

The Role of the Academic Board in the Contemporary Australian University

by

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

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Publications

Refereed journal articles

The following article comprises sections of chapter 3, Conceptual Framework and of chapter 6,

Power:

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Other publications

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List of Abbreviations

ACU: Australian Catholic University

AHELO: Assess Higher Education Learning Outcomes, a current OECD project aimed at assessing graduate capabilities on an international basis

ASEAN: the Association of South-East Asian Nations

AUQA: the former Australian Universities Quality Agency

BAF: Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future, higher education reforms introduced by the former Howard Government in 2003

BIS: Department for Business Innovation and Skills (UK)

CAE: formerly, colleges of advanced education (Australia)

CVCP: former Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals (UK), now known as Universities UK

CUC: Committee of University Chairmen, a committee of the chairs of university councils (UK)

DEST: former Commonwealth Government Department of Education, Science and Training (Australia)

DEEWR: current Commonwealth Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (Australia)

EC: European Commission

ERA: Excellence in Research Australia, assesses research quality in Australian higher education institutions

Go8: The self-titled 'Group of Eight' prestigious, research intensive Australian universities

HECS: Higher Education Contribution Scheme, the Australian system for co-payments by domestic higher education students

HEFCE Higher Education Funding Council for England

NAFTA: North American Free Trade Alliance

NGP: National Governance Protocols (Australia)

NPM: New Public Management

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

PhD: Doctor of Philosophy degree

PRS: Provider Registration Standards, part of the current Australian Higher Education Standards Framework

REF: Research Excellence Framework, assesses research quality in UK higher education institutions

TAFE: Technical and further education, Australian institutions which provide vocational education

TEQSA: the recently established Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (Australia)

UGC: University Grants Committee, former higher education funding body (UK)

UK: United Kingdom

US: United States of America

Abstract

This thesis examines the role of the academic board within the context of 21st century Australian university governance. It explores, in particular, whether there is a place for the academic board within the contemporary Australian university and, if so, whether new models for its structure, function and operation are required. The study is significant because Australian literature, in particular, suggests that in some instances university governance may have been redefined in a way that effectively excludes a meaningful role for academic boards. However, there is little current Australian or international research which explores these issues and which examines universities' and academic board members' responses to them.

The research project included a case study of three purposively different Australian university academic boards with data collection techniques including interviews with current and former academic board members and senior executives; analysis of academic board documents; and direct observation of academic board meetings. Additionally, data were collected on the academic board of every publicly funded Australian university from university websites and other publicly available sources.

The case study evidence supported arguments made in the literature that within Australia managerial modes of governance currently predominate and also highlighted a significant gap between academic board terms of reference and what those boards actually did. Moreover, there was little relationship between the formally documented powers of the case study academic boards and their perceived levels of authority and influence within their respective universities. In each case the locus of power was universally considered to be the vice-chancellor and his or her mode of operating substantially influenced the role and function of the academic board. Within all three case study universities the most commonly perceived significant function of the academic board was academic quality assurance, although the data suggest that boards' roles in implementing quality assurance were largely symbolic with the responsibility for establishing and implementing these programs actually resting with the senior executive.

In conclusion, the disjuncture between boards' terms of reference and their substantive activities which, in any case, significantly overlapped tasks undertaken by the senior executive, led to substantial concerns within the case study universities about the future of their academic board. However, the research also found the case study academic boards performed a significant number of unofficial roles which, while not formally recognised, were perceived to greatly add value to their universities' operations.

Potential implications of this research for practice within Australian university governance include the importance of identifying and documenting latent functions undertaken by university academic boards so that they are not overlooked in any future consideration of board roles; academic boards recognising the power of the vice-chancellor by working with him or her in a shared governance partnership, where possible and appropriate; being mindful of the risk that academic boards might be held accountable for academic quality assurance programs that they do not otherwise control; and the importance of academic boards' working to improve, and being seen to improve, their universities' core academic programs, a function they are uniquely well placed to undertake.

Chapter 1—Introduction

Focus of the study

The Australian higher education sector has changed irrevocably in recent years (Marginson and Considine 2000; Harman and Treadgold 2007). To this end, there is an ever-increasing reliance on non-government income and a consequent increase in competition between institutions.

Universities are, by necessity, more entrepreneurial and these activities require an increased focus on institutional-level planning and control, budgeting and risk management (Blackmore, Brennan and Zipin 2010a). There has also been a considerable strengthening of the role and authority of the vice-chancellor and his or her executive management team (Marginson and Considine 2000; Meek 2003b). Moreover, despite university budgets comprising a decreasing proportion of government income, state and federal governments have exercised greater oversight of the financial affairs, governance and academic profile of each institution (Blackmore and Sachs 2007). As a consequence, it is argued that:

Universities have evolved from medieval communities of scholars, through the ivory towers of the Oxbridge of yesteryear to today's large scale business model. The tension between their traditional character, where reasoned argument holds sway and issues are debated thoroughly until there is scholarly consensus, and the modern imperatives of efficiency and accountability for the bottom line of the budget is palpable in most modern university campuses. (Dooley 2007, p. 7)

Within this new form of university, there have been substantial changes in the ways in which priorities are set, decisions are made and resources are allocated. For example, Marginson and Considine write that academic structures and processes 'including senates and councils, academic boards, departments and collegial rules have been supplemented (and sometimes supplanted) by vice-chancellors' advisory committees ...' and that the 'basic frame of academic work is also subject to this 'dual structure' (2000, pp. 11–2). These shifts have fundamentally changed the way universities operate and the ways in which priorities are set, decisions are made and resources are

allocated. For example choices about budget allocation, institutional priorities and strategic directions are now commonly made in forums such as vice-chancellors' executive committees and planning and resource committees, rather than by heads of academic departments and deans of faculty as may have been the case in the past (Meek 2003b). There is also considerable pressure for judgments to be made quickly in response to market imperatives. Thus, new course offerings are commonly first assessed on the basis of financial viability before the academic merit of the proposed is considered.

Although on the face of it there need not be, there is in fact enormous conflict between the role of the university in teaching, scholarship and research and the requirement for increased financial security and an ever-improving financial bottom line. This tension is part of daily life within the contemporary Australian university, but particularly so within the body referred to in this study as the academic board (known also as the academic senate or faculty senate), the principal academic body within each institution (Marginson and Considine 2000; Dooley 2007).

The existence of academic boards is one of the unique characteristics of universities that help to make them both special and different to corporations and commercial entities. The role of the academic board cuts to the very heart of the reason for universities' existence: 'advising, and assuring the quality of academic activities' (Woodhouse and Baird 2007, p. 10).

The centrality of the academic board within Australian university governance is summarised neatly by Emmanuel and Reekie:

The Australian approach to quality assurance in higher education is underpinned by the universities' status as self-accrediting institutions with the legislative authority to accredit their own courses and programmes. ... Quality in the areas of admissions, teaching, learning and assessment is overseen within each university by the body with responsibility for academic matters, generally the Academic Board. (Emmanuel and Reekie 2004, p. 6)

Although there is a substantial field of literature on university governance, a comparatively smaller proportion of it addresses academic governance, and detailed discussions of academic boards or

their equivalents are fewer again. Foremost amongst the authors who have published in this field are Marginson and Considine (2000) who suggest, in particular, that:

... in many institutions the academic board's role in setting academic policy seems to be largely irrelevant given its lack of control over resources at a time when policy is often ruled by economics. Many managers view their academic boards as confined to the role of 'rubber stamp' in decision-making and a 'safety valve for harmless dissent. In some universities academic boards are seen as irrelevant or near-irrelevant, with little or no impact on management decisions or on the direction of the institution. In others they can exercise a reactive input into strategic planning and policy issues as they arise; nevertheless boards of this kind have no role in initiating or controlling major policy or financial decisions. (Marginson and Considine 2000, p. 116)

Other Australian scholars of the academic board include Anthony Dooley, former president of the Academic Board at the University of New South Wales and a significant former contributor to the conferences of Australian Chairs of Academic Boards and Senates. Perhaps not surprisingly, Dooley takes a different view of the condition of the academic board, arguing that:

During the late 1990s and early years of the millennium, there were predictions about the growing irrelevance of Boards ... However, these predictions have not come to pass, and most universities have acted to define more carefully the roles of their Academic Boards...(Dooley 2007, p. 19)

However, although the roles of university academic boards may be defined more closely than had been the case in the past, there is little evidence that they are any more effective as a result. This is borne out in the reports of the former Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) audits of Australian universities and in an analysis of those findings which suggests that the Australian academic board is, in general, not effective in discharging its key functions (Woodhouse and Baird 2007). Moreover, Marginson's and Considine's research shows that although Australian academic boards may approve academic programs and policy, 'the real decisions are made by senior managers' (2000, p. 117). Despite the potential for differences in interpretation about what an 'effective' academic board is and what 'real decisions' are, this is suggestive of perceptions that academic boards are in difficulty.

The challenges associated with the functioning of contemporary academic boards appear to be experienced across the Australian higher education sector, and also internationally (see for example Birnbaum 1989; Tierney and Minor 2003; Duderstadt 2004; Shattock 2006). It can be difficult to encourage experienced academic staff to stand for election to membership of academic boards and it can also be challenging to encourage members to attend meetings. In considering such matters, Woodhouse and Baird commented that:

On the whole, academic boards lack the contextual knowledge, policy skills and focus of the senior management group or other support groups. For these reasons, the exchange of information, rather than informed deliberation, dominates academic board meetings. The contribution of the board to institutional strategy frequently is negligible. This in turn may create a vicious cycle, where more knowledgeable and senior academics withdraw from involvement in board discussions, finding them uninformed and ill-directed. (2007, p. 10)

Despite literature acknowledging issues associated with the effectiveness of university academic boards, there is little empirical research exploring why the current difficulties might exist and what (if anything) might be done about them. For example, Marginson's and Considine's research on Australian university governance is now more than a decade old and the component of their study that examined issues associated with academic boards was small in comparison to the overall scope of their work. Very little research appears to have been published on Australian university academic boards since that time. In addition, there is little international research in the area of university governance per se, and even less on academic boards. This is surprising, because a number of authors make quite specific suggestions for how academic boards might be improved (see for example Duderstadt 2004; McInnis 2006; Mortimer and O'Brien Sathre 2007; Winchester 2007). However, Tierney is highly critical of the standard of literature and the paucity of research on university governance, describing much of what there is as 'hand-wringing ... anecdotal and atheoretical' in nature (2004b, p. 86). Indeed, while many academics seem to call for urgent research in the area of university governance, few would appear to be actually doing it.

Aims and significance of the research

This thesis examines the role of the academic board within the context of 21st century Australian university governance. It explores, in particular, whether there is a place for the academic board within the contemporary Australian university and, if so, whether new models for its structure, function and operation are required. In considering these issues, it is necessary to examine the nature of university governance in Australia; major trends and shifts in higher education and why those changes have led to governance reform; and how major changes in university governance have affected academic governance and academic boards in particular.

The following research problem is addressed:

- Is there a continuing role for academic boards in contemporary Australian higher education governance?

In exploring this question, the following subsidiary questions have been useful in the development of an understanding about what has happened to the academic board and why it is so.

- What changes have been made to university governance models within the past thirty years and why might they have occurred?
- What university governance models currently exist and how are they being implemented?
- How have these governance models been impacted by changes in university structures, management styles and modes of operating within the same thirty-year period?
- How have changes in university governance models, if any, impacted on the composition, role function and effectiveness of the Australian academic board?
- Are academic boards necessary to the future of Australian higher education and, if so, are new models for the academic board required?

This study is significant because the literature suggests that in some instances university governance may be being redefined in a way that effectively excludes a meaningful role for academic boards. The key questions, which do not appear to have been addressed elsewhere, involve whether this really is the case and, if so, does it matter to universities? Thirty years ago, academic boards were fundamental to *being* a university. However, universities have changed enormously since that time. Has the nature of higher education and universities changed so much that there is no longer a meaningful place for the academic board within the high-level decision-making processes of universities? If so (and this may not be the case), how do vice-chancellors, chairs and members of academic boards, and senior academics feel about it?

I identified the topic for this PhD research after a period of 10 years as head of governance at a large Australian university. Whilst undertaking this role it had become apparent that many of the staff who were involved with the academic board at my university, either as members or as support staff, were concerned that the board was in difficulty and wondered about the extent to which it was fulfilling its designated role effectively. Discussions with and visits to my colleagues from other universities both within Australia and within the United Kingdom suggested that concerns about university academic boards were relatively widespread. Within this broader scale, the issues seemed to be twofold: first, whether there remained a significant enough role for the academic board given that it was commonly considered many of its traditional tasks had been overtaken by management; and second, whether the academic board was fulfilling its current role, however defined, effectively. Having identified these issues as requiring further investigation I muttered loudly within my own university about this being a worthwhile research project. When after two years it was apparent that no-one had responded to this challenge I decided to undertake the task myself and this PhD was born.

Two previous studies have been instrumental in my consideration of the issues examined within this thesis. The first is the landmark study of university decision-making, *Power and Authority in British Universities* (Moodie and Eustace 1974), which documents changes within British university governance in the 20th century until 1970. Moodie's and Eustace's research is the only work of its kind undertaken thus far within the United Kingdom. Data were gathered via 'a series of open-

ended interviews and an intensive study of documents prepared for internal consumption by a large number of universities, of formal constitutions, and of other published material' (Moodie and Eustace 1974, p. 11). A further large-scale study of university governance was conducted in Australia in the 1990s by Simon Marginson and Mark Considine, published in 2000 as *The Enterprise University: Power, Governance and Reinvention in Australia*. Marginson and Considine, whose work is cited extensively throughout this thesis, undertook three-year case study research of 17 Australian universities and supplemented this data with that from publicly available sources. Their primary research strategy was to focus on formal and informal decision making inside the university.

Whilst it is not possible, within the limits of a PhD program, to replicate research of the scale undertaken by Moodie and Eustace and Marginson and Considine, the design of this study of Australian university academic boards has been informed by and seeks to build on their work. However, although the research was undertaken within Australia and is guided by relevant Australian research and scholarship, it also draws on developments within the United Kingdom (UK). Australian higher education was modelled on the UK system and many of the recent changes, both to Australian higher education itself and to Australian university governance, have mirrored those undertaken within the UK, although in some areas of reform changes were first made in Australia before being adopted by the UK, (see for example Slaughter and Leslie 1997; Knight 2002).

Methods of data collection and limitations

This research project involves a case study of three Australian university academic boards with data collection techniques being interviews with current and former academic board members (including members of the senior executive), analysis of current and historical academic board documents and university records and direct observation of academic board meetings. The three universities were selected on the basis of age since establishment and each was from a different Australian state. Additionally, data were collected on the academic board of every publicly funded Australian university from university websites and other publicly available sources. Data were

compared and contrasted across the three case study sites so as to identify similarities and differences, to identify patterns of change, and to increase the validity of the findings. However, a significant limitation of this study remains the small number of cases and the limited number of current and former academic board members interviewed at each site, this being due to the constrained resources available for the conduct of this research.

Although primarily a Bourdieuan analysis of organisational change and power relations within universities (see for example Bourdieu 1984, 1988a, 1989, 1990b), the discussion of data within this thesis has drawn from a number of additional theories to explore aspects of Australian university academic boards and their operations, including various theories of the state and higher education and theories of governance, and theories of the audit explosion (Power 1997, 2005); the risk society (Beck 1992); performativity and fabrications (Lyotard 1984; Ball 2000). It also draws on Gramsci's theory of hegemony (1971) in an examination of aspects of managerial domination.

The remainder of this chapter outlines some significant features of the Australian higher education system and its governance structures, and will also briefly address the UK sector. The discussion centres on major trends and shifts within higher education and analysis of why those changes have led to university governance reform. It then briefly addresses how shifts in higher education governance have affected academic boards, before setting out a plan for the remainder of this thesis.

Context for the study: higher education system and governance reform

University governance

Notions of university governance are steeped in history and are inextricably linked with the evolution of universities themselves (Shattock 2006). Definitions of contemporary university governance generally include the common principles of internal and external relationships and their intersection (Marginson and Considine 2000); decision making (Gayle, Tewarie and White 2003); and accountability and integrity (Holley 2006). While distinctions are often made between the direction setting role of governance and the implementation responsibilities of management

(Gallagher 2001; Bennett 2002; Gayle, Tewarie and White 2003; Bolden, Petrov and Gosling 2008), for the purposes of this study, university governance is understood in its broadest sense to incorporate:

... the determination of value inside universities, their systems of decision-making and resource allocation, their mission and purposes, the patterns of authority and hierarchy, and the relationship of universities as institutions to the different academic worlds within and the worlds of government, business and community without. It embraces 'leadership', 'management' and 'strategy'. ... Governance does not contain in itself the sum of teaching and research, but it affects them. It provides the conditions which enable teaching and learning to take place. (Marginson and Considine 2000, p. 7)

This study of the academic board must therefore not only look at what the board is and what it does; but also the place of the board within the structure and processes of university decision making; and its role in, and how it is affected by, various power and authority relationships.

Governance developments within the Australian higher education sector

Australian higher education is principally a unitary, national system, provided largely through the 37 public and a number of private universities, each of which is engaged in both teaching across a broad range of courses and research. Although some other organisations also provide higher education, such as a number of technical and further education (TAFE) institutions, the scope of this study is limited to the publicly funded universities within their various formations. The Commonwealth Government provides virtually all government funding to universities and has recently secured regulatory responsibility for higher education, this authority having formerly rested with the various Australian states. Commonwealth funding comprises a significant, but decreasing, proportion of university funding. Apart from government income, universities are funded by a mix of student contributions and earned income, including international student fees (Bradley 2008).

Australian universities are established under their own enabling legislation (i.e. by an act of parliament) and each has authority to accredit its own courses and programs, this authority being among the criteria for recognition as a university (Emmanuel and Reekie 2004; TEQSA 2011).

In the late 1980s the Commonwealth Government commenced moves to achieve what it saw as enhanced university governance through ‘an openly corporatist model of university governance aimed at delivering greater accountability to government’ by way of strengthened university councils (Baird 2006, p. 301). Baird goes on to write that:

Since then, federal and state government normative expectations of good university governance have been progressively refined through review and legislative change. From the 1990s, university councils have become smaller, pulling back from the very large councils evident in the 1970s and, in particular, decreasing staff and student representation. (2006, p. 301)

Historically, Minister John Dawkins heralded a new era in university governance in the later 1980s when the White Paper (Dawkins 1988) recommended a change in university council size and structure, vice-chancellors were to serve as chief executive officers and universities were to be more ‘business-like’ and entrepreneurial (Harman and Treadgold 2007, p. 14). Then, in 1995 the Hoare report provided a significant review of university governance and specifically addressed both the role of the university council and the relationship between councils and academic boards:

The governing body should have strong strategic planning oversight for the university. It should set the broad strategic framework within which the Vice-Chancellor and senior university administrators can operate ... the governing body is not equipped to determine matters of academic policy or of academic standards. These aspects come under the responsibility of the peak academic authority.

The governing body should also be responsible for the overall review and performance monitoring of the university, relying on the advice of the academic board or senate for monitoring academic standards and performance. This should be seen as an integral part of the strategic planning and accountability responsibilities of the governing body. (Hoare 1995, p. 42)

The report also noted that responsibility for determining matters of academic policy and academic standards fell to the peak academic authority, the academic board (1995, p. 42).

Consideration of the Hoare report by the federal government was complicated by the location of legislative responsibility for universities being with the states. In any case, a change of government in 1996 meant that no formal response to the Hoare report was ever issued and implementation

was not actively pursued, although the report remains a significant reference-point for university staff working in the field of governance. However, reviews in the states of Victoria and South Australia in 1997 and 1997 respectively did echo the Hoare report's philosophy with regard to the need for a more streamlined, business-like approach to university governance, particularly at the level of the university council (Rodan 2000, p. 73).

A further review of university governance was undertaken in Victoria and reported in 2002, with recommendations again primarily aimed at ensuring adequate oversight of universities' commercial activities (*Review of University Governance* 2002). However, the report of the review was also significant because it considered the role of the academic board and its relationship to the university council. In particular, the report noted references to academic boards in university enabling Acts and stated that:

These powers make academic boards the custodian of universities' academic standards, which is central to their role as academic institutions. Such an important role for the academic board with the university council is sometimes described as a bicameral system of academic governance. This review believes that Victorian universities are fortunate in having their academic boards' roles sufficiently provided in universities' Acts and that therefore no change is needed. Nonetheless, the review believes it is desirable to recall the importance of academic boards in maintaining academic standards. (*Review of University Governance* 2002, pp. 34–5)

Interestingly, all Victorian university Acts were recently amended with the new legislation excluding the provisions referred to above. One effect of these changes is that Victorian academic boards are now effectively subcommittees of their university councils rather than statutory bodies in their own right, as was formerly the case (see for example 'Deakin University Act 2009 (Vic)').

In response to concerns about university governance raised in the 2002 review *Higher Education at the Crossroads*, the Commonwealth Government introduced a package of reforms in 2003 known as *Our Universities: Backing Australia's Future* (BAF). Included within the BAF reforms were 11 National Governance Protocols (NGP) which came into effect in 2004 as a component of requirements under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* (DEST 2007). Broadly speaking, the NGP sought to further strengthen the place of the council as each university's governing authority

and to streamline councils by seeking to limit their size to no more than 22 members. The NGP were strongly corporatist in nature and, emphasised, amongst other matters, councils' responsibilities for effective oversight of university commercial entities. The protocols required that each council adopt a statement of its primary responsibilities, including that the university council must oversee and monitor 'the academic activities of the higher education provider' (DEST 2004). There was no mention of academic boards' role in advising and recommending to the university council on such matters and no mention of the academic board anywhere else in the protocols. Although initially a proportion of each university's operating grant was conditional upon compliance with the NGP, this requirement was removed in 2008 (Commonwealth of Australia 2008) which effectively rendered compliance with the protocols optional. In recognition of this the Ministerial Council of Tertiary Education and Employment approved in 2011 a 'Voluntary Code of Practice for the Governance of Australian Universities' in the form of a slightly expanded version of the NGP; indeed, in many respects the wording is almost identical. However, it could also be argued that the National Governance Protocols, and indeed the Voluntary Code of Practice, have now been superseded by the governance requirements set out in the Higher Education Standards Framework, regulated by the newly established Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA). For example, section 3 of the Provider Registration Standards (PRS) sets out requirements for corporate and academic governance and PRS 3.7 necessitates that:

The higher education provider's corporate governing body protects the academic integrity and quality of the higher education provider's higher education operations through academic governance arrangements that provide a clear and discernible separation between corporate and academic governance, including a properly constituted academic board and course advisory committees. (TEQSA 2011, p. 4)

Thus, unlike the NGP and the Voluntary Code, the PRS include a requirement that Australian universities have an academic board and they imply (but stop short of explicitly stating) that these boards should oversee the academic integrity and quality of the higher education provided by each institution. However, while PRS 3.3 requires that each university's 'corporate governance arrangements demonstrate a clear distinction between governance and management responsibilities' (TEQSA 2011, p. 3) there is no corresponding requirement for a separation

between academic governance and management. It is noted that ongoing compliance with the PRS is a requirement for registration as a higher education provider and that TEQSA will 'evaluate the performance of higher education providers against the Higher Education Standards Framework' (TEQSA 2011, p. 2).

In summary, general trends in university governance within Australia have tended to concentrate executive power within the office of the vice-chancellor, corresponding with an expansion in the size of the senior management group and in the scope of their functions and responsibilities. Within many universities this has led, in turn, to the bypassing of traditional academic governance arrangements (Marginson and Considine 2000; Emmanuel and Reekie 2004):

In the last century, power was in the hands of the group of all professors — the professorial board. Democracy began to grow in the 1970s to '80s with non-professorial heads of departments leading to non-professorial members of academic boards. In the 1990s, Australian university academic boards lost their roles in financial decision-making, thus separating academic priority from resource priority, and many academic leadership roles have been assumed by senior executives. With these changes, the academic board no longer functions as the prime source of institutional identity, being restricted to advising or commenting on matters for which the decisions are made elsewhere. (Woodhouse and Baird 2007, p. 10)

That is to say, the literature would suggest that within the past 30-odd years Australian academic boards have gone from the centre of power to being on the periphery, with the hub now being university vice-chancellors and executives.

Governance developments within the United Kingdom higher education sector

Without doubt the higher education sector within the UK is more complex than in Australia, not least because it is significantly larger and a great deal older. Shattock summarises the various governance models thus:

The forms of university governance in the UK do not spring from a single tradition as they do, for example, in the US or in most Commonwealth countries. In the UK there is the distinctive Oxbridge model, the mediaeval (or 'ancient' as it is now called in Scotland) Scottish model, the civic university model and the post-1992 higher education corporation (HEC) model. (Shattock 2006, p. 5)

However, leaving aside the Oxbridge and ancient models (for which there is no equivalent in Australia), Shattock argues that the constitution of the civic universities formed the basis for the dominant bicameral governance model within the UK (and Commonwealth universities) (2006, p. 9). Dearlove notes that traditionally within this model the university council (known as a 'court' in Scotland), was responsible for finance and the control of resources and had a 'lay' majority. The senate (academic board equivalent) was the sovereign academic authority. Senates were generally large and did not meet frequently, and so universities traditionally relied upon an extensive system of committees to organise their collective affairs (Dearlove 2002, p. 258). It is apparent from the similarities that this model of university governance did indeed form the basis for governance of Australian universities.

The fourth UK governance model, the higher education corporation, was created by legislation in 1988 when polytechnics became universities (Shattock 2006). Within the higher education corporation a unicameral structure was adopted under which '[g]overning bodies were given the responsibility for the determination of the educational character and mission of their institutions and academic boards were restricted to advising their governing bodies on academic developments and resource needs, not direct, but through the vice-chancellor' (Shattock 2006, p. 15). The closest equivalent to the higher education corporation within Australia appears to be the two private institutions, Bond University and the University of Notre Dame. Both have very similar governance structures in this regard and are therefore excluded from this PhD study. Although the Australian Catholic University (ACU) is established as a corporation with its academic board as a standing committee of the governing body, the academic board has significant powers within its own right and is not merely an advisory body. Unlike Bond University and the University of Notre Dame, the ACU is considered to be one of the 37 publicly funded Australian universities.

The higher education environment within the UK changed distinctly following the election of the conservative Thatcher Government in 1979 marked by 'cuts on university budgets, themselves an indication of Government dissatisfaction with the way universities were run, and the assertion of a more market-orientated system of higher education' (Shattock 2002, p. 237). In 1985 the Jarratt

report was the final in a series of studies of university management and was aimed at promoting efficiency and good governance. In particular the Jarratt report noted that:

Senates are the main forum for generating an academic view and giving advice on broad issues to Councils. They should also continue to play an essential role in decisions affecting academic questions. ... Large Senates are not the best places in which to undertake planning and resource allocation ... It does seem to us that the relative decline in the exercise of influence by Councils has increased the potential for Senates to resist change and to exercise a natural conservatism ... it may well be ... that a degree of tension between them [councils and senates] is necessary in the circumstances facing universities, and can be creative and beneficial in the long term. (CVCP 1985, p. 24)

The report's recommendations required that:

(a) Councils to assert their responsibilities in governing their institutions notably in respect of strategic plans to underpin academic decisions and structures which bring planning, resource allocation and accountability together into one corporate process linking academic, financial and physical aspects.

(b) Senates to continue to play their essential role in co-ordinating and endorsing detailed academic work and as the main forum for generating an academic view and giving advice on broad issues to Council. (CVCP 1985, p. 36)

The Jarratt report recommended the establishment within each UK university of a planning and resources committee reporting jointly to council and senate which would integrate academic, non-academic, financial and physical planning and provide a bridge between the legitimate roles of council and senate. The report also recommended the appointment of heads of departments by university councils on the recommendation of the vice-chancellor (a big shift from traditional means of appointment by academics), fewer and smaller committees and more delegation of authority to officers of the university (CVCP 1985).

Thus, the Jarratt report had profound implications for university governance, and was in large part responsible for commencing a shift in power from academic boards to university councils.

To this end, Dearlove argues that:

The Jarratt Committee (1985) challenged the conventions that were part of the traditional two-tier system of university governance, as well as the broad trend of university constitutional development over the twentieth century, a trend that had seen the democratisation of academic governance and the withering away of the power of lay members and Councils. The Committee regarded universities as 'corporate enterprises' that needed to engage in strategic, academic and financial planning. (CVCP 1985, p. 22; cited in Dearlove 2002, p. 261)

Shattock suggests that the Jarratt report led to a substantial rethinking of university governance within the UK government and that 'the role of governing bodies continued to be enhanced to the exclusion of senates' in subsequent higher education review documents such as the Dearing report and the Lambert report (2006, p. 14). This period heralded a significant increase in the involvement of the state in higher education through the imposition of new public management (NPM), involving efforts to 'make government more business-like' in the belief that this would increase financial efficiency and effectiveness (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011, p. 1). NPM had commenced in public administration in the UK during the 1980s and was mirrored in Australia (Harman and Treadgold 2007) and elsewhere under the guise of corporate managerialism (Rizvi and Lingard 2010). The concept is summarised thus by Bennett:

The drive to implement public policy through privately managed institutions is based on the belief that private enterprise is capable of far greater efficiency and effectiveness than public enterprise. This is due to its perceived ability to reduce bureaucracy, and to concentrate on output, results, innovation and quick reaction to the market and the needs of the customer, rather than input, expenditure control and monopolistic protection. (Bennett 2002, p. 288)

Bennett goes on to say that '[t]he higher education sector, as a large consumer of public funds, was in the vanguard of the move to bring private sector management styles to the public sector' (2002, p. 289). This shift towards heightened government interest in university governance and the corporatisation of that governance was experienced internationally and has had profound implications for the academic board, not least because of the ascendancy of the university council. Moreover, in the 1980s and 1990s there were two major trends in higher education: massification and marketisation (Bargh, Scott and Smith 1996). Within this changed environment, issues of

governance re-emerged because, in part, these trends tilted the balance of university business away from “internal”, essentially academic, issues to ‘external’ issues concerning institutional positioning, mission and even survival. These are issues which university councils, however reluctantly, are obliged to engage’ (Bargh, Scott and Smith 1996, p. 3). Thus, councils are dominant at least partly because the focus of government (and of university management) has shifted towards financial and reputational rather than academic matters.

Unlike Australia, the UK has no history of compulsory governance protocols. In 1995 the then named Committee of University Chairmen (now known as the Committee of University Chairs, (CUC)), the group representing chairs of UK university councils and which ‘has as its first aim supporting the higher education sector to develop the highest standards of governance’ (CUC 2009) published a formal *Guide for Members of Higher Education Governing Bodies in the UK*, which it subsequently revised in 1998, 2000, 2004 (Shattock 2006, p. 51) and 2009 (CUC 2009). In 2004 the Guide, which was principally concerned with the role of the governing body in university governance, was expanded to include specific examples of good practice and a voluntary Governance Code of Practice (CUC 2004). In 2009 the Guide was updated, the Code having been approved by the CUC (CUC 2009).

A further difference between the UK Guide and the Australian NGP is that whereas the Protocols were developed by the Australian government via the then named Department of Education Science and Training (albeit with some consultation with the university sector) and promulgated as a component of legislation, the UK Guide was developed and published by the CUC in conjunction with the then named Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals and the Association of University Administrators (Shattock 2006, p. 51). Although compliance with both the Guide and the Code is voluntary, the British government has effectively defined compliance with it as being ‘best practice’ and universities are expected to justify any instances of non-compliance in their institution’s annual report and during visits from the relevant Higher Education Funding Council (Shattock 2006, p. 53). Nevertheless, there have been no financial rewards associated with compliance and no financial penalties associated with non-compliance.

The UK Governance Code is similar in style and content to the Australian NGP and Voluntary Code, although unlike the Protocols, the UK Code does make one reference to the academic board in that it calls for regular reviews of boards' performance and that of their standing committees (CUC 2009). However, the UK Guide itself is a broad document, of which there is no equivalent in Australia, and it makes numerous references to the academic board, including with regard to calls for the vice-chancellor to consult with the board on proposals concerning the university's future; for the university council to seek the views of the academic board when reviewing the council's own performance; and in a section setting out a summary of the role of the academic board in general information for university council members on universities and their operations (CUC 2009). Thus, the Guide does not render the academic board invisible in the way that the board has been in both the Australian National Governance Protocols and in recent Australian government reviews of higher education.

In its 2011 White Paper *Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System*, the UK government announced the establishment of a new regulatory framework for higher education for England, incorporating a 'risk-based approach to quality assurance' (BIS 2011a, p. 52). Preliminary details of this framework were announced in August 2011 in the form of a consultation draft, which incorporates a sub-section on 'Governance and Academic Management' within the 'Criteria for the award of taught higher degree awards and powers' (BIS 2011b, p. 43). The draft framework includes references to requirements relating to 'academic leadership', 'governance', 'academic standards', 'academic policy' and 'academic risk' (BIS 2011b, p. 43) and suggests that the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) would serve as an 'independent lead regulator' (BIS 2011b, p. 8), with a role which would include assessing whether each university meets the criteria for 'good governance' (BIS 2011b, p. 24). There is no mention of the role of academic boards anywhere within the draft framework.

General trends in higher education and governance

The nature and purpose of higher education has been transformed since the early 1980s, both within Australia and internationally in Western democratic nations. While this trend will be examined in greater detail in chapter 2 of this thesis, Research Context, it is useful at this point to set out a summary of the key changes. In its 2007 report *On the Edge: Securing a Sustainable Future for Higher Education*, the OECD summarised the major shifts thus:

- rapid growth in the volume of higher education activity (i.e. student numbers and research) and in the complexity of this activity (e.g. new types of student);
- core funding from the State has not kept pace with this growth; investment in institutional infrastructure has fallen below the levels needed for sustainability;
- public agendas have become more complex and demanding and institutions need to respond to a broader range of stakeholders and interests;
- institutions are exposed to increasing market pressures and are required to differentiate themselves to succeed in a more competitive environment. (OECD 2007, p. 10)

Contemporary higher education systems are complex and multi-faceted and give rise to areas of tension within each organisation. The reconciliation of these tensions is a key challenge and has led to debate about the best form of management. For example, some argue that the corporate university has grown out of the massification of university education by necessity (Meek and Wood 1997, p. 10). However, Middlehurst and Elton suggest that the situation is much more complex than an interplay between massification and corporatisation, and summarise the changes as including:

... a reduction in public funding to the point where expansion turned first to contraction and then to expansion at reduced cost per student, with commensurate encouragement to increase alternative sources of funding; political emphases on greater market responsiveness and public accountability; a tighter coupling between higher education and the so-called wealth creating needs of society; and a considerable expansion of and diversification in access to higher education. (Middlehurst and Elton 1992, p. 252)

Middlehurst further suggests that changes in higher education emanate from three major sources. First, the macro-environment through such developments as technological innovation and changes

in patterns of economic power between and within nations; second, external signals received through a 'political filter', evidenced by a significant increase in the influence of the state on higher education; and third, at the level of the individual within the higher education institution itself, especially as involving senior managers (Middlehurst 1993, pp. 78–81).

Within this environment, university governance has been the focus of a great deal of attention (OECD 2007) and it is a commonly held view that recent changes in higher education have almost certainly led to governance reform. For example, it is argued that massification has resulted in significantly larger and more complex institutions in which, by necessity, collegial governance has been replaced by bureaucracy and entrepreneurialism. Reduced government funding per student, vastly increased numbers of students, the need to derive a significant proportion of university income from commercial sources, and government pressure for efficiency have all led to a streamlining of the decision-making process within universities (Middlehurst 1995; Meek and Wood 1997; Maassen 2003). Moreover, the sector has experienced substantially increased government demands for accountability (Shattock 2009a) where governance serves as an intermediary between the state and the university (Marginson and Considine 2000; Blackmore 2011a) and facilitates expanding relationships between universities and business and industry in the pursuit of financial return (Slaughter and Leslie 1997; Marginson and Considine 2000).

However, not all of the increased emphasis on university governance has been focused externally. Internal university governance mechanisms have also changed significantly in response, in ways ranging from an amplification of institutional management and executive and administrative power (Slaughter and Leslie 1997; Marginson and Considine 2000; Bleiklie and Kogan 2007; Mora and Vieira 2009); with reference points taken from the commercial world (Slaughter and Leslie 1997; Baird 2006); and an accountability regime focused on risk management, process control and compliance (Power 1997; Shattock 2006).

Opinion varies regarding whether this transformation in governance has been in the best interests of universities. Some, such as Shattock (2008), argue that it is not. Others see the changes as merely an inevitable outcome of a new global environment (Ramsden 1998; Dearlove 2002;

Middlehurst 2004; McInnis 2006; Taylor 2006), or the consequence of certain ideological responses such as neoliberalism or managerialism (Slaughter and Leslie 1997; Marginson and Considine 2000; Gayle, Tewarie and White 2003; Davies and Bansel 2005).

The terms globalisation, managerialism and neoliberalism recur throughout the literature and are therefore addressed in more detail in chapter 2, Research Context. However, although the concepts are each somewhat contested and are used by scholars in differing and contradictory ways it is nonetheless useful at this point to attempt to set out some simple definitions of each as they will be mobilised in this thesis, notwithstanding that it is later argued that both managerialism and neoliberalism are amongst a number of practices of globalisation or have been factors in its development (see for example Gayle, Tewarie and White 2003; Vaira 2004; Blackmore 2009; Rizvi and Lingard 2010).

Marginson and Considine characterise globalisation as both comprising changes in government and politics and changes in the economy and culture leading to greater global convergence and the formation of global systems (2000). Definitions of neoliberalism vary from unfettered competition among institutions and nations (Davies and Bansel 2005) and the retreat of the state so as not to intrude on the market (Clarke and Newman 1997); to, 'a logic of governing that migrates and is selectively taken up in diverse political contexts' that, in advanced Western democracies, manifests itself as freedom and self-management in different spheres of life (Ong 2007, p. 4). While understandings of managerialism and its variants also vary, in simple terms it can be characterised as the adoption by public sector organisations of structures, technologies, management practices and values more commonly found in the private business sector, particularly informed by principles of new public management (NPM) (Deem 1998; Marginson and Considine 2000; Blackmore and Sachs 2007; Kolsaker 2008; Shattock 2008).

Historical changes in university governance show a cyclical pattern. Moodie and Eustace describe how in the 19th century British university, university councils were ascendant and academic boards were merely advisory (1974, p. 34). However, between 1900 and the late 1970s, academic boards were at the pinnacle of power and influence in university governance due to a trend towards greater academic self-government and an expanding higher education system which meant, in

turn, that there were fewer difficult financial decisions for councils to make (Shattock 2006, pp. 11–2). At that time councils' powers were reduced by insistence upon the need to consult academic boards and by the granting of specific decision-making powers to the academic board, including regarding senior academic appointments and certain financial matters (Moodie and Eustace 1974, pp. 31-4). This was the period of collegial governance, when universities were seen to operate as communities of scholars dominated by professors researching and teaching together in collegial ways; in turn, universities were run by academics as leaders (the concept of 'first amongst equals') rather than as managers or chief executives (Deem 1998, p. 47; Fulton 2002, p. 201; Salter and Tapper 2002, p. 247). However, from the 1980s onwards, the cycle has shifted inexorably back towards the university council, wherein:

... the power of academically dominated senates has been paralleled or replaced by councils, boards or trustees who incorporate representation from the world of business, public services and politics. These and their chairpersons in particular reinforce the corporate nature of the reformed university. (Bleiklie and Kogan 2007, p. 479)

The 21st century has seen a continuation of the ascendancy of the university council. Reforms such as the National Governance Protocols in Australia, and the Committee of University Chairmen (CUC) *Guide for Members of Governing Bodies of Universities and Colleges in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, have led to a greater emphasis on independent, external members of university councils with particular focus on legal, financial and business expertise. Correspondingly, university councils now play (and must be seen to play) a much greater role in institutional strategy, accountability and financial sustainability (OECD 2007, p. 48).

However, Marginson and Considine argue that it is executive dominance, rather than the university council or the professoriate, that defines the character of the contemporary Australian university, exemplified by the quantitative expansion in the size and function of university executive groups, particularly deputy vice-chancellors and pro vice-chancellors (Marginson and Considine 2000, pp. 62-4). This is supported by recent OECD findings which show the increasing importance of senior managers and, in particular, that of the vice-chancellor, whose focus has broadened dramatically from academic leadership to strategic business management (2007, p. 49).

It is argued that arising from these shifts, 'the senate has changed from being a key operational element in university governance to being part of the 'dignified' apparatus of governance, a safety valve rather than a positive element in the decision-making process' (Shattock 2006, p. 78). Shattock also expresses concern about the impact of changed university decision-making processes on academics' personal commitment to university governance: 'This loss of personal involvement ... may have a long-term impact on the interest of the academic community in playing the full part in university governance' (2006, p. 29). This apprehension regarding academic disengagement from academic governance draws our attention to what Bleiklie and Kogan describe as the two key issues regarding changes in university governance:

First, there is a normative debate regarding the pros and cons of the changes, as to whether they are good or bad, and who benefits and who loses from them. The second debate is empirical-analytical, and here the question is to what extent the changes actually take place, how drastic they are, to what extent they are uniform across countries and global regions and to what extent universities and university systems are converging on the same organizational model and thereby becoming more similar than before. (2007, p. 481)

Through the process of literature review and research about what is happening with regard to academic boards in a number of Australian universities, this thesis aims to engage both of these issues.

Structure of the thesis

This thesis adopts a relatively straightforward and traditional structure. Following this introduction, chapter two sets the research context by undertaking a review of aspects of literature relevant to academic governance. It includes an analysis of the changing relationship between universities and the state, both generally and then within Australia and the UK, and incorporates a discussion of the similarities and differences between the two systems and of the extent to which common policies and features are, or are not, driving changes to higher education governance. Chapter two also explores the impact of globalisation on the way university governance is played out at the level

of the state and at the local level, including what are described as practices of globalisation such as the knowledge economy, neoliberalism and managerialism. The remainder of the chapter focuses on a survey of academic research which has centred on or is relevant to academic boards; and the usefulness or otherwise of that scholarly literature which suggests ways of improving academic boards.

Chapter three sets out the conceptual framework for the analysis of data within this thesis which draws on a number of theories relating to governance and the state; governance and higher education; power within the context of organisational change in universities; and the impact of quality assurance on higher education governance. Accordingly, the chapter commences with an exploration of theories of governance and theories of the state and higher education before introducing specific modes of university governance, including collegial, bureaucratic, corporate or managerial, entrepreneurial and network governance. The chapter then outlines Bourdieu's notions of habitus field and capital before considering Bourdieu's conceptualisation of power and the application of his theories to analyse organisational change within the field of higher education. The chapter then sets out a theoretical framework for the analysis of academic quality assurance as a primary mode of higher education governance before drawing together these theories into an integrated conceptual framework.

Chapter four comprises a review of the methodological literature relevant to this research project and describes the conduct of the study. In doing so, it justifies the choice of the case study method within the context of the research question and sub-questions; justifies the selection of the specific data gathering techniques, being interviews, document analysis and direct observation, and responds to their respective limitations; discusses the process of data gathering, detailing the specific steps which were undertaken to select the cases and gather the data in the field; and explains the methods of analysis, including the processes for within-case and cross-case analysis.

Chapter five is the first of four data analysis chapters within this thesis, each of these chapters responding to a different theme arising from the data, these being governance, power, academic quality assurance and the future of the academic board. Each chapter presents and discusses data

relevant to the theme of the chapter, within a context set by the conceptual framework and relevant literature. In particular, chapter five describes the case study academic board characteristics such as history, structure and perceptions of role, function and modes of operation within governance modes operating both inside and beyond their respective universities. It explains patterns in the case study data in the context of theories relevant to how academic boards are being repositioned arising from substantial shifts in the nature of university governance, drawing on theories of the state and higher education as well as theories of governance, including network governance.

Chapter six analyses data relating to Australian university academic boards in the area of power relations, within a context of organisational change or transformation. Although it draws on numerous theorisations the chapter is essentially a Bourdieuan analysis which applies the concepts of academic and intellectual capital to a discussion of changes affecting academic boards. Gramsci's notion of hegemony is also introduced later in the chapter, to explore the dominance of managerialism within universities and its impact on academic boards.

Chapter seven presents data relating to the role of Australian university academic boards in the area of academic quality assurance, commencing with a brief description of the growth of the quality movement within the context of higher education, and Australian higher education policy in particular. The chapter then presents case study to explore academic boards' formally documented roles in academic quality assurance in contrast to those quality assurance tasks that the academic boards actually undertook, drawing on theories of the risk society, the audit explosion, performativity and fabrications.

Chapter eight analyses case study data relating to the future of Australian university academic boards and considers whether the roles of academic boards might expand or contract as time goes on. The chapter also identifies a number of specific characteristics that appeared to either assist or hinder the effectiveness of the three case study academic boards and engages in some preliminary theorisation about the characteristics of an effectively board. Finally, the chapter draws on interview responses to undertake an analysis of apparent shifts in the nature of collegial governance within universities before speculating about what this might mean in the future.

The final chapter of this thesis serves as a conclusion and it draws on the data to respond directly to the research question regarding whether there is a continuing role for academic boards in Australian higher education governance. It also further considers the research process and limitations before identifying a number of potential implications of the findings for contemporary academic boards, including ways that boards may possibly improve aspects of their practice. The chapter also suggests possible areas for further research in respect of university academic boards.

Chapter 2 — Setting the Research and Policy Context

Introduction

This chapter sets out a critical review of literature relating to certain aspects of university governance including the changing relationship between universities and the state as enacted through policy, particularly within Australia and the UK. It also incorporates a discussion of globalisation and higher education governance, including the impact of factors such as the knowledge economy, neoliberalism and managerialism. It concludes with a summary of recent research relevant to university academic boards; and a critical consideration of literature on ways of improving academic boards.

In addition to the theoretical framework and conceptual tools set out in chapter three of this thesis, additional literature on academic governance is discussed within each of the data discussion chapters of this thesis, these being chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8. These chapters address, respectively, the issues of governance; academic quality assurance; power; and the future of the academic board. Thus, this chapter reviews only that literature which sets the context for and facilitates an understanding of the factors which have affected university governance in general and academic boards in particular.

The university, the state and policy moves

Consideration of the role of the state with regard to education is important, in part because in most western democracies such as the UK and Australia, higher education is at least partly funded and regulated by the state, and for which the state is held accountable. However, the power of the state goes far beyond the exigencies of money and rules about how it can be spent. As the following discussions of the university and the state, and then the impact of globalisation will show, '[e]ducation is of specific interest for government, both because it is a major expenditure and also

in the context of emergent knowledge economies, because of the processes of commodification of knowledge and information' that the state wishes to direct towards national interests (Blackmore 2010a, p. 1). Moreover, patterns of governance within government flow through to universities and impact not only on the way those institutions discharge and report on their obligations to the state, but also on the ways in which they govern their own, internal, affairs.

The state, or the nation state as a self-governing national entity is known, includes all levels of government and government institutions. Thus, Pusey describes 'the state' as incorporating not only elected government, but also including the police, the military, the constitution and 'the complex of legal, political, and bureaucratic institutions that together, and albeit variably, comprise the state apparatus of 'developed' nations like Australia' (Pusey 1991, p. 1). However, others describe the state in ways which more overtly explore the complex power arrangements and inter-relationships involved. For example, Jessop defines the state as:

... an ensemble of socially embedded, socially regularized and strategically selected institutions, organizations and social forces and activities organized around (or at least actively involved in) making collectively binding decisions for an imagined political community. (Jessop 2002, p. 6)

Similarly, but more simply, Rhodes describes it as a 'complex set of institutional arrangements for rule operating through continuous and regulated activities of individuals acting as occupants of officers' (Rhodes 1988, p. 97; as cited in Rhodes 1997, p. 11). Thus, nation states are powerful entities but they exercise that power indirectly:

State power ... is not exercised by the state as such: the state is not a subject. Nor does it originate entirely within the state itself or from among the state's personnel. Instead, it depends on the balance of forces within the wider society as well as within state apparatuses. (Jessop 2002, p. 6)

The relationship between the nation state and higher education within western democratic countries has shifted inexorably since the beginning of the 20th century. During the post-war period of the welfare state within the UK and Australia, the state played a dominant role in the provision of services, taking responsibility for key areas such as health, education and housing, both in response to working-class pressure but also to ensure the necessary workforce for economic growth and development (Rhodes 1997). This was the time of 'mass production of consumer

goods, large hierarchically-organized business organizations, assembly-line technology, mass consumption and an interventionist state' (Rhodes 1997, p. 173). Higher education was considered to be a public good, essential for the achievement of desired national improvements in productivity and equality and for 'sustainability of democratic citizenship values, and for a nation's social and physical wellbeing' (King, R. P. 2009, p. 21). Thus:

Historically seen as a human right, and public and individual good, state education has served as the great democratic lever for economic development, social mobility, and amelioration of social inequalities. (Luke 2005, p. 171)

Not surprisingly, state investment in higher education grew during this period; indeed it was seen as a 'social good that the state had an obligation to fund' (Tapper 2007, p. 160). Universities were largely empowered to both govern and manage their own affairs as they saw fit (Blackmore, Brennan and Zipin 2010b) but within limits imposed by highly centralised education bureaucracies (Rhodes 1997; Jessop 2002).

The dismantling of the welfare state commenced in the late 1970s and early 1980s in response to a general shift to the right in global politics driven by a powerful set of economic ideologies, including NPM, that 'were based on neo-liberal principles expressing both the failure of 'big' government and a commitment to free-market solutions' (Peters 2007, p. 159). This shift occurred despite the different political regimes in place at the time within the UK, US and Australia, and it had a profound impact on the higher education sector. Indeed, a number of authors suggest that the changes in the relationship between higher education and the state have been universal (see for example van Vught 1989; Braun and Merrien 1999; Harman and Treadgold 2007), with the common threads being the need for universities to respond to vastly increased demands for access to higher education (Blackmore 2009); state requirements for educational outcomes that support 'concrete social, political and economic goals' (Braun and Merrien 1999, p. 13); the pressures of international education markets (Marginson and Considine 2000; Blackmore 2009); and a call for accountability, assessment, efficiency and effectiveness that facilitates the government 'steering from a distance' (Braun and Merrien 1999, p. 13; Marginson and Considine 2000, p. 46; Harman and Treadgold 2007, p. 13; Blackmore 2009, pp. 2–3). Accordingly, van Vught describes within the UK a powerful combination of severe budget cuts and changes to mechanisms for higher

education funding 'allowing central government to steer the system more in accordance with the objectives it judges to be worthwhile' (van Vught 1989, p. 78; see also Kickert 1995; and Kickert 1997). Higher education was therefore becoming an 'economic resource' which enabled the state to use financial control as a means of facilitating change in the policy environment (Tapper 2007, p. 227).

Peters shares the view that the transformation of higher education from a universal welfare entitlement into a private investment in 'human capital' followed a similar pattern within a number of OECD countries:

First, a transparent alignment of the university system to reflect the needs of an emerging 'post-industrial' economy, with increasing demands for highly trained, multi-skilled, tertiary educated workers. Second, the introduction of new forms of corporate managerialism and the emulation of private sector management styles ... Third, the introduction of corporate or strategic planning and the move to institute a form of 'ownership monitoring' in order, allegedly, to reduce the financial risk of the State. Fourth, under neo-liberalism, there was an attack on faculty representation in university governance and the general attempt to discredit democratic forms of university governance on 'efficiency' grounds. Finally, the introduction of user-charges, student loans, and the creeping privatization of the system as a whole took place in varying degrees in countries like New Zealand, Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom. (Peters 2007, p. 160)

Whilst some suggest that these developments were triggered primarily by economic factors (see for example Meadmore 1998), others consider the situation to have been a more complicated, subtle realignment of the relationship between the sector and the state in which the state becomes an investor seeking a return (Tierney 2003); or in which the state sees universities as an essential means of achieving the 'knowledge economy' (Moodie 2007, p. 74; Peters 2007, p. 168). However, there is also a prevailing view that the shifts have been prompted, at least in part, by the growth of managerialism and, more specifically, of NPM within the public sector incorporating a fundamental belief in the superiority of the private sector in terms of efficiency and effectiveness (Deem 1998; Salter and Tapper 2002; Shattock 2006; Bleiklie and Kogan 2007; Harman and Treadgold 2007). The convergence of all of these forces has revolutionised higher education in the past 30 years or so, inexorably changing its role, mode of operation and place in society.

Whilst a more detailed discussion of the knowledge economy and the variants of managerialism will be undertaken later in this chapter, it is important to note that their impact on higher education has been profound and not entirely welcomed by the sector, even if some commentators perceive there was no realistic alternative (see for example Shattock 2008). Not the least amongst the impacts of neoliberal orthodoxies has been a paradox between decreased government resources and increased accountability to the state, both in response to direct government demands and also because 'financial stringency has made every institution more responsive to the need to compete for funding from the latest government initiative' (Shattock 2006, p. 30). Both of these factors have impacted on university governance (Shattock 2006) in ways which are considered in some detail in chapters 5 – 8 of this thesis. Further, it is argued that the relationship between the state and changes within universities is more complex than it might at first appear and that government demands for changes were particularly effective at this time only because they coincided with larger developments taking place simultaneously (Marginson and Considine 2000). These included an expanded role for intellectual labour within in the economy which brought business and universities together in new ways; the remaking of government itself arising from global economic and cultural change; and economic rationalism (Marginson and Considine 2000). However, others assert that while at a superficial level some of the policies driving changes to higher education within western democracies have been common, in fact the changes manifest quite differently, and for different reasons, at the national and local levels (Meek 2003a; Bleiklie and Kogan 2007), particularly with regard to relative levels of 'institutional autonomy' (Bleiklie and Kogan 2007, p. 485). It is therefore appropriate to separately consider policy changes in higher education within Australia and the United Kingdom.

Australian higher education: historical dispositions

Historically, the place of higher education within Australian society has been vastly different to that within the US, for example, and it is suggested that this has shaped development of the Australian higher education sector (Pusey 1991; Marginson and Considine 2000). For example, it is argued that rather than investing in higher education locally, the Australian elite, which was 'not very interested in Australian identity ... always sent its sons and daughters abroad only so that they could return with some advantage over their compatriots ...' (Pusey 1991, p. 233). Pusey also asserts that unlike the United States, within secular Australia 'there was none of the ... civic

republicanism of those old American New Englanders who were driven to public duty, and to learning, by the fear of God' (1991, p. 233). Thus, Australian higher education did not evolve from the church, as it did in the UK for example, and was not largely funded by private enterprise, as it was in the US. Instead, Australian universities have traditionally been more utilitarian and beholden to the state for funding than their counterparts elsewhere, with a strong vocational orientation driven by the rising middle class (Marginson and Considine 2000).

Following world war two, 'Australia underwent a rapid expansion of government systems of universal education, professionalisation of teaching, and after 1972, free university education' (Blackmore 2009, p. 6). Indeed, this was the welfare state, in which universities had a key role in 'nation building' (Jessop 2002, p. 152), not only with regard to development of the future workforce, but also in more subtle ways including through 'instilling desirable dispositions, values, and attitudes that conform to prevailing political visions and economic imperatives' (Luke 2005, p. 169). Thus, during this era:

... universities were expected to provide the growing number of professionals and business persons needed for production, mass consumption and public programs. It was expected also that the Australian university would sustain the humanities and the arts, as befitted a civilised nation; and would foster psychology, economics, sociology and other social sciences necessary to administration and public order. Above all, universities were the home of the sciences and technologies, seen by Australian governments of the day—like all governments throughout the world after Hiroshima—as the key to military and economic competitiveness, industrial development and social progress. (Marginson 2002, p. 411)

However, significant reform of Australian higher education that focused on massification commenced in the 1980s following election of the Hawke Labor government, under the leadership of Minister John Dawkins. These changes, known as the 'Dawkins' reforms' and introduced after much debate in 1989, signalled a 'Thatcher-like commodification of the tertiary education system' (Pusey 1991, p. 148) which abolished the binary divide between universities and colleges of advanced education through a series of institutional mergers, aimed at least in part at engaging Australia in the global economy (Slaughter and Leslie 1997; Duke 2004; Walters 2006); creating more university places (thereby meeting unmet demand) (Slaughter and Leslie 1997); and stimulating research (Slaughter and Leslie 1997; Marginson and Considine 2000). It was at this

time that co-payments for domestic students, in the form of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) were introduced (Pusey 1991). Subsequent reforms of higher education under successive governments have further reinforced efforts to make higher education more financially self-sufficient and corporate in nature (Zipin and Brennan 2003) in accordance with the prevailing view that university education bestows a private benefit which should be at least partly paid for by the individual (Zipin and Brennan 2003).

It is argued by some that the overriding imperative for these changes was economic rationalism (Pusey 1991; Meadmore 1998; Nagy and Robb 2008) with the aim of ensuring that higher education engaged more explicitly with the market (Meadmore 1998) thus reducing the public sphere to the private sphere and public policy to business policy (Pusey 1991). However, Marginson and Considine suggest that the model applied by the Australian federal government at this time was 'not so much the market as the corporation ... regulating itself through targets, management plans and performance controls' (2000, p. 28). This resulted in increased competition for student places and research dollars and, in common with the UK and US, state monitoring of performance through institutional profiling (Slaughter and Leslie 1997; see also Zipin and Brennan 2003). Thus, Blackmore describes a complex set of inter-relationships arising from the implementation of 'principles of new managerialism and a neo-liberal faith in the market as the mechanism to 'distribute' educational provision' (Blackmore 2009, p. 2).

When considering Australian higher education in relation to that elsewhere, some assert that direct government intervention has been greater in Australia (see for example Marginson and Considine 2000; Zipin and Brennan 2003; Harman and Treadgold 2007), while others argue that the changes were experienced here somewhat earlier and to a larger extent than in other nations (Marginson and Considine 2000; Harman 2001; Meek 2003b). This became most apparent in the 1980s when many nation states, in response to globalisation, forged links with other national economies to form regional governance structures such as the European Union (EU), the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the North American Free Trade Alliance (NAFTA). In contrast, Australia and New Zealand were geographically isolated from any European alliances and culturally isolated from Asia-Pacific alliances (Breglin and Higgutt 2000). Compared to the USA with its extremely complex higher education structure and Canada's strong provincial structure that modified national policy direction, Australia and New Zealand are also smaller nation states with

nationally funded higher education systems and were thus more open to more radical reform by governments seeking to restructure within a globalised economy (Slaughter 1998; Marginson and van der Wende 2007). For example, Pusey writes that there has been a ‘triumph’ of economic rationalism and neoliberalism in Australia, where the ‘state apparatus is caught within projections of reality that give primacy to ‘the economy’” (Pusey 1991, p. 10). Within this context, Marginson and Considine argue that Australian universities have developed certain distinctive features: first, they have traditionally been more state-dependent than universities in the US and Britain; second, for cultural reasons, expectations of higher education in Australia have always been markedly utilitarian in nature with strong leanings toward ‘applied’ rather than ‘pure’ knowledge; third, managerial and neoliberal policies have been enforced more rigorously here than in the US as fiscal constraints have been tighter and competition reform more rigorous. As a result, public institutions, including universities, have been under extreme pressure to corporatise their operations (Marginson and Considine 2000, pp. 53–5). Marginson and Considine are critical that despite differences between the Australian higher education sector and others, Australian universities have not devised services and activities that meet these uniquely Australian needs but have instead imitated and drifted towards American models (Marginson and Considine 2000). Since 2000 these trends have been overlaid by UK and EU approaches in quality assurance and research assessment (Blackmore 2010a).

Finally, with the emergence of international rankings of universities, Australian policy makers and university managers have sought to restructure, internationalise and specialise so as to be seen to promote quality as a national system but also to achieve excellence for individual high status institutions to attract research investment and students (Blackmore 2009; Rizvi and Lingard 2010).

Following the election of a federal Labor government in late 2007, the Bradley review of Australian higher education considered the extent to which the sector was positioned to compete in the global economy (2008, p. xi). The review found that Australian higher education was ‘losing ground against a number of its competitor countries on a range of indicators’ (p. xvi) and recommended, amongst other matters, a substantial increase in the proportion of the population with a higher education qualification and corresponding increases in financial support to students and funding of universities (p. xviii). The recommendations of the Bradley review were widely supported within the

sector (Davis 2008; Bradmore and Smyrniotis 2009) within a context of significant concern about the ability of Australian universities to maintain their dependency on fee-paying student income through continued growth in international student numbers in the wake of substantially increased global competition (Davis 2008; Bradmore and Smyrniotis 2009). In response to the Bradley review and an almost simultaneous review of innovation (the 'Cutler Review'), the Australian Government announced a suite of changes which included the uncapping of undergraduate student places in the form of a demand-driven funding model, the re-introduction of indexation for teaching and research training institutional grants, and an increased pool of funding for research infrastructure (Commonwealth of Australia 2009b; Gillard and Carr 2010). In 2010 the Government also commissioned a review of higher education base funding with a view to establishing ongoing 'principles for public investment in Australian higher education' (DEEWR 2011d). The final report was released in December 2011 and recommended increased base funding for teaching, increased funding for certain disciplines, the continued regulation of maximum student contributions, and that the balance of student to government contributions be fixed at a ratio of 40:60. (Lomax-Smith 2011, p. vii). The Government is expected to announce its response to the review later in 2012.

The United Kingdom higher education: historical dispositions

It is argued that prior to the late 1970s the British higher education system was fully-funded, internally-directed, self-governing and, by virtue of this combination of characteristics, unchallenged (Lapworth 2004). This was not least because the funding body, the University Grants Committee (UGC), served as a buffer between universities and the state (Slaughter and Leslie 1997; Shattock 2006). In contrast to its more elite history (Lapworth 2004), UK higher education expanded exponentially between 1945 and 1970, with the Robbins Committee declaring in 1963 that 'all those who qualified for entry and wanted a place should be able to attend college or university' (Slaughter and Leslie 1997, p. 41). However, the environment changed significantly following the election of the conservative Thatcher Government in 1979 which was driven by a neoliberal economic orthodoxy (Henkel 2000) leading to severe public sector budget cuts and the imposition of increased competition, including 'a more market-orientated system of higher education ...' (Shattock 2006). The commencement of the 1980s therefore marked a significant shift to externally-driven higher education reforms:

Whereas in the past the university sector had dominated its own reform processes, now reforms were directed from outside and were dictated by considerations that derived from an external perception of how state-funded institutions should operate. The informal structures and relationships that had served the universities (and the country) well over the post-War period, and that were widely admired by overseas commentators, proved inadequate to preserve the status quo when government itself changed and the perceived needs of the country put explicit pressures on identifiable outcomes of the higher education system. (Shattock 2008, p. 186)

It is suggested that the most significant push for widespread changes to British higher education came from the Jarratt Committee, (Slaughter and Leslie 1997; Shattock 2006). Thus the publication of the Jarratt report in 1985 saw universities depicted as 'corporate' organisations that needed to engage in suitably corporate practices' (Dearlove 2002, p. 260). In turn, this fuelled the introduction of managerialism within the sector (van Vught 1989). In 1992 polytechnics and other non-university higher education providers were designated as universities (Shattock 2006). As such, they were encouraged to openly compete with traditional universities for government funding with a view to increasing the cost effectiveness of higher education and providing an expansion in the size of the sector to cope with massively increasing demand (Slaughter and Leslie 1997). The subsequent and highly contentious Dearing report (1997) called for university accountability in meeting the challenges of educating increasing numbers of students with decreasing government funding per student (Trakman 2008). This trend was later reinforced in the Lambert report (2004) through calls for university councils to establish strategic and business plans and to monitor university performance through key performance indicators (Trakman 2008).

The UGC was abolished in 1988 and replaced by the Universities Funding Council and later by the four higher education funding councils for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, headed by chief executives appointed by and responsible to parliament (Shattock 2006). In 2003 HECS-style student contributions were introduced and these were increased in England in 2006 (Mandelson 2009; Cable and Willetts 2010; BIS 2011a). In early 2009 the then Labour government commissioned the 'Independent Review of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance' with the resulting report of the 'Browne Review' (2010) being published subsequent to the election of a Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government in 2010. The new government considered the report of the Browne Review within the context of the 'Global Financial Crisis' which occurred in

late 2009 and which contributed to a substantial budget deficit and government spending cuts (BIS 2011a, p. 4). It subsequently announced a 40% cut in government funding for higher education teaching to be replaced by student 'fees that attract a real rate of interest' (Thompson and Bekhradnia 2010, pp. 1-2). The government's higher education policy position was consolidated in a white paper, *Higher Education: Students at the heart of the system* (2011a), predicated upon 'shifting public spending away from teaching grants and towards repayable tuition loans' (Thompson and Bekhradnia 2011, p. 1). The stated aims of the white paper included a substantial reduction in government spending on higher education teaching; the facilitation of greater competition between institutions within the sector and the introduction of student demand-driven place allocations; the provision of increased support for disadvantaged students, including those from low socio-economic backgrounds; increased focus on quality of teaching; and the establishment of a new regulatory and quality assurance framework (BIS 2011a). However, criticisms of current UK government higher education policy include that the model may not in fact reduce overall government spending on higher education to the extent forecast and that it will result in substantially more government control over and direction of universities than was the case in the past (Thompson and Bekhradnia 2011). Further criticism suggests that by quarantining science-based subject areas from the funding cuts, other subject areas including the arts and humanities are effectively left with little or no government funding for teaching (Vasagar 20 October 2010).

In summary, the structural changes to UK higher education since the early 1980s have included significant growth in student numbers and a substantial decline in public funding per student (McNay 1999), in part due to a push for efficiency and increased output to address issues of massification (Peters 2007). From the point of view of those working within universities, this has meant:

[g]overnment interference has greatly increased; formula funding and earmarking has reduced institutional autonomy; the introduction of market forces has produced undesirable policy shifts and encouraged commercialism particularly in relation to international students; the demand for accountability both in respect to quality and in the imposition of corporate styles of institutional governance have created an immense burden of bureaucracy and has weakened the powers of

academic bodies *vis à vis* governing bodies; managerialism is seen to have increased and funding declined. (Shattock 2008, p. 184)

It is argued that the United Kingdom ‘demonstrates dramatically the pattern of change that has taken place in tertiary education ... in response to global competition’ (Slaughter and Leslie 1997, p. 40). The similarities between the transformations in higher education in the UK and in Australia are both evident and marked by significant policy exchanges; however, there are also differences. First, some of the more market-style developments, such as the HECS scheme, were introduced first in Australia and have been used as a model elsewhere, including within the UK. Second, the initial reforms in Australia were introduced under a Labor government while in the UK the Thatcher government was conservative, suggesting the power of neoliberal policy discourses seen as a response to globalisation. Third, the removal of the binary divide in Australia was, in general, achieved by way of a series of institutional mergers between older established universities and colleges of advanced education (or the equivalent) which Slaughter and Leslie argue ‘tilted the system as a whole in the direction of technoscience’ because of the former CAE influence (1997, p. 49). In the UK the polytechnics gained university status directly (Henkel 2000) rather than through mergers. Fourth, prior to the 2009 global financial crisis (which impacted Australia significantly less than elsewhere) it was suggested that the influence of managerialism upon higher education was greater in Australia than in the UK and US (Marginson and Considine 2000; Bleiklie and Kogan 2007; Nagy and Burch 2009). In particular, Bleiklie and Kogan describe Australia as having implemented ‘more radical New Public Management policies’ than elsewhere (2007, p. 486). Thus managerialism provided a mechanism for control of higher education funding which was in turn more limited in Australia than elsewhere due in part to the prevailing neoliberal orthodoxy and also arising from rapid increases in higher education participation which, due to a relatively low population-base, could not be funded by the tax payer. Managerialism also enabled increased competition between institutions, in particular for international students, as critical sources of income to offset public funding shortfalls (Blackmore and Sachs 2007).

Trends in higher education developments which are common to both Australia and the UK include massification; a reduction in per-student government funding; the increased corporatisation of higher education, including of academic work; the development of global and national partnerships; international comparison between universities; and increased accountability requirements. Thus,

notwithstanding the cautions of some who, as noted earlier, argue that the forces driving changes to higher education are very different across the globe (Bleiklie and Kogan 2007), the end results are not dissimilar (Slaughter and Leslie 1997, p. 48; Bradshaw and Fredette 2009).

Globalisation and governance

Although universities have always been international in terms of research, staff and student mobility, globalisation and neoliberalism have had a profound impact on the role and place of higher education within the state, which has in turn affected the way university governance is played out at the local level. This section will explore these forces and the complex relationships between them.

Globalisation

Despite the frequency with which the word 'globalisation' appears within the literature, there is no agreed definition (Vaira 2004; Sidhu 2006; Rizvi and Lingard 2010). Thus, the concept of globalisation remains multifaceted and contentious with regard to its 'fundamental features, contents and, above all, outcomes' (Vaira 2004, p. 484) and can include both 'contradictory and contingent sets of possibilities' (Currie and Newson 1998, p. 141). Moreover, although globalisation is facilitated by contemporary world-wide information and communication technology networks (Castells 2000a, 2000b, p. 61), it is argued that it is not a new force (King, R. P. 2010; Rizvi and Lingard 2010) and is therefore not primarily modern (Held et al. 1999; Morrow and Torres 2000) and that the impacts of globalisation are not uniform across the world (Currie 1998b; Rizvi and Lingard 2010).

Theories of globalisation have tended to revolve around consideration of the relationship between two opposing forces: convergence and divergence (Marginson and Mollis 2001; Vaira 2004; King, R. P. 2009). The notion of convergence derives from Di Maggio's and Powell's concept of institutional isomorphism (a component of their theory of new institutionalism) which suggests that as organisations change due to pressures of globalisation, they become increasingly similar (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, 1991). Reasons for this homogeneity include the coercive forces of

the state and other organisations in a position of authority; modelling (or imitating) the behaviour of other institutions in response to uncertainty; and normative pressures associated with organisation and the professions (DiMaggio and Powell 1991). For example, it is argued that as a result of convergence forces within global higher education, western notions of research and scholarship both dominate and define current worldwide academic practice (Lo 2011). Conversely, literature addressing the pressures for divergence proposes that difference is encouraged by 'more extensive and complex encounters with cultural 'others'' (Marginson and Mollis 2001, p. 597), with 'a greater prominence accorded to bottom-up processes of manipulation, localization, interpretation, mediation, resistance and so on' (Vaira 2004, p. 484).

However, it would be simplistic to suggest that theorising globalisation and higher education involves alignment with either convergence or divergence. For example, some argue that these two forces operate simultaneously, creating 'both sameness and difference and ... the relationship between them is open-ended and contingent' (Marginson and Mollis 2001, p. 602). Others have attempted to unify similarity and difference by merging 'global tendencies and local responses' into new models (Vaira 2004, p. 484; see also King, R. P. 2010). Examples include Lingard's 'glocalization', a melding of the local, national and global and the 'tension between homogenization and heterogenization' (Lingard 2000, p. 81); Marginson's and Rhoades' 'glonacal agency' which seeks to bring together 'global, national and local dimensions and forces' (Marginson and Rhoades 2002, p. 281); and Appadurai's 'cannibalization' of the 'triumphantly universal and the resiliently particular' (Appadurai 1996, p. 43).

It is argued that contemporary globalisation, that force we are seeing now, commenced in the 1970s when certain 'technological and economic changes [were] directed toward finding replacement sources for strategic raw materials and searching for new forms of production that would consume less energy and labor' (Burbules and Torres 2000, p. 12; see also Morrow and Torres 2000, p. 28). The features or characteristics of contemporary globalisation include the products of 'a unique conjuncture of social, political, economic and technological forces' (Held et al. 1999, p. 429) and as a result its effects are neither foreseeable or predestined (Rizvi and Lingard 2010) but include dual economic and cultural aspects (Marginson and van der Wende 2007). Thus, globalisation is much more than a global economy or free trade. However, Currie and Newson also

warn that 'globalization does not constitute a unidirectional, invariable, and unalterable package of social, economic, and political changes, as much literature by advocates and critics alike tends to imply' (1998, p. 145). From this perspective, globalisation is multidirectional, infinitely variable and constantly changing (Jessop 2002).

Within this context, the economic characteristics of globalisation include the transition from industrialised mass-production to a 'highly-skilled and flexible multiskilled workforce fostering and catalyzing innovation and market leadership' (Dudley 1998, p. 31); a rise in international advertising and consumption made possible by a reduction in trade barriers and restrictions between nation states (Burbules and Torres 2000); and the increasing flow of money, goods and ideas (Blackmore and Sachs 2007) via information and communication technology infrastructure (Castells 2000a). Globalisation includes the impact of supranational bodies such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (Lingard and Rizvi 1998; Marginson and Rhoades 2002) which 'have urged governments to change public policy based on the social good to one based on the economic good, leading toward greater deregulation and privatization' (Currie and Newson 1998, p. 149).

In political terms, globalisation is dominated by the powerful discourses of regionalism, westernisation and democratic governance (Dudley 1998; Held et al. 1999), and capitalism (Morrow and Torres 2000). However, it is noted that the broader governance implications of globalisation are as yet principally unaddressed, with no formal government at the world level (Bauman 2001). Nevertheless, global political issues such as climate change, human rights and terrorism 'demand international cooperation for their effective resolution' (Held et al. 1999, p. 50) and are addressed (or not, as the case may be) through institutions such as the United Nations, the International Court of Justice and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, amongst others. Moreover, globalisation has seen the development of powerful regional alliances such as the European Union (EU), amongst others. Through such alliances, 'contiguous nation-states ... share a number of common attributes, have significant levels of interaction, and ... enjoy institutional cooperation through a formal multilateral structure' (Held et al. 1999, p. 74). Partly because of the impact of the supranational and regional organisations, and partly because of the

power of the market which over-rides national borders, some argue that globalisation effects a reduction in the autonomy and authority of the nation state (Dudley 1998; Burbules and Torres 2000; Morrow and Torres 2000). Conversely, others suggest that although globalisation is transforming the ways in which state power is exercised, it is not necessarily diminishing that power (Held et al. 1999; Wright and Rabo 2010). Thus, as Currie observes, the responses of governments in Australia, Canada, Great Britain and the United States to globalisation have been similar:

... reduce the state to a minimalist state and increase the power of the market forces. (This, at least, has been the rhetoric of the governments, although they have maintained the power to intervene so that these governments in reality have not become the 'night watchman' states that some politicians have desired). (Currie 1998a, p. 16)

This 'hollowing out of the state' (Rhodes 1997, p. 19) and the corresponding 'steering from a distance' (Marceau 1993; Currie and Vidovich 1998, p. 168; Marginson 2007, p. 321; Blackmore 2011a, p. 446) principally derives from the ultimate faith in the market with a reduction in the role of government so that the 'market can do its work'. These concepts will be explored in further detail below in the subsection addressing neoliberalism and public/private divide.

Culturally, globalisation is characterised by a 'global interconnectedness within all key domains of social activity' (Held et al. 1999, p. 27), aided significantly by transportation and communication technologies (Torres and Rhoads 2006). However, it is not just the extent but also the speed of these global flows which is transformative (Held et al. 1999). This results in an increasingly internationalised world population (Torres and Rhoads 2006) and, at the same time, 'a tension between the ways in which globalization brings forth more standardization and cultural homogeneity while also bringing more fragmentation through the rise of locally oriented movements' (Burbules and Torres 2000, p. 14). That is to say, some consider that one response to globalisation is 'movements to preserve and promote local cultural identity and independence' (Marginson and Rhoades 2002, p. 282).

Practices of Globalisation

It is argued by some that there are a number of what can be described as practices of globalisation, 'which are sometimes overlapping, sometimes mutually reinforcing, but also at times contradictory' (Currie 1998b, p. 5). This subsection will briefly explore the practices or concepts of the knowledge economy, new public management (NPM), and neoliberalism, which have each had a profound impact on higher education governance.

The knowledge economy

Blackmore and Sachs (2007, p. 9) report that what is known as the 'knowledge economy' had commenced by the 1980s in response to the labor-market shifts in western democracies from industrialised mass production to innovation under which 'education and training become increasingly conceived of as instruments of economic policy' (Dudley 1998, p. 24). Scholars of regulation theory describe this as a shift from 'Fordism' to 'post-Fordism' (Dudley 1998; De Weert 1999; Vaira 2004; Brehony and Deem 2005; Kenway et al. 2006). Under post-Fordism:

[I]nnovation extends far beyond issues of technology and technology transfer to include social systems of innovation ... the cultivation and promotion of an enterprise culture and enterprising subjects, and a wide range of organizational and institutional innovations that bear on the changing forms of competitiveness. (Jessop 2002, p. 127)

This requirement for innovation led directly to 'an emphasis on the related roles of education and national systems of innovation produced by policy directed towards collaboration between government, academic, and industry' (Kenway et al. 2006, p. 20). Thus, one of the most important aspects of the knowledge economy is the role of the nation state, both in promoting the commodification of knowledge itself for the purposes of revenue generation and in encouraging the application of that knowledge so as to secure a competitive advantage for the national economy (Jessop 2002, p. 129). Moreover, '[w]hen knowledge is marketed and monopolized it becomes a private good. It is no longer a public good available to all ...' (Kenway et al. 2006, p. 57).

Accordingly, supranational organisations such as the OECD and the World Bank, among others, have been instrumental in promoting the notion of the knowledge-based economy to nation states as central to their ongoing economic growth and development (Kenway et al. 2006). Thus, the OECD has declared that '[k]nowledge is now recognised as the driver of productivity and economic

growth, leading to a new focus on the role of information, technology and learning in economic performance' (OECD 1996, p. 3). Arising from the knowledge economy, 'higher education was believed to be the key to the continuing growth of national economies' (St George 2006, p. 590). Nevertheless, the role of higher education differed greatly from that of the post-war period when education was seen as a tool of nation building (Lingard 2000). The dismantling of the 'welfare state' and its replacement by the 'regulatory state' (King, R. P. 2009, p. 73), involved 'the emergence of a new policy consensus globally within education' (Lingard 2000, p. 83):

Whereas in the earlier period the bureaucratic paradigm was seen as the model of efficiency and fairness, the bureaucratic form came under strong critique as the globalized economy took hold ...What was now required, so the argument went, was a flatter organizational arrangement geared toward the production of clearly stipulated outcomes as the lowest possible cost. (Lingard 2000, p. 84)

Moreover, the speed of change meant that traditional state bureaucracies were deemed to be inappropriate (Lingard 2000). Thus, there was a 'retreat of the state as the primary financier of knowledge' (De Weert 1999, pp. 58-9), achieved by way of increased student fees and decreased funding per student. Additionally, innovation and the collaboration between universities and business were encouraged for the purposes of increasing diversifying and increasing non-government income (King, R. P. 2009).

It is argued that within this context higher education is a key source of innovation, defined as incorporating 'new knowledge, scientific inventiveness, technology, markets, enterprise, competitiveness and entrepreneurialism' (Kenway et al. 2006, p. 35). The concepts of the knowledge economy and innovation are both deeply embedded within the Australian Government's current policy on higher education. For example, the policy agenda to 2020 describes innovation as 'the key to making Australia more productive and more competitive' (Commonwealth of Australia 2009a, p. 1) while 'universities and public research organisations provide knowledge to fuel the innovation system and skilled people to drive it' (2009a, p. 5). Moreover, in its response to the 2008 Bradley review of higher education, the Commonwealth set out a:

... commitment to the expansion of a high quality university sector, to educate the graduates needed by an economy based on knowledge, skills and innovation ... This approach is essential to enable Australia to participate fully in, and benefit from, the global knowledge economy. Funding that meets student

demand—coupled with ambitious targets, rigorous quality assurance and full transparency—is the only way Australia can meet the knowledge and skills challenges it faces. (Commonwealth of Australia 2009b, p. 5)

This is consistent with the OECD position that higher education is essential to the achievement by governments of ‘social and economic goals’ (OECD 2007, p. 11).

Managerialism

King asserts that public choice theory, ‘which suggests that governments rather than markets create inefficiencies’ underpins certain public sector reforms known commonly as managerialism (2009, pp. 40-1). In turn, managerialism assumes that ‘lack of competition in the supply of public goods and services has the same negative consequences as in the private sector’ (King, R. P. 2009, p. 41). Thus:

Managerialism refers to introducing private sector management in the public sector. It stresses: hands-on, professional management; explicit standards and measures of performance; management by results; value for money; and more recently, closeness to the customer. It is often referred to as the ‘3Es’ of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. (Rhodes 1997, p. 93)

Additional aspects of managerialism include heightened competition between providers; promotion of individual choice amongst consumers; and a regulatory state which co-ordinates and directs rather than provides services and which demands accountability for outcomes (King, R. P. 2009; Meek et al. 2010). Hence, managerialism has facilitated the steering from a distance approach noted earlier in this thesis.

While much of the literature appears to use interchangeably the various names by which managerialism is commonly known, such as new public management, new public administration or economic rationalism (see for example Blackmore and Sachs 2007; Shattock 2008; Rizvi and Lingard 2010), several authors differentiate between them. For example, Deem and Brehony distinguish between ‘new public management’ and ‘new managerialism’ arguing in particular that while new public management derives from public choice theory and is based on notions of reducing bureaucracy and introducing market-based forces within the public sector with a view to enhancing efficiency and effectiveness, new managerialism is an ‘ideological approach to

managing public services' related to notions of 'state regulation' and 'manager power' (Deem and Brehony 2005, p. 219; Meek et al. 2010). Similarly, the ideological concept of new managerialism is described as 'neoliberal managerialism' by Deem, Hillyard and Reed (2007, p. 9). Confusingly, a similar argument is made by Henkel who differentiates between 'value for money' managerialism (2000, p. 42) and neoliberal 'new public management' (2000, p. 51). Others differentiate between 'hard' and 'soft' managerialism (see Deem 1998) with Meek et al arguing that hard managerialism prevails in Australia, at least amongst 'middle-level academic managers' (Meek et al. 2010, p. 5).

It is argued that managerialism 'arose out of the material and cultural conditions of globalization' (Blackmore and Sachs 2007, p. 46) and tended:

... towards universality in the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, in much of Eastern Europe and Asia, and in parts of the developing world where reforms ... are often generated in World Bank loans-financed programmes. In developed nations and the relatively robust policy systems of emerging nations such as China, Singapore and Malaysia, the reforms are often motivated by desires for global competitiveness but generated from within the nation. The new public management has been applied less completely in Western Europe and North America. But it has influence everywhere. (Marginson and van der Wende 2007, p. 9)

The profound impact of managerialism on higher education and university governance, discussed later in this thesis, includes a focus on output controls and performance measurement (Peters, Marshall and Fitzsimons 2000; Blackmore and Sachs 2007).

Neoliberalism

Although, Marginson and Considine caution that 'there is more to globalisation than neo-liberal ideas about the primacy of market economics and the minimization of democratic politics' (2000, p. 46), many posit that neoliberalism constitutes a dimension of globalisation (see for example Gayle, Tewarie and White 2003; Olssen and Peters 2005; Torres and Rhoads 2006; Blackmore 2009; Rizvi and Lingard 2010) through which world economic relations are structured (Olssen and Peters 2005). Moreover, neoliberalism can be conceived as being expressed through the practices of managerialism (Peters, Marshall and Fitzsimons 2000).

Neoliberalism is a philosophy that 'espouses 'survival of the fittest' and unleashes competition among individuals, among institutions and among nations, freeing them from what are reconstrued as the burdensome chains of social justice and social responsibility' (Davies and Bansel 2005, p. 51). Characteristics include the 'the supremacy of markets' for distribution of 'goods, services and incomes' and the retreat of the state so as to avoid 'an unnatural intrusion into the workings of the market' (Clarke and Newman 1997, p. 14). Thus, like managerialism, neoliberalism facilitates the hollowing out of the state and steering from a distance.

However, Ong disputes perceptions that neoliberalism is limited to 'savage capitalism' and 'unfettered markets', suggesting that it is, in fact, considerably more complex (2007, p. 4). Accordingly, she argues that neoliberalism does not have 'a fixed set of attributes with predetermined outcomes' but is instead a 'logic of governing that migrates and is selectively taken up in diverse political contexts' (Ong 2007, p. 1). Thus, Ong asserts that:

In Great Britain and other advanced liberal nations, neoliberalism has been defined as a mode of 'governing through freedom' that requires people to be free and self managing in different spheres of everyday life – health, education, bureaucracy, the professions, etc. There is also a stress on responsibility at the community level, and new requirements of self responsibility by individual subjects. Neoliberalism as a governing by calculation suggests new relations between the governing, the self-governed and the space of administration. (Ong 2007, p. 4)

These differences in the way neoliberalism is understood and portrayed can be at least partly attributed to the different theoretical positions taken by each author. However, in general terms it is fair to say that through globalisation, neoliberalism has impacted on higher education in numerous ways. For example, neoliberal policy suggests that higher education is at least partly a private good because it provides 'individuals with the opportunity to become upwardly career mobile and better paid' (King, R. P. 2009, p. 21) and so should be funded, structured and marketed accordingly (Pusser 2006; Marginson 2007; Hawkins 2008). Governments have therefore focused on the 'private rather than the public benefits of education' (Blackmore and Sachs 2007, p. 10). Accordingly, Apple argues that this has exacerbated inequities involving 'class and race' (2000, p. 67). The effects of neoliberalism on higher education are further considered in the following section.

Higher education and globalisation

It is argued that the generic impacts of globalisation on higher education include 'continuous global flows of people, information, knowledge, technologies, products and financial capital' (Marginson and van der Wende 2007, p. 5). However, the more negative effects are reported to include unrelenting competition for students, funds and prestige with performance indicators used to assess and measure individuals, departments and universities against each other; corporate managerialism which has replaced collegiality; commercialisation of research leading to more applied research agendas and less curiosity-driven research; and the commodification of knowledge and university services leading to the sale of knowledge to students and others (Currie 1998b). Additionally, there has been a reduction in government funding for higher education (De Weert 1999), which has tended to be seen by western governments as a private good and therefore discretionary (Slaughter 1998). Derived from the importance of innovation, there has also been a much greater emphasis on science and technoscience (at the expense of the arts and education), and a tightening of the relationship between multinational corporations and state agencies with regard to product development, together with a focus on intellectual property (which has restricted the freedom to share research findings and scholarship) (Slaughter 1998).

Most particularly, the generation and dissemination of knowledge is no longer the sole domain of the university:

On the one hand, globalisation has meant the internationalisation of education, new information technologies as the internet gives greater access to information which opens up new possibilities. On the other, universities no longer monopolise, or even define, what is worthwhile knowledge. (Lingard and Blackmore 1997, p. 14)

This has led to much consideration of the role and future of the university (see for example Readings 1996; Barnett 2000; Marginson 2010a; Barnett 2011) and it has highlighted the nature of education as both 'cause and effect, determining and determined' (Apple 2000, p. 58).

However, not all national governments have reacted to the effects of globalisation upon higher education in the same way (Bradmore and Smyrniotis 2009), as they attempt to 'balance a range of internal and external pressures and constraints' (Burbules and Torres 2000, p. 10). Indeed,

globalisation is only one of the factors affecting domestic education policy. Thus, Marginson describes:

worldwide higher education as a relational environment that is simultaneously global, national and local. Institutions such as universities ... live their lives in all three of these often overlapping dimensions, more or less simultaneously. (Marginson 2010b, p. 201)

Within this context it is asserted that globalisation has tended to be 'more about what the United States does to the world than what the world does to the United States' (Marginson 2004, p. 3) and it is therefore not surprising that some argue that many American universities are not particularly outward looking (Marginson and van der Wende 2007). However, Apple posits that globalisation has indeed been a driver of United States education policy, arguing that:

It is impossible to understand current education policy in the United States without placing it in its global context. Thus, behind the stress on higher standards, more rigorous testing, education for employment, and a much closer relationship between education and the economy in general, is the fear of losing in international competition and the loss of jobs and money to Japan and the 'Asian Tiger' economies, to Mexico, and elsewhere (Apple 2000, p. 59)

This statement could equally apply to the United Kingdom and Australia, and to any number of western nations that feel particularly threatened.

The Impact of globalisation on higher education governance

Simon Marginson describes traditional views of governance as having the twin dimensions of internal and external, where 'Internal governance rests on the three estates of faculty, executive leaders and boards of trustees ... [and] [e]xternal governance involves policy actors, state higher education agencies, and boards located outside colleges and universities' (2004, p. 1). However, Marginson is highly critical of this artificial distinction because in practice internal and external dimensions of governance overlap and it is necessary to 'bring an understanding of their relationship into the structures of governance themselves' (Marginson 2004, p. 2). King supports this view, arguing that one impact of contemporary globalisation on higher education governance is a degree of isomorphism arising from overlap between the external with the internal, where:

Model adoption abroad may spur the view that existing domestic institutional structures require reconsideration and that governance changes are 'inevitable', especially if found in strongly emulated countries such as the USA. (King, R. P. 2010, p. 584)

Thus, Marginson argues that in addition to internal and external governance, globalisation forms a new third dimension of governance which is 'influential in shaping the terrain on which systems of governance operate, looming larger in the practical agendas of executive leaders and boards ...' (2004, p. 3). For example, both Blackmore and Marginson consider global university rankings are a new form of governance, facilitating competition and comparison between nations (Blackmore 2010a) and enhancing the ability of government (and then management) to impose a culture of performance measurement within universities (Marginson 2010c, p. 30). Literature relating to the impact of the audit and risk societies and academic quality assurance is discussed in chapter 7, 'Academic quality assurance'.

Relevant research on university academic boards

There is little empirical research on university academic boards apart from the significant studies extensively cited in this thesis, *Power and Authority in British Universities* (Moodie and Eustace 1974), and *The Enterprise University: Power, Governance and Reinvention in Australia* (Marginson and Considine 2000).

It is more than thirty years since Moodie's and Eustace's landmark study was undertaken of decision-making within British universities, examining the evolution, process and form of university government using data gathered from a large but undisclosed number of universities and employing methods that included open-ended interviews and document examination (Moodie and Eustace 1974). In analysing their data, Moodie and Eustace were informed by a systems approach and therefore sought to make generalisations across the British higher education sector (at it was at the time) rather than discussing or identifying individual universities or cases.

Moodie's and Eustace's text provides a detailed discussion of senate (academic board equivalent) agendas, committees, meetings and of time taken by the senate to consider agenda items (1974,

pp. 75-89). They also seek to enunciate the senate role as it was at that time. Their work is highly significant, in part because it paints such a comprehensive and descriptive picture of university governance (and especially academic boards) in another era. Describing their study as 'methodologically old fashioned', they attempt a 'tell it like it is' approach but are nonetheless aware of the impact of their own interpretations (Moodie and Eustace, p. 11) and therefore might perhaps be considered postpositivists. However, the field of higher education has been radically transformed since Moodie and Eustace undertook their research and this enables historical comparison with other data which may since have been collected and with present-day university governance, the results of which are set out in chapter 5, Governance.

Methodologically and theoretically different from Moodie's and Eustace's work, Marginson's and Considine's case study of decision making within Australian universities in the 1990s was described briefly in chapter 1. Listing the theoretical basis for their research as resource dependency theory (suggesting that universities will do whatever is necessary to maintain the flow of revenue and to maximise institutional prestige) and isomorphism (universities imitating each other's behaviours so that they become more similar over time), Marginson and Considine are highly critical of non-empirical research (2000, p. 11). They trace the origins of universities and factors shaping higher education; the decline of collegiality and the significant influence of new public sector management; the development of the enterprise university; and the various components of university governance and management (such as vice-chancellors and the senior executive, the university council, the academic board and committees). In a discussion informed by Clark's (1998) characteristics of transformational universities, Marginson and Considine conclude with consideration of what makes a successful university. A relatively small but significant section on the effects of these developments on the academic board suggests, in particular, that boards' lack of control over resources renders them largely irrelevant and confined to the role of a 'rubber-stamp' with no real role in major strategic, financial or management decisions (Marginson and Considine 2000, p. 116). They note the direct impact on the academic board of tension between the dominant management paradigm and the traditional academic discourse of equal colleagues, which 'management always wants to subordinate but can never quite do without' (2000, p. 115).

Research which is relevant to the role of the academic board in the contemporary university within the UK includes a report entitled *A Final Report to the CUC on Good Practice in Six Areas of the Governance of Higher Education Institutions* (2004), commissioned by the Committee of University Chairmen (CUC). Based on a national survey of chairs of university councils, council members and secretaries, the study examined six key areas of governance practice including the relationship between the university council and the senate/academic board and the development of committee structures. It found that the roles and responsibilities of senates and academic boards varied widely from 'very significant responsibilities covering a wide area of academic policy' to the narrower scope of 'academic quality, course approval and assessment' (CHEMS Consulting 2004, p. 51). However, with respect to this disparity between institutions, the report notes that there is considerable pressure for 'central control over issues such as the maintenance of quality and approval of new academic developments' (CHEMS Consulting 2004, pp. 51–2). This suggests that some UK universities have taken, or are thinking of taking, steps that would remove key items of senate or academic board business and therefore render those bodies superfluous. To this end, the study found that:

Some universities express a strong continuing commitment to the idea of a senate/academic board as central to the collegial values of governance in higher education. Others find such bodies increasingly irrelevant and are asking if the time has not come for them to be abolished, although this would — of course — need a fundamental change in the charter and statutes/instruments and articles of institutions. (CHEMS Consulting 2004, p. 52)

In UK research that did not directly examine the academic board, Kolsaker used a Foucauldian epistemology to examine the relationship between managerialism and academic professionalism to determine whether the way in which the impact of managerialism on the professional lives of academics is portrayed in the literature is overly pessimistic (Kolsaker 2008, p. 513). She concluded that:

... academics are reasonably comfortable working within managerialist regimes, and that they are instrumental in sustaining them. Far from becoming disenchanted by the impact of managerialism upon their daily life, they appear, on the whole, to be making sense of and adapting to the changing environment whilst retaining a strong sense of professional identity. Perhaps dichotomous analyses of managerialism and professionalism are now outmoded (Kolsaker 2008, p. 523)

Kolsaker's findings suggest that academics are not as disenchanted with managerialist regimes as Marginson and Considine argue, which bodes questions about how academic staff might view the changing role of the academic board with regard to tensions between the discourses of management and academia.

In Clark's *Creating Entrepreneurial Universities* he described five common elements observable in a study of five European universities undergoing transformation in 1995 (Clark 1998, pp. 5–7), with an updated analysis of the same universities published in 2003. Clark describes a new type of university with a flourishing bureaucracy that is focused on initiative and development and not on preventing errors or maintaining the status quo (Clark 2003, pp. 108–9). Although not directed at academic boards, Clark's findings suggest reasons why contemporary academic boards may be in such difficulty. For example, two commonly reported primary roles of the academic board are academic policy and quality assurance; both of these tasks are aimed at preventing errors and maintaining the existing state of affairs. If, in contrast, university management is focused on 'initiative and development', as suggested by Clark's case studies, then the activities of the academic board may seem out of step and irrelevant. This raises questions about tensions between higher education accountability frameworks and the pressures faced by universities to be innovative and entrepreneurial, and the ways in which these tensions may impact on the role and function of academic boards.

In Australia, Meek's and Wood's, report for the then Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, *Higher Education Governance and Management, An Australian Study* (1997) sets out the results of a national higher education governance and management survey of the key issues and problems associated with university operations in the 1990s. The survey targeted those holding key administrative and managerial positions within universities and included executives, deans and heads of academic departments (Meek and Wood 1997, p. 61). The report criticises processes for developing academic policy for being slow and cumbersome and raises concerns about perceptions of the role and nature of the academic board, especially with regard to 'conflict between academic boards and management over decision making prerogatives' (Meek and Wood 1997, p. 82). With respect to opinion about the effectiveness of academic boards, the

report found that while it 'is not unequivocal either way ... it could be concluded that opinion leads towards doubt about effectiveness ...' (1997, p. 82).

Recent analyses of AUQA audits of Australian universities consider the effectiveness of their academic boards. For example, Moodie examined the reports of 17 university audits and identified 'Academic boards' weak or incomplete discharge of their role in assuring the standards of their universities' graduates leave their universities exposed in view of the numerous indications of variable standards both within and between institutions' (Moodie 2004, p. 37). Baird also found that within the 36 audit reports published at the time her article was prepared, 'there are very many more recommendations than commendations in findings about academic boards' (Baird 2007, p. 107). She concludes that '[t]aken as a whole, the audit reports suggest that a proportion of academic boards struggle to perform their quality assurance and leadership roles (Baird 2007, p. 110). Similarly, in an AUQA report, *Thematic Analysis: The Role of Academic Boards in University Governance*, Dooley acknowledges that the vast majority of AUQA recommendations in respect of academic boards 'are concerned with maintenance of academic standards, effective implementation of policy, and accreditation and review' (Dooley 2007, p. 10). With regard to the role of the academic board in reviewing standards for teaching and learning, research and overseas programs, Dooley goes on to say that 'audit panels question the extent to which policy is implemented and systematically monitored' (Dooley 2007, p. 10). In summary, these authors found much to criticise which respect to the effectiveness of contemporary Australian university academic board, although it must be acknowledged that the first round of university audits conducted by AUQA tended on the whole to be limited to 'activities in pursuit of institutional objectives' (Baird 2007, p. 103), that is, fitness for purpose, rather than comparing each university and its various operations to some pre-defined best practice examples.

Repositioning academic boards

One of the issues explored in this study is whether it is considered that the work of academic boards can be 'improved' and, if so, how it might be done. This issue is also considered within a proportion of the literature. In Australia, Baird suggests that academic boards could begin by considering the reasons 'why they are having difficulty in achieving leadership in collegial

processes of debate and academic quality assurance, despite the best efforts of many academic board chairs to encourage innovation' (Baird 2007, p. 112). She speculates that three possible reasons are 'authority, skills and trust' where 'authority' refers to a lack of authority (as opposed to conferred powers) by the academic board within the institution, 'skills' refers to inadequate knowledge and expertise amongst board officers and members relevant to academic board functions, and 'trust' refers to a lack thereof between the board and the vice-chancellor and senior executive (and possibly also the university council) (Baird 2007, pp. 112–3). Similarly, Woodhouse and Baird suggest a way forward relating to amending the terms of reference and composition of the academic board to one 'made up of acknowledged experts and leaders [that] could better discharge quality assurance functions and assist in holding others accountable for the achievement of the institutions' strategies' (Woodhouse and Baird 2007, p. 10). Whether such a body could still be considered an academic board or might instead have become a committee of management is not addressed.

Dooley's advice includes strategies aimed at ensuring that the academic board has the power and authority to require its policies to be implemented; that the academic board undertakes effective quality assurance without undue focus on compliance; that initiatives developed at the board are taken to the senior executive for agreement upon an implementation strategy; and striking a balance at academic board meetings between openness and transparency and the institutional requirement for prompt decisions (Dooley 2007). More specifically, Winchester suggests that responsibility for the academic purpose of the enterprise should be delegated from the university council to the academic board to provide a legislatively-based rationale for academic boards' operation and scope (2007, pp. 7–8).

Within literature derived from the US, Mortimer and O'Brien Sathre (2007) set out a list of dot points of best practices in academic governance. In common with a number of others from elsewhere (see Shattock 2002 for example), McInness identifies the need for trust between and among the various university decision-making bodies (2006, p. 127). He makes a number of suggestions for strengthening university academic board equivalents, including improving the induction of new members, clarifying the roles of both management and the board, and systematically reviewing and reporting on board effectiveness. He also suggests harnessing

academic expertise and authority in ad hoc or short-cycle working groups operating outside the formal decision-making structures (McInnis 2006, p. 129).

In general, it could be considered that there are two problems with literature of this nature. The first of these is identified by Marginson and Considine and although it applies more generally to the state of research and scholarship on higher education, is directly applicable to the academic board.

It must be said that many texts concerning universities are deficient in their capacity to explain the university, or anything else. Rather than provide us insights into what is actually happening, most of this literature focuses on shifts in *The University* as an imagined abstraction with only the briefest reference to the realm of the concrete condition. Some authors are anxious about The University and defensive about its traditions, others want to advance current changes more quickly, but both groups discuss the topic without reference to real life in universities. (Marginson and Considine 2000, pp. 40–1)

Thus, much of the literature which seeks to improve academic governance and academic boards is quite general in nature and therefore risks not addressing what is currently happening in some, or even many, particular universities. The second problem is articulated by Birnbaum, who is highly critical of what he describes as 'normative statements on governance' (1988, p. 7). He argues that although authoritative statements that enunciate elements of sound governance practice aim to reduce or limit uncertainty and conflict regarding governance roles and procedures, they are problematic because such statements do not identify the specific structures and processes that would implement the principles so espoused and in so doing become something to be wished for but that cannot be achieved (Birnbaum 1988, pp. 8–9). Birnbaum cites the US Joint Statement on Governance of Colleges and Universities (American Association of University Professors, 1967) as the most influential of the normative statements published in the US, but there are numerous examples elsewhere, including the statement of *The Purpose and Function of Academic Boards and Senates* promulgated by the (Australian) National Committee of Chairs of Academic Boards and Senates (2005). Birnbaum is also critical of the incapacity of such statements to appreciate the differences between various kinds of institutions wherein policies useful in one type may be harmful or irrelevant in another (1988, pp. 8–9). This is because structures and practices are likely to be context specific and so the 'how to' may need to be determined at each institution. The difficulty is that the literature aimed at the repositioning of academic boards within entrepreneurial universities

appears not to recognise or articulate this qualification. A further difficulty is that within this literature there appears to be little consideration of the impact of university power relations on academic boards, a matter discussed in subsequent chapters.

Academic boards do not exist in isolation within their universities. The changes to their role and function that were introduced in chapter 1, Introduction, are suggestive of academic boards as indicators of the evolving nature of university governance and management and also of broader shifts in the relationship between universities and the state. Within this context, this chapter has considered literature relating to the nation state and higher education in western democratic nations, including some historical dispositions with respect to Australia and the United Kingdom. The chapter has further considered the broader notion of globalisation and its impact on higher education, particularly through the impacts of the knowledge economy, managerialism and neoliberalism. It has also examined the impact of these practices and processes on higher education reform and its governance. Within the context of the evolution of higher education from a welfare entitlement to a private good that must be at least partly paid for by the individual (rather than by the state) and its central place within the globalised knowledge economy or marketplace, the chapter has demonstrated the profound impact of the practices of managerialism and neoliberalism within higher education. In particular, it is argued that this has fostered a culture of corporate governance, competition and performance measurement. The following chapter theorises these shifts and traces their effects on university governance modes practiced within individual universities whilst also building a conceptual framework for the analysis of data within this thesis.

Chapter 3 — Conceptual Framework

Introduction

Although principally a Bourdieuan analysis, the discussion of data within this thesis draws from a number of theories to explore aspects of Australian university academic boards and their operations. In particular, two groups of theories were instrumental in the analysis of the research data. The first of these describes external influences on university governance and includes theories of the state and higher education. The second category of theories can be applied directly to internal university governance and particularly to the academic board, and includes the audit explosion (Power 1997); the risk society (Beck 1992); performativity and fabrications (Lyotard 1984; Ball 2000); and Bourdieu's framework for analysing power relations (Bourdieu 1979, 1986, 1988a), including what this might mean for organisational change within universities (Kloot 2009). Within chapter 6, Power, Gramsci's theory of hegemony (1971) is also introduced to enable the exploration of aspects of managerialism. The use of multiple theories in this way enables a multifaceted exploration of the data and provides, in particular, the capacity to explain the relationships between the macro (global, nation state), meso (institutional) and micro (practices) dimensions of the analysis, although these are increasingly difficult to distinguish between, both theoretically and in practice.

This chapter commences with a discussion of theories of governance, the state and higher education before considering in greater detail specific models of university governance. It then introduces Bourdieu's conceptual tools and his theorisation of the field of higher education, including criticisms of Bourdieu's theories, before considering Bourdieu's conceptualisations of power. The chapter also sets out a theoretical framework for the analysis of academic quality assurance as a mode of higher education governance. Finally, the connections between these theories are considered, establishing a conceptual framework for this research.

Theories of governance, the state and higher education

This subsection introduces theories of the state and higher education as well as theories of governance within a context of the repositioning of academic boards arising from substantial shifts in the nature of university governance.

While governance is clearly one component of government, it is also a wider and more inclusive concept (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011). Governance therefore incorporates 'the process of governing as a whole, as in the setting of government priorities, policy goals and their implementation' (Stokes 2011, p. 1). However, governance is not a uniform concept and is both contested and context specific (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011). Indeed, forms of governance exercised by the state have changed dramatically over time. For example, Blackmore describes three modes: hierarchical and bureaucratic governance during the 20th century, incorporating the welfare state and direct government provision of services and a focus on government inputs; corporate and entrepreneurial governance taken from the private and business sectors (incorporating the influences of neoliberal market principles and managerialism), with decreased government service provision but increased accountability requirements so that the focus is on outputs as a consequence of neoliberal restructuring in the late 20th century; and network governance, in which the 'state and society, public and private' work together in partnership as a potential or emergent mode of governance more appropriate for the 21st century (Blackmore 2011a, p. 12). However, while it might be tempting to see modes of governance as operating sequentially, that is, in distinct phases, it is suggested that they coexist, in ways that can be contradictory and conflicting (Rhodes 1996; Blackmore 2011a). For example, Rhodes (1996) notes that bureaucracy, markets and networks operate simultaneously as modes of governance at the level of governmental practice.

Modes of governance exercised by and through the state can both influence and direct governance exercised within universities (Zipin 2010, p. 8). For example, in contemporary terms, universities must earn commercial income to compensate for decreased government funding per student, often achieved through community and industry partnerships, whilst simultaneously responding to government requirements for teaching and research that address national priorities. Moreover, increased government

accountability requirements heighten pressures within universities in areas including reporting against goals, targets and indicators; and the meeting of legal and regulatory obligations (Horta 2009; Zipin 2010). However, rather than there being a clear distinction between internal university-based and external state-based dimensions of governance, it is argued that in practice, they are inter-related and overlap (Marginson 2004). This is reflected in theorisations of the relationship between higher education and the state. Clark's modes of state co-ordination of higher education is arguably the most well-known theory of this type, comprising four basic processes that link fields of study and institutions: bureaucracy, profession, politics, and market (Clark 1979). Clark later simplified this into a triangle of co-ordination wherein he analysed shifts between the three elements of the state, market and the academic oligarchy (Clark 1983, p. 143; see also Mora and Vieira 2009, p. 79). Applying Clark's model, Kogan and Hanney suggest that higher education policy and the systems resulting from it therefore flow out of 'a triangle of forces: professional-collegial; governmental-managerial and market', making it possible to compare systems and determine which combination of forces was dominant at any one time (Kogan and Hanney 2000, p. 24).

Other theoretical approaches to the relationship between the state and higher education rely on establishing a continuum between state control and state steering wherein:

One approach emphasises centralised, direct steering and planning based and/or rule based control of higher education whereas the other approach operates within a decentralised system with indirect control based on market(like) mechanisms and self-regulation. (Gornitzka 1999, p. 23)

For example, van Vught's model of the relationship between the university and the state describes a 'state control model' on the one hand, characterised by both a strong regulatory state bureaucracy and a strong academic oligarchy, and a 'state supervising model' on the other, focusing state-driven accountability mechanisms and strong university governance and management (van Vught 1993, p. 31; Gornitzka 1999). However, while increases in government demands for accountability can be seen as deriving from a withdrawal of the state from process control (how universities operate) it does not necessarily follow that the state would reduce its control over what it is that universities produce (product control) (Neave and van Vught 1991; Blackmore 2010a).

More recently, and within a European higher education context but with general applicability, Dobbins, Knill and Vögtle have developed a framework, based on Clark's triangle, comprising "the market-oriented model", the 'state centred-model' and the 'academic self-rule model" (2011, p. 669). The framework proposes indicators for measuring which model or models predominate in a number of observable areas of higher education governance including 'institutional balances of power', 'funding mechanisms' and institutional autonomy and therefore enable the tracing of the 'extent and direction' of change over time (Dobbins, Knill and Vögtle 2011, pp. 673–9).

Each of these theoretical frameworks suggest that any one nation can display blends of some or all of the forces or elements, and the adoption of a new governance mode by the state does not necessarily mean rescission of all aspects of the previous one or ones. Therefore, although it is suggested that university governance in western democratic nations is tending on the whole to towards marketisation (see for example De Boer and Goedegebuure 2007), characterised by state steering, some individual nations or indeed sub-sections of higher education systems within those nations, might remain aligned with academic self-governance, for example, or state control (Dobbins, Knill and Vögtle 2011).

University governance models

Just as multiple modes of governance operate simultaneously at the level of the state (Rhodes 1996; Blackmore 2011a), McNay describes a framework for university governance (depicted below) comprising four quadrants: (A) collegium; (B) bureaucracy; (C) corporation; and (D) enterprise (1995, 1999), contending that all four modes 'co-exist in most universities, but with different balances among them' at varying times (1995, p. 106). These four basic models of university governance are common to much of the literature; however, drawing from theorists of higher education systems (see Clark 1983; Birnbaum 1988) McNay overlays his framework with the concepts of loose or tight coupling which enables it to take some account of organisational and cultural power within the university setting. Notions of loose or tight coupling derive from organisational theory (Weick 1976; see also Schein 1985) with the degree of coupling dependent upon the number of common or interdependent variables shared by components of a system (Weick 1976). Within

higher education, the ‘loosely coupled relationship between policy initiatives’ issued at the top of the organisation and the outcomes achieved at the grass-roots level has ‘long been recognised by academic theorists’ (Trowler 2002, p. 3). For example, the notion of universities as ‘loosely coupled organized systems’ was also held by Clark, who described the primary characteristics of that phenomenon as ambiguity resulting in ‘soft technologies, fragmented work, and participants who wander in and out, as well as from vague goals’ (1983, p. 23). Thus, if within a university environment what is taught, by whom and according to what rules, is determined by academic departments that were independent of central administration, the coupling would be loose. On the other hand, if such decisions could only be made within a policy and financial environment determined by the centre then the coupling would be somewhat tighter. This is depicted in figure 1, below. Thus, within quadrants A and B power is distributed throughout the institution, while within quadrants C and D it is concentrated at the centre (McNay 1995, p. 110).

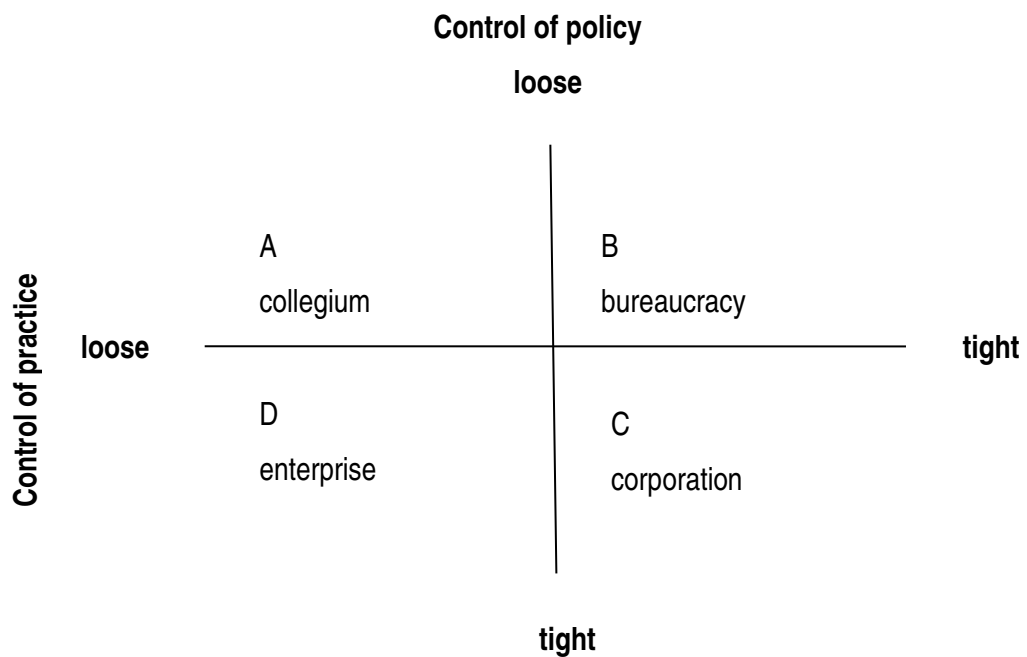


Figure 1: Controls and cultures in education institutions (McNay, 1999, p. 45)

While a number of authors draw directly on McNay’s framework within their own work (see for example Ramsden 1998; Berdahl 1999) and others describe shifts in governance

pathways that are clearly aligned with his thinking (such as Bleiklie and Kogan 2007), theorisation of university governance now extends far beyond the four quadrants originally described by McNay. Nonetheless, it is useful to use his framework as a starting point for a brief exploration of modes of university governance.

Collegial governance

The first governance model on McNay's framework (1999) is collegial governance (Tapper and Salter 1992; Slaughter and Leslie 1997; Dearlove 2002; Meek 2002; Amaral, Fulton and Larsen 2003; Meek 2003a; Tierney 2004a; Trakman 2008) which was dominant in the UK and Australia (and other Anglo-Saxon derived higher education systems) from approximately the 1900s until the 1980s (Musselin 2005). Although within a proportion of the literature the terms 'collegiality' and 'collegial governance' appear to be used interchangeably, for the purposes of this thesis it is important to differentiate between them. Accordingly, whereas collegiality encompasses interaction between academics 'that includes the professional sharing of ideas and advice, as well as social support and sociability' (Anderson, Johnson and Saha 2002, p. 47), collegial governance involves consensus based university decision-making by (or a proportion of) academic staff (Middlehurst and Elton 1992). Thus, while collegiality may involve local decisions about individual or team-based teaching, research and scholarship, collegial governance incorporates formal decision-making about university-level affairs.

Key features of traditional collegial governance include the existence of a discipline-based community of scholars (traditionally the professors) responsible for organising its own affairs in a manner which is independent from and autonomous to outside influences (Salter and Tapper 2002). Underlying collegial governance is a critical assumption that academic staff are best placed and equipped to understand the academic goals of a university and how those goals might be achieved (Trakman 2008). However, traditional Anglo-Saxon collegial governance does not have a monopoly on academic staff input to, or even control over, key decisions. For example, in a number of Asian and Eastern European countries the vice-chancellor or equivalent is elected directly by the academic staff and until relatively recently this was also the case in Austria, Denmark and Norway (Fieldon 2008). The shift within these nations to appointment of the vice-chancellor by the university board or council reflects international demands for greater managerial influence

within universities (Fieldon 2008). It accords with the view reported by some that collegial governance is inappropriate and ineffective in the current university climate in part because its decision-making processes are cumbersome and inconsistent with an environment in which decisions regarding management of reduced resources need to be made quickly (Ramsden 1998; Marginson and Considine 2000; Dearlove 2002). Further criticisms include that the transition from elite to mass higher education has broken down the consensus upon which collegial governance was based (Trow 1973); that the self-contained and inward-looking nature of collegial governance is at odds with contemporary institutions' needs to look externally for funds, partners and to service the professions more overtly (Ramsden 1998), discouraging 'individual initiative and risk taking' (Meyer 2002, p. 542).

The role of the committee, and thus of the academic board, is integral to collegial governance (Middlehurst 1993) with the purpose of government by committee being to build consensus out of the range of inputs into the decision-making process (Tapper and Salter 1992). Despite this, some have identified specific links between academic boards and the weaknesses of collegial governance, by highlighting the potential for inequality between those with power (such as professors) and those without (such as more junior academics) (Moodie and Eustace 1974; Lapworth 2004), and the tendency for the academic board to become a bottleneck due to its capacity to 'study, delay and veto' and the inherently protracted nature of collegial governance processes (Clark 1998, p. 131).

Bureaucratic governance

Next on McNay's continuum is bureaucratic governance, associated with processes and procedures, professional administrators (Marceau 1993), 'regulation' (Barnett 2011, p. 46) and 'a hierarchy of decision-making bodies' (McNay 1999, p. 48). Thus, the bureaucratic model assumes that the organisation comprises a 'formal organizational structure' with 'specified roles, clear hierarchies, [and] chains of command' (Davies and Morgan 1983, p. 158). Arguably, bureaucracy was dominant until well into the 1980s, most likely overlaid on collegiality so that many universities operated with a mixture of both modes of governance.

Managerial governance

By the late 1980s what McNay depicts as 'corporation' (McNay 1999, p. 45) and others describe as 'managerialism' or 'new public management' (Deem 1998; Salter and Tapper 2002; Meek 2003b; Bleiklie and Kogan 2007; Deem, Hillyard and Reed 2007; Harman and Treadgold 2007) had begun to be implemented. Some have argued that the increased role of the state in oversight of higher education and the reduction in funding per student that occurred in both the UK and Australia at this time meant that the introduction of managerialism was inevitable (Deem 1998, p. 48). Managerialism facilitated longer-term strategic planning by university councils and chief executive vice-chancellors, supported by 'senior management 'teams' of administrators and manager-academics', these being deemed most able to respond to the 'long-term interests of the institution as a whole' (Dearlove 2002, p. 265). Moreover, it is suggested that managerialism filled the more obvious gaps in collegial and bureaucratic governance forms (Marginson 2010a, p. 145).

Criticisms of the managerial model abound (Middlehurst and Elton 1992; McNay 1995; Meek and Wood 1997; Currie and Newson 1998; Lingard and Rizvi 1998; Berdahl 1999; McNay 1999; Shattock 2006; Blackmore and Sachs 2007; Shattock 2008; Trakman 2008; Zipin 2010), including that it leads to the "commodification' of education, displacing academic distinctiveness' (Trakman 2008, p. 70), that the model is inappropriate for universities because they are not, and are not like, commercial businesses or corporations (Middlehurst and Elton 1992; Shattock 2006; Nagy and Robb 2008; Trakman 2008; Bradshaw and Fredette 2009) and that, in any case, the private sector has as many, if not more, governance failings than universities (Meek and Wood 1997; Shattock 2006). There is also a significant risk that the focus on output controls and performance measurement (Peters, Marshall and Fitzsimons 2000; Blackmore and Sachs 2007) will limit the time and energy for, and change productive practices related to, teaching, scholarship and research that are contrary to quality and the core purposes of universities.

Entrepreneurial governance

The final model in McNay's continuum is entrepreneurialism, a concept identified by Clark (1998) who described universities moving beyond the restrictive funding and bureaucratic conventions of state-run higher education systems by fostering innovative academic behaviour, engaging in partnerships with external bodies, and generating non-government

funding to subsidise activities and enable further entrepreneurial activity (Clark 1998; Shattock 2009a). For some, the driving force behind entrepreneurialism is the market and the task of managing the university necessarily involves identifying opportunities, developing trading relationships and competing (Bargh, Scott and Smith 1996). However, those characteristics could equally apply to managerialism, and not all scholars differentiate these models (see for example Braun and Merrien 1999). The concept of entrepreneurialism in higher education governance is therefore complex and multifaceted. Indeed:

Under the banner of the entrepreneurial university sit many university forms, and many ways of being a university in the twenty-first century. Even so, despite its many and varied forms, entrepreneurialism is not all encompassing. It cannot be a single movement threatening to capture all universities in its wake. (Barnett 2011, p. 43)

That is to say, entrepreneurialism is one of the many forms of university governance simultaneously in operation, being currently more dominant in many universities but less so in others.

In characterising what they describe as the 'enterprise university', Marginson and Considine argue that on the one hand the fundamental mission of the such institutions is to 'advance the prestige and competitiveness of the university as an end in itself', while on the other, 'academic identities ... are subordinated to the mission, marketing and strategic development of the institution and its leaders' (2000, p. 5). Reflecting these paradoxes, reported advantages of the entrepreneurial model include the prominence of the student as client; the challenging of complacency among academics; the potential to stimulate change and enhance community links; and ensuring that costs become a conscious concern (McNay 1999). However, disadvantages include the downgrading of teaching and the potential for compromise of academic standards due to commercial considerations; the curtailment of freedom in teaching and research; and the loss of continuity, coherence and depth due to constant change (McNay 1999; Kok et al. 2010). There are also academic and other disadvantages arising from the unrelenting pursuit of non-government funding (Slaughter and Leslie 1997; Marginson and Considine 2000; Shattock 2009a) such as shifts from pure research to commercial consultancies (Deem 2001; Anderson, Johnson and Saha 2002); the constraints placed on research in industry and government funded

research (Slaughter and Leslie 1997; Deem 2001; Bansel and Davies 2010); and potential concerns around ethics and academic freedom (Henkel 2005).

Network governance

It has been mooted that next on the higher education governance model continuum is network governance. However, as noted above, some argue that as new governance models emerge they are layered or superimposed on top of existing models, rather than replacing them, so that a mixture of older and more contemporary governance models co-exist within the one university (Bleiklie and Kogan 2007; Kolsaker 2008; see also Barnett 2011). Thus, vestiges of collegial governance may coexist with bureaucratic governance, network governance and managerialism in the one university, buffeted by a range of external and internal forces, as depicted in the following simple diagram.

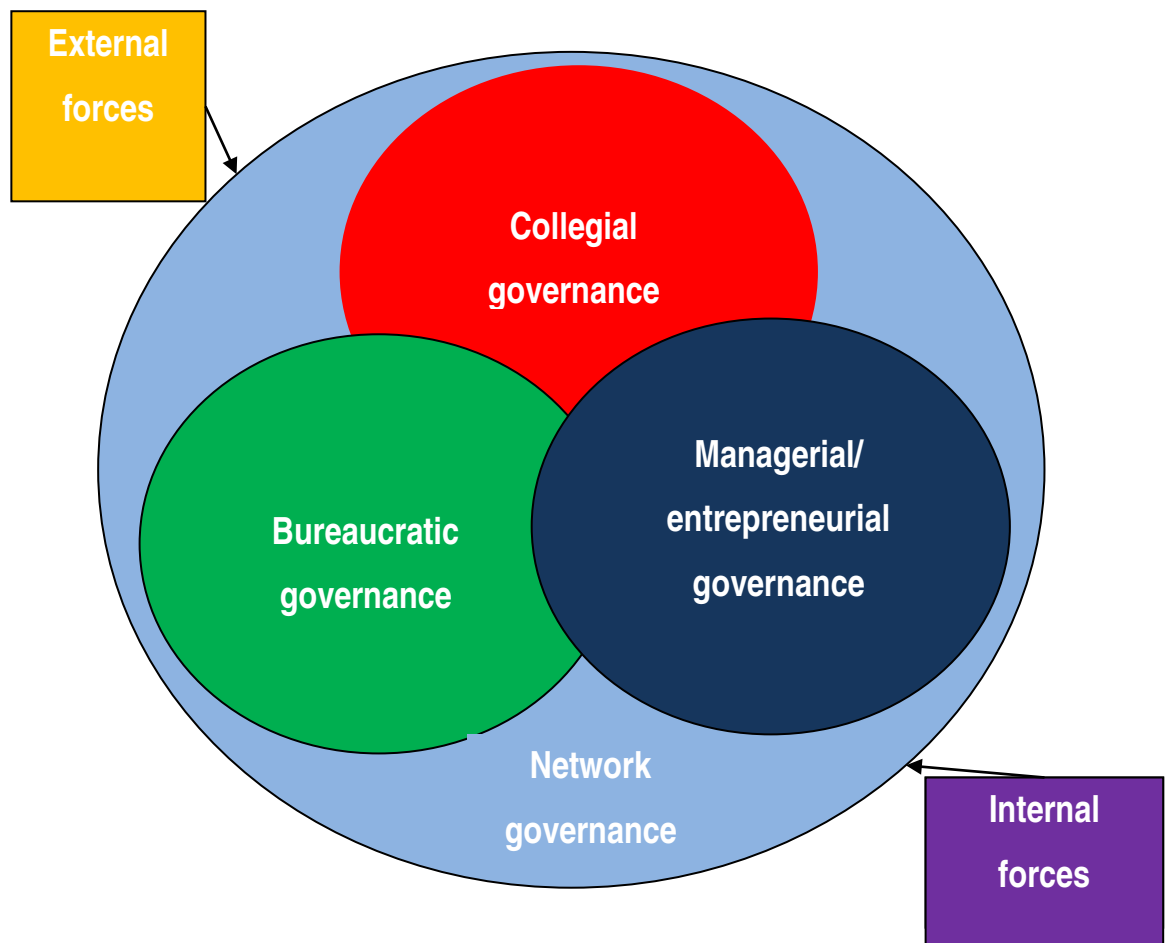


Figure 2: Interaction between contemporary modes of university governance

According to Castells, 'Networks, rather than countries or economic areas, are the true architectures of the new global economy' (2000a, p. 500). Within this context there is an extensive body of international literature within the field of political science which describes and, less commonly, analyses, policy networks or what is also known as the Anglo-governance model (see for example Rhodes 1996, 1997; Agranoff and McGuire 2001; Bevir and Rhodes 2003; Marinetto 2003; Rhodes 2007). This movement commenced with Rhodes' theorisation of changes in the nature of government in Britain in the late 1980s (Marinetto 2003), such as that exemplified in Rhodes and Marsh (1992). A key theme of this literature is the transition from 'the government of a unitary state to governance in and by networks' (Bever and Rhodes 2003, p. 41) involving 'governments, business corporations, and civil society associations' (Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011, p. 21). Within network governance key 'functions and processes are increasingly organized around networks' (Castells 2000a, p. 500). This is not to say that network governance presupposes that the centre is powerless; however, rather than the hierarchical control traditionally exercised by government, state power is more often exercised through the control of finances and accountability mechanisms over a 'proliferation of networks, which by their very nature have become increasingly complex and independent from central government' (Marinetto 2003, p. 599). Thus, the state influences through incentives and sanctions rather than directs (Rhodes 1997).

The application of theories of network governance has since spread widely to other disciplines and fields, including education (such as by Edwards 2000; Ball 2008; Ferlie, Musselin and Andresani 2008; Rizvi and Lingard 2010; Blackmore 2011a). For example, Ball maps some education policy communities in Britain (2008) while Blackmore examines the potential implications of network governance for equity within educational organisations (2011a). Like Rhodes (1996) Ball and Blackmore each argue that network governance does not simply displace other modes such as bureaucratic or market governance but instead is added to the mix or overlaid (Ball 2008, p. 748; Blackmore 2011a, p. 14). Moreover, network governance catalyses the public, private and voluntary sectors into a co-operative action (Ball 2008; Blackmore 2011a) and in so doing 'explores the changing boundary between state and civil society' (Bever and Rhodes 2003, p. 42) and between the state and the economy and civil society (Ball 2008).

Network governance within a higher education context has gained considerable prominence in Europe (E.C. 2006, p. 10) in response to the growing use of networks within and between individual higher education institutions and other organisations, both nationally and internationally (Blackmore 2009, p. 12). Thus, network governance represents a shift 'from classical hierarchical vertical bureaucratic relationships to more horizontal networked relationships' (Rizvi and Lingard 2010, p. 126). However, although some posit that network governance may have an increasing influence within Australian universities (Edwards 2000; Blackmore 2009) there is presently a lack of empirical research demonstrating its influence within this country.

The five modes of governance explored in this subsection are each potentially highly useful for an analysis of university academic boards. For example, it may be possible to determine which mode or modes might be in operation at any one time, both within the wider university and within the academic board itself and, in turn, how the mode or modes might affect the composition, role and function of the board, as well as its powers and relationships.

This section has reviewed literature on theories deemed relevant to the analysis of data on academic boards and governance, these being theories of the state and higher education and theories of governance, including network governance and governance models. It has also highlighted a number of ways in which these theories may be able to be applied in the analysis of data on Australian university academic boards and, possibly, academic boards more generally. However, a conceptual framework for the analysis of university academic boards that looked only at theories of higher education governance would be inadequate because it would fail to consider the impact of power structures and relations on university decision-making and on the academic board in particular. A theoretical framework for the consideration of power relations within the context of university governance is therefore considered within the following section.

Bourdieu and the field of higher education

This section introduces the primary framework that will be later used to analyse power relations in universities and the place and role of the academic board within those power relations, Bourdieu's conceptual tools and his theorisation of higher education.

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu wrote extensively on higher education (see for example Bourdieu 1984, 1988, 1993 and 1996). Despite criticism that some of this work, such as *Homo Academicus* (1988a), was particular to its time and place in French academic life and is therefore of limited use outside that context (to which Kloot 2009 refers), Bourdieu argued that his analysis is generally applicable within the university field (Bourdieu 1988b; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Indeed, the usefulness of Bourdieu's thinking tools of field, capital and habitus to explore institutional change and power relations within the field of higher education has been well demonstrated by Kloot (2009) in South Africa and Zipin and Brennan (2003) in Australia. In particular, Kloot draws on the two opposing forms of capital within the university field corresponding to the two predominate forms of power that Bourdieu described in *Homo Academicus*, these being academic power and intellectual power. Thus, intellectual capital refers to scholarly expertise and reputation (traditionally within a discipline) and academic capital refers to the process of hierarchical control of a department or organisation. Kloot focuses on the related concepts of organisational change and power, consistent with the reading of *Homo Academicus* as an 'example of social processes as they change and the consequences of their evolution' (Grenfell 2004, p. 67).

Bourdieu's theoretical framework explores the active relationship between 'the individual and their social environment' (Grenfell 2004, p. 27) and it is therefore appropriate to define the three central organising concepts or thinking tools of field, habitus and capital 'only in the context of the theoretical system they constitute, not in isolation' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, p. 96). To this end, Bourdieu described an agent's habitus, or mental structures through which the world is perceived (Bourdieu 1989), as being established in response to contact with bounded space in the form of fields (Grenfell 2004). Central to Bourdieu's theory are the concepts of power struggles and position taking within a field

(Bourdieu 1985; Swartz 1997, 2010) over the particular types of capital or resources that are effective within that field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

The notion of habitus can be characterised as a:

... system of acquired dispositions functioning on the practical level as categories of perception and assessment, or as classificatory principles, as well as being the organizing principles of action (Bourdieu 1990a, p. 13).

Habitus includes 'knowledge and understanding of the world', and so while an individual's habitus is formed in response to their experiences, one's habitus also contributes to the 'reality of that world' (Maher, Harker and Wilkes 1990, p. 11) in that it is both constituted and constituting. An agent's habitus is informative of where they are placed in the social hierarchy and of where others are placed in relation to them (Bourdieu 1989). However, although social structures are constantly developing and changing, habitus predisposes relatively stable and somewhat predictable physical and mental responses in the face of external stimuli (Grenfell 2004). Of necessity, habitus is a product of history; one's habitus can therefore also result in a tendency to persist with behaviours or responses even though they may no longer be useful or appropriate (Bourdieu 1990b). In that sense, Bourdieu's habitus facilitates understandings about why individuals may resist change. However, habitus does not only operate within individual agents. Bourdieu also characterises habitus as operating on a collective level (Swartz 1997; Reay 2004b; Jawitz 2009) where 'individuals who internalize similar life chances share the same habitus' (Swartz 1997, p. 105). Thus, Bourdieu describes a 'class habitus' as 'the internalized form of class condition and the conditionings it entails' (Bourdieu 1984, p. 101) which 'embodies both the material conditions of the existence of the class and the symbolic differentiations ... [in] relation to other classes' (Swartz 1997, p. 163). However, Bourdieu does not limit the concept of class habitus to social class, writing that:

... the practices of the members of the same group or, in a differentiated society, the same class, are always more and better harmonized than the agents know or wish (Bourdieu 1990b, p. 59).

Accordingly, Bourdieu suggests a professorial habitus (Bourdieu 1988a) and a 'linguistic habitus' (Bourdieu 1991, p. 21) while others have drawn on Bourdieu to describe a 'teacherly habitus' (Blackmore 2010b, p. 102), an academic habitus (Reay 2004a), a 'managerial habitus' (Zipin 2010, p. 156) or a habitus residing in a particular academic community of practice (Jawitz 2009).

While habitus can be described as subjective, a field is an objective, differentiated and structured physical or social space or territory with a generally recognisable boundary (Grenfell 2004). Fields are of varying sizes and they exist in relation to one another—there can also be 'fields within fields' (Grenfell 2004, p. 28). 'The effect of a field on an agent ... is dependent on their habitus, their position in particular fields and the strength of the field relative to other fields in which the agent is active' (Rawolle and Lingard 2008, p. 732). Habitus and field are therefore homologous in that they share common 'founding principles', are 'mutually constituting' and 'always evolving' (although not necessarily in the same direction) (Grenfell 2004, p. 27). However, according to Deem and Lucas, the relationship between habitus and field is not a 'rational calculation' but is instead an 'unconscious following of the habitus (2007, p. 118). It is therefore habitus that enables the transfer of attitudes and practices from one field to another (Bourdieu 1984) such as when processes from the business community are imported into higher education governance, a concept described by Rawolle as 'cross-field effects' (Rawolle and Lingard 2008, p. 733).

For Bourdieu, a field is 'a separate social universe having its own laws of functioning' (Bourdieu 1993, p. 162) and he understood universities as being positioned within a broader university field or field of higher education (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Maton 2005; Shelley 2010). Fields produce difference, both between agents within a field and between those inside the field and those outside it (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Within this context higher education is distinguished from other fields, and universities are distinguished from each other, through the products of 'credentialing of knowledge-intensive labour, and basic research' (Marginson 2008, p. 303). However, within fields there can be struggles 'between actors over the boundaries of the field and who may legitimately enter' (Deem and Lucas 2007, p. 118). Thus, definitions of a university, the rules around what constitutes a university award such as a degree and which institutions are 'authorised' (or not) to confer such awards or compete for research funding are often

hotly contested because they establish, in part, the boundaries of the higher education field. Moreover, while there are clearly national fields of higher education, Marginson argues that the impact of globalisation means there is now also a global field of higher education and that the boundaries for that field are defined by the international ranking scales (Marginson 2008, 2010c). This leads to intense competition between universities world-wide as they seek to be included on those lists, or to improve their relative positions, thereby establishing or consolidating themselves within the global higher education field.

Critically, Bourdieu also described a field as a set of power relations in the form of multidimensional space which defines agents or groups of agents according to their relational positions within that space (Bourdieu 1985). The positions assigned to agents are determined on the basis of the form and degree of capital they possess, which in turn affords varying levels of power or status (Maton 2005). Bourdieu has characterised social activity as being like an implicit game between agents as they struggle to secure a greater share of (or if possible a monopoly over) the particular form or forms of capital that are effective in the relevant field (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Naidoo 2004; Kloot 2009). However, such struggles also extend to 'how capital is defined and which capitals are valued' (Deem and Lucas 2007, p. 119), suggesting that capital which affords power at one time within a certain field may not afford the same degree of power within that field at another.

Within Bourdieu's theory there is a direct relationship between field, habitus and capital, with the value ascribed to the capital being derived from the social and cultural characteristics of the habitus of the relevant agent or agents within a particular field or fields (Bourdieu 1984; Maher, Harker and Wilkes 1990). In this way, capital can be characterised as being symbolic; it has value only when it is perceived as such (Bourdieu 1985; Grenfell 2004). Thus, academic reputation, described earlier as intellectual capital, is also a form of symbolic capital (James 1998). Conversely, 'valued resources' constitute a form of power (Swartz 2010, p. 46).

Bourdieu conceives of capital:

as *economic capital*, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights; as *cultural capital*, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications; and as *social capital*, made up of social obligations ('connections'), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility. (Bourdieu 1986, p. 243)

In particular, cultural capital relates to the distribution of knowledge and information, education and its formal qualifications, books, skills, art, music and other cultural pursuits (Bourdieu 1986). Social capital includes social or family connections or networks (Grenfell 2010). The definition and distribution of capital depends upon the field or fields in which it is located, although there may be intense competition for the available capital both within and between fields (Grenfell 2004). This suggests, for example, that universities both possess and create cultural capital (Bourdieu 1988a, 1993), even though individual academics and universities may compete with each other for other forms of capital, such as economic capital in the form of external grants, or social capital in the form of prestige or reputation.

Although Bourdieu did not always distinguish between the forms of capital operating within universities in this way (to which Naidoo 2004 refers), in *Homo Academicus* Bourdieu described two predominant species of capital within the university field: academic and intellectual capital (Bourdieu 1988a). These two forms of capital are polar opposites and are visible as two different power regimes within the university setting (Bourdieu 1988b), where academic power refers to the power of management and is hierarchical and temporal in nature 'enabling domination of other positions and holders' (Bourdieu 1988a, p. 84). By its nature, academic power is 'aligned with economic and political power' (Kloot 2009, p. 474). Intellectual power, on the other hand, is established by virtue of renown or reputation attained on the basis of scholarly or intellectual achievements (Bourdieu 1988a).

Criticisms of Bourdieu

A central theme of Bourdieu's oeuvre is an attempt to overcome the theoretical divide between objectivism and subjectivism (see for example Bourdieu 1990b, p. 25), that is

between the world as constructed by personal, lived experience (Jenkins 2002) and the idea that there exists a physical reality which is independent of this (Burge 2010). In essence, Bourdieu seeks to 'develop a sociology which can transcend the subjectivist/objectivist dichotomy' (Jenkins 2002, p. 25) and he does this, in part, through the notions of habitus and field:

habitus and field ... are intended to offer an alternative conceptualization of the subject, as socially embedded, as embodied dispositions, shaped by one's location within social fields. (Kenway and McLeod 2004, p. 528)

As noted above, for Bourdieu, the habitus is a mental structure through which the world can be understood and is itself a 'product of the internalization of the structures of that world' (Bourdieu 1989, p. 18). Within the context of a field or fields, the habitus enables the bringing together of the subjective and the objective and in so doing recognises the role that each plays in constituting the other.

The use of Bourdieu's theoretical framework to explore organisational change within the field of higher education is contrary to criticisms of his work which allege that the concept of habitus is overly deterministic (Jenkins 1982; Reay 2004b) and that it leaves too little room for self-determination or agency (King 2000; Marginson 2008). Thus, '[t]he concept of habitus fails to capture the varying degrees of incongruity between hopes, plans, and chances for different groups' (Swartz 1997, p. 111). That is to say, it is argued that Bourdieu cannot adequately explain self-transformation (Lukes 2005) or creative practice (Reay 2004b) within a field (Marginson 2008). However, others assert that changed practices occur arising from the interaction between habitus and field (Swartz 1997; Sayer 2005). For example, 'later experiences can modify the habitus and produce new dispositions and skills, enabling people to react in new ways' (Sayer 2005, p. 25). This reading is contested (see for example Butler 1999; King 2000) but is consistent with Bourdieu's wish that his conceptual tools be considered together and not individually. It also responds directly to Bourdieu's assertions that charges of determinism reflect an inadequate understanding of his overall theoretical framework (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Thus Bourdieu employs the notion of 'hysteresis' to describe a discrepancy between a new situation and that in which an agent's habitus was formed. When the

discrepancy is slight, a gradual modification of the habitus occurs; however, where there is a considerable discrepancy, 'rapid transformation can ensue' (Swartz 1997, p. 213), leaving open the potential for crisis in the event that there is a precipitous diminution of opportunity in the field relative to the 'subjective aspirations' of the habitus (Bourdieu 1984, p. 168).

The issue of the extent to which Bourdieu's theory allows a consideration of change will be considered further in chapter 8, which discusses the future of the academic board.

Bourdieu and power

It is argued that for Bourdieu power is a 'fundamental dimension of all social life' (Swartz 1997, p. 6) and in this way is integral to the construction and functioning of the social order. Power is therefore a constant underlying theme in Bourdieu's work which manifests in a number of different but interrelated ways. Bourdieu invokes power directly in the form of capital or 'valued resources' (Swartz 2010, p. 46). For example, within his seminal paper 'Forms of capital', Bourdieu describes capital and power as being 'the same thing' (Bourdieu 1986, p. 243) and in *Homo Academicus*, he clearly depicts academic and intellectual capital as being forms of power (Bourdieu 1988a). Nevertheless, for Bourdieu power is not limited to types of resources because there are also power struggles over those resources (Bourdieu 1984, 1996; Maton 2005; Navarro 2006; Deem and Lucas 2007; Kloot 2009; Swartz 2010). Thus, the various species of capital are described as 'instruments of struggle' (Bourdieu 1988a, p. 264) with regard to the definition of the most legitimate form of capital, the division of capital amongst agents and the worth of that capital (Bourdieu 1996) within fields (Swartz 2010). Indeed, such grappling is integral to the very construction of a field and to the relative distribution of agents within it (Bourdieu 1985). However, Bourdieu also describes a broader field of power in the form of an 'overall social field' (Bourdieu 1996, p. 271) which serves as an arena for a 'struggle over the power to dictate the *dominant principle of domination*' (Bourdieu 1996, p. 265, author's emphasis). That is to say, within the field of power, which encompasses various individual fields, there is played out a struggle for the 'right to dominate throughout the social order' (Swartz 2010, p. 47). Swartz provides the particularly apposite example of the struggle between the economic and the cultural fields for the right to dominate western democratic society (Swartz 2010). He also notes the integral role played by the state in regulating the

field of power and of the political field in providing a means for competing for state control (Swartz 2010). Thus, within the state sanctioned managerialist university, an academic staff member may be dominant within their intellectual field but subordinate within the broader field of power in which the most legitimate forms of capital are economic and political power. A further form of power for Bourdieu is symbolic power which enables an explanation of the domination of subordinate members of society without either their recognition or resistance (Swartz 2010). This concept is explored in further detail in chapter 6, within the context of a discussion of the nature of domination within universities. Less frequently, Bourdieu also invokes power as a physical and linguistic force (Bourdieu 1991) which he juxtaposes against the force of reason or symbolic force (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977).

Within universities power is a constant theme. Not only is there the power of the institution, incorporating the power of the state and the power of management, but there is also the power of the individual or agent who can support or resist institutional power, both consciously or unconsciously. As with the broader society, power within higher education is not static and it is also temporal. Thus, the analysis of data within this thesis will show that interview respondents made frequent references to academic board power that had been lost or gained in comparison to the past. They also speculated about possible shifts in power relations in the future. However, the special nature of universities as producers and purveyors of knowledge makes for a particularly interesting analysis of their power relations because, as Bourdieu would attest, knowledge is a form of power in its own right and intellectual knowledge (as opposed to the practical knowledge of everyday life) has a unique but shifting value within the university and within the broader knowledge economy. The struggle between intellectual knowledge and management knowledge which in Bourdieu's terms plays out as a broader struggle between intellectual capital and academic capital is a fascinating aspect of university life and of this research project, being further explored in chapter 6, Power.

A theoretical framework for the analysis of quality assurance as a mode of academic governance

In recent years higher education has become a risk for government in two significant ways: first, that it might not be successful in enabling the nation state to position itself favourably within the global knowledge economy; and second, that universities might not expend their public funding responsibly, effectively and in a way which provides government with increasing levels of return on its investment through economic and social productivity gains. For the state, seeking legitimation for its policies, governance in the form of academic quality assurance has become a primary means by which this risk can be managed and enacted, through increased accountability requirements such as research assessment and other mechanisms for measuring and monitoring institutional and academic performance (Blackmore 2010a). In turn, chapters 5 and 7 of this thesis will show that academic quality assurance has become a principal role of university academic boards. This section introduces the primary theoretical framework for the analysis of data relating to the role of the academic board in the area of academic quality assurance.

Beck argues that risk is fundamentally characteristic of the modern society (Beck 1999) where ‘the state of emergency threatens to become the normal state’ (Beck 1992, p. 79) in every level of society (Mythen 2004). Accordingly, the risk society involves:

... living from one crisis to another, attempting to cope with one unknown problem only to provoke an unknown quantity of unknown problems, focusing on the management of local orders while losing sight of their contribution to global chaos. (Bauman 2001, p. 200)

In response, the practices of risk management, audit and compliance have become synonymous with good governance (Huber 2009). Although it is ostensibly aimed at improving outcomes and achieving best practice, risk management is actually about making organisational responsibility transparent (Power 2004). Critics of the audit process argue that within organisations it is frequently more important to *have* an audit process which claims to examine and measure the implementation of systems and controls, than to actually *do* good work (Power 1997). As a result of this process orientation, ‘[t]he audit society is a society that endangers itself because it invests too heavily in shallow rituals of

verification at the expense of other forms of organizational intelligence' (Power 1997, p. 123).

Criticisms of Power's theory of the audit society include 'that the factors underlying the rise of the audit society have not been fully explained' (Humphrey and Owen 2000, p. 38) and that Power does not adequately define 'audit' when 'for us the issue of definition is crucial if one is going to make claims as to the rise of an 'audit' society or the effects of being made 'auditable'' (Humphrey and Owen 2000, p. 41). Humphrey and Owen also take issue with Power's assertion that audit has been a driving force behind organisational change and argue instead that 'audit is part of a broader move towards a 'performance measurement society' and that rather than stimulating change, auditing itself is subject to change as a result of pressures and movements emanating from inside' (Humphrey and Owen 2000, p. 41). Additionally, Bowerman, Raby and Humphrey contend that there is a lack of empirical evidence to support Power's notion of 'audit as a central player in the reinvention of government' (2000, p. 71).

Power has responded to these criticisms by agreeing that 'the concept of the audit society was invented in advance of detailed empirical work' (Power 2000, p. 116) and also that further research is required, particularly with respect to 'the role of auditable performance measures in shaping individual and organisational activity' (2000, p. 111). He further agrees that the 'relation between auditing, organizational democracy and transparency' (2000, p. 116) is an unresolved problem, suggesting that:

... what seems to be important is less the disclosure to stakeholders promised by the rhetorics of accountability, which lit the fuse for the audit explosion, and more the private discipline of information gathering and control which the audit process imposes. (Power 2000, p. 117)

However, Power rejects the criticism that the meaning of the word 'audit' is not sufficiently defined in his work, arguing instead that 'the vagueness of the word 'audit' was an important condition of possibility for the audit explosion' (2000, p. 111). Indeed the 2008 global financial crisis is evidence of how the implementation within the financial sector of an audit culture designed to reduce risk instead fuelled excessive risk taking which, in turn, led to the collapse of the international credit market (Kirkpatrick 2009).

Notwithstanding this critique of Power's theory and the gaps in empirical knowledge which Power himself acknowledges, the notion of the audit society (or an audit culture within an audit society) remains highly relevant to studies of the field of higher education. To this end, the application of theories of the risk society and the audit culture within higher education have been usefully explored by Shore and Wright (2000) and Strathern (2000a), amongst others, to demonstrate that audit is focused on transparent accountability in response to a perception of increasing sectoral and organisational risk. Central to the audit and risk cultures of universities is the notion of performativity (Lyotard 1984), which Ball characterises as:

... a technology, a culture and a mode of regulation, or a system of 'terror' in Lyotard's words, that employs judgments, comparisons and displays as means of control, attrition and change. The performances (of individual subjects or organisations) serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of 'quality', or 'moments' of promotion (there is a felicitous ambiguity around this word) or inspection. They stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organisation within a field of judgment (Ball 2000, p. 1).

It is argued that the time and effort required to meet demands for performativity may paradoxically reduce that available for substantive process and output improvements (Ball 2000; Elliott 1997; Lingard & Blackmore 1997).

Related to performativity is fabrication (Ball 2000) wherein mechanisms which enable the measurement of performance and the assessment of worth may produce 'versions of an organisation' rendered 'to be accountable' (Ball 2000, p. 9). Fabrications are not "outside the truth" but neither do they render simply true or direct accounts—they are produced purposefully in order 'to be accountable' (Ball 2000, p. 9). Examples of fabrication include the 'selection (or manipulation) of statistics and indicators' and the 'management of figures for public consumption' (Ball 2000, p. 11). The concept of fabrication helps to explain universities' responses to demands for performativity in respect of matters which cannot properly or easily be measured, and so are dealt with by proxy, such as student satisfaction or graduate outcomes as surrogates for the quality of teaching, or citation counts for the quality and impact of research. The difficulty is that proxies can become the end goal. Thus, rather than focusing on teaching practice with a view to enhancing

learning outcomes, for example, the impact of student evaluations of teaching may be to encourage a short-term concentration on what students like.

A conceptual framework for the analysis of academic governance

This chapter has introduced theories relating to higher education governance, power and academic quality assurance that will be brought to bear during the analysis of data on Australian academic boards. This thesis is eclectic theoretically in recognition of the complexity of universities generally and of governance in particular, arising from the multiple internal and external pressures that inform what universities do and how they do it. While several modes of governance can operate simultaneously at the level of the state, mirrored within individual universities, it is suggested that within Anglophone universities managerial or entrepreneurial modes currently prevail. Characteristics of these forms of governance include state steering (rather than state control), the development of partnerships to support the pursuit of additional income streams, managerial domination and an emphasis on strategic development and status acquisition at the level of the institution (Marginson and Considine 2000). Within this context it is clear that Bourdieu's conceptual tools of habitus, capital and field (Bourdieu 1984, 1985, 1986, 1988a; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Bourdieu 1999) are highly relevant. For example, symbolic capital in the form of prestige or reputation and economic capital in the form of non-government income (or at least income from sources other than those that provide recurrent higher education funding) are clearly extremely important. In an example of cross-field effects (Rawolle and Lingard 2008) managerialism has enabled the broader field of higher education (and the habitus of some of those within in it) to be penetrated by values, practices and goods from the business and public sectors. Within this context, the rise of the audit culture as a form of governance amid increasing perceptions of higher education risk are also examples of cross-field effects, deriving as they do from the commercial and government environments. This combination of factors has changed not only what in higher education is measured, and by what means, but also the nature of the goods produced by universities and community perceptions of their worth. However, the broader fields of higher education governance and the field of governance within individual universities are extremely complex, being subject to multiple and competing influences and

forces. The conceptual framework introduced within this chapter will therefore be mobilised within the discussion and concluding chapters of this thesis to consider the role and function of the academic board and the impact of changes to higher education, particularly within the past 30 years.

Chapter 4 — Research Method

Introduction

This chapter describes the conduct of the study. In so doing, it justifies the choice of method within the context of the research question and sub-questions; reviews literature associated with that method; justifies the design of the specific research instruments; discusses the process of data gathering; and explains the methods of analysis. The chapter also discusses the ways in which various identified limitations of the selected data gathering techniques were addressed.

Chapter 1, Introduction, described the research problem as being: is there a continuing role for academic boards in contemporary Australian higher education governance? It also justified the selection of this research question on the basis of substantial shifts in university governance within the past 30 years, led partly by changes within higher education in western democratic nations and partly by broader changes at the global and state levels, including within the public sector. These shifts in university governance appear to have reduced the role and function of academic boards within Australian universities to the point where, anecdotally at least, questions are being asked about their current and future roles. On the basis of little current empirical research in this area, this thesis therefore seeks to consider the place of the academic board within contemporary Australian university governance with a view to examining whether it may have a continuing role.

The research question underpinning this thesis is complex and multi-faceted and the following sub-questions were devised to assist in ensuring that relevant factors which may be impacting on university academic boards were explored throughout the research:

- What changes have been made to university governance models within the past thirty years and why might they have occurred?
- What university governance models currently exist and how are they being implemented?
- How have these governance models been impacted by changes in university structures, management styles and modes of operating within the same thirty-year period?

- How have changes in university governance models, if any, impacted on the composition, role function and effectiveness of the Australian academic board?
- Are academic boards necessary to the future of Australian higher education and, if so, are new models for the academic board required?

These question and sub-questions by their very nature require the detailed collection and analysis of a number of data forms in more than one university. They also require a close analysis of the distinctiveness of institutional histories and cultures. In turn, these requirements auger the use of the case study method.

Research approach

Within research method texts the most commonly cited definition of case study research is that by Yin:

1. A case study is an empirical inquiry that
 - investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when
 - the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.
- ...
- 2 The case study inquiry
 - copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result
 - relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulating fashion, and as another result
 - benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis.
 (Yin 2003, pp. 13–4)

Possibly in response to his concern that '[t]he case study has long been (and continues to be) stereotyped as a weak sibling among social science methods', Yin takes a very particular view of the case study (2003, p. xiii). He sees it as a 'comprehensive research strategy' comprising 'an all-encompassing method—covering the logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis' (Yin 2003, p. 14). However, others argue that Yin's approach is too specific, directive and inflexible, bordering on the 'scientific' in nature (see for example Czarniawska 1997). An alternative definition is provided by Orum, Feagin and Sjoberg, who describe a case study as:

... an in-depth, multi-faceted investigation, using qualitative research methods, of a single social phenomenon. The study is conducted in great detail and often relies on the use of several data sources. ... In case study research the nature of the social phenomenon studied has varied. It can be an organization; it can be a role, or role occupants; it can be a city; it can even be an entire group of people. The case study is usually seen as an instance of a broader phenomenon, as part of a larger set of parallel instances. (Orum, Feagin and Sjoberg 1991, p. 2)

The consideration of academic boards as a phenomena within the context of the research questions for this study is necessarily complex and must include a detailed and multi-faceted examination of their current and likely future roles, their pasts and how they have changed, and their place in and how they are affected by broader governance and management structures and processes within their respective universities. This is consistent with the definition of case study research by Orum, Feagin and Sjoberg, above.

Advantages and disadvantages of case study research

Case study research has a long history in a number of fields including history and law (Czarniawska 1997) and is suited to research in an educational setting because it can be used to facilitate an understanding of specific issues and problems of practice (Merriam 1988). In so doing, it draws on other disciplines, including the social sciences, both for theoretical orientation and data collection and analysis techniques (Merriam 1988, p. 23). That is to say, while case study research is well suited to education, it, like other forms of educational research, draws on a number of disciplines in the areas of theory and method.

The literature reports advantages of conducting case study research, including that it facilitates the detailed and holistic study of complex social phenomena (Orum, Feagin and Sjoberg 1991; Flick 2009); an examination of both continuity and change (Orum, Feagin and Sjoberg 1991); theoretical innovation (Orum, Feagin and Sjoberg 1991); and a high level of internal validity or accuracy due to data triangulation (Merriam 1988) which involves the use of multiple data sources to verify findings arising from analysis (Stake 2000a; Yin 2003). The case study method also provides a level of complexity in terms of perceptions, understandings, and observations about practice and processes that other forms of data collection, such as surveys, do not. In turn, this level of complexity enables the identification of a range patterns in the data and the generation of explanations as to why these patterns may occur (Creswell 2007).

Reported weaknesses of the case study include that it is more resource intensive than other research methods (Merriam 1988; Yin 2003); can be prone to oversimplification or exaggeration; does not represent an account of the whole but instead represents only part thereof; and is limited by the sensitivity and integrity of the investigator (Merriam 1988). However, it is arguable that many, if not all, of these weaknesses are also attributable to other research methods and are not limited to the case study. Thus, each becomes an issue to be considered and addressed during planning and analysis. For example, the resources required might sensibly limit the number of cases that can be studied and, providing that geography is not a key factor in the research, their locations, while issues relating to the sensitivity and integrity of the researcher must form an integral part of the research design.

A case study distinguishes itself from ethnography in that the researcher is not immersed in the site over a period of time. Thus, for this research the focus is on the finding of explanations as to the perceived role of academic boards in a number of universities rather than on the individual university cases. A key issue for multiple case study research is therefore maintaining what is distinctive about each site as well as the desire to make generalisations of findings (Hammersley, Gomm and Foster 2000; Silverman 2005; Flick 2009).

Generalisability

The issue of the generalisability of case study research is highly complex and contested. For example, the notion of empirical generalisation from one or more particular cases to a larger general population relies on a belief in universal 'rules' or 'laws' of knowledge, a position aligned with the positivist or scientific approaches to research (Gomm, Hammersley and Foster 2000; Lincoln and Guba 2000). Researchers who approach their case study research from positions opposed to some or all of these notions have devised other ways of thinking about the generalisability of case study research, although even within this approach there is enormous variation. For example, Lincoln and Guba propose the 'working hypothesis' and 'transferability' as alternatives, 'where the degree of transferability between two contexts depends on the similarity between the two contexts' (2000, p. 40). However, Donmoyer argues that both naturalistic generalisation and working hypotheses and transferability are inadequate because they fail to do justice to the process of experiential learning whilst also providing inadequate characterisation of the knowledge generated by that process (Donmoyer 2000). He suggests that 'schema theory, in particular, the Piagetian notions of assimilation, accommodation, integration and differentiation — provides an alternative way of talking about and thinking about generalizability' (Donmoyer 2000, p. 66). Regardless of their specific approach, all of these authors are attempting to identify ways of searching for similarities and differences between cases 'so that studies in one

situation can be used to speak to or to help form a judgment about other situations' (Schofield 2000, p. 76). A significant number of case study researchers recommend the use of 'thick description' for such a purpose (see for example Merriam 1988; Gomm, Hammersley and Foster 2000; Lincoln and Guba 2000; Schofield 2000; Stake 2000a; Patton 2002). Patton describes 'thick description' as 'detailed and concrete description of people and places' which, in turn, 'forms the bedrock of all qualitative reporting' (Patton 2002, p. 438). However, Guba and Lincoln, while noting that the phrase was coined by the philosopher Gilbert Ryle and was then extended by the anthropologist Clifford Geertz, report 'that the issue of what constitutes proper thick description has not been completely resolved, and it may never be resolved because "the criteria which separate relevant from irrelevant descriptors are still largely undefined"' (Guba and Lincoln 1989, p. 241 as cited in; Gomm, Hammersley and Foster 2000). That is to say, it is argued that difficulties determining what are and are not appropriate descriptors have the potential to limit the effectiveness of this technique.

For the purposes of this research project, Stake's notion of 'naturalistic generalization', where a reader applies what he or she has learned from the case to his or her own understanding and experience (2000a, p. 442) would appear to provide an appropriate, but related, alternative. This can be combined with the concept of 'theoretical generalization' as defined by Orum, Feagin and Sjoberg (1991, p. 13) and Yin (2003), where 'case studies ... are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes' (Yin 2003, p. 10). Consistent with these definitions, analysis of the research findings for this thesis has led to some theorisation (either generation of new theories or modification of existing theories) but in a more general sense readers will need to decide for themselves whether the findings are applicable to their particular university or set of circumstances.

Selection and defence of data gathering techniques

Data for case study research can be gathered using a number of techniques, none of which is unique to the case study method. Indeed, some have recently argued that for this reason, case study is not in fact a method (Thomas 2011) but simply a 'small-sample, in-depth' form of social research (Tight 2010, p. 338). Conversely, proponents of case study research, such as Stake (1995, 2000b, 2000a, 2005) and Yin (2003) argue that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts in that a case study is more than, and more valuable than, a collection of qualitative research methods used to investigate a phenomena

or issue. The latter position is accepted for the purposes of this research project, although it is also possible that the two positions need not be considered mutually exclusive.

The primary sources of data for case study research are most commonly documents, archival records, interviews, direct-observation, participant-observation and physical artefacts (Gillham 2000; Yin 2003). This research project has employed the methods of document analysis (for meeting agendas and minutes, university policy documents, academic board membership and terms of reference statements, and academic board operating procedures); archival records (for prior versions of all of these documents together with any reports of former reviews of university academic boards); interviews with relevant key staff (including vice-chancellors, deputy vice-chancellors, chairs and current and former members of academic boards); and direct observation (of academic board meetings). In summary, data were chiefly obtained using the techniques of document analysis, direct observation and interviewing. There was not a complicated process involved with deciding which methods to use because this combination of methods was obvious if a relatively well-rounded understanding of the role and function of university academic boards was to be developed. For example, while interviews alone would have provided information about board members' interpretations of their academic board, they could not be expected to have provided accurate data on the content of academic board written terms of reference, on changes in the patterns and levels of discussion of agenda items since the academic board's establishment or on patterns of interaction during board meetings. Information on these matters could only be obtained using direct observation of academic board meetings and document analysis.

A brief discussion of the methodological issues associated with each data gathering method used within the context of this study follows.

Document analysis

Yin asserts that the most important use of documents within case study research is to 'corroborate and augment evidence from other sources' (2003, p. 87). That is, data available from documents can be compared to and contrasted with data obtained from other sources (as the case study progresses) to identify issues that require further exploration. This is an important consideration for this study because documents have the potential to verify or refute interview accounts of the case study academic boards. However, Yin warns of potential difficulty obtaining permission to access a complete set of documents and archival records (and in knowing what the 'complete set' comprises, and therefore what to ask for) (2003, p. 86). Moreover, he asserts that over-reliance on documentary evidence is problematic because:

... every document was written for some specific purpose and some specific audience *other than* those of the case study being done. In this sense ... documentary evidence reflects a communication among parties attempting to achieve some other purpose. (Yin 2003, p. 87)

That is, documents may not be authentic or accurate (Merriam 1988), may or may not represent what happens or has happened (Gillham 2000) and may not always be available in accordance with the researcher's schedule. The combination of data collection methods used in this study assists in the amelioration of these potential weaknesses.

When discussing data collection techniques, a number of texts differentiate between documents and records (see for example Lincoln and Guba 1985, p. 277; Yin 2003, pp. 85–9), to distinguish between current and historical data sources, or informal and formal documentation. However for the purposes of this research project, the methodological considerations set out above are applicable to both types of documents.

Interviews

University academic board members are almost invariably senior members of university staff. Interviews of these types of individuals are variously known as 'elite' or 'expert' (Gillham 2000, p. 63; Odendahl and Shaw 2001, p. 299; Flick 2009, p. 165). Whilst semi-structured, open-ended questioning derived from the research problem is commonly used in the elite or expert interview (Odendahl and Shaw 2001; Flick 2009), Gillham advises that such respondents, '[b]y virtue of their authority and experience ... will have their own structuring of their knowledge' (2000, p. 64). Thus, there is a need for flexibility in the framing of the interview questions and in the conduct of the interviews. The most practicable approach is therefore interviews 'guided by a list of questions or issues to be explored, but neither the exact wording nor the order of the questions is determined ahead of time' (Merriam 1988, p. 74). This is consistent with Yin's observation that case study interviews are most commonly:

... of an *open-ended nature*, in which you can ask key respondents about the facts of a matter as well as their opinions about events. In some situations, you may even ask the respondent to propose his or her own insights into certain occurrences and may use such propositions as the basis for further inquiry. The respondent also can suggest other persons for you to interview, as well as other sources of evidence. (Yin 2003, p. 90)

This semi-structured, open-ended approach to interviewing was adopted for this research project. It assumes that respondents will have their own definitions and understanding of university academic boards and that the purpose of the interview is to enable the elucidation of those concepts.

Commonly cited difficulties in conducting elite interviews include time restrictions due to the 'busyness' of the interviewees—that is, scheduling may be difficult and the interview is likely to be short by necessity (Flick 2009, p. 168), requirements which must simply be accepted and worked around. Moreover, confidentiality can be problematic as respondents are more likely to be readily identifiable (Odendahl and Shaw 2001; Flick 2009). Thus, it is 'important that researchers not disclose personal traits or organizational affiliations through which their respondents could be easily identified' (Odendahl and Shaw 2001, p. 313). These issues were relevant to this research and were addressed in the research design.

The literature commonly cites the potential methodological limitations of interviewing, including poorly constructed and/or poorly executed interviews (see for example Yin 2003). Less common is practical guidance for relatively novice researchers on how to frame and ask good questions. Exceptions to this include Patton (2002), Merriam (1988), Rubin and Rubin (2005) and Kvale and Brinkman (2009) who each provide more specific direction. Merriam notes that interview questions serve to translate research questions into 'specific and perhaps even measurable language' and that they also serve to motivate respondents to share their knowledge and views (Merriam 1988, p. p 78). Both Merriam and Patton provide a typology of question types. Of these, 'opinion' and 'value' questions, aimed at eliciting what respondents' think; questions about what the respondent knows; and background questions about the respondent themselves (Merriam 1988, p. 78; Patton 2002, p. 351) are most applicable to this research project. Patton also provides advice and guidance on wording, structuring and asking the 'truly open ended question' which 'permits those being interviewed to take whatever direction and use whatever words they want to express what they have to say' (Patton 2002, p. 353). Kvale and Brinkman provide useful guidance on the practical conduct of the interview, such as how to interrupt long or irrelevant responses for the purposes of introducing a new question or theme (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009, p. 136).

Observation

Observation as a means of gathering qualitative data generally takes one of two forms, participant or non-participant (Gillham 2000; Flick 2009). Much qualitative methodological literature focuses on participant observation (see for example Merriam 1988; Silverman 2005). However, this research must

necessarily use non-participant observation by virtue of the researcher not being a member of any university academic board. Moreover, universities are generally sensitive about outsiders observing their governance mechanisms and so the researcher was not expected to have multiple opportunities to observe academic board meetings.

This bodes the question of what to observe. To that end, Merriam provides a checklist of elements for recording an observation: the setting; the participants; the activities and interactions (and their frequency and duration); and other, subtle factors such as nonverbal communication and what has *not* happened (1988, p. 91), with data generally recorded by way of field notes and diagrams (Patton 2002) or an observation summary form (adapted from Miles and Huberman 1994, pp. 51–3).

One of the key methodological considerations associated with direct observation for this research project was the potential impact of the researchers' presence on the conduct of the meeting (how would the researcher know the phenomena observed were 'typical?') (see for example Merriam 1988; Yin 2003). However, academic board meetings are comparatively large and formal in nature. As a result, it was considered unlikely that the manner in which business was conducted at the meetings observed for this research project would vary dramatically from that of the usual meeting simply by virtue of the researchers' presence. Nonetheless, it was necessary to take account of the possibility by contrasting what was observed during the meeting with interview respondents' perceptions of whether the meeting so observed varied from the normal course, and, if so, in what way. In each case respondents were certain that the patterns of behaviour observed had been typical.

Further issues involving case study research

The validity of case study research

The validity of qualitative research relates to its accuracy, that is, it being free from obvious mistakes (Gibbs 2007) and undertaken 'correctly in terms of some reasonable set of standards' (Miles and Huberman 1994, p. 294). However, the credibility of that research is largely dependent on the 'skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing fieldwork' (Patton 2002, p. 14), and is therefore vulnerable.

Yin also identifies 'construct validity' as being particularly problematic in case study research and suggests three strategies for addressing this. The first of these involves the use of multiple sources of evidence or data (Yin 2003); the second strategy is to maintain a 'chain of evidence' by way of 'clear

cross-referencing to methodological procedures and to the resulting evidence' (Yin 2003, p. 36); and the third involves the checking of transcripts by interviewees (Yin 2003). Each of these strategies was implemented during the conduct of this research project, as will be demonstrated in the research design.

Reliability in case study research

Traditionally, reliability in research 'refers to the extent to which one's findings can be replicated' (Merriam 1988, p. 170); however, Merriam also argues that this concept of reliability is problematic in social science research:

[b]ecause what is being studied in education is assumed to be in flux, multifaceted, and highly contextual, because information gathered is a function of who gives it and how skilled the researcher is at getting it, and because the emergent design of a qualitative case study precludes a priori controls, achieving reliability in the traditional sense is not only fanciful but impossible. (Merriam 1988, p. 171)

Arising from these issues, some have developed alternative constructs for the notion of reliability, such as whether the study has been conducted in such a way as to 'minimize errors and biases' (Yin 2003, p. 37); is consistent across multiple cases (Maxwell 2005) and is 'stable over time' (Miles and Huberman 1994, p. 278). Maxwell suggests a number of useful strategies for increasing the reliability of qualitative research, each of which were implemented during this research project, including the checking of interview transcripts against the original recording; and establishing and implementing clear definitions when coding data (Maxwell 2005). Yin and Merriam also recommend documenting the steps followed during the research process and then ensuring that these are implemented for subsequent cases in the same research project (Merriam 1988; Yin 2003), and that step was undertaken during this research.

Ethics

The general principles traditionally associated with the ethical conduct of research are the need for the expected benefits of the research to outweigh the likely risks to participants (NHMRC., ARC. and AV-CC. 2007); the need for all participants to give informed consent prior to their involvement in the research project; the need for research to be free of active deception; and that research should maintain the privacy of participants (Christians 2005; Flick 2009). To this end, all research in Australia involving human participants must have ethical approval prior to commencement and the Australian National Ethics Application Form, which must be completed to gain such approval, is structured around

these ethics principles. This project received approval from the Deakin University Faculty of Arts and Education Human Ethics Advisory Group, project reference HEAG (AE) 10-02.

Research design

The cases

Whilst a number of texts differentiate between case studies comprising single and multiple cases (see for example Yin 2003; Silverman 2005; Creswell 2007), Stake distinguishes between 'intrinsic' and 'instrumental' case studies (Stake 2005, p. 446). Whereas an intrinsic case study is the detailed examination of a case for its own sake, an instrumental case study is the examination of a particular case or cases:

... to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization. The case is of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else. The case still is looked at in depth, its contexts scrutinized and its ordinary activities detailed, but all because this helps us pursue the external interest. The case may be seen as typical of other cases or not Here the choice is made to advance understanding of that other interest. (Stake 2005, p. 445)

Similarly, Yin differentiates between the 'exploratory' (seeking to describe) and 'explanatory' (seeking to explain a phenomenon or issue) case study (2003, p. 3).

This case study research is of the 'instrumental' or 'explanatory' type because the particular research interest is the changing role of the academic board rather than the study of a particular university or even the study of an academic board at a particular university for its own sake. For this reason, the researcher has undertaken a multiple case study, which Stake describes as 'instrumental study extended to several cases' (2005, p. 446), 'chosen because it is believed that understanding them will lead to better understanding, and perhaps better theorizing, about a still larger collection of cases' (2005, p. 446). The technique used to select the particular cases was 'purposive sampling' with three cases selected to achieve 'maximum variation' (Flyvbjerg 2004, p. 426), that is, with the greatest difference between them within the population of Australian universities. Manifest differences between the three academic boards were important in ensuring that they were reflective of some of the variation between academic boards across Australian universities. This strategy also enabled the highlighting of common patterns in the data despite differences between the cases (Merriam 1988; Patton 2002; Flyvbjerg 2004).

For the purposes of this research, universities were divided into three categories: those established during or prior to 1914 (referred to as the 'sandstone' universities by Marginson and Considine (2000)); those established during or after 1986 which, for the purposes of this study were also dual sector, that is, teaching at both university and vocational education and training levels; and the remaining universities that fell in between these two categories, being those established between 1915 and 1985. There was one case within each of those three categories as three was determined to be the maximum number that could be managed within the time and financial resources available to the researcher. The rationale for the division of universities into those three categories was partially informed by the methodology used by Marginson and Considine (2000) in their case study research of university governance although, because of the greater scope of their project, they divided Australian universities into five categories rather than these three. However, more specifically, it was important to compare and contrast the role of and attitudes to the academic board within the oldest university (in the sample), where the literature suggests collegial governance would once have played a considerable role, with the newest dual sector university (in the sample) where, by virtue of age and institution type, the literature suggests there could be no long-standing tradition of either collegial governance or of academic boards. Those findings were then compared and contrasted with those from the middle category of universities where, the literature suggests, attitudes to and the role of the academic board, might reasonably be expected to fall somewhere in between.

Invitations to universities to participate in the research and confirmation of the three cases

Universities were invited to participate in this research project by way of an initial letter addressed to the vice-chancellor in early 2010. This letter outlined the aim of the research, the general nature of the research to be undertaken, and the aim of the research in furthering understandings of academic governance practices within the Australian higher education sector. The privacy and confidentiality provisions to be employed during the research were summarised, and the letter also undertook that the researcher would not invite or consider opinion on institutions or individuals. Both of these factors were thought likely to be relevant to the consideration of the invitation by vice-chancellors. The letter also provided a general outline of the data gathering process and methods to be employed. Attached was a draft set of interview questions which would form the basis of the proposed interviews at each university. Universities were asked to nominate a contact person with whom the researcher could liaise to make logistical arrangements for the conduct of the research. A sample letter of invitation to vice-chancellors is set out as **appendix A**.

Initially, one letter was sent to one university in each of the three categories. Of those, the university from the new dual-sector category accepted whilst the university from the middle category declined due to a forthcoming scheduled review of their academic board. The university from the oldest category of universities neither accepted nor declined and this non-response was deemed to be a rejection. Subsequent invitations were sent to two further universities, one in each of the two categories, and these were accepted. Thus, the three university cases were secured relatively quickly and easily and each agreed that data collection could be completed during 2010. Further ensuring variation between the cases, each of the three universities was from a different Australian state. These three universities are hereafter known as Newtown (the newest, dual sector university); Middleton (the university from the middle group which was a comprehensive research and teaching institution); and Historydale (the oldest of the three cases and also a member of the self-titled prestigious Group of Eight research intensive universities). Within this thesis all three of these universities' academic governance bodies are described as academic boards, but in reality, two of the three had different names. The actual names are not used so as to protect the anonymity of the three cases.

Selection of respondents and the arrangement of interviews

Selection of the individuals to be interviewed within designated categories was made by each university. The researcher requested that interviews be conducted with the chancellor, vice-chancellor, any other relevant members of the senior-executive (such as the deputy vice-chancellor academic or equivalent), the chair of the academic board (and deputy chair if applicable), the chair of one or two major standing committees of the academic board, two elected members of the academic board and, where possible and appropriate, two former members of the academic board. The decision to request that universities select individuals to be interviewed within these categories was made because the researcher did not have access to staff diaries and did not initially have access to information about the membership of each academic board beyond a list of names. At each university the vice-chancellor nominated a staff member with whom the researcher could liaise and that staff member proposed a list of interviewees to the researcher and then made an appointment for each interview. The nominated staff member also made arrangements for observation of one academic board meeting by the researcher by notifying the board secretary. For logistical reasons, it was intended that all interviews and the academic board observation take place during the period of one week at each university and this did occur for the oldest university (which was furthest from the researcher's home) but was not possible at either of the other two universities. Subsequent visits were therefore made to conduct several interviews with individuals who were not initially available. At Middleton University the observation of the academic board meeting also took place on this second visit.

Once a list of interviewees and their university contact details had been provided by each institution, formal letters of invitation to participate in the research project were forwarded by email to the individual staff members. An informed consent statement, for signature by each participant, was forwarded as part of the same communication. A sample letter of invitation to interviewees forms **appendix B**.

Privacy and consent

Consent for participation in this research was obtained via the plain language statement and informed consent form, the contents of which were approved as part of the ethics approval process for this research. Participants were advised that they may withdraw their consent to participate at any time prior to, during, or after the data collection phase, by advising the researcher. None of the respondents withdrew from the research.

In spite of the aforementioned pseudonyms in place of university names, the relative seniority of the staff being interviewed and the comparatively small numbers of institutions in each category meant that was possible that individuals and institutions could still be readily identifiable within this thesis and published articles arising from the research. Thus, details of organisational characteristics and personal traits were withheld where there was any likelihood that either the individual or organisation (or both) might be identified.

Additional means by which the privacy of individuals participating in this research were protected included:

- each participant being given the opportunity to check transcripts of their interview/s to ensure that all identifying details had been removed
- raw data, including tape recordings of interviews and transcripts of recordings, were collected in a de-identified form (that is, names and categories of participants and the name of their university, were replaced by unique codes)
- a master-list of all participants and their universities was maintained in hard copy by the researcher.

Participants in the research were advised of the above provisions in the formal letter of invitation.

At each university there was one respondent who requested an amendment to his or her transcript so as to remove the detail of a reported anecdote which might potentially have identified an individual or institution.

The research diary

A research diary (Gillham 2000; Flick 2009) in the form of a hard copy notebook recorded the process of the research as it occurred and included the researchers' thoughts, experiences and observations and preliminary attempts at theorisation during the data gathering process in the field. The research diary formed an integral part of the case study data and chain of evidence (Yin 2003). It also enabled the cross-referencing of data during subsequent analysis. For example, when considering the transcript of a particular interview the researcher was able to refer to the diary entry for additional detail on that particular encounter.

Document, contact and observation summary sheets

A document summary sheet was prepared for and attached to each document collected during fieldwork for the purposes of 'clarifying and summarizing' that document's importance (Miles and Huberman 1994, p. 54). Each document summary sheet followed a common format setting out the name or description of the document; the event or contact (if any) with which the document was associated; the significance or importance of the document; and a brief summary of the contents (Miles and Huberman 1994).

Documents (with a document summary sheet stapled to the front of each) were stored in hard copy form in a physical file. There was one file for each case, and within each case, documents were sorted by date and type. A formal document numbering system was also implemented through which each document was allocated a unique number indicating its type, the date to which it related, and a signifier for the institution (e.g. university A, B or C). For example a March 2009 academic board agenda for Middleton University was recorded as B0309ABA on the document summary sheet. A master list of document numbers and the documents to which they referred was kept in hard copy by the researcher.

Similarly, a contact summary sheet was created for each interview and was attached to the hard copy of the relevant interview transcript. The contact summary sheet set out the specific details of the interview such as the date on which it took place, the venue, category of interviewee (recorded by way of a code) and the coded signifier of the institution. The contact summary sheet also set out the 'main concepts, themes, issues, and questions' (Miles and Huberman 1994, p. 51) arising from each

interview. Further, an observation summary sheet was created for each academic board meeting observed during the research process (see below).

Interviews

At each university the data collection process ran smoothly and interviews ran to schedule. For senior executives interviews took place in their offices and for other staff members interviews were held in university meeting rooms specifically booked for the purpose. In each case only the interviewee and the researcher were present. In total 31 interviews of between 40 and 60 minutes' duration were conducted, ten each at Newtown and Middleton universities and eleven at Historydale. For logistical reasons it was possible to interview the chancellor of Historydale University only and this necessarily meant that the views of this chancellor could not be compared with any other chancellor as part of this research project. The same interview questions were used for each interview, subject to necessary variation arising from differences in category of academic board membership, for example. However, in view of the semi-structured and open-ended nature of each interview, interview questions were not asked if the matter had been addressed in an earlier answer or if the question was deemed not applicable to the respondents' circumstances. Follow-up questions were also asked when deemed appropriate by the researcher. The generic set of interview questions forms **appendix C**. The questions were derived from the research question and sub-questions in a very straightforward manner, taking account of the methodological issues associated with interviewing noted earlier in this chapter.

All interviews were conducted in person by the student researcher. A copy of the checklist used as the basis for the pre-interview and post-interview information given to each interviewee is set out as **appendix D**.

With the individual consent of each respondent, interviews were recorded using an H2 Zoom digital recorder and notes were also taken by the researcher in case of recorder failure. In the event, there were no instances of recorder failure but the process of note-taking was nonetheless found to be very useful. For example, respondents often added further detail to an earlier response during a delay in questioning caused by the slowness of the researchers' handwriting. Respondents in all categories appeared very comfortable with the interview process and were extremely forthright in their responses.

Observation

Hand-written notes were taken during the observation of one academic board meeting at each university, on the basis of guidance provided by Merriam (1988), to which reference was made earlier in

this chapter. A hand-drawn diagram was also made showing the physical placement of key participants around the meeting table and any other available seating. All three academic board chairs chose not to announce the presence of the researcher at the commencement of the meeting being observed, to avoid the risk that members might conduct themselves in a manner contrary to that usually adopted.

Following each academic board meeting so observed, an observation summary sheet was completed highlighting the main themes or issues gleaned from the observation; a summary of the information obtained; a summary of any other salient issues; and any new or unanswered questions arising from the observation that might have required follow-up (adapted from Miles and Huberman 1994, pp. 51-3). Additionally, the observation summary sheet set out the specific details of the meeting such as the date, venue and institution name.

Academic board documentation

In general, universities maintain comprehensive historical and current records. Thus, at each of the case study universities a large number of hard copy documents relating to the academic board was obtained. These included current and historic academic board membership listings, terms of reference, operating procedures, schedules of business (where they existed), relevant legislation and key academic board policies. Documentation arising from reviews of the three academic boards was also obtained which, for the two older universities, Middleton and Historydale, included reviews conducted periodically since each university's establishment. With respect to agendas and minutes, it had been intended to request a sampling of these for the period between 1980 and the present (or in the case of Newtown University since its establishment in the 1990s). However, during the site visits to the two oldest universities it became apparent that historic documentation dating back to each university's establishment would also be available. A decision was made to request a sampling of this documentation so that any changes in the role and function of the academic boards could be traced over a longer period of time than that originally intended. Thus, for Historydale University a set of three agendas and three minutes from one year was obtained for each decade since the university's establishment. For Middleton University only academic board minutes were available as historical documents going back beyond the mid-2000s because that university did not archive committee agendas.

For all three universities a complete set of agendas and minutes was obtained for the immediately preceding 12 months together with a sampling of agendas and minutes from a number of years in the

late 2000s. That is to say, for the year 2010 and the years immediately preceding it, a considerable number of agendas and minutes was obtained from each university.

In the majority of instances these documents were copied for the researcher by the university archivist or a staff member from the university governance unit or equivalent organisational unit. They were subsequently forwarded to the researcher by post.

Design and implementation of data analysis processes

Techniques for the analysis of data

Within qualitative research, data analysis commences during (and to that extent guides) the data collection stage (Merriam 1988; Gillham 2000; Gibbs 2007). However, a review of the methodological literature suggests a number of stages in the analysis process (although these may not be followed in a linear chronological order): processing and organising the data; identifying themes and patterns; and then representing or reporting the data (see for example Creswell 2007). The first two of these will be discussed in turn below.

Processing the data

The methodological literature concurs that data obtained from the three methods of collection used in this case study are of the one kind: text (see for example Merriam 1988; Miles and Huberman 1994). Nonetheless, to get to this point, data needed to be processed by way of the writing up of field notes and the conversion of recorded interviews into transcripts, for example (Miles and Huberman 1994). Ideally, this should take place as soon as possible after the notes or recording were first taken so that memory is fresh and the size of the task is not so overwhelming (Gibbs 2007). As far as logistically possible that approach was taken for this case study research. The processed data then formed part of the case study data set.

Identifying themes and patterns

Analysing case study data is complex because of the volume of data, the multiplicity of data sources and, in a multiple case study such as this one, the complexities of the various cases. To add further complexity, strategies and techniques for the analysis of case study data are not clearly defined (Yin 2003), with some texts omitting this step altogether and moving directly to 'writing up' (see for example

Gillham 2000). Despite this dearth of material, several possible approaches for instrumental or explanatory case studies can be identified and are discussed below.

Creswell advocates the four steps of description, categorisation, identification of themes, and comparison of those themes to published literature (generalisation) (Creswell 2007). Merriam describes a process involving the compilation and coding (indexing) of data; the development of categories or themes; and the development of a theory to 'explain the data's meaning' (1988, p. 146). This approach draws on the method of 'grounded theory' developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) whereby theory emerges from and is grounded in the data. Yin favours the use of the 'theoretical propositions' (2003, p. 111) that led to the case study, to provide a focus for the organisation of case study data; to highlight some data and allow other data to be set aside; and to assist in the definition of explanations for phenomena observed. In contrast to these more general methods, Miles and Huberman suggest a sequence of stages for the process of analysing case study data: coding; identifying relationships patterns and themes in the data; using these patterns and themes to inform further data collection; identifying generalisations from within the data; and comparing those internal generalisations to formal knowledge to develop or refine theory (Miles and Huberman 1994). Miles and Huberman also describe numerous detailed and specific techniques which can be used early in the analysis process as well as other techniques for analysing and displaying within-case and then cross-case data. Rather than being a 'recipe' to follow, Miles' and Huberman's text is more akin to a set of ingredients from which selections can be made during the course of the analysis process.

While there are similarities between all three approaches to case study analysis, the approach which was followed for this research project was that of Miles and Huberman. Their strategies for the analysis of data within cases and then between cases greatly assisted the researcher to manage the vast quantities of data that were generated by this research without becoming overwhelmed by it. The specific techniques that were implemented are described below.

Initial analysis of interview data

The initial processing of interview data involved the transcription of interviews, the completion of a contact summary sheet for each interview, and the checking of each transcription with the interviewee. This phase commenced during the data collection phase and concluded soon thereafter. As part of this process each transcript was read carefully by the researcher and the most obviously salient points made by the respondent were noted on the contact summary sheet. This later proved important

because for each interview this list became a point of comparison, something against which later outcomes could be checked to see whether anything significant had been missed.

Next, each transcript was coded and as part of this process a master list of codes was maintained and amended as the process progressed. Within the master list, codes were recorded in the form of a hierarchy or 'tree' and each code was specifically defined and dated. Methodological literature stresses the importance of documenting and applying clear definitions of the codes used (Miles and Huberman 1994) and of using interpretive or analytical as well as descriptive codes (Gibbs 2007). Coding is one of the most common techniques for the initial analysis of qualitative data (see for example Merriam 1988; Patton 2002; and Silverman 2005). It is 'a way of indexing or categorizing ... text in order to establish a framework of thematic ideas about it' (Gibbs 2007, p. 39). Coding enables the retrieval of all text addressing the same theme and so facilitates the identification of patterns in the data within each case (Gibbs 2007). It also subsequently enables deeper levels of analysis between cases (Gibbs 2007). For this research project a preliminary set of codes was developed arising from the initial reading of the transcripts, informed by the themes described in the literature, and these were amended substantially as the process progressed. Thus, the codes were modified, deleted (and replaced by new ones) or expanded as required and in some instances this required re-visiting transcripts which had already been coded and re-applying the new or amended codes. At the highest level, the codes addressed academic board membership characteristics; the way board meeting time was spent; the perceived style of board meetings; the level of enjoyment of board meetings; the perceived usefulness of the board; the perceived necessity (or not) of the academic board; perceived changes to the board from the past; board descriptors; board roles and functions; perceptions of board performance levels; board committee roles and functions; and power and relationships impacting the board. For each of these high-level codes there were several levels of sub-codes.

Following the initial coding of transcripts, analysis of interview data initially took place separately for each university. Thus, as a second step, interview quotes relating to each code were extracted from the transcripts and pasted into a tabular word document, recording at the same time the alphanumeric identifier allocated to the respondent and the specific location in the transcript where the quote could be found. One table was produced for each of the highest level codes for each university but quotes were recorded against sub-codes within each of these tables. Patterns and themes which were emerging from these data were noted at this stage for later use.

Initial analysis of observation data

The initial processing of data obtained arising from the observation of the academic board meeting at each university was relatively low-key and involved the completion of an observation summary sheet and the noting of patterns and themes on that summary sheet arising from the notes taken and diagrams drawn during the observation itself. For example, the academic board meeting at Middleton was notable because there was no discussion of any agenda item by members; items were either not discussed or were reported upon by the senior executive, but there was no discussion as such. In particular, note was taken of whether the interaction patterns so observed were consistent with or contradicted members' descriptions of their academic board meetings as reported during interview.

Initial analysis of documentary evidence

The initial processing of documents obtained from each university involved the completion of a document summary sheet and the recording of these on a document master list for each university. For each document, the key issues or themes were noted and this varied greatly depending on the nature of the document. For example, agendas were initially read to get a feel for the span of agenda items considered. Similarly, minutes were read to ascertain the level of discussion of agenda items and whether proposals had been approved with or without amendment. Subsequently, very specific techniques for the analysis of the documentary evidence were devised and implemented. For agendas, this involved classifying items according to the nature and the source of the item of business. For minutes, this involved classification according to whether the item was a report or a recommendation and then whether it had been discussed or not, and also whether the proposal had been generated by the board and/or one of its committees, or elsewhere. Specific definitions were developed for each of these classifications and these were recorded on a master list so that the application of the definitions was consistent within universities over time and also between the three universities. Other documents were analysed in a similar way. For example, lists of academic board members were checked to ascertain the composition of the board at any particular point in time. Terms of reference were recorded and matched against evidence of activity aimed at addressing those terms of reference obtained from agendas and minutes or schedules or business or other academic board documents. Changes over time in the scope of powers reported by terms of reference were also recorded.

Following these processes, tables were created for each university so that trends could be tracked in the academic board documentation over time. For example, for any academic board meeting the table recorded the date of the meeting, the total number of items considered at that meeting, the span of agenda items, and the classification outcomes for the agendas and minutes. In this way, trends were

observable over time relating to the numbers and span of agenda items, the levels of discussion of them and the nature of those items. A similar process was followed for documents setting out the terms of reference and membership so that patterns could be observed over time. This enabled the identification of the dates upon which, for example, an elected chair of an academic board had been replaced, or the shift from a professorial to a representative board had occurred, amongst others. These document analysis techniques were developed by the researcher using her own professional knowledge of university governance processes and practices because no pre-existing technique appeared to achieve the same purpose. The process was forensic and time consuming but necessary.

Within case analysis

Once the initial analysis of each data type had been completed separately for each university, analysis across the three data types for each university could then occur. For this process the master list of codes developed for interview data was used as a guide in a process similar to pattern coding, which works by grouping together first-level codes into a smaller number of 'sets, themes and constructs', as a preliminary step to cross-case analysis (Miles and Huberman 1994, p. 69). In essence, pattern coding is aimed at understanding 'the patterns, the recurrences, the plausible whys' in the data (Miles and Huberman 1994, p. 69).

A series of word documents was then created, comparing and contrasting the results of the within case analysis. For example, data contrasting interviewee perceptions of academic board strengths and weaknesses were represented in tabular form, as was data reporting perceptions of the enjoyment, usefulness, necessity and effectiveness of board meetings. In total, eight tables were created for each academic board, in addition to documents summarising the history and profile of each academic board, and shifts in the nature and treatment of agenda items and academic board membership and powers. Ideas for the combinations of tables were adapted from the notion of a 'case dynamics matrix' aimed at demonstrating links between various aspects of the data within a case (Miles and Huberman 1994, p. 148). At all times this process was guided by the researcher's questioning of similarities and differences within and between the data. Such questions included: are there differences between what published agendas and minutes say about what the academic board does versus how it is perceived by members of the board? Are there differences between the way the board is viewed by the various types of members? How do those various members explain what they see as the board's relative effectiveness or ineffectiveness, as the case may be? Once the various tables had been created the researcher recorded systematically her observations arising from the data analysis.

This process of within case analysis was repeated across each of the three cases.

Cross-case analysis

Once data within each case had been analysed, cross-case analysis could commence. To do so, the researcher focused on ordering and explaining the similarities, differences and patterns observed in the data between the three cases. Techniques such as the ‘variable-by-variable matrix’ were useful in guiding the identification and display of relationships between variables across the cases (Miles and Huberman 1994, p. 220). In total, 25 tabular matrices were created to display various relationships between data across the three cases and the researcher’s observations were recorded in text beneath each matrix. Some examples of these matrices include: a comparison of academic board roles and style, by university; a comparison of the way academic board time is spent, by university; a comparison of the changes in the nature of academic board agenda items and their treatment by university, over time; a comparison of key academic board characteristics, by university; a comparison of deans’ attitudes to academic boards, by university; members’ rationales for attending academic board meetings, by university; and vice-chancellors’ attitudes to academic boards, by university. Each matrix was carefully formatted with a view to it being copied and pasted directly into a data discussion chapter if desired. Having said that, the case studies produced a vast quantity of data and it was not expected that it would be possible to use every matrix within this thesis — in short, enough data were collected for two PhD theses rather than one and so decisions would have to be made about which themes would be elucidated in discussion chapters and which would remain unaddressed at this stage. The process of selecting these themes is described at the commencement of the following chapter. Although some preliminary theorisation was occurring at this stage, for example, by drawing on the theories of governance and power discussed in chapter 3, Conceptual Framework, when thinking about observed data patterns within each case, it did not begin in earnest until the writing of the data discussion chapters, during which the cross-case data was considered and explanations for similarities, variations and gaps were sought.

Chapter 5 — Governance

The structure of the following four discussion chapters

The following four discussion chapters set out the analysis of this research relating to Australian university academic boards. Accordingly, they separately address the themes of governance; power; academic quality assurance; and the future of the academic board, themes which emerged from the interaction between the research question(s) and the data. This first chapter includes a discussion of the case study academic board characteristics such as history, structure and perceptions of the role, function and modes of operation within governance modes operating both inside and beyond their respective universities. In doing so, it establishes the context for the following two chapters which consider the place of the academic board within university power and authority relationships and also the primary role of the academic board as articulated by respondents at all three case study universities: academic quality assurance. These are the two central analysis chapters of this thesis. Arising directly from the data they are set within a framework of academic board domination by management and the symbolic role of the academic board in externally focused academic quality assurance regimes. The final discussion chapter considers the future of the academic board, an issue that arises from the key research question. That chapter concludes by theorising the characteristics of an effectively functioning academic board and considers apparent shifts in the nature of collegial governance within universities. The four themes are integrated in a concluding analysis with consideration of the implications of this research for the future role and function of Australian academic boards.

Each of the four discussion chapters adopts a similar structure involving presentation and discussion data relevant to the theme of the particular chapter, within a context set by the conceptual framework discussed in chapter 3, and relevant literature. The data from each university case study is reported as a cross-institutional analysis rather than three institutional case studies.

Introduction to this chapter—governance

Within the context of universities being re-positioned to serve global knowledge economies, the role and function of academic boards has fundamentally changed in the past 30 years. This chapter sets out and analyses data relating to Australian university academic boards in the area of governance. It demonstrates a significant diminution of the power and status of boards relative to executive management and a heightened focus on the functions of academic quality assurance. Academic boards have, as a consequence, become a key site of struggle over the role and function of the multi-national corporate university and academic work.

The governance structure of Australian university academic boards and some historical dispositions

This section will introduce the governance structure of contemporary Australian universities and the role of the academic board within that structure. It will also set out some historical dispositions relating to Australian and British academic boards from the 1960s and the 1990s as an indicator of change.

The governance structure of Australia's publicly funded universities commonly comprises the governing body or council; the vice-chancellor as chief executive officer; and the academic board (or its equivalent), responsible to the council for the academic affairs of the university. In a number of Australian universities the academic board is established by the institution's enabling Act as a body in its own right but with responsibility for advising and recommending to council on matters which are beyond the scope of the board's powers; whilst in others, the academic board is a subcommittee of the council. Theoretically, academic boards that are committees of their universities' governing bodies have less autonomy and status than other boards. However, some argue that regardless of the basis of their establishment, academic boards may function in very similar ways across the higher education sector (Coaldrake, Stedman and Little 2003, p. 25). Australian universities also tend to operate an extensive committee system, with both the council and the academic board frequently having a substantial set of standing committees, although the literature suggests that academic board committees in particular may have been overtaken, in terms of power and influence, by a newer (and sometimes parallel) set of

management advisory committees established in more recent years by the vice-chancellor (Marginson and Considine 2000).

The Australian university governance structure (together with that of other Commonwealth nations) was originally derived from the bicameral structure of the civic universities^[1] (Amaral, Jones and Karseth 2003; Shattock 2006) founded within the United Kingdom from the late 1880s (Moodie and Eustace 1974). Under this model, both the council or its equivalent as governing body and the academic board are established by the university's enabling legislation or statute (CHEMS Consulting 2004). From approximately the 1900s until the end of the 1970s, this UK civic university governance structure provided for a university governing body or council comprising a 'lay' or external majority but with little influence over academic decisions (Moodie and Eustace 1974); while the academic board was the sovereign academic authority (Shattock 2006). The peak of academic board influence and power in the mid-20th century is a useful point against which more recent academic boards can be compared. While there is a dearth of research literature on Australian university academic boards prior to the 1990s, in *Power and Authority in British Universities* (1974) Moodie and Eustace report a detailed empirical study of university government in the UK in the late 1960s. They describe the academic board at that time as generally comprising all of the professors and the vice-chancellor, together with a very small minority of others in non-professorial leadership positions—this being a combined grouping of all those 'with the heaviest and most specific responsibilities for the essential work of the university' (Moodie and Eustace 1974, p. 76). Accordingly, many boards had between 150 and 200 members and were therefore large but elite professorial bodies whose agendas included a mix of academic, management and resourcing matters (Moodie and Eustace 1974) and did not separate governance and management as is customary within the contemporary corporate university. This was the period of collegial governance and a time of minimal involvement by the state in higher education, represented on Clark's triangle of co-ordination as the academic oligarchy (Clark 1983). Thus, education was held to be a public good and investment in higher education was considered necessary to promote national growth (King 2009). Academic values predominated and within the UK and other Anglophone nation states there was the time, money and inclination to enable collegial governance and academic boards to flourish.

To apply a Bourdieuan perspective to Moodie's and Eustace's (1974) description of the 1960s British university academic board, university professors had clearly acquired their god-like status by virtue of

¹ The civic university category of UK universities excludes the Oxbridge and ancient universities, for which there are no equivalents in Australia, and it also excludes the post-1992 higher education corporation universities which were established with a unicameral structure under which the academic board was restricted to advising the governing body on academic developments through the vice-chancellor (Shattock 2006).

their holdings of substantial intellectual capital. Being comprised largely of the professors, the site of greatest concentration of intellectual capital within any one university was therefore its academic board. Thus, academic boards not only oversaw the academic affairs of their universities, but were effectively running them, in accordance with their status and authority as holders of virtually all of the intellectual capital. However, while academic boards held almost unlimited actual powers, they also came to hold significant symbolic powers because their composition and the scope of their business represented what it meant to *be* a university at that time. Bourdieu's theoretical framework also sees higher education as a relatively autonomous field with its own specific logic which, in turn, was able to refract external influences in accordance with this logic (Bourdieu 1993; Maton 2005). For most of the 20th century, national policies which prioritised cultural and intellectual values (over political and economic ones) enabled universities to be largely self-governing and self-directed (Blackmore, Brennan and Zipin 2010a). The confluence of these two sets of circumstances, being the dominance of intellectual capital and national priorities which facilitated and enabled autonomous universities, served to elevate academic boards within universities to a level that had arguably not seen before (or since).

More recent than Moodie's and Eustace's work is *The Structure of Academic Boards at Selected Australian Universities* (Stoddart 1994), an edited collection of separately authored case histories which reports on the specific composition, functions, powers, and, in some instances, committees of five named Australian academic boards (or their equivalents) in the early 1990s. This collection of case histories appears to be the only published Australian work of its type as it reports detailed empirical data on academic boards in a way which enables comparisons with specific boards of other periods.

Classifying the Stoddard collection of case histories according to the same age-groupings as those used for the selection of universities for the three case studies undertaken for this thesis (to which chapter 4, Research Method, refers), one was from a university established prior to 1914, two were from universities established between 1915 and 1985 and two were from universities established after 1986. It is not possible to infer that the five academic boards reported in this edited collection are representative of all Australian university academic boards at that time. However, using publicly reported data obtained from Australian university websites in early 2010 (see below) it is possible to compare these 1990s Australian academic boards to their contemporary counterparts and thereby identify any specific changes in board size, composition and reported role and function. It is also useful to compare, in general terms, the 1990s Australian academic boards to their 1960s British counterparts.

The case histories suggest that on the whole, Australian boards of the mid-1990s were smaller than they had formerly been, with a greater number of elected and *ex officio* members and fewer professorial members than in the past (Stoddart 1994, p. v). Thus, by 1994 the academic board from the pre-1914 university had changed from a full professorial board to a more representative board comprising 150 members, including an elected chair, a significant number of senior managers and some elected professors, non-professorial staff and students (Rosenman 1994, p. 1). By 2010 this academic board had shrunk further to approximately 135 members. In 1994 the role of this board had also changed from that of 'running' the University ... [whereby it] managed resource allocation within the University, determined staff and equipment budgets and allocated positions to budgets' (Rosenman 1994, p. 1) to being 'the leader of academic developments ... the representative of the collegium, and representing the opinion of the collegiums to [the university council]' (Rosenman 1994, p. 1). The resource allocation and other functions previously undertaken by this academic board had become the responsibility of the (comparatively recently established) senior executive, deans and heads of departments. This change was characterised as having stripped the academic board of 'much of its perceived power in the University' (Rosenman 1994, p. 1). Further changes to the reported powers and responsibilities of this board by 2010 included the addition of specific responsibility for academic and research standards and the addition of such quality assurance matters as reviews of academic programs and policy.

These changes are consistent with developments in the broader national and international higher education sectors noted earlier in this thesis. For example, the higher education environment changed markedly in the UK in the 1980s arising from a dramatic shift in government thinking about the nature and role of higher education under which universities became more corporate and entrepreneurial (Clark 1998; Marginson and Considine 2000). These changes are significant for a number of reasons, including that they reflect a transformation in government attitudes towards higher education as something which had formerly been a state responsibility but was now a private and individual benefit with at least a share of the cost to be borne by the beneficiary. Invoking Kogan's and Hanney's 'triangle of forces', state co-ordination of higher education had therefore moved out of the 'professional-collegial' phase and into a period dominated by 'governmental-managerial and market' forces (Kogan and Hanney 2000, p. 24). Secondly, at the level of the university, the increase in the role and responsibility of the university council signalled a shift away from collegial and academic governance towards managerialism and corporate governance practices (Lapworth 2004; Shattock 2008).

Mirroring these international trends but heightened by local fiscal and other constraints (Slaughter and Leslie 1997; Marginson and Considine 2000) the Australian government's Dawkins reforms of the

1980s included mergers between universities and institutes or colleges of advanced education (CAE) thereby creating more university places but within an environment of reduced government funding (Slaughter and Leslie 1997; Marginson and Considine 2000). In particular, some argue that the former CAEs were more hierarchical than universities and that former CAE executives influenced greatly the management structures of newly merged universities, encouraging the wider and more rapid adoption of managerialism than might otherwise have been the case (Blackmore 1992). Accordingly, the resultant higher education system was rationalised and corporatised through 'targets, management plans and performance controls' (Marginson and Considine 2000, p. 28) and the implementation of neoliberal principles espousing 'faith in the market as the mechanism to 'distribute' educational provision' (Blackmore 2009, p. 2). Thus, on the one hand, Australian universities supplemented reduced funding through fee paying students, while on the other hand, managerialism devolved managerial work and made academics responsible for institutional outcomes (Blackmore 2009).

Returning to the case history data for a moment, the academic boards from the second-oldest (or the middle group) of universities were comparatively small in 1994 (28 members and 37 members respectively) comprising elected academic members, *ex officio* members and some students, and both were chaired by members of the university senior executive (Cox 1994; Loxton 1994). By 2010 the size of one had increased to 33 and the other had decreased from 37 to 21 members but with an elected chair.

The academic boards from the two post-1986 universities also adopted a more representative composition, although being somewhat larger than the boards from the middle group universities, comprising 50 and 46 members respectively and with an elected chair. In 1994 both boards had some responsibility for academic planning and budget development, at least as regards academic matters (Garnett 1994; Randle 1994). However, by 2010 all references to budget development and resource allocation had been removed from these boards' publicly listed powers and responsibilities, and from their list of academic board standing committees. Specific references to academic quality had been added.

The issue of these five boards' responsibilities for resourcing appears to be crucial. For the academic board in oldest university, the loss of its resourcing function may have contributed to a perceived diminution of power and place (Rosenman 1994; Stoddart 1994). This reflects a widespread trend in Australia commencing in the 1990s (Marginson and Considine 2000; Woodhouse and Baird 2007). However, the case histories also report that some of the newer academic boards, which had never had

these functions, appeared instead have experienced some difficulty carving out a meaningful and genuinely independent role in academic governance (Cox 1994; Loxton 1994; Randle 1994), possibly because of what some describe a more managerial and less collegial culture within the former CAEs (Entrekin and Everett 1981).

So far this chapter has provided some preliminary information about the governance structure of contemporary Australian universities and the role of the academic board within that structure. Brief descriptions of British academic boards in the 1960s and five Australian academic boards in the 1990s have also provided a basis for considering, later in this chapter, the ways in which Australian university academic boards may have changed in the intervening years.

Australia-wide data on academic board characteristics

This section will describe contemporary data on all Australian academic boards with a view to establishing whether there are any patterns in the profiles of those boards. It will also compare the contemporary data to the historical data published in the 1990s (described above) to assist in developing an understanding of the ways in which Australian academic boards may have changed.

A detailed web-based analysis of 37 academic boards from publicly funded Australian universities was undertaken in April and May 2010. Data were collected about the name, size, composition, and key powers/responsibilities of each academic board, together with information about the place of each academic board in the governance structure of each university, the basis upon which each board was established and the number and names of board committees. To ensure accuracy and currency, information on each university academic board website was cross-checked against provisions relating to that academic board in state and university legislation, university policy and other formally approved university documents. While these data were necessarily limited to academic boards' publicly reported functions, case study data collected in 2010 on three Australian university academic boards to be reported later in this chapter will compare boards' official terms of reference with their recorded and reported actions, highlighting any similarities or differences between the official responsibilities of university academic boards and what it was that they actually do.

For ease of comparison, the universities were grouped into the same three age-categories as were used for the case study analysis (to follow) and for consideration of the published case history data noted earlier, being those universities established prior to 1914, those established between 1915 and 1985 and those established after 1986. The results show that although all of the boards comprised a mix of elected or appointed and *ex officio* members (these generally being senior executive and senior management positions), *ex officio* members comprised at least half of all board members in a significant proportion of instances. This means that in many contemporary Australian university academic boards, approximately half (or more) of all members are there by virtue of the position they hold on the senior executive or senior management, reflecting the significant expansion in the size of the senior management group and in the scope of their functions and responsibilities within Australian universities, commencing in the 1980s (Marginson and Considine 2000).

There was very little difference in the spread of officially stated academic board responsibilities between the three categories of universities, although there were variations in the extent to which those responsibilities had been conferred upon or delegated to the board or were undertaken on an advisory basis only. Moreover while very few academic boards' formal terms of reference (or their equivalents) referred specifically to financial or resourcing matters, the majority explicitly included reference to academic policy, academic strategy, academic standards, quality assurance and program or course approval.

There did not appear to be any significant differences between the categories of universities with regard to the number or purpose of academic board committees. Thus, almost all academic boards had reportedly established committees which addressed, in one form or other, the common areas of teaching and learning, higher degrees by research, academic programs and academic quality. In part, these committee systems are governance structures which reflect the priorities of national higher education policy. They are also indicative of the expanding scope of universities' business, with trends towards university–industry partnerships, internationalisation, quality assurance and research assessment (Blackmore, Brennan and Zipin 2010b; Marginson 2010a; Peters 2011). Committees are not only part of collegial governance processes, they are also characteristic of the way universities work (Tapper and Salter 1992). However, the simple existence of academic boards and other committees within a university is insufficient to determine whether and if so, to what extent, aspects of collegial governance remain in operation. It is what these committees do and the broader role they play that will determine their place in the university's governance structure. This will be explored later in this chapter using case study data.

The Australia-wide data, considered together with that from the case histories, suggest that Australian academic boards have become smaller within the past 20 to 30 years and are now be more likely to have explicitly stated responsibilities for academic standards and academic quality assurance. These shifts are consistent with the adoption of managerial governance practices within universities described above. However, although some of the oldest universities appear to have undergone a transition from professorial to representative and partly elected boards, this is not necessarily the case for the newer universities where academic boards may well have been established as smaller and more representative bodies from the outset. Similarly, while resource allocation and budget development may once have been tasks to which the academic boards in the oldest universities had substantial input, as was the case in the 1960s British universities, a split between academic and resourcing responsibilities appears more likely to have always existed within some of the newer universities. Thus, not all academic boards share the same history or pattern of change.

Case study data—characteristics of three academic boards

Consistent with the instrumental case study method for this research, the discussion of data within this thesis does not include a detailed description of each university case or of each academic board. Instead, the analysis in this and subsequent chapters will focus on the similarities and differences between the three cases, to which table 1 of appendix E refers. As described in chapter 4, Research Method, one of the three case study academic boards was from a prestigious research-intensive university established prior to 1914 (known in this thesis as Historydale University), one was from a comprehensive research and teaching university established in the 1960s (known in this thesis as Middleton University); and one was a dual sector university established in the 1990s (known in this thesis as Newtown University).

In addition to their varying ages, the three academic boards had substantially different physical characteristics. For example, the academic boards at both Newtown and Historydale universities were statutory bodies with an elected chair whereas the board at Middleton had been a committee of council since the institution's establishment. The Middleton board was chaired by an academic appointed directly by the Vice-Chancellor, although it had, at various times in its history, also been chaired by the vice-chancellor or a member of the senior executive. The largest of the boards was at Historydale

University with more than 120 members and the smallest was at Middleton University with between 30 and 40 members. The academic board at Newtown University was slightly larger than that at Middleton, with between 40 and 50 members. The proportion of academic board members who were *ex officio* also varied greatly from 12% at Newtown University, to 36.5% at Middleton University and 65% at Historydale University. Thus, significantly more than half of the members of the academic board at Historydale University were representatives of university management.

Changes in the academic boards over time

The relatively recent establishment of Newtown University combined with substantial changes to its academic governance arrangements in the mid-2000s mean that it is not appropriate to attempt to trace changes in the evolution of the academic board there. Similarly, no meaningful comparison can be made between the academic board at Newtown and those at 1960s British universities or 1990s Australian universities. However, such comparisons are possible for the academic boards at Historydale and Middleton universities.

A comprehensive review of minutes and other historic documents shows that at Historydale University the academic board was originally established as a professorial board and that the duration of its meetings peaked at 5.5 hours in the late 1950s, by which time the board's business had expanded to encompass substantial strategic, operational and financial planning matters. Consistent with that described by Moodie and Eustace (1974) for the British universities, collegial governance therefore appears to have been at its height at this university between the 1950s and the 1980s, when the academic board minutes suggest that it was effectively running the university. The late 1980s therefore marks the shift from collegial governance to more managerial modes, coinciding with an expansion in size and scope of senior executive at that time and a shift from elected to appointed faculty heads etc. Accordingly, in the late 1980s the academic board became a representative board comprising a mix of elected and *ex officio* members. Changes to this board's composition since that time largely involved increased numbers of *ex officio* members to reflect the expanding size and scope of the senior executive. With the expansion of the senior executive, the scope of Historydale's academic board business has reduced. For example, budgetary and planning responsibilities were removed in the 1990s. The length of the academic board meetings had reduced accordingly to 1.5 hours in 2010 and the board appeared to engage in strategic, operational and financial planning and decision-making rarely or never. Accordingly, the matters most commonly considered by the board were comparatively passive (i.e. not initiated by the academic board) and transactional in nature.

At Middleton university the pattern of change was similar but over a necessarily shorter period of time given that this university was considerably younger. Thus, the academic board has evolved from having a largely professorial membership model to a representative model, with a substantial reduction in its size and scope of business. Until the mid-1980s, a significant proportion of agenda items for both academic boards would nowadays be considered strategic and management matters, such as staff appointments and discipline and strategic, operational and financial planning. However, at both Historydale and Middleton universities, the size of each academic board peaked after the introduction of the representative model of membership in the late 1980s and the early 1990s respectively, suggesting that the growth may have been due to a substantial increase in the number of *ex officio* members of the two academic boards at that time. This is contrary to the commonly held view that academic boards were largest during the period of collegial governance.

In summary, the changes which occurred in the academic boards at Historydale and Middleton universities were consistent with those reported in the historical case histories and the literature noted earlier in this chapter, *viz*, in 2010 both boards were smaller than they had formerly been; both had changed from being largely professorial bodies to having adopted a representative membership model; and on the basis of changes in the matters considered at meetings, both boards would appear to have lost their former resourcing responsibilities, to be considering a narrower scope of business than was previously the case and to have considerably reduced decision-making roles within their universities. This is illustrated in table 2, appendix E.

These changes are in accordance with literature which suggests that the field of higher education within western Anglophone nation states has altered inexorably since the 1980s. Substantial shifts in government policy commencing in the UK but spreading quickly to other nations, including Australia, have seen higher education move from being a public to a private good in the form of an economic resource (Tapper 2007) with increased emphasis on those educational outcomes that the support social, political and economic goals of knowledge-based economies (Braun and Merrien 1999; Shore 2010). Government responsibility for delivering higher education has therefore been replaced by requirements for increased accountability, transparency and assessment (Rhodes 1997; Blackmore 2009) where financial control is used as a means of 'steering from a distance' the direction of higher education in a global policy environment that has impacted on the university sector cross-nationally (Rizvi and Lingard 2010). Greater demand for access to higher education together with reduced government funding per student (van Vught 1989) have forced universities to become more entrepreneurial and market-driven both nationally and internationally (Blackmore 2009), leading to

heightened competition between universities for students, grant income and prestige (Deem 1998; Marginson and Considine 2000). These changes have been prompted, at least in part, by neoliberal ideologies in response to globalisation symbolised by managerialism or new public management (Bansel and Davies 2010; Marginson, Murphy and Peters 2010), premised on a fundamental belief in the superiority of the private sector in terms of efficiency and effectiveness (Bleiklie and Kogan 2007; Shattock 2008).

Consistent with van Vught's theory of the relationship between the university and the state, the implementation of the 'state supervising model' has focused on state demands for accountability, generating within universities requirements for strong governance and management arrangements (van Vught 1993, p. 31). Accordingly, university governance has become the focus of a great deal of attention (OECD 2007) stimulating widespread governance reform with common trends in Anglo-Saxon derived higher education systems, despite variation within and between nation states. In turn, this has impacted the role and function of the academic board. First, the role of the academic board has been substantially reduced through the shift in the balance of power to the university council (Lapworth 2004; Shattock 2006), partly because the focus of some university business has necessarily shifted away from internal, academically-driven matters to external issues at both national and global levels relating to financial viability and public accountability (Bargh, Scott and Smith 1996; Brown 2009). Second, there has been a rise in public-sector management practices such as managerialism and streamlined management-led decision-making processes and an equivalent decline in those slower and more cumbersome collegial and bureaucratic governance processes traditionally practiced by the academic board (Bleiklie and Kogan 2007; Mora and Vieira 2009; Marginson 2010a; Meek et al. 2010). This has arguably enabled universities to enact both the longer-term strategic planning and short-term quick-reflex responses demanded by the changed higher education environment (Dearlove 2002), facilitated by a considerable expansion in both the office and the role of vice-chancellor (Meek 2003b; Emmanuel and Reekie 2004; Middlehurst 2004; Shattock 2006), coupled with a consolidation of power within the university executive and a diminution of academic authority (Meek 2003b; Shattock 2006). Third, the accountability regime has meant that 'governance at all levels has tended to become less about initiative and new development and much more about process and compliance' (Shattock 2006, p. 39). Fourth, greater pressure on individual academic staff with regard to student outcomes and research outputs (Blackmore 2009) may have decreased both the time available to academic staff and their trust in management and so reduced the extent to which they might wish to participate in academic governance processes (Lapworth 2004).

The aforementioned changes in the academic boards at Historydale and Middleton universities are consistent with those reported by respondents in interviews with current and former academic board members at both universities, many of whom were long-term university staff who had observed substantial shifts in the role and function of the academic board first-hand. A summary of interview responses on observed changes in the academic boards at both universities is set out in table 3, appendix E.

In general, respondents at Middleton University described their academic board as having fewer professorial members than in the past, being smaller in size and less central to university-decision-making. For example, one recent former elected member of the academic board described the shift in the centrality of the board to university decision-making as follows:

... it was certainly fulfilling a much less proactive and central role than say the [former board name] did back in the 1970s when issues that were central to the University's activities were debated and voted upon and argued out, often with great passion, and finally decided upon. BFME000 (former academic board member)

However, there was also a sense that the changes that had occurred at this academic board were part of a much broader spectrum of changes at the university level; that although the changes to the way in which academic board was structured and operated may not have been entirely desirable, they were nevertheless necessary in the more financially-driven environment in which universities now operate. There was also a recognition by respondents that their university was part a broader, corporatised higher education environment. This is exemplified in the following interview responses:

So as we move towards a more corporate model, operational decisions are coming at the [university executive] level and strategic oversight directions are coming from Council. So I'm wondering whether, if the roles of [board name] have changed, that part of that is because of this move within tertiary education in Australia to a more corporate type approach. I mean we have to ... we are a business whether we like it or not and I think it would be naive to operate under any other premise. BEL002 (elected member, Middleton University)

These days ... initiatives don't arise bottom-up through the University's committee structure; they almost invariably come whistling down from the [executive group] or just the Vice-Chancellor. And given the way they have to fit in with what's happening in the external environment that the University operates in, and often things have to happen pretty quickly, there's a degree to which that has been an inevitable change. I don't think there is any way in which you could go back to the old [board name] role. BFME000 (former elected member, Middleton University)

This suggests that not only were the patterns of change observed at Middleton University consistent with those described in the literature regarding the corporatisation of the university and its place within a globalised higher education market, but that staff were aware of and had sanctioned these changes and the impact they have had on governance and management arrangements. Accordingly, the vice-chancellor's analysis of changes to Middleton's academic board was that there was now far greater differentiation between the roles played by management and the roles played by academic staff. The Vice-Chancellor also argued that in contemporary Australian universities academic staff are not equipped to make decisions about the hiring of staff, and other like matters, and that such matters are best left to management. The corollary is that academic boards no longer possess the skill or expertise needed to make management decisions:

In the past academic boards would have had a far greater role in the hiring of staff and things like that and I just don't think they've got the skill sets in the 21st century to do that, it's not what academic staff are trained or employed to do. I wouldn't be wishing to see them have a wider view in other matters; whereas I do believe probably 40 years ago they would have had a much wider view. BVC006 (vice-chancellor, Middleton University)

However, while it is certainly true that, as noted earlier in this chapter, managerial and bureaucratic modes of governance have dominated universities in recent years (Kok et al. 2010; Marginson, Murphy and Peters 2010), it is also contended that as academics move into line management positions, the divisions between academic and administrative work are being eroded (Blackmore and Sachs 2007; Whitchurch and Gordon 2011). That is to say, it is spurious to assert that academics are not capable of making management decisions because academics who are promoted to management roles are required to make just such decisions on a daily basis. Moreover, recent empirical research suggests that 'the boundary between governance and management is not only ambiguous and subjective, but at times contested and subject to negotiation' (Rytmeister 2009, p. 152). This suggests that the removal of managerial responsibilities from academic boards may have had at least as much to do with shifts in power relations within universities in the 1980s and the 1990s as it did to do with the streamlining of university decision-making in response to escalating external demands that was noted earlier in this chapter. As such, the subject of academic boards and power will be considered in detail in the following chapter in this thesis.

There was also a view at Middleton University that the era of the professorial academic board was not ideal for reasons other than the changed internal and external higher education environments. For example, long-term staff of the university described the board at that time as elitist and inflexible:

My memory is that it was pretty-much a professorial board plus others in the 1970s and that was the era of the god-professor and there were some very strong and opinionated people who felt that their views ought to guide what the University did and they were not backwards in coming forwards and debating things with great fervour. BFME000 (former elected member, Middleton University)

I think it is now broader and more encompassing of the whole academic arena. I think previously when I was first appointed to [University name] the [board name] was a body which was perceived as elitist and inflexible—and this I'm talking about 20 years ago. BCC004 (committee chair, Middleton University)

This is consistent with literature which reports that until the end of the 1970s academic identity was constituted around the language of collegiality and internal hierarchies of professorial leadership that produced a particular discourse of the role and function of the university (Henkel 2000; Deem, Hillyard and Reed 2007) but also ensured an uneven distribution of status and power (Ramsden 1998, p. 23).

Like those at Middleton University, staff at Historydale described changes to their academic board which included fewer professorial members, reduced academic board role and power, some academic board committees having been taken over by or replaced by senior management committees and increased emphasis on academic quality assurance work. Both elected and *ex officio* members also highlighted some advantages of moving from a professorial to a representative board, including shorter, more efficient meetings. For example, from this pro vice-chancellor's perspective:

... it's become a much more organised and efficient process ... than it originally was when I came on, which was [then] a debating forum. Originally, it was a professorial board. Professors of the university made up the academic board and they made decisions, and the professorial board was the opportunity for all those professors who had an opinion about anything to say it. These meetings could go on; they went on at least half a day and sometimes the whole day. It was all very entertaining and jolly and convivial but it was a massive waste of time. CEX008 (pro vice-chancellor and ex officio member, Historydale University)

There was also agreement about the responsibilities of the academic board having been reduced due to an expansion in the size and scope of the senior executive and a shift to a more corporate-style of governance and management. For example, the vice-chancellor noted that:

Well the role of the academic board has shrunk overall because of the rise of the senior management group and the fact that they have greater executive powers. CVC000 (vice-chancellor, Historydale University)

More specifically, this elected member recalled the initial appointment of a deputy vice-chancellor (academic) and the subsequent transfer of responsibilities from the academic board to the newly created senior executive portfolio, suggesting that this shift had not only continued but escalated in the intervening period:

Well, when they created, in [date] a DVC (academic), that was, you know, the start of a shift of all academic decision-making going to the DVC (academic) rather than it being the board that had that authority. Um, and that's, you know, increased over time. CEL004 (elected member, Historydale University)

Like Middleton University there was also a sense among both elected and *ex officio* members at this university that the changes were inevitable and irreversible. For example, an elected member who was also a former chair of the academic board, noted that:

I'm fairly pragmatic and I don't believe we can ever go back to the old university where the professors pontificated and decided on budgets and directions and everything else. I mean that just doesn't fit any more and nor would I want it to happen. CEL004 (elected member, Historydale University)

Interestingly, Taylor argues that while some academic staff may perceive managerialism to be a threat to academia, for others it represents a 'new division of labour between teaching and research on the one hand and institutional management on the other' enabling those staff to concentrate on their primary areas of interest and concern rather than be distracted by administrative and management matters (Taylor 2006, p. 273). That is to say, while it is possible that some academic staff may perceive managerialism as a negative force (Middlehurst 1993; Newton 2002; Amaral, Fulton and Larsen 2003; Blackmore and Sachs 2007; Bansel and Davies 2010), this is not necessarily always the case. For others, it may enable an increased focus on academic pursuits while lessening the risk of interruption.

In general, despite the differences between the two universities and their academic boards, there was a great deal of similarity between the responses of members regarding the changes that had occurred over time. However, there were also differences. In particular, there was a strong sense at Middleton University that the representative composition of the academic board (as opposed to the largely professorial board of the past) meant that it was now more flexible and less elitist than in the past, whereas this was not reported at Historydale University, despite both sets of respondents including a

significant proportion of long-serving university staff who could comment on the effects of the changes first-hand. This could possibly signify differences in culture between the two universities, at least in part due to the disparities in age and status.

Changes in the level of discussion and proactivity of each board

Interview responses from both Historydale and Middleton universities suggest that the level of discussion at meetings of each of the two academic boards had decreased markedly since their respective professorial board days. At Historydale University this was evidenced by the reduction in meeting time from an average of 5.5 hours in the 1950s to the 2010 average of 1.5 hours.

Unfortunately, equivalent historical records were not available for Middleton; however, respondents recall meetings during which the mainly professorial members were ‘debating things with great fervor’ (BFM000), versus the meetings of the contemporary board which eight of the ten respondents described as being characterised by little or no discussion. This assessment is supported by the results of an analysis of shifts in the degree of discussion of agenda items by the two oldest academic boards, over time. Data for this analysis were collated from a sampling of academic board minutes over three years in each decade of the respective academic board’s life. Table 4 in appendix E depicts these shifts at twenty-year intervals.

In respect of Middleton University, the percentage of agenda items discussed at academic board meetings had decreased from 60% in the 1960s to 10.5% in 2010. At Historydale University the percentage of agenda items discussed at academic board meetings had decreased from 78% in the 1920s to 14% in 2010. Of particular note is that for both academic boards, the point in their histories at which discussion appears to have been the greatest was shortly after their establishment, with the proportion of agenda items discussed having declined steadily ever since. This is contrary to the commonly held view that academic board discussion would have peaked during the height of collegial governance, somewhere between the 1950s and the 1980s. However, at Newtown university 41% of agenda items were discussed by the academic board in 2010, a considerably higher proportion than at either of the other two universities. These data are consistent with the results of an observation of one meeting of the academic board at each of these three universities during 2010. At Newtown University the academic board appeared to be very active and engaged in considerable discussion of substantive agenda items, also reflected in the published minutes of the meeting. In contrast, at Middleton

University no discussion of any agenda item was observed or recorded during the meeting and *ex officio members* were the only persons who spoke to or introduced items (other than the chair). Thus, the meeting appeared to be very passive and only one question was asked by an elected member for the duration of the meeting. At Historydale University, although there was also no observed or recorded discussion, a number of questions were asked by elected members. Moreover, while *ex officio* members spoke to the majority of agenda items, some items were actively addressed by (non-*ex officio*) committee chairs and members. In contrast, at Middleton University, committee members and chairs appeared to play no role in the academic board meeting and the nature and structure of academic board committees at this university appeared greatly reduced in comparison to those in place at Historydale and Newtown universities.

A review of the nature of academic board agenda items shows that in 2010 the academic board at Middleton was the most passive in that it did not appear to initiate or generate any of the agenda items it considered, a pattern which was supported by interview responses. Conversely, the academic board at Newtown university was the most proactive in that of the three academic boards it considered the greatest proportion of items initiated or generated by itself or by its committees, followed closely by the board at Historydale. However, consistent with a statement by Moodie and Eustace that traditionally the role of the academic board 'has never been to initiate but has always been ... confined to the co-ordination, validation, and criticism of the initiatives and decisions of others' (1974, p. 84), the nature of business considered at all three academic boards was comparatively reactive. Thus, at no time during any of these academic boards' histories did the proportion of items initiated or generated by the board or its committees exceed that initiated or generated by others.

Fulfilment of academic board terms of reference

The Australia-wide data show very little difference in the spread of officially stated academic board responsibilities between the three age-groupings of universities, although there were variations in the extent to which those responsibilities had been conferred upon or delegated to the board or were undertaken on an advisory basis only. For example, very few academic boards' formal terms of reference (or their equivalents) referred specifically to financial or resourcing matters, but the majority explicitly included reference to academic policy, academic strategy, academic standards, quality assurance and program or course approval. That is to say, there was a great deal of commonality

between university academic boards with regard to what was included (and what was not) in their officially stated responsibilities. For the three case study universities, common areas of responsibility (according to their documented terms of reference) were oversight of or providing advice on academic matters; course approval; and academic quality assurance and compliance with certain academic policy and academic standards. However, as might reasonably be expected, there were also some differences. For example, the boards at Middleton and Historydale universities were called upon to serve as discussion forums for academic matters and this was not mentioned for Newtown, while the board at Historydale was responsible for academic policy and policy applicable to teaching and research staff but this was not mentioned in the terms of reference for Newtown and Middleton academic boards.

However, it cannot be automatically assumed that academic boards systematically implement each of their terms of reference and so it is also important to compare boards' official responsibilities with what it is that actually do. Thus, each of the individual terms of reference were compared with agendas and minutes and other official academic board documents for each case study academic board during 2010 to obtain evidence of the academic board having undertaken the tasks so named. This exercise did not consider how well or how effectively those tasks had been carried out, merely that there was action aligned with a particular responsibility (or not, as the case may be). The meeting observation and interviews of current members of each academic board enabled data triangulation to improve the reliability of this data. For example, where a particular responsibility was named in an academic board's terms of reference but no evidence of activity aimed at fulfilment of that responsibility had been found in the agendas or minutes for that board or in the meeting observation, key members of the board would be asked whether the board undertook the named activity and, if so, in what way. A summary of the outcome of this exercise is set out in table 5 appendix E.

The results of this analysis show that none of the three academic boards addressed all of their terms of reference and that two of the three boards addressed approximately 60% or fewer of their terms of reference. Thus, although the academic board at Newtown University addressed 90% of its terms of reference, by far the highest result, neither it nor any of its committees appeared to monitor compliance with course approval policies and procedures despite that task being explicitly listed. At Historydale University the academic board addressed 62.5% of its terms of reference, the next highest result, with some gaps in the areas of quality assurance and academic standards, taking an overview of academic activities, academic strategic planning and academic policy. However, at Middleton University the academic board addressed only 47.5% of its terms of reference with no evidence of activity in key

areas such as academic quality assurance. In all three universities there was a mismatch between their terms of reference and what it was that they actually did and at Historydale and Middleton universities that mismatch was quite substantial. Moreover, because of this potentially loose relationship between documented responsibilities and specific action, it can be inferred that changing an academic board's terms of reference may not be sufficient to render significant change in what that board does or how it operates. Thus, while 'most universities have acted to define more carefully the roles of their Academic Boards' (Dooley 2007, p. 19) in recent years, this does not necessarily mean that those boards are any more effective as a result.

Perceptions of key academic board roles and meeting style

So, if at least two of the academic boards were not consistently taking action in accordance with their terms of reference, what did current and former members think they actually did? Interview data show that across all three universities and regardless of the membership category of the respondent, the most frequently articulated key academic board role was academic quality assurance with common aspects to this being course approval and academic policy approval, rather than broader or more externally focussed aspects of quality assurance tasks such as the collection and reporting of data on key performance indicators, or the setting of such indicators, for example. However, while the members of academic boards at Newtown and Historydale universities also cited broader roles such as providing early input to major decisions or serving as a forum for academic discussion, such matters were absent from the key roles reported for Middleton University. These findings are consistent with the span of 2010 agenda items observed for the three academic boards and suggest that the scope of matters actually considered by the academic board at Middleton was considerably narrower than that considered by the other two boards.

Interestingly, two of the key academic board roles perceived by members of the Newtown University academic board were *not* reflected in its terms of reference, these being the board serving as a voice for staff and the board serving as a functional and symbolic hub for a unified university. These are therefore tacit functions in that they were considered to be crucially important but were not documented.

Respondents were also asked about any symbolism associated with their academic board and at Newtown and Historydale universities collegiality was the most commonly reported symbolic role. However, the symbolic roles reported at Middleton University were quite different in nature because there it was felt that the academic board symbolised staff participation in academic decision-making, despite comments on the style of board meetings at that university (and the outcome of the academic board meeting observation reported above) suggesting almost universally that in reality there was little such participation. This contrast is sharply illustrated by the following two comments from the same recent former member:

... perhaps the symbolic role that academic [board] do[es] have is to academic staff to feel that they are part of the democratic decision-making process and even though they are not coming to a vote on everything, that they are around the table and could say something if they felt something was about to happen that was strongly objectionable. BFMELO00 (former elected member, Middleton university)

... you'll see the pattern of the business: a report was received and noted; and another report was received and noted; then the following things were approved. But ... you got no sense that decisions were [actually] being made. And that's my memory of just about every meeting. BFMELO00 (former elected member, Middleton University)

Thus, while at all three universities the academic boards were commonly felt to have adopted a meeting style which was transactional and passive or reactive, at Middleton University the board was very commonly described as being a rubber stamp. This was not the case at the other two universities. Conversely, the academic boards at Newtown and Historydale universities were more likely to be described as collegial and discursive and at both universities there was a tendency for management to express frustration about the board getting too caught up in detail, exemplified by these comments from a deputy vice-chancellor and the vice-chancellor respectively at these two universities:

... as a meeting style, board meetings tend to be discursive and narrative, collegial and inclusive, as opposed to more targeted management committee meetings. So I think from that perspective, there can be elements of frustration in the sense that they do tend to meander and get caught up in what you often think are really relatively minor points of detail rather than seeing things in the big-picture context. (Deputy vice-chancellor, Newtown university)

Where the board is not very effective is when you're way down the track on a piece of change that's involved lots of discussions between faculties or whatever it may be ... and it has been hammered out in a subcommittee and then it gets to the board and it gets re-opened. Now the truth is that in some of the cases

they are actually right, so I'm not saying that it is always a bad thing to occur, but in some of the cases it's a total furphy. (Vice-chancellor, Historydale university)

Interestingly, quite a number of respondents at Historydale felt their board no longer played a symbolic role in the university and would not generally be missed if it were disestablished. This is borne out in members' responses about the future of this academic board, which were quite pessimistic and will be discussed in a subsequent chapter which considers the future of the academic board.

A tabular summary of the data reported in this section is set out in table 6 of appendix E.

Perceptions of academic board strengths and weaknesses

Across all three universities there was a tendency for respondents to report more numerous academic board weaknesses than strengths, regardless of their category of membership (to which table 7 of appendix E refers). However this tendency was particularly notable at Middleton University, suggesting that dissatisfaction with that academic board was significantly greater than at the other two universities. The single common strength across the three boards was the academic board serving as a forum for information transmission, especially to elected members.

A weakness that was commonly reported by senior executives in respect of all three boards was a failure to provide educational leadership, meaning that there was insufficient debate of high-level or major educational issues and that the boards were felt to be too dependent on management. Frustration with this issue was particularly palpable at Newtown university where management appeared to have significantly higher expectations of the board than was the case at the other two universities. This is reflected in the following comments from a deputy vice-chancellor and from the vice-chancellor respectively:

... those discussions could be taking place in the board but they could also be being fostered by the board to be discussed more broadly in the University ... [but] it's not even on the radar. Or at least insofar as it does get on the radar it's actually being brought by management to the board. AEX009 (deputy vice-chancellor, Newtown university)

I do think that it should be taking a more active role in understanding what is happening in the changes in tertiary education in Australia ... the board needs to have a much stronger self-consciousness about what it's

going to mean for its core business in education and research. It's still too much caught up in the house-keeping of the university and not enough in self-consciously scanning the external environment, anticipating what should be coming and joining with management in positioning the university for a different future. It's too reactive to management, not proactive to the demands on the whole of the institution AVC008 (vice-chancellor, Newtown university)

At Middleton University the deputy vice-chancellor (academic) expressed a similar frustration:

As I said, with the main areas they probably have not been proactive in the initiative of any particular issue; I can't recall one in which, in a sense, [board name] said something to which the most relevant DVC said 'Oh that's a brilliant idea, we're going to take it forward and take it up'. BEX006 (deputy vice-chancellor (academic), Middleton University)

This mismatch between the functioning of academic boards and the expectations of contemporary Australian university executives is reflective of the shift within universities towards faster, management-led decision-making (Blackmore, Brennan and Zipin 2010b; Marginson, Murphy and Peters 2010) which for some means that traditional models of university governance are out of step with contemporary demands facing higher education (Bargh, Scott and Smith 1996; Dearlove 2002; Meyer 2002; Gayle, Tewarie and White 2003; Lapworth 2004; Bradshaw and Fredette 2009). This has arguably seen academic boards being at least partially left behind, bypassed, replaced or ignored. Thus, an insight into why passivity might commonly be a feature of contemporary academic board meetings was provided by this elected member at Middleton University:

It is difficult for many people to contradict the Vice-Chancellor. Once the Vice-Chancellor has made a statement it is very difficult for people to say well, actually, I don't agree with that. So there's often quite a lot of head nodding. BEL007 (elected member, Middleton university)

This respondent was not referring to a lack of university knowledge or a lack of interest in university-wide affairs, but to a fear of the consequences arising from being seen to disagree with the vice-chancellor. Indeed, respondents from both Middleton and Historydale universities reported a significant tendency for meetings to be dominated by management, particularly so at Middleton, where it was felt that both the agenda and the meetings were driven by the executive. This trend was also reported at Newtown University but there it was felt to be somewhat reduced, being in the form of a propensity by the vice-chancellor to dominate some of the board's discussion. Related to this was a further common weakness at all three boards, being overlap between business considered at the board and that previously considered elsewhere, making it difficult for the board to add value or to carve out a unique

role. This is illustrated in the following comment from the deputy vice-chancellor (academic) at Historydale University:

They tend to come as well-worked reports so the Board is essentially signing off on a set of proposals and recommendations that have been well worked through but I mean that's essentially what the Board does. CEX007 (deputy vice-chancellor (academic), Historydale University)

Members, such as this elected member from Middleton University, generally felt that this tendency for academic boards to consider matters only after they had been thoroughly thrashed out elsewhere meant that on most occasions there was nothing left for the board to do but sign-off on the proposal:

Not that we just blatantly—you know, it's there so it's stamped, but more that well this has been highly considered before and there's really not a lot more that [board name] can add to it. BEL002 (elected member, Middleton University)

Particularly at Middleton and Historydale universities, this was a significant disincentive with regard to contributions from members at meetings and it appears to arise from the general view reported earlier in this chapter in the literature, that the role of the academic board has been largely taken over by senior management. This will be discussed in further detail in chapter 6, Power.

The unofficial roles of academic boards

The fact that some of academic boards' traditional roles appear to have been taken over by management does not mean that boards and board meetings do not serve other important purposes. For example, writing about the equivalent to academic boards within the US higher education sector, Birnbaum notes that while such bodies may not always be successfully undertaking their manifest functions, they do fulfil a number of important latent functions, including: acknowledging the right of academic staff to participate in governance; serving as a cue to administrators regarding issues that need action and those that do not; highlighting academics with management potential; functioning as an organisational conservator; providing a source of ritual and pastime; and serving as a scapegoat (Birnbaum 1989, pp. 428–38). The corollary of Birnbaum's list of latent academic board functions is therefore that any consideration of the role, composition and mode of operation of the academic board (or its equivalent) must take into account both the board's existing overt and tacit functions.

Consistent with Birnbaun's assertions about US academic board equivalents, respondents at each of the case study universities spoke extensively about academic board functions or purposes that could be considered to be 'latent' or unofficial in nature. For example, at all three universities many of the (non-senior executive) members reported attending board meetings so that they could hear from, see and perhaps even be seen by, the vice-chancellor and other members of the senior executive, reflected in following comments from members:

[Academic board meetings provide] a good opportunity to observe the players, meaning the senior managers of the University. CEL004 (elected member, Historydale University)

And it also raises your profile. So you get regular appearance before the vice-chancellor and a range of senior staff and other staff. AEL004 (elected member, Newtown University)

Similarly, this head of school noted that for her, the academic board meeting is:

... the only place really, as a head of school, that I get to learn about all the activities that are happening across the university in person. CEX001(head of school and *ex officio* member, Historydale University)

Thus, academic board meetings serve as an important source of university-wide (as opposed to faculty-based) information, as these members report:

I use it as a knowledge conduit. It is one of the ways that I get information about what's happening beyond my own school and faculty, within the university. BEL002 (elected member, Middleton University)

I think it is certainly a good way of getting a feel for and knowing what's going on in the university in the academic sphere and I think that is helpful for dealing with the various changes in teaching and so on, and the ERA and everything that is happening in research. It gives you a broader picture and a better feel. BCH003 (board chair, Middleton University)

Board meetings also provided members with an opportunity to network, both during and after the meeting.

You get to mix with people you might not see very often. We've got [number] of campuses at [this university name] so people travel here to academic board; you might catch up with someone over something, like I did — I caught the [title deleted to preserve anonymity] before he left to talk about something. I've used it as a forum to do that, at the morning teas that we have following academic board. I've used it today to have a series of three or four meetings with people on this campus about different things. So I think there's the

mixing and interaction across faculties and staff of the university that otherwise wouldn't cross paths and there's the social side as well, it lends itself to that. CEX001 (head of school and *ex officio* member, Historydale University)

The networking opportunities that academic board meetings provide were highlighted by this anecdote from a member of the senior executive at Newtown University, which relates to a review of an academic board at another Australian university in which she participated:

And we said, 'what's the best thing about it?' And they said, 'well at morning tea time I get to catch up with all the people I've been trying to catch up with for weeks [laughter] or months'. And so somebody [jokingly] said 'well why don't we cancel the board meeting and just have the morning tea'? AEX006 (deputy vice-chancellor, Newtown University)

This propensity for academic boards as places to see and be seen, hear and be heard, and to network both formally and informally, is suggestive of boards as sites of network governance, a mode of governance which some argue operates both horizontally and vertically (Blackmore 2009, p. 12). However, Parker notes that the existence of networks and networking within and between organisations is not necessarily an indicator that network governance is taking place (Parker 2007). On the basis of empirical research conducted in Ireland and Sweden she posits that there are a number of key characteristics of network governance and that unless these are present, network governance is not occurring (Parker 2007). For example, according to Parker's criteria, network governance involves the following:

1. Actors connected by ties and social relations
2. Decentralised decision-making involving shared power (absence of single-actor control and domination)
3. Information transfer and reflexivity (reflection on practice and world views)
4. Actors participate out of recognition that they affect and are affected by the behaviour of other actors.

(Parker 2007, p. 115)

While it would appear likely that all three academic boards may meet the first, third and fourth of these criteria, the extent to which these boards are actively engaged in decision-making and shared power in the absence of 'single-actor control and domination' is a moot point. For example, the data for Middleton University (reported above) suggests that this board generates no substantial agenda items and makes few considered decisions (rather than simply rubber stamping recommendations from the executive). Moreover, while the academic boards at Newtown and Historydale universities spent comparatively more time actively considering proposals, it is doubtful that any of the three boards are

sites of '[d]ecentralised decision-making' or are engaged in 'steering, setting directions and influencing behaviour' as Parker argues is required for network governance to be taking place (2007, p. 115). By their very nature, boards are part of a formal, hierarchically-based committee structure and are not 'decentralised'. Nor are they generally involved in the high-level strategising that might be involved in 'steering' and 'setting directions'. Further, it is argued that '[n]etworks ... function by non-hierarchical coordination' (Borzel and Panke 2007, p. 154) and that hierarchical decision-making, which includes 'majority voting' (Borzel and Panke 2007, p. 155) such as is practiced (either formally or informally) by academic boards is therefore not conducive network governance which is, in turn, more likely to be associated with an absent or ineffective hierarchy (Borzel and Panke 2007).

On the other hand, it is possible that academic board members use the spaces in and around meetings to engage in network governance involving other, more loosely connected and less formal networks. That is to say, if the formally and hierarchically constructed academic boards are not implementing network governance, network governance might still be taking place between groups of members around (but not during) meetings in a manner reminiscent of latent or tacit functions.

Academic board effectiveness

At Newtown and Historydale universities, the majority of respondents, across all categories, believed their boards were effective, although there was recognition at Historydale that this was within the context of a vastly reduced set of academic board responsibilities than had formerly been the case:

I think what it's been left with it does very well. CCH003 (board chair, Historydale University)

I think, in the context of the evolving environment, both broadly and specifically at [this University name], I think it actually manages reasonably well. CEX007 (deputy vice-chancellor (academic), Historydale University)

These reported views contrast with the existing Australian and international literature on university academic boards (or their equivalents) which, in general, suggests that they are not currently seen to be effectively discharging their responsibilities (Birnbaum 1989; Marginson and Considine 2000; Moodie 2004; Shattock 2006; Baird 2007; Woodhouse and Baird 2007). The perception of academic board effectiveness at Newtown and Historydale universities also contrasts with the significant number

of weaknesses reported for both academic boards (reported above) and, in the case of Historydale, with the relatively high proportion of unfulfilled terms of reference (also reported above). So what might this mean? In the case of Newtown University, which, taking into account the spread of data reported in this chapter would appear to have been a relatively well-functioning and highly regarded academic board, it may simply mean that while the board was generally perceived to doing 'a good job', it could 'do better'. In the case of Historydale University which, on the whole, would appear to be a somewhat less well-functioning academic board, it would appear that the disadvantages arising from the costs in terms of time, energy and money of running the academic board may be seen within the university community to be currently outweighed by the benefits of those latent and manifest functions that the board does undertake. These issues will be further explored in a later chapter on 'The future of academic boards'.

However, at Middleton University, a majority of respondents felt that while the board was efficient with regard to speedy formal approval of recommendations, it was only partly effective, or not effective, especially with regard to its broader responsibilities relating to monitoring and tracking quality assurance, academic standards and academic developments, as the following responses suggest:

I think it's very effective in being the last stop. I think it doesn't hold up those decisions, it's very good at that. I'm not as ... I don't think it's good at that monitoring and surveillance role. BEL007 (elected member, Middleton University)

... the critical element of this university is the quality of the graduates that we produce; the quality of our degrees; the international acceptance of the degrees. It is not enough to simply stand up and say 'We do it'. That's why I came back to the view that if there's anywhere where I think [board name] needs to think about how they do that, it is that whole question of 'How do we know?' 'How do we benchmark?' 'How do we validate?' BVC006 (vice-chancellor, Middleton University)

Well our [board name] isn't so much a place of debate whereas I think a lot of [academic boards] are. But on the other hand I think we work quite efficiently. BCH003 (board chair, Middleton University)

Thus, the academic board at Middleton University was felt by respondents to be least effective of the three academic boards, while the board at Newtown University was considered to be the most effective. This is consistent with data reported elsewhere in this chapter, such as the percentage fulfilment of terms of reference.

Academic board committees

Data on the extent of variation between the three universities in respect of the number and nature of academic board committees, and the mode of appointment of committee chairs (to which table 8 in appendix E refers) show, in particular, that the board at Middleton University did not have teaching and learning or research committees (or equivalent). Instead, that university had established an education advisory committee responsible to the deputy vice-chancellor (academic) and a research advisory committee responsible to the deputy vice-chancellor (research). This would suggest that matters relating to education and research strategy and performance were not determined or overseen by the academic board at Middleton, but were instead the province of the senior management group.

Only at Newtown university were academic board committees considered to be universally very effective. At Middleton, a majority of respondents felt that the board committees were no longer appropriate for that university's mode of operating, or they didn't know the board had committees, or didn't know enough about them to comment. The committees therefore appeared to be relatively invisible at that board. While at Historydale University a majority of respondents considered that the academic board committees were effective, senior executives felt the committees were too large and that the membership was too faculty-based to be useful on key university-wide issues. However, it is also possible that the large and active set of academic board committees at Historydale at least partly accounts for the previously noted relatively low level of discussion during meetings of that academic board. This is reflected in the following comment from the chair of the board:

... the board meetings are just the culmination of a lot of other work. There's a misconception I think, among a lot of elected members, that the board meeting is all that happens. Many elected members don't find it easy to contribute productively at the [board] meeting because they haven't been to any of the [committee meetings]. CCH003 (board chair, Historydale University)

The view that at this university the major debates occurred at the academic board committees (rather than at the board itself) was also expressed by other elected and *ex officio* members. For example, a pro vice-chancellor observed that within the last 30 years, as pressure increased on the academic board for shorter meetings and faster decisions, the role of the board committees had also increased:

...the board itself [became] more efficient as a decision-maker which then pushed the major discussions down to the committees ... and the committee structure became quite sophisticated. CEX008 (pro vice-chancellor and *ex officio* member, Historydale University)

The phenomena of debate at academic board meetings being replaced by debate at board committee meetings was not observed at either of the other two universities. It may well be that for a university with a large academic board such as at Historydale, it is simply too impractical and time consuming to have major debates at board meetings and so committee meetings provide an alternative venue for such discussions.

Governance modes at the case study academic boards

The case study data presented within this chapter would suggest that while a number of governance modes are evident simultaneously at each academic board, a different mode was dominant in each case. For example, it would appear that managerial or corporate governance substantially influenced the board at Middleton University, evidenced by the extent to which the vice-chancellor and senior executive would appear to dominate both the agenda items and board meetings, regardless of the official terms of reference which were quite extensive. That this board did not have teaching and learning and research committees (these areas being the traditionally core responsibilities of academic boards) but that such committees did exist, advisory to two deputy vice-chancellors, further supports the view that at this university, and within this academic board, managerial and corporate modes and governance and management prevailed.

However, at Historydale University, a combination of factors suggests that the academic board was operating within a predominantly collegial mode. For example, the board was very large and operated an extensive and highly active committee system which, in turn, generated a substantial proportion of the board's business. Moreover, interview responses indicated that the style of this board's meeting were collegial and half of all respondents felt that the board also symbolised collegiality.

In discussing university governance, some argue that universities should find a way forward that enables an appropriate sharing of governance responsibilities (Shattock 2002; Child and Rodrigues 2003; Coaldrake, Stedman and Little 2003; Kennedy 2003; Duderstadt 2004; Lapworth 2004; Carnegie and Tuck 2010). This is not US style-shared governance but is instead what Carnegie and Tuck describe as 'integrated university governance' which:

... openly acknowledges the interdependence of scholarship, performance and conformance and of the various actors involved throughout an institution, thus embracing a whole-of-university approach to university governance (Carnegie and Tuck 2010, p. 438).

Within this context it appeared that the academic board at Newtown University was attempting to operate within the kind of shared governance mode that Shattock and others have envisaged, notwithstanding that particular academic board's weaknesses and failings reported earlier. This is exemplified by the following comment from a recent former elected member on the relationship between the vice-chancellor and the academic board:

...It was very much a collaborative approach to decision-making, it wasn't just linear. AFM002 (former elected member, Newtown University)

However, one of the weaknesses of theoretical models of shared governance such as that advocated by Carnegie and Tuck is that they tend in general not to incorporate an analysis of why those models are not currently in place and what practical steps practitioners could take to implement them. Thus, Carnegie's and Tuck's assessment of what is required for implementation of their model includes 'trust, knowledge management and professional judgement' (2010, p. 439) and does not acknowledge power as being an issue in university governance structures, a weaknesses noted by Kezar and Eckel (2004) with respect to structural models of university governance in general. Thus, the shared governance in operation at Newtown University was not an equal partnership—indeed, as will be considered in chapter 6, Power, the academic board at Newtown University had virtually no formal decision-making authority in its own right. However, there *was* an important sense at that university of the executive and the academic board working together for the benefit of the university as a whole. This appeared to give this academic board a sense of purpose, place and importance that was distinctly lacking at the other two case study universities.

While the diagrammatic representation of modes of university governance depicted earlier in this chapter was based on an interplay between collegial, bureaucratic, managerial or entrepreneurial and network modes of governance, it is also possible to portray collegial and managerial modes of governance as being at opposite ends of a spectrum or continuum (Deem 1998; Whitchurch and Gordon 2011). Thus, the modes of governance observed in play at the three case study academic boards can be represented as follows.

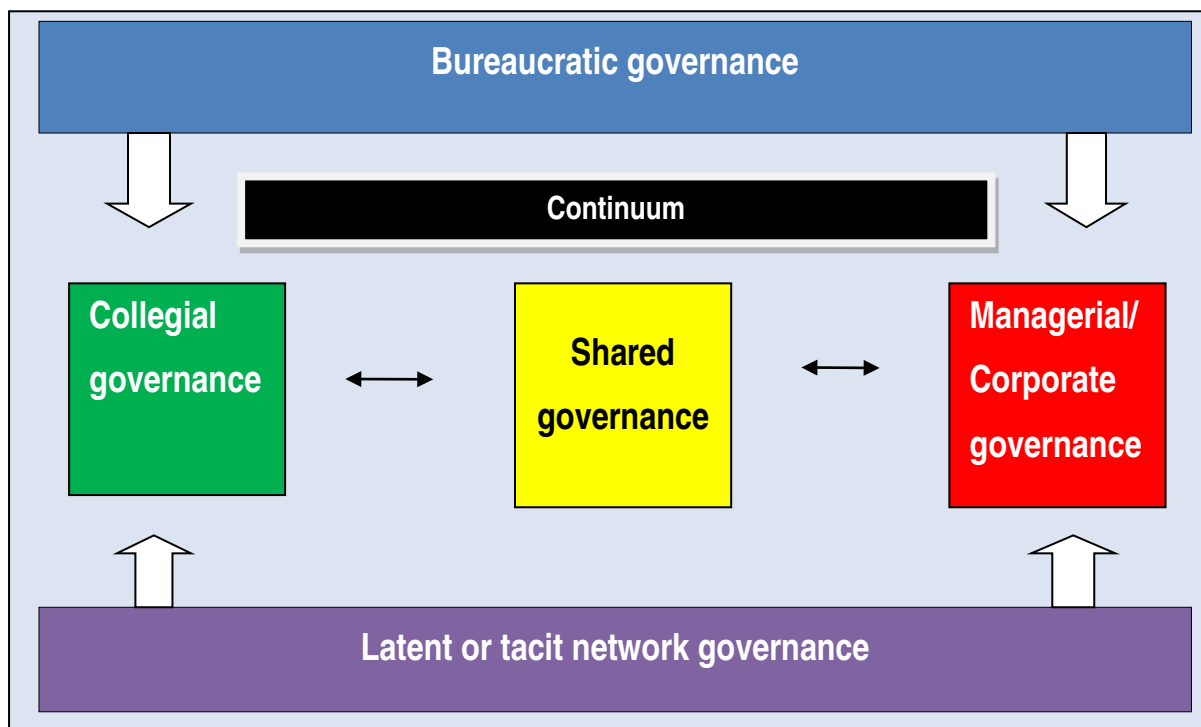


Figure 3: Modes of university governance observed in operation at the case study academic boards

Figure 3 suggests that academic boards can be placed anywhere on the continuum between collegial and managerial governance and that bureaucratic and network governance operate as overlays, influencing the dominant mode of governance on a continual basis.

This chapter has analysed governance modes in operation at the three case study universities and has compared them with historical data about Australian and British academic boards to suggest ways the two oldest boards have changed, particularly in response to the predominance of managerialism in contemporary Australian universities. For example, the proportion of members who are representatives of management has increased substantially, while the level of discussion at board meetings has decreased. The chapter has also compared and contrasted data relating to the three case study academic boards in a range of areas, including roles, functions, perceptions of effectiveness and academic board committees. In particular, the data have highlighted a significant gap between academic board terms of reference and what these boards actually did.

The following chapter will continue this analysis with a consideration of academic board power relative to power-bases within the university as a whole.

Chapter 6 — Power and academic boards

Introduction

This chapter analyses data relating to Australian university academic boards in the area of power relations, within a context of organisational change or transformation. Although this thesis draws on numerous theorisations of organisational change within the higher education environment (such as van Vught 1989; Bargh, Scott and Smith 1996; Barnett 2000; Henkel 2005; Bleiklie and Kogan 2006; Taylor 2006; Deem, Hillyard and Reed 2007; Badat 2009) and is informed by various theories relating to power (for example Lukes 1974; Foucault 1977, 1991; Lukes 2005), it is essentially a Bourdieuan analysis. In particular, Bourdieu's concepts of academic and intellectual capital are extremely insightful in explaining the factors affecting academic boards and their current domination by management.

Power is a relevant concept for the analysis of academic boards because it is central to understanding their current, former and possible future roles, and their place within their institutional settings. The disjunction shown in the previous chapter between academic board terms of reference and what they each actually did demonstrates that in considering the role an academic board it is not enough to examine their documented responsibilities. Such an analysis must also differentiate between formally allocated decision-making powers and real or substantive authority to act autonomously or to influence key academic directions. That is to say, between academic boards as rubber stamps for decisions already made elsewhere and academic boards as a source of academic and educational leadership (or somewhere in between).

This chapter analyses differences between the formally allocated, perceived and observed levels of power exercised by the three case study academic boards and compares this with interviewee perceptions of the locus of power within each university. It also explores the relative power exercised by (and over) the three academic board chairs and the attitudes of vice-chancellors to the academic board within their university and what impact this appeared to have on the role and function of each board. The chapter draws on Bourdieu's theorisation of different forms of power within the field of higher education, as outlined in chapter 3, Conceptual Framework, to explore the expression of dominance in the context of relationships between agents or groups of agents within individual universities,

particularly around the academic board. Gramsci's notion of hegemony is also introduced later in the chapter, to explore the predominance of managerialism within universities and its impact on academic boards.

The application of Bourdieu's theory to changes in university academic boards

Drawing on Bourdieu various scholars have analysed the changing nature of the field of higher education (Naidoo 2004; Maton 2005; Marginson 2008; Kloot 2009; Blackmore, Brennan and Zipin 2010a) and within this context it is suggested that academic boards are an indicator of such change. In particular, there has been a shift in the relations of power between academics and management, with university executives becoming dominant. These arguments will be explored in more detail through the following analysis.

Chapter 5, *Governance*, has charted a general shift from collegial to more managerial modes of governance within Australian and other western universities, prompted by shifts within the internal and external environments. The literature suggests that this has substantially reduced the role and function of university academic boards whilst also increasing the size and the authority of the senior executive and enhancing responsibilities for university councils (Amaral, Jones and Karseth 2003; Lapworth 2004; Shattock 2006). This analysis is supported by data from five published academic board case histories reported in the previous chapter. Case study data reported in chapter 5 also support these changes, showing that the academic boards from the two oldest universities included fewer professorial members than in the past, were both somewhat smaller in size and were substantially less central to university decision-making. A more managerial environment was also described as having largely overtaken the role of the two academic boards, with at least some academic board committees having also been replaced by senior management committees. These changes have had a profound impact on the balances of power within their universities and on the place of the academic board within those formal and informal authority networks. Combined with the lack of resourcing authority and strategic planning functions in the case study academic boards' terms of reference (noted in the previous chapter), they would appear to indicate that the balance has shifted from intellectual (scholarly) to academic (management) capital, to which chapter 3 refers, consistent with the progressive changes within the broader higher education field that have led to the domination of managerial and

entrepreneurial modes of governance over the collegial forms historically practiced by the academic board.

This is not to suggest that intellectual capital as scholarship and research is no longer important to universities; indeed it is their relative levels of intellectual capital that positions universities on the various rankings scales that dominate the national and international higher education markets (Marginson 2010c). However, in recent years universities have worked hard to increase their holdings of academic capital relative to their levels of intellectual capital through the shift from elected academic leaders to appointed executives and in the substantial growth in the numbers of such appointments, both in Australia and internationally (Salter and Tapper 2002; Blackmore and Sachs 2007). Such appointments serve to harnesses and manage the economic and political capital that universities need to survive in the corporatised higher education market.

Additionally, Bourdieu describes that agents can optimise their power by seeking to increase the value of the capital they hold, relative to that held by their opposition (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). To this end, the importance of academic capital within individual universities would appear to have increased substantially in the past 30 years in response to the shifts in the broader social, political and economic environments at national and global levels that have been described in this thesis.

Power and the academic board

A summary of triangulated data from the three case study universities on the levels of power exercised by their academic boards, drawn from interview responses, academic board meeting observation and analysis of terms of reference, meeting agendas, minutes and other academic board documents (to which table 9 appendix F refers), shows that at Newtown University the academic board had no formally documented decision-making powers. That is to say it was not authorised by its terms of reference or delegations to make any substantial decisions in its own right. This lack of formal decision-making power is sharply illustrated by the following comment from the vice-chancellor:

OK, where does the Board's advice go? It has no executive powers, it has no ability to actually mobilise money or mobilise staff. It can't give direction to staff and it can't mobilise money, it can only influence and advise. And who does it influence and advise? In our system it advises and recommends to Council by a

direct line on any matter it likes and it advises and directs the Vice-Chancellor. Even its course recommendations come to me. AVC008 (vice-chancellor, Newtown University)

However, despite its lack of documented authority, the academic board at Newtown University was perceived by respondents as being highly influential and so had quite a substantial level of informal power. For example, one elected member described the board as being a ‘shaper of management’ in relevant areas (AEL005). This is exemplified by the following interview response from a deputy vice-chancellor:

It has immense influential potential, and in fact much to the chagrin of our chief financial officer, even has the capacity to comment on the budget, but of course they have no right to actually veto anything. So in terms of actually being able to do much, per se, the Board is relatively toothless. But in terms of its influential power and the forums in which it sits, that’s where its power comes from. AEX009 (deputy vice-chancellor, Newtown University)

In contrast, the general consensus at Middleton University was that while the academic board there had an extensive formally documented role in decision-making regarding academic matters, it had very little power in reality, with the agenda and meetings being dominated by the vice-chancellor and the senior executive. This situation is summarised by the following comment from an elected member:

The power certainly does not rest with [board name] even though they are the ones approving things. BEL002 (elected member, Middleton University)

Accordingly, the vice-chancellor at Middleton did not see the board as having any role with regard to strategic matters:

They have a role in the decision-making of the University on delegation from Council in academic matters. Full stop. BCV006 (vice-chancellor, Middleton University)

However, although at Historydale University the academic board had reasonably extensive terms of reference, interviewee references to power at board level were generally only in the negative—that is, to power the board was losing or had lost (to the senior executive), demonstrated by these comments from the chair of the board and vice-chancellor respectively:

... the role of the board has been watering down. So I guess what I'm saying is that things that were very much at the centre of the Board's work are all the time being moved into other arenas. CCH003 (board chair, Historydale university)

I think that you've got some people on academic board who yearn for the days when it had a lot more control rather than say, and hence when you debate a major issue, it tends to get down to not what you can influence but what you can control. And the truth is that they control less and less. CVC000 (vice-chancellor, Historydale University)

These and other similar comments suggest that at Historydale University, power relations between the academic board and the university executive were somewhat more contested than they were at either Newtown or Middleton universities, notwithstanding the recognition by interviewees at both institutions that the shift from collegial to more managerial governance modes was both inevitable and necessary (as reported in the previous chapter). This might be because, being the oldest and most prestigious of the three universities, there was a higher value placed on intellectual capital at Historydale relative to its value at the other two universities, leading to struggles between management and academic board members over which party should be the holder of this capital. That is to say, it is possible that intellectual capital retains a relatively high value at Historydale University (in spite of the overall dominance of academic capital which appears to be evident at all three universities) but that the senior executive and senior management groups are wresting that capital from the academic board and thereby reducing the board's power. This would explain moves by the senior executive, reported in the previous chapter, to take over certain academic board committees which might otherwise be considered intrinsic to a board's work, such as the teaching and learning committee. However, resistance to changes to the role and responsibilities of the academic board at Historydale University could also be attributable to the habitus of the chair and other elected members of the academic board which may, in turn, be steeped in history and the former role of the board (as suggested by the vice-chancellor, above). Bourdieu describes that during times of change habitus 'works on the basis of the premises established in the previous state' (Bourdieu 2000, p. 161) although responses vary in their 'degree of flexibility or rigidity' (Bourdieu 2000, p. 161). In the case of Historydale, the habitus of elected academic board members may have tended to respond through 'accommodation' where attempts are made to retain the former way of life in spite of manifest changes in the surrounding circumstances (Bourdieu 2000, p. 161).

However, at Middleton University, where the senior management group appeared to have taken over these committees some time ago, there was much less contestation about the role of the academic

board, and, it could be argued, about the devaluing of intellectual capital relative to academic capital. Under these circumstances, discrepancies between the habitus of elected academic board members and the environment may potentially lead to a modification of the habitus (Swartz 1997) through a process described by Bourdieu as 'adaptation' (Bourdieu 2000, p. 161). That is to say, the collective habitus of academic staff at Middleton may have adapted to the more managerial environment within that university and to its effect on the academic board which resulted in greater acceptance of its reduced role and function. Consistent with this suggestion, Ashall asserts that:

For Bourdieu, individuals are free to make their own choices, but not in circumstances of their own choosing: the amount and quality of cultural, economic and social capital that they possess informs those choices and structures their mode of thought. (Ashall 2004, p. 24)

Thus, choices to accept managerial domination are not made in isolation but in a context shaped by agents' own perceptions and resource bases, and those around them. At all three case study universities there was also a clearly perceived differential between the formal decision-making authority of each academic board and the degree of power they actually wielded within each university's decision-making processes, illustrated by this comment from the chair of the board at Historydale university:

In terms of policy, I think we can have influence, if we work smartly, but no power. CCH003 (board chair, Historydale University)

Indeed, as exemplified by the academic board at Middleton University, extensive formal decision-making authority conferred by formal terms of reference does not necessarily make for a more powerful academic board. Despite this, a review of the minutes of the three academic boards within the past five years shows that each had rejected recommendations which had come either directly or indirectly from the vice-chancellor, albeit considerably less frequently in the case of Middleton, consistent with this comment from the chair of that academic board:

The [board name] certainly does do things like send things back to the originator or even to the executive group — [but] not so often. BCH003 (board chair, Middleton University)

This suggests that, amongst the case study universities, even the most passive of the academic boards was not totally without influence. There was also evidence of academic process improvements being initiated by the academic board, as this example from Historydale University suggests:

The board also brings up its own changes. For example, [example deleted to preserve anonymity]. That was a big change for a university like [name] and the Board discussions on that were very—particularly at an early stage, when the thoughts were being [formulated], that [change] came from the Board itself, or from a subcommittee of the Board. CVC000 (vice-chancellor, Historydale University)

However, such occurrences were considerably more frequent at Newtown and Historydale universities than at Middleton, consistent with the more managerialist style observed at that university.

Within this context all three academic boards could be described as exercising influence at times, but this did not equate to the right to dominate management. Thus, within the context of this thesis, influence is differentiated from what Bourdieu describes as ‘legitimate’ power (Bourdieu 1996, p. 265). That is to say, these three academic boards had varying degrees of influence but they remained subordinate to management. They could exercise power only if they could persuade management to accept their point of view. Thus, management brought to bear legitimate power because it had the greatest share of that form of capital which had the highest value in the surrounding field: academic capital. Indeed not only did academic capital dominate each university subfield but it dominated intellectual capital within the broader societal field of power because within capitalist western democratic nations the prevailing neoliberalism equates management with economic capital and this has a considerably higher value than the predominantly cultural capital contributions made by intellectuals, despite the efforts of the knowledge economy to convert the products of universities to economic capital.

Power of the chair of the academic board

Data on the mode of appointment of the chair of each case study academic board and their place, if any, within the university senior management committee structure (to which table 10, appendix F refers) show that while the chair of the academic board at Middleton University was appointed by the vice-chancellor and did not play a role in senior management committee meetings, at Newtown and Historydale universities the chairs of the academic boards were elected and were also invited members of their universities’ senior management committee or committees. However, despite being able to attend meetings, these two academic board chairs were not perceived as being part of the ‘management’ group, rendering them at least partly an outsider and significantly limiting any influence

they might otherwise have had. For example, the academic board chair at Historydale University reflected on her experience attending these meetings and on the matters that were considered appropriate for her to raise and those that were not as follows:

It's very easy to think that you've got a corporate role, which you don't have. It is very clear, if you overstep that line, then the executive says 'No, that's not your role'. So they have a very clear idea of what's their role and what's the board's role. It is not so clear to me always. CCH003 (board chair, Historydale University)

The difficulty of being present at such meetings but not having the authority of full membership, combined with the ongoing challenges associated with carving out a meaningful role for the academic board within the context of a management-led corporate university is also reflected in this comment from the former chair of the board at Newtown University:

In a number of the senior committees ... the Chair of the Board sits ... in an observer-participant role. So I would often find myself sitting in those meetings thinking there is a serious decision going to get made here, shouldn't this go to the Board? But it may not have been thought of that we need to consult with the Board on this. So, you know, decisions would get made that, yeah, you have to keep prodding and saying 'Excuse me, excuse me, do you not think this is a governance issue as well?' AFM002 (former board chair, Newtown University)

Both of these comments are suggestive of ongoing contestation between management and academic boards regarding the extent and limits of the power and authority of each. The tension here is partly one involving boundary delineation whereby in general terms management has largely overtaken many aspects of the traditional role of the academic board (to which chapter 5 refers), such as 'strategic' academic developments, leaving boards struggling not only to be considered relevant but also to be heard. In doing so, management has at least partly disestablished the boundary that formerly differentiated the role of the academic board from other aspects of the university.

Mark Considine analyses the concept of boundary loss around the university, as follows:

When a system fails to maintain or somehow loses its boundary with other proximate systems, it fails to be recognizable to itself and to others. The value that previously distinguished it now belongs to a larger group of systems with new generic titles and boundaries, such as the higher education sector, the knowledge industry, the information system, and so on. The trivial version of this might be the proliferation of corporate training institutes like McDonald's University or Nike University. But more serious signs include the dissipation of the university as a recognizable community of scholars and its potential replacement by intellectual property producers, symbolic analysts, and knowledge economy managers. (Considine 2006, p. 263)

Although Considine's theorisation of the university system is undertaken within an actor network theory framework, Marginson argues that a Bourdieuan analysis can also be undertaken within the context of Considine's theorisation, using the notion of bounded fields (Marginson 2009). Applying this thinking to Australian academic boards it could be considered that within the broader university field there was an academic board subfield. However, in appropriating many of the traditional academic board tasks for itself, management has broken down the formerly clear-cut separation resulting not only in a transfer of ownership and responsibilities but in a loss of identity for the academic board. Thus, it is arguable that a proportion of the value that might formerly have been attributed to the academic board now belongs either to management or to the university as a whole. Once this happens, there is an inevitable loss of [academic board] agency (Marginson 2009). Thus, at both Newtown and Historydale universities there was evidence of ongoing struggles over boundary maintenance around academic board responsibilities, suggested by the comments from the academic board chairs (above). At Middleton University it is arguable that the battle had more or less already been lost.

However, the tensions experienced by the case study academic board chairs at senior executive meetings also reflect the kind of power struggles that Bourdieu describes over the 'definition of the most legitimate form of capital for a particular field' (Swartz 2010, p. 47), or within this context, over the relative value of academic capital and intellectual capital within the university. This means that when senior managers meet they may be more likely to consider the financial (economic capital) and reputational (symbolic capital) aspects of a proposal for change, whereas by virtue of the nature of their portfolio the chair of the academic board could be expected to focus on the implications for teaching, learning and research and thus may have difficulty being 'heard' in the meeting. The valuing of academic over intellectual capital also helps to explain why academic board chairs may battle to get significant issues to the academic board in the first place, as exemplified above at Newtown University.

This analysis suggests that the chairs of the academic boards at Newtown and Historydale universities could attend management meetings but were unable to influence decision-making at those meetings in the way that, for example, a deputy vice-chancellor might be able to do. However, as noted by this dean at Historydale University, there may be other, less formal ways in which the academic board chair can exert influence:

It is an influential role. It doesn't have any power, or very little power — it doesn't have any money and there's no line management responsibility — so without any money and any line management responsibility it doesn't

have any power; but it has a lot of influence. And then it depends on the incumbent and how they use that. So if the incumbent becomes an advisor to the Vice-Chancellor, for instance, then their influence can be much greater than someone who the Vice-Chancellor doesn't have confidence in. CEX009 (executive dean, Historydale university)

Thus, the privilege of attending these meetings did not appear to afford either board (or other board members) greater power, but did mean that the respective chairs were better informed and positioned in closer proximity to the vice-chancellor and other key decision-makers where they could mobilise the gamut of their [personal] capital in pursuit of the academic board cause. This was done carefully (and usually informally):

I have to play ... I have to be very careful about the way I present issues at the VC's executive every Monday; what I bring to their attention and what I do one-to-one. I do a lot of one-to-one discussion. CCH003 (board chair, Historydale University)

In contrast, the chair of the academic board at Middleton University, had access to considerably less high-level information and fewer decision-makers than the chairs of the other two academic boards. The extent to which, within universities, strategic, financial and management information becomes an essential form of academic capital is underscored by this comment from the vice-chancellor of Middleton University about the risks associated with providing the chair of the academic board with such information:

... if you vest — to a certain degree — power in that position, he or she can or she actually decide to do something which is counterproductive. BVC006 (vice-chancellor, Middleton University)

This had the potential to make the chair of the academic board at Middleton (who was appointed directly by the vice-chancellor), considerably more beholden than the two elected chairs at Newtown and Historydale universities, as the vice-chancellor at Middleton sagely noted:

Of course, the chair serves at the pleasure of the vice-chancellor. And so if you decided you didn't like that chair you could get rid of him or her [laughter]. BVC006 (vice-chancellor, Middleton University)

Moreover, the time allowance allocated to the position of chair of the academic board was 0.5 or greater at Newtown and Historydale universities, whereas at Middleton it was considerably smaller [detail withheld to maintain anonymity of the three cases]. These differences appear to be at least partly reflected in the attitudes of the vice-chancellors towards the position of chair of the academic board at

their respective universities. For example, at Newtown University, the vice-chancellor commented that chairing the board had provided the incumbent with an opportunity to gain experience at the senior levels of the university and that it was important for the chair to learn that 'they can and should take a leadership role'. Similarly, at Historydale University, the vice-chancellor referred to both the status and the influence of the chair of the academic board at that university:

[Name of current board chair] also has influence because she's on the senior executive and as [academic board chair] she's listened to, for two reasons: one, because she is [academic board chair]; and two, she has generated a reputation that she's sensible. She'll negotiate—she has positions on many things but she negotiates. Her unofficial position is important because she gets her information from Board members talking to her so her view is listened to, out of session as well. CVC000 (vice-chancellor, Historydale University)

This contrasts significantly with Middleton University where the vice-chancellor referred to the position of chair of the academic board as having 'been kept relatively low-level'. These differences between mode of appointment, allocated time fraction and membership (or not, as the case may be) of senior executive or senior management committees suggest that the position of chair of the academic board at Middleton University had less status and influence and was less secure than at the other two universities.

Academic board chairs also have difficulty walking the fine line between trying to work with management (sensible given the locus of power and necessary if they are to have any personal credibility with the management team), whilst at the same time not being seen by members as having sold out to management. This challenge was exemplified by the former chair of the board at Newtown University, as follows:

I would meet with [the vice-chancellor] once a month before the Board meeting. And some people would say '[he/she] is vetting the agenda'. There were a lot of detractors. I would say '[he/she] isn't, [he/she] doesn't have any say in the agenda', but I would go to [him/her] once a month with the agenda for the Board and discuss it. Because it is a mutual—a reciprocal thing. You know, you give [him/her] a heads up. AFM002 (former board chair, Newtown University)

Within the same context, a senior administrator at Historydale University described one of the difficulties for academic board chairs as being seen to be too close to senior management. That is, they can be expected (by management) to sell the management line to the academic board rather than take a more independent view of items of board business. This is suggestive of a blurring of the distinction

between academic and intellectual capital and between academic and administrative work as academics move into line management positions, creating for those academics a significant sense of ambivalence and contradiction as to their role (Blackmore and Sachs 2007; Whitchurch and Gordon 2011).

Interestingly, whereas at one time academic staff might have seen the role of chair of the academic board as an important step along the way to becoming, for example, a deputy vice-chancellor, at least within the three universities studied as cases this no longer appeared to be the case. This shift is most likely reflective of the decreased status and power academic boards reported earlier, and the rise of academic over intellectual capital. That is to say, if academic boards no longer hold an exalted position within the university structure, then being chair of the academic board would understandably also have reduced cachet. Arising from this shift is the vexed question of what former academic board chairs do next, as noted by both the current chair of the board at Historydale University and a senior administrator:

I would say it's not a good career move for anyone. It's proved to be the case recently that people who move into that role are either on their way to retirement or are forced to step back and go back to their schools and resume their research careers, which is really quite difficult. No, I wouldn't regard it ... you can only have the position for three years, but three years in that role is certainly enough to destroy a research career. CCH003 (board chair, Historydale University)

Once upon-a-time your [chair] was clearly on a step towards an executive, it was a career move; it's not anymore. CAR006 (academic registrar, Historydale University)

Accordingly, rather than being a career enhancing move, all three academic board chairs saw their roles as a way of giving something back to the university—as a service they could provide or a contribution they could make. There was no sense among the three respondents that being chair of the academic board would assist with an academic career, but neither was it seen as a pathway to the management role. It was, particularly at Middleton and Historydale Universities, a position on its own, at risk of being in a kind of 'no mans' land'. However, complicating the decision to accept the role of chair of the academic board at Middleton was a direct invitation from the vice-chancellor. Thus:

Oh, well at one level I suppose if the Vice-Chancellor asks you to do anything you kind of think, don't you. You really have to say yes, of course. BCH003 (board chair, Middleton University)

While it is possible under these circumstances that potential candidates for the role of chair of the academic board might be nearing retirement and so looking for a productive way of rounding out a long university career, as was the case at Historydale University, it is also likely that younger and more career-focused academics may be less attracted to the position than might have been the case in the past. This, in turn, can cause problems for the smooth running of the board, as noted by this senior administrator at Historydale:

I think that one of the problems with it not being a career path is that often now we're not getting heads of school or former deans using that as a pathway so you're often not getting people who are experienced in at least some level of decision making before they arrive there. CAR006 (academic registrar, Historydale University)

However, not only has the reduced power and status of the academic board most likely affected the willingness of members to become chair, it was suggested during interviews that being a member of the board (or expressing a wish to be a member of the board) may also not necessarily be a career enhancing move:

There was a professorial promotions committee recently and one candidate was asked about their future leadership and what they were going to do, and he said that he was going to nominate for the academic board. And it was almost like there was a guffaw around the room; it was like this noticeable gasp around the room: 'Wrong answer!' CEX009 (executive dean, Historydale University)

That is to say, membership of the academic board might not always be perceived as providing academic staff with a means of furthering their leadership aspirations, reflecting both academic boards' reduced status and the substantially reduced power of intellectual capital within the university.

The locus of power within each university and its impact on the academic board

So, if academic boards and academic board chairs were not part of the power-base within the three case study universities, where did that power-base rest? Within each of these universities, the locus of power was universally considered (by every single interview respondent at each of the three universities) to be the vice-chancellor, supported by his or her senior executive. This is consistent with their role as the holders of the greatest proportion of academic capital within their respective universities. Not surprisingly then, the management style adopted by the vice-chancellor had a direct

impact on the mode of operation for each academic board. There was also a strong sense amongst respondents that if you were not a member of the senior management group you were 'other' and also that the size and scope of that group was expanding, relative to the rest of the university:

Well, you know, if you're not a manager you really don't—your views aren't really important, I suppose.
CEL004 (elected member, Historydale University)

The group to me seems to be getting bigger and bigger, with lots of DVC appointments over the last three years. CEX001 (head of school and *ex officio* board member, Historydale University)

Thus, within each of the three universities key financial, strategic and management decisions were seen as being made by the vice-chancellor. To a greater or lesser extent (depending on the university) this decision-making was shared with some or all members of his or her executive. The corollary of this was that such decisions were clearly not within the ambit of the academic board. A consolidated summary of interview responses regarding the power of the vice-chancellor within the university and the perceived impact of this power on the academic board is set out in table 11, appendix F. Moreover, the effect of the top-down managerial style upon academic boards was that vice-chancellors, supported by his or her executives, were seen to dominate meetings and, in the case of Middleton University, to also dominate the board agenda. In chapter 5, Governance, it was noted that of the three case study universities, the academic board at Newtown University appeared to work in a shared governance partnership with the vice-chancellor (albeit one in which the vice-chancellor was the greater power) while the board at Historydale University had retained a more collegial style. In contrast, the academic board at Middleton University appeared to operate in a much more managerially-driven style than the other two academic boards (consistent with the chair being appointed by the vice-chancellor, for example). Not surprisingly then, respondents at Newtown University reported that at their academic board meetings there was an almost constant tension between the authoritative style of the vice-chancellor and his/her wish for an articulate and effective academic board. This is reflected in the following comments:

The vice-chancellor can control the board and sometimes I think [he/she] can overstep that. But that's up to the Chair to pull that back and that's always a tension, I think. AEL004 (elected board member, Newtown University)

And that was the difficulty, keeping [VC name] in line [at the board]. You know, in saying to [VC name] 'OK vice-chancellor, you have used up all your words for today, can you please give somebody else a go' [laughter]. AFM002 (former board chair, Newtown University)

[current vice-chancellor] has a high regard for the purpose of the board and for the need for the board to give independent advice, but quite often probably steers it a bit too strongly. AEX003 (pro vice-chancellor and *ex officio* board member, Newtown University)

[VC] is a pretty formidable [person] but [he or she] bent over backwards to accommodate what we were doing [on the board]. AFM002 (former board chair, Newtown University)

However, at Middleton University, where the academic board was more overtly dominated by management, comments from members clearly reflected this, as the following sampling shows:

... they [academic board] may have a comment to make which will be taken on board but in terms of influencing the decision, I don't think BEX009 (deputy vice-chancellor (research) and *ex officio* board member, Middleton University)

Meetings are dominated by the vice-chancellor's opinion. BEL007 (elected board member, Middleton University)

The [academic board name] is executive driven. That's inevitable ... it's executive driven and it has to be. BEX005 (deputy vice-chancellor (academic) and *ex officio* board member, Middleton University)

At Historydale University, as noted above, the focus tended to be on a comparison between the previous role of the academic board in managing the university and its current role which included advising the senior management and council; but it did retain some decision-making authority, particularly in areas of academic policy and quality assurance:

... well there clearly is a tension between decisions and influence. Whereas I think members who come onto the board believe that there is more authority and capacity to make those final decisions than there probably is, the influence is, in some ways ... probably just as powerful. CEL002 (elected board member, Historydale University)

I don't think its influence is as great, with your senior management ... you know, portfolios of the executive are really seen as the ... they're the people to please; not the board. CAR006 (academic registrar, Historydale University)

On quality assurance issues [such as] on reviews of schools and institutes, on promotions [etc] it still has a lot [of power]—particularly in a policy sense. CCH003 (board chair, Historydale University)

Not surprisingly, the greatest influence on the level of power and influence wielded by each academic board appeared to be the attitude of the vice-chancellor, consistent with their undisputed place as the locus of power. (Table 12, appendix F, contrasts the attitudes of the three vice-chancellors toward their university's academic board, highlighting in particular the differences between their views on academic board power.) For example, none of the vice-chancellors appeared to see their academic boards as being particularly powerful in their own right whilst only the academic board at Newtown University was described as being 'highly influential and significant' in spite of its lack of formally designated authority. This was evidenced by the vice-chancellor at that university noting that he or she had never acted against academic board advice (a view reinforced spontaneously by other respondents) whereas no such assurance was provided in respect of the other two universities. The vice-chancellor at Newtown University also articulated a view that a strong, independent academic board operating in co-operation with management would result in a stronger university and this sentiment was not echoed at the other two universities. Notably, both the academic boards at Newtown and Historydale universities had unique functions and both vice-chancellors were aware of these and noted their importance to the wider university.

These data suggest that improving the relationship between the vice-chancellor and the academic board may in fact be more a more effective way of enhancing the role and function of an academic board than reviewing its terms of reference. That is to say, the level of perceived influence wielded by an academic board appears to be a direct reflection of the attitude of the vice-chancellor towards the board. By extension, an academic board can be influential and significant within its university only if the vice-chancellor wants it that way.

The nature of domination

As noted above, vice-chancellors, and perhaps their senior executives, dominated or controlled strategic academic decision-making, academic board agendas and academic board meetings at each of the three case study universities, albeit to varying degrees. However, within each of the three case study academic boards the unequal distribution of this power between the *ex officio* and the elected members operated on a number of different levels. First, within the academic board membership there was an overt differential arising from the institutional hierarchy whereby a deputy vice-chancellor (academic) for example, is senior to all heads of school, deans and other academic staff. Second, there

was a power differential arising from university decision-making processes, and in particular, the allocation of resources. Thus, in accordance with the locus of power at each university being the vice-chancellor, such decisions were made by vice-chancellors and members of the senior executives and not by elected members of academic boards. This means that at academic board meetings those members who in their roles outside the board made or participated in important decisions about the future direction of their university carried with them an authority and status that elected members, and the board itself, were unable to match. Elected members were beholden to the *ex officio* members because they *knew* where the decisions were really made and who made them—and it certainly was not the academic board. Third, there was a further power differential arising from the unequal distribution of knowledge and information between the vice-chancellor and senior executive and the ordinary academic board members. The sum total of this equation was domination of the academic board by the senior executive (and especially by the vice-chancellor), as illustrated by the following comments:

There is a power differential formally and there's an informal power differential as well because members of the executive are much better [informed], they've already talked about it and they've already rehearsed the arguments. There's also a difference in that the elected members have terms of two years and students only have one year and so that takes a while for people to get going. Now, in fact the people do come back but often they will be shorter-term people than the senior executive. So there are a few things that will work in that same direction whereby the elected members may feel less ... perhaps less competent to speak and argue about something — less knowledgeable. BCH003 (board chair, Middleton University)

This complex web of power relations within the academic board calls for a theoretical analysis of the nature of this domination of the board. One option for this analysis is Bourdieu's notion of symbolic power, within which the habitus plays a key part in that it serves as an internalisation of structures of the field (Bourdieu 1989) which, in turn, play a role in the creation and continuation of inequality. Thus:

As perceptive dispositions tend to be adjusted to position, agents, even the most disadvantaged ones, tend to perceive the world as natural and to accept it much more readily than one might imagine—especially when you look at the situation of the dominated through the social eyes of a dominant. (Bourdieu 1989, p. 18)

Bourdieu describes the perpetration of domination by the dominant as 'symbolic violence' which is naturalised within the field and misrecognised by the dominated as necessary and reasonable 'creating passivity and conformity to a given social order' (Navarro 2006, p. 19). Symbolic violence therefore comprises meanings which are imposed 'as legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the

basis of its force' (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977, p. 4). In turn, it is misrecognition which makes possible the exercise of this power (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977; Navarro 2006). That is to say, in given field in which there is an unequal distribution of capital, and therefore of resources, the habitus of the dominated becomes 'so at home with domination that it does not recognize it as such' (Burawoy 2008b, p. 43) and, in so doing, the inequality becomes 'inaccessible to consciousness' (Bourdieu 1984, p. 172).

However, Burawoy argues that Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power is more complex than a set of relationships between known individuals within a single field, extending to such multifarious cultural phenomena as class and its relationship with the state:

For Bourdieu domination, whether class or gender, secures itself through a symbolic universe that defines categories of *distinction* and thereby mystifying the underlying reality. We see this most clearly in *Distinction* where underlying class domination is transposed into an assertion of cultural superiority which the dominated accept as an innate attribute of the dominant. Moreover, the state consecrates these distinctions, defining what it is to be a citizen, a racial group, an occupation, an educational credential so much so that Bourdieu declares the state to have not only the monopoly of legitimate physical violence but also of symbolic violence. (Burawoy 2008a, p. 45)

This results in what Burawoy describes as the 'obfuscation' of the very categories of distinction which perpetrate the disadvantage' (Burawoy 2008a, p. 48).

It is argued that the field of higher education facilitates the reproduction of differential power relations both within itself and within the wider society. For example, Naidoo posits that universities reproduce 'the principles of social class and other forms of domination under the cloak of academic neutrality' (Naidoo 2004, p. 460), such as through the generation of cultural and symbolic capital in the form of knowledge and educational qualifications which are then unequally distributed within society as a whole. However, universities are also power regimes in and of themselves, as noted above by the interview respondents from all three case studies, in that significant quantities of academic, economic, political and symbolic power are currently vested in the vice-chancellor and his or her senior managers, arguably at the expense of grass-roots academic and professional staff and students.

It is also possible to consider that the adoption of managerialism within universities may be an example of Bourdieu's 'hysteresis' (Swartz 1997, p. 213). Thus, a discrepancy between new funding and governance requirements derived from business but imposed on universities by the state and the

circumstances under which the university habitus was formed in terms of collegial governance, led to a rapid transformation of the field of higher education in the 1980s, and a revaluing of academic capital over intellectual capital. The importation of managerialism to the field of higher education is also an example of cross-field effects (Rawolle and Lingard 2008), deriving as it does from the business and public sectors with a focus market demand, value for money, accountability in the form of reporting against financial, strategic and output targets, and a belief in the superiority of private sector governance and management practices.

The extent to which Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence can be employed to explain the dominance by management over university affairs, including the academic board, turns on the extent to which those staff who were dominated acknowledged and accepted the resultant inequalities. This is because 'in Bourdieu's world, the invisibility of domination is founded on the concordance of a social structure with a habitus inculcated by the same social structure' (Burawoy 2008a, p. 48). Thus, under a regime of symbolic power, dominated staff would either not notice the power differential or, if it were noticed, would consider those differences to be part of the natural order of the world, and therefore accept them without realising that they were doing so. However, as noted in the previous chapter (to which table 3 refers), with respect to changes experienced by the academic boards at the two oldest universities, respondents at Historydale University reported a significant shift from collegial to corporate-style governance and that a more managerial environment had largely overtaken the role of the academic board. Similarly, at Middleton University respondents described the university having adopted a more corporate style of decision-making with the academic board being noticeably less central within this process. At both of these universities the changes had been noted by respondents and were characterised as being necessary. Moreover, although the 'newness' of Newtown University meant that it was not possible to trace the rise of managerialism at that institution, academic board members appeared both aware and accepting of the power differential between the vice-chancellor and his or her executive and the remainder of the staff and the academic board.

For example, the following quote from an elected academic board member implies that management is something to be courted and appeased, as would be expected in a relationship with a significant power differential:

So it is a real political balance I suppose [for the Board] of upholding the governance obligations of the University and making sure you're not chastising the management in the same process. AEL004

That perception is underscored by this comment from a deputy vice chancellor at Newtown University:

You could be very purist about it and say 'Well the Vice-Chancellor should have no more say in Board matters than any other member' but the reality is that the Board actually has very little power to do anything.
AEX009

Indeed, Swartz notes that Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence has been the subject of sharp criticism precisely because the concept of misrecognition is inadequate to explain the reproduction of social hierarchies (Swartz 2010). Thus, the 'degree of acceptance and respect for existing hierarchies may be less deeply internalized in numerous instances than the idea of symbolic violence implies' (Swartz 2010, p. 49). Accordingly, at all three universities it would appear that rather than staff being unconscious of the unequal power relations between management and other staff, there was an acknowledgement and an acceptance of the overall supremacy of both vice-chancellors (and their senior staff) and therefore of academic capital. This does not accord with misrecognition and is instead suggestive of Gramsci's hegemony under which the interests of those governing are presented as being the interests of all (Mouffe 1979; Bocoock 1986; Burawoy 2008a). Accordingly, Bates argues that:

The concept of hegemony ... means political leadership based on the consent of the led, a consent which is secured by the diffusion and popularization of the world view of the ruling class. (Bates 1975, p. 352)

Consent is a critical factor in the existence of Gramsci's hegemony (Gramsci 1971; Bates 1975; Bocoock 1986; Burawoy 2008a), which does not necessarily mean that the unequal distribution of power is *liked* by all those involved (Bocoock 1986). Moreover, consent can be somewhat passive in nature (Femia 1981), achieved by way of the 'prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production' (Gramsci 1971, p. 12).

The following comments from academic board members at all three universities are therefore suggestive of consent to the hegemony of the vice-chancellor (supported by his or her executive) and the implementation of what were perceived to be largely corporatist and managerialist agendas, despite differences in management style amongst the three universities:

I think it is inevitable in the world we currently inhabit. I think, you know, the dreaming spires and the professorial people sitting around thinking great thoughts and deciding what they want to do, that independence of universities, has gone. So I think it's inevitable. It doesn't really matter whether it's desirable or not, because I don't think you can turn the clock back. Universities are becoming budget-driven. Bottom

lines, triple bottom lines; we talk much more about money than we used to. BEX009 (executive dean, Middleton University)

Despite our misgivings, our complaints from within the University, my experience when I meet with colleagues from other universities is that this is actually a well-run one, this is a well-managed one. Many things work well [here at this University]. CEX009 (executive dean, Historydale University)

... the VC is the executive officer who is meant to run the place. CEL010 (elected member, Historydale University)

The locus of power is with [Vice-Chancellor name] and I would say that that has shifted over ... time here. Quite clearly [he/she] was employed as a visionary here, to shift the University, and [he/she] has achieved that with a great degree of collegiality. AEX003 (pro vice-chancellor and *ex officio* board member, Newtown University)

These extracts are additional to those reported in chapter 5, Governance, where academic board members characterised the managerialisation of their respective universities as being both inevitable and necessary.

Analyses of Gramsci's notion of hegemony are highly contested (Hill 2007) leading to numerous, frequently 'opposing interpretations' (Mouffe 1979, p. 184). For example, while some argue that hegemony involves some combination of force and consensus (Bates 1975; Burawoy 2008a), others maintain that this instead describes domination and that hegemony excludes force (Femia 1981; Bocock 1986; Marginson 2008). However, it is also suggested that these two power regimes are mutually dependent and that '[r]ule by consent is ultimately underpinned by rule by force' (Marginson 2008, pp. 308, citing Gramsci 1971, p. 10).

Although physical force is not present in universities, it could be argued that other forms of force more subtly support the hegemony of the vice-chancellor's senior management group. Examples include discourses about the need for efficiency and market orientation to ensure institutional survival, the provision or withdrawal of budget allocations and the inclusion or exclusion of individuals and groups from key decision-making bodies. The effect of exclusion from key decision-making bodies on balances of power within a university is exemplified by the following comments:

The deans aren't ... we're not part of the vice-chancellor's executive. We actually run the university but we are not part of the executive because it has just got so big that we are just not part of ... the VC's executive, which

is the key decision-making body in the university. That's where the power is, the University executive; the power is not with the deans. CEX009 (executive dean, Historydale University)

The budget is set by the executive and is handed down and there's a big bun-fight but it's still handed down. CEX009 (executive dean, Historydale University)

In essence, the allocation of staffing and monetary resources by vice-chancellors and their executives is a key component of the force which supports the hegemony of the senior management group within universities. Thus, as typified by this comment from a dean at Middleton University:

The Vice-Chancellor drives the strategic plan, [he/she] drives the budget. BEX009 (executive dean, Middleton University)

By contrast, those individuals and groups that do not have access to money and staff are considered to have no force, a situation acknowledged by the vice-chancellor of Newtown University when describing the power of the academic board at that institution:

It [the academic board] has no executive powers [because] it has no ability to actually mobilise money or mobilise staff. AVC008 (vice-chancellor, Newtown University)

However, it is also argued that the concept of hegemony cannot be reduced to a simple association between money and power but instead seeks 'unity between economic, political and intellectual objectives' (Mouffe 1979, p. 10) and is therefore 'economically and culturally maintained' (Apple 2004, p. 151). Within the context of managerialist, academic-capital driven universities this is an interesting point, because managerialism involves a substantial focus on the sources and allocation of funding and reporting against financial indicators. However, as noted earlier in this chapter, while academic capital may currently wield more power than intellectual capital, the key role of universities nonetheless remains the generation and transmission of knowledge, albeit within a broader (now globalised) higher education system that is predicated upon status and hierarchy. That is to say, universities are about so much more than money or the narrow 'neo-liberal imaginary of a universal market' (Marginson 2008, p. 305). This suggests that while the dominance of the senior executive may be underwritten by its control over the allocation of resources, the hegemony of that group is dependent upon its ability to mobilise a significantly broader range of discourses to gain the confidence of the university as a whole. For example, all three vice-chancellors at the case study universities spoke about broad consultation forums which they hosted regularly, providing an opportunity for the articulation of their vision for the

future of their university and seeking the input of staff, thereby securing their commitment and support. This is exemplified by the following comment from the vice-chancellor at Middleton University:

To be a University, you need to think a bit about how you actually ensure there is a fairly appropriate level of deliberation and communication, but you can think of a million different ways of doing that. I mean my quarterly 'town hall meetings' are an effective way of engaging with a lot of people and you could actually argue that the job is mine to communicate. BVC006 (vice-chancellor, Middleton University)

The means by which vice-chancellors communicated with non-executive-level staff could also be considerably less formal than an official 'forum' or 'meeting', as is suggested by the vice-chancellor of Historydale University:

I encourage my direct reports to be very frank [but] I have networks outside of them, just because I've been here a long time. And I like hearing their views on particular issues. CVC000 (vice-chancellor, Historydale University)

The existence of vice-chancellors' communication mechanisms and the important role they played in allowing staff to receive information about and have input into university future directions was spontaneously verified by unsolicited comments from numerous respondents, as the following sampling suggests:

Well we have Friday Forums which are called by the vice-chancellor — they are the VC's creation — where those who are in leadership positions (which actually turns out to be a hell of a lot of us), [its] another kind of consultative [forum]. ACC005 (chair of academic board committee, Newtown University)

I mean when [Vice-chancellor name] has a 'town hall meeting' [he/she] has video links to [campus locations] and what have you. That's where those people are actually involved in at least understanding what's happening in the University. BEX009 (executive dean, Middleton University)

However, it was also considered that academic boards served as an important additional forum though which the confidence of grass-roots university staff could be gained, as this vice-chancellor articulated, whereas managers could not necessarily be relied upon to serve this purpose:

... managers are not representative of the [staff] who are out there and who are slightly suspicious of all these managers worrying about money, some of whom haven't come through their world, that is, taught apprentices or taught PhD students. So these [staff] have a lot more faith in [the academic board] than in [management]. And if I'm trying to hear what's going on in the University, listening to the Board gives me another flavour and

view-point than simply listening to my managers. My managers will tell me if this makes sense logically and if they think they've got the money and resources to do it and if they think they can implement it, but they're not always feeling the—they might be telling me what I want to hear rather than feeling the pulse of whether the staff will in fact respond to it well [and] can make it happen at the local level. AVC008 (vice-chancellor, Newtown University)

At Historydale, the role of the academic board as a consultative mechanism for the vice-chancellor and senior executive was formally enshrined in its terms of reference, as follows:

Provide a forum to facilitate information flow and debate within the university and between the senior executive and the wider academic community. (Academic board term of reference no. 8, Historydale University)

These data therefore suggest that vice-chancellors at the case study universities appeared to purposefully and consciously implement a range of mechanisms to ensure that their strategies and mechanisms for the leadership and management of the university were presented to staff in such a way as to be considered in the best interests of the university as a whole, despite what may have been significant differences between the interests of students, staff and university stakeholders. This played a significant role in securing and maintaining managerial hegemony. Moreover, the three academic boards served as a tool for vice-chancellors in the implementation of processes aimed at securing such hegemony.

Hegemony is a useful concept for the analysis of power relations within comparatively autonomous Australian universities because it does not attribute the dominance of managerialism within the higher education sector, or of vice-chancellors within individual universities, to the inability of subordinate staff to imagine things any other way. Instead, hegemony provides for the engagement of staff in the complex processes by which consent is obtained to managerialist power regimes, drawing together a web of interconnected economic, social, political, cultural and reputational factors. However, in the same way that university staff are not the passive victims of managerial hegemony, so too have academic boards been active in embracing a new role which is both perpetrated by and which in turn perpetrates the dominance of the vice-chancellor and senior executive. This role is academic quality assurance and will be explored in the following chapter.

Chapter 7 — Academic boards and academic quality assurance

Introduction

Within the past thirty years, at least partly in response to the complex forces of globalisation (Burbules and Torres 2000; Vaira 2004; Horta 2009; King 2009; Watson 2009; Rizvi and Lingard 2010; Blackmore 2011a), western democratic nations have mobilised discourses including neoliberalism (Apple 2000; Olssen and Peters 2005; Blackmore and Sachs 2007; Marginson 2007; Peters 2007; Bansel and Davies 2010; Shore 2010), the knowledge economy (Kenway et al. 2006; Peters 2007; Shattock 2009b; Bullen, Kenway and Fahey 2010; Wright and Rabo 2010; Barnett 2011), managerialism (Meek and Wood 1997; Deem 1998; Braun 1999; Peters, Marshall and Fitzsimons 2000; Dearlove 2002; Amaral, Jones and Karseth 2003; Blackmore and Sachs 2007; Kolsaker 2008; Kok, Douglas and McClelland 2009; Marginson 2010a), and quality improvement (Barnett 2003; Morley 2003; Amaral and Rosa 2010; Harvey and Williams 2010; Singh 2010; Filippakou 2011). For the higher education sector, these pressures, together with the processes of massification and vocationalisation, have tended to result in greater numbers of students and often significantly decreased funding per-student (Marceau 1993; Scott 1995; Gumpert et al. 1997; Meek and Wood 1997; Rosado and David 2006; Peters 2007). Furthermore, these factors have intensified competition within and between universities and also between universities and other higher education providers and research agencies (Slaughter 1998; OECD 2007; Peters 2007; Bradmore and Smyrnios 2009).

Despite differences between Anglophone nation states, some argue that within individual universities processes such as planning, auditing, measuring and reporting have become common responses to complex and escalating external demands for accountability (Shore and Wright 2000; Shore 2010). Financial exigencies require universities to be more entrepreneurial and these activities also call for increased focus on institutional-level planning and control, budgeting and risk management (Slaughter and Leslie 1997; Marginson and Considine 2000). Within this corporate university environment the role of the academic board has been redefined and some argue that within Australia it is now largely limited to academic quality assurance (Baird 2007; Winchester 2007). Moreover, this same literature reports that boards tend to be ineffective and ineffectual in carrying out these roles (Birnbaum 1989; Moodie 2004; Woodhouse and Baird 2007).

This chapter analyses data relating to the role of Australian university academic boards in the area of academic quality assurance. It follows two preceding discussion chapters addressing academic boards and university governance; and academic boards and power. The chapter commences with a brief description of the growth of the quality movement in higher education, and Australian higher education policy in particular. Within the context of theories of the risk society, the audit explosion, performativity and fabrications, outlined in chapter 3, Conceptual Framework, case study data is then presented to explore academic boards' formal roles in the area of academic quality assurance versus those quality assurance tasks that the academic boards actually undertook. The usefulness of these theories for exploring the case study data is also briefly explored.

Quality and academic quality assurance

Quality emerged from its industrial base to become an issue in higher education policy in the late 1980s in the United Kingdom and in the early 1990s in Australia as an integral part of new managerialism (also known as new public management), a movement which sought to expose higher education to increasingly international market forces and to improve the internal management and accountability of universities (Sachs 1994; Vidovich 2002; Harvey and Newton 2004; Meek et al. 2010). However, Sachs posits that notions of quality in higher education have since split into the categories of 'quality assurance (QA) and quality improvement (QI)' and that 'a tension has arisen ... between quality as a measure for accountability and quality as a means for transformation and improvement' (Sachs 1994, p. 22). Similarly, Filippakou asserts that 'two dominant discourses of quality can be identified: the discourse of quality assurance and the discourse of quality enhancement' (2011, p. 19). Within this context, it is argued that while the quality movement commenced with 'softly softly' notions such as expert peer review and self evaluation against internal objectives or 'fitness for purpose' (Vidovich 2002, p. 394), it has since had a tendency to evolve into quality assurance in the form of measurement against externally set indicators and standards (Anderson, Johnson and Milligan 2000, p. viii; Blackmore 2009). Thus, 'Quality is in danger of becoming defined in terms of the existence of suitable mechanisms of quality assurance' (Harvey and Green 1993, p. 23) rather than as an indicator of improved 'academic endeavours' (Harvey and Williams 2010). Indeed, Dew and Nearing argue that:

[Q]uality assurance in higher education would appear to be more about ensuring that academic programs meet a common standard rather than seeking to continuously improve. Quality assurance often appears to

promote conformity to external requirements and may appear to be more about maintaining control rather than seeking excellence. (Dew and Nearing 2004)

This highlights one of the two key difficulties with much of the current literature and higher education policy that addresses quality: the terms quality and quality assurance have become conflated (Teelken and Lomas 2009) so that it is now almost universally understood (at least at the level of the state if not by university management) that the key means of both achieving and demonstrating quality in higher education is by way of a performance-measurement driven quality assurance program. Additionally, a significant proportion of the existing analysis tends to present quality assurance as either inherently good or bad, while there appears at the same time to be a dearth of empirical evidence on what higher education quality assurance actually achieves and at what cost (Brennan and Shah 2000; Stensaker 2008). Clearly, quality is a highly contested concept in the field of higher education scholarship (Newton 2002; Filippakou and Tapper 2008; Teelken and Lomas 2009; Brink 2010; Kristensen 2010; Massaro 2010).

Morley argues that four inter-related factors have contributed to the hegemony of the quality assurance movement in higher education. The first of these is globalisation, wherein quality assurance is one way of enabling the processing of mass higher education whilst also providing information about the quality of the higher education product to the market (Morley 2003). The second factor is the risk society in that quality assurance is seen as a primary means of addressing the risk of defects and errors (Morley 2003). Third, the 'frenzied activity in higher education' arising from its central place in the knowledge economy 'suggests an even greater demand for quality and standards' (Morley 2003, p. 8) 'to assure the quality of the higher education product and the credentials of graduates' (p. 10). Finally, the culture of continuous quality improvement which has pervaded the public services and the university sector 'has resulted in the need for professionals to evaluate and represent their practice and organizations' according to the prevailing graphical and numerical templates (Morley 2003, p. 14).

In summary, quality assurance enables the higher education system to process ever-increasing numbers of students; it provides global consumers with concise and specific information about the university education they are purchasing; it serves, in theory, as a means of mitigating the risk of defects and errors in the delivery of that education; and it assures publicly the quality of the higher education product and the credentials of graduates so necessary for the effective functioning of the global knowledge economy. Moreover, quality assurance both requires and enables the evaluation and representation of practice and organisation 'within new modes of description' (Morley 2003, p. 14);

whilst at the same time facilitating an increase in control by central authorities over desired outcomes/ends through deregulated processes/means (Vidovich 2002). However, quality assurance is not a neutral concept. Barnett portrays contestation about the meaning of quality in higher education as a 'power struggle' involving attempts to impose definitions of higher education (1992, p. 6) while others have described quality itself as a form of power (Morley 2003) which privileges both the state and institutional management at the expense of the academic (Stensaker 2008) and trust (Strathern 2000a; Blackmore 2010a). Accordingly, quality assurance 'give[s] power to some and remove[s] it from others' (Salter and Tapper 2000, p. 66) and is now one of the primary tools used to govern universities (Morley 2003; Filippakou and Tapper 2008).

Academic quality assurance systems in higher education

Academic quality assurance can be undertaken in various ways including self-evaluation, peer review, measurement against performance indicators and targets, and surveys of students, graduates and employers (Harman and Meek 2000, p. vii). Internally, it occurs at the unit, course, discipline, faculty and institutional levels, while external quality assurance is undertaken or driven by outside agencies pursuant to government regulation or requirement (Middlehurst 2001, p. vii).

Internal quality assurance appears to take somewhat similar forms within the UK, the US and Australia, as elsewhere (Brennan and Shah 2000). Blackmore argues that here 'the desire is to make visible what has previously been invisible in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment' (2009, p. 8). However, external forms of quality assurance have significant differences. For example, external quality assurance in the US has a long history based on institutional accreditation (Kristoffersen and Woodhouse 2005) which has since expanded to encompass student learning and performance (Ewell 2010). Formal external quality assurance for higher education is much more recent, and more comparative, within the UK and Australia. Thus, externally monitored quality assurance did not formally commence in the UK until 1990, being substantially predated by 'several processes for monitoring the quality of higher education' including 'professional accreditation of programmes' (Harvey 2005, p. 263). The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) for Higher Education was subsequently established in 1997 and undertakes audits and publishes findings on 'how UK universities maintain their own academic standards and quality' (QAA 2009).

Within Australia, quality assurance was 'mainstreamed' in the latter part of the 1990s 'with other (and much less publicly visible) accountability mechanisms ... negotiated annually between the Commonwealth Government and individual institutions aimed at increasing accountability through the reform of internal university management' (Vidovich 2002, p. 392; see also Shah, Wilson and Nair 2010; and Shah and Nair 2011). The Australian Universities' Quality Agency (AUQA) was then established in 2000 as an independent national body to monitor, audit, and report on quality assurance in Australian higher education using a method comprising institutional self assessment and visits by external expert audit panels, with a focus on the achievement of organisational outcomes (Emmanuel and Reekie 2004). During the first round of audits in the early -to-mid 2000s in particular, AUQA considered the adequacy of academic governance exercised at each university by the academic board. In a report published by AUQA in 2007 entitled *Thematic Analysis: The role of academic boards in university governance*, Dooley noted that AUQA audits tended to focus on two key issues with regard to academic board performance. The first of these was the role of the academic board with regard to the 'maintenance of academic standards, effective implementation of policy, and accreditation and review' (Dooley 2007, p. 10); and the second was the relationship between the university council, the senior executive and the academic board in the establishment and implementation of effective governance (Dooley 2007, p. 17).

Following the Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education (2008), the Australian Government established a new autonomous national body for the regulation and quality assurance of higher education, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) (Commonwealth of Australia 2009b). TEQSA replaces AUQA, as an independent body 'with powers to regulate university and non-university higher education providers, monitor quality and set standards. It ... will register providers, carry out evaluations of standards and performance, protect and assure the quality of international education and streamline current regulatory arrangements' (DEEWR 2011b). TEQSA is central to new regulatory and quality arrangements for higher education in Australia, which include a Higher Education Standards Framework incorporating teaching and learning and research standards (DEEWR 2011c). A further reform arising from the Bradley Review was the introduction of mission-based compacts between the Government and each university, designed to 'define clear and consistent targets for improvement and reform which will trigger reward payments' (Commonwealth of Australia 2009b, p. 47). The Australian Government has also introduced sector-wide government performance measures and indicators for higher education in areas including the quality of teaching and learning outcomes (DEEWR 2011a). In respect of research, the Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) initiative assesses research quality within Australia's higher education institutions using a combination of

indicators and expert review by committees (Australian Research Council 2010). ERA commenced as a pilot in 2009 and as a full investigation in 2010 covering the period 2003 to 2008 (Australian Research Council 2010). The second round will be undertaken in 2012 (Australian Research Council 2011).

The development of academic standards and research indicators for Australian higher education have seen much public debate about university autonomy generally and peer review in particular (Woodhouse 2010). For example Michael Gallagher, Executive Director of the Group of Eight (research intensive) universities, has noted that traditionally universities, and not governments, have been responsible for setting academic standards, with peer review and reputation being 'powerful drivers towards excellence' (Gallagher 2010, p. 3). Similar debates have occurred internationally, such as those around the assessment of research impact on the economy and society as part of the new Research Excellence Framework (REF) currently being developed in the UK (HEFCE 2011). The proposal has been strongly criticised by some in the sector both for its perceived erosion of the status of peer review and the potential for government interference. For example, the submission from the University and College Union in respect of the proposed REF notes that traditionally, 'research is assessed through peer review on the basis of its intrinsic quality, not the changing policies of governments or the perceived needs of business' (UCU 2009, p. 5). Moreover, Australia is not alone in undertaking the centralised development of academic standards. For example, in the UK the government has announced a strengthened national quality assurance system, with a particular focus on academic standards (Brown 2010; BIS 2011a), while the OECD is currently developing measures to assess higher education learning outcomes (AHELO) across institutions and nations, with a view to informing the development of an international standards framework for higher education (OECD 2011). Indeed, the development of regulatory-based standards for higher education is now a global phenomenon with a significant number of the players being supranational or intergovernmental agencies (Jayasuriya and Robertson 2010), arguably instigated in the late 1990s by the Bologna process (Reinalda 2008; Huisman and Westerheijden 2010) but also by intensified global market competition for international students. The use of quality assurance mechanisms as a tool in marketing higher education to fee-paying international students (Massaro 2010) is likely to be strengthened by the current financial crisis in UK higher education (Morgan 2010) while in Australia, which is heavily reliant on international student fees, there has been evidence for some time of the importance of quality assurance in this area (Vidovich 2002; Blackmore 2009). Indeed, quality assurance allows individual nation states to claim distinction within the highly competitive international student market (Blackmore 2011b).

The academic board, quality assurance and the audit culture

The inclusion of specific references to quality assurance and academic standards within contemporary academic board terms of reference appears to be a significant change from the past. For example, in the 1994 collection of five academic board case histories (reported in chapter 5, Governance) there were few references to these phrases and little explicit mention of quality assurance-type activities such as monitoring the implementation of academic policy; the emphasis instead appeared to be on the generation and approval of these policies. However, by 2010 all but three of 37 publicly funded Australian university academic boards explicitly listed academic quality assurance or standards as being amongst their reported primary responsibilities. Many academic boards had also established a standing committee specifically for this purpose.

Given the context and operation of universities as both educational and commercial enterprises that are at the same time accountable to government, it could be argued that notions of the audit and risk societies, together with the culture of performativity and its fabrications, may be central to examining the role and function of the academic board and to considering its future. This is because, as noted in chapter 5, much of the work of the contemporary academic board is about responding to and containing risk through, for example, the approval of academic policy or the approval of academic programs and/or assessment standards. These processes invariably form an important part of universities' quality assurance programs which, in turn, seek to establish external control over core academic work such as curriculum and assessment (Blackmore 2009; Teelken and Lomas 2009). This close association between the role of the university academic board and universities' quality assurance processes has arisen partly because of the link between the traditional work of academic boards in overseeing teaching and research and the desire to render what it is that universities do visible or accountable to the external community. However, a further reason relates to more fundamental changes to academic boards' roles and responsibilities arising from broader shifts in university governance which have meant that (as noted in chapters 5 and 6) not only do academic boards tend in general to have less power than was the case in the past, but that the scope of their responsibilities has narrowed considerably (see also Marginson and Considine 2000; Shattock 2006). Thus, a proportion of the literature argues that Australian academic boards (and perhaps to a lesser extent those in the UK and elsewhere) have effectively been left with no substantive role other than academic quality assurance (Winchester 2007,

p. 2), a performative task wherein they ‘map out paper trails of curriculum and assessment to provide the ‘evidence’ required by quality assurance audits’ (Blackmore 2009, p. 7).

Given that quality assurance within universities has arisen, in part, due to demands for accountability borne out of the audit culture, it could reasonably be expected that at least a proportion of academic boards’ time would be spent undertaking or considering audit and compliance-related tasks and reports, and possibly even in the setting of targets and performance indicators against which such reports are made. However, there is a dearth of published empirical data on whether this is indeed the case. For example, although academic quality assurance and academic standards related tasks have been added to the publicly reported Australian academic boards’ roles and responsibilities (as noted above), it is not possible to determine from these data whether boards are actually controlling these functions or whether by virtue of their real and symbolic holdings of intellectual capital academic boards merely add credibility to universities’ efforts to meet externally driven accountability requirements. To this end, the remainder of this chapter will analyse data from the three Australian university case studies on the contribution of academic boards to university quality assurance framework. Specifically, the analysis will consider the extent to which the three academic boards’ terms of reference include quality assurance roles and whether those roles appear to have been actually undertaken (or not). It will also consider the nature of the quality assurance work undertaken by academic boards to explore whether it is audit and compliance-driven in nature or whether it appears to be aimed at the more substantive quality improvement of universities’ teaching, learning and research activities. Finally, the analysis will explore the degree to which academic boards are responsible for those quality assurance tasks assigned to them or whether responsibility lies elsewhere and boards’ serve merely as a performative vehicle.

The role of university academic boards in academic quality assurance

The centrality of quality assurance to the role and function of the three case study academic boards is demonstrated by their official terms of reference. Thus, the terms of reference of both Newtown and Middleton universities explicitly refer to ‘quality assurance’ or ‘academic quality assurance’ and while those phrases are not found within the board terms of reference at Historydale University, they do include specific reference to the related area of academic standards (to which table 13, appendix G refers).

Moreover, while interviewees at each university were not specifically asked about the role of their academic board in relation to academic quality assurance, they were asked to specify their perception of board roles and then to identify the primary or most significant role. At each university, the primary role for the academic board was universally identified (regardless of category of board membership) as academic quality assurance (to which table 14, appendix G refers). However, this does not mean that other important academic board roles were not identified by respondents, but that regardless of the number of board roles, academic quality assurance was regarded as the **most** important one. This suggests that within the three case study universities, academic quality assurance was inextricably linked, at least in theory, with the academic board and that taking into account the historical data about the former roles of the two older universities, Middleton and Historydale universities, (reported in chapter 5) this association is relatively recent.

Interestingly, at all three universities academic board members explained that for them, academic quality assurance referred primarily to course approval and to ensuring that the academic programs and the rules that governed them were of an appropriate standard. That is to say, rather than the more compliance-driven tasks that might be expected arising from the influences of the audit culture and risk society, interview respondents appeared to associate academic boards with the more traditional, substantive quality improvement roles of overseeing the development, approval and implementation of academic programs (summarised in table 15, appendix G). This was particularly the case at Newtown and Historydale universities, but less so at Middleton University where respondents tended to refer to the phrases 'academic quality assurance' and 'academic standards' without specifically defining or describing what they meant by that.

A review of all aspects of each academic boards' terms of reference that relate to responsibilities considered by interviewees to be academic quality assurance-type tasks against available evidence of the extent to which each board was undertaking activity aimed at fulfilling those responsibilities (further details on the method for this assessment were provided in chapter 5) shows that while the three academic boards were formally responsible for a relatively wide range of academic quality assurance tasks, many of the tasks so listed were only partly (or not at all) undertaken (details set out in table 16, appendix G). Specifically, none of the three academic boards undertook all of their academic quality assurance tasks and two of the boards satisfied 55% or fewer of their responsibilities in this area. For example, although there was greatest evidence of activity aimed at fulfilling its quality assurance responsibilities at Newtown University, there was little evidence at that university of the monitoring of compliance with course approval policies despite that task being explicitly listed in the academic

board's terms of reference. However, it was not clear whether it was implicitly understood that faculties would undertake this task (instead of the academic board) or whether policy compliance was simply overlooked in this university's processes at that time. Thus, consistent with Power's description of the audit society (1997), this academic board could be considered to have provided a paper trail for audit purposes in respect of academic policy implementation while its actual overview in this area appeared to be considerably more superficial and discursive.

At Middleton University, there was no evidence of activity by the academic board aimed at oversight of student assessment and little evidence of academic quality assurance tasks of any kind, with the exception of passive (no discussion of any kind) approval of new course recommendations from the senior executive and passive approval of an annual report from the deputy vice-chancellor (academic) on course review. Moreover, while at Historydale University there was substantial activity relating to the review of teaching and research organisational units, this was not the case for the remaining quality assurance-type aspects of this academic board's terms of reference. For example, although the board did approve new and revised courses, the strategic aspects of new course proposals were first approved by the senior executive; the academic board looked only at the academic content and was generally expected to approve courses pre-approved by the senior executive.

The bifurcation between the strategic and academic aspects of course approval processes, particularly at Middleton and Historydale universities, reflects the broader split within universities between academic and managerial leadership and between line management and academic work described in chapter 6. For example, the interview data suggest that strategic overview of the academic activities of each university was not undertaken by the three case study academic boards but was instead within the purview of the deputy vice-chancellor (academic) (or equivalent) and the vice-chancellor. Moreover, consistent with the interview responses about academic board activities in the area of quality assurance, there was little or no evidence of any of the three academic boards undertaking such externally focused activities as the setting of key performance indicators and the monitoring of performance against them, or of auditing policy and process compliance. Instead, it would appear that those tasks were undertaken by the respective senior executives, particularly at Middleton and Historydale universities. For example, a former chair of the academic board at Historydale reported that while the academic board had initially been instrumental in developing that university's academic quality assurance processes, they had since been 'taken over' by the deputy vice-chancellor (academic):

The deputy [chair] of the Board, back in the late [date], he developed the teaching quality assurance process [name of process] and that's been refined and of course that's now in the Deputy Vice-Chancellor's remit.
CEL004 (elected member and former board chair, Historydale University)

At Middleton University the deputy vice-chancellor (academic) was similarly responsible for the oversight and implementation of quality assurance processes, such as student evaluations of teaching and the implementation of academic policy, as this exchange with an elected academic board member suggests:

Interviewer: Does [academic board name] have any role in overseeing whether that, and how well, that policy aimed at quality assurance is implemented?

Respondent: I would say that I can't recall too much ... I can recall [board name] meetings where the DVC(A) has reported information on student evaluations of teaching, for example, and has reported information on the [survey name].

Interviewer: But that's something the DVC(A) does rather than [board name]?

Respondent: Yes. BEL002 (elected board member, Middleton University)

However, the fact that it is deputy vice-chancellors and vice-chancellors who set and monitor academic performance indicators (and not academic boards) suggests that not only were the three case study boards not engaged in the degree of audit and compliance work that might have been expected taking into account their terms of reference, but that such tasks have become associated with university executive-level power regimes. This is crucially important because it is arguable that the performative nature of audit-driven academic quality assurance means that it is about bureaucracy, accountability and compliance rather than about improving core university work (Strathern 2000b; Harvey and Williams 2010). There is therefore a significant disjunction between externally (or state) focused academic quality assurance (Filippakou 2011) in the form of reports against key performance indicators, itself a form of academic capital, and what it is that universities actually do on a day-to-day basis—teaching and research—that is, intellectual capital. This is evident in a significant body of empirical research in the UK and Australia around student evaluations as measures of the quality of teaching and learning outcomes (Morley 2003; Douglas and Douglas 2006; Blackmore and Sachs 2007; Blackmore 2009) which are in turn arguably forms of fabrication. Thus, the objective becomes the development and implementation of accountability measures rather than the improvement of student learning, for example. This is partly because the penalties for universities in not implementing such

systems are great, such as reduced government funding, student fee income or reputation, and so resources which might otherwise have supported substantive teaching and research must necessarily be diverted to enable measuring, monitoring and reporting. But it is also because in specifying what is to be measured, the accountability mechanisms circumscribe university outcomes and therefore redefine what 'good university work' actually is (Strathern 2000b). As such they are forms of power in that they 'do as much to construct definitions of quality and performance as to monitor them' (Power 1994, p. 25). Moreover, Flippakou asserts that 'Quality regimes influence intimately the manner in which we construct and organise higher education' (2011, p. 15) and that 'quality systems project specific representations on what higher education might be ...' (Filippakou 2011, p. 17). Specifically, performativity changes academic practice. This is manifest when, for example, research findings are published in highly-ranked international journals with a view to enhancing the citation count rather than in grass-roots journals focused on improving policy or praxis.

At Historydale University there was a further aspect to the relationship between the academic board, the university executive and academic quality assurance in that the current chair of the board noted that the division of responsibility included a 'large blurred area around quality assurance processes' (CCH003), suggesting that there was some contestation in relation to issues of ownership and responsibility. This was reinforced in the following exchange between the interviewer and the board chair about recent changes to the course approval process:

Respondent: ... there was a notion that the process needed streamlining, that it was too sluggish. And so a lot of the course approval process, the high-level stuff, now goes to a meeting of the executive deans and it's the detail that gets looked after by the Board.

Interviewer: Yeah, so they look at the strategic stuff?

Respondent: Well, they call it strategic, but what's strategic and what's actually quality assurance is a very blurred boundary. CCH003 (board chair, Historydale University)

The vice-chancellor of Historydale also commented on the blurring of boundaries around quality assurance, noting that in relation to course approval:

... you sometimes get people who do yearn for the days when academic board had more control so they, if you like, play a role in the approval process which is—and where this would occur would be in new programs; they go beyond the issue of 'Is what is being proposed of sufficient quality?' [and] they really get into whether that program should be offered or not. CVC000 (vice-chancellor, Historydale University)

These responses suggest that key aspects of the curriculum, including such fundamental questions as what courses or units are offered (and, by extension, to whom, in what manner, and when) were now largely determined by the senior executive rather than by academic staff in faculties or by the academic board. In the previous chapter it was noted that power relations between the academic board and the university executive were somewhat more contested at Historydale University than they were at either Newtown or Middleton, suggestive of struggles over the relative distribution and value of both academic and intellectual capital. However, it was mooted that resistance to changes to the role and responsibilities of the academic board at Historydale, as noted by the vice-chancellor's comments (above), could also be attributable to the collective habitus of the academic board, consistent with the former role of the board as a centre of control. Such contestation was likely to be substantial at Historydale University because historical records (reported in chapter 5) suggest that in its heyday the academic board at this university was considerably more powerful than that at Middleton and it therefore has had the greatest amount to lose.

Academic boards' inability to effectively discharge their full range of documented academic quality assurance responsibilities, especially at Middleton and Historydale universities, was confirmed by interview responses. For example, at Middleton University, one former elected member reported that academic quality assurance was:

... one area where I felt that it [the academic board] was just a rubber stamping exercise. BFM001 (former elected board member, Middleton University)

In the same way, a current elected member reported that academic board approved the quality assurance frameworks but was 'not actually doing it, even though it is listed in the terms of reference' (BEL002), suggesting that while the board formally approved the quality assurance processes it was not involved in developing or implementing them. Thus, the academic board was considered by this member to be: 'Not doing it and not driving it' (BEL002). However, it was not only elected members who had observed difficulties with respect to the implementation by this academic board of its academic quality assurance terms of reference. For example, a dean observed that the academic board:

... receives reports on things such as student evaluation of teaching but does not really deal with quality assurance or academic standards. BEX0099 (executive dean, Middleton University)

Similarly, the deputy vice-chancellor (research) reported a 'Lack of robust probing of faculties and schools re academic standards' (BEX008), while the vice-chancellor noted that the academic board was not sufficiently proactive in the area of quality of teaching:

I think there's probably a number of reasons [for this]. I think one is having the time and the capacity for them to develop that particular framework. So here it has been kept relatively low-level and it has not, I think, built the capacity to actually do these sorts of things. BEX006 (vice-chancellor, Middleton University)

These responses indicate that at Middleton University it was generally considered that the academic board was not effectively undertaking its designated responsibilities relating to ensuring and enhancing the quality of teaching and research, possibly due to inadequate time, information, expertise and experience. A similar argument is made by some in the Australian literature on academic boards, suggesting that despite the documented responsibilities of Australian academic boards for aspects of universities' quality assurance processes, boards are not currently effectively discharging these responsibilities in such areas as admission, course content, academic standards, assessment and academic progress (Moodie 2004; Baird 2007; Woodhouse and Baird 2007) and that they lack the knowledge, skill and authority to do so (Baird 2007). Baird argues that this latter point is due to a combination of factors relating to the ascendancy of the senior management group which has, in turn, lessened the authority of the academic board within the university; that elected members of the board may be less likely to be academic leaders than might have been the case in the past and thus may not have sufficient expertise in key areas of academic board responsibility such as the scholarship of teaching, learning and research; and that the above two limitations have significantly reduced the trust of senior managers in the academic board (2007).

However, at Newtown University there was much less reported dissatisfaction with the academic board's implementation of its quality assurance roles and, as noted above, the gaps between the board's stated quality assurance tasks and its actual implementation of them were fewer. This could possibly be a reflection of that academic board's greater overall effectiveness (reported in chapter 5). However, it could also reflect a greater level of empowerment within that academic board to consider and act on data about the quality of teaching and learning, as suggested by the vice-chancellor:

I see the [Board name] as having an ability—with a different community of people, a different constituency of people, overlapping but different—equally able to be developing the quality assurance, not only from a tick-a-box compliance point of view, but from the point of view like 'hey if I look at my teaching results or if I look at the student survey results for the course in which my unit is in, there's something going wrong here' [then] I've

got to reflect as a teacher on that evidence and I've got to be proactive about my quality assurance in my unit in my course. Now this isn't ticking a box, this is being reflective about evidence. AVC008

That is to say, at Newtown University it appeared that not only was the academic board more heavily involved in academic quality assurance activities than was the case at the other two universities, but that it was considered, at least by the vice-chancellor, that the involvement was substantive and meaningful and not limited to compliance-based activity. However, further research would be required to determine whether the vice-chancellor's view was more widely held within the university.

At the commencement of this chapter it was noted that one of the issues to be explored in this analysis was the extent to which the case study academic boards' academic quality assurance work was compliance and audit-driven. On the basis of the evidence outlined above, two conclusions are possible. First, the quality assurance tasks undertaken by the three academic boards were largely limited to course approval and policy approval. There was little evidence of compliance monitoring and no evidence that any of the three boards was involved in the setting of targets or standards or the collection and analysis of data against them. Moreover, especially at Middleton and Historydale universities, course approval was limited to what was left over after the senior executive had approved the 'strategic' aspects of new course offerings. This suggests that the three academic boards were engaged in little or no compliance and audit-driven academic quality assurance work. Second, while the three boards' terms of reference made extensive references to academic quality assurance and quality assurance-related tasks, the scope of such tasks actually undertaken was considerably narrower. It therefore appears that while these academic boards were officially and publicly responsible (via their terms of reference) for their respective universities' academic quality assurance, in reality responsibility for establishing and actually undertaking many of these tasks rested with the vice-chancellor and senior executive and in particular with the deputy vice-chancellor (academic) or equivalent. In this way, a significant proportion of the three academic boards' quality assurance responsibilities were performative rather than real. It also suggests that in allowing academic boards to remain associated with quality assurance tasks that they were not actually undertaking, the three universities (Middleton and Historydale universities in particular) were engaged in exercises of fabrication.

These findings were unpredicted. Given their published terms of reference, the three case study academic boards might have been expected to spend a considerable amount of their time auditing, monitoring and reporting and in fact there was a risk that these tasks might have distracted academic boards for their core work of overseeing teaching and research. However, the extent to which the case

study data suggests that university senior management had taken responsibility for both academic quality assurance and the strategic management of university academic affairs, particularly at Middleton and Historydale universities, means that in fact neither possibility appears particularly likely. This corresponds with recent empirical research conducted in English universities which found that academics 'defied external audit activities, which were considered as an intrusion into their [discipline-based] professionalism' (Cheng 2011, p. 183) and is suggestive of academic quality assurance as an activity undertaken by and for management and not by academics or academic boards.

One of the issues that does not seem to be considered in the current literature on academic boards is the extent to which academic boards' reported quality assurance roles may provide credibility to external agencies with regard to the quality of the university's academic program. This further latent and performative role of the academic board was reflected in a number of interview responses. For example, at Historydale University, this deputy vice-chancellor noted that:

So, ah although the Academic Board doesn't have, as such, a day-to-day power broking role, its important function and critical role in governance is recognised and respected and supported. Now one of the reasons for that is external and that is the role of AUQA and in the future TEQSA because it is the academic quality assurance processes that the Board oversees and manages that's fundamental, that's fundamental to our success in those reviews. CEX008 (deputy vice-chancellor (academic), Historydale University)

Similarly, at Middleton University the deputy vice-chancellor (academic) noted the connection between academic board involvement in quality assurance and success in external audit processes, observing that for his university this was an area that required improvement:

We have, like most universities, inbuilt five-yearly course reviews [with an] external panel, and we're supposed to check off that the [board name] plays an active role in course reviews, and the answer is [that] it doesn't. They know about them; every year as DVC (A) I report the ones we've had in the past year, just in a list, but in no sense is it active in reading reports. On my desk right now is the thought of [board name] increasing its role in the quality assurance process to do with our course review process, partly because I think we are going to be held to account more for that as TEQSA comes in; the academic standards debate will come in and we need to have a transparent mechanism for saying that we do these things well. I suspect that we're vulnerable on that front right now. BEX005 (deputy vice-chancellor (academic), Middleton University)

In essence, this deputy vice-chancellor's concern was not about a potential inadequacy with regard to the course review program; he appeared confident that the university's processes were adequate and

effective. The issue was that an external monitoring agency such as TEQSA may expect that the academic board would have a meaningful role in course review and that this was not currently the case. That is to say, an academic board's holdings of intellectual capital would enable it to add credibility to externally-driven university quality assurance processes in a way that university executives (with their reserves of academic capital) could not. This interpretation is shared by Zipin and Brennan who argue that performativity has become part of the habitus of university management which in turn uses academic boards as a vehicle to achieve procedural (but not substantive) outcomes (2003).

The potential for academic boards to be emblematically (but not actually) responsible for academic quality assurance was recognised by a number of respondents at Middleton University, including an elected member who reported that:

Where [board name] plays a role in quality is in terms of being perceived from the outside world. BEL002 (elected board member, Middleton University)

That same member noted that the academic board was symbolic of academic approval processes: 'to outside agencies such as government' (BEL002); while the deputy vice-chancellor (research) noted that the academic board was symbolic of the 'academic integrity of the university' (BEX008). However, it was a deputy vice-chancellor at Newtown University who appeared most conscious of the importance of the role of the academic board in this regard, observing that:

Absolutely I think if you take away the academic governance role of the board, I think we're a TAFE really, and to me that is almost—it's a question that you ponder a lot really, as a dual-sector University, 'what's the difference between TAFE and higher ed?' And increasingly the Federal government, for example, is coming up with the view that there's not much difference at all. AEX009 (deputy vice-chancellor, Newtown University)

An obvious question arising from this analysis is why have academic boards embraced the quality assurance agenda, regardless of the extent to which they are (or are not) actually undertaking the responsibilities set out in their terms of reference? One possible answer is that quality assurance might potentially have provided academic boards with a way of filling the void in their terms of reference which developed arising from the transfer of many of the traditional academic board roles to management, commencing in the 1980s, as noted by this former chair of the board at Historydale University:

Traditionally we existed to, with the vice-chancellor, run the university, I believe. That's a long time ago. Now I think that they're there as the quality assurance body for academic activities of the university.

...

I guess it's, you know, a lot of the old roles have been taken and you either reinvent yourself or you cease to exist. CEL004 (former board chair and elected member, Historydale University)

This need to fill gaping holes in the role and function of the academic board within the managerial university was most clearly articulated by the deputy vice-chancellor (research) at Newtown University:

I mean they [academic boards] effectively made all the decisions. They decided who got staff, they often had resources committees, they decided (in a command and control system), who got new lecturers, who got professors etc. And gradually what's been happening is that management has grown up in universities as they've become bigger and, you know, the amount of money they control has become more obvious. Collegial decision-making has been replaced by management decision-making and management accountability. And I think that all universities have got this issue about what role does the academic board have in a modern university? AEX006 (deputy vice-chancellor (research) and *ex officio* board member, Newtown University)

Thus, quality assurance might provide at least a proportion of academic boards with an officially sanctioned role in a world where university affairs would appear likely to remain dominated by management and government (Kogan and Marton 2006; Blackmore and Sachs 2007; Henkel 2007; Bansel and Davies 2010) for some time to come.

This chapter has reviewed the literature relating to academic quality assurance and has noted that within the context of higher education the word 'quality' is now frequently taken to mean 'academic quality assurance' with its connotations of audit and measurement against performance indicators rather than the more traditional activities aimed at improving teaching, learning and research. In respect of the three case study academic boards, academic quality assurance was universally considered by respondents to be the most important academic board responsibility although the data on board activity demonstrated that rather than undertaking those tasks themselves, in many instances academic quality assurance was undertaken by the senior executive. The case study academic boards therefore tended to be symbolically responsible for academic quality assurance while the real work was done elsewhere. Put simply, this means that the boards were frequently not actually doing the task that they themselves thought to be the most important aspect of their overall role. What this might mean for the future of academic boards is considered in the following chapter.

Chapter 8 — The future of academic boards

Introduction

The subject of this chapter is integral to the research question for this thesis, *viz*, is there a role for the academic board in the contemporary Australian university? The limitations of this study, including the limited number of universities studied as cases, mean that it is not appropriate to attempt to provide a single answer to this question. Moreover, it is not possible to predict the future of any one university, let alone of the Australian higher education system. Therefore, the definitive future of academic boards as a component (or not) of Australian universities must necessarily remain uncertain. However, it is possible to theorise or speculate about what the data that were collected from the three Australian universities studied as cases might mean for the future of academic boards in general.

This chapter analyses case study data relating to the future of Australian university academic boards. It commences with the discussion of data regarding perceived gaps in academic board roles, before analysing interview responses about what academic board members from each case study university thought their board should be doing (or not doing) in the future. Both of these issues are indicative of whether there is a view that academic board roles might expand or contract, or be made redundant, as time goes on. The chapter then draws upon case study data presented in preceding chapters to identify a number of specific characteristics of the three case study academic boards that appeared to either assist or hinder their effectiveness. While it is not appropriate to generalise from the three case studies to all Australian academic boards, it is nonetheless useful to draw out experiences that may potentially be of interest to others and to theorise about the characteristics of an effectively functioning academic board. It is reasonable to assume that for academic boards to have a future they must be considered to be functioning effectively or at least in some way that is useful to their university. The chapter then draws on interview responses to undertake an analysis of apparent shifts in the nature of collegial governance within universities before speculating about what this might mean in the future. It concludes with a discussion of potential options for the future of the three case study academic boards and of academic boards more broadly.

The analysis within this chapter draws upon the conceptual framework presented in chapter 3 and also engages, in a very minor way, upon some theory generation of its own.

Case study data relevant to the future of academic boards

A review of interview data suggests that overall, very few of the case study respondents identified any real gaps in the formally documented roles of their academic board (refer table 17, appendix H). This does not suggest that respondents were satisfied with what their boards' were doing; on the contrary, as noted in chapter 5, Governance, respondents at each university reported numerous perceived weaknesses in current academic board performance. However, the vast majority of respondents were unable to identify any new roles that they would like their academic boards to take on—tasks that were not already listed in their board's terms of reference. Instead, respondents were focused on what was in their board's terms of reference that was not being done; either not very well, or in some cases, at all. There was also a general focus on, and in some cases, a concern about, a potential narrowing of roles. That is to say, many respondents could identify tasks that they thought their academic board might lose in the future, but few could identify tasks they thought their academic board might realistically gain.

The greatest number of potential gaps in academic board roles was reported at Middleton University where three out of ten respondents listed additional or expanded roles for the academic board, these being greater involvement in course reviews; consideration of research matters; and oversight and benchmarking of academic standards. This result is possibly reflective of dissatisfaction with academic board performance reported at that university, particularly in the area of academic quality assurance (to which chapters 5 and 7 refer); however, even at Middleton, considered by members to be the least effective board, the majority of respondents did not identify any gaps in academic board roles.

When specifically asked about the future of their academic board, the majority of respondents at Newtown University (7) wanted the board to continue with its then current spread of responsibilities and mode of operating although two of those members called for minor amendments to the agenda and the board's communication style. In general, the elected members were more likely than the *ex officio* members to favour the status quo and the following comment about the future role of the academic board at Newtown was typical of those received:

I think it should be doing what it is doing [now]. AEL005 (elected member, Newtown University)

Three of the Newtown executive members wanted the academic board to foster greater discussion on key academic or educational issues, as noted in chapter 5, and to have greater involvement in key academic matters. This is exemplified in the following comment from the deputy vice-chancellor (research):

I would like to see the [Board] much more involved in, but not necessarily running, a whole lot of our key education functions. I would like it to be more involved in policy around research, for example — it's hard because it's reluctant to get involved in policy around research. I'd like to see it more engaged in academic promotions than it is. AEX006 (deputy vice-chancellor (research) and *ex officio* board member, Newtown University)

Despite these comments it appeared that these respondents considered that any broader role to be played by this academic board should be within its existing terms of reference, under which the academic board had little or no direct decision-making authority whilst the vice-chancellor was the clear locus of power (as noted in chapter 6). Thus, taking into account the responses from both elected and *ex officio* members of this academic board, it is suggested that no alteration of the current balance of power between the academic board and the vice-chancellor was envisaged at Newtown University. To this end, it may potentially be difficult for the academic board to take on the above functions without stepping on management's toes, particularly if the board were to articulate a view which was different to the management line.

At Middleton University, a number of members questioned whether the size and composition of the academic board needed to stay the same or whether it could in fact become more streamlined (the academic board at that university was already comparatively small). The following comments from a recent former elected member and from an executive dean are typical of those received:

One could look at the composition of the [board name] and ask whether you need such a large body, although it has been getting smaller rather than larger, whether you need three elected academic staff members from each faculty. I don't think you get a greater diversity of view from within each faculty by doing that. BFM000 (former elected member, Middleton University)

Well there has got to be something. Somebody is going to have to sign-off and particularly at a time of, you know, audits and compliance and all the rest of it, there has to be an ability to make a trail of where something came to and where it went to and those sorts of things, and the [board name] certainly performs that role. I mean it's the history of the university in terms of what it decided to do as far as academic matters

were concerned. There has to be something that does that. So I suspect there will be something, but whether it has that membership or what it looks like in the future is a different sort of a question. BEX009 (executive dean and *ex officio* board member, Middleton University)

The vice-chancellor had also clearly been reflecting on this issue, noting that, while an academic board in some form was necessary for the university's future, it did not need to retain the current composition or size:

Does that mean it needs to be an elected academic board constituted in the way that we actually constitute it today? I think the answer to that question would have to be clearly no; you wouldn't need to do it that way. You ...would need to have some diversity of views of the different methodologies and values and paradigms and pedagogy of different areas (I'm a great advocate of diversity giving you better outcomes) ...you would need to have sufficient broad expertise to actually enable people to feel that that body looking at it was credible and for council to feel that there was sufficient expertise in that particular area. You would therefore probably end up with a committee that looked somewhat similar to academic board but arguably constructed in a different way and probably not necessarily as large and without the potential of it being seen as a more political body... . BVC006 (vice-chancellor, Middleton University)

It is possible that by hoping for a less 'political body' the vice-chancellor was thinking of one that was not elected, or at least had fewer elected members, a change also suggested by the former elected member and implied by the dean, above. One could therefore speculate that these current and former members were envisioning a much smaller body than the current academic board of between 30 and 40 members, and that with fewer elected members both the size and composition might be similar to a vice-chancellor's advisory committee (of say 12 to 15 members).

However, it was not only the size and composition of the board at Middleton University that drew comment, as a majority of members would have liked this academic board to engage in more robust debate about substantive academic issues, suggested by the following comments:

I think maybe [board name] could be a bit more ... there could be more robust debates at [board name] about things. It is supposed to be a forum for discussion of academic matters and, you know, perhaps controversial issues. BFM001 (recent former elected board member, Middleton University)

I would love to get [board name] occasionally more engaged in robust debate than it does. BEX005 (deputy vice-chancellor (academic) and *ex officio* board member, Middleton University)

Specifically, both the board chair and the deputy vice-chancellor (academic) noted that it would be appropriate for the academic board to have a greater involvement in considering the outcome of course reviews:

... we're thinking it might be useful if we have a closer look at the reviews that are done of the various courses. BCH003 (board chair, Middleton University)

Comments from the deputy vice-chancellor (academic) on this issue were reported in chapter 7 within the context of academic quality assurance.

Moreover, while the vice-chancellor appeared to favour a relatively passive academic board, expressing a wish that the board should continue as it was at the time of the interviews, he also reported a preference for the board to have a greater role in the oversight of teaching quality:

It could be, I think, more proactive in the question of quality of teaching...[i]n the sense of taking a greater involvement in the policies and the aspects ... being a greater sounding board for the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) about quality of teaching. BVC006 (vice-chancellor, Middleton University)

These comments from respondents on what the academic board at Middleton University should be doing in future are consistent with those reported earlier in this thesis which suggested that there was much less satisfaction with the performance of this academic board than at the other two case study universities. Despite this, none of the above comments reflects any wish for the Middleton academic board to take on any substantially new roles (roles not already set out in the terms of reference) or for there to be any shifts in the balance of power between the board the vice-chancellor. That is to say, there was a prevailing view at this university that while the board could do better, there should not be any major amendment to its role or function.

This was not the case at Historydale University where the majority of respondents thought it was likely that the academic board would have a reduced or substantially reduced role in the future. This phenomena is exemplified in the following exchange with the vice-chancellor:

Interviewer: Do you think there are any key roles that the Academic Board should currently be playing but isn't?

Respondent: Ah, not really. There's the question of are they doing some things that maybe they shouldn't. CVC000 (vice-chancellor, Historydale University)

The most pessimistic of views about the future of the academic board at Historydale were expressed by the current chair of the board and an elected member who was also a former board chair:

I'll be perfectly honest; I think in five years' time I'd be surprised if the board still exists. Well I think it would be a token gesture. Now if those three things go [referring to mooted senior management take-over of three current primary academic board roles], there's nothing substantial left for the board to do. And that's just being perfectly realistic. I can't see ... if that's the way the university wants to proceed, then it will. CCH003 (board chair, Historydale University)

My observation is that traditional academic boards are not very useful; because they're big and cumbersome, they haven't moved with the times and so it's not surprising that management has taken back or taken over most of the roles and functions. I don't know; I am ambivalent. I think in the future they won't exist; you know, there'll be a quality office [instead]. CEL004 (former board chair and current elected member, Historydale University)

However, as noted above, the vice-chancellor also foresaw a narrowing of academic board roles at Historydale University, and both the vice-chancellor and the deputy vice-chancellor (academic) suggested in particular that the teaching and learning and research committees might become senior management committees (rather than academic board standing committees as was currently the case):

So the question that is being debated, at least amongst some people here, is whether or not teaching and learning subcommittee and research subcommittee wouldn't be better under [name of senior management committee]. I mean I am not interested in getting into a huge fight with academic board about losing more powers; I just think there is not a lot of up-side in that one. It would be better if they saw that it wasn't working as well as it might. It's not totally broken; it's just that people feel that you don't have enough decision-makers at the table. CVC000 (vice-chancellor, Historydale University)

I think it is at a bit of a tipping point in terms of what does the board look like in ten years' time. I think the institution will need to have some discussions as to that. Calling it anachronistic would be too strong but we have, over the past three years, developed a very strong senior management structure with a set of subcommittees and there'll come a point in time where you decide where the subcommittees best sit and do we have, essentially, duplication. I don't think we're there yet but I think it will be a debate we will have to have. CEX007 (deputy vice-chancellor (academic, Historydale University)

However, despite the projected substantial narrowing in academic board roles, both the vice-chancellor and the deputy vice-chancellor (academic) wanted the board to have a continuing role in the academic quality assurance of degrees, possibly because of the potential for the academic board to add credibility to externally focused quality assurance mechanisms (as reported in chapter 7,):

I think maintaining the quality assurance role for degrees etc is important. I think [the Academic Board] is an important organisation to continue playing a role in quality assurance. CVC000 (vice-chancellor, Historydale University)

I think you are always going to have to have an entity like the board in large institutions that plays a key role in early consultation, communication, and through its delegated responsibility around course approval and quality, essentially, of the educational programs. I think that its focus will probably be streamlined to be more in that regard. I think the areas that it mightn't do in the future are the strategic work around research and education; I'm not sure it does it now anyway. CEX007 (deputy vice-chancellor (academic), Historydale University)

There was also a minority of respondents at Historydale who did not envisage any changes to the academic board:

Oh, at the risk of sounding complacent, probably much the same as what they are doing at the moment. Overseeing the academic business of the University. CEX008 (pro vice-chancellor and ex officio board member, Historydale University)

But it is so much a part of the fabric of the university and a part of the fabric of the academic world generally that I think it would be rather difficult to make too many fundamental changes. CC0005 (chancellor, Historydale University)

In accordance with Bourdieu's notion of habitus (Bourdieu 1989, 1990b) which is formed partly on the basis of experience and is therefore is rather more inclined (than not) to be supportive of the status quo, these comments suggest that history is a powerful driver of expectations about the future, especially in an institution established approximately 100 years ago, as was the case at Historydale University. Conversely, considering the vice-chancellors' positions at all three universities as the locus of power (as reported in chapter 6), it is likely that the roles undertaken by academic boards in future will be dependent upon the goodwill of the vice-chancellor in office at the time. The vulnerability of the academic board in this regard was recognised by this elected member:

I think it will be fairly similar to what it is now, depending on perhaps the next VC. If the next VC is someone who is very anti the academic board then it will be a harder road; if the next VC is someone who is more ... who sees the academic board as an ally and working in the same direction, and worth keeping on-side, then it will be an easier road. CEL010 (elected member, Historydale University)

Taking into account the very weak relationship between academic board terms of reference and what the three case study actually boards actually did (reported in chapters 4 and 6), these data also suggest that securing a future role for academic boards may have more to do with the quality of the relationship between the academic board (and its chair) and the vice-chancellor than with any potential review of their formally documented role.

A summary of respondents' interview responses in respect of the future of their academic board is set out in table 18, appendix H. The question of why there was a notable projected narrowing of academic board roles at Historydale but not at the other two universities is interesting. One possible explanation is that academic board functionality was already comparatively limited at Middleton University (and so did not need to be further narrowed). For example, while at Historydale it was mooted that the senior executive would 'take over' the teaching and learning and research subcommittees, data presented in chapter 5 suggested that this shift had already occurred at Middleton. That is to say, both the projected and the actual narrowing of academic board roles at Middleton and Historydale universities is reflective of the dominance of managerial modes of governance and of academic capital, reported in chapter 6.

Conversely, the situation at Newtown University was quite different, partly because its age meant that at that university there was no history of substantial academic board power. As noted in chapters 5 and 6, this academic board's formally documented decision-making authority was very limited and the vice-chancellor's power was extensive, to some extent arising from its history as a former CAE, where hierarchical management structures were comparatively common and which arguably led to a more rapid and extensive adoption of managerialism (Blackmore 1992). That is to say, managerial modes of governance and academic capital may well have been dominant at Newtown University from the outset.

In summary, very few respondents across the three case study universities identified any gaps in their academic board's role and a majority of respondents at all three universities foresaw their board having the same or a reduced set of responsibilities in the future. No one envisaged any new or additional responsibilities for their academic board. Although members in all categories at Newtown and Middleton universities called for their boards to engage in more robust debate on key academic issues, this appeared to be within existing power balances which see the vice-chancellor as dominant.

Characteristics of the three case study academic boards that appeared to assist or hinder their effectiveness

Identifying those characteristics of the three case study academic boards that appeared to either aid or limit those boards' effectiveness may potentially be of interest to academic boards more generally, particularly with regard to any changes they may wish to make for the future. To this end, despite its lack of formally documented powers, the academic board at Newtown University was considered to be the most effective of the three academic boards (to which chapter 5 refers) and to have the highest level of influence and authority (to which chapter 6 refers). Two specific factors appear to contribute to this situation. First, this academic board had a unique role, that of serving as both a symbolic and physical focus for unification between the higher education and vocational education components of this relatively recently formed dual sector university. This role was not fulfilled by any other body or officer within Newtown and it gave the academic board a sense of purpose and place that appeared to be lacking in the boards at the other two case study universities. The central role that this unique function played in the establishment of the status and credibility of the academic board at Newtown University was universally recognised there by every single respondent and is reflected in the following comments from members:

The Board serves as a very, very clear focus point, both iconically and symbolically, as well as practically, of the ethos that we are operating as a single University that teaches courses that run from certificate 1 through to PhD and that need to be integrated and we need to have the parity of esteem and recognition of the work that goes on across the University as a whole, within our Board. And so from that perspective I think it serves a quite unique function in our university. AEX009 (deputy vice-chancellor, Newtown University)

The success of this University is about its ability to pathway between its sectors ... [the Board] is the one forum where it all sort of starts to come as the one university, not [university name] TAFE Division [etc]. AEL004 (elected board member, Newtown University)

It brings vocational and higher education together in one Board rather than it being almost two totally different processes. AEX006 (deputy vice-chancellor (research) and *ex officio* board member, Newtown University)

The Board has been a key vehicle in creating one university out of a multi-sector and, initially somewhat fragmented and somewhat disrespectful set of silos. AVC008 (vice-chancellor, Newtown University)

[The academic board is] an important mechanism for bringing the governance of the University under the one umbrella. AEL005 (elected member, Newtown University)

In serving as a focus for a unified university, the academic board was fulfilling a function that was integral to Newtown University's vision and mission in a manner which was both symbolic and practical, as noted by the deputy vice-chancellor (above). That is to say, the single academic board representing both vocational and higher education symbolised the establishment of an integrated dual sector university that was then reflected in the practical operations of that board through its implementation, for example, of a single course approval process (rather than the parallel course approval processes that had formerly been implemented).

A second unique characteristic of the academic board at Newtown was that it appeared to be operating within a shared governance mode, as discussed at the conclusion to chapter 5. This arrangement was actively fostered or enabled by the vice-chancellor, who although recognised within the university as the undoubted locus of power (and therefore the holder of the greatest proportion of academic capital), articulated that:

... my power is much greater if I've got a collegiate group with me, so it's actually in my interest to have an effective Board, if I'm not going to be a benevolent dictator. AVC008 (vice-chancellor, Newtown University)

Chapter 6 noted that although this academic board had few executive powers in its own right, it was regarded within the university as being highly influential. It would therefore appear that the status and authority of this academic board was significantly due to the attitude and approach of the vice-chancellor towards the establishment of a partnership between the academic board and university management. That is to say, it was the vice-chancellor's specifically articulated view that a strong university relied on both strong management and strong academic governance through the academic board:

... the life-blood of what happens in research projects, in classrooms, talking with students, is the staff. And the staff do need to have the collegiate voice. I suppose my bottom line is — I'm of a view that a complex organisation like this, any complex organisation with a product range which runs from certificate one to PhD, which is multi-campus, multi-country, multi-institutional, cannot rely on a single way of seeing its own business, hearing its own stake-holders inside and outside the University. To have two lines with very different windows strengthens the institution. AVC008 (vice-chancellor, Newtown University)

In essence, the vice-chancellor at Newtown was engaged in building the academic board up, as a symbol of what it means to be a university, whereas at Middleton and Historydale universities there was

a sense of the academic board as an institution of the past, that had been or was being, taken down. The vice-chancellor's perspective of the role of the academic board at Newtown University was unique amongst the three case study vice-chancellors, possibly made easier because the youthfulness of that university meant that there was no experience of a historical transition from traditional collegial governance to managerial governance. This vice-chancellor could possibly 'afford' to be magnanimous to the academic board because it posed no real threat to his or her authority and there was no historical or institutional memory of a dominant academic board.

Of specific interest is whether there are lessons from the experiences of the academic board at Newtown that may be more widely applicable to academic boards generally. One way of interpreting this data would be to suggest that the academic board was valued and supported at least partly because of its unique role in bringing together both components of the dual sector institution. However, it is also possible to apply a broader and more interpretive lens to the data and therefore to infer that it was the fact that this academic board had a unique function that set it apart, rather than what it was that the unique function involved. This suggests that one way of assisting to secure a future for an academic board would be ensure that that board had a unique function to perform that could not be undertaken elsewhere in the university, the importance of which was universally recognised within that university. Moreover, because the unique function performed by the academic board at Newtown was not in that board's terms of reference (which might potentially lead to a vulnerability noted in chapter 5), it also suggests that it is what the academic board actually does rather than its formally documented role that is most important. Finally, the experience of Newtown University underscores the importance of the attitude of the vice-chancellor towards the academic board. Given the vice-chancellor's undisputed position as the locus of power, it is arguable that one of the most important things an academic board could do to secure its future would be to forge an effective relationship with the vice-chancellor.

Characteristics of the academic boards at Middleton and Historydale universities that appeared to help or hinder their effectiveness and that therefore may have broader implications for academic boards more generally included the mode of election or appointment of the chair and the role and function of academic board committees. As noted in chapter 6, the academic board chair at Middleton University was appointed by the vice-chancellor whereas those at Newtown and Historydale were elected by the academic board. Interview responses from Middleton suggest that the chair of the academic board at that university was substantially less autonomous, and felt more beholden to the vice-chancellor, than the academic board chairs at the other two case study universities. It may also have potentially reduced the authority of the academic board as an independent academic voice at that university in view of the

fact that, at least in theory, the chair could be removed at any time by the vice-chancellor. Whilst the experiences at Middleton University may not necessarily be replicated in other universities it can be speculated that an elected chair of an academic board may be important for a sense within that academic board, and within the wider university, of academic board autonomy. It is just possible that while an elected academic board chair may not make the board more powerful, a non-elected chair may contribute to the board feeling (and being perceived as) somewhat less independent.

The experience at Middleton would also appear to suggest that academic board committees in the principal areas of teaching and learning and research are integral to a depth of knowledge and experience amongst members about these issues and that they may also contribute to substantive discussion at the academic board meeting. At Middleton those committees were part of the vice-chancellor's advisory committee structure and not part of the academic board and this meant that key items of business relating teaching, learning and research necessarily came directly from the vice-chancellor or senior executive rather than from academic board committees. In turn, this increased the sense that the academic board was dominated by the senior executive and that the elected academic board members lacked the knowledge to contribute to discussion (because they had not been present at committee meetings where those matters had been discussed). It also suggests that if the senior executive at Historydale University proceeds with a 'take over' of the two principal academic board committees as was mooted during interviews with the vice-chancellor and deputy vice-chancellor (academic) there may be a further substantial reduction in the perceived authority and effectiveness of that academic board. Thus, academic board committees pertaining to teaching and learning and research may be amongst the factors which contribute to academic board autonomy and depth of knowledge.

Taken as a whole this analysis suggests that characteristics which may potentially contribute to academic board effectiveness include the possession of a unique function which is recognised as being an integral part of the academic board role; a clear agreement with the vice-chancellor about the purpose of the academic board and the existence of a respectful and co-operative relationship or partnership with the senior executive (but which does not imply automatic academic board support for every proposal which emanates from the senior management group); an academic board chair who is elected; and academic board committees which include the key areas of teaching and learning and research.

A transition within collegial governance?

This subsection sets out a tentative theorisation of apparent shifts in the nature of collegial governance within the three case study universities before speculating about what this might mean for academic boards in general in the future.

The historical nature of collegial governance

As noted in discussion chapter 5, Governance, the notion of collegial governance involves such characteristics as a group of scholars working together as a 'self-governing collective' for their 'mutual advantage' (Middlehurst 1993, p. 49) with leaders being elected rather than appointed by management as is now commonly the case (Olsen 2009). Collegial governance is steeped in the history, symbolism and ideals of the university as far back as the 13th century when a Magna Charter of the University of Paris obliged the chancellor to 'obtain the vote of the professors in matters connected with appointments for the teaching of theology and cannon law' (Rüegg 1992, p. 23). Since then, images of collegial governance have 'exerted a powerful influence on the culture and functioning of academe' (Middlehurst 1993, p. 49), for example by establishing the necessity of academic freedom to provide 'independent, authoritative judgment' (Salter and Tapper 2002, p. 247).

The committee system is integral to collegial governance because committees serve as the 'chief organ of government' (Middlehurst 1993, p. 49). To this end, the purpose of the committee is to build an agreement out of the range of inputs into the policy making process:

Government by committee means orderly procedures, carefully weighted judgments, broad consultation and slow-moving machinery. These are decision-making qualities that are consistent with an academic culture that emphasizes involvement and rationality ... (Tapper and Salter 1992, p. 48)

Within Anglo-Saxon derived universities, particularly those within Commonwealth nations, the academic board was historically the principal committee and was therefore a key site for the implementation of collegial governance. This was evident in chapter 5 of this thesis where literature and both case study and case history data show that within the UK and Australia academic boards effected the operation of universities for a significant proportion of the 20th century (for example, see Moodie and Eustace 1974; Stoddart 1994; Amaral, Jones and Karseth 2003).

The concept of hegemony was described in chapter 6, Power, as involving a dominant group governing with the consent of those governed on the basis that the interests of the dominant force are perceived as being in the interests of all (Gramsci 1971; Bates 1975; Mouffe 1979; Bocoock 1986; Burawoy 2008a). Within this context, the hegemonic group under a collegial governance regime was undoubtedly the professor (see for example Tapper and Salter 1992; Ramsden 1998; Lapworth 2004). This resulted in the marginalisation of those staff (such as women who tended to be concentrated at lower academic levels) who were 'not part of the favoured group' and also meant key decisions were 'typically arrived at by a small cadre of decision-makers' (Ramsden 1998, p. 23). That is to say, it is arguable that traditional collegial governance was 'elite' (Dearlove 2002, p. 258) and therefore did not involve decision-making by consensus (Meek 2002) or embrace the whole community of scholars (Moodie and Eustace 1974). Thus, '[a]cademic self-governance, therefore, is itself riven with a series of tensions ... between those with and those without the power' (Lapworth 2004, p. 300). This is contrary to romantic notions of collegial governance as a synonym for democracy (Middlehurst 1993).

Collegial governance in the contemporary Australian university

Data from the three university case studies suggests that the imagery of collegial governance continues to exert a powerful influence on some contemporary Australian universities. For example, within both Newtown and Historydale universities the word 'collegial' was the most commonly used descriptor for the academic board, represented by these comments from the chair and the deputy chair of the academic board at Newtown University:

I think that the old fashioned ... collegiality in universities is really represented by a well-constituted academic board. ACH007 (board chair, Newtown University)

It's a very collegial and collaborative organisation so I think that the [Board name] represents that through its membership. AEL010 (board deputy chair, Newtown University)

At Historydale University it was specifically noted by this pro vice-chancellor that:

Because we're an academic organisation and traditionally, I think, universities have seen it as their role for, again, the collegial process to take place. That is, academic members of the university make decisions about academic matters. So there needs to be a forum by which academic members of the university come together to make those decisions. CEX008 (pro vice-chancellor and *ex officio* board member, Historydale University)

Moreover, the academic board was considered by a majority of respondents at both institutions as being symbolic of collegial governance, as described by these members of the board at Newtown University:

I think it [the Board] is important to the academic staff of the university, because of that history of, you know, going back to in England when you had colleges that were placed together, there is a real identification with that. AEL004 (elected board member, Newtown University)

I think they are really important in terms of ... maintaining the aspect of collegiality and collegial governance which is what universities are meant to stand for. AEX006 (pro vice-chancellor (research) and *ex officio* board member, Newtown University)

Similarly, at Historydale University the academic board was reported by respondents to be representative of the collegial nature of academic governance in universities. There was therefore a sense at these two institutions that the symbolism of both the academic board and of collegial governance was important to their identities as universities. This is exemplified in the following comments:

Yeah, I mean it [the academic board] has symbolically, through its representation, through its formality, through its high degree of organisation, of collegial ... of collegiality, that I guess underpins a lot of modern universities; the value at least. So I think it plays a symbolic role in those areas. That shouldn't be underestimated how important that is. CEX007 (deputy vice-chancellor (academic) and *ex officio* board member, Historydale University)

I think the board does symbolise ... that essence of a university and I guess, to a large extent, it is the collegiality. CAR006 (academic registrar, Historydale University)

And I think that historical tendency is still there where we have gatherings of scholars, scholars come and go and join other universities around their disciplines, they teach together, they talk together, they develop courses together and that collegial basis is the way in which universities operate. And the ultimate collegial body in a university is the academic board. AEX009 (deputy vice-chancellor, Newtown University)

Although within this thesis (to which chapter 5 refers) collegial governance is differentiated from collegiality, for many of those interviewed these terms appear to be interchangeable and each is symbolically associated with the academic board. This is interesting given the pervasiveness of managerial governance at all three universities, as noted within chapter 6, and suggests a dissonance

between the romantic ideal of the university and the exigencies of actually being one in the 21st century, as noted by this deputy vice-chancellor from Newtown:

I mean boards are sort of, in some ways, are relics of a pre-managerial university structure. AEX006 (deputy vice-chancellor (research) and *ex officio* board member, Newtown University)

Interview responses from Newtown and Historydale also suggest that at those universities collegial governance is being redefined to encompass the notion of giving staff a voice. For example, at Newtown University eight out of the ten academic board members interviewed described one of the key roles of the academic board as providing a 'voice for staff' and the words 'collegial' or 'collegiality' were very commonly used in the more detailed responses given. At Historydale University a majority of key roles ascribed to the academic board also related to the provision of a voice for staff, either in the form of allowing staff to air their views or to convey those views to senior management. This contrasts with the marginalising force that traditional collegial governance frequently represents in the academic literature (described above). Interestingly, it was only at Middleton University that there was an attempt by respondents to differentiate between collegial governance and democracy, characterised by this description of changes to the academic board by a committee chair:

I think it is now broader and more encompassing of the whole academic arena. I think previously when I was first appointed to [University name] the [board name] was a body which was perceived as elitist and inflexible – and this I'm talking about 20 years ago. BCC004 (board committee chair, Middleton University)

Thus, at Middleton University the word 'collegial' was used by only two respondents when describing the current academic board, perhaps at least partly due to the more managerial nature of that academic board, to which chapter 6, *Power*, refers. That is to say, the more managerial environment within which the academic board operated was relatively widely recognised at Middleton. Within this context it is possible to interpret the continued references to collegial governance within Newtown and Historydale Universities as being vestiges of a bygone era, whereby aspects of collegial governance such as complex committee structures and comparatively long and consultative decision-making processes derive from a collective habitus of university staff that is steeped in history. This phenomena was also described in chapter 6. However, an alternative interpretation is that collegial governance has been retained at these universities, alongside managerialism and other relevant modes of governance, but that the nature of the collegial governance has changed. Rather than professors being the hegemonic group within the collegial governance regime, it is argued that it is now university managers who are hegemonic. That is to say, the essential architecture of collegial governance remains in place but there

has been a substitution of one hegemonic group for another. This possibility had clearly occurred to one of the elected members of the academic board at Historydale University, as is illustrated by the following exchange:

Interviewer: Do you think those decision-making processes have changed in your time at this University?

Respondent: Probably not. It was probably done by professors in a back room anyway and people think that Academic Board had a role in doing it but I suspect it didn't ... the power's just in a different place [now] ... It was even more autocratic before. CEL010

As noted elsewhere in this thesis, the particular characteristics of collegial governance include there being a community of scholars that is relatively independent from and autonomous to outside influences and which operates in a self-governing manner to its own advantage (Tapper and Salter 1992; Middlehurst 1993; Dearlove 2002; Trakman 2008). Clearly many of these features continued to apply within Newtown and Historydale universities, and also within Middleton University (although not overtly recognised as such at Middleton). For example, the hegemonic group (management) arguably operates as a self-governing community wherein the vice-chancellor serves as chief executive officer. This was evidenced by the case study data which showed the vice-chancellor as the locus of power in all three universities, notwithstanding the governing authority of the university council (see also Rytmeister 2009). Moreover, the analysis of power relations in chapter 6 which highlighted the dominance of academic capital suggests that the vice-chancellor and his or her senior executive manage their respective universities with a view to their own continued advantage as the seat of power, supported by the pervasive neoliberal philosophy of the state. Although universities must now respond to government demands for accountability, they are also arguably freer to manage within these constraints than was formerly the case when the state was more directly involved in the provision of higher education, and therefore remain relatively autonomous. Additionally, university executives have tended not to adopt the more streamlined management approach of the corporate sector but have instead retained the architecture of collegial governance such as 'governance by committee' and long and complex consultation processes on many major decisions. For example, while the decision-making authority of the academic board may have been at least partly replaced by the university senior management committee, the decisions largely continue to be made, in all three case study universities, by committee; different committees perhaps than in the past, but committees nonetheless. Further, chapter 6 highlighted the complex consultation processes the three case study vice-chancellors had put in place to seek staff input to decisions about university future directions. This did not mean that

decision-making was by consensus, but it did reflect steps to secure the hegemony of management by consent.

In chapter 3, Conceptual Framework, the phenomena of multiple modes of governance operating simultaneously within universities was discussed. The above analysis suggests that, in addition to the more dominant modes of governance including managerialism and bureaucracy, Australian universities continue to practice collegial governance, albeit in a modified form. However, what is arguably missing in the contemporary collegial governance model, whereby the manager has replaced the professor as the position of authority, is the community of scholars. Traditional collegial governance is based on a community of scholars and the academic board played a key role in serving as a focus or a hub for that community. Despite the way it may sometimes appear, Australian universities are still about the business of generating and transmitting knowledge; they are not profit-making institutions (Marginson 2010a). This means that university management needs ongoing access to expertise in scholarship and research to do its job properly. The issue is whether they will continue to see that that expertise should be provided by the academic board or whether they will seek to provide it themselves, in accordance with the phenomena of academics moving into line management positions (see for example Blackmore and Sachs 2007; de Zilwa 2010; Whitchurch and Gordon 2011).

What could the future of academic boards be?

Interview responses reported within this chapter suggest that there are a number of possibilities with regard to the future of the academic board within the next five or so years. The first of these is that the role and function of the academic board might stay, more or less, in its current form. This varied across the three case study universities but in general terms involved a subordination of the academic board to the vice-chancellor and his or her senior executive. However, even in their smallest variations university academic boards are comparatively large bodies and they are expensive to run, both in terms of direct support required for their operations and because of the time taken to prepare, read and respond to agenda papers by significant numbers of the most senior university staff. In keeping with their fellow institutions around the globe, Australian universities face ongoing financial constraints and an obvious question is why would vice-chancellors seek to retain academic boards when they are costly to operate and, to a greater or lesser extent, perform a relatively limited number of functions that could possibly be undertaken elsewhere in the university? That is to say, evidence reported in this thesis shows that the three case study academic boards fulfilled less than their full set of (comparatively narrow in historical

terms) documented responsibilities and were frequently considered to be not particularly effective. On this basis, why would their universities not want to pursue a second option of disestablishing the academic board?

One answer relates to the very substantial number and range of latent or unofficial functions performed by the three case study academic boards, reported in particular in chapters 5 and 7. These included academic board meetings:

- providing opportunities for members to see, hear and be seen by the vice-chancellor and senior executive
- facilitating information transfer between the vice-chancellor and university staff, enabling vice-chancellors to obtain tacit support for changes in university goals and strategy
- enabling networking between and among the non-senior executive academic board members
- serving as possible sites for network governance involving groups of academic board members.

However, perhaps even more important than the above were the latent functions undertaken by the case study academic boards in respect of academic quality assurance. As shown in chapter 7, the three academic boards were considered to play an important role in providing credibility to their universities' quality assurance frameworks as far as external agencies were concerned. That is to say, due to their holdings of intellectual capital, academic boards provided external agencies with assurances about the quality of their universities' academic programs in a way did not appear to be currently able to be replicated by university senior management. As noted in chapter 7, there may potentially be financial and reputational issues associated with any change to these arrangements that does not satisfy agencies such as TEQSA. For example, the Regulatory Risk Framework released by TEQSA in February 2012 includes as a specified risk indicator, 'Weak academic governance', supported by an explanation which calls for 'a properly constituted academic board' (TEQSA 2012, p. 20). This indicator is to be amongst the set taken into account when TEQSA develops and evaluates the risk profile of each Australian university when considering compliance with Provider Registration Standards (TEQSA 2012). Moreover, their historical associations with universities and their documented responsibility for the quality of teaching and research mean that academic boards represented, at least in part, what it meant to be a university. Disestablishing university academic boards would therefore necessarily involve a significant re-evaluation of what being a university actually means, and none of the three case study universities appeared ready to traverse this path, at least at

the time this research was undertaken. However, the results in this area across the three case studies were not universal. For Newtown University, in particular, the academic board appeared to be a significant source of the symbolic capital necessary for the identity of that institution as a university, perhaps due to the age of the institution. This was evident in the interview data reported for the section of this chapter on collegial governance, above. For the older Middleton and Historydale universities, it could reasonably be expected that they would have significant reserves of symbolic capital independent of their academic board and therefore that they would be somewhat (but not currently totally) less dependent upon its existence as a component of their identities.

The importance of the latent functions undertaken by university academic boards was further underscored by the case study at Newtown University which showed that there the board performed a unique and essential role relating to the university's mission that was not part of its formally documented responsibilities. This suggests that although the latent functions performed by boards might be considered important (even if unconsciously so) within universities, the failure to include such functions within their terms of reference means that they continue to be vulnerable and their future must necessarily be uncertain.

Within this context it is interesting, but perhaps not surprising that there is little mention of university academic boards in any of the documents related to Australia's new quality assurance framework for higher education or in the recently released UK the White Paper for higher education, *Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System*, which proposes risk-based regulation of higher education (Department of Business Information and Skills (BIS 2011a)). These documents, and others like them, place considerable emphasis on academic standards. For example, within both the new Australian Higher Education Standards Framework (TEQSA 2011) and the European Tuning initiative, which is aiming to establish comparable and compatible qualifications in each of the (potential) signatory countries of the Bologna process (EC 2009), there is emphasis on learning outcomes as both generic and subject-specific competences. Coates argues that this focus is somewhat unusual amongst quality assurance systems but that:

To the extent that student outcomes are stressed, it is vital that progress in this area builds on, rather than breaks, the authority of teachers and institutions over the development, dissemination and assessment of knowledge. It is important that any measurement of student learning and development is itself collaborative in nature, given the broader individual, social and economic roles such measures will play. Further, it is vital that performance information is reported in multilevel ways that inform and support practice (Coates 2010, pp. 41–2).

With respect to the establishment and measurement of academic standards as part of their future quality assurance frameworks, universities are clearly at a turning point. Theoretically, they can either move towards a compliance and audit-driven approach or they can commence developing ways of measuring academic standards with a view to enhancing learner outcomes. Coates posits that this latter course of action is only possible if individual institutions and, indeed, academics are involved in the process (see also El-Khawas 2009). In view of their traditional role as the curators of good teaching, it is clearly in both students' and institutions' interests for academic boards to be engaged in such work. However, the invisibility of boards within the relevant policy and position documents suggests that academic boards will need to move quickly if they are to establish a key role in this area.

Chapter 9 — Conclusion

Introduction

This thesis has set out to examine the role and function of the academic board in the contemporary Australian university with a view to considering the question of whether there is a continuing role for academic boards in Australian higher education governance. The research project included a case study of three Australian university academic boards with data collection techniques including interviews with current and former academic board members in a range of categories, analysis of current and historic academic board documents, including agendas, minutes, terms of reference and operating procedures; and direct observation of academic board meetings. Of the three cases, Newtown was a new dual sector university established after 1986; Historydale was a ‘Group of 8’ research intensive university established before 1914; and Middleton was established in between these two age groupings. Additionally, data were collected on the academic board of every publicly funded Australian university from university websites and other publicly available sources. Triangulation was used to compare and contrast the data so as to identify similarities and differences, to identify patterns of change, and to increase the validity of the findings.

Following the statement of the research question in the introductory chapter, a number of subsidiary questions were set out, as follows:

- What changes have been made to university governance models within the past thirty years and why might they have occurred?
- What university governance models currently exist and how are they being implemented?
- How have these governance models been impacted by changes in university structures, management styles and modes of operating within the same thirty-year period?
- How have changes in university governance models, if any, impacted on the composition, role function and effectiveness of the Australian academic board?
- Are academic boards necessary to the future of Australian higher education and, if so, are new models for the academic board required?

Accordingly, this conclusion will address these questions specifically, drawing where appropriate from both the research context (to which chapter 2 of this thesis refers) and the analysis of the research data (to which chapters 5 to 8 refer).

However, prior to commencing this discussion it is necessary to say something about the research experience. In the light of my former professional experience in the field of university governance (to which chapter 1, Introduction, refers) I commenced this research with a very clear notion of what I wanted to investigate and of how to go about it. A review of the literature highlighted both the profound impact of changes in higher education within Anglophone nations on university governance and a lack of current empirical research on university academic boards, particularly in Australia. While it would have been nice to undertake a large scale investigation of Australian academic boards, the limits to the resources available to a PhD candidate necessitated a project much more modest in size. To this end, a case study investigation of three purposefully different Australian university academic boards was undertaken. In conducting this research I have been extremely fortunate and the research process has gone very smoothly and exactly as planned; while many things could have gone wrong (such as universities refusing to participate or digital recorders failing) none of this happened. However, while the research process was straightforward, some of the findings were quite unexpected, as has been detailed in the preceding discussion chapters. This element of surprise added greatly to the enjoyment of the experience and it has been a privilege to conduct this research and to write about it.

The application of multiple theories within this thesis means that aspects of different theories have been used to illustrate or explain certain phenomena within my data. For example, Bourdieu's academic and intellectual capital were useful in explaining shifts from collegial governance to managerialism within universities and therefore why academic boards appear to have less power than was formerly the case. However, although Bourdieu's notion of symbolic power can be useful in explaining domination, it did not appear to adequately address the situation of vice-chancellors within the case study universities. This was because the vice-chancellors occupied the position of locus of power in an arrangement of which staff appeared to be aware and considered necessary. Bourdieu's symbolic power, which relies on the dominated being unaware of the unequal power relations or of misrecognising them as 'natural', did not appear able to fully explain this implied consent of staff for the dominance of the vice-chancellor and his or her executive. Gramsci's hegemony (1971) was therefore introduced to address this gap because within Gramsci's theory the consent of the dominated to the domination being so experienced is a critical factor. However, rather than replacing Bourdieu's explanation of changes in modes of governance within universities, as seen through the lens of the shift from intellectual to academic

capital, Gramsci's theory of hegemony has added to or enriched that explanation. Similarly, theories of the audit and risk societies have explained the predominance of academic quality assurance within universities within a context set by Lyotard's notion of performativity (1984) and Ball's fabrications (2000). Taken together, these theories help to explain how the hegemony of university management enables the enactment of fabrications in which the intellectual capital of academic boards provides credibility to university academic quality assurance activities despite the case study evidence that not all of those activities were actually undertaken by academic boards. That is to say, while the case study evidence suggested that universities' academic quality assurance programs tended to be designed and run by the senior management group, it was academic boards that provided external quality assurance and accrediting agencies such as TEQSA with assurances about the quality of their universities' academic programs, due to their holdings of intellectual capital.

What changes have been made to university governance models within the past thirty years and why might they have occurred?

Changes in university governance models within the last thirty years largely reflect a movement away from collegial governance models towards managerial and other more corporate-style governance arrangements, commencing in the 1980s in the United Kingdom and spreading quickly to other Anglophone nation states, including Australia. This transformation of the university environment was driven by in part by changes in government thinking about higher education and reflected shifts towards corporate-style governance practices within the public sector, and the implementation of market and competition-driven neoliberal style policies for higher education, particularly within Australia. While higher education was formerly seen as a public responsibility for the good of the community as a whole, it was now seen as at least partly a private and an individual benefit under which a proportion of the cost was to be borne by the student. Substantial increases in student numbers combined with static or reduced government funding for higher education have resulted in a reduction in per-student government funding, supplemented by fee-paying students. Moreover, the impact of globalisation has seen the development of international competition amongst the elite research intensive universities, whilst also fuelling more widespread pressures arising from the impact of the international ranking scales. However, while direct government involvement in the delivery of higher education has reduced, government demands for an education system that supports the knowledge economy have increased,

and with them, requirements for increased accountability and quality assurance, enabling the state to steer from a distance.

These trends have directed substantial attention towards university governance and streamlined, less bureaucratic decision-making within universities. Accordingly, and consistent with the move away from collegial governance towards managerialism, there has been an increase in size and a consolidation of power within the office of the vice-chancellor and in the decision-making authority of the university council. However, theorisation of university models of governance has been useful in suggesting that rather than there having been a substitution of one governance model for another, a number of governance modes remain in operation within universities at any one time, with one or more being dominant but the remainder still being present. Thus, the case study data showed that aspects of collegial and bureaucratic governance remain in place but are subordinate to managerialism and the executive power of the vice-chancellor. Moreover, theories of the state are relevant to studies of university governance because governance modes adopted within universities tend to reflect, at least in part, those in place at the level of government. Applying Clark's (1983) triangle of co-ordination with its shifts between the state, market and the academic oligarchy to Australia in the 21st century suggests that in accordance with the pervasive neoliberal philosophies of western governments, the market is currently dominant although certainly the state (through its demands for accountability) remains highly visible. This approach is consistent with Rhodes' theory of modes of governance whereby bureaucracy, markets and networks coexist with the balance shifting between and among them (Rhodes 1996).

What university governance models currently exist and how are they being implemented?

Data presented within this thesis showed that managerialism was manifest within the three case study universities in a number of ways. For example, within the two older universities interview respondents described shifts to corporate-style management and decision-making with a substantial increase in the role of the vice-chancellor and in the size and scope of the senior executive. Consistent with the role of the vice-chancellor as the locus of power across all three universities, it was the vice-chancellor who drove strategic and financial decision-making, these matters being considered to be of vital importance to each university's future. However, in each case vice-chancellors did not act alone but were supported by a senior executive and a set of vice-chancellor's advisory committees. Within the two

older universities, where it was possible to investigate changes over an extended period of time, the role of the academic board in decision-making about strategic and operational matters had been greatly reduced. Case study evidence also showed that vice-chancellors appeared to implement communication strategies designed to ensure that their leadership and management of the university was presented to staff in such a way as to be considered in the best interests of the university as a whole (and therefore it was assumed in the best interests of staff also), despite research suggesting that changes in the nature of academic labour have led to a sense of loss of autonomy amongst some academic staff (Henkel 2007). Moreover, the academic board served as a tool for vice-chancellors in the implementation of processes aimed at securing such hegemony.

However, while the case study evidence supported arguments made in the literature that within Australia managerialism was currently the dominant mode of governance, it also showed the simultaneous but subordinate existence of other modes of governance. For example, extensive reliance on policies, procedures, university legislation and relatively formal meeting procedures for bodies such as the academic board and the university council suggested that for all three universities bureaucratic governance remained present. There was also evidence from interview responses of extensive use of networking between staff and of decisions being made in both formal and informal network groups. For example, the chair of the academic board at Historydale University spoke about raising matters with the deputy vice-chancellor (academic) outside of formal meetings as a way of having input to decisions about matters of interest to the academic board, while a head of school described the time before and after academic board meetings as an opportunity to meet with (and possibly to lobby) senior staff from other campuses. However, while there was evidence of informal networking between staff at academic board meetings there was no evidence that any of the three academic boards were currently implementing network governance themselves; indeed, the formality of academic board meetings combined with the making of key decisions about university strategy and operations in forums other than the academic board appeared to preclude the implementation of network governance at any of the three case study academic boards.

Moreover, while there appeared to be evidence that although some aspects of traditional collegial governance had been retained within the three case study universities, alongside the more dominant managerialism and other relevant modes of governance, the nature of that collegial governance was evolving. Thus, drawing on Gramsci's notions of hegemony (1971), rather than professors being the hegemonic group within the collegial governance regime, it is argued that it was now university managers who were hegemonic; the essential architecture of collegial governance remained in place

but there had been a substitution of one hegemonic group for another. For example, consistent with the characteristics of collegial governance described in the literature, senior management arguably operated as a self-governing community which sought to perpetuate its own power within the neoliberal 'steering from a distance' environment currently facilitated by government. Additionally, universities' executives had largely retained decision-making by committee, although there had been a substitution of academic board and its committees by senior management committees. However, traditional collegial governance is dependent upon a community of scholars and the academic board played a key role in serving as a focus or a hub for that community. Continued access to expertise in scholarship and research is essential to enable universities to conduct their core business of generating and transmitting knowledge. However, in view of the less prominent roles played by academic boards in the two older case study universities (than in the past) it was unclear whether university vice-chancellors and their senior executives would see that the academic board should continue to play this role in future.

How have these governance models been impacted by changes in university structures, management styles and modes of operating within the same thirty-year period?

Case study data shows that for the two oldest universities (where a pattern of change can be traced) the size and scope of the senior executive group increased substantially in the late 1980s, corresponding with a transition from a predominantly collegial governance mode to a predominantly managerial governance mode within the university as a whole. Drawing on Bourdieu's notion of capital (Bourdieu 1986), which manifests within the university setting as two opposing forms of power (Bourdieu 1988a), academic capital refers to position taking within the management hierarchy of the institution and intellectual capital derives from a scholarly reputation primarily on the basis of research (Kloot 2009). This thesis has shown that the period between the 1900s and the 1980s has been characterised within the literature as the collegial governance era, enacted largely as governance by and from the professors who, in turn, both generated and controlled substantial intellectual capital reserves. However, it has also traced a shift in the balance of power from intellectual to academic capital, commencing in the 1980s, consistent with the progressive changes within the broader higher education field that have led to the domination of managerial and entrepreneurial forms of governance. Thus, universities have increased the amount of academic capital they hold through the replacement of

elected academic leaders by appointed executives and in the considerable growth in the numbers of such appointments, both in Australia and internationally. However, the value of academic capital has also increased substantially in the past 30 years in response to the shifts in the broader social, political and economic environments at national and global levels that have been described above, and in the changes within universities which have seen a demand for faster, more financially-driven and externally focused decision-making. Thus, the executivisation of universities within Australia and other Anglophone nations is the most significant change to university structures and management styles within the past thirty years and it has impacted directly on governance processes currently in place, including by way of the rise of the management advisory committee whose membership is chosen by the vice-chancellor, and the pre-eminence of the university council as the body responsible for final approval of strategic and financial decisions.

However, the second most significant change has been the development and implementation of academic quality assurance, which in itself has become a significant governance regime (Harvey and Williams 2010), implemented within the UK from the late 1980s and in Australia in the 1990s. Academic quality assurance, as opposed to the enhancement of academic programs with which universities had traditionally been associated, was designed by the state specifically to manage perceived risk associated with higher education and to ensure external accountability. As such it is the primary strategy for government steering from a distance. However, academic quality assurance has also fundamentally changed internal university governance arrangements because universities must collect the data required by government to be in a position to report it. It has therefore been argued within this thesis that academic quality assurance is one of the ways in which the audit culture is manifest in organisations (Power 2000), and that '[s]uch monitoring processes ... change the institutional practices they are monitoring, defining what constitutes quality and performance' (Blackmore 2009, p. 7). Moreover, quality assurance tasks are performative in nature and encourage the development of fabrications so as to be seen to achieve the desired results. Thus, the focus becomes meeting the target rather than improving teaching, learning and research. As such, academic quality assurance facilitates managerialism and the power of management, despite relying on grass-roots academics to collect much of the data.

Within this environment, case study data from the three Australian universities studied showed that vice-chancellors were dominant, consistent with their place as the locus of power. A theoretical analysis of this domination (within chapter 6, Power) has shown that rather than staff being unaware of the power differential between vice-chancellors and their executives and remaining staff, as might be

expected with Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence, the dominance was acknowledged and accepted as inevitable and necessary, if not always liked. This implies consent, a concept central to Gramsci's theory of hegemony which represents the interests of those governing as being in the interests of the population being governed. Within the case study universities, the hegemony of the senior management group was actively supported by processes for allocation of staffing and monetary resources by vice-chancellors and their executives (he or she who has the money has the power) and also by a range of mechanisms designed by vice-chancellors to enable them to convey their vision for the future of their university to a wide group of staff and students, and thereby secure their ongoing support as consent.

How have changes in university governance models, if any, impacted on the composition, role, function and effectiveness of the Australian academic board?

Both the case history and case study data reported within this thesis have shown that in general, contemporary Australian academic boards comprise a mix of elected and *ex officio* members resulting in roughly equal proportions of academic staff and management. For the oldest academic boards this is a significant change from the past when academic boards comprised largely professors. On average, Australian academic boards are also smaller than was formerly the case. However, by far the greatest change has been in the area of role. The reported case history data and the case study data show that until the 1980s Australian academic boards tended to have significant power and influence and determined a complex range of strategic, management and academic matters. However, since that time the role and function of university academic boards has decreased while the size and authority of the senior executive has increased, concomitant with an enhancement of the responsibilities of the university council. In particular, the data show a marked decrease in academic board responsibility for strategic and financial matters. This coincides with a decrease in collegial governance and the rise of managerialism within Australian universities and ensured that (notwithstanding differences between them), within the two oldest case study universities, the more managerial environment had largely overtaken the role of the academic board, with at least some academic board committees having also been replaced by senior management committees. Additionally, both the case history and case study data show a significant increase in the extent to which academic quality assurance now features within Australian academic board terms of reference, compared to data from the early 1990s. Thus, consistent with the changes in the broader university environment (described above) by far the two biggest

changes to academic board roles and modes of operation have been a significant diminution in power and a substantial increase in documented responsibility for academic quality assurance.

This thesis has undertaken a Bourdieuan theoretical analysis of the changes to Australian university academic board power bases and has demonstrated that radical changes within the university field have facilitated domination by managerial forms of governance through a shift in the balance of power between intellectual and academic power. The resultant valuing of academic capital over intellectual capital, combined with a substantial increase in the amount of academic capital within contemporary universities (relative to intellectual capital) has effected a considerable decrease in the power of Australian academic boards, and perhaps academic boards more generally. That is to say, Bourdieu's theories have been useful in exploring why Australian academic boards have less power than was formerly the case. However, two of the case study academic boards were also considered to have a less defined role within their universities than in the past, with at least a proportion of the business having already been considered by the senior management or senior executive groups before being placed on the board agenda. Taking the concept of Bourdieu's fields (which describes the possibility of fields within fields), this thesis has argued that there has been a diminution in the differentiation between the field encompassing the academic board and that of the wider university, leading to a loss of academic board identity and sense of purpose.

Case study data on academic board effectiveness showed that none of three academic boards was addressing all aspects of its terms of reference. Indeed, of the three academic boards, one of the boards was undertaking activity which addressed less than 50 per cent of its documented obligations and another less than 75 per cent. This suggests a significant disjunction between academic boards' terms of reference and what it is they actually do and contrasts with Australian literature which reports that within recent years a majority of Australian academic boards have reviewed their role and function. Moreover, the disparity between academic board terms of reference and their implementation appeared to be greatest in the area of academic quality assurance. Thus, although the three case study academic boards had extensive formally documented obligations in respect of academic quality assurance, not all of those tasks were fully, or even partially, undertaken. Instead, interview data suggested that responsibility for establishing and implementing university academic quality assurance frameworks tended to rest with the vice-chancellor and senior executive, particularly the deputy vice-chancellor (academic).

The analysis of case study data reported within this thesis in respect of the quality assurance roles and responsibilities of their academic boards has applied a theoretical framework relating to the audit culture, performativity and fabrications to show that to varying degrees, arising from their substantial holdings of intellectual capital, the three academic boards were serving as performative vehicles for their universities' quality assurance frameworks that were, in turn, designed, controlled and implemented by the vice-chancellor and senior executive. As such, the academic boards played a significant role in the fabrications perpetrated by their universities, aimed at external agencies such as AUQA and TEQSA. In this way, the universities were responding to the demands of the risk society by using academic boards to protect their reputations and financial positions and thereby retain or enhance their holdings of symbolic and economic capital. This does not necessarily mean that the substantive quality of these universities' teaching and research has deteriorated, or is at issue, although some suggest that quality assurance as currently constructed is counterproductive to quality, or that their quality assurance frameworks were inadequate (this research examined neither of these issues). However, it does suggest that the role of the academic board in establishing and maintaining university quality assurance frameworks is largely symbolic and performative in nature.

Are academic boards necessary to the future of Australian higher education and, if so, are new models for the academic board required?

The question of whether academic boards might be 'necessary' in the future clearly relates to the issue of what it is that they might (or might not) be doing. Case study data reported within this thesis suggests that across the three universities no major additions to the formally documented responsibilities of any of the three academic boards were expected by either elected or *ex officio* members. In particular, respondents appeared to envisage continuation of the current balance of power between the board and the vice-chancellor in which the vice-chancellor was the dominant party. For example, while at Newtown University senior executive members reported wanting the academic board to foster greater discussion on key academic or educational issues and to have greater involvement in key academic matters, respondents appeared to consider that any broader role to be played by this academic board should be within its existing terms of reference, under which the academic board had little or no direct decision-making authority. Moreover, at Historydale University, the oldest of the three, both *ex officio* and elected members foreshadowed a further diminution of the responsibilities of the academic board through a possible transfer of key academic board subcommittees to the senior executive. That is to

say, while none of the respondents at any of the three case study universities expected any increase in academic board responsibilities in the short to medium term, at one university a significant decrease had been mooted.

So, if these academic boards are unlikely to be taking on any new tasks, are any of their current tasks considered sufficiently indispensable to render these boards 'necessary' to their universities' future? With respect to their officially designated roles, set out in their terms of reference, two key issues already highlighted in this conclusion are relevant. First, there was a disjuncture between academic boards' formally documented responsibilities and what it was they were actually doing, leading to difficulties fulfilling their terms of reference. This was particularly so for academic quality assurance where responsibility appeared to generally rest with the deputy vice-chancellor (academic) despite the academic board being publicly accountable for this area of the university's operations. Second, there was substantial overlap between many of the tasks officially undertaken by the three academic boards and their university senior executives, leading to concerns about the extent to which the academic boards 'added value'.

However, this thesis has also shown that the three case study academic boards performed a substantial number of latent or 'unofficial' roles. These included serving as a site for networking and also facilitating information transfer and relationship development between the vice-chancellor and senior executive group and other academic board members. Additionally, through their officially designated responsibilities for academic quality assurance and their substantial reserves of intellectual capital, academic boards also provided external credibility to their universities' quality assurance frameworks in a way that the vice-chancellor and senior executive were unable to do. Further, for Newtown University in particular (the youngest institution) the symbolic capital generated by the academic board through its role in enhancing the university's reputation (to external agencies by way of its quality assurance role) appeared necessary to that institution's self-identity as a university. This was less so for Middleton and Historydale universities, whose reserves of symbolic capital could be expected to be greater by virtue of their age and experience. The academic board at Newtown University also performed an additional latent role which was unique to the academic board and to that university's mission and this gave that academic board a sense of purpose of place that was both universally recognised (within Newtown) and that was not replicated within the other two case study universities.

For the three case study academic boards, their futures within their predominantly managerialist universities are likely to turn upon the extent to which the benefits they generate outweigh the substantial costs (both in time and money) of running them. To this end, it is the latent or unofficial roles that the three academic boards performed which appeared to add greatest value. However, the undocumented nature of the latent functions of the three academic boards also increased their vulnerability due to the risk that the true extent of the roles undertaken by these academic boards may never be fully acknowledged. Conversely, while the three case study academic boards did not appear to be as engaged in their universities' academic quality assurance activities as their terms of reference might suggest, Newtown and Historydale universities were generally considerably more engaged in substantive quality improvement tasks such as course and program approval and review. While the devaluation of intellectual capital has meant that these roles might not get the credit within universities that they once generated, these are nonetheless substantive academic tasks that are central to universities' core business and academic boards would appear to be ideally suited to continuing to implement them. For example, satisfaction with the effectiveness of these two academic boards' performance was uniformly high in respect of the areas relating to the substantive quality of teaching, learning and research. Thus, it was not so much that these two academic boards were a problem as that their core work was not currently highly valued within their universities. Any revaluation of the importance of intellectual capital within universities that might potentially occur in the future could therefore be expected to result in an increase in the perceived status and value of the academic board.

With respect to the future of governance models for both Australian universities and their academic boards, this thesis has raised questions about whether corporate modes of governance and management will continue to dominate universities or whether the disjunction between academic capital and teaching, scholarship and research (and indeed between academic and intellectual capital themselves) will create pressures sufficient to enable the generation of new modes of governance and management that are more appropriately aligned with real university work. Indeed, some have argued recently that managerialism and its variant neoliberalism have failed universities (Marginson 2010b; Peters 2011). For example, Marginson states that although managerialism filled the more obvious gaps in collegial and bureaucratic governance forms, it is intrinsically unsuited to 'communicative globalization, ... the diversity of knowledge goods and ... the predominantly public good nature of knowledge'. He calls for the development of a 'new set of techniques of reflexive modernization for organizing knowledge-related institutions' involving a 'diversity of knowledge goods', and a 'gift-based ... knowledge exchange' which moves beyond the 'Anglo-American university culture' (2010b, 145).

However, it is perhaps here that the limitations of Bourdieu's framework become apparent for it is argued that Bourdieu does not allow for the 'creative imagination' (Marginson 2008, 312) which is needed to envisage the kind of radically new course of action that might be life in universities after neoliberalism. Thus, exactly what it is that these new governance and management regimes may involve, or what the longer-term future of academic boards might be, appears yet to emerge. In the meantime, for Australian academic boards at least, it appears likely that the immediate future will involve greater direct or indirect involvement in managerialist-driven academic quality assurance regimes. Unfortunately, academic boards risk becoming the 'straw man' by providing intellectual credibility to these externally driven exercises, whilst not controlling either their means or outcome.

The research process and limitations

As noted in the introductory section of this conclusion, this research project was successful in that the envisaged process was able to be implemented without amendment, in the manner originally designed. Moreover, the case study method appeared to be effective with the three data collection techniques enabling data triangulation and cross-checking of data. There is no doubt that the research would not have been as effective were it to have relied on interviews alone. The data generated by the analysis of current and historic academic board documents enabled the identification of patterns of change in board composition, responsibilities and modes of operation that would not have been otherwise possible. For example, by comprehensively reviewing a sampling of academic board agendas (where available) and minutes for Middleton and Historydale universities from the date of their establishment it was possible to identify substantial changes in not only the types of items considered but also in the degree to which those items have been discussed. It would not have been possible to determine the extent of change in academic board modes of operating by interview alone, which simply records interviewee perceptions and relies on human memory. Similarly, by attending one academic board meeting at each university it was possible to develop a deeper understanding of patterns of interaction within meetings and this was helpful in understanding interview responses and in generating a sense of shared experience between the interviewer and the respondent. My experience as a senior manager within another Australian university also helped to further this sense of shared experience and trust. Interviewees appeared to accept without question that I was familiar with not only the higher education sector but also with how an individual university generally works and they made repeated references to this shared understanding during the interview process.

However, there were also disadvantages associated with this combination of data collection techniques. First, in total they generated a lot of data which then required comprehensive organisation and analysis before meaningful comparisons within each university and across all three universities could be made. There were risks that at times the sheer quantity of data might feel overwhelming (it did) or obscure patterns within and between the universities. To address this, very specific mechanisms for recording the sources and nature of agenda items and their treatment and the nature and levels of discussion were developed and implemented systematically across the three universities. Moreover, while interviews were transcribed and coded, the patterns of data which emerged were then compared with notes taken during each interview and after each interview to ensure that nothing significant had been missed. Furthermore, detailed indexation and filing of all hard copy and electronic documents assisted rapid retrieval and comprehensive data analysis.

Second, the data collection and analysis techniques were very time consuming, not only for the researcher but also for each of the university cases. For example, historical records were not always easy to locate and copy and support from university archivists, librarians and academic board support staff was therefore required in each case. Third, the three data collection techniques examined only a proportion of the total information relating to each of the three academic boards and there is a risk that the data so obtained were not representative of the whole. For example, at each university only 10 academic board members (or senior staff involved in supporting the academic board) were interviewed, rather than every academic board member. Further, only a sampling of agendas and minutes was analysed for a designated number of years in each decade of the academic board's life, rather than every single set of agendas and minutes ever produced. Moreover, only one academic board meeting was observed, rather than every meeting over the course of a year, for example. Thus, whilst the 'proportionate' approach was necessary to achieve a manageable outcome, not everything that was possible to be known about each of these academic boards could possibly have been discovered. There were also necessarily some inconsistencies. For example, at Middleton University archive records of academic board meetings were limited to minutes; agendas were not retained except for the immediately preceding years. This reduced the evidence available for determinations about whether an item of business was strategic (or not) or generated by the academic board (or not).

However, by far the most significant limitation associated with this research was due to the limited number of cases studied. Regardless of the purposive sampling method used to select academic boards representing a variety of ages, compositions and modes of operating, the sample size of three academic boards cannot in any way represent the full spectrum of academic boards currently in

operation within Australian publicly funded universities. For this reason, the findings of this research cannot be assumed to apply to all or even any other academic board. Readers will need to decide for themselves whether the implications of the research findings apply to their university or particular circumstances. However, common patterns within the data have enabled some minor theory generation or suggested modifications to existing theories and, consistent with the limits for generalising the findings of case study data that were described in chapter 4, Research Method, of this thesis, these may have wider applicability.

Within this context, the dearth of current Australian research on university academic boards would suggest that there is considerable scope for substantial further research in this area. For example, a research project which continued the research methods implemented within this PhD study but with a considerably larger sample of universities could be expected to yield a great deal of useful data on transitions within university governance and management. Indeed, consideration could be given to whether it might be appropriate to submit a proposal to the Australian Research Council for the funding of a project of this nature.

Implications of the research findings

During the course of my research and the presentation of my research findings around Australia I have been asked by countless academic board chairs for ideas on what their board might do to improve (or strengthen) its role and function. Accordingly, this research project has led to the identification of the following implications for practice. However, as noted above, the extent to which these are applicable to any one particular university can only be determined by that university.

- 1 The experiences of all three case study universities with regard to, first, the relationship between their terms of reference and the activities actually undertaken and, second, the relationship between the formally documented powers of each academic board and the extent of power actually wielded, suggest that for other academic boards wanting to strengthen their role and position within their university, a re-writing of their terms of reference is unlikely to be a sufficient course of action. In a way this is unfortunate because revising a formally documented role statement or set of terms of reference is something concrete that an academic board can address, and most likely control. It is therefore understandable that this might be a key focus in

any academic board review. However, all three case study academic boards demonstrated (in their own unique ways) that extensive documented powers do not necessarily make for a strong and effective academic board, and vice versa. Similarly, the three case study academic boards were found to be implementing a large number of latent functions which were not reflected in their documented roles and authorities, some of which played a significant role in the day-to-day operation of their respective universities. For example, academic boards served as important sites for networking and for the exchange of information between the senior executive and academic staff. Assuming that the implementation of latent functions by Australian university academic boards occurs more widely than only within the three case study academic boards, it might be useful for boards to identify and document the latent functions that they are currently undertaking so as to avoid the risk that those tasks might be overlooked in any future review or evaluation of the worth of the academic board.

- 2 The position of the vice-chancellor as the undisputed locus of power within each of the case study universities had a profound impact on the three academic boards. It meant that, either directly or indirectly, vice-chancellors tended to dominate the academic board meetings, the business they considered and the ways they operated. This suggests that working with the vice-chancellor (rather than against him or her) might potentially be the most effective option with respect to identifying ways of strengthening an academic board. In particular, the case study academic board which was considered most effective within its own university environment appeared to have implemented a shared governance arrangement in partnership with the vice-chancellor, where each recognised the role and contribution of the other, within the limits imposed by the apparent hegemony of the vice-chancellorial position. Of course, much of this is necessarily dependent upon the attitudes of those individuals concerned. This means that in view of the balance of power between the vice-chancellor and the academic board at his or her university, an academic board can be only as effective as the vice-chancellor wants it to be.
- 3 The experiences of the case study universities with respect to academic quality assurance suggest that it may be beneficial to be mindful of the potential for academic boards to be used as a vehicle to provide academic credibility in respect of university quality assurance programs which might, in fact, be designed and controlled by the senior executive. While it may be tempting to consider academic quality assurance as a potential savior of academic boards in view of the substantial apparent diminution of their roles in other areas in recent years, the

evidence from this study suggests that there is a risk that academic boards might in fact be held accountable for the outcomes of academic quality assurance programs that they do not otherwise control. Moreover, externally focused academic quality assurance programs are performative in nature. Despite the fact that none of the case study academic boards appeared to be spending their time measuring, monitoring and reporting quality assurance data, there remains a risk that academic boards could potentially be caught up in these activities thereby reducing their time and energy for substantive quality improvement tasks.

- 4 The lack of differentiation between the case study academic boards and the roles of the senior executive potentially placed the future of these academic boards (two of them in particular) in jeopardy. This was because in many cases boards were felt to be considering matters which had principally already been determined by the senior executive group. Were this situation to apply more widely, it may be important for Australian academic boards to attempt to carve out a role or roles which cannot readily be replicated by university management. Within Newtown University this was successfully undertaken through the implementation of a unique role that was central to the university's vision and mission. However, such roles may not necessarily exist within all universities and even if they did, not all academic boards might be positioned to take them on. An alternative approach might be for academic boards to build on their substantial reserves of intellectual capital by increasing the focus on those traditional roles of the academic board such as substantive academic quality improvement of teaching, learning and assessment and of research training. Academic boards could potentially play a key role in enabling their universities to enhance their intellectual and symbolic capital by working to improve, and be seen to improve, their universities' core academic programs. It could be argued that senior management does not hold sufficient intellectual capital to undertake this task itself and that there is substantial benefit for the university in having such activities managed by an expert body which is independent of inter-faculty competition and rivalry and which is regarded by external agencies as an independent arbiter of academic quality.

Appendices

[Vice-Chancellor Name]
Vice-Chancellor
[University name
and address]

[Date]

Dear [Vice-Chancellor name]

I am writing to you to seek your assistance in facilitating research I am undertaking for my PhD program at Deakin University.

The subject of my research is the role of the Academic Board in the contemporary Australian university. My supervisors and I hope that the study will make a useful contribution to understanding evolving trends in Australian university governance, and academic governance in particular. For example, there is no recent empirical research, either within Australia or internationally, which considers the role and function of the academic board and what academic boards might (or might not) be doing in the future. My research is seeking to make a preliminary step towards filling this gap.

My interest in university academic boards was established during more than ten years as head of university governance at a large Victorian university. However, the purpose of my research is not to test a particular hypothesis or theory and so I am not undertaking this research with a particular view on what the role of the academic board is or should be, or on how useful boards may or may not be, for example. Consistent with the constructionist framework in which this research has been framed, my interest is in gathering, comparing and reporting the diversity of others' views on these matters.

I am taking a case study approach to my research and would like to interview a relatively small number of senior members of the [University name] Academic Board as part of my research. I would also like to consider a sampling of non-confidential documentation relating to the Academic Board, such as current and past Academic Board terms of reference and composition, agendas and minutes (but not agenda papers); and to observe one meeting of the [University name] Academic Board. However, please be reassured that my research does not have any interest in matters relating to institutional strategy, budget and finance, university commercial interests or any other confidential matter. Additionally my research will in no way invite or consider opinion on institutions or individuals. I am approaching other universities and I hope to study three universities in total.

I wish to stress that all data collection will be confidential and results will be reported anonymously; no individual and no institution will be identified, or identifiable, in reports of the study's findings. Moreover, as my major interest is in the analysis of themes and patterns across the group of cases, the report will not include a summary of individual universities or of individual university academic boards.

It is envisaged that within each university, the research would be conducted over a period of approximately one week, chosen by the university. Initial selection of persons to be interviewed would also be made by each university, although if at all possible I would like the sample to include the chancellor, the vice-chancellor, a relevant member of the Senior-Executive (such as the Deputy Vice-Chancellor academic or equivalent), the chair of the Academic Board, the chair of a major standing committee of the Academic Board, two other members of the Academic Board and, ideally, two former members of the Academic Board.

The ethical aspects of this study have been approved by the Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee.

I would be pleased to provide a report of my overall findings to you and to the Academic Board of [University name] on completion of my research.

Please find attached a copy of the proposed interview questions, together with the plain language statement and the informed consent form that any person participating in this study will be asked to sign.

I would be most grateful if you would consider my request that [name of university] be included within my study. If you do agree, please nominate a staff member with whom I could liaise to make arrangements for the conduct of the research.

Please do not hesitate to contact me on the numbers below if you have any questions or require additional information. Alternatively, you may care to contact my principal supervisor, Professor Jill Blackmore, at the above address.

Yours sincerely

Julie Rowlands

[Researcher's home address
telephone numbers and
fax number]

[Name and address of research supervisor]

[Participant's name and address]

[Date]

Dear [participant's name]

Participation in research project on university academic boards or their equivalents

I am currently conducting research for my PhD program at Deakin University on the role and function of university academic boards. As you may know, [university name] is a participant in this research project with respect to its [academic board name] and your name and email address have been forwarded to me in confidence by that University. As part of the research project I plan to interview a number of senior University staff and current and former members of the [academic board name]. Thank you for indicating to [vice-chancellor's nominee] that you would be willing to participate in these interviews in your capacity as a current member of the [academic board name].

The title of the research project is 'The role of the academic board in the contemporary Australian university'. The principal aim is to consider the role and function of the university academic board (or its equivalent), how that role and function may have changed over time, and what the academic board might, or might not, be doing in the future.

I am undertaking this research under the direction of my PhD supervisor, [name]. The study includes interviews with some members of three Australian university academic boards (or their equivalents). I hope to interview around 45 participants in total. My research will also involve attending as an observer one meeting of the academic board (or its equivalent) at each participating university, and analysis of some current and past academic board documents, such as statements of terms of reference and composition, meeting agendas and minutes.

The focus of the interviews conducted as part of my research is academic board members' views on board roles and responsibilities—I will be looking at patterns of similarity and difference in the way academic board members express themselves in response to a series of questions on these topics. Each interview should last approximately 40 minutes. I would like to record the interview, as this will help to facilitate the accuracy of the research. Each participant will subsequently have the opportunity to check the transcript of his or her interview.

The results of the study will be written up in the form of a generic report sent to the vice-chancellors of participating universities and embodied in my PhD thesis. A copy will be forwarded to you if you would like to receive it. There may also be publications arising from the study. Quotes from interview transcripts may be used in these documents. Please note that in my analysis and in the writing up of results, your comments will be anonymous: no individuals will be identified by name and no indications that may identify an individual or a particular university will be included. Interview transcripts and tapes will be numbered and your name will not be recorded on them; a master list of all participants and their respective universities will be maintained in hard copy by the researcher for the life of the life of this research project. All materials for the study, including memory sticks and memory cards, will be kept confidential and stored in locked filing systems in accordance with university policy. The interview questions have been designed to explore an important topic in university governance, the role of the academic board, without asking you to discuss any sensitive or confidential matters such as personal opinion on individuals or institutions.

I understand that you initially received a preliminary invitation to participate in this research project from [vice-chancellor's nominee] and that she has negotiated with you an interview time. I wish to confirm that interview time as follows:

[Date, time and venue of interview]

I would be grateful if you were able to participate in this research, but I should stress that you are under no obligation to do so. To this end, please find attached a copy of the plain language statement explaining the research project, and the informed consent form. Please read and consider both documents. If you agree to participate, please complete and return one copy to me, and keep a copy for your own records. Alternatively, you may bring your completed consent form with you to the interview rather than returning it in advance, if that is more convenient for you. However, please note that it is necessary that I receive your signed consent form before the interview can commence.

A copy of the generic interview questions is attached to the plain language statement. I have also attached a version that has been adapted for use within [university name], for example by inserting the University's name and the name of the [academic board], where appropriate.

Please also note that if you do agree to be part of this research project, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time. If you do wish to discontinue participation or to not have your interview data included in the analysis, please contact me and I will confirm the arrangement in writing.

I would be pleased to respond to any questions or concerns you may have about this research project.

Yours sincerely

[Researcher's name, address and contact details]

Interview questions

The role of the academic board in the contemporary Australian university

Introduction

Interviews to be conducted for this research are broadly of the semi-structured open-ended type, whilst retaining the flexibility to alter the exact wording and the order in which questions are asked in response to the circumstances of the interview. Moreover, a question will not be asked for the sake of doing so if the participant has fully addressed the particular issue as part of an answer to an earlier question. The proposed set of interview questions is set out below. However, additional questions may also be asked during or at the end of an interview in response to information given or issues raised by the participant.

Please note that there are no right or wrong answers and that participants are the experts.

Participants will be asked whether they would like to have any input to the manner in which their interview will be conducted. The feasibility of any request so received will be discussed with the participant.

Questions

Section 1—[university name] academic board

- 1 For how long have you been a member of the [university name] academic board?
- 2 What is your role on the [university name] academic board?
 - 2b: If you are an elected member, why did you stand for election?
- 3 Do you attend every meeting of the academic board? Why or why not?
- 4 Do you enjoy attending academic board meetings? Why or why not?
- 5 Do you think the [university name] academic board serves a useful purpose within the university as a whole? If so, what is that purpose?
- 6 Do you find academic board meetings useful in the context of your own role within the university? Why or why not?
- 7 What six (or so) descriptors would you use to characterise the [university name] academic board?
- 8 What do you perceive to be the official roles of the [university name] academic board?
 - 8b: Have these roles changed since you have been at this university? If so, how?
 - 8c: Do you think there are any key roles that the academic board should currently be playing but isn't?
 - 8d: What do you think the [university name] academic board roles might have been like in the past?
 - 8e: What would you like the [university name] academic board to be doing (or not doing) in future?
 - 8f: Do academic boards have any unofficial (e.g. symbolic) purposes or functions?
 - 8g: What do you think the [university name] academic board spends most of its time actually doing?
- 9 In your opinion, are any (or some) of the roles of the [university name] academic board more important than others? If not, why do you think the roles are equal? If you think some roles are more important, which ones?
 - 9b: How compatible are the various academic board roles or activities? Are there any inconsistencies?

9c: In your opinion, how effective is the [university name] academic board in carrying out its key roles?

10 Does the [university name] academic board have any standing committees?

If yes:

10b: Have you served on any of these committees? If so, which ones?

10c: In your opinion, what purpose/s (in general terms) do these committees serve? i.e. why have they been established?

10d: Overall, how effective you think the academic board committees are? Why?

11 What are the official processes for making key decisions (such as on the strategic plan or the budget and other important university-level matters) at [university name]?

11b: Have these decision making processes changed in your time at this university? If so, how?

11c: Where are key decisions made i.e. where is the locus of power? Is this the same as, or different from, the official decision making process?

11d: What part does the academic board play in both the official decision making process and in the locus of power?

11e: Can you describe, in general terms, the relationship between the university executive and the academic board? In your opinion, is that relationship effective?

12 How would you describe the relationship between the [university name] academic board and the university council? In your opinion, is that relationship effective?

Section 2—academic boards in general

1 Why do you think university academic boards exist?

2 What might the most important role of university academic boards have been, say, 30 years ago?

3 Do you think academic boards should continue to exist in the future? Why or why not?

3b: If academic boards should continue to exist, what should they be doing (or not doing) in future?

Interview checklist — Pre-interview

- Introduce self and purpose of interview — data collection for case study research for PhD program on the role of the academic board (or equivalent) in the contemporary Australian university.
- Thank you for agreeing to participate in the interview and for giving up your time. Explain consent form and necessity of completing before interview commences. Form to be completed at the time if not already received. Explain can withdraw at any time by completing form and/or contacting me. My contact details were on the email and letter I sent confirming this interview.
- Explain confidentiality of data collection process i.e. name recorded on master list but thereafter all data is tagged by a code not a name and any and all identifying details will be removed from reports of the results of this research. Data kept secure according to [name of researcher's university] approved processes.
- Am studying three cases (universities) and am looking at patters of similarity and difference in perceptions about and experiences of the academic board (or equivalent) across the cases. Will not be reporting in detail on any one case. Will not be making any judgments about the effectiveness of any university of any university academic board.
- Is it Ok if we record the interview so that I can have accurate records of what was said? A transcript of the interview will be produced and you will have the opportunity to check the transcript for accuracy, if you would like to do so. I will also take some notes in case of recorder failure.
- Interview should take approximately 40 minutes. Interview questions are open-ended and there are no right or wrong answers. My interest is in your understanding and experience so you are the expert here.
- I have a pre-prepared set of interview questions which was given to you in advance with the informed consent form. Those questions are a guide only and questions on that list will not be asked if the matter has already been addressed in another answer or if they are not relevant to your circumstances. Follow-up questions may also be asked.
- Do you have any requests about how you would like the interview to be conducted?
- Is it OK if we start now? I will just turn on the recorder.
- At the commencement of the interview clarify the participant's role on the board or at the university e.g. you are an elected member...

Interview checklist — Post-interview

- Thank you very much for your responses. Do you have any questions of me about the research or the process? Do you have any concerns you would like addressed?

- Once I have finished all of the interviews at this university I will commence transcribing. This will take some time but I will be in contact with you by email with your transcript as soon as possible. You do not have to check the transcript unless you wish to do so.
- Would you like to receive a summary of the findings of this research at the conclusion of the project? If so, I will take a note of this and forward you a copy at the time.
- Thank you again for your time, I am extremely grateful.

Table 1: Comparison of academic board characteristics amongst the three cases studied			
Characteristics	Newtown University	Middleton University	Historydale University
Period of university establishment	Early 1990s	1960s	Late 1800s–early 1900s
Mode of establishment	Statutory body	Subcommittee council	Statutory body
Total members	40–50	30–40	120+
Proportion <i>ex officio</i>	12%	36.5%	65%
Chair elected/appoint	Elected	Appointed by VC	Elected
Average current length of meeting	3 hours	2 hours	1.5 hrs

Table 2: Comparison of case study academic boards over time		
	Middleton University	Historydale University
Size of board on establishment	15	6
Average length of meeting on establishment	Unknown	2.5 hrs
Span of agenda items in period of establishment	Staffing appointments Timetable New course proposals Library opening hours Honorary degree proposals Admission of HDR candidates Awarding of degrees	Admission of HDR candidates Student discipline Appointment and promotion of academic staff Cross-faculty academic organisational matters (e.g. timetables etc) Promotion and extension of teaching and research
Span of agenda items at peak of professorial board	University research Review of student selection processes The establishment of a new discipline Examination arrangements Awarding of degrees Appointment of acting school chairmen Staff discipline arrangements	Consideration of the state higher education system Reviews of post-graduate studies Redevelopment of the library Academic salary increases Introduction of substantially new courses Increased academic and support staff and equipment budgets
Average length of meeting at peak of professorial board	Unknown	5.5 hrs
Largest size of board	58 (mid-1990s)	147 (in 1990)
Date of shift from professorial to representative membership models	Mid-1990s	Late 1980s
Date of loss of resourcing and planning functions	Early 2000s	Early 1990s

Table 3: Summary of interview responses on observed changes in academic boards		
	Historydale University	Middleton University
Physical changes in board size and composition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Composition includes fewer professorial members and a greatly increased number of <i>ex officio</i> members • Some elected members argued that the academic board now contains too many management members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic board smaller in size than was formerly the case • Composition includes fewer professorial members • Board now perceived as less elitist and more representative of whole university than in the past
Changes in scope of matters considered by academic board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased emphasis on academic quality assurance tasks • Loss of responsibility for budgets and financial matters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greatly reduced.
Changes in importance of academic board within university decision-making	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shift from collegial governance to corporate-style governance and management. Changes inevitable and necessary. • More managerial environment has largely taken over role of the academic board • Establishment of role of DVC(A) specifically led to reduction in academic board decision-making • Some academic board committees have been taken over by or replaced by senior management committees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University has of necessity adopted more corporate-style decision-making • Strategic decisions now approved by university council and operational decisions by VC and executive • Academic board noticeably less central to university decision-making, inevitably so.
Changes in academic board meeting style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shorter, more efficient meetings • Much less discussion at academic board meetings than was formerly the case 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Much less debate at academic board meetings than was formerly the case • Decision-making style now more passive and less passionate

Table 4: Comparison of changes in the degree of discussion of academic board agenda items over time			
University	Newtown	Middleton	Historydale
Degree of discussion of agenda items from board observation and minutes 2010	41% reports and proposals discussed 2010 minutes. Considerable discussion observed of substantive agenda items and also recorded in minutes. No rubber stamping. Very active.	10.5% reports and proposals discussed 2010 minutes. None observed or recorded. Only one question asked by elected member. Only SE and <i>ex officio members</i> spoke to items. Very passive.	14% reports and proposals discussed 2010 minutes. None observed or recorded. A number of questions asked by elected members. SE and <i>ex officio members</i> spoke to most but not all items (committees quite active).
Degree of discussion of agenda items 1980s	N/A	28% reports and proposals discussed 1960s minutes.	34% reports and proposals discussed 1980s minutes.
Degree discussion agenda items 1960s	N/A	60% reports and proposals discussed 1960s minutes.	57.5% reports and proposals discussed 1960s minutes.
Degree discussion agenda items 1940s	N/A	N/A	71.5% reports and proposals discussed 1940s minutes.
Degree discussion agenda items 1920s	N/A	N/A	78% reports and proposals discussed 1920s minutes.

Table 5: Comparison of extent to which the three case study academic boards undertook activity to address each of their terms of reference (TOR), 2010			
Characteristics	Newtown University	Middleton University	Historydale University
% TOR addressed	90%	47.5%	62.5%

Table 6: Respondents' perceptions of key board roles and style by university		
University	Board roles	Style of board meetings
Newtown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic quality assurance • Additional key role is the Board serving as functional and symbolic hub for unified university. <i>This function is unique to this university</i> • Providing advice on teaching, learning and research matters • 'Voice for staff' • Symbolic role: of collegiality 	<p><i>Most common responses were:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internally focused • Transactional/task focused • Detail oriented • Reactive • Discursive • Collegial
Middleton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic quality assurance defined as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ course approval ○ academic policy approval • Recommendations/formal advice to Council • Symbolic roles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ voice for staff to senior management ○ theoretically enables staff participation in academic decision-making ○ academic integrity and standards (to external agencies) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passive and reactive (universal response at this university) • Transactional • Rubber stamp
Historydale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality assurance and integrity, primarily through course approval and faculty/school reviews • Early input to major decisions • Forum for discussion of academic matters • Communication conduit from SE to academic staff • Forum for staff networking and cross-faculty communication • Symbolic role: collegiality but 5 respondents felt the board no longer had a symbolic role in this University 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transactional • Reactive/passive • Collegial

Table 7: Board strengths and weaknesses by university		
University	Board strengths	Board weaknesses
Newtown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The unified Board (unique function of this Board) • Representative membership • Forum for debate • Forum for information transmission to members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over-large agenda (hard to focus on really important items) • Failure to provide educational leadership (i.e. to provide significant advice or comment to senior management on academic directions, either in response to proposals from SE or a failure to initiate responses to major external changes. • Too transactional • Tendency for vice-chancellor to dominate discussion at times
Middleton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efficient at approving/endorsing recommendations • Source of information from VC and senior executive for elected members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of discussion • Passive/rubber stamp approach to business • failure to undertake quality assurance and monitor academic standards • board irrelevant or fails to add value with the real decisions being made elsewhere. • Meetings dominated by SE
Historydale	<p><i>For non-SE members</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presence of the senior executive; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overlap between Board and SE responsibilities • Board is too large

	<p>members wanted to see and be seen.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forum for information transmission • Enables members to contribute to academic decision-making. <p>For <i>executive</i> members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meetings short and well-chaired. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient high-level debate on major educational issues • Failure to fulfil all aspects of TOR • Meetings dominated by SE <p>From <i>executive members</i>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too focused on detail rather than bigger picture
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Table 8: Academic board committee characteristics, by university			
Characteristics	Newtown University	Middleton University	Historydale University
Number of standing committees	5	6	7
Committee names	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Course Approvals • Education Strategy • Teaching and Learning • Research • Postgraduate Research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher Degrees by Research • Scholarships • Student Appeals • EO and Diversity • Course Approvals • Fee Monitoring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching and learning • Research • Higher Degrees by Research • Course Approvals and Policy • Standing Committee • Academic Promotions Process • Library
Appointment of committee chairs	Appointed by the board from elected members	Appointed by the Vice-Chancellor and not necessarily from among board members	T&L, HDR and RC are chaired by the DVC(A) and the DVC (R) respectively. Remaining committees chaired by the chair and deputy chair. No election/appointment.

Note: in cases where there was a risk that the name of an academic board committee might divulge the identity of the university, the name has been substituted with a generic description of the committee's role.

Table 9: Relative levels of power of each of the three case study academic boards	
University	Formal power of the academic board and summary of interview responses received
Newtown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board had no executive powers in its own right, formally limited to advising council and the vice-chancellor. • The business of the board and the debate tended to be dominated by the senior executive. • Board seen by interviewees as being highly influential, a potential shaper of University directions and a very important input to management.
Middleton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board had very extensive formally documented powers via its terms of reference. • Board universally described as having little or no power in reality and its decision-making role was seen as being limited to the final stamp of approval on matters formally delegated by Council. • Board universally described as having no role in strategic academic matters and by a number of members as being irrelevant to the key issues that affect the university. • Vice-chancellor described the board as 'tame'. • Board meetings and board business described as being dominated by the senior executive.
Historydale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board had reasonably extensive official terms of reference and documented decision-making authority. • Interviewee references to power at board level were generally only in the negative i.e. to power the board did not have and/or had lost to the senior executive. • General perception was that the board had no power and little or no influence. • Key academic board committees (and therefore board responsibilities) were seen as 'at risk' of being taken over by the senior management group.

Table 10: Mode of appointment and relative power of the chair of the academic board	
University	Summary of documentary data and interview responses received
Newtown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair elected and had place on university senior management committee.
Middleton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair appointed by the vice-chancellor and did not play a role in senior management committee meetings or consultation.
Historydale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chair elected and had place at both senior executive and senior management committee meetings. • Interview respondents generally felt that the chair's attendance at senior executive and senior management committee meetings afforded him or her limited influence over matters related to board responsibilities, but no power, and that it did not really serve to increase the board's power or influence.

Table 11: The power of the vice-chancellor within each university in the context of the academic board	
University	Summary of interview responses received
Newtown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vice-chancellor is seen as the ultimate decision-maker and the locus of power within this University. • Vice-chancellor described as dominant and formidable in University. • Vice-chancellor sees his/her power as being enhanced by working together with academic board on key issues. • Vice-chancellor described as having very high regard for the academic board and having never overturned board advice on an educational issue. • Vice-chancellor also described as dominating board meetings to a greater extent than desirable.
Middleton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locus of power universally described as being vice-chancellor. • Vice-chancellor and senior executive seen as driving the business and agenda of the board. • Academic matters of substance are reported to be decided by the vice-chancellor and senior executive (and not by the academic board).
Historydale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vice-chancellor or vice-chancellor <u>and</u> key members of the senior executive universally seen as being locus of power.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vice-chancellor and senior executive seen as being the location of strategic academic decision-making, not the Board.
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Table 12: Summary of Vice-Chancellors' attitudes to their academic board			
University	Newtown	Middleton	Historydale
On board power ...	Board highly influential and significant but no formal power to make any decisions in own right. Vice-chancellor has never gone against academic board advice.	Board has no power in its own right. Authorised only to make decisions on matters delegated by council.	Power now rests with vice-chancellor and senior executive. The academic board controls 'less and less'.
Key board role: unique function	Yes. Bringing together the whole university.	None articulated.	Yes, school reviews.
Key board role: shared governance	Provides opportunity for management and Council to work with the board in a shared governance arrangement. This makes for a stronger university.	None articulated.	None articulated.

Table 13: Degree of responsibility of case study academic boards for academic quality assurance

University	Terms of reference relating to academic quality assurance-type tasks
Newtown	Provide quality assurance on courses of study and research including admission, course content and assessment and student progress.
Middleton	Responsible for academic quality assurance and for review of the university's AQA.
Historydale	Encourage the maintenance of high standards of teaching and research.

Table 14: Summary of interviewee perceptions of academic board primary role

University	Board roles
Newtown	Academic quality assurance relating to academic programs and research.
Middleton	Academic quality assurance defined as: course approval academic policy approval
Historydale	Quality assurance and integrity through course approval and faculty school reviews primarily.

Table 15: Typical interview responses relating to primary academic board role: quality assurance

University	Selected typical interview responses, all membership categories
Newtown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'The academic quality assurance role is really important'. AEL005 • 'The control and quality and development of courses and pathways is, to me, its predominant role'. AFM002 • 'The Board is the premier debating ground, testing ground, quality assurance mechanism for the academic and research quality of activities taking place in the University'. AEX009
Middleton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance of academic standards is primary role: 'I guess I sort of see them as an academic-type watch dog' BCC004 • Academic quality assurance is a delegated responsibility from Council. 'This is the most important role'. BEX006 • 'Approving the [academic quality assurance] frameworks'. BEL002
Historydale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The key role is: 'quality assurance and integrity' CEL002 • Its key role is: 'to ensure that the rules and the detail is right, I mean the official oversight of the programs'. CEL010 • 'Exercising delegated authority from Council regarding course and program approval'. CEX007 • It has a role in quality assurance regarding program approval, program review, discontinuations. CEL004

Table 16: Extent of academic board activity aimed at fulfilling academic quality assurance related terms of reference		
University	Terms of reference relating to academic quality assurance-type tasks	Assessment of fulfilment and evidence
Newtown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish policies and procedures for approval of courses of study and monitor compliance with them. 	Partly. Evidence of a very active policy consultation and approval processes within agendas and interviewees responses. Evidence of compliance is more limited e.g. the annual work plan refers to reports of compliance with plagiarism policy only.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide quality assurance on courses of study and research including admission, course content and assessment and student progress. 	Yes. Detailed references in annual work plan and in agendas and minutes e.g. analytical report on admissions is considered in March, on student progress in May, etc. Minutes reflect that consideration of these reports is active and extensive.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend to council on course approval. 	Partly. Specific references to course approval in agendas and minutes but senior executive approves 'strategic' aspects first and there was some contestation over what was strategic and what was not at the meeting observed.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend to council on course admission requirements. 	Yes. Specific references in agendas and minutes.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recommend to council on requirements for conferral or granting academic awards. 	Yes. Specific references in agendas and minutes.
Middleton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for academic quality assurance and for review of the university's AQA. 	Mostly no. No evidence of academic quality assurance activities except passive receipt of reports from the DVC(A) of course review and passive approval of recommendations from the senior executive on new courses (which go straight to the board). This was confirmed by interviewees.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approve new courses and course review processes. 	Partly. See criticism of new course approval above.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approve course approval processes. 	Yes. Policies and procedures recommended by the senior executive are approved by the board and appear regularly in agendas.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oversee student assessment and examination. 	No. No evidence of active oversight. Unstarred reports occasionally received with regard to student progression etc.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Receive a report annually on course review and implementation. 	Yes. These reports appear as unstarred items in the agenda each year. The reports are not actively considered.
Historydale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage the maintenance of high standards of teaching and research 	Mostly No. Matters relating to academic quality assurance and academic standards handled by DVC(A) except course approval (see below). Transcripts of interviews with board chair and DVC(A) and VC confirm this.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maintain effective overview of academic activities of the university 	No. Strategic overview of these matters is undertaken by the DVC(A) and the VC and senior executive. DVC chairs the T&L Committee and the VC reported that he/she would like that committee to be removed from the board and report instead to the VC.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approve new academic programs and changes to existing programs under delegated authority 	<p>Partly. Formally approves new and revised courses but the strategic aspects of new course proposals approved first by the SE. Academic board looks only at the academic content and is generally expected to approve courses approved by the SE.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and review academic policy, procedure and guidelines in relation to academic and educational issues, including matters relating to academic and research staff. Recommend such policy to the university council for approval 	<p>Partly. Generally speaking, academic board and its subcommittees do not formulate academic policy but instead consider such policies drafted by the senior executive. There are exceptions to this including with regard to academic promotion, categories of academic employment, assessment and other matters covered by board subcommittees. Conversely, policy relating to staffing matters does not come to the board unless it is about promotion. A large number of interviewees consider the board is rubber stamp on many policies, including promotion.</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee the review of all organisational areas of the university undertaking teaching and research programs. 	<p>Yes. Is responsible for and undertakes comprehensive school and institute review process. Reports considered at almost every meeting. Clearly reflected in agendas and minutes.</p>

Table 17: Perceived gaps in board roles					
Frequency of interview responses given, by university					
	No perceived gaps in academic board roles identified	Engagement with wider university community	Greater involvement in course review process	Consideration of research matters	Oversight and benchmarking of academic standards
Newtown	9	1			
Middleton	7		1	1	1
Historydale	10				
Totals	26	1	1	1	1

Table 18: Interview respondents' views of the future of their academic board	
University	The future of this academic board
Newtown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five members favoured the status quo and wanted the academic board to maintain its current role and mode of operating. Of these, four were elected or former elected members. • Two elected members made suggestions on the future of this board and they were to increase communication to the university about board's role; and to streamline the agenda to focus on key issues. • Three executive members called for the board to take on a greater academic leadership role by fostering discussion around the future of higher education and having greater oversight of key academic functions of the University.
Middleton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Ex officio</i> members except the vice-chancellor were united in their view that more robust debate at board meetings was necessary for the future. One elected and one former elected member were also of this view (a majority of respondents). • <i>A number of</i> members questioned whether the board needed to retain its current composition. • Two other respondents desired the academic board having greater involvement in planning and monitoring of academic directions, and in considering the outcome of course reviews. • The vice-chancellor wanted the board to maintain its current role and mode of operating but to also be more proactive on quality of teaching.
Historydale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Six members indicated that they thought it was likely that the academic board would have a reduced or substantially reduced role in the future (these included the board chair, the deputy chair, a former chair, the vice-chancellor, the deputy vice-chancellor (academic) and a dean). • The vice-chancellor and the deputy vice-chancellor (academic) mooted the teaching and learning and higher degrees by research committees becoming senior management committees (rather than academic board standing committees as was currently the case) but wanted the board to have a continuing role in the academic quality assurance of degrees. • One elected member did not comment on the future role of the board. • Three members foresaw the board maintaining its current role.

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