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## **Artifice or integrity in the marketization of research impact? Investigating the moral economy of (pathway to) impact statements within research funding proposals in the UK and Australia.**

### **Introduction**

The marketization, commodification and predominance of a fiscal rationalization of higher education (HE) (cf. Bok 2003; Olssen & Peters 2005; Palfreyman & Tapper 2014; Rhoads & Torres 2006) has profound implications for academic practice and, as is specific to our discussion, a moral code of conduct, where academics are seen to compromise or sacrifice professional integrity in an attempt to secure professional advantage and/or self-preservation. A push for academics to behave 'entrepreneurially' is emblematic of changing prioritizations for and performance expectations made of academics, particularly in the context of what they deliver to their host-institutions as 'positional goods' (Hirsch 1976). The increased visibility of such behaviours also signifies the primacy of what Marginson and Considine (2000) have called 'the enterprise university'.

A pressure to 'deliver the goods', such as the procurement of research income, is, however, shown to destabilize and potentially inure academics' sense of professional identity, where in the process of fulfilling institutional expectations they are given cause to abandon or deviate from 'traditional' or honoured codes of conduct and/or ideological maxims that underpin, inform and guide who they are and what they do (cf. Bexley *et al.* 2011; Evans 2015; Henkel 2000; Watermeyer & Olssen 2015). A commitment to academic 'virtuousness' (cf. Macfarlane 2010, 2012; Williams 2002; Nixon 2008); Mertonian (1942) norms of communism, universalism, disinterestedness and organized skepticism; and the defence of critical and objective truth appears, therefore, threatened by professional pragmatism, opportunism, sponsorism and a willingness by academics to compromise, if not cede, to the demands and directives of academic capitalism (Slaughter & Leslie 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades 2004) and neoliberal or 'managerial' governmentality (cf. Foucault 2007; Dean 1999; Zipin & Brennan 2004) or more specifically, what Deem *et al.* (2008) term 'new managerialism' in HE. Apologists argue that academic complaisance with market edict is imposed and engineered rather than voluntarily and willfully elected; a survivalist response to the spectre of HE's neoliberal governance and the transmogrification of the university from public institution to private interest (cf. Burawoy 2011; Holmwood 2011; Ginsberg 2011; Giroux 2014). Others, consider the lamentation of a mythological 'golden-age' of science (cf. Holden 2015) and characterize game-playing and careerism as being no more contemporary neoliberal phenomena than long-standing, if previously more tacit, features of academic labour. Notwithstanding, the 'neoliberalization' of HE (Peck and Tickell 2002), begets significant questions related to how the intensification of new managerialism affects the extent and/or viability of academics' critical agency and contestation of managerial governmentality (cf. Leathwood & Read 2013); and the frequency and/or ease by which they succumb to a 'culture of complicity' (Nixon 2010).

In the contemporary milieu, academics are recruited and promoted, recognized and rewarded by their institutions, in many instances, primarily, on the basis of their entrepreneurial aptitude and success in procuring positional goods. A standard specification within most academic job advertisements and criterion, certainly among senior academic appointments, is, for instance, a track-record in securing external grant income. For those unable to successfully leverage external research funds, the upshot is the same as for those who fail to publish their research in high-impact journals – professional obsolescence, marginalization and collapse. Research life in higher education is consequently dominated by what Baez and Boyles (2009) refer to as a 'grants culture' with academics scrambling to

prove their worth in reference to the money they generate. Academic livelihood is concomitantly seen to rest on compliance and proficiency with what Lisa Lucas (2006) has described as 'the research game in academic life'.

However, the process in attracting research income, in the UK for instance from disciplinary specific Research Councils (RCUK) such as the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC), can be arduous and lengthy and is contingent on the applicant successfully demonstrating alignment with each Council's strategic plan and penetrating what Michele Lamont (2011) calls the 'black box of peer-review'. Furthermore, in a milieu of continued recovery from the events of global economic downturn and the continued traction of a policy of austerity in the distribution of public funds for higher education, specifically those made available for research, the competitiveness associated with attracting external research monies has significantly inflated. Hyper-competitiveness in winning grant money may consequently provoke academics to engage in *extraordinary* practice, or practice uncommon to that which they identify as being efficacious and legitimate and 'true' to the role of the scholar. The parameters of what is deemed to be acceptable academic behaviour and rationalizations put forward in defence of such, will therefore, most likely extend, modulate and/or blur to accommodate contemporary occupational demands. Such blurring is perhaps especially evident where, under the watch of new managerialism, academic practice is conflated with, or rather consumed by a focus on, academic *performativity* (cf. Ball 2001, 2003, 2012); a preoccupation that neutralizes or anesthetizes concerns related to professional conduct (cf. Leathwood and Read 2013).

Within the continuing propagation of a performance and/or audit culture in higher education (cf. Shore & Wright 1999; Strathern 2000), a new evaluation criterion of 'impact' is modifying the ways with which academics approach research and behave as researchers (cf. Collini 2012). In both UK and Australian funding contexts, the perceived merit of a research funding application is now linked to the capacity of the applicant to prescribe convincing pathways to research impacts, or more specifically, credible evidence of how they will engineer and ensure economic and/or societal returns from the research to be undertaken. 'Pathways to impact' statements (PIS) as they are known in the UK or 'impact statements' in Australia – we adopt UK HE lexicon to describe both – demand that academics demonstrate an awareness of their external communities; the stakeholders and benefactors of their research; and what these constituencies need and how they will best benefit from the research. PIS also, therefore, require that academics demonstrate methodological competency in engaging with their research users, showing how research will be translated and appropriated in ways that most effectively service needs. They are described by Research Councils UK as 'an essential component of a research proposal and a condition of funding' ([www.rcuk.ac.uk/innovation/impacts](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/innovation/impacts)).

Superficially at least, PIS appear a valid route to engendering a more engaged research culture (cf. Watermeyer 2012). However, despite being a formal part of the research funding application process the significance assigned to PIS by peer-reviewers (and consequently PIS authors) and the extent to which they influence evaluative decisions and the awarding of research grants is unclear. Indeed, anecdotal evidence suggests that PIS are habitually bypassed by peer-reviewers who either find making credible impact evaluations onerous or tend to privilege and/or prioritize value judgements related to the pertinence of the research topic and/or robustness of the research method. There is a prevailing sense that PIS may be more cursory than constitutive and more ambiguous than stable aspects of the funding application process that consequently permit, if not incite – as will be discussed – braggadocio. Some commentators (cf. Moriarty 2011) have also cautioned that PIS, seen in

the context of a Government push for the commercialization of UK universities (cf. Lambert 2003; Warry 2006), are emblematic of a shift towards 'post-academic' (Ziman 2000) or 'mode-2' (Gibbons *et al.* 1994) models of knowledge production and are consequently representative of the narrowing and instrumentalization of academic research. Notwithstanding, PIS are mandatory requirements of the funding process and are representative not only of the changing nature of competition but moral economy within higher education, where academics' public citizenship is not an automatic but incentivized component of their professional lives.

In the following account we discuss testimony from academics as applicants (and reviewers) of external research funding sources, drawn from across the disciplines, based in two research intensive universities, in the UK and Australia to consider the ways with which the hyper-competitiveness of the current research funding climate is contributing – to borrow from Richard Sennett (1999) – to the 'corrosion of character' in academic life. We consider how academics through PIS are engaging in extraordinary yet increasingly normalized displays of practice, which signpost complicity with a neoliberal attitude of success at any cost and the proliferation of what Smith (2012) terms, the academic 'flexian'. We consider how academic integrity is jeopardized and lost where forces of market logic dominate and where a capacity to 'sell the future' may be seen to contribute to research success – and therefore de-risk occupational livelihood and longevity – even where the value gained from doing so is uncertain. Furthermore, we consider how the monopolization of HE sectors by new public management technologies, simultaneously produces disquiet and conformity among academics. We do so to elucidate the incongruousness and/or incompatibility of academics performing as knowledge-workers within a market economy of higher education and yet the embeddedness, and we might argue, assent, apathy and pseudo counter-culturalism that characterizes this reality. PIS are used accordingly to highlight a 'schism' (Winter 2009) between imagined/utopian and actualized versions of academic identity and practice (see also Billot 2010). Overall, our discussion focuses on how new managerial demands of entrepreneurial practice in academia – embodied within PIS – can be deleterious to the moral fabric of academic endeavour or what Clegg (2008) describes as 'principled personal autonomy and agency', especially in the context of academics as custodians of truth. In doing so we comment not only on what Kinser (1998) calls the 'unbundling' of academic practice but what we perceive as the unravelling of academic integrity.

## **Method**

Semi-structured Interviews (n=50) were undertaken predominantly with senior academics between 2011-13 in the UK and Australia. Interviewees were drawn from the areas of arts and humanities, social science, natural and life science and physical sciences including mathematics and engineering. They were located within two institutions recognized for being research intensive and research elite universities. Interviewees were also individuals with recent experience of grant writing and reviewing and, therefore, with experience of composition and evaluation of PIS.

Information about potential interviewees was sourced via approach to the research offices of the two institutions. Attempts were made to achieve the target range for each discipline sub-sample; however this was not always possible due to a variation in response rate from the discipline areas. An approximate gender balance was sought and achieved. The scope of this paper restricts exploration of these individual characteristics, which will be the subject of further research. Furthermore, the paper does not extend to a discussion of the practical implications of academics' PIS sensationalism such as for instance the potential for formal

reprimand. Nor does it seek to appraise the extent of impact sensationalism via direct critique of PIS. This is left to our interviewees.

The purpose of the interviews was to ascertain how academics conceive of their role within the context of an ‘impact agenda’ and specifically in relation to PIS. They were invited to discuss issues pertaining to academic values, accountability, scientific freedom and sense of public duty. Thematic analysis was carried out and both deductive and inductive approaches were taken, focussing on key areas, but with scope for unanticipated themes to emerge from the analysis.

For purposes of anonymity the names of the two universities as those of interviewees are withheld. Where verbatim quotation is used, it is referenced only by the rank of the speaker and country of his/her employ.

## Findings

Interviewees were united in identifying a tendency among funding applicants to exaggerate the impact claims of prospective research as common practice. A slippery slope towards impact sensationalism and hyperbole perceived to characterize PIS was rationalized by interviewees, as illustrated in table 1, on the basis of *systemic* pressure affecting academic behaviour and *localized* issues or handicaps indigenous and specific to PIS:

- hyper-competitiveness in attracting public research funds, yet conversely ambivalence in the value assigned to PIS in the evaluation of funding proposals
- academics’ entrepreneurial obligation or the need for self-marketability and PIS as a response to occupational Darwinism and feature of legitimate ‘game-playing’ (Knowles & Burrows 2014)
- the PIS convention, albeit inadvertently, facilitates and even encourages inflated claims
- asymmetry and disconnect in the conceptualization and presentation of accounts of research and impact: statements concerning and distinguishing research and impact intentions
- the impossibility of prospectively evidencing causality and lines of attribution between research and future impact

Table 1: Causes for impact sensationalism

<b>SYSTEMIC</b>	<b>LOCALIZED</b>
Hyper-competition	Susceptibility to impact inflation
Uncertainty of evaluative value	Separation of impact from research
Academic capitalism	Weakness in signposting causality

### **Systemic causes and consequences**

Success in competitive funding processes was perceived by interviewees as the primary motivator for academics adopting a sensationalist approach to marketing the future impact of their prospective research. The importance associated with the acquisition of research funds was thus also seen to instill a moral permissiveness and/or elasticity in the authoring of PIS and a willingness among funding applicants to overstate impact claims in order to gain a competitive foothold: “if I want to do basic science, I have to tell you lies” (UK, Professor); “you’re made to lie in all kinds of ways” (Australia, Professor).

Several interviewees described the composition of PIS as a process predicated on 'falsehoods' and 'untruths'. Future imaginings of impact were characterized as 'charades' and 'illusions' (UK, Professor); 'virtually meaningless', or 'made up stories' (Australia, Professor) "... taking away from the absolute truth about what should be done" (UK, Professor). Words such as *lying, lies, stories, disguise, hoodwink, game - playing, distorting, fear, distrust, over-engineering, flower-up, bull-dust, disconnected, narrowing* and the recurrence of the word '*problem*' (including different synonyms) typified interviewees' perceptions and experiences of PIS.

Having to sensationalise and embellish impact claims was seen to have become a normalized and necessary, if regretful, aspect of academic culture and arguably par for the course in applying for competitive research funds:

Would I believe it? No, would it help me get the money – yes. (UK, Professor).

I will write my proposals which will have in the middle of them all this work, yeah but on the fringes will tell some untruths about what it might do because that's the only way it's going to get funded and you know I've got a job to do, and that's the way I've got to do it, it's a shame isn't it? (UK, Professor)

Now with permanent self-justification you get a very messy picture and people start to come up with things and you think can you be sure about that? They come up with things that they probably don't mean, and even if you say this will show up, I don't know exactly whether this is true but even if it is true, I think it is not necessarily good! (UK, Reader)

Several interviewees explained that successfully marketizing the impact of research was a matter of survival in academia. Many spoke of academics operating as impact merchants, whose attempts to sell the impact of their research in PIS was one aspect of satisfying the performance expectations of senior managers:

If you can find me a single academic who hasn't had to bullshit or bluff or lie or embellish in order to get grants then I will find you an academic who is in trouble with his [*sic*] Head of Department. If you don't play the game, you don't do well by your university. So anyone that's so ethical that they won't bend the rules in order to play the game is going to be in trouble, which is deplorable. (Australia, Professor)

Interviewees intimated how this pressure to perform, excused academics and provided moral immunity in the context of consciously over-claiming impact:

I don't think we can be too worried about it. It's survival... People write fiction all the time, it's just a bit worse (Australia, Professor).

We'll just find some way of disguising it, no we'll come out of it alright, we always bloody do, it's not that, it's the moral tension it places people under. (UK, Professor)

Others, however, argued that whilst embellishment of PIS might provide a route to occupational survival, its undertaking would not be without negative ramifications and may be for instance, deleterious to public perceptions of research, where what is purported as future impact is likely to be unachievable:

It's about survival. It's not sincere all the way through... that's when it gets disheartening. It puts people on the back foot and fuels a climate of distrust. (UK, Professor)

The sensationalism associated by interviewees with PIS was judged to be the consequence not only of occupational survival but career progression. Interviewees claimed that the introduction of PIS in funding applications further intensified the competitiveness in attracting research funding and was consequently stimulating game-playing, certainly among more careerist applicants. 'Gaming' was a word used by several interviewees across the disciplines and countries to describe the process of winning funding; "it's going to be a game you know" (Australia, Professor). The art of gamesmanship was one well practised by one participant who reported that they were "very practised at connecting up possible impacts with scientific activity and joining imaginary dots between one thing and another". They cautioned, however, that what they would conceive as impact was "massively open to subjective opinion—close to scientific blasphemy in my view" (UK, Professor)

### **Localized causes and consequences**

Many interviewees appeared to lampoon PIS by intimating that authors would require skills of clairvoyance in order to accurately convey the future. Unsurprisingly, many thus considered PIS to be an unworkable part of the funding process and argued that describing impact *a-priori* was unfeasible, futile and liable to engender fallacious claims:

It is impossible to predict the outcome of a scientific piece of work and no matter what framework it is that you want to apply it will be artificial and come out with the wrong answer because if you try to predict things you are on a hiding to nothing. (UK, Professor)

Impact futurism and/or factoring-in impact in advance of carrying out the research was reported by some interviewees as 'dumb' and 'illogical', not least when placed in the context of the habitually peripatetic, non-linear, serendipitous and unpredictable nature of scientific discovery. Interviewees consequently appeared to implicate PIS as anti-foundationalist and/or fallibilistic, with impact articulated prior to the materialization of research outcomes lacking historical precedence or positivistic justification:

The idea therefore that impact could be factored in in advance was viewed as a dumb question put in there by someone who doesn't know what research is. I don't know what you're supposed to say, something like I'm Columbus, I'm going to discover the West Indies?! (Australia, Professor)

It's disingenuous, no scientist really begins the true process of scientific discovery with the belief it is going to follow this very smooth path to impact because he or she knows full well that that just doesn't occur and so there's a real problem with the impact agenda- and that is it's not true it's wrong – it flies in the face of scientific practice. (UK, Professor)

Others opined that the PIS should count no more than as an article of aspiration, not least where impact claims were so ambitious as to more closely resemble star-gazing than horizon-scanning. What interviewees identified as the dramaturgical leanings of PIS authors and a biasing of exotic and/or idealized impacts were also seen to hinder and deter the

evocation of more modest and realistic projections of impact, though these were seen as vital to distinguishing the originality of research:

It's really virtually impossible to write an (Australian Research Council) ARC grant now without lying and this is the kind of issue that they should be looking at. (Australia, Professor)

It's virtually impossible to write one of these grants and be fully frank and honest in what it is you're writing about. (Australia, Professor)

An issue of disconnection between what applicants recognize as their research intentions and potential research impacts, and arguably what they perceive as the prioritization of the two in the evaluation of funding applications, was also seen by interviewees to affect the plausibility of PIS. Concomitantly, interviewees intimated a disparity between funding applicants' respective prioritizing and trivializing of rigour, integrity and 'truthfulness' in the composition of detail related to research and detail related to impact within grant proposals:

It's interesting because I think of it as two quite separate things and I think there's integrity in the research that you're doing and then to what extent do you feel that the pathways to impact is really part of that research or is it something separate. (UK, Professor)

Then I've got this bit that's tacked on... That might be sexy enough to get funded but I don't believe in my heart that there's any correlation whatsoever . . . There's a risk that you end up tacking bits on for fear of the agenda and expectations when it's not really where your heart is and so the project probably won't be as strong. (Australia, Professor)

It becomes increasingly difficult - one would be very hard pressed to write a successful grant application that's fully truthful ...you're going to get phony answers, they're setting themselves up for lies... [they go on]... it's absurd to expect every grant proposal to have an impact story. (Australia, Professor)

Some also felt that this kind of disconnection or two cultures of research and impact, compromised an ability to prospectively demonstrate causality and lines of attribution between research and impact:

People take highfaluting disconnected stuff and find ways of connecting them through a process. (UK, Professor)

Many perceived the requirement to outline potential impact in grant applications as restricting. In particular, the requirement to link research directly to activities such as public engagement and policy making initiatives caused some interviewees to express concern about the integrity of those impact stories:

Trying to force people to tell a causal story is really tight, it's going to restrict impact to narrow immediate stuff, rather than the big stuff, and force people to be dishonest. (UK, Professor)

Among those we spoke to, some were able to draw a distinction between impact sensationalism as the propagation of lies and academics engaged in the creative and speculative fashioning of future imaginaries that would be inherently promissory. Self-



evidently, in attempting to legitimize the economic/societal impact of prospective research, PIS authors might only seek to project the positive. The whole impact agenda is characterized by its innate bias towards the elicitation and engineering of positive impacts. Interviewees intimated that the creation of PIS was unavoidably entwined with a kind of impact-utopianism and the generation of guilt-edged narratives, and that PIS were imaginations of impact rather than empirical assertions of impact:

They're telling a good story as to how this might fit into the bigger picture. That's what I'm talking about. It might require a bit of imagination, it's not telling lies. It's just maybe being imaginative. (Australia, Lecturer)

The legitimacy of authors exercising creative license in the composition of PIS was echoed by other interviewees who considered embellishment not as lying but playfulness in selling their research in the best light in order to stand the best chance of being funded:

People might, well not lie but I think they'd push the boundaries a bit and maybe exaggerate! (UK, Professor)

They're just playing games – I mean, I think it's a whole load of nonsense, you're looking for short term impact and reward so you're playing a game... it's over inflated stuff. (Professor, Australia).

From this perspective, the sensationalism attributed to PIS might be viewed as no more a case of prevarication than a reflection of an HE agenda that endorses academics as creative choreographers and rewards their ability to narrate persuasive guess-estimates of future unknowns.

## **Discussion**

The purported crisis of the public university and devastation of its ideological tenets is routinely attributed to the engulfment of higher education by neoliberal doctrine. The erosion and suppression of academic autonomy, freedom and creative and critical agency are similarly attributed to the rise of neoliberal hegemony enforced by institutional and sectorial, academic and administrative capitalist elites. In this milieu, academic subalterns are seen to find justification, route for blame and perhaps some solace, for what they perceive as the corruption of academic life, in their excoriation of academic capitalism and those they opine as its perpetrators and police. However, as the findings of this study illustrate, the fecundity of a neoliberal mandate for higher education is not so simply explained.

The desertion of Mertonian principles and coterminus enfeebling of a moral code of conduct cannot be solely imputed upon neoliberal duress. To do so would be to claim that academics are completely without critical agency and/or motivation. Self-evidently they are not. Furthermore, to imagine that academics are not, and have not historically been willing conspirators of HE's market system would be to demonstrate profound naivety and false nostalgia, respectively. Instead, as our study shows, many academics are complicit with the system they protest, claim to abhor and upon which, focus their vitriol. Where ultimately they act (co)operatively, knowingly and consensually, with the agents and processes of their subjugation, their complaint is phony. The mingling of their outrage and repudiation with the ease of their submission also, however, reflects the success and 'stealth' of neoliberal ideology (Brown 2015), where the appearance or pronouncement of resistance translates,

without organized subversion, into empty symbolism and a sense of they're being adrift and lost, somewhere between their imagined and actualized identities.

These accounts of PIS also point towards the impotency and the disconnectedness of a counter-discourse and a sense of individual academics shouting into an abyss. Notwithstanding, this simulacrum of resistance is arguably enough to convince and reassure academics of their own moral integrity or be that, impunity. It concurrently dissipates the efficacy and urgency of collective action and constructive disobedience; foments a discourse of academic victimization and disempowerment; and reproduces and reinforces the conditions, which provoke the chimera of intellectual disdain (cf. Zizek 2009; Dean 2009).

What these accounts of PIS reveal is not only inertia from academics in resisting the neoliberalization of higher education but acquiescence to, and complicity with managerialist governmentality. The common depiction of academics as guiltless and powerless victims of a tyrannical HE regime is ostensibly itself as much the subject of embellishment as the PIS of our discussion. Indeed, academic 'game-playing' as reported in the context of PIS, demonstrates somewhat unambiguously that academics themselves are at least partially culpable for the atrophy of higher education into a service industry and are, therefore, arguably, architects of their own moral panic and 'unbecoming' (Archer 2008).

Of course, the response will come, with which we sympathize, that active resistance to HE's new managerialism is to incite censure if not exclusion (cf. Rolfe 2013; Watermeyer & Olssen 2015). We do not suggest that academics seek this kind of confrontation. Instead we advocate active responsiveness and responsibility in academics consciously avoiding the pitfalls of professional life that risk their integrity; for surely as Williams (2002) would argue, to relinquish honesty is to relinquish the essence of what it is to be an academic. Of course, as some of these accounts have shown, PIS are not necessarily displays of dishonesty but acts of creative expression that expose the inconsistencies and absurdities of new public management, academic performativity and the associated frivolousness and capriciousness of the HE market economy, more than the moral failings of their authors.

Ultimately, PIS, as our interviewees have shown, are a paradox, in that impact window-dressing is a self-defeating exercise, where embellishment may be easily discovered (and potentially punished?) by those with responsibility for evaluating funding proposals. The sense of futility in fabrication is further extended where the weight of influence attributed to impact in evaluators' funding decisions is presumed to be less than it might be.

Notwithstanding, we perceive the eagerness or desperation that characterizes academics' attempts at generating grant money, in this case partially through exaggerated claims of prospective impact, as emblematic of an albeit, forced, collusion with higher education's competition fetish and market logic. A funding frenzy also reveals that a preoccupation with *performing* public accountability occurs with the neglect of *self*-accountability.

At the same time, these accounts intimate the precariousness and unforgivingness of academic employment; gross inconsistencies and egregiousness in HE's regulatory frameworks and surveillance regime; and how demands for academics to 'sell' themselves is ultimately a zero-sum game that confuses accountability with auditability. These accounts also painfully expose the infirmity of academic personhood and a sense that academics' present-day struggle with who they are and what they do or should do is a far closer reality than that they might imagine as the future of their research. Furthermore, they illuminate the vagaries of academic integrity and virtuousness as they are applied in unequal measure in the conceptualization of research and its impact.

Others' might point, as have our interviewees, to the absurdity of an impact agenda in HE and that the artifice of PIS is no more the dissolution of academic integrity than what Mats

Alveson (2013) calls the 'triumph of emptiness'. Notwithstanding, the hyperinflation of impact claims for the purpose of securing publically funded research, is, as one of our interviewees suggested, unacceptable, not least where it jeopardizes and potentially despoils the interface between science and society. The absurdist proportions of PIS that our interviewees elicit also point to an unacceptable level of compliance from academics; a sense as Davies and Petersen (2005) argue that neoliberalism's pernicious reach is an inescapable facet of academic life; and where PIS are made analogous to a mockery of the truth, a trivializing of academics' public commitment.

In problematizing the current state of academic practice, it is necessary to recognize and respond not only to the deficiencies, abnormalities and failings of HE's current system of governance but the similar shortcomings of academics in their attempts to 'dwell in the ruins' (Readings 1998).

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