultural prescriptions (Sarantakos 1993) although considered in the research, particularly in the development of typology of academics and how they coped with change and work life balance, this was not the main focus of the research. Although theory development using ethnography has made a contribution to knowledge (Omery 1988), the development of theory using 'grounded theory method' was thought less likely to attract debate (Atkinson & Hammersley 1994).

Qualitative interview techniques do not have the same rigid structure as surveys and questionnaires, but are more iterative, flexible and continuous (Rubin & Rubin 1995). The continuous, flexible nature of qualitative interviewing allows for the information gathering process to be repeated, retested and redesigned to arrive at a closer and clearer model of the phenomenon that is investigated. A qualitative interview is an interaction between the

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interviewer and the respondent where the interviewer has a general plan of inquiry but not necessarily a specific set of questions to be investigated (Babbie 2004). Although the interviewer is familiar with the research questions, the interview is essentially a smooth and natural conversation between the interviewer and the respondent. The interviewer establishes the general direction of the conversation but most of the talking is done by the respondent. An interviewer needs to listen carefully to answers to questions, interpret these in the light of the general inquiry, and then phrase another question that delves deeper into the relevant area of inquiry. The strength of qualitative research lies in the depth of understanding that it is able to deliver. The flexibility of investigation of this kind of research also adds to its attractiveness over more static research techniques that require fixed limitations. The weakness of qualitative research lies with its inappropriateness as a tool for arriving at statistical description for large populations. Compared to quantitative research methods, qualitative research measurements generally have more validity, a deeper focus on a specific area of research, rather than reliability; a confidence that the same result can be repeated (Babbie 2004). Finally, the role of the interviewer is an active one as the personal bias of the interviewer needs to be considered in the final analysis of the data. Interviewers address this by confronting their own biases, communicating with their fellow researchers, and making comparative evaluations.

The study of recorded human communications is termed content analysis (Krippendorff 2004). Content analysis is particularly suited to the study of in-depth modes of inquiry that examines the who, what, and how of a given phenomenon. Conventional sampling techniques, such as random, stratified and cluster sampling are employed in the use of content analysis. A coding process is also employed to transform raw data into a standardised form. The coding process involves the logic of conceptualisation, the mental process whereby notions or concepts are made more specific and precise, and operationalisation: specific operational procedures that result in empirical observations that mirror the real world (Babbie 2004). The main strength of content analysis is its ease and accessibility. Where there may be financial or safety concerns about what research method to employ, content analysis is unobtrusive, inexpensive and flexible in its execution. The disadvantage of content analysis is limited to the recorded information and this may affect validity and reliability. Once the information has been recorded, although it can be recoded differently to achieve greater consistency and increase validity, it cannot be easily replicated to achieve greater reliability.

Grounded theory, first presented by Glaser and Strauss (1967), attempts to derive theories from an analysis of patterns, themes and common categories discovered in observational data. Grounded theory derives its concepts of theory construction from the theoretical perspectives in classical sociological theory and cultural studies (Charmaz 1990). The early forms of the theory describe a naturalist approach to research with a positivist concern for a 'systematic set of procedures'. Grounded theory attempts to overcome some of the problems associated with the loose use of content analysis by introducing rigour, scepticism and objectivity and clearly audited decision pathways. What distinguish content analysis from grounded theory are the positivist research procedures that include systematic coding important for achieving validity and reliability.

The early forms of Grounded theory (Glaser 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin 1998) sought to construct theory about socially important issues through a process of data collection, and have been described as inductive in nature. Research topics emerge from the stories that are told by respondents and the researcher analyses the data by constant comparison. Initially comparisons are made with the researched data and then with the researcher's interpretations translated into codes and categories and again with more data. This constant process of comparison of data grounds the researcher's final theorising in the respondents' experiences. Over time grounded theory has evolved depending on the ontological and epistemological beliefs resulting in several points of departure along a spiral of methodological development (Mills et al. 2006). The traditional form of grounded theory developed by Glaser (1967) that took a positivist position, evolved over time to take a relativist ontological position with the influence of Strauss and Corbin (1998). Where Glaser (1978) believed in a pre-existent reality and that the discovery of truth emerges from the data that represents reality, Strauss and Corbin (1998) believe that truth is enacted, it is a social construct.

Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1994, 1998) affirm the importance of a multiplicity of perspectives and view of reality and so extend and emphasise the range of theoretical sensitivity attended to in the analysis of human action and interaction (MacDonald 2001). Subsequently the analysis and reconstruction of theory is richer and more reflective of the research content. This methodology reveals an interpretive position as it includes the perspectives and real life stories of the research participants (Strauss & Corbin 1994). The multiplicity of perspectives of theoretical sensitivity includes the researchers' level of insight, how they respond to the respondent's words and actions, and finally the researchers' ability to reconstruct meaning from the research data (Strauss & Corbin 1994). This methodology differs from traditional grounded theory method where researchers are expected to enter the

research field with no pre conceived concepts, enabling them to respond to the raw data without it being filtered through pre-existing hypotheses and concepts (Glaser 1978). The theorising that Strauss and Corbin (1994) propose is an act of reconstruction from the data a position that systematically integrates a multiplicity of perspectives through statements of relationship, that are interpreted from given perspectives as adopted by researchers. With respect to the literature review, traditional grounded theorists state there is no need to review any of the literature in the area of study (Glaser 1992) for fear of importing pre-existing biases. This interpretation of grounded theory clearly separates the data from the participants and the researcher. With the evolved grounded theory, Strauss and Corbin (1998) posit that the literature plays an integral role in the researchers' theoretical reconstruction. The literature provides examples of similar phenomena that can stimulate thinking and add to a richer comprehension of the data.

Finally for traditional grounded theorists' coding is the fundamental analytic tool used to reveal an emergent grounded theory form the research (Mills et al. 2006). The three forms of coding, open, theoretical and constant comparative (Glaser 1992) describes the process that begins with developing codes that lead to categories and then theorising after constant comparisons of open and theoretical coding. Strauss and Corbin (1998) began by proposing a more complex coding method to reflect their concern for the interplay between social groups and the individual realities, eventually lead to a more simplified coding system called axial coding. Axial coding paradigm was design to provoke thinking about relationships between categories and their properties and dimensions but more so that it should not restrict the dynamic flow of events and complexity of relationships (Strass & Corbin 1998). Strauss and Corbin (1998) have a constructivist intent with their methodology and agree that the tools for increasing theoretical sensitivity should reflect a degree of flexibility and creativity. Finally the grounded theory characterised by Strauss and Corbin (1998) acknowledges the researcher as the author of theoretical reconstruction of the research.

### **Constructivist grounded theory**

Charmaz (2000), a student of Glaser and Strauss, has become the leading component of constructivist grounded theory. Constructivist grounded theory is ontologically relativist and epistemologically subjectivist, and reconsiders the relationship between the researcher and participants bringing to the fore the notion of the researcher as author. What differentiates Charmaz (2000) from Strauss and Corbin (1998) is basically their ontological position. Charmaz (2000) argues that Strauss and Corbin (1998) continue to assume the existence of an external reality whereas Charmaz (2000) applies the strategies of traditional grounded

theory within a constructivist paradigm thus rejecting notions of emergence and objectivity (Annells 1996). According to Charmaz (2000) data alone do not provide a window on reality; 'discovered reality' emerges from the interactive process between researcher and participants, and the temporal, cultural and structural contexts of the research setting. Charmaz (1995) has positioned the researcher as co-producer of the data with descriptions of the situation, and their perceptions of the participants. Charmaz (2000) differs from her predecessors in her treatment of data and their analytic outcomes. Researchers immerse themselves in the data in a way that embeds the narrative of the participants in the final research outcome.

The style of writing of constructivist grounded theorists not only evokes the experience of participants (Charmaz 2001) and re-envisages it, but brings fragments of fieldwork, content and mood together in a colloquy of the researcher's perceptions (Charmaz & Mitchell 1996). It is the responsibility of the researcher to balance the participants' accounts and the connections between analytical findings and the research data as this helps reposition the participants' as co-contributors to the reconstruction of the final grounded theory model. Charmaz (2001) provides constructivist grounded theorists the necessary guidance to make meaning from the data rendered from participants' experiences into valid theoretical interpretations.

This project seeks to construct theory from an analysis of the social actions of the research participants in their particular temporal and contextual settings. This style of constructivist grounded theory falls within the ontological relativist and epistemological subjectivist tradition pioneered by Charmaz (2000). Grounded theory derives its concepts of theory construction from the theoretical perspectives in classical sociology theory and cultural studies and its constructivist approach by viewing both data and analysis as derived from shared experiences and relationships (Charmaz 1990, 1995, 2000, 20001; Charmaz & Mitchell 1996). The reason why the constructivist grounded theory as presented by Charmaz (2000) was chosen as a methodology for this thesis is because the ontological perspective that reality is created within a social construct and the epistemological perspective that the researcher and participants are both actively involved in the construction of the grounded theory, best suits the mindset of the researcher and the research question. The researcher has spent more than 20 years working in sector that is being researched and so is part of the same world as participants and so is immersed in the data and can provide deeper insights with respect to data analysis and verification.

The constructivist approach, as presented in this thesis, requires the researcher to examine the situations that give rise to the actions of participants, interpret these actions and then

move towards theorising their interpretations (Bryant 2002; Charmaz 2000, 2002). The resultant theory remains grounded in the researcher's point of view.

From a detailed understanding of the actions of participants that was gleaned from the transcriptions of the participant interviews, constructivist researchers can move through the process of coding and category formation, to a more insightful understanding of the larger, macro, social environment that frames the contextual setting of the actions. Differences and distinctions between the relationships of social actors are continually considered as part of the constant comparative method, and the hierarchies and power structures that maintain these networks become more evident. Constructivist researchers become adept at seeking out these differences and distinctions and ensure that their data is rich enough to make their revelation clearer.

Both constructivist grounded theorists and their participants are involved in interpreting meanings and actions (Charmaz 1990). Constructivist believe that data and analysis are social constructions and so what theory is derived from their data and analysis is reflective of this (Bryant 2002, 2003; Charmaz 2000; Hall & Callery 2001; Thorne et al. 2004). More specifically, data analysis is contextually situated in time, place, culture, and situation. It is also subject to the values of researchers and participants and this is acknowledged as part of the reflexivity of the research process.

The potential efficacy of grounded theory is in its analytic process , which leads to theorising on the construction of meanings, actions and social structures. Grounded theory builds analytic structures that make for the more secure construction of a lasting theory. It contributes to the process of theory building and provides insights and perspectives that reflect the vantage points inherent in our varied experiences (Charmaz 1990).

### **Approach to constructing grounded theory**

The process that was followed in the construction of grounded theory for this project was that which is outlined by Charmaz (2006) in her interpretation of Glaser and Strauss' methodology. The process consists of treating grounded theory methods as a craft that may vary according to the individual emphasis of the practitioner but in total the commonalities of the final outcome are in agreement.

Qualitative research and grounded theory method was deliberately chosen as the research method for this project as this method, although systematic, provides flexible guidelines for 'collecting and analysing qualitative data to construct theories 'grounded' in the data themselves' (Charmaz 2006, Atkinson et al. 2003). Grounded theorists focus on the

collected data and immerse themselves in the research setting to gain a deeper understanding of research participants' behaviour and gain a more enlightened analytic sense of their circumstances. Grounded theory begins with the construction of data through observation, interaction and a deep understanding of the context (Charmaz 2006). The systematic guidelines that steer grounded theory guide the researcher from the early stages of the research to separate, sort and synthesise the collected data through a system of qualitative coding. The coding system sorts and labels the data to enable comparisons with other segments of data (Charmaz 2006). The categories that are created by the coding facilitate the drawing of relationships between categories and the scaffolding of levels of abstraction that subsequently, with further data, refine emerging analytic categories. The final outcome results in a 'grounded theory' or an abstract theoretical definition of a researched contextual setting.

The founders of grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss (1967, 1978; Strauss 1987) outlined a number of processes that guide the researcher to control their data gathering and analysis. These include:

- Simultaneous data collection and analysis
- Coding and category construction derived directly from data
- Making constant comparisons at each stage of the analysis
- Advancing theory development in conjunction with data collection and analysis
- Memo writing to detail categories
- Sampling is conducted to advance theory construction
- The literature review is conducted after the analysis

(Charmaz 2006)

Grounded theory to be complete needs to comply with the following criteria: close adherence to the data, conceptual density and usefulness, sustainability, modifiability and explanatory power (Glaser 1978, 1992; Strauss 1987). The written guidelines for conducting qualitative research offered by Glaser and Strauss, and later by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1994, 1998), have provided researchers with deeper insight and more secure constructive scaffolding to build analysis. There is a strong emphasis on action by Strauss and Corbin in their development of grounded theory. They viewed people as active agents in their lives and not as passive recipients of external forces. There is a greater focus on the process

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rather than on structure in understanding social behaviour. A number of recurrent themes appear in the development of Strauss and Corbin's grounded theory, these include human agency, emergent processes, social and subjective meanings, problem-solving practices and action theory (Charmaz 2006). These themes characterise grounded theory and differentiate it from other qualitative research method. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), grounded theory emerges from the data distanced from the scientific observer. Charmaz (2006) builds on this and purports that there is no separation between the data and the researcher; we are all part of the same world and grounded theory is constructed through our common present and past and our social interactions.

### **The process of constructing grounded theory**

The process that was followed in the construction of grounded theory for this project was that which is outlined by Charmaz (2006) in her interpretation of Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1998) methodology. The process consists of treating grounded theory methods as a craft that may vary according to the individual emphasis of the practitioner but in total the commonalities of the final outcome are in agreement.

### **Gathering data**

The process of constructing grounded theory begins with the collection of rich, full and detailed data and placing it in its relevant situational and social context. Making sense of participants' experiences then leads to analysis of these and a deeper understanding of their meanings and actions.

### **Coding**

This consists of two types of coding, or sorting the data according to what they indicate. The first is termed line by line coding, that permits the researcher to look closely at the data, line by line, to conceptualise ideas. The second type of coding is focused coding, that allows the researcher to synthesise larger amounts of data.

### **Memo writing**

The practice of memo or note writing on created codes and categories enables a richer understanding of analysis. Memo writing enables comparison of data, the exploration of ideas and the steering of future data gathering. Memo writing leads the researcher to seek theoretical sampling.

### **Theoretical sampling, sorting and saturation**

Theoretical sampling begins with data, formulating ideas and then scrutinising these ideas, with the aid of memos and notes, to seek further empirical enquiry. According to Hood



(1983), the early categories that are created from coding are not definitive and are only strengthened through theoretical sampling. This requires a return to the field to pursue further enquiry and substantiation of analysis.

Sorting data, according to grounded theory method, provides the researcher a means for organising the data and then theoretically linking created categories. Sorting enables comparison of categories and the building of theory (Glaser 1998).

Saturation occurs when the gathering of new data, on an existing pattern of behaviour or category, no longer yields any new theoretical insights or any new properties (Charmaz 2014; Glaser 2001). There is contention in the literature about when saturation is reached; according to Morse (1995) saturation may be proclaimed rather than proven and so similar to other qualitative methodologies, the grounded theory approach may suffer similar hazards in proving saturation when it may not have occurred. Dey (1999) contends that saturation is dependent on the researcher's conjecture that the properties of the category are saturated. Dey (1999) prefers the term 'theoretical sufficiency' as saturation is confined to the categories that are created by the existing data.

## **Grounded Theory research evaluation criteria**

The critique and evaluation of all research studies is generally agreed to be centred on assessment of reliability and validity (Long & Johnson 2000). Reliability is described by Hammersley (1992) as referring to the degree of consistency and replicability of findings and confidence in data collection. Within qualitative circles 'dependability' rather than reliability seems to have become the more appropriate term (Sandelowski et al. 2009; Hall & Stevens 1991; Robson 1993; Koch 1994). According to Charmaz (2014) the criteria for evaluating research is dependent on who formulates it and to what purpose it is formed. Grounded theory method contains untapped versatility and potential and so the usefulness of the research will be judged by the audience that reads it. Glaser (1978) considers a criteria of fit, work, relevance and modifiability when evaluating research method. Although different disciplines adhere to different standards (Baker & Edwards 2012; Conrad 1990; Morse 2012; Thorne 2001), it would suffice to say that reliability, with respect to the stability of data-collection methods, is significant to the integrity of the research.

Hammersley (1992) goes on to describe validity as a true and accurate account of those features of a phenomenon that it proposes to describe, explain or theorise. Hammersley (1992) posits that no knowledge can be certain; truth lies in the plausibility and credibility of the claim and is dependent on the weight of evidence for each of these. According to Long &

Johnson (2000) validity is normally established through reference to three main aspects: content validity, criterion-related validity and construct validity. Content validity depends largely on sampling and the research instrument and whether the entirety of the phenomenon is addressed. Criterion-related validity deals with correlating the research instrument and findings with an established standard to measure actual and standard performance. Construct validity deals with proximity of the research instrument to the construct question. The overriding objective of validity is to match research findings to the phenomenon under investigation.

With respect to rigour in research, Hammersley (1992) accepts there isn't general agreement and posits that audit of the decision trail and triangulation help maintain rigour in seeking reliability. When seeking rigour in validity, according to Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) reflection is commonly used with qualitative research. Kirk and Miller (1986) argue that prolonged involvement in a community heightens sensitivity to discrepancies in meaning by the researcher and the research participants. Guba and Lincoln (1989) recommend prolonged engagement with research participants and setting to identify those characteristics and details in the setting that are most relevant to the research problem. A further strategy to maintain rigour according to Robson (1993) is peer debriefings, where the researcher discusses the research analysis with peers and colleagues on a continuous basis. Holloway and Wheeler (1996) posit that research supervisors have a key role with their research students to ensure rigour. Finally presentation at research conferences is a recognised means of submitting research findings to peers and colleagues and other fellow researchers to attract critical comment. Hammersley (1992) supports the idea of having various discussion levels of evidence to substantiate knowledge claims.

Charmaz (2006) provides the following criteria for the successful application of grounded theory. Charmaz (2006) further posits that a strong combination of originality and credibility increases the scholarly contribution as well as enhances the criteria of resonance and usefulness. These criteria are individually addressed in the light of the project's research in chapter eight, Conclusion.

Credibility		Successful and sufficient data to achieve familiarity with research setting. Categories offer a wide range of empirical observations. Strong links between the data and argument and analysis. Enough evidence for claims.
Originality		Categories offer new insights. Does the work have a social and theoretical significance? Does the grounded theory challenge, extend, refine current ideas, concepts and practices?
Resonance		Categories provide fullness of the studied experience. Does the grounded theory resonant with participants? Does it offer deeper insights into their lives and worlds?
Usefulness		Does the research spark further research?  Is there a contribution to knowledge?

Table 4.1 Criteria for successful application of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006)

## **Researching the work life balance of Australian academics:**

### **Methodology**

Two universities, the University of Melbourne and Monash University were chosen for the sake of convenience from the Group of Eight (Go8) elite universities in Australia. There are only two G8 universities in Melbourne. They were chosen because they represent two of Australia's most highly resourced, quality branded universities that are populated with high academic performance students. They represent Australian academics working at their peak performance and their personnel are considered the most highly regarded in the sector.

Random samples of academics from these two universities were asked to be involved in-depth interviews to investigate how changes in the Higher Education Sector have affected their work life balance.

### **The University of Melbourne**

The University of Melbourne was established in 1853 and is Australia's second oldest university and the oldest university in Victoria. It is arguably considered to be Australia's most prestigious university, consistently ranked among the leading universities in the world and ranked by Times Higher Education World University Ranking 2012-2013, as Australia's number 1 university. The University of Melbourne is a sandstone university, meaning that it is one of the earliest universities to be established (the early universities in Australia were built from hewn sandstone). The university also claims membership of the Universitas 21, an international network of universities, established as an international reference point and resource for strategic thinking on issues of global significance. The endowment and research expenditure of the University of Melbourne is claimed to be the largest in Australia. The university is associated with a number of prestigious research institutes, namely the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute of Medical Research, the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economics and Social Research and the Grattan Institute. The university has further association with the highly regarded Melbourne Business School, Melbourne Law School and Melbourne Medical School. The University of Melbourne has had four Australian Prime Ministers, five Governor Generals and seven Nobel Prize laureates as past graduates.

### **Monash University**

Monash University was founded in 1958 and is the second oldest university in Victoria. Monash is a member of the Group of Eight elite Australian universities and is the only Australian member of the influential M8 Alliance of Academic Health Centres. Monash has the largest student body in Australia, with 45,000 undergraduates and 17,000 graduate students. Of the total population of approximately 62,000 students, around 22,000 are International students. Monash has a number of internationally recognised research centres including the Australian Synchrotron and the Monash Science Technology Research and Innovation Precinct. The strategic objective of Monash research is to make a highly significant contribution to bringing real and positive change to the lives of people all over the world.

Monash has seven campuses, five of which are in Victoria, with one in Malaysia and one in South Africa. Monash also has a research centre in Prato, Italy, a graduate school in Mumbai, India and a joint graduate school with China's Southeast University in Jiangsu Province, China.

Representing two of Australia's elite universities, the quality of resources at both Melbourne and Monash universities, the capabilities of their students and staff, their research prowess, and their administrative processes are considered of the highest order and are therefore a model to which other universities would aspire. Subsequently, it would be expected that academics working in such a prestigious work environment would be provided with the best opportunities for work life balance.

## **Data Collection**

The primary data source was developed from face-to-face interviews with 33 (male and female) academics from Monash and Melbourne, conducted over a period of five months, February 2013 to June 2013. The recruitment process and participant characteristics are described below.

## **Participants**

### **Recruitment and selection**

The selection of participants was not random but geared to yield as broad a range of academics' views as possible. Potential participants were recruited from the Faculties that had the largest student population in the university. It was thought that the large student numbers of these faculties would be representative of the widest and most diverse range of views.

Potential participants were identified from lists of staff found on the university website that profiled the department where the academic worked, which included job titles indicating their position level and usually the length of service at the university. Those in more senior positions (Professor, Associate Professor and Senior Lecturer) had generally worked for longer periods in the university and were selected for the longitudinal perspective they could offer regarding the changes they had witnessed over time. Some early academics were chosen for the project to contrast their real experiences of working in a contemporary university with their perceptions of academia when they were past students. Although these academics are new to universities they may well have spent a number of years in industry gaining life experience. Their reason for entering into academia is their presumption that the working hours in a university are more flexible and the work commitments are less onerous compared to industry. Academics were also chosen to represent a balanced number in terms of gender and a wide selection of cultural backgrounds.

Additional participants were recruited by snowballing from those initially volunteering, by asking participants for names of potential candidates at the end of the interview. Professors

would tend to recommend other professors, given that the objective was to research the experiences of long serving academics, but at times would recommend more junior staff who being new to academia would have experienced the full impact of the changes of the last 30 years. Accessing new participants was not difficult and almost every interview contained a recommendation to interview someone else. Finding participants from different Faculties was also not difficult; professors knew other professors from Faculties other than their own, and those professors knew junior academics in their discipline.

Once identified, each potential participant was sent an introductory email (see Appendix B) that outlined the purpose of the study, its time requirements and measures to ensure confidentiality. Depending on the responses to the initial email, an interview time was agreed to or a further more specific email about the nature of the study was sent. Twenty out of thirty-two participants required a more detailed email briefing of the project and what was required of the participants. Twelve of the participants were happy to be involved without further discussion, as they said they had been briefed by the previous participant who had recommended them.

There were 33 interviews of academics, 15 from the University of Melbourne and 18 from Monash University. The high response rate to invitations to participate (33/34) and the willingness of participants to recommend their colleagues to participate in the study affirm the topicality of the issue of work life balance in Australian universities.

Of the 33 participants 85% were full time members of staff and 15% were part time. With respect to gaining more insight into the work life balance of participants, it was noted that 52% of participants had adult children, 27% adolescent children, 15% young children and 2 % no children.

## Participant profile

University	(18) Monash	(15) Melbourne
Position	10 Professors 3 Associate Professors 1 Senior Lecturer 2 Lecturers 2 Assistant Lecturers	4 Professors 6 Associate Professors 2 Senior Lecturers 2 Lecturers 1 Assistant Lecturer
Experience	3 30< years 6 20-30 years 7 10-20 years 2 1-10 years	3 30< years 5 20-30 years 6 10-20 years 1 1-10 years
Gender	9 males 9 females	10 males 5 females
Discipline	7 Management 4 Engineering 4 Law 2 Accounting 1 Marketing	5 Accounting 3 Management 3 Urban studies 2 Research 1 Mathematics 1 Law
Cultural Background	12 Anglo 2 Chinese 2 Maltese 1 Sri Lankan 1 Jewish	12 Anglo 2 Jewish 1 Indian

Table 4.2 Participant profile

## Conducting the interviews

Prior to commencing the formal interview, the nature and rationale of the research was explained again to ensure the participants were fully aware of the nature of the study and their involvement, including the interview process and the confidentiality procedures. Participants were informed that they were free to withdraw at any time from the process without repercussions, and that any material collected would be removed and destroyed.

The use of audio-recording was explained, including that they could stop the recording at any time, and agreement obtained to audio record the interview was included in the consent form.

They were informed that transcriptions would be generated from the audio recording for analytical purposes and they were encouraged to read the transcripts if they wanted to.

Participants were asked if they had any questions or concerns about the research process and their involvement, and after these had been addressed, they signed a consent form (Appendix A) and were given an Information to Participants Form (Appendix B) that included contact numbers for the researchers as well as for registering complaints with Human Ethics in Research committee.

None of the participants withdrew from the research project.

### **Number of participants**

The size and constitution of the participant group (33) was determined when 'saturation' occurred and the new data no longer revealed any new theoretical insights. In accordance with grounded theory methodology, saturation occurs when the categories formed from the data, no longer reveal new properties of the extant emergent pattern (Charmaz 2014; Glaser 2001). The logic of saturation supersedes the notion of appropriate sample size. Rather than the term saturation, Dey (1999) prefers the term theoretical sufficiency, as there may be conjecture as to whether saturation has in fact been achieved. In any case saturation is the term coined by grounded theorists to indicate a judgement that is made, based on the data, that there is no further need to continue the research as it no longer reveals any new properties.

### **Interview structure**

The interviews were conducted in a form that aimed to gather rich, full and detailed data that described the participants' experiences and also provided a clear and focused account of the relevant situational and social context. The objective of the interview was to create a non-threatening, open environment where interviewees could express in their own time and words their personal understanding of their everyday work experiences and how these impacted on their daily life.

The participants' voice needed to emerge from the data (Bowden & Green 2010) and open ended questions were asked to allow the participant to choose which aspect of a specific topic best revealed their personal experience. The interview questions were designed to explore the particular interviewees' experiences and the interview structured to give space



for this, while also ensuring that the key research issues were included (Charmaz 2006). All participants were asked about the same key research issues to ensure consistency of coverage.

The interviews generally took between 45 and 60 minutes and were conducted in the interviewee's offices at work, by the researcher, since Grounded theorists need to be involved in the data collection as well as analysis, as a very close association with both these processes leads to a more sophisticated exploration of the data's nuances of meaning.

### **Interview questions**

The interview questions for the project were developed in accordance with the grounded theory methodology as outlined by Charmaz (2006). In-depth questioning was conducted to explore the participants' reflections and experiences as well as fit the project's area of research. The questions were framed from an interactionist perspective in an effort to glean the participants' experiences, views and actions regarding certain contexts. Although an interview plan was taken into every interview, a high degree of informality and free conversation characterised the interview. It was important that the interviewee was made to feel comfortable and that they had the license to speak freely about how they felt about the chosen topics. In accordance with grounded theory interviewing methodology, the interviewer has an active part in the interview and is alert and sensitive to relevant leads that are introduced by the interviewee (Gorden 1987; Gubrium & Holstein 2001); Holstein & Gubrium 1995; Rubin & Rubin 1995; Seidman 1998). Glaser (1992) posits that an interviewer needs to probe deeper into the meaning of what participants' said in order to build a stronger bridge between their participants' experiences and the objectives of the research study. The end result is a more textured, dense understanding of the participants' experiences and how they give more in-depth meaning to the research.

This was achieved in the interview by using open ended questions to enable the interviewee to frame and explore their personal views about the topic.

*'How have you reacted to change at the university?'*

*'How have these changes affected your personal life?'*

The interviewee's initial responses to questions were supported in a way that encouraged deeper reflection.

*'How did the changes affect your response to teaching, research and administration?'*

*'What strategies are you using to cope with the changes that have affected your personal life?'*

### **Developing the interview schedule**

The interview schedule emerged through a multi-layered, iterative process (Appendix C). The initial interviews operated as pilot interviews in trialling the first schedule. The first interview was with a very seasoned, highly regarded academic and researcher, and the advice that was given steered the course for the following interviews. Improvements were made to an opening question *'How has working at the university impacted on your personal life over the last decade?'* This question was considered to be too broad or too intimidating to be an opening question and was later modified to *'What are your reflections about the changes in universities in your time as an academic?'* The personal impact of the changes was investigated as an aside question after the interviewer related a particular account of work related change.

Other interview questions that were modified as a result of comments made by early interviewees concerned the topic of work life balance. The original question asked was *'How do you balance your personal life with university work and how well does this work for you?'* This question tended to elicit a gender related response rather than a detailed individual response. Men, depending on age, commented that their personal life was fine and in the capable hands of their wives, and women responded by expressing concerns about their presumed neglect of the family. More in-depth, individual questions needed to be asked to probe for a more detailed individual response. Example questions were *'Has your response to your children changed over time?'* or *'Has your contribution to family life changed over time?'*

The closing question *'Are you optimistic about the future of universities?'* elicited quite an emotional response from many participants. In order to avoid the 'grumpy old men' syndrome and avoid responses that harkened back to the 'good old days', participants were asked to direct their responses to giving advice to new academics. A typical question was, *'Would you advise a young person to pursue a career in academia?'*

The interview schedule also developed in relation to the data. In line with grounded theory approaches, data analysis was conducted alongside data collection, and so that key themes emerging from initial interviews were incorporated and explored in subsequent interviews, until no new themes emerged. Key themes that emerged from initial interviews dealt with teaching and students, research and administration, technology and collegiality and how these impacted on work life balance.

The first question asked of interviewees was *‘How long have you been an academic?’* This question was important to establish the experiential credentials of the academic. The aim of the project was to investigate the work life changes of academics over a period of three decades and so it was important to establish that most of those academics fell into this category. In the final analysis, out of the 33 academics interviewed, more than half (16) had careers that lasted over 20 years, and 15 academics had over ten years’ experience. The other three academics were deliberately chosen because they were new to academia and so they could contrast their perceptions of what they thought academia was like with their real life experiences.

The research part of the interview began with an opening statement that outlined the project’s aims followed by an open question to the participant for comment. The opening question to participants, *‘What were the most significant changes that have impacted on your academic career?’* was designed to elicit from the participant their personal impressions of significant changes that have occurred during their career as an academic. This is different from deliberately introducing topics and then asking participants to comment. The interview process relied heavily on the participant introducing topic leads that were then fleshed out with further questioning.

The interviewer had a list of topics that were important issues to be covered for the progress of the project’s research but the topics were not introduced by the interviewer in the first instance. Topics were introduced by the participants and these were checked off the interviewer’s list. If there were some topics on the list that were not first introduced by the participants, then the interviewer would seek further comment from the participant. The list of topics that needed to be covered for the research project are presented in the following table:

Research	Technology
Collegiality	Students and teaching
Administration	Work life balance
Service to the university	The future

Table 4.3 List of research topics

The topic of work life balance, a main research theme of the project, was investigated through direct and indirect questioning. Direct questions, such as *'Did workplace changes affect your personal life?'* were asked of participants, and where glib responses were received similar to, *'Oh everything was fine at home, my wife took care of everything'*, more indirect questions were asked to delve deeper into the issue. Sample indirect questions such as *'Has your relationship with your children (wife/partner) changed over time? Do you attribute this change to work?'* were often asked of male participants, who didn't immediately consider the impact that work may have had on their work life balance. Only with further questioning did many male participants reveal a more detailed account of the impact of work on their personal lives. Many of the female participants were more forthcoming how work impacted on their personal lives. Most of the female participants were mothers and very little prompting was needed to elicit detailed responses.

The interview ended with an investigation of the participants' views of the future of universities and the role of academics would play. Questions were framed to elicit a reasoned response from an experienced academic who was advising a young academic or someone considering pursuing an academic career.

### **Interview transcripts**

Transcription was performed by a paid, qualified transcriber, experienced with maintaining research confidentiality. All identifying information was removed from the transcripts which were given numerical codes. Transcripts were completed on an ongoing basis soon after the interview and were checked by the researcher for accuracy.

The audio recording was transcribed verbatim and included non-verbal elements such as ums and ahs, laughing, coughing and sighs, as well as repetitions and false starts.

Hard copy transcripts and signed consent forms were stored in a locked filing cabinet in the project supervisor's office. Electronic files of interview recordings, transcripts and interviewee lists and codes were filed electronically on a password-protected drive accessible only to the project's supervisor.

### **Interview Data Analysis**

While data coding emerged from the interview material, unsurprisingly this reflected the social experience of interviewees. Academic work has traditionally been divided into three main categories: research, teaching and administration/service to the university. As a result of this historic division, it wasn't surprising that all interviewees naturally talked about each of these categories when it came to relating their accounts of how changes in the Higher Education Sector have personally affected them. Although the percentage of time that was

spent by each academic in each of these categories was different, as the difference depended on the level and nature of their academic position, these categories still dominated the main workload of academics and it is in each of these categories where all the significant changes occurred.

## **Coding**

In accordance with Charmaz' (2014) interpretation of grounded theory methodology, coding is the first process that leads to analysis of the data. Charmaz (2014) posits that coding is the link between collecting data and the development of an emergent theory that explains this data. The coding process remains an interactive process, as it represents the labelling that the researcher has assigned to the empirical data gathered to describe the researcher's opinion of what is happening. There are two phases in the coding process, initial coding and focused coding. Initial coding directs the researcher's attention to patterns, or repetitions in the data that may lead to further focused coding after further testing. Qualitative coding consists of labelling or categorising segments of data and is the initial step in the analytic interpretation process (Charmaz 2006). The codes are the foundation stones that select, separate and sort data and make it ready for building an analytic account of these codes. According to Charmaz (2006), coding is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data.

### **Initial coding**

According to Charmaz (2014), initial coding requires close adherence to the data in order to draw patterns and later sort these as action codes. This process contrasts with the idea of imposing pre-existing categories onto the data. In order to achieve this end, each interview transcript was read as a whole in order to gain an overall sense of the personal reactions of academics to the topic areas covered in the study. It soon became clear from the accounts given by academics that there were groupings of topics, and that the topic of 'service to the university' was integral to the administrative tasks that academics were expected to perform. According to Charmaz (2014), coding for actions helps avoid preconceived notions that may direct the research to follow extant theories before the necessary analytical work has been completed. The initial coding that eventually led to category creation were grounded in the actions of participants described in the data. The initial codes created and quotes that illustrate the specific action that relate to the code's application are as follows:

**Initial code: Teaching and students**

**Coding parameters:** Personal response to new cohorts of students, quality teaching demands, classroom environment, comments on teaching colleagues not included.

**Sample quotations to illustrate coding application**

*Expectations of paying customers ... there are challenges about how academics perform in the delivery of material ... institution needs to think of resources ... changed learning environment ... cultural differences and language issues ... what needs to be done given international cohort ... no exit from system so academics are coping ... resources depend on institution ...*

*In the past there were more locals, smaller classes (15-17) today 25 in tute ... once there were 40 ... reduced because this created a bad impression on students ... not good to treat them like cattle ... pressure to produce money ... need to generate own income to justify position ... keep an eye on student numbers and research grants ... cohort of students is Asian ... international cohorts are more demanding ... students are not shy to email ... students are arbiters of good teaching ... student surveys are significant ... students like to be spoon fed ... this is not good teaching ... they ask questions of what appears in the unit guide ... academics need to be more careful with how they answer student questions so as not to offend ... cohort is more demanding ... emphasis on money ...*

**Initial code: Research and collegiality**

**Coding parameters:** Personal response to new research demands, response to changing research culture comments on students not included

**Sample quotations to illustrate coding application**

*Academic output has become more demanding...more publications required... G8 expectations are higher... skewed towards research... are there enough A and A\* journals... need to work with others...strategic research to make quota... journals are a problem... no division of points... need to become specialist in a particular area... collegiality non-existent due to workload pressures... it's lonely but must live with it... everyone must publish in A journals over a specific period of time... you must learn skills to play the game*

*Collegiality? .... competitive atmosphere now ... those that can play and those that can't play the research game ... winners partner with winners ... more competitive less collegial ... being sole author may be preference but it doesn't pay now ... there are research entrepreneurs ... there is mutual exploitation ... need to seek outside partners who are not direct competitors ... conferences are looked down on ... no consideration of the benefits of conferences ...*

**Initial code: Technology and administration**

**Coding parameters:** Response to Bureaucracy and governance rules, comments on colleagues and students not included.

**Sample quotations to illustrate coding application**

*Technology is the vehicle that supports change technology has positive impact on research ... greater volume of material and easier access ... admin bureaucracy has increased expectations ... less flexibility ... technology facilitate easy measure tools SET/SEU but what do they really assess?... Admin burden is becoming too great ... difference between process and procedure ... collect the same data 5 times ... process impedes flexibility ... the uni system sometimes impedes the things that it values ... if it's logical then it's doomed to fail... administrators are not academics interpretation of practice is not uniform don't want to see or understand another way ... losing touch with academics ... measurements are faulty ...*

*Academics' activities controlled ... technology plays a role in this ... technology used to manage staff ... managers can easily find evidence to be punitive ... it's got a lot tougher ... moving away from when work was largely trust ... a system where the academics were in control of what they did ... 'trust is good, but control is better' Lenin ... everything is measured teaching, quality, research ... measurement is what it is about ... technology pressures are increased through the introduction of a new system ... email invasion ...*

A further reading of the transcripts was made in order to confirm that these initial codes could be further analysed to later form categories.

Line by line coding is a heuristic device that enables the researcher to further interact with the data by helping define more implicit meanings and actions and make comparisons between data that may lead to pursuing emergent links that could be further pursued. According to (Charmaz 2014) 'line by line' coding enables the researcher to gain a more in-depth analysis of the data to reveal, not only explicit statements but also implicit concerns. Highlighter pens of different colours were used in the next set of readings of the transcripts to mark significant responses to the categories that were created. The task began with finding similar responses but then moved on to more nuanced responses. The following sub-sections were created under the main categories:



Category	Descriptor
Teaching and Students	Student profile Teaching quality Teaching environment
Research and Collegiality	Performance measures Research culture
Technology and Administration	Bureaucratisation Trust Control

Table 4.4 List of categories and descriptors

### Focused coding

Charmaz (2014) states that the next major phase in the coding process is focused coding. This involves moving beyond the initially created analytic directions and starting to synthesise larger amounts of data. Focused coding requires the taking of the initial codes that made the most analytic sense and categorising these in a more insightful manner.

The categories and sub-categories that were initially created with respect to academics' responses to change, shared similarities and differences depending on the level and position of the academic. This led to a realisation that a typology of an academic was needed to provide a more focused description of the academic experience. With the aid of focused coding three different types of academics were identified, Seasoned, Vocational and New. These new categories, created from focused coding, not only considered years of service but also how each of these academic typologies linked with the earlier categories that were created from the initial coding. Descriptors and differentiators were explored in the transcripts of the data to find evidence of distinctions between the different typologies of academic. The following table was created to assist with sorting the data:



Category: Typology of academic	Differentiators
Seasoned	Stage in life Life skills Positions of power
Vocational	Personal Motivation Position of trust
New	Stage in life Workload commitments

Table 4.5 Typology of academics and differentiators

Affirmation of academic typology differentiators was sought from similar responses of academics in the transcripts. Most seasoned academics had the longest service record in academia, saw themselves in comfortable positions and could well defend themselves against change agents. If they were not inclined to defend themselves against change or were tired of fighting they were in a financial position to leave. Academics with a vocation, also had years of experience in academia behind them and coped as well as their conscience would allow them. Their personal sense of worth and their heightened sense of duty needed to remain intact for them to cope. Finally new academics, those who had the least academic experience were those hardest hit by change. They had the least defences, no position of authority, or experience to safe guard their position and so were the ones most likely to be affected by any change.

In the process a new category was identified 'Playing the game'. This category emerged from the data as a coping mechanism for all academics. A series of descriptors of 'playing the game' was sought again from the transcripts of the data. The data revealed that all academics sought different ways of protecting themselves against adverse reactions to change and the analysis of the data identified different ways of 'playing the game' from different academic typologies.

Category	Descriptors
Playing the game	Coping mechanisms Work life balance strategies ‘Work around’ techniques ‘Playing the system’

Table 4.6 Playing the game category and descriptors

The final category that needed to be analysed was work life balance, the central theme of the project. A return to a further reading of the data and the transcripts revealed a number of sub-categories that described the different approaches to work life balance of academics. It was revealed that not only does the level and type of academic, namely seasoned, vocational and new have an impact on how well academics dealt with work life balance but there were five additional factors identified. The five factors of work life balance that emerged from the transcripts were as described in the following table. More focused coding was conducted to ensure this was an accurate reading.

Category	Descriptors
<b>Work life balance</b>	<b>Five Factors:</b> Flexibility Time management skills Stage in life Gender Work intensification

Table 4.7 Work life balance and five factors

In addition to the five work life balance factors that emerged from the reading of the transcripts of the interviews further common factors were identified. These common work life factors and their associate sub-categories descriptors appear in the following table.

Category	Descriptors
<b>Common work life factors</b>	
Personal traits/characteristics	Attitude to change Work ethic Cultural differences Passion for work
Leadership	Key performance indicators
Workplace related pressure	Stress mechanisms

Table 4.8 Common work life factors and descriptors

### Theoretical sampling, saturation and sorting

The coding process provides the skeletal structure of the theory building but the categories and sub-categories created need to be further examined to flesh out a more substantive, strengthened body of analysis (Hood 1983). Memo writing leads to theoretical sampling which enables the delineation and development of the properties of created categories and their range of variation (Charmaz 2006). Theoretical sampling was applied to the project's data and after discussions with colleagues; relationships between categories slowly began to emerge. It soon became clear that all created categories had in common one uniting theme, that of the university business model. This idea was applied to the initial categories created, namely the areas of change; students and teaching, research and collegiality and administration and technology.

The transcripts of data were re-read with the intension of sorting the data under the categories of change that shared the common theme of the university business model.

A following table provides a description of how the data was sorted to explore the idea that the university business model was a common theme in all three initial categories:

Common theme	Areas of Change
University Business Model	Teaching and Students  Research and Collegiality  Technology and Administration

Table 4.9 University business model and areas of change

The sorting process was further applied to the five factors of work life balance, namely: flexibility, time management skills, stage in life, gender and work intensification.

The following table represents the sorting for this area:

<b>Common theme</b>	<b>5 Work Life Factors</b>
University Business model	Flexibility  Time management skills  Stage in life  Gender  Work intensification

Table 4.10 University business model and five work life factors

The final sorting of the data was done in reference to the three common work life balance factors, namely, work life, leadership and personal characteristics.

<b>Common theme</b>	<b>Common Work Life Factors</b>
University Business Model	Personal traits/characteristics  Leadership  Work related pressure

Table 4.11 University business model and the common work life factors

The sorting of the data and its arrangement to facilitate comparisons between categories, resulted in the emergence of one overriding theme, namely the university business model. The emergent theme of the university business model impinged on all other categories, and this also led to saturation as no further new themes emerged from the data that didn't relate back to the university business model. Saturation is achieved when the gathering of fresh data no longer provides any new theoretical insights (Glaser 2001).

## **Limitations of Constructivist grounded theory**

A constructivist approach to grounded theory views data and analysis as being derived from shared experiences and relationships with participants and lies squarely in the interpretive tradition (Charmaz 1990, 1995, 2000, 2001; Charmaz & Mitchell 1996). Although constructivist researchers delve deep into the how and why of participants actions, to gain the most insightful understanding of their actions, it is understood that the experiences of research participants cannot be replicated. The theorising that results from the research data remains the author's interpretation of the data (Bryant 2002; Charmaz 2000, 2002). The theory is dependent on the author's point of view and cannot stand independently. Different researchers may arrive at similar views but their rendition may theoretically differ. None the less the objective of theorising according to a constructivist methodology is to apply the research data to a wider framework. A macro perspective enables the researcher to seek differences and distinctions between people and be alert to the conditions which such differences and distinctions arise.

Constructivist grounded theorists take an interpretative stance with respect to giving meaning to the actions of their participants. This reflexive approach assumes that both the data and the analysis are social constructs that reflect the participants' experiences (Bryant 2002, 2003; Charmaz 2000; Hall & Callery 2001; Thorne et al. 2004). The analysis is derived from the participants' experiences and has a temporal, situational and cultural context. Furthermore the interpretative nature of the analysis can result in the researcher's imposing their values into the analysis and so it is incumbent on the researcher to continually be aware of their own presuppositions. The researchers must continually address their own interpretations as well as those of their research participants.

The work done to adhere to the interpretative, reflexive approach to data analysis and maintain a check on importing the researcher's preconceived ideas included the re reading of the transcripts with the intention of identifying implicit meanings in each category and how these alluded to particular categories. Explicit descriptors of work life balance were noted and these were sorted for each of the main categories created. Implied meanings were also noted and common ideas linked and then consolidated. Tentative descriptions were made of each of the categories and were reviewed in the light of the logical connection between work related duties and its impact on personal life. Where there was ambiguity in the meaning of the descriptors further discussion and exploration of ideas was sought from academic colleagues. Finally relationships of meanings across the created categories were explored and refined. Reading and re reading individual transcripts, sorting them into groups and

discussing anomalies with colleagues eventually lead to a clearer, more strengthened analysis.

## **Triangulation**

The final step in the analysis process is the triangulation of the data, analysis and the extant literature. The objective of the literature review was to identify the extant ideas and research in the areas that the grounded theory of the project would be addressing. The objective of the triangulation process is to identify the most significant areas in the literature and then compare and contrast these with the findings in the data and analysis. These explicit and compelling connections between the literature and the data analysis are the foundations on which the grounded theory is structured (Charmaz 2006). Relevant works in the literature are integrated and assessed in relation to the project's research objectives and from this review the grounded theory is developed. When gaps are revealed in the extant literature, these are addressed with the developed grounded theory.

The grounded theory finally developed still remains interpretative and rather than make explicit theoretical propositions, paints specific conditions, shows conceptual relationships and forecasts consequences. The constructivist grounded theory provides the methodological scaffolding on which the analysis is based and what strengthens the new theoretical connections that are made.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the way the study was undertaken and how the theory was developed. The chapter began with an outline of qualitative research and grounded theory method. The steps in the process, as enumerated by Glaser (1978) and as interpreted by Charmaz (2006), were presented as the methodology map that the project used to steer its course. An account was given of the two elite universities that were the situational context of the study and the justification for their choice. A description was given of the project participants and the interview process and how the research topics were explored. The chapter concludes with the elucidation of the analysis section and how the coding and sorting of the data again follows grounded theory methodology. The theorising that resulted from the analysis follows the constructivist approach to ground theory and so the research data remains the author's interpretation and point of view. The interpretative stance and reflexive approach to the data analysis required a close adherence to the data and a rigorous checking procedure to avoid the researcher importing their own presuppositions into the analysis.

## **Chapter Five Findings - Areas of change**

### **Introduction**

The past three decades have witnessed transformative changes in the work environment of Australian academics in the Higher Education Sector. The research of this thesis has identified the new university business model and its impact on the areas of, teaching and students, research and collegiality and administration and information technology, where the impact of transformative change has been most felt by academics. The causal links identified in the literature chapter, namely the increase in student numbers, new academic productivity measures and increase in teaching, research output and administration and the outcomes of neo-liberal change and the need for universities to find extra funding, are detailed in this chapter from the experience of academics interviewed. The new business model, introduced in the 1990s, acted as a catalyst for incremental change and its objective was to address the neo-liberal and deregulation workplace policies of subsequent Federal Governments. The resultant effect of the model was to create causal links that had a catalytic transformative effect on the interaction of academics with their students and with university administrative processes. The model also, over time, incrementally created causal chains that transformed the delivery modes of teaching, as the cultural diversity of subsequent, in-coming students changed. In addition to these changes there were further changes for academics in the emphasis on research and attitudes towards collegiality (Ryan et al. 2013). Information technology also became an effective tool, in the university's business model, that facilitated the implementation of neo-liberal policies. The changes, brought about through technology, in the modes of teaching delivery, student interaction and administration have re-shaped the traditional university experience to reflect a more corporate model. These incremental changes, over the years, resulting from the new university business model also permeated university leadership. The style of leadership of unit managers was steered by the university's key performance indicators (KPI) that regulated unit manager's adherence to new business policy and the new pressures in the workplace created by the model impacted on academics' personal motivation and working conditions. Finally the transformative effects of the business model created causal chains that lead academics to need to redefine their previous workplace autonomy in an effort to balance their working hours and their work commitments (Bellamy et al. 2003; Harman 2003; Marginson 2000).

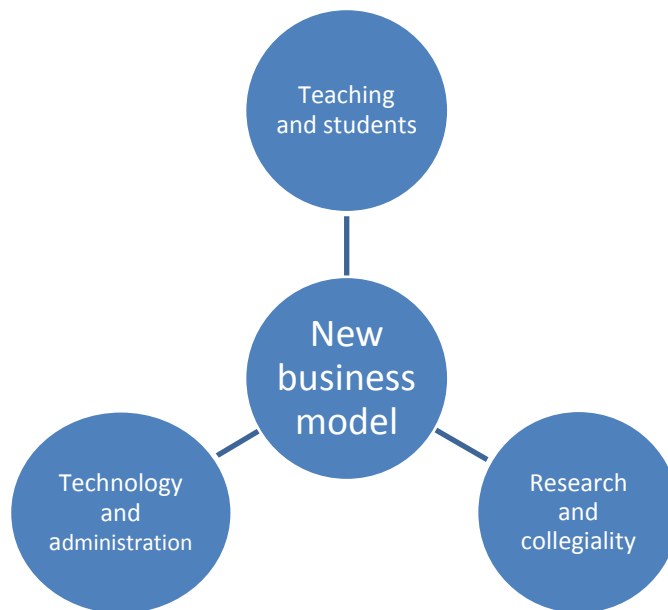


Figure 5.1 Areas of change

## Teaching and students

### Increasing student numbers and new cohorts of students

The workload expectation of academics today is to spend about 40 per cent of their time teaching students (Bentley et al. 2013b). The strategy to increase student numbers in addition to the implementation of neo-liberal policies reflected in university business models has created causal chains that ultimately affected the quality delivery of courses. In 2009 the Gillard government announced that Australian universities would move to a 'demand-driven funding system by paying for uncapped undergraduate student places (Norton 2013). Prior to this the Commonwealth government allocated student places to universities and growth arose at least in part from social as well as economic motives. The uncapping of university student numbers created competition between universities in line with a neo-liberal agenda (see fig 3.1 Chapter 3 p46). The steady increase in student numbers on the one hand reflects government initiatives to raise the education standard of the young, but on the other transforms the tertiary education system into one that needs to accommodate a much broader cohort of students. The great increase in university student numbers has also meant that many students now have university entrance but may not have the skills to cope with sustaining their stay (Ryan et al. 2013). According to DEET (2013) statistics on Higher Education, Monash University increased its total student numbers from 35,150 in 2001 to 50,830 in 2013, an increase of 45 per cent. The University of Melbourne during the same period increased its total student numbers from 30,034 in 2001 to 40,376 in 2013, an increase of 34 per cent.



The changing cohort of students is reflected in the following comments made by a University of Melbourne academic who stated that:

*It could be argued that universities are facing a very different set of challenges to when I began my career. **When I began my career, only a very small percentage of high school graduates entered university, whereas now it's a much larger percentage.** And so, clearly **universities have to change to accommodate that, where a tertiary education is considered almost norm,** whereas in my youth, it was a secondary education. (Mathematics Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 30, p5)*

The contemporary cohort of students, whether they are International or local are more demanding whether this demand stems from a paucity of English language or requisite study skills. The pressure which is created from taking the money first and then accommodating the students has led to increased stress in the delivery of content, and the maintenance of standards. This pressure is felt worse at the coal face with academics in the classroom (Ryan 2005; Biggs 2003).

The issues of increased workplace stress and the maintenance of quality standards is reflected in the following comments by two Monash academics, who state that:

***I think universities will become, well they're already now, degree factories.** It's not about educating people in the sense that it's making, you know you're educating them to be really critical thinkers. And that's not what you're doing these days, what you're doing is you're producing people who can go out there and work, you know industry or corporate sector requires ... **I think universities will become increasingly dumbed down, instrumental, and no, I don't think the future is good.** (Law Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 2, p29)*

*... one of the serious problems is that we've had to **rely upon international students for money.** This means that **standards have declined** precipitously in my opinion in terms of what students are doing inside the university. (Law Professor, Monash) (Interview 1, p15)*

Contemporary academics have to contend with increasing numbers of full fee paying International students who come with their own array of problems that include inadequate English skills and domestic students who spend too much of their time working to pay for their university fees. According to DEET (2013) statistics on Higher Education, Monash University increased its international student intake from 9197 in 2001 to 18,223 in 2013, an increase of 98 per cent. The University of Melbourne during the same period increased its

international student intake from 5,532 in 2001 to 11,971 in 2013, an increase of 111 per cent.

The following comments illustrate the perceptions of academics interviewed.

*... our students have become very much international, almost everywhere of course in Australia, so I don't know what we are in the university here or in my faculty, but **it might be an average 40 per cent overseas students, primarily from china**, and that's great, but sometimes we do wonder ... (Management Professor, Melbourne)(Interview 17, p13)*

***The international students will have language problems.** Not all of them, but enough so that it's become a system problem ... **the domestic students' problems chiefly arise because of overwork because they're working two more days a week to pay their way through university**, they don't have enough time for study and quite often they'll fall behind. (Management Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 8, p34)*

#### **Commercial relationship between student and academic**

Besides the expanding numbers of students and the problems with language and the capacity to undertake university studies, particularly with overseas students, academics were expected to cope with contracts entered into by university management with students to deliver a level of service in a particular time frame. This contractual arrangement caused further pressure and anxiety for academics who were expected to execute the conditions of the contract, although they were not involved in the initial commercial arrangements. A student may have paid for the privilege to undertake a course, but according to the academic, who is the arbiter of the required standard to be met for successful completion, the student may not have the capabilities to complete given the time frame. The relationship between the student and the academic, who is delivering the course, is different and according to the analysis of this research is not subject to the same customer/client relationship as would be in an ordinary commercial setting. A young, inexperienced academic may not fully understand the different expectations involved in a student/teacher relationship compared to the parties in a commercial contract. In the past, students accepted the tuition they received from their lecturers and tutors as a necessary part of their education and would not have seen education as a commercial proposition. This is why it is not uncommon for those contemporary academics that are most vulnerable, to suffer worse from the causal chains that link increasing pressures of work with changing work conditions.

The issue of the commercial relationship that now exists between students and academic is illustrated in the comment made by a University of Melbourne academic who noted that:

... where **we charge huge amounts of money to students** ... there is a 3 way contract, that yes, students have paid money to the university and that there is that type of relationship between the university and the student. **But the relationship with the academic is different and our contract if you like with the student is non-monetary so it's not as sort of regular customer supply relationship, it's a student teacher relationship** ... my relationship with the student is different. (Management Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 6, p24)

The focus on full fee paying international students has at times blinded universities to the particular needs of domestic students. Teaching dynamics change when the classroom is filled with students from many different cultural backgrounds and the standard of English varies considerably from the level of a native speaker. Some ethnic groups of students come from cultural backgrounds where rote learning and teacher centred learning is the norm and so when confronted with student centred learning, which is the Australian norm, the academic is faced with the dilemma of trying to satisfy the learning styles of both the domestic and international students (see Chapter 3 p48). Often group work is an integral part of the learning process at university and the grade for this assessment is the same for all members of the group. Many domestic students find that they are disadvantaged, when placed in groups with international students, who don't have the same command of English as they have. Dealing with classes comprising of students of various levels of competency is not a new phenomenon and cannot be solely attributed to the new cohort of international students, but the research does indicate that the pressures created from classes of students with multi levels of competency have been exacerbated with little university resources to help academics deal with the issue (Ryan 2005; Biggs 2003).

A senior lecturer at University of Melbourne commented regarding the increased international student numbers that:

... even though we're global, so **we have a lot of high international student intake, we know that over time that's going to alter and universities need Plan Bs for that.** But this other, you know we are relatively small, generally speaking, even though the export dollar value of education in Australia is really batting well above its, you know punching well above its weight, **what we're doing within the domestic market, we just need to be very careful because the impact of that I think on the academic will be, that's going to dramatically affect work life balance and how people see their job.** (Accounting Senior Lecturer, Melbourne) (Interview 18, p25)

### **Cultural sensitivities in teaching delivery**

The shift in emphasis from seeing students as pupils to consumers increases pressure on academics. For instance, a failure to comply to the requirements of such consumer sovereignty can lead to unfavourable student surveys, which may have detrimental effects on academic's tenure or future promotion prospects. Academics also need to make sure their delivery of material is sensitive to the different expectations of teaching method from overseas students.

For example, an academic noted that:

***... more international/Asian students cohort. That requires a certain different approach and when I say 'different' is because their mindset is a little different ... (Accounting Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 16, p4)***

In contrast in the past, classes of students were more homogenous and there was not the same sensitivity given to the different styles of learning that students were previously used to in their home country.

The following comments of two Monash academics illustrate their perceptions of the need to adapt teaching to the needs of overseas students:

***... if I go back six years ago, at one stage I was teaching classes of 45 with people from 14 different nationalities, so it was very challenging at the time ... (Management Senior Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 25, p6)***

***... you need to understand the teaching style in China, they're used to answer the specific question given by their teacher and they are not encouraged to participate and they feel intimidated if they talk in class ... (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 9, p19)***

### **The changing nature of students and the classroom**

Another important change to academic work has been class sizes which increased from a pre-1990 average of 15 to an average today of 25 (DEEWR 2009; Larkins 2011).

One of the academics interviewed commented about the increase in class sizes as follows:

***... local students and the class sizes were much smaller, that is definitely without question. We used to set out tutes at 15-17 and if you got 18 or 19 you'd feel really hard done by. These days, I mean you're absolutely very fortunate if you can have 25 in a tute. (Law Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 23, p9)***

The cohort of students attending university has also changed from one which pursued full time study and attended most classes to one which continues to study full time, but often has full time work commitments.

An academic at Monash noted regards this issue that:

***... In the 1990s ... the majority of our students studied full time. Now I realise students they, even though they are not allowed, they study full time and they work full time. So they [are] juggling with that ... you know I think we need to address that. (Management Assoc. Professor, Monash) (Interview 5, p8)***

This new cohort of students face the dual pressure of dealing with their studies as well as trying to meet their full time work commitments, whose monetary rewards go towards paying for their tertiary education. According to the ABS 2009-10 Survey of Income and Housing, the main source of income for three out of five (61 per cent) higher education students was a wage or salary. Around 46,000 students (5 per cent) received no income at all. These latter students may have enough savings to support themselves throughout their course, or rely on others such as their partner or parents for financial assistance. The contemporary student cohort is similar to the student cohorts of the past in that they have to deal with classroom pressures, but they differ from the past in the demands they make on academics. The pressure of studying in a language which is not their first language and the burden of working full time to pay for the privilege of studying often causes students to become more demanding and challenge academics to re-mark their work or provide detailed justifications for their grades (Winter & Sarros 2002; Winter, Taylor & Sarros, 2000).

Indicative of this situation is the comment from an academic noting that:

***... There was a change. I mean 40 years ago, if you gave a student a mark, they didn't question it. Amazing. Nowadays, if you give a student a poor mark, they'll quite often come along and challenge it. (Management Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 8, p33)***

### **Student engagement**

In the past, student engagement, a process that not only promotes the learning process but particularly involves meeting student interests and increasing their motivation levels (Klem & Connell, 2004), was not so much the concern of universities, as it is today, because of the security of recurrent government funding. Now, because student fees are a major source of university funding, even in Group of Eight universities, such as Melbourne and Monash, every effort is made to ensure student demands are being satisfied. This situation is strongly reinforced by neo-liberal business paradigms adopted by universities. Every effort is made

by these universities to monitor student satisfaction, of Courses, academics and individual subject units, through student evaluation surveys. Academics often find themselves pressured at both ends to meet student and university demands to increase student engagement and at the same time comply with their own professional teaching and learning standards.

For instance, a Monash academic noted that:

*... We talk about student engagement, we don't talk about learning, there's no discussion of learning, and learning outcomes have nothing to do with engagement, core graduate attributes, nothing about content which I think is one of the ... which is a huge change. (Marketing Professor, Monash) (Interview 7, p3)*

Academics are expected to deliver the content of their teaching unit so that it appeals to students, who not only wish to be informed, but also not be burdened with a dry delivery. If academics cannot achieve this fine balance of accessibility and palatability of content, then they will be unfavourably graded by their students in their student evaluations. Marginson (1997) highlights that the neo-liberal micro economic reforms have caused universities to respond in this manner because of the resultant increased competition and emphasis on consumer/student sovereignty. Marginson's (1999) later research into the management practices in higher education, has found that market driven courses have led to a diminution of profession standards and autonomy.

Typical of this experience is the comment from a University of Melbourne academic who said that:

*... so essentially what I'm saying is it is actually possible to engineer high quality teaching scores by essentially dumbing down. (Management Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 6, p12)*

### **Teaching quality**

There has been considerable discussion about whether the standard of student work has diminished over the years (Meyers 2012). The research of this thesis has identified comments made by interviewees that the students' standard of work has indeed declined, as a result of the general increase in numbers of students, and in particular due to the increased number of international students, who do not have English as a first language. The highly competitive market for students, driven by deregulation resulting from neo-liberalism, is also causing conflict with traditional notions of professional standards of quality and integrity. The quality delivery and integrity of a subject that is delivered to students

competes with the pressures to make content more accessible to students (Marginson 1997).

On this issue an academic at Monash commented:

*... I lower my standards for marking simply because I ... we accept these international students. I'm very sympathetic to international students, I've spent years now writing about their case so they can improve their situation, but I also know in many cases, **they're really not capable of doing Masters ... they're just not.** (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 13, p19)*

A significant difference between the teaching environment of the past and what typically happens today, is the focus on balancing quality teaching and doing what is required for students to have a successful outcome. Academics are constantly monitoring their student success rates and try to ensure that they do not exceed what are considered to be reasonable boundaries.

For example, academics from University of Melbourne noted that:

*... I'm conscious that there needs to be a balance between keeping the students happy, but my priority is to ensure I maintain the quality control of what I'm delivering. So you could get a high QOT (Quality of Teaching) by saying to the kids, here's a sample exam question and then ask the identical exam question with some different numbers and you'd rate your socks off; but I don't see that as learning. (Accounting Lecturer, Melbourne) (Interview 27, p14)*

*Now it's not enough to be a superb research mathematician, you've got to be a wonderful lecturer, as judged by the students, not as judged necessarily by the staff. You've got to be a competent administrator. And so it – **you really have to be an all-rounder.** And of course there's nothing wrong with being an all-rounder, but it does sometimes mean that the very – we're not hiring the very best mathematician. **We're hiring the best person to fill that broader job.** (Mathematics Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 30, p5)*

Academics are expected to deal with the dilemma of maintaining quality content with vigilance over pass rates. They are constantly modifying the content of what they teach so it is palatable to their cohort of students.

This issue is reflected in the following comments from a University of Melbourne and a Monash university professor:

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How academics respond, adapt and cope with the transformational changes in the Australian Higher Education Sector



*... the only assistance (the staff), and this is the wrong word, that the faculty provided was **they started introducing quotas on the number of students you could fail.** (Urban Studies Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 11, p4)*

*... **I mean I don't care if they like my class; I care if they learn in my class.** If they come out and say, you know what, that was a valuable or in five years' time they say, you know I learned stuff I can apply or understand how to make decisions, **that's the important thing.** (Marketing Professor, Monash) (Interview 7, p8)*

The responsibility for protecting the integrity of the courses that are delivered remains with the academic, who is at the frontline. Their professionalism and quality control is what ensures that the university retains its brand in the market. If courses are modified to such an extent, to satisfy the growing numbers of students, who can afford the fees, but may not cope with the expected standard, then the integrity of those courses may be challenged.

Recognition of the importance of quality is clearly stated in the remarks of an academic from University of Melbourne who noted that:

*... I'm certainly conscious of the fact **that if you're graduating with a Melbourne University degree, then it need not be and should not be watered down in any way** and you should be able to be competent and confident getting a job in Australia or getting a job in China or Japan or India or wherever you come from as well. So there's a little bit of an equity argument there as well I think. (Accounting Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 29, p12)*

The unrelenting pressure to meet the demands of student cohorts is left to the academics who have to face students in the classroom. To add to this pressure the arbiters of what constitutes good teaching and successful student engagement with academics is left to students. At the end of each unit of study, students are asked to complete student evaluation of teaching surveys and the student evaluation of subject surveys. The issue of who the university chooses to support, the academic or the student, is made more uneven by the university increasing the importance of student demands by making them arbiters of what constitutes a good learning environment (DEEWR 2009). Academics have to not only contend with the delivery of quality content, but they have to ensure that it is delivered in an accessible format that suits students. Although it may be conceded that some lecturers are not good communicators, the idea of devaluing the quality of a course to suit students is not a viable course of action. Academics are expected to create strategies that make course delivery palatable for students, but at the same time does not compromise quality. This



practice mirrors neo-liberal corporate management techniques that govern through regimes of incentives and disincentives; academics are rewarded if they are seen to be compliant with student demands (Connell 2013). Often students rate a successful class engagement as one when the unit content is easily accessible and is not too onerous on their capabilities and time. Paradoxically the university uses these student evaluation of teaching and student evaluation of subject surveys as evidence when it comes to promoting or giving academics tenure.

The pressure of trying to accommodate students, who have become the new arbiters of successful learning, is illustrated in the following two comments by a University of Melbourne academic.

***... a university is looking for numbers...but for the academic who's left with the task of instructing those groups, I think that's the danger that the academic faces. Similarly and whether it's because of technology or whether it's because of social media or whether it's other things... academics study is changing and so if that becomes much worse, I think the job and the role, I think this is the pressure for the academic. So If we end up at a point where we want to reduce everything to a Powerpoint slide, and that's what the student, I'm speaking generally now, but that's what the student expects, that's all they should have to deal with, then I think we're going to create all sorts of problems.***  
(Accounting Senior Lecturer, Melbourne) (Interview 18, p23)

***This anyone can go to university expectation, I think is going to cause havoc and dramatically, which I sort of said is going to dramatically affect the life of the academic.***  
(Accounting Senior Lecturer, Melbourne) (Interview 18, p25)

As well as being the gatekeepers of quality control in course delivery, academics also have to contend with the diminishing numbers of students who attend class. Even in the past class attendance was never a high priority for students, but today many students do not attend, because they are busy working long hours, many of them to pay for their fees. Attendance is generally high at the beginning and end of courses, firstly to get course outlines and secondly to get exam preparation hints, but during the semester attendance can fall below 50% (Gomis-Poqueras et al. 2011).

A typical comment was made by an academic from Monash who saw that:

***..I find the first three weeks attendance is very good and the last three weeks, yet in between you are lucky if you get 50% of your like attendance.'*** (Management Assoc. Professor, Monash) (Interview 5, p8)

### New learning environment

Further to the increases in work demands of academics, learning support systems have also put increased demands on academics in their teaching (Hil 2015). In the light of the new business environment which universities were entering, academics needed to change their approach to students. Although students may have been active learners in the past, contemporary students are more likely to question decisions made by academic staff, as would demanding customers in the receipt of a service and expect to have their demands met.

E learning is the main driver that steers the direction of the future classroom. On the one hand new technology is enabling students to access subject material more easily without having to rely on coming to class, but on the other it is alienating students from direct access to academics and fellow students. This resultant disengagement is making students less engaged in their learning.

On this topic a Monash academic indicated that:

*...I think students engage less and less; it comes back to the question are they learning more or better. I suspect that there's been a diminution in the learning process. Technology is useful but if...wholly technological mediated learning doesn't work for most people. You have certain people for whom it is most suitable. (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 26, p8)*

The use of Information Technology support material which has become a requirement in modern universities, has catered for the young computer savvy student to interact within an isolated learning environment that discourages students from making an effort to take their own notes or even read beyond what is recommended. The e learning platforms developed provide students with extensive detail of course material, including lecture slides, subject guides and reading materials. It is expected that the academic will summarise course material and present the material in a contemporary format that appeals to a generation of students who prefer information to be easily accessible. (Sappey 2005)

Another Monash academic observed with regard to this issue that:

*...the internet has impacted on teaching, research and service. So in a sense of now how the internet and technology has changed how you deliver, changed student expectations, say in tutoring processes. So it actually puts greater demand on...students do less so it puts more demand on the academics to do more....students don't want to take notes so you provide more information but they don't want to read. So technology*

*has significantly changed, which has resulted also in universities changing expectations of how you teach, how you engage, what you do. (Marketing Professor, Monash) (Interview 7, p3)*

The dynamics of the learning process have undergone dramatic change and where once students were expected to map their own way through their journey of discovery, with the guidance of their tutors, today academics are expected to provide an arm chair ride for students to make the experience as seamless as possible (Gomis-Poqueras et al. 2011).

A Melbourne academic observed that:

***..if you don't record your lectures, if you don't given them lecture slides to fill in , you'll get slaughtered in your ... because that's an expectation.** So If you wanted to take a very old fashioned, no, no, no I'm not recording these lectures, you will have to turn up, you will sit there with a blank bit of paper and take your own notes, you could do that and on principle, I think you'd be entitled to take that approach; but I know full well what would happen to my QOTs (Quality of Teaching) if I did that. (Accounting Lecturer, Melbourne) (Interview 27, p14)*

It is now expected by universities that academics remain sensitive to the needs of their students, and as instigators of the communication process that they need to be attuned to the needs and expectations of their audience, if they hope to get their content message across. There is also the wider need to communicate effectively to the current generation of technology savvy students with a personal approach (Sappey 2005). The difficulty lies though with the modern academic being able to maintain a quality learning environment and at the same time present material that is easily accessible, in an IT format preferred by the student and is sensitive to individual learning styles.

On this topic a Monash academic explained that:

***... academics are going to have to adapt their content to suit the younger generation coming through and the use of technologies, so they have to make that adjustment. So I think they constantly have to monitor their audience and their audience's need, the classes needs make changes as they go through a semester.** So for example I'm teaching a group of post grads and there's a high proportion of international students I have to monitor that group and make sure that they're understanding what I'm doing and they're on board with me ... so I would expect that other people do likewise, but I'm not exactly sure... (Management Senior Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 25, p8)*

Technology has been used by universities as a tool to more efficiently administer the neo-liberal objectives of their business models. Technology has pervaded all aspects of the academics' work environment whether it be with teaching delivery, course and student administration or as an auditing tool in the monitoring of productivity. The neo-liberal efficiencies that technology have been thought to produce, have driven universities to seek a deeper penetration of technology into academics' work environment, to the extent that in the near future, IT platforms may even replace teaching staff and the conventional classroom. The seemingly free rein that has been given by universities to technology platforms to drive pedagogic and administrative governance, because it is presumed to be more cost effective, has not necessarily produced the cost savings that were hoped (Gomis-Porqueras et al. 2011). What technology has done though is increase the work related pressure of academics due to the constant need to re train to master new modes of teaching delivery and new administrative requirements. The increased pressure has left academics with greater work intensification and less opportunity to achieve work life balance (Anderson et al. 2002; Bexley et al. 2011, Moensted et al. 2012).

The issue of the future effect of information technology in the classroom is commented on by a University of Melbourne academic who noted that:

*... I think it's highly uncertain because we don't know what technology is going to do to academics ... what's happening with these MOOCs, you know these massive free course offerings as an example, to what extent are they going to replace labour with these technologies in the classroom, and once you're not needed in the classroom, or not needed as much or needed differently or needed less in the classroom, then research is going to become a bit of a luxury. (Management Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 17, p31)*

Paradoxically, the efforts that universities are putting into technology in order to gain operational efficiencies are in fact endangering their future sustainability. If a view of the future involves the 'cloud', and a virtual educational setting, then physical location is no longer an impediment. With 'cloud' technology universities have greater access to global markets and accessibility of material delivery that may lead to international course consolidation and university mergers. The pace and future impact of technology on universities is fast and all pervasive and although is used as a tool to facilitate the delivery of university business models, often creates stress and insecurity in the work environment that affects academics' work life balance (Anderson et al. 2002).

A Monash academic comments on the future effects of technology in the following remarks.

***Once you go online, once you go to really the web, in the cloud or the fog, I can't see why we need to have more than one Australian university. I mean why not get all the universities together to hire John Cleese to do introduction to marketing, I guarantee it'll be a really good class. (Marketing Professor, Monash) (Interview 7, p28)***

## **Research and Collegiality**

### **Research output as a performance measure**

The focus on adopting neo-liberal commercial strategies to promote their business entrepreneurialism has led universities to reconsider their brand image and place in the competitive market. Apart from increasing student numbers, universities began to scrutinise the journals in which their academic staff published to ensure they were high profile enough to add to the university's brand image (see Chapter 2 p50). The emphasis was on prestigious A\* publications, rather than appropriate publications that targeted audiences, which could benefit most from the research. It is expected that academics spend at least 40 per cent of their time in developing or contributing to an area of research expertise (Bentley et al. 2013b). In the past research was an activity that many academics were involved in as part of their professional development, but today research output of academics has many implications. It can be a measure of the productivity of an academic or collectively it can be a measure of the ranking of the university on a world scale. There is a priority to measure research in terms of quantity of research income, rather than in terms of quality of scholarship publications (Young et al. 2011). The time and pressure it took for academics to prepare for publication in high profile journals took academics away from their teaching commitments (Young et al. 2011). It was more likely that academics would be rewarded, if they published or were involved in research rather than if they spent more time teaching. The research indicates that this created a division between those academics who wanted to spend most of their time teaching and those who wanted to spend their time publishing and doing research (Rainnie et al. 2013; Connell 2013). A typical academic productivity measure for research in fact allowed for academic teaching schedules to be reduced.

A Monash academic commented regarding the downgrading of teaching that:

***I'm not overly optimistic. I don't think a lot's going to change. Certainly within our department, we had a change in the workloads policy, so teaching commitments have been reduced, which has been a huge help... previously the standard was 14 hours per semester and then there were credits and deductions based on publications, unit leadership responsibilities, and that's now been replaced by, I think it's a six and a half hours per semester load ... but that's a load that you only get if you meet publication***

**requirements that are established for each level, and they vary.** (Law Assistant Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 4, p26)

In the same way that international full fee paying students can attract necessary funding for universities, research output can also attract funding from Australian Research Council (ARC) grants and other government bodies. The pressure today for academics is to not only produce research to assert their quality as an academic, but more to produce high ranking research that will attract the most funding (Broadbent et al. 2013).

An academic at Monash commented on the recent Federal Government attempt to create ranking of journals that:

**... when the ERA [Excellence in Research for Australia] rankings were abolished, there was discussion about part of the reason that they were abolished is because they weren't intended to be used a performance measure, but they were, and now they continue to be. So I get the sense that that is one of the big ... has been one of the biggest issues that has kind of transformed academic work.** (Law Assistant Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 4, p5)

A ranking system has been created that measures the quality of academics' research publications and allocates university funding accordingly, but what riles academics most is that this ranking system is perceived by many as being unfair.

On this issue an academic from University of Melbourne commented that:

**... There's an arbitrary measure of the quality of a journal, which is not a measure of your work incidentally. In business, we talk about A\*, A, B and C journals. They're arbitrary measures of the quality of the journal and if you get into an A\* journal, you get so many brownie points and B journals, so fewer, but you know, so it goes. This is not a measure of the quality of the work. There is no judgement implicit in this other than that an editor or an editorial team somewhere or other are doing their job. It's a reasonable system for sciences; I think it's a very poor system for social sciences, but anyway ... and research demands are geared around that.** (Management Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 8, p10)

The push by universities to accept a ranking system for publications and to obtain competitive research grants, is driven by their desire to improve their competitive position in the world market. Australian universities are ranked with other world universities and depending on their ranking they can attract more full-fee paying students. Unfortunately, the



drive by universities to increase their ranking means that academics have to endure restrictions with respect to the type of journal they publish in. Only what are considered to be high ranking journals attract funding and these may not be the kind of community based, or policy based journals that academics believe have a broader impact (Connell 2013; Young et al. 2011).

Typical observations on this issue are illustrated by the following comments:

*... I guess if we want to improve our ranking, if we really want to compete in the global market, I think that's the way to go. Because when I checked with the academic staff in China or in the States and in Hong Kong, they have much higher standards than us. Yeah, very much higher. (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 9, p11)*

*... As time went by the pressure to go for the obscure but high ranking journals increased and I think the relative disdain for more widely read perhaps influential but less high status journals started to grow as well. (Urban Studies Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 11, p9)*

### **The breakdown of collegiality in research**

Analysis of the interviews has revealed that universities studied are creating a greater divide between teaching and research and this in turn is creating a causal link leading to adverse effects on the collegiality of academics. Anxiety and pressure is increased as academics vie for publication in the same journals, as the number of high profile journals may be limited (Bessant 2002, Bentley et al. 2013b). Differentiation between academics is reinforced as those academics that are research active are more likely to be rewarded because their actions coincide more directly with university strategic business directions. Those, who only focus on teaching, will find that their working schedules will become less flexible, because they are required to teach more scheduled classes and so this may impact more severely on their work life balance.

Concern over the issue of a research/teaching divide among academics is expressed by the following University of Melbourne academic who commented that:

*... I'm also quite worried about the fact that we're sort of got, almost a class system emerging in the university sector by institutions again, and by research versus teaching people, and that concerns me because the students will lose out eventually, because the separation between research and teaching will become greater. And all respect for the good teachers but the point of the university is being lost where you learn from someone who's right in there and able to think and you learn how to think as opposed to just*

*learning stuff which is, I suspect, what the teachers might do a little bit more than perhaps the researcher. (Accounting Senior Lecturer, Melbourne) (Interview 12, p23)*

Collegiality in academia was more prevalent in the past, when universities were not so preoccupied with income producing activities and run on a business model.

A Monash academic commented on this issue as follows:

*... **there's been a decline of collegiality.** For me the collegial system doesn't exist anymore in universities. First, the collegial system was basically, when someone says that you're my colleague, it really means you are a fellow member of the college. The term has now got down to ... **The word doesn't mean anything now, just means workmate, the person I work with.** (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 13, p9)*

Academics in today's climate need to ensure they meet university requirements with respect to research output and so they need to be more strategic with whom they work. This competitive environment results in less networks being created on a collegial basis and more created on the basis of strategic expediency.

This decline in collegiality is captured by a University of Melbourne academic who said that:

*... **There was a big decline in collegiality over the time I was there; and I think it related to this, particularly this emphasis on kind of competition in research.** Suddenly there was a bit of a division between academics that could play the research game and those that couldn't or didn't, a bit of resentment on both sides; **tendency for people to kind of team up or seek out partners for grants; a tendency for people who got grants to be seen as the insiders and the winners and get promoted and for the people who didn't sort of miss out.** So I think, yeah, it became much more competitive and less collegial. (Urban Studies Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 11, p11)*

Those academics new to academia are at a considerable disadvantage, when it comes to meeting their university obligations with respect to research output. They often do not have the useful networks that are necessary to reach the required research output, which the university expects. In the past collegiality may have helped these academics make a start, but the contemporary competitive environment tends to lend itself to making strategic research liaisons with those who have proven skills in meeting high calibre research output. Unless there is a particular reason why a new academic should be included in a research team, as might be the case in mentoring, more experienced academics may even be



penalised for including someone on their research team who is not equal to them in research quality and output (Bentley et al. 2013).

For instance, a younger academic from Monash commented about this issue that:

*... I don't have good networks and I'm pretty new to academia so, and I'm very junior, so all those things kind of mean that I just kind of do my own thing. Which is probably not a good thing but I haven't managed to, you know, kind of break in to that kind of circle. And I think as well it's a bit of a chicken and egg as the more you'll be published, the more people will want to publish with you and the more senior you are, they'll want to have their name associated with you ... (Law Assistant Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 3, p16)*

A senior academic from Monash explained regarding this issue that:

*... I have one of my colleagues, she's just at lecturer level, she been working two years. Now I've included her on a paper with me and she hasn't, it's me that's set up the overall thing. But she's also, I'm mentoring her on this paper and while her overall contribution is probably only going to be 10%, 15% in terms of this paper, if you had a system where I was going to get penalised for doing that, I wouldn't include her. (Management Assoc. Professor, Monash) (Interview 20, p15)*

Even when academic researchers are of the same calibre and prestige, there is still competitive rivalry as to whose name goes first on the paper. This is significant only because the university has decided to recognise a hierarchy of contribution to the research and the presumption is that the first named author is the one who contributed the most to the research. This attitude creates further divide amongst academics and makes the notion of collegiality even more remote.

The pressure on academics to compete with regard to research publications was characterised as follows by a University of Melbourne academic:

*... the faculty asked of me recently, why are you doing these things and you're not first author ... if you want to be promoted you should have your name first as the leader. ... I resist that because I want to build the relationship with the people and I want to be seen as a fair operator ... (Accounting Senior Lecturer, Melbourne) (Interview 12, p8)*

In addition to competitive rivalry amongst academics, universities have entered into competition with other research-only institutions. These private and sometimes government funded think tanks have as their sole purpose high quality research and so have this as their

competitive advantage over universities. There is evidence from the research that universities are positioning themselves in challenging spaces as they are compromising teaching for research and may find in the future they have lost their teaching expertise but have not gained from their focus on research (Connell 2013).

The issue of competitive rivalry amongst different institutions in the area of research is commented on by the following Monash academic.

***So it is not clear that universities have a monopoly, they lost their monopoly on research a long time ago. And then are they excellent teaching institutions? Well, it's variable and there are new modes of delivery evolving. So I think it's very uncertain the future of the university. I don't know, what they are now is very different to what they were 50 years ago and you know ... what they'll be in another 5 years is going to be different again. (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 26, p15)***

### **Research culture**

As noted in the previous section the research culture of universities has changed over time from one that was more relaxed and collegial and which allowed academics to pursue their research. Although academic freedom to publish anywhere is still defended, academics are often steered into publishing in high ranking journals that are the specific choice of universities. There are some academic disciplines which lend themselves to taking a more practical or even community emphasis, because their research is more action based rather than theory based. Their research has a broader audience for the publication and the potential impact on government policy is unimpeded by agendas set by university management. In line with neo-liberal ideals, there is also a rising importance placed on managed research which is aligned with external funding sources that can ultimately affect academic freedom. The choice that academics once had in determining what research they could pursue is being compromised by the pressure universities are imposing on academics' professional autonomy (Olssen & Peters 2005).

These concerns are summed up in the following comments by a University of Melbourne academic who commented that:

***... During the period when they were a little more relaxed about research, if you were doing things and writing things, people would be happy. Even before the ERA [Excellence in Research Australia] came in, suddenly there were some journals, why are you bothering to publish in that. And in particular of course, an obsession with so called international journals which I often like to describe as 'oh yes, they're the ones that nobody reads.'*** So, some things are a bit more populist, like policy makers, on the whole as

*time went by you get less and less brownie points for publishing there, more and more brownie points for publishing in the rigorous, fancy and obscure international journal of so and so that as I say no one much reads. (Urban Studies Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 11, p6)*

Those academics, who remain true to their discipline and the audience they wish to communicate with are unfortunately penalised for their loyalties. Unless an academic is publishing in those journals which are recommended by the university, then this can have repercussions on the academic's tenure, promotion and standing.

This shift in attitudes is reflected in the following comments made by a University of Melbourne academic who noted that:

*... certainly, at Monash there was an extended process of trying to define minimum acceptable standards for every year your performance and then for promotion. Melbourne also has those standards ... **If you're not producing a certain amount, they will hold you to account. Whereas in the early days I think they were grateful that you did something.** (Law Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 23, p17)*

Even the format of a publication whether it is a book or simply a journal article can be scrutinised by the university. The university is heavily influenced by how it is going to meet government requirements for research funding and so, if a particular publication format does not attract funding then it is discouraged. This view of research by universities puts academics in an invidious position, tossed between meeting university research compliance requirements and being loyal to the audience they wish to appeal to (Cooper et al. 2011; Olssen & Peters 2005).

A Monash academic with regard to these issues noted that:

*... **if you're wanting to write a book, books aren't counted** so you can't write a nice book for industry because it's not valued by a university and the papers that you write are for other academics. **So what it ends up being is a very narrow and long piece of work, deep piece of work only for a very limited number of readers. So that's the expectation because that's apparently what's valued in terms of ranking and so forth.** (Management Senior Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 25, p4)*

### **Research and personal motivation**

Personal motivation for research is an essential driver that motivates academics and fuels them to either continue with their vocation or else seek alternate work elsewhere. If an academic can link their motivation for research to a higher need, namely community service

or altruistic goals then this can work towards offsetting a work environment that demands more and more from the academic (McGilvray 2010).

This view is captured in the following comment by a Monash academic who states that:

*... I spend more time at work but it's not only teaching and research because I do lots of community work as well. **So sometimes even though I'm here, it's not particularly research or teaching, it's my service. ... to the community. But luckily, in my case, they are interrelated.** So I do research related to like the local communities and then I get like grants for that and sometimes I use like my research I mean to teach. **So therefore like that's probably why I'm not complaining, compared to like, probably like some academics.*** (Management Assoc. Professor, Monash) (Interview 5, p14)

A strong collegial network or working department that shares common goals can also inspire and transform academics into energised producers of quality research. Some universities provide academics with a work environment that is staffed with high energy, high profile people, and is well resourced to enable academics to focus more on their research than on teaching.

For example a University of Melbourne academic commented that:

*... when I came here, there were four people in the group so there was an established group, a critical mass, of researchers, active researchers led by a very significant professor... **I found myself being placed in a group like that and so all of a sudden, instead of thinking about small little projects and papers that were, you know, wouldn't amount to much, I suddenly found myself in discussions about big projects and discussions were all centred around the big journals and so I ... went from two articles to 13 by the time I got confirmed and 18 by the time I got to SL.*** (Management Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 6, p16)

Some academics have a strong vocational calling in the Weberian sense. They have an inner drive to pursue their discipline and so the work they perform is paramount in their minds. Their focus on achievement often overrides the operational limitations of their working environment although in some cases there is enough work related pressure that even the most dedicated end up being unable to pursue their aspirations.

Their sense of engagement is expressed in the following observation by a University of Melbourne academic who saw that:

**... look other people don't necessarily do the public policy stuff that I do and that's ... and the only reason I do is because there's a demand for it at the moment.** Now that won't be the case forever and so but while there is a demand for it **I need to do it because it's part of our work of engagement as academics** ... (Research Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 24, p4)

Another committed University of Melbourne academic refers to the administrative and/or university policy constraints on where to publish in the following comment:

**... there's a phrase in Hebrew, Tikkun Olam, heal the world, and I'm in it to heal the world. I have a very big mission statement and I want to make people's lives better** and there's been times I've wondered whether I can make people's lives better through academe given the constraints. (Urban Studies Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 15, p4)

## **New university management style and information technology**

### **Commercialisation of education**

Neo-liberalism and the resultant commercialisation of tertiary education is certainly the most significant catalyst for change that has affected the Higher Education Sector in the past 30 years (see Chapter 2 p34). Governments over the decades have altered university funding models to such an extent that universities' need for alternative forms of funding has shifted their perspective of how they view their students. These new funding models have also direct the university's focus towards competition with other universities and building brand image and this can conflict with the university's goal to deliver quality education (Rainnie et al. 2013).

On this issue two Monash university academics responded that:

**... it's all about the Monash brand we deliver globally, we do all this wonderful stuff, but I wonder whether it's more to do with the kudos of the universities. So we work towards building the brand through how we're ranked and rated, it's all about our measurement. Whether that coincides with great quality education, I'm not sure.** (Management Senior Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 25, p14)

**... I think that the biggest thing is that they're like businesses now, they've got to behave in a way as corporations and so the whole system has had to be reinvented and**

***you've got to look at the funding models, there's a strong imperative as to why that's had to occur. (Accounting Professor, Monash) (Interview 22, p3)***

As indicated above, universities now compete for students who either bring Federal Government support as overseas full fee paying students or as post-graduates. This has meant that the way they view students is inclined to be more from a customer service, business perspective than a purely educational one. This new neo-liberal dynamic has coloured academics' attitudes with respect to the way they deliver their courses and has raised their awareness of the need to keep their customers satisfied. The neo-liberal ideals that focus on consumer sovereignty and managerial accountability have come to the classroom and academic performance is rewarded or punished according to pre-set targets externally imposed based on customer satisfaction. (Olssen & Peters 2005).

On this issue academics have commented that:

***... I think students have become more demanding. The fact that they're paying for their degrees and they're paying so much for their degrees means that they're expecting a certain level of service and it's almost like they expect to pass because they're paying for it ... I feel a sense of obligation because I will fail students if they don't actually do the job. (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 14, p17)***

***... universities at some point started to realise they couldn't get enough students to fill their places, and they were competing against each other in a glutted market. It's a big change. It doesn't sound much but it's a big change, because students changed from being ... how could you put it, grateful learners, to being demanding customers. (Management Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 8, p7)***

When a university's perspective changes from the traditional focus of simply being a learning institution to a business organisation which is expected to pay its way, then this begins to impact on the kinds of operational decisions universities make. Whether or not to run a course or how to make a course more palatable to attract more students becomes the basis for making decisions not necessarily pedagogic reasons (Connell 2013).

The views of academics interviewed on the impact of commercialisation of courses are encapsulated in the following comments by a Monash university academic who observed that:



*... if you got a credit average in the diploma course you could go onto the Masters. Then they cut that and they said, 'pass degree in any area', straight into a Master's program in international business and the numbers went through the roof. They went from 40 to 300 and something. Okay, it was a pure money grab and I was ... then I said, look, these students are not going to be able to do this work. They said, you mustn't lower your standards. And I thought, oh stuff that. I mean you've taken their money knowing what their capabilities are, I am not going to continue, I'll just lower, I'll lower the standards until roughly the same proportion gets in. (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 13, p20)*

Student perceptions have also changed, with the adoption of neo-liberal business models in universities. Full fee paying students, who scan the market for the best offers, may base their decision about which course to do on price, accessibility or expediency and not on any educational reasons.

For instance, in the case of overseas students often driven by non-educational factors and admitted with inadequate ability to do the course, an academic from the University of Melbourne commented that:

*... I should actually have mentioned that as perhaps one of the big changes, yes and they completely changed the dynamic of the class because the group that we had were students who were studying the course for residency points. This is what attracted them rather than being interested in being urban planners; and most of them had very, very poor English and really had no idea what was going on. So Australian students didn't want to be in work groups with them because they'd have to carry them; they tended to sit there in tutorials and not participate; and because I always had exams in my subjects they would all fail. (Urban Studies Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 11, p3)*

### **Bureaucratisation of universities**

A further consequence of neo-liberalism and the resultant marketisation of universities is an increased emphasis on performance and accountability assessment with the use of Key Performance Indicators, which is accompanied by a growing bureaucratic control structure super imposed on academic work. This new bureaucracy is different from the bureaucracy of the past, which was characterised by accepted rules and regulations, which represented processes and standards reflecting the expertise of experienced practitioners (Olssen & Peters 2005). The government regulations which have been imposed on universities, to audit and monitor in line with new funding models, have steered universities in the direction of a new style of managerialism and related bureaucracy. In an effort to comply with



compulsory audits and to be seen to be professionally managed, a new climate has been created in universities that witnessed the blossoming, both in numbers and in influence of a growing administrative class.

This level of administrative control is expressed by a University of Melbourne academic who noted that:

*... I think the big thing that's happened has been partly because of technology and partly because of requirements from places like Canberra and what's happened to the nature of universities themselves. They've attempted to become professionally managed and what they've actually become is highly bureaucratic. (Management Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 17, p5)*

The bureaucratic systems that have emerged over recent years in universities, have been found wanting in their purpose and efficacy (Rainnie et al. 2013). The shift from treating universities or public education bodies as businesses has been in line with neo-liberal ideology and also the need for the Federal Government to address shortfalls in funding due to growth in student numbers. Unfortunately though, the monies derived from commercialisation have not yielded the results expected. The transaction costs of a growing bureaucracy to control the academic labour force and meet Federal Government reporting requirements is eating into the profits which are expected from pursuing new sources of funding. According to Murphy (2013), there are 1.3 non-academic staff members to every academic. This ratio of academic to non-academic staff has not changed since 1996 reinforcing the notion that the administrative efficiency gain over this period has remained static.

The following comment by a Monash academic illustrates this issue:

*... I think the biggest change, the change is that originally universities were not managed in any conscious way at all. People were academics and they did their work and some didn't do their work and some did a lot of work. Now we have a huge amount of systems to manage with. Partly that's the road of information and technology but it's partly, fundamentally its universities seeing themselves as managing corporations, university, senior university staff seen themselves as managing corporations and/or trying to. So they go through all the machinations of managing, so there's a huge amount of resources invested centrally in managing people. And that just really means **there is more compliance, more doing what you have to do I guess.** Some of it's valuable, but by and large that's the biggest change because it means that **for everything there is an online***

***training package as a performance management*** for us now and most other universities is online too but I mean it still involves the interviews. But ***my point is this is a major change the management of universities but it's not clear that who valuated, the value against the cost that you're gaining any benefit. That's what's changed.*** (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 26, p2)

The goals and objectives of this growing administrative class are inherently different from that of academics. Administrators are responsible for governing processes and ensuring compliance to policy and may not be sensitive to the pedagogic or even research needs of academics. In fact, it has been commented that the two groups find it difficult to appreciate each other's perspective as to the role they play at the university. According to Marginson (1999), under the period of neo-liberal restructuring, the new order of university governance which witnessed the exclusion of the collegial view of key decisions and the creation of schools, to replace the traditional teaching departments contributed to a widening of the gap between administrators and academics.

This sense of difference between the administrators and academics is expressed in the following observation by a Monash academic who noted that:

***... There's a kind of like invisible group of managerial class of administrators and that, who have nothing to do with teaching and research who tend to make rules, that are impractical. Like I think it's, it's difficult to identify with the goals of the university, or the university in that context, where it's colleagues that I see who do in fact like teaching and want to do a good job and can't because of this idiocy at the higher levels.*** (Law Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 2, p5)

The phenomenon of a growing administrative class, which is at odds with academics, creates impediments to the continuous flow of work. Academics, who in the past had a greater say in the decision making process, are often confronted with administrative obstacles that impede innovation and change. The result is frustration, often on both sides, and a feeling that there has been a loss of flexibility and creativity.

Their dilemma is well expressed by the following comments by a Monash academic who says that:

***... I think the administrative bureaucracy has also put increased expectations on individuals so there's less flexibility. We're expected to ... I mean, you know. The university wants things done, but then inhibits things being done ... they want you to***

*make change but you can't make change until 2014. ... you need to be more innovative but you can't be more innovative. (Marketing Professor, Monash) (Interview 7, p5)*

The dramatic increase in the numbers of administrative staff has led to new power structures evolving in universities and these have contributed to the wider ideological separation of academics from the administrators. Further the devolution of work tasks from what was historically the responsibility of administrators to the now diminishing number of academics and increased work pressure on academics (Anderson 2008). The devolution of some administrative work to academics has been facilitated with the use of information technology. Rather than have, for example, the entering of grades, initiated by academics and then inputted by administrative staff, it was deemed more efficient and cost effective to only have academics complete the whole operation. It seems ironic that time has seen a dramatic increase in numbers of administrative staff and yet a growing administrative workload has been devolved to academics. According to McInnes (1998) the use of information technology as a management information system also addressed neo-liberal concerns for a greatly increased accountability system.

The following comment from a University of Melbourne academic clearly illustrates this issue:

***... there was a tendency for administrative staff to devolve their work onto academics, particularly with the aid of computers, particularly entering marks, that kind of thing ... when I started administrative staff were there to help the academics get their work done. By the time I finished, that sense had gone, that **there was a sense that the administrative staff were a different caste, they had their own interests and academics were people who kind of tended to get in the way and wouldn't do what they were told.** The other thing that was truly extraordinary was the enormous increase in the number of administrative staff over ten years. The number of academics hardly changed at all, but I don't think I'm making this up. The number of admin staff doubled ... (Urban Studies Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 11, p14)***

### **Managerialism and administration**

Historically academics were responsible for the delivery of material to students and received support in the execution of student and classroom administrative duties, however today the rise of neo-liberal ideas and the focus on excessive accountability has led to more and more administrative duties becoming the sole responsibility of academics. Harman and Meek (2007) argue that the shifts towards neo-liberal forms of management have resulted in negative impacts in terms of workloads, worsening morale and disillusionment.

This problem is highlighted by the following comments by a University of Melbourne academic who stated that:

*... managerialism has led to the building of quite wasteful and almost useless bureaucracies. And the frontline people, who are in my opinion the academics who actually face the students in the classroom and do the research projects and publish their results in order to contribute in our small way to furthering knowledge, like putting that idealistic view, that's what we're supposed to be doing, we've been given not only no additional support, photocopying, now and my own chasing around of bits of stuff and navigating the bureaucracy takes more time than it used to take because the bureaucracy has expanded and become so much more complex than it used to, but I'm also subjected to their demands more and more. (Management Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 17, p7)*

Where in the past academics could focus most of their time on preparing for classes and refining their research, namely concentrating on their core activities, the drive now is on meeting the extra demands that are placed on them by administrators. The endless paperwork and menial administrative duties have to now all be completed by academics as part of a drive to devolve more procedural duties on to those who are closest to the issue (Anderson 2008).

These growing administrative work demands are apparent in the following comments:

*... I came from the private practice, the whole bureaucracy thing to me is just, it's a bit of a, I'm used to it now, but it's a really big shock in terms of just the ... stuff ... we had a mid term test, and so I was photocopying, and stapling and doing all of that and I spent, I don't know, I don't like thinking how much time I spent doing that. (Law Assistant Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 3, p21)*

*... well just staying on top of paperwork is never ending and it's a constant game of catch up during the teaching period ... and then during a break you need to get on top of it all again and then get on top of the research stuff that's there as well. (Law Assistant Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 4, p22)*

The growth of a managerialist culture in universities has been at the expense of academics spending more time with their students and on their research. Although academics do not deny the value of administrative duties they would rather spend most of their valuable time completing tasks that have a greater value than trying to navigate complex bureaucracies. The increased emphasis that is put on bureaucratic accountability is costing the welfare of academics and time that could be spent on students and research (Anderson 2008).

## Process and procedure

It seems ironic that, try as they may to improve efficiencies and adhere to government compliance requirements, universities are still unable to implement processes that enable them to achieve their goals. Repetition is often the result of manic efforts to record everything for purposes of measurement; this obviously creates further costs that negate efficiencies. According to Langford (2010) in this respect Australian universities have a relative weakness in institutional processes compared to other work aspects.

This repetition and related lack of flexibility in university systems and processes is exemplified in these comments by a University of Melbourne academic who stated that:

*... I think many universities are recognising that they collect the same data five different times. ... I think there is more process, in some cases that's a good thing. And these are, unfortunately these are multimillion dollar businesses and you need process to do things. **Process sometimes impedes flexibility**, adaptability which universities say they want; **so the university systems sometimes inhibit the things they espouse**. And **the other problem is the rules are not equally applied**. This is the rule but if this person really needs or it's really important, we'll do it. Well then that's not a rule, then in that case **there is ambiguity**. I mean so we want to become that rigid and inflexible? In one way, yes then it's clear and everyone knows. On the other hand, it means the special cases we can't adapt for; so both of those are bad. (Marketing Professor, Monash) (Interview 7, p21)*

Efforts to streamline procedures are often met with great consternation from the academics who have to follow these procedures. This difference in perspectives between administrators and academics, the former's concern being compliance and the latter's end results, leads to frustrations especially when there is little communication between the two parties.

This issue is reflected in the following remarks made by a Monash academic:

*... **admin's getting so ridiculous** ... a travel form now you know, it's like a job application. You've got to fill in this, that and the other thing and they put it online as if it's all easier online but sometimes the documents aren't clear, it says to go into this, it doesn't work and not only does it ... it is time consuming, by the end of the process, you are in such a dirty mood because you've had to take part in something that's just time wasting and almost idiotic. **They seem to me always increasing the amount of admin stuff, not at the department level, it's sort of at the central level of the university, but somehow you end up doing more and more admin.** (Law Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 2, p24)*

The issue of repetition of work is often the result of universities over emphasising process and a manic effort to record everything for the sake of measurement. There is often a lack of flexibility to address issues directly without having to follow formal procedure. Frustrations often result in the insistence of administrators to follow process when academics would rather address the issue in a more direct fashion.

In the past academics were more involved in the running of their School's and decision making, but since changes influenced by neo-liberalism, new funding models and the evolution of a growing managerial class, accompanied by a growing number of administrators, causal links have resulted in the new decision making processes creating wider divisions between managers and staff. As a result academics now have to contend with a growing administrative class, whose responsibility is to control the business operations of the university. What frustrates academics even more is that the agenda of the new managerial/administrative class always seems to take precedence over academic issues (Fredman & Doughney 2012).

Representative comments on these issues raised the following points:

***... universities, in my opinion, are being run more like businesses, and they're being taken over by the managerial sector rather than being run by the aca-, with an academic viewpoint, with administrators there to run it the way academics would like it to be run. It's now being run by the administrative class and to the extent that the academics are sometimes, in my opinion, seen as a necessary irritant. And too often, decisions are made by our managers, which directly impact on our situation, with no consultation with the stakeholders. This causes resentment and sometimes extremely stupid decisions. It makes no sense. (Mathematics Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 30, p5)***

### **Information Technology as a facilitator of administrative efficiency**

Technology has played a significant role in changing the nature of the work done by academics. It was presumed by universities that technology would facilitate the administrative process and make the operational tasks needed for completion easier to execute. In reality this is often not the case. What is not considered is the amount of time, which is spent becoming familiar with new IT systems, and the dramatic change in the lack of support to help academics go through the transition process.

The problems with adoption of information technology and academics' response are reflected in the following comments, by Monash and University of Melbourne academics who state that:



*... No, technology doesn't ... never makes things easier, we just change our rules. So **technology does not make work easier, it just changes the nature of work.** (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 13, p18)*

*... **Melbourne has spent a lot of money, a lot of resources in technology, especially the IT system and the expectation is that academics, like myself, would become self-supporting in a sense,** there will not be a need for external support. The problem with that and while that is some ways is a good thing, **the problem with that is that there's usually a reasonably steep learning curve involving becoming knowledgeable about many of these technologies and as soon as you start feeling comfortable, there's an upgrade or a change or something like that and so you're back on the treadmill again learning the new systems.** That is the biggest change I've noticed, the sort of dreadful reduction in the levels of support and the transfer of that to individual academics. (Management Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 6, p2)*

Information technology has also played a major role in changing the nature of teaching delivery. Online learning has been taken up by universities with great relish as on the surface it may appear to appeal to the style of teaching that young students prefer and secondly there is a common belief that it is more cost effective in its delivery. The amount of time it takes to prepare websites, monitor online discussions and maintain accurate online records has not been accurately measured and so it is not surprising that universities may have an inaccurate assessment of the costs associated with delivery (Gomis-Poqueras et al. 2011).

A University of Melbourne academic and a Monash academic commented on the misconception by management related to this issue that:

*... **it's the belief with online learning that somehow online learning's cheaper, well it's not, it's just not ... not if you are going to do it properly. I think that we have built in, we have increased the amount of admin that people have to do which is a false economy because you pay professors to fill in friggin' forms, there's no point doing that.** So I think that the admin support that people used to have access to , I think a lot of that's gone. (Research Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 24, p7)*

*... **fundamentally as soon as information technology became established, universities like most organisations said, right, we can strip out administrative support.** And that's a trend that just goes on. But it's not, I don't think it's unique. **But because universities have such complex governance arrangements and so much accountability to***



***government itself so there is more demands for that sort of providing information, completing forms, whatever, updating profiles, whatever.*** (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 26, p6)

The use of information technology by universities in an effort to make the flow of administrative work more efficient and to interrelate with students has not proven to be the reality (Hil 2015). Only the nature of work has changed, in the sense that academics are provided with the tools to enable them to perform their administrative duties, but without administrative support. This change assumes a level of expertise in the use of information technology, which takes time and effort to reach; this may not always happen in a cost effective way. By universities putting more focus on information technology, in an effort to keep up with the growing government demands for more accountability this is adding more to the administrative burden of all academics who are battling without the requisite support.

It is ironic that since universities have begun to pursue more commercial paradigms rather than pedagogic, students are becoming less engaged in their learning. Frontline academics who are more likely to observe the reality of student engagement, have reinforced this notion. Technology in particular has played a significant role in a number of ways in facilitating this disengagement including providing the opportunity for students to not have to turn up to class but still feel they are keeping up with the course requirements (Gomis-Poqueras et al. 2011).

### **Leadership and the new university business model**

The overwhelming response from the interviewees in the research project, with respect to the directions that universities were taking with the implementation of business models that steered educational institutions away from their primary emphasis on pedagogy and research towards neo-liberalism, deregulation, competition and commerce, was the pathway was fraught with challenges. Most academics interviewed believed that the execution of neo-liberal business models and the transformative effects they had in the workplace were dissonant with the values of traditional universities. These transformative effects introduced by the business model redesigned the work environment and took away the traditional workplace autonomy that academics once enjoyed and replaced it with a system that promoted high degrees of regulation and administrative governance (Harman 2003).

Academic leadership shares some similar characteristics with corporate leadership in the sense that it involves creating the right environment to help followers enhance their human potential (Bijur, 2000). Where there is a significant difference though is where corporate leaders are preoccupied with increasing shareholder value, academic leaders traditionally

were more concerned with maximising stakeholder value. The stakeholders in universities are more diverse and include students, staff, community and funding agencies, and so pose a different set of challenges. Ramsden (1998), comments that academic leadership should encompass innovation in teaching, inspiring new research and cultivating a collaborative work environment that fosters these ideals. Ramsden (1998) further posits that motivational leadership can only be developed in an open and transparent environment that encourages participation and ownership of a shared strategic vision. In the early 1990s the privilege that academics had to elect their Head of School was replaced with university appointed positions, in favour of the universities new direction that moved away from a collegial form of governance to a more managerial, executive form (Thornton, 2004). When academic leaders are removed from direct involvement in teaching and research and are channelled into only considering key performance criteria that reflect neo-liberal business models then academic leadership has been transformed for the worse.

According to Marginson & Considine (2000) the rise of executive power since 1980, at the gradual loss of collegial power (Shattock, 2002) has given rise to a new style of university governance. The best interests of the university are believed to be represented by governing councils, whose members are selected are drawn from the university's internal and external communities, because of their particular expertise (Rytmeister, 2007). Unfortunately not all the views expressed at Council meetings are shared by everyone and social distance can occur between groups. Rytmeister (2007) believes in order for Councils to be effective an inclusive culture needs to be promoted; one that is built on trust and goodwill. The growth of this culture is dependent on how the approach of the Chancellor and the integrity of the Vice-Chancellor is perceived by individual council members. Reactions to differing opinions of council members by senior council members can be a measure of how inclusive Councils are. An open inclusive culture would welcome differing opinions and not view them as a conflict of interest. Acceptance of open discussion of other strategic models apart from the neo-liberal business models, preferred by universities should be made more welcome, to make the complex task of good governance more likely to succeed.

A typical response by academics of their thoughts related to the new business model adopted by universities is expressed by the comments made by a University of Melbourne academic who noted:

*...I got to see an old fashioned, in a good sense, university operating one where for all their faults, the academics if you like really were in charge and where administrative support really was providing support....**at the moment I think it's becoming worse. I maintain hope that eventually people will see through it and realise that it's counter-productive and not***

How academics respond, adapt and cope with the transformational changes in the Australian Higher Education Sector

**conductive to all the levels of efficiencies** that people say they're after. But I don't know. (Urban Studies Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 11. p16)

The direction that universities were taking was to pursue a neo-liberal business model, whose objective was to be market driven and to commodify access. Many neo-liberal policies jarred with many academics, as they considered the monetisation of higher education blurred the social elements and traditional research and pedagogic objectives of universities (Connell 2013).

This issue of traditional university values jarring with neo-liberal values is expressed in the following two comments made by a Monash academic who noted that:

*I don't think, I don't blame any individual university because we are just responding like to the environment and probably following their counterpart organisations somewhere else. But overall, I mean I think it's not directly relevant to your research as I understand, but **I think we need a different model, particularly for like where education fits into as not as like a business; rather it's like social aspect of education needs to be highlighted.*** (Management Assoc. Professor, Monash) (Interview 5, p11)

*... **education is not a business ... it has a very important social element and if you lose that I think you lose like the importance of education;** It's not like making profit. I think we need radical change in that regard.* (Management Assoc. Professor, Monash) (Interview 5, p22)

The research indicates that the driving force of universities to pursue neo-liberal policies, created causal chains that linked commercial imperatives with operational decision making and ultimately neglected pedagogic ideologies. These commercial decisions tended to result in short term solutions rather than long term vision steered by pedagogy.

A causal link is drawn by the following Monash academic comments, that connect the universities' drive to enrol students into courses to help raise funds and the oversupply of certain graduates.

*... **Education's got a higher purpose than just making money.** There was a report that recently came out linking funding of university places to the perceived value of the degree at a community programs but ... and apparently that because **you can charge a lot for a law degree because of the earning potential and they're low cost in comparison to a science degree, to run.** But I mean how many law graduates do we need in the world*

*really? ...t here's been an oversupply for a long time and it's only going to increase ... (Law Assistant Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 4, p32)*

The commercial environment that incrementally transformed universities from being institutions, whose central purpose was the development of higher learning, to becoming business enterprises, also resulted in a more jaundiced view of their sister institutions. According to the research, both Melbourne and Monash universities began to see each other as competitors rather than as two higher education institutions who shared the same ideals of academe. The difference between competition and collegiality illustrates the division that was incrementally growing between universities over a period of recent years. Both Melbourne and Monash universities saw themselves as business competitors for the same revenue producing students, and so marketing rather than pedagogic or research strategies were implemented to attract those prospective customers (Connell 2013).

The increased rivalry between Monash and the University of Melbourne is noted by the following Monash academic who commented that:

*Well I know what we do here when we're discussing the content of a master's program for example. **A key issue on what would go into it is not the pedagogy, not the nature of the topic, it's what does Melbourne do? ... That's 'cause we are in competition with Melbourne,** so Melbourne now has a twelve month Masters, so we were talking about doing that too until the State has said No. (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 13, p21)*

A prerequisite of a business model in a neo-liberal deregulated, competitive environment is a governance system that can quantify productivity to ensure profitability. The challenge to produce a matrix or quantified indexes that can measure pedagogic or research productivity is arguably unmet even after 30 years of trying. According to the research, what has occurred as a result of endless attempts to measure productivity and adherence to business imperatives is an ever increasing pressure in the workplace (Rainnie et al 2013).

The issue of increased work related pressure is addressed by the following Monash academic who commented that:

***I can't see people getting more relaxed. I can't see that. I think it will become more competitive; it will become more demanding especially with this kind of matrix and the benchmark and quantified indexes. When this comes in, that's for sure, this means pressure, okay. I can't see that is going to go away. I think it will be there, it will be there for some time. Whether that's going to get worse, I'm not sure, because everything has a limit.** (Engineering Professor, Monash) (Interview 10, p19)*

The efforts of implementing neo-liberalism and the policies of deregulation, has arguably been the most challenging task of universities in the last 30 years. The pathway that universities had to take, in an attempt to address the Federal Government's change agenda for the Higher Education Sector, led them to enter a foreign competitive, commercial landscape that was alien to the lofty, protected gardens of academe they were used to. Furthermore, not only did universities have to venture forth into the unfamiliar world of commerce but their metal was tested by their ability to do it on their own. The research has indicated that the result of the universities' foray into neo-liberalism and their attempts at self-regulation, have left their academic workforce, who dutifully followed their leaders, being left unable to cope (Hull 2006; McWilliam 2004). Those interviewed for the research overwhelmingly believed that their university did not cope well with the changed environment of self-regulation and the pursuit of neo-liberal business model objectives, although most academics interviewed believed there was a case for change.

A telling comment about the success of the universities new business model is made by the following university of Melbourne academic who stated that:

***... universities have proven themselves incapable of self-regulation in serious ways. ... the government has intervened. (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 13, p21)***

### **Trust replaced with control**

Historically the professional position that academics held entrusted them with a high level of trust in their workplace. There wasn't the amount of scrutiny then, with respect to teaching supervision, research output or even service to the community, as there is today. New business models that universities have needed to adopt in order to comply with government requirements and ultimately attract funding, have led to the development of a culture that is pre occupied with measurement and accountability. Where once academics were expected to get on with their work in a professional manner and there was a climate of trust, today trust has been replaced with control and the work environment is characterised by documentation and measurement against given standards. According to Olssen & Peters (2005) accepted assumptions about the public service ethic in relation to the 'common good' and the 'public interest' have been replaced with a new set of specified contractualist norms and rules. The terms 'professional', 'trustee' or 'fiduciary' are conceived as principal/agent relationships. The presumption of trust and that public servants will act in the public good has been replaced with neo-liberal notions of governance that enforce hierarchical forms of specified authority structures that discourage autonomous, professional behaviour and delegated authority (Olssen & Peters 2005).

This shift in the experience of academics is reflected in the following remarks by a Monash academic who states that:

***When I began my career there was much less pressure in terms of time and in terms of the sort of things that you were required to do. So in other words, it was a much less pressured job; there was much less administration. Comparatively speaking, there was less teaching, classroom sizes were smaller. There was more time to carry out research and to pursue research based interests. So I suppose what I'm really saying is, it was a much less pressured job, really for the first 20 or 25 years than it has become say since the late 1980s and early 1990s. I've noticed a change since that particular period.*** (Law Professor, Monash) (Interview 1, p 3)

The quote 'Trust is good, but control is better' has been commonly attributed to Lenin and it seems that modern universities have chosen to follow this notion. In an effort to ensure compliance to government funding requirements, universities have had to implement rigid and sometimes insensitive control measures. Where trust was once the norm and academics were allowed to be professional in the execution of their duties, today it is presumed that the only way that universities can get compliance and the productivity output they want is when they control through measurement. According to Olssen & Peters (2005), there has been a shift from the flat structures of collegial or democratic governance to hierarchical models based on dictated management specifications of job performance. Specifications by management over academic workloads erode traditional conceptions of professional work autonomy in teaching and research.

These concerns are expressed in the following comments from University of Melbourne academics:

***... Well it's moving from a situation where the work was largely high trust. I think historically there have always been some academics who abuse trust, but for the most part the work system was based on how academics have to be trusted. They are the ones who determine how much preparation they do, whether their teaching is good, really whether their residual time outside the classroom is spent on productive research, that sort of thing. So it's high trust and I think, historically, it mostly worked. Sometimes it didn't, but mostly it did. But the trust has gone out of it. People are not trusted anymore. The quality of their workload is measured, the quality of their workload is measured, their research is assessed upon, as you know, the assorted ERA measures ... and so everything's measured, everything's managed through measurement; it's a big change.*** (Management Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 8, p5)



*...a belief that you **have to have processes that elicit good performance rather than necessarily building that on the basis of trust.** (Research Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 24, p6)*

A more resigned view on the changes was put forward by another University of Melbourne academic who commented that:

*I don't think there's a conspiracy theory or anything like that. I don't think it's. **It's I think it's a reflection of the modern university and the accountability requirements that's pervaded the modern university.** So Government requires more accountability of their staff I think, all that's happened. So I think it's part of a general trend towards those sort of things. (Research Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 24, p5)*

Further to the concerns that academics have with respect to control measures is whether the control measure which are implemented, are in fact good performance indicators. Often constant measuring becomes frustrating and takes time away from the importance of a particular task. It isn't a worthwhile exercise spending more time documenting performance rather than refining the action of performance.

A typical comment on this issue expressed by a Monash academic who argues that:

*... If you've got a university and the mission is that it wants to engage in education and research, I think **what we're seeing is just setting expectations in terms of both research and education. Now are those expectations reasonable?** Hopefully they're informed by numerous things including benchmarking exercise, informed by historical patterns, informed by understanding the discipline and **so long as there's a process for reconsidering them, yeah I think it's always going to cause angst. But whenever you sort of have these accountability or performance indicators, that is the scenario.** (Accounting Professor, Monash) (Interview 22, p 11)*

These observations reflect the issue that universities need to ensure that they don't lose sight of their core mission, to be involved in education and research, rather than an over emphasis on key performance indicators. The measures that universities have put in place to ensure compliance have in fact taken time away from their raison d'être. In the case of University of Melbourne the strategic shift to a new model of general undergraduate degrees and postgraduate degrees was expected to focus academics more on teaching and research. However, the result did not bear this out as the following observation by a University of Melbourne academic shows:



*... I had actually hoped when the Melbourne model was originally discussed, **the original propaganda for the Melbourne model was ‘we’re going to simplify ourselves in order to get back to the basics, to do teaching, research and what was called the knowledge transfer at the time, the public intellectual role.’ And that hasn’t happened. It sounded nice but that hasn’t been the way it’s turned out.** (Urban Studies Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 11, p16)*

As a consequence of neo-liberal ideology’s promotion of universities as a business and the Federal Government’s monitoring requirements, universities have experienced a significant growth in bureaucratic control structures (Larkins 2012). These governance measures were designed to audit and monitor new funding models, but in addition to this created a growing administrative class. The reality of this new phenomenon created divisions between administrators and academics, and also proved to be costly to run to some extent off setting efforts to find new funding sources. Where trust was exercised in the past as a means of governance, it was replaced with control in a culture that was pre occupied with measurement and accountability.

### **Resultant effects of the new university business model**

The research indicates that the introduction of the business model driven by universities to attempt to address Federal Government neo-liberal policies and deregulation, has not achieved the goals it had intended and left academics struggling to achieve a sustainable work life balance. The business model has left the overwhelming majority of academics interviewed for the research not optimistic for their futures or for the future sustainability of the university (Bentley et al. 2013b; Hattie et al. 1996; Anderson 2002). The model has permeated all aspects of an academics’ working life and imbued it with a competitive, product oriented emphasis that is very alien from what they were used to. The collegiality that academics once enjoyed has been replaced with a selfish competitiveness that stems from vying for the limited numbers of resources or rewards that the university has to offer (Rainnie et al. 2013). The progress that academics make in the workplace is being directed by short sighted productivity measures that often conflict with what the academic considers to be a useful measure of their worth. The ideological conflict with academics and their university management concerning their future direction has left the academics wanting in the sustainability of their work life balance (Bellamy et al. 2003; Harman 2003; Marginson 2000).

The lack of optimism in the success of the new university business model is reflected in the following comments by a Monash academic who stated that:

*... I think it's going to get worse. I think academics are going to get more selfish, they're going to get more focus, they're going to get more US model perspective where all they care about is their own little niche, there's going to be less collegiality, less willing to share because that doesn't count, it's not measured, it's not valued. People are going to say well what do I need for promotion. (Marketing Professor, Monash) (Interview 7, p30)*

The measure of an academic who is able to tolerate the transformative changes that have occurred in higher education over recent years, according to the research, is a person with a level of effort and dedication that is willing to sacrifice their work life balance. This person is not extolled as the 'virtuous academic' but is considered to be the unfortunate one who is prepared to make personal sacrifices that can only be sustainable for a brief period before another able bodied person of the same ilk comes along to take over. The sacrifice of work life balance is not a sustainable strategy for either willing academics or universities who wish to develop their competitive advantage in a commercial world.

A bleak picture of the future academic is painted by a University of Melbourne academic who stated that:

**... I'm concerned that if they want more out of us, only the people who have no other life whatever will be able to succeed in any way.** And that's not really, you know, for a start it's kind of not fair, I don't know if fair is a good word in this arena, but **it's kind of sad as well that it takes that level of effort and dedication.** I mean I like effort and dedication but on the other hand, **you can't have only people who can work 80 hours a week for their entire lives doing it.** (Accounting Senior Lecturer, Melbourne) (Interview 12, p 22)

The future of any successful business enterprise is reliant on having a plentiful store of primary resources. If universities are to pursue their commercial practices into the future they would need a ready supply of academic personnel who would be willing and able to work according to the new order. The research indicates that most academics interviewed would not recommend academia as a future, first option profession. The past contemplative world of academe is disappearing and is being replaced with utilitarian providers with commercial objectives who are continually conscious of the customer/provider contract and how enterprise working conditions need to be transformed to meet this objective (Anderson et al. 2002).

Reservations that many academics had with respect to recommending academia as a future are revealed in the following comments made by Monash and University of Melbourne academics who stated that:

*But I do think that now I would be quite careful about advising people whether to enter into an academic career now because in my opinion there's much less scope for the sort of thinking and peaceful reflection that serious scholarship requires.*

*(Law Professor, Monash) (Interview 1, p4)*

*... there are, I would say for young people there are more opportunities now than there were when I completed my studies. When you did a PhD in Mathematics in the late 60s, you either - you essentially got an academic job. There were - that's why you did it. There were essentially no other employment opportunities for mathematicians. Now there are a huge number of opportunities. I mean, banks are hiring and financial companies are hiring, industry - what little we have of it in this country - is hiring it in their research divisions, BHP, et cetera. So I would say that there may more opportunities for young people doing PhDs in mathematics. That being said the lifestyle of an academic is probably less desirable now than it was when I was at the start of my career. And so I think it's just as well that there are a variety of alternative careers for people to choose from. (Mathematics Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 30, p4)*

## Summary

This chapter identified the new business model as the driving catalyst for change arising from the need for universities to address the neo-liberal policies of subsequent Federal Governments. Government funding constraints, resulting in the need to increase student numbers and profiling, have had the greatest impact on transforming the working environment of academics. Testament of the transformative effect on the areas, most dramatically affected by change, namely, teaching and students, research and collegiality and technology and administration rests with the personal accounts of those interviewed for the research. The chapter continues to examine the commercialisation of Higher education and the university's business model and the impact that this model has had on university leadership, the changing learning environment and the growth of bureaucracy and managerialism.

The specific issues unravelled in the area of teaching and students, dealt with the increasing numbers of student and their demands for new learning styles and further engagement with their academics. Full fee paying international students have become the catalyst for change in the way courses are delivered and the way students interact with the academics who teach them. International students have come to universities with

specialised language and learning style issues that academics have needed to address in a climate when class sizes have continued to increase. The learning culture has also changed from one that reflected a teacher student relationship to one that is more reminiscent of a customer service relationship. Students have been given by universities the role of being arbiters of good learning and this has had an impact on the quality of teaching. Academics concerned with getting good ratings for their classroom delivery are tempted to make subject content more palatable to students sometimes affecting quality integrity. Furthermore the new learning environment for students is driven by information technology and is steered to facilitate the servicing of the specific demands of the new cohort of client/student. Paradoxically, instead of the new e-learning environment, often demanded by students, engaging students more with their learning and tutors it has in fact served to isolate them further from those traditional classroom attributes that have historically been successful in facilitating learning.

The chapter continued on to discuss the area of change, collegiality and research, and detailed further workplace transformations. The collegial environment that academics once knew has been replaced with a more competitive environment that only rewards academics who are willing to comply with the prescribed research guidelines outlined by the university. In an effort to increase their profile and their international brand, universities are paving controlled research pathways for academics to follow, and although they are rewarding those who follow the laid out direction, they are not providing an alternate route for those who have cause to go a different way. Academics have needed to become more strategic with their research and develop specialised networks with successful academic publishers in order to improve their research output. Those who suffer most in this competitive climate are the early researchers who do not have a research reputation and so find it difficult to enlist into successful research groups.

The chapter continued on to examine the university business model and the areas dealing with, information technology and administration, and detailed the extent to which universities have been transformed into massive bureaucracies whose objective is the auditing and governance of university operational processes to ensure compliance with government regulations. The chapter examined the causal link between the incremental transformation of the work environment and the increased work related pressure of academics. The growing bureaucracies created by universities to facilitate performance and accountability measurement often delivered duplicated results that have cost the university time and money and the flexibility to react directly to issues. These bureaucracies and new forms of managerialism have resulted in creating significant divides between academics and

administrators that are further exacerbating a stressful working environment. Successful work life balance has been difficult to achieve for most academics, as success depends greatly on their stage in life and position of power. Academics no longer have the same flexibility over their work schedules and their time management skills are continually being challenged with work intensification generated by the university's business model.

Finally the chapter examined the new style of university leadership and the affect this has had on academics' workplace stress levels. University leadership is steered by key performance indicators that are designed to ensure adherence to neo-liberal ideologies reflected in the business model. The role that unit managers play in the execution of the university's business vision is significant in the impact it has on academics' personal motivation and work intensification. The traditional notion of trust in the workplace has been replaced by universities with a new focus on control and measurement indices.

The chapter ends with a not too optimistic view of the future of academics working in those universities that are pursuing new business models that propound neo-liberal ideologies. More is required of the future academic in terms of addressing student engagement, e-learning expectations and administrative and bureaucratic demands. Not a great deal is returned to the academic for making sacrifices to their work life balance to meet these demands and any consolation they may have found in a former collegial environment is slowly being eroded by increased competition for limited resources.

## Chapter Six: Academics and change

### Introduction

The previous chapter detailed the main areas where change had the greatest impact on academics, namely teaching and students, research and collegiality and technology and administration that were identified by the research. The incremental changes, which occurred over a period of three decades, transformed the Australian higher education workplace and had a significant impact on the sustainability of academics' work life balance, due to the above mentioned factors. As part of the change, a new culture developed in universities which began to view students as customers, who needed to be serviced in the same way as they would be in business. Also a new style of managerialism developed which replaced the existing collegial environment, resulting in academics needing to become more strategic in their relations with their colleagues, particularly with respect to research. Finally, the growth of bureaucracies supported by the new information technology, which university management saw as facilitating performance improvement and accountability of academic staff actually resulted in stressful divisions between administrators and academics.

### How academics have coped with the areas of change

In analysing the impact that the changes of the past 30 years on the Higher Education Sector have had on Australian academics, it became apparent that there was a differential response by academics to the situation, in which they found themselves. Analysis of these responses revealed a distinct pattern, which enabled identification of three categories of how academics coped with the results of the changes over the last 30 years. These categories are namely **Seasoned Academic, Academic with a Vocation, and New Academics**. What is common to all three categories, and what measures an academic's working life, is the concept of how well academics are able to 'play the game'. The game involves academics trying to balance university workload requirements without completely compromising their sense of professional self-worth.

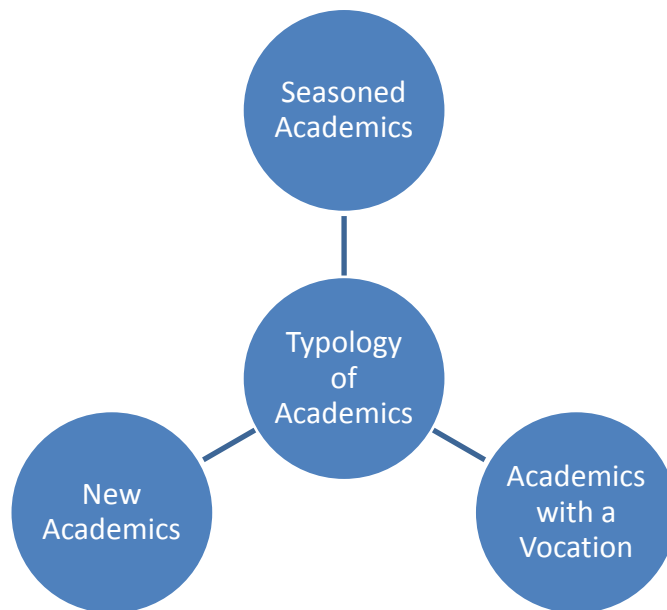


Figure 6.1 Typology of academics

## Typology of academics

### Seasoned academics

Seasoned academics are identified as those, who have had a long career in academia, usually have attained the professorial level, and have had extensive experience not only in teaching and research, but also in senior managerial positions. These academics not only have a strong understanding of current university priorities, but are also able to compare these with previous policies. They are usually at an age when retirement is an option which can be taken at any time without undue penalty. Their knowledge of university process is extensive and they often have excellent networks of colleagues from all sectors of the university including senior management, other academics and even members of the university council. Seasoned Academics usually display a measured and balanced approach to change, often cognisant of the different perspectives which have gone into the decision making process. For instance, they can appreciate that a decision, which impacts on one particular area of the university, may not have been made because that area was being unfairly targeted, but because unpalatable outcomes can occur in the shifting balance of priorities. Of course, in the balancing of priorities, if the outcome exceeded their limits of tolerance for change, seasoned academics would not hesitate to reconsider their tenure at the university.



Typical responses from those categorised as seasoned academics, with respect to their limits of tolerance of change and their opportunism in respect to the changing environment are expressed in the following comments:

*The compliant part is whatever, whoever I work for I kind of try to, you know, do what they want. To some extent I, up to a point, **I accept the fact that there is an authority structure in an organisation and I like to please those in authority. But, you know, the other part of me is I don't want to be infringed on too far. But and you can't infringe on me too far because I'm 61 nearly.** What are you going to do? You want to sack me, well okay, try that. (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 26, p 14)*

*... It's more competitive than ever before. But again, **we've got some pretty good, you know pretty good sort of avenues for accessing funds.** Melbourne's got a fairly good record, partly **because of brand I suspect but partly because of network and partly because of the actual quality of the projects.** So I've got a number of research grants that are current at the moment, **so I'm not one that's traditionally had a lot of difficulty in getting a research grant,** but that's partly a result of the types of questions that I do. **I like to research, resonate a little bit with down town so they're naturally somewhat attractive to potential funding bodies.** (Accounting Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 29, p9)*

*... **I don't think the changes that happened at universities really made much difference to me at all because I would still have kept going, and as I've pointed out, I don't think they really interfered sufficiently.** So let's say, you know the fact that we went to a semester system, the fact that greater emphasis, there was more administration, you know there were more students, etc etc, **all those things were, you know obviously, put more pressure on what one did but I don't think that they really were an obstacle to my attainment of my goals.** And in fact, the point is because I was particularly oriented towards research anyway, quite a lot of **what I was interested in doing was a sufficiently well rewarded by the university system because the university system is geared towards, I think, promoting people's research.** (Law Professor, Monash) (Interview 1, p9)*

### **Life Skills**

The armour of experience, which seasoned academics have donned over their many years of service, enables them to survive and to a certain extent endure the vicissitudes that the Higher Education Sector changes have brought. The life skills these academics have developed over the years, whilst experiencing the many changes that have occurred in the Higher Education Sector, enable them to be philosophical about the future (Bellamy et al.

2003). They also have a heightened understanding of the need to have many interests in life and are adept at balancing and even discarding some interests, if these begin to compete with the higher priorities in their life.

The following comments illustrate the perceptions of academics interviewed:

***I'm not a fighter but I'm a survivor. Yeah, yeah. It makes like a real difference. I mean fighting is like you can get things like within [a] short time period but there's a question about sustainability and you need to understand what you achieve in your life because life is like, job is not your life and there's other anchors in your life. I think when you look at future, it's very, what's the word ... it's not dangerous, it's very inconvenient to have just one anchor in your life; you need different anchors. (Management Assoc. Professor, Monash) (Interview 5, p23)***

***... I mean I think universities have always dealt with autonomous creatures, you know people who work autonomously in lots of respects. But I think they still need to adhere to what the university requires, I mean I think that's still a requirement. So maybe it's a bit of a balancing act on that one. (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 14, p20)***

### **Stage in life**

Seasoned academics are also at a stage in life, where their family responsibilities are not as burdensome as they are for some younger academics. In most cases they are in a better financial position, their children no longer live at home and their work responsibilities are under control, because they have built a reputation for excellence in their work over the years which protects them against what they might interpret as unreasonable management demands. Choice plays a greater role in their life and often seasoned academics have a choice in the amount of work related pressure they are prepared to endure. The life skills that have been developed and life circumstances that have endured, over the years, have built resilience in seasoned academics, which has not only toughened them, but also provides them with an increased ability to make informed judgements.

The following comment illustrates the way in which the seasoned academics thought about where they had got to in their careers:

***I mean I'm good at jumping through hoops, I do want they want. But on the other hand, I do what I want to do too. And you know, it's also stage of lifecycle you know what are you going to do with me? (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 26, p13)***

*... it depends upon your circumstances outside of work. So if you have a young family and the demands that exist with that versus the demands of teenage children versus demands, you know the different demands that might exist from having adult children. So I have adult children, I now have grandchildren so there's demands that come in, or that I choose, I choose to participate in that. So I **think it, this is very difficult to generalise about other than looking at the different circumstances that people find themselves in.** (Accounting Senior Lecturer, Melbourne) (Interview 18, p3)*

*... because I was a single mother, I had a child, I was doing university, studying full-time and I was working in a restaurant on weekends and various other things, so I think sort of I got used to living in a way that crammed a lot in and it just became my way of being. So in that sense, I **don't feel stressed in that way or I might have momentary stress where I feel stress this week, I've got to get this done and that done and the other thing, but no not as a regular sort of person ... I'm a fairly tough person, just by life circumstances.** (Law Lecturer, Monash)(Interview 2, p13)*

*... it's partly because my children left home and I'm more driven now. (Law Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 23, p8)*

The many years of experience seasoned academics have had working in universities, in addition to their position of authority and reputation, enable this type of academic to defend themselves in a more robust fashion against increasing workplace demands. The knowledge they have acquired over the years about university processes and their stage in life, when they are close to having achieved all the maximum benefits that their workplace has to offer, has provided seasoned academics with an increased ability to make informed and less emotive judgements compared to their more junior colleagues.

### **Academics with a vocation**

Academics with a vocation are identified as those who perceive their profession as a 'calling' in the Weberian sense (Weber 1917). These academics have chosen their profession, because they have a strong feeling that academia, whether it be driven by teaching or research, is the right environment for them to do their best work. Their central motivating force is their dedication to their work and their desire to share this with others. They are not like seasoned or early academics, who may be very good at what they do, but do not leave work every day troubled about whether they have performed at their best. Academics with a vocation are driven by their self-image and what they consider to be their higher purpose, and so changes to their work environment are always measured against how these impede their vocational pathway.

The following comments typify the views of academics with a vocation:

***I became an academic because I wanted to be a public intellectual, not to put too fine a point on it. I had an interest in the area of transport planning and urban planning and thought that I could have something to say that would make a difference.*** (Urban Studies Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 11, p16)

*Oh no look I think I'm quite detached from the university. I look at myself in this position... I'm doing the work of 1.2 professors, there were 2.6 professors in this role. They don't pay me much at all. I get compensated with an allowance and I might get a little bonus in the end, but really I'm nowhere near what the boys are paid in terms of those professors doing this type of work. But I don't do it for that reason. I do it ... it gets back to my view as a tax payer in the community. What I want to see for my kids, your kids and everybody else's kids is that they get the best university education that they can and that means sometimes a bit of a fight and a bit of a push around what's important to our students and I say to my students quite often, look when I'm in my Zimmer frame, going around ..., you'll be running my super and all the companies that contribute to the wealth of my super, I've got a vested interest in your performance in the longer term. And it might seem like a joke at the time, but I honestly believe, if you don't invest in your children's future then what sort of a citizen are you in the community. So I'm not about whether or not Monash is second in the rankings in the group of eight, I'm not about satisfying my superiors necessarily, although I do try to comply with what they want. My broader vision is that we look after the leadership of our community through our children and give them the best possible education, so that's why I do this.* (Management Senior Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 25, p13)

Vocational academics have a heightened sense of their role as academics and how it governs their behaviour and affects the community in which they live. This heightened sense of vocation drives their behaviour, causes them to only focus on their work and so may result in them being ill-prepared for the adverse workplace changes to which they may become exposed.

### **Personal motivation**

Academics with a vocation are a highly motivated group who can derive their energy from their personal values which are enhanced if they work in a creative environment. A creative environment is able to complement the primary vocational drive of these types of academics. Those who find themselves in a working environment that sparks their creativity are likely to experience periods of high productivity. Universities are aware of this category of academic,

particularly if their area of research attracts high levels of funding, and so often resources them to be able to work productively.

The following comments illustrate the factors that drive such academics:

*... I don't have a sense of whether that's, whether it's longer or shorter hours work than it was, but most of us are here because we are self-driven ... self-motivated people. People have to be able to gel their professional work with their hobby, with what gives them pleasure ... in terms of leisure. So yeah, you've got to be able to gel those two. If you don't like what you're doing, then it's very hard to do it for longer periods of time. (Management Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 17, p29)*

*Yes it was definitely easier in those days because [as] I said to you, in those days, the institutional pressure was much lower whereas the self-motivated pressure was higher. As for the self-motivated pressure obviously that is fully under your control. You can easily juggle within yourself. Yeah, I think it was easier to pass at that time. (Law Professor, Monash) (Interview 1, p6)*

*... What this university has done, and it's not something new. I think the ethos was established a long time ago and the professoriate over... here has been particularly focused on making sure that that is preserved to have as low teaching loads as possible. So for most of my colleagues here, who are not in sort of administrative roles like myself, they do on average about four to five hours of teaching per week and when you do that many hours well, it becomes possible to spend two or three days in the week focusing on research and writing papers. (Management Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 6, p10)*

Academics with a vocation can work well with the university, if their objectives coincide. With special ARC funding universities can accommodate centres of excellence run by academics with a vocation, particularly if they rise to the level of eminent professor, and not only help to improve the university's national brand image, but also their international standing. For as long as there is alignment with university goals, academics with a vocation can continue to work in a very privileged work environment. Of course changes to a university's objectives can occur over time, such as internal decisions that place a greater focus on creating links with industry in an effort to seek external funding. This may result in the scope of research conducted by these centres of excellence to be focused more on applied research. Furthermore, decision making with respect to the future direction of research in the centre may need to be shared with Business managers.

The following comment illustrates the successful working relationship between centres of excellence and vocational academics:

*The Australian Research Council created – or, well, they for the first time in 2003, a number of so-called Centres of Excellence in different disciplines, which were awarded in open competition, and my colleagues and I got this centre for the Mathematics and Statistics of Complex Systems. And **the ARC gave us a lot of money to run that centre, and part of the deal was, with me being appointed as director, that I should be freed by the university from the usual administrative and teaching tasks.** So, in fact I wasn't – I'm not supposed to lecture undergraduates since 2003. And I haven't, and I've just done – given graduate courses since then. (Mathematics Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 30, p2)*

### **Trust**

An important characteristic of an academic with a vocation is that their relationship with students as one of trust. They see their work as subject to the same moral standards that they impose on their own lives. Moral dilemmas can occur for these academics, when a policy decision is made by the university which conflicts with being true to their ideals.

The following comments illustrate the concern about these matters by academics:

*I guess the bottom line is this. **Being an academic and teaching people is a position of trust.** You're there because students trust you and in all this is a privileged position. **The pay is not that great, as you know, but it is a privileged position. And because it's a privileged position, you work towards that road and you deliver accordingly.** So I never take it for granted, I never take it for granted that I walk into, enter this room, because **it's a position of trust and you have to work and strive not to break that trust.** (Accounting Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 16, p22)*

***I think I have an ambivalent relationship to the university.** I really like this place in some ways, but in other ways I think too many of my colleagues, not all but some of my colleagues, are really driven by their ambition and their career. **Whereas I think being an academic is a privileged position and you should actually be making a difference.** It's one of the differences I noticed between Victoria University and Melbourne. (Researcher, Melbourne) (Interview 21, p4)*

Academics with a vocation have a heightened sense of dedication and a strong motivational driving force in relation to their work compared to other types of academics. These types of academics have a self-image that is an integral part of their work and so changes to their work environment have a more powerful impact on their personal lives. When the strategic



objectives of the university align with the research of these academics both can benefit from the experience. If this is not the case, it is more difficult for academics with a vocation to adjust to a changed work environment that doesn't share the same dedication to their discipline that they do.

### **New Academics**

Those who are most vulnerable to the changes in Higher Education over the years have been those who are just starting their academic careers. These include young academics and those who have come to academia from the workforce, because they believed academia would provide greater work flexibility and so provide better work life balance. What issues cause this group to be most vulnerable is their stage in life, their inexperience in fully understanding the coping mechanisms associated with teaching and research and their lack of power to protect them from becoming victims.

The following comments made by a newer Monash academic reflect these issues:

*... I feel like the pressure's actually greater and perhaps that's because I'm at the start of my academic career ... I feel like there's more pressure but certainly ... and that's partly because I'm at the level that I'm at, but partly I think, yeah, I think there's just a lot of pressure placed on academics. (Law Assistant Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 4, p2)*

### **Stage in Life**

Those new to academia are usually under 40 and at a stage in life, when they have to contend with a young family, mortgage and heightened sense of whom they are and their immediate responsibilities. The responsibilities of raising children are heavy and greatest when the children are young and most in need of parental support. Parents with young children are continually tossed between having to balance spending time with their children and trying to meet their work related commitments. One of the main reasons why those new to academia choose to work in a university is because they believe the flexible working hours will be to their advantage in providing them with the opportunity to spend more time with their children. Young mothers new to academia are particularly sensitive to their family commitments and are often most disappointed when they realise that they don't have the flexibility, which they expected, to arrange their workloads to accommodate time with their children. Furthermore, they soon realised that they did not have the workplace power to negotiate a better working load deal.

The problems faced by newer academics are reflected in the following remarks:



**... I think it is the case, particularly with young, you know young families. Because they are, particularly female academics got that problem more than male academics.** The reason is like when they come to like family work, caring is always like mum's role rather than dad's role, so I think they are struggling. (Management Assoc. Professor, Monash) (Interview 5, p13)

**... some of the younger academics have come to see me and particularly, we've got two female academics at the lowest level in the department** who both have small children and **both of them raised concerns about workloads.** (Law Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 2, p2)

**I expect it's very different particularly for working women with families,** and I can see that in my female colleagues in particular, but **I was very lucky in that respect in the sense that when I had a young family, my wife at times was not working and even when she was working, we had plenty of assistance from grandparents and so on.** (Law Professor, Monash) (Interview 1, p8)

**No I don't take a lot of work home because, well when I started full time in 1997 I was single, now I have a son who is going to turn 10 this year,** so this is, I'm probably jumping ahead of, you're probably going to ask these sorts of questions a bit later, but in terms of work life balance, **if you're either a male or you're single, then what you can do and how much time you can devote to your work is totally different than if you are a female and you're married.** So yeah, so the day, my day is quite truncated and there's not, by the time I've picked up my son from school and organised homework and cooking dinner and everything else there's, yeah, I don't typically do work at night time. Plus some nights I'm here teaching, so yeah. (Research Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 24, p6)

New academics, particularly females with young families, suffer added stress and anxiety as a result of spending longer hours at work. In order to cope there is a greater reliance on extended family to help with family responsibilities, but this is not always possible and so the added financial burden of childcare can add to the pressures new academics have to endure. The added responsibilities of raising a family, being relatively new and in a constantly changing work environment combined with having to cope with young families, make new academics particularly vulnerable.

### **Work commitments**

Apart from the pressures of dealing with family commitments, new academics have to endure the strains of having to teach full time teaching loads, continue to maintain a high

level of research output and most importantly fighting to secure tenure or promotion. Universities reduce time spent teaching in line with research output with research output and workloads models. As a result, new academics, who do not have a track record of high quality publications, are expected to compensate for this lack of publications by teaching more classes. Further, teaching more classes requires dealing with more students, grading more student work and spending more of one's work time in class. The result of this is that less time spent on research, and so the heavy teaching commitments continue. It is difficult to break this vicious circle, unless a new academic forges a link with an experienced research partner and begins to produce quality publications. Having quality research publications not only sees the slow reduction of teaching commitments, but also benefits the new academic's bid for tenure or promotion.

The pressures faced by new academics are captured in the following views of older academics:

*I think that there is **too much strain upon academics, particularly junior academics** coming in where a lot of the workloads appear to be piled up upon people. (Law Professor, Monash) (Interview 1, p16)*

***I think it puts people, I think trying to secure tenure puts enormous pressure on people.** (Accounting Senior Lecturer, Melbourne) (Interview 18, p16)*

In line with the experience of many new workers, who arrive in a workplace for the first time, new academics are usually unaware of the custom and practice of their new workplace. They do not have the benefit of past experience and presume what is asked of them is normal, although it isn't what they expected. Being new to the workplace makes them vulnerable, and so it is not likely that they would question or even try to negotiate better working conditions. This situation is reinforced because many new academics are on probation for sometimes up to three years, and so they have even less incentive to question their working conditions. Hence the pressures to conform to work requirements are greatest among those academics who are most vulnerable. In contrast, seasoned academics are in more powerful positions and are better placed to defend themselves.

The comments of the following Monash academic reflect differences between new and seasoned academics:

*Younger staff – understand this is a completely personal view. **Younger staff**, who have, of course, **been continually exposed to evaluation** – that is, evaluating staff and the rest of it – are more – **well, they're more trained and inculcated into those things. They don't***

*question it ... But we're also in quite senior positions now. Which means that we can, to some extent, fight against those systems. You know, in the end we just become grumpy old – grumpy old academics, right? That's what it means, I – dinosaurs is another way of describing it. So – so, we're more robust to those sorts of measures. (Engineering Assoc. Professor, Monash) (Interview 33, p9)*

The increased pressure that new academics experience in the workplace has meant that they find it harder to achieve work life balance. This is particularly true for young, vulnerable academics, who may blame themselves for not coping, because they do not have the experience, confidence or personal motivation to defend themselves (Hull 2006; McWilliam 2004).

A young Monash academic commented about the pressure that:

*If you wake up in the morning and you can't take it anymore, or you're not enjoying what you're doing, leave. **This is a job not for everyone.** (Accounting Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 16, p26)*

A senior Monash academic reinforced these views by observing that:

*... I am not optimistic. I think that **universities have become too targeted towards, I don't know, product or whatever. ...I think that there is too much strain upon academics, particularly junior academics coming in where a lot of the workloads appear to be piled up upon people.** (Law Professor, Monash) (Interview 1, p15)*

New academics are the most vulnerable to the pressures of a changing environment. They have the least number of defence mechanisms, such as a position of authority and experience in the workplace to enable them to defend themselves against difficult workplace pressures and demands. Furthermore, because new academics are less likely to question workplace demands, they tend to become the ones who are most likely to suffer the added pressure of these demands.

## **Academics Response to Changes**

In the preceding sections of this chapter, the characteristics of three types of academics were explored. The differing experiences of change of these types are now examined in the light of the main areas of change namely teaching and students, research and collegiality and technology and administration.

## Teaching and Students

### Seasoned academics

As argued above, seasoned academics are the ones who are most likely to have the greatest control in their workplace and the most likely to have achieved a comfortable work life balance.

The aura of authority which comes with years of teaching experience enables seasoned academics to be confident when teaching and when dealing with students. Professors and senior lecturers also on average spend a lot less time in the classroom than their junior colleagues. As a result, although they are still exposed to the issues which challenge many other academics, such as, growing class sizes, teaching international students and the increasing expectations of the contemporary student, they experience less pressure due to the small number of students in the subjects they teach.

The ability of seasoned academics to deal with the expectations of students is well illustrated by a seasoned Monash academic who commented that:

***I once had a student say to the staff member ... 'Look, who's the customer here'. And she said to me, 'What do you say when the students talk to you like that?' I said, 'The students never talk to me like that'. No student has ever spoken to me like that so I guess I give off the image of they know what I would do to them. If a student spoke to me like that, I would eat them. (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 13, p19)***

The life experience and confidence which seasoned academics command, enables them to develop an avuncular relationship with their students, which serves to provide students with the personalised, pastoral care they often seek. In this climate of trust and respect there is greater flexibility for the seasoned academic to control the style of delivery without simply pandering to the whims of students to ensure good teaching evaluations.

For instance, a Monash academic noted that:

***... if I were to just maintain the – a traditional lecturing mode, I'll be hammered in my evaluations. So, in order for that not to occur, what you've got to do – now, if you're a – if you're an experienced person, you can do this. You can – you know, you can have your cake and eat it too, as it were. You can ensure that there's that sort of interpersonal contact that the students want, but still maintain a very rigorous, classical style of lecturing approach to the unit. (Engineering Assoc. Professor, Monash) (Interview 33, p27)***

Seasoned academics are also more capable of dealing with the language issues that international students face. They are more likely to make allowances for a level of English, which is often not at the same level of a native speaker.

The following comments made by a Monash academic illustrate this issue:

*For example, the **international student, obviously language skills are not as good as local students**, that's given, okay. And so therefore, time is spent on polishing their papers, polishing their theses ... **So that's why I'm saying from the language point of view, I would spend, have to spend more time doing this type of work.** (Engineering Professor, Monash) (Interview 10, p9)*

Seasoned academics, because of their experience with students and their level of authority in the university, are able to handle the demands of students in a more controlled way. They also have the added advantage that they teach fewer students and so they face less pressure in managing their teaching responsibilities. Finally, seasoned academics are more likely to make allowances for those students who are struggling to meet standards as they are more confident to defend their position if they were challenged.

### **Academics with a vocation**

Their discipline area is not only an integral part of how academics with a vocation see themselves, but it is also a measure of their professional integrity. These academics take the reasons why students choose to attend their classes personally and so find it difficult to deal with those students, who may have other reasons, apart from a genuine interest in the area, for their enrolment. The many other reasons why students enrol in courses may include residency credits, level of difficulty of the course, or simply just trying to meet societal expectations that higher qualifications are a necessary prerequisite for future work (Universities Australia 2013). If students do not choose to study a course because of an intellectual interest, then they are less likely to be involved in the course content and not play an active role in class. Academics with a vocation find it more difficult dealing with those students, who don't share their passion for their discipline and are less likely to make allowances for them, especially if this may mean compromising the standards of their subjects to meet the capacity and expectations of this group of students. These academics, at times, find themselves facing the dilemma of whether they should lower standards to allow all students to pass and in doing this concede that access to universities is open to all and standards have to be adjusted accordingly.

The following are two different examples, one from a Melbourne academic and one from a Monash academic that illustrate this dilemma:

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How academics respond, adapt and cope with the transformational changes in the Australian Higher Education Sector

*The unfortunate reality is, is that, in my opinion, not everyone is cut out for an undergraduate degree or any other kind of qualification necessarily. They may have aspirations and may be really, really good at some other stuff, but simply not suited to a university program for whatever combination of reasons and currently we're pushing in the direction of an expectation, in the first instance we create expectation everyone should have Year 12, you know horrendous job for some secondary school teachers, right, and now we as a community, as a **society are creating an expectation that well you should have an undergraduate degree and whilst that's a laudable expectation it may in fact mean that a lot of students end up at university who would be best otherwise not.*** (Accounting Senior Lecturer, Melbourne) (Interview 18, p23)

*... we accepted them and my position was, if we take their money, we have an implicit contract. We take their money knowing what they are capable of doing. So therefore, I cannot apply the standards to them that I would have applied, or to students, that I would have applied in earlier days. So I lower ... I can just ... statistically I know I have, I must have, 'cause I still, **I don't mark to a bell-curve, it roughly works out that way after ... if I mark 100 papers, I look at the end, it's pretty close to a bell-curve.*** (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 13, p15)

Academics with a vocation are more focused on their area of discipline than other types of academics and so find it more difficult to make workplace compromises. They take a very personal interest in their discipline area, and so find it difficult to cope with the wide range of attitudes that students and others might have towards their subject area. Personal dilemmas may arise which can cause added pressure to this type of academic, when they have to choose between maintaining the standards of their discipline area and the workplace demands of the university.

### **New Academics**

New academics cope the least well with their teaching commitments and their student cohorts. They are the most junior in their departments and so are the most likely to receive the highest teaching allotments, because they do not have the research profile or higher administrative duties to lessen their teaching load. This type of academic needs to do the most to improve their research profile, as well as fight to get either tenure or promotion. These work related issues are in addition to the pressures they are bearing with respect to family commitments. New academics are the least able to understand the business strategies of universities to increase funding by increasing the number of international students. These changes in quality of content to suit new student cohorts result in increased classroom pressures for those who are less experienced and spend the most time in class.



The pressure to adapt to lower student quality is reflected in the following comments by two Monash academics:

*... lack of quality in ... **lack of emphasis on quality teaching and quality student output and I think that's an issue of enormity of scales and pressures to get students through.** I think that's partly because of the commercialisation of higher education. I think...* (Law Assistant Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 4, p6)

*Yeah, and I ... and there's a part of me that's saying well that's bloody horrible but you can't do that. But I have students saying, 'we do not want to be interpreters, translators for international students, we're paying a lot of money to do this course, we know if we put in an international student that student will not do any work, we will do all the work and they'll get the mark and we just don't want to do it'; and I've had students saying that out loud in class.* (Management Assoc. Professor, Monash) (Interview 20, p9)

The following is a comment made by a Melbourne academic on this issue:

*... I'm conscious that **there needs to be a balance between keeping the students happy, but my priority is to ensure I maintain the quality control of what I'm delivering.** So you could get a high QOT [Quality of Teaching] by saying to the kids, here's a sample exam question and then ask the identical exam question with some different numbers and you'd rate your socks off; but I don't see that as learning.* (Accounting Lecturer, Melbourne) (Interview 27, p11)

Added to the increased teaching pressures, new academics have to contend with students being the arbiters of the quality of teaching that they receive. The student evaluation of teaching and student evaluation of subject surveys are tools, which are used by universities to measure the quality of academics' teaching and the results of these surveys are taken into account when academics go for tenure or promotion. Usually, only the final result of these surveys is considered and not the battle that went into getting these results.

A lecturer at the University of Melbourne commented on the shortcomings of such evaluations as follows:

*So it's almost like you fight this rear-guard action to work out what's going on and then to try and achieve the educational goals or the research goals within that because they, unfortunately I think, they just don't, **they don't see the inside of the classrooms and they don't read the papers and they don't, you know etc.** So all they worry about is the real, **almost the empty tests of ratios and student numbers and student evaluation scores,***



***you know that's all they've got.*** (Accounting Senior Lecturer, Melbourne) (Interview 12, p18)

New academics cope the worst with their workplace demands, because they are the least experienced, have a limited research profile, do not usually undertake higher administrative duties and have the greatest numbers of classes and students. This type of academic is most often faced with the issues of balancing quality subject content delivery with acceptable pass rates, and dealing with classroom dynamics which are becoming increasingly more challenging due to the new cohorts of students. Their success as academics, suitable for promotion and tenure is measured by student pass rates, and whether students are satisfied with the academic's delivery of the subject.

## **Research and collegiality**

### **Seasoned Academics**

Seasoned academics are able to cope best with the demands of research, because over the years, they have built a reputation through their publications. They are knowledgeable about in which journals it is best to publish, and may have over the years developed close links with the editors of these journals. In fact, an increasing number of seasoned academics have become editors of quality journals so that the chances of meeting university research output and quality requirements are more readily achievable. These academics have an established research profile, which increases the chances of getting ARC (Australian Research Council) grants. The number of grants received will strengthen the prestige and status of the academic at the university and so enable them to be in a better bargaining position, when it comes to meeting the university's increasing demands.

Centres of Excellence in universities can attract significant funding from the Australian Research Council and so are regarded as prestige centres of research. Those seasoned academics, who have an established research profile and attract the necessary ARC grants to establish these centres, are held in high regard. These centres are also able to attract full fee paying PhD students, as well as other high profile academic staff and thus able to effectively engage with industry.

For instance, a University of Melbourne academic commented on this issue that:

***... and the universities are very keen to get Centres because there's a lot of money coming in from the ARC and it's a feather in the university's cap to get one of these Centres. And all the universities that I know of are very supportive now that they realise the benefits that a Centre can bring, when – as I say, when this Centre was initially funded,***

*we more or less did all the work ourselves, and once we got the grant, Melbourne University was very generous. It's provided us with this building, et cetera. But now, you know, we're given funds to develop the proposal, and that was unheard of 10 years ago when we got the original grant. Because universities are certainly keen to have such Centres. (Mathematics Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 30, p9)*

Seasoned academics finally do not find it difficult to attract research partners. Academics, who have a lower research profile, look for academics who are well published in order to gain easier access to higher quality journals (Young et al. 2011). The sense of collegiality, collaborative spirit and group decision making of the university of the past, has been replaced with more strategic imperatives (Bessant 2002). Some academics are in a position to cope better with the increasing demands of universities than others, and those who need help are forced to seek strategic alliances rather than mentoring from their colleagues in order to cope.

The following comments made by academics illustrate this issue:

*So I've got a number of research grants that are current at the moment, so I'm not one that's traditionally had a lot of difficulty in getting a research grant, but that's partly a result of the types of questions that I do. I like to research with what resonates a little bit with down town so they're naturally somewhat attractive to potential funding bodies. (Accounting Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 29, p18)*

*... you should have a very strong network, otherwise like in the present system, it's very hard to survive and achieve anything you want. Therefore on top of whatever your formal network, it's very important to develop, you know trusted relationships with people and whom you know get that reputation. So I think probably to release some of your, you know the pressures and stress level and it works I think very well. (Management Assoc. Professor, Monash) (Interview 5, p9)*

An academic from the University of Melbourne noted about the decline in collegiality that:

*... There's been the decline on of collegiality. For me the collegial system doesn't exist anymore in universities. First the collegial system was basically, when someone says that you're my colleague, it really means you are a fellow member of the college. The term has now got down to I got a bus recently and the people who sold me the bus ticket said, 'sit over there and my colleague will be along in a minute'; and I thought, yeah, the word doesn't mean anything now, just means workmate, the person I work with. (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 13, p6)*

Seasoned academics are more likely to cope with the increased research demands that are being asked of academics by universities. They have established networks and have built a reputation which enables them to increase their research output, without the added pressure that is experienced by other academics. However, even though they can cope with change they are sensitive to the loss of the collegial culture which once prevailed in universities.

### **Academics with a vocation**

Academics with a vocation are subject to the same pressures to publish as the other categories of academic, but where they differ from others is in their choice of journals in which they publish. Where others are willing to accept the limitations of seeking to publish in the preferred journals listed by the university, academics with a vocation only seek to publish in journals which they believe most benefits their discipline. This difference in the type of journals they choose causes them stress, since they wish to be loyal to the university's directives, but at the same time hold the integrity of their discipline in the same high regard.

On this issue a University of Melbourne academic commented that:

*Yes, there are issues when you do interdisciplinary research about well-respected interdisciplinary journals and I've been frustrated by the quality of some of those interdisciplinary journals myself and I've been frustrated by trying to fit what I do, which is action research, into some mainstream journals, absolutely. (Urban Studies Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 15, p7)*

Furthermore, many academics believe the journal rankings are unfair, because many high ranking international journals are biased towards publishing research by academics at universities in the countries where the journals are published (Young 2011). Academics with a vocation are usually the ones most likely to resent this state of play. They resent that the journals, in which the university wants them to publish, are more European or North American focused and although publishing in these journals may broaden the university's international profile, academics with a vocation believe it is more important that they reach national audiences, who may make a difference in policy decisions. Australian journals have a comparatively low readership as a result of Australia's low population. These journals are not considered high profile enough for the university due to their low citation rate (Vanclay 2011).

These concerns are reflected in the following comments by University of Melbourne academics:

*Well there's only so many hours in the day and of course those international journals are usually a lot more work submitting articles to because they all have fancy online submission systems and everything has to be in the right format and there are always IT problems and so on. **So you can kind of get caught up writing for them and then there's just no time left over to write for anything that you think might have a bit more of a broader and more policy-relevant audience. The work that I do is very policy-relevant, so I'm keen to get it out there for people who might be able to make a difference.*** (Urban Studies Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 11, p7)

***Almost all Australian journals, by definition, are second or third rate compared with American or European or particular British Journals. Now what's the basis on which I say that they're second or third rate? Simply citation measures. On citation measures, the American Academy of Management journals have citation scores of seven-point-something-or-other social science citation index.*** (Management Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 8, p42)

Academics need to maintain a good publishing record as it is a requirement for their job security. The kind of journal they decide to publish in historically was left to the academic but in the recent climate in universities more and more pressure is placed on academic to publish in particular journal that are selected by the their university for their prestige and citation rating. These criteria for selection can conflict with the academic with a vocation's choice. Those academics who put their discipline area on the same high level of importance as the universities' need to improve brand image, are most likely to be confronted with the publishing dilemma that is created when these two criteria conflict (Hil 2012, 2015).

### **New academics**

New academics are the least likely to cope with the research demands of the university. They are short of time to spend on research, and yet maintaining a high research profile is pivotal in deciding whether they will be successful in gaining tenure or promotion (Bentley et al. 2013b). These pressures result in a need for new academics to behave strategically in order to progress their research output to eventually improve their position at the university. For example, new academics can find support with those, who are as vulnerable as they are, and so it isn't uncommon for them to join forces with PhD students or other new academics to undertake to complete research projects.

For example, the nature of such strategies for research and publication is spelt out well by the following comment by a University of Melbourne academic who stated that:

*Well I, I normally, on a given project and I've sort of just come to the end of one now, I did this on the smell of an oily rag, I had \$5K in my research account and I paid for one of my previous PhD students with that \$5K to do a bunch of interviews and to collect some data. And then with another academic, so that's three of us altogether, we pulled three papers out of that and we each led one of those papers ... and they had different theoretical bents on the same data set and so ... and that's actually not a bad way to go for maybe, 'cause strategically it means that we each sort of have the glory, but intellectually we each sort of lead something and put our own stamp on it because as always, data can be sliced and diced in various ways often. And it meant that we ... there's only so much of that leading thing that you can do because intellectual energy is kind of finite at some point but at least if someone says, can you just write a theoretical bit on that, I know you're an expert, just fill in that paragraph, it's kind of easy, you just sort of do as you're told. (Accounting Senior Lecturer, Melbourne) (Interview 12, p9)*

New academics have the least skills and resources to be able to cope with the increased research demands that are made of them by universities. In order to cope they band together with others in a similar position and come up with research plans which will help them meet their often onerous commitments.

## **Administration and Technology**

Administration is a necessary burden with which all academics have to contend and it is the most equally shared between all three types of academic, seasoned, academics with a vocation and new academics, who find it the most challenging problem with which to cope. Large bureaucracies, with numerous administrators are common in universities due to stringent accountability and performance indicators which regulate their funding (Hil 2012). Furthermore there are also the endless policies which may be adopted by universities and the proliferation of staff who require academics to fill in forms and continually change processes to meet new requirements. Seasoned academics find themselves more heavily involved with administration, because it is a natural offshoot of the positions of responsibility they hold, but they don't necessarily cope any better with administration than do other academics.

This increase in administrative workload and attendant problems is apparent in the following observations by two seasoned Monash academics and a seasoned academic from University of Melbourne who state that:

*I mean my Deputy Dean ... and myself, we have no professional staff assistance. I mean we can go to the group managers of student services and academic services but **basically I do all my own admin and I chair two major committees and we have governance staff to write up the minutes, but everything else I write and do myself. So and that's a cost savings.** So yeah, **I think things have changed over time whereas academics you do more administration in these roles.** But I think that applies to everybody, it's not just me. (Management Senior Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 25, p19)*

*But **whenever you sort of have these accountability or performance indicators,** that is the scenario ... yeah **I think it's always going to cause angst.** (Urban Studies Professor, Monash) (Interview 22, p11)*

***There's more compliance reporting,** there's more ... we're AACSB accredited, **so there's now we've got to map all the learning objectives to program objectives and all that sort of thing.** So there's more of those sorts of demands. (Accounting Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 29, p15)*

Administrative duties in universities have also increased in parallel with the demands of large bureaucracies which have been created to cope with the external regulatory requirements of the Australian Quality Framework (AQF) and the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). The pressure to cope with the increased administrative duties has largely fallen on academics (Bexley et al. 2011). The increase in administrative duties performed by academic staff may have fuelled the notion that non-academic staff are a growing share of the university. In fact non-academic' share of the total workforce has been stable at around 57 per cent for the past 30 years (Norton, 2014). It would seem that the increase in administrative workload has simply been passed on to academic staff rather than it being processed by existing administrative staff.

### **Technology an administrative tool**

Technology has played a significant role in enabling universities to meet their responsibilities with respect to funding accountability. Universities have used information technology to make efficiencies in the handling of administrative tasks, by making a greater number of these tasks the responsibility of academics (Bentley et al. 2013b). Seasoned academics have been burdened with the increase in administration in the same way as other academics, perhaps the only advantage that seasoned academics have over others is that they can object more loudly, defy timelines more readily and at times not do what they believe to be an inefficient use of their time.



The impact of technology and administration demands is apparent in the following comments from University of Melbourne and Monash academics:

*I had a very inexperienced young person contact me about a year ago and said, 'I'm doing a quality assurance project ... and I want to calibrate the consistency by which different people mark assignments and exams'. So she said, '**So professor, what I require you to do is re-mark all the assignments and the exams from that subject of last year so that she can then check the consistency of what I think they should have been marked than the lecturer think they should be marked**' ... I rang her up and I had to explain to her that **this was not going to happen**. (Management Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 17, p9)*

*Well for example I've tried to fill in, **I've got to fill in this travel diary for my last trip. I've tried to fill it in four times and it just won't work. And so I've written back saying I'm not going to do it again** and someone's written back saying if only you do x, y, z. I mean so I think ... I think that they've tried ... (Research Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 24, p7)*

*Well **technology has just enabled that complete transfer. I mean to some extent it's efficient. It's efficient at a personal level to do things yourself and do them quickly and some things you can do very easily, but ...** (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 26, p6)*

As a result of the increase in administrative duties, all academics have suffered an increase in workload. The universities' have used technology in an attempt to facilitate the transfer of clerical work to academics but this has not been successful in either making administrative procedures more cost efficient for the university or less burdensome for academics (Bentley et al. 2013b, Anderson et al. 2002). It appears that what increased administration duties and budgetary pressures have achieved is an increase in academics' workloads.

The following comments by University of Melbourne and Monash academics illustrate these issues:

*And the business **faculties have to find academics, as well as administrators, who will sit on the relevant committees or do the advisory stuff** to manage progression, special consideration, remarks, all of the stuff that goes with this. **This is all workload, workload, workload**. But they're doing this on a dwindling dollar basis because all the money's going off to science. (Management Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 8, p36)*



*... I think many universities are recognising that they collect the same data five different times, how can we collect it one way in a database that can be then used every time someone asks about research expertise in the faculty. There should be one place; you shouldn't have to ask anybody again. It's not going to change from the last time, well it may a little bit, but ... (Marketing Professor, Monash) (Interview 7, p9)*

It was expected by universities that information technology would help facilitate the handling of increased administrative tasks that were expected to be handled by academics. This often did not eventuate because efficiency would depend on the type of academic the administrative task was expected to be completed by. Seasoned academics, although have suffered an increase in the administrative duties at times would treat the task with disdain as it was not an effective use of their time. Other academics, namely vocational and new, would dutifully complete tasks which they felt were repetitive and inefficient although they imposed on a great deal of their time. Most academics were sensitive to the need to accommodate the contemporary student that related a lot more comfortably to information technology and so spent the necessary hours to make their subject delivery more palatable to these students.

### **Information technology and teaching delivery**

Besides impacting on the administrative process, technology has also influenced the way teaching is delivered to students. The university's expectation is that academics remain sensitive to the changing student learning environment and this has meant that course content needs to be compatible with online delivery (Brotherton & Abowd 2004). Academics need to keep up to date with social media and online delivery and how this can make the delivery of their course material more accessible for students who are very familiar with information technology. Technology has enabled online delivery of courses and a culture that promotes easily accessible, fast paced knowledge transfer. Academics are the ones responsible for making this happen, even though they are not IT specialists and sometimes believe that over simplification of content material is not the best way for students to learn.

This integration of Information technology with teaching practice is explained in the following comments by University of Melbourne and Monash academics:

*And similarly, through **social media and other tools and the technology** that we might have it's possible **we will create an environment where the student doesn't want to do the hack work, and if we don't want to do the hack work, they want to skip all of that and go to the other stuff, I think that is where the real set of difficulties will come for the academic and the impact that that will have on his or her working day and life and***

*week and month as opposed to some of the other things that we might have talked about. So we may have a class to go to, which we need, we need students, but I'm really not sure about the unilateral idea that we'd simply just have more and more students. (Accounting Senior Lecturer, Melbourne) (Interview 18, p24)*

*I would argue that because we're handling a generation which lives on the internet, you need to structure and design the course delivery in an online/more hands-on approach. So these are students that don't come just to listen for the lecture, so you have to engage them, you have to make it more realistic, you have to make it more in line with industry standards. (Accounting Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 16, p4)*

### **Playing the game**

Analysis of the interviews has identified, besides a typology of academics, the phenomenon of 'playing the game'. A definition of this phenomenon, in the context of the research, is derived from the comments made by the interviewees. One definition is adherence to workplace rules, but not necessarily compromising one's beliefs. Other academics defined it as being flexible with one's own work standards to such an extent that you appear to be complying with what is generally expected, and still maintaining your integrity. Although the research indicates that seasoned academics are those most likely to cope with the recent changes in Higher Education, that does not mean they no longer need to 'play the game'. In fact an academic's ability to 'play the game', no matter what descriptive category they may be assigned, seasoned academic, new academic or academic with a vocation, is central to how well they can cope with their changing and ever more demanding work environment. The neo-liberal model of competition and performance measures which universities have been pursuing, has altered university culture from Cardinal Newman's (1852) ideal of a university as being a place of teaching universal knowledge with a culture which is essentially concerned with compliance and game playing.

The following comments by a Monash and University of Melbourne academic illustrate how they negotiate the tensions between being compliant and retaining autonomy:

*... learn how to play the rules. Play the rules but you don't have to sell your soul. I mean they're not so, it's still not so ... this is not Henry Ford 1925 where you just do what you're told. You still have some freedom left, some scope to offer a choice. **But basically understand what the rules are and work to the rules. But that doesn't mean a flunky.** That's not what that means, stand up for yourself ... (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 13, p16)*

***... to sustain academic work you have to play the game, you do have to play it by the rules and that's where, I mean, you know, you might be able to do it in a way that you feel more comfortable with but that's where, you've got to really look at the structures of work, the type of behaviours that are encouraged and the types of rewards in order to look at the way people are going.*** (Researcher, Melbourne) (Interview 21, p11)

### **Why play the game?**

The extent to which you 'play the game' is often a reflection of the position you hold at the university. Seasoned academics may 'play the game' with the intention of leveraging this with trade-offs for more suitable working conditions. As noted above, if a seasoned academic has developed a good reputation in their research area and can command ARC funding, then this prestige can help with negotiating a better working conditions deal. This position of power requires a self-assurance, which sometimes comes with stage in life or life experience but not always. An academic with a vocation may have this kind of self-assurance, but may not. This category of academic may not wish to enter into negotiations about more privileged working conditions, because their concern is more with their discipline area rather than 'playing games'. It is also interesting to note that meeting key performance indicators (KPIs) on publications may be perceived as a government and university inspired way of controlling behaviour and that the ranking of journals can be a political game (Young et al. 2011; Craig et al. 2014).

An important aspect of playing the game is gaining research funding and getting published in so called A starred international journals.

The following comments from a Monash and a University of Melbourne academic show their awareness of these issues:

***... I mean I go into it with a very aware thing that it's a game ... you know and I'll play the game. So the game is, we know you want research money and publications. You all know I'm one of the best in the faculty for that, this is what I expect in return. I expect a certain amount of promotion, I expect a certain amount of teaching relief, I expect a certain amount of support when I need it.*** (Urban Studies Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 15, p9)

***I think promotion, it was certainly understood that if you wanted to get promoted, you needed to play by the rules and being a public intellectual was all very nice, but where are your articles in high status international journals.*** (Urban Studies Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 11, p8)

Those academics who can and do 'play the game' benefit most from the changing work environment. The game players are usually those academics, who have developed a defence mechanism to protect themselves from loss. They have a reputation in their area of research which may command future funding and so play this off against promotion or more suitable working conditions. If alternately, they chose not to play anymore and discontinue their career, they are in a financial position to suffer the least loss. Another reason for game playing is that it is rewarded by the university (Fredman and Doughney 2012) and non-participation can often result in stress and depression.

The consequences of not 'playing the game' for those who are the most vulnerable, can be quite dire and hurt the new academics the most. New academics have any number of family issues, whether they are with children or the mortgage, and so they are least able to negotiate better deals for fear of losing everything. They are also the ones who are most concerned about tenure or promotion in order to secure a more stable income or position.

The pressure put on academic staff, who cannot meet current demands and play the game is explained in the following comment by a Monash Professor who states:

***I have seen people in this department being pushed out, either retrenched or put into a state where they simply have to leave because ... and they came here when it wasn't this push on an emphasis on research. And then they began to get belittled, encouraged to leave, you know really, it was really, has been unfair in lots of ways. I see the need why Australians need to do it because we traditionally have published below our, we publish, Australians always published a lot, they just publish in low grade journals, that was our, that was the state of play; so our impact overseas was not very good. And so I think the changes are ... the changes, I can live with the changes ... It's because I can. Well and I'm pushing this to say, look these pressures are awful on people if you can't play that game, so these pressures that have come and that have mounted and mounted are awful but they happen to suit me. (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 13, p6)***

The need to behave in a way demanded by the system is explained by a Monash academic who states that:

***So, rolling with the punches is a necessity. We – you know, if you don't, you will not get through your probationary period as an academic. If you – if you're – if you can't demonstrate that you're flexible these days, that you – that you can see and respond***

***to the signs, then your chances of survival are remote.*** (Engineering Assoc. Professor, Monash) (Interview 33, p5)

### **Result of game playing**

Ironically 'playing the game' may not always produce the results that either the university or the academic expect. The publishing treadmill, generally promoted by the university in the belief that this is the way to improve the university's international brand, can produce behaviour that runs counter to the discipline interests which academics wish to honour. For instance, simply looking at journal ranking, without considering the impact that some Australian journals can have on policy decision making, is too narrow a focus. This narrow minded approach is encouraging compliant behaviour which does not foster a research culture that should be expected from institutions with a less instrumental view of higher learning (Ryan 2012).

The thoughts of academics critical of conforming to KPIs, which may not result in high quality research are expressed by a University of Melbourne academic who stated that:

***But I do think that the publishing treadmill is just not necessarily producing a lot of good quality work, some good quality work. So I do think there's a broader issue with the type of rewards that are set up and what that encourages, the sorts of behaviours that that encourages and the game that's set up and how people have to play the game to survive. .... Oh look, I haven't played the game well so I'm not probably in a really good position to say. So there are some journals that I can publish in. There's some more journals I'd like to publish in that are ranked as B journals, so I will still publish in them but it isn't ideal.*** (Researcher, Melbourne) (Interview 21, p10)

Directing academics along a particular publishing pathway serves to either make academics wilier in their game playing to produce the requisite research output or it can make them more dissatisfied. Either outcome does not serve the university well, as the following comment by a University of Melbourne academic with a vocation makes clear:

***Yes, I think it ... I don't, I'm not sure that it had an impact on what I did at home because I didn't take my publication work home, that tended to be the teaching, corrections, that kind of thing. But I think it probably meant that as time went by, I was starting to feel a little frustrated that the, if you like, the public intellectual role was perhaps starting to erode and I was becoming more and more like a 'conventional academic' you know, sort of.*** (Urban Studies Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 11, p9)

The idea that if universities begin to be too prescriptive about research requirement, whether they be with number of articles published or type of journal, then this narrow goal setting criteria for success begins to be fraught with difficulties. This idea is well expressed by Ordonez et al. (2009) in the following quote.

“Suppose that a university department bases tenure primarily on the number of articles that professors publish. This goal will motivate professors to accomplish the narrow objective of publishing articles. Other important objectives, however, such as research impact, teaching, and service, may suffer. Consistent with the classic notion that you get what you reward (Kerr 1975, 1995), goal setting may cause people to ignore important dimensions of performance that are not specified by the goal setting system.”

## **Summary**

In this chapter a typology of academics was outlined to distinguish the different coping mechanisms utilised by academics, when dealing with changes to their workplace. The coping mechanisms of the three types of academic identified namely, seasoned, those with a vocation and new, were drawn from the academic's stage in life, experience and ability to 'play the game'. Seasoned academics coped best with teaching, students and research as they taught the least numbers of hours, had the least number of students and usually had a research profile that made publishing more accessible. New academics coped worst as they had to contend with teaching the greatest number of classes, having the greatest number of students, and finally needing to comply with the university's research requirement to attain either tenure or promotion. Academics with a vocation coped or not depending on how favourably the university viewed their discipline area. These academics are extremely sensitive about their discipline area and so take changes to student cohorts, teaching delivery and publishing restrictions personally. It will more than likely cause these academics stress if they believe workplace changes do not favour their discipline area.

What all three typologies of academic have in common is an inability to cope with the increased demands of technology and administration. Technology is continually playing a more prominent role in content delivery for students and in the execution of administrative tasks. Students are demanding a contemporary IT learning environment that suits their needs and expect academics to keep up with those demands. It is difficult for all academics to keep up with a continually changing IT learning platform and maintain content quality (Gomis-Porqueras et al. 2011). Another area of commonality that the three typologies share is 'playing the game'. This was a characteristic that was gleaned from the research that described a kind of strategic behaviour acted by academics in their attempt to appease

university management and also save their self-image. Those academics who were the best game players could for a period of time appear to meet university demands and at the same time salve their conscience that they were not compromising their discipline or their professional values.



## **Chapter Seven: Adoption and accommodation strategies adopted by academics to cope better with work life balance.**

### **Introduction**

The previous chapter outlined a typology of academics and described the ways in which different types of academics responded to changes in Higher Education. They were differentiated according to characteristics such as the stage in life which they had reached, the amount of teaching expected of them, and the quality of their research output. The areas, where most academics coped worst, regardless of their type, were with changes to technology and university administration. The phenomenon of 'playing the game' was also identified as another key measure of how well all academics coped with balancing their work commitments and retaining some autonomy at work, particularly with regard to their discipline area.

This chapter will examine the five different factors influencing work life balance which have been identified by the research, and the accommodation and adoption strategies academics employed to cope with these factors. The chapter will then discuss the wider workplace issues of personal motivation, leadership and work related pressure and how these impact on the work life balance of academics. The level of work intensity has been identified as affecting work life imbalance (Skinner et al. 2012) but the analysis indicates that personal motivation and leadership are also key factors affecting work life balance.

### **Five factors influencing work life balance**

The changes to the nature of Australian universities, since the 1990s, and its impact on the work experience of academics, have also had significant implications for their work life balance. In the analysing the interviews it was apparent that there were five factors, which affected the work life balance of academics.

The five factors of work life balance which affect all three types of academics seasoned, those with a vocation and new and are shown in Figure 7.1 below.

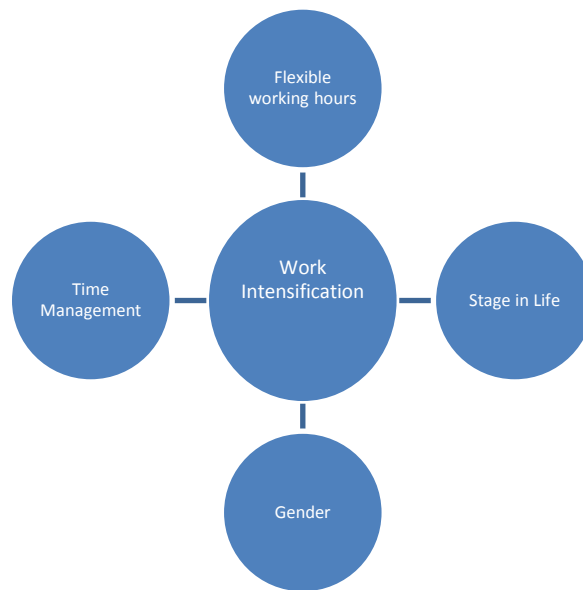


Figure 7.1 Five factors influencing work life balance

### Flexibility of working hours

The freedom to choose hours of work and to have the ability to rearrange one's work schedule can add considerably to achieving successful work life balance. The most common response by academics as to why they chose academia is because they believed the profession offered the greatest flexibility of working hours (Shockley & Allen 2012). Analysis of the interviews revealed that academics do retain a degree of freedom in choosing their working hours, but they place higher priority on their workload commitments. Whether academics choose to complete their work at home or at the university is their choice so long as their work commitments are met.

This is attested to by the following remarks by seasoned academics from Monash and University of Melbourne:

*... what I'm really trying to say here is that I've always been the sort of person who has worked at weekends ... if I wanted to take a day off or two days off to do something which is personally related, I could do that, I had that sort of freedom.'* (Law Professor, Monash) (Interview 1, p2)

*'... the only good thing about academia is that you get to pick which 80 hours of the week you work'* (Accounting Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 29, p19)

The flexibility of academic's work schedules can allow them to arrange their activities to suit themselves enabling them to juggle their family commitments with their university commitments. However, this is not always possible, and usually the time taken off is made up at another time.

The following comments made by a seasoned and a new academic from Monash indicate the attractions of flexible working time arrangements:

*... the reason I was attracted to academia was that I was less office bound in the sense of kind of time restriction, so that if I had classes that finished at three o'clock, I could collect the kids from school, and even if I did a couple of hours at night when they were in bed, I could at least have that experience of collecting them, which was very difficult when you're working as a... in the city.'* (Law Assistant Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 3, p4)

*... what attracted me to academia was the flexibility. I think that degree of flexibility still exists for new academics whether they be male or female because **you have got an environment where you can do elements of your work not being in the office.** But then that's a trend that's happened within non-academic institutions anyway.* (Accounting Professor, Monash) (Interview 22, p9)

The choice of how many hours of work academics perform in a week is often a personal one. There is a university expectation that a minimum number of hours are completed depending on the academic's status, but there is no maximum restriction in work hours or where these work hours should be completed. For academics their work is a reflection of who they are, and for some the lines are blurred between work and other life activities, as the following comments by two seasoned academics, one from Monash and one from Melbourne, make clear.

*... I'm a hard working person ... that's my choice ... I keep control over (work) and I do things that I'm interested in. **So my work morphs into a hobby of interest** ... if the cricket's on TV or the footy's on TV, that's fine, I can sit there and do that, but have my laptop and when I get bored with the footy I'll fiddle around with something or mark an assessment ...* (Management Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 17, p1)

*... So in terms of your question, **I don't think the concept of work life balance was ever part of the academic model, I mean that was the nature of academia for me,** so I can't talk for ... I think I know, but **for me there is almost more that you can do than the available time allows so therefore it intrudes into your time** and your whatever time you might call your own, your own space. I mean what is your own space? I don't know because how many hours a week do you work? I mean I might work, I mean in the past, I mean when I was ... over the last ten, 15 years reflecting, I've never worked less than... **if there was a week I don't work 40 hours, that'd be a miracle. But the flexibility was still***

*there. Say, look I've got to do something today, I'm not going to go to work and that's still a plus and I'm sure that flexibility applies to other people too, it wasn't just because I was at a senior level, people don't, you know they have got much more control over their time. So maybe work intrudes into non-core hours, maybe they work more than 40 hours a week, maybe they work 60, but they're still ... I think there's still that element of flexibility for us. (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 26, p10)*

On the other hand, those academics, who choose to separate their work life from their personal life, although they share the same flexibility of work hours as other academics, find it difficult to work during their personal time. These academics have very clear divides with respect to what constitutes working hours and personal time, and when their workload begins to invade their personal time, they feel uncomfortable. The reasons why their workload begins to impinge on their personal time may be due to trying to meet university requirements for tenure or promotion or simply because of lack of time because of work intensification. Furthermore, personal time may begin to be slowly eroded because of poor time management.

These issues of the reduction of personal time through work pressures and ready access to work at home through the internet are illustrated in the following comments by a new academic from Monash and a seasoned academic from University of Melbourne:

*... one of the professors who's high up in the faculty, who was addressing young researchers was saying, **look forget about work life balance, you're not going to go up if you think you can have that, you've got to work nights, you've got to work this , that and the other.** (Law Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 2, p2)*

*... it was a practice I developed in my previous life as a lawyer because **I'd seen contemporaries of mine allow their work life to take over their home life**, so I'd developed that strategy in the law which was kind of easy to do because for many things, you needed to be in the office to have access to the resources anyway. That was, of course, before the days of the internet access to everything. **So I tried to maintain that as an academic as well; but I think over time it broke down a little.** (Urban Studies Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 11, p5)*

### **Time Management skills**

The way academics manage their time can be adoption strategy to help measure how well they are able to manage their work life balance. Poor time management can arise in spending too much time completing some tasks at the expense of others. Some academics may spend too much time responding to student emails, whilst others may lose track of time

because of the intensity of their research. Both behaviours result in poor time management and an inability to meet work requirements in the hours allocated to work. Time management techniques may be interpreted as an excuse for work intensification, but for academics with a vocation spending less time on research may not be as simple as making a better time schedule. Undertaking extra work on research can result from a person's passion for what they are doing, but for many academics, especially new academics, it can also relate to getting published in high ranking journals. For other academic 'game players' doing the bare minimum on those tasks that have the least value and more on those that will get them promotion and tenure may be their preferred option.

The following comments by two Monash academics, one a seasoned academic and the other an academic with a vocation, illustrate the dilemma.

*... unfortunately I still believe there are some academics who don't put in 38 hours a week, 48 weeks a year. And if they're not doing that then asking them to do that is hard. **I think there are a lot of people, who are spending more time but spending it on the wrong things. It's poor management of time** but we don't build up the expectations for what is an individual set of explanations. How quick should we respond to student emails? (Marketing Professor, Monash) (Interview 7, p31)*

*... **the other part of the work/life conundrum for academics is research when you get into it can be so all encompassing in the sense that you can never have read enough articles.** There's a ... I mean partly some of the reasons why I work on weekends have got nothing to do with the pressure from the organisational context, its all, it's a self-made type of thing ... (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 20, p4)*

Academics' attitude to time management and work life balance can be a reflection of how they see themselves and the nature of their work. The analysis of the interviews indicates that some academics, those with a vocation, believe there are no fixed working hours and that there is no line of demarcation between work and personal time. On the other hand, seasoned academics believe that there is a distinct separation between work and personal time and think that there are repercussions for those who do not make allowances for this separation.

The problem of always doing work and not making a separation between work and home is apparent in the following comments by two seasoned University of Melbourne academics.

*... **as an academic your job's not restricted by hours of work; it's essentially a lifestyle.** And so, whilst we have flexibility in our working arrangements, **the price we pay***

*for that is that in effect we never actually knock off. So in effect, you're always at work, but the benefit you get from that is you don't have to always be sitting in your office...* (Accounting Senior Lecturer, Melbourne) (Interview 18, p1)

*... I am very strict about working 40-50 hours a week and hardly ever work at home. I hate it when I work at home, I hate it when I sometimes have to work on the weekends, and sometimes have to work in the evening. ... I see the effect all the time on people who don't create absolute firewalls between their home and their work life.* (Urban Studies Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 15 p10)

Sensitivity to all aspects of life is strategy that is more likely to yield a successful work life balance. Acceptance that the completion of all work at the workplace is not always possible, and that it may need to be transported to the personal environment of the home is not necessarily an invasion of private space, but this has to be carefully managed. However, the nature of academic work, particularly research, means that it is difficult to cease the thinking about problems raised by the research, outside normal working hours. Of course other responsibilities of life such as family commitments cannot be neglected because of work, because these too need to be managed to have successful work life balance (Pocock 2007; Skinner et al. 2012).

The impulse to continue to focus on research is well explained by a University of Melbourne academic who observed that:

*... many of the things that I think are important and that I can do them usually in a much better way in the normal course of the day, of the working day. But I do acknowledge that sometimes it's not possible, it's not easy to just, especially **when it comes to research, not possible to switch off if you've got a train of thought and doing something that there's a momentum to everything and that you can't just simply put things side and start doing something else.** So yeah, there are times when I do end up spending a lot of time focusing on particular like activities, but lately that hasn't been the norm.* (Management Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 6, p3)

Time management skills are an integral part of achieving work life balance. Different types of academics have unique strategies for dealing with time management, for example, academics with a vocation are more inclined to become immersed in their research and then can find they are unable to complete their other duties without having to take work home. New academics are overcome with all the demands of research, teaching and administration as well as young family commitments and so find it hardest to achieve work life balance.

Seasoned academics are more successful in dealing with work related pressures and so are more able to balance work commitments and home life more workable. Although time management skills are helpful to alleviate work pressures, they cannot deal with the extent of academic work intensification which is discussed below in the section on growing work intensity.

### **Work intensification**

During the last 30 years the amount of workload undertaken by academics in contemporary Australian Universities has increased considerably (Bentley et al. 2013a, 2013b; Bexley et al. 2011). This increase was from a low base, but a significant workload increase has been felt strongly by all academics (Bentley et al. 2013a, 2013b; Bexley et al. 2011). The reasons for the increase are many and include the rising numbers of students studying at university, the increase publication expectations placed on academics and the increase in administration required to monitor students (Bellamy et al. 2003). In an effort to try and complete the allocated tasks required of academics, more and more work is being undertaken during what was traditionally personal family time. Information technology, particularly the internet enabling off site work, is a major factor in this change occurring, because it has made the access to work resources no longer subject to physical restraints. It is not uncommon for academics to work on teaching preparation, research writing or even administration duties from home because technology has provided them with a ready platform to do this. The issue of concern though is that more and more work is required of academics and this can only be completed, if it is done outside of normal working hours. This situation, which many academics believe to be an unreasonable, unrealistic amount of work, is skewing work life balance (Harman 2000, 2003; Baird 2012).

The increasing academic work intensification is reflected in the following remarks from University of Melbourne and Monash academics.

***... I think there is work intensification ... so more and more work has to be done and so there's less time to do it and more work has to be taken home, so it's infiltrating weekends as well as nights. (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 14, p6)***

*... look the thing is that if you're an academic, I mean I've taught in TAFE and been an academic, if you're an academic you have far more autonomy than you do as a TAFE teacher. You have far more capacity to structure your own work and all that sort of stuff, and so there's all of that. But **the actual demands and the expectations and the requirements that you have to fulfil, I don't think are realistic. They're not realistic, no.** (Research Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 24, p3)*



Of the factors contributing to the more onerous workloads of academics, a major one is the increase in the numbers of students which increases the amount of work that is required to grade, teach and administer them. This is not taking into account the amount of time, which it is necessary to devote to student welfare and pastoral care of students (Bentley et al. 2013a, 2013b; Bexley et al. 2011). These interpersonal issues become more pressing when there has been an increase of 1.5 per cent of total number of international student enrolments to 328 402 since 2012 (ABS 2013). ). According to DEET (2013) statistics on Higher Education, Monash University increased its number of international student from 25,954 in 2001 to 32,607 in 2013, an increase of 27 per cent. The University of Melbourne during the same period increased its international student numbers from 24,502 in 2001 to 28,706 in 2013, an increase of 17 per cent.

The pressures associated with maintaining a good research profile also add to the work intensification of academics. Whereas in the past, publishing was a more natural occurrence from an academic's desire to add to knowledge, publishing today is more driven by a quota that must be met by every academic. As a result academics always have to be mindful of their research profile and publications because, as discussed in the Chapter Four, the results impinge on their plans for tenure or promotion (Rainnie et al. 2013; Connell 2013; Young et al. 2011).

The expansion of tasks and the control of academic work through performance measurement is reflected in the following comments by a University of Melbourne and Monash academic.

*... what I mean is that there are some universities where there has been a tremendous escalation of work, there is virtually no support and an individual academic is responsible for many different things **from the delivery of the courses, student welfare issues, assessment to strategic issues where the course fits into bigger programs**, and all those sort of things... (Management Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 6, p6)*

*... it depends from which perspective you're looking at, easier or harder. **In terms of academic output it's definitely becoming more difficult. Why? Because you need to publish more, you need to research more, and the standards have increased;** okay? But the more you spend time to research a particular area, the more confident you become in that area. (Accounting Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 16, p3)*

Work intensification has also meant that an academic's time has been channelled into doing more and more administrative tasks that interrupt their ability to concentrate on preparing lectures and doing research (Bentley et al. 2013a, 2013b; Bexley et al. 2011). Due to the need to deal with an ever increasing number of minor routine tasks, which contribute to work intensification, academics are gradually losing the ability to rise above their workload and focus on longer term projects and research.

The implication of these changes for the ability of academics to get on top of their work is apparent in the following remarks from a University of Melbourne academic who states that:

***I think that the university is, everything's changing all the time and that worries me because there's never any time to consolidate. The students keep coming every year, and that's a constant, but there are more of them and they demand more. But the underlying administration systems, the ways that we're assessed, the funding regimes, particularly the non-ARC ones, everything's changing and it's very hard to find a stable routine by year, I suppose. And that worries me quite a lot because when it comes down to it, you've got to be sitting down on your own or with a few others doing research and all of those things tend to erode that opportunity. So I'm a little bit worried. (Accounting Senior Lecturer, Melbourne) (Interview 12, p22)***

With the growing use of information technology, academics are finding themselves having to understand new software to undertake tasks originally done by clerical support staff. A necessary amount of time needs to be devoted to any particular administrative task in order to gain proficiency in it, but unfortunately, universities do not usually allocate enough time or resources for those who use the software, often academics, to become efficient users (Rainnie 2013). The requisite amount of time still needs to be spent to gain efficiency and often that time is usually what was traditionally personal and family time.

The effect of such increasing applications of information technology has significant impact on work life balance, as can be seen from the following comments from a Monash and University of Melbourne academics.

***... I tend to be a person who learns through trial and error when it comes to technology, I'm not afraid of pressing buttons, just perhaps not the right buttons to press, but it does take time. It takes time to get it right, it takes time to get support in case you need support, to get training; yeah it's very time consuming. So in terms of work life balance, I would say, and my kids and husband would say, I probably spend 90% of my life on Monash related issues. (Management Senior Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 25, p11)***

***... we're just juggling constantly and the kids, which is why I tend to work at night or in the morning very early because the days are so bookended.*** So usually I'm okay but I have to, I will say occasionally I feel sort of a bit ashamed that I'm not as kind and as understanding and as gentle as I should be and that's probably not a very good thing 'cause you're trying to switch out of a very critical and very driven sort of academic mindset into a yeah let's just walk on the street very, very slowly looking at every leaf on the ground when I actually I'm late for that meeting that I'm taking my child to. (Accounting Senior Lecturer, Melbourne) (Interview 12, p11)

A key aspect of understanding work life balance is coming to terms with work intensification. The volume of work expected of academics, with the increasing number of students both local and international and the requisite amount of administration that accompanies these cohorts of students has impacted on both work satisfaction of academics and their work life balance. Efforts made by university management to use information technology to streamline the efficiency of the added workload have not been successful in alleviating academic stress levels. The demands that university management place on academics to publish in particular journals and classroom demands to ensure students are well looked after have compounded to impose on more of academics' time leaving very little time for family and other personal commitments.

### **Stage in life cycle**

Achieving an appropriate work life balance is also related to what stage academics are in their career. In this respect academics face similar challenges to other employees (Higgins et al. 1994). Early career academics may have to face the challenges of a young family, in addition to learning the customs and practices of the workplace. An academic who is single with no family commitments, may be able to devote more time to their work compared to an academic who is married, with a demanding spouse and young children.

The following comments from Monash academics are typical of the interaction of work and family demands.

***... I mean just having children, I think any role always makes the issue of balancing one's work and personal life an issue for you*** because you have to work out ... I would have to say in the last five years I have never worked as hard.' (Management Assoc. Professor, Monash) (Interview 20, p3)

***... when I first started, I didn't have a family so I worked extremely long hours and made a really long, big commitment to my career but now I have a daughter and I have to juggle that.*** And so, I think I do that quite successfully and I think that there are

*provisions within the university to assist with that juggling act ... (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 14, p4)*

The amount of time that an academic chooses to spend on either university work or personal commitments is also related to their career prospects. For an early career academic with a young family, the choice may be to spend more time at work than with the family, because their objective is to gain tenure or promotion in the belief that this would benefit the family in the long run. Early career academics are often put under enormous pressure to comply with the university requirements for achieving either tenure or promotion. Studying to earn a PhD award is probably the most demanding task faced by early career academics, but this is not the only requirement. A good research profile as well as a good teaching record, are also demanded. The requirements for securing university tenure are extremely demanding and time consuming to achieve and so those who find themselves at this early stage of their career are under the greatest amount of pressure. This pressure increases, when the issue of gender is considered as discussed below.

The importance of stage of life as a cause of heavy work demands is captured well by a University of Melbourne academic who states that:

*I mean if the suggestion is, is there more work, I think the academic, he or herself, can **choose to be doing more or doing less depending upon what their role is, whether they have tenure or whether they don't, whether they are required to do additional study, whether they're not; so it really is about the stage of your career that you're in in some ways.** (Accounting Senior Lecturer, Melbourne) (Interview 18, p2)*

### **Gender differences**

Universities pride themselves that they are non-sexist institutions which do not discriminate between the sexes. Alexander et al. (2014) indicate that male and female respondents have different expectations, particularly with regard to working hours in the workplace. As a result, universities, often under pressure from the NTEU union, have introduced policies to address these differences. One major reason for the different expectations is that married female academics with children, take on much more responsibility for rearing children compared to males (Alexander et al. 2014). It is more common for mothers, which includes many female academics, to make the greatest efforts to reschedule the hours they spend at work, in order to accommodate the schooling or personal needs of their children. Males are more likely to take on the role of breadwinner and, although do their best to share the responsibilities of the children, they tend to have more of a supportive role rather than a primary active role (Baird et al. 2012). Married women not only differ from men in their approach to child rearing,

but also play a different role to men in the family. Female academics do not differ from women generally and so share the same family concerns as other women and as a result they are more likely to take on the role of family maintenance rather than the provider role (Baird et al. 2012). A female academic, whose family commitments sometimes conflict with her work commitments, is under more strain than her male counterpart, who merges the role of family provider with his work. Hence it is women who are more likely to suffer the dilemma of juggling work commitments and the problems of daily family life.

The following comments by two female University of Melbourne academics highlight these issues:

*... in terms of work life balance , if you're either a male or you're single, then what you can do and how much time you can devote to your work is totally different than if you are a female and you're married. So yeah, so the day, my day is quite truncated and there's not, by the time I've picked up my son from school and organised homework and cooking dinner and everything else there's, yeah, I don't typically do work at night time. Plus some nights I'm here teaching, so yeah. (Accounting Lecturer, Melbourne) (Interview 28, p6)*

*... Well I think part of the problem is that we tend to conceptualise work as done by the traditional male breadwinner who has no responsibilities outside their breadwinning and so often when we think about careers, we think about jobs, we think about even things like work life balance it's really framed on that model where there's somebody else to pick up all the pieces. Now that's not the experience of women and it's not the experience of many men as well these days; and it doesn't take into account the normal patterns of life which involve people getting sick, yourself getting sick, whatever. So work, the way work [is] conceptualised doesn't really take into account the normal flows of human life and the normal incidents within human life and doesn't really take into account how much most working people need to be involved with that. There are still some who have got somebody to pick up all the pieces for them but it is a smaller minority now. (Researcher, Melbourne) (Interview 21, p14)*

In an attempt to achieve a more successful work life balance, some married academics interviewed reversed traditional family roles. A female career academic who became the family's principal breadwinner was encouraged to do so by her university's policies for the promotion of women in the workplace. Unfortunately the university's positive discrimination policies for the promotion of women were ineffectual and the female academic was left with feelings of guilt that she had made the wrong decision. The analysis of the interviews

indicates that traditional gender roles in the family can affect the success of women in balancing family and work.

The following comments from two female career academics, one from the University of Melbourne and one from Monash University, articulate key aspects of this issue:

***... everyone has to deal with work life balance ... but there is this added thing on women that you should be putting a home first. There've been times in my life when my husband has been the active parent. There was a time when I resigned my job ... I spent the next year being a full time mum, [my spouse] was the sole bread-winner, he was enough for both of us and I was having a good time; that's considered normal. But at times when we moved to Australia and [my spouse] doesn't have a job, I have a job that pays well and the kids need a certain thing, that's considered unnatural and weird. (Urban Studies Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 15, p13)***

***Monash had won an award for, as an employer of choice for women. But it's a self-electing award, you know the university puts itself in, and they were discussing that; and so I brought up the fact, well how come we have the deputy, one of the high up people in the faculty making these statements to early career researchers. And not only is that a problem in itself but if you read Monash's what's called diversity and inclusive policies, there's one whole document on women that talks about the difficulties for women, particularly with children, because when they go home they can't ignore the kids and the husband and that; and it just completely contradicted that. So I know for some of the female academics in our department, it is a real problem. (Law Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 2, p3)***

The analysis of the interviews supports the literature which argues men and women behave and are treated differently in the workplace and this can adversely affect their successful work life balance. Women take on a more nurturing role in the family and often this makes meeting workplace responsibilities more challenging. The university, often under pressure from the NTEU union, introduces policies that try to alleviate the pressure on women to balance their work and family commitments, but when these policies fail to deliver, the result is further anxiety. Sometimes these gender roles are the result of acquired values and at other times it's the workplace that makes work life balance more difficult due to increases in work intensification.

### **Common factors that to a lesser or greater degree affect work life balance.**

Apart from the five factors affecting work life balance – namely, flexibility of working hours, stage in life, gender, time management and work intensification – three further common factors have been identified that to a lesser or greater degree interacted with the previously

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identified work life factors. These common factors, namely personal characteristics, leadership and work related pressure, independent of the factors already discussed, may negatively impact on work life balance. These factors, apart from characterising the personal motivation of academics, also characterise the organisation with respect to leadership in the workplace and work related pressure. Personal characteristics and cultural differences influence academics' attitudes in relation to workplace change and their work ethic. Leadership characterises the organisation with respect to the role of unit managers and the university's strategic vision and the effect this has on academics' work life. According to Winter (2009) academics' alignment with university goals can lead to identity schisms. The extent of these schisms is based on the academic's willingness to separate their personal identity from that of the external corporate commercial image of the university. Finally, workplace pressure is the overarching effect of the outcomes of university strategic expectations of the workplace with regards to quality and efficiency.

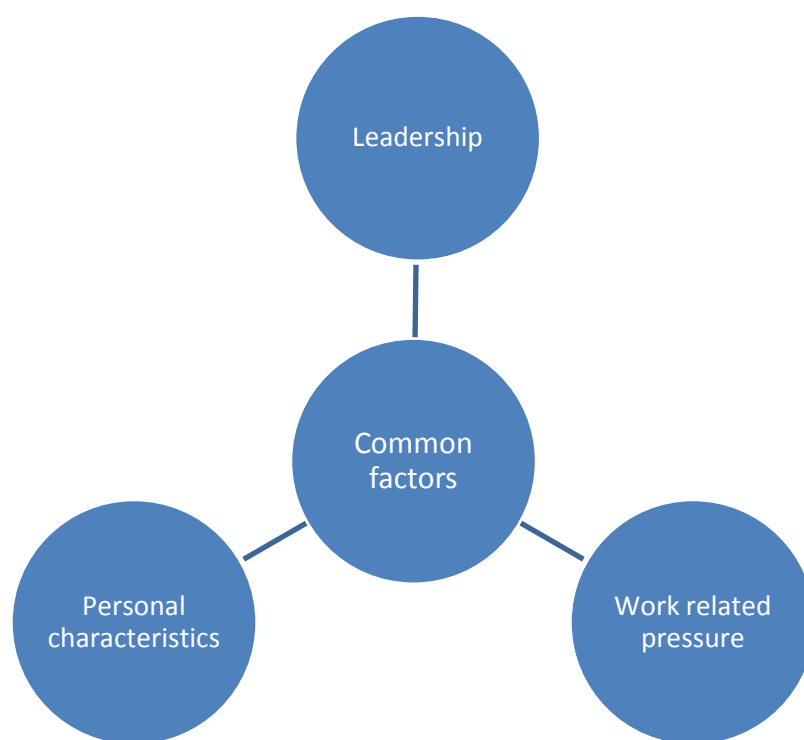


Figure 7.2 Common factors affecting work life balance

### **Personal characteristics**

The common factor, 'personal characteristics', is the first of the common factors affecting work life balance and is the driving force that energises people to continue to pursue their course of action. Analysis of the interviews has revealed that the personal characteristics



factor has four aspects, namely: attitude to change, cultural differences, work ethic and passion for the work.

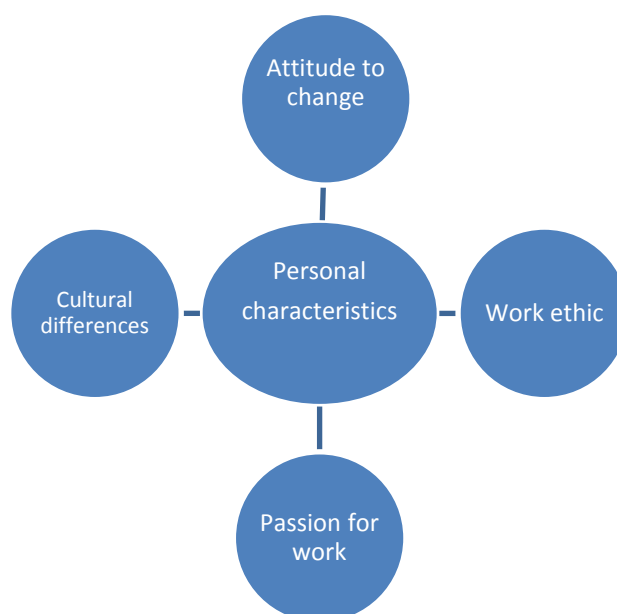


Figure 7.3 Four aspects of personal characteristics

### **Attitude to change**

An academic who has a more relaxed attitude to change, similar to the seasoned academic type, may have acquired skills to help them deal more readily with change. Survival in the workplace and the package of skills needed to realise this, is a coping mechanism adopted by academics, who are not afraid to compromise, and whose objective is the sustainability of their place at work.

For instance, a seasoned Monash academic noted that:

*... what I think is, as like a mature person, it depends on how you take it. **I find that some academics, they are very good at like the rearranging things according to their, you know their interests and what they want to do. But some are struggling.** I don't know whether it's this model or it's that normal, like you know, nature; **like some people can't accept changes and some people can.** I think it's very important to highlight the package of skills where you can survive in the workplace, doesn't matter where you are. (Management Assoc. Professor, Monash) (Interview 5, p11)*

## Work ethic

Others, similar to the academics with a vocation type, have a personal motivation that is driven by a heightened sense of professional obligation. Analysis of the interviews indicates that this idea stems from the notion that you must deal with the hand that you have been dealt and it is an individual's professional responsibility to successfully deliver what is expected of them.

For instance, a Monash academic with a vocation noted that:

*... because I didn't say that it's harder or not. **What I'm saying is that we have a position of trust and we have an obligation not to breach that trust. So if I have 500 students, I need to find a way how to deal with that.** If I have five students, then I'll deal with that cohort accordingly. So it's not a matter of 500 or 5000, it's a matter of **you have an obligation, the whole Institute is actually, they are trusting you and you have to find ways how to deliver in a good quality** ... (Accounting Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 16, p23)*

Further to this notion of taking personal responsibility, some academics are motivated by the challenge to do more and so increase their energy levels to meet the challenge. The increase in energy levels though may come at the expense of what might be otherwise be considered leisure time.

A University of Melbourne academic with a vocation commented that:

***... a high energy level is a pretty good substitute for brains and rose to pretty high levels,** you do things. So that all those things were there and alright, it's a modest statement I'm sure of it, but if you talk to lots of people like me, I'm sure their reactions would be the same as mine. Oh of course there's time left over. If there's not stay awake another ten minutes and do it. (Accounting Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 19, p15)*

Universities create academic workloads to meet certain minimum standards, such as the need to publish in top level journals there are still many academics, who do a lot more than the minimum requirements. Academics, similar to those with a vocation, who have a strong work ethic exercise this autonomy and adjust their work schedules and environment, with the aid of technology, to spend more time working in their discipline area.

For example, two Monash academics with a vocation noted about personal work ethic that:

***... there are two aspects of workloads ... One is the institutional required workloads; another is self-motivated workloads.** You could work in the environment where there is no*

requirement, you can just take it easy and everyone takes it easy but **you yourself work like mad because you like the work, for no other reasons.** (Engineering Professor, Monash) (Interview 10, p2)

... it's not fundamentally driven by the university or by the things that ... **I think it's more than my personality, it's what is ultimately attractive about working in a university, that you have got some control over when you work and how you work and technology has made it easier.** (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 26, p5)

### **Passion for work**

The healthiest form of personal drive is to be guided by doing something you find satisfying. The interview analysis indicates that academics who enjoy their work, whether it is teaching or research, find it easiest to cope with change. Of course, the workplace circumstances of the individual academic need to be supportive and provide the requisite resources for the academic to do their work. Many academics tolerate difficult circumstances in order for them to pursue their passion, and so when the university is supportive and provides the requisite resources, there can be no greater satisfaction for a dedicated academic.

A passion for research can lead to high output of research papers which in turn, attract support from the university, as the following comment from two University of Melbourne academics with a vocation shows:

**I enjoy research now whereas in the early days it was something that you basically needed to do ... when I published I'd send something off to a journal and then until I heard something back I'd think, oh good that's the research done. Whereas now I've got, always got two or three things that I'm writing on and I'm anxious to get started on the next paper. So it's been a, it's sort of a slow burning love affair that probably in the last five or six years I've just, the penny has dropped about research and I love it. But it's taken me that long.** (Law Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 23, p8)

**... If you were really really good at research like Melbourne and ANU, and to a degree Monash and some others, you'll get so much funding coming your way that you'll be able to manage with comfort. But if you're not, If you're at the other end of the spectrum, then life is hard.** (Management Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 8, p15)

Workplace satisfaction and being able to pursue a discipline which defines an academic's vocation is a very powerful motivator. Those academics, as indicated by the analysis of this research, who have found their life's passion in academia, are most likely to tolerate changes in their workplace and achieve a successful work life balance. The marrying of an

academic's work commitments and personal goals celebrates a positive, productive approach to work and leads to a healthier work life balance.

The comments made by the following University of Melbourne academics show this:

*... I always thought I'd be a good teacher and from my first experience of going in front to of a class it was like this wonderful sense of ahhh, this is me ... very different from being a lawyer ... every second you were writing down what you're doing and what bill, what file that can be billed against and just awful, just awful. (Law Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 23, p7)*

*... to coming here where I would describe it as pure teaching. No yard duty, no report writing, no parent contact, kids are here by choice or you have much more leverage. Hey, if you don't want to come to lectures, don't come. You know, and so all those issues. Yeah, to me this is a dream job. (Accounting Lecturer, Melbourne) (Interview 27, p5)*

### **Cultural differences**

Those academics who share another cultural background apart from Australian have an additional dimension added to their personal drive. The research has identified this dimension to include a desire to succeed in spite of difficult odds, a heightened sense of community responsibility and a unique culturally based work ethic. The desire to succeed against the odds stems from a strong desire to not be disheartened or have one's objective circumvented by circumstances beyond a person's control.

For instance, a Monash academic with a vocation remarked that:

*... so being like a female immigrant, I call it like triple disadvantage. Number one is like being an immigrant, being female immigrant, being a female immigrant from a developing country; so that's what we call in the literature triple disadvantage, so I've got that. (Management Assoc. Professor, Monash) (Interview 5, p15)*

A strong commitment to community can be another powerful motivator. The research indicates that those academics, who have chosen to be deeply linked to their community have done so in an effort to wed their research and their cultural identity. An academic's drive is doubly fuelled because the research is not only elevating their research profile, but it also raises their profile in their community.

The following comment by a Monash academic with a vocation supports this issue:

*... my research is community based, so therefore I'm very strongly connected to my Sri Lankan immigrant community here, so whatever I do it goes to like, directly goes to like my community. It gives me a little bit like, you know, the motivation to carry on ... I always feel that I'm connected and my research and my projects provide me like an excellent opportunity to be connected. (Management Assoc. Professor, Monash) (Interview 5, p16)*

The amount of time academics spend on work related activities takes away from the time they would spend with their family. Those academics interviewed for the research from Chinese backgrounds share a unique cultural characteristic in that time away from the family may be interpreted as bringing honour or prestige to the family. Precious time away from the family may be considered to be a reflection of the important or powerful position the academic holds at the university. What is significant and motivating is that the academic may feel less awkward about being away from the family if they feel they have the family's tacit support for the work they are performing. It is interesting to note also that the research has revealed that the work ethic in China is different from the West. A devotion to work is considered an honourable activity with a higher status than leisure.

This view point is reflected in the following comments from two Monash academics from Asian backgrounds.

*... In China I shall say people seem to live for work, not work for live. Because in that society, if you have a job, if you work hard, if you can't see your family members, people will think, oh you have got very important job; you know you are an important person. You could receive more respect and also your family members normally will not complain. (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 9, p3)*

*The family's support is very, very important. I think that is also culture-related. In the culture where I came from, what I was doing in the last many many years, it was regarded as a good thing, it was regarded as a respectable profession and it is highly respected by your family members, relatives and community; and therefore, it is also part of the motivation, you feel respected, you feel ... supported. (Engineering Professor, Monash) (Interview 10, p15)*

## **Leadership in the workplace**

Leadership, both on a departmental and institutional level, is the second common factor affecting work life balance. In the past academics were more involved in the decision making process in their workplace and always had the counsel of their colleagues to turn to for support. The research has indicated that the cumulative changes referred to in the literature

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chapter, relating to the decision making process for managers has moved from a traditional collegial to a more managerial approach. This has resulted in departmental managers taking on the responsibility of implementing the governance and operational policies handed down by the university's senior management team. Unit managers have to conform to Key Performance Indicators, which are derived from the university's business model. Although it is not uncommon for the senior management vision of any organisation to slowly dissipate, as it moves down the ranks, it is incumbent on the departmental manager to act as a conduit for the effective delivery of the message. If the institutional vision of the university is not accepted, then some academics may choose to ignore it and continue on their own way, but this would depend on the tacit support of their manager.

The relevance of the strategic policies of the university to direct academic work is captured by a Monash academic who says that:

***... I think the vision of the leaders, and I speak very specifically, are not meaningful for everyone in an organisation. So there'll be lots of lecturers who do a wonderful job, academic staff do a wonderful job, but whatever we're ranked third in the group of eight or first or eight, I don't think it matters one iota to them. (Management Senior Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 25, p17)***

The supportive actions of managers and the way they wish to interpret senior management directives for the other academics in their unit is significant in creating the kind of workplace environment which allows everyone to get on with what they consider to be important.

This positive management style is described in the following comments by a University of Melbourne academic who states that:

***... I mean it depends on people in managerial roles around you of course, I think it's too easy for us to forget the importance of who our managers are in and around academic units. So I think the wrong person in the wrong job can have a splintering effect. That's not my experience here. So the people in managerial roles that I've experienced have been very supportive, they allow you to get on with your job, create an environment that allows you to do that, expectations are high, and you get on with it. (Accounting Senior Lecturer, Melbourne) (Interview 18, p22)***

The research indicates that if the unit manager takes a more rigid approach to the implementation of university policy, which can occur if managers get incentives for successful completion of their KPIs, then this can have a serious effect on other academics under them. The climate of an academic's work environment is most likely set by their

immediate unit manager due to decision making becoming more centralised and no longer devolved to the operational level.

This situation is captured by a University of Melbourne academic who noted that:

*... I'm not young, I've worked in other areas, I've moved in and out of academia so I haven't progressed up the greasy pole so much. **But the senior people here are very good in providing opportunities and mentoring and support and so on. That is not the case in all parts of Melbourne, there are some professors who basically run sweatshops where they keep people at low levels, get them working very long hours but don't really provide them with development opportunities.** (Researcher, Melbourne) (Interview 21, p12)*

Those academics who are most vulnerable are the ones most susceptible to the whims of their unit managers, whilst others who are more confident in their work space due to their status or experience are less likely to be adversely affected.

Those academics who are only focused on their work, similar to the vocational type, may find ways of shutting out workplace demands and only focus on what they consider to be important, as the following comment made by a University of Melbourne academic suggests:

*... fifteen years and twelve heads of department. There were many years where I was going through my annual performance reviews where the person I had set my objectives for was not the person who was reviewing my performance. It's only been in the last few years ... where there's been a bit more continuity. **So what I'm saying to you is that to some extent the heads of department and deans haven't really mattered to me ... I've just found a way of doing my stuff and I've always been like that ...** (Management Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 6, p20)*

Paradoxically, although the university is very reliant on unit managers disseminating policy to those at the operational level, the research has shown that the university has a very poor record in choosing managers that are able to do this effectively. A possible reason for this may be because unit managers are simply academics in the guise of managers and academics have a reputation for being opinionated and so expect to be included in decision making processes.

For example, a University of Melbourne academic noted, with regard to managerial competence that:

***... part of the problem has been because of the fact that universities are very inefficient, like most organisations, at selecting good leaders. We've got some leaders***



*in the organisation, I'm talking about academic leaders now, and not just in management, you'd think in management they'd be better but they're not. (Management Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 17, p6)*

### **Pressure in the workplace**

The third common work life factor is pressure in the workplace. Pressure affects academics differently and this is reinforced by the analysis of the interviews. Some academics have the requisite package of skills to cope with pressure whilst others are more adversely affected by this phenomenon. In all cases the academics interviewed for the research admitted that over recent years there has been a steady increase in pressure in the workplace. This pressure again results from the increase in student numbers, increased demands in research and publications and increased demands in administration. Where in the past it was a choice how many hours an academic chose to work, in the contemporary university workplace the choice has become an expectation. As a result of this change it is those academic who are not used to working over the average 40 hours per week, who are feeling the greatest pressure, and this is having an effect on their work life balance.

This issue of work related pressure and what constitutes the requisite number of hours to comfortably complete one's work is reinforced in the following remarks by Monash academic who states:

***The question I guess is what were those balances to start with? Were they ... If they were appropriate to start with and they've had to change, well that suggests that's a negative but perhaps there was too much discretion or slackness in the system before so having to change, may not necessarily be a bad thing. So I can only talk specifically for myself and I would do many many more hours than the standard 40 hour week, but that's my choice. I suppose the fundamental question is could I deliver on my expectations without doing more and that's probably the pressure that many academics feel, that they don't have that choice to deliver on the expectations, they have to do more than what would be in their standard 38.5 hour week. So most of my research would be done at home, if I have an opportunity to do that. (Accounting Professor, Monash) (Interview 22, p8)***

Academics interviewed commented that the flexibility that they once enjoyed with respect to their work schedule is now becoming increasingly more challenging to achieve and there is a greater burden on them to organise their time management to accommodate the work intensification generated by the business model. All academics interviewed for the research

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were conscious of the changes made to their work environment, but they responded differently depending on their gender, stage in life and ultimately their personal store of coping mechanisms. Whatever their store of coping mechanisms, the workplace changes has been a major causal effect in transforming the sustainable work life balance of academics.

The issue of increased workplace pressure is addressed in the following comments made by Monash and University of Melbourne academics who noted that:

***When I began my career, there was much less pressure in terms of time and in terms of the sorts of things that you were required to do. So in other words, it was a much less pressured job, there was much less administration. Comparatively speaking, there was less teaching, classroom sizes were smaller. There was more time to carry out research work and to pursue research based interests. So I suppose what I'm really saying is, it was a much less pressured job, really for the first 20 or 25 years than it has become say since the late 1980s and early 1990s, I've noticed a change since that particular period.*** (Law Professor, Monash.) (Interview 1, p3)

*How do these strategic pressures ... you know **the glutted market, the demand that more money be raised through fee income and more money be raised through research income ... how does this sort of hit people?** And there's not a simple answer ... **ten years ago a lot of universities did not function like this; nowadays they all do, there's nowhere to hide.*** (Management Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 8, p21)

In the past there was little work related pressure and as a result the international standing of Australian universities was low. This issue needed to be addressed, particularly in the light of universities needing to upgrade their brand image to compete for students on an international stage. The pressure on academics to publish, as indicated by the research, in selected international journals had a twofold effect. Firstly it was a measure of the university's international standing but secondly it was used as a measure of the academic performance for tenure or promotion.

This focus on research output is noted by two Monash academics who made the following remarks:

***... academic strengthening ... seems to be based a lot around the quantification of academic work, and although the ERA ranking system's now been abolished, all of those rankings are relevant for us now as performance measure objectives. And I think that, definitely adds to the pressure ...*** (Law Assistant Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 4, p5)

*Monash is in a bit of a kind of research, research, research, so we can keep our kind of G8 thing and I think they're very keen to get rid of people that aren't producing research output ... **there is additional pressure by being a G8 university.** (Law Assistant Lecturer, Monash) (Interview 3, p25)*

The increased number of students brought its own pressures. Academics had to contend with spending more time to grade assignments and exams. More students, particularly internationals, meant there was an increased responsibility on academics to ensure that the special needs of these students namely, English language skills and pastoral care need were being met.

The issue of students with special needs is addressed in the following remarks by Monash academic:

*... the changes to student demographics and how that impacts on you is that the **pastoral care** that I really think international students need, **there's a lot more pressure on you as an academic staff member to provide that.** (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 20, p 2)*

In an effort to distribute the number of hours in the day to try and address work commitment and life balance there was an increasing danger that quality was going to be compromised. The balancing was left to the academic who had to measure quality delivery with the student teaching and unit evaluations.

The issue of balancing quality and expediency is addressed in the following comments by University of Melbourne academics:

*I mean it's not like we're working in a coal mine, it's not like we face the dangers that many people do at work. And I guess one of the issues is some of the work, I mean it can take, **you can do it in this much time or you can do it in that much time and I guess the question is how much quality's lost by doing things much more quickly.** Sometimes cutting corners doesn't matter; sometimes I think it does. (Researcher, Melbourne) (Interview 21, p12)*

*... I'm in a particular situation where I've got a lot of research grants that have to be fulfilled, it's not that sort of relentless pressure that's the issue, not so much that there's someone saying so and so's not doing enough. No-one's saying that about what I do. **The issue is not having enough time, not having enough hours in the day to actually do it, that's the point.** (Research Assoc. Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 24, p13)*

## **Summary**

This chapter detailed the five factors affecting work life balance that were identified from the research and the accommodation and adoption strategies employed by academic to deal with these. These factors were flexible working hours, stage in life, gender, time management and work intensification. The impact of each of these factors measures the extent to which academics are able to take control of their work life balance. The recent workplace changes in Higher Education resulted in academics finding it more challenging to retain the autonomy they once had in the workplace. A flexible work schedule provided academics with more options to meet work and family commitments, particularly for those with young families. The work schedule flexibility that academics once knew is being slowly eroded and replaced with an expectation that better time management skills are more likely to aid academics in their efforts to deal with the work intensification of the contemporary workplace. The chapter also identified an additional three common work life factors. These were personal characteristics, leadership and workplace pressure. These factors magnify the workplace environment to include environmental causes that impact on the personal drive of academics. The leadership qualities and strategies of unit managers play a formative role in shaping successful work life balance. A good supervisor, as was quoted in the research, can make a great deal of difference to lessening work related pressure; a bad supervisor can exacerbate problems. Regardless of supervisor, though, work intensification and not having enough hours in the day to complete work is an increasing stressor of the contemporary workplace.

## **Chapter Eight: Discussion**

### **Introduction**

The previous four chapters on the findings explored the central themes of the thesis. The themes were transformational change, underpinned by an evolving university business model which over time affected the nature of academic work, and altered academic work life balance. Each of these themes was analysed, in the light of the data, not only to reveal what characterised them individually but also to see how they were connected to each other. The findings that emerged from the analysis of the interviews was that key areas of academic work, teaching and students, collegiality, research, technology and administration were most prone to change over time. It also emerged from the interviews that how well academics coped with the evolving nature of their work was reflected in the typology, which characterised them as a seasoned, a vocational or a new academic. The theme of work life balance was also analysed in the light of the data, to break it down to its component parts. It emerged from the data that there were five factors that characterised work life balance, namely: flexibility of working hours, time management, stage in life, gender and work intensification. These five factors influenced the accommodation and adoption strategies employed by academics to deal with their work life balance. Further to these five factors three more common factors were identified from the research that affected work life balance. These three additional common factors were: personal characteristics, leadership and work related pressure.

Further to these factors, the gradual government policy changes that were introduced by successive governments in order to help restructure the Australian economy and make it more globally competitive contributed significantly to the change process. These changes included the deregulation of financial markets and taxation reform, the Structural Efficiency Principle and, in particular, the Industrial Relations Commission ruling that universities should implement performance appraisal systems. These policy reforms sought to align university priorities with those of government and so gradually impelled universities to become more market oriented, ultimately affecting the working conditions and work life balance of academics. An overview of the data revealed the close inter-relationship of the changes to each of the themes which gradually emerged over the 30 years of the shift from a traditional public university to the neoliberal model.

The objective of this, the discussion chapter, is to evaluate the findings and analysis of the research with the extant literature. The first part of the chapter re-visits the definition of

transformative change that was presented in the Literature Review, which examined the Thelen and Mahoney (2010) argument that transformative change not only results from abrupt, wholesale breakdown, but also from an incremental, endogenous shift in thinking. The evolving temporal context, which is central to understanding Thelen and Mahoney's (2010) definition of transformational change, is used to explain the institutional change that affected the Australian university sector. The second part of the chapter compares the findings of the thesis with respect to the effect that the changes, over the last three decades, have had on academics' work life balance.

The thesis takes for granted that the academics interviewed, who come from two of the most prestigious universities in Australia, are representative of the views of other academics and the agents that affect change in these universities are typical of the change agents that affect other universities.

## **Part 1**

### **Incremental transformative change**

As identified in the Literature Review, transformational change requires a basic shift in attitudes, beliefs and cultural values (Bartunek 1988; Chapman 2002). Thelen and Mahoney (2010) add that this transformational change need not only occur as a result of a single wholesale act, but as a result of slow incremental changes. The analysis in the literature chapter, of the growing concern of policy makers with the competitiveness of the Australian economy, and concern over the growing cost of universities with the expansion of the number of students, were part of a complex chain of events that led to major change in the institution of the public university. This thesis sought to further explore this phenomenon of institutional change to universities by seeking the opinions and experiences of those academics that had firsthand experience of these changes over the last three decades. Although the experiences of each of the research participants are unique, their experiences are reflected in the literature on change to universities. There are many accounts in the literature which describe changes such as, the gradual increase in student numbers and growing commercialisation of universities since the 1980s and the Dawkins report on Higher Education (Bellamy et al. 2003, Bentley et al. 2013b; Andersen et al. 2002). However, these accounts do not necessarily grasp the complex and contested change of events that cumulatively led to the transformation of Australian universities. These changes also resonate with the 'drift' change model that is presented by Thelen and Mahoney (2010), in the sense that gradual change has caused universities to drift from their traditional objectives which were governed by scholarship and research, to being market driven. The changes affected the core work in which academics were engaged, namely teaching, administration

and research, as well as contributed to a major shift in attitudes, beliefs and cultural values of universities as organisations. Furthermore, the changes were consistent with the neo-liberal ideologies prevalent since the 1980s to the present, which heavily relied on competitive markets in the allocation of resources (Argy 2003).

The three main areas of change identified in chapter four of the findings, namely teaching and students, administration and technology and research and collegiality, were each subject to incremental change over the past three decades. Whereas students in the past were passive learners, the growing emphasis on teaching quality to attract students, increased the students' power in the classroom and status in the university (Ryan 2005; Biggs 2005). They morphed over time from being the quiet recipients of higher learning to the arbiters of what constituted a good learning experience. Students became empowered through student feedback surveys, which turned them into active learners who had a veto on teaching delivery (Ryan 2005; Biggs 2005). The incremental cultural shift, from being an elite place of learning to a commercial enterprise inaugurated a new regime for universities that saw their traditional values and mores being converted to commercial key performance indicators. The new funding models, driven by neo-liberal policies necessitated the dramatic increase in student numbers and hence not only were academic staff and student ratios a causal link leading to a deterioration of working conditions of academics, but also of quality education and research at Australian universities (Rainnie et al 2013).

Traditional attitudes to research and collegiality were also gradually transformed over time from one that was discipline driven to one that was measured on productivity. Quality of research output, incrementally became the measure of research and affected relationships with colleagues. Unless an academic was able to produce the requisite amount of research at their particular level, they would be censured and feel threatened in their position. The research culture had changed over time to become more strategically directed to the extent that academics were encouraged to form productive partnerships to maximise research output, rather than casual relationships based on intellectual interest. According to Connell (2013) neo-liberal policies have narrowly focused research to benefit corporate or organisational interests and not scholastic or pedagogic objectives.

Technology, over the past three decades, has undoubtedly played a significant part in all aspects of life and work and the work environment of universities is no exception. The efficacy of technology though has a paradoxical effect in that sometimes where it is introduced with the intention of creating greater efficiencies, it has the opposite effect. Given this quality, technology which was introduced in universities to improve administrative efficiency, and to increase cost effectiveness, has in fact cost the university more in terms of



training and the loss of sensitivity to human issues. Gomis-Porqueras et al. (2011) comment that new technologies introduced with the best intentions, such as recording lectures, can still have adverse outcomes, such as decreasing the number of students attending lectures with a negative impact on the learning process.

### **Power transition**

The nature of political coalitions and conflicts are critical to understanding the changes to institutions. In order for an institution to achieve sustainability it would need to arrive at workable synergies with external, socio/economic demands and its internal organisational structure. Thelen (2004) posits that an institution's forum lies in the multiple forces that come together to drive the institution's strategic direction. Over the past three decades Australian universities have evolved in a particular way in order to arrive at a destination which they believe will provide the right climate for their sustainability. To add to the complexity of the situation, universities are like massive hulks entering unknown waters, and so changes in direction are slow and incremental, and whose effect is not fully realised until a lot of time has passed. The legislative changes, influenced in part by neo-liberal ideologies, which were first introduced in the late 1980s ultimately led, over three decades, to universities being transformed from their traditional, collegial work culture to one characterised by managerialism and business accountability. The effects of this change are only now, three decades later, beginning to be fully realised.

The research findings, detailed in chapter four are reflected in the literature which describes universities as being adversely impacted by the neo-liberal policies imposed on them which led to academics suffering increased stress and reduced work life balance (Bellamy et al. 2003; Bentley et al. 2013b; Marginson 2000; Comodromos & Ferrer 2011). Change management style has had significant impact on employee motivation, morale and workplace freedom and has led to gradual changes in the power structures of universities. The collegial management style, which has been replaced with a more managerialist style, has had a serious impact on the contemporary working environment of most academics, and is apparent in the findings of this thesis. The managerialist style of governance imposed on universities as described by Anderson (2006) is one which would be more likely to be found in the private sector rather than in the public sector. This change is manifested in the greater focus on accountability, the development of market orientation and emphasis on greater efficiency and resultant productivity.

The research findings in chapter four detail the gradual cultural change, from trust to control, and supports the extant literature on traditional power structure changes with respect to the professoriate (Olssen & Peters 2005). More than half of the project's participants were

professors or associate professors and it was not unexpected that these participants commented on the power shift from academics at their level to senior university bureaucrats. In the past, the closeness of professors to junior staff enabled a more pastoral relationship to develop. This closeness greatly assisted with the mentoring, nurturing and assistance of junior staff with their career development. It was also admitted by professors, who were interviewed that the mentoring of the past was successful because it was in a climate of trust. The contemporary workplace culture was seen as senior university management bureaucrats replacing the traditional role of professors, creating such a divide where there is little shared empathy between management and frontline academics. According to Connell (2013) the growth in managerial power of Vice Chancellors and Deans encouraged entrepreneurial behaviour fuelled by corporate level salaries leading to a widening gap of levels of trust between staff and management. Campbell (2004) further posits that the entrepreneurial behaviour of institutional actors, in the case of universities, Vice Chancellors and their councils, results in incremental endogenous change that may become over time transformational. Howell et al. (2011) expands this notion by highlighting the complementarity of institutions and their leaders to reinforce each other, forming an interlocking that strengthens continuity. Minor incremental changes over long periods of time establish pathways that guide institutional actors to respond to new economic conditions (Howell et al. 2011).

### **Beyond path dependence**

In the Literature Review, Pierson's (2004) thesis of path dependence was explored. Pierson (2004) posited that once an institution had chosen a course of action it became locked into that pathway and so became less inclined to consider other courses of action. The result of this definitive course is a very strong emphasis on the institution's final choice of action as this has a serious bearing on its eventual sustainability. The institution's sustainability is tied with its decision making and the resultant increasing returns that are expected from the decision made. Pierson (2004) further posits that the social environment and the temporal context, in which decisions are made, are significant when attempting to understand the reasoning of different courses of events. The causal power of temporal connections, involving the sequencing and time frame of significant events, provide a deeper understanding of the causal social mechanisms of social change. Consideration of the temporal dimension of social and political processes allows research to go beyond an application of rational choice theory as a methodology for analysing certain social phenomenon (Jepperson 1996).

The Australian Higher Education Sector in the late 1980s had to respond to the neo-liberal policies of deregulation which governed the conduct of universities. The previous traditional model gradually began to fray, in response to these pressures and universities were required to become more accountable for the funds that they received and were encouraged to begin a new regime, where they would be responsible for generating an increasing percentage of their own funding. Universities were forced to redefine their traditional objectives and make choices about how they were to address the new neo-liberal regime. New business models were created and to use Pierson's (2004) terminology were 'locked into place'. The survival of the university was dependent on compliance with government legislation, and although the university did not have a historic tradition for generating its own funds, it had to address this issue as the gap in government funding could only be filled with funds generated by the university. The choices made by universities go beyond rational decision making; the choices made were in response to attitudes at the time and the social and economic events which unfolded in the 1980s through to the 2000s. In fact, the evolution continues to the present setting and is supported by the research findings where it is clear that universities have locked themselves into progressing with a business model that is changing their *raison d'être* and leading them to unfamiliar territories. University decision making is becoming more and more dependent on resource accountability and not on scholastic pursuits. The growing emphasis on economic accountability and financial sustainability has become the primary concern over recent decades. According to Connell (2013) the productivity metrics such as measures of research output, which have been imposed on universities to comply with neo-liberal accountability reforms, have been clumsy. Despite this, the new path dependence is set to continue with further attempts to measure performance with accompanying rewards and disincentives to steer the way. Traditionally universities were institutions that relied heavily on government funding and so did not need to be driven to seek financial autonomy. The time, when governments and society were prepared to subsidise the existence of universities for the common good continues to be undermined.

The research of Brian Arthur and Paul David (1994) was explored in the Literature Review and the notion of increasing returns or positive feedback could lead a business to lock itself into a course of action was introduced. Douglas North (1999) applied this research to the much more complex area of institutions and inferred that increasing returns or positive feedback could not only lead to inefficient institutional processes, but also that those institutions, which locked themselves into a course of action, would later find it difficult to disengage themselves. However, the shift from a traditional public university model to the neo-liberal model outlined in the literature chapter, obviously demonstrates that it is possible to disengage gradually from an existing path. As argued in the thesis a gradual shift from an

existing path is possible. This can occur if there is a major change in the political ideology, for example the movement towards neo-liberalism, and also if this is accompanied by a changing economic environment, like the focus on national competitiveness in the 1980s and increasing expansion in Higher Education. The temporal context is again significant here in understanding the course of action as short time frames can place greater pressure on decision makers to make final and seemingly irreversible decision. The decision by the then Education Minister, John Dawkins, in 1988, to begin charging students for a percentage of the cost of their tertiary education, because of the life-time financial benefit of such education and the perceived inequity of taxing citizens who have not received a higher education to pay for those who did, is an example of such a decision. Pierson (2004) builds on this research by considering the phenomenon of collective action and the 'winner take all' outcome of political contests. However, in the current political context in Australia with Independents having the balance of power in the Senate, government neo-liberal policies to deregulate fees have been thwarted. Definitive decisions are considered to be stronger and more sustainable when compared to ambivalent compromises (Thelen 2010).

The road to path dependence which was chosen by universities as a response to the neo-liberal inspired government regulations with respect to university funding, has strong parallels with the literature and the research of Pierson (2004), North (1999) and Arthur and David (1994). The short time frame of political parties' terms led them to make decisions which cumulatively locked universities into a course of action that was continually reinforced by further government policies. There was never enough time to manoeuvre, negotiate or compromise to arrive at an alternative solution. Further to the pressure that universities were under to conform to government legislation, there was a growing competitive environment in the Higher Education Sector, prompted by government, which pitted one university against the other, when vying for innovative ways to increase their funding. Over a period of three decades the Higher Education Sector gradually and incrementally changed from an environment that was protected, passive and well nurtured to one that was increasingly competitive and highly preoccupied, not with academic interests, but with how to compensate for the decrease in government funding. According to Fredman & Doughney (2012), the neo-liberal change implemented through managerialist practice has significantly increased stress and depression levels of academics and the short term competitive thinking of university management that has been rewarded will be at the expense of critical, creative and long term planning.

### **Temporal sequencing of events and causal chains**

In order to fully comprehend the causal effects of events, it is apposite according to Aminzade (1992) to locate these events in relation to how and where they have interacted with other events at any particular point in time. Pierson (2004) posits that the timing and sequencing of events enriches our understanding of these events. Over long periods of time the temporal intersection of these events may be significant and as Tilley (1995) posits an understanding of when events occur can have a formative effect on how they happen. The temporal dimension and the accumulative effect of slow moving events can lead to significant causal chains that may result in transformative change. The time frame for social change varies, according to Abbot (1998), and so consideration needs to be given to the transformative effect of slow moving events that have cumulative effects that build thresholds or trigger causal chains. Granovetter (1978) and Schelling (1978) refer to the long term cumulative process that gains momentum to finally amass to a critical point as the 'tipping point phenomenon'. An understanding of the causal chains that develop slowly and incrementally over long periods of time enriches rational choice analysis and offers a macro perspective of transformative change.

Three decades ago, when the Higher Education Sector began its institutional metamorphosis, no one predicted that it would change into the contemporary competitive business entity it is today (Symes 1996). The change was slow, incremental and steered by short term decision making that was essentially based on sustainability. The business decisions made by universities, the effects of which are detailed in chapter four, had no precedent and were framed by government expectations to meet funding shortfalls. Universities had little past experience in entering competitive markets and the business models that were created did not foresee the impact of the causal chains that resulted from the growing student population, an ageing academic staff and university governance (Trampusch 2005). The three decade time frame witnessed students gradually morphing into customers, the development of an ageing academic workforce dealing with work intensification and increased workplace stress, and university administrative processes becoming computerised in a naïve effort to cut costs. The cumulative effect of three decades of decisions based on funding shortfalls and the causal chains leading to the commercialisation of universities, university governance more reminiscent of the private sector and clumsy productivity measures like the RAI and workloads models, has resulted in universities focusing more on business models and key performance indicators than on academic scholarship. Whether the cumulative process has reached a critical mass or, as Granovetter (1978) and Schelling (1978) refer to it, a 'tipping point', is a point in contention, but what can be safely assured is that the pathway ahead has been set, reversal is not

easily conceivable and the full impact of it in the future is unknown. The latest Coalition government higher education reforms, which advocate full market based student funding, seems to indicate a 'tipping point' may be imminent, and may herald an acceleration of the policies of deregulation (Pyne 2014).

Rational choice analysis does not paint a complete picture of the complex, overlapping interests which inform in the decision making process that universities have undergone. In an effort to satisfy government demands universities structured business models that created causal chains that impacted on the students and academic staff. The increase in student population provided more students with an opportunity to enter university but did not necessarily take into account the student's requisite skills to cope with academic study. The changing student cohort and their wider range of capabilities added to the onus that academics had to create a positive student learning experience. The commercialisation of higher education that has developed over time has created causal links which have resulted in the changed learning environment for students and the teaching delivery mode for academics. The collegial work environment of the past has been replaced with a managerialist style of control that is facilitated with the use of technology. Research activity in universities has become a vehicle for increasing the university's profile and promoting their branding, where once this activity and selection of journal publication was the academic's choice. Where in the past, the purpose of university administration was to assist academics in their research and teaching responsibilities, the contemporary university has been converted into a massive bureaucracy, facilitated by technology, whose objective is the auditing and governance of university operational processes to ensure compliance with government regulations.

## **Part 2**

### **The commercialisation of universities**

The commercialisation of universities evolved over a period of three decades and, although universities became empowered with more autonomy over generating their own funding, the new business paradigm steered by neo-liberal government policies, led universities into unfamiliar territories. Traditionally, public universities were not expected to behave as business enterprises and so began gradually to adopt the same tightly controlled financial governance procedures that were characteristic of neo-liberalism (Rainnie et al. 2013). As discussed in the shift to the neo-liberal model in the first part of the literature chapter, financial accountability became the driving force for decision making, and often long term scholastic endeavours were compromised for more immediate financial returns. The appointment rather than the election of academic leaders reinforced a managerialist style of



control that gradually, over time, re-focused the strategic vision of the university. Leaders were guided by key performance indicators and bonuses to adhere to the new university business imperatives and academics had to get used to abiding by rigid managerial directives. Those who had the weakest defences were the most exposed to the effects of change, and the growing culture of surveillance and preoccupation with performance measurement marked rising levels of bullying and harassment (Cox & Goodman 2005; Thorton 2004; Shahjaha 2011). McWilliams (2004) notes that with the change in workplace culture and the feeling of disempowerment and isolation that it invited, universities witnessed a steady increase in stress among academics.

The neo-liberal policies that underpinned the commercialisation of universities, are reflected in the research findings. Many academics, who participated in the research, commented on the transformation of students from passive learners to active customers seeking value for their education dollar. The growing numbers of students, and the increased importance they had as generators of funding, made them at times, formidable customers to deal with. Students became active arbiters of what constituted a positive learning experience and university management had to attend to their assessments, as they became formative agents in building a quality brand to be marketed internationally. The power that students gained as a result of becoming paying customers also affected university operational decisions with respect to which classes or courses were financially profitable to run. Research findings detailed in chapter four, revealed that universities were making strategic business decisions, on courses they were running, based on financial viability rather than on pedagogic merit. The marketisation of the Higher Education Sector has seen competition row between institutions, the monitoring of consumer/student patterns of behaviour and managerialism as the preferred style of governance. Connell (2013) posits that under neo-liberal market logic students are inclined to choose those courses which promise the greatest rewards on completion and so to keep in line with meeting consumer demands universities are making programming decisions that reflect popular choice rather than scholastic merit.

### **Students, teaching and the new learning environment**

The impact of the changes of the past three decades in universities has not only significantly affected students, but also their learning environment. More students are gaining access into university, but for most their study time has been curtailed, because they are spending more and more of their time at part time work in an endeavour to finance their tuition (Sappey 2005). In an effort to make the learning environment a friendlier experience, universities introduced technology based learning platforms to make learning unit/subject content



material more accessible to students. Over the past three decades technology has resulted in the gradual adoption of change in curriculum delivery to students. Online unit/subject delivery, the recording of lectures, the monitoring of students and the recording of results are all examples of how technology has changed the traditional learning environment in the contemporary university. Technology has altered the dynamics of the learning process and empowered students with the resources to map their own way through the learning experience. The role of academics is changing to that of teaching facilitator, the guide who provides students with the learning materials that will enable students in their own time to journey seamlessly through their education. Unfortunately technology has not proven to be the panacea that it was expected to be. While technology has made the learning environment more accessible to students, it has alienated students even further from the classroom and the academic, the two expert resources that are most able to identify and address problem areas. The teacher/student relationship that traditionally proved to be the most successful in the learning process is slowly being diminished. According to Gomis-Porqueras et al. (2011), the net effect on students' learning outcomes remains open to debate. In some instances technology in the classroom may benefit some students, but may adversely affect others. A generic application of technology in the hope that there will be a common benefit may hurt the reputation of the university and its quality delivery of courses.

The research findings in chapter four with respect to teaching and students provide detail of numerous instances that support the growing phenomenon of students not attending classes or lectures because they have clashing work commitments. These comments support the literature on this issue and provide further insight into this phenomenon. Specific details from the findings reveal that the issue isn't simply students not attending class, as this may not be so surprising, but that a particular cohort of student, namely the international full fee paying student, who can ill afford to be absent, are not attending because they need to work to pay for their tuition costs. Furthermore, those students who do attend classes not only have to contend with the demands of their course, but also the changing dynamics of the classroom. Issues dealing with the increasing number of multicultural students in class, reflecting disparate styles of learning further add to the increasing pressure for staff of the new learning environment. Academics are also expected to acquire new classroom management techniques to address common issues, such as the reluctance of some local students to include foreign students into their group work as they mistakenly believe the foreign students will adversely affect their group result. The full fee paying international students, whom universities have targeted, have proven to be the catalyst for change in the contemporary university. This group is a very important source of funding and so universities are prepared to listen to student demands, when making changes to the learning environment. Online

learning and technology learning platforms are a response by universities to try and provide a more accessible learning experience for students but, according to the findings in chapter four, student engagement through IT support does not always equate with student learning. Most academics go to great lengths to provide students with the essentials for being successful through the university's IT learning platforms, but however much is done it is never enough if students are the arbiters of what is expected. The research findings highlight the efforts that academics go to balance student demands with the quality requirements of delivering a learning unit. Academics are the ones caught in the middle between complying with the university's desire to satisfy their full fee paying students and maintaining professional quality standards. Achieving a balance of conflicting demands is challenging, when classes are increasing in size and international student cohorts come with language difficulties, and preferences for different learning styles, and when there is also increased pressure from the university to ensure unit pass rates are maintained at an attractive, marketable level (Winter & Sarros 2002; Winter, Taylor & Sarros 2000).

### **Bureaucracy and technology**

In an effort to become more professionally managed, universities have become more managerial in their style of management and more intensely bureaucratic. Technology has played a formative role in helping universities comply with auditing regulations, both for the government and for their own monitoring purposes. The expectation of university management was that technology would provide cost efficiencies, reduce duplication of work and provide more accurate accountability. The reality of the universities' efforts, though, has been that rather than technology reducing duplication and creating less stress, technology has led to work intensification (Jacobs 2004). According to Tight (2010) there has been an increase in time spent on university administration by academics over the past few decades. Inevitably the cost of a growing administrative bureaucracy has begun to impact on the new sources of income which are being generated from international enterprises. According to Ryan (2012), there will continue to be increased external and internal measurement, surveillance and control over universities and their academic workforce. Habermas (1984) describes rigid political and economic steering as the mechanisms of bureaucratisation and managerialism.

The research findings in chapter four on technology and administration support the literature and reveal the emergence of a growing administrative class, the members of which are not always empathetic with their academic colleagues. The preoccupation that administrators have with compliance and governance procedures, has not always been consonant with the pedagogic or research imperatives that drive academics. This dissonance in views leads to

impediments in work flow, frustrations and the creation of a poor working environment not sympathetic to academics. The worst case scenario is creation of a workplace culture where professionalism and trust have been replaced with bureaucracy and control. An increasing impetus for compliance and procedural governance has steered universities away from continuing to allow academics the autonomy and freedom they once had, to execute their professional duties. The traditional university core values of pedagogy and research are slowly being usurped by measurement and managerialism, resulting in the university's traditional *raison d'être* being challenged. The time that academics had in the past to spend on research and curriculum development is being eroded with the increase in administrative duties and compliance procedures. In triaging their workplace duties academics are continually prioritising administrative tasks to satisfy the university's managerialist demands. Failure to comply with the university's administrative demands, have as many consequences for academics as not complying with student demands for a more accessible and engaging learning environment. The final outcome is that academics suffer increased work intensification and have to sacrifice their work life balance to meet their ever increasing workplace priorities.

### **Workload models**

Australian universities created workload models in an effort to measure productivity and provide a method to account for academics' work in the three main areas of teaching, research and administration. Such models are used by universities as a productivity measurement to weigh the teaching, research and administration duties of academics. A full workload should reflect the typical allocation of 40 per cent on teaching, 40 per cent on research and 20 per cent on service to the university or administration (Dobele et al. 2010). It is rare that this allocation is achieved as an increase in research activity can lead to a decrease in time spent teaching or in administration. A teaching load can vary from 14 hours per week to no hours per week in some cases, as increased research activity can offset teaching load. Most of the academics interviewed find research to be the most rewarding aspect of their workload and so seek to spend more time engaging in this activity. The reality of the contemporary academic workplace, supported by the research findings of this project, is that mostly highly experienced, high profile academics are able to reduce their teaching commitments significantly to spend time on research. Most other academics find that there is an imbalance in the research teaching divide (Tight 2010). The more time spent teaching the less time there is to focus on research and so the avenue to increase research activity by reducing teaching is closed off. This circular dilemma creates a causal link with the workloads model and the causes of academics' burn out, stress and lack of motivation (McInnis 2001).

The pressure of teaching weighs heavily on academics; the need to consider curriculum issues, different levels of student capabilities and student success rates are some of the issues that academics need to address. The toll that is exacted from academics to achieve a successful learning environment for students does not leave them much time to pursue their research interests without creating further imbalance to their work life balance. The workloads models do not equitably treat the amount of time and effort that goes into teaching delivery. Issues such as the increasing number of international students, the multicultural classroom and disparate styles of learning, offshore teaching commitments, and the familiarisation with an e-learning technology are all heavily taxing commitments which take their toll on academics (Davis 2001). Increasing workload commitments and the increasing demands placed on academics, according to Hull (2006) and McWilliam (2004) may eventually lead to occupational health and safety risks.

The views of academics interviewed align closely with the research findings. Academics interviewed for the project point out the workloads model does not account for all the duties which academics are expected to perform and there is an amount of unaccountable or 'hidden' work that academics perform usually at their own expense. Apart from dealing with the changing dynamics of the contemporary university classroom, the impact of technology and international teaching allotments, not all administrative tasks that are completed by academics are accounted for in workload models. Unit/subject coordination, course coordination, and curriculum development are not entirely compensated for in workload models and so this situation can lead to the over loading of academics and work intensification. Work intensification can result from not taking into account all the different aspects of work which are associated with creating a successful learning environment for students. The timely grading of student work, time spent discussing individual learning issues with students and pastoral care of students not only have a direct effect on student learning but indirectly impact on the academic's performance measures which eventually impacts on promotion and career advancement. The cry that there is never enough time to complete all workload tasks echoes incessantly down the corridors of academia and the hackneyed management response that technology is the answer does not restore peace. Technology, although designed to help streamline processes and make work more efficient, requires time for the user to become familiar with the software let alone master it to get its full benefit (Anderson et al. 2002; Bexley et al. 2011; Moensted et al. 2012).

### **Productivity measures**

The current design of workload models in universities are not sophisticated enough to accurately measure the productivity of academics (Bentley et al. 2013). The blanket

approach that is used in current models is too crude to describe the teaching research nexus or measure academic behaviour and productivity. The nature of the work academics perform is highly diverse and differentiated and is not easily measured using scientific management measurement tools. The report into the effectiveness of the particular workload model used at Victoria University, Melbourne, as a productivity measure, conducted by Moensted et al. (2012), demonstrates that the model creates conflict between academics' professional values, their motivation for work and the university's management demands. The research findings identified a loss of control and individual autonomy of academics and increased pressures on time, workload and morale. Furthermore, the findings identified an increased burden of core academic tasks and lack of reward and recognition for teaching and research innovation (Moensted et al. 2012). If universities are to act strategically and demand greater productivity and control of its staff, they would need to find a workload model that better represented the professional objectives of academics (Coaldrake 2000). Current workload models do not accurately account for the increased administration duties which have been imposed on academics nor do they take into account the raised stress levels and frustrations experienced by academics whose time is continually being taken away from research (Anderson et al. 2002; Bexley et al. 2011; Hogan 2011).

Reactions to the university's workload models vary considerably and judging from the research findings of this thesis, can range from surrender and compliance or as Ryan (2013) describes it from zombification, to sophisticated 'game playing' as described in chapter five of this project. 'Game playing' is open to all levels of academics and relies on seemingly adhering to the rules, but not compromising one's beliefs. Other definitions from the research data, change the definition to mean being flexible with one's beliefs to the extent that you appear to be complying with university management expectations. The seasoned academics are those academics, who are most able to live with change. If they are academics in positions of authority they can play power games to create better working conditions for themselves. In this instance power can come from their reputation as high profile researchers, who are able to increase their research profile to offset their teaching load, or their power can come from threatening to take their reputation elsewhere. These academics share the same characteristics as the 'opportunists', described by Thelen and Mahoney (2010) as those who employ whatever possibilities exist within the existing system to achieve their own ends. Those academics, who are the most vulnerable to increasingly demanding workload models, are those with little positional power, no research profile and have little experience working in academia. These academics are usually early academics with young families, financial commitments and few assets that they can leverage in their negotiations for better working conditions. They are the ones most likely to comply with

university work expectations as they can ill afford not to. The only means for these academics to gain some leverage to improve their conditions is with promotion or tenure and that will only happen with compliance. There remains a gap in the literature with respect to 'game playing' as a coping mechanism used by academics to deal with workplace change. This thesis has planted a few seeds in this fertile ground for new research.

### **Research and teaching**

The workloads model that was introduced as a strategic tool by universities to aid compliance with new government funding requirements, has also resulted in the causal effect of placing a greater value on one particular aspect of an academic's work, namely research, and undervaluing others, teaching and administration. The value of teaching has over time become undermined and workload points that are gained in research can be used to offset an academic's teaching load. The efforts that are made by academics to create quality teaching environments are not rewarded in the same way as research and are often seen as expectations rather than grounds for special recognition (Moensted et al. 2012). The time and effort that academics put into student pastoral care and welfare, course coordination and the administration of the growing numbers of students in classes are also not recognised in the same way as research. The causal effect created by the research/teaching divide has changed the workplace culture of universities and has at times pitted one academic against another. Those who can comply with the university expectations with respect to research and can gain research grants, publish in university recommended high profile journals, and publish in areas that are promoted by the university are the ones most likely to benefit from better working conditions. Those academics who are not able to comply with university research requirements, because they wish to publish in journals other than those recommended by the university or wish to pursue research that isn't strategically promoted by the university, find themselves penalised with more teaching and as a result have less time to spend on any research.

### **Research as a performance measurement**

The university uses productivity metrics like the research active index (RAI) to measure the research output of academics. The RAI considers the higher education journals that are listed in the Excellence in Research Australia journal ranking system and so may not measure all the research that academics are involved in. There is great controversy amongst academics about which journals are listed, how they are ranked and the nationality or cultural significance of the journal. There are some disciplines, namely social sciences, that do not fare well with the listed journals rankings and there are some important, policy making government journals that are not listed at all. There is also the controversy that many of the



journals are either British or American and so do not have a strong interest in Australian case studies. The unit of measure for research, like the RAI, that is used by universities can have a causal effect of discriminating against some academics, resulting in restricted career paths, increased workload and increased work related pressure. The RAI was designed to quantify and measure the research output of academics but has failed to provide the necessary metrics or currency for accountability, to accurately measure this. Along with the workload model the RAI, with its points system has not been able to measure accurately or reward commensurately academics for the work they do. According to Bexley et al. (2011), less than one third of Australian academics believe they can effectively manage their workload and less than one half of them claim that their workload is not manageable.

The extant literature concords with the research findings in chapter four on the effects of the business model on research and collegiality. Universities have begun to place higher importance on research and are prone to giving research activity higher priority than teaching and administration. Universities are ranked according to the quality of their research output and so the higher the calibre of research the greater the possibility of attracting more ARC (Australian Research Council) grants or other government funding. The priority that the universities have is to attract funding from research councils or other government sources and so they will strategically manoeuvre the academic workforce to publish in areas that attract this funding. The universities' clear focus on attracting funding blurs the academics' vision to have a free and uninhibited research environment where academics pursue research and publish in journals that suit them. Many academics feel that the journal ranking system is unfair and is skewed to improving the international profile of universities and their funding shortfalls and not the research objectives of academics (Kwok 2013).

The research findings have also revealed that universities' drive to improve their international profile and government funding through compliance with the quality research guidelines they have been given, has a causal link with the dramatic change in research culture. Academics are encouraged to be more strategic in their alliances with other colleagues, and encouraged to choose to work with those who will improve their research output. Collegiality in research is slowly being replaced with strategic alliances based on measured output. Those academics that have a track record for quality research output will be in a position to choose who they will work with and will be sought out by those who wish to improve their profile. This may appear reasonable on the surface but the research findings reveal that new academics remain disadvantaged as they have no research profile and may never be chosen for collaborative research. New academics may even lack the invaluable



mentoring they need from experienced colleagues because inclusion of their contribution to a particular research study may mean a reduced research allocation for the research leaders. Paradoxically, where the university encourages research collaboration with strategic partners, those that do collaborate have to contend with the competitive rivalry that is caused by deciding whose name goes first on the research document. When the university has not made it clear whether there is a hierarchy of recognition in the order of appearance of names, a further divide amongst academics can occur making the notion of collegiality even more remote.

Traditionally academics had the freedom to publish where they thought their work would benefit the most. The changing research culture in universities has created a causal link with the steering of academics to publish in particular journals and in areas that the university has strategically chosen. For some academics who pursue action based research, as those in Urban Studies, the preference is to publish in journals that don't only have an academic appeal but have a broader audience appeal. These types of academics who have a strong allegiance to their discipline area may find that their research objectives are divided between publishing in university recommended journals that would be recognised for promotion or when getting tenure, and their objective to contribute to action based research. Personal motivation for research is a formidable driver for academics and so it would be highly productive for both academics and universities if their research objectives were aligned. If these objectives are aligned academics can be inspired, transformed and energised and the university can become the recipient of quality research.

### **Coping with change**

The changes that have occurred in the Higher Education Sector over the past three decades have been transformative and yet the resistance to change has been weak and generally reliant on individual withdrawal rather than organised action (Ryan 2003; Anderson 2008; Parker & Jary 1995; Wilmott 1995). Thelen and Mahoney (2010) discuss the 'drift' phenomenon, where inaction in response to environmental changes can result in drift and ultimately over time cause major institutional change. Academics do not have a history where it is common for them to become accountable to others, apart from their peers, for their performance, and so they are more inclined to confine their dissatisfaction about workplace changes to their trusted colleagues or resist involvement in performance measurement activities (Anderson 2008). Ryan (2013) describes the weak, survival mode resistance of academics to the workplace changes they have been subjected to as a form of zombification. The professoriate traditionally were the champions for other academics when wrestling university management for improved conditions, but in the contemporary university,

according to Barney (2010), not even this group is prepared to impose active resistance. The stance that the professoriate has taken is a pragmatic one, sharing the characteristics of Thelen and Mahoney's (2010) 'opportunists', where the cost of resistance is weighed against the uncertain benefits that may ensue. Retreat into a quiet world of survival and in action is the example that is set for other academic to follow (Barney 2010). According to Dill (1982), disempowerment from the autonomous control that academics once had over their work environment has resulted in a diminution of personal morale and personal alienation.

The way academics have chosen to cope with change is of particular interest to the research scope of this thesis, as there is a gap in the literature with respect to different coping mechanisms of academics when dealing with change. Chapter five introduced a typology of academics that described how each academic type coped with the change process. There was room in the extant literature to add the three types of academics – seasoned, vocational and new – to provide a more detailed account of the coping mechanisms of different academics. The coping mechanisms were drawn from the academic's stage in life, work experience and approach to 'playing the game'. A close examination of these three areas, in the light of the research findings, has revealed valuable insights into the coping strategies of different types of academics and so adds to the typology of change agents presented by Thelen and Mahoney (2010), thus contributing further to filling gaps in knowledge.

Seasoned academics share some of the traits of opportunists and parasitic symbionts as described by Thelen and Mahoney (2010). In their analysis of institutional change, Thelen and Mahoney (2010) regard opportunists as opposing the institutional status quo, although opportunists believe it is too costly to try to change the organisation's rules. Opportunists exploit existing possibilities in the prevailing system to achieve their self-interested ends. Parasitic symbionts, similar to opportunists, pursue their self-interests through gaps in compliance in the prevailing system, and as a result are more associated with 'drift', or the slow, long term neglect of institutional adherence to rules and practices. Although the typologies presented by Thelen and Mahoney (2010) refer to broad change, there are common elements which are shared with the patterns of academic response identified by the research of this thesis. Also, seasoned academics were the most dexterous at 'playing the game' as they had the most experience, the position of power to leverage negotiations and the least to lose. Given that most seasoned academics are at a stage in life where they do not have onerous family commitments, they can choose not 'to play the game' and leave full time employment with a lucrative financial package. This group of academics concords with those described in the literature as taking early retirement.

Vocational academics, given they are driven by their self-image and their commitment to their work, are often not interested in game playing. The sustainability of this group of academics is dependent on whether the work they do is income producing and falls within the strategic framework of the university. If this is not the case, these academics are often the victims of school closures and the target of redundancies. The sustainability of vocational academics is often dependent on how favourably the university viewed their discipline area. Vocational academics are not only scholastically but also emotionally involved in their discipline, and they take changes that affect their work personally. New academics are the ones who cope least well with their workload commitments. They don't have the experience or position of power to 'play games', they have the most onerous teaching load and they have the pressure of securing tenure, getting promotion and managing the growing number of casual staff. Given the tremendous workplace pressure that these academics have to endure, it is not surprising that the research findings concur with the extant literature in relation to the use of casual academic staff to camouflage the workplace realities that academics endure.

Although the typologies identified in the research are not particularly similar to those identified by Thelen and Mahoney (2010), there are some common elements. Seasoned academics may share common characteristics with mutualistic symbionts and opportunists in the sense that they act to promote their self-interest. The typologies identified by the research and Thelen and Mahoney's (2010) typologies add further insight into this area and can lead to a deeper understanding of it. The phenomenon of 'playing the game', which emerged from the research, also adds new insights to the extant literature. 'Playing the game' is a coping mechanism that is exercised by any academic who is able to read a workplace situation well enough to seemingly comply with what is required of him or her, and at the same time continue to exercise workplace freedom. There is a gap in the extant literature dealing with this interesting and engaging phenomenon, and the research of this project hopes to plant the seeds for further research in this fertile area of change management.

### **Retirement as a coping mechanism and workforce casualisation**

The ageing of Australian academics has resulted in a significant growth in casualisation of this workforce (Neumann & Larkin 2011; Sears 2003; Hugo 2005). The baby boomers of the 1950s are reaching the end of their careers and are being replaced by casual, sessional employees in the contingent workforce of adjuncts. Research indicates that sessional academics can range from 40 to 60 per cent of the workforce (Junor 2004; Bexley et al. 2011). There would appear to be a causal link with universities choosing to implement neo-

liberal, flexible workforce policies and the increase in an adjunct academic workforce. The research of this thesis reinforces the picture that is painted of an academic workforce under stress because of workforce casualisation and the stressors that work intensification brings on those who continue to work full time. Increases in student staff ratios, increased demands in research output and a heavily controlled and audited work environment make retirement more and more attractive for many ageing academics (Fredman & Doughney 2012). Paradoxically, the sessional academics who choose to replace retiring academics are equally exploited by the remaining tenured academics who try to offset their workloads (Jacobs 2004). Sessional academics are part of a growing underclass that is used to camouflage the harsh realities of the contemporary academic workplace (Wilmott 1995). Aspirations of sessional academics to one day seek full time tenured work, as the existing workforce retires, are often dashed when the reality is eventually digested that most universities are more likely to continue to hire casual staff than tenured full time staff (May 2011). Early retirement of mature, experienced academics, often linked to the changing academic industrial environment and the increased workplace pressures, is becoming more and more frequent (Coates et al. 2009, 2010; Hughes et al. 2006). Unfortunately the industrial landscape that is left, bereft of its fertile resource of experienced academics, struggles to progress in the maintenance of future sustainability.

### **The impact of change on the work life balance of academics**

The work life balance of academics has been dramatically transformed over the past three decades and the attractiveness of academia, as a profession, has diminished with respect to status, control, prestige and salary (Bentley et al. 2013). The commercialisation of higher education, over time, lead to compromises being made to scholarship, for the sake of financially expedient neo-liberal strategies, and the creation of a difficult workplace for both academics and students. In an effort to pay for increased fees, students were forced to seek increased hours of part time employment that would ultimately make it more difficult for them to keep up with their studies. Academics were subjected to an increasing number of productivity metrics that were designed to measure compliance with neo-liberal policy imperatives but in reality, over time, served to transform the traditional collegial workplace into a business workplace with managerialist control. The transformative changes that occurred in universities since the 1990s, have created a causal link with the fall in academics' job satisfaction and motivation and ultimately their work life balance (Bellamy et al. 2003; Harman 2006; Marginson 2000).

The findings of the thesis outlined in chapter seven parallel the extant literature and confirm the loss of job motivation and the effect that the changes have had on academics' work life

balance. The five work life factors, namely flexible working hours, time management, stage in life, gender and work intensification that emerged from the project's findings, affect the accommodation and adoption strategies that have the greatest impact on achieving successful work life balance. The flexible work schedule that academics had in the past has been slowly eroded with the expectation that improved time management skills and technology will enable academics to cope better with the work intensification of the contemporary workplace. Those academics who are at the stage in life when they have young families or who are female and mothers confronted the greatest difficulties with work life balance as they found themselves taking more and more work home to meet their work demands. There were an additional three common factors detailed in chapter six that emerged from the project's findings: leadership, personal motivation and workplace pressure; these factors also resonate with the extant literature. The transformational shift in leadership, from a collegial to a managerial style, which occurred over a period of three decades, impacted on the measures of workplace productivity and ultimately personal job motivation. Workplace leaders implemented control measures, through key performance measures, that regulated the amount, quality and type of work produced by academics, and this had the greatest impact on their personal motivation.

Work life balance is a measure of the satisfactory balance between workplace commitments and responsibilities and activities outside of work. The Australian Work and Life Index (AWALI ) (Pocock, Williams & Skinner 2007) attempts to measure five general areas of work life balance:

- the frequency work interferes with other non-work related responsibilities
- the frequency work restricts time with family and friends
- the frequency work interferes with developing interpersonal relations
- satisfaction with life balance
- time pressures

Although this research does not attempt to replicate the AWALI index, it has taken into consideration its definition of work life balance and the criteria it uses to measure this phenomenon. The five factors of work life balance detailed in chapter six that emerged from this project's research findings, add valuable further insight to the general areas surveyed in the AWALI index.

The number of working hours of academics has steadily increased from 49.2 hours per week in 1999 (McInnis 1999) to 50.84 hours in 2009 (Maddison & Hamilton 2009). Most participants in this research estimated that they work more than 70 hours per week and no

one worked less than 50 hours per week. These statistics concord with AWALI 2012. (Skinner et al. 2012), which states that 28 per cent of surveyed men work long hours (48+ hours per week). Furthermore, the AWALI 2012 index revealed that those working long hours did not do so by choice. All participants of this project declared that in order to meet their taxing work commitments they needed to encroach into their personal time, which resulted in sacrificing quality time with family and friends as well as social and leisure activities.

Most academics reported stealing time away from the family, working weekends and holidays and usually working late into the evenings in order to meet their workplace commitments. Work commitments and life activities have morphed together for academics and the time spent on one becomes indistinguishable from the other. This may not appear on the surface as unusual for professional people who have dedicated their lives to their work. What distinguishes today's academics from the dedicated scholars of the past is that most of the contemporary academic's time is spent completing menial, trivial administrative tasks that provide little satisfaction or motivation. Their time is spent simply trying to contend with the work intensification that has manifested due to the minutia of duties that need to be completed. The AWALI 2012 index revealed that people were motivated to complete unpaid work from home because they needed to catch up on work as a result of having too much to do. Academics have an ever increasing workload; apart from taking classes with increased numbers of more demanding students, unit and course coordination, academics are expected to take on extra duties dealing with committee membership and community service. The sheer volume of work is overpowering and yet academics are still willing to risk their physical and mental health to try and cope (McInnis 1999).

The research findings of the thesis outlined in chapter six, revealed a loss of control over the academics' work schedule and flexibility of working hours. One of the major attractors to academia was the flexibility in working hours and over time this has been replaced with a blurring of work and home with the emphasis on productivity and not on where work is located. The home is invaded by growing work commitments that cannot be completed at the workplace. The rationalisation that 'My life is my work and so it doesn't matter where I do it', may be relevant for those academics who have the support of their families but this is not the case for all academics. Time management skills are crucial in helping academics organise their work commitments and many academics surveyed for this project believe that developed skills in this area can only help with managing their workloads. On the other hand many academics surveyed believed that the idea of fixed working hours and a division between work and personal time was unrealistic. The sheer volume of work that is expected



forces academics to find individual solutions to deal with their work intensification. Some academics relish in the work, others deliberately try to separate work and personal time and others again prioritise their work to concentrate on the most rewarding activities. The success that academics have in managing their time and their personal activities outside of work is a measure of their work life balance.

### **Gender divide**

The past three decades have witnessed considerable in roads made by women in academia (Wyn et al. 2000; David 2007; Hornig 2003), but women still remain the most vulnerable members of academia who continue to face discrimination and marginalisation (Probert 2002; Hey 2001). Younger women academics are the more likely than other women to face discrimination and feel institutionally powerless due to their regarded low status (Maddison & Hamilton 2009; August et al. 2004). According to Raddon (2002), conflict with strong social expectations of women, regarding their role as spouse and mother and the workplace, often inhibit the successful career path of female academics. Although the modern male academic shares the role of parenting with their partner, it is more often than not the women who may need to compromise their career aspirations for the sake of rearing children. It is only when a deliberate choice is made by couples that the female academic will rely on their partner for the child rearing and priority is given to the female academics career over family issues (Marchbank 2005). In this case the female academic behaves in accordance with the promotion expectations of their male counterparts and adheres to the strictures of the system. The AWALI 2012 index found that work life outcomes are worse for women than men when taking into account differences in work hours. Also the index found that mothers have a worse work life outcome than fathers, whether single or partnered.

Stage in life and gender emerged from the research findings as outlined in chapter six, to be strong determinants in successful work life balance. Early career academics with young families find it hardest to juggle work commitments with the responsibilities they have for raising a family. Issues such as tenure, PhD completion, promotion and simply coping with growing work intensification have to be balanced with mortgage, young children and spousal responsibilities. Older academics, who are at a stage in life where family commitments do not impact on their work life balance as they did when they were younger, have more choices in achieving successful work life balance. Women, in particular young mothers find it exceedingly difficult to balance their work and family commitments. Even if female academics become principle family breadwinners they are still wracked with guilt for not always being there for their children. The research findings reveal that female academics that prioritise their career over family in an effort to seek promotion and so place the family in



a more financially secure position, are vilified by others or are disappointed in the university's policies for women. The research has indicated that gender roles, whether they are self-imposed or not, as well as gender discrimination workplace policies, can have an adverse impact on achieving work life balance. These findings concur with the AWALI 2012 index findings.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter revisited the Literature Review and related the extant literature with the research findings of the project. The first part of the chapter re-examines the central theme of incremental transformative change, posited by Thelen and Mahoney (2010), and how this is relevant when examining the changes that have occurred in the Australian Higher Education Sector with gradual shift from the traditional public university model to the neo-liberal model over the past three decades. The characteristics of incremental transformative change, namely power transition, path dependence and temporal sequencing and causal chains are used to explain the emergence of the neo-liberal business model of a university with deleterious changes to the work environment of academics, to replace the former traditional public university model. It is recognised that, despite the strength of path dependence, as North (1999) has induced, it is possible to but difficult to disengage from an existing model. The degree of difficulty in doing this, the gradual and contested nature of the process of institutional change, which characterises Thelen and Mahoney's (2010) account of incremental transformational change, is such an example. The research findings in chapter four outline the changes that have occurred in teaching, research and administration as a result of the introduction of the new university business model and concord with the incremental, all pervasive, ongoing characteristics of incremental, transformative change described by Thelen and Mahoney (2010).

The chapter compares the research findings with the effect that these incremental transformative changes have had on academics and their work life balance and the extant literature. In chapter six the typology of academics, created to identify the coping mechanisms of academics to change, resonates with the extant literature and further commentary on early retirements. Chapter six also contributes to filling a gap in the extant literature on coping mechanisms by introducing the phenomenon of 'playing the game'. This phenomenon is characterised by an academic trying to balance university workload commitments, without entirely compromising their sense of personal worth. The chapter concludes by considering the findings of other research surveys, namely the Review of the Victoria University Workload model (Moensted et al. 2012), and the AWALI 2012 (Skinner et

al. 2012) and comparing these research findings to the findings of the thesis and work life balance.

## **Chapter Nine: Conclusion**

‘It is not the strongest species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the ones most responsive to change’ – Charles Darwin

### **Review of the thesis**

The objective of this thesis is to research how academics respond, adapt and cope with the transformational changes of the Australian Higher Education Sector since the 1980s. The merit of this objective is significant since the changes which have occurred over the past three decades in the Higher Education Sector have been transformative and have had a serious impact on the work quality and work life balance of academics. Although much has been researched in transformational organisational change (Hart 1996; Carnall 1986; Dunphy 1990; Golembiewski 1979), the difference between the epistemology of this project’s research and other previous research, is in how transformational change is manifested. This thesis builds on Thelen and Mahoney’s (2010) research on the typology of institutional change; in particular, it uses their model of transformational change which posits that transformational change can be the result of an incremental, endogenous shift in thinking and not simply the result of an abrupt, wholesale breakdown. The context of the research is the constantly morphing higher educational sector and a work environment of academics that is slowly becoming unrecognisable to those who have worked in it for many decades. The changes that have occurred in the Higher Education Sector over the past three decades as a result of government neo-liberal and deregulation policies have been gradual and insidious, and their eventual effects have not yet been fully realised. It was not possible, 30 years ago, to have predicted the work environment that academics endure today and it is not possible to accurately predict the academic work environment 10 years from now. It is argued that the gradual peeling away of layers of traditional work practices will have a slow incremental effect and the final result will only be fully recognised when it has arrived. What remains a constant, though, in the period of transition and transformation, is that some will cope with the changes and others will not. In any case, the changes that have been imposed by senior university management, and in some cases in consultation with the NTEU union, have adversely affected most academics, and survival in the new, changed environment is dependent on individual academics’ personal coping mechanisms and their individual response to change.

The decision to embark on the road to change was not instigated by universities, but rather by the then-government’s neo-liberal policies and the movement towards deregulation. Universities had to follow a path of dependence that was laid out for them by government,

which led them to enter unknown territories. Traditionally universities were not so preoccupied with their funding sources and so historically they did not need to develop business acumen to promote their financial autonomy. Once universities were put in a position where they increasingly had to generate their own funds, they were then forced to create strategic business models that would not only help generate funds, but also measure and audit the productive use of these funds. The creation of the academic workload model, the research active index and student evaluation surveys are all examples of universities trying to put into place metrics to measure academic performance and to justify their spending of resources, which are more common in the world of business and neo-liberal policies. The commercialisation of universities has happened incrementally over a period of 30 years and has transformed universities from government-funded institutions of scholarship, there for the common good, to business entities. The long term effects of government neo-liberal and deregulation policies have been the commercialisation of universities and a negative impact on both the well-being of academics, with respect to their work life balance, and on students, with respect to greater financial burdens and reduced support for their learning.

The increase in student numbers attending university, without proportional increase in government funding, has resulted in larger classes and not enough staff to support them, increased work intensification and work related pressure for academics (Coates et al. 2009). The changed work environment has seen an increase in attrition and early retirements of academics (Fredman & Doughney 2012). Those academics who are most responsive to change, or as the research has identified, those who have the resources and capabilities to 'play the game' can cope better with change. But once they lose this control, they too will take a retirement package or resign. The question then remains, who is left to continue with the university into the future? According to Junor (2004) and Bexley et al. (2011), the sessional workforce or contracted academics who are being hired by universities to replace tenured, experienced staff who are retiring, will also become disillusioned with no future prospect of full time work even in a highly pressured workplace. When there is no longer the prospect of responding to change as a survival technique, then the contemporary university may even become extinct. Universities have come to rely on technology, particularly blended learning as a means to improve communication, and so maybe there is the intention that the contemporary university may be replaced with more sophisticated technology platforms. This is possible, but whether the new species of online university will be able to produce the kind of thinking scholar that we would expect to come from a university remains to be seen.

## **From institution of learning to service provider**

The thesis has analysed the changes that have occurred in the Higher Education Sector, with respect to teaching and students, research and collegiality and technology and administration. These areas were identified by the research (Anderson et al. 2002; McInnis 1999; McInnis & Anderson 2005) as the main work domains of academics and so these would have the greatest impact on the work environment of academics and ultimately their work life balance. Each of these work domains were analysed in the light of the research findings, and the effect that the changes had on academics, their work environment and students was assessed. With respect to teaching and students, what emerged from the data was that the increasing numbers of students, their changing cohort characteristics and the new demands they brought to the new academic learning environment, all served to transform the pre-existing classroom, traditionally controlled by academics, to one that promoted student engagement, and was critically evaluated by students. The controlled learning environment was gradually being replaced with a service culture that saw the student as a paying customer, who had commercial rights as in any other service transaction. The commercialisation of universities, the increasing number of full fee paying international students and a business-like administration all reinforced the new neo-liberal policies. Technology facilitated the gradual progress of universities towards greater bureaucratic oversight of academics and a shift from a collegial style of governance to a managerial culture. Although technology did not always provide the cost efficiencies that were expected, it did provide a more accessible platform for the dissemination, recording and auditing of information. This accessibility came with the price of changing the existing culture based on trust to one that favoured control.

Research and collegiality are two work domains that contribute significantly to promoting academics' job motivation. The workplace changes that have occurred in universities over recent decades have gradually replaced the collegial environment of the past with a competitive environment in line with the new managerialism and related business orientation. Having entered the marketplace, universities now needed to be conscious of their brand image in order to attract potential fee paying students. The university's research profile and status have become the means to promote their status compared to other universities who may be competing in the same market for full fee paying students. The increased emphasis on research profile has resulted in academics only being rewarded if they choose to publish in those journals that are deemed to be beneficial to building the university's brand image.

## **Response to change**

A person's response to change is not only going to be indicative of whether they cope with the change process, but also whether they survive it. Those academics who have endured the change process which has occurred over the past three decades in higher education, are either in positions today that enable them to endure the change or have already taken the many early retirement packages that have been offered in recent years. This thesis has identified a typology of academics, gleaned from the research that describes different types of academics and their coping mechanisms. Those academics most likely to survive the change process, were the seasoned academics who had the requisite skills and capabilities, namely workplace experience, positional power, and time to defend themselves by leveraging their skills to negotiate a better workplace outcome. These academics share some of the characteristics that Thelen and Mahoney (2010) identified in 'opportunists'. Academics with a vocation were only going to survive the change process if the university deemed that they were useful to the university's strategic plan. In other words, this type of academic did not play a proactive role in their survival, but was dependent on whether what they did continued to have relevance to their employer. The early academic is the type, according to the research, who is most likely to suffer the most from change. They are the most inexperienced, most overloaded in terms of work and without any positional power to be able to negotiate to improve their position. Many early academics come to academia with a more positive perception of the job than reality offers. It is a matter of time before early academics come to their tipping point of whether to persevere with a workplace that is becoming ever more demanding, through work intensification and pressure, or leave.

A further response to change that emerged from the research findings was the phenomenon of 'playing the game'. The definition of this phenomenon, which was derived from the research, lay in an academic's ability to adhere to the rules without compromising their personal work standards. Those most able to 'play the game' were academics who had the requisite workplace experience, positional power and time. This category of academic most resembles seasoned academics, although playing the game can be open to any type of academic. An early academic, if they are so inclined, can also be strategic about their research, and publish or form workplace liaisons only with others who publish in areas that are approved by the university. Being aware of what kind of behaviour is rewarded and being prepared to replicate that kind of behaviour is a survival mechanism which is only open to those who have the personality that would enable them to follow such a path. Many early academics are pressured into behaving in particular ways that are expedient for the short term, but then may find in the long term that they have compromised too much. Conforming

to pathways which have been laid down by others, may ultimately lead academics to compromising their personal interests and values. Even for universities, the idea of encouraging academics to only seek recognition from limited research publication outlets, is denying real opportunities for universities to differentiate their offerings from others. For all universities to pursue the same high ranking journal publications, and not reward publication in other community or action research journals or through the writing of books, is to foster a research culture based on article publication to the detriment of true scholarship.

### **The impact of change on the work life balance of academics**

The major theme of this thesis is how academics respond, adapt and cope with transformational change. From the research findings there emerged five factors that affected the accommodation and adoption strategies of academics in dealing with their work life balance. These factors are, namely flexible working hours, stage in life, gender, time management and work intensification. It was revealed from the research findings that one of the most significant reasons why academia was chosen as a profession was because of the flexible hours of work. Flexible working hours gave academics the freedom to juggle time with their family or other personal activities to achieve better work life balance. However, because of work related pressures some academics have had to take an increasing amount of work home. Those academics who did not wish to take work home, because they believed the division of work from personal life was important to their work life balance, put themselves under increasing pressure to complete their work during working hours. Whether academics believed in fixed working hours or not, time management skills became a crucial coping mechanism that helped enable academics to allocate the requisite amount of time on work and personal commitments.

Awareness of all aspects of life is an accommodation strategy leading to successful work life balance. The changes that have occurred in Higher Education Sector have seen an increase in work intensification and this has placed increased pressure on academics to meet their workplace requirements and still have time for their personal commitments. Time management is not enough to meet work demands. Technology has not helped reduce administrative demands that are placed on academics. The issues that affect work life balance to do with stage in life, namely those early academics with family commitments, mortgages and early careers impact work life balance. Seasoned academics who only have themselves and their retirement package to worry may cope better in the work environment but may have to contend with poor health. Female academics are also under more pressure than their male counterparts, when juggling work and family commitments. Those academics



who are wives and mothers feel their social role more deeply than male academics, whose social role expects them to be providers and work long hours away from home. Female academics, who take on what have traditionally been male roles, are still subject to the university's policies on women in the workplace. These policies have often proven wanting, according to the literature and also demonstrated in this research (Probert et al. 2002).

Changes in the Higher Education Sector have resulted in increased work intensification for Australian academics. Although it may be argued that this increase is from a low base, it cannot be denied that the rising numbers of international and local students, a rise of 10 per cent of overseas students of total university student enrolments from 2003-2010 and a rise of 25 per cent of local university students enrolments for the same period (Australian Universities 2010) increased administrative demands in the monitoring of these students and increased expectations in research output have led to a major increase in academics' workloads. Academics are expected to complete an inordinate number of tasks to satisfy their workload commitments, and to simply dismiss this as a time management issue is to not fully comprehend the enormity of their workload. Academics' mean working hours have increased from 47.7 to 49.2 hours per week and the time spent on administrative tasks has risen from 6.4 to 8.4 hours per week (McInnis 1992; 1999; 2001). New technologies and bureaucratic procedures were an attempt by universities to help academics streamline academic administrative work, but as the research has revealed, these new innovations have often added to work time and workplace stress (Anderson et al. 2002; Bexley et al. 2011; Coates et al. 2009).

In addition to the five work life factors identified by the research, a typology of academics – seasoned, those with a vocation and new – was developed to describe the different coping mechanisms used by academics when responding to changes in their workplace. Seasoned academics coped best as they use their experience and positional power as leverage in their negotiations for a better workload. Seasoned academics taught the least number of students and had a research profile that made publishing more accessible. Academics with a vocation either coped or not with change, depending on how favourably the university viewed their discipline and whether their efforts were deemed necessary in the university's strategic plan. Their personal motivation is a strong coping mechanism for this type of academic, as it helps them respond positively to workplace change. Whether this personal motivation stems from a strong work ethic, a passion for the discipline or cultural mores, there is an inner force that drives academics with a vocation to respond to work intensification by simply increasing their energy levels. When an academic can marry their work commitments and their personal

goals, they are more likely to have a satisfying work life balance (Pocock 2007). Those least likely to cope well are the new academics because they have the greatest number of students, teach the most classes and have to contend with the additional pressures of trying to secure tenure or promotion. In addition to these workplace demands, they are usually at a stage in life where family commitments are at their greatest (Bexley et al. 2011).

The leadership qualities and style of university managers are significant in enabling academics to retain on the last vestiges of flexibility in their workplace. The analysis of the research findings relates leadership style with the typology of academics. Usually unit/subject managers were senior experienced academics who shared the typology of seasoned academics. Seasoned academics had the time and positional power to be supportive of their colleagues in less senior positions, but not all were prepared to be workplace heroes. According to Barney (2010), the leadership of the professoriate slowly dissipated over time, with the group taking a pragmatic approach to the workplace, weighing the cost of resistance with uncertain future benefits. The example that was set by the professoriate, according to Barney (2010), was to retreat into a quiet world of survival and inaction, resulting, according to Ryan (2013), in a form of general zombification for all academics. Thelen and Mahoney (2010) also refer to the 'drift' phenomenon, where inaction in response to environmental changes can result in drift and ultimately over time cause major institutional change. In order to try and mitigate total managerialist control, TESQUA (Tertiary Education Quality Assessment) required that academic governance continue in the form of Academic Boards. Where unit/subject managers were willing to question the key performance indicators that they were directed to follow, the result was usually a short lived, peaceful work sanctuary that lasted for as long as the unit/subject manager could take the increased pressure and resist early retirement or a package. The typology of the academic and their leadership style had a profound effect on the climate of the workplace; 'the wrong person in the wrong job can have a splintering effect.'

The work life balance of all academics has been seriously skewed as a result of increasing workplace pressures, lack of sympathetic leadership and general surrender to the onslaught of transformational change. Those academics that are most responsive to the new environment are those who have the requisite skills to cope with change. Experienced, seasoned academics, with positional power and who leave more junior, research inactive academics to do most of the teaching, have the capabilities and skills to protect themselves for as long as their work remains more attractive than the departure package that is offered to them. Those academics with a vocation, who live to work, can endure great levels of

pressure but they are reliant on doing a lot of research that the university views as integral to their strategic plan. The pressures that are endured by new academics are the most arduous (Bexley et al. 2011). They are the least able to defend themselves as they have the most onerous workloads, the least flexibility and little power to leverage for a better deal. Although 'game playing' is an option that is open to all academics, this is a short term option which still favours the skilled. Genuine work life balance for academics is dependent on cooperation with university management and a sensitive response to the rising workplace demands that are made on academics.

### **Meeting grounded theory criteria**

The contextual setting for the development of grounded theory for this thesis was the Australian Higher Education Sector. Charmaz (2006) posits that positioning a grounded theory in a particular social context makes it more robust and facilitates the comparison between studies that can then lead onto further theory development.

The findings of this thesis describe the perceptions of many experienced and highly acclaimed academics who have lived through the many changes that have occurred in Higher Education Sector over the past three decades. Their experiences are set in two of the most prestigious Australian Go8 universities.

The following section revisits the grounded theory criteria that were outlined in chapter three, Methodology, and how this project has addressed each of these criteria.

### **Credibility**

Credibility is established when strong logical links are formed between the empirical data, the main argument and the analysis. The credibility for this thesis lies in the quality and range of participants and the length of time they have served in the Higher Education Sector. More than half (17/33) of the participants have been working in universities for more than 20 years and nearly all (30/33) have been working for more than 10 years. Furthermore more than two thirds of the participants (26/33) held senior positions in the universities where they worked and participants ranged from eight different faculties. The coding for the interviews as presented in the Findings of the project, chapters four to six, were developed in accordance with the directions given by Charmaz (2006), as were the links between categories that eventually formed the basis for the grounded theory. Finally the triangulation of the project research findings and analysis with the relevant literature outlined in chapter

Two, Literature Review and chapter Eight, Discussion, reaffirmed the credibility and merit of the project.

### **Originality**

Originality is established when the research offers new insights into the area of research. The new insights that this project offers include the typology of academics that emerged from the research and the phenomenon of 'playing the game' when investigating academics' work life coping mechanisms. These new insights, which are detailed in chapter five, Academics and Change, extend and further refine the current ideas and concepts in the extant literature. Furthermore, the project's research findings, gleaned from two Go8 universities in Australia, shed new light on the kind of working environment of academics working in two of the most prestigious universities in Australia and the social implications of this, as well as comment on the capabilities of highly branded universities to self-manage their funding.

### **Resonance**

Resonance is established when the grounded theory categories that have emerged from the data resonate with the experiences of the participants. The data collection and analysis was conducted over a six month period in alternating sequences, with the intention of verifying and affirming early findings and in order to shape further data collection. The categories of teaching and students, research and collegiality, administration and technology that were detailed in chapter five, Academics and Change, are reflective of academics' existing work domains and so resonate with their experience. The data analysis builds on this resonance, with further categories emerging from the early findings such as work life balance (chapter six) and the university business model (chapter four).

### **Usefulness**

Usefulness is established when the project findings and analysis are deemed to contribute to extant knowledge and are also able to spark further future research. The contribution that this thesis makes to knowledge stems from the use of grounded theory in deriving an understanding of how academics perceive the transformative changes that have occurred in the Higher Education Sector over the past three decades. The objective of the empirical data collection for this thesis was to capture the feelings and personal opinions of participants to the changes that have occurred in their workplace and how these changes have impacted on their work life balance. The thesis offers many opportunities for further research into

academics' coping mechanisms in dealing with work life balance, university business models or even more generalised theories in organisational management.

### **Limitations of the research**

Qualitative research and grounded theory method was deliberately chosen for this project as this research methodology is characterised by a deep immersion into the research setting to gain a more enlightened understanding of the research participants in the contextual circumstances. The objective was to gain a more detailed account of the shared experiences and relationships of academics who have had firsthand experience of the changes to the Higher Education Sector over the past three decades. The participants of the project were seen as active agents in a context of transformative change and not as passive recipients. The process of the interaction of the participants to the changing environment was of greater interest than the structure of workplace change. A constructivist approach was adopted as data and analysis was derived from the process of shared experiences and relationships. An objectivist, positivist approach attends only to the data and not the process of its production (Charmaz 2006). Constructivists believe that data and analysis are social constructs and so both the theorist and their participants are involved in interpreting meaning and actions. The constructivist or interpretivist approach that is posited by Charmaz (2006), and is followed in this project, bases grounded theory methodology on the research participants' experience and their personal construction of reality. The theory and knowledge that is constructed is ultimately grounded in the researcher's and participants' interpretation of the empirical data within the research context.

The limitation of the research lies in the subjective process of the constructivist interpretative tradition. The theory building that results from the analysis of the research data remains the author's point of view and is framed within the temporal, situational and cultural context of the participants' experiences. This project is guided by what Charmaz (2006) advocates: that there are multiple social realities, and theories are not discovered but are portrayed in an interpretative way. The journey to constructing reality is not made by the researcher alone but in company of research participants (Charmaz 2006).

## Concluding remarks

A central finding of the thesis was the catalytic role that government neo-liberal and deregulation policies and their influence on university business models played in the transformative change of the Australian university's workplace. The impact of neo-liberal business models over time became pervasive and affected the central domains of teaching and students, research and collegiality, and technology and administration that characterised the essence of academics' work. The gradual development of the business model occurred in the context of and responded to dramatic increases in student numbers, which not only transformed the learning environment, but changed the collegial culture that once prevailed for academics. Technology played a pivotal role in helping facilitate the universities' new neo-liberal imperatives, and the traditional climate of trust was insidiously replaced with one of control. Universities began to shed their integument of scholastic endeavour and become business enterprises, concerned with their brand image and maintaining a sustainable competitive advantage over their sister universities. Management style is characterised by key performance measures and is essentially concerned about adherence to the university's strategic plan to ensure the greater exploitation of avenues that provide the most lucrative funding. The effect to date of the ongoing impact of the university business model is a deterioration of work life balance for academics and the creation of a service environment, rather than a learning environment for students.

Universities cannot be solely blamed for their foray into neo-liberalism and deregulation; to their credit they may claim they were forcibly dragged into commercialisation, because of government policy. The Dawkins higher education reforms and deregulation policies of 30 years ago did not provide universities with too many options, because funding was cut and the only way to compensate for the loss was to generate their own funding. Subsequent governments, whether Conservative or Labor, continued to implement neo-liberalism and deregulation policies. These policies which promoted commercialisation were not greeted at the time with any great enthusiasm as this new direction opposed the traditional route followed by universities. The same feelings that were prevalent 30 years ago are echoed in the sentiments of academics today.

*... **education is not a business** ... it has a very important social element and if you lose that I think you lose the importance of education. (Management Assoc. Professor, Monash)*  
*(Interview 5, p22)*

Although it was government neo-liberal policies and deregulation that drove universities to adapt business models, the kind of business model implemented remained under the control of university management. Federal Governments over time have provided universities a platform to seek opportunities for autonomous funding and develop self-regulation but the 30 year period since the university business models began to develop, has not seen universities cope very well with these new responsibilities. This thesis reaffirms the idea that universities do not have the requisite business skills or business acumen to cope with a self-regulatory environment that pursues business objects.

***... universities have proven themselves incapable of self-regulation in serious ways ... the government has intervened. (Management Professor, Monash) (Interview 13, p21)***

## **The Future**

The increase in work related pressure and the deleterious impact that the business model has made on academics' work life balance does not augur well for the sustainability of the university into the future. The flexibility and autonomy in the workplace that academics once enjoyed has been replaced with a culture that encourages an itinerant, casual workforce. Technology is the facilitator of the new learning environment, but paradoxically rather than engage students more in their learning, technology often only serves to alienate students further from academics (Gomis-Porqueras et al. 2011). The overwhelming number of academics interviewed for the project, were not optimistic for the future. This should not be viewed as a 'grumpy old men' reaction to change or a harking back to the halcyon years. In order for universities to become sustainable into the future, they need a plentiful store of primary resources. The workplace climate and culture that is being nurtured in the contemporary universities, if allowed to grow unchecked, will produce a hostile landscape that will not be inviting to anyone. The research conducted by Coates et al. (2009) and Hughes et al. (2006), already indicates that those academics who are retiring are not being replaced by academics of the next generation. Retiring academics are not recommending academia to younger cohorts and in fact the thesis reveals that young intellectuals are advised to seek alternative careers.

***... I would be quite careful about advising people whether to enter into academic career now ... there's much less scope for the sort of thinking and peaceful reflection that serious scholarship requires. (Law Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 1, p4)***



***... the lifestyle of an academic is probably less desirable now than it was when I was at the start of my career. And so I think it's just as well that there are a variety of alternative careers for people to choose from. (Mathematics Professor, Melbourne) (Interview 30, p4)***

The future is another world and so we can only surmise what will characterise the university of the future. Those who will populate this futuristic place of learning, as Charles Darwin states, will be those who have the requisite skills to respond best to change. Successful work life balance for academics will be redefined in accordance with those qualities that a positive response to change will dictate.

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## Appendix A: Consent Form

# CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH

### INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS:

We would like to invite you to be a part of a study into:

#### **Work life factors of academics that lead to the adoption of transformational change in the Australian Higher Education Sector**

Of particular interest will be the relationship between academics' involvement in universities and their perceptions of how they regard themselves and are regarded by others in the institution. Transformational change will be researched in the light of academics' personal, work related and environmental factors and how these affect a more accepting perception of dramatic change.

There are negligible risks associated with this project

### CERTIFICATION BY SUBJECT

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (name) \_\_\_\_\_  
of \_\_\_\_\_ (suburb) \_\_\_\_\_

certify that I am at least 18 years old\* and that I am voluntarily giving my consent to participate in the study:

#### **Work life factors of academics that lead to the adoption of transformational change in the Australian Higher Education Sector**

being conducted at Victoria University by: **George Comodromos**

I certify that the objectives of the study, together with any risks and safeguards associated with the procedures listed hereunder to be carried out in the research, have been fully explained to me by:

George Comodromos

and that I freely consent to participation involving the below mentioned procedures:

- Semi-structured interviews and open ended questions

I certify that I have had the opportunity to have any questions answered and that I understand that I can withdraw from this study at any time and that this withdrawal will not jeopardise me in any way.

I have been informed that the information I provide will be kept confidential.

Signed:

Date:



Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the Chief Researcher  
Richard Gough  
9919 4640.

If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Research Ethics and Biosafety Manager, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001 or phone (03) 9919 4148.

**[\*please note: Where the participant/s are aged under 18, separate parental consent is required; where the participant/s are unable to answer for themselves due to mental illness or disability, parental or guardian consent may be required.]**

## **Appendix B: Information for research participants**

# **INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS INVOLVED IN RESEARCH**

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### **You are invited to participate**

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You are invited to participate in a research project entitled 'Work life factors of academics that lead to the adoption of transformational change in the Australian Higher Education Sector'.

This project is being conducted by a student researcher George Comodromos as part of a PhD study at Victoria University under the supervision of Richard Gough, Senior Lecturer from the Faculty of Business and Law.

### **Project explanation**

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The aim of the project is to explore the work life factors of Australian academics that lead to the adoption of transformational change. Of particular interest will be the relationship between academics involvement in universities and their perception of how they regard themselves and are regarded by others in the institution. Transformational change management will be further researched in the light of academics' personal, work related and environmental factors and how these affect a more accepting perception of dramatic change. The context of the project will be the Australian Higher Education Sector. The conceptual framework of the research can, at a later stage be applied to an organisation that is considering introducing change to assess whether the organisation's employees are suited to an easy transition to dramatic change.

### **What will I be asked to do?**

---

Participants will be interviewed and asked semi-structured questions about their work life factors and how these affect their attitude to transformational change. The interviews will last approximately one hour. It may be necessary, in some instances for the researcher to return to gain further clarification.

### **What will I gain from participating?**

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The participant will be involved in research to gain a deeper understanding of transformational change and how this impacts on workers' lives. The research, at a later stage can be applied to an organisation that is considering introducing change to assess whether the organisation's employees are suited to an easy transition to dramatic change.

### **How will the information I give be used?**

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1. The research will identify the work life factors that contribute to acceptance of transformational change by academics in the Australian Higher Education Sector.
2. The research will further enhance existing knowledge of academics' organisational involvement and describe the lived experience of transformational change.
3. The research will provide a more detailed profile of academics' propensity to cope with transformational organisational change in the Australian Higher Education Sector.

### **What are the potential risks of participating in this project?**

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There are negligible risks to the participant

### **How will this project be conducted?**

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How academics respond, adapt and cope with the transformational changes in the Australian Higher Education Sector

The project will take a constructionist epistemological approach by requesting academics at two (Melbourne and Monash) out of the eight Group of Eight universities to participate in a series of semi-structured interviews that seek to investigate how their work life factors impact on their attitude to the transformational change recently experienced by their university. It is envisioned that there will be 6-10 academics from each of the two universities who will be willing to participate in the research. The final selection of research candidates, probably between 12-20, will represent a cross section of all academics inclusive of gender balance, different academic levels, different age groups and length of service at the university. The semi-structure interviews will be flexible, iterative and continuous as characterised by Rubin and Rubin (1995) in their qualitative interviewing guidelines and will later form case studies

The two universities are chosen from the Group of Eight to maintain homogeneity of sample as well as provide a contrast between the older Melbourne University and the relatively new Monash. The objective is to test factors identified from the extant literature that lead to the acceptance of transformational organisational change and identify any new factors not researched previously. The analysis will result in the classification of the two universities in accordance to academics' perception of the success of the transformational change process. To further validate the interview findings a series of focus groups will be conducted in an effort to provide better understanding of the issues raised in the case study research.

The following key areas will be examined in the research project to isolate the work life factors that most contribute to the acceptance of change and explore to what extent academics have accepted the transformational organisational change process at their university.

- Degree to which the personal attributes, work related and environmental factors impact on acceptance of transformational organisational change.
- Evidence of transformational leadership style and general acceptance of dramatic change process

Research results will be triangulated with extant theories to lead to new theory extension and adoption. The identification of new factors that lead to new theory formation incorporates grounded theory (Glaser 1967). Grounded theory utilises qualitative research methodology with the intention of generating theory from the data derived from the research process.

### Who is conducting the study?

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The Chief Investigator is Richard Gough ( [richard.gough@vu.edu.au](mailto:richard.gough@vu.edu.au) ) The project will involve academic participants from Melbourne University and Monash University.

Any queries about your participation in this project may be directed to the Chief Investigator listed above. If you have any queries or complaints about the way you have been treated, you may contact the Research Ethics and Biosafety Manager, Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee, Victoria University, PO Box 14428, Melbourne, VIC, 8001 or phone (03) 9919 4148.

## **Appendix C: Interview Schedule**

### **Statement of purpose**

The aim of the project is to explore how work life factors of Australian academics interact with transformational change within universities. Change management will be researched in the light of academics' personal, work related and environmental factors and how these affect a more accepting perception of dramatic change.

### **Background**

How long have you been with the university?

How has working at the university impacted on your personal life over the last decade?

Do you identify more with the university or with a professional group?

### **Change**

Could you identify what you think are the major changes that have occurred during your career at university?

Prompt

- Type of students
- Research demands
- Admin pressure
- ENTER scores
- Quality of student

What are your reflections on the major changes that have occurred during your career at the university?

How have work demands changed since 2000 and how do you feel about these changes?

### **Work life Balance**

How do you balance your personal life with university work and how well does this work for you?

What are the challenges of maintaining this balance and are they increasing over time?

Have your career aspirations at the university changed over time? Are you achieving or have you achieved what it is that you want? Have your career aspirations been affected by changes at the university?

### **Workload**

How have workload changes affected your personal life during your career?

How has teaching changed in the time you have been at the university?

How have your research interests developed given the workload demands of the university?

Prompt

- Journal rankings
- Research output

How have the administration demands of the university impacted on your work, and on your work life balance?

### **Future**

Are you optimistic about the changes that are occurring now at universities?

Do you continue to see that you have an active role to play at university in the future?