UK Universities and Executive Officers: the Changing Role of Pro-Vice-Chancellors

Final Report

David Smith, Jonathan Adams and David Mount
Higher Education Policy Unit, University of Leeds and Evidence Ltd
This report presents an overview of the principal findings from a research project funded by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (Leadership Foundation). Its central theme is how the role of pro-vice-chancellor (PVC) is being configured within the contemporary UK university.

The bulk of the field research – across 13 selected UK institutions – was conducted during 2005-06 and focused on the descriptions provided by PVCs and their senior colleagues of how they perceive and interpret their roles. We wanted to understand how they got into their posts, what development and experiences they drew on, and how they placed their particular roles not just in the context of their particular job descriptions and responsibilities but within a wider conception of the institution and higher education more generally.

Interviewing PVCs was a fascinating experience. It gave us a privileged insight into how the world of universities looks from the vantage points of those whose responsibility is (usually) for something that equates to more than the sum of the parts, that is to say: the institution itself. But we are also aware that the portrait that emerges is inevitably partial, in several respects. First, it is a snapshot composed of the personal views and responses of those who happened to be in post at the times of our visits. Second, such is the diversity of the mass, verging on universal, system of higher education that there will inevitably be people, and even whole institutions, where it may be feasible to say “But it’s not like that here”. Third, we are conscious that our investigation of senior leadership is also partial in that it canvassed the opinions of the leaders, but not the led. In an ideal world we would have sought to balance the two, but resources and time are limited.

To mitigate these limitations we did two things. First, we incorporated into the methodology a sense of the historical trajectory of the management model in higher education. Going back to 1960 and using data published by the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) we sought to provide a statistical portrait of the evolution of the pro-vice-chancellorship for six sample years. Linked to this we also examined, in outline at least, what we have termed the restless history of higher education management, in some cases contrasting what we believe did happen in relation to the PVC with what some no doubt think ought to have happened. This includes the continuing advantage of academic and collegial models over business-derived models. This approach provides our report, we believe, with a stronger sense of how the present system has emerged and a stronger confidence in our arguments concerning some of the key continuities from the past that in our view delineate and define the important role of PVC.

The second thing we did was to select our site visits to represent the spectrum of histories, traditions, sizes and missions that characterise a unitary yet highly stratified system of institutions. The responses to our requests for participants were invariably positive, although the final profile of our visits probably favours the pre-1992 institutions, albeit of varying sizes and sub-sectors, at the expense of the former polytechnic sector. Even so the lens of our sample is sufficiently broad to warrant the conclusions for the sample as a whole. Beyond that we cannot say with any certainty. No doubt there will be plenty to recognise and some to question. In the end this is social research and we take responsibility for the final voice.
Acknowledgements

In research of this kind debts of gratitude accumulate rapidly. First and foremost we would like to thank the numerous pro-vice-chancellors and their colleagues who agreed to participate. These are (very) busy people, but they met us with unfailing generosity of time and spirit. We hope that the dialogue was as interesting for them as it was for us. We would also like to acknowledge the tireless efforts of Isabella Peter-Liburd at Evidence Ltd in setting up the visits and the work of the various colleagues in the site visit institutions who organised diaries and room bookings to bring things together. Finally we would like to thank colleagues in the Leadership Foundation for funding the research and for being so supportive throughout.

David Smith, Jonathan Adams and David Mount
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Our report is composed of three parts. First, we briefly summarise the recent change in the abundance and diversity of the Pro-Vice Chancellor (PVC). Second, the main part of our work stems from a series of semi-structured interviews with PVCs and the people they work for and with. These interviews covered a diversity of institutions across regions and sub-sectors. Third, we have started a process of reflection on the outcomes of our interviews and of consolidation of emerging conclusions. This report is part of that process, but not the final step. In particular we will be presenting in a subsequent report the results of a comparative analysis of those in equivalent roles in selected Australian and European universities.

The traditional higher education senior management team (SMT) has been the Vice-Chancellor (1st tier) and the PVCs (2nd tier) together with the senior staff (once Registrar and Bursar, now professional Directors) leading the supporting administrative functions. The VC and PVCs are the only academic staff in higher education institutions (HEIs) with a wholly cross-institutional perspective, though in some institutions such responsibility may also extend to the post of Deputy VC (DVC). Where a DVC is appointed it is a point for discussion whether the second tier is merely ‘stretched’ or whether it is, in effect, reduced in status to a distinct third tier.

The title of PVC sounds archaic but the role has been retained because of the unique niche that PVCs fill. They are not directors or general managers. Rather they operate in the space between the academics, the professional services and the VC. In traditional HEIs, they have operated through influence rather than power although delegated power is now sometimes more explicit. Their effectiveness stems from their own status as academics, their experience of the sector and their personal relationship with colleagues. Resourced or delegated, positional powers are much less significant.

Models and the particular features of leadership in universities are a starting point for a study of PVCs. A tension exists between traditional collegial culture and newer ‘managerialism’, but there is little hard evidence to associate managerialism with academic success. Instead the university must grapple, as other third-sector organisations do in seeking to be successful in the context of their missions and purpose, with a division (sometimes, a chasm) in the institutional bottom line between unavoidable financial imperatives and essential academic values. Achieving the former is pointless unless the latter is also delivered, and the PVCs are intimately involved in that delivery.

Chapter 2 – Historical Perspectives

From the 1960s onwards, UK universities – focussed on the dissemination of knowledge - developed from an elite system to a mass system. An increase in student numbers, an increase in the diversity of activity and challenges, and changes in the culture of management were some of the reasons VCs started to need the support of an enhanced senior management team.

In the 1980s, the culture within public services changed – with a new emphasis on strategic management, market orientation and competition. The Jarratt Report (1985) suggested that VCs start to operate as chief executives, not just as academic leaders. The existing ‘civil service model’ of higher education management was portrayed as ineffective. Management pressures were increased in 1986 with the introduction of research selectivity and a reinforcement of the mission of knowledge innovation.

In 1988, the Polytechnics moved out from under the aegis of local authorities. Signalling further change in concepts of and attitudes to higher education, in 1992 the Polytechnics became universities and the sector was exposed to a new range of management ideas and models.

The Dearing Report in 1997¹ was seen on the one hand as the high-tide mark in terms of giving power to governing bodies (with power taken away from the senate / collegial committees). But, on the other hand, Dearing recognised the distinctiveness and complexity of academic life, requiring a different style of leadership to that used in business. The Lambert report (2003) differed from Dearing and harked back to Jarratt in wanting universities to have strong executive leadership, the better to work with business and industry. The interface with the knowledge user had become a further challenge for senior management.

Data show that there has been a clear increase in the number of PVCs per institution during the period 1960-2005. This has been a steady process generated within the sector. Some of this change is associated with systemic factors such as research selectivity but there was no

¹ The National Committee of Enquiry into Higher Education, NCIHE (1997)
noticeable rate change attributable to Jarratt. In fact, the evidence suggests that Jarratt’s case study institutions were atypical and therefore misleading in terms of policy signals.

Data also show that PVCs are, and always have been, almost exclusively drawn from the ranks of established academics. Most are professors, and typically have an Oxbridge, London or big civic pedigree. Only a small minority of academics become a PVC much before their 50th birthday. Most were, and still are, men.

Chapter 3 – Becoming a PVC

PVCs can be characterised in a number of ways:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part-time (in theory)</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fixed term secondment</td>
<td>Permanent post</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal appointment</td>
<td>External appointment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appointed by VC and/or academic community</td>
<td>Appointed by VC and/or Council</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The full range of characteristics are found across all types of institution, but there is a tendency for characteristics in the left-hand column to be a prevalent ‘set’ in pre-92 institutions and for the right-hand ‘set’ to be more prevalent in post-92 institutions.

There are three common models for making appointments

- By invitation – VC in effect is patron of the PVC, which inspires loyalty but means a PVC’s loyalty to the VC may be greater than their loyalty to the institution.
- Competitive recruitment – either internal or external. The VC will usually be chairing or at least advising the appointment committee.
- Election by senate – a less common model but still present.

The system is in change, however, as it has always been and the historical route that led from an opaque informal approach seems likely to be increasingly replaced by formal and transparent recruitment processes.

The reality in any of these models is that VCs nearly always have the whip-hand in terms of PVC appointments, regardless of the small print in university statutes. Even in the ‘elected’ examples, VCs usually chair nomination panels, determine the candidates who go forward to election and will set the scope of the role allocated.

The characteristics needed to perform as a PVC are seen by post-holders and other senior staff as being essentially three-fold. They are:

- Engagement with the academic life.
- Imagination to extend boundaries, envisage changes.
- Alignment with the academic / institutional enterprise.

PVCs were asked about how they or their successors might gain these abilities. They strongly emphasised experience over formal training:

- Prior experience of leadership.
- Subsequent learning though doing the job and then reflecting on and making sense of their own experiences.
- Undertaking formal and structured development and training programmes was generally seen as much less important. The essence of the PVC role was not really amenable to such an analysis and approach.

Chapter 4 – Being a pro vice-chancellor: responsibility without power?

What PVCs do

PVCs are required to take on many roles, both strategic and operational. Operational activities will often include a compliance role (e.g. maintaining assessment standards across departments) and sometimes an advocacy role for particular projects (e.g. new Hefce initiatives) or areas of university life (e.g. growing research income). Maintaining a balance between the strategic and the operational in these complex arenas can be problematic. PVCs talked about the need to ring-fence time for strategic thinking (the important but challenging) and to guard against being sucked exclusively into operational matters (the urgent and amenable).

The strategic influence of PVCs is limited in some institutions as a consequence of the strength of the VC’s own vision. This may mean that second-tier staff have less flexibility to inject their own ideas. We also found great variation in the extent to which PVCs have, or are seen to have, clearly delegated remits and resources to prosecute those remits. VCs can either hamstring or empower their second-tier and it is evident that, in many cases, it is the VC rather than the post-holder who is the prime determinant of the scope and impact.
How PVCs get things done

PVCs deliver primarily by working with and through other people – they are facilitators. In such a role, personal relationships are critical. This is problematic when structural relationships are challenging. Examples where this had been the case occurred, for example, at the interface between the PVCs (academics) and heads of services, a point put to us by both PVCs and by the experienced and professional managers who worked with them.

Many PVCs work alone. They often have minimal ‘private office’ support. Only some have a central administrative unit working to or with them, and some of these links have become weaker where new professional managers have been appointed.

As well as building up 1:1 relationships with key players, PVCs work with the university committee structure, using the power vested in the committees which they chair as a source of authority. Given the nature of collegiate culture this appears generally to work to greater effect than using executive power: “academics don’t understand the word managerial”. The committee is a forum for debate not decision, and was thus criticised by Jarratt and others. But the PVC uses it to get consensus, buy-in and thereby create self-management. To wield this sort of power, PVCs need academic rather than management credibility. In such a culture the way to get things done is to share information, make sensible and defensible analysis, and then enter and lead the debate.

Only a minority of PVCs see themselves using the formal authority they might be able to draw on. Generally, most agree that it is efficacious to use their ‘collegiate’ power. But they also recognise that their more formal authority is in the background, but is present in academic awareness, and may acquire added value from being rarely invoked.

Academic credibility is maintained - in theory and in tradition – because PVC roles may be designated as part-time. The implication is that the translation is temporary and that the individual remains an active and engaged member of a wider community. The reality for most is that the PVC role is a more than full-time commitment in itself in which the individual lives off their academic capital. Current research and teaching commitments are frequently notional or tokenistic, but their symbolism retains a value that might surprise outsiders.

PVC performance and support

There appears to be a shift in universities towards formal assessment of PVCs, using indicators which often are linked to corporate plan targets. Many PVCs use a process of self assessment – for example in terms of the quality of key relationships - as a way of measuring their own success and setting targets for improvement.

The PVC role can be a lonely one. Although professional expertise and support is available, from heads of service areas for example, some of our interviewees believed that people felt ‘dropped in it’ in the early stages of developing their life as a PVC. The extent to which they felt unsupported was marked and widespread, but variable. Many of the people we met were clearly overworking – as a quick glance at a few diaries readily confirmed - and acknowledged that they were not modelling a good work-life balance for other colleagues.

Career progression

The sector is not very good at looking after its senior people. Some VCs expressed concern that tempting someone to a PVC job was a risky venture for the individual concerned. Not all seemed to recognise the challenge or the load when they were candidates.

Appointment to being a PVC is the pre-cursor to becoming a VC for some people. That has, after all, been the historical route and might be expected to remain so. In fact, recruitment to the first tier is changing. The advent of ‘Super Deans’ has opened up an alternative route, with more explicit development of management competency. It might be that recruitment to the PVC ranks will become less attractive.

For those not moving onwards, re-entry to academia is fraught. Academic plans may need to be refreshed and host departments may be faced with carrying large salary bills. The experience of senior management may not sit well with departmental demands. For these reasons, where people are not able to secure the VC job, attractive options include (early) retirement or a move out of the academic sector.

Chapter 5 – Conclusions: do universities need PVCs?

Pro-vice-chancellors continue to have an important and special role to play in contemporary universities. Although chief executives are routinely adjusting and refining the structures and reconfiguring PVC roles within them, there are some enduring features that justify the continued need for PVCs within the management model. Our research found a consistent view from within the system that the PVC is not only a facilitator of the VC’s vision, but also an initiator of action to achieve that vision.
There is nevertheless a sense of slight unease about how to improve the match between structures and roles. This reflects a broader problem arising from the nature of the higher education enterprise. Universities are not like business organisations. Despite the transformations associated with mass higher education, the main historical empires and activities of the university survive largely intact. Teaching schemes, research groups and administration (in some form) mark the main fault lines of all universities and within each, especially teaching and research, there are enduring and often highly distinct professional practices, procedures and cultures that define the organisation.

Although not totally immune from management these are nevertheless areas of great sensitivity and importance that, in terms of their inner processes, are difficult to control and manage. Consequently academic work remains largely separated from the formal organisational structures of management. It is this separation that arguably provides the primary reason for the almost constant search for better alignment between academic processes and the management model. The changing role of the PVC bears witness to the latest phase in the somewhat restless history of recent higher education management going back to the Jarratt Report if not earlier.

However, a key and enduring characteristic of the PVC role is that only they and the chief executive have a cross-institutional perspective. They facilitate the initiatives and standards that deliver the mission and maintain the institutional ‘brand’. PVCs have progressively increased in abundance since 1960, not because of management directives but because the more complex challenges faced by academic institutions have increased the need for individuals who weave and maintain a complex web which enables the institution, as the sum of its constituent parts, to function. We argue that such is the centrality of PVC roles to the working of the dual structures of academic work and management, that if the pro-vice-chancellorship did not already exist, it would need to be invented.
1. INTRODUCTION

Pro-vice-chancellors (PVCs) are key members of the ‘second tier’ of university leadership. They provide academic leadership, support and act as deputys to the vice-chancellor and take responsibility for specific areas of strategy and policy activity. Despite the apparent seniority of their position and the importance of their responsibilities the role of PVCs remains, arguably, misunderstood and under-theorised. Nor is there much empirical evidence concerning the historical evolution of the role or its relationship to changing configurations of the management model in universities. While researchers have focused attention on vice-chancellors and, more recently, those in leadership positions in faculties and departments, the PVC appears to have been overlooked in previous research. While many in the system continue to assume that the second tier is essential to the functioning of the contemporary (and future) university, we suspect that the reality is that many are increasingly unsure why, how or in what form PVCs contribute to the second leadership tier. In short, what are the rudiments of leadership in the second tier and why do universities need PVCs?

Resolving this uncertainty is important for two reasons. First, understanding continuities and changes in PVC roles across the sector, provides an opportunity to test how higher education is reorganising its approaches to leadership and management in response to the changing landscape of extended mission and realigned boundaries. Leading change inside institutions is increasingly perceived as a team game and PVCs are historically perceived as key members of the senior team. In Clark’s (1998) formulation of entrepreneurial or transforming universities there is an expectation that we will find a strengthened steering core1. Clark suggests this might take different forms, but one of them might be invigorated deputy vice-chancellors2 and pro-vice-chancellors3.

Second, from an external policy perspective, the ability to demonstrate effective leadership capability is seen by a range of stakeholders to be increasingly important. In the UK at least, several governments over recent years have sent fairly strong signals-to-the-system that they suspected there to be a ‘deficit’ in university leadership capacity. The most recent came in the Lambert report, where it was observed that government ‘does not seem to have enough confidence in the way that universities run themselves to give them extra funding without strings attached’4.

This ‘official’ distrust of higher education’s leadership capability appears to be mirrored in higher education systems in other parts of the world, and we will document this in our subsequent comparative studies focusing on leadership in other European Union (EU) states and Australia. In all these contexts the focus on leadership, and perhaps the source of some of the distrust, is linked to the concern of national governments to maximise the contribution of universities to the skills, research and innovation necessary to build and sustain globally competitive knowledge economies5.

The European Commission (Commission of the European Communities 2006), for example, envisages universities as leaders of their own renaissance, from a position of tutelage to the state into unfettered agents of change through the drivers of research, innovation and competition. The underlying assumption is that universities have been suffering not just from the interfering hand of the state, but from entrenched and historically distorting internal cultures of collegial authority and academic consensus. Even in the UK, where governance systems are generally perceived to be less tramelled by ‘management by committee’, there have been several high-profile attempts in recent years to encourage universities to replace what many observers have perceived to be slow and unresponsive management, with more executive structures and styles of decision making6.

Whatever the driver, there appears to be evidence of important changes taking place in the shapes and structures of university senior teams. Lambert for example, reported ‘significant changes for the better’in the quality of executive decision making and governance, though remained critical of the sector’s attempts to prepare and train its leaders of tomorrow. That such reforms are deemed necessary is taken as axiomatic, with specific criticism being levelled at both deans who ‘often lack a sector-wide strategic view’, and pro-vice-chancellors who ‘usually have limited experience of managing large budgets’7.

The reform agenda, then, anticipates a revolution in leadership and management capacity in universities. Yet the reality is that we know relatively little about the evolving role of PVCs. Although often eminent and highly successful academics in their own right, PVCs have tended to remain in the shadows in previous studies of leadership, management and governance8. For example, Fielden and Lockwood’s prescriptions for improving the planning and management

---

of British universities in the 1970s located the PVC under the design of supporting structures for the Vice-Chancellor. Within these structures they considered the main support to be heads of areas (e.g. the Deans) rather than PVCs. These authors lamented the trend of that era towards appointing three or four PVCs, advocating instead ‘the need for one senior Pro-Vice Chancellor, not concerned with line management, standing apart from the structure other than for ceremonial purposes or in the event of the Vice-Chancellor’s absence, death etc’.

More recently, the investigation of new managerialism in UK universities by Deem et al 10 in 2001 provided a valuable analysis of academic managers’ perspectives on current management practices, the actual procedures used and dominant organisational forms. Although the analysis cast some light on the position of PVCs within this framework, particularly the problematic nature of the academic-management interface, the changing nature of their roles was not the main focus of attention. Similarly the earlier studies of governance and executive leadership by Bargh et al 11 made extensive use of PVCs as key informants in documenting managerial and governance roles, but again they were not the explicit focus of attention. More recently Shattock’s study of managing successful universities made only two passing references to PVCs, the most substantial of which related to the importance of academic involvement in the process of appointment to the post 12.

The present study, therefore, switches the focus of attention to this small but somewhat neglected group. Its purpose is to document the evolving role of pro-vice-chancellors as senior executive officers and assess their centrality to emerging management models in UK universities.

Themes, questions and some challenges
The research was designed to illuminate a number of themes about the second tier of university leadership and the place and purpose of PVCs within it. As a starting point we wanted more detail about the historical context for the pro-vice-chancellorship. How has the role evolved over recent decades? Have PVC numbers increased and, if so, why? What is the changing profile of PVCs in terms of titles, academic backgrounds and responsibilities? To what extent has the evolution of the post been influenced by wider trends and discourses about management and leadership in universities?

Although we had anecdotal evidence pointing to certain interpretations of the recent history of academic management, we felt that a more systematic investigation was necessary in order to ground our contemporary analysis on something rather firmer. For example, we were not convinced by the thesis of a relentless rise of managerialism in university life, or the value of largely rhetorical accounts drawing seemingly simplistic causal links between executive leadership and effectiveness, on the one hand, or collegiality and ineffectiveness, on the other. This account of the pro-vice-chancellorship commences therefore with some historical analysis based on documentary sources together with a comprehensive analysis of data on PVCs recorded in selected volumes of the Yearbooks published by the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU).

Our analysis of the main contours in the development of the pro-vice-chancellorship since the 1960s is set in the broader context of evolving management models in higher education. In our view this is some essential history that not only enables us to make sense of the trends, but allows further elaboration of the main themes of the contemporary analysis. We wanted to know what is happening in universities in the second tier - what is working, what is not working and why? But we also wished to know how significant PVCs are in enabling universities to achieve their purposes. Why do universities continue to have senior leaders called ‘pro-vice-chancellors’ or other broadly equivalent titles derived from the terms used for vice-chancellors, rather than, say, directors or general managers? What is it that a PVC adds to the management of a university? How should their roles be characterised – as leaders, as facilitators, as mediators or as something else? How should people be selected and trained for the post? What mechanisms are used to appoint them? How, where and with what effect do PVCs operate and how are relationships brokered? What is the impact on the ‘traditional’ PVC role of executive deans, an emerging new management tier responsible for large faculties and budgets? In summary, does contemporary higher education really need PVCs and are there any discernible trends for the future?

Data for the contemporary analysis included documentary materials, statistics, tape/digital recordings and extensive field notes. However, interview data lies at the heart of the evidence base. Our respondents were drawn from a structured sample of 13 HEIs selected to represent both the continuum of institutional types in the UK system as well as a reasonable regional distribution. We conducted 54
in-depth interviews, the majority with serving PVCs in UK universities, the remainder with vice-chancellors, senior managers and administrators who worked with PVCs in cross-campus roles and other key informants in the system. Further details on the methodological approach are provided in the Appendix (page 52).

At each institutional site we sought to explore with PVCs and some key colleagues the nature of their roles, who they worked for and with, and the relationship between being a PVC and an academic. It is impossible of course to assert that our approach captured the full complexity of views across the sector. Nevertheless, we are confident that within the confines of the sample, both of institutions and respondents, the structured discussions yielded substantive consistencies in responses and views. Indeed, in the reporting process we have sought wherever feasible to select quotations because they are illustrative of predominant and pervasive themes in the discourse of leadership.

It was through the accounts provided by PVCs and their colleagues that we hoped to construct a phenomenological account addressing the main themes and questions of the study. It is clear, however, that how to write the research – how to transform the phenomena of individual experiences and perspectives of those we interviewed into a form of text suitable for telling the story of the pro-vice-chancellorship - constitutes an important challenge, in two key respects.

The first concerns the primacy accorded to different, perhaps competing, voices in the reporting process. Who tells the story – the researcher or the researched? Answers to this question are seldom satisfactory and usually produce an uneasy compromise. Scientific writing invariably privileges the researcher as the so-called authoritative voice, the one that separates out and gives meaning to the voices of the subjects of the research. It is a convention to rely on the ‘noise’ of the researched, but with the attendant danger is often the voice of the researcher that we hear most above the ‘noise’ of the researched, with the attendant danger that the voice of the subjects is drowned out.

In addressing such problems we have been guided to some extent by the ethical and pragmatic considerations of conducting this sort of research. Academia is a relatively small world. That part of it concerned with senior management is an even smaller and more intimate one. Interview data were collected under the terms of an assurance that the anonymity of informants and their institutions or other affiliations would be strictly protected in any published material. In terms of reporting, this meant that publication of interview transcripts as ‘authentic’ text was rejected, not just as impracticable, but as ethically dubious. Apart from the inevitable distortions to the text necessary to protect anonymity and, just as importantly, confidentiality, there is in any case the very real sense that without a layer of analysis and comparison across the sample such transcripts might fail to convey anything of real substance.

The alternative approach has been to present our research in a more conventional form, in effect as an elite study in which we as researchers present our analysis of PVCs as outsiders looking in. In conveying a view of PVCs not just in terms of their social characteristics but of their own interpretations of their leadership experiences and the work landscape they inhabit, the narrative voice is ours. Whether compelling and comprehensive, or rudimentary and vapid, the accounts provided by the PVCs are interpreted by us as researchers looking in on what it means to be a member of this tier of university leadership.

For the purpose of this end-of-award report to the Leadership Foundation we have illustrated our arguments about the experiences and work of PVCs with a number of vignettes and exemplars drawn directly from the biographical and perceptual raw materials. Hence, we have sought to capture the views of PVCs, as ‘insiders’ and thereby complement the outsider-in perspective of the researcher. In this sense the experiences of individuals are combined to form a ‘collective’ account of a particular group of university people. Wherever possible we have tried to avoid using outliers in the data to illustrate particular views or arguments, preferring wherever possible to present exemplars that are more widely illustrative or representative of the sample population as a whole.

The second challenge concerns the orientation of the study to broader concepts and debates derived from the literature of leadership. Understanding the social practice of leadership, whether in universities or other organisational settings, requires some engagement with what is meant by leadership. In recent years a welter of leadership initiatives has penetrated the public sector fuelled by a range of official and semi-official policy endorsements and initiatives.

13 For example, see Richardson, L. (1997)
14 In seeking participation from a sample of institutions, we were careful to provide a statement on the ethical protocols that would guide our interventions as researchers by specifying the terms of engagement with institutions and those who would be interviewed.
15 The majority of interviews were recorded and subsequently transcribed to aid our analytical procedures.
of better leadership as a route to organisational improvement and modernisation. The phenomenon of ‘leadership’, of course, transcends sectors and in its recent manifestations draws on a shared understanding of the problems facing organisations – public or ‘third sector’ as well as private – as they struggle to adapt to changing environments.

In essence, the thesis is simple. The organisational environment – both public and private – is one of increasing uncertainty, instability, deregulation, competitiveness and resource scarcity. To succeed, organisations perceive a need to change their structures, shape, size and methods of operation. Staff at the operational end need better motivation, clearer direction and continuous reassurance. Change management, once seen as a suitable response to such unstable conditions is no longer deemed sufficient. What is required now is better ‘Leadership’.

Although the leadership thesis is routinely regurgitated, critics have argued that it remains incomplete, insufficiently tested, inadequately debated and not properly scrutinized. Despite a burgeoning literature of leadership theory, key questions remain about what constitutes leadership in social enterprises characterised by twin bottom lines that combine budgetary control with social and economic impact. In such circumstances it is not entirely clear how leadership can be distributed and empowering, and how it can be effectively embedded in terms of succession planning and development activity. While the discourse of ‘leadership’ undoubtedly pervades the public sector, altogether less clear is the salience of the discourse (and the value of leadership theory more generally) in particular contexts, whether national, sectoral or organisational. It is possible to argue, for example, that organisations, HEIs among them, need several forms of leadership and that these require somewhat different skills and perspectives. If this is so, then there is a need to proceed with caution in relation to the specificities of leadership roles and to avoid any temptation into advocacy of more abstract remedies or approaches.

A similar, if slightly earlier, set of questions to those about leadership accompanied the phenomenon of new managerialism. The extent to which UK higher education had been permeated by practices and culture derived from ‘new managerialism’ was a question explored in considerable detail by Deem et al. Their conclusions stressed the extent to which established structures and the histories associated with them influenced the salience of such ideas across the sector. Certainly the efficiency model – doing more for less - associated with new managerialism was found to have significantly permeated higher education. The study also found evidence, but to varying degrees, of other models derived from theories of new managerialism such as downsizing, devolved budgets, internal markets, and new emphases on cultural change and strategic activity. However, in contrast to the health service, where extensive organisational and cultural change had taken place, Deem et al concluded that higher education was characterised much more by hybridised forms of new managerialism. Although a new ‘breed’ of manager academics had emerged in the sector, most of them had not embraced practices associated with new managerialism. Change in the sector had been more subtle, influenced by complex overlays of ideas derived from the appeal of historical structures and values, together with notions of identity and practice derived from self regulation and the cultures associated with academic disciplines.

Our empirical study of PVCs sheds further light on some of these themes and the theories and concepts of leadership and new managerialism underpinning them. Our approach is to employ tools from leadership theory very selectively. Sector and organisational context, it seems to us, are particularly important in making sense of the roles of PVCs. The sort of leadership required, the opportunities to exercise leadership and to be ‘managers’ are likely to be influenced by the structure and culture of the organisation. Further considerations flow from this simple, but important, proposition. The perceived need for leadership and how the organisation sets about implementing its approaches to leadership development reflect the characteristics of the enterprise. We might anticipate too that those who fill leadership roles will need to embody a range of attributes or behavioural requirement in order to perform effectively in leadership roles.

Drawing carefully from appropriate strands of the literature to illuminate the accounts provided by PVCs of their experiences in the job, the rest of this report explores how leadership needs are interpreted, whether different cultures of leadership are recognisable in different institutional contexts, and how leadership ‘talent’ is recognised and developed. However, in the specific case of university PVCs, it seems to us unlikely that changing roles might be explained simply by the current fascination with leadership. This is not to argue that higher education is an exceptional
arena and therefore general leadership theories do not apply. Nevertheless, there is already a sufficient body of evidence to suggest that the sector context in higher education is likely to subvert many of the ‘conventional’ rules of leadership\textsuperscript{21}. Perhaps even more significantly, we are far from convinced that the indiscriminate use of general theories of leadership can explain the historical emergence of the role of PVCs any more than the particular configurations of how leadership is practised. For this we turn in the following chapters from theory to history and then to accounts of practice in order to review and contextualise the evolution of the pro-vice-chancellorship.

2. THE EVOLUTION OF THE PRO-VICE-CHANCELLORSHIP SINCE THE 1960s

Introduction
This chapter assesses the impact of longer-term trends in the management of UK universities on the pro-vice-chancellorship. In addition to a brief account tracing the emergence of new forms of public management in the specific context of higher education, the aim is to provide a statistical portrait of PVCs drawing on data sourced from a sample of the Yearbooks of the Association of Commonwealth Universities, stretching back to 1960.\textsuperscript{22} These data describe the evolution of PVC posts across the UK higher education system in terms of total numbers and job titles. They also enable some indicative conclusions about changes over time in the academic profiles of those in PVC positions.

The results will provide some new evidence with which to assess attempts since the 1980s to introduce to university leadership and governance the languages, practices and organisational forms associated with business models of leadership and management imported. In particular, we explore how far the evolution of the second tier of university management exemplified in the post of pro-vice-chancellor has reflected a broader narrative of change, associated most obviously with the growth of executive, rather than collegial, structures of leadership and management. Our statistical analysis suggests that the office of pro-vice-chancellor characterises the growing complexity of the management task in contemporary universities. However, we argue that the rise of the pro-vice-chancellorship needs to be viewed as a long-term phenomenon stretching back to the early 1960s and the first stirrings of the transition in UK higher education from an elite to a mass system.

The historic contours of the management model and, in particular, its rhetorical and recurring references to competing notions of collegial and executive cultures, provide the setting for understanding how the pro-vice-chancellorship has evolved over recent decades. Our account has a secondary argument concerning the emerging discourses associated with almost continuous attempts to reform higher education over the last two decades or so. The reality is that the rise of mass higher education has taken place alongside far-reaching changes in the relationship between the state and public sector organisations and in the ways it seeks to regulate and audit institutions. As the boundaries between public and private have been redrawn, the state has attempted to bring about changes in the organisation, culture and delivery of public sector services.

Referred to variously as ‘new managerialism’ or ‘new public management’ these new organisational forms and practices are themselves the subject of often intense debate. In a recent review of their relevance to understanding management approaches in higher education, Deem\textsuperscript{23} has argued that while new managerialism can be portrayed as an ‘ideological configuration of ideas and practices’ in relation to public service management and delivery, ‘new public management’ is generally perceived as ‘defining new forms of administrative orthodoxy about how public services are run and regulated’. Both phenomena have rather different intellectual and theoretical roots. Nevertheless, both concepts share a common perception of a shift from previous orthodoxies associated with public bureaucracies and the power of service professionals over service users in the culture of thinking and practice. Hence there tends to be a common perception that public service bureaucracies have shifted towards (quasi-) marketisation, devolved management and fragmentation of service delivery\textsuperscript{24}.

The criticism of the quality of UK university leadership noted above also needs to be located against this backdrop. Since the 1980s the transition from elite towards mass forms of higher education provision has been accompanied by the emergence of new models of resource allocation; the shift towards strategic management approaches; the development of more corporate approaches to university governance; greater stress on market orientation and competition; and, growing demands for much greater responsiveness in universities to the needs of business and the economy. These changes challenged and, it is usual to assume, overturned the mid-twentieth century world of

\begin{footnotesize}\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{21} Bargh, C. et al (2000)
\item \textsuperscript{22} Comparative data for Australian higher education institutions has also been collated and will be presented separately as part of the comparative strand of the project.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Deem, R. (2005)
\item \textsuperscript{24} Deem, R. (2005)
\end{itemize}\end{footnotesize}
Eustace provided a valedictory statement on a world that universities of the late 1960s and early 1970s, Moodie and From donnish dominion to Jarratt, chancellors. reform that have framed the changing world of pro-vice- provide a brief account of the trends in higher education arguments. Before presenting our statistical profile we provide a brief account of the trends in higher education reform that have framed the changing world of pro-vice-chancellors.

From donnish dominion to Jarratt

In a pioneering study of power and authority in the British universities of the late 1960s and early 1970s, Moodie and Eustace provided a valedictory statement on a world that less than a decade later would be summarily dismissed as inefficient and outdated. There were then some 60 universities or other HEIs in the post-Robbins higher education ‘system’. However, Moodie and Eustace found that there was no uniform terminology of posts or roles. To obviate this problem they provided an extensive note on the terminology used to identify the principal parts of the management model of that period, together with their closest or approximate equivalents. In the case of the vice-chancellor, they noted that this was the equivalent of the President and Vice-Chancellor at Belfast; Vice-Chancellor and Principal at Birmingham; Principal and Vice-Chancellor at the Scottish ancients; Principal at other Scottish institutions and some of the Colleges of the University of London; and Rector, Director, Provost and Master at other London Colleges.

These terms normally flowed through to the second tier in a more or less logical fashion. Hence, the term pro-vice-chancellor was typically associated with ‘vice-chancellor’; pro-principal with principal, pro-provost with provost and so on. However, Moodie and Eustace also identified some distinctions between those in more senior or ‘deputy’ roles and those in more conventional PVC roles. The titles Deputy Principal at Birmingham or Vice-Principal at Bradford were, in effect, jobs as assistant or deputy to the person in the top post. These more senior roles were considered full-time administrative posts which the person appointed would retain on a permanent basis.

Pro-vice-chancellor and equivalent posts, on the other hand, were considered part-time in the sense that the incumbent would be expected to continue with some research and teaching. This was in preparation for an eventual return to departmental life at the end of the term of office. Appointment to such posts occurred on the basis of election by ‘senate’. A key point is that the term ‘administration’, as implied in the posts of assistant or deputy vice-chancellors/principals etc., was normally used to ‘include all those who administer the affairs of the university’. This category also referred to the vice-chancellor and many others in ‘academic roles’ (as well as certain members of the lay council). The bureaucracy, on the other hand, referred to ‘the professional full-time administrative staff, normally headed by the registrar (sometimes secretary) or jointly by him and the bursar, the senior financial official’.

The work of PVCs in the typical 1960s university, therefore, is referred to mainly by reference to the central role played by the vice-chancellor. By this time, the VC was usually styled ‘chief-academic and administrative officer’, the latter an acknowledgement of the increasing salience of ‘administration’ in academic life during the post-Robbins world of expanding universities and student numbers. The Robbins Report (Committee on Higher Education 1963) had already drawn attention to the ‘variety and burden of work that the modern university requires of its Vice-Chancellor’. Ten years on, as Moodie and Eustace noted, student numbers had already doubled, leading them to conjecture that the burden would become excessive as universities grow in size. This fact appears to explain the tendency in almost all universities to appoint deputy and/or pro-vice-chancellors.

Noting that many universities had at least one, some as many as three, pro-vice-chancellors, they suggested that such part-time deputies may ‘take the chair or receive outside visitors for the vice-chancellor, even if they cannot take decisions for him’. They recorded the exceptional example of the University of Birmingham, where the deputy was full-time and given responsibility for certain areas of university business. Several other universities had by this time full-time deputy posts, notably the ex-College’s of Advanced Technology (CATs), though Moodie and Eustace considered these posts to be a legacy from a previous style of government. They were unable to predict whether this model would become a permanent feature in the future.

27 Moodie, G.C. and Eustace, R. (1974) all references in this section 55-57
Jarratt and the ‘efficiency’ agenda

Moodie and Eustace’s analysis provides an important baseline to the subsequent evolution of executive manager roles in higher education, including the PVC. For many commentators, however, the major landmark in the evolution of such roles came a decade later with the Jarratt Report of 1985\(^31\). The Report of the Steering Committee for Efficiency Studies in Universities, to give it its full title, had its genesis in the appointment in 1979 of Sir Derek Rayner to advise the newly elected Conservative administration on the promotion of efficiency in government\(^33\), Chaired by Sir Alex Jarratt and including a substantial lay representation, the Committee’s investigations during 1984-5 took place against a background of sharp reductions in publicly funded support for universities. The formal terms of reference are worth quoting in full for the light they shed on funded support for universities. The formal terms of reference are worth quoting in full for the light they shed on subsequent discourses about management in the sector\(^31\):

> ‘To promote and co-ordinate, in consultation with the individual institutions which it will select, a series of efficiency studies of the management of the universities concerned and to consider and report to the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and the University Grants Committee on the results with such comments and recommendations as it considers appropriate; provided that the commissioned studies will not extend to issues of academic judgment nor be concerned with the academic and educational policies, practices or methods of the universities.’

The Jarratt report (1985): para 1.1\(^34\)

Jarratt advocated strong, top-down university government, with the emphasis on corporate style strategic planning, resource allocation and accountability. Within this structure, the ‘centre’ would be strengthened, with revitalised lay councils taking responsibility for strategic direction, while senates would be relegated to detailed academic concerns.

Jarratt was clear that improving the effectiveness of governance in general and planning and resource allocation mechanisms in particular, hinged on the leadership provided by the vice-chancellor. Although it was acknowledged that vice-chancellors displayed differences of style arising from their personalities, the report highlighted two contrasting models: one oriented towards strong leadership and the exercise of executive authority, the other towards academic consensus, with the vice-chancellor being a scholar first and acting as a chairman of Senate carrying out its will, rather than leading it strongly\(^35\). Among the list of recommendations, therefore, was that the vice-chancellor be recognised ‘not only as academic leader but also as chief executive of the university’\(^36\).

The impact of the Jarratt report on the sector should not be under-estimated. Together with other initiatives around this time, such as a move towards greater selectivity of research funding, it can be argued that Jarratt was responsible for a general movement for more purposeful management of funds, and a strengthening of planning, especially at university centre level\(^36\). However, it is important to separate Jarratt’s contribution to the rhetoric of efficiency and effectiveness in the management of universities from its impact on the development of management structures and practices. There is little doubt that subsequent discourses about management were heavily influenced by the report. However, the extent to which Jarratt brought about discernible changes in the organisation of the management model or job redesign in terms of the nature and practices of senior management posts is less clear.

In one sense, the Jarratt exercise was just the latest (if most dramatic) episode in a ‘quiet revolution’ in managerial effectiveness\(^39\). As a result of the growth in student numbers and the expansion of the system authorised in the 1950s and endorsed by the Robbins Report of 1963, universities had begun to develop more sophisticated bureaucracies well before the Jarratt exercise. Running bigger and more complex institutions required increasingly professional management. Jarratt’s contribution lay in its endorsement of a very different approach to making these bureaucracies work. Consciously rejecting anything associated with existing university practices, the report insisted on an industrial-style, top-down, management model at the expense of an older-established civil service model.

---

31 For a broader overview of the reform trajectory during this period see Parry, G. (2001)
32 Rayner, from the high-street retail store Marks and Spencer (a company seen as expertly led and highly efficient), had been chosen by Margaret Thatcher, then in her first term as Prime Minister, to help improve value in public services (HoC Committee of Public Accounts, 1986). The investigation grew out of the Rayner Scrutiny Programmes, but in this case was handled by a body appointed by the then vice-chancellors’ group, the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (now Universities UK).
33 Because of the tight timetable imposed by the ‘efficiency studies’ concept, the Jarratt Committee employed professional management consultants to undertake six institutional case studies. The six selected were: Edinburgh, Essex, Loughborough, Nottingham, Sheffield and University College London.
34 The insertion of an ‘exclusion’ zone around academic and educational issues is noteworthy in the light of the Committee’s findings and recommendations.
35 CVCP (1985) para 3.58
36 CVCP (1985): recommendation 5.5d
37 For example, in the year following its publication, the universities’ funding settlement was made conditional on a ‘Programme of Action’ being implemented to improve management practices.
38 Universities Funding Council (UFC) Third Annual Report (1989)
39 Scott, P. (1986)
As Scott suggested in a searching contemporary critique of the report, Jarratt and the reformers instinctively associated the established ‘civil service model’ of university administration with an outdated, inherently inefficient, pattern of university government: ‘council as the dignified guarantor of an institution’s integrity, senate as its academic parliament, and vice-chancellor as a consensual leader, all serviced by a neutral civil-service style administration’.

Turning this model upside down, rejecting a constitutional view of university government as a partnership between representative institutions and a powerful but disinterested administration and vice-chancellor, was an essential part of the ‘efficiency’ agenda. Anything else was simply politically inexpedient. For Jarratt, public institutions and private enterprise were one and the same, and the former needed to be moulded to fit with the models associated with the latter.

**University governance**

Any rush to impose on the universities an industrial model of executive, top-down, management drawing its inspiration and rhetoric from private enterprise, which Scott found so objectionable, was less evident in the established universities than in the local authority controlled polytechnics. Moreover, the search for evidence of Jarratt-inspired changes in the sector tended to concentrate on arrangements for reinvigorating governing bodies than on what happened inside the structures of senior management. As Shattock has argued, Jarratt’s prescriptions on advancing the powers of governing bodies at the expense of academic committees (such as senate) found their greatest expression in the ways the government chose to release the polytechnics from local authority control in 1988 and subsequently convert them into autonomous universities in 1992. Shattock also cites evidence to suggest that government wished to extend to the governing bodies of pre-1992 universities more extensive powers.

Whatever the intention behind legislative changes in the wake of Jarratt, the impact on the behaviour of governing bodies in both the pre- and post-1992 universities is less obvious than a simple distinction between corporate-dominated and academic-dominated models of governance might imply. Moreover, if we concentrate on senior management structures the picture is far more opaque. In this sense it is easy to overlook the Dearing Committee’s 1997 pronouncements on the subject of management and governance. The Committee’s terms of reference included how ‘value for money and cost effectiveness should be obtained in the use of resources’.

Certainly Dearing did not minimise the challenge of finding new or better ways of doing things in the future, including the need to improve the efficient and effective use of resources. But while the final report resisted any temptation to revert to Jarratt-style managerial dirigisme, it nevertheless chose to recommend a strengthening of university governance structures.

According to one view, the Dearing Report’s recommendation on governance represented ‘the high tide of the movement to reinforce the powers of governing bodies’. In this sense, Dearing linked directly with Jarratt in aiming to promote governing bodies at the expense of the roles of senates and academic boards. However, it is possible to place a slightly different interpretation on Dearing’s approach to the important relationship between governing bodies and the executive. In picking up the theme of organisational effectiveness, the final report made explicit reference to three important principles that should underpin governance arrangements. These were: (i) respect for institutional autonomy; (ii) protection of academic freedom; and (iii) transparency of governance arrangements.

Each principle conjures up in different ways the significance of research, teaching and administration in the organisational arrangement of the university. Autonomy allows the university a degree of freedom in setting its corporate strategy in relation to academic activities. It is relevant in the UK context not only because it emphasises such strategy and the leadership task associated with it at institutional (rather than for example, discipline) level, but because it reminds us that the institutional bottom line has a strong financial element to it. Academic freedom retains more than symbolic importance because it signifies the control of academics over what they teach or research and how they might do it. Transparency underpins the first two.

Government is exercised by institutional autonomy and academic freedom because of the lack of immediate or direct controls over processes. How can it ensure that administration is effective? Through institutional leadership and the transparency of its outcomes is one answer.

The significance of the Dearing ‘principles’ for understanding institutional leadership, however, lies in their symmetry with the organisational rigidities associated with research, teaching and administration. We will return to the issues surrounding this conundrum in subsequent sections of the report. For the moment it is sufficient to note that by endorsing these principles, as well as drawing attention to...
the ‘impressive’ improvements in efficiency in the face of dramatic cuts in public funding per student already achieved by institutions, Dearing appeared to override Jarratt’s rather simple industrial-executive model with one that endorsed the distinctiveness and complexity of academic life. To Dearing the nature and purpose of a university mattered, hence his attempt to broker a new compact between higher education, its stakeholders and society more generally.

In contrast to Jarratt’s idea of almost unbridled executive power, what appeared to exercise Dearing most was arriving at a formulation that would effectively safeguard against possible abuses of such power. Hence in an important passage on academic governance, Dearing noted:

‘The powers relating to an institution’s academic work, clearly vested in senates or academic boards, should not be bypassed by senior managers or the governing body. Academic boards and senates must ensure that they have a clear account of their responsibilities to guide their decisions and behaviour, that their members are clear about their responsibilities, individually and collectively, and that this is respected by the governing body.’

National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (1997): para 15.65

This demarcation between the academic and managerial arenas of institutional life did not preclude scope for further improvement in the use of resources. It did, however, appear to postulate an alternative model of institutional decision-making based on a stronger alliance of governance and academic structures as a counter-balance to the rising power of the executive45.

It is possible, therefore, to interpret as one of the by-products, intentional or otherwise, of Dearing’s pronouncements, an attempt to secure the notion of some form of collegial, or at least consensual, approach to institutional management. Far from undermining the notion of ‘shared governance’ advanced by Shattock, Dearing appeared to recognise the dangers of corporate-dominated styles of university governance. For Dearing, arguably, the principal threat to academic freedom and institutional autonomy lay not in strengthened governing bodies, but in leaving executive powers unchecked. If this interpretation is accepted, it casts a rather different light on more recent discourses about governance and management.

Universities and business

The most recent intervention into the debate about university management came with the appointment by the UK Treasury of Sir Richard Lambert, former editor of the Financial Times, to head an enquiry into university-Industry collaboration. Lambert’s remit was wide ranging and included an investigation into what was perceived as ‘slow-moving, bureaucratic and risk-averse style of university management.’ The Report’s (2003) pronouncements in favour of a business model for running universities aligned Lambert closely with the industrial-executive line flowing from Jarratt. Lambert did not reject entirely the idea (or value) of the collegiality associated with committee-based structures. But the Report was altogether less exercised by the problematic nature of academic freedom or institutional autonomy than Dearing had appeared to be. On the contrary, Lambert largely by-passed such issues, preferring instead to emphasise the need for rapid decision-making and dynamic management to be achieved by executive forms of business management based in cabinet style teams. Led by senior managers, these teams would delegate authority out of committees, placing it instead in the hands of academic and administrative managers who would operate through simplified lines of management46.

As an example of ‘good practice’ Lambert commended the fact that:

‘As part of the process of management improvement, well-run universities are appointing more professionally qualified and accredited staff, often from the private sector. Directors of human resources, estates management, marketing and communication are commonplace in leading universities…. To reflect these changes, some institutions are breaking with traditional and outmoded perceptions of their administrations and re-labelling their administrative staff as “professional services” or “directorates”:’

Lambert (2003): 7.11

Lambert’s enthusiasm for running a university like a business was driven principally by the belief that this model would encourage better university collaboration with the outside world and would, in any case, lead to more entrepreneurialism and enterprise among both staff and students. Such approaches have been criticised because they tend to ignore the many facets of university life that do not (directly at least) involve working with business47.

45 Shattock is sharply critical of Dearing for being overly influenced by the Hoare Report from Australia and for being overly simplistic about the role of governing bodies, whilst ignoring the need to reform other areas of university governance, see Shattock, M. (2003) p98
47 Evans, G.R. p37
A central theme connecting Lambert with Jarratt, therefore, concerns the development of stronger executive structures. Although two decades apart and responding to different terms of reference, both appear to have bypassed Dearing’s concerns, especially in their advocacy of the so-called business model based in essence on executive styles of decision making as the best route to managerial effectiveness. This shared faith, as much as the discourse itself, defines an industrial top-down model of executive management as an ‘ideal’ for universities as they strive to bring together in one corporate process the academic, financial and physical elements of university life.

What also characterises both reports is an apparent disregard of context and culture, together with an oversimplification of the complex task of managing collective creative environments. While Dearing’s three principles endorsed the importance of the context and culture of higher education, Jarratt and Lambert appear to disregard them. This is important for how leadership roles are interpreted.

In the Dearing prescription, networks that maintain the distinctiveness of higher education are important. Maintaining networks across the institution comprises an important part of institutional leadership. In contrast, the leadership task for departments or faculties does not encompass this wider institutional view. For example, deans have no responsibility beyond their immediate empires and the activities that fall within them. Course or programme leaders may have to co-ordinate and work with other peers and senior colleagues across the institution. Nevertheless, the focus of their work remains almost always intra-faculty. PVCs, on the other hand, have to ensure that faculty or departments are adopting broadly similar values to those of the institution as a whole. Their focus, arguably, has a key inter-faculty dimension. There are tensions between these vertical and horizontal divisions and these have implications for PVC roles, a point which we investigate further in subsequent chapters.

From the rhetoric of Jarratt or Lambert, then, it might appear that higher education has succumbed relatively easily to the various agendas associated with new managerialism or new public management. In reality, however, the extent to which these ideas have found their way into management models, practices and cultures is more contested and ambiguous. Moreover, although the values and practices associated with collegiality are assumed to have been eroded in the post-Jarratt university, there is little hard evidence to suggest that new managerialism has been strongly associated with academic success. As Shattock has observed, those institutions occupying the top places in the university league tables ‘seem to emphasise collegiality in their management styles rather than any form of executive dominance’.

What exactly is meant by collegiality, of course, is open to question. But insofar as it represents the polar opposite of executive direction in the depiction of the management model in higher education, collegiality remains a highly symbolic, if not potent, element in trying to understand the contemporary practice of leadership and management roles. We return to the issues surrounding collegiality in subsequent chapters.

The pro-vice-chancellorship and the management model

The foregoing provides a brief account of more than two decades of fairly continuous attempts to reform management and governance in higher education, coupled with a seemingly insistent strand in the literature concerning the poor quality of university management and leadership. In essence this has been interpreted as a general failure on the part of universities to adopt the business model. How does the evolution of the pro-vice-chancellorship align with this discourse?

It is clear that the pro-vice-chancellor was already a recognised post in the administrative structure of the 1960s universities. Moreover, Moodie and Eustace predicted that PVC numbers were almost certainly set to increase as institutions and the system itself expanded so demanding more, not less, administration. Although this lends some support to Scott’s assertion of a ‘quiet revolution’ in university management already underway, any tranquillity appeared to be shattered by Jarratt’s efficiency intervention. In Jarratt’s regime, power in universities would be ceded by the donnish dominion to stronger top management, led by the vice-chancellor acting as a chief executive. Key players in the top management team were the pro-vice-chancellors (though Jarratt bracketed vice-principals and vice provosts under this generic heading) and the deans. The report noted that universities usually had three or four such PVCs in post, each serving for three or four years. These were normally selected from among the senior professors whose work as PVCs would qualify them for a reduced teaching load (no mention was made of research). Jarratt recognised several PVC roles:

### References

49 Alternative conceptions of ‘new managerialism’ and ‘new public management’ are often conflated. For an exploration and clarification see Deem, R. and Brehony, K.J. (2005). The debate is not entered into in the present report.
‘Often they are given particular tasks in developing academic policy. At other times they are obviously vital as “trouble shooters”. But they are also a vital part of the mechanism for policy co-ordination in that they frequently have ex-officio membership of the key committees. They also play an important part in the informal processes of policy development and co-ordination through regular meetings with the Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar.’


‘However, Jarratt also emphasised that the role of the pro-vice-chancellor “does and should depend heavily on tasks assigned to them by individual Vice-Chancellors.” Since the expectation was that the executive role of vice-chancellors would increase, it followed that the use made of Pro-Vice-Chancellors will be increasingly vital. In a rehearsal of exactly the same argument made in the Lambert report two decades later, Jarratt also concluded that the development of management skills in PVCs would be increasingly important but, implicitly, that the importance of fostering such skills was being ignored:’


However, Jarratt portrayed two slightly contradictory aspects to PVC roles. As we have seen, one was as “shadow” to the chief executive’s strategic role: as the latter grew in strength and importance, so it was predicted the shadow executive role of the PVC would increase in step. But the other was portrayed as more operational, since it related to policy co-ordination, a role that sometimes required them to act as “trouble-shooters”. Ex-officio membership of key academic committees was mentioned by Jarratt as a vital part of the mechanism for policy co-ordination. By implication, therefore, PVCs performed academic as well as administrative roles, since they worked at the fulcrum of the management model, linking executive decision-making at the centre with the main academic body in the faculties and departments. The implication is that the PVC retained a key role in building and maintaining academic consensus. How this “link” role might be played out, or even its significance, did not appear to detain Jarratt for long, since the emphasis of the report was on top management and line management, rather than the consequences for academic democracy.

**Longer-term trends in the statistical profile of PVCs**

This narrative has a number of implications for understanding the changing role of pro-vice-chancellors during the post-Jarratt era. If, as Jarratt predicted, PVCs were to become integral to the chief executive role of the vice-chancellor, it is reasonable to anticipate, first, that their numbers might begin to increase more steeply after his report in response to the explicit demands for universities to strengthen their management along corporate or executive lines. Second, we might also expect to find some evidence indicating that the nature of their roles was changing to reflect a more executive or managerial agenda.

To test these propositions we have examined longer-term trends in relation to PVC posts, both in terms of their numbers and the profiles of those in them. To do this, we have drawn on data detailing senior management posts across the UK higher education system as recorded in the

---

**TABLE 1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEMBERSHIP OF SENIOR MANAGEMENT TEAMS (SMTS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Count of SMT posts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVCs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DVCs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deans on SMT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVCs per HEI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DVCs per HEI</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) annual Yearbooks. The advantage of such data is that they are provided by the institutions themselves. We were unable to analyse data for every institution for every year, so we sampled six benchmark years across the period: 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000, and 2005\textsuperscript{52}.

Table 1 presents a simple profile of institutional and post frequencies over our 45 year census period from 1960 to 2005. The number of UK HEIs with data recorded in the ACU Yearbook has increased over the period, with a marked growth in the 1990s when the former polytechnics were given university status. There are a maximum of 135 institutions for which data might have been available by the end of the period. The number for which data was in fact available is shown in Table 1. This should be taken into account when considering the data in other tables, but the changing balance across categories within tables is the more informative element.

The secular trend shows a steady increase in the overall count of PVCs (and their equivalent titles), from just 18 posts across all eligible institutions at the start of the period, to 284 by the end. The size of SMTs gradually increased over the decades with a progressive expansion of the numbers of PVC posts. By 2005, there were almost 2\% PVCs for each HEI and around half also had a DVC.

When the number of PVC posts is scaled against institutions for each of our sample years, however, a rather different picture emerges from that which Jarratt put forward. Taking all institutions into account at the start of the period there were just 0.39 PVC posts per HEI. Even by 2005 the corresponding figure was 2.41 per institution. Although the long-term upward trend in PVC numbers remains clear, the rate of growth seems more modest. This finding is not unexpected in view of the increase in the numbers of institutions over the period.

This raises the question of what the drivers on the expansion in the number and range of posts might be. For example, we could separate those institutions which for reasons of their smaller size - or perhaps type - have never created or appointed PVC posts. If we thus focus on those institutions with at least one PVC, or equivalent, then in 1960 these institutions typically appointed just one post. In the sample year before the Jarratt exercise, the figure had already risen to almost two per institution. This upward trend was maintained, in the wake of Jarratt, but did not accelerate significantly. By 2005 the average number of PVCs per HEI had risen to just 2.36. Scale therefore seems to be a factor, but we have not investigated that relationship in this study. We can only draw attention, at this stage, to the need to disaggregate the complex factors which may influence the size and structure of senior management teams.

What stands out, apart from the decade-to-decade rise in numbers, is the long-term persistence of some specific job titles referring essentially to this same post, or a close variant of it. Table 1 disguises an element of complexity, since we have assigned a diversity of job titles to the category of pro-vice chancellor. Most did include that within the title but some variants appeared to occupy the same position in an SMT under a different label.

As Table 2 makes clear, the variations have proliferated, rather than diminished over time. As a proportion of the total, the titles pro-vice-chancellor and vice principal have remained by far the most prevalent. But this figure disguises a shift. In the smaller higher education system of 1960, only five of the total number of posts identified did not carry the title pro-vice-chancellor. By 2005, there were no less than 92 SMT posts across the unified and enlarged system that carried titles other than PVC. The second most frequent post, by some margin and consistent over the decades, has been Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC – see Table 1). These figures suggest that the distinction between PVC and DVC posts has remained a significant signal over the period.

These results reflect a rather different picture than might have been inferred from a superficial reading of the Jarratt report. A number of observations can be made. First, it is clear that the system has witnessed a secular increase in the number of PVCs and equivalent posts and that this trend was already clear before the Jarratt exercise. Nor is there any evidence from ACU data to indicate any discontinuity in the number of posts in the wake of Jarratt exercise. On the contrary, when viewed against the spectacular growth in the system both in terms of the number of HEIs and student numbers, the changes over time in PVC posts do not appear to be out of step. The other feature is the conservatism that the system has shown in signalling the nature of the post by its title.

Jarratt’s comments on the office of PVC appear, when viewed retrospectively from this statistical perspective, to have been slightly misleading. It is probable that he was unduly influenced by practice at his six selected case study institutions. While Jarratt was correct to draw attention to a variable number of PVCs between universities, his observation that usually three or four were in post applied at that time to only a very limited number of institutions.

\footnote{The ACU data exclude the former polytechnics until the ending of the binary divide in 1992. However, details for these institutions are included in the figures for the sample years 2000 and 2005.}
### TABLE 2

**NUMBER OF PVC AND EQUIVALENT POSTS AND INSTITUTIONAL SPREAD FOR SAMPLE YEARS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pro-Vice-Chancellor</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVC and Sub-Warden</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVC and Vice-Principal</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVC and Director of (area)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVC and Registrar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVC and Assistant VC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Vice-Chancellor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Pro-Vice-Chancellor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Pro-Vice-Chancellor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant VC, Finance Director</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-Principal</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Vice-Principal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Deputy Principal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-Principal and Warden of St Bart’s</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-Principal (Director of Information Services)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-Principal and Director of Studies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Principal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-Vice-Principal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal and Vice-Principal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-Provost</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-Rector</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-Provost</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-Director</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pro-Warden</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy Director</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rector and Vice-Provost</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice-President</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commissary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deputy High Steward</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orator</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Even by 1990 the mean number of PVCs was two per institution. Our data confirm that Jarratt’s case studies were institutions with more PVCs than the average. This is partly explained by the special nature of the institutions. Three of the six were drawn from the ranks of the larger civics – Nottingham, Sheffield and UCL. Edinburgh, though older, was also a large and complex institution. Of the remaining two, Essex, created in the 1960s, already had three PVCs by 1980, while Loughborough was unusual among the ex-CATs in having both a PVC and a senior PVC. Table 3 provides further detail of the longer-term trend in these institutions.

Our analysis provides little evidence of a sudden rush towards appointing more senior manager second-tier posts in the form of PVCs in the wake of Jarratt’s findings. The analysis lends rather more support to the idea of a longer-term or quiet revolution in management, at least as indicated by the progressive rise in the numbers of PVCs in the system, and this is especially so when scaled against the growth of the system itself.

Stimulated by expansion planned before Robbins reported, some universities started to develop cross-institutional management capacity prior to the 1980’s political obsession with efficiency. This trend continued in the post-Jarratt world. Although we cannot discount the possible impact of Jarratt’s executive model on the steady increase in the number of PVCs in subsequent years, the trend appears to have been impervious to this and other external influences on higher education.

The development of research selectivity and its associated system of research assessment from 1986 onwards will certainly have had an impact on the designation of PVC posts, though not on overall numbers. We found that the most frequent specified responsibility among PVC posts is that of the PVC for Research. On the whole, this is also the earliest ‘designated’ PVC post to appear. This almost certainly reflects the response of institutions to the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and the need for an institutional response to the strategic and management demands that it introduced.

A profile of continuity: PVC backgrounds
This section switches from the broader trend in the growth of the post to a more detailed portrait of changes in recruitment and promotion over the same period. Again the picture that emerges is one of continuity.

The statistical profile paints a fairly clear picture of more or less continuous long-term growth in the number of PVCs in the system. The vast majority of those appointed to pro-
vice-chancellorships are career academics. Over 80 per cent of all PVCs across our sample years since 1960 were ‘professors’. It is possible that some of these were promoted to a chair whilst in post, but it is reasonable to assume that the vast majority had already established themselves as successful academics before moving into the post.

There are other enduring features that define the likely attributes of those who make it into second-tier leadership roles. The record of SMT members’ qualifications is patchy, so some caveats need to be entered. Nonetheless, some interesting conclusions can be drawn.

If we take first degree awarded as a proxy for the initial academic subject areas of PVCs then we find those from science backgrounds outnumbering those from the arts and social sciences - though not by a huge margin. Certainly there is no evidence of a science takeover in senior management. However, the marginal superiority of science backgrounds provides a footnote to longer-term historical trajectories. Whereas early 20th century Oxford, for instance, remained dominated by ‘the serried ranks of classicists’, at Cambridge ‘scientists governed its affairs as much as arts men’.

The influences of Oxford and Cambridge, curricular or otherwise, are of more than passing interest in the context of contemporary university leadership. The data show that the Oxbridge MA has changed in predominance from the sine qua non of the 1960 pre-Robbins institution. It has declined in relative frequency in every year as the hoi polloi meritocracy established its grip.

A small, but significant, proportion of PVCs had also achieved high-status external recognition for their academic achievements, either before or during their period of PVC office. This is reinforced by the profile of membership of Fellowship in one or more of the main UK based learned societies and institutes (Royal Society, British Academy, Royal Academy of Engineering, etc.).

### Table 4

**FIRST RECORDED QUALIFICATION OF SMT MEMBERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BA</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BSc</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA % total</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 5

**SECOND RECORDED QUALIFICATION OF SMT MEMBERS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PhD+DPhil</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSc</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DSc</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD + DPhil % total</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We already know from previous research on vice-chancellors’ profiles that attendance at Oxford or Cambridge has constituted an enduring and disproportionate feature on the propensity to succeed to the top academic post in universities. Given that this research had already shown the close correlation between being a PVC and becoming a VC, we expected to find a similarly disproportionate number of PVCs with ‘Oxbridge’ backgrounds. The figures confirm this to be the case.

There are 85 HEIs among those which awarded first degrees to SMT members, of which most are in the UK. The list is dominated by Cambridge and Oxford in the early years. They remain among the most frequent in 2005. London (including increasingly independent constituents) has shown the greatest growth. The ‘big civics’ generally now provide more SMT members across the system. The place of the two Scottish institutions among the lead UK-wide group is unexpected.

We also examined PVC backgrounds as indicated by the awarding institution of post-graduate degrees. Table 7 confirms and illuminates the growing diversification across the HE system and the emergence of talent in many places.

**Table 6**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOST FREQUENT AWARDING INSTITUTIONS OF FIRST QUALIFICATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bristol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinburgh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We already know from previous research on vice-chancellors’ profiles that attendance at Oxford or Cambridge has constituted an enduring and disproportionate feature on the propensity to succeed to the top academic post in universities. Given that this research had already shown the close correlation between being a PVC and becoming a VC, we expected to find a similarly disproportionate number of PVCs with ‘Oxbridge’ backgrounds. The figures confirm this to be the case.

There are 85 HEIs among those which awarded first degrees to SMT members, of which most are in the UK. The list is dominated by Cambridge and Oxford in the early years. They remain among the most frequent in 2005. London (including increasingly independent constituents) has shown the greatest growth. The ‘big civics’ generally now provide more SMT members across the system. The place of the two Scottish institutions among the lead UK-wide group is unexpected.

We also examined PVC backgrounds as indicated by the awarding institution of post-graduate degrees. Table 7 confirms and illuminates the growing diversification across the HE system and the emergence of talent in many places.

**Table 7**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MOST FREQUENT AWARDING INSTITUTIONS OF SECOND QUALIFICATIONS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cambridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birmingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bristol</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinburgh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasgow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manchester</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is a time factor to consider in these data: from which institutions would the SMT members of 1970 and 1980 have graduated? Most would have graduated before Robbins. Even by 1990 the changes in the sector were only just beginning to affect the make-up of this tier of management.

The diversity of awarding institutions for higher degrees is greater than that for first degrees and more of them are international. The spread of ‘most frequent’ in Table 7 is similar to that in Table 6, however, and the trends are essentially the same.

First degrees from former polytechnics comprise a minute fraction of those in PVC posts. Partly of course this is a function of age, since the polytechnics as a collective entity of institutions didn’t exist until the late 1960s. Nevertheless, the figure is startlingly small, even for the most recent sample years (2000, 2005). Extending this analysis to those with an ex-polytechnic awarded post-graduate degree produces even slimmer numbers. Overseas backgrounds are, unsurprisingly, rare until the present period.

The pattern of recruitment from within the academy appears to be an enduring feature of the sector. Exhortations for universities to become more business or executive in their structures and styles of leadership and management have not led to any discernible or significant changes, either in the titles applied to second tier roles or in the typical avenue into such posts. There is evidence to suggest some changes at the margins in very recent appointments, as will become obvious from the ‘insider’ accounts of PVC job presented in the next chapter. There is also a new challenge to the primacy of the PVC and DVC in second tier academic leadership roles in the form of a new breed of ‘super dean’, but this is not yet evident in the data captured in Table 1 and it is too early to discern any shift in longer-term patterns.

Part of the explanation for the enduring nature of appointing academics to lead academia, rather than say recruiting general managers from outside with more generic leadership and management skills, lies in the simple proposition that not all PVC vacancies are open to external applicants. We cannot say with any precision what proportion of PVC posts are in effect closed in this way. We know from existing sources that some parts of the sector, notably the post-1992 HEIs, are traditionally more inclined to open posts to external competition. (We also have some evidence that some PVC posts in the pre-1992 institutions have been advertised externally: we return to this issue in the next chapter). For the most part however the typical avenue into PVC posts remains defined and referenced by successful experience as a career academic, not just as evidence by the title of professor, but by previous engagement in some form of leadership and management activity.

We were not so much surprised as disappointed to confirm that, in a sector where top-posts have traditionally been male-dominated, there is an extensive gender imbalance among PVC post holders.

Gender of SMT members has been determined for this purpose from a visual review of first names, and it is therefore a potentially inaccurate assignment. In the early part of the period most senior staff tended to use only initials but there was a progressive switch to recording first names so that the gender of most staff can be inferred reasonably consistently by 2005.

If we assume that those staff who continue in 2005 to use only their initials are male, then the proportion of females has increased. However, if we make the more conservative calculation based on only those staff whose names allow us to assign them to male or female, then there has been some variation but no discernible trend in the gender balance.

### TABLE 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M Total</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Total</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F as % total</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F as % F + M</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Summary
This chapter has drawn attention, firstly, to the discourses of management and governance that have framed the evolution of the pro-vice-chancellorship since the 1960s. The need for change has been consistently argued on the basis of a perception of deficit in management capacity and quality across the sector. A breakdown in trust is a characteristic of this discourse, with academic-dominated forms of governance and management – often derided as ‘management by committee’ – regarded as the primary cause of management failures and a general lack of management quality. A consistent theme in the rhetoric of reformers has been an emphasis on creating stronger executive structures and more dynamic decision-making. Although the prescriptions for change routinely oversimplify the complex relationship between governance and management in universities, they have exhibited a shared faith in the application of industry-derived models of organisation and decision-making as the best route to more effective leadership and management, as well, it is worth noting, as a more entrepreneurial culture. Hence, two decades on from the Jarratt exercise on university efficiency, the Lambert Report was able to celebrate outstanding examples of successful executive style leadership in some universities and moreover, in advocating more of the same in other universities, declare confidently that ‘the direction of reform in the sector is right’.

Yet throughout the debates about governance and management over this period, nagging doubts have remained about the efficacy and fitness for purpose of the executive or corporate model. In contrast to the exhortations of reviewers like Jarratt and Lambert, academic studies of governance and executive leadership have produced detailed empirical accounts that emphasise the persistence of traditional values and alternative models to explain how universities as creative organisations actually operate. Thus what for some is perceived as inefficiencies associated with ‘management by committee’ and cultures of consensus, for others provides room and some empirical evidence to celebrate the specificity of the academic enterprise.

The contrast is probably overdrawn, but the apparently stubborn persistence of older cultures and continuities within higher education’s management models is striking. One example is the persistence of the committee within academic governance as a forum for developing consensus. The committee is not a decision making locus. It is not necessarily inefficient or in need of abolition, because in a collegial environment the committee is a place where the consensus can be created and endorsed. In this sense the committee creates opportunities for self-management. The persistence of such apparently archaic structures may be interpreted therefore not as a negative, but as an enabling feature of higher education. Nevertheless, the arguments surrounding committees (as much as collegiality) have important implications for the role of the PVC.

Our study of the changing role of pro-vice-chancellors is located within the historical discourse surrounding governance and management. Despite Jarratt’s predictions, our first cut of the data on the changing profile of the pro-vice-chancellorship suggests some enduring features that are not easily explained by an inexorable march towards executive structures. These data indicate some clear secular trends in both the numbers and distribution of the pro-vice-chancellorship across the sector. From these figures it would appear that the principal driver of the upward trend in PVC numbers since the 1960s was the expansion of the system associated with the transition from elite to mass forms of higher education provision. The total number of PVCs in the system has certainly increased over time, but so too has the number of institutions. While the nature of the management model may also have changed over time it is clear that shifts in scale as much as the style of institutions cannot be discounted in any explanation of secular trends in the profile of the pro-vice-chancellorship.

3. BECOMING A PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR

Introduction
The statistical profile presented in the previous chapter provides a baseline for a more detailed consideration of the contemporary role of pro-vice-chancellors. We have argued that the historical evolution of the role is characterised by strong elements of continuity, particularly in the enduring nature of job titles, the typical avenues of promotion into the job and the backgrounds of those who make it into the second tier. From this historical portrait the present chapter is the first exploring contemporary ‘insider’ accounts portraying what the world of being a PVC looks like from the perspectives of those in the job.

The focus in this chapter is on how one becomes a PVC. It commences with some personal experiences of the selection and appointment procedures used by the sector.
to recruit new PVCs. We are interested in the actual methods used to identify a pool of potential recruits for senior appointments. How are they identified? What attributes and skills are required? How are these evidenced? Who does the selecting? How open is recruitment? From the methods of making senior appointments the second section turns to PVCs’ views of their preparation and training to take on the job.

The aims are to construct a broader account of how people work their way into senior leadership posts and to identify the attributes and experiences valued by the appointment process. Later outputs from the project will cover comparative material from European and Australian higher education systems. Analysis of these data will provide a set of wider benchmarks against which to compare and contrast evolving roles and models in the UK system. The final part summarises our findings.

**Selection and appointment procedures**

Our research confirmed that appointment procedures to PVC posts vary considerably across the sector. There is also evidence that some universities are changing their approach to senior appointments, borrowing practices previously the preserve of other parts of the sector. The continuities evident in the broader profile of recruitment to second tier jobs remain largely undisturbed, but there is a willingness in some quarters to challenge established orthodoxies and borrow practices previously considered the preserve of other types of universities. However, institutional policy relating to appointment of senior university officers is normally enshrined in university statutes and, at this level at least, there are some important and entrenched distinctions between the pre- and post-1992 universities.

A key role in the pre-1992 universities is reserved for academic influence, normally exercised through the Senate. For example, Ordnance 3 of the University of Warwick, one of the 1960s new universities, sets out the procedure for PVC appointments. A lead role in the process is reserved for the Senate, with professorial influence exercised through the appointment of Senate members to an ‘Advisory Committee on the Appointment of Pro-Vice-Chancellors.’ The stipulation for members is that they have ‘some direct knowledge and experience of the roles and responsibilities of Pro Vice-Chancellors or other senior management responsibilities within the University’ (see Statute 8(2)). At the University of Sheffield, one of the large civic institutions founded before the First World War, Section 7 of the statutes declares that nominally PVCs are appointed by the University Council. However, here too the Senate has a key role, providing not just a report or advice to the Council on any such appointment but in furnishing the names of possible candidates who are members or former members of the Senate. Similarly, Ordinance 6 of the federal University of Wales, Aberystwyth, empowers the Senate to nominate pro-vice-chancellors, the appointment formally being the responsibility of the Council.

Since the statutes also make it clear that pro-vice-chancellors are responsible to the vice-chancellor and ‘act as deputies to the Vice-Chancellor’ (e.g. University of Essex), it may seem surprising that the same documents are less than fulsome about the particular role in the appointments process to be played by the vice-chancellor. Most content themselves by reserving for the vice-chancellor the role of recommending to the Council the number of PVC posts. Several, such as the University of Bristol (Ordinance 11), allocate to vice-chancellors the task of preparing PVC job descriptions and person specifications, advertising the same within the university and calling for applications from members of the university staff. Others, such as Warwick, reserve for the VC the right to consider the persons recommended by the Advisory Committee of the Senate and either (i) recommend the appointment, or, (ii) refer a recommendation back for further consideration.

Not all statutes go this far. In many cases the vice-chancellor’s role is not normally specified, leaving influence from this key office to be exercised behind the scenes and through various forms of formal and informal recommendations and selection processes. Even where the role of vice-chancellors is fairly tightly specified, it is clear from our site visit data that their role and influence normally extends in directions beyond the formal prescriptions.

In the post-1992 institutions, traditionally the process is reserved for the vice-chancellor and governing body. The scope for academic involvement, at least via the constitutional formalities specified in charters, is highly circumscribed. Several PVCs confirmed that their own appointment panels comprised the VC and perhaps DVC, together with members of the governing body, but did not include any role for academic boards or academics.

These formal or constitutional arrangements for appointment and selection reflect different modes of thinking about the most appropriate methods of choosing senior university officers. In the civic institutions and those of the post-Robbins period during the 1960s, senior appointments were assumed to be the business of the
academic community. Senates and academic departments, it was assumed, were the ultimate repositories of supreme authority in universities\textsuperscript{57}. The idea that appointments to senior positions were the legitimate business of governing bodies or, indeed, the vice-chancellor, was simply not seen as credible in an era when senate and academic departments were still regarded internally as the dominant locus of power. Even in the immediate post-Jarratt world such attitudes lay largely unchallenged in many of the older universities. One vice-chancellor provided a clear picture of how one of the major civic universities continued to operate along traditional lines:

‘In the period when I became the PVC at [institution] it was basically ‘buggins turn’. The existing PVC and the VC took soundings and then approached a selected individual. It was expected that they would have been prominent on committees, probably the Chair of a …Board. There was continual reinvention of the individual role according to experience and necessity, and there was no formal training of any kind.’

Former PVC pre-1960 University

‘The established pattern in the pre-1992 universities was to view PVC posts as part-time and temporary appointments. The assumption was that those appointed would retain links with their departments, remain research active and return to their full-time academic posts at the end of their appointment period. Indeed, writing in the 1970s, Fielden and Lockwood\textsuperscript{58} argued strongly that their experience suggested ‘a correspondence exists in terms of an individual academic’s ability in his discipline and his administrative or management ability’. Fearing a future in which the universities assigned management responsibilities solely to those no longer active in research or teaching they welcomed the trend towards rotation as a means of increasing participation in management and avoiding ‘the rigidity and complacency which can result from long tenures.’

Fielden and Lockwood (1973): 50-51

An alternative model was to be found in the former polytechnics, however. Later in the 1980s, the process of setting free the polytechnics provided a deliberate, even ideologically inspired, business oriented alternative to the academic style of governance\textsuperscript{59}. For these institutions local authority interference in management, a legacy of the earlier determination to have ‘a sector under social control’, had manifested itself in lack of confidence about their ability to rationally manage their own affairs\textsuperscript{60}. Conforming to a managerialist culture borrowed from business was one response. In these ‘new’ universities PVC posts were deemed permanent appointments, advertised externally and, theoretically at least, open to a more diverse pool of potential recruits.

Because they are enshrined in the codified constitutional arrangements of the universities, these models continue to distinguish practices in the pre- and post-1992 institutions. However, our interview data describes a more complex picture. From the experiences of those in such posts we have drawn two principal models describing current approaches to selection and appointment. Each model has several variants, but the core features of the variants are sufficiently similar to warrant inclusion into one of the two models. We characterise these models as (A) ‘Selection by invitation’; and (B) ‘Competitive recruitment’. A third model - (C) ‘Election by senate’ – was also identified during the research but is rare. In some institutions it is combined with other appointment models.\textsuperscript{61} Our analysis concentrates therefore on Models A and B. Each is illustrated with reference to selected vignettes drawn from the site visit interviews.

**Model A: Selection by invitation**

The first model is in essence a patronage model of selection. The appointment is de facto in the gift of the vice-chancellor who invites people, normally from within the university, to become a PVC. Respondents with experience of this model referred to it variously as the ‘hand’ or ‘tap on the shoulder’. These colloquialisms describe a semi-formal system of internal selection found in several of our site visit institutions, all of them pre-1992 universities. In this model, individuals are identified as potential PVCs and appointment occurs as an outcome of a series of ‘conversations’ rather than formal interview.

In its purest form the selection model is in the gift of the vice-chancellor who acts as the principal patron in the appointment process. In the following extract a former PVC, now a VC, provided a personal account of his experience of this model:

‘I hadn’t expected to become a PVC and there was no…sense that pro-vice-chancellorships were advertised or even announced in any way…. There was a Committee on PVCs which technically was

\textsuperscript{57} Moodie, G.C. and Eustace, R. (1974)
\textsuperscript{58} Fielden, J. and Lockwood, G. (1973)
\textsuperscript{59} Kogan, M. (1989)
\textsuperscript{60} Pratt, J. (1997) p294, p303
\textsuperscript{61} Our sense is that in operational terms it is VCs who nearly always have the whip hand in terms of PVC appointments, regardless of university statutes. However, because of its rarity in UK HEIs the election model is not discussed further in this report.
chairied by the vice-chancellor…. There was no interview. What happened was that they took soundings among existing PVCs about people that they might think would be any good in the job and then took soundings off the people that had been mentioned…. So two of them came to see me in my office and talked about it. Interestingly enough …. [the VC] had not said anything about it…. So we talked about it and it was all slightly inconclusive. I expressed an interest and then had a conversation with …. [the VC] later, when it became much more concrete.

It was that kind of process, you know, how you used to elect the leader of the Conservative Party in the old days, taking soundings, no interview, you didn't make an application, you didn't say 'If I became a PVC I would do x, y or z'.

Well what sort of things did they ask you?

Well…it was a relatively brief, casual, conversation really. I think they came in and said your name has been mentioned as someone who might be a possibility….that kind of very casual conversation. They didn't appear to have any set of questions or anything like that.

They didn't have a particular agenda?

No, they had no particular agenda, no. The very fact I can't remember very much about it shows that it was fairly unstructured really, because it wasn't that long ago!

PVC, pre-1960 University

This experience is not untypical of other experiences recounted by both current and former PVCs. Several respondents confirmed that they too had not known that they had been identified as potential PVCs or even that a vacancy was imminent. Nor were they clear why, or through what process, their names had even emerged as potential applicants.

Model B: Competitive recruitment

The second model is distinguished from the first by transparency in both process and selection criteria. It is characterised by the formal announcement of vacancies as well as publication of job details including person specification. Candidates apply for the post and subject themselves to the demands of the selection process, typically involving combinations of formal and semi-formal interviews. The model may of course involve behind the scenes conversations between the vice-chancellor or other members of the senior team and potential applicants, but in essence the purpose is to open the recruitment process to competition between a wider range of candidates. However, there are two significant variants to this model.

(i) Internal competition

In this variant competition is restricted to the institution making the appointment. Application is open to any member of staff, though for all practical purposes the appointment is likely to be filled from a more restricted pool of applicants able to show previous experience of leadership perhaps at departmental or faculty level. Several in our sample of PVCs had experienced this model at first hand. In the following account a PVC explained:

‘An advert came out, yes. And I talked to a lot of people, like you do with these things, I talked to the person who had the job before, I talked to a lot of other people about it, what was involved and the rest of it. Because even though I had an idea, it wasn’t obvious to me what the distinction was between the posts…. We knew they were in charge of various areas…. What about the appointment procedure? Can you tell me a bit about what you had to do to actually get the job?

Well, the first thing is to send in your full CV and so on…. and covering letter talking about, if you like, looking across these characteristics and saying where you fit the job description…. Then we had to make a presentation to a committee which was formed of senior members of the University, including the Vice-Chancellor and Registrar and Deputy Vice-Chancellor and a lay member of Council. What we had to do there was make a presentation to start with…. It was an hour 15 minutes. First 15 minutes were a presentation: ‘How can [title]’….designed to show a broad appreciation of what’s going on in the University, rather than just in your subject area…. That was quite challenging actually…. Then questions from the panel on your presentation. And then the rest of the time was interview, general questions.
Was it arduous?

A bit arduous, though I don’t get nervous about things. One advantage of knowing people is that you don’t get as nervous if you don’t know them, but you can’t predict what they’re going to say.

But it wasn’t too bad? It wasn’t an absolute grilling?

Well, it was probably a sort of gentle heating over dying coals, or whatever. So that was the set up and the job description was quite clear I think what was expected.’

PVC, 1960-1990 University

Was that onerous?

Yes, well we used to – all senior jobs… were all two day processes…. Tours round… meeting people, death by knife and fork in the evening….. And in the morning the first stage of interviews were the appointment panels and each interviewed each candidate and at lunch time only a smaller number went through to the formal interviews, so from eight in the morning it went down to four in the afternoon.

Were there any particular areas of focus?

I had to do a presentation to senior staff, in the morning, as well…. Well a lot of the focus was on areas of responsibility that I had identified that I would like under my portfolio. An assessment of my strengths and weaknesses in how to take on those responsibilities. I didn’t get what I wanted!”

PVC post-1990 University

The final example illustrates experience of open competitive recruitment where the successful candidate came from outside the institution. In this case the post, for a pro-vice-chancellor in a pre-1992 university, had been advertised in the national press:

‘I’d been thinking about leaving… [my previous post] for a short while. … I felt if I was going to move out… I’d need to do it fairly soon, otherwise one gets to a certain age where people think you’re probably too old to move…. I decided that my background might be of interest to the university sector and I’d enjoy returning to the university sector….. A number of PVC roles were advertised during that period….

There was no sense that I was in peoples’ minds when it was advertised. As far as I was concerned it was a genuine advert and I applied as an unknown quantity. I was unknown to [the VC]…. My predecessor had been unlike the other PVCs before me…. Although he was a career academic [University] academic, he had been in his PVC role for some time…whereas I think the others normally did three year stints. I think the feeling was that this particular role….required a fuller time commitment. And required a longer tenure to make something of it…. I think that was the reason why they thought well given that we are looking for someone that we’d be happy to see in the role for some time, why don’t we advertise it as a real job….

It’s an open ended appointment…. There wasn’t a lot of discussion about that. But I did make it clear that I wasn’t going to be very willing to give up a permanent job in [sector] for a fixed-term job with no future…. The fact that they wanted to appoint me at all meant that they were moving away from that [re-entry] model. I don’t have a credible academic base to go back to…. I don’t have an academic home here, I’m not a typical academic PVC….’

PVC 1960-1990 University

(ii) Open recruitment

The second variant opens competition to internal and external applicants. Those who had experience of this method described a much more formal route into the job. In the following extract the PVC describes his experience as a successful internal candidate in a much more overtly competitive and open process:

‘There were two jobs going at the time, as PVCs. I had to submit an application, outlining the areas of responsibility, across the whole range for those two. The internal applications were dealt with by an internal preliminary interview process. External applications were dealt with by one of the [headhunter] companies….they had about 90 applications and the headhunters interviewed about 25 or 30 and presented 15 externals to the vice-chancellor. And I think there were about 5 or 6 or 7 internals, which were dealt with entirely by the vice-chancellor and the interview group. They then interviewed the 15 presented by the headhunters, and came up with a shortlist….of 8 of which I was the only internal. And that was a two day process.

PVC, 1960-1990 University

Were there any particular areas of focus?

I had to do a presentation to senior staff, in the morning, as well…. Well a lot of the focus was on areas of responsibility that I had identified that I would like under my portfolio. An assessment of my strengths and weaknesses in how to take on those responsibilities. I didn’t get what I wanted!’

PVC post-1990 University

The final example illustrates experience of open competitive recruitment where the successful candidate came from outside the institution. In this case the post, for a pro-vice-chancellor in a pre-1992 university, had been advertised in the national press:

‘I’d been thinking about leaving… [my previous post] for a short while. … I felt if I was going to move out… I’d need to do it fairly soon, otherwise one gets to a certain age where people think you’re probably too old to move…. I decided that my background might be of interest to the university sector and I’d enjoy returning to the university sector….. A number of PVC roles were advertised during that period….

There was no sense that I was in peoples’ minds when it was advertised. As far as I was concerned it was a genuine advert and I applied as an unknown quantity. I was unknown to [the VC]…. My predecessor had been unlike the other PVCs before me…. Although he was a career academic [University] academic, he had been in his PVC role for some time…whereas I think the others normally did three year stints. I think the feeling was that this particular role….required a fuller time commitment. And required a longer tenure to make something of it…. I think that was the reason why they thought well given that we are looking for someone that we’d be happy to see in the role for some time, why don’t we advertise it as a real job….

It’s an open ended appointment…. There wasn’t a lot of discussion about that. But I did make it clear that I wasn’t going to be very willing to give up a permanent job in [sector] for a fixed-term job with no future…. The fact that they wanted to appoint me at all meant that they were moving away from that [re-entry] model. I don’t have a credible academic base to go back to…. I don’t have an academic home here, I’m not a typical academic PVC….’

PVC 1960-1990 University
These examples illustrate some fundamental differences in approaches to the selection process. Against the clearly enunciated procedures and criteria associated with the competitive recruitment model, the equivalent elements in selection by invitation can appear opaque, even discriminatory, by comparison. Several whose route into the job had been via the patronage model admitted to having no clear idea why they had been identified as a potential PVC or even in some cases that a vacancy was imminent. Nor were they clear why, or through what process, their names had even emerged as potential applicants. Since selection criteria are not formally specified in this model, the process may leave even successful candidates speculating on just why they had been identified for selection, as the following excerpt from a former head of department illustrates. The respondent was asked why he thought he had been approached as a potential PVC. He responded:

‘Well, I’m not exactly sure, but I think what they did was, I think, this is probably going to sound arrogant now, but the VC was looking for people who had shown they had a skill as managers. It was a very large department. It…went through a massive transformation from being a hum drum…thing into a, well, it got a 5 in the RAE…financially make it successful so it returned a significant surplus, build up a graduate school. We did well as a department, but it wasn’t just me. But I think that was seen as, this person is strategic; this person can turn things around; and so on…. So I presume that’s why I was selected. I don’t know whether other people were asked, I mean, I’ve no idea. There must be some processes; it’s a bit of a mystery to me…. People who have been asked, have got good reputations of turning departments around, building them up, have the respect of their colleagues…. So I think those must be the criteria.’

PVC 1960-1990 University

Whatever the model of course, all institutions contain a reservoir of potential leadership talent. Those who have been ‘blooded’ in various roles – typically heads of department or deans of faculty – are historically the prime candidates for selection. However, all in this group will share broadly similar management and leadership experiences, so some additional criteria are required in order to distinguish those with real potential for PVC roles. One VC admitted that identifying potential PVCs from this pool is done ‘with great difficulty’. It involves ‘knowing people’, their strengths and weaknesses. Soundings are taken from other senior colleagues, including serving PVCs, to gain a picture of who the VC can work with, ‘who will be good’. As one VC observed:

‘In order to choose good [PVCs] I do a lot of walking around. I know all the professors…. [I take] a very substantial look at individuals’ strengths when choosing who to appoint.’

VC pre-1960 University

The decision as to which method of selection to employ may therefore derive from an initial assessment of the likely talent available internally. Sometimes the prospect of appointing from the ‘old lags’ (VC) in the departments or schools is sufficiently unappealing to result in a decision to advertise externally. If however the pool looks as though it might yield some people of high potential then the VC may decide to construct an initial ‘invitation’ list - potential leaders who have been ‘selected but not anointed’ (PVC).

The selection by invitation system requires, in the words of one PVC, ‘people to get on the radar’ if it is to work effectively. Those without the ‘visibility’ attached to departmental and faculty roles are unlikely to be detected, though it is not impossible of course. Some respondents felt this automatically introduced some gender bias into the model of selection, since women are typically under-represented among the professoriate generally and in senior departmental and faculty in particular. Others countered that the advantage of the patronage model is that it facilitates selection where potential leaders, male or female, had not necessarily thought of putting themselves forward for consideration. We have no evidence on which to judge the merit of these arguments. We merely report the finding and place it in the context of the models of selection currently being operated across the sector.

Certainly the persistence of a system based essentially on patronage had surprised some of the PVCs interviewed, even though they owed their position to it. Several conceded that its great weakness is that it may produce candidates who owe their allegiance more to the VC than the institution itself. As one DVC put it, ‘They are the creation of their patrons and will live and die with him [or her]’. On the other hand, it can also engender intense loyalty to the leader.
It is important to emphasise that both models of selection may be operated in the same institution. Our site visits revealed at least four cases where PVC appointments had been made following a process of external advertisement and engagement of ‘head hunters’. Three of these were pre-1992 institutions where the successful candidates now worked alongside PVCs appointed through the invitation model. On the other hand, we encountered no cases of the latter model being employed in the post-1992 institutions. The preferred method among these institutions is competitive recruitment, though, as one of the examples above suggests, this may nevertheless result in an internal appointment.

Finally, although the invitation model may appear to accord more extensive power to the VC as patron, the evidence from those institutions operating both selection models suggest this contrast to be less stark than might be supposed. But whatever the model, the appointment process derives most of its direction and energy from the VC’s office. Although the dignified elements of governance arrangements may formally delegate powers to nominate names or implement certain procedures, the ‘efficient’ elements in the day-to-day management of the institution ensure that executive powers are normally retained in the hands of the vice-chancellor. While some deputy vice-chancellors are technically hired (and fired) by the governing body, even in these instances it is inconceivable that the post holder would be able to operate effectively without the sustained support of the vice-chancellor. As one VC observed, ‘Formally they [PVC appointments] are signed off by the Council. If they refused I would leave.’

Preparation for the role

As the statistical portrait indicated, PVCs are drawn overwhelmingly from the ranks of senior academics – people with high achievement and recognition in their disciplinary fields of play, coupled with experience of leading academic departments or faculties. We have also drawn attention to the overt recognition given to such achievement in the models of selection employed to appoint PVCs. In this sense, those who become PVCs are likely to have been adjudged as competent leaders and managers even if the frameworks on which such judgments are made are inclined to be less than consistent. As Henkel has shown, part of this validation process involves acquiring a public identity that ‘feeds into the sense of an individual professional identity and self-esteem’, one reinforcing the other in a ‘virtuous, if often fragile, circle’.

The reification of this practice and experience of leadership is an important part of the cultural attributes of the system of promotion and development in higher education. Two portraits from the interview data illustrate how identity, practice and self-confidence, if not self-esteem, are involved in how PVCs make sense of their preparation for the role. The first example is drawn from an interview with a PVC occupying a permanent position in a post-1992 university who reflects on the value of his experiences as dean of a large and diverse faculty:

‘How long were you a dean?’

Approximately seven years.

How valuable was that experience as dean before moving to become a PVC?

With the academic responsibilities I have it would have been very difficult if I hadn’t been a dean. As Dean I was responsible for all parts of the Faculty, and it was quite a large one. The important thing is that you have experience of a diverse faculty…. I didn’t have the extent of the line management responsibilities I do now. I line manage directors, of central services. I don’t have any significant budgetary responsibilities which I did have as a dean.

If you think back across your experiences, whether as dean or head of department, what do you think were the main attributes that you had to develop during that academic career to equip you to be a PVC?

People management is number one. And accepting that managing people takes care and time and thoroughness. And number two is budgetary responsibility. Understanding budgets and making sure the faculty hit its budget requirements with the University. Then number three is academic standards. I’m afraid it’s in that order in terms of the time I used to spend on things as a dean. In the end academic standards were critical, but I think I could say that was how my time was spent….. I think you tend to think that academic standards are your overriding priority and in the early days of being a dean, managing 250 – 300 staff, you’ve always got one or two difficult, difficult cases going on with that number of staff. In the early days you kind of resent the time that you have to spend on them. But then, you know, you end up in the odd industrial tribunal you appreciate then the need to, so yes.
Does that mean you need to become reasonably hardened to things before you become PVC?

I don’t think hardened is the right word. You just have to become experienced. I’m not a tough person. I’m not a soft touch. I’m not a toughie, but I’m experienced. I think that experience allows you to explain to people difficult things, rather than just sort of jump in with your boots.’

PVC post-1990 University

The second example is a DVC:

‘How have you gained the ability to take on a DVC role, I mean particularly have you had any training and development and support?

None. That’s not fair, not fair at all. None in regard to being head of department really, or dean as it was. That should be qualified in the sense that, you know, I did go on training and development courses about how to… appraise people, and you know, the mechanics of management, but you know, they’re not really very helpful, I mean they’re only helpful as far as telling you how to appraise somebody or fire somebody or whatever. All the really difficult stuff is around the relationships and motivating people. And I just learnt that on the job, through bitter experience, success and failure, as a head of department, stroke dean as it was. Since I’ve taken on this job, I now put quite a lot of time into professional and self-development, partly through the leadership foundation…..

And…as you say, you learnt a lot of the basic skills through the head of school, what you need to do now…

I think it’s very difficult to learn this stuff, I mean it has to be – the way to learn it has got to be rooted in practice, doing it at the time.’

DVC 1960-1990 University

The forms of learning articulated in these examples are strongly experience and practice based. Such learning about leading is not derived from a traditional instructor-centred ‘training’ paradigm – an approach derided by one writer as responsible for turning out ‘highly skilled barbarians’63. Indeed, formal leadership development programmes targeted directly on aspiring higher education leaders have been rare. It is not so much that respondents in our study were instinctively anti-training in outlook; rather they reflected a strong sense that preparatory programmes need to be tailored to the specificities of the context and strongly experience based if they are to be of any value. Such views echo those of Antonacopoulou and Bento who stress the need for ‘co-creation, interpretation, discovery, experimentation and a critical perspective.’ They continue:

‘Rather than learning ‘leadership’ as it is known by others, learners make sense of their own experiences, discover and nurture leadership in themselves and in each other, not in isolation but in community.’

Antonacopoulou and Bento, 2004: 81-82

Conceptually we may also suggest that those academics that make it into the selection process (including of course those actually selected) are prime examples of the way organisational actors demonstrate their identity through belonging to communities of practice64. In Wenger’s formulation of identity formation there are three modes of belonging. These are: (i) engaging in the processes of negotiation of meaning; (ii) imagining or creating images of the world and seeing connectivities extrapolated from experiences; and, (iii) aligning energy and activities to ensure a fit with broader structures and broader enterprises65.

Translating these concepts to the present study, we can see each of these processes – engagement, imagination and alignment – as part of the career preparation of PVCs. These are people whose engagement with academic communities has been forged at every level and is typically maintained at the highest. Their mode of belonging to this community, their understanding of its shared practices, is necessarily important to their identities as practicing academics. They are also people with the creativity of imagination to challenge and even extend the boundaries of their disciplinary crafts – through cutting edge research or novel modes of teaching or in their vision for taking forward their departments or faculties. In this sense they are capable of not only expanding themselves, but in developing aspirations for others, whether the craft itself or others whom they may lead or mentor within the craft. Imagination, then, can be connective and aspirational. Finally, through alignment, the potential PVC is also able to demonstrate a part in, and contribution to, the broader academic and institutional enterprise. We might also extend the concept of alignment in that not only does it imply some degree of personal alignment to the institution,
but a collective alignment or mutual sense of belonging that empowers and inspires others to see their place in the larger enterprise.

The key element in this formulation when applied to PVCs is that they have demonstrated, through their ability to engage with others, ways of belonging that reinforce the mutuality of the community of practice\textsuperscript{66}. They have also shown their willingness to demonstrate accountability for the enterprise by taking some responsibility for it, or at least a part of it, typically in the role of head of department or faculty. Finally, they have shown the imagination necessary to use and extend the repertoires of practice associated with the community to which they belong. That is, the PVC is typically someone who has demonstrated their competence or ability to perform in ways that confirm their position within the community of practice. As Wenger suggests, the repertoire of a community of practice can be extensive, typically including: ‘routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, and which have become part of its practice’\textsuperscript{67}.

Viewed from this perspective we can begin to make sense of the pronouncements of practicing PVCs when they talk about preparation for the role. One PVC rehearsed what was a consistent theme across all the interviews:

‘It would be ‘impossible’ to be a PVC without having been a Head of…. [Department]. Because you need to have developed the right skills, in diplomacy and people management, and you need to understand how the institution functions or you won’t be able to achieve anything. It would be very difficult to come into leadership at…. as an outsider because of this need to understand the system.’

\textit{PVC, pre-1992 university}

Through such shared repertoires of practice PVCs were able to take up their posts and survive being, in the words of another PVC, ‘dropped in it – the only induction I had was two hour briefings with my predecessor’\textsuperscript{68}. Several respondents conceded that while preparation for the role was minimal there were aspects to being a PVC that were not necessarily amenable to formal training. As one PVC observed:

‘I think it’s just an issue of what happens when you become PVC and how you build up that repertoire of expertise that distinguishes the things that you can safely be left to get on with on your own, and the things you can’t, that you have to consult. The thing that frustrated me right at the beginning was that you didn’t seem to be able to do anything on your own. You had to consult seemingly endlessly. Because the PVC role is connected with other things you couldn’t dig a hole without informing at least 27 other people that you were going to dig a hole, and in some cases you might have to ask permission whether you were going to dig a hole, and it seemed that everything that you touched was someone who not only had a view, but felt they had a veto. I think I’ve got less worried about that now.’

\textit{PVC, 1960-1990 University}

At the core of the issue of preparation and training to become a PVC, then, lies the nature of the role itself. When one respondent, PVC in a large pre-1992 institution, confessed that he felt he didn’t think he needed ‘training’ for the job, it was not because of academic arrogance, which he was careful to distance himself from, but because he genuinely believed the nature of leadership and management in universities demanded something that could not be gleaned from purely formal approaches to management training. Another DVC expressed a similar view, but in different terms:

‘Academics in senior management roles are a separate animal: we’re academics with responsibility but no power or money. Our bluff could be called at any minute. We’ve got other worlds to go back to – we’re not professionals, but we can mug up on subjects very quickly, we’re trained in the rapid assimilation of knowledge, we’re trained in running meetings, to speak and seek consensus. Transferring our academic skills to administration is ok…. we have an eye for detail… for building consensus. It is about managing a complex organisation and the need to take all the staff with you.’

\textit{DVC, 1960-1990 University}

---

\textsuperscript{66} Communities of practice are central to Wenger’s (1998) social theory of learning but their shape, scope and location within organisations is the subject of much debate. Wenger contends that although such communities exist even where the organisation may not recognise them, their development can benefit from expert internal leadership. Although this is an intriguing argument with implications for how we might conceptualise the leadership roles of PVC we merely note its possibilities in this context.

\textsuperscript{67} Wenger, E. (1998) p83

\textsuperscript{68} DVC pre-1992 University
Yet these views about preparation for PVC roles can easily mask a wider question about who finds their way into the role and how effective they are. There is little to commend in an approach to preparation that can leave some new post-holders confused about what to expect and even less clear about how to get things done. It’s not so much that respondents in the study felt they didn’t have the aptitudes, experiences or requisite skills necessary to do a good job. It was more that they didn’t understand how best to apply them in the new-to-them milieux of senior institutional leadership. The result was admirably summed up by one PVC who observed of his first year in post:

‘I didn’t so much do things wrong, I just didn’t do much.’

PVC 1960-1990 University

Summary

Previous chapters of this report have questioned the ‘deficit’ view of management and leadership capacity as a recurring theme in the rhetoric of reform in higher education. This was certainly the dominant motif running through the 2003 White Paper on ‘The future of higher education’. In spelling out the challenges for the sector, the government made clear its belief that while there were some examples of excellent leadership and management there were also institutions that had been ‘propped up rather than turned round’. The solution proposed lay in developing ‘outstanding management and leadership that is not just strong, but visionary and thereby better able to set and achieve clear goals for improving quality’. Underpinning this solution is an assumption that the sector should identify the ‘best international expertise in leadership and management’ in order to help ‘build a cadre of professional leaders and managers’.

Our research into the preparation and training of PVCs helps to unpack some of the rhetoric around this proposition. In one sense our findings appear to lend some support to the idea of an unsystematic, even amateur, approach to preparation and training. Certainly, the majority of PVCs interviewed in the research intensive institutions had not undertaken any formal leadership skills or preparatory programme prior to taking up their posts. Insofar as development opportunities were identified and exploited by PVCs it was generally in- rather than pre-post. Some were taking part in development programmes as preparation for the next step up the leadership hierarchy. Although not necessarily specific to higher education, participants indicated that such experiences are seen as useful precisely because they are generic and bring them into contact with a wider range of senior managers in other sectors.

These findings suggest that learning to be a PVC is not generally the province of formal training schemes, training departments or even specialist management consultancies. In Wenger’s conceptualisation of organisational learning, there is little in the preparation of PVCs that can be identified as ‘extractive training’; that is, there is a general unwillingness to commit to the creation of management training schemes that extract ‘requirements, descriptions, artefacts, and other elements out of practice’ and convert them into artefacts such as ‘courses, manuals, procedures’.

In this sense, learning to become a PVC does not necessarily rest on formal definitions of management in terms of management competences. In general the universities in our study have eschewed the sort of competence architectures - ‘job descriptions, performance standards and route maps for career planning’ - that characterised the flowering of interest in management competence during the 1980s and 1990s. Nevertheless, this is not to suggest that they are entirely unsystematic in their approaches to qualifying people for leadership roles. Nor should the absence of formalised or ‘extractive training’ to become a PVC be construed as evidence of a lack of preparation for the job.

On the contrary, whilst formalised leadership training prior to appointment was not found to be a typical feature of PVCs’ previous career development, almost all those interviewed emphasised the importance of practice and experience as a point of departure for being PVC. Nevertheless, this raises a career structure issue. It is not obligatory to have been a PVC to become a VC. Nor do Deans or Heads of Department have to become PVCs to get further. Nevertheless, there is clearly an expectation that in custom and practice it helps. It is not so much the symbolic value of such labels, but the experiences and immersions associated with them.

Several policy questions for the sector are raised by this experience based disposition. Can recruitment and selection processes be shown to be achieving the right results in identifying, preparing and supporting those best suited for senior leadership roles? Can they also claim to be non-discriminatory and fit-for-purpose in a changing world of contemporary higher education? Although several leadership development programmes have been inaugurated, what might they learn from the findings?
presented here? There is also a separate but related issue about institutional approaches (or the lack of them) towards induction arrangements for those new-to-post. Interestingly, while a lack of formalised training for the role was commented upon widely, respondents in the study were generally unwilling (or unable) to point to any simple remedies.

Competence to be a PVC then is manifested in engagement with practice – both as academics and as managers. It is through the reification of practice in the various communities to which they belong that the potential PVC is prepared for the roles ahead. Many of those interviewed recounted numerous exemplars of how their experience of shared repertoires of practice associated with these communities was indispensable to learning how to be a PVC.

4. BEING A PRO-VICE-CHANCELLOR: RESPONSIBILITY WITHOUT POWER?

Introduction

From selection procedures and preparation for the post, the main concern of this chapter is with what PVCs actually do. It seeks to uncover from accounts of PVCs themselves how they see their roles and the various ways they actually perform them. We attempt to construct a more nuanced picture of change and continuity grounded in the collective experiences of our PVC sample. Only through such an approach, we suggest, can we begin to make sense of the magnitude of the leadership development challenge represented in the post of PVC.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first sets out our interpretation of what PVCs are expected to do. We argue that although the post is characterised by manifold roles in the end it can be condensed into how they understand the often ambiguous and sometimes competing relationship between strategic and operational issues. The second section provides some exemplification of how these foci translate into specific tasks and how PVCs actually interpret them to get things done. We seek to understand not just what attributes and skills are involved, but how different PVCs might bring them into operation. This is followed by a brief consideration of the pressure exerted by performance assessment and how this relates to notions of ‘career’ in senior leadership roles. The final section provides a summary interpretation of how second tier roles might be characterised in the setting of higher education institutions and the implications for understanding how their roles are evolving.

Maps of strategies, operations and policies

University ordinances often specify PVC responsibilities, at least in outline. Typically these include: academic strategy; chairing key university committees; managing and supporting deans and/or heads of departments, leading research, learning and teaching, as well as various forms of knowledge transfer and enterprise activities; budget preparation; projects allocated by the VC; academic promotions procedures; relationships between academic and support staff; and, communicating and relationships with external organisations. The list is not exhaustive, but it provides a flavour.

However, ordinances do not convey either the specificities of roles or the conventions of how they might carry out their functions and duties. Nor of course do they indicate how roles are differentiated between PVCs. While in some institutions constitutional responsibilities and management tasks are specified in some detail, in others the ordinances may state simply that the expectation is that the PVC acts as the deputy to the VC. Hence the legal framework at institutional level can provide only a partial picture of PVC roles. In a system characterised by a long history of university autonomy it is not surprising perhaps that even with state attempts to introduce far-reaching changes in the ways in which universities are regulated and managed the impact of the reform imperative on leadership practices continues to lack uniformity or consistency.

Divergence might be anticipated in a system that is decentralised and where institutional approaches are subject to the varying effects of changes in the management model imposed by the chief executive. Personalities and values, whims even, can have palpable effects on how things are organised and how they are approached. And yet underlying the temptation to see everything as contingent on context (or eccentricity), our survey uncovered some consistent trans-institutional themes that define how senior leadership and management tasks were approached. Because PVCs occupy a unique position at the interfaces between the designed organisation, its cultures and practices, their evolving roles provide a valuable lens on each of these themes.

The PVC occupies a unique location between the chief executive and what we believe to be the three great ‘empires’ of the university. These are:

- Teaching schemes – usually linked to disciplinary based departments, schools or faculties
• Research groups – again usually disciplinary in orientation and departmental in location, but not universally so in an increasingly trans-disciplinary world

• Administration – not just the service ‘bureaucracies, usually arranged around functions such as finance, estates and IT, but in terms of academic governance

There is a hierarchy, of course, since the second tier is the half-way point between the chief executive above and the delivery units below. Moreover, the second leadership tier is itself being stretched so it may be more appropriate in some institutions to imagine the PVCs occupying a ‘mezzanine’ level between the VC and deputies, at the top, and deans of faculties or heads of schools further down.

Nevertheless, few PVCs (or DVCs for that matter) see their relationship, especially with the inner landscape of academic empires, as simply hierarchical. As we have argued, universities are not command and control type organisations. The hierarchies are invariably cross-cut by a range of professional and disciplinary axes that limit and deflect the immediate reach of senior managers. The central challenge facing PVCs, therefore, is finding ways of mediating (and influencing) the VC’s strategic thinking and then bringing this to life in an operational sense within the delivery units of the institution. A simple statement perhaps, but one that is core to understanding being a PVC and how the role is performed. Does this mean that the post of PVC is mainly operational rather than strategic? The answer is necessarily ambivalent, for three reasons.

First, many of the PVCs in our survey were themselves ambivalent about this aspect of the role. In a sense, strategy is everywhere and nowhere. We mean by this that almost all the PVCs considered their role to be strategic in some form. Several presented this as the primary element in the alchemy of second tier leadership. As one respondent observed, not getting too involved in operational issues to the exclusion of the bigger picture was difficult to avoid, but it is important. ‘I enjoy leadership’, another PVC commented, continuing:

‘I also enjoy being involved in strategic development and sort of policy making, rather than simply the operational issues. I’m very engaged with operational issues, but I like to be part of strategic thinking, the development of plans for the immediate- and long-term future. I always kid myself that I can see into the future, and I can anticipate some of the sort of threats and opportunities that will be coming.’

PVC pre-1960 University

To avoid being sucked too far into operational affairs a further respondent indicated that he ‘protects’ certain days in the week to spend time reading, scanning web sites and thinking strategically, rather than writing, arguing this enabled him to arrive at more informed decisions.

In the following vignette, a PVC reflected on how involvement in strategy worked in practice. It is also clear, as the previous example illustrated, that although being strategic needs time to reflect on the big picture, the proportion of time actually spent on the task is marginal:

‘Some of it is sitting and thinking ahead, inasmuch as I get any time at all for that. That’s done with people in my portfolio area….staff from academic support office and a few others. That’s sitting and saying: “Well where are we going with teaching and learning or information services…. And definitely in the vice-chancellor’s [executive group], some of the time….

So it’s a bit of horizon scanning, bigger picture stuff?

Yes, how are we doing, what we’re doing? How can we be successful? What do we need to do to be successful? …What’s happening in the sector? How are we positioning ourselves? That sort of stuff. So that’s one thing, but that probably occupies, to be honest, about 5-10 per cent of my time.

Do you consciously have to carve time out to do that?

Yes, it’s interesting, this week for example we’ve got some development work with the Vice-Chancellor’s [executive group] … we’re having a whole day together and my theme is…. Thinking ahead to what will be. And I’ve started doing some work for it. We only allocated this a week or two ago and, actually I’m getting quite into it, but I haven’t got enough time to do that…. That was the strategic bit.’

PVC 1960-1990 University

Drafting strategy papers on key themes identified by the VC, leading discussions inside executive group meetings and taking debate into the wider university forms part of most PVC roles.
Yet a second reason for our ambivalence about strategy concerns not just the lack of time to think strategically, but the shifting and stretching territory of the second leadership tier itself. We have alluded to this in the previous chapter. Whilst most, if not all, PVCs claim they are involved in strategy in some sense of the word, it is clear that some more than others have more opportunity to influence the strategic thinking of the VC.

This variation results primarily from the emergence of different types of PVC role. In the UK context, it is tempting to locate the major fault line in relation to influence in high level strategy formulation between DVCs and PVCs. There is some justification for believing that deputies may wield more influence than the PVCs, but it is not inevitably so. One DVC considered all PVCs to have a role in ‘big strategy’ because of their involvement in the VC’s top level advisory groups. It may also be, as we have already argued, that the DVC constitutes are different level of tier of second-in-command leadership, but this is not universally so.

However, on the basis of the roles encountered in our research sites we can propose five different models of PVC roles with the potential for differential involvement at the strategic level. We say more about these in relation to the management model in the final chapter. Although it is almost certain that the sector contains slightly different variants of these models, we propose them here as broadly representative of types rather than empirical realities in all their dimensions. The key characteristics are summarised above.

The common denominator of these types, born out by the interviews with those in the sample HEIs, is the scope they give to exert some form of influence on the strategy process. Most are part of the SMT and hence privy to strategy considerations at that level. But some SMTs are differentiated affairs with a pecking order of senior post-holders who work more closely with the VC than others. Almost certainly all PVCs will have purchase on strategy processes through involvement, typically with heads of academic units, in some variant of a larger senior management group.

Yet, we must not rule out the power and personality of the VC as an influence, positive or negative, on the scope for creativity or challenge in the strategic sphere. Some in our survey indicated that opportunities to engage in high level strategic thinking with the VC were rare: ‘The vice-chancellor has very clear views’, one PVC observed, and if you wanted to take a different line you would need ‘all your eggs in the basket’. This was a coded reference to the reputation of the VC for diverting or circumnavigating propositions or challenges from those in the second tier through heavyweight intellectual demolition.

Notwithstanding such personal factors, membership of SMTs and wider management groups gives to most PVCs opportunities to bring forward ideas, contribute to debate and assess the chances of being able to deliver strategy in their areas. Although in some of the site visit institutions key responsibilities resided in the DVC’s office it is not clear that this is automatically accompanied by an enhanced role in strategic development to the exclusion of PVCs. Even for DVCs, immersion in operational considerations and ensuring compliance, as we referred to it above, can easily overshadow their strategic roles. As one DVC commented:

‘My job is to run the academic business of the university day-to-day. To come up with academic strategy at one level and to run the university. So

### TABLE 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>DESIGNATION</th>
<th>RESPONSIBILITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DVC</td>
<td>Academic or non-academic</td>
<td>Budget and line management responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVC Executive</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Budget and line management responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVC Policy</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>No budget or line management responsibilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVC Dean</td>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>Faculty or other unit line management combined with cross-institutional role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVC Service</td>
<td>Academic or non-academic</td>
<td>Primarily but not exclusively to lead administrative or professional services with line management responsibilities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the executive deans report to me and all of that. So my job is... very operational in terms of managing the day-to-day... [areas of responsibility]

The bit of thinking I’ve got is the academic shape and direction of the institution.... I’m the one commanding the troops that have got to do [it]. ...

I suppose I’m the implementer really. If together we devise the policies and they’re [other PVCs] out there doing the thinking about them and making the connections out there, then I need to make sure they’re implemented. I suppose that’s the distinction.'

DVC 1960-1990 University

The close connection between strategy and operations evident in these comments was echoed in many of the PVCs' accounts. The issue of quality and the potential impact of activities on the ‘brand’ exerted a strong influence on this process. Primary responsibility for ensuring compliance rests in the relevant PVC portfolio area. For example, in the run up to RAE 2008 several PVCs (Research) were tasked with developing institution-wide codes of conduct for the selection of staff in the exercise, taking into account the varying requirements of research strengths, peaks of quality, equal opportunities and so on. Whilst the research portfolio may be heavily influenced by the assessment cycle, other portfolios might reflect shorter, but no less intense, cycles of quality considerations. For example, PVCs (Teaching and Learning) typically scrutinise external examiners’ reports, approvals for new programmes, and other indicators of compliance with institutional standards. Occasional fire fighting when things go out of line will be involved, the PVC being required to respond to prompts from the internal administration about areas of concern and ultimately take responsibility for bringing errant departments back into line.

The third form of mediation between strategic and operational roles is introduced by their involvement in policy and its implementation. The border between initiating policy through the writing of position papers and other policy documentation, and project implementation is often blurred. The challenge is how to tread the line between policy development and responsibility for its implementation. Delegating the task of implementation is the preferred course of action, though frequently PVCs admitted they are sucked into this process in order to ensure things get done. Out of policies developed or advocated by PVCs other roles emerge – advocacy, perhaps for areas or budgets, working the system to advance a particular cause or vision. In the following vignette we observe how a PVC describes how easily strategy and policy intertwines:

‘What do you actually do?

I attend a lot of committee meetings, I convene a lot of committee meetings and I contribute to policy making and practice within the university itself. A lot of it is that helping other people to make the most of their roles.

Like a facilitator?

It’s almost a mediating role sometimes, between central, and advocacy. It’s that kind of, you’re between, if you like, the very centre and the departments and units and so on. And you’re working in both directions for and with them.

To what extent are you therefore, as you say, advocacy in a sense, almost like cabinet government role, where you have a portfolio and your advocacy is for your area, almost at a level of securing a budget?

Yes, it’s arguing for budgets as well. I argue for budgets, so I will defend my people when it comes to budget review…. I don’t have a very strong role in the budgets, mine tends to be on the practice and the outcomes of what they’re doing…. I know, or I hope I know, what they’re up against in making their claims…..

You mention policy and policy making. How do you define policy and policy making in this context?

In my own particular area, the whole area of … didn’t have much in the way of policy…. And while we have a lot of departments that are research council funded and give excellent opportunities to their students, there are areas where we don’t…. so part of my role has been to develop …policy for … the whole cultural, social and education aspect of the ….student experience. So it’s the development of a kind of policy and strategy…..

So it’s got a strategic dimension?

It’s got a strategic dimension. I’m not very good on policy for policy’s sake, unless it’s got a ‘what are we actually going to do’ bit....
You presumably have to have a vision of what you want to achieve in [this area] in policy terms. Is that something that you have personally, or do you develop in consultation with colleagues?

It evolves. Some things are already there. And some things are desirable and in discussion with others, should come out with something in the middle, I suppose to a certain extent. You decide which things that are there you want to keep, which you don’t, or will be phased out. You have to have that vision of where you want it to be in the end. And therefore a strategy and tactics for getting there. I quite enjoy that bit in the middle.

PVC pre-1960 University

Getting things done

The dependence on others – whether within the administrative infrastructure or elsewhere within the university – was a recurring theme in how PVCs described the process of getting things done. Working with the administration, academic groups and units, colleagues within the senior team or the chief executive requires PVCs to adopt different modes of working. Despite differences in portfolios, experiences, institutional contexts and cultures, the common denominator linking being a PVC is that they work and network with people to get things done.

The majority of PVCs (and DVCs) in UK institutions do not hold budgets and have no direct line-management responsibilities. This feature is beginning to change in some institutions, especially so in the case of DVC posts. However, unlike resource centre leaders, such as deans of faculty or heads of departments, most PVCs operate without budgetary levers, yet they are responsible for strategy and policy in their portfolio areas.

Making things happen, therefore, is approached in different ways. One DVC understood the work as ‘a series of projects’, not unlike academic research, which is also project-oriented. Yet whereas research projects link delivery with line management, in the carrying out of leadership projects the DVC and PVC is heavily reliant on others over whom they can exert little or no direct control. Instead:

‘We do it by a kind of bluff – we exert authority. Patronage is important – we have the delegated power of the VC. We have authority also that emanates from the SMT…. There’s something about not holding a budget. Power doesn’t come from money, but it does come from being responsible.’

DVC 1960-1990 University

Most respondents were less sanguine however about the nature of their authority, though few presented a significantly different narrative of how they got things to happen. They chair committees, acting almost as ‘professional chairs’; control agendas and work with people in the spaces between meetings. It is not micro-managing as such, but it is keeping ears open, tracking what is going on and making sure they or their senior colleagues at the centre are not taken too much by surprise by anything.

The continued importance of the committee system may dismay many commentators who see in them the archaic and cumbersome remnants of collegial structures of governance. Yet few PVCs described their roles in such terms. On the contrary, they recognised that unlike in their previous roles as heads and deans where powers and budgets usually combined to get things done, as a PVC, working through the committee structure may be the only way to exert authority not just to achieve change, but to prevent things happening where there was a perceived danger to standards and reputation. The following vignette is exemplary of how the different ingredients of collegiality, quality and compliance coalesce in such fora:

‘If you are in a position of needing to have a talk with a department, what authority do you carry?’

Yes, and it’s interesting, that’s a very, very good question, because, because it’s not clear. In a sense you…well, it’s a question I asked the VC, quite early on…. I found it difficult to know what I could say will happen and won’t happen, because everything is through other people. I think it’s a socially constructed, to an extent, authority…. We do have certain delegated authority [from the VC], but it’s general, it’s stronger when it’s specific. So if a department in the end is not towing the line, or is doing something that’s just not in the University’s interests…. I have the authority, I think, to raise it with them; I have the authority to – I haven’t pushed the boundary because they tend to respond. I haven’t reached the position where… a department says, “No, this how we’re doing it”. Because I chair teaching committee I’ll say, “Well ok, let’s just raise it in teaching committee.” And then teaching...
committee will take [a view] and it’s their peers and they’re just going to have to tow the line. Although there is one, just recent, issue where I’ve said: “You cannot do this. It is not the way something is done.” And they said: “Well, who are you to say that? What’s teaching committee’s view.” And I’ve said: “Look, if you don’t think I’m right on this, I’m perfectly happy to raise it at teaching committee. But it will be wasting your time, because you’ll have to wait for two months on this thing. And I know how they’ll respond. But I’m very happy to do it.” It’s the first time anybody’s sort of challenged in that way.

Did they back off, if I may ask?

They did, but they backed off because they’d misunderstood…I don’t feel particularly threatened by that, because I worry about making decisions incorrectly as well. And committees, you know, it does make you feel a bit more secure at times that something is right.’

PVC 1960-1990 University

The committee structure, arguably, remains the PVC’s best friend, though some saw the need to scale back the number of committees they either chaired or attended. It retains its importance as a tool of management not just because it holds colleagues to account in terms of academic governance, but because committees are located at the interstices between management structures and academic work practices. In this sense, committees offer to PVCs a window into the inner landscape of research, teaching and other parts of the mission. It is a reminder that being more like a senior manager in business may not be an appropriate model in an academic landscape where the controls are indirect and the pressures (sometimes) contradictory. As another PVC observed, slightly mischievously, ‘I have wholly imaginary authority’.

The idea that D/PVCs have only imaginary authority and rely on bluff is partly rhetorical of course. The role is without doubt one of influence rather than overt authority. As one senior PVC, but soon to be VC suggested, the role uses ‘a culture of persuasion’. Abrasion and pushiness are at times necessary, but the skill is choosing the right moment to be so and to be highly selective in displaying this side. As another DVC, observed, a university is not like the army:

‘Leadership has to be within a collegiate, facilitative culture, where many people, for example down to the level of principal lecturers, have to lead and inspire others.’

DVC post-1990 University

The DVC in this case spoke for others in observing the shallowness of their position where budgetary levers were weak or inconsequential. Following restructuring into fewer, larger units, budgets in his institution, like many across the sector, were delegated to and ‘owned’ by unit heads. Such delegation enabled big decisions to be made at that level without approval from the centre. This was an advantage in some respects, but the disadvantage was a sense that the big picture risked being lost as the university began to feel more like an institution of five colleges.

Managing these centrifugal forces, here as elsewhere, is itself a key task, one that many D/PVCs argued reinforces their role in developing, managing and using relationships and networks across the institution. Herein lay one of the most significant arguments in favour of retaining within the essence of PVC the notion that they are in effect senior academic leaders rather than general or simply professional managers. Academic credibility is universally interpreted by D/PVCs as an absolutely critical dimension of their status and capacity to get things done.

Leaders in research intensive institutions in particular emphasised the importance of being seen as a hands-on academics in terms of maintaining a research profile. In the next example, a PVC (Research) explains how authority is socially constructed and deployed to get things to happen:

‘It’s very difficult to get people, especially academics, to deliver things. It’s not easy. There are some people who are [delivering] because they know what the game is, and there are other people who aren’t. You’ve got to find strategies for both of those. Not to overload the first lot, not to leave the second lot alone, basically. But I have no, I can’t turn to anyone and say “Look, I’m your line manager, you must do this.” Not in this current job…. I can produce policy, if you like, and I can go to the Deans and I can go to the [area] Directors, which I’m doing at the moment, and ask for comments on the policy, because I say “You’re going to implement it. There will be a point when this is handed over to you, to implement. So at this point you’re going have to tell me whether I’ve got the wrong end of the stick or not.” … My job is getting the message across to people...
Implicit in what you’ve said, is it’s important to have credibility?

Oh absolutely. I can’t do it without that. I would feel extremely uncomfortable going to tell people, you know, I can manage to maintain a research profile….

It’s leading from the front?

Absolutely, I put my neck on the line…

So it’s almost in a sense having academic credibility, rather than a managerial credibility?

Oh, absolutely. Academics don’t understand the word managerial.

PVC 1960-1990 University

Similar sentiments were elicited from across the sample of D/PVCs. Many posts in the pre-1992 sub-sector are retained ostensibly as ‘part-time’ appointments precisely to give credence to time being set aside time for research. Several respondents claimed that they ‘would lose their street cred if they ceased to be research active’. This image was expressed in terms of its importance not just to the message it sent to their colleagues, but the maintenance of a crafted sense of academic identity. Elsewhere in the sector, particularly the post-1992 institutions, full-time and permanent (hence theoretically professional) post-holders also explained their ability to get things done in terms of academic credibility.

Yet, we are sceptical that the attribute of academic credibility was sourced solely from a current reputation as a cutting edge researcher or teacher. Some in our sample could (and did) point to such currency. But the likelihood is that most brought to the post a sense that they had been through the relevant academic processes to bring experience and know-how to the post. Several in the research intensive institutions admitted that the idea of maintaining an active research profile was impossible within the confines of the day-job. If they did manage to do so, it was more by dint of their collaborators and research teams than their own involvement. A few even admitted that a work-life balance was difficult enough, without the pretence that they were leading from the front in research.

But we do not doubt the importance of academic credibility as a powerful story-line in the accounts of D/PVCs. They wished for the most part to emphasise the importance of academic over managerial credibility as a critical element in their role.

‘It’s clear that we’re a separate animal, we’re academics, with responsibility but not power or money.’

DVC 1960-1990 University

‘Although they do have formal authority, it is rarely exercised in a formal display of their powers. Indeed, if things are working well then power doesn’t come into the equation since D/PVCs need to work together with colleagues on the basis of mutual trust.’

Both D/PVCs, then, are primarily facilitators. They need to communicate with people, and also listen to their views. As one PVC explained, ‘my role is to get information out, together with a sensible analysis and then engage in debate.’ Generally this is approached within an atmosphere of collegiality and is built on good relations. No doubt this description might have been contradicted had our methodology incorporated a sweep of both the leaders and the led. However, what counts in the present study is how PVCs themselves interpret their approaches to the job. They, too, presented ample evidence of a reflexivity about their role and how they do it. They knew, as one expressed it, the ‘downsides’ of getting too close to their colleagues since often the job could become ‘tricky when I have to do something horrible.’ Maintaining a degree of distance is essential: they ‘mustn’t confuse the role of being a friend and a drinking mate with the role of being a PVC’ (PVC pre-1960 University). Another observed that the job can easily degenerate into

‘A ragbag of responsibilities involving too much nose wiping.’

Yet the social distance between PVC and colleagues across the institution is also in part a function of scale. Keeping relationships going with large numbers of people is difficult. Although most PVCs observed that they worked hard at the task, several admitted that sanity was preserved by maintaining somewhat closer and, critically, more informal relationships with a much smaller number of colleagues. Occasional drinks sessions after work, particularly with deans or heads of school, provided a sounding board for what was really happening on the ground, a chance to gossip and exchange views off the record.

74 Henkel, M. (2000)
Beyond the academic landscape, PVCs also have to find ways of interacting with the administrative structures. For some in our research, this is a territory fraught with difficulty. Several conveyed coded references to uneasy relationships with certain heads of professional services. One PVC had been tasked by the VC to report on structures and relationships in relation to one service area. Cultural differences over management styles and ethos between academic and service functions had surfaced and relationships had suffered. In a different institution, another PVC complained that the service departments were both anonymous and dysfunctional. Recently appointed, one of this respondent’s steepest learning curves had been in how to deal with the obstacles to progress erected by some administrators. Having reached a nadir in terms of obfuscation and delay, the PVC had re-launched an approach based on asking naïve questions, working with the committees on a more informal basis, identifying the key people who were ‘dying to get things done’ and, critically, consciously challenging through personal behaviour some of the cultural mores of the system.

Underlying these experiences are some deeper tensions. Those in primarily professional/administrative posts with primarily service roles represent an alternative model of professional competence to that of the gifted academic PVC as ‘amateur’. Our research encountered this amateur versus professional tension in several locations. Although roles are being restructured and reconfigured in different ways, arguably these have (so far) failed to address the problem of how to combine a professionalisation imperative with the continued need for academic credibility. The former cannot easily displace the latter. It is primarily for this reason that academics rather than professional managers continue to dominate the ranks of second tier roles.

Universities do have cross-institutional and co-ordinating roles – and more are being invented – that are led by non-academic professionals, rather than academic PVCs. Invariably, however, they continue to report to a PVC, at least implicitly. Examples can be drawn from the emerging ‘third’ mission. As universities extend their ‘enterprise’ and innovation activities, working more systematically in collaboration with business and wider society, they are establishing a range of functional services to provide the necessary expertise and support for such activities. Nevertheless, in the institutions we visited those in such service roles worked with, and reported to, PVCs whose portfolio title reflected the extended mission.

Typically institutional leadership of knowledge transfer, enterprise or outreach activities of one kind or another may be combined with a portfolio for research or external relations. It is not unusual for managers of university business offices of one sort or another to be line managed by one of the service directors but report to a PVC. As one manager of a university business officer explained, there is a ‘thin dotted line’ to the Service Director, and a ‘thick dotted line’ to the PVC. While the former represented the operational dimension of his role, the latter signified the strategic. In effect, he admitted, he worked on a day-to-basis in a way that was ‘semi-detached from the PVC’ providing expertise and professional support (Manager, Business Office, 1960–1990 University).

The need for some practitioner-versed involvement in cross-institutional and coordinating roles, even in emerging specialist areas such as commercialisation activities, spin-out companies, or intellectual property issues more generally, continues to distinguish academic institutions from those in other professional service occupations. Significantly where we did encounter PVCs whose backgrounds had varied slightly from the more conventional linear ‘academic’ route into the role, there was emphasis on previous experiences, knowledge or immersion of the cultural attributes of academic institutions. We draw two inferences from this evidence. First, it would appear that the area of enterprise or third mission, still problematic in terms of its relationship and integration with the core first (teaching) and second (research) mission, is propelling some institutions towards appointing PVCs with less conventional backgrounds, though this is far from universal. Second, although professional expertise and support is available (and needed) across most portfolio areas, it remains difficult to conceive of academic leadership being supplied by individuals without extensive and relevant cultural experience.

Although we encountered some strains between the academic and administrative structures, frustrations were not universal across the sample. Most PVC interviewees had developed excellent working relationships with service directors and key administrative colleagues, even though running through the interviews there is a pervading sense that the infrastructure (clerical as well as administrative) supporting the second tier is perilously thin. For the PVC, the critical issue is less the distinction between academic and administrative, amateur and professional, but the quality of personal relationships. The PVC is critically dependent on forging good relationships and encouraging...

75 Comparison with organisational leadership in other service organisations is not part of the research specification. It is of interest though that by retaining academics as senior managers universities bring to the leadership task a practice related focus on organisational function, in contrast to other areas (health and law for example) where senior management roles may be performed by people who come in from elsewhere.
colleagues to deliver in their areas of expertise, even where there is no immediate line-management relationship. The following example illustrates this dependency:

‘How do you get things done, if you don’t line manage?’

Well, that’s quite interesting. I mean, that’s not only in this job, actually. I’ll tell you what my big problem is, that for years I’ve done everything myself. So I’m used to doing everything, ok. Even though I was a head of department, I would give people things to do and then trust them. But I lost that trust when people didn’t deliver…. In the end I’d do it myself. And I found that if you want something done, then you do it yourself.

That’s quite onerous isn’t it?

Oh it’s very onerous, but you feel it’s done properly. I do trust people, up to the moment they don’t deliver on something.’

_PVC 1960-1990 University_

Although the sense of isolation running through this vignette is particularly acute, it was not wholly out of line with several other accounts. Some admitted the role could be quite lonely. ‘Hot desking’, rather than permanent office in corporate suites, is a facet of some PVC lives. A place back in the department assumes significance not just for a possible future ‘re-entry’ into departmental life, but as a continuing spatial expression of community membership. For others, of course, abandonment of departmental existence was mandatory, replaced by office and life on the corporate floor. The important point is the diversity of PVC existence.

Yet underpinning all is a sense of responsibility without power. PVCs are responsible for key projects, for implementing as we suggested, the VC’s will; they carry the can if they’re not implemented. Their personal integrity is on the line. How do they assess their successes and failures? How do others assess them?

_Performances and pressures: careers in the balance?_

We stated at the start of this chapter that the formal legal framework of university statutes and ordnances provides only a superficial guide to PVC roles. However, this does not mean that the job is entirely without formal or definitive architecture with which to describe expectations of and performance standards for those in senior leadership roles. Although universities remain fairly unsystematic in their approaches to qualifying people for leadership roles, once in them there is usually a more rigorous regime for setting targets and performance indicators. Whilst our research confirmed that this process is both transparent and formal so far as the participants are concerned, it is a bounded process in that it tends to remain confidential to the players involved. Those outside the loop will not be privy in any formal sense to the nature of targets, the review process or its outcomes.

Performance agreements are not a statutory requirement and several institutions in our survey did not have formal PVC targets or appraisal systems. In one research intensive institution, for instance, it was suggested that there was a system of performance review involving an exchange of letters each year, but there were questions about its effectiveness. Whilst they were trying to be more rigorous and cohesive, there was also a conscious attempt to avoid explicit performance targets since these would reduce the flexibility perceived to be required to manage the institution (PVC pre-1960 University). In another similar, but less prestigious (in research terms), institution there was no job description or performance indicators, but there was an annual appraisal with the VC. Despite this no formal targets were set for the ensuing year (PVC pre-1960 University).

However, most institutions had been operating formalised performance assessment for some time. Typically the process engages PVCs in negotiating and agreeing with the Chief Executive a series of performance indicators (PIs) derived from the strategic plan. The indicators set out agreed institutional goals which are then translated and refined into a series of target performance indicators measurable against broader strategic goal. Hence documentation we have seen ordinarily indicates around 6-10 general goals relevant to the portfolio area. One area for example might be an improvement in quality systems. The goal would then be broken down into a series of more specific strategic goals designed to develop frameworks for enhancing quality across the institution. These in turn would track into a set of agreed target PIs, including for instance a demonstrable improvement in relevant institutional rankings. Annual performance review would be benchmarked against these indicators and a proportion of salary or bonus would be retained against acceptable performance to targets.

For most in the survey, performance assessment along such lines was an accepted part of the role. Some expressed
enthusiasm for the formalities of the system. ‘I’m a firm believer in appropriate appraisal’, one respondent observed, adding:

‘I think it’s realistic, but I think one knows from one’s own experience from the past what is achievable and I think that’s important appraisal when you’re setting one’s own plans, and it’s also what additional, what I find of interest and what really inspires me is to do a task, do a task well, but also having done that to move to another task, so it’s the continuing development.’

PVC pre-1960 University

Although most seemed comfortable with the idea of appraisal, including 360 degree and other personal assessments, there were some who expressed a sense of being under considerable pressure to meet expected performance targets. Such concerns invariably seemed to track back to a perception that preparation for the job – despite the importance ascribed to experience in previous management roles – is inadequate (see Chapter 3 above). As one PVC complained, then just a few months into the post, there had been virtually no opportunity to prepare for the job formally and little sense of what it would entail:

‘Ask my children if they’ve seen me in the last month – no, it is a very, very demanding job. I have worked unacceptably long hours in the first few months of the job and I need to stop doing that…. It is possible to be pulled in too many directions and add things, accretion, you know another project, another special group…. I am trying to do something about that, I mean I have started a process to reduce the number of committees and produce a bit of focus, and devolve the oversight of some bits to other people so that I can run straight on with the new stuff…. And I think it’s a high priority for me ‘cos you can’t keep working at that level.’

PVC pre-1960 University

The sense of being overwhelmed in the first months of the role, shared by other respondents in the survey – there’s ‘a lot to learn’- undoubtedly added to the pressures associated with personal performance. In the same institution, one of the more experienced PVCs admitted to cringing at the thought of some of the things he did in earlier years – crass mistakes – even though they seemed the right thing to do at the time. In another institution a respondent admitted anxiety about ‘things not done’ or about ‘things that have happened more slowly than I would have liked’ (PVC pre-1960 University).

Significantly most respondents also talked about the importance of self-assessment in the role rather than simply the formal system of performance assessment. Their sense of achievement in the role included a range of rather disparate notions. These ranged from the highly specific, such as success in the RAE or success in Quality Assurance Agency audit; through the more general, such as being seen as fair to the academics, earning the respect of deans and heads of department, ‘not to be seen as just the [Chief Executive’s] man’, receiving positive feedback from Heads of Schools, or colleagues taking a more corporate view; to the simply vague, such as how the institution is progressing, or nothing going drastically wrong.

Careers as PVCs are no doubt influenced by such concerns, yet they are not necessarily defined by them. Performance is undoubtedly a critical factor and the learning curve is steep. As one new to post PVC admitted:

‘I’ve got a more robust sense of it now than I had back [at the start], when I really did feel rather tired of it – just tired. Yes, complicated job with all sorts of aspects to it. So I think I can see that there are areas that are probably more difficult than I anticipated, some of which I think may be resolved by the fact that we have made some new appointments…. I think I’ve learned a lot about getting things done at this level.’

PVC pre-1960 University

Even some of the more experienced feared that the model is under pressure. Knowing enough to take on certain briefs can stretch even the most gifted. Such immersion is a tester possibly for those who may see themselves progressing into top posts as chief executives. But for a variety of reasons there were many in our survey for whom the ascent to the top was curtailed. Age, in a negative sense, is as important as opportunity. For some reaching the second tier had come too late for the last leap forward to be a realistic ambition; for others it was not a desirable step in any case. Those in permanent positions, typically in the post-1992 institutions, without the prospect of another significant career move knew the game and looked on their role as career capstones. Those in the pre-1992 sector, still predominantly reliant on four year renewable appointments, often had the prospect of possible re-entry.
to departmental life and resumption of research and teaching duties. Few seemed to view this prospect with relish. Most seemed to think it would in any case be unfair to their departmental colleagues to land back in the operating units fresh from senior leadership.

Without career advancement in senior leadership, whether sideways or upwards, many PVCs viewed ‘re-entry’ with ‘re-entry’ with misgivings and usually entertained only the prospect of retirement, early or otherwise, as an alternative. Several VCs explained that they consciously looked to recruit to PVC posts those with realistic prospects of progressing ultimately to the top posts. Some even include this prospect as a formal attribute in the person specification of job advertisements. Yet the reality, as several respondents confirmed, is that this cannot be a reality in every case. The sweet seductions of the head hunters engaged to produce long and short lists of suitably qualified and experienced applicants for PVC and DVC posts almost invariably produce a mixed bag of contestants. Who goes where and why is not dictated merely by ability but by a combination of personal and institutional circumstances that remain as dynamic as they may be ambiguous. Pressure, performance and people combine in ways that are unpredictable but they do so in a theatre that isn’t (yet?) very organised. As one PVC observed the system undoubtedly needs to find a better continuing career structure, particularly where ‘going back’ is not really an option.

**Summary**

The idea that PVCs have responsibility without power is a persuasive story line of many in our survey. They recognise that they do have formal authority, but acknowledge that it is rarely exercised. Yet it is an exaggeration perhaps to think that PVCs have only imaginary authority. It is true that many PVCs perform their role without the levers associated with budgetary control, something that most had experienced in previous roles as departmental heads or faculty deans. Some PVCs do control budgets of course. But for the majority of PVCs in the UK context at least roles are performed on a different basis. It can be characterised as a collaborative approach based on forging of critical relationships.

Standing as the mid-point between the academics and the administrators, but charged with the interpretation and implementation of the VC’s will, the PVC typically relies on melding the historical appeal of collegiality with the imperatives of corporate management. Sometimes they must buffer and mediate between the two. At others they must achieve their desired goals in more executive styles. Hence, they do what they do in various ways: through informal and highly personal relationships with key players, through powers of argument and persuasion, and through operational control of the key committees of academic governance. In the organisational images suggested by Mintzberg\(^76\), the PVC is not just part of the residual form that is the university as a ‘professional bureaucracy’, but is a leader of more fleet footed and ‘responsive adhocracy’. The PVC is thus a symbol of stability, continuity and tradition as well as a fulcrum of change and environmental uncertainty.

Three areas exemplify this argument. The first concerns the lingering effects of collegiality on university leadership. It is generally argued that collegiality has withered in response to the rise of new managerialism and new public management\(^77\). However, as Bryman’s\(^78\) research for the Leadership Foundation has shown, the literature on collegiality is not distinguished by its clarity, either in the meanings attached to the term or in its practical application. He identifies two principal uses attached to the term. One concerns consensual decision making involving the full participation of staff – a meaning of collegiality often viewed from outside the system with suspicion because it is associated with a culture of resistance and with an approach to decision making that is as slow as it is cumbersome. The other reflects the notion of mutual supportiveness among staff. The problem with both meanings, Bryman argues, is that it is difficult to assess whether collegiality in either sense is declining, how important it is to staff and whether (and if) leaders can and should do anything to bolster its presence. Although collegiality is still considered an important cultural attribute of the system, in view of its conceptual fuzziness the term risks acquiring ‘an almost mythical character’\(^79\).

We share this concern with the bluntness of collegiality as a research instrument. Nevertheless, as we have attempted to show in the preceding exemplars and analysis, the notion of collegiality suffuses the narratives of our sample of PVCs. The interview schedules did not raise collegiality explicitly. Rather it was PVCs who raised the issue, often obliquely and sometimes problematically, but always in ways that demonstrated the continuing salience of the concept. They described it in various ways and, we suspect, invoked in it different meanings. But there is no doubting the symbolic value of the concept in their accounts of how they get things done. We argue therefore that collegiality as a theme

---

\(^{76}\) Mintzberg, H. (1979)  
\(^{78}\) Bryman, A. (2007)  
\(^{79}\) Bryman, A. (2007)
underpins all the others since it concerns institutional values, history and the future. Whilst we acknowledge that PVCs are expected (some more than others) to think strategically, not just about the direction of change but how to implement it, it is the inheritance of collegiality that conditions how strategic intentions are to be delivered.

Perhaps we should not be surprised that in value-based organisations collegiality remains a potent influence. There are opportunity costs as well as risks attached to transformation and change. They should not be approached lightly for there are inherent dangers that might run counter to the core cultural values of the institution and higher education more broadly. What makes universities valuable is not just the contributions they can make to wealth creation and the knowledge economy of today or even tomorrow, but the core values on which they are built and on the conservation of which they maintain their social, economic and cultural distinctiveness. The PVC may be expected to act as an innovator in some contexts, but at the risk of hyperbole, all remain ultimately responsible for conserving for the university of the future the ideals and values of the past.

But it is not just collegiality that is embroiled in core values. The second theme relates to issues of quality and culture. Silver has argued forcefully and on the basis of research evidence that universities do not have a monolithic culture. Academic practices, identities and cultures are dispersed by subjects, disciplines and other loyalties80. Although it is a commonplace that what happens in one part of a university may have no or little impact on another part of the institution, the paradox nevertheless is that the modern university is acutely aware of its brand image, the more so as relations with stakeholders and students become increasingly ‘marketised’ and the operating environment decidedly more competitive.

In a loosely coupled organisation, which we have argued describes the university, it is very easy to tarnish the brand and lose the trust that is essential to the maintenance of value and hence market position. It is essential to ensure that there are common standards of quality that are fit to purpose of maintaining brand quality. Quality in this sense may take many forms and may be played out in various fora in both the research and teaching domains. The addition of the third mission of economic activity and impact raises new questions about quality, not just in terms of the standards that might be applied to such activity, but its wider impact on the established missions. Whatever the PVC’s title, portfolio or area of responsibility, wherever they may locate and derive their own disciplinary loyalty or culture, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that they are, when empowered by the VC of course, the final arbiters on matters that ensure the university maintains its integrity as an institution: the sum is very much greater than the parts in this sense. Corporate culture may be difficult to locate in a university, but corporate responsibility is altogether more salient.

The third, and linked, theme concerns compliance with these university standards. Departments, schools or units that are culturally more innovative and prepared to do things differently may need encouraging, or, conversely, checking. Judgment will be required so as not to stifle innovation or, perversely, reward stasis. This role is essential not just to the brand but to the working of the institution. While there is no reason in principle why those heading the operating branches of the university should not be responsible for ensuring their own compliance, in practice this adds a layer of risk that would leave the institution hostage to fortune. Seeing across the piece, therefore, is another facet of the PVC’s role, again almost irrespective of the particular job responsibility, academic or cultural identity. This is why the fairly recent creation of the hybrid PVC and Dean – the so-called super deans – constitutes such an interesting and, for some commentators, risky experiment. It remains an open question whether the same office can in effect be responsible for both the broader university view as well as the faculty.

5. CONCLUSIONS: DO UNIVERSITIES NEED PVCs?

This research has focused on changing roles of pro-vice-chancellors. It has explored the perspectives of PVCs themselves to construct a portrait seen from the inside of becoming and being a senior leader within contemporary UK universities. However, the resultant picture has been supplemented by two further sets of perspectives. One is historical, examining data on the evolution of the pro-vice-chancellorship, setting this in a wider discourse about the alleged failings of the management model in higher education. The other is organisational, focusing on the nature of the university and how to understand its practices.

The purpose of the final chapter, then, is to draw our argument together into a broader set of conclusions. It
focuses not just on the roles of PVCs but their place in the management model in UK higher education. Our aim is not specifically to provide a check-list of leadership competencies that will lead to more effective leadership or institutions. This is not to deny that universities and the sector as a whole needs to think more systematically about approaches to leadership development or the competencies that support them.

But this is not the primary purpose of the research. Rather it is to ground the debate in some firm empirical evidence about the nature of the role within the second leadership tier and to contextualise that evidence within a clearer understanding of the relationship between leadership practices and the organisational structures and cultures of the contemporary university. Our conclusions therefore take on this task. They are intended not so much as an end but a beginning to the process of reflection on the outcomes of our interviews and a consolidation of the emerging conclusion. The report is a part of that process, with subsequent elements, in particular comparative studies of equivalent issues in Australian and European universities, to follow later.

The chapter is arranged in three parts. First, we consider the management model in higher education. This locates the role of the PVC within a particular structural configuration of second tier leadership. But our discussion is somewhat wider than that. We consider the nature of the university as context, drawing together a sense of its purposes and cultural attributes as defining features of leadership tasks. Second, we draw out the key structural changes in boundaries of the management model that are impacting on PVC roles. These prelude the final part of the chapter – the main findings and key conclusions on why universities have PVCs and what constitutes their special contribution to the leadership task.

The management model: a leadership gap?

The historiography of higher education management in the UK contains a discernible discourse of discontent. For 20 years or more, going back at least to the Jarratt efficiency exercises of the mid-1980s, it has been assumed by successive governments that university leadership is weak and compromised by its reversionary predilection for collegial styles of management.

As we noted, for Jarratt, the answer was to reconfigure the vice-chancellor as a chief executive officer at the centre of strong top-down university government with an emphasis on corporate style strategic planning, resource allocation and accountability. More recently the Lambert Report made explicit the government’s lack of confidence in the way universities run themselves and even singled out PVCs for criticism, arguing that they had insufficient experience of managing large budgets.

Whilst not wishing to create the impression that viewed from the inside everything is rosy, our findings suggest these are superficial views of the nature of the leadership task in higher education. The persistent tendency to equate collegial styles of leadership and management with ineffectiveness and corporate styles of strong top-down decision making with effectiveness misunderstands the cultural attributes of the university and how to get the best from its practices. Two sets of issues surround this debate with, in each case, implications for how we read the purpose and place of PVCs.

The first concerns the nature and purposes of the university. Despite exhortations to become more like business organisations, universities remain resolutely different in many key respects. They are not for-profit organisations and even though they are increasingly ‘marketised’, at least in the way the state seeks to organise and regulate access to their products and services, ultimately as institutions they are not for sale. As Birnbaum reminds us, the value of the university lies essentially in trust. On the whole people believe they will get value from a university – whether they are purchasing education, specific knowledge, know-how or advice – but they may not be clear why or how this value will manifest itself.

These strictures are important for understanding why working and managing in a university may be different to business. But the picture is further complicated by the multiple and sometimes conflicting missions of the university. Pursuit of international excellence in research, for instance, is normally not done in isolation from other activities, not least teaching. At the same time, more teaching oriented institutions are invariably disinclined to be persuaded that research, in some form, is not for them. Besides, each strand in the mission can itself be broken down into numerous, often highly differentiated, activities and engagements. The point to emphasize is that universities speak to multiple communities, internal and external and that the organisational forms of the university have developed in order to reflect these disparate goals and the pressures associated with them.

The second set of issues concern the need to accommodate some fundamental and potentially awkward historical rigidities. Contemporary universities and other higher education institutions are larger, more differentiated, more globally oriented, more segmented, and in terms of the impact of new technologies, more distributed than ever before. The main directions of movement, particularly in but not confined to the large research university, appear to be across the established structures associated with traditional departmental structures. Arguably this rigidity is retarding progress in new directions, for example across and between disciplines.

We argued earlier in the report that the basic empires of the university – teaching schemes, research groups and the administration - remain substantially unchanged since the birth of the modern Humboldtian university of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Despite the transformations associated with the rise of mass and even universal higher education, the historical continuities in relation to these empires are striking. In the teaching, research and, to a lesser extent, administration empires, in the persistence of the inner instincts of collegiality and collegiate practices, we find successive and often interlinked layers of university practices that have proved historically immune to ideas of ‘rational’ management derived uncritically from industry or even professional bureaucracies.

However, it is not simply that in its customs and practices academic work is necessarily anarchic – though there is a view of universities as organisational anarchies. It is still less the case that activities to do with teaching and learning, curricula and assessment or research cannot be managed. But it is to argue that higher education continues to be characterised by a fundamental separation of work and its processes from the formal organisational structures of management. In the setting of higher education, the deeper cultures of the disciplines and the empires of teaching and research survive, not unthreatened or unchanged, but largely intact.

Part of the explanation for this separation is to do with our understanding of professional work in the academy. This is built around concepts of professional training and the subject specialisms, cultures and practices of the academy and its various academic disciplines. Notions of freedom and autonomy are sufficiently entrenched to prevent any (easy) external management interference in such basic areas of academic work connected with the exercise of professional judgment as applied, for instance, to academic standards or to questions of academic competence. Academics manage academics in this sense. It is the need to accommodate such fundamental continuities within an operating environment for higher education that is no longer as stable or predictable as in previous eras that defines the management task. We have argued therefore that those who lead need not just the political and networking skills required for dealing with competing/multiple interests and resource demands, but direct experience or immersion in the values and practices of organisational function. The university is as much a political organisation as a professional bureaucracy.

**Shifting boundaries: a ‘stretched’ second-tier?**

Although universities as institutions are framed within constitutional settlements that are usually stable and long lasting, periodic organisational redesign has become endemic in higher education. One of the most radical, though still relatively rare, forms of re-design involves wholesale mergers or acquisitions between previously separate institutional entities. More usual and less obvious outside the secret garden of the institution are internal revisions set in train by university leaders. These ordinarily reflect the chief executive’s personal perception of the need for some form of redirection of the institution, its orientation and positioning in relation to markets, or its strategic approach to developing its competitive position thereby achieving greater efficiencies in some or all of its core activities.

Shifting the management model may have implications for the role of the PVC, not least because such rearrangement may disturb existing boundaries and their associated individual and group identities.

On the basis of our field research in 13 UK universities we identified two broad organisational models with some variations at the margins:

The first is the re-configuration of the university into a smaller number of faculties. Several vice-chancellors in our field research (and we know of others beyond it) have chosen to reorganise their institutions by collecting cognate academic disciplines into several large faculty structures. Typically, the approach has been to reduce the number of operating faculty to between three and five units, each led by re-energised faculty deans which we designated as
‘super deans’. These deans have major strategic and operating roles, especially the case where they are responsible for the entire budget of the faculty.

We encountered several cases where reorganisation along these lines has caused institutions to institute a formal review of pro-vice-chancellor and other senior roles, including scrutiny of whether such PVC roles are even required. In the event the outcome has been to reaffirm the importance of the role and to incorporate it into the reorganised organisational structure. No institution in the UK has (so far) chosen to abolish the pro-vice-chancellorship, though they have re-aligned them in such a way as to raise some fundamental questions about the apparent parity of roles and responsibilities across different parts of the second leadership tier. Perhaps it is less obviously a flat second tier, but one that is becoming ‘stretched’ in order to accommodate a more hierarchical relationship between different types of PVCs.

Two variants of PVC roles appear to have emerged out of the move towards academic concentration in faculty systems. The first, more traditional, approach has been to retain PVCs as senior academic officers. In this guise the PVC is allocated responsibilities that are institution-wide in their coverage. In these circumstances deans or heads of department may report either to the vice-chancellor directly or, in some cases, to one of the PVCs or, more usually, a deputy vice-chancellor. Here the second tier of PVCs and service directors constitutes a senior leadership layer above the faculty deans.

Another, less common, approach has been to re-design the role of PVC by combining it with that of faculty dean. In this hybrid form, the PVC/Dean (PVCD) is allocated dual responsibilities. The PVCD is both PVC with cross-institutional functions and dean with executive faculty responsibility. This means the PVCD typically participates in, and takes (collective) responsibility for, setting the strategic direction of the institution as a whole and the development of associated policy lines. But the PVCD also embodies academic and budgetary responsibility for the faculty and its performance. Hence, in this dual guise it is to be expected that PVCDs will participate in the cycle of institutional planning and review, but on two sides of the table.

For those institutions that have followed the route of creating PVCD roles a key question will be whether a more traditional PVC role, or set of roles, is also required alongside that of the PVCD. For the moment it seems the approach is to continue with both types of PVC role. In our site visit institutions there were no cases where organisational re-design had caused a decision to abolish traditional PVC roles.

In contrast to the super-faculty model many institutional heads have chosen to persevere with various forms of distributed organisational models. In some cases the approach is based on devolving responsibility and budgets to academic departments. In this model, heads of department may report directly to the vice-chancellor, leaving PVCs with no line management responsibilities.

In others cases a faculty structure of sorts may overlay various combinations of departments. In such cases the faculty may be headed by a dean, but in contrast to the ‘super faculties’ model, budgets continue to be devolved directly to departments or schools. Hence, although the faculties are run by deans, budgetary responsibilities remain distributed to heads of the operating units.

The most significant variation in this model may be related to the differential roles and responsibilities of DVCs and PVCs. Our site visits revealed several universities in which the DVC worked very closely with the VC to a different brief and with more obvious ‘senior’ status to the other PVCs. It is important to note however that such are the variations of organisational practices that it is also perfectly possible to find exemplars of more concentrated faculty systems which also operate with a closer VC – DVC dualism as an upper second tier element. Although it is helpful to think in terms of some typical management models, the reality is that few universities will conform to any model in every detail.

**Change and continuity: the PVC role reconfigured?**

Change and continuity, then, appear to characterise and shape the context of the PVC. Despite the transformations associated with mass higher education and the burgeoning calls on the university as a knowledge provider, transmitter and innovator, it appears from our study that the sector as a whole, both in the UK and beyond, continues to believe in the notion and value of some form of pro-vice-chancellorship.

We are confident in concluding, from our interviews and from subsequent reflective analysis, that PVCs continue to have an important and special role to play in contemporary universities. Despite a widespread feeling that the system is ‘moving on’, it is evident that it is PVCs that help to cement the top-down business of running a multi-million pound
enterprise to the bottom-up independence and self-management that is associated with the best teaching and research. Even in post-92 institutions, the significance of the collegial culture remains an important part of what makes a university effective in its core functions. The continuing presence and need for PVCs, and the influence they bring to bear, are the manifestation of this within university leadership.

They key characteristic of the PVC role is that only they and the chief executive have a cross-institutional perspective. Only they – and those with the same delegated competency - can facilitate the initiatives and standards that deliver the mission and maintain the institutional ‘brand’ across the ‘baronies’ of the Faculties. PVCs have progressively increased in abundance since 1960, not because of management directives but because the more complex challenges faced by academic institutions have increased the need for individuals who weave and maintain a complex web which enables the institution to function.

Having seen what PVCs do, we can make the case for their continuing value in a simple model. (Figure A) Higher education institutions (HEIs) are organised along two principal axes (A in diagram). The academic units provide the disciplinary structure that forms one axis and may be aggregated by research group, degree scheme, department, school or faculty. The core functions provide the other axis, and the structure indicated by those functions is repeated at any level of aggregation: it is similar for individual academics, their departments, their Faculties and the institution as a whole. The core functions are conventionally summarised as teaching, research and administration but are more diverse in their modern incarnation.

The traditional role of PVCs is facilitating and cross-institutional (B). But it is one of influence, not command, and lacks direct management levers. The appearance of Super-Deans with strong management influence within a Faculty, often accompanied by clear financial control, introduces a more overt (and appealing?) management structure (C). However, this lacks institutional cohesiveness: Deans may compete with one another and – at the extreme - disrupt institutional outcomes. The PVC role is preserved because it retains that institutional perspective and delivers the crucial non-financial bottom line that characterises the higher education (and generic third-sector) mission. If this is to be effective, then it is essential for senior management to recognise and moderate the inherent tensions in the system (D) to achieve both the financial goals that enable the disciplinary structure and the (word) goals that enable overall strategy. The increasingly frequent appearance of Faculty super-Deans might be a threat to the effectiveness,
even to the existence, of the PVC, but this should not be overstated and the need for balance was recognised by institutions we visited.

Changing management structure is not the only threat to the role and effectiveness of PVCs. There are many more instances of factors that cause institutions to get less out of their second management tier than might otherwise be the case.

The VC’s recognition of what the PVCs are there to do and how they might best do it is opaque, perhaps because they too have a cross-institutional, but in their case over-riding, role. Not all PVCs appear to be empowered confidently to implement their tasks. Explicit recognition of what makes an effective senior management team, the value of delegation as a management tool and the significance of empowerment would be a valuable objective for leadership development.  

A significant part of the PVC’s influence is derived from their continuing membership of the academic college. They have taught and carried out research with distinction. Most maintain an academic presence in their translation. While the reality of this may, for some, be merely tokenistic, it is nevertheless an essential part of the myth that in arising from the academic body, so to it they will return. In fact we found few PVCs who relished the thought of such re-entry and the assumptions that underpin the notion are a real source of friction in the role of many PVCs.

PVCs have remarkably little formal introduction to their roles. They have often been appointed by opaque and informal processes, though this is changing. They learn on the job and have little formal training. They rarely have substantial support teams, but may have to negotiate challenging relationships with professional Directors in service roles. Yet relationships are the pivot of their existence for their power is through influence, not command. Committees – the very oxygen of academic governance – are where they lead, creating the consensus and buy-in that enables the institution to work through academic self-management. They maintain the networks that present the disciplinary bazaar to the market as a coherent whole that proclaims its value and brand.

Summary

The role of the PVC, then, confronts the basic problem of providing effective linkages between academic processes and corporate outcomes. Finding ways of addressing the inner tensions between structures and work practices represents a fundamental challenge for senior managers in higher education. Many vice-chancellors appear to be responding to the challenge through various adjustments to the design of the organisational management model, sometimes, as in the case of one of the ancient universities, as part of a more sweeping packages of changes associated with new forms of governance.

In our site visit institutions, however, vice-chancellors justified the need for keeping PVCs firmly within the management model. Whatever the specific features of the organisational design at any one time, the pro-vice-chancellorship continues to occupy a pivotal place in the interactions between structures and practices. Their role is seen as central to the working of mass universities as multi-functional organisations with their burgeoning need for information flow and innovation. However, the roles of PVCs stretch across and sometimes, more significantly, between several communities or fields of play. This can be problematic since professional work and designed management structures don’t necessarily sit together easily.

But the headline finding from our research is that the PVC occupies a distinctive place within the organisational structure of the contemporary university. Although chief executives are routinely adjusting and refining the structures and reconfiguring PVC roles within them, there are some enduring features that justify the continued need for PVCs within the management model. Our research found a consistent view from within the system that the PVC is not only a facilitator of the VC’s vision, but also an initiator of action to achieve that vision. Indeed, we can go further and argue that such is the centrality of this role – or more accurately set of roles – to the working of the dual structures of academic work and management, that if the pro-vice-chancellorship did not already exist in some form, it would need to be invented.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX: RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODS

The original research proposal set out seven main questions about the changing nature of the pro-vice-chancellorship:

• What is the extent of differentiation between the role of pro-vice-chancellors, deputy vice-chancellors and other senior management team posts?

• What is the nature of the relationship between pro-vice-chancellors and other members of the senior team, including vice-chancellors and other senior academic and administrative managers?

• How important is the role of the vice-chancellor in setting the parameters of pro-vice-chancellor roles?

• How are pro-vice-chancellors selected and trained for their jobs?

• What are their strategic and operational responsibilities?

• Are there clear career trajectories, including analysis of progression/exit routes into and from the pro-vice-chancellorship?

• How do UK practices compare with evolving models in EU and Australian systems of HE?

• What are the principal trends in terms of PVC roles and what are the policy implications?

To address these questions as systematically as possible the project employed a combination of desk based and survey methods. These comprised the following elements.

1. Desk-based research

Documentary and data collection

Documentary analysis – at system and institutional level – was designed to provide data with which to analyse the historical evolution of PVC roles. The primary data source has been the published institutional entries profiling PVC post holders in the annual Association of Commonwealth University These data focus on PVC numbers, their distribution across different types of HEIs, job titles and relationships to specific cross-institutional responsibilities. Data were assembled for six sample years: 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2005.

Literature review

There is a relative paucity of secondary source material bearing directly on the role of PVCs. The review concentrated on approaches to leadership roles and organisational configurations contained in both the formal published literature as well as appropriate ‘grey’ literature. We also collected data derived from a sample of institutional documentation such as corporate plans, strategic plans and marketing information. These data were used to establish commonalities, continuities and contradictions between institutions, gaps in coverage and underpinning assumptions in relation to numbers, roles and selection. Analysis was further directed to the identification of typologies in relation to different strategic and organisational approaches to university senior leadership.

2. Survey approaches

Site visits

The site visits concentrated on institutional and personal approaches to PVC roles and their relationships with senior management teams and operating units. We constructed an initial structured sample of 16 institutions. These were selected to represent a diverse spectrum of HEIs in terms of size, type and regional distribution. In the event we received invitations to visit 13 HEIs. These are recorded in anonymised form by type and regional distribution in the table below.

In the selected institutions we were usually able to conduct in depth interviews with all or a majority of the senior teams, including the VC or Principal and the heads of a sample of service and support areas working to PVCs. In some institutions the approach was lighter touch, confined to interviews with a smaller sample of D/PVCs. A total of 47 interviews were conducted across the 13 institutions. The principal survey instrument in each institution was one-to-one, semi-structured interviews, each normally lasting from one to two hours. The interviews were governed by a research protocol ensuring the anonymity of individual participants and their institutions in published outcomes of the study.

Key informant interviews

These comprised a series of in-depth semi-structured interviews with key informants, such as former VCs in national roles and others with system-wide overviews of higher education. These were selected to reflect critical experience and knowledge of leadership theory, practice and development. We interviewed seven informants in total.
The primary purposes of the interviews were: 1) to subject our hypotheses regarding the historical evolution of pro-vice-chancellor roles to external critique; and, 2) to contribute to our understanding of the internal cultures of institutional leadership and management.

**Comparative study**
The final element was designed to provide some comparative baselines with senior leadership roles in European and Australian HE systems. Evidence was collected through a combination of semi-structured interviews, email and telephone contacts with VCs, DVCs, and PVCs or their equivalents in Australian (6), Swedish (2), Danish (2), French (1) and Swiss (1) universities. The purpose of the interviews was broadly similar to the UK element with the addition of a suite of questions focusing on broader system characteristics. This element of the study will form the subject of a separate report.

### Structured Sample of UK HEIS: Institutional Types, Regional Distribution and Interview Totals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Pre-1960</th>
<th>1960-1990 Institutions</th>
<th>Post-1990</th>
<th>Specialist Mission</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern</td>
<td>1(2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
<td>1(5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>1(4)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>2(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NI</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North East</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1(2)</td>
<td>1(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>1(5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>1(6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South East</td>
<td>1(3)</td>
<td>1(4)</td>
<td>1(2)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3(9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South West</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorks &amp; Humber</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6(25)</td>
<td>3(15)</td>
<td>3(6)</td>
<td>1(1)</td>
<td>13(47)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Dr David Smith**  
Principal Research Fellow, Deputy Director of the Centre for Policy Studies in Education (CPSE), & Joint Director of the Higher Education Policy Unit (HEPU) in the School of Education, University of Leeds

David is also Director of Knowledge Transfer, in the Faculty of Education, Social Sciences and Law at the University. He trained as a social and economic historian being awarded SSRC Studentships at the Universities of Lancaster and Liverpool to study for his MA and PhD. After teaching at Liverpool Polytechnic he held research posts at the Universities of East Anglia and Warwick before moving to his present post in 1993.

His research and writing covers a broad field of higher education policy in both historical and contemporary settings, including the governance and management of universities, access and widening participation and research policy. He is the author of a range of books, articles and policy reports. Current projects include an investigation of knowledge transfer in the creative industries funded by the AHRC and a study of dual regimes of further and higher education funded by the ESRC.

**Dr Jonathan Adams**  
Chief Executive, Evidence Ltd

Jonathan has published widely on research policy and assessment. In 2004 he chaired the EC Monitoring Committee for the Evaluation of Framework Programme VI and in 2006 chaired the European Research Fund for Coal & Steel Monitoring Group. Jonathan was formerly Dean for Strategic Development at the University of Leeds (1996-2001) and prior to that was a science policy adviser at the Department of Education & Science. He originally trained as an ecologist at Liverpool, Kings College London, Newcastle upon Tyne and Imperial College London. He worked with Evidence on Hefce's Fundamental Review of Research Policy and Funding (1999-2000) and on Hefce led projects on 'Maintaining Research Excellence and Volume' (2001) and on 'Highly Skilled Technicians in Higher Education' (2001). At a more local level, he has been involved in the development of a new format for academic planning at a leading Russell Group University, and in reviewing the training needs of research post-graduates and linking these to a new M.Res. degree. He has also been instrumental in developing elements of the White Rose consortium's 'Enterprise Learning' and 'Business Exploitation' projects.

Evidence specialises in research performance analysis and interpretation. It works on contract for Government departments and agencies and for universities and other research based organisations in the UK. It has a range of products and publications assessing HE research quality including the UK Higher Education Research Yearbook.

**David Mount**  
Evidence Ltd

David's academic background is in resource management and conservation, and training and development. He has held posts in National Park and Nature Reserve management, focusing on the training and development of personnel involved in these functions, and on related policy development. He worked with Evidence on Hefce's Fundamental Review of Research Policy and Funding (1999-2000) and on Hefce led projects, 'Maintaining Research Excellence and Volume' (2001) and 'Highly Skilled Technicians in Higher Education' (2001). At a more local level, he has been involved in the development of a new format for academic planning at a leading Russell Group University, and in reviewing the training needs of research post-graduates and linking these to a new M.Res. degree. He has also been instrumental in developing elements of the White Rose consortium’s ‘Enterprise Learning’ and ‘Business Exploitation’ projects. He is a visiting lecturer at Birkbeck College, University of London, and at the University of Sheffield.

Current/recent projects include: Development of training policy for the Countryside Agency; Management and delivery of a programme of environmental awareness training for senior staff from the Alfred McAlpine Group; Research within AONB management.
ENGAGING WITH LEADERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION