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Responding to university policies and initiatives: The role of reflexivity in the mid-career academic

Abstract
How do academics make sense of university policies and strategic initiatives and act on them? Interviews were conducted with 27 mid-career academics in different disciplines, different research-intensive university environments and two countries (England and Australia). Data were analysed iteratively utilising a critical realist perspective, specifically, Archer's modes of reflexivity. The paper argues that individuals' responses to university policies and initiatives, to changes in policy and policy conflicts can at least partially be understood through interrogating the modes of reflexivity they employ.

Introduction
Academics pursue their work and careers within continually changing organisational contexts. Institutional decision-making, strategic initiatives, quality assurance processes, research and teaching as well as university working conditions, and universities' relationships to the community, industry and the professions are all subject to continual change (Barnett, 2000; Tight, 2013). Institutional leaders establish policies and initiatives expecting to change behaviours and attitudes. However, such interventions do not always lead to desired outcomes. Indeed, they can have the opposite effect. As Ball (1994, P.10) says

> *"policy is both text and action, words and deeds; it is what is enacted as well as what is intended. Policies are always incomplete in so far as they relate to or map onto a wild profusion of local practice."*

Mismatches between policy intention and effects give expression to the idea of policy as contested territory (Ozga, 2000). Policies operate on many different levels and are mediated through complex iterative processes (Vidovich, 2002). Academics' responses to policies initiated at the macro level (e.g. government) are mediated at the meso level within institutions and the micro level within faculties and departments. For effective policy enactment, understanding why academics respond or fail to respond is important. Simplistic explanations attributing lack of adherence to ideas of academic freedom, or remarks about changing academics being like herding cats, cover up a lack of research-based understandings of why academics act as they do.

This paper aims to understand academics' responses to policy interventions and strategic initiatives. Fuller understanding of how academics manage the complex balancing of different institutional demands is needed to provide insights into why university policies do not always achieve their desired ends. Policy initiatives and strategies in national and institutional settings are complex and varied but the focus in this paper is predominantly on policies which academics believe relate to their research and teaching activities and impact on their career development.

The paper is based on a study of academics in different disciplines, different research-intensive university environments and two countries. Following a brief discussion of the literature, it sets out the methodology and examines academics' awareness of institutional policies, policy changes and initiatives and how they respond. The paper argues that academics' responses are mediated through the particular forms of reflexivity they use, their

perceptions of what they consider possible or desirable, and perceived institutional constraints.

Background

A significant amount of research has looked at academics' responses to national policies, though usually filtered through institutional policies. The increase in managerialism and audit cultures within universities in response to increasing forms of measurement and evaluation has been a particular focus. Henkel (2000, 2005), for example, characterises major policy changes to UK higher education historically as increasing managerialism and instrumentalism in response to initiatives like initiatives like research assessment (e.g. Research Excellence Framework: REF), and the increasing competitiveness of universities with the importance of national and international league tables. Trowler (1998) looked at academics' responses to national policy changes in relation to teaching and learning and the introduction of new 'credit framework structures'. His research demonstrates how policy outcomes can be very different from the intentions of policy-makers and argues that academics respond in different ways, which he characterizes as either sinking (discontent) or swimming (content) and he uses related categories of academics who are 'accepting the status quo' or who 'work around or change policy' leading to those who were 'swimming' endeavoring to be involved in 'policy reconstruction' and those who were 'sinking' simply using 'coping strategies' (Trowler, 1998, p.114).

In the context of intensification of research activities within universities in response to successive RAEs, Lucas (2009) showed how aspects of the research environment (research leadership, research strategy and research culture, including socialisation of academic staff), were formed to meet departmental missions to increase research that would be highly ranked nationally. However, while these forms of 'new managerialism' involved manipulating staff workloads and auditing staff outputs and achievements to determine whether they were 'research active' and eligible for submission, or 'research inactive', academics' experiences and responses to these environments were mixed. There were gains, but as Leathwood and Read (2013) showed, there is substantial inequity in the system. They found gender differences in responses. Being labelled 'research inactive' can have negative consequences for academics and their careers either in terms of redundancy or being moved to a 'teaching only' contract (Lucas, 2006).

The critical realist perspective used in our study suggests that structures may mediate, but they do not determine individuals' actions (Sayer, 1992). Archer (2007) argues that people use 'internal conversations' to interpret the situations they are in; the person and the social situation providing structure are linked through these 'internal conversations'. Archer argues that people balance their freedom against particular personal, institutional and structural constraints as they perceive them.

The concept of reflexivity has been used to examine how people respond to changing structural conditions that characterise modern society (Ferrugia, 2013). Archer defines reflexivity as:

> *'…the regular exercise of the mental ability, shared by all normal people, to consider themselves in relation to the (social) contexts and vice versa (Archer 2007, p.4).*

She argues that reflexivity is important because it 'mediates the role that objective structural or cultural powers play in influencing social action' (p.5). Therefore, university policies and

structures, as aspects of the social world, do not cause academics to act in particular ways, but the exercise of reflexivity means that in weighing up options available, academics interpret that policy or structure as constraining or enabling in relation to what they value.

Archer (2007) identifies four modes of reflexivity which, she argues, characterise individuals' relationships to reality:

Communicative reflexivity: exhibited in people whose internal conversations require completion and confirmation by others before resulting in courses of action;
Autonomous reflexivity: exhibited in those who sustain self-contained internal conversations, leading directly to action;
Meta-reflexivity: characterised by internal conversations critical of one's own internal conversations and on the look-out for difference in the social world around them;
Fractured reflexivity: internal conversations intensify distress and disorientation rather than leading to purposeful courses of action.

Archer's modes of reflexivity provide lenses through which to view different ways individuals respond. Employing particular forms of reflexivity may lead some academics to develop strategies that proactively further their career goals, while others may be more reactive and, in the worst cases, lead to an inability to act.

Methodology

A survey of academics in research-intensive environments in six Australian and six English universities explored how academics make sense of the competing pressures of teaching, research and administration (Brew & Boud, 2009; Brew, Boud, Namgung, Lucas & Crawford, 2016) and was followed up by 27 semi-structured interviews with mid-career academics. Purposive sampling from survey participants who indicated willingness to be interviewed was used to select those with 5-10 years' post-doctorate experience in three broad disciplines (Sciences and Engineering (S&E); Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH); and Health Sciences (HS)) from three Australian (Aus) and five English (Eng) universities. Purposive sampling was used to ensure a balance of participants in terms of country, gender, and discipline. All interviewees were informed of the research purpose and signed a consent form. Participants and their universities have been anonymised to protect confidentiality. To provide context, quotations indicate country, discipline, academic level (Lecturer (L), Senior Lecturer (SL), Reader (R), Associate Professor (A/P) or Professor (P), gender (M or F) and transcript lines (L).

Interview questions focused on how participants saw themselves as an academic, how they became their particular kind of academic, critical career incidents, perceived personal and structural influences in their current role, what constrains and enables teaching and research decisions, and their future aspirations. Interviews lasting approximately an hour were each conducted by a member of the team and were digitally recorded. They were transcribed and iteratively analysed by the team according to broadly identified themes initially individually and then in face-to-face meetings. This paper focuses on interviewees' awareness of policies and institutional initiatives, their responses to changes in policies and initiatives, and their responses to policy conflicts. We apply the conceptual framework of Archer's modes of reflexivity to attempt to understand what drives particular responses. In interpreting our data in this way we utilise their whole transcripts not just the quotations used here. Also, we do not wish to deny that other factors also may influence their responses such as age, gender, discipline, etc.

Findings

Awareness of institutional policies and initiatives

Interviewees differed in the extent to which policy issues were a focus of their attention. Some talked about the broad policy context and how it influenced university policy and practice. Others were aware of local policies and procedures without a strong sense of where they came from. For some, issues of policy were not a focus of attention at all. We noted confusion about the difference between policies, procedures and strategies for implementation.

Declan is aware, for example, of how government policy shapes universities:

> *"So the universities are in a very … tricky environment trying to second guess government policy and strategically move in the right direction … it pervades senior management thinking and therefore filters down into enterprise bargaining agreements and work planning policies as well."* (Declan, Aus, SSH, P, M, L 406-415)

Emily (Eng A&H) also identifies teaching constraints that come about through general HE policy,

> *"the general deregulation of the sector … has meant increasing numbers … and the lack of corresponding increase in members of staff to deal with that has been a real problem. … We are required to teach certain subjects … to get professional [recognition], … but also policies that are beyond our control regarding deregulation in the higher education sector has been impacting."* (Emily, Eng, SSH, SL, F, L.1044-73)

How academics struggle to adhere to or distance themselves from particular initiatives and whether they take proactive or reactive strategies appears to reflect their particular mode of reflexivity. For example, like many interviewees exhibiting autonomous reflexivity, Stephen appears detached from the organisational restructures going on around him and from policies influencing practice. He appears uninterested in the reasons for various management decisions. He has a clear sense of what he has control over and can influence and what he does not.

> *"I've noticed [I'm becoming] more aggressive in protecting various parts of my time, so if I want to do research any particular day, that doesn't involve talking to someone, [I just] won't come in."* (Stephen, Eng, S&E, L, M, L.851-7)

Stephen's mode of survival is not to get involved. He presents changes in course size and structures as if there is an invisible hand squeezing and stretching them. Sidney on the other hand, demonstrates communicative reflexivity in his idea that structural mechanisms result in a sense of immediacy that does not appear to allow for thought, planning and consolidation:

> *'… … we're making lots of decisions … which impact lots of people, but we're doing them all for the wrong reasons. And we're having to do them quickly … not being able to think out why we're changing this or changing that and the implications of it and who it affects."* (Sidney, Aus, SSH, L, M, L426-438)

Alongside this, Sidney talks about always being *"slightly suspicious of the people higher up the administrative ladder"* (L.446-7) because you can never be sure what they are going to

do, change, or impose next. You have to be *"hoping for the best and preparing for the worst at all times"*. (Sidney, Aus, SSH, L, M, L.456-7).

Policy change

Policy changes and restructuring may affect academics' workloads, how they view their work and the possibilities for particular chosen activities, positively or negatively. A change that affected Shaun was degree accreditation by a professional body. This was deemed necessary to ensure continued student applications. His courses did not address the competencies needed in the degree. The consequence of this was that his teaching was taken away. It became necessary to redefine himself:

> *"I … found myself with no units of study to coordinate because … they were no longer deemed important or necessary. So I sat there and I went, well alright I will become what the university executives are telling me I need to, that is a research intensive individual." (Shaun, Aus, HS, SL, M, L.157-163)*

Shaun describes this as a critical incident in his career:

> *"[It was a] slap in the face, because an external accrediting body didn't think my knowledge area was necessary to produce this … degree, as opposed to a university standing up and going, well no the tail doesn't wag the dog, this is what we think is important to become a university graduate and that should inform what becomes a practitioner." (Shaun, Aus, HS, SL, M, L.344-52)*

Shaun felt constrained in his teaching but he exhibits characteristics of autonomous reflexivity sustaining self-contained internal conversations, leading directly to action and taking personal responsibility to shape his academic life. Even though he suffers setbacks both with his career and especially with his teaching, in spite of criticising a number of policies, he emphasises his strategic orientation and his agency in all aspects of his work. Shaun focuses on continually redefining and pursuing his goals ensuring that anything that could be seen as a setback is creatively re-worked for potential success. This "instrumental rationality", according to Archer (2012, p.199) is typical of autonomous reflexivity.

Some academics, in contrast, felt constrained when institutional policies changed. Natalie joined her university when there was a strong emphasis on teaching:

> *"When I started here, … there was this very distinct drive towards being an educator, … we're here to help support learning for the students and to provide a nice structured environment for them to do that learning in, and research was very much on the backburner at that point." (Natalie, Eng, S&E, SL, F, L.45-50)*

However, this university changed its policy to put more emphasis on research.

> *"I don't see myself as a researcher, … when we actually went through the interview process … I didn't have the research that I needed and, ... I ended up on a shortlist for people who, in theory, wasn't making their jobs." (Natalie, Eng, S&E, SL, F, L.76-81)*

The university's attempt to force academics to focus more on research also did not fit with the way Natalie saw her career going.

> *I don't have any desire to keep pushing through the career ladder … My husband stays at home to look after the children, it suits us, we've just bought a lovely big house, I don't want to go anywhere. So in that sense my job is influenced quite heavily by my home life. … I need a career but I'm not doing this because this is my entire life." (Natalie, Eng, S&E, SL, F, L.648-650]*

While her home situation enables Natalie to work, it also appears to constrain her career advancement. However, the constraint could actually be enabling since it appears that her home life gives her a potential reason not to engage in research and consequently move up the career ladder. Her responses suggest she reflects in a communicative mode. This is characterised by internal conversations where reflexions require completion and confirmation by others before resulting in courses of action. Natalie appears to need the confirmation of her actions by students, by colleagues, by her head of department and even by the interviewer. She exhibits "working to stay put", which Archer (2007, p.158) argues is characteristic of communicative reflexivity.

Different ways academics respond to policy depending on how they reflect is well illustrated in the contrast between Isla and Silvie who are in the same faculty (Aus, SSH). After six years in post Isla was promoted. However, two weeks after being informed of this, the university introduced a policy designed to make redundant all academics not research-active. Isla was told that she was at risk of redundancy due to lack of performance on the newly defined research criteria. The target group were required to show how their work contributed in other ways. Isla then had to wait three months to learn the outcome. In reflecting on her situation and recent institutional policies, she is debilitated. In her responses she demonstrates fractured reflexivity. Her internal conversations intensify distress and she is unable to act. When she had study leave, she was not able to use that time productively either. Related to this is her anger about the way the university is managed. This adds to her negativity and sense of powerlessness.

In contrast, Silvie sees herself as manipulating the university so for her the context is much broader:
> *"I've always found that the hierarchy's been interested in what I've had to say and they've taken the opportunity to involve me in a lot of strategic thinking." (Silvie, Aus, SSH, A/P, F, L.61-70)*

Silvie demonstrates meta-reflexivity. She thinks critically about the environment she works in, works to ensure that she communicates a sense of self that is valued, but also challenges the perceived status quo. Her concern with the policy of making redundant non-research-productive academics is one of equity in relation to her colleagues, not its effects on herself:
> *"it's assumed that everyone at [this university] is research active, so you've actually got to be totally inactive to have any penalty and the penalties have been traditionally very low… Obviously the sackings of last year have changed that somewhat, but in practice there's no distinguishing done between people who meet the minimum criteria and people who are very active. So, I don't have children, that's fine for me, but I have argued that it's actually very discriminatory against people with caring responsibilities because that becomes a discretionary part of your workload if it's not actually actively recognised." (Silvie, Aus, SSH, A/P, F , L.382-404)*

All of the participants found themselves in situations of policy turmoil and change but they varied in the degree to which they could navigate their way through these changing conditions. A complex mediation of structural, institutional conditions and policy change was enacted through these academics' reflexive positionings and their perceived ability to act in ways consistent with their academic self and career aspirations.

Responses to particular policy initiatives
William refers to "*red tape*" that surrounds teaching describing initiatives requiring writing learning outcomes and conforming to graduate outcomes statements as "*a fashion, a fad*" (L.257). His concern with the changes in HE and his dislike of the chaos that he believes is being brought about through new policy dimensions demonstrates communicative reflexivity. He recognises the need for change, while all the time working hard to stay put; not to change too much. He is critical of change and trying to come to terms with it. He would like to have the autonomy to decide what he should do but feels unable to do this as he experiences policy change and initiatives being imposed from the top.

> *"I think that most of the kinds of top/down models that have been imposed on us recently have not been good at all. ... I was at the discipline meeting the other day and … we have to map ... to some other graduate outcomes, there was a whole new set– everyone's just absolutely sick of this surfeit of … red tape." (William, L223-231)*
> *"The more that comes from the top down that's imposed upon us, the less say that we have, the more deprofessionalised we've all become. …We're just these subordinates who have to be kept into line. The general culture is we're … not trustworthy." (William, Aus, SSH, L, M, L.475-482)*

Declan (Aus, SS, P, M) also dislikes conforming to red tape and says that it "*saps energy and motivation."* (L.131). Gregorio (Eng S&E, R, M,) says "*the administration is the big, big problem.*"(L.48). Heidi (Eng, S&E, R, F) also recognises the constraints but her autonomous reflexivity means that she rides above it.

> *"it's this interesting dichotomy here between an enormous amount of form-filling and in the end still doing what you want when it comes down to it. … We changed lots of things around but keeping the paperwork such that it didn't ever look like 'major changes'. … Over the many small changes it really looks different [laughter]. It's got nothing to do with what it was. The paperwork wouldn't portray that." (Heidi, Eng, S&E, R, F, L.521-33)*

For all UK academics the 2014 REF was a cause for concern but those exhibiting autonomous reflexivity attempt to navigate their way through expectations that could also fulfil their own research plans:

> *"the REF [is] creating a set of incentives that basically say, 'As long as you produce your four, three star or four star papers...' Then … it completely distorts where people send their work. These days you don't send your work to a journal … [that's] most appropriate. You send it to a journal that you think, the panel might think, is going to be three star, four star." (Geert, Eng, SSH, R, M, L.447-457)*

Jane (Eng, SS, SL, F) feels that the REF is a constraint because she sees herself as an active researcher who publishes "*quite a lot*" (L.253) but that the publications from her ESRC project will not come out in time for it. Kathie responds similarly:

> *"I'm REF-able at three star anyway, so it's not something that worries me. If anything, it's to my advantage because other members of staff might go down to teaching only contracts, which may free up more of my time." (Katie, Eng, SSH, SL, F, L.363-368)*

A number of interviewees describe a commitment to a particular research area that does not fit departmental policy. Such academics appear to be very strategic, with a strong sense of their own research area. For example, although there's a drive within Kathy's department to get teams together, which she sees that as a good thing, she has not been involved herself:

> *"because they're not in my research area and … quite early on when I could see the need for the research in my area. I made the decision that I wasn't just going to join somebody else's grant … if it wasn't directly related to what I was researching." (Kathy, Eng, SS, SL, F, L.304-312)*

Shaun describes a similar situation:

> *"there are some faculty research priorities .. which were suggested as being pillars that we had to try and perform under. I couldn't tell you what they are, I haven't paid attention to them because I remember looking at them and going, my area doesn't fit under them" (Shaun, Aus, HS, SL, M, L.464-480)*

Policy conflicts

Declan is concerned about the effects of different policies on his colleagues:

> *"I think academics are getting mixed messages …, you come back at the beginning of a new year and semester's beginning and the message is, do your work plan, you've got to teach, … we've got to fill up those classrooms. By the time you come to your review in the middle of the year all your supervisor wants to talk about is how much research you've done. That's a mixed message." (Declan, Aus, SSH, P, M, L.362-367)*

Antonio (Eng, S&E, L, M) describes a conflict between research councils' demands that you do interdisciplinary research and research with other people, and requirements for promotion, which require a narrow specialism. *"You are pushed in different directions so it's challenging"* (L.191)

Stephen talks about the difficulty of managing conflicting policies of the university and a research funding body:

> *"I had [a research grant] where there's a project which is entirely open source, so everything we do is put on the web, it's part of the description of the project, … And the university delivers this non-disclosure agreement saying that nothing will be released (laughs). And we said, "The grant award says that everything has to be released." (Stephen, Eng, S&E, L, M, L.716-724)*

Stephen describes the time it took to sort this out as "*a nightmare*" (L.699-701).

Discussion

These findings illustrate their sense of agency as academics create their jobs within particular institutional contexts. This is a complex scenario. We have suggested that academics' responses may be mediated by the forms of reflexivity that they use, and have highlighted some of the different ways that individuals have responded. William illustrates coming to terms with the structural constraints and his own desires within the academic context. Some of the things William said are reflected in other interviews, in terms of how to marry the kind of constraints and initiatives, how to make a career within the mess of what constrains and what enables academics. He suggests that this is something that all academics have to come to terms with: there is too much work, too much constraint, so how do academics turn these constraints into something productive?

We found that academics differed in the extent to which they were aware of, or concerned about their colleagues' responses and these related to different forms of reflexivity. People exhibiting meta-reflexivity were concerned about colleagues in general, but also could be critical of their colleagues, of institutional policies and ways of working. We see this in Silvie's concern for equity and the effects of different institutional policies on academics with different family circumstances, and in Declan's concern about the effects of mixed messages on his more junior colleagues.

Some responses mean that academics are able to recognise particular initiatives but to disregard them. We found this to be the case particularly with the many academics demonstrating autonomous reflexivity where there was a certain detachment from the policy context. Whether or not they understood the context, such as Stephen, or appeared to be in the dark about what was going on such as Sanjay (Aus SS, SL, M), action for these academics was self-contained and purposeful. University policies and initiatives were adhered to only in so far as they supported these academics' personal career trajectories.

Other academics who tended to exhibit communicative reflexivity appeared to be challenged by the policy context, particularly when it changed as in the example of Natalie whose university changed from a focus on teaching to one demanding research. According to Archer (2007), communicative reflexivity is characterised by those who work hard to maintain the status quo and they depend on other people for support to assure them that what they are doing is right. Natalie, is unable to respond positively because she viewed doing research as selfish and this contradicts her dependency on the support and goodwill of her colleagues and students. This contrasts with Shaun who exhibits autonomous reflexivity. A policy to make the degree conform to professional standards resulted in his teaching being taken away, so he redefined himself and changed his whole focus.

Academics who exhibit what Archer (2012) calls fractured reflexivity are debilitated. We see this in Isla's responses to a new research policy. Her university committee work ensured that she maintained her job, but even when she had study leave, which provided time for research, she was unable to do any. We have noted the very different attitude to the same policy from Silvie, whose interview responses tended to exhibit meta-reflexivity. Clearly, the modes of reflexivity of these two women, of similar ages, lengths of service and same faculty, are not the only points of difference between them. However, discussion in terms of Archer's modes of reflexivity has brought their different responses into stark relief.

Some transcripts appeared to be relatively consistent in the mode of reflexivity exhibited and interpretation was therefore straightforward, while other transcripts were more difficult to

identify as several modes of reflexivity appeared to be apparent within the same transcript. We repudiate essentialist assumptions. Our only claim is that the modes of reflexivity provide a useful tool for thinking through individuals' responses to policies and institutional initiatives. In saying this, we in no way deny that other factors may be relevant to how people respond. For example, age, status, gender, career goals, personality and personal circumstances etc., are also likely to play a part.

In attributing different forms of reflexivity to individuals, we stress that these are our interpretations of the interview transcripts. As such they suggest some reasons why particular academics, according to Trowler (1998 p.114) 'swim', and others 'sink'. Archer (2012) argues that different forms of reflexivity are driven by peoples' natal conditions. She suggests that family background, circumstances and aspirations contribute to the ways in which people reflect. While there are some hints in our data that this may be true, we did not explore participants' backgrounds with them, so we cannot substantiate this. However, it would be interesting to explore in a future study because why people adopt particular modes of reflexivity is clearly of relevance to institutional leaders managing academics' responses.

In providing an account in terms of individuals' modes of reflexivity, we have shown different ways in which people may respond when policies and initiatives are required to be implemented. Specifically, we have shown that academics do not simply respond to policy or initiatives as intended. These findings have implications for institutional managers and leaders. They suggest that account needs to be taken of the different ways in which people respond. For example, sensitivity to the ways in which those demonstrating communicative reflexivity work to maintain the status quo and the difficulties they appear to have in responding to change, would suggest that attention needs to be paid to providing academics with thorough rationales for policy changes and that opportunities for these to be debated need to be provided. How such policies fit in with and/or enhance existing practice need careful consideration if they are to be implemented successfully. Academics whose mode of fractured reflexivity makes them unable to move forward may need professional counselling. Our data suggest that for academics demonstrating autonomous reflexivity, teaching and learning policies and initiatives are likely to pose the greatest challenges particularly if they are seen to take time away from research. For successful implementation, such people are likely to need incentives in terms of furthering their careers. In some ways, the people whose mode of reflexivity is meta-reflexivity, could be the most helpful in policy implementation as their focus is likely to be on the smooth and equitable functioning of the university community as a whole. Harnessing the critical capacities of such academics and their concern for their fellow workers can be a useful asset for sensitive managers concerned to implement new initiatives. In short, dealing more realistically with academics' expectations and beliefs about their work and careers is indicated across the board. This means making expectations and rationales very clear, discussing with colleagues how particular initiatives can be accommodated within existing work, ensuring policies do not conflict with each other, and marrying new initiatives with older ones in sensitive ways.

Conclusion
Interviews in research-intensive university environments in England and Australia were interrogated in terms of what they say about how mid-career academics respond to university policies and initiatives. Taking as a starting point a view of policies as being mediated by local action (Vidovich, 2002) our study explored different ways academics have responded. Archer's forms of reflexivity provided a lens through which to interpret different levels of awareness and responses to policies and initiatives, to policy changes and to policy conflicts.

We have suggested that individual academics' responses to institutional initiatives, policies and policy changes can at least partially be understood in relation to the modes of reflexivity that they employ and mediated by their career aspirations and what they consider is desirable. Further work is clearly needed to substantiate the argument in this paper; however, the findings and interpretations so far advanced suggest that such work would be fruitful.

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