

Academic artisans in the research university

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Abstract

In the changing context of universities, organisational structures for teaching and research problematize academic roles. This paper draws on a critical realist analysis of surveys and interviews with academics from universities in England and Australia. It identifies important academic work, not captured simply in descriptions of teaching or research. It shows that many academics, who are not research high flyers nor award-winning teachers, carry out this essential work which contributes to the effective functioning of their universities. That work is referred to as academic artisanal work and the people who do it as academic artisans. Characteristics and examples of academic artisans are presented and the nature of artisanal work is explored. Implications for higher education management and for future studies are discussed. The paper points to an urgent need to better understand the complex nature of academic work.

Keywords: Academic work, academic career, teaching-only contracts, academic performance

Introduction

In the changing context of higher education, universities have been challenged by the need to establish new technical and specialist occupations and to redefine traditional academic teaching and research roles. New pressures, new demands and new functions require new organisational structures (Henkel 2016). Nevertheless, structures and funding mechanisms tend to exist for research and teaching separately. Indeed, in recent decades a focus on outputs and effectiveness of both research and teaching, has led to increasing polarization and codification of these two aspects of university functioning. On one side, there is research with its distinct practices led by national demands for productivity and, in many cases, assessment exercises (McNay, 2009). On the other side, is separately funded and organized teaching, which has more or less distinct practices and demands. This emphasis on research and teaching not only creates discourses of separate measurements of effectiveness, it also allows differential valuing of aspects of academic work; research commonly being valued more than teaching (cf. Boyer, 1990).

This bifurcation constructs academic work as being either teaching or research with “service” or “community engagement” a third poor cousin (Macfarlane, 2007). Academics’ contracts have traditionally focused on teaching and research and, given the emphasis on effectiveness,

separate evaluations are also applied to individuals through promotion and progression. Therefore, in shaping their academic jobs, individuals have to balance these different activities (Brew, Boud, Crawford & Lucas, 2017; Churchman and King, 2009). However, the academic role is changing as the nature of research and mass higher education demand new expertise. Often this is done without empirical evidence of how academics themselves think about their work nor evidence of how they can create career trajectories that address institutional requirements, while at the same time meeting their personal goals (Brew, et al, 2017).

In universities where there is a high level of research activity and substantial levels of support for research, significant numbers of qualified and capable academics do not appear to engage in research, conform to the expected levels of research outputs or respond to injunctions to do so. Some academics engage in research but find that when national research assessment is introduced, either their research is not at the expected level, or that it is not the right kind of research, or simply that it does not fit their department's research narrative (Lucas 2006; Lucas, in press). In some research-intensive institutions, such academics are treated as if they do not or cannot exist and are moved to teaching-only contracts (Locke, Whitchurch, Smith & Mazenod, 2016).

There is a wide range of academic work needed to make universities effective, which is, strictly speaking, neither research nor teaching. While research and teaching are separate and visible, other necessary aspects of academic work are rendered invisible or are relegated to a less important category (e.g. service). We suggest that those academics who principally carry out this work have tended to be rendered invisible in discourses of university functioning and evaluation.

This group of people appear to be characterized by de Sousa Santos' (2013) notion of the sociology of absences. He suggests that a group that appears not to exist, may in fact be socially constructed as not existing; that "non-existence is produced in the form of non-productiveness" which, when applied to labour consists of "discardable populations, laziness, professional disqualification, lack of skills" (De Sousa Santos, 2013, p. 2:18). This describes academics not well published in research, for example, who have been overlooked in discussions of researcher productivity (Brew, Boud, Namgung, Crawford & Lucas, 2015) and, within self-identified research-intensive institutions have tended to be constructed as deficient, lacking the necessary skills or drive to engage in research.

This paper argues that to consider academics either as focused mainly on teaching or on research is to mis-represent the nature of academic work. Its aim is to counteract deficit models of academics who are not the research high flyers or award winning teachers, arguing that there are important aspects of the work of academics that have gone unnoticed and unrewarded; that are thereby absent in academic discourse. The paper draws implications from these findings for university functioning and specifically the ways in which university policy needs to shift if people who do not take a research productive path can be fully recognised as making important contributions to the overall academic enterprise of the university.

The paper discusses the changing context of academic work introducing the idea of academic artisanal work. It then presents the methods of investigation. This leads to a discussion of the findings from quantitative and qualitative analyses. Three examples of how academics carry out artisanal work are presented before discussing more fully the characteristics of such work. The discussion further examines challenges raised by the identification of academic artisans and relates this to issues raised in the literature on academic work.

Background

The changing nature of academic work has been commented upon extensively in the last two decades (see e.g. Blau, 1994; Gornall, Cook, Daunton, Salisbury & Thomas, 2013) with similar changes being noted in comparative studies across different nations (see e.g. Fumisoli et al , 2015; Teichler & Höhle, 2013). The pressures of academic work and time constraints has been a particular cause for concern (e.g. Gibbs, Ylioki, Guzman & Barnett, 2015).

Although assumptions about academics retaining “research and teaching” contracts persist, there is a growing literature exploring new types of academic and quasi-academic roles (see e.g. Macfarlane, 2011; Szekeres, 2004; Whitchurch, 2008a). It has been recognised that people on “professional staff” contracts are increasingly performing teaching and research functions. Macfarlane (2011, p.59) refers to this as the “unbundling” of academic work. Whitchurch (2008a, p.378) highlights the role of extended projects that are creating what she calls “a third space” in which professional staff are conducting “quasi-academic” functions in “blended roles” working in situations and across professions in ways that exemplify Nowotny, Scott and Gibbons’ (2001) notion of Mode 2 knowledge construction. There is, Whitchurch (2008b, p.387) suggests, evidence that staff are constructing new forms of authority via the institutional knowledges and relationships that they create on a personal, day-to-day basis.

While discourses of university functioning continue to construct them as teaching and research institutions, what lies in between is hidden. Szekeres (2004) describes administrative staff in universities as largely invisible arguing that their work is disregarded in university discourses. She quotes McInnis who suggests that previously “administrative staff were considered powerless functionaries” but they now “increasingly assume high-profile technical and specialist roles that impinge directly on academic autonomy and control over the core activities of teaching and research” (McInnis, 1998, p. 166, in Szekeres p. 18). New managerialist practices have brought with them an increase in administrative work (Szekeres, 2004). Indeed, US statistics show that faculty spend more time on administration than they do on teaching and research (Snyder & Dillow, 2012).

Courtney (2012) argues that many of these changes in academic work are a direct response to changes in the environment, such as changes in technology, new forms of knowledge production and increasing burdens of auditing and managerialism. Other changes are indirect, coming about largely due to cost-cutting pressures. These include increases in casualisation, and the adoption of non-standard, part-time, temporary, and fixed term contracts. Indeed,

Ryan, Burgess, Connell and Groen, (2013) reported that 25 per cent of academics in Australia were casual staff who carried around 50% of the teaching load.

Despite all these changes, and the arguments around the unbundling of academic work, many academics still have both teaching and research responsibilities and it is these who are the focus here. Locke (2014) reported that in 2012-13 just over half of all UK academic staff were in teaching and research roles, just over 25% were on teaching-only contracts and nearly 23% only undertook research. Among those on full-time contracts, over 60% were on research and teaching contracts, just 9% were on teaching-only and nearly 30% were on research-only contracts. However, in 2013-14 the number of UK staff on teaching and research contracts had declined and Locke, et al., (2016) suggest that they now represent 48%. Data from Australia indicate that in 2016, 58% of academic staff were on teaching and research contracts (Australian Government, 2016).

National research assessment exercises have focused attention on levels of research outputs and led to concerns that even in research-intensive institutions, considerable numbers of teaching and research academics are not research-active. Some universities have introduced strategies to dismiss them or move them to teaching-only positions (Henkel, 2005; Lucas, 2006; Lucas, in press).

There is nonetheless evidence that to describe academics as teaching and research academics masks what they actually do. It serves to exclude the fact, as Macfarlane, (2015, p.108) notes, that academics spend a good deal of their time engaged in tasks that could be described as administrative and service activities rather than research or teaching. We are not talking here of small numbers. In the UK, McNay (2003) reports that 66% of academics were defined by their university as not sufficiently “research active” to be entered into the 2001 RAE. We cannot assume, as Macfarlane (2011) does, that the low numbers of academics submitted to the UK’s research assessment framework means that most academics are principally teachers. Many may be engaged in the same kinds of “third space” tasks described above.

Churchman and King (2009) point to the disjuncture between how academics describe their work and official stories that are told. This is highlighted by the way teaching and research are viewed as separate, but are integrated in the everyday practices of academics. Malcolm and Zukas (2009) highlight the messiness of academic work and argue that more needs to be understood about the academy as sites of social practice, where there is interplay between the institution, the working lives of academics, what they do and what they think. Whitchurch (2008a, p.378) also suggests that there has been little empirical work on the “crossovers” that are occurring within the “new forms of institutional space that are being created”.

This paper addresses these concerns. While recognizing that many professional staff work within the “third space” that Whitchurch has identified, our focus is on what academics do within it. We refer to that work as academic artisanal work, and the people for whom such work constitutes a major part of their effort, as academic artisans.

Like professionals in many complex organisations, academics work out how to shape their own jobs in ways that satisfy their own goals and needs while at the same time meeting institutional requirements (Brew, et al, 2017). Everyone has to balance what is expected of them with what they want to achieve; to find a way to craft a career that has coherence and a sense of purpose. Some academics, clearly, carry out their teaching and research functions unproblematically and are successful. Others put together tasks and responsibilities that come to hand and shape academic jobs in new ways; ways that can neither be characterised as teaching nor as research. Levi Strauss (1962) uses the term “bricolage” to describe the act of making something by putting together whatever is at hand in new ways. The bricoleur makes do with what is available and puts things to use for purposes for which they were never meant. The Japanese word “shokunin” meaning "artisan" or "craftsman", seems to capture some of the sense of the bricoleur but also, importantly, the sense of doing the best work for the community which also implies a pride in one's work. In the words of the Japanese sculptor and shokunin Tashio Odate (1984, p.viii): “shokunin means not only having technical skill, but also implies an attitude and social consciousness ... a social obligation to work one’s best for the general welfare of the people, [an] obligation both material and spiritual.” This takes us beyond simplistic ideas of artisans as skilled workers, to express a sense of agency and conscientiousness in responding in ways that contribute to the good of the whole. It is this which expresses the sense in which we use the term “artisanal” to explain the work of academics that sits between teaching and research.

Methods

Our research takes a critical realist perspective, which assumes that people are socially produced and subject to change, yet as embodied individuals they respond both intellectually and emotionally, interpreting and making decisions about the macro and micro discourses in their specific contexts. So following Archer (2007), we researched the internal conversations that academics had about the university and its role in their formation as researchers and teachers. We explored how academics negotiate the complex balancing of research and teaching. This paper draws on analyses of quantitative survey data, qualitative survey comments and interview transcripts.

We conducted an online survey of academics from research intensive university environments in six Australian and six English universities to explore how academics develop as researcher and/or teacher, what they prioritise, and what constrains and enables their interpretations of the academic context, leading them to take up particular positions focusing variously on teaching or research or other activities. Institutions were selected so as to provide a mix of universities with research-intensive areas (recognising that areas of research intensity exist even when a university as a whole is not designated research intensive). So Australian universities included the Group of Eight (Go8), Innovative Research Universities (IRU) and the Australian Technology Network (ATN), while English universities included Russell Group, post-92 and redbrick universities. Academics surveyed were from three broad disciplinary groups:

Sciences and Engineering; Social Sciences and Humanities; and Health Sciences. Respondents were identified through staff lists on websites. Approximately 4000 academics were surveyed in each country. Before the analysis, respondents who identified as not on teaching and research contracts were discarded as were responses with insufficient data. This left a total of 2163 usable responses for the analysis. The survey consisted of quantitative measures, but space was provided for qualitative comments.

Respondents were asked how much time they spent on different activities and in an open-ended question what else they spent their time on. Responses to this question were content analysed.

We determined levels of researcher productivity, from self-reports of publication levels and research grant applications (Brew & Boud, 2009) taking account of disciplinary differences in publication practices by determining levels of research productivity at the disciplinary level. For each disciplinary group, we constituted a “high research productive” group consisting of respondents designated high on publications and high on grants; a second “low research productive” group from respondents low on publications and on grants; and a third medium group. (For a fuller discussion of how this was done see Brew, et al, 2016).

Semi-structured interviews with twenty-seven mid-career academics from three Australian universities (1 Go8; 1 ATN; and 1 other) and five English universities (2 Russell Group; 1 1964; 1 1984; 1 new) were carried out and transcribed. Interviewees were identified from those who, in the survey, indicated a willingness to be interviewed. Purposive sampling was used to select academics with 5-10 years’ experience beyond their doctorate in the three broad disciplines. Interview questions focused on how participants saw themselves as an academic, how they became the kind of academic they are, critical incidents in their career, perceived personal and structural influences in their current role, what constrains and what enables teaching and research decisions, and their future aspirations. The interviews which were carried out the authors, lasted around one hour. All interviewees were informed of the purpose of the research and gave informed consent.

Interviews were first analysed according to broad themes. In discussion with the whole team, linkages between themes were then identified and summaries of each transcript created according to the themes. A second level of analysis to compare and contrast themes across transcripts was then carried out and variations clarified. (See Brew, et al, 2017 for a fuller discussion of the analysis.)

Findings

Data suggested that the “low research productive” group of academics were by no means lazy, unqualified or lacking the necessary skills to succeed in a research-intensive environment. On the contrary, questionnaire data indicated that such people work on average 41.5 hours per week, which represents nearly one day per week over their contracted 35 hours. Such academics have different priorities to their research-productive colleagues. In contrast to high

productive researchers who tended to prioritise research, they tended to prioritise teaching. It was found that people who prioritise teaching do less research than those who prioritise research. We found that their actions facilitate research capacity, because they undertake a larger share of undergraduate teaching and teaching administration. They were inclined to spend less time on research and supervision and about the same time on administration which for them tended to be focused on aspects that smooth the functions of the university, including, for example, leading courses, heading departments, taking up positions of responsibility, taking a greater role in advising students and introducing curriculum innovations. In contrast, the administration done by highly productive researchers tended to be research administration.

Like many university systems and policies such as promotions requirements, committee structures etc., the survey had been implemented on the assumption that academic work was divisible into four relatively distinct areas: teaching and supervision; research; administration and management; and external engagement. So academics were asked how much time in a typical week they spent on these activities. They were then asked what other activities they spent their time on. The open-ended survey responses to this question are revealing in the context of this paper, because many of the activities represent substantial responsibilities. While some academics mentioned activities such as teaching preparation or research article writing, many academics, both in Australia and England, enumerated a vast catalogue of activities that were not simply teaching, research or administration (see Figure 1).

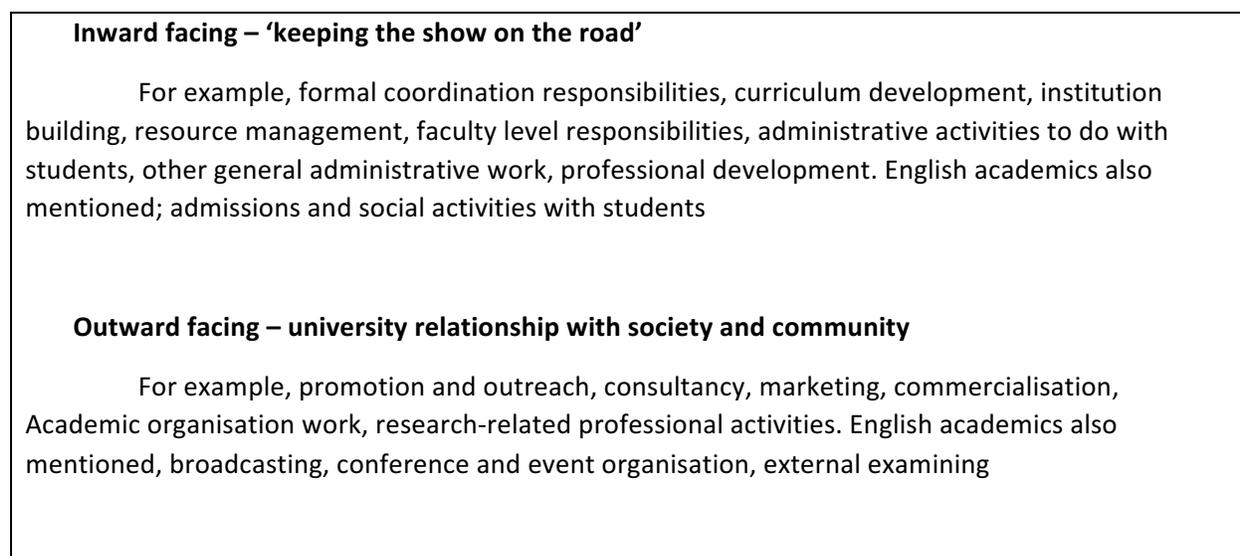


Figure 1. Academic activities noted by survey respondents as not being research, teaching or administration

Some of these activities focus inward to keep the university functioning. Others are outward facing and have to do with creating and maintaining university relationships with society. This is in line with other work principally from the US that is focused on notions of “service”

(Gouldner, 1957; Ward, 2003) or the scholarship of engagement (Boyer 1996; Diamond & Adam, 1996). In a UK context, Macfarlane's (2007, p. 265) "service pyramid" includes similar activities. However, it is noticeable here that none of our 2163 English and Australian respondents mentioned "service" as something they spent their time on. This suggests that while institutions may categorise some of these activities as service or even academic citizenship or community engagement, and academics may be required to list some of them under such headings when applying for promotion, this does not appear to characterise how this work is conceptualized by these English and Australian academics. Some of these activities may come under the heading of service, others do not. Some are old roles made visible; others emanate from the new conditions of academic work mentioned above. However, calling certain kinds of work service or academic citizenship tells us nothing about what such work means to academics, nor about the ways in which academics carrying out such functions, think about and perform them. This is why we have felt it necessary to introduce the notion of academic artisans (in the sense of 'shokunin' as mentioned above).

Since this list of activities was derived from open-ended survey comments, it is not possible to link the responses to academics' research productivity levels. These survey responses merely hint at the kinds of activities that come under the umbrella of artisanal work. Indeed, artisanal work cannot be described simply in terms of sets of activities. It is how academics think about them, and the ways in which they perform them; the steps they take to ensure that they respond creatively to actual needs and problems as they arise, that the artisanal nature of this work becomes clear. In the interviews, we see what such activities involve for individuals, The interview data suggests that there are many academics engaged in substantial activities of these kinds who are, either as a cause or a consequence of this work, unable to maintain high levels of research productivity as the following three examples derived from the interviews demonstrate. These examples, were chosen because they illustrate how individuals draw upon their personal skills, qualities and interests to actively shape their work to meet institutional requirements. They have been given pseudonyms to preserve confidentiality. Line numbers of transcripts are included.

Example: Kathy

Kathy is a Senior Lecturer in an Australian university. She describes herself as having a teaching/research/admin balanced position. She is in the medium research productivity group. She teaches a first-year course with a large intake (550 students). 60% of the students are not majoring in her subject. Most of her teaching is in Semester 1, but she teaches the same course in session 3 (the summer program) as well. She has one of the major administrative loads in the department, leading a team that coordinates all the undergraduate programs. This involves student advising. It is a big job and she describes herself as working really hard. She exhibits a large degree of resilience in the face of challenges in both the teaching, admin and research areas.

so when there's identification that maybe a process needs looking at, or thinking about, or whatever, that's when I will come in and liaise with other people to try and streamline stuff, I guess, is what's my role. That's how my role has developed.... The role continues to develop so that's the direction I'm steering it in at the moment, 'cause that's what I see as the need. (Kathy, L.285-90)

Kathy takes on a major administrative load which could be framed as “service” in a promotion application, but here she demonstrates how she shapes this particular role by identifying the actual requirements and responding creatively to them.

Example: Sidney

Sidney is a Lecturer at an Australian university. Originally from the UK, he has a minority background. He is clear that the first-year module that he teaches is strategically important, bringing in significant student numbers and being a main “pull” for the department; he validates his contribution in this way. He undertakes pedagogical research and enjoys the opportunity to develop his teaching, despite increased teaching loads and the work this all causes. He says that his research is just ticking along at about 30% of what it could be.

The core of my teaching role here is with a large first year critical thinking class that we have. ... it's a big revenue stream for the department and it's one of the main ways in which ... we attract students... So it bears quite a lot of responsibility, and consequently, ... it's very time consuming... . And I oversee its teaching at satellite campuses ... and a gifted and talented programme. ... So whilst my research has kind of ticked along, ... it's given me the opportunity to pursue research into teaching and to explore avenues ... and connections with people in learning and teaching that I really cherish and think are really valuable. ... It's diminished the amount of research I can do.[but] I'm happy about the opportunity to do what I have done (Sidney L.10-115).

Sidney demonstrates how he creatively puts together a range of activities that appear to him to go together including carrying out research on learning and teaching to make a unique contribution.

Example: Sophie

Sophie works in an English department of education. She has been in post for 14 years. When she began she had a very strong background in teaching and counselling, but not very much research experience. She sees herself as: “somebody who cares about the students but who also wants to be accessible to people” (L250-1). She says: “anything to do with the students would come first for me” (L42). Sophie sees formal structures as something that can be used to influence the student experience, e.g. in chairing a faculty level quality committee. She is director of teaching and learning within the department as well as coordinating an offshore Masters. She had recently been promoted to reader. We characterise her as low to medium

research productivity, but it is clear that although she likes writing, carrying out research is not a priority for her.

when [chairing the faculty quality committee] came up two years ago that's when I decided I would go for it. ... I'd started to feel I was becoming a bit too insular and I've always, really ever since I've worked in the university [I] got to know people ... and got a sense of the different cultures of the different departments and I'd started to feel I wasn't doing that anymore, so that was one of the reasons I wanted to be out and about in the faculty and getting to know people and the other reason was because I do feel strongly, however you define it, quality in learning and teaching and I think there are more people who feel those things are important now, in this university, than did in the past and I find that really encouraging. (Sophie, L 505-514)

Sophie took on a definable role but in this extract she illustrates what that means to her in terms of the ways in which it enables her to interact with people across the whole university.

Defining the academic artisan

The activities in Figure 1 and the examples here tend to be performed by academics who are not just teachers, but manage and organize things formally and informally. They are responding to the situations they are in to make positive contributions that develop or support the mission of the university. As we saw in the examples, research may suffer as a consequence.

Academic artisans do not just craft positions for themselves to meet their own needs. The bulk of what they do is focused on providing a service to the institution by going beyond necessary tasks and contributing to a bigger whole. To characterize this work as artisanal is to draw attention to how such academics demonstrate a sense of responsibility and agency for work which comes their way. They also demonstrate commitment to the institution, to their colleagues and/or department and to students; not just their own students, but students more broadly. They display conscientiousness about fixing things that they perceive to need fixing. They tend to be good corporate citizens who are committed to the collective, often caring about student engagement and wellbeing, about how colleagues work together and ensuring efficient functioning of their workgroup. Such people may not be particularly productive in the typical research sense, but are essentially keeping the university going. The work of the academic artisan is often forgotten; or it is assumed that what they do are minor elements of normal teaching and research contracts, or may be dismissed as “service”.

Our data suggest artisanal work requires a wide range of professional skills. Interviewees carrying out such work demonstrated industriousness, hard-working and skilled coordination and administration. They also appeared to have the ability to work with colleagues and to mobilise them. Often the work of the academic artisan does not appear on their position description, or only sketchily. They create their own job, according to the needs of the institution, work-group or discipline as they perceive them (Brew, et al., 2017).

It is important to be clear about what artisanship is not. We are not referring to those academics who just focus on their own teaching and/or looking after their own students, or who just have lots more teaching than their colleagues. Academic artisans are not the people who are using students as an excuse not to do research. Neither are we referring to academics who just focus on being on lots of university/faculty committees. Also we are not referring to academics just doing a particular role and nothing more e.g. head of department, neither are we talking about academics who are doing an administrative job, or taking on a task to fill out their workload. At times, it may be difficult to distinguish academic artisans from such academics. This is one of the problems and perhaps a reason why they hitherto have been absent in university discourse.

Whilst further research is needed to verify this, it is clear, as we have argued, that the focus of attention of the academic artisan is the organisation (including the faculty, department, or workgroup) and where it is going. They appear to be aware of the social structures and how they are played out around themselves. This leads them into coordination roles, mobilizing colleagues, managing things, and they craft these roles in unique ways responding creatively to the actual needs and requirements as they arise. Their orientation may arise due to their awareness of a job that needs to be done, and this can lead them to take up a formal role in, for example, course coordination, curriculum development, marketing or outreach.

The academics who perform these roles are therefore by no means deficient—though they may appear so on simplistic metrics used to judge performance. Rather, their work provides the glue that holds the university together. If they were not doing this work then others would not be able to do theirs. Indeed ironically, academic artisans facilitate university research capacity by not taking part in it.

Discussion

Our task in this paper has been to highlight academic artisans as a forgotten or “absent” group of academics who tend not to figure in discourses of academic work. We have suggested that universities organized around the context of research and teaching render invisible the in-between spaces that academic artisans occupy. Yet the work that they do is vital for university functioning.

There is more research to be done to explore the work and identities of people who occupy academic artisanal roles in universities. We have sketched some dimensions of these roles as demonstrated by academics in our data and hinted at others. However, our survey and our interviews were all based on the assumption that academics may focus primarily on research or on teaching. We recognise that some academics do just do this. However, it is only in analyzing our data as a whole, that we have come to recognise that much academic work falls between the two and that for substantial numbers of academics on teaching and research contracts what falls between teaching and research is the main focus and *raison d’être* of their academic work and careers.

While there has been considerable debate about the relationship between research and teaching, considerable discussion about academic identity, and discussions of academic freedom are longstanding, what is meant by ‘academic’; the nature and extent of academic work and how this is changing has received little attention.

There is, then, a need for studies to differentiate changing understandings of the nature of academic work. We are of the opinion that much artisanal work in universities is truly academic because it relies on the artisan making complex academic judgements and responding in creative ways. However, an important question raised by some of the artisanal work we have identified is the extent to which this work is academic work, or whether it is “academic related”, or “quasi academic” as the literature suggests. Cost-saving decisions to employ professional staff to perform functions usually performed by academic staff are increasingly being made by university managers (Whitchurch, 2008b; Macfarlane, 2009), so a healthy debate on the nature and scope of academic work is long overdue.

Without nuanced research-based understandings of what is meant by academic work, it is likely that there will continue to be confusion concerning the role and status of artisanal work in the university. Without this knowledge, inappropriate decisions about individuals’ contracts will continue to be made by university managers, for example, employing professional staff in academic roles, shifting academics onto professional staff contracts and requiring some teaching and research academics to move to teaching-only roles. However, teaching-only positions do not substitute for academic artisans, because their only focus is teaching; not the wider roles that artisans perform nor the spirit in which they do it. To do this is to treat academic artisans as if they do not exist.

Given that artisanal roles have been treated as absent in universities, and that this work has been undervalued, there are problems for academics who occupy these roles when it comes to promotion and progression. Many academic artisans as demonstrated by the examples, deliberately choose this path. Others may not be given a choice. They may be encouraged in early career to take on an artisanal role in the expectation that it may lead to career advancement. If a junior academic is successful in such a role, they may be offered further similar ones. They can then become stranded within the artisanal space failing to develop sufficient research output to apply for promotion. Although they may engage in implementing major teaching innovations, they may not obtain awards for teaching. Although further research is needed to substantiate this, there appears to be a tendency for academic artisans to become sidelined in terms of promotion. When institutional policy changes e.g. when all academics are required to be high level researchers, there may be serious problems for individuals.

Universities therefore need to re-evaluate what such academics bring to the academic enterprise and to recognise this work. At one level this may be to re-evaluate the role of “service” or “academic citizenship” (Macfarlane, 2007) seeing this as vital to university functioning. However, this does not go far enough because to recognise the role and existence

of academic artisanship is to break down traditional distinctions between research and teaching and examine the ways in which academics respond to institutional conditions in creating their jobs. This affects the organisation of the university, the work academics do, notions of academic careers and indeed, ideas about how universities function and what they are for.

Recognition of academic artisans therefore is important. In this paper, we have drawn attention to some of the work that academic artisans do. Investigation is needed to delineate different artisanal roles and their features, and to explore career profiles of academic artisans. Universities' attitudes to artisanal roles also need to be investigated. Research is needed to explore why they tend to be invisible. We believe that it was our focus on teaching and research formation that meant they were not immediately apparent in our sample. So studies are now needed based on the assumption that they do exist.

The experiences of academic artisans and their understandings of their academic role also need further exploration. This is important to inform university policy and strategy because academic artisans who focus their work and careers on the needs of the institution are likely to be important in implementing strategic initiatives.

Conclusion

This paper began with a discussion of research findings in relation to those academics who for one reason or another do not, or choose not to, do research or who have not developed accepted research profiles. Drawing on survey and interview data a picture has been painted of those people in terms of what they prioritise, how much work they do and what kind of work. We have argued that "academic artisans" as a group tend to have been "forgotten" or "absent" in discourses about the university and the academic work needed to sustain it. Such people make important contributions to university functioning.

Our study is indicative and suggestive. No doubt the choice of the term "academic artisans" will be debated. Our data has pointed to the ways in which academics think about and perform work that falls around and between teaching and research. This group has hitherto not been considered as a separate group. So a serious discussion about academic work, is overdue, especially as it is difficult to envisage how any university can operate effectively without those who exhibit artisanal characteristics and take on artisanal roles.

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