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# **An alternative proposition to Lewis' 2014 views on the 'Construction of professional identity in a dynamic higher education sector'**

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## **Abstract**

This paper offers an alternative proposition to that of Lewis on identity and professional identity in higher education (HE). The proposition is provided from the narratives of twenty-six individual interviewees who deliver HE in college based higher education (CBHE); a viewpoint not considered by Lewis, who tends to adopt a more generalist view. Where Lewis blames the demise of HE on academics, the alternative is considered where it is the managerialist and marketisation practiced by managers and administrators alike, that may be the cause of this demise; introducing what is often referred to as the 'McDonaldization of HE'. The paper considers Lewis' views that the Association of University Administrators should have more power, and take the lead on managing academics, and HE, but finds the arguments both weak and tentative; subsequently one argues that the subjects Lewis discusses are 'wicked problems' with little or no real opportunity for resolution.

**Keywords:** Academic identity, professionalism, administration, higher education, managerialism.

## **Introduction:**

When considering the concepts of identity, professional identity, academic identity, higher education, or culture, many different authors have addressed these issues (Bourdieu 1988, Elliott and Hall 1994, Adams 1998, Barnett 2000, Becher and Trowler 2001, Furedi 2002, Ball 2003, Archer 2008, Barnett and Di Napoli 2008, Churchman and King 2009, Castells 2010, Henkel 2010, Fitzmaurice 2011, Fanghanel 2012, Adcroft and Taylor 2013). These authors listed above are but a few of those who have written on the subjects discussed by Lewis (2014) in his paper: “Construction of professional identity in a dynamic higher education sector”<sup>1</sup> *Perspectives: Policy and Practice in Higher Education*, Vol. 18 (2), pp.43-50; some of whose works are not considered.

Rather than considering Lewis’ work, and then having a section considering the alternative proposition based on my own research, one believes it would be better for the reader, if one were to weave the alternative propositions in and amongst the critique of Lewis. This then will aid in avoiding repetitiveness, and ambiguity, whereby not having a structured discussion may obfuscate the reader.

My own research is based on the perceptions of lecturers of their professionalism, academic identity, and scholarship within a College-Based Higher Education (CBHE) institution.

## **Placing Lewis in Context:**

To put Lewis into context, there is a brief outline of what he is involved in at the bottom of page 43 of his paper. Here the paper identifies his many accomplishments and the fact that he is a Fellow and Trustee of the ‘Association of University Administrators’ (AUA). Further, the Journal Lewis’ paper is published in, is in partnership with the AUA. It is from

this context that one argues that bias may have crept into Lewis' discussion, for example, when claiming that administrators should have academic empathy with academics and the work they do, and that as professionals in administrative roles, should embrace academic empathy as a professional trait. Lewis' view is that:

...the AUA is well placed to take the lead on this work; that as part of their [administrators] values and their [administrators] promotion of professional behaviour amongst their membership, there is an opportunity to promote and facilitate the acquisition of academic empathy. (Lewis 2014, 48)

This, and the fact that although Lewis discusses how managerialist practices have had an impact on universities, he seems to embrace these (whilst at the same time lambasting them); rather than seeing managerialism, marketisation as a canker on universities and colleges alike, instilling practices deemed to measure anything and everything (Furedi 2002, Barnett 2003). As Barnett (2003) writes in relation to change within HE, there are a number of layers of unease, referring to these layers like currents in a river, and that one of these currents as become polluted. He further suggest that the state exceeds its legitimate interest concerning universities (Barnett 2003). Additionally, that private sector corporations are also abusing their interest in universities when trying to control the freedom of academics to speak unreservedly, and that students now define themselves as consumers (Poynter 2002, Barnett 2003, Anonymous for peer reviewing 2009). The same can be said of HE in FE; as Fisher (2009, 20) writes:

Ever since Further Education colleges were removed from local authority control in the early 1990s, they have become subject both to 'market' pressures and to government-imposed targets. They have been at the vanguard of changes that would be rolled out through the rest of the education system and public services – a kind of lab in which neoliberal 'reforms' of education have been trialed [*sic*], and as such, they are the perfect place to begin an analysis of the effects of capitalist realism.

On a further point, Lewis when outlining his paper highlights that his study comprises of a number of reflections, which are based upon his doctoral research data; but there is no data presented within the current paper. Further, in his paper he does not identify, or makes

clear, which type of university his work is referring to, for example, ‘Russell Group’, ‘Red Brick’, ‘Post 1992’, or the new ‘post 2000’ universities. Despite these all being universities, they are distinctive in the way they conduct themselves, for example, some are research intensive, other are both research and teaching, and at the opposite end of the spectrum are the teaching focused universities. As a result, universities in the UK and possibly other countries can be placed along this spectrum. Lewis, certainly does not consider UK college based higher education, and the fact that some of these colleges are referred to as ‘University Centres’; some of which are franchised by universities, or are satellites of the partner university, others funded through consortiums (Bathmaker et al. 2008).

In the UK, governments have, by removing the autonomy of teachers in schools, and lecturers in colleges and universities, paved the way for prescriptive education, which can be measured and thus results driven (Elliott and Hall 1994, Anonymous for peer reviewing 2011c, Wolf March 2011). In 2009 in the United States of America (USA); Gray (2009) was identifying the same problem of prescriptivism; in the UK, Tony Blair’s (then Prime Minister) mantra was ‘What works if all that matters’ (Ball 2010), whereas in the USA the mantra was ‘No Child Left Behind’ Act 2001 (Gray 2009, Anonymous for peer reviewing 2011c). For me, it is this removal of autonomy and greater control by administrators that Lewis (2014) is arguing for.

In relation to the above, Lewis relies on leading authors to support his claims for greater control by administrators (For example: Barnett 2003, Whitchurch 2008), and that the AUA is both the driving force and underpinning professional body to support this action. Subsequently, this view does not lend itself to that of having academic empathy, when in reality the message is that academics sit outside this group of professionals. Nevertheless, when considering the works of Colbeck (1998), the heterogeneity that Lewis discusses, could be due to the ever increasing administrative burden placed upon academics today. As a result,

from my own research, one has identified that there appears to have been a shift from one of ‘pedagogy to hamburgerology (Ritzer 2002, Wynyard 2002, Anonymous for peer reviewing 2009, Ritzer 2011). Here, these authors argue that there has been a shift from teaching to customer service, where the student is deemed ‘King/Queen’ (Furedi 2002); further, that academics are expected to ‘cow tow’ to students, less they take their business elsewhere (Fox 2002, Oxford 2008, January 31). On the discussion of shifts, Wittrock (1989) identifies that there may be an ‘epistemic drift’; here he quotes Elzinga (1989) on the subject, writing that:

...a shift from a traditional reputational control system associated with disciplinary science to one that is disengaged from the disciplinary science and, thus, more open to external regulation by government and managerial policy impositions. The norms of the new system have a strong relevance component, transmitted from the bureaucracies to which the hybrid research community is linked. The bureaucracy thereby influences not only problem selection but also the standards of performance of research, standards of significance and territorial definition of the field or speciality in question. (Elzinga 1989, 209, Wittrock 1989, 9)

When reading this, it can be clearly seen that it is devoid of academic empathy, and instead is a view that seeks to control through bureaucratisation and managerialism the work of the academic. Further, Elzinga (1989) refers to academics (or in this case research community), as hybrids. Therefore, in the case of college based higher education (CBHE), not only are these institutions hybrids (Parry and Thompson 2002), but it also appears so are the lecturers (academics) that work within them. It is true that my own research has shown that these lecturers do not perceive themselves as academics (Anonymous for peer reviewing 2010, 2011b, 2012, 2014a, b), but they do perceive themselves as highly professional, and have their own professional body – ‘Institute for Learning’, which lays down a code of conduct and continuous professional development that these lecturers in FECs delivering CBHE have to comply with (Clancy 2007, IfL 2008). However, the ever increasing demands placed on both CBHE and HE via a market-orientated approach to education is said to be diminishing the professional status of lecturers (Kingston 2008), where one is seeing the emergence of an ‘academic underclass’, where lecturers are employed on short-term, or part-time contracts

(Willmott 1995). Having said this, Schon (2002, 22) writes that: “...the foundations of professional status are to be found in the substantive field of knowledge that the specialist professes to command...the technique of production or application of knowledge over which the specialist claims mastery.” Administrators are not specialists in the many of the fields that academics are leaders in via the scholarship or research they undertake on their chosen subject area (Kreber 2000).

From the above, one argues that Lewis is somewhat blinkered, and has not read wide enough to gain a thorough insight into what constitutes academic identity, or identity in its own right; these are both wicked problems (Rittel and Webber 1973); these are problems that have no real conclusion to them, and therefore, academics, may forever strive to find an answer. The problem with Lewis (2014) is much of what he has written is taken out of context; this will be discussed in further sections below.

### **Proposition**

In this section, a comparison of Lewis’ (2014) arguments will be undertaken, and the issues I have identified will be analysed and critiqued in comparison with my own research.

### **Professionalism**

When reflecting upon what Lewis has written concerning professionalism, he makes it clear that academics sit outside this domain, thereby inferring that academics are not professionals, nor have a recognised profession; despite many academics being members of the Higher Education Academy (HEA). Contrary, he sees academics and the academic community as a guild; this is evidenced when he quotes (Clark 1987, 372) as writing:

As if it were a birthright, they [academic staff] [academic staff was included by Lewis] struggle for self-government, invoking powerful doctrines – academic freedom, community of scholars, freedom of research – which serve both as guild ideologies and as the justification for unusual personal liberties.

If Lewis had consulted other literature on the guilds, he would have gained a deeper understanding in that there were initially two guilds – ‘The Guild Merchant’ and the ‘Crafts Guilds’, therefore, which guild is Lewis referring to? It was some time later that the merchant’s guild was merged into the crafts guild, largely due to the crafts guild’s increase in influence and power (Hoffman 2011). As Hoffman writes, the guilds ‘...were founded to promote the spiritual as well as the temporal welfare of their members ... The guilds maintained schools, since education was considered to be a religious duty.’ (Hoffman 2011, 6). Contradictory, Lewis (2014, 45) argues that:

The interconnection of university, church and the ‘learned professions’ reinforced a distinction between the professional elite and the rest of society. Where traders and skilled manual workers acquired their knowledge through practical apprenticeships, the ‘gentlemen’ of society undertook a liberal university education.

This then, is in direct opposition to Hoffman’s (2011) views above, where the church was central to education, and the guilds both supported the members of the guild and the laity in times of hardship; not the gentlemen as depicted by Lewis. Further to this critique, it is surprising that when discussing professionals and professionalism, that authors such as: Friedson (2001); Nixon et al. (2001); Schuck, Gordon, and Buchanan (2008); McInnis (2010); Henkel (2010), and (Fitzmaurice 2011), are not considered. It is understandable that Lewis could not review all the various works of the literati, but those mentioned are often the most cited in other texts. Having said this, Lewis does quote Perkin (1969), but he does not elude to the perception by Perkin’s that the terms of professionalism and professional have become nothing more than another ‘class’ in society. But what of Perkins’ (2002) later works, these have not been considered; why?

Perkin (2002) argues that professionalism has become nothing more than another ruling class, which permeates society from the top to the bottom. As Anonymous for peer reviewing



(2014a) identifies, the term professionalism may have become somewhat diluted, as it is now a common term used in every-day language to identify that one is good at what they do. But is this nothing more than a web spun by the individual to lay claim to the significance of the work that they do (Meek 1988)? For certain, from Lewis' (2014) views, this would seem to be the case he is arguing.

To aid his view point on professionalism, Lewis (2014, 44-45) develops three conceptual frameworks; the critique here, is that the term conceptual framework is a paradox. That is, 'conceptual' is an idea, thus is subjective, whereas, a framework means structure, that is, something to which one must adhere. Therefore, the two do not sit together, and is grammatically incorrect.

When looking at Lewis' model 1, it can be seen that the base (foundation) depicts the AUA professional body. The two sidewalls do not sit on the foundation, but to either side of it, and comprise of 'identity' and 'professionalism'. The plinth that straddles the two sidewalls is the 'personal reflections'; presumably of Lewis' (2014) research. Where in this model does 'scholarship' fit? In relation to this, my own research, which looked at academic identity through the lens of lecturers delivering CBHE, used similar constructs to those of Lewis. However, my research focused in-depth on academic identity (a subject Lewis merely pays lip service to), scholarship, and professionalism. These terms are often used interchangeably (See Anonymous for peer reviewing 2010, 2011b, 2014a, b). From this, one suggests that academic identity is based on the following theoretical model (see Fig. 1).

Fig. 1 Theoretical model of academic identity

PLACE FIG.1 HERE

Here it can be seen that the foundation stone is knowledge/scholarship, which in turn supports the pillars of research, teaching, work culture, the ‘self’, and professionalism. All of which support the plinth of ‘academic identity’.

From the above discussion, Lewis’ (2014) paper needed to drill a little deeper and consider other authors works (already identified earlier in this paper), on the subject of professionalism, academic identity and autonomy. These works were published around the time he claims he was undertaking his PhD, from which he was publishing other papers. Again, the question needs asking: “Why were these papers not considered?”

In reality, Lewis’ (2014) paper is somewhat paradoxical. From the abstract, one is led to believe that neoliberal managerialism is to be considered and its impact upon HE. Nevertheless, in truth, the inference is that Lewis is arguing that administrators should have greater control on what happens in HEIs (especially over academics), whilst arguing that administrators need to have empathy with academics. Hence, the abstract appears to be out of kilter with the rest of the paper.

#### Academic Identity

Lewis (2014, 46), when discussing “Situating ‘professionalism’ and ‘identity’ in an HE context”, commences this section by inferring that academics see themselves as having a birth right to autonomy, to undertake research, and be part of a group of scholars. From Fig. 1, and the elaboration on this model, one can see that this is what academic are; they are the creators of knowledge (Usherwood 2010), they then disseminate that knowledge in a language that others can use to develop their own knowledge (HEQC 1993). At the same time, academics need to disseminate this newfound knowledge to their students in the classroom (along with their experiences and reflections on undertaking that research), or workshops with colleagues. Presently, no one is born with knowledge; it has to be earned

through years of study, debate, and reflection. Lewis only needs to reflect on his own academic apprenticeship and the various degrees he has completed; his doctorate being probably one of the most academic pieces of work he has conducted. One doubts, nor is there any indication that he was born with this knowledge; he acquired it through scholarly activity and research. As a result, one refutes Lewis' statement about a birthright; although it is acknowledged that other authors have also claimed this (McInnis 2010), but as Henkel (2007, 96) identifies, "Academic freedom is not something that is given as a right; it is won; and not once and for all."

It is plain as to what academics in CBHE and HEIs need to do their job to a high level of quality and to allow them to be professional in what they do; it is similar to what Lewis is claiming for administrators, that is greater control and autonomy over what they do. Further, not all academics have gone through school, college, university, having never worked in the commercial sector. Many academics have come from the commercial sector, especially in CBHE, bringing with them the practical knowledge of the subject they teach (as identified earlier in the paper).

From the literati, an academic is portrayed as many things ranging from a teacher, scholar, research, specialist, administrator, service provider, counsellor, community member within the organisation and so on (Conway 1970, Bourdieu 1988, Adams 1998, Blaxter, Hughes, and Tight 1998, Churchman 2002, Harris 2005, Churchman and King 2009, Brew 2010, Gale, Turner, and McKenzie 2011). To this end, it is not the academics themselves that are heterogeneous, but the number of differing roles that administration and management within both CBHE and HE expect academics to take on board, that undermine academics' ability to practice what they were trained to do, teach, research, undertake scholarly activity, publish, and disseminate knowledge (Colbeck 1998, Anonymous for peer reviewing 2010, 2011b, 2014b), which brings about the heterogeneity.

In reality, to define an academic is, as Barnett (2000) discusses in relation to universities – is super-complex. However, super-complexity would suggest that there is a possible solution; it would be better to adopt the ‘wicked problem’ phraseology of Rittel and Webber (1973), because like these authors infer, a wicked problem is never solved, at best, it is only re-solved, time-after-time. The same could be said to be true when defining professionalism, and identity itself; Lewis (2014) tries to accomplish this in his paper, and as such, only scratches the surface of these concepts. In this section of Lewis’ paper tends to become somewhat heterogeneous in his writing. That is, moving from discussing identity to that of environments; yet he does not broach the subject of culture. For example, the environment (culture) an individual works within is not necessarily the sum of the cultures that they may be immersed in and thus influencing their identity at a point in time. Lewis eludes to Whitchurch’s (2008, 2010b) works to support his discussions. However, Whitchurch’s work considers the environment of research-intensive universities, not all universities. Moreover, she is not discussing the identity of academics, but the managers and administrators in these universities. Therefore, how is Lewis making this cognitive leap to apply this to academics, when in fact, it does not? Whitchurch (2008, 69) writes:

Despite an ongoing process of professionalization, the roles and identities of administrators and managers in UK higher education are neither clearly conceptualised nor understood...The identities and voices of this group of staff, therefore, remain susceptible to uncertain and even contradictory constructions.

Due to the above, I argue that Lewis has constructed the wrong identity of the academic, and in fact, should have undertaken Whitchurch’s advice and focused on administrators and managers within HEIs, possibly stopping to consider his fellow administrators in CBHE. In reality, Whitchurch (2008) highlights the overlap between academic managers (Vice Chancellors and Deans of Schools), and administrators; which in her later work she refers to

as the 'third space' (Whitchurch 2013), seeing the university as a community, rather than a 'them and us' as Lewis depicts.

When discussing academic identity, would have expected Lewis to make reference to a number of works, for example: Nixon et al. (1998); Henkel (2000, 2002, 2005); (Hall 2002) Churchman and King (2009); Anonymous for peer reviewing (2014b); Fanghanel (2012). However, Anonymous (2010, 198) offers a preconception of academic identity, when writing that:

An academic is qualified to a minimum of master degree level; is regarded as having eminence in their chosen field; is given autonomy and time to conduct research, and disseminates that research through teaching in higher education institutions, and publication in referred journals

The above is not how Lewis (2014) portrays an academic; after quoting Perkin (1969) that academics hold a privilege position (which we do), he goes on to argue how the academic profession is fragmented. There is no common link here with his title of his paper, which is allegedly on professionalism and identity, not academic identity. There is in fact clear evidence that academics are professionals and are members in some case of more than one body. For example, there is 'The Chartered Institute of Marketing'; 'The Chartered Management Institute', 'The Institute of Direct Marketing'; 'The Association of Accounting Technicians', 'Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development'; then there are teaching professional bodies such as: 'The Higher Education Academy'; 'The Institute for Learning', and 'The National Association of Professional Teaching' – the list is not exhaustive. As Churchman (2002, 646) identifies, academics are professionals, and that they are characterised by the "...exceptional preoccupation and satisfaction with the intrinsic rewards of the work itself." My own research concurs with this view, where the lecturers in CBHE's institutions identified that they were not academics, but professionals who translated academic papers into a language that their students could understand, and that they gained a

great deal of satisfaction in helping students develop (Anonymous for peer reviewing 2009, 2011b). Yet Holbeche (2012) argues that there will be a new breed of academic, one where the academic will be also an administrator, and expected to engage in the new managerialist and marketisation practiced in HE today. Holbeche (2012, 9) goes on to say that the new “...reforms are intended to put ‘teeth’ into improving the quality of the student experience.” She goes onto to write: “Many institutions are moving from an academic calendar annual cycle to a 24/7 operation [*sic*] and in post-1992 institutions there is a national contract for hours and models of work which rely on physical presence.” (Holbeche 2012, 16). This is already a fact within CBHE, and is now affecting some HEIs; in particular those that are post-1992 universities.

Having discussed the above, it was evident that Lewis, rather than focusing on the question, seemed to be rather eclectic in his approach, which made for difficulty in following the argument and understanding what it was he was endeavouring to communicate; that is, the construction of professional identity.

## Identity

Here I will broach the subject Lewis (2014) entitles ‘Reflections on Identity. Once more, this can be viewed as a wicked problem, as there are many variables to consider (Giddens 1991). As Giddens (1991, 99) writes:

‘The body’ sounds a simple notion, particularly as compared to concepts like ‘self’ or ‘self-identity’. The body is an object in which we are all privileged, or doomed, to dwell, the source of feelings of well-being and pleasure, but also the site of illnesses and strains. However, ...the body is just not just a physical entity which we ‘possess’, it is an action-system, a mode of praxis, and its practical immersion in the interactions of day-to-day life is an essential part of the sustaining of a coherent sense of self-identity.

From this then, the body would merely be a vessel for containing the soul (Heidegger 1962), the soul is then developed by interaction with experiences from within society as a whole. On

the subject of identity Lewis (2014) merely offers four paragraphs; a large number of books are available on this subject, as there is academic papers. Subsequently, my question is ‘Why is this section so brief? Especially when it allegedly forms the core of the discussion Lewis is endeavouring to put forward in terms of identity and professionalism.

On returning to the subject of professionalism, Farrugia (1996) argues that professionalism comprises of a person’s beliefs, which in turn, comprise of an individual’s knowledge, values and experiences (Anonymous for peer reviewing 2009). These views mirror those of Henkel’s (2000) on what defines an academic, with one exception, Henkel introduces ‘self-esteem’. Concerning beliefs, Rollinson (2005) argues that these are merely a set of assumptions that people make as individuals. He writes that beliefs are:

...assumptions about probability that some object or event exists, that it has certain characteristics or that it is related in certain ways to other objects or events; for example,...that there is a God, who is all powerful. Because [*sic*] there is no emotional reaction to the object, beliefs are non-evaluative and do not determine behaviour; they merely indicate what the holder of the belief thinks is true. (Rollinson 2005, 128)

One does not hold entirely with this view, as beliefs can evoke high levels of emotion, especially when discussing theology, this is evidenced via the various feuds taking place around the world today in the name of religion.

On identity, Lawler (2009) suggests how the youth of today (at the time of publishing her book), were casting off the stories and experiences of their parents and grand-parents, or as Becher and Trowler (2001) suggest, the stories of their tribe. Their identity is replaced by their own ‘lived’ experiences, which forms what Lawler (2009) terms the ‘plastic identity’. To do this, the individual would need to remove the stories passed down to them; stories that helped build and shape their individual character in the first place. This then resonates with the concept of the ‘self’, of which Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) argue there are many levels of self, and subsequently identity. However, like Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) suggest,

different persona may undergo what they term as ‘mental programming; more so within an organisational society of any given institution, department, group, or team.

Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) further argue that ‘political acting’ might be present within some institutions, departments, groups, or teams. That is, those individuals who wish to be part of, say, a particular group, may practice this political acting, as they see this groups as being able to further their own ambitions; basically learning the signs and language of the group, and then acting the part - Kets De Vries (2003) terms this as ‘mirroring’; hence one would argue that they were being unprofessional.

When discussing professional identity Bathmaker and Avis (2005, 5) suggest that there are two forms of professional identity; they are:

Within the literature, those who seek opportunities for transformative democratic practices and critical pedagogies distinguish between forms of professional identity which involve compliance with performative requirements of management cultures, and professional identities which are defined as ‘authentic’ to democratic values and practices.

Holbeche (2012) on this subject refers to one of her interviews with an HR director who commented on the possible clash with the proposed new reforms and former values:

The change is making universities more like commercial operations. They are becoming less collegiate in the approach to business. Old style academics are seen as losing out as their time becomes more open to review. There is a growing tension between the professional managerial approach and academic life – the need to account for resource and time, the need to produce and measure. Those engaging in academic management are being required to take decisions and responsibility in greater amounts. (Holbeche 2012, 17)

Harris (2005) may concur with the above, when arguing that professionals are caught between the ‘economy of performance’ and the ‘ecologies of practice’. From what has been discusses, it can be seen that this is far from the reflections Lewis (2014, 46) suggests on identity when writing that:



Identity is concerned with considerations of ‘sameness’, be that sameness of objects through the classifications of things and people, or the affiliations we as humans choose, and have chosen for us, with different groups.

If this were true, then academics in CBHE would be treated and paid the same rate as the academics in HEI’s, but as Anonymous for peer reviewing (2009, 2010, 2011a, b) identifies, this is not the case. What Lewis is suggesting above, denotes an ‘expressive attitude’, not an identity. An expressive attitude, or any attitude, is based upon values, and are subsequently identified by these values (Mullins 2006). Mullins identifies that attitudes can serve four main functions:

- Knowledge – one of the major functions is to provide a basis for the interpretation and classification of new information. Attitudes provide a knowledge base and framework within which new information can be placed.
- Expressive – attitudes become a means of expression. They enable individuals to indicate to others the values that they hold and thus to express their self-concept and adopt or internalise the values of a group.
- Instrumental – held attitudes maximise rewards and minimise sanctions. Hence, attitudes towards other people (or objects) might be held because of past positive (or negative) experiences. Behaviour or knowledge, which has resulted in the satisfaction of needs, is thus more likely to result in a favourable attitude.
- Ego-defensive – attitudes may be held in order to protect the ego from an undesirable truth or reality. (Mullins 2006, 134-135)

However, as one identified earlier in the paper, these values can be learned and expressed to the group, even though the value holder, may not agree with them, and thus is manipulating the group (Maccoby 2007) to enable the individual to get to a desired position (Hofstede and Hofstede 2005). One caveat here, is that care must be taken, as the values, beliefs, goals and aspirations of the individual might not be the same as those of the group or the organisation (Silver 2003).

Concerning values, Rollinson (2005) writes that:

Values tell us what a person wants to be true. Strictly speaking, they are not concerned with objects that are desired, but whether objects are considered desirable. They have a strongly [sic] judgemental element and this sets a standard that guides the conduct of the value holder and acts as a benchmark to evaluate the conduct of others. The most important thing to note is that, whereas beliefs have little direct influence on behaviour, values have a behavioural impact. (Rollinson 2005, 128)

Lewis (2014) however, argues that these values (that Rollinson argues set a standard of conduct for the individual, and on which to measure other individuals), “...gets in the way of effective and efficient practice.” (Lewis 2014, 45). Conversely, Strathern (1996, 40) wrote that values:

...are produced by people who belong to the class which frames legislation; they define the words that go in dictionaries, see themselves as defending public and personal liberties, and contest at every turn the assumptions built into their practices.

From the above discussion, one can see how professionalism, identity, and academic identity are not easy to define, and as such can be termed wicked problems. Here, there are three communities (in which the arguments are embedded), and as such, one would expect their values and beliefs would be aligned. But as one has identified earlier in the paper via the deliberations of Hofstede and Hofstede (2005) and others, that an individual’s values and beliefs do not always align themselves with those of the community of practice (CoP) (Wenger 2008, Jawitz 2009, Nagy and Burch 2009), or habitus (Bourdieu 1988), in which they work. Having said this, Lewis (2014) does acknowledge that culture is complex, but he still is of the belief that this can be resolved via policies that are flexible. However, he still is of the opinion that academics are to blame for the current inflexibility, and the cause of the current complexity within HEIs. However, in reality, he is allegedly discussing how administrators could be better professionals, in relation to their expertise and specialism in connection with the work of administration.

#### The professional/profession divided

Under this heading Lewis (2014) (like the rest of his paper), appears to borrow a number of terms from different authors, some of which are from texts on academic identity. For example, when he is discussing how administrators should have autonomy, he borrows

this terminology from texts on academic identity, something he is arguing should be removed, as it is this autonomy in academe that he believes is causing the complexity within HEI.s and should therefore be removed via administrators and management having greater control (Lewis 2014). Despite Lewis using Whitchurch considerably to support his arguments, he really does not grasp the finer nuances of what it is that Whitchurch is communicating. For example, Whitchurch identifies how the realms of administrators and academics are drawing closer together, but at the same time are still very distinct from one another in some UK universities, those being research intensive universities, not all universities (Whitchurch 2010b, a, 2013).

What is confusing about Lewis' (2014) paper, is that he appears to be arguing for greater control, whilst at the same time resenting. He believes that academics have too much autonomy, and that they see this as a birthright. Yet, he argues that the domain within administration is one of central control and authoritarianism; somewhat similar to Handy's (1991) 'Zeus' style of management, where everything is controlled centrally, but also where decision-making is slower. Here, Lewis (2014) argues that this create a 'tribalism' within groups, whether real or perceived. But people within a working environment will always come together and form groups separate to those that management form (Becher and Trowler 2001, Rollinson 2005, Mullins 2006).

Lewis (2014) contradicts himself further when he argues that there is a need for more centralisation when writing that "The problem lies in the need for more centralised, institution-wide control in an environment of high accountability, regulation and external assessment." (Lewis 2014, 49). Therefore, whilst condemning managerialism, he is arguing for more of the same; and that the AUA should be the underpinning profession to guide and establish this control; this could be viewed as an oxymoron.

## **Conclusion**

From reading Lewis' (2014) paper, one has drawn out key points for discussion and critique. I have used Lewis' headings to keep the discussion focused, and to offer an alternative perspective from my own research. For me, the paper by Lewis is full of controversy, paradoxical discussions, and limited use of texts on the subjects of identity, professionalism and academic identity in particular.

The views put forward by Lewis on professionalism are somewhat lacking, in that key authors on the subject appear to have not been considered or referred to. It is recognised that one cannot read all the literature on a given subject, and that some may be somewhat dated. However, when articles published currently are still referring to these texts, one would expect to see them listed, if only referred to for further reading.

Concerning academic identity, Lewis does not put across a realistic view of what an academic is, or any definition of the term; but appears instead, to blame academics for being heterogeneous, and thereby lessening both the HEI's and the administrative profession within HEI's, in terms of control. However, as identified by (Holbeche 2012) it is the practices of human resources, senior managers and administration that are responsible for this fragmentation, that is, by lessening the academics' autonomy by introducing reforms that diminishes existing values within a culture that has survived centuries. Further, that students' views, according to Holbeche (2012) are more highly prized than those who research or practice scholarly activity (which Anonymous for peer reviewing (2010) research identified as 'read to teach'), and bring in new knowledge to disseminate in the classroom or via publication, or both. Even though Lewis (2014) references and uses Holbeche's work, he seems to argue that these very reforms are impacting on administrators such as himself, and as such is diminishing both senior management and administrators' roles, when in reality, the

impact is on academics. Subsequently, one is not convinced that Lewis addresses the problem he identifies in his title and introduction of his paper. Furthermore, the conceptual model that Lewis puts forward is also somewhat weak, as it does not consider other variables such as values, beliefs, social norms, attitudes, group dynamics, and the narcissism that can manifest in individuals.

As an alternative suggestion to the conceptual model Lewis offers, I have developed a conceptual model based on my own research, where at least under culture; some of the above variables have been considered. Here I looked at the narratives of 26 individuals based in CBHE and combined them with the views of leading authors on the subject(s) (identified in this paper), to develop this model (See Fig. 1); it can be seen that this is not too dissimilar to that of Lewis' (2014, 44) model.

Lewis also discusses identity, but again from a weak position, as Lewis only skims the surface of a subject that whole texts have been written on (For example, see: Giddens 1991, Hofstede and Hofstede 2005, Smith 2007, Simmons 2008, Lawler 2009, Lumby 2009, Castells 2010, Price and Whiteley 2014). As I have identified in this paper, identity on its own is a wicked problem. For example, many factors may influence that identity in any given situation. As such, as Hofstede and Hofstede (2005), Kets De Vries (2003, 2006), and Maccoby (2007) identify, individuals can and do adopt a more narcissistic side to their behaviour, especially if they wish to be seen as part of a particular group, or manipulate people to achieve their own hidden agendas.

Lewis' (2014) paper is one of interest, but the subjects under discussion are not covered as well as they might be. Further, Lewis appears to contradict himself at times, this may be due to him trying to cover three wicked problems, rather than focusing and drilling down on just one. Additionally, although he claims that one should have academic empathy, and that

this is a sign of a good professional administrator, he does not seem to hold with this ideal; instead, he lambasts academics for the demise of higher education.

Academics have to abide by the policies and procedures that registry, human resources, senior management, government and other government quangos or stakeholders in the UK put in place, which are influenced via the very reforms that Holbeche (2012) highlights. On implementing these new reforms, academics are expected to adhere to these managerialist and audit practices, which measure performance and output; based on what; the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), National Student Survey (NSS), and or university league tables. With this in mind, can administrators such as Lewis really blame academics for the demise of higher education; I think not.

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