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ARTICLE

Strengthening the university executive: The expanding roles and remit of deputy and pro-vice-chancellors

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Abstract

Deputy and pro-vice-chancellors (DVCs and PVCs) are core members of the executive team and play a pivotal role in university management. Nevertheless, they have rarely been the subject of empirical investigation. This study addresses this research gap, utilising a census to examine the size and remit of the DVC and PVC cohort in English pre-1992 universities and map its evolution since 2005. It shows how these universities have increased the number of DVCs and PVCs, created new more managerial variants of the role and extended their collective remit. These developments evidence the extent to which pre-1992 universities have strengthened their executive and adopted a more corporate post-1992 university management model. Yet, despite the advent of new executive-style roles, the endurance of the traditional floating policy PVC testifies to the continued salience of academic leadership—as well as more managerial approaches—in contemporary university management.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Deputy and pro-vice-chancellors (DVCs and PVCs) sit at the second tier of university management and play a distinctive and vital role in support of the vice-chancellor as policy developers and catalysts for action (Smith, Adams, & Mount, 2007). However, despite their centrality and importance, they have rarely been the subject of empirical investigation. The exploratory and descriptive research presented here addresses this gap by turning the spotlight on the current cohort of DVCs and PVCs in English pre-1992 universities and the role they fulfil as members of the university executive team.

The study's aims are fourfold. Firstly, to provide an overview of the size and remit of the DVC and PVC population. Secondly, to identify the changes to this second tier of management since 2005 and assess whether or not these may signal a strengthening of the university executive. Thirdly, by comparing the DVC/PVC cohorts of pre- and post-

1992 universities, to understand the degree to which there has been a convergence of executive management models between the two sub-sectors. Fourthly, to theorise what the findings signify for the nature of management in the modern university, in particular the extent to which a more business-like, or managerial, approach may now prevail. With this latter aim in mind it is anticipated that, notwithstanding the study's English empirical setting, the article should be of interest and relevance to an international audience.

To set the research in context, the article begins by charting the transformation of university management—in particular the emergence of the executive team—over the last few decades and highlighting the key change drivers. Attention then turns to DVC and PVC roles and the way they have typically been differently conceived by pre- and post-1992 universities. The data collection method is then outlined and the findings presented. In the final section conclusions are drawn and the practical and theoretical implications of recent developments discussed.

2 | HISTORICAL AND EMPIRICAL CONTEXT

2.1 | The emergence of the executive team

The management of English universities has changed beyond recognition from that of 40 years ago. As the Higher Education policy environment has been transformed during that time, so universities have upgraded their managerial capacity (Scott, 1995). One early catalyst for change was the Thatcher government's new public management reform agenda aimed at increasing the efficiency, cost-effectiveness and relevance of public services (Ferlie, Ashburner, Fitzgerald, & Pettigrew, 1996). The Jarratt Report (CVCP, 1985), which advocated the adoption of more business-like management structures and decision-making processes, was an early manifestation of the government's attempts to improve the efficiency of university operations. It is generally regarded as a watershed moment in Higher Education management and as having ushered in the more managerial approach that is subsequently perceived to have permeated universities (Deem, Hillyard, & Reed, 2007).

Jarratt's recommendations included strengthening the authority of the vice-chancellor as chief executive, streamlining the committee structure, delegating budgetary responsibilities to departments and developing institutional plans and performance indicators. While these proposals were indicative of a more business-like approach to Higher Education management, this was no slavish imposition of corporate practice or 'an industrial solution' (Richmond, 1986, p. 4). Rather, improvements to management structures and procedures were to be undertaken in support of the university's academic mission, with management as 'the servant, not the master' (CVCP, 1985, p. 34). Contrary to government expectations and immediate media reaction (Goffin, 1988), the Report was not particularly critical of the way universities were managed and did not find significant inefficiencies. In fact, its findings illustrate the extent to which university management had already changed following the expansion of the sector and the financial constraints of the early 1980s (THES, 1985). Those universities under scrutiny thus easily passed the Jarratt test.

Therefore, although the Report could not be said to have sparked an overnight management revolution, it was nevertheless symbolically significant in three key respects. Firstly, it articulated the need for good university management and for those in senior academic positions to act as managers as well as intellectual leaders. Secondly, in championing top-down management it challenged both the culture of donnish dominion (Halsey, 1992), or collegiality and academic self-management, and the outdated and inefficient civil service administrative model in which administrators were expected to operate in a subservient role to the academic community.

Thirdly, the commissioning of the Report evidenced the government's perception of 'leadership deficit' within Higher Education (Watson, 2008, p. 11). This has been a recurring policy theme (Smith, Adams, & Mount, 2006) with a series of White Papers and reports, including *The Future of Higher Education* (Department for Education and Skills, 2003) and the Diamond Review (Universities UK, 2011), conveying a consistent message that universities need to become more efficient, find new sources of income and improve their performance (Middlehurst, 2004). The establishment of the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education in 2004 and various initiatives by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to promote good leadership, governance and management practice also testify to government determination to improve the way universities are run (Taylor, 2006).

Irrespective of government pressure, however, universities were already recognising the need to improve the quality of their management. The move from an elite to a mass system, the introduction of tuition fees and the access and enterprise agendas, and the imposition of an increased regulatory and accountability burden are just some of the developments that have made the Higher Education environment more fast-moving, competitive and challenging than hitherto. As the scale and complexity of university activities increased, so management came to the fore (Shattock, 2013).

The resultant progression from university administration to proactive strategic management (Shattock, 2000) manifested itself in two main ways. Firstly, in the expansion and professionalisation of the administration (Middlehurst, 1993) with generalist administrators replaced by specialist managers, such as those in marketing or estates, often recruited from outside the sector. Secondly, in the creation of executive teams—defined here as a university's most senior managerial (as opposed to governance) decision-making body.

Although the executive team is a taken-for-granted feature of the contemporary university, it is a relatively new phenomenon. Jarratt made no reference to it in 1985, suggesting that the concept either did not exist or was not recognised as such at the time. However, by the early 2000s the Lambert Report noted that many 'well run' universities were 'developing strong executive management structures' with small, cohesive cabinet-style management teams (Lambert, 2003, pp. 93–94). These executive teams emerged as a support mechanism for vice-chancellors as the range and complexity of management issues became too much for one person to deal with (Henkel, 2002). These days, the executive team may itself have support in the form of executive policy assistants (Middlehurst, 2013) and a wider senior management team, typically including deans and/or heads of department and directors of professional services (Woodfield & Kennie, 2008, p. 398).

Since vice-chancellors are the main determinant of an executive team's size and mode of operation, these vary from institution to institution (Middlehurst, 1993). However, there is a core membership common to virtually all executive teams (Woodfield & Kennie, 2008) comprising the vice-chancellor, registrar/chief operating officer, director of finance, and the DVCs and PVCs who form the focus for this article.

2.2 | DVCs and PVCs: The binary divide

DVCs and PVCs, who occupy the second tier of university management immediately below the head of institution (typically termed vice-chancellor), are integral members of this core executive team. Collectively they comprise its largest constituent group and therefore serve as a useful bellwether for monitoring changes in executive team size and composition. For the purposes of this research, the term DVC is reserved for those members of the DVC/PVC cohort with a different title and more senior status from that of their colleagues. All other post holders are categorised as PVCs regardless of their actual job title.

Most previous empirical work on the role and profile of university leaders has focused on vice-chancellors (e.g., Bargh, Bocock, Scott, & Smith, 2000; Breakwell & Tytherleigh, 2008). DVCs and PVCs at the next level down the university hierarchy remain a relatively under-researched and under-theorised group. Little was known about who they are or what they do prior to the seminal study of Smith et al. (2006) which charted the evolution of the role from 1960 to 2005. Subsequent studies have examined the competencies required to become a PVC (Spendlove, 2007), the boundary-spanning nature of the role (Pilbeam & Jamieson, 2010), the profile of post holders and changes to the way they are appointed (Shepherd, 2014, 2017a, 2017c). In Australia, the challenges and rewards of DVC and PVC roles have been investigated together with the way performance is assessed (Scott, Bell, Coates, & Grebinnov, 2010).

Smith et al.'s (2007) study found that in 1960 there were a mere 21 DVC and PVC posts across all UK universities. By the 1970s, numbers had grown and many universities had at least one PVC, and some as many as three, while a few had a more senior DVC post (Moodie & Eustace, 1974). In the mid-1980s, Jarratt noted the vital role played by PVCs in policy development and coordination and as troubleshooters for the vice-chancellor and expected the job to grow in importance (CVCP, 1985). However, there was no sudden post-Jarratt surge in DVC or PVC numbers but rather a steady increase over the following 20 years at a 'relatively sedate' pace (Smith & Adams, 2008, p. 347).

In 1992, the Further and Higher Education Act brought the former polytechnics into the university sector, ending the so-called binary divide. Although the distinction between these 'new' universities and the 'old' (pre-1992) ones may be considered something of a 'crude classification' given the variety of institutional histories and missions within, as well as between, the two sub-sectors (Macfarlane, 2015, p. 110), it is nevertheless a meaningful one with respect to DVC and PVC roles. There have traditionally been three main areas of difference between DVCs and PVCs in the two sub-sectors: mode of employment, means of appointment and role construction.

In the pre-1992 institutions, DVC and PVC posts have typically been part-time (at least in theory) with candidates appointed on a fixed-term internal secondment basis while maintaining their underlying open-ended academic contract. The assumption behind this arrangement was that post holders would continue their academic activities alongside their management role before reverting to their academic job at the end of their period of office (Middlehurst, 1993). In reality, this does not necessarily happen in practice (Spendlove, 2007) and over the years this exit route has become both less attractive and less feasible for career track academic managers who are likely to have lost touch with their research (Shepherd, 2014).

By contrast, in post-1992 institutions DVCs and PVCs have always been full-time, permanent posts and recruitment via external open competition is the norm. There are also significant differences in the way PVC roles are constructed between the two sub-sectors. In pre-1992 universities these have typically been floating policy roles with no direct reports or budgets. In the post-1992 universities, on the other hand, they are executive management jobs that entail line management responsibility for academic or professional services departments.

Although the management approaches of the two sub-sectors have arguably become more similar over the years (Deem, 1998), the binary divide in DVC and PVC posts was still very much in evidence at the end of Smith et al.'s (2007) study period in 2005. The research presented in this article extends and updates Smith et al.'s work by examining the 2016 DVC and PVC cohort in pre-1992 universities and its evolution since 2005. Before these findings are presented, the data collection method is outlined.

3 | METHOD AND DATA SOURCES

This article draws upon data from a census, or enumeration, of an entire population (Bryman, 2008) undertaken for a Society for Research in Higher Education-funded research project entitled *Appointing for Diversity: Can 'Old' Universities Learn from the Experience of the 'New'?* The strength of the census method is that it provides an effective means of obtaining an overview of the characteristics of every individual in a study population at a given point in time. In this case, the study population consisted of all DVCs and PVCs in English universities listed as members of Universities UK, the membership organisation for heads of Higher Education institutions. Limiting the research geographically to England had the advantage of restricting the enquiry to those universities within a single Higher Education system, operating under the same policy and funding regime. Comparability was further enhanced by the exclusion from the study population of private universities (such as Buckingham) and small, specialist institutions (such as the Guildhall School of Music). The final census population comprised 92 institutions: 42 pre-1992 and 50 post-1992 universities.

The aim of the census was to map the socio-demographic and professional profile of the 444 DVCs and PVCs in these institutions and produce a structured and consistent data set. Accordingly, the following units of data were collected for each individual: name, academic title, gender, ethnicity (a classification of white or non-white based on the individual's profile photograph), subject discipline, job title (including specific portfolio), date of appointment, and previous role and institution. This article focuses on a sub-set of these data relating to DVC and PVC numbers and roles; socio-demographic and professional profile data are presented elsewhere (Shepherd, 2017a).

Data were gathered from publicly available sources, primarily university websites (corporate pages, publication schemes, press releases on new appointments and staff profiles). In addition, non-university online sources, such as LinkedIn, were used to address any data gaps, for example, in an individual's career background. Data collection was undertaken within the month of June 2016 in order to provide a snapshot in time of the size and remit of the study population. These findings are presented in the following sections.

4 | THE DVC AND PVC COHORT

Pre-1992 universities are making significant changes to their DVC and PVC cohort along several dimensions: numerically, hierarchically and managerially. They are also revising the way in which their DVCs and PVCs are recruited. These developments are detailed in turn in the following sections. Figures used within the main body of the text are rounded to whole numbers to aid readability.

4.1 | Growing in size and diversity

DVC and PVC numbers have increased by 55 per cent in pre-1992 English universities in just over a decade. As of June 2016, there were 229 DVC and PVC posts within the 42 census institutions, including five that were vacant pending appointment. This compares to 148 posts (including two vacancies) in 2005 across the 39 census institutions with an entry in the *Association of Commonwealth Universities Yearbook*. The average number of DVCs and PVCs per institution has thus risen from 3.8 to 5.4 over the same period, equating to an additional 1.6 posts.

This growth in the DVC and PVC cohort cannot easily be explained by a correspondent growth in institutional size since it has taken place during a period when UK student numbers[1] have remained broadly the same: falling slightly from 2,281,780 in 2005/6 to 2,280,830 by 2015/16 (Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency, www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis). Higher Education staff numbers have increased during that period—by 15 per cent, from 355,415 to 410,130—but at a significantly lower rate than that for DVCs and PVCs.

Not only have pre-1992 universities significantly increased DVC and PVC numbers over the last 11 years, they have done so to levels beyond that of their post-1992 counterparts. As of 2016, the former had just over one additional DVC or PVC on average than the latter: 5.4 compared to 4.3. These average figures mask a wide variation in the actual number of DVCs and PVCs in each institution. In pre-1992 universities this ranged from two to 12 (including two PVCs heading up overseas campuses), while in the post-1992s the range was even wider—from zero to 13. There is no clear link between type of institution and size of the DVC and PVC cohort and it is not necessarily the largest—or most prestigious—institutions that have the most DVCs or PVCs. Rather, the key determinant of cohort size is whether or not an institution has PVC/Deans.

As the name implies, PVC/Deans combine institution-wide PVC responsibilities with the executive management of a faculty or, in four cases, a university campus. Although they represent a new type of PVC, they are not new management posts per se, but rather a re-titling of existing faculty dean positions. Unlike traditional floating policy PVCs, PVC/Deans are executive PVCs with line management and budgetary responsibilities. These contrasting types of PVC often sit within the same executive team, even though they may have been appointed by different means and on different terms of employment (Shepherd, 2014).

According to the *Association of Commonwealth Universities Yearbook* there were no PVC/Dean posts in pre-1992 universities in 2005, but by June 2016 there were 61. PVC/Deans thus account for 27 per cent of the current DVC and PVC cohort and 75 per cent of the increase in numbers since 2005. Over one third (38%) of pre-1992 universities had PVC/Deans in 2016, typically three or four posts each according to their number of faculties. This means that the PVC/Dean profile for pre-1992 universities is now similar to that for post-1992 universities, which have 63 posts across 17 (34%) institutions.

4.2 | Bolstering the hierarchy

Pre-1992 universities are making changes at DVC, as well as PVC, level in a hierarchical stretching of the second tier of management (Smith et al., 2007). Firstly, they have increased DVC numbers at a much higher rate than those of PVCs, with a 155 per cent increase since 2005 (from 18 to 46 posts) compared to 41 per cent for PVCs over the same period (from 130 to 183 posts). This equates to an average of 1.1 posts per institution in 2016 (the same as for post-1992 universities) compared to 0.5 in 2005.

TABLE 1   Change in the DVC/PVC model in pre-1992 English universities

	2005	2016
Single-tier model (PVCs only)	25 (64.1%)	8 (19.0%)
Two-tier model (both DVCs and PVCs)	13 (33.3%)	34 (81.0%)
No DVCs or PVCs	1 (2.6%)	0

Secondly, a growing number of DVCs are being given the title of provost or DVC/Provost. By 2016, 12 pre-1992 universities (29%) had adopted the president–provost model prevalent in the United States whereby the president assumes an external-facing ambassadorial and fundraising role while the provost heads up the day-to-day campus operations. This is a continuation of the trend for universities to create executive-style DVC roles that are distinct from, and more senior in status to, that of PVCs (Smith et al., 2007).

These changes reflect a reinforcement of the hierarchy within the DVC and PVC cohort. In 2005, two thirds of institutions (64%) had a single-tier DVC/PVC model, comprising PVCs only, with only one third having a two-tier model comprising one or more DVCs plus PVCs (Table 1).

However, by 2016, these figures had reversed with 81 per cent of institutions having a two-tier model with both DVCs and PVCs. These data illustrate the extent to which pre-1992 universities have been bolstering the DVC job over the last decade.

4.3 | Extending the remit

Most DVCs and PVCs (141 of 229, or 62%) have responsibility for a specific policy portfolio. Traditionally in pre-1992 universities these were in the areas of research and education or teaching and learning. These remain the two core portfolios in both pre- and post-1992 universities, although there are relatively fewer DVCs/PVCs with a research brief in the latter group perhaps because of their teaching orientation (Table 2).

TABLE 2   DVC and PVC portfolios in pre- and post-1992 English universities

Portfolio[a]	Pre-1992s (n = 42)	Post-1992s (n = 50)
Research	16	8
Research and enterprise/innovation	22	17
Enterprise/innovation	7	5
Teaching and learning/education/academic	40	33
Student experience	4	13
International	20	14
Planning/resources/operations	13	12
External relations/partnerships	4	11
Marketing, communications and fundraising	4	2
Human resources/equality	3	0
Quality	1	1
Other	7	5
Total	**141**	**121**

[a]Joint portfolios are categorised by whichever one comes first in the job title.

TABLE 3 DVC and PVC recruitment method in pre- and post-1992 English universities

Recruitment method	Pre-1992s (n = 224)	Post-1992s (n = 199)
Internal-only process	124 (55.3%)	54 (27.1%)
External open competition	100 (44.7%)	145 (72.9%)[a]

[a]This figure may be an underestimate since some permanent post holders may have been appointed by external advertisements placed prior to 2006—and hence outside the data collection period.

However, as Table 2 illustrates, many institutions now have DVCs or PVCs with responsibility for enterprise/innovation and the student experience (more common in the post-1992s). These changes reflect firstly the advent of third stream technology transfer activity and secondly the introduction of tuition fees and the construction of students as consumers (Williams, 2011). DVC and PVC portfolios have also expanded to include internationalisation and other policy areas more usually associated with professional services managers, including planning/resources/operations, external relations, marketing and fundraising. Thus, the scope of the collective DVC and PVC remit has broadened considerably in the pre-1992 universities beyond the traditional teaching and research areas in the way that Smith et al. (2007) had anticipated. As a result, pre-1992 institutions now have a similar portfolio profile to that of their post-1992 counterparts.

4.4 | Bridging the binary divide

Despite this convergence of DVC and PVC profiles and remits, differences remain between sub-sectors in the way post holders are employed and appointed. Although most pre-1992 universities still employ their PVCs (if not their PVC/Deans and DVCs) on fixed-term secondment rather than the open-ended contracts favoured by post-1992 institutions, they have moved rapidly in a post-1992 direction concerning their recruitment practice. As already noted, external open competition for DVC and PVC posts is the norm within post-1992 institutions. In pre-1992 institutions too, vice-chancellors have been externally advertising more positions, motivated by a desire to attract the best candidates, bring in fresh blood, test internal candidates against the field and bring greater transparency to the recruitment process.

By cross-referencing the census data with the author's existing data set of DVC and PVC job adverts in the *Times Higher Education* and on the jobs.ac.uk website between January 2006 and June 2016, it has been possible to identify post holders appointed by means of external open competition. This analysis reveals that 45 per cent of DVC and PVC appointments were made in this way by 2016 (Table 3), 64 per cent of which involved the use of executive search agencies—a new development at DVC and PVC level over the last decade. Given the compelling arguments proposed by vice-chancellors in favour of external recruitment this trend looks set to continue, albeit as part of a mixed recruitment model that retains the internal secondment option for some PVC posts (Shepherd, 2017a).

The traditional binary divide is also increasingly being breached in relation to differences in PVC role construction. Two thirds of PVCs (122 of 183, or 66%) in pre-1992 institutions are still in policy-related rather than executive roles. A major difference thus remains between sub-sectors, although the creation of PVC/Deans represents a major shift towards the executivisation of PVC posts since 2005.

5 | CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study has added to knowledge by extending and updating what is known about the DVC and PVC cohort and charting how this has changed in pre-1992 institutions since the most recent data set for 2005 (Smith et al., 2007). Three main conclusions can be drawn from these findings and these are presented in turn below together with discussion of their practical and theoretical implications.

Firstly, pre-1992 universities have significantly strengthened their second tier of management. Not only has the number of DVCs and PVCs increased, but the reconfiguration of deans as PVC/Deans has brought a whole new group

TABLE 4 Comparison of DVC and PVC cohort in pre- and post-1992 universities

	Pre-1992s (n = 42)	Post-1992s (n = 50)
Number of DVCs	46	55
Number of PVCs	183	160
Total DVCs and PVCs	229	215
Average number of DVCs and PVCs per institution	**5.4**	4.3
Range in the size of DVC/PVC cohort	2–12	0–13
Number of PVC/Deans	61	63
Number of institutions with PVC/Deans	16 (38.1%)	17 (34.0%)
Average number of DVCs per institution	1.1	1.1
Number of provosts or DVC/Provosts	**12**	4
Number of institutions with two-tier DVC/PVC model	**34 (81.0%)**	28 (56.0%)

of executive PVCs into the cohort and, hence, onto the executive team. Although an examination of change drivers is beyond the scope of this study, it is likely that these include a desire to tighten the link between the centre and the faculties as part of a more corporate management structure (Middlehurst, 2013) and to strengthen the management levers for translating institutional strategy into action. Therefore, while the advent of PVC/Deans could not be said to have added to the overall numbers of senior managers, it has nevertheless increased both the size and influence of the executive team.

According to Mintzberg's (1993) conception of the university as professional bureaucracy, the executive team occupies the strategic apex of the institution, its most important constituent part. From a theoretical perspective, its continued growth may be viewed as a manifestation of a strengthened organisational steering core (Clark, 2007) and as a movement away from the collegium organisational model, where the operating core of academics dominate, towards a corporate model in which the executive is more powerful (McNay, 1999).

This strengthening of the executive may be viewed as a legitimate response to changing circumstances and as a necessary means of enhancing an institution's 'strategic capacity' (Middlehurst, 2013, p. 283). However, for some authors, the growth of management is perceived as problematic (Smith & Hussey, 2010; Vincent, 2011). Others have argued that, as DVCs and PVCs assume responsibility for a broader range of policy portfolios and functions traditionally performed by academics (and, to a lesser extent, professional services staff), the academic community may become distanced from institutional policy debate and strategic decision making (Shattock, 2013). This in turn may lead to a widening of the gap between the executive team and rank-and-file academics, or the 'academic manager' and the 'managed academic' (Winter, 2009, p. 121).

Secondly, there has been considerable convergence of the DVC/PVC profile between pre- and post-1992 English universities (Table 4). Taken together with the portfolio data already presented in Table 2, this shows there are more similarities than differences between the two sub-sectors in the number, type and remit of their respective DVC and PVC populations.

In fact, as the figures highlighted in bold in Table 4 illustrate, pre-1992 universities have gone further than their post-1992 counterparts in increasing the size of their DVC/PVC cohort and in bolstering the DVC role.

Some important aspects of the binary divide remain with respect to the terms of employment, appointment practice and role construction of DVC and PVC posts, although there has been significant movement towards a post-1992 university norm, particularly in relation to the adoption of an external open competition model of recruitment. While a degree of convergence in management structures between pre- and post-1992 institutions now operating within a unitary Higher Education sector and facing similar pressures and challenges is to be expected, it is nevertheless surprising

that it is the post-1992 universities which are providing the model to emulate—particularly in the absence of empirical evidence that a more top-down, executive approach has actually enhanced performance in those universities where it has been applied.

Thirdly, there is greater diversity in the types of DVC and PVC posts. At a practical level this illustrates how vice-chancellors are reacting to changing circumstances by devising 'new delivery models' to implement their institutional strategies across structural boundaries (Smith & Adams, 2008, p. 352). At a theoretical level, this diversification of posts reflects the 'dynamic tensions' that characterise leadership and management in the contemporary university (Bolden, Petrov, & Gosling, 2008, p. 399), especially that between management and collegiality. That is because vice-chancellors' decisions about executive team structures and members' activities reflect their own leadership values and beliefs (Woodfield & Kennie, 2008), including where they sit on the managerialism–collegiality continuum. The more managerial a vice-chancellor's approach to the running of their university, the more managerial their interpretation—and expectations—of the DVC/PVC role.

If, as Smith et al. (2007) suggest, the PVC role exemplifies the contested nature of academic leadership, then the advent of the executive DVC or PVC might be taken to signify the adoption of the more directive, top-down management style characteristic of the post-1992 universities (Shattock, 2012). This has led some authors to conclude that the first-among-equals academic leadership typical of a collegial culture has been 'consumed' by a corporate management assumption of the right to manage based on a position in the management hierarchy (Yielder & Codling, 2004, p. 319). The more hierarchical management approach and full-time managerial conception of the DVC and PVC role evidenced here, coupled with the legitimation of academic management as a career, have arguably increased the likelihood that post holders will be willing to assert their right to manage—a key tenet of managerialism (Shepherd, 2017b). Certainly, Jarratt's call for those in senior positions to act as managers as well as intellectual leaders appears to have been heeded.

On the other hand, the fact that the traditional floating policy PVC has survived the advent of more executive DVC and PVC roles suggests that there is still a place in pre-1992 universities for senior managers who operate via 'influence' rather than 'command' (Smith & Adams, 2008, p. 355). Therefore, although the positional power of DVCs and PVCs may be increasing, expert power retains a critical role. This goes some way to explaining why academic credibility remains a non-negotiable requirement for senior management posts (Smith et al., 2007; Spendlove, 2007). It further implies a considerable degree of ambiguity and variation in conceptions of management in the contemporary university. The academic narrative bemoaning the rise of managerialism and the demise of collegial culture (e.g., Deem et al., 2007; Smith & Hussey, 2010; Vincent, 2011) fails to adequately convey the tensions and contradictions evident in actual management practice.

The research presented in this article is descriptive rather than explanatory in nature and its value lies in establishing the fact and dimensions of a given phenomenon—i.e., the strengthening of the executive in pre-1992 English universities—prior to asking the why questions (de Vaus, 2001). Further research is now required to investigate whether or not the expansion in the size and remit of the DVC and PVC cohort evidenced here has served to alleviate the perceived 'leadership deficit' (Watson, 2008, p. 11) by enhancing the quality, as well as the scope, of university management. In the meantime, it remains a moot point whether or not bigger necessarily equals better in relation to executive teams and organisational performance.

ENDNOTE

[1] Disaggregated data for the pre-1992 study population are not available.

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