

Positioning ourselves for research and teaching: a cross-country analysis of academic formation

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Introduction

International 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?
- Are there differences between England and Australia in this positioning and, if so, how might these differences be accounted for?

Research context

- Changing nature of academic work;
- Contested notions of the purpose of higher education;
- Arguably accounts of what constitutes academic work act to define a particular view on the purpose of higher education and particular institutional priorities;
- It is known that some post-doctoral academics do not develop as researchers (Lee and Boud 2003) – studies have also examined academics' understandings of the nature of research (Brew 2001; Åkerlind 2008) and responses to research selectivity exercises (Lucas 2006; McNay 2003)
- Limited knowledge about the formation of academics as researchers and as teachers.

Factors that contribute to productive research:

 **Institutional factors** (Caroyol & Matt 2006, Smeby & Try 2005)

 **Demographics** (Fox 2005, Stack 2004)

 **Individual capabilities** (Fisher 2005, Toma 1999)

 **Social contingencies** (Leahey 2006, Lee & Bozeman 2005)

Research productivity

- ❁ Studies are mostly quantitative
- ❁ Measuring research productivity is varied and at times problematic
- ❁ Findings are often contradictory
- ❁ The literature tends to neglect the processes of research
- ❁ It assumes productivity is an individual matter and
- ❁ It tends to ignore contexts
- ❁ It ignores non-productivity

Our study

Mixed methods;

Stage 1 – a quantitative survey and piloting of qualitative data collection tool
(the focus of this paper)

Stage 2 – purposive sampling for semi-structured interviews with academics
(5- 10 yrs post-doc or first appointment)

Conceptual framework – Archer (2000)

Universities

Australia: 6 universities – 2 GO8; 2 ATNs; and 2 innovative research universities

England: 2 Russell Group; 3 Pre-1992; 1 Post-1992

Disciplines

- Science, Engineering and Technology
- Social Sciences, Humanities and Arts
- Medical and Health Sciences

The study: survey

	Australia	England
Number surveyed	4035	4042
Responses	1098	1033
Gender	54.89 Males 45.11 Females	60.1 Males 39.1 Females
Discipline		
Medicine and Health	19.7%, n=216	10.8%, n=112
Science, Engineering, Technology	53.1%, n=583	33.4%, n=345
Social sciences, Humanities, Arts	27.2%, n=299	55.8%, n=576
Completed a doctorate	81.4%, n=894	82.6%, n=815

Expectations:- factors that could contribute to high or low research productivity

1. Preparation through doctoral study

1. Expectation: doing a PhD will prepare students for research

2. Amount of time spent on teaching, research and admin

1. Expectation: More time spent on teaching and admin means less focus on research

3. Identity as a researcher

1. Identifying as a researcher and prioritising research should result in higher research productivity

4. Discipline

1. Higher levels of research productivity expected in science and technology

5. Gender

1. Women tend to be less productive than men

6. Conception of research

1. “Trading” Conception of research may lead to higher productivity

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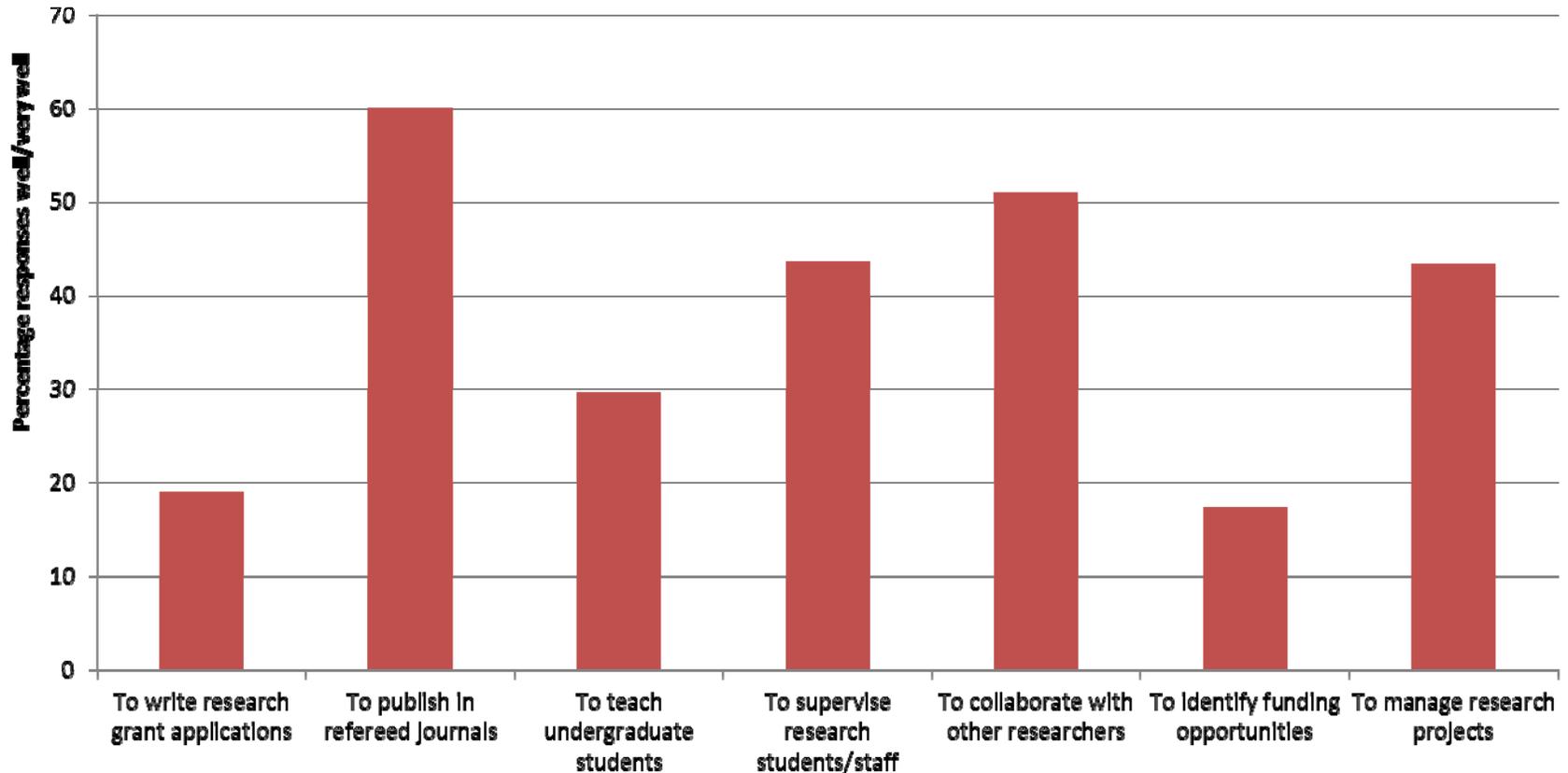
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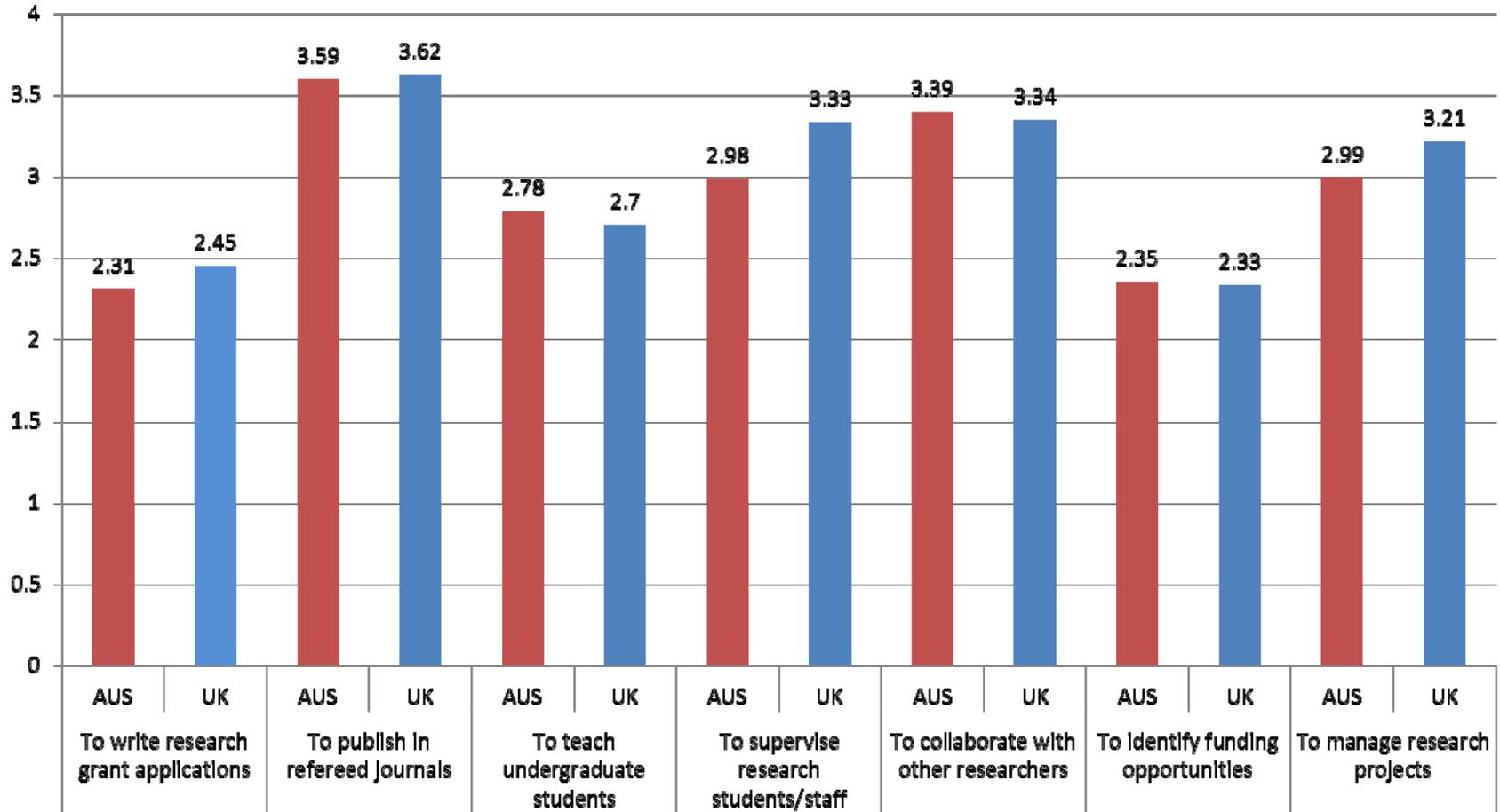
1. How well did doctoral studies prepare you for research and teaching?

(combined English and Australian data)

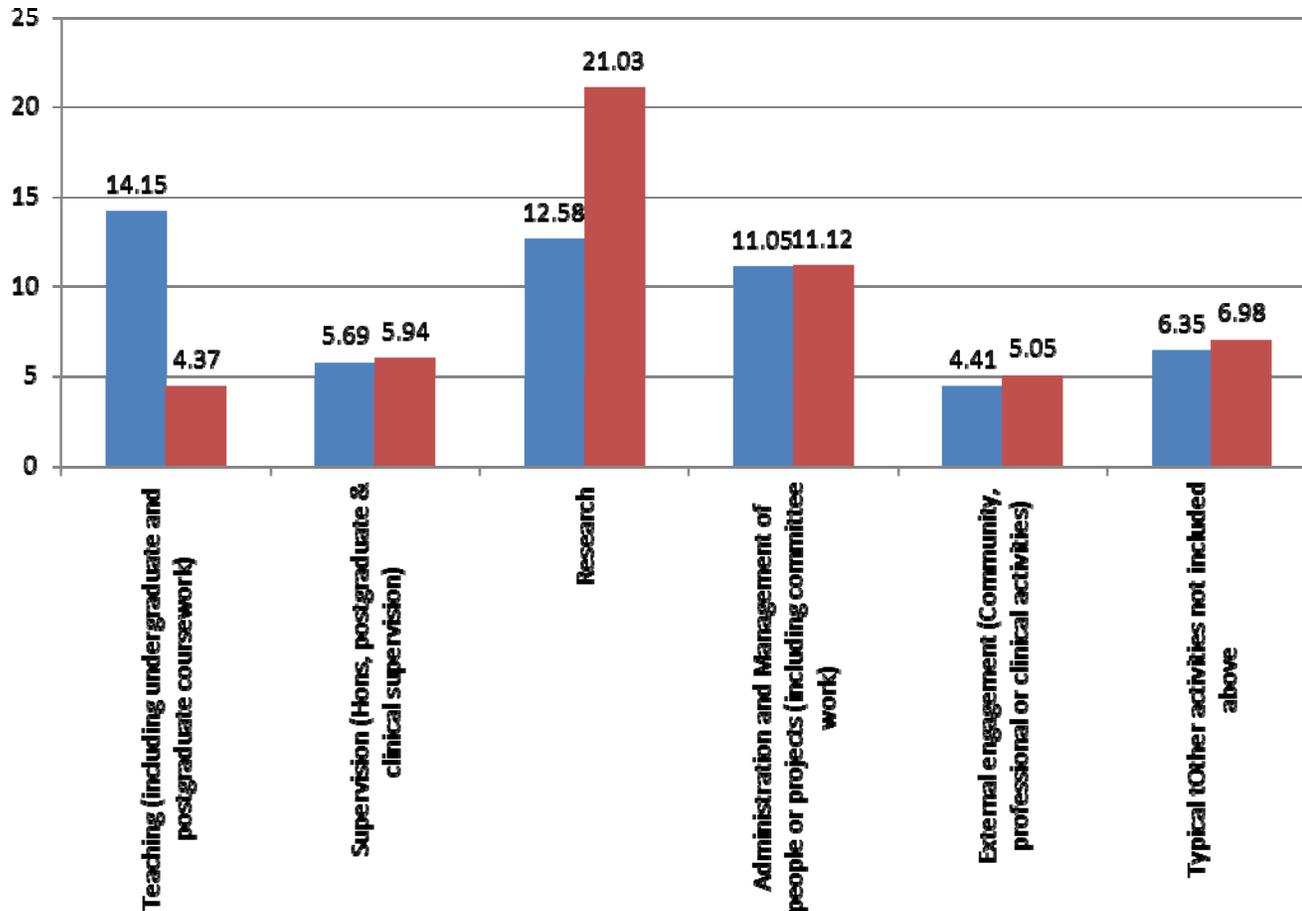


Extent to which doctoral studies was considered preparation for independent research and teaching

(Australia and UK comparison using 5 point scale)



2. Average weekly time spent on teaching, research and administration (Eng and Aus combined data)



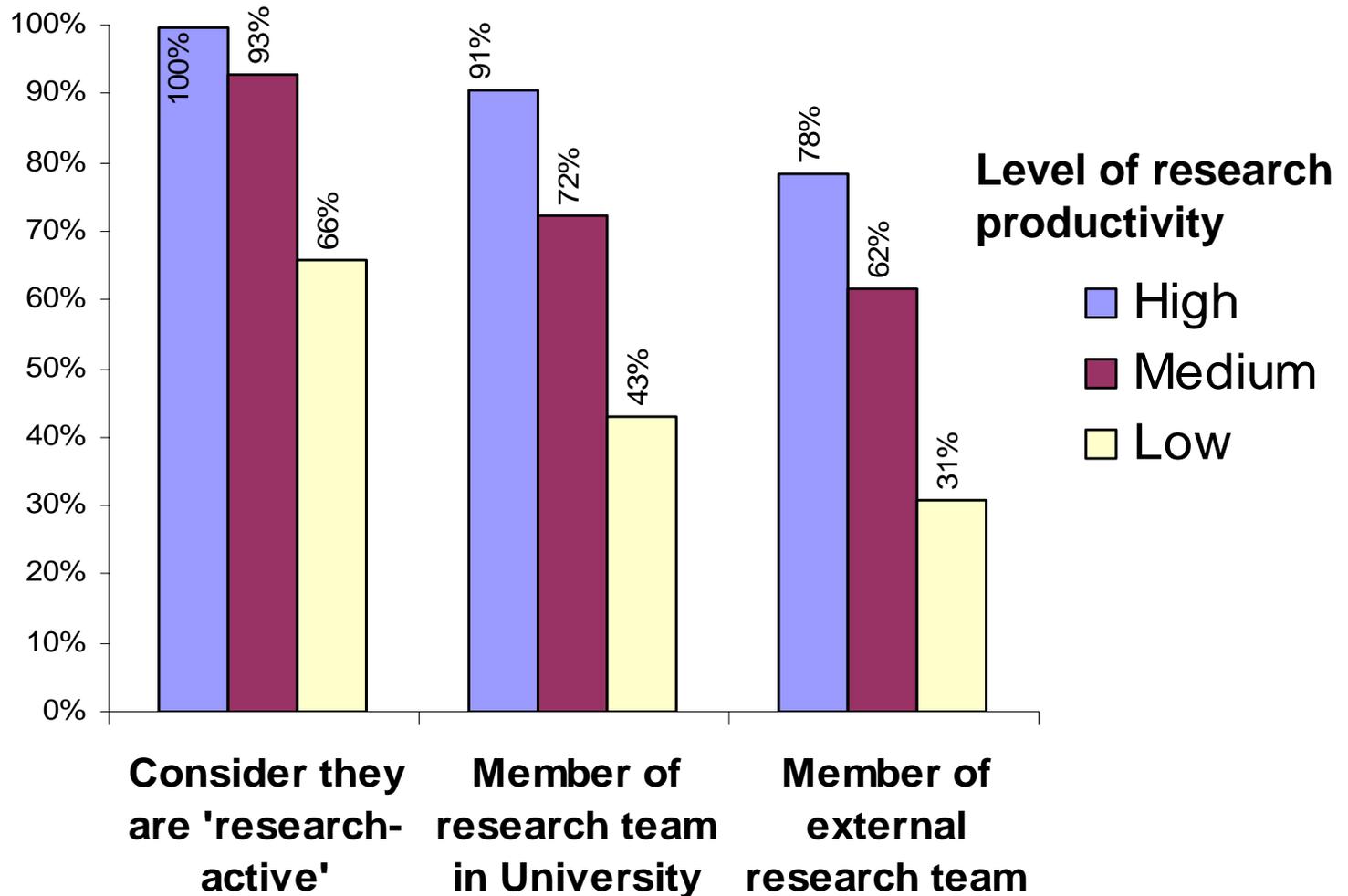
Typical Teaching Week (Total = 54.23)

Typical Non-teaching Week (Total = 54.49)

3. Identity as a researcher

- Identifying as a researcher should result in higher research productivity
- Categorising research productivity related to publications and outputs (Total respondents = 1,098)
 - High = 21% (publications with score >17; grants applied for or obtained >11)
 - Medium = 51.7% (publications with score 8-16; grants applied for or obtained = 5-10)
 - Low = 27.2% (publications with score with score <7; grants applied for or obtained <4)

Researcher productivity and identity



Future

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