Issues in researching academic identity in different countries:

Reflexive deliberation in international research collaboration: minimising risk and maximising opportunity

Angela Brew, David Boud, Karin Crawford and Lisa Lucas
Exploring international collaboration in research

Drawing on our experiences of a specific international research collaboration;

Rambur’s (2009) conceptual framework for multinational research;

Archer’s (2007) notion of ‘reflexive deliberations’;

Explores factors that enable and constrain progress in collaborative research.
The international research study

Comparative exploration of how academics develop specific academic identities -

- How do mid-career academics think about and act upon the perceived constraints and opportunities for development in their context?
- How do these academics come to position themselves in relation to research and teaching? What has influenced this positioning?
The study

Universities
Australia: 6 universities – 2 GO8; 2 ATNs; and 2 innovative research universities
England: 2 Russell Group; 1 1964; 2 1984?; 1 new

Disciplines
- Science, Engineering and Technology
- Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts
- Medical and Health Sciences
The study: Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Australia</th>
<th>England</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number surveyed</td>
<td>4035</td>
<td>4042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responses</td>
<td>1098</td>
<td>1033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>54.89 Males, 45.11 Females</td>
<td>60.1 Males, 39.1 Females</td>
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<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medicine &amp; Health</td>
<td>19.7%, n=216</td>
<td>10.8%, n=112</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science, Engineering Technology</td>
<td>53.1%, n=583</td>
<td>33.4%, n=345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social sciences, Humanities, Arts</td>
<td>27.2%, n=299</td>
<td>55.8%, n=576</td>
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<td>Completed a doctorate</td>
<td>81.4%, n=894</td>
<td>82.6%, n=815</td>
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Archer’s three-stage model

1. Structural and cultural properties *objectively* shape the situations that agents confront involuntarily and *inter alia* possess generative powers of constraint and enablement in relation to

2. Subjects’ own constellations of concerns, as *subjectively* defined in relation to the three orders of natural reality: nature, practice and the social

3. Courses of action are produced through the *reflexive deliberations* of subjects who subjectively determine their practical projects in relation to their *objective* circumstances (Archer, 2007, p. 17)
Conceptual Framework for Multi-National Research Collaboratives

- Parallel Facility Sharing
- Data Sharing
- Bridging Peers
- Differing Scientific Languages & Academic Cultures
- Human Subjects or Politically/Culturally Sensitive Themes

Rambur 2009: 84
Interaction costs

- Ethical approval
- Research assessment
- Technical limitations
- Access to participants
Collaboratives: A Simplified Dichotomy of Characteristics

- Risk—Institution
- Instability—Low
- Funds as Catalyst—Effective
- Administrative Champion—Essential

Area of Deceptive Similarities

- Risk—Individual
- Instability—High
- Funds as Catalyst—Not Particularly Effective
- Administrative Champion—Not Effective

Area of Deceptive Differences

Time to Research Outputs

Complexity of Interface

Increasing human factors
Increasing complexity of meanings
Increasing psychological distance

Rambur 2009: 91
The role of structure and agency in managing complexity

- Structural, institutional and individual risk
- Funding
- Communication
- Working as a research team
Conclusion

- Reflexive deliberations drawn from a specific international research collaboration;
- Drawing on theoretical frameworks from Archer (2007) and Rambur (2009) to inform our critical reflections on the processes; strengths and challenges of our joint work;
- Structural constraints and the power of agency identified through reflection on risk and opportunity;
- Systematic application of personal and collective ‘reflexive deliberations’ support risk minimisation, managing the complexity and identification of valuable opportunities; can reduce time to outputs.
References
