The changing academic work in universities:
Lived experience and perceptions of
Australian academics

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Abstract

This thesis examines the changing academic work environment in Australian universities and the impact of this change on academics. In particular, this thesis explores the lived experience and perceptions of university academics working in public universities in Australia.

Across the globe, universities are facing complex issues that can lead to transformational change. The main drivers of change are globalisation, burgeoning knowledge-based economies, the rapidity of new technology adoption, and global competition. The impact of these drivers and the subsequent reforms are ultimately reflected in the changing nature of academics’ work and in the analysis of their experiences.

Over the past four decades, since the Australian government reforms in the 1980s, public universities in Australia have been experiencing change, mainly influenced by new political and economic ideologies, including neoliberalism, corporatisation, managerialism, marketisation, and commodification of education. The consequences of these influences are reportedly having detrimental effects on academics, whereby academics’ esteem value, academic identity, academic freedom, and academic autonomy are all undermined. Academics report experiencing intimidation, bullying, mistrust, and harassment. As such there is a need and urgency for a research study, giving voice to Australian academics themselves, to investigate this problem in order to better understand it.

The public university system in Australia is a vast industry with a large workforce, and the services it provides to the country and economy are many. University academics who play a main role in this industry need to be happy, effective, and efficient in order to be productive. It is therefore important to provide academics with a work environment that enables them to exercise academic freedom, academic autonomy, and an academic professional identity esteemed by their peers. Given the scale of the public university system and the impact of its services on, and economic contribution to, the country, this study is relevant and significant. This study emphasises the importance of prioritising attention to academics to ensure that the changing nature of academic work does not result in detrimental effects on academics and that they can effectively operate in a conducive work environment. To date, there is little research that focuses on Australian academics’ lived experience and perceptions relating to their
changing academic work environment. Hence this thesis is unique and significant because it explores the lived experience and perceptions of academics in Australian public universities.

The study adopts a qualitative research approach, employing an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to explore and analyse the lived experience of the participants. To support inductive research and commence a generation of “new” thinking, the data collection method consists of 16 in-depth, one-on-one, and face-to-face interviews with academics working in eight Australian public universities who are experiencing change. The study takes the approach of standpoint theory.

The thesis points to two findings. The first is the formulation of the academic predicament model (APM), which explains the erosion of academic professionalism and how the change de-professionalises academia in Australia. The second is an understanding of the conflicting forces impacting on academics. On the one hand, in the changing learning environments, academics are expected by management to be innovative, collegial, collaborative, and involved in excellent research activities. On the other hand, with changing university governance, academics’ autonomy and academic freedom are challenged. Academics’ esteemed identity is devalued and undermined. Some academics feel a sense of obligation to conform to Senior Management directives and adhere to the introduced mechanisms of accountability. They report being pressured and stressed by what they regard as undue compliance, competition, and university managements’ high expectations of innovative creativity.

The findings have the potential to deepen the understanding of university managers, relating to the challenges academic staff confront in the changing learning environment, changes to university governance, and new accountability management systems. The research also presents recommendations with the aim of minimising the impact of the changes on academics and providing a conducive work environment in Australian universities. The key recommendations of the study call for strategies for enhancing respectfulness and collegiality, strategies for resisting influences and further application of ideologies in Australian universities, strategies for resolving work intensification, and strategies for improving existing processes and procedures relating to academics.
Statement of originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signed: ________________

Sureetha De Silva

Date: 16/09/2019
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<td>Academic Research Council</td>
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<td>ARWU</td>
<td>Academic Rankings of World Universities</td>
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<td>ATAR</td>
<td>Australian Tertiary Admission Rank</td>
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<td>ATN</td>
<td>Australian Technology Network</td>
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<td>CAEs</td>
<td>Colleges of Advanced Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Officer</td>
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<td>DEST</td>
<td>Department of Education, Science &amp; Training</td>
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<td>DVC</td>
<td>Deputy Vice Chancellor</td>
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<td>ERA</td>
<td>Excellence in Research for Australia</td>
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<td>Go8</td>
<td>Group of Eight Australia</td>
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<td>HECS</td>
<td>Higher Education Contribution Scheme</td>
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<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information Communication Technologies</td>
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<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<td>IPA</td>
<td>Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis</td>
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<td>IRU</td>
<td>Innovative Research Universities</td>
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<td>IT</td>
<td>Information Technologies</td>
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<td>MOOC</td>
<td>Massive Open Online Course</td>
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<td>NHMRC</td>
<td>National Health and Medical Research Council</td>
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<td>NPM</td>
<td>New Public Management</td>
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<td>NTEU</td>
<td>National Tertiary Education Union</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University</td>
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<td>RUN</td>
<td>Regional Universities Network</td>
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<td>SQLR</td>
<td>Systematic Quantitative Literature Review</td>
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<td>TAFE</td>
<td>Technical and Further Education</td>
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<td>TEQSA</td>
<td>Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency</td>
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<td>Times Higher Education Rankings</td>
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<td>United Kingdom</td>
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<td>UNS</td>
<td>Unified National System</td>
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<td>VC</td>
<td>Vice Chancellor</td>
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<td>WAM</td>
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I dedicate this thesis to my beloved parents, Ralph and Srima Fernando.
Acknowledgement of published and unpublished papers included in this thesis


Conference Presentations


Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1. Introduction

This study describes the nature of the changing academic work in Australian universities and the impact of this change on academics. This introduction chapter establishes the case for the research, explains how the research study was conducted to address the identified research problem and how the findings are presented in the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

1.2. Background to the study

Globally, universities are facing complex issues which may lead to transformational change. The main drivers impacting the transformation are globalisation, burgeoning knowledge-based economies, rapidity of the adoption of new technologies, and global competitiveness (Altbach, 2015a, 2015c; Guruz, 2011; Hazelkorn, 2015, 2017; Mok, 2015). These drivers and subsequent government reforms, influenced by new political and economic ideologies, including neoliberalism, corporatisation, managerialism, commodification of education, and marketisation, are ultimately reflected in the changing nature of academic work in universities (Kenny, 2018; Taylor, 2017).

It is claimed that universities have moved from being vehicles for the pursuit of knowledge and venues for independent thought and critique, to large commercial enterprises satisfying demands for educational and applied research services and, corporatisation and commercialisation of universities (Marginson & Considine, 2000; Parker, 2011; Taylor, 2017). Marginson and Considine (2000) have coined the term Enterprise University to name the corporate model adopted by public sector universities, arguing that these universities attempt to graft a business culture onto a public sector organisation. The government and public sector bureaucracy of developed countries including the UK has been “reinventing itself in the form of what is termed New Public Management (NPM), market-based public administration, and
managerialism”. (Parker, 2011, p. 437) The corporatised and commercialised universities are now required by governments to compete in the marketplace for customers, funding, sponsors, and they are expected to adopt a business model, redefining themselves as retailers of products and services. Collegial culture, a former valued feature of universities, has also changed to a market driven culture, reflecting the new managerialism of the NPM model (Parker, 2011).

Academics around the world report experiencing excessive stress due to being under-valued and to being routinely disparaged, bullied, and harassed in their work environments (Gill, 2009; Sims, 2019; Smyth, 2017; Taylor, 2017; Thornton, 2004). Jameson (2017, p. 2) recognises this as a form of de-professionalisation and is said to occur through “questionable managerial behaviour involving controlling, bullying, performance monitoring, thinly justified by economic rationalism”. The impact of this de-professionalisation can be profound. For example, Sims (2019, p. 25), an Australian university academic, explained her personal experiences of being bullied in her workplace and termed it as “de-professionalisation”, which is associated with “increasingly onerous regimes of compliance control policed through policies, regulations, guidelines, and performance management metrics”.

In order to appreciate the extent of the issue of change in Australian universities it is useful to have insight into the scale of the enterprise. There are 41 universities in Australia of which 37 are public universities and four are private universities (Universities Australia, 2019a). This study concentrates on Australian public universities, and academic staff in those universities. Australian public universities employ more than 120,000 full-time staff and many more casual, also known as sessional staff, with 60% of academic staff being sessional ((DoE, 2018, Connell, 2013). (See Appendix A for a map of Australian public universities localities).

Australian public universities are autonomous in their operations and responsibilities. They earn the power to self-accredit their courses, and to approve their own courses through academic boards or similar such bodies. However, they must do so in accordance with the Higher Education Standards Framework. The responsibilities of Australian public universities include, student admissions, staffing structures and appointments, curriculum content and design, teaching and learning and assessment processes, internal budget allocations and research activities (DEST, 2018).
The funding of Australian public comes in the form of a single, block grant from the federal government for operational purposes. A dual funding system operates with regard to university research activities. For research and research training activities, and for the infrastructure costs associated with those activities, a general operating grant is paid to universities. The allocation of this payment is formula-driven, reflecting institutional performance. As such, the Australian Research Council and the National Health and Medical Research Council support researchers and research projects through a competitive funding system (Gallagher, 2000).

The Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) is Australia’s independent national quality assurance and regulatory agency for Australian universities. All organisations that offer higher education qualifications in or from Australia, must be registered by TEQSA. Its purpose is to protect student interests and the reputation of Australia’s higher education sector (DEST, 2018).

Currently, Australian universities are positioned in four groups according to specific aims, objectives, and collaborative initiatives of member universities (Australian Education Network, 2018). These are (a) Group of Eight Australia (Go8)—known as a coalition of leading Australian universities, intensive in research, and comprehensive in general and professional education; (b) IRU (Innovative Research Universities)—a group of universities committed to conducting research of national and international standing; (c) ATN (The Australian Technology Network)—a group of universities that considers itself as sharing a common focus on the practical application of tertiary studies and research; and (d) RUN (The Regional Universities Network)—a group of universities situated in regional Australia. The universities that are not in these four groups are termed Ungrouped Universities (see Appendix B).

Similar to the changing university environment internationally, in Australia, with the government reform of 1987 introduced by the Minister of Education, John Dawkins, the university education system in Australia completely changed (Croucher, Marginson, Norton, & Wells, 2014). Dawkins created what became known as the unified national system of higher education, which transformed colleges into universities and swapped free education to loans for eligible Commonwealth-supported students studying at public universities (HESC); elite education changed to mass
education, local focus took on an international outlook, vice-chancellors became CEOs, and most academics became both teachers and researchers (Dawkins, 1987).

Connell (2013, p.1) has ascertained that when Dawkins’s (1987) neoliberal reform policies in Australia “began to bite in the sphere of higher education” towards the end of the 1980s, a common reaction among university staff was “astonishment and then dismay”. (Connell, 2013, p. 1) They did not want to see staff of other universities as “opponents”; they were their colleagues. They did not want to prove the economic value of courses that were never designed to be “sold”, which Connell (2013, p. 1) stated was “bizarre if not mad requirements, and morally offensive too”. The consequences of Dawkins’s reforms in Australia are mainly considered as having detrimental effects on academics and their work environment. A plethora of literature has been produced—spanning nearly forty years—that describes different aspects of these detrimental effects. However, even after four decades, concerns relating to detrimental effects on academics still linger on. Therefore, it is important that this study is designed to expose and explore unheard or ignored voices of academics.

Australian universities have been reshaped to reflect the model of a corporation and are now considered as competitive corporations and not, as previously considered, “branches of a shared higher education enterprise”. (Connell, 2013, p. 1) University administration has progressed towards a corporate-style, top-down management structure, intensely focusing on revenue, and directing rather than collaborating with other academics (Taylor, 2017). Student numbers have increased rapidly since the 1980s, and this increase is generally termed *massification of higher education*. Although student numbers have increased, there has been no major increase in central state funding. The expansion of student numbers has been handled via rising class sizes and a cheaper labour force: “Federal government funding as a proportion of the higher education budget collapsed, from around 90% to under 50%”. (Connell, 2013, p. 1) Fees have been re-introduced, and they have gradually increased. The focus in universities has been placed on entrepreneurship. For example, vice-chancellors and deans are increasingly understood as entrepreneurs. They are paid as corporate managers and given more autonomy and managerial power (Connell, 2013).

Currently, 120,000 academic staff work in the 37 Australian public universities (DoE, 2018). The scale of economic, social, and cultural benefits these academics
contribute to Australia are recorded in literature (Universities Australia, 2019b). However, the value of the university academic staff and their contribution to the country are not recognised or highlighted, and remain largely unexplored, despite their significance and value to Australia.

1.3. Research gap

Research studies that examine change in academic work internationally and in Australia can be grouped into four categories. In Category 1, researchers examined drivers influencing transformational change in academic work (Guruz, 2011; Hazelkorn, 2015; Jacob & Meek, 2013; Lynch, 2015; Marginson & Van der Wende, 2009; OECD, 2010). In Category 2, the literature focused on empirical studies that reveal negative impacts of the changing work which specifically highlights detrimental effects on academics’ wellbeing and work–life balance (Bell, Rajendran, & Theiler, 2012). A large number of empirical studies were in Category 3, where researchers concentrated on one factor evident in the changing nature of academic work, for example, corporatisation (Taylor, 2017), managerialism (Saunders, 2006), casualisation, (Bexley, Arkoudis, & James, 2013; Klopper & Power, 2014; May, 2011), academic identity, (Winter & O’Donohue, 2012), or entrepreneurialism (Ryan & Guthrie, 2009). Category 4 focused on the source or the country where the research study was conducted. This analysis of the literature revealed that most of the studies relating to Australian university academics are outdated and focus on varied topics other than on Australian university academics’ lived experience on the changing academic work environment. Only four research studies belonged to the 2010–2019 period; they are the studies conducted by Comodromos (2016), Ferrer, J. (2010), Coates, H., & Goedegebuure, L. (2010), and De Zilwa, D. (2010). Hence, the limited number of empirical studies related to the changing academic work in Australian universities, that explore university academics’ lived experience has created a gap in the literature. The interest of this research study is to address that research gap.
1.4. Statement of the problem and research questions

Over the past four decades since the government reforms in the 1980s, public universities have been experiencing change mainly influenced by new political and economic ideologies, including neoliberalism, corporatisation, managerialism, marketisation, and commodification of education. The consequences of these influences are reportedly creating detrimental effects on academics, whereby academics’ esteem value, academic identity, academic freedom, and academic autonomy, are undermined. Academics report experiencing intimidation, bullying, mistrust, and harassment. As such there is a need and urgency for a research study to investigate this problem to better understand it by giving voice to Australian academics. Four research questions (RQ) were formulated for conducting a research study to address the problem:

RQ1  What influence and impact have changes in the university system had upon academics in Australian universities?

RQ2  What opportunities and barriers do academics see and experience in relation to those changes?

RQ3  How are university academics responding to opportunities and barriers they see and experience in relation to the changing landscape of Australian universities?

RQ4  What goals and objectives do academics seek to achieve through such responses?

1.5. The significance and purpose of the study

The public university system is a vast industry with a large workforce, and the services it provides to the country and economy are many. University academics who play a main role in this industry need to be happy, effective, and efficient in order to be
productive. It is therefore important to provide academics with a work environment that enables them to exercise academic freedom, academic autonomy, and an academic professional identity esteemed by their peers.

Given the scale of the public university system, and the impact of its services upon the country and economic contribution, this study is relevant and significant. This study emphasises the importance of prioritising attention on academics to ensure that the changing nature of academic work does not have detrimental effects on academics, and that they can effectively operate in a conducive work environment.

1.6. Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to investigate the lived experience of a cohort of university academics working in public universities in Australia. This aim is accomplished by conducting research interviews with purposively selected academics. The study provides a voice to these academics in understanding the nature of change in university work in Australian universities and captures the impact this change is having on academics. Their narratives of lived experience and perceptions on the topic are analysed and presented in this study.

1.7. Theoretical overview and research design

The theoretical framework employed in this study is that of standpoint theory. A standpoint is a place from which human beings view the world, and it influences how the people adopting it socially construct the world. It is a mental position and an attitude towards a particular issue from an individual’s own perspective (Harding, 1987, 1992, 2004). It was considered the most appropriate theoretical framework for guiding the process of this research, exploring the lived experience, and seeking the perceptions of university academics regarding the changing academic work.

This study adopted a qualitative research approach to support an inductive and open generation of new thinking to emerge from the data. Phenomenology was chosen as the methodology and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) as the desired
research method. The data collection method comprised in-depth, one-on-one, face-to-face interviews of 16 university academics employed by eight Australian public universities situated in the south eastern states of Australia. A single interview was conducted with each of the 16 participants for the duration of 60 to 75 minutes. The interviews were then transcribed and member-checking validated the transcripts prior to analysis. To accomplish a detailed exploration and analysis of personal meaning and the lived experiences of participants, the study employed IPA, which is informed by three key concepts of the philosophy of knowledge: phenomenology—the study of conscious experience and self-awareness; hermeneutics—the method of interpretation; and idiography—the explication of individual cases and events (Eatough & Smith, 2017; Smith & Osborn, 2015).

1.8. Limitations of the research

This section presents the identified major limitations of the study. While some are related to the scope and participant selection of the study, other limitations became apparent through the application of the qualitative phenomenological methodology used in the study.

1.8.1. Limitation of the scope

To explore the lived experience of academics, this study used the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach. In the literature, IPA researchers recommend the use of a small sample size in order to gather “rich, thick data” from in-depth participant interviews (Marx, 2008, p.795). Therefore, 16 academics—a small sample size—from eight Australian universities were interviewed. The intention of the study was not to generalise but to understand the nature of the changing phenomena of academic work in universities and how it affects academics. Although the use of small sample of 16 academics benefitted this intention, it is a major limitation in the study, which is more obvious when considering the large number of academics employed in public universities all around Australia. Due to many reasons, including the scope and time constraints of this study, and the difficulties pertaining to distance when conducting one-on-one, face-to-face interviews with academics in universities in the Northern Territory, Western Australia, and South Australia, only universities on the
south eastern coastline were selected for the study (see Appendix A). In small-scale qualitative research studies with limited participant numbers—as in this study—a noted limitation is the inability to generalise to other populations and situations (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

1.8.2. Limitation on participant selection

The impetus for this study was based on the researcher being employed in an environment where the opportunity arose to witness firsthand how changing phenomena affected university academics. This situation influenced the researcher in the participant selection process, which was focused on purposive sampling. Consequently, the study findings may not apply to the wider community because it is not a representative sampling, which is major limitation of this study.

1.8.3. Limitation on using IPA

One of the limitations of using in-depth interviews in a phenomenological study is that the effectiveness of interviews solely depends on participants’ openness and willingness to articulate their lived experiences. Participants may become comfortable talking only about general information on the topic and avoid describing personal experiences, thereby hindering the gathering of rich data on deep issues that may surface. This comfort zone will limit the main purpose of the study,–exploring academics’ experiences relating to the changing work environment in Australian universities. To avoid this limitation affecting the study, the researcher attempted to create a more personal, friendly, and relaxed environment at the interviews, giving participants more time to reflect on their experiences. Participants were not rushed or coerced, and the researcher continued to encourage them to share their experiences. Therefore, their first-hand information and arguments, and their independent voices on issues related to the topic, were expressed.

1.9. Outline of this thesis

Chapter 2 presents a review of research studies, expert opinions, and discussion papers on literature pertaining to academic work in universities internationally, and
specifically highlighting academic work in Australia. It situates and aligns the current research and literature that complements and informs this research study. To provide a comprehensive review of the topic, a systematic quantitative literature review (SQLR) was conducted, and to enhance its reliability and effectiveness, the Leximancer text analysis software was used as a complementary method to assist in providing an automatic analysis of the conceptual content of related literature.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology applied to the study and the rationale for the appropriateness of this approach. The focus of the research, its purpose, its outcome, the research question, the structure of the methodology chapter, and the theoretical framework of the study are explained here.

Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 present the findings of the study. These chapters describe responses of academics to the four research questions of the study.

Chapter 8 discusses the findings of the research. Referring to previous research studies, the discussion chapter highlights the main arguments that emerge through the findings and focuses on similarities and differences relating to previous studies. This chapter explains the inductive nature of the study that enables the development of a new conceptual model of academic predicaments. This conceptual model is a representation of the lived experience and perceptions of university academics in Australia.

Chapter 9 provides the review and concluding remarks on the thesis. It also presents recommendations, the contributions of the study to knowledge in the field, limitations of the study, and implications of the study for future research.
Chapter 2. A Review of literature

2.1. Introduction

Change occurring in universities internationally and in Australia has been the topic of studies for several decades. For this review, literature published between 2015 and 2019 on the changing academic work in universities is highlighted. Additionally, research studies published prior to 2015, which are highly cited and relevant to the topic, are included in the review. To situate and align the current research and literature that complements and informs this research study, first the changing academic work internationally, and then the changing academic work in Australia are explored. Next, literature that indicates change in academic work due to historical government reforms is reviewed.

For the review of literature in this study, Systematic Quantitative Literature Review (SQLR) was conducted. The systematic quantitative assessment technique has been used in literature reviews in the social sciences for more than a decade and it is considered as a method that provides insights that cannot be gleaned by more traditional narrative approaches (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006; Pickering, Grignon, Steven, Guitart, & Byrne, 2015). It uses systematic methods to collect data, critically appraise research studies, and synthesise findings qualitatively or quantitatively. The outcome achieved by using Systematic Quantitative Literature Review (SQLR) at the initial stage of this study is presented in Figure 2.1. The SQLR revealed four significant emerging themes that cause change in university academic work: (a) increase in student numbers, articulated as massification of higher education; (b) influences of political and economic ideologies including neoliberalism, corporatisation, managerialism, commodification, and marketisation, (c) changing governance, and (d) new mechanisms of performance management, accountability, and auditing. Figure 2.1 presents the process of using SQLR in the study and a justification of the emergent themes. Complementing this diagram, the SQLR Protocol, includes the review question, the inclusion and exclusion criteria, and the literature search terms and evaluation procedures (see SQLR Protocol in Appendix C).
The review of literature on this topic revealed that international and Australian scholars who reported on the changing university academic work, have used more than 25 terms for concepts relating to political and economic ideologies that describe the changing phenomenon and the impact of the phenomenon upon university academics. The literature that explains the phenomenon, represent three subthemes: (a) external pressures, (b) influences of political and economic ideologies, and (c) internal pressures. In this study, Leximancer text analysis software assisted as a complementary method to provide a comprehensive review on the topic, which also enhanced its reliability and effectiveness. Leximancer is a text-mining tool for visualising the structure of concepts and themes in text which uses word-association information to elicit emergent concepts from the text (Smith & Humphreys, 2006).
This chapter consists of six sections. The first section is the introduction and the second section examines the changing phenomenon of universities internationally, and in Australia. The third section examines and reviews literature on Australian public organisations other than public universities. This situates the topic in the broader scholarly literature field. By situating it more broadly, it is possible to compare the trends in other public organisations with public universities, in the context of change. This provides a fuller understanding of the phenomenon. The fourth section presents the changing work in public universities. The fifth section provides an outline of the Australian public universities and the sixth section is the summary of this chapter.

2.2. **Pressures and Influences**

This section investigates and reviews literature relating to the changing phenomenon of universities. The reviews are presented under three subthemes: external pressures, ideological influences, and internal pressures.

2.2.1. **External pressures**

The main drivers influencing change in universities worldwide are noted in the literature as globalisation, burgeoning knowledge-based economies, rapidity of new technologies adoption, global mobility, and university rankings and global competitiveness (Altbach, 2015c; Mok, 2015).

Higher education systems, policies, and institutions are transformed, and the social, economic, and cultural life reshaped by the “widening, deepening, and speeding-up of worldwide interconnectedness” (Held, 1999, p. 2) termed as globalisation (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009; Marginson, 2007). It is defined as a phenomenon that increasingly integrates worldwide communications, education, economics, finance and trade through interactions and interconnectedness (Altbach, 2015c; Marginson & Van der Wende, 2009).

Knowledge-based economies mainly focus on intellectual capabilities instead of on natural resources and physical inputs (Jacob & Meek, 2013). Universities are now drawn into the market of producing and selling knowledge as a commodity, and this
shift from education to market orientation, and to the commodification of knowledge, change social relations in the academic workplace (Sappey, 2006).

Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) have changed the face of teaching and learning for students and academics (Gallagher, 2000). With interconnectedness, international boundaries and divisions appear to be decreasing, and with the advanced capabilities of ICT students are able to search universities across the world and enrol in learning at a distance (Newman, Couturier, & Scurry, 2010). The widespread availability of the internet via personal computers equipped with browsers, and the establishment of the World Wide Web, has revolutionised the way people live, and is considered as the transition to a knowledge society and a global knowledge economy (Gates, 2006). By accelerating the use of information and communication technologies, which bridge time and space in unprecedented ways, and by continually decreasing costs, the use of new technologies is changing the work context in university academic environments (IAU, 2012). Information Communication Technologies have promoted online/cyber learning, which has encouraged the birth of cyber identity, and cyber isolation– alienation from human interaction (De Silva, 2002). Termed as the ICT revolution, new technologies are transforming the industrial society into a knowledge society (Guruz, 2011).

Global mobility is a concept also referred to as cross-border higher education, or international mobility in higher education. It applies to students, academic staff, researchers, educational programs, and institutions (OECD, 2010). Some institutions have included global mobility incentives in their institutional goals, such as introducing specific internationalisation programs, by providing research funding and career development portfolios to attract high-performing young researchers to their institution (Jacob & Meek, 2013).

University rankings have become an indicator to gauge the competitiveness and excellence of worldwide universities. It is a growing focus of universities around the world. Students associate high rankings with better and higher quality education (Hazelkorn, 2015, 2017). University rankings are frequently used to determine the status of individual institutions and assess the quality and performance of higher education systems (Cooper & Poletti, 2011; Lynch, 2015). The most prominent ranking systems include the Academic Rankings of World Universities (ARWU), QS World
University Rankings (QS), Times Higher Education Rankings (THE), CWTS Leiden Rankings, and Webometrics (ARWU, 2018; Pusser & Marginson, 2013; QS, 2018; Rauhvargers, 2013; THE, 2018).

Marginson (2006), commenting on global competitiveness stated that universities are adopting reform measures to enhance their research performance with the intention of performing well in the global university rankings and becoming internationally competitive. University management is expected to focus on competitive advantages in their strategies to enhance efficiency and productivity (Nayyar, 2008). According to Marginson (2006) within a world-wide university hierarchy inequality between universities is necessary for global competitiveness.

2.2.2. Ideological influences

This section reviews studies conducted, and articles written by international and Australian scholars on the influences of political and economic ideologies, specifically relating to neoliberalism, corporatisation, marketisation, commodification and managerialism, on the changing landscape of universities.

The literature highlights how neoliberalist ideology has subsequently taken over governments, universities, and people, in some parts of the world in the past four decades. Talking about neoliberalism, Brown (2015, p. 9) comments that “a new form of governmental reason has been unleashed in the Euro-Atlantic world” that has inaugurated “democracy’s unmooring and substantive disembowelment”. What Brown means is that, neoliberalism as a “normative order of reason” has eventually become a “widely and deeply disseminated governing rationality” that has “transmogrified every domain of human endeavour”. (Brown, 2015, p. 10) Brown (2015) and Smyth (2017) further explain that neoliberalism is more than a set of economic policies, an ideology, or a resetting of the relation between state and economy, it disseminates market values and metrics to every sphere of life.

The influences of neoliberalism have impacted upon the changing work conditions in universities and has “led to de-professionalisation, alienation and a loss of professional autonomy and identity”. (Rudd & Goodson, 2017, p. 1) Neoliberalism, which means a modern version of liberalism was championed in the 1980s by the politicians Margaret Thatcher in the UK and Ronald Regan in the USA (Davies, 2016),
and promoted in Australia in the late 1980s by Dawkins reforms (Dawkins, 1987). In the literature, it is noted that much of the policies and practices in higher education attributed to the impact of neoliberalism, either provides the context for the policy or offers an explanation (Tight, 2019). However, the term neoliberalism is habitually used in recent literature in the context of universities with a negative connotation. When neoliberalism was first introduced it had considerable popularity and Harvey (2005) justifies its use in universities.

*Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices.*

(Harvey, 2005, p. 2).

However, characteristics of this new ideology are quite different to the culture and characteristics of the traditional universities. Some of these characteristics that impact on the changing nature of universities and academic work highlighted by Olssen and Peters (2005, p. 314) are presented here:

- the view of individuals as economically self-interested subjects, or the self-interested individual;
- the perception that the best way to allocate resources and opportunities is through the market, or free market economics; and
- the view that the free market is a self-regulating order and it regulates itself better than the government or any other outside force, which is considered as a commitment to laissez-faire.

Although university activities are conventionally recognised as human activities that are not strongly associated with markets, this phenomenon is changing. Tight (2019) considered neoliberalism to be a global pedagogical project. The features attached to this thought are that this pedagogical project aims at the dispossession of free time so that all of life becomes productive, and it aims at marketising all of social life and recognises the roles of staff and students as entrepreneurial subjects whose
activities are enabled through technology. Senior Management in universities has adopted this global pedagogical project because it serves as a mechanism for institutions to improve (Tight, 2019).

Literature has also confirmed the futility of adhering to neoliberalist characteristics in universities. For example, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) report by Ostry, Loungani, and Furceri (2016, p. 38), published in the quarterly *Journal of Finance & Development* stated that, “… the 40-year experiment with neoliberalism, as a philosophy and a set of practices has failed … instead of delivering growth, some policies have increased inequality, in turn jeopardising durable expansion”. If characteristics of neoliberalism are not benefitting universities, there may not be any need to continue the application of them anymore in Australian universities. Such thoughts were conveyed by Smyth (2017). He further commented that “Neoliberalism is being dumped upon by its proponents because it has not delivered growth … so, where does this leave the apologists in universities, who have either wilfully or negligently bought into this bankrupt and predatory ideology?” (Smyth, 2017, p. 210).

In his study, Parker (2011) focused on corporatisation and commercialisation of universities in developed countries including the United Kingdom, Europe, North America and Australasia since the 1980s. He commented that the “nature and magnitude of the recent shift in university identity and role can be characterised, in terms of culture, governance, structure and operational focus, as the corporatisation of universities, along with the commercialisation of their missions, objectives and operations” (Parker, 2011, p.437). The aim of Parker’s study was to investigate and interpret the implications of underlying factors that have produced the process of university corporatisation and commercialisation, and he attempted to address five associated questions:

a) What key environmental factors have spawned the apparent radical transformation of university identity and focus?

b) How has government played such a central role in motivating these changes?

c) What are the corporate characteristics that universities have imported from the private sector?

d) What historical origins do they appear to reflect?
e) Finally, how are these influences and change reflected in the identity and role of academics serving within these institutions?

However, Parker’s study does not gather personal experiences or perceptions of university academics to inquire how they experience the influences of corporatisation and commercialisation.

McCarthy, Song, and Jayasuriya (2017, p.1) focused on Australia as a case study to argue that the managerial culture has alienated academics from their labour, and that Australian universities over the last 25 years have been unified, internationalised, corporatised, and have become mass educational providers. They further commented that introducing a corporate and managerial model into universities is a consequence of massification of higher education and marketisation. McCarthy et al. (2017) highlighted four factors that occur within this changing phenomenon: (a) how academics disassociate from the educational purposes of their academic roles and consequently lose their skills; (b) how academic work is commodified in the process due to a lack of understanding; (c) how, with influences of corporatisation, higher education is subjected to systemic regulatory governance, which has transformed the nature of academic work; and (d) how there is a growing discontent from academics with the corporate and managerial model. However, they do not mention academics’ lived experience and perceptions relating to academics’ discontent. Marginson and Considine (2000) shared similar explanations regarding corporatisation and ascertained that Australian universities became corporatised in the process of unifying universities to a single model of disinvestment, internationalisation, and massification.

Deem, (2004) explained how corporatised universities adhered to a demand-driven system and moved away from the traditional collegial decision making, and subsequently accepted a new public management associated with managerial governance. Agreeing with contemporary scholars, Collini (2012) and Hil (2012) raised their concerns about universities following the corporate direction under an enterprise culture, with a top-down structure.

While Kenny’s (2018) study explored workload and performativity in universities, he examined ways of re-empowering academics in a corporate culture. He argued that in modern universities, managerialism, which is now the norm, has disempowered academics within their institutions and reduced productivity because
corporate approaches do not pay much attention to academics. They “ignore the nature of academic work” (Kenny, 2018, p. 366).

Chapleo and O’Sullivan (2017) investigated how academic work has been affected by influences of marketisation, commercialisation and commodification and discussed transformations in academic work relating to universities being positioned in the market place. Traditionally, the purpose of the higher education was considered as a public good with a clear societal mission. However, throughout the years the purpose and missions of higher education have evolved and now it is considered differently. Scholars talk about higher education as an increasingly global, diverse, complex, and crowded education market (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016).

Some scholars consider marketisation, commercialisation and commodification as a phenomenon that is inevitable. Hemsley-Brown, Melewar, Nguyen, and Wilson (2016), and Pucciarelli and Kaplan (2016), commented that economic, technological, and social change have necessitated a customer-oriented approach without giving universities much choice but to market themselves with holistic competitive strategy. Therefore, most of the worldwide universities are now recognising the need to implement marketing concepts. Some universities are keenly establishing band-building approaches in order to reach their potential targets and to promote the value propositions of their universities (Chapleo & O’Sullivan, 2017).

With the change in the higher education sector in Australia, a major shift was evident relating to “higher education delivered as a service encounter” (Sappey, 2006, p. 495). This transformation of pedagogical exchange to a service encounter indicates how education is now being used as a commodity and how the traditional norms are now moving on to market relationships. Sappey’s research was undertaken with 25 business faculty academics and academic managers from three universities along the Australian east coast and the study involved the techniques of observation, interviews, content analysis of policy documents and content analysis of web-based communication. The findings noted how in some universities the management is now “constructing the student as ‘customer’ and reconstructing the employee in response to management’s perceptions of customer wants” (Sappey, 2006, p. 496).
2.2.3. **Internal pressures**

Enrolling large numbers of students to universities created unprecedented internal pressures in universities. The term *massification of higher education* indicates a significant increase in the proportion of the global population seeking tertiary qualifications in the latter part of the twentieth century (Scott, 1995). This increase of the student population has been termed in the literature as a *rapid expansion* (Engel, & Halvorson, 2016; Teichler, 2006; Trow, 2005). Trow’s (1973) notion of massification has been presented by Brennan (2004) and Trow (2005) with an illustration, portraying transformations in university enrolments from elite to mass to universal. Elite means shaping the mind and character of a ruling class in preparation for elite roles. Mass means transmission of skills and preparation for a broader range of technical and economic elite roles. Universal means adaptation of the “whole population” to rapid social and technological change. Table 2.1 visualises Trow’s conceptions of *Elite, Mass* and *Universal Higher Education*, adapted from Trow (2005), he explains further, how the phenomenon changed including change in: (a) institutional characteristics, (b) academic standards, (c) curriculum and forms of instruction and (d) internal governance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.1</th>
<th>Trow’s Conceptions of Elite, Mass, and Universal Higher Education</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>i) Attitudes to access</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite (0-15%)</td>
<td>Mass (16-50%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A <em>privilege</em> of birth or talent or both</td>
<td>A <em>right</em> for those with certain qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ii) Functions of higher education</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shaping mind and character of ruling class; preparation for elite roles</td>
<td>Transmission of skills; preparation for broader range of technical and economic elite roles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>iii) Curriculum and forms of instruction</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly structured in terms of academic or professional conceptions of knowledge</td>
<td>Modular, flexible and semi-structured sequence of courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>iv) The student ‘career’</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“sponsored” after secondary school; works uninterruptedly until gains degree</td>
<td>Increasing numbers delay entry; more drop out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>v) Institutional characteristics</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Homogenous with high and common standards</td>
<td>· Comprehensive with more diverse standards;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Small residential communities</td>
<td>· “Civics of intellect”—mixed residential/commuting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Clear and impermeable boundaries</td>
<td>· Boundaries fuzzy and permeable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>vi) Locus of power and decision making</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘The Athenaeum’—small elite group, shared values and assumptions</td>
<td>Ordinary political processes of interest groups and party programs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
vii) **Academic standards**

| Broadly shared and relatively high (in meritocratic phase) | Variable; system/institution ‘become holding companies for quite different kinds of academic enterprises’ | Criterion shifts from ‘standards’ to ‘value added’ |

viii) **Access and selection**

| Meritocratic achievement based on school performance | Meritocratic plus ‘compensatory programs’ to achieve equality of opportunity | ‘open’, emphasis on ‘equality of group achievement’ (class, ethnic) |

ix) **Forms of academic administration**

| Part-time academics who are ‘amateurs at administration’; elected/appointed for limited periods | Former academics now full-time administrators plus large and growing bureaucracy | More specialist full-time Professionals. Managerial techniques imported from outside academe |

x) **Internal governance**

| Senior professors | Professors and junior staff with increasing influence from students | Breakdown of consensus making institutional governance insoluble; decision-making flows into hands of political authority |

(Brennan, 2004, p. 24; Trow, 2005, p. 1)

This table highlights the nature and intensity of student enrolments and the profound implications for the way university education is planned, delivered, funded, and quality assured across the globe. The ongoing expansion of higher education brings numerous challenges, as well as opportunities for governments and institutions. An analysis of how successive Australian governments eventually promoted massification is outlined in Table 2.2.

### Table 2.2 An analysis of promoting massification in Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whitlam Government reforms: 1972 to 1975</td>
<td>With the removing of tertiary education fees, massifications in Australia began.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dawkins’ reforms under the Hawke government: 1980</td>
<td>Dawkins’ reforms further promoted massification and a new group of students previously deprived of entering universities had the opportunity of pursuing higher education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987 and 2001</td>
<td>Massification significantly increased between 1987 and 2001. Student enrolments increased from 78,000 to 600,000; university degrees were no longer solely for the elite; thus, massification began in the Australian higher education system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bradley Report: 2008</td>
<td>The Bradley report allowed providers to set their own entry standards and to enroll as many students as they wished into eligible programs, according to demand, while continuing to receive government subsidies under the Commonwealth Supported Places scheme (Bradley, Noonan, Nugent, &amp; Scales, 2008).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014 Review</td>
<td>In 2014, the demand-driven funding system report recommended extending the current demand-driven model to sub-bachelor and postgraduate courses (Kemp, 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014 to present</td>
<td>The rapid and massive increase of student numbers has continued. At the same time intensification of academic workloads and varied changes and issues linked to massification has continued.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In 2011, there was a rapid increase of domestic students in Australian university enrolments, and this growth in student numbers came from students in the lower ranks of the ATAR (Australian Tertiary Admission Rank) distribution, whose school attainment would previously not have been considered suitable for direct university entry (Go8, 2014). The admission of students with lower entrance scores created challenging situations for academics with significant implications relating to student retention, underprepared students with lower academic capability, and lower educational achievement (Devlin, 2013; Go8, 2014). A similar situation was noted in the findings of a UK study published in 2016, which indicated that, among other factors, the increase in student numbers implies a deterioration of higher education service quality (Giannakis & Bullivant, 2016). Like the increases in student numbers in Australia, and in the UK, the student numbers in universities globally have doubled during the past two decades. Currently worldwide, more than 150 million students are enrolled. The prediction is that another 100 million will add to this number by 2020 (Altbach, 2015c).

Scholars argue that massification of higher education has placed greater stress on government funding, created shortages of qualified academic staff, and that “overall quality has declined” (Altbach, 2015c, p. 4). Nearly one decade earlier, Land (2004, p.1) predicted “convergent pressures” on higher education systems because of massification of education. Drawing upon 35 participants from UK universities, the findings of Land’s (2004) research indicated that steep increases in student enrolments contributed to situations of declining units of resources infrastructure, academic standards, and the widening of staff–student ratios in universities. Additionally, massification of education is influencing other significant change in universities, such as redesigning curricula to accommodate massification, changing pedagogy, and changing staff roles and priorities (Land, 2004). Additionally, increased use of technology in teaching, and growth of managerialism in universities have been noted as effects of massification (Engel, & Halvorson, 2016).

This section further reviews some of the literature that has examined changing accountability management, auditing, and the application of new mechanisms to ensure academic quality assurance. The term ‘academic quality assurance’ is explained as “a demonstration or verification that a desired level of quality of an academic activity has been attained or sustained” (TEQSA, 2018, p. 1). The academic activities mentioned...
here are normally described as activities relating to teaching, learning, scholarship, research, and research training for higher degrees by research. The mechanisms, including systems, processes, and other activities that are employed to verify such attainments are typically known as quality assurance systems, quality systems, or “quality assurance” (TEQSA, 2018, p. 1).

Davis (2017), in his study on managerialism and quality assurance in universities identified five aspects of what is needed to enhance academic quality assurance in a university. He recognised specific efforts that reduce the risks associated with ritualised quality assurance practices: (a) establishing quality assurance in the unique context of the institution, (b) ensuring that the efforts of policymakers are aligned with those of policy users, (c) ensuring quality based on sound auditing principles, without excessively monitoring performance, (d) building a quality culture where quality assurance is practiced in an enabling environment, and (e) allowing quality assurance practices to be adaptable. These findings add value to the current literature review because they suggest what is required for a positive outcome amid challenges from managerialism and quality assurance and the varied changes that may eventually affect academics.

For quality assurance and accountability management, universities utilise a wide range of audit mechanisms which are commonly known as performance indicators, benchmarks, quality assurance protocols, research assessment exercises, teaching quality reviews, and league tables (Craig, Amernic, & Tourish, 2014). In the study of Craig et al., (2014, p.1) they commented that “extensive auditing of research output ….has damaged individual scholarship and threatened academic freedom”. As such they have termed the impact of audit culture upon academics as “pervasive audit culture”. Additionally, Craig et al. (2014, p.1) have highlighted that the audit culture which has developed in public universities has led to counter-productive outcomes and that “managerial oversight of academic work has reached a critical tipping point”.

Academic freedom is noted in literature as a core value of higher education that protects freedom of teaching, research, and expression of academia, and that the principles of academic freedom are fundamentally important to the pursuit of knowledge (Altbach, 2015b; Williams, 2016). The Declaration of Principles of Academic Freedom published by the American Association of University Professors
(AAUP, 2018) highlighted three main principles of academic freedom: (a) freedom of inquiry and research - to promote inquiry, and advance the sum of human knowledge; (b) freedom of teaching within the university - to provide general instruction to the students; and (c) freedom of extramural utterance and action - to develop experts for various branches of the public service. These three elements are considered as “at the heart of today’s definitions of academic freedom” (Altbach, 2015b; Williams, 2016, p.10). However scholars argue that academic freedom in many countries is “under threat” and is “under considerable stress today” (Altbach, 2015b, p. 3).

While literature denotes that academics should not be requested to explain to the wider public, to policy makers, or to other stakeholders the significance of what they do as academics, there is a demand for academics to quantify impact to industry and societal end-users within a specific, set time period (Olssen, 2016). This notion represents a new dimension of audit evaluation and, according to Olssen (2016, p.139), “the impact agenda goes well beyond the initial reasons provided for introducing accountability of research, and extends into dangerous areas of monitoring and control”. Olssen’s study attempted to understand the positioning of neoliberal strategies on accountability management in academia, and then tried to assess the consequences of these changes for the university sector. Olssen commented that these consequences of audit processes establish some of the ways in which the academic career is de-professionalised. Olssen’s findings and commentary can be considered as a significant change relating to academic work in universities and which provide evidence that professionalisation in academia is being redefined due to accountability management and auditing processes.

Olssen (2016, p.139) further highlighted the predicaments academics are faced with due to the “erosion of individual researcher autonomy and control, and the increased constraints exerted over professionalism”. He explained, that in the UK, with the Research Excellence Framework (REF), there is an “increasing concern with control over the substance and content of what is being researched” (Olssen, 2016, p.140). This affects academic work in two ways. Firstly, it alters what is being researched, and the nature of knowledge production in universities, it diminishes researcher creativity, and undermines researcher autonomy, because now the research must be evaluated according to its impact on the industry, policy, society, stakeholders as end-users. The second consequence is “equally insidious”, commented Olssen (2016, p.140), and explained how REF demands what kinds of journals academic need to publish in.
Similar to thoughts expressed by Olssen relating to increased constraints exerted over professionalism, many scholars have noted the internal pressures academics encounter by adhering to traditional traits of academic professionalism. They have further discussed the complexity and difficulty in determining a clear and straightforward definition for “academic professionalism”. (Evans, 2010; Kolsaker, 2009; Smyth, 2017). While Boyt, Lusch, and Naylor, (2001) considered that professionalism means attitudes and behaviour a person possesses toward their profession, Evans (2010) ascertained that what professionalism means mainly relates to what practitioners or workers do in the context of their working lives, specifically the quality of services they provided and everything related to their professions. He further noted that academic professionalism is this interpretation of professionalism applied to academics. Fraser (2017) considered the changes that are apparent in professionalism as an indication of a ‘new professionalism’, and he argued that now in the UK ‘traditional-professionals’ are being de-professionalised and re-professionalised as a consequence of new managerialism and neoliberalisation.

The notion of professional status being discredited or deprived to professionals has been noted by scholars as de-professionalisation. (Dearlove 1997, Fraser, 2017, Smyth, 2017). According to varied comments by scholars, de-professionalisation can be understood as taking away from academics their academic autonomy, academic freedom and academic identity, which may eventually demoralise them and cause unprofessional experiences for academia (Exworthy & Halford, 1999; Flynn, 1999; Fournier, 2000; Fraser, 2017). For example, internal pressures caused by performance management in universities have been cited as one of the main reasons of de-professionalisation. (Fraser, 2017), Literature has ascertained that de-professionalisation is evident in the changing university environment with the “rise of managerialism and the fall of collegiality” (Dearlove 1997, p. 61).

In the academic work environment in higher education, collegiality is considered as the “cornerstone” of professional work (Cipriano, 2011, p.172). Previous literature states that the presence of collegiality in a university academic work environment may be recognised by the way members of academia interact and show respect to one another, share responsibilities, and work collaboratively in order to achieve a common purpose. The history of universities reveals that traits of collegiality, including “communitarian and independent spirit” has been the foundation of the University
(Weinberg, and Graham-Smith, 2012, p. 78). But in the current universities the collegial spirit is disappearing (Clark, 2001) and Weinberg, and Graham-Smith, (2012) further commented that collegiality is presently undermined by managerialism and its profit-driven motives.

In the changing academic work environment academic autonomy is another attribute that is challenged. Academic autonomy is explained in existing literature as the “right to determine the nature of one’s work” within a community of scholars (Neave, 1988, p.43).

Literature that focuses on the findings of research relating to ‘academic identity’ recognised that academic identity cannot be explained with reference to descriptions of teaching, research, or management roles in academia, and that it can be “understood not as a fixed property, but as part of the lived complexity of a person’s project”. (Clegg, 2008, p. 329). Literature further noted that values are considered as significant and central when defining the identity of individuals, and that external pressures and changing university structures eventually shape and develop academic identities. (Winter & O’Donohue, 2012) As such, traditional notions in public universities relating to the relationship between values and academic identity may be considered as being under threat (Clegg, 2008; Winter & O’Donohue, 2012). Scholars noted that managerialism, prioritising and emphasising economic logic, and academic professionalism that focuses on university value systems create “academic identity tensions arising from pressures to combine and sustain competing and contradictory managerial and academic values systems” (Winter & O’Donohue, 2012, p. 1). Henkel (2005) stated that in the study he conducted, discipline and academic freedom are the two themes that emerged as most important for academic identities. He further commented that the notion of academic identity traditionally enjoyed by academics is now challenged. According to Harris (2005), with the corporatisation of academia, the distinction between corporate identities and academic identities is now becoming blurred.

Another internal pressure that affects change in university academics’ work is the changing university governance. Gayle, Tewarie, and White (2011) described university governance as the structure and process of authoritative decision making across issues that are significant for external as well as internal stakeholders within a university. Scott (2018) argued that university governance is a complex field which can
be interpreted in a narrow sense, focusing on the formal ‘government’ of higher education systems and institutions, or in a wider sense, emphasising ‘governance’ to embrace formal, legal, and administrative regimes and how decisions are taken and implemented. According to De Silva, Klopper, and Pendergast (2018) universities are facing complex issues which often leads to transformational change, and among the changes, university governance and accountability management have been noted as areas of reform. Universities are challenged in all aspects of their activities including the nature of their students, the way they deliver knowledge and do research, the way they interact with the community, business, the state and other universities, and the way they manage their human resources (Mora and Vieira, 2009). While universities must cope with new challenges in the current changing environments Mora & Vieira believed that many of them are related to governance. They noted the main trends of change in university governance as, (a) enhancing institutional autonomy, (b) less state regulation, (c) increasing university leadership and losing relevance of collegial model, (d) greater reliance on market influences, (e) greater cooperation with the wider society and, (f) greater accountability as well as detailed procedures for quality assurance (Mora and Vieira, 2009).

Bleiklie and Kogan’s (2007) study analysed how organisational patterns of university governance, and decision-making structures, have been changing over the past few decades from the classical notion of the university, which they call “a republic of scholars”, to the current, changed patterns of university governance termed as “stakeholder organisation” (Bleiklie & Kogan’s, 2007, p.1). In the traditional notion of university governance, leadership and decision making are based on collegial decisions of academics. But in the changing notion, “institutional autonomy is considered as a basis for strategic decision making by leaders who see it as their primary task to satisfy the interests of major stakeholders” (Bleiklie & Kogan’s, 2007, p.1). Because academic, collegial opinions and decisions are not considered significant anymore they are now seen and heard as another voice among several other stakeholders.

Enders, Kehm and Schimank (2015) based their research on case studies relating to four European countries (Austria, England, Germany, The Netherlands) and explored the effects of the New Public Management (NPM) upon the changing governance of higher education and research. According to their argument although NPM is likely to
“strengthen external steering of research”, when relating to the changing governance and its effects on academics it is evident that such change reduces academic autonomy, and “push towards a de-coupling of research and teaching” (Enders et al., 2015, p.1). The next section examines and reviews literature of public sector organisations excluding public universities.

2.3. Changing work in public sector organisations

The review of literature in this section indicates that changes have been taking place in public organisations in Australia, and specifically in several other countries, since the late 1980s. This section emphasises some of the significant changes and the impact of those changes on employees in public sector organisations.

The research conducted by Nica (2013) examined the transformative nature of organisational change, and the data provided a context for understanding the manager’s role in the changing process. The findings of the study emphasised the critical role that public managers play in bringing about organisational change. According to Nica (2013, p. 179) the changes occurring in the public sector were influencing ways of disciplining employees and establishing conditions that were changing the public workplace culture which was considered as a “rigid civil system with flaws”.

The purpose of the study conducted by Ryan, Williams, Charles, and Waterhouse (2008) was to improve ways of carrying out change management strategies in public sector organisations and critique the top-down approach. To collect data a series of employee focus groups, organisation communication outputs, and interviews with key management personnel were used. The research was conducted as a three-year longitudinal case study to determine the effectiveness of the top-down approach to change, in a large public sector organisation. It examined the way in which the top-down approach could have been more successful if used in conjunction with other approaches involving middle managers and employees, especially regarding the planning and implementation of change. The findings of the study indicated that a top-down change strategy needs to be coupled with other change strategies for change to become successfully embedded in the organisation. Ryan et al. (2008) commented that
organisational factors and processes can limit effective communication from top-down change filtering through to all employees. The study also showed that genuine consultation and meaningful two-way communication must be established for top-down change strategies to function effectively together with other techniques. The study was significant because it highlighted the vital importance of middle managers in communicating organisational change and the need to establish a genuine two-way communication flow (Ryan et al., 2008).

Bouckaert, Peters, and Verhoest, (2016) examined the tension between specialisation and coordination in public organisations. They examined the pattern of organisational autonomy in seven countries (New Zealand, United Kingdom, Sweden, the Netherlands, France, Belgium and the USA) by presenting their trajectory from 1980 to 2005. In the study the coordination strategies in the seven countries were compared with drivers for coordination and the nature of the reform and changes in the coordination mechanisms used. The findings noted that all countries responded to the ideas of New Public Management (NPM) in the same way, highlighting that “by following NPM doctrines the seven countries have increased levels of specialisation within their public sector… fragmentation of management and policies increase because higher levels of specialisation, and lower levels of coordination and consolidation” (Bouckaert et al., 2016, p. 237).

The purpose of the study by Bason (2018) was to improve productivity or service delivery and highlight the importance of public innovation. Bason stated that his publication helped to connect the concept of innovation to the fundamental role of government and public organisations, to generate new ideas that create value for society. He considered it as a process of innovation and experimentation, in which governments are responsible simultaneously for ensuring stability and steering society through an ongoing process of change. Another important contribution of his publication is that now it is possible to consciously and systematically create innovative public solutions.

Previous research has shown that not all employees encounter change initiatives in the same way. The attitudinal constructs representing employees during change have been highlighted as: cynicism about change (Watt & Piotrowski, 2008), readiness for organisational change (Choi & Ruona, 2011), openness to change (Devos, Buelens, & Bouckenooghe, 2007; Robbins & Judge, 2017), and commitment to change (Meyer, Srinivas, Lal, & Topolnytsky, 2007). These four constructs have been seen as reflecting
Cynicism to change has been considered by scholars as an employee attitude that is detrimental to organisational change (Watt & Piotrowski, 2008). It has been defined as a complex attitude that includes cognitive and behavioural aspects resulting in increased beliefs of unfairness, feeling of distrust, and related actions about and against organisations (Bommer, Rich, & Rubin, 2005). Bommer et al. conducted their study as an empirical assessment of individual-level change within an organisational setting using longitudinal data collected from 372 employees. The findings indicated that transformational leader behaviours influenced employees’ cynicism about organisational change. Critical factors that can create cynicism among employees in organisations have been noted as: lack of faith in leadership, and, an unrealistic and frustrated expectation (Beer, Voelpel, Leibold, & Tekie, 2005). The importance and benefit of further empirical studies on the changing organisational culture in the public sector has been emphasised by Choi (2011) who has commented that the findings can enable organisations to better support employees during change initiatives and improve organisations’ ability to increase employees’ acceptance of change. This section reviewed literature that focused on how employees in public organisations other than public universities viewed organisational changes specifically after the introduction of changes in 1980s, including the impact of the new public management system. The next section examines changing work in public universities.

2.4. Changing work in public universities

The exponential increase of student numbers in the late 1980s has been noted in literature as one of the causes for the changing of academic work in public universities, and this change has been termed by commentators as a rapid expansion and massification in universities (Altbach et al., 2009; Land, 2004; Teichler, 2006; Trow, 2005). According to Land (2004), steep increases in student enrolments contributed to situations of declining units of resources, infrastructure, and the widening of staff-to-student ratios in universities. Land (2004) further elaborated that redesigning curricula to incorporate the
masses, changing pedagogy, and changing staff roles and priorities subsequently transformed academics’ workplace culture. Another transformation evident in university work environment is that it is now governed by consumer orientation—from a pedagogical exchange to a service encounter—in which the core of all activities and decisions in the university now focus on satisfying the consumer. Additionally, the relationship between academics and student-customers is now considered as a corporate relationship rather than a student–academic relationship (Sappey, 2006).

It is noted that as universities have been affected by the decline in public funding, they have been coerced to adopt a more entrepreneurial approach and more market-like behaviour in managing universities. This situation has been reinforced by increasing competition, globalisation, communication technology, and flexible delivery (Sappey, 2006). Conveying similar arguments Olssen and Peters (2005), and Szekeres (2004) commented that intensified competition has led university providers to be influenced by neoliberal ideologies and a corporate-style culture, initiating transformations in universities.

The managerial control in universities has been referred to as a shift from collegiate to a hierarchical decision-making process, and “market competition, managerial rationalism and performance monitoring”, influenced by managerialism has been referred to as the “migration of practices from the private sector to higher education” (Kelly, 2012, p. 13; Szekeres, 2004). The general terminology that was used in traditional universities has been replaced by vocabulary associated with corporate organisations. For example, the vice chancellor is positioned as a strategic director, or a change agent; and discourses used in university operational plans highlight terms that were not used previously, including formulae, key performance indicators, performance management, unit costs, and effective benchmarking (Harris, 2005; Olssen & Peters, 2005). In this changed environment, universities are now operate in a “marketplace” (Szekeres, 2004, p. 9), competing with other providers for students, government funding, using clear reporting lines and sophisticated reporting tools necessary to successfully account for all its activities (Szekeres, 2004). As universities compete to maintain their market position in a rapidly changing global knowledge economy, corporate image and identity are becoming increasingly important to sell universities’ brand names and products.
Teelken (2012) conducted a comparative European study on managerialism and organisational commitment, exploring how academics deal with managerialism in universities. In his study the first phase of the data collection comprised a questionnaire completed in 18 universities within six European countries by 2,325 respondents, and the second phase of the data collection comprised 48 interviews in universities in the Netherlands, Sweden, and the UK in order to investigate which effects of managerialism the respondents experienced in their daily work in higher education, and how they coped with these managerial changes. The respondents in the three countries agreed that during the past five years they had observed an increased emphasis on performance measurement, and more assessment of quality in research as well as in teaching in universities. Teelken (2012) noted that some respondents experienced an impact on academic autonomy while some others experienced increasing control from the university management. The nature of this control was linked to quality checks through the measurement of performance, particularly through the research assessment exercise, the financial aspects of research, and the possibilities of sanctions.

Similar to the study on managerialism in universities, and its effects on academics in European countries, a study was conducted in Australia by Anderson (2006). He explored the ways in which managerial change in Australian universities affected academics’ working lives, and the significance of academics’ resistance to managerialism. From eight Australian universities, 27 academics were interviewed. The researcher noted that the most common theme that emerged in the research interviews was how quality assurance mechanisms imposed an additional workload burden on academics, and how it failed to assure quality in any meaningful way. Another study conducted by Anderson (2008) explored the phenomenon of academics’ resistance to managerialism in universities. Anderson conducted interviews with 30 academics in 10 Australian universities. The findings suggested that academics framed their opposition and resistance to managerialism with reference to particular valued elements of embedded understandings and perceptions of the traditional academic culture in universities.

Another study in the context of transformation of higher education relating to the proliferation of managerialism and its controls of audit, accountability, monitoring, and performativity was conducted by Knights and Clarke (2014) in the UK and drew
upon empirical research on business school academics. A total of 52 semi-structured interviews were conducted within eight UK business schools in an attempt to understand how academics experience their working lives. During the interviews, participants were invited to talk about their work-life as academics. The findings indicated that “managerialist techniques” forces academics to be “over-committed” (Knights & Clarke, 2014, p. 352). However, Ylijoki and Ursin’s (2013) notion relating to transformations in higher education was different. Their study focused on how academics make sense of the changing nature and the current transformations of university education. Their study conducted in Finland was based on 42 interviews with Finnish academics. Both senior and junior staff from various disciplinary backgrounds took part in the interviews and the data were analysed by means of narrative inquiry focusing on how the interviewees constructed and narrated their work experiences. According to interviewees’ accounts of their work experience, three fundamental storylines were distinguished: regressive, progressive, and stability. The regressive storyline describes deterioration of work with a variety of worries, fears, and disappointments involving a negative picture about the transformations in higher education, whereas the progressive storyline explains improvement and movement into a more favourable direction with contentment, optimism, and high spirits involving a positive view. Between these opposites, the stability storyline involves a neutral view towards university transformations with a viewpoint of a work–life balance.

In 2010, the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU) Victorian Division in Australia conducted its bi-annual online survey to collect data relating to the state of tertiary education in Victoria. The survey was designed to provide information to the Union about significant issues for staff in the sector. Fredman and Doughney’s (2012) research examined data collected by this survey to investigate perceptions by academics of their work in the Australian state of Victoria. The context of neo-liberalism was used as the basis for the analysis of this study focusing on academic work satisfaction, managerialism, and corporatised managerial practice. The findings indicated that a strong influence of a management culture was noted as the most significant driver, and that satisfaction among academics was low. The researchers commented that academics’ concerns relating to workloads made them dissatisfied and noted that if academics have more control over their work and are given opportunities to develop in their jobs, academics would become more productive. The statistical analysis of the
study was complemented by discursive analysis of open-ended responses, and in the open-ended responses it was evident that dissatisfied academics tended to contrast a marketised present to a collegial past.

A growing body of research by Chandler, Barry, and Clark, (2002), Knights and Clarke, (2014), Teichler, (2011), and Ylijoki and Ursin, (2013) suggested that the university work context has been subjected to substantial reforms with the implementation of new forms of performance management in universities across the world, and that performance management systems have disrupted academic life. The study conducted by Kallio, Kallio, Tienari, and Hyvönen, (2016) focused on how the performance management system is understood by academics across universities and departments in Finland at a time when new management principles and practices were forcefully introduced. A mixed method approach was applied to the data-gathering of this study. An internet-based survey questionnaire was sent to all academic employees in chosen departments in universities in Finland and 966 respondents completed and returned the survey. Qualitative analyses of the responses to the open questions of the survey were used by the researchers to explore the reasoning behind the responses. The researchers commented that the results of the survey highlighted the proliferation of performance management as “a catalyst for changing the very ethos of what it is to be an academic and to do academic work” (Kallio et al., 2016, p. 686).

Kinman and Jones’s (2008) study examined work demands, work–life balance, and wellbeing in UK academic staff. The target sample for this research project comprised 5,000 academic and academic-related staff employed within higher education institutions in the UK. The findings indicated that work demands were high and work–life balance and wellbeing in UK academic staff were not satisfactory. Academics who reported more work–life conflict seriously considered leaving academia. Kinman and Jones (2008) suggested that because the majority of academics who responded to this study had not achieved an acceptable balance, they might benefit from some guidance in creating more effective physical and psychological boundaries between their work and home lives and in seeking support from the UK universities.

Similar to the study by Kinman and Jones (2008), in the UK, the research by Bell, Rajendran, and Theiler, (2012) investigated the impact of perceived job stress, work–life balance, and work–life conflict among academics faced with organisational
change in universities in Australia. One hundred and thirty-nine academic staff members employed in universities Australia-wide participated in completing a voluntary self-report questionnaire. The responses were analysed, examining correlational relationships between job-related stress, health, work–life balance, and work–life conflict among academics. The results indicated perceived job stress, such as threat and pressure-type stressors, associated with poorer work–life balance, and increased conflict between academics’ work and personal lives. The researchers commented that even with the availability of stress management and flexible work arrangements for university employees, the complex nature of stress still seems to negatively influence academics’ health and work–life balance.

The study by Winefield, Gillespie, Stough, Dua, Hapuarachchi, and Boyd, (2003) fall into the same category relating to academic stress and academic well-being. Winfield et al. (2003) conducted a study on occupational stress among Australian academic staff. The researchers specifically reported on data relating to psychological strain and job satisfaction. The sample for the study was drawn from nearly 9,000 respondents at 17 universities. From the results, the researchers concluded that financial difficulties imposed on Australian universities in recent years were affecting the staff. These effects were having serious consequences on the psychological wellbeing of the academic staff. The main stressors identified in the study included heavy workload, time and resource constraints, long working hours, poor pay, poor communication, role ambiguity and overload, lack of recognition, striving for publication, providing support for students, and keeping up with technological advances.

A survey conducted by the National Tertiary Education Union (NTEU, 2016, p. 1) explored views of professional and academic staff at the University of Adelaide regarding trust in university management, workload issues, and the suitability of the Professional Service Reforms—a program that seeks to concentrate administrative power and resources within the central administration. The results indicated that both academic and professional staff at the university were overworked, unheard, and were pessimistic about the capabilities of Senior Management to realise their questionable reform agenda in a way that considered the effects on and views of staff. The NTEU commented that these results should act as a warning to Senior Management and questioned whether a super-faculty process should be initiated when staff are already
stressed and overworked from a long series of reforms and redundancies and when there is no confidence in the reform agenda or the people leading it. The researchers emphasised that survey responses clearly indicated that university staff have no faith in the abilities of management to perform the huge task of the Professional Services Reforms program, and academics didn’t trust the management’s motives.

The research team of Currie, Harris, and Thiele (2000) interviewed a cross-section of staff in two Australian public universities about the sacrifices they had to make to pursue their careers in the contemporary university work context. The interviews took place in small focus groups of between two and four people, and 54 academic staff and 36 general staff members were interviewed. Participants described a range of personal and professional sacrifices that staff made in order to be part of the contemporary university culture. From the responses, the researchers noted that staff worked beyond the call of duty, sacrificing their families, friendships and their health. Currie et al. (2000) commented that universities in Australia have fallen under the sway of neoliberal restructuring, putting increased pressure on permanent, tenured staff, and creating impoverished working conditions for part-time, casual staff. The research study identified that people working in universities are becoming alienated from their institutions because of unrealistic workloads and an increasingly competitive environment, especially those who do not want to compromise their values or “play the game” (Currie et al., 2000, p. 291).

The research study by McInnis (2000) focused on a different aspect of the university work context. They explored the influence of changing work practices on the quality of teaching. The sample was drawn from 15 Australian universities across five states, covering the full range of institutional types, from established research-intensive universities to new regional providers, and the sample included academics across all levels. A total of 2,609 academics completed the questionnaire. The results of this study reported the shifts in time and commitment to teaching, the impact of change in approaches to teaching on academic workloads, and the everyday obstacles that academics identified, as hindering their teaching. The study identified aspects of diversity in the work experiences of academics and suggested that academic workloads and work roles have reached a critical point where a major reform is required to improve the quality of teaching (McInnis, 2000).
Lai (2013) conducted a comparative study of a renowned and a regional university in the Chinese mainland on the changing work life of academics. In this research, Lai employed a qualitative method and interviewed 40 academics. According to the findings, new employment reforms posed new challenges to academic work including increased pressure to publish which had negative effects on academic culture and academic participants were worried about the long-term effects of a decrease in teaching quality.

Ryan, and Guthrie’s (2009) study examined the perceptions of business academics about the impacts of “Modernisation Practices” (p. 319) articulated as *collegial-entrepreneurialism* and as an approach that builds on collegial processes to protect academic values from the “excesses of modernisation”. Ryan and Guthrie (2009) argued that Australian universities have been corporatised during the past two decades and have been adopting modernisation practices encouraged by government policies. The findings revealed that academics were highly motivated, hardworking, committed to academic values and priorities and loyal to their school. This view contrasts with other studies on the changing work context and its impact upon academics. According to other research, academics were reported to be stressed by decreasing academic freedom, increasing demands for accountability and quality assurance, and decreasing levels of job satisfaction and commitment (Anderson, Johnson, & Saha, 2002; Anderson, 2006, 2008; Harman, 2000, 2005; Kayrooz, Kinnear, & Preston, 2001; McInnis, 2000; NTEU, 2000; Winter, Taylor, & Sarros, 2000; Winter & Sarros, 2002; Winefield et al., 2003).

Scholars have identified a changing academic workplace culture in public universities due to casualisation of academic staff. Lama and Joullié (2015) investigated the casualisation of academic teaching in Australia focusing on finding out whether the changes pose risks to teaching quality. Data were collected through an online survey of casual academics working in three universities and at two private higher education providers in Australia. One hundred and fifty-six casual academics were surveyed and 43 responded. The responses indicated that casual academics were of the view that they were unfairly treated compared to their full-time colleagues. They were not provided with continuous improvement through professional development and training. These views may result in low morale and dedication. Many casual academics work in
multiple institutions and deliver a number of units simultaneously. Although this is legal and legitimate, the researchers raised the question of casual academics’ ability to maintain a required level of standards across the board. The risk associated with such a trend could be that casual academics are unable to afford a desirable level of preparation time and are not committed to their work. It highlighted that issues casual academics encounter, and which restrict their ability to perform, could negatively affect teaching quality.

Another study on the casualisation of university academics was conducted by Klopper and Power (2014). They used data from a questionnaire on demographics of a small group of 22 sessional teaching staff employed at an Australian university. According to the findings, although the sessional staff believed they were effective university teachers they were at a disadvantage because they were not provided with ongoing development, and their teaching workloads were heavy. With other employment they were faced with time constraints as well. The researchers commented that to provide quality outcomes for students, universities must address these issues relating to sessional staff.

The study by Bexley, Arkoudis, and James, (2013), highlighted effects of casualisation. They explored the attitudes, motivators, and career plans of the academic workforce in Australia. They based their research study on a large-scale online survey across 20 Australian universities. A total of 5,525 academics including sessional and casual staff responded. The findings identified increased casualisation as the most prevalent example of how a relatively homogenous profession has become more diverse, causing change in professional practice. Other changes affecting academics were noted as a growing divergence in the level of academic positions, policy drivers that reward applied over pure research, and a focus on university education as a practical preparation for the workforce.

Ryan, Burgess, Connell, and Groen (2013) dealt with a different aspect of casualisation of academics. Their research examined the processes associated with the management of sessional academic staff. The study focused on a single university and used a survey questionnaire and interviews with the sessional academics and their managers. All casual academics who received an invitation to participate in the survey were invited to indicate their interest in participating in a focus group. Forty casual
academics participated in six focus groups, and seven heads of school and their relevant administrative staff were invited to participate in interviews. The findings emphasised the urgency for improvement in both the employment conditions and management of sessional academic staff.

May’s (2011) research examined the statistical data on employment of casual academic teaching staff, related literature, and reviewed change over several decades. May investigated employer responses with the aim of presenting a thorough analysis of the casual teaching academic workforce. The study used a mixed methods research design and used previously unreleased data from the industry superannuation fund Unisuper. In addition to the use of Unisuper data a survey was sent to 10,000 casual staff employees. The survey gathered data about employment conditions, employment preferences, and motivations, to understand and document the determinants of the casualisation of academic employment in Australia, and the implications for employees, university management and public policy. Data were also collected through case studies of two universities, through interviews with casual academic staff, and with senior university managers who had oversight of casual teaching staff. The purpose of the interviews was to explore the issues raised by the employee survey in more depth and gain an understanding of the employer strategy and motivation. The responses led the researcher to conclude that casual staff is a risk to a university.

**Identifying the research gap: A review of Australian research studies on the changing work in public universities.**

The analysis of literature relevant to the phenomenon of changing academic work in Australian universities, as explained in Chapter 1 (p. 5) revealed that only four research studies related to this topic belong to the 2010-2019 period; they are, by Comodromos (2016), Ferrer, (2010), Coates, and Goedegebuure, (2010), and De Zilwa, (2010). Hence, the limited number of recently published empirical studies related to the changing nature of academic work in Australian universities have shown evidence of a gap in the literature. These studies are reviewed below:

The most recent Australian research conducted on Australian academics is the PhD research study by George Comodromos in May 2016, at Victoria University, Melbourne, titled ‘How academics respond, adapt and cope with the transformational
changes in the Australian higher education sector’. The objective of the study was to research the ways academics respond, adapt to, and cope with the transformational changes in the Australian higher education sector, and Comodromos (2016) focused on the view of transformational change that is proffered by Thelen and Mahoney (2010).

According to Comodromos, Thelen and Mahoney’s (2010) view is that organisational transformational change manifests as a result of “incremental, endogenous shifts in thinking and not simply due to abrupt wholesale breakdown” (Comodromos, 2016, p. 14). Grounded on this view, Comodromos’s thesis focused on the incremental organisational restructure of Australian universities along with the personal experience of academics undergoing that change and on the work–life balance of academics. Fifteen academics from Melbourne University and 18 academics from Monash University participated in the study. Researchers used open-ended questions that explored participants’ personal experiences on the topic. Three areas were identified by the research as the main work domains of academics: teaching and students, research and collegiality, and technology and administration. The themes that emerged from the data were noted as increasing student numbers, their changing cohort characteristics, and the demands they brought to the changing learning environment.

Because the central theme of the study was the work–life balance of academics, the study identified five factors that affected them: flexible working hours, stage in life, gender, time management, and work intensification. However, although Comodromos’s study is about Australian university academics, when comparing Comodromos’s study with the current research study, it is obvious that the purpose of the current study is dissimilar to that of Comodromos’s (2016) study, which specifically focused on the work–life balance of academics. By investigating the lived experiences of a cohort of university academics, the findings of the current study explore a wider spectrum of issues that are mostly affecting current university academics in Australia which are not limited only to work–life balance.

The doctoral research study conducted by Ferrer (2010) on Australian academics focused on ‘reconceptualising engagement’. It investigated the notion of investing in people, which is known as ‘human capital’, and the management of human capital that is considered as a strategic imperative for knowledge-based institutions such as universities. Ferrer (2010) commented that due to globalisation, increased competition, advanced technologies, and changes initiated by government policy to the Australian higher education sector, management of human capital has been greatly affected. The
research study explored survey data of 4,462 business academics from the 37 Australian public universities and provided insight into academic engagement. Ferrer (2010) stated that his thesis contributed to discussions on human capital, and that it can be used in “knowledge industries” and the “management of talent” (Ferrer, 2010, p. iv). The purpose of the study does not specifically focus on Australian academics’ lived experience in order to explore the changing nature of academic work environment and its impact on academics. Therefore, it is different in its purpose to the current study.

According to Coates and Goedegebuure (2012), in the changing university work environment, academic work roles, expectations, and the workforce were seen as altering. Their study emphasised the need to reconceptualise the Australian future academic workforce. Coates and Goedegebuure first analysed academic work and the academic workforce in the context of current dynamics and discussed the significance of academic work. They reviewed workforce characteristics and analysed tensions and pressures involved in the current situation. Explaining their aim in laying a firm conceptual foundation, they presented a typology of academic work that provides an instrument for “exploring different permutations of foci” (Coates & Goedegebuure, 2012, p. 2). They reinforced and expanded their conceptual ideas with a case study of sessional academics who testified to the challenges faced by the academic profession. In their study, Coates and Goedegebuure attempted to operationalise these challenges with eight strategies: “(1) reconfiguring academic work; (2) constructing academic career profiles; (3) designing attractive customised experiences; (4) designing measured experiences; (5) engaging sessional academics; (6) refreshing the research degree; (7) expanding staff numbers with system growth; and (8) engaging leaders in capacity development” (Coates & Goedegebuure, 2012, p. 3). However, the current study is not a case study of sessional academics, and it is focused on lived experience and perceptions of full-time-equivalent Australian university academics.

The research study conducted by De Zilwa (2010) used case studies of academic units from Australian public universities to explore the reasons for these ‘academic units’, – departments, schools, and faculties– in a university, responding in different ways to contemporary challenges of change. It is noted that the wider academic environment within which the universities and academics operate is both complex and dynamic. Therefore, ‘academic units’ are expected to operate according to the diverse, competing needs and operational directives from university executives and of the expectations of stakeholders, including students, academics, funding bodies,
professional associations, and the government. De Zilwa’s study investigated participants’ responses to two main questions: (1) why do some units adapt to environmental challenges and others resist change?, and (2) how and why do academic units adopt different modes and processes of adaptation or resistance? De Zilwa foresaw the study making significant contribution to scholarship on “leading and managing change in universities”. (De Zilwa, 2010, p. 1) His study offered advice and practical suggestions to university leadership about ways of guiding their ‘academic units’ through the challenges of the changing work environment. However, De Zilwa’s (2016) study did not explore university academics’ lived experiences.

The four studies that are explained here ascertain the absence of empirical studies on the changing academic work, from the perspective of Australian university academics’ lived experiences. This limitation has resulted in creating a gap in the literature that requires addressing, which makes this focused study unique and one of the more significant contributions to scholarship in this area.

2.5. Australian public universities

This section presents a general overview of Australian public universities, including a historical synopsis of when and how the Australian universities were established, their legal status and governance, how universities are funded, and major government reforms affecting transformations in Australian public universities.

Australia’s university education system consists of 37 public universities that are government funded and publicly owned, while four private universities are commercially owned and provided for fees. In addition, many public universities also have strategic partnerships with private providers, and public-private divide seem mixed in Australia (Withers, 2014).

The first two universities to be founded in Australia were the University of Sydney in 1850 and the University of Melbourne in 1853. For nearly a quarter of a century, they were the only universities in Australia. Then in 1874 the University of Adelaide was established, followed by the University of Tasmania in 1890, the University of Queensland in 1909, and the University of Western Australia in 1911. Until the end of World War II, there were six universities in total. With the
establishment of the Australian National University in 1946, the university sector started to develop momentum and three other universities were established by 1958. Between 1964 and 1973, a new wave of growth occurred where a further nine universities were established (Australian Education Network, 2018).

Currently, Australian universities are placed in four groups according to specific aims, objectives, and collaborative initiatives of member universities, and they are named as: Group of Eight Australia (Go8), Innovative Research Universities (IRU), The Australian Technology Network (ATN), and The Regional Universities Network (RUN). The universities that are not in the four groups are termed as ungrouped universities (see Appendix B Grouping of Australian Public Universities).

Australian public universities are autonomous in respect to their operations and responsibilities, including student admissions, staffing structures, appointments, curriculum content and design, teaching and learning, assessment processes, internal budget allocations, and research activities (DEST, 2018). According to the Commonwealth Law, universities are considered to be responsible for themselves and are free to use all available resources at their disposal (Gallagher, 2000). Public universities are established under laws of the States and Territories that define their powers and governance structures, and they are subject to the accountability and audit requirements of those jurisdictions. Universities are represented through the national universities’ lobbying body, ‘Universities Australia’, previously named ‘The Australian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee’. The gatekeeper to Australian higher education is the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) (DEST, 2018), which commenced its operations in 2012. Prior to TEQSA’s establishment, the regulation of higher education quality was largely a matter for state governments. Weaknesses in state government regulation of higher education were one reason for TEQSA’s creation (DEST, 2018). Australian universities have the power to self-accredit their courses, and to approve their own courses through academic boards or similar bodies. However, they must do so in accordance with the Higher Education Standards Framework (TEQSA, 2016). Among other requirements, they must adhere to the Australian Qualifications Framework, a national set of standards as to what different qualifications such as Diploma or Bachelor mean (DEST, 2018).
The federal government provides the public funding of Australian universities, and most of it is in the form of a single, block grant for operational purposes. A dual funding system operates in respect of university research activities. For research and research training activities, and for the infrastructure costs associated with those activities a general operating grant is paid to universities. The allocation of such payment is formula-driven, reflecting institutional performance. The Australian Research Council and the National Health and Medical Research Council support researchers and research projects through a competitive funding system (Gallagher, 2000). Australia offers income-contingent loans to assist students to pay for their education under the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP). Current policies related to that program are an accumulated result of decisions made over decades (DEST, 2018). The main source of public funding for higher education is the Commonwealth Grant Scheme. This finances tuition subsidies that are paid to higher education providers on behalf of students. The students then become known as Commonwealth supported students (DEST, 2018; Gallagher, 2014).

Government reforms and policies, and transformations in Australian universities have been presented in literature according to key historical periods named after the government minister of education responsible for the reforms, for example, Dawkins: 1987–2000; and Nelson: 2000–2008 (Long, 2010).

The higher education sector in Australian post-World War II era, is characterised by growth and diversification, which has been articulated as a social and intellectual boom time in Australian academia. The notion of “post-war optimism and enthusiasm” (Barcan, 1980, p. 288) is seen as being responsible for making possible a successful academic career and producing a successful academic life and improving academic standards. The period from 1944 to 1950 has also been noted as significant for the availability of Commonwealth government funds, increased student enrolment, and immense growth in the size of universities (Barcan, 1980).

In the 1960s, a number of teaching-only institutions, known as Colleges of Advanced Education (CAEs), were established. They were designed to orient higher education towards vocational outcomes at a lower cost and academically less demanding than universities (Dobson, 2001). Following the Martin Committee’s report of 1964, the formation of a binary divide between universities and CAEs took place.
The number of universities grew from seven to 17 and the number of colleges grew to 77 (Marginson, 1997). During that time, the Martin Report recommended the provision of higher education for all citizens according to their inclination and capacity (Butler, 2007).

With the aim of making university entrance accessible for working-class families, in 1974 the Labor Whitlam government abolished tuition fees and replaced them with competitive academic scholarships, which included a means-tested living allowances scheme known as the Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme (Barcan, 2016). The Whitlam government increased public awareness of higher education, increasing its importance as a ‘positional good’—goods that act as status symbols, signalling a person’s high relative standing within society (Butler, 2007; Marginson, 1997). The 1970s were considered as a period of optimism among academics and students (Butler, 2007) and massification started with the Whitlam government’s removal of fees for tertiary education (Engel & Halvorson, 2016).

Major transformations in Australian universities started during the period of 1988-1991 with the reforms by the then Labor Government Minister of the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET), John Dawkins (Collins, 2012; Davis, 2008). Until the late 1980s, the Australian higher education sector was classified as a binary system, which was seen in the distinction between universities and colleges of advanced education (CAEs) with respect to roles and funding (Butler, 2007). Dawkins abolished this distinction and a Unified National System (UNS) of higher education emerged, with the amalgamation of institutions wherever possible (Davis, 2008).

Prior to Dawkins’s reforms, the Australian higher education system supported an array of institutional types, including colleges, institutes, and conservatoria of music. These were seen as multi-disciplinary, specialising in fields such as nursing, teaching, agriculture, or the arts. Institutional size varied from vast multi-campuses (e.g., such as RMIT) to small colleges, and governance was diverse, from autonomous institutions to simply units within state education departments. However, with Dawkins’s reforms CAEs were amalgamated into universities and most small institutions were completely removed from the system. These changes resulted in 63 higher education providers becoming 36 universities, many with multiple campuses. Dawkins’s mergers narrowed
the range of institutional options open to students, hindering the benefits of specialisation for students (Davis, 2008). The newly-risen complex institutions were like those of large private corporations (Bessant, 2002; Meek & Wood, 1998).

One of the aims of the Unified National System (UNS) was the provision of equity of resources for all higher education institutions through a productive competition between institutions (Eveline, 2004), and this brought greater efficiency and effectiveness to a previously ineffective system of self-governance (Harman & Treadgold, 2007). The UNS was noted as the beginning of a “competition era” in Australian higher education (Ferrer, 2010). With student numbers significantly increasing during the period between 1987 and 2001 from 78,000 students to 600,000, university degrees were no longer only for the elite, and the Australian education system experienced the birth of massification of higher education (Molony, 2000).

Income-contingent loans began with the introduction of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) of 1989, which re-introduced tuition charges at public universities. HECS required students to pay fees as a proportion of course costs and provides a mechanism for students to obtain a loan that they repay through the taxation system once their income reaches a certain threshold. This scheme applied only to government-funded undergraduate/postgraduate courses. The price for HECS courses were set by the government across all institutions and varied by level and field of study. However, HECS was seen as income paid by students rather than by the government (Gallagher, 2000).

Due to the nature of the change, Dawkins’s reform in the late 1980s was commonly termed the Dawkins ‘revolution’ (Charlesworth, 1993). It is noted as a reform that radically transformed the Australian higher education sector. The contributing factors to this transformation were identified as broader international movements in educational change influenced by neoliberal ideologies deriving from economic and managerialist notions (Taylor, 1999). Policy directions after the 1980s were pressured by competition, corporatisation, and consumerism (known as the three Cs by Marginson, 2004), which was envisaged to “lift efficiency, performance, and rates of innovation, strengthening accountability to students, to the business, and to the government” (Marginson, 2004, p. 3).
According to Collins (2012), these reforms were viewed as the reason for the indiscriminate application of market models and values, a commitment to user-pays systems, and the widespread application of entrepreneurial languages and practices. Dawkins’s reforms were criticised for putting too much pressure on university academics to seek external research grants, and for rating academics on their ability to do so (Goldsworthy, 2008). Scholars argued that these reforms have “dumbed down” higher education, because college diploma students became university graduates overnight (Nillsen, 2004, p. 5). Commentators noted the impacts of Dawkins’s reforms upon Australian universities as commercialising university education and exposing research to market pressures, creating a culture of corporate managerialism in universities, contributing to a rise of bullying, introducing neoliberal ideologies into Australian universities, and reducing the public funding of universities (Bessant, 2002; Butler, 2007; Gare, 2006; Thornton, 2004; Wellsmore, 1997).

In summary, significant transformations of the Dawkins reforms included:

a) a major consolidation of institutions through amalgamation, and the abolition of the binary system of CAEs and universities,

b) increased emphasis on vocational discipline fields,

c) a new Australian Research Council (ARC) to administer a comprehensive portfolio of research programs for the entire higher education system,

d) the strengthening of management of universities and colleges (Meek, 1991), and

e) the introduction of the Higher Education Contributions Scheme (HECS), which requires domestic students to contribute to the cost of their education on an income-contingent, deferred-fee basis (Dobson, 2001).

In the 1990s, severe funding cuts occurred under the Liberal–National government led by John Howard. Critics noted that funding cutbacks were responsible for a drop in OECD terms of achievement in Australian higher education between 1996 and 2006 (e.g., according to Gillard, 2009; Australia dropped two places, from seventh to ninth in OECD rankings). The Howard government’s market-based policies and
funding cuts were seen as factors forcing the newly established universities to compete for funds along with longstanding universities, which was noted as an unfortunate clash of direction relating to the previous expansionary policy (Barcan, 2016). In the 1990s, complaints were heard about the unfairness of treating all universities the same (Butler, 2007), including the longstanding ‘sandstone’ universities which are considered as the oldest foundations in each state, and built of sandstone (Marginson & Considine, 2000) (see Appendix E Classification of Australian Public Universities). A group of eight universities, known as the Go8 (Group of Eight Australia), was formally constituted in 1999 to look after the particular interests of the longstanding universities. The Go8 was noted as a coalition of leading Australian universities, intensive in research, and comprehensive in general and professional education (Australian Education Network, 2018). The Go8 consists of, Monash University (Melbourne, Victoria), The University of Adelaide (South Australia), the University of Melbourne (Melbourne, Victoria), The University of New South Wales, (Sydney, New South Wales), The University of Queensland, (Brisbane, Queensland) The University of Sydney (Sydney, New South Wales), The University of Western Australia (Perth, Western Australia), and The Australian National University (Canberra, Australian Capital Territory).

New challenges appeared, affecting Australian universities after 2003 with the introduction of the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), followed by more international rankings systems, including the QS World University Rankings (QS), the Times Higher Education Rankings (THE), CWTS Leiden Rankings, and Webometrics. Although previously Australian universities believed themselves to be trailing leading universities internationally, now such perceptions were quantified and confirmed by the global ranking system (Davis, 2008). Rankings are used as a guide by students, researchers, staff, and the public as a guide to comparing universities (Davis, 2008). The popularity of rankings has spurred international competition, forcing Australian universities to lift their ranking in the league tables. (e.g., places in the ranking tables for Australian universities in 2019, according to the ARWU: University of Melbourne 41st, The University of Queensland 54th, Monash University 73rd and The Australian National University 76th place. According to the 2019 QS rankings, the Australian National University was placed at 24th, University of Melbourne 39th, and the University of Sydney at 42nd place). In 2003, seven Australian universities formed a group known as Innovative Research Universities (IRU). This group of universities was
committed to conducting research of national and international standing. It consists of Charles Darwin University, Flinders University, Griffith University, James Cook University, La Trobe University, Murdoch University, and the University of Newcastle.

The Australian Federal Government Education Minister Brendan Nelson’s reforms from 2000–2008, known as Nelson reforms, are seen by scholars as intensifying the role of higher education in preparing students for the workforce of knowledge industries in the context of global capitalism (Marginson, 2004; Pick, 2006). The trends identified in these reforms have also been noted as being influenced by individualisation (referring to a process by which people are disconnected from collective social structures), and an intensification of a process that started in the 1980s, opening the Australian higher education to increased competition, privatisation, and marketisation, mainly based on neoliberal perspectives (Pick, 2006). Universities are forced to operate more like competing private corporations, and their major considerations were seen as meeting the needs of customers, market shares, and profits (Pick, 2006).

The Bradley Report in 2008 recommended to the government to introduce a ‘demand-driven’ system for the domestic student market and endorsed allowing providers to set their own entry standards and enrolling as many students as they wished into eligible programs according to demand while continuing to receive government subsidies under the Commonwealth Supported Places scheme (Bradley et al., 2008). From the late 1980s, full fee-paying international student enrolments increased, and education rapidly developed into Australia’s third-largest export industry (Bradley et al., 2008). A significant feature introduced by the Rudd/Gillard reforms, as a result of the Bradley Review in 2008, was noted as the ERA (Excellence in Research for Australia) initiative, which was a research evaluation framework formulated with the purpose of improving the international standing of Australian research (Gillard, 2009). Although the Rudd/Gillard Labor governments expected ERA to have a transformational impact on universities by their focus on comparative international indicators of quality research, scholars (Cooper, & Poletti, 2011) argued that the ERA appeared to be transforming Australian universities into a culture of audit, undermining the ability of universities to produce innovative and critical thought.
In 2010, universities that saw themselves as sharing a common focus on the practical application of tertiary studies and research joined to form another university group, The Australian Technology Network or ATN. This group consisted of Curtin University of Technology, the University of South Australia, RMIT University, the University of Technology Sydney, and the Queensland University of Technology. In 2011 another group was formed, known as the Regional Universities Network or RUN. This group consisted of Central Queensland University, Southern Cross University, the University of Ballarat, the University of New England, the University of Southern Queensland, and the University of the Sunshine Coast (Australian Education Network, 2018). See Appendix B, ‘Grouping of Australian Public Universities’ for a list of universities in the Go8, IRU, ATN, and RUN groupings.

When Christopher Pyne became the Minister for Education in Australia in 2012, previously imposed limits on domestic student numbers at public universities were lifted, and a new demand-driven funding system, was introduced. This allowed universities to respond to student demand, replacing the previous supply-driven system, in which student places at public universities were allocated by the government. A review of Pyne’s reform conducted in 2014 revealed public universities have greater freedom conferred by the demand-driven system in relation to course offerings, modes of delivery, and admissions (DEST, 2018). Change in enrolments, change in funding and change in staff recruitment were some of the significant changes that were highlighted in literature relating to historical reforms and transformations. However, with increased enrolments of Australian domestic students, it was noted that the growth in student numbers came from students in the lower ranks of the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank distribution, whose school attainment would previously not have been considered suitable for direct university entry (Go8, 2014). This was seen as creating challenging situations for academics with significant implications of student retention, underprepared students with lower educational capability, and lower educational quality (Devlin, 2013; Go8, 2014).

The changes that were taking place relating to university funding with successive government reforms made the publicly funded university system much more competitive (Norton, Norton, & Cakitaki, 2016). To improve productivity and efficiency in universities, performance-based funding has been introduced (Bradley et
As students are now considered as customers and pay for their education, student choices have become significant when making financial arrangements and financial consequences for universities (Engel & Halvorson, 2016).

Rapid growth in student numbers have caused unprecedented situations in universities in dealing with issues of limited teaching staff and increasing student-staff ratios. It is predicted that by 2030 the student–staff ratio will probably become 30:1, compared to 22:1 in 2012 (Go8, 2014). The trend in universities has been to fill in the gaps of academic teaching staff by recruiting sessional and casual staff. Rothengatter and Hil (2013) have noted that this often means that the least experienced and most poorly remunerated sessional staff are engaged in the bulk of student interaction and marking.

2.6. Summary

This Chapter has provided a review of literature relevant to the context of the study. First it reviewed previous research studies and literature that examined external global pressures that impact on academic work internationally and in Australia. These external drivers include globalisation, burgeoning knowledge-based economies, rapidity of new technologies adoption, global mobility, university rankings and global competitiveness. It also reviewed literature that examined influences of political and economic ideologies including neoliberalism, corporatisation, marketisation, commodification and managerialism. Next, a review of literature was conducted on internal pressures such as massification of higher education, inadequate funding, inadequate resources, government reforms, audit culture and governance. Section three (2.3) examined changing work in public sector organisations other than universities. This situated the topic in the broader scholarly literature field and it was possible to compare the trends in other public organisations with public universities in Australia, in the context of change. This provided a fuller understanding of the phenomenon. The fourth section (2.4) presented the changing work in public universities. It specifically highlighted Australian research studies on the changing work in public universities, identifying the gap in extant Australian literature. The fifth section (2.5) provided an outline of the Australian public universities. The objective of this chapter has been to reinforce the
previous findings and build on extant literature on the topic. This was accomplished by
detailed analysis provided, and it revealed that there are gaps in knowledge relating to the
nature of academic work and their impact on academics in Australia. The next chapter
describes the method that the study adopts to address the identified gap.
Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology used in the study to address the overarching research question: *What is the nature and scope of the lived experience of academics in the changing landscape of Australian universities?* This research question called for a qualitative approach to inquiry, exploring a problem in the phenomenon through lived experiences of the players of the phenomenon—the academics in this study (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The findings have the prospect of raising awareness of academics’ lived experience in a profound way, thereby creating the possibility of improved workplace processes and practices for academics. As Merriam and Tisdell, (2016) note, “Research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspective of those being studied offers the greatest promise of making a difference in people’s lives” (Tisdell, 2016, p.1). Therefore, the choice of a qualitative research approach was considered best suited for this study. The methodology presented in this chapter consists of two sections, the methodological orientation and the research design.

3.2. Methodological orientation

In this section the use of qualitative research, its nature, and justification for its use in responding to the overarching research question of the study are described. The philosophical assumptions that underlie this study are presented as an explanation of the theoretical perspectives of interpretivism combined with the standpoint theory, and how they support the selected methodology. The rationale for choosing phenomenology as the preferred methodology and interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the preferred research method is discussed.
3.2.1. **Qualitative research approach**

The focus of qualitative research, according to Merriam and Tisdell, (2016), is understanding the meaning of experience. For example, how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds and what meaning they attribute to their experiences. The researcher is the primary instrument in data collection and analysis. The process is inductive, and rich description characterises the end-product. Scholars have described qualitative research as having the potential to generate new knowledge without predetermined responses and critically evaluating and gaining better understanding of complex concepts and peoples’ perceptions (Creswell, & Poth, 2017; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Fine, Weis, Weseen, & Wong, 2000). The term “qualitative research” is used as an overall term for a variety of approaches and traditions (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In qualitative research, it is important to understand, articulate, and present the philosophical assumptions that underlie the research (Creswell & Poth, 2017). The next section explains the philosophical assumptions applied in this study.

3.2.2. **Philosophical assumptions**

The influences of philosophical assumptions consequently determine significant decisions relating to the research, including research goals and outcomes. The assumptions that have implications on a qualitative research have been noted as:

- Ontology—the nature of reality, or claims researchers make regarding knowledge;
- Epistemology—how individuals arrive at that knowledge and how researchers justify those claims;
- Axiology—the role of values and how the researcher acknowledges values in research;
- Methodology—the process of research (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 20).

In this study, within an interpretative framework, social constructivism guided the practice of research and the application of philosophical assumptions. In social constructivism, individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. They develop subjective meanings of their experiences. The goal of research is to rely, as much as possible, on the participants’ views of the situation (Creswell & Poth,
Constructivist researchers acknowledge that their interpretations are shaped by their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences; their intent is to make sense of the meaning others have about the world (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 24). The researcher in this study is aware, and acknowledges, that the researcher’s beliefs in social constructivism within an interpretative framework guided actions and decisions relating to the research study. How the researcher’s philosophical assumptions guided this research study is further illustrated in Table 3.1 according to Creswell and Poth’s (2017) explanation and illustration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretive framework</th>
<th>Social constructivism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Researcher goals</td>
<td>To understand the world in which they live and work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential researcher influences</td>
<td>Recognition of background as shaping interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Examples of researcher practices</td>
<td>Interprets participants constructions of meaning in his/her account</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontological Beliefs (the nature of reality)</td>
<td>Multiple realities are constructed through our lived experiences and interactions with others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epistemological Beliefs (how reality is known)</td>
<td>Reality is constructed between the researcher and the researched and shaped by individual experiences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Axiological Beliefs (role of values)</td>
<td>Individual values are honoured and are negotiated among individuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodological Beliefs (approach to inquiry)</td>
<td>Use of an inductive method of emergent ideas (through consensus) is obtained through interviewing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### 3.2.3. Theoretical framework

The purpose of this section is to present a theoretical framework appropriate in guiding the process of the research study. The theories through which the phenomenon and the overarching research question of the study are explored are explained here. A review of theoretical literature revealed that the theory of interpretivism and standpoint theory, enable to clear understanding and visualisation of academics’ lived experiences voiced by academics. How these two theories are used in the study are explained in sections 3.2.3.1 and 3.2.3.2.

#### 3.2.3.1. Interpretivism

Given the nature of this study, looking at the world through an interpretivist lens appeared a natural fit and the preferred perspective. To understand the “world of
meaning, one must interpret it” (Schwandt, 1994, p.119). Using interpretivism in this study enabled to capture underlying meaning of university academics’ expressions of their lived experience.

Interpretivism is regarded as an important and viable theoretical model. According to Young, (2009, p.206), it is “indeed possible to access the intentions behind actions….an utterance, in order to be fully understood, must also be comprehended as an expression of something internal which discloses besides its obvious meaning the attitude, intention, or state of mind of its originator.”

When using interpretivism, all interpretations involve answering one or more of four basic questions to uncover meanings: (a) what is the object intended to mean? , (b) what could it mean to individuals or groups?, (c) what does it mean to individuals and groups?, and (d) what is its significance to individuals or groups? (Young, 2009, p.205). The overall purpose of using the interpretivism theory is to uncover what participants’ words really mean when they are explaining their lived experiences. Therefore, interpretivism is regarded as the perfect theoretical framework for this study.

3.2.3.2. Standpoint theory

By combining the interpretivist theory with standpoint theory, the researcher was able to gather data on the lived experience, interpret this, and present the findings through the lens of standpoint theory. The core concept of standpoint theory is to understand the perspective of a specific group that commonly shares a phenomenon. In this study, it is appropriately used to understand university academics’ standpoint on the topic explored. Standpoint theory is defined as a view point or an attitude towards an issue from an individual’s own perspective (Harding, 1992, 2004). Standpoint theory originated as a post-modernistic approach of the feminists’ standpoint. It was greatly influenced by the concepts of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, a German philosopher who studied the standpoints of the people belonging to various socio-economic classes (Wood, 2008). Academics’ lived experience in Australian universities undergoing change are better viewed through the lens of the standpoint theory in order to perceive what is really occurring across their workplace domain, which was considered the most revealing data for the study (Avieson & McDonald, 2017).
Research studies and scholarly literature have revealed that university academics have encountered complex issues with the changing academic work mainly in universities in Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, and European countries (Bexley et al., 2013). Researchers have found the outcomes of these effects on academics have been quite detrimental, often creating situations of stress, insecurity, anxiety, academic consumerism, fragmentation of work, and in some instances living under oppressive work situations of bullying, in some instances (Gill, 2009; Ryan & Guthrie, 2009; Taylor, 2017). It is believed that drawing on rich traditions of feminist and multicultural standpoint theories will provide first-hand knowledge of academics’ standpoint of their experiences, as well as promote awareness for the government and university managers (Smith, 2004).

The following diagram (Figure 3.1) presents a conceptual visualisation of the appropriateness of standpoint theory applied to this study.

![Diagram](image)

Figure 3.1 Conceptualisation of the standpoint theory used in the study

A person’s own perspectives are considered being shaped by his or her social and political experiences, which consist of many dimensions making standpoint multifaceted (Sprague- Jones & Sprague, 2011). A participant’s point of view, or how a participant sees and understand a phenomenon is a combination of participant’s varied and experienced dimensions which establish a standpoint.
3.2.4. Phenomenology

Phenomenology is the qualitative research approach that best fits this research topic, because “phenomenologists are interested in lived experiences” and this research study is about lived experiences of university academics, encompassing the changing nature of their work (Van Manen, 2016, p. 26). Initially articulated by Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), a German philosopher and mathematician, phenomenology provides researchers with ideas about how to examine and comprehend lived experience on its own terms, rather than one prescribed by pre-existing theoretical preconceptions (Moran, 2005). In justifying the choice of phenomenology for the research approach of this study, some of the significant characteristics of phenomenology are examined here.

The focus of phenomenology is “on the experience itself, and how experiencing something is transformed into consciousness” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 25). According to Patton (2002), the main task of the phenomenological researcher is to represent the basic structure of experience or, the essence. Patton further explained how phenomenological research is based on the assumption that “there is an essence or essences to shared experience” (Patton, 2002, pp. 116-117). These essences are the core meaning mutually understood through a phenomenon commonly experienced by different people, and are bracketed, analysed, and compared to identify the essences of the phenomenon. To understand the essence or the underlying structure of the meaning of an experience, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) recommended the use of phenomenological interview as the primary method of data collection.

However, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) emphasise that, prior to interviewing, those who have had direct experience with the phenomenon should explore his or her own experiences, and become aware of personal prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions. This process is termed as epoch, which is a Greek word, meaning, to refrain from judgment. In applying “epoch” in this study, the general understandings, judgments, and perceptions about the changing university academic work were set aside, and the phenomenon revisited only through participants’ lived experiences and interpretations (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33). The philosophical assumption explains the researcher’s awareness of personal prejudices, viewpoints, and assumptions. These prejudices and assumptions are “bracketed” or temporarily set aside to examine consciousness itself (Merriam, & Tisdell, 2016, p. 27). “Phenomenological reduction”
and “horizontalisation” are two other strategies unique to phenomenology, similar to epoch and bracketing, which have been used in the study. Phenomenological reduction is the process of repeatedly revisiting to the essence of the experience to obtain the inner meaning, by separating the phenomenon in order to understand its essence. Horizontalisation is the process of treating the data as having equal weight at the initial data analysis stage. This data is then organised into themes. The data in the study is viewed from various perspectives and this aspect of phenomenology is called “imaginative variation” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 27).

The research exercise in phenomenology is a dynamic process, with an active role for the researcher. The researcher is trying to get close to each participant’s personal world to take an “insider’s perspective”; doing this is unavoidable, indirect, and incomplete, because access depends on, and is complicated by the researcher’s own conceptions (Smith & Osborn, 2015). However, the researcher’s conceptions are a requirement to make sense of the participant’s personal world through a process of interpretative activity. This is the interpretative, or hermeneutic aspect of phenomenology, hermeneutics being the theory of interpretation (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009).

In this study, participant accounts were regarded as interpretations, as well as the interpretations of the researcher, introducing the concept of double hermeneutics or a two-stage interpretation process. By being engaged in double hermeneutics, the researcher is making sense of the participants making sense of what they are experiencing, which has been explained as a process in which the researcher plays a dual role (Smith, 2007). Interpretative qualitative research “emphasises the role of the researcher as an interpreter of the data and an individual who represents information” (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 248). Such researchers are involved with multiple realities. As different researchers embrace different realities, so do the individuals being studied and the readers of these qualitative studies. In addition, “when studying individuals, qualitative researchers conduct a study with the intent of reporting these multiple realities” (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 18). The researcher plays a significant part in the process. “The interviewer’s thoughts and feelings are admitted as explicit and thus legitimate components of the enquiry, and their congruence or divergence from those of the participant are matters of proper enquiry” (Biggerstaff, & Thompson, 2008, p. 222).
Finlay and Gough (2003) explains its implications and according to them the most important of which is the need for researchers to develop the personal professional self-awareness that underlies reflexivity. This reflexivity is deployed at each stage of doing interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), which is explained in the next section.

3.2.5. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) was chosen as the most suitable qualitative, phenomenological approach for this study, because the aim of IPA “best fits” with the aim of the study. IPA aims to grasp the texture and qualities of an experience as it is lived by an experiencing subject. The primary interest is the person’s experience of the phenomenon and the sense they make of their experience rather than the structure of the phenomenon itself (Eatough & Smith, 2017). The aim of the study is to explore the lived experience of university academics within the phenomenon of changing universities, to understand what opportunities and barriers emanating from those change have affected academics, and how academics have responded to them. In addition to the similarities of the aims, the other characteristics that highlighted the significance and selection of IPA are that,

- IPA is considered as a methodology particularly useful for examining topics which are complex, ambiguous, and emotionally laden (Smith & Osborn, 2015),
- it is suitable when researching in unexplored territory (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005),
- its increasing popularity of use as an approach to qualitative inquiry; being used in large numbers and across disciplines demonstrated the value of IPA in understanding the human experiences of a phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009), and
- it recognises that “this is an interpretative endeavour as humans are sense-making organisms” (Smith & Osborn, 2015, p. 1).

Most importantly, IPA is endowed with five significant features that make IPA unique when exploring, analysing, and presenting experiences of human beings. These features are its phenomenological, hermeneutic, idiographic, inductive, and interrogative
nature (Smith, 2004). Phenomenology, hermeneutics, and idiography are considered as “three key areas of the philosophy of knowledge” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 11). Each of these will be explained in turn.

First, phenomenology, from the perspective of IPA, is described as “a philosophical approach to the study of experience” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 11). The word phenomenology derived from phainomenon (phainomai, to appear) and logos (reason). There was no “unexperienced” appearing and whatever “appeared” appeared in concrete experiences, signifying the activity of giving an account, or giving a logos of various phenomena, and of the various ways in which things appeared (Pivčević, 2013, p.1). The German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), one of the major contributors to phenomenological philosophy, advocated “stepping outside our everyday experience, our ‘natural attitude’, in order to be able to examine that everyday experience” (Smith et al., 2009, p.12). This process involves adopting a “phenomenological attitude”, turning our gaze from outward, to objects in the world, to inward, towards our perceptions of those objects (Smith et al., 2009, p.13). This research study recognises the significance of a “phenomenological attitude”, and adopts a “phenomenological method”, identifying the core structures and features of participant experiences (Smith et al., 2009, p.12).

Second, IPA is informed by hermeneutics. From the perspective of IPA, hermeneutics has been described as the “theory and practice of interpretation” (Smith et al., 2009, p.21), which was originally developed as a philosophical approach to the interpretation of biblical texts (Smith, 2007). The word hermeneutics derived from the Greek god Hermes who communicated messages from Zeus and other gods to the ordinary mortals (van Manen, 2016). In IPA, double hermeneutics is highlighted as a significant concept, which means while the participant is trying to make sense of their personal world, the researcher is trying to make sense of the world of the participant. This captures the dual role of the researcher (Smith et al., 2009, p.3).

The third key area of ideography, from the perspective of IPA has been concerned with the “particular” (Smith et al., 2009, p.29) or single cases. It contrasts with the nomothetic, which is concerned exploring at group or population level and making claims regarding general human behaviour. IPA’s idiographic approach operates at two levels in the analysis process: (a) in its commitment to a systematic and
thorough, detailed, depth of analysis, and (b) in its commitment to understanding and making sense of particular people, in a particular context and in a particular phenomenon (Smith et al., 2009). IPA studies use small, purposively-selected carefully-situated samples, which can be described as an idiographic approach to inquiry, because such samples are used with a commitment to detail and depth of analysis. While maintaining this idiographic approach, “IPA adopts analytic procedures for moving from single cases to more general statements, but which still allow one to retrieve particular claims for any of the individuals involved” (Smith et al., 2009, p.32).

The main aim of IPA researchers has often been explained by vocabulary including “exploring”, “investigating”, “examining”, and “eliciting” participants’ experiences and understanding a specific phenomenon. This type of vocabulary indicates the inductive nature of IPA research process. IPA researchers can employ techniques that are flexible enough to enable unanticipated topics or themes to emerge during the analysis (Reid et al., 2005). The researchers can construct broader research questions leading to the collection of expansive data, instead of verifying or negating specific hypotheses established on literature (Smith, 2004).

IPA’s interrogative aspect contributes to knowledge and scholarship through interrogating or illuminating existing research in which in-depth analysis of a set of case studies is discussed in relation to the extant literature (Smith, 2004).

IPA’s inductive, interpretative analysis “sharpens the inquiry” by focusing on what is presented, and grounding it firmly in a close examination of what the participant has said; IPA recognises that different levels of interpretations are also possible (Smith & Osborn, 2015, p. 41). Considering these features, IPA was the most appropriate choice of research approach for exploring university academics’ experience in the changing workplace in Australian universities. The next section explains the research design of the study.

3.3. Research design

This section describes the data-collecting methods, data analysis processes, ethical considerations attended to, how research integrity was maintained, and
limitations of the study. A visual representation of the research design is provided in Figure 3.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Design</th>
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<tr>
<td>Data Collection</td>
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<td>• Strategies for selecting sites</td>
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<td>• Strategies for selecting participants</td>
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<td>• Strategies for selecting the size of the sample</td>
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<td>• In-depth interviews</td>
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<td>• Writing exploratory comments</td>
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<td>• Identifying emerging themes</td>
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<td>• Collating themes and grouping</td>
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<td>• Move to the next participant</td>
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<td>• List major themes across transcriptions</td>
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<td>• Impact and importance</td>
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<td>Limitations</td>
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<td>Chapter Summary</td>
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</table>

3.3.1. **Data collection**

For this study, the preferred data collection method was one-on-one, face-to-face, in-depth interviews. It was important to gather data from specific sites, from participants who had experienced the phenomenon investigated, and who were able to
articulate their lived experiences in that phenomenon (Van Manen, 2016). In order to
gather “good data” (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 148), it was considered important to
select information-rich data sources related to the phenomenon. Therefore, participants
and sites for this study were not randomly selected, but purposively. Three purposeful
sampling strategies were utilised: (1) strategies for selecting sites; (2) strategies for
selecting participants; (3) strategies for selecting the size of the sample (Creswell &
Poth, 2017).

3.3.1.1. Selecting sites

There are 37 public universities and four private universities in Australia
(Universities Australia, 2019b). One of the main differences between public and private
universities is that public universities are mainly funded by the state government, while
private universities may largely depend on tuition fees which “offers education of high
quality at high cost to students in the upper income groups with additional support
derived from industry, private persons and philanthropic institutions” (Franke, 1991, p.
320). For the investigation of the phenomena to be consistent, the sites were selected
from the 37 public universities. The sites included rural and metropolitan universities
from different university groupings from the Australian states of Queensland, New
South Wales, Victoria, Australian Capital Territory, and Tasmania, located in the south
eastern coastline of Australia (see Appendix A and B). Participants in the study
represented eight universities from the above mentioned states.

3.3.1.2. Selecting participants

Participants in this research comprised university academics. Two types of
criteria were used to select participants: eligibility criteria, the requirements that needed
to be met for a participant to be included in the study; and dispersion criteria, the
requirements necessary to achieve a diversity of participant attributes. The two
eligibility criteria were based on participants having more than two years of experience
as academics in Australian public universities and holding a current full-time equivalent
academic appointment. A participant’s experience of two years was indicated so that
participants have sufficient time in the university environment to be able to express their
lived experiences and perceptions relating to the changes in universities. The three
dispersion criteria are shown in Table 3.2, and Table 3.3 provides a summary of
participant profiles.
### Table 3.2 Participant criteria

<table>
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<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<td>Participants from different current academic levels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participants from a range of academic disciplines</td>
<td>Including participants from a range of academic disciplines (e.g., arts, education, law, business, engineering, medicine, allied health, and natural sciences).</td>
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<tr>
<td>As far as possible, an equal number of male and female participants</td>
<td>An equal number of male and female participants provided an unbiased situation in the data collection, thus avoiding the data being heavily weighted towards one gender.</td>
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Table 3.3  
Participant profile

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3.3.1.3. Selecting the size of the sample

In IPA research studies, the sample sizes have ranged from 1 to 325 (Creswell & Poth, 2017), and Smith and Osborn (2015) commented that there is no “right” (p. 26) sample size, but it depended on the purpose of each study. However, studies using IPA have recommended using a small sample size of 10 to 20 participants because a large sample size of more than 20 has been associated with risks of losing subtle reflections of meaning (Reid et al., 2005; Smith & Osborn, 2015; Smith et al., 2009). The size of the sample is significant in determining whether the main goal of the study is producing a detailed, in-depth exploration, or producing a more generalised study of an examination over the whole population. Therefore, according to the parameters of this study, a sample size of 16 participants was selected, giving this study the opportunity of gaining depth rather than breadth, and presenting each participant’s experience as rich, meaningful data.

3.3.2. In-depth interviews

This study required a data-gathering method that facilitated a close interaction between the researcher and the participant, to be conducted in a dialogue in real time, which allowed the participants to tell their own stories in their own time. This method also needed to provide participants sufficient time to think, reflex, and talk, while the researcher listened for the most part. A variety of data-gathering methods used in qualitative research studies, including multiple interviewing methods that would match with the aim and the requirements of this research study, was reviewed prior to selecting the method of in-depth, one-on-one, face-to-face interview. Such an interview is described as “a conversation with a purpose” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 57). The purpose in this instance was to talk about academics’ lived experiences in the changing academic workplace in Australian universities. This method provided the flexibility and space for the researcher to further investigate when new and unexpected issues and concepts emerged (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014).

One-on-one and face-to-face aspects of in-depth interviews were most appropriate in keeping the participants focused throughout the interview and developing a rapport between the participant and the researcher. Using this method to gather personal lived experiences of participants enabled the researcher to capture
interviewee’s emotions and behaviours, specifically verbal and non-verbal cues, including body language that indicated enthusiasm as well as discomfort when talking about certain topics (Smith, et al., 2009). The research questions were “pitched at the abstract level” (Smith et al., 2009, p.58) for the in-depth interviews, which meant participants were not directly asked questions—the direct-question approach is considered ineffective and not helpful for in-depth data gathering (Smith, et al., 2009). Instead, the interviews were set up as events designed to facilitate in-depth, continuous discussion on the related topics. Allowing the research questions to be answered subsequently entwined in participants’ experiences brought forth “rich, thick descriptions” of data exploring and presenting the “multifaceted complexities of the situation being studied” (Geertz, 1973; Marx, 2008, p.795).

The interpretative phenomenological analysis approach used in the analysis phase of the study required “rich data” for its effective analysis, and in-depth interviewing was helpful in the “elicitation of stories, thoughts, and feelings about the target phenomenon” (Smith, et al., 2009, p.56). Participants talked freely and at length about their experiences and their concerns. The researcher had the opportunity of engaging in dialogue in the light of the participant’s responses. Some of these discursive conversations continued for approximately 75 to 85 minutes. Although some interviews finished within 45 minutes, they were intense and provided rich data. Most of the interviews continued for 60 to 85 minutes.

The questions the researcher asked participants at the interview were limited to introductory questions for building rapport, and questions for clarification purposes, prompts and probes. Participants’ responses to the introductory question provided most of the significant background information about participants and was very helpful in building rapport, setting the scene, and encouraging participants to focus on their experiences on the topic. Probes were effectively used to find out more about what the participant was saying or for further clarification. During the interviews, to allow participants to recount their lived experience without any hindrance to their flow of thoughts, the researcher asked participants only a few questions. The participant was the “experiential expert” on the topic, while the researcher played the role of an “active listener” or an active co-participant (Smith et al., 2009, p.64). However, although to ask participants the research questions directly was not in the plan of these in-depth
interviews, the researcher constructed an interview schedule with the research questions merely as a guide or virtual map that could be drawn upon if required (see Appendix F).

### 3.3.2.1. Interview process

The academics who volunteered and met with the eligibility criteria were informed about the interview via email. A project description (Appendix G) and an information sheet (Appendix H) were attached to the email. Participants were also informed about a possible follow-up interview. When participants had read the documents attached to the email and responded to the researcher’s email, a date, time, and meeting venue were organised. The researcher travelled interstate to universities on the south eastern coastline of Australia, conducting interviews. Most participants preferred to be interviewed in their own office. Two participants had their interviews conducted in an enclosed consultation room in their workplace. At the interviews, after the initial greetings, participants were given the informed consent form to sign (Appendix I).

Each interview began with a “warm up” about the participant’s job, and how long the participant has been working in that university. Such discussion enabled the interviewer to build rapport and lay ground for participants to share and compare in-depth information regarding their previous and current experiences relating to the changing nature of the university workplace. Participants then felt freer to articulate sensitive and personal stories relating to the topic. While trying to understand the meaning of each participant’s experiences, the researcher continued to play a more “active listener” (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014) role during the interview, listening attentively and constructing more open-ended questions to clarify and further explore the phenomena investigated. These clarifications teased out any hidden presumptions.

In addition to the project description sent to participants prior to the interviews, the prompts used during the interview focused on exploring the mental phenomena (thoughts, memories, and associations), sensory perceptions, and specifically individual interpretations made by participants. At times during the interview, participants used long pauses for reflection, or were unable to speak because they were emotionally overwhelmed by the stories they were narrating. Such moments were respected by the researcher by remaining silent until the participant regained their composure.
The interviews were successfully carried out without any issues, and with the permission of the participants they were audio-recorded using a digital voice recorder. The researcher’s notes and reflections relating to each interview were documented in a reflection journal (Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Two academics not selected as participants were sent emails thanking them for their interest in volunteering to participate in the study and informing them that because they did not fit into the specific selection criteria category, they could not be included in the study but would be informed of the findings once the study was completed.

3.3.2.2. Pilot study

It was considered important to conduct a pilot study prior to the main study. The purpose of this was to ensure that the interview questions were clear and unambiguous (Creswell, & Poth, 2017) and that the quality of the interview and the equipment used in the audio-recording of the interviews provided maximum benefit to the study (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Smith et al., 2009). Two participants were selected for the pilot study via the same criteria of the participant selection process that was used in the main study. These two interviews assisted in refining the interview process and procedures through pilot testing (Creswell & Poth, 2017). For example, although initially an interview schedule document (Appendix F) was constructed, to be used by the researcher to facilitate comfortable interaction with participants (Creswell & Poth, 2017), after reviewing the pilot study, this document was used only at the end of the interview as a checklist for the benefit of the researcher to ensure that all topics had been covered. It was noted at the pilot study interview that because the participants had already received the project description and an information sheet prior to the interview, they knew the topic and research questions they were expected to focus on, and participants preferred to narrate their experiences without the research questions. The pilot study interview indicated that such a structured approach of referring to the interview schedule document disturbed the natural flow of thoughts and discursive conversation of participants.
3.3.2.3. **Data saturation**

At the beginning of this research project, the author determined that data collection would continue until it reached a point of data saturation—the topic being exhausted without any new perspectives from the participants—or until data were collected from all 16 participants. Transcripts from the main study were reviewed after collecting data from eight participants, and because there was no significant evidence that data saturation had occurred, the data collection continued. However, before the completion of interviews with all 16 participants, data saturation was evident. Yet, instead of stopping the interviews after the 12th participant, the author decided to interview all 16 participants.

3.3.2.4. **Data storing**

At the end of each interview, the data from the mp3 audio files in the digital voice recorder were transferred to a personal computer protected by a password. Soon after each interview, the data were transcribed and saved in separate folders under a code assigned to each participant. For example, \textit{UA1}, indicates the pseudonym \textit{UA} for university academic and \textit{UA1} as participant number 1. All documentation, including the informed consent form, audio-recordings, transcriptions, data analysis, and other additional material relating to each participant were saved in these folders. The folders were stored in the Griffith University research data storage, \textit{Research Space}, under the researcher’s name.

3.4. **Data analysis**

The transcribed data were analysed using the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) data analysis process. According to Smith et al. (2009, p.79), “the essence of IPA lies in its analytic focus”, which is seen as directing the researcher’s “analytic attention” towards participants’ attempts to make sense of their experiences. Researchers using interpretative phenomenological analysis have the advantage of adapting the guidelines provided by IPA to assist in the data analysis process (Smith, 2004). The guidelines suggested a process consisting of six stages, of which Stages 1 to 4 followed a cyclical process. However, scholars who have used IPA have
recommended researchers to be flexible and creative in their analysis (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). As such, in this study the guidelines were used only as an outline. A detailed account of the analytic process is provided in this section together with accompanying examples.

3.4.1. Stage 1

This stage involved the reading and re-reading of the transcript, and becoming familiar with the participant’s account, because each reading had the potential of focusing on new insights within the data. In order to “enter into the participant’s world” (Reid et al., 2005, p. 66), the researcher actively engaged with the data by listening many times to the audio-recordings, and being immersed in them.

3.4.2. Stage 2

This was a significantly important stage of the data analysis, and a considerable amount of time was spent on reading the transcription and writing exploratory comments. All other stages and emergent themes were built upon the work carried out on this stage. So, the transcription was read again and text that seemed important was underlined. Then, for each underlined piece of text an account was written commenting on why the underlined text was considered important. Sometimes these comments included a question. An example of the researcher’s exploratory comments is illustrated in Table 3.4.

The framework illustrated in Table 3.4 helped in formulating these exploratory comments. For instance, the researcher examined the transcriptions from different aspects, including the expressive, descriptive features in the content, or ways in which participants described their experiences and understanding of issues concerning them; the vocabulary, and the language use—features such as metaphors, symbols, repetitions, pauses—and phrases that appeared significant to the participant and stood out in their story of personal experiences; and the main concepts highlighted in their conversations when participants were talking about their experiences (Smith et al., 2009). The exploratory comments also focused on the audio recording of words and phrases that participants emphasised, and places where the participant laughed, sighed, or used a change of voice to express emotional response were noted.
### Table 3.4 Interview extract and researcher’s exploratory comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant’s words in the original transcript</th>
<th>Researcher’s exploratory comments</th>
<th>Identifying emerging themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oh, have I seen changes in the academic working environment? Oh yes, many…</td>
<td>A firm affirmation from the participant about the changes happening in the academic workplace.</td>
<td>The nature of change is incremental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In terms of my own perceptions of that, I guess I see maybe three areas that have really changed a lot since I joined or since I started teaching here.</td>
<td>He allocated these changes specifically to three areas. He claimed that he has seen an increase in the volume of changes</td>
<td>Managerial process characteristics:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The first one would be that actual managerial processes and, um, the structures of the faculty have really become more and more top-down, more directed rather than democratic. I guess, in terms of our senior management of the university, not just the faculty, (but the University senior management which runs things like a business).</td>
<td>He denoted the most significant as the first one and articulated it as “the actual managerial processes”. He repeated the words “more and more” to emphasise how they are becoming “more and more top-down, more directed rather than democratic”</td>
<td>• More directive and less democratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whilst I do understand the need to be financially accountable, etc., what really upsets me greatly is the...the gap between what occurs with the senior executive of the University and what we actually do, and their complete lack of understanding of what we do or the way the teaching environment for example has changed.</td>
<td>Although the participant acknowledges the need for a change, (due to the need to be financially accountable), he is not happy with the way changes occur. The sad and broken tone in his voice (when someone is on the verge of expressing hurtful emotions) indicated how deeply these changes have affected him. He uses the words “what really upsets me greatly...” According to the participant the indifferent attitude and “lack of understanding” of the senior executives regarding the work the academic teaching staff are doing, has created a “gap” between them</td>
<td>The “gap” (between the senior executives and academic teaching staff) affecting the academic staff. Reasons for the “gap”:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So, what really upsets me is people making decisions about the daily organisation of the University and the business of the University (which is teaching and research) and really having very little understanding of what it means. Like, I don’t think any of them teach. I think the Vice Chancellor teaches one unit, but he only does a part of it, he doesn’t teach the whole unit. He doesn’t understand about using the learning management system and the difficulties of that, or the different types of students that we have to support once they’re accepted into the University.</td>
<td>The repetition of the phase “what really upsets me” further emphasises the impact of the changing situation upon the participant. From the participant’s list of concerns, another one highlighted was, the way senior executives were “making decisions … Yet, “having very little understanding of what it means…”</td>
<td>• Senior academics’ lack of understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sense of frustration</td>
<td>• Lack of communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Criticising the managerial processes</td>
<td>• Not involving teaching academic staff in course-related decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant’s words in the original transcript</td>
<td>Researcher’s exploratory comments</td>
<td>Identifying emerging themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>So, I think that <strong>gap is really disappointing</strong> and the other thing about that top level is that <strong>they seem to think that briefing people with information about their intended, um, strategic directions is actually consultation, but it’s not.</strong> They tell you that this is what we’re doing rather than genuinely consulting with academic staff. So, I expect that <strong>gap is the big thing I’ve seen get bigger.</strong></td>
<td>Indicating a notion of deceptiveness in the managerial process and structure, and he voices it as “they seem to think that briefing people with information about their intended, um, strategic directions is actually consultation, but it’s not” The tone indicates anger … he feels he is cheated. Just the thought that the managers can say anything and fool the academics… “Rather than genuinely consulting with academic staff”. Can it be a threat to the concept of academic autonomy? Once again talks about the “Gap” and how it is getting bigger</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The second area</strong> I expect that I’ve seen change is the ways in which <strong>the programs that we teach are accountable to external bodies.</strong> So, rather than the University being an accrediting body in itself, <strong>we are now accountable to a whole range of external bodies.</strong></td>
<td>He moves on to the second area of change– academic programs monitored by external bodies Isn’t this undermining academic integrity?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4.3. **Stage 3**

The transcripts were read through again, with specific attention to the notes that were written in Stage 2. The main aim at this stage was to identify emerging themes from the underlined text in the transcriptions and specific notions highlighted in the researcher’s notes. The emerging themes were conceptualised and written down as concise phrases (Smith & Dunworth, 2003). In IPA, the process of identifying emergent themes is noted as breaking up the narrative flow of the interview and introducing the concept of the “hermeneutic circle”, which is described as a circle of interpretation. As most of the transcriptions were annotated prior to reaching Stage 3 of the analysis process, the “hermeneutics circle”—the intimate relations between part and whole in analysis—were evident; this meant the part was interpreted in relation to the whole and the whole was interpreted in relation to the part (Smith et al., 2009; Smith, 2011). In this process, themes were presented reflecting the participant’s original words as well as the researcher’s interpretation. The researcher’s attention focused on capturing what was important at that point in the text, but at the same time was attentive to the whole text (Smith et al., 2009). The researcher moved from the text informing the themes and then back to the themes informing the text in a cyclical pattern, which has been explained in IPA as a synergistic process of description and interpretation (Smith et al.). During the researcher’s interpretations, the importance of “seeing” the world as it was experienced by participants (Finlay, 2013, p. 172) was acknowledged by the researcher. When the transcript had been worked through in this way, it was possible to compile a complete listing of the emergent themes. In IPA, the themes at this stage are called the first level themes (Smith & Dunworth, 2003).

In the examples provided in Table 3.4, it is evident how participants’ thoughts and experiences were merged with researcher’s interpretations, reflecting the synergistic process of participants’ original words of expression and researcher’s interpretations (Smith et al., 2009). These merges and synergistic processes were captured in the emergent themes.

3.4.4. **Stage 4**

The main purpose of Stage 4 of the analysis was to collate themes that belonged together and that could be put into groups. It was a time-consuming, laborious task that
required attentiveness to detail, critiquing skills, and focus on deciding how best the themes would fit into specific groups, because some were seen as repetitions or linked by more general themes. According to conceptual similarities, the themes were grouped together and given a descriptive label that captured the thematic essence of the group (Smith & Dunworth, 2003; Smith et al., 2009). The focus here was on what linked them, and what broader categories they were part of.

When looking for patterns and connections between emergent themes, six specific ways were considered: (1) abstraction—identifying patterns between themes and grouping them under a “super ordinate” new name for the cluster, (2) subsumption—when an emerging theme itself is considered as a “super ordinate” and brings together a series of related themes, (3) polarisation—investigating the themes for their opposite characteristics and focusing on differences instead of similarities, (4) contextualisation—identifying the contextual features between emergent themes, (5) numeration—the frequency of the appearance of related emergent themes throughout the transcript, indicating their importance and relevance to the participant, and (6) function—examining emergent themes for their specific function (Smith et al., 2009, p. 96). Stage 4 of the analysis process enabled the researcher to capture the essence of the transcript and organise the data into a manageable number of themes characterised as the “superordinate themes” of level two (Smith & Dunworth, 2003). Stage 4 is demonstrated in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 Emerging themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emerging themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The nature of change is incremental</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Managerial process characteristics:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o More directive and less democratic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o Top-down</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The “gap” (between the senior executives and academic teaching staff) affecting the academic staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Reasons for the “gap”: Senior academics’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o lack of understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o lack of communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o not involving teaching academic staff in course-related decision-making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o academic autonomy challenged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o academic integrity challenged</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.4.5. **Stage 5**

After proceeding through Stages 1 to 4, and when one participant’s transcription was completed, the next participant’s transcription was considered in Stage 5, and the same process from Stage 1 to 4 was repeated.

3.4.6. **Stage 6**

When all 16 participant transcriptions were analysed, clustered themes across transcriptions of all participants were brought together in a list of major themes and subthemes. Alongside these listed themes, persuasive, narrative accounts were written, describing important experiential notions that were observed during the process of analysis.

3.5. **Ethical consideration**

This research study was conducted in compliance with research ethics norms, in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research and the code of practices established by the Griffith University’s Human Research Ethics Committee (Griffith University, 2018; NHMRC, 2018). In the study, respect for human beings was demonstrated by the manner in which the researcher conducted the interviews, upholding participants’ right to freedom and choice (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Participants were not subjected to coercion in deciding whether to participate in the study. Written communication was provided in the form of a project description (Appendix G), an information sheet (Appendix H), and an informed consent form (Appendix I). These documents informed participants of their right to withdraw from the research study without penalty if they did not wish to continue, or if they wished to review the interview material and request that portions of it not be used. Interviews were conducted in a manner that gave due respect to participants by providing an atmosphere that encouraged them to speak freely. Their privacy, confidentiality, and cultural sensitivities were treated with respect throughout the research process.

According to the “research merit as a value” explained in the guidelines in the National Statement (NHMRC, 2018, p. 5), research merit was determined in the current
study by conducting a thorough systematic quantitative literature review and by using appropriate methodology. The findings have the potential of challenging stakeholders to consider ways of possibly implementing improved workplace processes and practices to better cater for academics’ workplace needs. The research study was supervised by a professor and an associate professor at Griffith University who have the experience, qualifications, and competence that are appropriate for research.

Values of justice were demonstrated in the study by applying the same conditions of participation to all potential participants who matched the selection criteria. Participants were treated with respect and care, and exploitation of participants did not take place in this study. A summary of the findings of the research would be made available to all participants on completion of the study.

Beneficence, according to the National Statement (NHMRC, 2018, p. 10), was noted as “justifying any risks of harm or discomfort to the participants”. The severity of inconvenience in the study was very low and risks of harm or discomfort to participants was negligible.

Informed consent was seen by the researcher as a commitment to respecting participants’ individual autonomy by acknowledging their informational and participatory rights. In this study, participants were provided with an information sheet (Appendix H), detailing information on the research and on the entitlement to withdraw. Prior to the interviews, participants confirmed their intent to participate by signing an informed consent form (Appendix I).

To maintain privacy and confidentiality, all identifiable information collected from participants was regarded as confidential and stored securely. Information was de-identified following the interview process. Audio-recordings of the interviews were transcribed for research purposes only, and then erased, following transcriptions. Participants were not identified or identifiable in any of the publications. The transcribed research data would be stored securely in the Griffith Data Storage system Research Space for a period of five years and then securely disposed of. At the end of the study, research findings would be disseminated through publications, ensuring that neither participants nor their institutions could be identified.
Research that is conducted with integrity and carried out by researchers with a “commitment to searching for knowledge and understanding” (NHMRC, 2018, p. 10) is considered as research integrity, and the next section examines how research integrity was assessed in this study.

3.5.1. Research integrity

Resnik and Shamoo (2011) described research integrity as the trustworthiness of research due to the soundness of its methods, and the honesty and accuracy of its presentation. This section explains the steps that were taken in this study to ensure its research integrity. Qualitative research studies similar to the current study are commonly evaluated according to criteria for validity and reliability (Smith et al., 2009). Qualitative validity is assessed according to the accuracy of the findings. Qualitative reliability is assessed by ensuring that approaches used in the study are in consistent with views of other researchers’ and research studies (Gibbs, 2007). For assessing validity and reliability in IPA research studies, Smith et al. (2009) have recommended and adhered to Yardley’s (2000) criteria of four broad principles: (a) sensitivity to context, (b) commitment and rigor, (c) coherence and transparency, and (d) impact and importance. These are discussed in the following sections.

3.5.2. Sensitivity to context

This principle was demonstrated in the study with a close attention to different stages in the interview process, e.g., by showing empathy and by making participants feel at ease during the interview, and the sensitivity applied during the analysis of data, e.g., by making sense of how the participants are making sense of their experience (Smith et al., 2009), and by meticulous attention to the participants’ accounts. In the stage of writing the report, sensitivity to context was demonstrated by highlighting participants’ voices through a considerable number of verbatim extracts supporting the interpretations reported.

3.5.3. Commitment and rigor

The researcher’s personal commitment, and thoroughness of the study, responsibility, effort, and seriousness shown by the researcher in conducting an experiential qualitative research, were explained by Yardley and Bishop (2015), and
Smith et al. (2009), as commitment and rigour. This was established in the study by, (a) attending closely to participants during the data collection stage and ensuring that participants were comfortable during the interview, listening to participants attentively, (b) analysing the data with care, attention to detail and interpretation, (c) ensuring the thoroughness of data by purposive recruitment of participants, representing a varied range of views relating to the research topic, and (d) using many extracts from participant transcriptions in text and tables in the report.

3.5.4. Coherence and transparency

Coherence was established in the study by the “fit” between the research question, the philosophical perspective adopted, and the method of investigation and analysis undertaken (Yardley & Bishop, 2015, p.267). Transparency was made evident by the clarity of the research process—how the different stages of the process were described in the final presentation of the study (Smith et al., 2009; Yardley & Bishop, 2015). Transparency in the data analysis was established by providing detailed descriptions of how data were initially coded and what modifications were included subsequently. The study was conducted in a manner consistent with the underlying principles of phenomenological and hermeneutics norms and interpretative phenomenological analysis. The final report consists of descriptions of lived experiences of participants and researcher’s interpretations, in text, diagrammatic representations, and tables.

3.5.5. Impact and importance

Establishing the impact and importance of the study, was accomplished by highlighting the anticipated outcomes of the study, including contribution to the knowledge of the changing academic workplace in Australian universities, and by presenting the results in the form of publications and a thesis. The research study may have potential of direct practical implication on policy makers.

This research, by following steps to ensure of its validity, has the potential of impacting on changing academic workplace in Australian universities. In addition to Yardley and Bishop’s (2015) criteria of evaluation, validity and reliability in the study was evaluated by the following four methods as suggested by Smith et al. (2009):
a) Respondent validation or participant feedback, which provided participants the opportunity to further express their views prior to presenting the report,

b) Triangulation used in the study to enrich understanding of the phenomena investigated by collecting data from different groups of academics and viewing it from different perspectives.

c) Disconfirming case analysis, in which all the data were taken into account and presented, including ‘disconfirming instances’ or ‘negative cases’, instead of taking only data fitting with a specific viewpoint.

d) An audit trail or a paper trail providing evidence of the research process linking raw data to the final report, allowing all stages of the analysis to be retraced.

In summary, this section presented a framework for evaluating the research integrity; how well this research has been carried out and why the findings can be considered as trustworthy and useful. The strategies used included ensuring sensitivity to context, commitment and rigor, coherence and transparency, impact and importance respondent validation, triangulation, disconfirming case analysis, and maintaining an audit trail. Therefore, by conducting the research with honesty, and following recognised research principles, research integrity is established in this study.

3.6. Limitations

A limitation of using in-depth interviews in a phenomenological study is, that the effectiveness of interviews solely depends on participants’ openness and willingness to articulate their lived experiences. Participants may become comfortable talking only about general information on the topic, and avoid describing personal experiences, hindering the surfacing of rich data, on deep issues. This will be a limitation on the main purpose of the study—exploring academics’ experiences on the changing workplace in universities. To limit its effect on data gathering, the researcher tried to create a more personal, friendly, and relaxed environment at the interview, giving participants more time to reflect on their experiences. Participants were not rushed or
coerced, but the researcher continued to encourage them to share their experiences. Their firsthand information and arguments and their voices on the topic could be heard naturally.

The data collection process of a phenomenological study can be laborious and time-consuming (Creswell & Poth, 2017), causing a limitation to the progress of the study, which is stressful to the researcher because the large amount of data that needs to be analysed after the interviews can overwhelming. To overcome this limitation the research project adhered to a strict timeline and the progress was reviewed in a timely manner.

IPA research studies use smaller sample sizes, usually less than twenty—the norm is from one to fifteen—allowing the study to access a richer depth of data that may not be possible in larger samples (Smith et al., 2009). In small-scale qualitative research studies with limited participant numbers, one of the limitations that has been noted is the inability to generalise to other populations and situations (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Generalisability was not the aim of the current study and this limitation did not appear to be a concern because the sample size of 16 provided the opportunity to gather detailed descriptions of rich, thick data from in-depth interviews with participants.

3.7. Summary

This chapter provided the justification for the decisions made about the use of methodology and methods of this research project. It presented a rationale for the choice of qualitative research design, phenomenological paradigm, and interpretative phenomenological analysis of the study. It described and justified the processes and procedures used in data collection, in-depth interviews, data analysis, how ethical considerations were adhered to, how research integrity was assessed, and limitations of the study. The next chapter is the first of four data presentation chapters that communicate the data collected and analysed in accordance with the protocol presented in this chapter.
Chapter 4. Findings: The changing academic work in Australian universities

4.1. Introduction

This chapter describes how participants responded to Research Question 1 (RQ1) of the study: what influence and impact changes in the university had upon academics in Australian universities? In the findings relating to this research question, two categories were identified: (a) massification of higher education, and, (b) influences of political and economic ideologies, including neoliberalism, corporatisation, managerialism, commodification, commercialisation, and marketisation. In the findings, there were varied themes that emerged under these two categories. The interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) chosen as the most suitable qualitative, phenomenological approach for this study considers theme as “an aspect of the structure of lived experience…it is the form of capturing the phenomenon one tries to understand” (Van Manen, 2016, p.87). Seven themes emerged from the category of massification of higher education, and ten themes emerged from the category of influences of political and economic ideologies.

The findings described in this chapter are presented as lived experiences of academics, interspersed with a few observations of colleagues’ experience, and participants’ comments and perceptions on them. Participants’ verbatim quotes are identified and presented through pseudonyms. For example, UA7, indicates the pseudonym for university academic as UA, and UA7 as participant number 7. When presenting participants’ verbatim quotes, with the pseudonym, each participant’s university grouping is also indicated. For example, UA7, from a university in the Go8 (Group of Eight Australia) universities (see Appendix B for university groupings, and Appendix A for a map of Australian universities). When participants were explaining their lived experience, in one instance, a participant narrated a story to explain her perceptions and feelings relating to a certain scenario of the phenomenon. To present participant’s experience in its authenticity, her story is summarised and included in this
chapter as an anecdote. A visualisation of categories and themes is presented in Figure 4.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Question (RQ) 1: What influence and impact have changes in the university had upon academics in Australian universities?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Massification of Higher Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Change in the mode of delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Change in student numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Change in casualisation of academic staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Change in the application of advanced ICTs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Change in academic workload</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Change in university learners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Change in academic-student-interactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influences of Political and Economic Ideologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The evolution of the university into a corporate model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Disappearance of the collegial governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Changing leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Accountability Management and performance measurements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Change influenced by managerialism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Change influenced by marketisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Change influenced by neoliberalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Changing pedagogy shaped by economic logic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Change influenced by commodification of education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Changing student perception on university education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4.1** Changing academic work in Australian universities

### 4.2. Change: categories and themes

The findings indicated that the two categories that bring about a change in the work of academics in universities are, the massification of higher education and influences of political and economic ideologies, including neoliberalism, corporatisation, managerialism, commodification, commercialisation, and marketisation. Massification of higher education has instigated change in the university learning environment and influences of political and economic ideologies has brought upon change in university governance and accountability management. Each of these categories and themes will be considered in turn.

#### 4.2.1. Massification of higher education

All sixteen participants of the study highlighted massification of higher education as a factor triggering change in Australian universities. Three decades ago Scott (1995) used the term massification to indicate a significant increase in the proportion of the global population seeking tertiary qualifications in the latter part of the
twentieth century. Scholars explain this increase of student population as *rapid* expansion (Bradley et al., 2008; Engel, & Halvorson, 2016; Teichler, 2006; Trow, 2005).

Professor UA4 from a university in the Innovative Research Universities (IRU) group, who has more than 33 years of experience as an academic, spoke about this change as “many, more people in higher education, from many more backgrounds, areas and levels of interests than there have been previously” (UA4, 5). In her personal narrative she explained, how she started teaching in a teacher’s college but with the Australian government reforms by the then Minister of Education- John Dawkins in 1987, the college was amalgamated with a university and overnight how she became a university academic.

Participant UA4 reminisced at length about what really happened with Dawkins’ reforms. She said that while John Dawkins’ reforms are considered controversial, they changed university education in Australia, by creating what became known as the unified national system of higher education, transforming colleges into universities, and introducing free education into a loan, for eligible Commonwealth supported students studying at public universities, known as Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS). What participant UA4 was describing about the Dawkins Reforms in the 1980s is confirmed in literature, stating how elite education changed into mass education, how a local focus is changed into an international outlook, Vice-Chancellors into CEOs, and most academics into both teachers and researchers (Croucher et al., 2014; UA4). Participant UA4 elaborating further said:

[I] know the people in the primary teacher’s college found the... (Long pause) ... [A]round the time of Dawkins, in the late 1980s or early 1990s, that was a very fragmented and difficult time for everybody...difference was enormous, and they felt that their work wasn’t valued and I think that the academics [in participant’s new university and in other institutions that became universities overnight] thought that this is not what university is about... (UA4, 26).
Existing literature has explained massification of higher education as a factor that caused a rapid change in university academics’ work environment in Australia (Bradley et al., 2008; Engel, & Halvorson, 2016). But the findings of the current research study explore further providing new reflections which enable the reader to delve deeper into themes which emerged from the findings. Some of these themes emerged as issues of massification of higher education which have impacted on university academics’ lives.

Seven themes under the category of massification of higher education that emanated from the findings, are presented below. They are: change in the mode of delivery, change in student numbers, change in casualisation of academic staff, change in application of advanced Information Communication Technologies (ICT)s, change in academic workload, change in university learners, and change in academic-Student Interactions. Each of these themes will be elaborated in turn with participants’ lived experiences.

4.2.1.1. Change in the mode of delivery

All sixteen participants in the study acknowledged that change in the mode of delivery of courses, specifically introducing online teaching, as a challenging change. Some participants understood that online teaching was introduced to accommodate large numbers of students. Ten participants indicated that online teaching is not the same as face-to-face teaching regarding its enrichment towards student learning. Participant UA5, a Professor from a university in the Go8 universities commented:

[I] don’t think it [online teaching] can in any way replace that interaction with others, despite, however good these technologies claim to be, it’s not the same as having a classroom discussion...they [students] don’t have the same experience, and I think it’s an inferior experience” (UA5, 47).

Participant UA14, a Professor from a university in the Australian Technology Network (ATN) group of universities elaborated further:
The other thing is that content gets forgotten with that online teaching. So, you might have the most amazing zooms or collaborations or whatever, but if the content is not there... what’s the use of having that there [a course online]? So, I think sometimes that gets forgotten in the whiz-bang in how lovely it can look (UA14, 92).

### 4.2.1.2. Change in student numbers

Twelve participants ascertained the value of having small group interactions and the difficulty of having group discussions now, with large numbers of students, as another significant change. Another Professor from a university in the Australian Technology Network (ATN) group of universities said:

> We are seeing online teaching as being the panacea for everything, and also, as being better... we are hearing lots, and lots of talks about the lectures with 300 people ... I think it’s probably definitely cheaper, but I don’t know that it’s necessarily better (UA14, 90).

Participant UA5 said that some universities have removed tutorial groups and seminars because it’s more efficient to have a large lecture theatre with 500 to 700 of students or teach online because “you can reach large numbers in one hit” (UA5, 44). She said she was conscious of how stressful teaching large numbers of students and not interacting with students in groups can be for academics. “It’s less satisfying to have the large groups” (UA5, 45). This was noted by all participants as a challenging change for Australian university academics.

### 4.2.1.3. Change in casualisation of academic staff

Fourteen participants commented on universities employing large numbers of sessional staff, also known as casual staff members, as another change that is apparent with the increasing of student numbers. Participant UA6, a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Regional Universities Network (RUN) remarked that when there are too many students for a lecturer to cope with, inevitably, the lecturer has to get help from other staff. Most of them are casual staff and a lot of them are contract markers.
A Professor from a university in the Go8 universities explained the reason for employing casual staff, and said, “I think fundamentally it’s because of the funding” (UA6, 34). He further commented:

[A] lot of humanities disciplines have shrunk quite a lot. When I first came twenty-one years ago, we had about 17 people full time academics in my department and we have half of that now (UA6, 34).

With the increase of student numbers and decrease of permanent academic staff, universities had to employ more casual staff. But participant UA6 said “there’s definitely too much casualisation” (UA6, 39), which he ascertained as an obvious change in the Australian university work environment.

4.2.1.4. Change in the application of advanced Information Communication Technologies (ICT) s

Participant UA15, an Assistant Lecturer from a university in the Regional Universities Network (RUN), emphasised that a remarkable change evident in the university work environment is the application of advanced communication technologies in learning, teaching, and research. She said that for academics who started work thirty or forty years back at a time when use of computers were limited, and if those academics are still working, they may be experiencing a tremendous change now.

[With the use of technology…there’s a lot more visibility in terms of what you are doing and accountability… from the digital student evaluations to e-prints, and to know how much you produced or published this year… So, I would expect that, definitely, autonomy has reduced because of those accountabilities (UA15, 46).]

She further said her experience of 5 years as an academic is too short to see and comment on a significant change within the themes related to technology.
4.2.1.5. Change in academic workload

Fifteen of the participants acknowledged increased pressure on staff to teach more students with limited resources, as an effect of massification of higher education. Some participants termed it as “labour intensification” (UA1, 8). Participant UA1, a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities explained this connection between labour intensification and limited resources:

[For example, the number of students in a classroom keeps going up, but obviously the number of hours in which to evaluate what they do doesn’t change. So, there is labour intensification. Work gets more intense and there seems to be more work to do and less time to do it in (UA1, 7).]

4.2.1.6. Change in university learners

University students have changed, and academics “see a learner’ differently” (UA9, 9), and for students, “the experience of going to university is different” (UA13,7). Participant UA9, a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities who teaches students of secondary teaching courses remarked:

[The learner was once a human and a person, and it was good because sometimes you could tell whether someone was going to be a good teacher. I get to know them now over the computer... that to me is a big change... one of the big shifts is a shift between care for the student to this huge and almost constant pressure to make money and to see students as clients and units, and this quantifying that’s going on is, uh... it’s changed (UA9,10).]

Participant UA11, a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities who has been working as an academic for nearly 20 years ascertained, that it is a huge change because universities now recognise a student as a client and a customer.
[T]he other big change that I can see is in students, in terms of the way they view their study. There is this attitude ‘I’m a client, not a student, why didn’t you pass me?’ (UA11, 56).

Participant UA15, an Assistant Lecturer from a university in the Regional Universities Network (RUN) further explained this change in students:

[T]he potential for them to come in and say, ‘you haven’t taught me this,’ whereas twenty years ago it would be, ‘you haven’t learned this.’ So, I think that that’s a change, but again, that’s more a change that I see as a consumer, as a tax payer, as somebody who went to university 30 years ago vs. what I see of my students now (UA15, 48).

A Professor who has been working in a university in the Go8 for more than 25 years observed, student expectations and perceptions regarding education is different from students of two or three decades back.

[T]he change, I think, in terms of students paying and bringing into the market, means that they are more concerned about vocationalism. What are they going to get out of it in a sort of practical sense? So, it’s that idea of commodification (UA5, 10).

Eight participants noted that students’ attitude towards knowledge production and knowledge acquisition is changing. Although majority of participants viewed this change as having detrimental effects, two of the participants consider the shift as a good move. [see Chapter 5 with reference to favourable change and predicaments].

4.2.1.7. **Change in academic-student interactions**

Twelve participants noted that interactions, and relationships between academics and students within the university community are changing. Three trends of relationship within the university community were articulated by the participants: (1) academic–student relationship, (2) peer relationship (student–student), and (3) collegial relationship (academic–academic).
All participants voiced similar reasons for change happening in academic—student relationship. Some of the concerns expressed are:

- there are large numbers of students and with the increased workloads, academics are too busy and don’t have time to spend with students other than dashing in and out of lectures
- it is not possible to interact with each and every student in a large group of students, so they tend not to interact face-to-face at all and,
- as most of the courses are in flexible delivery mode, academics interact with students mainly through online environment, including via discussion groups, blogs, emails etc.

At the research interviews, participants, spoke about their disappointment of the current change of interaction with students, and the distance they feel relating to students. One participant said that in an academic’s mind, a student can be just a name, or a university identification number because now they do not get an opportunity to interact with students face to face. Therefore, academics are not really connected to a person. Participants said that it affects students as well.

A Professor from a university in the Australian Technology Network (ATN) group of universities stated:

\[W\]ell, for me it’s about relationships. If I had my choice, I would prefer to work with my students... and know who they are and know who turns up and who’s not turning up, all of those sorts of things... (UA14, 93).

Three participants implied that there is no reason to become personally interested, or care for their students if they do not even get an opportunity of meeting them face to face.

The second change identified within the university community relationships was peer relationships between students. Reasons noted for this change are:

- students have to work to support themselves, and as such they do not have any time to socialise, hang around with friends, or attend group discussions;
- Students are sometimes working in two or three different jobs, studying, or doing their assignments. So, students do not have any interest to interact with other students.

Participants commented that they have observed change in student behaviours, such as extreme competitiveness, self-centeredness, and an inability to effectively interact with their peers. Ten participants commented that sharing and working together seems to be slowly disappearing and that students do not see anything wrong being self-centered and not interacting with peers, which is now becoming the norm. As a result of changing attitudes, some students tend to become very demanding. These changing attitudes of students subsequently affect academics.

To elaborate on the changing academic–student relationship, and peer relationship (student–student), participant UA8, an Associate Professor from a university in the Go8 universities said, “If I can just start with an anecdote…” (UA8, 10) and narrated her lived experience with her students. The anecdote is presented in Box 4.1.

**Box 4.1 Anecdote 1 by a participant**

One day, instead of teaching her students as usual in a large lecture theatre, she invited all students to go out to a large courtyard in her university. They had interesting discussions, shared food, and the teaching session continued beyond the usual time:

*to have a sense of hope into the future that they could be change agents in creating a kind of future that they wanted to be part of. Literally, the students were saying to each other that they were not ready to leave this class because it was so different to what they were having in other classes* (UA8, 13).

Participant UA8 further commented that she is not saying “something magical about her class” (UA8, 14). She pointed out that what she was trying to show by narrating this lived experience is, that students were saying:

...*in terms of a sense of community, a sense of connection to others, what I can do beyond my university degree, where I still get to stay with my values at the centre and not just enter into*
work that is about, government or industry priorities, but about
doing something that I deeply care about (UA8, 15).

She remarked, “That’s just a personal story, but I think the evidence is really clearly
nationally, that students do feel it. They are frustrated by the decline in services that
are available”.

The third changing relationship identified within the university community is
academic to academic relationships, or collegial relationships. Participants explained
how the changing nature of academic work environment is imposing limitations on
norms of academic collegiality in universities. Two examples provided as causes for
this change are: (a) limited space and time to interact with other academics and (b) lack
of respect for each other. Each of these will be considered in turn with verbatim text
included.

A. Limited space and time to interact with other academics

A Professor from a university in the Go8 universities commented that there is
less collegiality among academics, and that academics do not get opportunities and
space to meet and interact. She said that even university campuses have structurally
changed now. She recalled that in the 1990s they had common rooms, and those rooms
were common spaces, where you could bring your own cup of tea, so you didn’t have to
pay money to be there; “it wasn’t a commodified space” (UA8, 27). Whereas now,
“cafes are overflowing”. People spend money to have a quick cup of coffee or tea
“rather than the kind of serendipity of these common rooms where people would meet”
(UA8, 28). She considers that,

[T]here are less opportunities for the serendipitous bumping
into each other and sharing moments of when we’ve got
something in common or talking about difficult times (UA8,
29).
B. Lack of respect for each other

Ten of the sixteen participants commented that the way academics speak to each other and interact with each other has changed. One participant recalled his experience with his previous Head of School. The participant was deeply concerned and unhappy the way this Head of School addressed other academics and interacted with them. “Academics are experts in their own fields of study, yet the Head of School treated them without respect” (UA8, 27). At academic meetings, others were not allowed to ask any questions. If someone braved up to ask a question or comment on something the Head of School became offended and angry. Participant’s memories of experiencing a controlling culture and a bullying personality of the head of school was quite upsetting and raw for him. He commented:

[T]he previous head of school would deliver information at us which had been terrible... a kind of lecture...and there was very little space for engagement. It was antagonistic when you did engage. The conduct and the treatment of certain individuals in those meetings was one that I could understand that people would say nothing at all rather than saying anything (UA8, 29).

The second category is presented in the next section.

4.2.2. Influences of political and economic ideologies

The second category identified in the findings that is relevant to the first question is the influence of political and economic ideologies, including neoliberalism, corporatisation, managerialism, commodification, commercialisation, and marketisation. The influence of political and economic ideologies brought about change in university governance and accountability management. Ideology is understood in this study as a form of economic, social or political philosophy with ideas that aim to explain the world or to change it (Gerring, 1997). All sixteen participants highlighted changing university governance as a significant transformation they experience, that affects their academic work. University governance refers to the structure and process
of authoritative decision making across issues that are significant for external as well as internal stakeholders within a university (Gayle et al., 2011).

Ten themes emerged from this category: (a) the evolution of the university into a corporate model, (b) disappearance of the collegial governance, (c) changing leadership, (d) accountability management and performance measurements, (e) change influenced by managerialism, (f) change influenced by marketisation, (g) change influenced by neoliberalism, (h) change influenced by pedagogy influenced by economic logic, (i) change influenced by commodification of education, and, (j) change in student perception on university education. Each of these will be considered in turn with verbatim text included.

### 4.2.2.1. The evolution of the university into a corporate model

Participant UA8, a Professor from a university in the Go8, who expressed her displeasure relating to changes that academics are experiencing in the current academic work environment attributed it to “influences of corporatisation of universities”. She quite vehemently said “I call where I work a corporation now. There are certain things that indicate that, organisationally, this [the university] is acting as a corporation. We have a CEO that earns over $1,000,000 a year”. She commented that universities do not transition very well into the corporate model (UA8, 16).

> We take the corporate model, we pick and choose what we want. Universities do that—they act like corporations in some respects, but they take no responsibility (UA8, 17).

Participant UA8 emphasised further about the evolution of university into a corporate model:

> It’s so problematic, corporations want to act like good corporate citizens, and it’s problematic to think about corporate social responsibilities and social license to operate, ... we stop treating students as actual active citizens, but rather see them as consumers. It’s entirely inappropriate for an educational institution, regardless of the kind of push for a corporate
takeover... we rely on their student fees...because it’s a significant income to the university (UA8, 19).

4.2.2.2. Disappearance of the collegial governance

Participant UA10, a Professor from a university in the Ungrouped Universities, termed his experience of change relating to university governance as a movement from a collegial governance to a governance of a corporatised hierarchical model. He commented:

[w]hat I’ve seen since I’ve been here [in Australia] is a movement or a difference, from the system that I’m accustomed to, where what we would call collegial governance, which is the idea that the academics effectively run the university—it’s an old idea, self-governing institutions (UA10, 42).

Talking about the old system of collegial governance, participant UA10 observed that it probably promotes a certain type of collegiality because we are being expected, not only to produce more work as individuals, but we are being expected to create teams that work together “[T]o concentrate our efforts so we are working on the same kinds of projects, but also to create more productivity and more of, –what gets called these days– impact” (UA10, 12).

4.2.2.3. Changing leadership

Fourteen participants noted that change happening within university leadership impact on the work of academic staff. Participants remarked that the recruitment process of Senior Managers has changed significantly. Participant UA3, a Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities commented, “Those positions are [now] largely by appointment rather than by election or by turn taking” (UA3, 39).

Participants highlighted that Senior Managers’ attitude and behavioural patterns have changed, and considered such changes are linked to the fact that Senior Managers are now appointed externally. They commented that in some universities, faculty academics are not given the opportunity to be elected to these positions, even when they
reach a level of seniority. Change of appointment seem to have created a different kind of collegial atmosphere. Participant UA3, expressing his observation commented:

[Y]ou speak perhaps in a different tone of voice to somebody who’s been appointed from outside to somebody who’s taking their turn at leading the faculty because it might be your turn next. You are a lot gentler if there’s that understanding that people will do those jobs for a certain time (UA3, 40).

This new, changed recruitment procedures have created much doubt and apprehension in participants. Participant UA5, a Professor from a university in the Go8 universities stated:

[W]here they [Senior Managers] are appointed beyond their level of ability, they don’t do a very good job, and they are arrogant and bossy and that’s resented because what academics value most of all is their autonomy (UA5, 56).

Two of the participants believed when unsuitable people are appointed to managerial positions, they could destroy universities. A Professor from a university in the Go8 universities advised, as a recommendation for an improved future recruitment process:

[T]hink more carefully about who is appointed and it’s not just these managerial types who order people around…I’ve seen that destroy institutions, so that’s very bad. But, to have people who are considerate and have others work with them constructively… (UA5, 127).

4.2.2.4. Accountability management and performance measurements

The findings revealed that fourteen participants believed that a significant change has occurred in the academic work environment in Australian universities relating to accountability management and performance measurements of academics.
Participants considered the newly introduced forms of measurement as a threat to academic freedom, and could hinder innovative thinking, innovative teaching and research. A Lecturer from a university in the Innovative Research Universities (IRU) pointed out that due to “complexities in processes, procedures, templates, standardisations” (UA2,12) and numerous forms academics have to complete, and measurements to adhere to, academics may not have time to attend to more important work and innovative thinking. Therefore, when teaching students and preparing their lessons, they may “choose to, repeat what they have been doing previously, rather than being innovative and doing something new” (UA2, 13).

With the change in university governance, new forms of auditing, accountability, and evaluation are used to measure performance of university academics in Australia. Phrases such as accountability management, performance measurements and new public management, (NPM) reforms, are used interchangeably in corporate and managerialism vocabulary; meaning the same as accountability management of academic work (Parker, 2011).

Participant UA14, a Professor from a university in the Australian Technology Network (ATN) commented:

[W]e are getting busier having our time filled, not necessarily with the big main tasks of teaching, research or even service, but lots more admin and paperwork, lots more doing things so that people can see what you are doing rather than doing the doing... the current trend is about people having to prove that they are doing work or people having to prove that they’re not being lazy, to me, that doesn’t make a lot of sense... it turns our work into these sequences of six minute lots or fifteen minute lots, which is not what it is (UA14, 2-4).

4.2.2.5. Change influenced by managerialism

Change influenced by managerialism is explained in this section under the subheading of: (A) change of behaviour of Senior Managers, (B) remuneration
inequalities, and (C) autocratic decision making of Senior Managers. Each of these subheadings will be considered in turn and verbatim text included.

A. Change of behaviour of Senior Managers

Eight participants commented that due to the controlling attitude of Senior Managers, it has been difficult to discuss with them about matters affecting academics. Participant UA3, a Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities shared his experience of what happened in his university.

\[T]\he academics in the university had to take legal action because they could not resolve a workload issue with their previous Dean (UA3, 65).

He further explained his experience of “meeting the new Dean for the very first time in a Supreme Court” (UA3, 67).

\[W]\e went through a period where we had a Dean who was quite intolerant of staff attitudes. We had senior members of staff breaking down in tears in our staff meetings because they couldn’t take the stress of the amount of teaching, they were being asked to do. They were doing sixty to seventy hours a week of work, and that was too much…. eventually that dean was replaced. And the new dean came in when we were halfway through a legal battle on this (UA3, 66).

B. Remuneration inequalities

Another factor highlighted by participants was about remuneration inequality between the leadership and academics. Some participants considered there is a link between Senior Managers’ remuneration packages and the demeaning manner some Senior Managers treat others. For example, a Professor from a university in the Go8 universities said:

\[N]\ow the ‘managerial class’ are the ones who assume they have the power because they are often paid more and can tell others what to do. The managerial-class of people has
increased exponentially within university, so we now have more managers than academics (UA5, 132).

Participants commented that the growing gap between the “managerial class executives” and other academics has become pronounced with the ballooning of university management remuneration. They remarked that in Australian universities the salaries of Vice Chancellors, Pro Vice Chancellors and Senior Managers, are too high.

C. Autocratic decision making of Senior Managers

Another change voiced by five of the participants is, that before Senior Managers decide on projects that effect all academics they do not have any consultation with academic staff. A Senior Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities commented:

[T]he management seem to think that briefing people with information about their intended strategic directions is actually consultation, but it’s not. They tell you that this is what we’re doing rather than genuinely consulting with academic staff. So, the gap [between academic staff and Senior Managers] is getting bigger (UA11, 5).

4.2.2.6. Change influenced by marketisation

From the themes that emerged in the category of influences of political and economic ideologies, marketisation was noted by fourteen participants as another factor having immense impact on the changing of the university culture, and consequently affecting the academic work. Participant UA5, a Professor from a university in the Go8 universities, remarked:

[O]nce you moved to this marketised system, the notion of competition is imposed, and everyone is supposed to be involved, so it exacerbates the competition between individuals and between faculties (UA5, 110).

She further elaborated, that marketisation has had an impact on the changing of the previously known collaborative relationships between institutions, “because it
means that now, everyone is supposed to play a role in helping their unit and their institution do better in these league tables and ranking... now everything has to be excellent” (UA5, 80). According to her comments, influences of marketisation affects relationships between institutions, and “it appears sometimes to be negative because there is less of a willingness to collaborate and, to do things which would be sensible” (UA5, 111).

4.2.2.7. Change influenced by neoliberalism

Six of the participants who ascertained that influence of neoliberal ideologies impact on the changing of academic work highlighted evidence of how one of the characteristics of neoliberalism, which is ‘the self-interested individual’, is changing the nature of academics’ work, and their lives.

Participant UA5, a professor from a university in the Go8 universities, commented, “The promotion of this aspect of neoliberalism encourages academics to think about the self always”. She said that either in the individualistic sense, or whatever unit, “whether it’s your faculty, the school or the university…so, all of those become more important than thinking about the notion of common good” (UA5, 89). She further said, that the current perception of the notions of common good, justice, and equity, “they are all concepts that are suppressed within this very competitive mindset that prevails” (UA5, 91).

4.2.2.8. Changing pedagogy shaped by economic logic

Participants commented that the university management and the government see university education as an economic enterprise and encourage increased enrolments of domestic and international students, which is causing transformational change in universities. But, the management highlight students as, “at the heart of a changing learning environment”. However, participant UA8 said “that’s clearly not the case…” Participant UA8, an Associate Professor from a university in the Go8 universities, commented:

[W]ith the many different catch-cries that universities have…the economic logic was then shaping pedagogy and
assessment in profound ways. It’s making those managerial priorities fit into an economic agenda (UA8, 8).

Participant UA11, a Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities, commented that there is a “management class”, a category of personnel, who work in the university who do not do any teaching or any research, but they make up more than half of the people who are employed at the university:

[they don’t know what students are like and they don’t know what research is or how the research culture works, but they run the organisation... they run the institution, and they run it according to their own needs or requirements, and that’s a kind of bureaucracy (UA11, 16).

He elaborated further on the change that management is enforcing upon courses, academics, and students to accommodate to the increasing student numbers. He was concerned that with new change students may not get adequate training they require in the course that he is teaching. He further said:

[I]f you look at the way funds are dispersed at a University, and this has always been the case, I’m sure, but it seems now to be worse than ever. The University takes 50% of what we earn for them, and people who don’t earn a cent of that distribute those funds... Vice-Chancellors, Pro Vice-Chancellors... (UA11, 9).

Participant UA6, another Professor from a university in the Go8 universities supported the same viewpoint of how economic-logic is changing pedagogy. He voiced it as, “learning getting squeezed” (UA6, 29) to fit in to the economic-logic. He explained how in subjects like History the university used to have year-long courses. Students can read in the May and August vacation, and write long essays. But now universities have much tighter teaching periods, there is less time for that reading and wider study outside the classroom. Consequently, the quality of what happens in the classroom is going to be diminished by that, because students are not doing substantial reading.
He related another experience which he termed as “thinning out of the curriculum”. It highlights how university “management interventionism” is making management’s agenda fit into a changing of curriculum and courses. In his Go8 University, they had “a large review in the area of the Bachelor of Arts, which was very poorly implemented” (UA6, 31). He said that the management imposed a standardised structure on courses on all programs across the faculty and across different discipline. Every discipline in the faculty had to “come up with the same something, to fit the same template, and if a course had too many electives then they had to cut some of them” (UA6, 32). He said that consequently there was only room for limited number of electives in this new program of Bachelor of Arts. Especially language courses, which have always been quite rich in electives got greatly affected. Now the language courses are separated from literature and culture courses. A student can now do 3 years of a language and just do the language acquisition part only, but they are not learning, and not reading the literature anymore.

[I]t’s like learning English but you don’t get to learn from Shakespeare for example. So I think the curriculum has been thinned out (UA6, 32)” .... “We had the curriculum changed to highlight more of the skills development component and academic opportunities to teach their own specialization in-depth have been curtailed to some extent (UA 6, 25).

4.2.2.9. Change influenced by commodification of education

The influence of commodification or considering education as a commodity was identified as a change and noted by 14 participants. Participant UA5, a Professor from a university in the Go8 universities, who has more than twenty-eight years of experience as an academic commented:

[R]ather than a joint enterprise in which academics and students engaged in the pursuit of knowledge, they [students] come into a system that is markedly different in all these manifestations in terms of the notions of management and the idea of profit and the notion of education as a commodity (UA5, 9).
Some participants linked commodification in universities to change of students’ perceptions, and their expectations, regarding university education. For example, participant UA5, illustrating this point of view commented, that students are more concerned about vocationalism and as to what they are going to get out of it in a practical sense. She said that it is “more complex to unpack the way that operates, because students are interested in having some outcome” (UA5, 11). She explained that it is similar to going into a shop to buy something specific, and they want a material outcome for the cost. Relating to university education the participant said, the cost is often extremely high, for example, the fees for some degrees are more than $100,000. “If we move to deregulation then that will be even more pronounced” (UA5, 12).

Five of the participants pointed out how the change of commodification of education is impacting on students’ lives and their behaviour, and consequently, how academics’ work is affected. Three trends of thought emerged from the findings.

a. Students are anxious and nervous about their future. Participants compared their university days with the present. “We were privileged that there were jobs and one didn’t really worry too much about that, one enjoyed the experience of being a student, whereas now, students are neurotic about the outcome” (UA5, 20, 21).

b. Students’ wellbeing is affected by the change. Participants compared the past with the present.

[We never heard of ‘well-being’ in the past, but there’s now this movement in terms of student well-being...Students are worried; they are worried about the high fees that they’re paying, they are worried about the increased competition in the market, so they are made to think all the time about jobs rather than enjoying their experiences as students (UA5, 22).

c. Students are more competitive now. Participant UA5 narrated her experience of how students complain about their marks questioning why they didn’t get a High Distinction. She commented:


[Your’ve got to mark to the bell-curve where you’ve got too many failures here and we can’t have that. We can’t have students going out and complaining to the ombudsman or something like that because they haven’t done well because that’s going to be very bad for our market and marketing image (UA5, 30).

Participant UA5 further explained how the marks and the notion of competition “contributes at various levels… how the market subtly and unsubtly contributes to the shaping of the student experience, what they are taught, as well as how they might be taught” (UA5,31).

4.2.2.10. Changing student perception on university education

A shift from theoretical knowledge to applied knowledge and the change of student perception towards knowledge are themes that emerged from the findings. Five participants remarked this as significant change that impact on the academics’ work. A professor who has worked for 28 years in a Go 8 university said:

[T]hey [students] are less interested in the idea of knowledge for its own sake…So, critical knowledge seems to be less important, so I think the focus is then on applied knowledge… there’s less tolerance of theory and critique on the part of students and, that’s been accepted by institutions as well, so you hear about the phrase of ‘dumbing down of courses,’ which I think points to that shift away from critique to applied knowledge (UA5, 17).

Participant UA5 said, that it is not only from the perspective of students but also their parents, society and government, who are all talking about having a “material outcome”, and “what is going to be the practical ramifications and how this is going to change workers… it’s the idea that universities now should be producing job-ready graduates as an important dimension” (UA5, 18). She reminisced into her university days to highlight the change “When I was a student no one talked about that” (UA5, 19).
4.3. Summary

Two categories were identified as triggering change in academic work: massification of higher education, and the influence of political and economic ideologies. Under the category of massification of higher education, seven themes emerged noted as causing change to university learning environment, changing academic work, and affecting academics. They are, change in: (a) the mode of delivery, (b) student numbers, (c) casualisation of academic staff, (d) the application of advanced information communication technologies (ICT)s, (e) academic workload, (f) university learners, and (g) academic-student interactions.

Under the category of influences of political and economic ideologies, ten themes emerged noted as causing change to university governance and accountability management. They are: (a) the evolution of the university into a corporate model, (b) disappearance of the collegial governance, (c) changing leadership, (d) accountability management and performance measurements, (e) change influenced by managerialism, (f) change influenced by marketisation, (g) change influenced by neoliberalism, (h) change influenced by pedagogy influenced by economic logic, (i) change influenced by commodification of education, and, (j) change in student perception on university education. In the next chapter participants’ responses to Research Question 2 are examined.
Chapter 5. Findings: Barriers and Opportunities

5.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the findings relating to Research Question 2 of the study: *what barriers and opportunities do academics see and experience in relation to the identified change?* At the interviews some participants reflected upon alternative phrases such as *predicaments* and *dilemmas*, with reference to the term barriers; and *favourable changes*, and *benefits*, with reference to the term opportunities. In the findings of this research question, the phrase *predicaments* and *favourable changes* seemed to link more appropriately with participants’ responses. As such, the terms predicaments and favourable change are used throughout this chapter.

In the findings eleven themes were identified as predicaments and four themes were identified as favourable changes. A visualisation of the findings to Research Question 2 are presented in Figure 5.1.

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Figure 5.1 Predicaments and favourable changes
5.2. Predicaments

The term predicament is understood in this study as an unpleasant or difficult situation that university academics encounter. Eleven themes emerged as predicaments: (a) the impact of online teaching (b) limited resources and labour intensification, (c) curriculum change, (d) pressure to accomplish research–teaching nexus, (e) casualisation of staff, (f) the impact of advanced technologies, (g) the changing student, (h) student surveys, (i) academic-student relationship, (j) accountability, management and performance measurements, (k) appointment of Senior Managers. Each of these will be considered in turn with verbatim text included.

5.2.1. The impact of online teaching on academics

All 16 participants commented regarding predicaments academics encounter as consequences of online teaching and learning. Five themes that emerged from the findings relating to online teaching are presented in this section under the subheadings: (a) addressing learning difficulties of online students, (b) spending excessive time on individual students, (c) concerns of quality of teaching and learning, (d) detrimental effects of online presence as an academic, and (e) making online teaching a requisite for academics.

5.2.1.1. Addressing learning difficulties of online students

Participant UA9, a Senior Lecturer from a rural university in the Ungrouped Universities remarked that the universities that “jumped to online teaching were the smaller, vulnerable universities”. She pointed out the predicament academics in her university are faced with as a consequence of this decision to launch courses online. She commented that her university has taken anyone, regardless of their background. “It’s good, an open-access university in a way, but when you do that in an online sense, you inherent a lot of difficulties that you can’t fix. You can’t always fix someone’s poor writing or, thinking skills”. She said in addition to that, “you’ve got these big ominous shifts to remove funding for students, so universities have to find ways to increase load to make up that gap, and that growth agenda of online teaching and learning becomes a massive quality issue” (UA9, 34).
5.2.1.2. Spending excessive time on individual student

Participant UA3, a Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities distinguished that online teaching is “a different kind of work because you are dealing with students individually instead of dealing with them as a whole group” (UA3, 16). He presented an example to elaborate this further and said that if somebody asks a question in a big group when you are physically present, you can respond to the whole group by saying it once, and you inform twenty or thirty people at the same time. “[B]ut when you are doing it online, just because I’ve answered this email doesn’t mean that I’ve responded to everyone” (UA3, 17).

Another factor participant UA3 highlighted is the change that can be observed in online students’ expectations of their studies, which is different from those of face-to-face students. He remarked that frequently when academics are responding to online students’ emails: “Students expect you to respond immediately” (UA3, 11). He provided an example to explain this further, and said that a student who had a problem and wrote him a message just before midnight, wrote another message at ten past midnight saying “why haven’t you replied yet” (UA3, 12). The participant however understood how the student felt, “but of course you know, if you are a student and you only have an opportunity to study late at night, you would really like if you could get instant response” (UA3, 13). He considered online teaching is time consuming. “It’s difficult to measure how much time the online students take… too much time spent on individual students (UA3, 10).

5.2.1.3. Concerns of quality of teaching and learning

Five participants emphasised their concerns about the quality of a university degree when the courses are delivered online. Participant UA9, a Senior Lecturer from a rural university in the Ungrouped Universities remarked, “What a university degree was maybe even 15 years ago is not really the same [now]” (UA9, 58).

Participant UA9 further emphasised that not only relating to online courses but even in face-to-face delivery courses the quality of a university degree is now different and threatened. She said, “The truth is, many people have experienced that you can do a university degree, but it doesn’t always lead to a job, or future, or a career”. She implied
that the university management change and introduces university courses with the purpose of increasing student enrolments and focusing on getting more revenue, without much thought to the quality of the courses. She highlighted her rural university environment as an example and explained that they have a low level of general education attainment and low literacy/numeracy levels in that city, and because there is a lot of socio-economic poverty, she think the university is changing to include associate degrees as part of its offering, which means that her university teach people who haven’t finished grade 12 or who don’t have an ATAR score [The Australian Tertiary Admission Rank score]. “[b]ut students might want to do aged care, cooking or agriculture… So, it’s just more of a cynical system where we are becoming more like a TAFE [Technical and Further Education]” (UA9, 59).

Some participants considered the changing mode of delivery to online teaching as a barrier to effective teaching in so many ways. They said that students learn better with face to face teaching with opportunities for discussion. Participant UA5, a Professor from a university in the Go8 universities commented that students do not have the same experience and that she considers that the experience that students get with online teaching is an inferior experience. “[I]t is an experience and it suits them[students] because if students are basically interested in credentialism, getting the degree at the end… the piece of paper rather than the experience, that’s where we see that very significant difference” (UA5, 48).

5.2.1.4. Online presence as an academic

Participant UA9, a lecturer from a rural university in the Ungrouped Universities considers, having an online presence as an academic is not a pleasant experience. She compared online teaching and learning with social media and remarked that in some ways online learning is parallel to social media, because of what can happen with responses from students. “[f]or example, if we look at what happens with social media... bullying, trolling, and the power that social media has” (UA9, 28). She elaborated further on the comparison and said that if you have a face-to-face class of students you can tell a joke, you can be yourself, you can find an unusual way to get to something, and you can give a long example, a wordy example, a story, or a memory. If you try doing that online, “then it looks indulgent ... it looks weird” (UA9, 28). She said it can be interpreted in so many different ways and it is very hard because “[W]e can’t pretend
that spoken language is the same as written language, there’s a massive difference” (UA9, 29). She said that she has experienced that the way in which students react in an online situation is different and interesting. “I’ve found it a big thing to try and work out” (UA9, 29). She commented that she is still trying to “find a way to have a presence online… I suppose, everyone does it in their own way” (UA9, 30). She further stated, “[Y]ou are invisible from the students. They don’t judge you on how you present to them; you are just a name on a screen” (UA9, 25).

5.2.1.5. Making online teaching a requisite for academics

Participant UA14, a professor from a university in the Australian Technology Network (ATN) commented that online teaching is not for every student and not for every lecturer, “[T]here is an assumption that everybody would be able to do it and I’m not sure that that’s necessarily the case” (UA14, 92).

Participant UA13, another Senior Lecturer from a university in the Australian Technology Network (ATN) explained his perception of online teaching and said that entirely online courses are not for him, because the type of courses that he runs are where there is a strong engagement with industry, which requires face to face teaching. He said that he teaches capstone subjects where its problem based and applied learning. As such, it is much more difficult to do that type of courses in an online space. He emphsised that all courses should not be considered as online courses.

He said that he designs his courses, and he wouldn’t find himself easily accepting a teaching role that was just online. He has built a career around a particular style, and he thinks that particular style of teaching and philosophical engagement with education has value for students, for the university, for him and for industry. “I don’t think it will be entirely replaced by an online education space. I have a lot of engagement with my students” (UA13, 65). The next section describes another theme that emerged as predicament.

5.2.2. Limited resources and labour intensification

Fifteen participants noted increased pressure on staff to teach more students with limited and decreasing resources as an effect of massification of higher education affecting Australian university academics, which has now become a predicament. Some
participants termed it as “labour intensification” (UA1, 8). Participant UA1, a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities focused his response on the connection between labour intensification and limited resources. “[S]o, people are being asked to do more work with less resources” (UA1, 7). He further explained this situation with an example of how the number of students in a classroom keeps going up, but the number of hours in which to evaluate what they do doesn’t change. “[S]o, there is labour intensification. Work gets more intense and there seems to be more work to do and less time to do it in” (UA1, 8).

Participant UA4, a Professor from a university in the Innovative Research Universities (IRU) commented on the decrease of resources, but with an evident increase of students, she specifically focused on the government funding to universities which she said is “very tight…” (UA4, 15). She explained how a great deal of the work of the university is to provide the population with a degree and, “teaching undergraduate students is where a great deal of the money comes from”. These tend to result in the increase of pressure on staff to teach to larger cohorts. She further said that different ways have been put into place to accommodate for the increase of students, for example, there have been courses that run for 10 weeks or 13 weeks and they might have five pieces of assessment. “That’s crazy” (UA4, 15) she said.

Participant UA1, a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities stated, that although limited resources are not an issue that academics can resolve, the general expectation now in the changing university work is, that at individual level academics need to resolve whatever problems they encounter. He said if an academic said “I struggle to do the marking and to return it back in a certain number of weeks because I have too many students, so I’m going to be late,” the management wouldn’t resolve the problem but would say, “do your work more efficiently … you need to change the way you are doing your marking. You are not using your time effectively” (UA1, 8).

According to four participants, limited resources and labour intensification may have implications on the pedagogy, or more specifically on the quality of courses. It is reflected in the following scenario explained by participant UA1. He said that a multiple-choice exam for example, is machine readable, so he doesn’t have to do the marking. He just gets his computer to do the marking. He remarked that a multiple-
choice exam does not make people who are good at thinking or evaluating things, they just make people who know the right answer, and that is not a very valuable skill. Participant UA1 commented that it is like, teaching a parrot what the right answer is and the parrot can say what we want, but “it doesn’t mean that the parrot knows anything, or is more or less intelligent, or anything like that. So, there is a degradation in that kind of context of the academic values, which is partly economically driven” (UA1, 9).

5.2.3. Curriculum change

Academics who teach subjects such as history and art had the opinion that changes in universities do not provide them with many opportunities to expand or progress innovatively. A Professor from a university in the Go8 universities said, that in his subject area, “the curriculum has been thinned out” (UA6, 24). Participant UA6 remarked that the reason for this thinning out is due to “management interventionism” (UA6, 25) and making management’s agenda fit by changing curriculum and courses. Another participant explained, how universities are focused on “producing job-ready graduates” (UA5, 19) and some specific subjects they teach do not quite contribute in promoting this aspect of shift. Participant UA11, a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities stating his predicament explained, “[S]o, what happens is, that in terms of accreditation, etc, there is another layer of change coming down from on-top called degrees of difference”(UA11,7). He further elaborated how the management is expecting academics to change the makeup of courses to have an Honours year level in fourth year, which would change everything. “That changes the entire degree in terms of what we can offer. So, the outcome from that is, that students might not get in my area, Arts, any training. They already have very limited arts training, and they make it even less now” (UA11, 8).

Participant UA11 said he feels that the university management doesn’t care whatever happens, all they are concerned with is the ‘economic-logic’ linked to these changes. The term economic-logic is used here to indicate the aim of gaining a profit, instead of intentions of public common good. He further said that the management does not understand students’ issues. “[T]he vice chancellor doesn’t understand about using the learning management system and the difficulties of that, or the different types of students that we have to support once they are accepted into the university” (UA11, 4).
Participant UA11 expressed his frustration, about the unfairness of the situation relating to changes. He was also concerned about his job security with these unprecedented changes. “[I]n terms of those changes, and in terms of my own self-concept as an academic…I’m totally disempowered” (UA11, 8). Although he is the academic who is in charge of that subject area he said that he has no sense of agency, and a total lack of power relating to what is occurring. “I’ve had no input into that whatsoever”. He further commented how such changes affect academic autonomy and academic freedom.

5.2.4. Pressure to accomplish research–teaching nexus

Twelve participants voiced their concerns relating to excessive pressure on accomplishing research-teaching nexus. Themes that emerged from the findings highlighted the challenges academics face with undue expectations they need to accomplish to perform effectively in research activities, as well as to be innovative-teachers to large numbers of students.

The findings noted three aspects of research–teaching nexus identified as predicaments: (a) How research–teaching nexus is personally affecting academics, (b) the difficulties of getting research funding, (c) the privileges for some academics over others. Each of these will be considered in turn with verbatim text included.

5.2.4.1. How research–teaching nexus is personally affecting academics

Participant UA10, a Professor who has also worked in another European university as an academic, expressed his dismay at the situation relating to research performance measurements in Australian universities. He remarked:

[As a Professor, I produce work and I’m trusted to do it ...
but in this place you are actually treated like a machine that
produces either enough or not enough (UA10, 11).

He said he has been shocked by this and considered it is the strangest thing in the world “That there is this level of distrust in academics to be able to organise their
own lives and to produce at a level that is reasonable” (UA10, 12). He further commented that he feels that in this Australian university, it is like he is literally having a speedometer, which tells him “how well I am going or how poorly I’m going in terms of my productivity. To me, I couldn’t believe it when I came here, that there’s such a weird quantification of my work…. (UA10, 7). He stated that research-teaching nexus put too much pressure upon academics. Participant UA9, a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities commented that research is being used more “as a weapon against academics” (UA9, 68) rather than as something that academics undertake because they want to do it. She complained that although university management measures academics’ research output to a decimal point, university management does not want to measure academics’ workload. Participant UA9 further explained how universities increase workload of academics but refuses to acknowledge its impact on academics’ teaching and quality of research.

5.2.4.2. The difficulties of getting research funding

Participant UA12, a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Regional Universities Network (RUN) explained how the university management allocate academics time and funding for research and stated, “[B]ut they want more evidence of impact… they want you to have so many research outputs …of quality… so that’s a bit more under the microscope…It’s harder to get research funding” (UA12, 1). Participant UA12 further elaborated on the ‘standard base amount of research workload’ that everybody gets, which is problematic because some people are doing almost no research, yet they have access to the base amount, which is 10%, while another colleague might do quite a bit more research than them, yet only get 12% or 13%.

[T]he workload for research, in many respects, is unfair for a number of different reasons. I’ve been into universities and worked under maybe about five different regimes, so to speak, of about five different workloads. So, it is a bit of a problematic area (UA12, 4).
5.2.4.3. The privileges for some academics over others in getting research funding

Participant UA12, from a university in the Regional Universities Network (RUN) noted that not all academics of all disciplines are treated the same way when allocating research funding and time. Some researchers who work in large teams, are being privileged over others. Some universities might invest a lot of money in equipment or a lab, and researchers of those universities may be more privileged in getting more research funding. Participant UA12 said that his father was a physics Professor and he is familiar with some of the work he did. “[I]f you take a subject like physics, the university has got all of that investment for that subject area there already, and once you build up a name as a group, it’s not too hard to attract research funding (UA12, 2).

He explained further how an academics’ workload for research depends on how much external funding they are able to attract. “[I]f they don’t bring in any external funding, then they don’t have access to that portion of possible research workload” (UA12, 5). Then the rest of their research workload, is contingent on how many, and what quality the publications are. Some participants commented on how the research-teaching-nexus operated in the past. This is illustrated in the scenario explained by an Associate Professor from a university in the Australian Technology Network (ATN) group of universities. He said that in the past, there was an understanding that different academics would have different combinations of things that they were doing across that career. So, some academics might have times when they were doing lots of research, and then times where academics had to do lots of teaching, or, people becoming more specific into those different roles. “I don’t think that happens so much anymore. I think we’re all being expected to do everything and to do well at everything” (UA14, 5).

A Senior Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities expressed his frustration as he compared the past and the current situation relating to research, and blamed the Management for the current situation. He said that he does not have “[A]ny respect whatsoever for our Senior Management of the university ... none at all, because they are fundamentally concerned with money, bums on seats, cross-subsidising research through teaching, and building their own careers” (UA11, 41). He further
stated that “they [the Management] really don’t care what occurs …so long as we tick boxes for them. It’s a terrible state of affairs” (UA11, 42).

5.2.5. Casuallisation of staff

Fourteen participants mentioned casualisation of staff in Australian universities with an inference of negativity. From the findings five factors emerged as predicaments related to that of casualisation of staff: managing casual staff is additional work for tenured academics, casual staff contracts, and processes and procedures of recruitment are not appropriate, casual staff members are unfairly treated, only one tenured academic teaching in the course, and all others are casual staff and, no career structure for casual staff.

Participant UA12, a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Regional Universities Network (RUN) group of universities commenting on the employment of casual staff, highlighted managing casual staff as an additional problem academics are faced with. He said that he taught a course with about 800 students on three campuses and online, and this layered more pressure added to managing the course and the casual staff. He commented that this creates a situation of a lot of management in which “you have to be careful about quality, so quite a lot of effort has to go into moderation, and training people up to the right standard. Once you’ve trained them up, then you try hard to keep a hold of them” (UA12, 8).

Participant UA5, a Professor from a university in the Go8 universities pointed out, that according statistics there has been a phenomenal increase of casual academic staff members in Australia, which is currently about 65%. But, she said that the way casual staff are employed is inappropriate.

[T]here are terrible stories about people being employed on the 1st of March and then sacked on the 30th of November and then having no income over that period, not knowing whether they’re going to have a job the next year (UA5, 119).

She further explained her experience and commented that “The awful part is that their job may rest in the hands of a person in authority such as a Head of School” (UA5,
Due to the insecure and unpredictable employment processes for casual staff members it is difficult for casual staff members to speak out, because they do not have the authority like the tenured staff. If they speak out or question anything, that could be the end of their casual job because the Head of School is more likely to favour someone who is a “docile head-nodder” than someone who is going to ask questions and appear to be difficult, “so that’s a very negative dimension of it” (UA5, 120).

Another “negative dimension tied up with the casualisation” is, when the appointments become “ancillary to research” (UA 5, 121), so that full-time Senior Researchers can then employ people to do their research, or while the senior person does the research, the casual staff can undertake the teaching for that person. Participant UA5 expressed her annoyance over how the university is making use of casual staff members’ vulnerable position to “save money and maximise profit”. She termed casual staff members as, “the bi-products of the competition, [that we see in Australian universities], because it’s about saving money, and it’s not about caring for individuals at all” (UA5, 118).

Participant UA8, who is a Professor from a university in the Go8 presented her opinion and said, “Majority of our teaching work is done on contract and, that creates all sorts of pressures” (UA8, 6). She remarked that casual staff members are not paid as previously, and they are unfairly treated compared to their tenured full-time colleagues. She reminisced into the past and said that previously it was not like now. When academics with continuing positions, had to employ tutors in the early 90s, they actually paid the tutors to come to lectures. Academics valued tutors and wanted them to be competent with the curriculum. “We paid them much more in terms of the amount of time we would allocate for marking. Now, we have become much meaner and leaner in terms of the amount of money that we pay to our casuals” (UA8, 6).

From the fourteen participants commenting on casualisation of staff as a predicament, twelve participants said that they are the only tenured full-time academic staff teaching their course, and all others are casual staff. The stories and grievances of all twelve participants were similar. Participant UA11, a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities talked about casualisation of staff as a “big problem” (UA11, 39). He said the reason for the problem is that there are too many casual staff members and only a few tenured staff members. He provided an example
and said, “I run one unit that has 240 students in it, and 60% of those are online. I’m the only salaried staff member, and there are eight casual sessional staff” (UA11, 40). He further explained the problem for him in this situation as having excessive work. “The amount of work that I must do in coordinating them, helping them to understand what we need to do, explaining how the unit runs, and moderate assessment tasks, takes lot of my time and that’s a big administrative burden” (UA11, 39).

Participant UA13, a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Australian Technology Network (ATN) group of universities, who manages large undergraduate classes on three continents with 600 students, and 40 casual staff shared similar thoughts and commented, “In the course that I’m running, I’m the only full-time academic teaching in that course. All other staff are casual staff” (UA13, 20). Participant UA3, a Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities shared his thoughts and emphasised, “[W]e have several thousands of casuals working part time and we only have about 1500 staff members that are permanent within this whole university. So it sounds to me as though the proportion is not ideal (UA3, 57).

A predicament presented by participant UA11 highlights the lack of consideration of prospects for casual staff. “[T]he other thing that really disturbs me is the lack of any sort of career structure for people who are casual. What do you have to do to get permanent position? (UA11, 40).

5.2.6. The impact of advanced technology

The use of advanced technology in teaching and learning is praised for its benefits. However, some still doubt whether too much focus on technology deviates attention from the most important subject matter in student learning. This is reflected in the comment made by participant UA4, a Professor from a university in the Innovative Research Universities (IRU). She said, “[A]cademics are encouraged to manage, using technology to cut work hours, and that’s good and smart and possible, but if it erodes the quality of teaching then that can be a problem” (UA4, 16).

Literature indicates that with increasing focus on the active use of advanced technology to support learning and teaching in university education, opportunities for academics to learn new technologies and new software are increasing in universities worldwide (US Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology, 2016).
However, in the literature some scholars argue that for advanced technologies to impact on education and improve learning and instructions, effective use of technology requires prepared teachers, ongoing support, and continuing professional development (Bull et al., 2016). Participant UA3, a Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities commented on the increased challenge technology makes for some academics. Although it is an opportunity for some, others see it as a predicament that hinders them from carrying on as usual, because now they are forced to upskill. Focussing on this challenge he said, that he is a lecturer in information technology. So, he is one of the people who has been “happy to shepherd these new systems in” (UA3, 128). Yet he said that from his point of view, it’s not an issue. But he knows that from many other academics’ point of view, who haven’t got that information technology background, “they do find it different” (UA3, 129).

Participant UA15, an assistant lecturer from a university in the Regional Universities Network (RUN) group of universities, who has been working as an academic only for 3 years, compared herself with more matured academics with more than 15 years of experience and commented, “I’m quite happy and comfortable in that space [using technology for teaching] but I know that some of my older colleagues have struggled with technology” (UA15, 11). Participant UA11, a Senior Lecturer, from a university in the Ungrouped Universities presented similar thoughts and commented that he sees different approaches and “great difference between the qualities of what’s available online” (UA15, 12). When considering his colleagues’ different tech-savvy approaches, he emphasised, “[S]o, within my faculty, there’s probably a percentage of people that really get it and understand how to do it, but the majority don’t” (UA15, 13). Participant UA15 explained how the majority considers competency in technology as their ability of “putting up Power Points or Word documents or PDF’s, and they don’t have any understanding of how technology can enhance learning and teaching, or what asynchronous/synchronous components can impact on student identity, student engagement or student learning” (UA15, 14).

5.2.7. The changing student

Ten participants commented on the changing nature of student’s study-focus and personality traits. Participant UA5, a Professor from a university in the Go8 universities commented, that rather than developing a joint enterprise in which academics and
students engage in the pursuit of knowledge, “now students come into a system that is markedly different in all manifestations of the notions of management, and with the idea of profit, and the notion of education as a commodity” (UA5, 9). According to participant UA5, students now behave in a university education environment just like a customer walking into a shop to buy a selected product. The study conducted by Sapp (2005), indicates in the findings how higher education is now delivered as a “service encounter” which highlights university students’ newly constructed status as customers. Eight participants noted the changing student attitudes and the notion of “service encounter” (Sappey, 2005, p. 1) as a predicament and stated that it changes students’ view towards knowledge production and knowledge acquisition. Additionally, this change is seen by participants as a shift from theoretical knowledge to applied knowledge and it is a change that involves not just the perspective of students but also their parents, society and the government. Participant UA5, further elaborated that “[T]hey, [students, their parents, society, and the government] are talking about having some sort of material outcome… they are less interested in the idea of knowledge for its own sake, and the critique…. the focus is on applied knowledge (UA5, 15). The management has been encouraging this shift of attitude. “so, you hear about the phrase of ‘dumbing down of courses,’ which I think points to that shift away from critique to applied knowledge” (UA 5,17).

Participant UA3, a Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities, who has been working as an academic for more than 23 years has seen clearly the changing study-focus in students. He said when he first started working in the university, the most frequent question from student was “What do I have to do as a student to get high distinction in your subjects?” He said it was a delight to be able to respond to, that type of question from a student and it helped to educate him as the lecturer as much as the student. The participant laughed and added, now, if a student comes to see him in his office, the question is “What do I have to do to scrape a pass?” (UA 3,110). He explained in detail how difficult it is for academics to teach when students are not interested in their studies. It becomes a predicament for academics. He said that some students were enrolled in university studies, because that was the only way for them to claim government benefits.
[Y]ou want people to come to the university because they want to learn. Not because the government has basically forced them to be there (UA3, 108).

Even students who are keen in their studies now behave in a different and changed approach to their studies. Another Professor from a university in the Go8 universities who has worked for more than 28 years believed students’ approach to study is changing because now all resources are provided online to them, “[S]o increasingly we are in this kind of blended mode where we have classes and some students don’t come to them”, and others are just sort of dipping in online and taking the bits they want to take and hoping to pass that way. It is not always satisfactory” (UA6, 18).

This changing phenomenon relating to students’ perceptions and behavior towards studies has turned out to be a predicament for academics because now students spend less time reading books or spending less time physically in the library to just downloading little chunks of what they think they need. Participant UA6 felt that impacts on the quality of learning and teaching. As such, there was more pressure for academics to have more blended learning resources available electronically through the website.

Participant UA6 considered changing student perceptions is a result of “students getting internalised by a utilitarian approach” (UA6, 23), and commented that students have been increasingly sold a very utilitarian idea of what university education is about. The messages that students have got from government and universities management have “[I]nternalised this message of going to university is all about getting a credential for a prestigious job … getting a better paid job… there is that sense of entitlement because they are customers and paying through HECS [a student loan scheme in Australia] and so on…” (UA6, 24).

As such, five participants specifically expressed this factor that Australian university students’ experiences are now changing, and commented that students now treat universities as a place that they drop into and out of, for one or two hours to come to class, rather than being connected in a whole different set of ways to what could be a part of a university community. Therefore, students are missing out on the chance for a
much broader transformative experience that higher education could be. She remarked what students now get is “one of a more extractivist relationship, where students come in, get the curriculum, learn what they need to learn to pass their assessment” (UA8, 12).

An Associate Professor from a university in the Go8 universities, with more than 20 years of experience as an academic expressed her “dismay” when comparing the changing situation with what used to be in the past, which she believed makes this situation a predicament. “[W]hen I started work in the early 90s, you’d never dream of parking in a two-hour car park. What would you do in two hours? Nothing!” (UA8, 13). In those days, students were at the university for the whole day. They would go to the food co-op and have a discussion, or went and did some work in different groups with the environment collective or whatever, or the student union. There were groups and activities that were a whole other area of university life, which made university experience meaningful. “On the whole, students don’t do this now ….”(UA8, 14).

Another participant tried to explain the reasons for change relating to students’ campus-experience and said that the pressures on students have increased so they are spending less time on campus… even though they are not getting quite the same experience of being a student 30 years ago used to have.

[I] guess student priorities have changed too whereas a lot of them used to see being a student was like a distinct phase of the life, whereas now it’s in the life cycle. Now students are juggling paid work and study at the same time (UA6, 15).

5.2.8. Student surveys

Seven participants commented on the irregularities relating to online student surveys. The customer-centric mentality students portray, especially when completing student feedback surveys is emphasised by participants as a concern and a predicament for the academic staff. Participant UA6, a Professor from a university in the Go8 said that there is more of a sense of entitlement among students because they are filling this survey online. He noted that, “there is this notion called the ‘online disinhibition effect’ that people are willing to be much ruder and more aggressive when they are sending emails or filling in something on the internet” (UA6, 23). But if you are writing on a
piece of paper with other people in the same room even if it is anonymous, they may not do the same. So there has being an increase in sort of rude and aggressive comments. Participant UA6 sounded extremely frustrated with student feedback surveys. He blamed the management for the chaos the student feedback surveys are causing and impacting negatively upon academics. Participant UA6 said that he doesn’t really generalise about students, but there has been one trend that has been noticeable. “[I]t’s all about minority of students… if someone gets survey back and 10% of the responses are rude or offensive …that’s upsetting for the people who get them” (UA6, 24).

Participant UA11, a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities said in the university where he works they have a system of student feedback which he believes all universities have, and, it seems to be so common that academics get a directive from the management to improve something, and so they improve the student feedback system by putting it fully online. “What has happened is that participation rates for those surveys has dropped 500%. They used to get ... 60% to 70% survey response, and I now get 15% or 10% or less than 10%” (UA11, 48). He further elaborated that as a part of that system, the procedures that sit underneath that for example, is, “if you get a unit survey that has anyone of various indicators, such as a low response rate (which isn’t my fault), you then have to put in a review of your unit ... about it ... about why the students haven’t responded” (UA11, 49).

Participant UA11 pointed out that “it’s a ridiculous system, and it is not my problem” (UA11, 49). He implied that it is a short coming of the management how the system is handled:

[T]hat happens all the time, where some guidance from above or some decision is pushed down, and you have just have to do it, and it just increases your administrative burden. The students are over-surveyed anyway. If they are enrolled in four units a semester (a full-time load), and they get a teaching survey and a unit survey, then that’s eight surveys they must do (UA11, 39).

Some students with client-customer boldness can be disrespectful towards academics and the student feedback surveys can be used inappropriately. Participants
said that in student surveys, there is no accountability for them, and so they can say what they want to. For the first time this year, he said, he had some students who had some absolutely vile things to say in the student survey, and it sounded like the student was drunk when he wrote it, and “I know who the student was because it’s a small sample; I can’t do anything about that. I can’t even acknowledge that I know who it was because they believe that it fundamentally undermines the system of the survey” (UA11, 40).

Participant UA11 said in his situation, he feels powerless and he cannot do anything about it which in the end may even impact on him as an academic and may even lose his job. He felt it is a real power imbalance.

[I]’m not saying it’s necessarily a bad thing because I understand the value of it, but it’s another point that makes one feel disempowered. I know a lot of people don’t even read them now. The only thing you must read is the unit surveys, and people are just sick of them (UA, 11, 42).

5.2.9. Academic-student relationship

In the findings, 10 participants reported that change in the academic workplace has detrimental effects on academics and students, and their relationships within a university community. Participant UA9, a Senior Lecturer from a rural university in the Ungrouped Universities said she has been training students as future school teachers for the past twenty years. But now, the change she is experiencing makes her very sad.

[The biggest and the saddest change, is losing close connection with students... The way it’s changed over time..., when I started, I was conscious of issues of quality of teaching, because we had very close relationships with schools, and I think in a way teachers were more involved in the way that we taught, and we knew our students... I used to know all of my students, and sometimes I taught them for four years, you know, in different ways, and now I teach students that I never ever see (UA9, 8).]
5.2.10. Accountability management and performance measurements

Eight participants voiced their concerns and elaborated on their experiences relating to forms of auditing, and evaluation, used to measure performance of university academics in Australia. They remarked that performance measurement was not a fair system. The consequences of not adhering to stipulated measurements were severe. Participant UA14, a Professor from a university in the Australian Technology Network (ATN) group of universities observed:

[W]e are getting busier having our time filled, not necessarily with the big main tasks of teaching, research or even service, but lots more admin and paperwork, lots more doing things so that people can see what you are doing rather than doing the doing... the current trend is about people having to prove that they are doing work or people having to prove that they’re not being lazy... to me, that doesn’t make a lot of sense... it turns our work into these sequences of six minute lots or fifteen minute lots, which is not what it is (UA14, 33).

Another factor that participants highlighted was that performance measurements do not capture effectively all of the work and associated activities performed by academic staff. For example, participant UA2, a Lecturer from a university in the Innovative Research Universities (IRU) commented that academic staff spend a vast amount of time attending to the administration of teaching by means of communication with students via email. Similarly, academic staff spend time on pastoral care undertakings. But, “those activities do not get captured in the performance measurements, only the numerical values do” (UA2, 27).

Participant UA9, a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Innovative Research Universities (IRU) explained:

[T]hey [university management] measure your output on a little calculator... if you fall below it then you’ll be in
trouble, and people have lost their jobs because of that... they will measure to a decimal point your research output, but they are very happy not to measure your workload (UL9, 67).

A performance measurement that academics are anxious to accomplish is publishing articles in a “good journal” (UA3, 74). Relating to this requirement as an academic, twelve participants shared their experiences and sounded stressed, because of the time constraints they encounter due to their increasing responsibilities of teaching, and lack of time to write journal articles was reportedly a challenge. They emphasised that the type of work they do “doesn’t necessarily just happen, but thinking, writing, crafting and investigating is involved with that kind of work which takes time” (UA14, 52). Two other significant discrepancies noted, relating to publishing journal articles are, that the definition of what a “good journal” to publish, which is not clear, and the fact that “Senior Management does not have a clear understanding of how, the ‘journal impact factor’ [– a measure reflecting the yearly average number of citations to recent articles published in that journal–] and the ‘journal h-index’ [–a measure of the quality of a journal that can be calculated using data from Web of Science, Scopus or Google Scholar–] work for different disciplines” (UA3, 76). For example:

[I]n the science disciplines, the rotation time from submitting an article in a science journal to getting it published is usually very quick. In an education journal, it takes about twelve to eighteen months to get something published. This difference seems to be more pronounced when academics are requested to provide details of significant things to be reported to the university council. The Senior Management requests details of any articles published in journals with an impact factor of more than five. However various fields, such as education, rarely meet this mark. They also request details of any grant over half a million dollars. That’s also a rare thing in education and some other disciplines (UA3, 78).
As one participant affirmed: “It shows a certain insensitivity by Senior Management when they are not able to talk in phrases which are disciplinary aware” (UA3, 78).

5.2.11. Appointment of Senior Managers

Participant UA5, a Professor from a university in the Go8 universities emphasised the importance of appointing appropriate candidates to leadership roles who do not bully their colleagues at work. “It’s actually in the interest of the university” (UA5, 127). She said, and further elaborated:

“If people are hounded and harassed, constantly, they are going to feel disaffected and I’ve experienced that at institutions where a Head of School has been very aggressive towards staff and treated them arrogantly. People leave because they don’t want to put up with that or they will be disaffected and they will disengage. They won’t want to work for the institution and they’ll do the absolute minimum and not come in” (UA5, 127).

Professor UA5, confirmed the behaviour of Senior Managers “I’m conscious of all of this, because I had a young colleague talk to me this morning about a problem and there seemed to be this lack of respect that was really a part of that problem” (UA5, 131).

5.3. Favourable change

Five themes were identified as favourable change: (a) online teaching, (b) opportunities to learn advanced Technologies (c) shift of attitude in students, and (d) employment of casual staff. Each of these will be considered in turn with verbatim text included.
5.3.1. **Online teaching**

Three participants considered the changing of the mode of delivery of some courses to online teaching as a favourable change. Participant UA15, a Lecturer from a university in the Regional Universities Network (RUN) expressed her gratefulness to online teaching. “I wouldn’t have been able to complete my higher degrees if there wasn’t an online option, and I can see the number of students that would not have accessibility to higher education if we didn’t have it” (UA15, 60). She further elaborated how online teaching and learning are continuously advancing with the latest technologies.

\[ As \] the technologies improve... we look at those other forms of technology. Now, technology makes it more personalised contact (UA15, 62).

5.3.2. **Opportunities to learn advanced technologies**

A favourable change that all 16 participants identified and agreed upon is, the opportunities academics have in learning new information communication technologies (ICTs). Participant UA7, a Professor from a university in the Go8 universities explained the benefits she has had because she was keen to learn the latest and more advanced forms of information communication technologies. She believes that she was selected to the current role because, she could use Blackboard when at that time none of the others could. “So, it’s really been my superpower, being adaptive with technology” (UA7, 23). She also mentioned that her colleagues ask her “how do you manage bazillion things at once?” and her response to that is, that she has a system and a technology that supports every single aspect of her work, and she is constantly looking for improvements and using software to support her.

Participant UA15, is an Assistant Lecturer from a university in the Regional Universities Network (RUN), and she acknowledged that in her university they have a large IT services team, and they are available at the other end of the phone. “We have a lot of online tutorials, as well as face-to-face professional development that you can sign-up for. So, we do have all of that support” (UA15, 26).
5.3.3. **Shift of attitude in students**

Eight participants commented that the shift of attitude in students about university education is a good move. Participant UA5, from a university in the Go8 noted that universities should be producing job-ready graduates and the applied knowledge means something that’s going to be good for the student in terms of vocationalism. She further commented:

*I think, it’s government and society thinking about what is going to be the practical ramifications and how this is going to change workers, basically, so it’s the idea that Universities now should be producing job-ready graduates as an important dimension that we see there of this shift* (UA 5, 18).

5.3.4. **Employment of casual staff**

Four participants spoke about the employment of casual staff as a favourable change. A Professor from a university in the Australian Technology Network (ATN) commented, that with the rapid increase of student numbers it was more practical to get the assistance required by means of temporary work. “Unless we’ve got big inputs of funding to have academic staff full-time workers who cover all of the teaching…” (UA14, 61). The participant explained further that in the courses she is teaching there are many casual staff who do not want to work as tenured full-time academics and are happy in their current roles. “They are great at their job, but, for whatever reason, the time of their life or their career, they are not after full-time work” (UA14, 61).

Participant UA3, a Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities shared similar thoughts:

*I think it’s almost necessary for us to have a certain proportion of our staff as casuals. Because we can’t predict how many or how few students we are going to get from year to year. That’s entirely in the hands of the students. ...we need to have some flexibility* (UA3, 54).
5.4. **Summary**

From the findings of participants’ lived experience related to Research Question 2, of this study, 11 themes emerged as predicaments for academics, regarding change in the university academic work and four themes emerged as favourable change. The predicaments explained in this chapter are: (a) the impact of online teaching, (b) limited resources and labour intensification, (c) curriculum change, (d) pressure to accomplish research–teaching nexus, (e) casualisation of staff, (f) the impact of advanced technologies, (g) the changing student, (h) student surveys, (i) academic-student relationship, (j) accountability, management and performance measurements, and, (k) appointment of Senior Managers. The favourable changes elucidated in this chapter are: (a) online teaching, (b) opportunities to learn advanced technologies (c) shift of attitude in students, and (d) employment of casual staff. In the next chapter participants’ responses to Research Question 3 is examined.
Chapter 6. Findings: Academics’ responses to change

6.1. Introduction

This chapter explores the findings relating to Research Question 3: how are university academics responding to opportunities and barriers they see and experience, in relation to the changing landscape of Australian universities? In the previous chapter, the use of alternative term favourable change, instead of the term opportunities, and predicaments instead of the term barriers was explained. These two alternative terms predicament and favourable change are used in this chapter as well.

In the findings twelve themes emerged illustrating how academics articulated their responses and positively and negatively commented on predicaments, and favourable change. From the twelve, four are considered as positive comments and eight are considered as negative comments. These are illustrated in Figure 6.1.

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Figure 6.1 Academics’ responses to change
6.2. Positive comments

Four themes emerged as positive comments: (a) benefits of being an academic, (b) opportunities of engaging in research activities, (c) how academics respond to online teaching (d) how academics respond to advanced technologies. Each of these themes will be considered in turn.

6.2.1. Benefits of being an academic

When discussing favourable change participants’ experience in their academic work environment, four participants commented positively. They highlighted the benefits of being a university academic. Participant UA15, an Assistant Lecturer from a university in the Regional Universities Network (RUN) group of universities commented on the flexibility she enjoys as an Australian academic.

[I] find we have enormous flexibility. Although we have deadlines to meet, and work can be very stressful, then equally we have a lot of time throughout the year where we are not working to those types of deadlines. So, the flexibility that’s afforded from this type of work is pretty amazing

(UA15, 14).

The joy of being a university Academic, and the ease of work compared to other teaching professions is reflected in her explanation of her experiences as a secondary school science teacher.

[S]o, if you can imagine a group of 25 fourteen-year-olds with Bunsen burners (laughs). It doesn’t get a lot more stressful than that. Look at my office now! (UA15, 53).

She said being a high school teacher is hard work and stressful. For her, being a university academic is her dream-job. She said that sometimes when academics complain about their job it surprises her,

[T]hose of us who have come from teaching in secondary schools do have a laugh about the people who go, ‘oh, it’s so
stressful,’ and we go, ‘yeah, no.’ Count your lucky stars how nice this job is! The secondary school teachers I know and the colleagues that have worked with children with behavioural problems, with very high needs, you get used to, you know..., spit, gunk, being punched, having your hair pulled, being scratched, sworn at. Yeah, no, this is an easy job compared to that (UA15, 54).

6.2.2. Opportunities of engaging in research activities

Participant UA16, a Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities explained the benefits of having time to do full-time research without sharing their time with teaching activities. She noted that because she has been allocated to do full time research, she can spend all her time doing research, whereas people who have a high teaching load and research it would be more difficult to concentrate. Attending to the grant writing and publications take a lot of time. She remarked even though her colleagues in other universities may not have allocated time for full-time research, if they have support from the university management to generous time allocation, it could make a big difference.

[Y]ou’ve got to have enough time to sit down and think about a problem and turn it over in your head and look at what other people have done. You need time for reading, that’s what really helps you to understand what else is going on and therefore what you can contribute in your area (UA16, 47).

This view is consistent with key ideas expressed in scholarly literature. Universities are continuously emphasising on the teaching–research nexus. Yet, some scholarly literature denotes that teaching and research are not activities that can be integrated into a nexus, enforcing academics to concentrate on teaching and research at the same time (Boyd et al., 2010).
The comments by participant UA10, a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities, and participant UA13, a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Australian Technology Network (ATN) illustrate how some academics responded to favourable change. They acknowledged the value of cooperative research.

“So, if we are all working on separate little bits, we have less impact than if we work together on projects. I think we have moved, in the last couple of years, from a focus on individual productivity to a focus on coming together to create more impactful and cooperative research (UA10, 12).

[I] collaborate with a few others on research studies because they are doing interesting stuff and my stuff fits with their stuff, and so we collaborate. But we don’t teach together, for it’s like a work-based thing around the outcome that we are after… I find that those that you do collaborate with are often very generous with their time and their experience (UA13, 10).

Different ways universities provide their academic staff with research-enhancing services, including mentoring programs, and research retreats, are reflected in the comments by a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Innovative Research Universities (IRU). He explained how he contributed to the research mentoring program for colleagues from different parts of the university that has been going on for three years. He described how a Professor in his field of study from another university, worked together with him and the valuable input he gets from that Professor. Participant UA12 recommended identifying academics from other universities in one’s research area and linking and networking with them. UA12 further explained his experience of attending a research retreat, and how beneficial it was. “Once you start doing that, if you’re generous with people then they can be generous back” (UA12, 64).
6.2.3. *Positively responding to challenges of online teaching*

Previously, (see Chapter 5, p. 109) participants identified online teaching as a predicament because when online students request for help, an academic must respond to students’ individual emails separately and they takes much of academics’ time. But participant UA3, a Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities explained how he resolved that predicament. He said he has designed his courses so that at the end of every week the students do a short quiz and they have three opportunities to do the quiz. If they fail, that is, they have not understood some of the most important material in that week’s learning, then they must contact him.

\[T\]hen I can give specific one to one response. I can look at what they’ve said on their quiz. I can see where they’ve got the right idea. I can confirm that with them. I can see where they’ve got the wrong idea and I can explain to them how they can... why it’s wrong and what they can do to figure it out from the material (UA3, 23).

6.2.4. *Positively responding to challenges of advanced technologies*

Participant UA7, a Professor from a university in the Go8 explained how she responded to the challenges of advanced information communication technologies. She remarked that some academics complain because they do not become competent and technology-savvy, to manage their work properly. She pointed out that to perform academic work efficiently,

\[I\] use ‘OmniFocus’ [a personal task manager program], which is like a ToDo list on steroids. It’s going to tell me what I need to get done by the end of the day in order to manage deadlines up to the end of the year… Sometimes I tell it to hide things from me until I’m ready to even think about those things anymore… I use every digital tool to pack
and link things together. So, I use ‘fantastical’ to manage my calendar, I use all these ‘apps’ to link... (UA7, 67-69).

Participant UA7 remarked that a colleague used to say that being an academic is like those plate-stick people, where they have got plates on the top of the sticks and they have to turn the sticks to keep the plates up. “The problem is that some plates start to wobble and you’re too busy turning this stick and you’re not wobbling that stick. Omni has got my plates” (UA7, 70), she said.

Eight participants were optimistic and excited about the favourable change in the university work environment using new and advanced information communication technologies (ICTs). Most of the participants commented that there are many opportunities for academics to learn ICTs. Participants who consider using advanced ICTs as a favourable change explained how they continuously upskill to keep up with the latest.

Participant UA7 said that all academics need to respond positively and make use of all opportunities made available through change. She expressed her annoyance because some academics are resistant to it. In her annoyance, she mockingly imitated what they normally say. “…oh, I don’t manage my time, I can’t write, unless I have a whole day…” She said she has “very limited patience for that line of thought” (UA7, 69). Participant UA7 said being a professional designer maybe making her think differently.

[Y]ou’ve got to take every moment that you can. You’ve got to be constantly ‘cooking it’, you have to be thinking about it. So, that ten minutes that you’ve got to be creative you’ve got to go, ‘bang’ and do it right there (UA7, 69).

Participant UA13, another Senior Lecturer from a university in the Australian Technology Network (ATN) explained how he tries to keep up to date with technology and acquire relatively current skills. He said that his skill-set is still not adequate enough for an online learning environment.

[S]o, if someone hasn’t been paying attention to that or hasn’t been upskilling themselves as time goes on, they must
be feeling under a fair bit of pressure, I would imagine

(UA13).

6.3. Negative comments

The eight themes that emerged as negative responses are: (a) consequences of the changing university governance, (b) from collegial governance to corporatised hierarchical model (c) responses to change in the university leadership (d) accountability management and performance measurement, (e) curriculum change influenced by commodification of education, (f) marketisation, and market logic, (g) neoliberalist characteristics mirrored in competitive self-interested individuals, and (h) customer/client learner-syndrome. Each of these themes will be examined in this section.

6.3.1. Consequences of the changing university governance

University governance refers to the structure and process of authoritative decision making across issues that are significant for external as well as internal stakeholders within a university (Gayle et al., 2011). The consequences of the changing university governance that emerged from the findings are explored under three subheadings: (a) from collegial governance to corporatised hierarchical governance, (b) responses to change in leadership, and (c) accountability management and performance measurements. Each will be considered in turn with verbatim text included.

6.3.2. From collegial governance to corporatised hierarchical model

Participant UA10, a Professor from a university in the Ungrouped Universities, conveyed his response to consequences of change in university governance as a shift from collegial governance to a corporatised hierarchical model. “[C]ollegial governance and academic freedom, these kinds of ideas that were really foundational in the universities, have been replaced by corporations and hierarchical models” (UA10, 43). According to participant UA1, a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped
Universities what academics experience now is, “the cultural and political context where the university is a kind of a corporate enterprise, and a commercialised enterprise, in pursuit of revenue” (UA1, 11). He further said, “That does some strange things to academic culture, because traditionally for good and bad, academic culture is kind of collegial in its nature and it’s kind of about peer evaluation” (UA1, 12). However, according to the changed corporatised hierarchical model:

icient epeal btle to te aer cieal, te a able to the commoel government and they are accountable to institutions and people and bodies that are above them (UA10, 44).

Another consequence highlighted by participant UA1 relating to the change from a collegial governance to a corporatised model is, what he terms as “competitive corporate logic”. Explaining this concept, he said that academic work is “made strange, when competitive corporate logic is introduced, which is also effectively anti-democratic” (UA1, 13). He explained what he meant by anti-democratic:

It [university] is not interested in democratic processes, and its democratic processes kind of jeopardise our corporate instrumental orientation, and they are also not really very time efficient if you are interested in a corporate kind of logic, then it’s better to just not have people talking all of the time about what to do or deciding for themselves what to do—just tell them what to do and they’ll just do it (UA1, 12).

Participant UA1 indicates, that what eventually happens to academics when they go through an anti-democratic process of change is, academia gets into an indifferent attitude, a mentality, or situation: “just tell them what to do and they’ll just do it” (UA1,12). This also shows how academic freedom is undermined with the change from a collegial governance to a corporatised model. Literature emphasises the significance of academic freedom as, “The indispensable requisite for unfettered teaching and research in institutions of higher education” (AAUP, 2018). According to Altbach,
(2015b) problems concerning academic freedom exist almost everywhere—created by changing academic realities, political pressures, growing commercialisation and marketisation of higher education, or legal pressures.

As participant UA1 pondered further upon his lived experiences he expressed mixed feelings over predicaments academics face within a changed university governance, and his voice switched to an ironical, sarcastic tone as he remarked:

\[ \text{[S]}o, \text{ we need, I suppose, for the university to be the way it is now, there is a management class (a category of people—personnel), who work in the university who don’t do any teaching or any research, but they make up half or more than half of the people who employed at the university and they don’t know what students are like and they don’t know what research is or how the research culture works, but they run the organisation... they run the institution, and they run it according to their own needs or requirements, and that’s a kind of bureaucracy (UA1,14).} \]

6.3.3. **Responses to change in the university leadership**

Two notions are highlighted here as participant responses under this subheading. They are the change in the recruitment process of Senior Managers and discrepancies in remuneration packages for Senior Managers when compared with others in the academia. Both responses have negative connotation and ascertained that they have a strong detrimental effect upon academics. Providing an illustration for this notion participant UA3, a Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities highlighted that Senior Managers’ attitude and behavioural patterns have changed, and considered such change are linked to the fact that Senior Managers are now appointed externally. In some universities, faculty academics are not given the opportunity to be elected to these positions, even when they reach a level of seniority. Change of appointment seem to have created a different kind of collegial atmosphere. Participant UA3, expressing his observation commented:
You speak perhaps in a different tone of voice to somebody who’s been appointed from outside to somebody who’s taking their turn at leading the faculty because it might be your turn next. You are a lot gentler if there’s that understanding that people will do those jobs for a certain time (UA3, 40).

Participant UA10, a Professor from a university in the Ungrouped Universities provided evidence to illustrate discrepancies in remuneration packages for Senior Managers when compared with others in the academia. He remarked that the Vice-Chancellor in his university “operates as a CEO and he behaves like it and he makes a fortune”. He said he has heard:

Senior Managers are paid between $700,000 and $1,000,000. It’s more than the “[Australian] Prime Minister makes. So, these people become, kind of elite managers who do not answer to people down underneath them (even though they would claim to be consulting) there’s very little evidence that that consultation is serious (UA10, 44).

Participant U10 explained his experience, and one incident relating to the Vice-Chancellor of his university was of special interest to him because he sounded quite shocked as he considered it is quite extraordinary. That incident must have been the ‘talk of the university’ at that time, because he remarked “I don’t know if anyone told you this…” (UA10, 44). What participant UA10 narrated is presented as an anecdote in Box 6.1.

Box 6.1 Anecdote 2 by a participant

A month or so ago, the VC turned up in a helicopter. He, you know, landed a helicopter over here in a field where the rest of us … if we want to go to [the city], it’s a three and a half hours in the car each direction, and this guy shows up in a helicopter. That’s I think, an interesting example of the kind of elitist CEO kind of mentality, and demeanour, just a way of being in the world that this person assumes … and he is definitely not the sense of a servant/leader, or a person who is an academic like any other … this is a special person who arrives in a chariot, you know? Rather than turning
Participant UA10, a Professor, coming to an Australian university from a university in another developed country, expressed his shock because of the way changes are taking place in university management in Australian universities, which are consequently affecting academics. He commented, “I think that the voice of ordinary academics is very quiet” (UA10, 50). He did not speculate any reasons for such quietness. But another Senior Lecturer, participant UA11, in his responses implied what could be a reason.

“We have no job security. They do it all through casual staff, so it’s not a very pleasant picture, and in fact, my partner and I both work in the system, and we are both looking at ways that we can secure our future outside of the academy (UA11, 17).

Participant UA11, in his response noted that inappropriate funds distribution and appointing too many managers are creating predicaments for academics causing academic freedom and academic autonomy to gradually disappear.

...that sense of a lack of agency and, a total lack of power in what is occurring... if you look at the way funds are dispersed at a university...The university takes 50% of what we earn for them, and people who don’t earn a cent of that distribute those funds... Vice-Chancellors, Pro Vice-Chancellors (UA11,14)

The other thing that we’ve seen really occur particularly in our university is they’ve appointed so many upper-level positions that are really high paying positions. It’s like, what week is it, how many new people have they appointed?
Whereas, the people that are actually generating the income, that is, Lecturers, Senior Lecturers, Associate Professors… [He made an angry noise, “pffft” between his lips to indicate that other academics do not get any benefits] … (UA11, 15).

The next subheading explains another trend of university governance that affects academics.

6.3.4. Accountability management and performance measurements

Relating to accountability management and performance measurements, participants now have to attend to more complexities in processes, procedures, including templates, standardisations, numerous forms to complete, and measurements to adhere to. Participant UA1, a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities noted, that this also means more work, and, “More rigid, I suppose…, implementation of ideas of what productivity is… so specific sorts of activities will be considered measurable and you must hit those targets” (UA1,12). Participant UA1 elaborated on accountability management and performance measurements and remarked:

[Then I suppose there’s also the sense of a slightly alien bureaucracy, so the idea that lots of academics’ time is given over to bureaucratic and administrative tasks that don’t seem very time effective, and people spend a lot of time filling out forms and filling out grant applications for grants that they don’t get, dealing with paperwork, going to strange committees and all of these strange… administration. So, there’s too much bureaucracy that seems not commensurable with the level of oversight which you would anticipate for the activity (UA1, 13).

He said that there might be other activities which academics might think as productive, but if they are not measurable and if they don’t contribute to academic career or profile, then academics will be at a disadvantage. “It’s not wise to pursue those
activities” (UA1, 13). He further provided an example to argue his point of view and said:

[I] might think that it was useful to engage in outreach with unemployed people in my city. But unless I can turn that into publications then it is of no value to me. It is not visible, and it is not capturable. So, the definition of what an academic is imposed externally and it is felt to be imposed externally, and that’s in a way, alienating or makes it seem strange to people. So, there’s all of those things (UA1, 12).

Participant UA14, a Professor from a university in the Australian Technology Network (ATN), in her responses indicated the notion of a threat to academic freedom and academic autonomy because of the lack of trust academics are challenged with, and having to prove that they are not dishonest and that they are not lazy:

[T]he current trend is about people having to prove that they are doing work or people having to prove that they’re not being lazy, to me, that doesn’t make a lot of sense… it turns our work into these sequences of six minute lots or fifteen minute lots, which is not what it is (UA14, 3).

Participant UA3, a Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities ascertained that two other significant discrepancies relating to publishing journal articles are, that:

[T]he definition of what a “good journal” to publish, is not clear, and the fact that Senior Management does not have a clear understanding of how, the ‘journal impact factor’, and ‘the ‘journal h-index’ work for different disciplines. [‘journal impact factor’—a measure reflecting the yearly average number of citations to recent articles published in that journal— and the ‘journal h-index’—a measure of the quality of a journal that can be calculated using data from Web of Science, Scopus or Google Scholar—] (UA3, 76).
He further said that for example, in the science disciplines, the rotation time from submitting an article in a science journal to getting it published is usually very quick. But in an education journal, it takes about twelve to eighteen months to get something published. This difference seems to be more pronounced when academics are requested to provide details of significant things to be reported to the university council. Also, the Senior Management requests details of any articles published in journals with an impact factor of more than five. However various fields, such as education, rarely meet this mark. They also request details of any grant over half a million dollars. That’s also a rare thing in education and some other disciplines. Therefore, participant UA3 said, “It shows a certain insensitivity by Senior Management when they are not able to talk in phrases which are disciplinary aware” (UA3, 78).

6.3.5. Curriculum change influenced by commodification of education

Participant UA11, a Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities, commented how curriculum changes are taking place in universities influenced by commodification of education. He was concerned about the quality of the courses because with the new changes students may not get adequate training, they require in the course that he is teaching.

[S]o, what happens is that we have now, in terms of accreditation, etc, we’ve got another layer of change coming down from on-top called ‘degrees of difference,’ and that means that what they[the management] are expecting of us is to change the makeup of our courses to have an Honours year level in fourth year. That change everything. That changes the entire degree in terms of what we can offer. So, the outcome from that is that students might not get, in my area, Arts, any training. They already have very limited arts training, and they make it even less now (UA11, 8).

Participant UA11 said he feels that the university management doesn’t care whatever happens, all they are concerned with is the ‘economic-logic’ of these changes.
The term economic-logic is used here to indicate the aim of gaining a profit, instead of intentions of public common good:

Management does not understand students’ issues—The vice chancellor doesn’t understand about using the learning management system and the difficulties of that, or the different types of students that we have to support once they are accepted into the university (UA11, 4).

He was also concerned about his job security with these unprecedented changes happening, just to get “fit into an economic-logic agenda” of the university management. He quite outspokenly expressed his frustration, of the unfairness of the situation:

In terms of those changes, and the result in terms of my own self-concept as an academic is, that I’m totally disempowered. I have no sense of agency whatsoever…. that sense of a lack of agency and total lack of power in what is occurring (UA11, 9).

### 6.3.6. Marketisation and market logic

Participants responded to the new trend of change that is evident due to marketisation in universities, which means, exposing its services to market forces. Participant UA1, a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities focused his attention to the significance of, “the shift where the student is understood as a consumer of services”. He observed:

Students, they could go to Hungry Jacks and have a Big Mac Meal, or they could go to Burger King and they could have a Whopper meal or they could go and have a pizza—they are free to make their own choice. So, they can go to the University of Sydney, they can go to the University of New South Wales—they can go wherever they want. So, those little retailers (the provider of the service), they are competing
with each other, so they have to think about how to entice the consumer (UA1, 17).

Participant UA5, a Professor from a university in the Go8 remarked, that marketisation has had an impact on the changing of the previously known collaborative relationships, because it means that now, “everyone is supposed to play a role in helping their unit and their institution do better in these league tables and ranking... Everything has to be ‘excellent’” (UA5, 80).

At the interview, while describing his lived experience participant UA1 questioned, “What does the university do?” and then he identified, that the main job of a university is, to “produce workers” (UA1,12), and remarked:

[I]t’s [the university] made to do a job which is to produce workers, so, in a way, that’s a big shift or a big set of shifts which is about making it look more like a market, so that is a commitment to market logics (UA1,13).

Participant UA1, mentioned about the book titled “What are universities for?” written by Professor Stefan Collini (2012), at Cambridge University in the United Kingdom—Collini is one of the critical voices that debates about universities and their future. Participant UA1 said that although he does not totally agree with everything Collini (2012) says, he considers some of Collini’s thoughts are significant because they are in accordance with his own lived experience. Specifically talking about market logic, participant UA1 remarked:

[T]his kind of market logic is corrosive—of course in some context it makes sense to have a market, like deciding on a hamburger that two people are going to compete to give you. They are going to see who can offer the cheapest and tastiest hamburger, but education doesn’t seem to be like a hamburger—even in economic terms, there are various things which make education not like a hamburger. So, most obviously, most people only get an education once. They go to one university. It’s not like I can go and try the burger and
say, ‘I don’t like that hamburger, so I’m going to go and get the next one’ (UA1, 12).

6.3.7. Neoliberalist characteristics mirrored in competitive self-interested individuals

Participants’ responses indicated that amongst academics there is a change of perceptions, characteristics, and behavioral patterns evident, which have a detrimental impact on their peers. Participants attributed these personal characteristic changes to the influences of neoliberalism. One of the characteristics of neoliberalism that is noted in the literature is, “The self- interested individual: a view of individuals as economically self- interested subjects…” (Tight, 2019, p. 2). Participants’ stories of their lived experiences illustrate how they have suffered deep hurt due to their peers’ selfish competition. Responses of two participants: participant UA11, and participant UA8, are included in this section.

Participant UA11, a Senior Lecturer, from a university in the Ungrouped Universities, when explaining change and competition in different areas of his work environment commented, “In the last couple of years, probably, I would say change in…competition for grants, competition for research, higher degree student supervision, collegial publishing ... all of those things” (UA11, 22). He further said that they have affected him personally and his work, and provided an example:

[A] colleague of mine chose to submit two grant applications and didn’t even ask me if I was interested in joining her in those applications...we are in the same area and have always worked together. That cuts quite deep. Yeah. However, it just makes you, or it certainly has made me far more focused and less collegial (laughs) ... (a pause), It hurts (UA11, 23).

Participant UA8, an Associate Professor, from a university in the Group of Eight (Go8, explained in detail her hurtful experience. Due to the length of the story narrated by her it is summarised and inserted in Box 6.2 as an anecdote.
Box 6.2  Anecdote 3 by a participant

Participant UA8 said Ian [pseudonym] is a very good friend and they have spent a long time in the field together. They have published together on the work they did together. Then one day, “he forgot, that’s what Ian said”, to put Participant UA8’s name on a paper.

[I]t was only when I saw the paper and I said, that’s our work. That’s absolutely my intellectual work, and that’s a grant that I got. You didn’t even talk to me ... (UA8, 35).

When Participant UA8 spoke to Ian about it, Ian felt very embarrassed and awkward and he said he didn’t even think of it.

[I] thought, how could he not even think of it? Has life become so instrumental and so based on meeting indicators that one who you are friends with and you see every week anyway, you wouldn’t think to just say ... I mean, this is intellectual property. This is the stuff we trade on. I found that deeply worrying, that someone could be ... I mean, I don’t know what it means, but part of it says to me that it means something. It means that the pressure to comply with these measures are coming from somewhere means that people make moves that I think do damage to personal relationships (UA8, 35).

Participant UA8 remarked, “Part of the challenge is that we are all competing for the same thing”. She narrated another story to illustrate, what happened and how she felt about another colleague. This anecdote is presented in Box 6.3.
Participant UA8 said that she had just received an email that week inviting her to review and ARC [Academic Research Council] peer review document. During that time, she also had an ARC application in. All academics were applying for the same money.

[I] think that plays out in how people review each other’s grants. We are all seeking to publish in the same journal. So, I think now that the pressure is so great, yeah people surprise me. People I’ve had long-term good rapport with do thing that I think, “oh.” (UA8, 30).

Participant UA8 explained what happened.

[T]his colleague who I have known for 20 years, I had work for 10 years on a project (an interdisciplinary project) and the time had come for myself and the other social scientist to leave the project. You know, we’d taken in as much as we could, and there was no doubt that we were going to leave (UA8, 31).

She said this colleague was invited to replace her and he never even contacted her to say:

[W]hat’s going on? Do you want to still be involved? ... He just took this on. When I saw him face-to-face, and I explained the story, then he said, “I’m so sorry, I couldn’t say no because I need to be named on a major grant to keep my job” (UA8, 32).

Participant UA8 said her colleague was apologising for what he did but all he needed to do was to call her and ask her what the story was. She thought that would have been so good for their rapport and their ongoing working relationship,

[B]ut he didn’t even think to call, instead it was that he couldn’t say no to this because he needed to be attached to a big grant and he’d just been invited to come on board to a big grant. So, he was willing to jeopardise our good working relationship for the sake of a grant (UA8, 33).

Participant UA8 said:

[I] won’t forget those two things or those two people that relationship has shifted. It’s very offensive (UA8, 36).
6.3.8. Customer/client learner-syndrome

Under the theme of negative responses, changed student perceptions and behavioural patterns that are affecting participants is coined here with the term *customer/client learner-syndrome* to identify a specific group of students in the changing learning environment, which characterises a syndrome or a group of symptoms which consistently occur together among these students. Participant’s responses recognised that these customer/client learners are interested in having an outcome for the cost, and they are more demanding.

Participant UA5, a Professor from a university in the Go8, commented that students now behave in a university education environment just like a customer walking into a shop to buy a selected product. Customers are interested in having some outcome for the cost, which is often extremely high, and some degrees in Australian universities are more than $100,000. Participant UA5 commented that if universities move to deregulation then that will be even more pronounced. The study conducted by Sappey (2005), indicates in the findings how higher education is now delivered as a ‘service encounter’ which highlights university students’ newly constructed status as ‘customer/client’.

*One of the big shifts is a shift between care for the student to this huge and almost constant pressure to make money and to see students as clients and units, and this quantifying that’s going on .... it’s changed* (UA9, 10).

Participant UA11, a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities who has been working as an academic for nearly 20 years ascertained, that it is a huge change because universities now recognise a student as a client and a customer.

*The other big change that I can see is in students, in terms of the way they view their study. There is this [attitude] ‘I’m a client, not a student, why didn’t you pass me?’ sort of thing* (UA11, 56).
Participant UA15, an Assistant Lecturer from a university in the Regional Universities Network (RUN) further explained this change in students:

[T]he potential for them to come in and say, ‘you haven’t taught me this,’ whereas twenty years ago it would be, ‘you haven’t learned this.’ So, I think that that’s a change, but again, that’s more a change that I see as a consumer, as a tax payer, as somebody who went to University 30 years ago vs. what I see of my students now (UA15, 48).

6.4. Summary

From the participants’ lived experience related to Research Question 3 of this study, how the academics respond to predicaments and favourable change they see and experience in relation to the changing landscape of Australian universities extrapolated nine themes. Four themes were considered as positive: (a) benefits of being an academic, (b) opportunities of engaging in research activities, (c) positively responding to challenges of online teaching, and (d) positively responding to challenges of advanced technologies. Eight themes were considered as negative: (a) consequences of the changing university governance, (b) from collegial governance to corporatised hierarchical model (c) responses to change in the university leadership (d) accountability management and performance measurement, (e) curriculum change influenced by commodification of education, (f) marketisation, and market logic, (g) neoliberal characteristics mirrored in competitive self-interested individuals, and (h) customer/client learner-syndrome. In the next chapter participants’ responses to Research Question 4 is examined.
Chapter 7. Findings: Goals and Objectives

7.1. Introduction

Chapter 7 investigates the findings relating to Research Question 4 of the study: *what goals and objectives do academics seek to achieve?* It is the final of the sequence of chapters presenting the findings of the study. Stopping at Chapters 4, or 5, or 6, would have presented findings as, more of a tale of woe and lamentation. Instead, Chapter 7 explores outcomes or academics’ aspirations, and goals and objectives academics seek to achieve.

Participants’ responses to the final research question, which unfolds in this chapter, are conceptualised in Table 7.1.

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Creating a conducive and productive work environment

7.2. Goals and Objectives

All 16 participants expressed their desire to have a conducive and productive work environment. Their goals and objectives centred on the two categories that emanated from the findings: the influences of massification of higher education, and the influences of political and economic ideologies. Participants’ narratives of lived experience and perceptions, expressed at the interviews revealed their keenness in establishing a university learning environment that is supportive of academics’ work.
Regarding the second category participants were keen in establishing a university governance that protects and enhances academic freedom, academic autonomy and academic identity.

7.2.1. University learning environments instigated by massification of higher education

Findings indicated that rapidly increasing student numbers, or massification of higher education as a factor that changed student learning environments and academics’ work, specifically creating situations of workload intensification for academics. In the context of their academic work some participants termed it as “labour intensification” (UA1, 8). When considering goals and objectives, participants articulated two normal practices they wanted changed relating to labour intensification. First, it is the normal practice they commented, that when a Senior Manager requests academics “to do more and more extra work, which they balance it up against teaching demands and research demands, and they just do that work without refusing, without any resistance”. Some participants suggested that without always conforming to what the Senior Managers compel academics to do academics need to develop more assertive patterns of behaviour.

[T]hey [the management] just can't assume that working hours are without limit. At the moment you just do it (UA3, 129).

But at the same time participants noted that there is a fear factor of losing their job if they do not conform to directives of the Senior Managers.

[T]hey [some academics] are on contract, and they fear that they may not be re-employed (UA8, 25).

The second normal practice mentioned was, that although university committees conduct a risk assessment when they establish a new policy proposal, it is common practice to ignore, or not include a workload impact statements in the policy proposal. Academics wanted this changed. They wanted a workload impact statement to be introduced into future policy proposals to reduce work intensification in universities.
With massification of higher education, universities are increasingly changing their mode of delivery to online teaching, and participants noted that online teaching is currently recognised as a less expensive way to deliver content to a large number of students. Related to online teaching, participants identified three scenarios that they desire to seek for, as outcomes, or goals and objectives. The scenario for the first outcome is illustrated by participant UA11, a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities. He stated that “majority of staff do not understand the value of online teaching” (UA11, 24), and he assigned it to the fact that all staff are not at the same level of competency in the use of digital technologies for educative purposes. The academics who are not at a high level of competency find it very hard and stressful to attend to anything online without help. Although all Australian universities have technology help readily available, which has been confirmed by participants, staff may not want to continuously ask for help. An effective hands-on training to upskill all online teachers may be more accommodating than ‘do your own study guides’, and ‘software help packages’.

Participant UA11 explained how the majority of his colleagues think that developing online teaching material means putting up PowerPoints, Word documents or PDF’s, and “they don’t have any understanding of how technology can enhance learning and teaching, or what asynchronous/synchronous components can impact on student identity, student engagement and student learning” (UA11 25). He further commented that to resolve all misconceptions relating to the application of advanced technology, staff need solid training in the ICTs.

Participant UA13, a Senior lecturer from a university in the Australian Technology Network (ATN) explained the background to the second scenario and said, that according to the kinds of courses that he coordinates, there is strong engagement with industry which requires face to face teaching. He said he teaches capstone subjects where its problem based and applied learning which is much more difficult to do as an online space. He argued his situation further:

[I] ’ve kind of built a particular career around a particular style, and I think that that particular style of teaching and philosophical engagement with education has value for students, for the university, for me and for industry. I don’t
think it will be entirely replaced by an online education space. I have a lot of engagement with my students. So, I would not put my hand up to do an entirely online course (UA13, 65).

Participant UA13 seeks an outcome that best suits his students and the course he teaches instead of diminishing its quality and changing it to an online course.

The background to the third scenario expressed by participants relates to issues that were presented in Chapter 5 as predicaments of online teaching, including (a) ways of addressing learning difficulties of online students, (b) spending excessive time on individual students, (c) concerns relating to the quality of teaching and learning, (d) online presence as an academic and the changing academic identity, and (e) making online teaching a requisite for academics. Participants’ goals and objectives relating to online teaching focus on seeking resolutions for predicaments and formulating strategies to reduce any detrimental effects on students and academics.

Participant UA3, provided an example of an outcome that other academics could follow to one of the predicaments relating to the issue of spending excessive time on individual students. He said he designed his courses in a way that students do not need to send him too many emails continuously asking too many questions and requesting explanations. He said he ensures that students understand each week’s material and at the end of every week they do a short quiz. They have three opportunities to do the quiz. If they fail, that means they haven’t understood some of the most important material in that week’s learning, then they must contact their tutor. The tutor can give specific one on one response. “The tutor can explain why it’s wrong and what they can do to figure it out from the material” (UA3, 23). Participant UA3 further said, that he would “at least like to have them [students] in the same room [it could be a virtual chat room] “for the first occasion that I meet them” (UA3, 32), because then they get to know him as a person. He stated that “it is better that way” (UA3, 34). The overall response of participants was to have mixed mode of delivery instead of online only teaching.

Addressing challenges of increasing casualisation of academic staff, also known as sessional staff, is another theme emphasised in the findings. Participants’ goals and objectives relating to this theme focused on seeking resolutions for the five factors identified as issues: (a) managing casual staff is additional work for tenured academics,
(b) casual staff contracts, and processes and procedures of recruitment are not appropriate, (c) casual staff members are unfairly treated, (d) only one tenured academic teaching in the course, and all others are casual staff, and (e) no career structure for casual staff. Participants did not want their sessional staff colleagues to be treated differently. The way casual staff members are treated by the university management was explained by participants in previous chapters. The goals and objectives participants now look for are centred on unresolved casualisation of staff issues. These were considered by tenured academic staff as a nuisance that they did not want to be involved in. They considered managing and coordinating casual staff members was putting additional pressure and work load on themselves. Yet, accomplishing goals and objectives on this topic was not forthcoming, because they are employment related issues that needed to be dealt with the university management. However participants were hopeful that casualisation of staff issues will be resolved soon.

[T]he problem with that [dealing with casual staff] is that the amount of work that I have to do in coordinating them, in helping them to understand what we need to do... how the unit runs, moderate assessment tasks.. Really eats into your time and that's a big administrative burden (UA11, 40).

Participants recognised the changing student perceptions and behaviour, with change noted as customer/client syndrome (see Chapter 6), and the challenges instigated by alienation of staff-student relationships and interactions, as new challenges. Participants desired these challenges addressed in the goals and objectives participants are seeking to achieve. They indirectly relate to three changes participants highlighted as significant: (a) opportunities and time to interact, in the way it used to be previously, when they had face-to-face, reduced student numbers, (b) apprehensions of implications of pedagogical quality of online teaching and learning, and (c) strong belief on the significance of small discussion groups, and participants’ desire to continue those.

Participant UA13, a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Australian Technology Network (ATN) explained his goals and objectives for the future generation of students and outcomes he seeks to achieve based on technology. He considers designing courses as experiences of a customer’s journey is an effective outcome. To make it happen, he makes sure that he keep up to date with technology. He said he is
working with a customer-experienced designer. He was excited about the innovative concepts of this new project and said “that’s a significant shift in thinking…when you think of students as having a journey … a customer journey, and that throughout a student’s course, the student has certain expectations” (UA13, 7). He believed that this new project will enhance more collaborative opportunities for staff and students to interact.

7.2.2. University governance and accountability management instigated by influences of political and economic ideologies

Findings indicated that influences of political and economic ideologies including neoliberalism, corporatisation, managerialism, commodification, commercialisation, and marketisation as factors instigating change university governance and accountability management. Participants’ goals and objectives in this second category are explored in this section.

The changing pedagogy, shaped by economic logic and commodification of education, is a theme that participants discussed. Participant UA8, an Associate Professor from a university in the Go8 explained how the university management highlight students “at the heart of a changing … pedagogy”. However, “that’s clearly not the case…” He commented that the university management and the government see university education as an economic enterprise, encourage increased enrolments of domestic and international students, and commodification of university education. These decisions are causing transformational change in academic work. He further said that:

[W]ith the many different catch-cries that universities have…the economic logic was then shaping pedagogy in profound ways. It’s making those managerial priorities fit into an economic agenda (UA8, 8).

Participants recognised the significance and connection between university governance, decisions made by university managers relating to university funding and
participants goals and objectives. The comment of participant UA6, a Professor from a university in the Go8, illustrates the voices of all 16 participants:

[I] think it shouldn’t be impossible because other advanced democracy does it...to have better public funding arrangements for a public University system... The sector needs to lobby much more aggressively... The university management have failed to do this (UA6, 46).

Participant UA6 further explained the background of the Australian university funding models, to justify and highlight its urgency. He said, that the demand driven system has significantly expanded the constituency of the Higher Education Australia.

When 15 to 20% of 18 years old are going to university, government could say this is a small elite they could look after themselves. Once you get up to 40%, then every family has someone they expect would go to university and they take interest... the mistake that university management made in supporting fee de-regulation several years ago was so disastrous (UA6, 48).

As such, participants suggested a review of Australian university funding models. This will enable “universities having more power to do what is best for the students and academics” (UA6). He continued to explain that instead of trying to build a wider public constituency for a better higher education funding arrangement, how universities caved in to a bit of pressure from the Abbott government. Universities said they will go along with the 20% cut in public funding per student, which never happened. But because universities said that, they didn’t pass it but because universities say they are willing to accept it. So, they took away all the lobbying powers for years. “We lost [several] years … a great mistake collectively by Australian Universities management” (UA6, 46). He further said, “everyone else [other countries] have been increasing their public investment in higher education much more than Australia has” (UA6, 47).
Participant UA10, a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities, commented on the stressfulness inappropriate funding models create in universities, and for academic staff.

[It’s an interesting kind of trickle down from the federal government—the Commonwealth Government—that sets priorities and benchmarks, and puts funding formulas in place, and it trickles down through the VCs down to the deputy VCs, through the Deans and onto the faculties, and everyone is stressed (UA10, 37).

Participant UA10 expressed frustration regarding this situation. During the interview, as if observing something funny, he started laughing, and sarcastically remarked that it is a system that is “specifically designed to keep us stressed and to keep us under pressure, because there’s a belief that it will produce more, and better knowledge will come out of this pressure cooker” (UA10, 38). Next, he questioned, “Do workers who are put under pressure, do they work better? Do they make better work? Do they make better objects and better things? I don’t know. This is a good question” (UA10, 38). Although academics continue to develop goals and objectives and look forward to a brighter future, participant UA 10’s words and behaviour indicate the dismal reality of the situation.

With the changing of university governance, new forms of audit, accountability, and evaluation are now used to measure performance of university academics in Australia. Traditionally, in universities, performance development was used to help academics improve their future performance. Participant UA4, a Professor from a university in the Innovative Research Universities (IRU) reminisced on her past experiences and remarked that when she started work as an academic they had no such accountability management mechanisms. But for the purpose of mentoring, or for enabling an academic to discuss what they were doing, and whether they were on track, they had a “terrific” system. Participant UA4 further commented:

[I] do think that to have somebody to check in with, even if it’s only once a year, to see how I’m going and what my
goals are for next year and where I am going in the longer term, I think that’s fantastic (UA4, 45).

She explained how some people experience performance appraisals as surveillance rather than mentorship. “I don’t actually see it that way, but I know that some people do. I think that the difference depends on how the person running the performance appraisal approaches it” (UA 4, 45). She commented, “It’s a problem when they are treated as punitive … If you’ve got a supportive performance appraisal then it’s a really good place to pick up things and help people when things are going wrong” (UA4, 48).

Participants commented that the existing measurements have many flaws, and that it is unfair to measure academics’ work in the ways it is measured now. In the study eight participants expressed their experience and perceptions on the topic of accountability measurements. These are presented in Chapter 5 as predicaments that academics encounter in their changing academic work. With the intention of resolving these, academics articulated their goals and objectives and desired outcomes. Participants wanted a review of the existing performance measurements. Participant UA8, an Associate Professor from a university in the Go8 commented that academics can come up with their own indicators of impact and success. “[J]ust add them, rather than being constrained by the bureaucracy and the forms, and all of the different ways in which we have to document, just add what we are doing into the mix” (UA8, 66). Participant UA 8 further suggested creating new service roles, rather than just being told what service academics need to do to the university but creating new roles that will enable academics to make different kinds of contributions to the university. To justify the need and urgency of a review and change in accountability management and performance measurements participants presented their experience and perceptions. Experience of four participants are given below:

Participant UA10, a Professor from a university in the Ungrouped Universities, who previously worked as a Professor in a university in another developed country remarked that as a professor, he produces work and he is trusted to do it. But in Australian universities he was shocked to notice how academics are treated. “You are treated like a machine that produces either enough or not enough. I just think it’s the strangest thing in the world, that there is this level of distrust in academics”.
For research performance here, [in Australia], everything is counted. In this university I literally have a speedometer. It tells me how well I’m going or how poorly I’m going in terms of my productivity. To me, I couldn’t believe it when I came here, [to this Australian university] that there’s such a weird quantification of my work… (UA10, 7).

Participant UA10 reiterated that academics can organise their own lives and produce at a level that is reasonable. He desired this “weird” system changed.

To me is it’s been one of the most jarring change that I’ve had to deal with here. The way that so many things are quantified; so many aspects of my work life are turned into numbers, and I’m put on a grid against benchmarks and essentially against other people (UA10, 8).

Participant UA2, a Lecturer from a university in the Innovative Research Universities (IRU), pointed out that there isn’t really anything in their workload models around teaching that quantifies or captures the pastoral care work that academics do. “There’s a lot of emotional energy, and also a lot of minutes in the day, thinking, and trying to work out ways of helping students deal with situations that are getting in the way of their studies, or just their life” (UA2, 25).

Participant UA9 emphasised the power of the “little calculator”, as she called it; the power it has over academics’ lives. “It’s centralised, and anyone can access it, and there’s a certain level where if you fall below it then you’ll be in trouble, and people have lost their jobs because of that” (UA9, 67).

The comment by participant UA14, a Professor from a university in the Australian Technology Network (ATN) highlighted how discreetly the system measure academic performance. She desired such measurements reviewed.

What it ends up doing is, it turns our work into these sequences of six minute lots or fifteen minute lots, which is not what it is, …Then, also, as soon as you start counting
something, there has to be an expectation that everybody is doing that (UA14, 32).

The other outcomes and goals participants desired to achieve were to promote and establish an environment of collegiality and research. Participant UA4, a Professor from a university in the Innovative Research Universities (IRU) expressed her thoughts:

[I]t’s really important to continue to create time for research and collegiality, and that everybody gets the opportunity to do research (UA4, 50).

Participant UA16, a lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities, explained about another innovative way of promoting collegiality that her university is implementing. She said, “The newest thing” in her university is “futurelearn” (UA16, 29). She explained that it is like an online MOOC platform. To put together high-quality online resources, it’s no longer one person doing all of the work to develop a unit, or to develop all of the materials for a program of study. “There’s a whole team involved” (UA16, 29). She said that way, it may improve the ability for people to work with each other. She remarked that being a teaching academic can be quite solitary, and the activities you are involved with are varied and many, because you are in charge of delivering the course. She said that “With this new system there’s a lot more interaction between people” (UA16, 30).

The overall outcome sought after by all participants has been emphasised as establishing a conducive work environment that enable academics to be more productive. A Professor from a university in the Go8 commenting on the overall outcome said that academics must take the initiative to do what is required to create a happy work environment for themselves.

[W]e all know, and the evidence shows, that happier people are more productive... if it is possible, without being confrontational you can put forward perfectly logical arguments about why things might be better... (UA5, 124).

Participant UA5 suggested that colleagues need to get together and put pressure on the Head or Dean of the unit to achieve a positive outcome. Participant UA1, a
Senior Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities presented a different suggestion, “so, one thing that people can do, and this is presumably the desired outcome, is that they change their working practices and they can change their understanding of their work so that they can get ahead in this system and be fine” (UA1, 68). He elaborated his argument and said that they can change their priorities:

[T]hey can become careerist, ... ‘well, I’m here to have a career, I want recognition for my work, I want money, I want whatever the good stuff is that there is here,’ so I’m just going to do what I have to do to get that, and I don’t care... it doesn’t matter to me if that’s weird or not, and I could become very good at it (UA1, 69).

As an example, participant UA1 mentioned becoming an expert on something related to their career, such as applying for a grant application. Participant UA13, a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Australian Technology Network (ATN) group of universities conveyed similar thoughts as an outcome he seeks to achieve in creating a conducive work environment that enables him to be more productive.

[y]ou need to come up with your own unique spin on that, and I think if you haven’t thought about how you are going to provide that unique spin, and you haven’t kind of put processes and plans in place in order to demonstrate that value, you would feel pretty trapped by the game ... because you are competing on the same rules as everybody else, and in the competition there’s lots of them (UA13, 17).

7.3. Summary

This chapter investigated the findings of the fourth research question of this study relating to outcomes or goals and objectives academics desire to achieve. The first section explained the goals and objectives in the category of university learning environment. For example, to reduce work intensification; to not always conform to Senior Managers’ directives when they request more work from academics; to develop
more assertive patterns of behaviours; to include a workload impact statement in their policy proposals, training, and up-skiing in advanced technologies, to not put all the courses online, to resolve issues relating to casualisation of staff, to provide opportunities and time to interact with students, and to organise small discussion groups in order to spend more time with students.

The second section explained the goals and objectives academics seek to achieve in the category of university governance and accountability management. For example, goals included a review of Australian university funding models, a review of the existing performance measurements, development of all materials of a program of study as a collaborative team effort, such as “futurelearn”, and promotion and establishment of an environment of collegiality and research. The next chapter is the discussion chapter of the thesis.
Chapter 8. Discussion

8.1. Introduction

Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7 have presented the findings of the study, exploring the lived experience of university academics within the changing academic work environment in Australian universities. This chapter synthesises key inferences from those findings, identifying links between conditions of change in the phenomenon and academics’ experience, and comparing the findings to a wider context of previous research. In Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7, the data presented were linked to the four research questions that guided the study. From the data, two categories and several themes emerged. A ‘theme’ in this study is considered “an aspect of the structure of lived experience … it is the form of capturing the phenomenon one tries to understand” (Van Manen, 2016, p. 87).

The research problem investigated in this study relates to the nature of the changing academic work in universities and how change impacts on academics. The data gathered for the study used in-depth, one-on-one, face-to-face interviews with academics working in a range of Australian public universities who are experiencing this change. The narratives of academics’ lived experience have made the findings rich, authentic, and significant, which has allowed original and unanticipated findings to emerge from the data. Two of the categories that impacted on the changing nature of academic work in Australian universities are massification of higher education and influences of political and economic ideologies. Data revealed that since the government reforms in the 1980s, public universities have been experiencing transformational change due to the impact of these two categories. Themes that emerged from the category of massification of higher education instigated change in the university learning environment, and themes that emerged from the category of influences of political and economic ideologies instigated change in the university governance and accountability management. Several themes emerged under these two categories causing unprecedented change, thereby affecting academics.

The first notion that emerged from the unanticipated, innovative findings is presented in the form of a conceptual framework, the academic predicament model.
(APM). The reason for using this name for the model is explained in this section. For example, research question (RQ) 2 of this study is, ‘what barriers and opportunities do academics see and experience in relation to the identified change?’ At the interviews with reference to the term ‘barriers’ some participants reflected upon alternative phrases such as ‘predicaments’ and ‘dilemmas’. In the findings, relating to this research question the term predicaments seemed to link more appropriately with participants’ responses. Predicaments are understood in the study as unfavourable, difficult or unpleasant situations (Chapter 5, Page 107). The term predicaments is used throughout Chapter 5, and the same term is used in the model that visualises participants’ responses in the findings of the current research study. It adds further information to existing arguments in previous literature that relates to ‘predicaments’ university academics encounter in their work environments (Barcan, 2016; Gill, 2010, 2014). Hence it was considered appropriate that the visualising model is named as the ‘academic predicament model (APM)’.

The model provides the expression of change since the 1980s in Australian universities, and the framework describes the nature of change in different phases. First, it highlights the government reforms in the 1980s impacting on the change of academic work. Next, it presents how the influences of massification of higher education and influences of political and economic ideologies are effecting change. Finally, it outlines the predicaments academics experience due to these changes. Academics’ lived experience offers a new definition of ‘predicament’ that specifically relates to university academics in Australian universities. The definition elaborates on, and highlights the lack of empathy in academia, and the corrosion of trust as well as the problem that academic work is devalued and academics are intimidated, bullied, and harassed. All causing a situation of erosion and even disappearance of the traditional notion of academic professionalism. Academic professionalism is understood in this thesis as characteristics including skills, competence and appropriate judgment, and having an attitude and code of conduct which respects ones status as an academic. Evans (2008) explaining professionalism and academic professionalism stated that professionalism is something that applies to every occupational workforce, and academic professionalism is this interpretation of professionalism applied to academics. The predicaments that academics experience may consequently impact on academic freedom, academic autonomy, and academic identity. If immediate measures are not implemented to
resolve these challenges and issues, academic professionalism may deteriorate to a stage of the de-professionalisation of academia. These findings are argued in Section 8.2 (in this chapter), and the conceptual model of academic predicament is visualised in Figure 8.1.

The second notion that emerged from the unanticipated, innovative findings is presented in the form of a paradoxical argument relating to the two categories impacting on the changing of academic work in Australian universities. Data revealed that massification of higher education and influences of political and economic ideologies are more than simply categories. Due to their goals and objectives, processes, procedures, and the way they operate, they are two paradoxical forces that affect academic work. On the one hand, with the changing of university learning environments, instigated by massification of higher education, academics are expected by management to be innovative, collegial, collaborative, and be involved in excellent research activities. On the other hand, with the changing university governance and accountability management, instigated by the influence of political and economic ideologies, academic identity, academic autonomy, and academic freedom are challenged. The argument of this finding is visualised in Figure 8.3.

8.2. Academic Predicament Model (APM)

The inductive nature of the study facilitated the development of the conceptual model, the academic predicament model (APM), which is used to present one of the findings. It encapsulates the essence of the findings of the research—the nature of change in Australian universities from the 1980s to date, as voiced by academics. The model is created from participants’ comments in the research findings. It is anticipated that, based on the information visualised and presented in this section, the management may be able to develop strategies to minimise detrimental effects on academics.
Figure 8.1
Academic Predicament Model

1. Australian University work environment before 1980s
   - University academics' endowments
     - High standards of
       - academic identity
       - academic freedom
       - academic autonomy and working in conducive work environments

1a. Downfall of collegiality and professionalism
    - Devouring of
      - Academic identity
      - Academic freedom
      - Academic autonomy and working in unfavourable work environments

1b. Academics' Predicaments
    - Corrosion of trust
      - Academics must be "managed"
    - Incapable of governance responsibilities
    - Intimidated, bullied and harassed by non-academic managers
    - Micromanaged
    - Academic work being devalued
    - Academic job-satietyless
    - Benefits-uncertain

2. Australian University work environment after 1980s
   - Initiation of change
     - Mimetic isomorphism
   - Infiltration
     - Ideologies and massification of higher education

2a. Transformational change in university work and predicaments for academics

2b. Influences of ideologies and pressures of massification of higher education
    - Characteristics of neoliberalism
    - Corporatised university
    - Managerialism Marketisation
    - Commodification of education
    - Performance measurement and accountability management
    - Changing university governance
    - Rapid increase of student numbers
    - Work intensification
    - Changing modes of delivery

2c. Government reforms
    - To impose change with economic agenda
    - Placing universities in the marketplace
    - Reduced funding to create competition

3. Erosion of academic professionalism

4. Birth of de-professionalisation of academia
In the model, the green boxes, numbered 1, and 1a, indicate academic work and the academic profession prior to changes in the 1980s. Participant UA4, a Professor from a university in the Innovative Research Universities (IRU) group, who has more than 33 years of experience as an academic compared how the situation changed for academics after the Dawkins reforms in the 1980s. She stated that the “difference was enormous, and academics felt their work wasn’t valued” (UA4, 26). Section 4.2 (p. 85) explains this in detail. The findings of the current research study resonate with the literature on the topic of the Australian academic profession, specifically with the study by Coates, Dobson, Edwards, Friedman, Goedegebuure, & Meek, (2009). They provided an analysis of challenges facing the sustainability and development of the academic profession in Australia. Their study highlighted characteristics of the academic profession and identified challenges that needed policy action at the national and institutional level. However, from the findings of the current research study it is understood that, although Coates et al. (2009) indicated that “there is a clear imperative to develop a cogent strategy for planning and building the academic workforce”, developments in the academic profession may not have occurred as Coates et al. had expected because, according to current findings, the academic profession is still in dire need of attention from responsible authorities and the Australian government. The current plight of the academic profession is visualised in 1b, one of the dark red boxes in the Academic Predicament Model that is labelled ‘Downfall of collegiality and professionalism’. This will be discussed later.

8.2.1. Initiation of change

In the model, the blue boxes represent academic work and the academic profession after the government reforms in the 1980s. The blue box numbered 2a, labelled ‘initiation of change’, is noted as mimetic isomorphism–indicating the tendency of an organisation to imitate another organisation's structure. At the time the research interviews were conducted, participant UA5, a Professor from a university in the Go8, and participant UA4, a Professor from a university in the Innovative Research Universities (IRU) group, were close to retirement as Australian university academics. They have had “thick and rich” (Geertz, 1973; Marx, 2008, p795) experience of the “change” occurring in Australian universities. They commented that influences of political and economic ideologies evident in Australian universities are the result of imitating overseas universities, which they believed to be “[a] global phenomenon
embraced at the governmental level and imposed on universities … it all happened very, very quickly” (UA5, 69). Participant UA5 further commented that she used the term ‘imposed’ to indicate that the initiation of change in universities happened without universities and academics fully realising— “[t]here wasn’t much resistance from universities” (UA5, 70). This finding is consistent with what has been found in the literature. Parker (2011) stated that the transformation of Australian universities into a corporate model is the result of imitating overseas universities, or “mimetic isomorphism” (Parker, 2011, p. 438). Literature further confirmed that governments, mainly in the UK and US, saw that “education could be deployed by the market, rather than simply being, as Margaret Thatcher [British Prime Minister 1979–1990] described, a drain on the public purse” (Parker, 2011, p. 438). The next section describes the other blue box in the model.

8.2.2. Infiltration: Political and economic ideologies and massification of higher education

The blue box numbered 2b, labelled ‘infiltration’, is noted in the model as ideologies and massification of higher education. Infiltration is understood in the study as unfavourable traits accessing surreptitiously and causing change. This section on infiltration focuses on the two categories and their related themes of the study. Of all the themes that emerged from the two categories, participants focused on four themes as the most significant because their lived experience revealed that those themes heavily impact upon their academic work and their lives. Figure 8.2 illustrates these.
8.2.2.1. Infiltration: Changing university learning environment instigated by challenges of massification of higher education

Before the changes in the 1980s, enrolment of student numbers at universities was limited. This situation is recognised and acknowledged in scholarly literature using the term *elite* (see Chapter 2, p. 20) But as enrolments increased, it changed to the situation of “mass”, and with the rapid increase of large numbers of enrolments, it became a situation of “universal”, which is also explained in scholarly literature as “massification of higher education” (Engel & Halvorson, 2016; Scott, 1995, p. 1). Consequently, the university learning environment and academic work have been changing, instigated by challenges of the massification of higher education. Of the themes that emerged in this category, participants focused on two themes as more significant than the others because they impact more on academics’ lives. They are (a) increasing student numbers and work intensification and, (b) casualisation of academic staff. Both of these themes will be explored in turn.

(A) Increasing student numbers and work intensification

Findings indicated rapidly increasing student numbers as a factor for creating situations of workload intensification for academics. Some participants termed it as “labour intensification” (UA1, 8). Participant UA1, a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities, explained how the number of students in a classroom keeps increasing, but the number of hours in which to evaluate what they do does not change. So, labour intensification is evident. “Work gets more intense and there seems to be more work to do and less time to do it in” (UA1, 7). This finding aligns well with findings reported by Altbach (2015c), who saw enrolments of students as a continuous flow, and commented, “Global enrolments now stand at more than 150 million, having doubled in just a few decades, and it is likely that there will be another 100 million added by 2020 (Altbach, 2015c, p. 4). The consequences of such change are varied and many. “[M]assification has placed great stress on government finances … shortages of qualified academic staff … overall quality has declined, in some countries dramatically” (Altbach, 2015c, p. 4).

Participant UA4, a Professor from a university in the Innovative Research Universities (IRU), provided an example of how duration of courses and assessments
have been changed to accommodate the increase of students: “courses that run for 10 weeks or 13 weeks might require five pieces of assessment…that’s crazy” (UA4, 15). There is similarity between the current findings and Trow’s (2005) notion of consequences of massification. He explained how the phenomenon is changing, including change in (a) institutional characteristics, (b) academic standards, (c) curriculum and forms of instruction, and (d) internal governance, all due to massification (Trow, 2005, p. 1). Participant UA1, a Senior Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities, noted a connection between labour intensification and limited resources, and he stated that people are being asked to do more work with fewer resources. Connell (2013, p. 2) commented, “Student numbers are increased, generally known as massification of higher education, without a major increase in central state funding. The expansion of student numbers has been handled with rising class sizes and a cheaper labour force”.

Initially, academics acknowledged rapidly increasing student numbers as a phenomenon that academics could not avoid, because “teaching undergraduate students is where a great deal of money comes from ... what that tends to result is, pressure on staff to teach more and more to larger numbers” (UA,4). However, with decreasing resources such pressure made it a predicament, creating stressful situations for academics. Sims (2019, p. 24) described a similar situation, in which she commented, “We are experiencing cuts in academic and professional staff—the ones delivering the core work of the university; and to compensate, the remaining workers are required to do more work, to work harder”. She further elaborated on this situation and said what this means is that her teaching workload has increased, and the “discount” she received in the past in her teaching workload to recognise her research productivity has decreased. Yet, at the same time the expectations for her research output have not decreased, so she is expected to increase her overall work productivity in a context where the average academic in Australia works 50.7 hours per week (Sims, 2019, p. 24; NTEU, 2017).

When comparing the findings of this study to those of previous studies, it can be noted that a large number of research studies focused on the workload allocation model (WAM) (Watson, King, Dekeyser, Baré, & Baldock, 2015; Boyd, 2014; Dekeyser, Watson, & Bare, 2014; Hemer, 2014; Rea, 2012; Vardi, 2008). Most of these studies highlighted the workload allocation models that are operating in Australian universities. The findings of Boyd’s (2014) study indicated that participants of his study have an
increasing workload and are experiencing “symptoms of workload stress and burnout” (p. 325). Some of the academics participating in his study expressed concerns, stating workload models are used as management tools to control academics and reduce their autonomy. Boyd (2014) stated how others expressed anger that “the models would not result in any change or reduction in workload” and were therefore “a waste of time” (Boyd, 2014, p. 325). Another study on academic work was conducted by Vardi (2008). Similar to some of the other studies on Australian academic work, Vardi focused on academics’ workload allocation models (WAM) in use across a large Australian university. He ascertained that academics are expressing dissatisfaction with their working life because many are now working long hours due to increasing demands on academic work (Vardi, 2008).

So, although previous literature and the findings of the current research study are similar in many aspects, only four of the 16 participants in the current study mentioned workload allocation models at their interviews. They only mentioned them but did not discuss or elaborate. According to the way this study was carried out, the researcher utilised prompts only if participants wanted to talk about a theme. However, new themes that participants did not use were not suggested by the researcher. WAM may have been of little interest to participants of this study. This may be because they did not want to restate the already-known weaknesses of WAM. For example, Boyd’s (2014) study had stated that workload models were used as management tools to control academics and reduce their autonomy.

Participant UA6, a Professor from a university in the Go8 universities, stated “now there is, more pressure on academics to be spending all their spare time…doing research for publication purposes… or grant-getting purposes… much more work intensification, so that people [academics] are spending less time just conversing with colleagues” (UA6, 8). He further commented that because of increasing performance expectations and demands by Senior Managers, now academics are “[M]uch more focused on meeting their own productivity targets” (UA6, 10). He provided an example to explain the link between work load intensification, and increasing performance expectations. “Previously, it was a common practice for academics to have tea in the common room, and spend time with colleagues— anyone who was free after attending to their teaching and research activities—, but now the common rooms are empty” (UA6, 11). He commented that in his Go 8 University, the staff club closed down
because the club was losing money, and there was “non-interest in supporting it” (UA6, 12). Participant UA6 observed the reason for this situation,

[F]eeling of congeniality has been squeezed out...performance expectation keeps rising. ...you don’t want to be the person in the school who’s got the lowest rate of publication or the worst student evaluation... everyone is kind of chasing a rising average of performance expectation...indirectly there’s that pressure not to be below the average. Even if the average keeps rising (UA6, 14-16).

A similar conclusion was reached by Barcan (2016) when he stated that, in the form of improvements, more responsibilities are added to academics’ workloads, “…the simple super-adding of requirement after requirement, task after task, has left academics unsure, confused, overburdened and—to put not too fine a point on it—wondering how much more work can be compressed into a week” (Barcan, 2016, p.6). Relating to issues of increasing student numbers and academic work intensification, the findings of the current study confirmed and made the factor clearer, that although this has been an issue for a very long period, nothing has been done to resolve it. Further, it is anticipated that lived experience and voices of academics will reinforce the urgency and significance of resolving issues of excessive workloads.

(B) Casusalisation of academic staff

With the rapid increase of student numbers, universities needed to employ more casual staff, and participant UA6, a Professor from a university in the Go8 stated, “there’s definitely too much casualisation” (UA6, 39). He noted the increasing casualisation of academic staff as an obvious change in Australian academia and in the changing university work. Literature has demonstrated the same. According to the National Tertiary Education Union’s (NTEU) survey of casual academics, 60% of respondents had been working casually for more than 3 years. More than 10% had been working casually for 10 years (Rea, 2012). Connell (2013, p. 1) ascertained that more than half of “Australian undergraduate teaching is now done by casual labour, euphemised as ‘sessional’.

Participant UA5, another Professor from a university in the Go8 universities, remarked that casual staff members were employed as “the by-products of the competition that we see in Australian universities, because it’s about saving money” (UA5, 85). These comments are consistent with what has been found in the literature.
Sims (2019, p. 25) commented, “it was considered appropriate by Senior Management to no longer pay casual academics a teaching rate to teach in off-campus units”, rather to pay a lower rate designed for student consultations. Participant UA5 said that there are “terrible stories about people being employed on the 1st of March and then sacked on the 30th of November and then having no income over that period, not knowing whether they’re going to have a job the next year” (UA5, 86). She continued explaining her experience related to a casual academic staff member, and commented that “the awful part is that their job may rest in the hands of a person in authority such as a Head of School” (UA 87). Due unpredictable and insecure employment processes for casual staff members, it is difficult for them to speak out, because they do not have the authority of the tenured staff. She said that if they speak out or question anything, that could be the end of their casual job because the Head of School is more likely to favour someone who is a “docile head-nodder than someone who is going to ask questions and appear to be difficult, so that’s a very negative dimension of it” (UA5, 86). This participant was displeased that the university is making use of a casual staff members’ vulnerable position to “save money and maximise profit”. Participant UA5 pointed out “another dimension to it… the way that it becomes a sort of ancillary to research, so that full-time Senior Researchers can then employ people, or they can be employed while the senior person does the research”. She said that there are “several negative dimensions that are tied up with casualisation” (UA5, 92).

In the literature, a similar situation is described as experienced by Sims (2019), who reported a recent example of how management decided that online teaching was not actual teaching, but rather involved answering student questions. Therefore, when casual academics were employed to teach online it was appropriate to pay them a third of the teaching rate. When a number of long-term casuals (many of whom had taught the same unit over a period of years) complained, one casual staff member received a response from the Senior Manager thanking her for her service to the School, stating that it was unfortunate she was not able to accept the contract, which meant she was no longer an employee of the university, and that her contract as a casual staff member had been terminated.

Participant UA8, who is a Professor from a university in the Go8, presented her opinion and said, “[t]he majority of our teaching work is done on contract, and that creates all sorts of pressures” (UA8, 6). She remarked that casual staff members are not
paid as much as previously, and they are unfairly treated compared to their tenured full-time colleagues. She reminisced:

*I* didn’t used to be like this. We used to, when we employed tutors in the early 90s, we actually paid them to come to lectures. We valued them being competent with the curriculum. We paid them much more in terms of the amount of time we would allocate for marking. Now, we have become much meaner and leaner in terms of the amount of money that we pay to our casuals (UA8, 6).

When comparing these findings to those of older studies, several can be noted as expressing similar arguments. Lama and Joullié (2015), in their research study investigating the casualisation of academic teaching in Australia, focused on finding out whether the change pose risks to teaching quality. Bexley et al. (2013, p. 385) commented that “increased casualisation is perhaps the most obvious example of how a relatively homogenous profession has become more diverse”. Coates and Goedegebuure (2010), Klopper & Power (2014) and May (2011), who have also conducted studies on casualisation of staff, commented on the following factors: casual staff members are unfairly treated compared to their full-time colleagues; they are not provided with continuous improvement through professional development and training; their teaching workloads are heavy; the issues casual staff members encounter may result in low morale and lack of dedication; and many casual academics work in multiple institutions and simultaneously deliver several units. Although working in multiple institutions may be legitimate, researchers raised the question of casual academics’ ability to maintain a required level of standards across the board. By holding several employment contracts, casual academics are faced with time constraints. The risks associated with such a trend could be that casual academics are unable to afford a desirable level of preparation time, and might not be committed to their work, which restricts their ability to perform and negatively affects teaching quality. When considering the findings of the current research and previous evidence in the literature, it is obvious that casualisation of academic staff is an academic predicament affecting academic staff and their work.

Most of the previous studies that conducted research on casualisation of staff in universities concentrated on casual staff members and considered them as participants of their study. But in the current study this issue is looked at from a different perspective because full time equivalent academics present their lived experience relating to their colleagues who are on casual work. Coordinating teaching with casual
staff is an additional work load for the academics and at the same time emotionally and ethically academics are affected by the way casual staff are treated. Therefore the findings of the current study brings new insights into existing knowledge relating to causalisation of staff.

8.2.2.2. Infiltration: Changing university governance and accountability management instigated by challenges of political and economic ideologies

The second category that emerged from the findings of the study relates to ‘university governance’—the structure and process of authoritative decision-making, which are significant for external as well as internal stakeholders within a university (Gayle et al., 2011). Before the change began in the 1980s, university governance operated in the form of collegial governance. Shattock (2008, p.76) explained collegial governance, commenting that “the vast majority of universities have always been governed according to what is referred to as a system of collegial governance; decisions are made collectively”. However, Shattock further stated that “traditional notions of collegiality and consensus-based decision-making have increasingly come under pressure, making room for business-like management and professionalisation of administrative structures” (p.78). Instigated by the challenges of political and economic ideologies including neoliberalism, corporatisation, managerialism, commodification, commercialisation, and marketisation, university governance and accountability management are changing, thereby impacting on Australian university academics and their work.

From the themes that emerged in this category, participants focused on two themes as more significant than the others because they impact more on academics’ lives. They are, (C) managerial culture within academia and (D) changing accountability management mechanisms. See figure 8.2.

(C) Managerial culture within academia

All 16 participants commented strongly on the transformational change within academia, relating to a collegial culture that has been replaced by managerialism. Participant UA5, a Professor from a university in the Go8 and who has been working in
the Australian university academia for more than 30 years, remarked that “a shift has occurred in universities which has brought with it a considerable degree of managerialism which didn’t exist in the past. So that has replaced the collegial dimensions” (UA5, 2). She further explained how academics made decisions in the past:

\[
\text{[t]hey’d gather together for the way that the institution should be run and what was important, what was offered, and what wasn’t offered. It’s a striking change to shift away from that idea of collegiality where one can appoint a Head of School or Dean... to a system where now it is a Senior Manager that makes the decisions (UA5, 3).}
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Participant UA3, a Lecturer from a university in the Ungrouped Universities, commented that when Senior Managers are externally appointed, they are more controlling, attempt to distance themselves from other academics, and do not like discussing university-related matters with other academics. She further commented that it is similar to creating an atmosphere of “a managerial culture within academia” (UA3, 46). These participants’ comments are consistent with what has been found in previous studies. Sims (2019, p. 1) commented that,

\[
\text{[T]he practices that emerge inside higher education organisations as a result combine to form an organisational neoliberal managerial culture that shapes practices, operating in a vicious cycle... In this vicious cycle, managers set the organisational culture through the roles they take on in this figured world, leading to particular ways of behaving and engaging in the practice of management (Sims, 2019, p. 1).}
\]

Participant UA5 criticised the controlling, inappropriate behaviour of some Senior Managers and said, “I’m conscious of all of this, because I had a young colleague talk to me this morning about a problem, and there seemed to be this lack of respect that was really a part of that problem” (UA5, 131). She further elaborated:

\[
\text{[I]f people [academics] are hounded and harassed, constantly, they are going to feel disaffected and I’ve experienced that at institutions where a Head of School has been very aggressive towards staff and treated them arrogantly. People [academics] leave because they don’t want to put up with that or they will be disaffected, and they will disengage. They won’t want to work for the institution, and they’ll do the absolute minimum and not come in (UA5, 127).}
\]
She emphasised the importance of appointing appropriate candidates to leadership roles—“it’s actually in the interest of the university… Senior Managers who know how to manage, and who do not bully their colleagues at work” (UA5, 127). In the literature, Taylor (2003) provided a succinct distinction between management and managerialism: “The former refers to necessary organising activities required in any large, complex organisation. The latter refers to the petty self-perpetuating creation of needless bureaucracy and anti-professional controls that are rife within higher education” (Taylor, 2003, p. 5).

Participants considered that there is a link between Senior Managers’ remuneration and the demeaning way some Senior Managers treat others. For example, Participant UA5 stated:

[now the “managerial class” are the ones who assume they have the power because they are often paid more and can tell others what to do. The managerial class of people has increased exponentially within university, so we now have more managers than academics (UA5, 132).

Participants commented that the gap between the “managerial class executives” and other academics has become pronounced, with the ballooning of university management remuneration. They expressed their opinion that the salaries of Vice-Chancellors, Pro-Vice-Chancellors and Senior Managers are too high. These findings are congruent with previous findings. Adams (2017) noted the debate in the UK about the remuneration awarded to Vice-Chancellors (VCs), and highlighted that the VC of the University of Bath receives the highest remuneration package. But Lyons and Hill (2018, p. 2) reported that VCs in Australia are “the highest paid, taking home 1.5 times more than the VC of the University of Bath”. They added that “VCs here [in Australia] take more money home each week than is earned by many casuals in a year” (Lyons & Hill, 2018, p. 2).

Participant UA10, from a university in the Ungrouped Universities, used to work in a university as a Professor in another developed country prior to coming to Australia. He said he is “shocked” with the way change taking place in university management is consequently affecting academics. He commented, “I think that the voice of ordinary academics is very quiet” (UA10, 50). He did not speculate any reasons for such quietness. But another Senior Lecturer, participant UA11, in his responses implied what could be a reason:
[W]e have no job security. They do it all through casual staff, so it’s not a very pleasant picture, and in fact, my partner and I both work in the system, and we are both looking at ways that we can secure our future outside of the academy (UA11, 17).

Participant UA10 indicated that although there is evidence that managerial culture prevails in academia, academics are forced to remain quiet because they fear they may lose their jobs. This is also considered as a situation where the democratic culture is weakening within academia. Literature indicates the same. Kimber and Ehrich (2015, p. 1) commented that “the increased power of managers, expansion of the audit culture, and the extensive use of contract employment seem to be weakening the democratic culture and role of universities”. Previous literature have mentioned how some Senior Managers use their power to control academics. But in the current study participants’ narrations enable the reader to relive and experience the effects of a managerial culture in universities.

(D) Changing accountability management mechanisms

With the changing of university governance, new forms of audit, accountability, and evaluation are now used to measure performance of university academics in Australia. These are noted in literature as products of corporatisation and managerialism (Bleiklie & Kogan, 2007; Craig et al., 2014; Kimber & Ehrich, 2015). Participants’ personal stories indicate that these new forms of measurement are damaging to innovative, individual scholarship and threatening to academic freedom.

Traditionally, in universities, performance development was used to help academics improve their future performance. Performance measurements used in new systems quantitatively evaluate past performance, and they seem to be more judgmental. University academics recalled unpleasant memories of their experiences relating to performance measurements and how some of their colleagues, who are “good teachers …but lost their jobs” (UA9, 95), due to these measurements.

One participant explained Research Performance Expectations (RPE) in Australian universities– In RPE, for each appointment level (A-E), in each discipline, expectations are specified. Participant UA9 elaborated on their RPE’s percentages and said that she always makes sure that she matches her percentages correctly; for example, 40% of teaching, 40% of research, and 20% of community engagement. But as passionate teachers, she and her colleagues “[d]o extra work because that’s what
teachers usually do without complaining” (UA9, 96). Yet, in the current performance and accountability management system in universities, academics are “compelled” to focus on research output:

[they university management] measure your output on a little calculator... if you fall below it then you’ll be in trouble, and people have lost their jobs because of that... they will measure to a decimal point your research output, but they are very happy not to measure your workload (UA9, 67).

Participant UA9 and other participants said that performance measurements do not calculate all the work and activities of an academic. For example, academics spend a large amount of time communicating with students via emails and on pastoral care activities, which are not captured in the accountability management mechanisms. Participants highlighted weaknesses in performance measurements, including lack of fairness. Craig, Amernic, and Tourish, (2014, p.1) stated, “extensive auditing of research output by means of performance management assessment regimes motivated by a New Public Management mentality has damaged individual scholarship and threatened academic freedom”. They further highlighted the importance of understanding “the effects of a perverse audit culture when re-thinking and re-forming approaches to university performance management”.

8.2.3. Transformational change and academics’ predicaments

The academic predicament model is further explained in this section. In the model, the three boxes numbered 2c1, 2c2, and 2c3, coloured orange, can be identified and argued as consisting of three discrete elements. These three elements, according to the representation in the model, present an unconducive and unproductive academic work environment. The box 2c1 consists of government reforms in the 1980s. According to academics’ perceptions (evidence provided in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7), government reforms after the 1980s imposed change with a hidden agenda of economic logic, creating a quasi-market with reduced funding, and placing public universities—with a focus on education and the common good—in the competitive marketplace. The box 2c2 consists of influences of political and economic ideologies as well as the pressures and challenges of massification in higher education. The box 2c3 consists of
predicaments academics experience as consequences of actions in element one, 2c and element two, 2c. This third discrete element marked 2c, according to the findings, highlight on: (a) corrosion of trust in academia, (b) changed and falsified assumptions about academics, including perceptions that academics need to be “managed” to be productive, (c) that academics are incapable of handling governance responsibilities, (d) that academics are being intimidated, bullied, and harassed by non-academic Senior Managers, (e) that Senior Managers have unrealistic expectations, (f) that academics are being micromanaged, (g) that academics’ work is devalued, and, (h) that benefits for academics remain uncertain.

These findings are consistent with previous literature. Harris (2014, p. 73) commented, “[T]he regulatory regime established by Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) and the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) smacks of mistrust in the ability of academics to discharge their role in a proper manner”. Harris has further stated that the result of this mistrust is that academic staff have become both “de-professionalised and infantilised”, and that they are considered as not exercising independent professional judgment. Therefore, “deemed to need constant supervision” (Harris, 2014, p.73). Weinberg and Graham-Smith (2012) stated:

Formerly self-empowered as a practitioner of knowledge and an authority in the discipline, and in the running of the university, the practicing academic has been relegated to the role of mere functionary in a system whose core principles are essentially uncollegial. The driver of the institution of learning has become the least significant player (Weinberg and Graham-Smith, 2012, p. 74).

Participant UA5, a Professor from a university in the Go8, commented that academics need to be treated with respect and fairness, and that “academics are not just cogs in a wheel; they are human beings who have spent many years in their education and training” (UA5, 131). Jurkiewicz and Grossman (2012) and Sims (2019) expressed a similar pattern of thought in their research studies. Similar to “the cogs in a wheel” highlighted by participant UA5, Jurkiewicz and Grossman (2012, p.6) remarked that academics are not “tools to be used to attain goals, a system of dehumanisation that equates humans with a piece of metal —you can use it if you want, you throw it away if
you don’t”. Sims (2019, p.128) claimed that “systemic de-professionalisation in neoliberal managerial universities has made management privilege invisible”. Scholars further commented specifically on the behaviour of Senior Managers:

“[t]he invisibility of privileged neoliberal managerialism has created a culture of privilege where management claim, use, and I believe, abuse power in systemic discrimination against workers. Normalisation of this privilege makes it invisible” (Sims, 2019, p.28).

“[t]he invisibility of their [Senior Managers'] privilege makes their behaviour appear rational and sensible... the problems lie with maladjusted individuals who need to learn to function more appropriately” (Fraser, 2017, p.2).

“[t]hey [Senior Managers]... progressively acquire the ability to become detached from the consequences of their behavior” (Jurkiewicz & Grossman, 2012, p. 7).

Participant UA10 explained his experience (presented in Chapter 6, anecdote 2), narrating a story about their Vice-chancellor using his travelling privileges, by travelling in a helicopter. This incident can be related to what has been noted in the literature, as being “detached from the consequences”, and the “invisibility of privilege”.

However, according to the representations in the model, once the purity of the unbiased knowledge is contaminated by undue influences, and by political, economic, and all other kinds of agendas, it changes into a downfall of professionalism and collegiality, which is marked as1b in a red coloured box in the model. The findings of the study indicated as consequences of these changes—due to infiltration of contaminated pressures and influences of political and economic ideologies—academics’ endowments are gradually disappearing. Participants remarked how academic freedom, academic autonomy, and academics’ esteem value are being devoured by the downfall of professionalism. Fourteen participants emphasised this factor in their interviews, representing the voice of all other academics. Participant UA4, from a university in the Innovative Research Universities (IRU) stated, “I am stuck… there seems to be less freedom and openness” and, talking about one of her
experiences, she said, “it was an encroachment into academic freedom” (UA4, 42). Another participant said, “I have no sense of agency whatsoever … a total lack of power” (UA11, 23).

In the academic predicament model, the areas numbered as 2c₁, 2c₂, and 2c₃, and coloured in orange, that indicate the three elements as unconducive and unproductive to academic work environments, may also be considered as areas of “contamination” that create a downfall of professionalism and collegiality. Smyth (2017) used the term “toxic” to explain the same. He questioned, “Have universities become toxic places in which to work?” (p. 2). Gill (2010) noted “toxic shame” (p. 238) when she graphically illustrated it in her reflective piece titled Breaking the silence: The hidden injuries of the neoliberal university. Smyth (2017) further argued the unfairness and discrimination related to league tables and university rankings, which created undue stress on academic work, as promoting a toxic culture. According to the terminology used in this model, the term ‘contamination’, is in line with a similar notion in previous literature: “[T]his kind of preferential discrimination, based on a league table derived through some system of opaque bibliometrics, is likely to pervert the course of academic work and further promote a toxic culture” (Smyth, 2017, p. 110).

In the findings and from previous literature it was evident that university academics encounter various unpleasant scenarios as revealed by their lived experience. A question that crosses everyone’s mind is, how can this happen in places like universities where “so many smart people” (Alvesson & Spicer, 2016, p. xi) are employed? Alvesson and Spicer (2016) present their train of thoughts in the “stupidity paradox”, and commented that universities, far from being knowledge-intensive, have become engines of stupidity. They provided specific factors regarding what happens when “smart people stop thinking and start doing stupid things”: (a) they stop asking questions, (b) they give no reasons for their decisions, (c) they pay no heed to what results their actions cause, and (d) instead of complex thought… “flimsy jargon, aggressive assertions, or expert tunnel vision”… (Alvesson & Spicer, 2016, p. xi).

They further elaborated that in the short term, by avoiding careful thinking, people are able to simply get on with their jobs, but asking too many questions is likely to upset others. They further stated “not thinking freeze you up to fit in and get along” (Alvesson & Spicer, 2016, p. xi). Whelan, Walker, and Moore (2013) defined this situation in academia, as zombification.
8.2.4. **Downfall of collegiality and professionalism**

In the academic predicament model, the red-coloured box numbered 1b, and labelled “downfall of collegiality and professionalism”, conceptualises and explains how valuable characteristics of the academic profession are eventually devoured by influences of political and economic ideologies and consequences of massification in Australian higher education. The terms *collegiality* and *professionalism* were explained previously on pages 25 and 26. It was highlighted in the findings that collegiality in universities decreases when members of academia do not effectively interact and show respect to one another, share responsibilities, or work collaboratively in order to achieve a common purpose. Additionally, findings noted that professionalism within academia collapses when academics do not provide quality of services and ensure that everything related to their profession is efficiently maintained, including high standards of attitudes and behaviour towards their profession. Smyth (2017, p.40) remarked “we need to look at what is happening to academic identity, how academics envisage their work, and how this is being transformed largely without their consent”.

Yet some scholars suggested that academic identities are not “under threat” by neoliberalism, and that the fluidity of the concept of identity makes it such that individuals can “create… spaces for the exercise of principled autonomy and agency” (Clegg, 2008, p.329). But opposing Cregg’s opinion, participants’ perceptions and evidence in the literature suggested that academic identity, autonomy, and freedom are being devoured (Smyth, 2017) and that academic professionalism is facing erosion, paving the way for the de-professionalisation of academia (Harris, 2014; Jameson, 2017). Therefore, in the model, the box numbered 1b indicates the disappearance of academic identity, academic freedom, and academic autonomy. Parker (2011), consistent with the findings, commented that a centralised, managerial decision-making structure together with the university’s corporatisation and commercialisation reduced academics’ autonomy and freedom of speech.

Participant UA3 (65) commented on how academics in his university had to “band together to take legal action” because they could not resolve a workload issue (see Chapter 4.3) with their previous Dean, who was “[q]uite intolerant of staff attitudes… actually had senior members of staff breaking down in tears in our staff
meetings because they couldn’t take the stress of the amount of teaching they were being asked to do” (UA3, 66).

Previously, this could have been a situation that would have been settled with amicable agreement. Now academics need to “band together” and apply to the Supreme Court for settlement. This comment is voiced by the participant as evidence of consequences of the changing university governance and managerial culture within academia. The findings are directly in line with previous findings in international and Australian research. Gill (2014, p.24) commented on how academics in the UK felt about the changing situations. “Morale is v. [very] v. [very] low. I saw head of dept. crying. This is so poisonous and destructive”. She explained what academics thought about these changes: “they felt as something alien imposed upon academics from the outside” (Gill, 2014, p. 24). As such, the academic predicament model (see p. 169) presents the downfall of collegiality and professionalism, in the red-coloured box numbered 1b.

8.2.5. Erosion of academic professionalism

Previous literature and participants’ experience denote that the erosion of professionalism and the de-professionalisation of academia are consequences of the changing academic work environment in universities. Whitehead (2014), an Australian academic, describes the notion of professionalism as “nobility and service— alongside personal striving”. He said as much as he is able, he tries to incorporate these attributes into his professional role. He further commented that on the other hand, a common theme of his academic experience within a number of universities has been, that “policy and contracts dictate professional outcomes” (Whitehead, 2014, p. 2). His yearly reviews, workload analysis, and policy for promotion for his staff dictate that “personal goals or aspirations are often at odds with what his employers want”.

Kolsaker (2008, p.516) stated that key characteristics of the academic profession are “shared values, altruistic concern for students, educational expertise, high level of autonomy, generation of new knowledge, application of logic, use of evidence, conceptual and theoretical rigor, and the disinterested pursuit of truth”. However findings of the current study ascertain that academics’ esteem value, academic identity, academic freedom, and academic autonomy are undermined in the changing university work environment and some academics in Australian universities now experience undue
intimidation, bullying, mistrust, and harassment. The academic predicament model presents the erosion of academic professionalism in the red-coloured box numbered 3.

8.2.6. Birth of de-professionalisation of academia

The concept of de-professionalisation has been previously argued about and discussed in the literature. Jameson (2017, p.2) identified that de-professionalisation is achieved through “questionable managerial behaviour involving controlling, bullying, performance monitoring, and thinly justified by economic rationalism”. Some scholars considered de-professionalisation as a consequence of neoliberalism. Rudd and Goodson (2017, p.1) stated that influences of neoliberalism have impacted upon the changing work conditions in universities and have “led to de-professionalisation, alienation, and a loss of professional autonomy and identity”. Sims (2019, p.25) explained that de-professionalisation is associated with “increasingly onerous regimes of compliance control policed through policies, regulations, guidelines, and performance management metrics”.

Sims (2019), Qureshi, Rasli, and Zaman (2014), and Verkuil, Atasayi, and Molendijk, (2015) commented that work that is de-valued and accompanied by an increase in routine bureaucratic requirements leads to feelings of powerlessness and de-professionalisation. They further stated how detrimental work environment cause stress-related illnesses, depression, and high levels of anxiety, which can all have a significant impact on the wellbeing of academics. Bérubé and Ruth (2016, p.1) remarked that the academic profession has been “drastically de-professionalised over the past 40 years and that academics need to find ways of making this case to the general public”. They further argued the value of highlighting consequences of de-professionalisation on academic freedom. Participants of this study expressed similar perceptions and their lived experience relating to de-professionalisation of academia. Participant UA6, a Professor from a university in the Go8 universities, ascertained how effects of corporatisation of universities are changing:

[M]ore collateral structures, some very limited participatory democracy at the local department level and disciplines having some autonomy to a much more of top down line management structure, and university behaving much more like
corporate businesses. So because of that it has affected the collegiality as well.
(UA6, 3).

He further commented that disciplines based departments have been replaced by larger schools which are now controlled by line management, and head of schools are not answerable to colleagues as they are not appointed by colleagues. These changes are gradually contributing to the birth of de-professionalisation which is presented in the academic predicament model in the red-coloured box numbered 4.

8.3. Conflicting forces

The second innovative notion of the findings that emerged from the data is presented in this section in the form of a paradoxical argument that involves two conflicting forces relating to the two categories impacting on the changing of academic work in Australian universities. The two prominent conflicting forces are, the changing nature of learning environments instigated by the category of massification in higher education, and university governance and accountability management instigated by influences of political and economic ideologies. On the one hand, with the changing nature of academic work in Australian universities, management expects academics to be innovative, embrace a collaborative approach, and be collegial. On the other hand, to the contrary, with the changing nature of university governance and accountability management, academic autonomy and academic freedom are undermined, thereby forcing academics to follow Senior Management directives and perform according to accountability mechanisms. Participants’ comments on the conflicting nature of these two categories have been explored in Chapters 4 to 7, where it is noted that the conflict is impacting on academic work.

This finding is somewhat similar to and consistent with what Scott (2018) has argued. He recognised that contemporary universities are subject to the influence of two contradictory forces. Scott’s article is titled “Compliance and Creativity: Dilemmas for University Governance”. Scott saw it as a conflict within university governance, but in the argument presented in the current study it is seen as a conflict within the changing university work environment between the two categories of university learning environment, instigated by challenges of massification in higher education, and
university governance and accountability management, instigated by challenges of political and economic ideology. Due to a perceived decrease in academic freedom and academic autonomy, academics now appear to have limited capacity and flexibility to engage in the enhancements or innovations of learning and teaching. These limitations make a difference in the university learning environment.

Scott’s (2018, p. 2) argued that tension and contradiction are caused by the pressures universities are under that relate to complying with “new accountability regimes … created by new ‘quasimarket’ mechanisms” and “the obligation of universities to promote creativity”. Scott considered them as dilemmas in university governance. The conflicting forces presented in the current study are visualised in Figure 8.3. The consequences of these conflicting forces ultimately impact on academics’ work environment.

For both categories to work harmoniously and to make the relationship practicable, the categories of university governance and accountability management need to incorporate positive change to accommodate and acknowledge academics differently. University management needs to trust academics, move away from a corporate, compliance-culture, and encourage a collegial, cooperative-culture.

8.4. Summary

This chapter explained the two significant findings of the research study: the academic predicament model, which portrays a deeper understanding of the changing
phenomenon through the conceptualisation and its elaboration; and how conflicting forces of paradoxical categories and themes are impacting on Australian university academic work.

In the late 1980s, which can be considered as the era of most prominent change in academic work in Australian universities, participants experienced an unfamiliar situation within a corporatised university, with different norms, operational strategies, and corporatised vocabulary. But University Managers—who were given elevated status, remuneration, and managerialist responsibilities similar to leaders in a corporation—would have experienced a status of prominence and controlling powers with the change. The findings of the current study as well as previous literature noted that within academia there has been a continuous situation of satisfied, accomplished managers and frustrated, deflated academics. This saga has been continuing for the past four decades despite criticism and outcries from academics.

It is hoped that findings, including the development of the academic predicament model (APM), will illuminate what has not been brought to light so far, with a sense of urgency so that the findings will result in a change in the existing work environment in universities. It is also hoped that the disruptive characteristics contaminating academia, as reported through the lived experience of participants in this study, will be replaced by a more productive, professional characteristics and workplace ethics that inspire healthy, interactive communication among academic staff and create conducive work environment.
Chapter 9. Conclusion

9.1. Introduction

This final chapter presents how the overarching research question of the study,— ‘What is the nature of the lived experience of academics in the changing landscape of Australian universities?’—investigated and addressed the research gap relating to the problem in the phenomena. It focuses on the significance of the findings and provides an understanding about the nature of the change in university academic work environment in Australia, and its impact on academics. This chapter further provides recommendations, contributions, and limitations of the study, implications for future research, and a summary of the concluding chapter.

9.2. Review of the thesis

This section proffers a review of the thesis. Significant findings that emerged from university academics’ comments accomplished the main aim of the study, that is, to provide a voice to academics and explore their lived experience and perceptions in order to capture the nature and impact of the change in university academics’ work environment in Australia. A cohort of Australian university academics was interviewed, and the findings revealed new insights into the existing knowledge on the investigated topic.

Previous studies on the changing nature of academic work in Australian universities have concentrated more on the causes and influences of external and internal factors initiating change, and not so much on participants’ lived experience. A small sample size of 16 participants was used in this research—qualitative research with an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) and using a small sample size to gain subtle reflections of meaning (Reid et al., 2005). The range and depth of data presented by participants, who narrated their lived experience relating to the phenomenon investigated, enhanced the quality and credibility of the study. New insights the study offers into the area of research in higher education and towards academic work in Australia establish the originality of the findings of the study. As such, this study can be considered as original, unique, and an important addition to the field.
Chapters 4 to 7 presented the findings, and these chapters are full of the “rich, thick data” (Marx, 2008, p.795) of participants’ verbatim quotes. Two categories emerged from the data: massification of higher education, and influences of political and economic ideologies. These categories indicated the nature of the change in Australian universities. Under the category of massification of higher education, the themes that emerged instigated changes in the university learning environment. Under the category of influences of political and economic ideologies, the themes that emerged instigated changes in the university governance and accountability management. Findings of the study noted that all themes that emanated from the two categories have consequently changed academic work and have had an impact on academics’ lives. The nature of the change highlighted two notions: the change is transformational and the change indicates paradigm shifts. These notions are explained below in sections 9.2.1 and 9.2.2. Section 9.2.3 presents the impact of these changes on academics.

9.2.1. Transformational change

The current study ascertained that the nature of the changing academic work in universities is transformational. The findings revealed that the philosophical, practical, and strategic processes affecting revolutionary change within academia have contributed to a transformative change in academic work in Australian universities. Participants noted that it is a rapid and inevitable change which was imposed on academics as a requirement of institutional and personal development.

9.2.2. Paradigm shifts

The findings noted that the academic work environment in Australian universities has shifted from a collegial learning environment to a corporatised, managerial environment focused on economic logic. This shift has triggered a fundamental change in the concepts of learning and teaching; academic culture, practices, processes and procedures; and academic staff endowments, including academic autonomy, academic freedom, and academic identity. Hence this study presented evidence and a claim relating to paradigm shifts in the changing work environment in Australian universities.

9.2.3. The impact of change

According to the findings, the nature of changing academic work impacted on academics in varied ways. Most significantly, with increasing student numbers and
work intensification, the pressure to work beyond academics’ working-capacity limits has created stress. Yet, fear of losing their jobs has forced academics to tolerate and conform to managerial decisions while remaining silent. Consequently, academic freedom, academic autonomy, and academic identity have been affected. Over-casualisation of academic staff, the managerial culture evident within academia, and accountability management mechanisms, have had a detrimental impact on academics.

The most remarkable outcome of the study relating to the impact of change was the emergence of two unanticipated original findings. The findings noted that first, the change in university academic work is impacting on academic professionalism. Professionalism is recognised in the study as the norm of the academic profession, protected and strengthened by key characteristics including academic autonomy, academic freedom, and academic identity. These traits are disappearing from an academia impacted by changes in university governance and accountability management, instigated by influences of political and economic ideologies; and by changes in the university learning environment, instigated by massification of higher education. The notion of disappearance of professional characteristics from academia is recognised in the study as erosion of professionalism, which then eventually would lead to a situation of de-professionalisation of academia. These findings are presented in the newly formulated model, named the ‘academic predicament model’ (APM). It is a visualisation of the change that has been happening over the past four decades (see Figure 8.1). It also provides a glimpse into the future, if measures are not immediately taken to stop the erosion of professionalism and the de-professionalisation of academia.

The second finding relates to how two categories in the study—learning environments instigated by the category of massification in higher education, and university governance and accountability management instigated by influences of political and economic ideologies—with their conflicting norms create a complex and stressful situation for academics. For example, on the one hand, with the changing of academic work in Australian universities, management expects academics to be innovative, embrace a collaborative approach, and be collegial. On the other hand, to the contrary, with the changing university governance and accountability management, academic autonomy and academic freedom are undermined and Senior Management forces academics to follow directives and perform according to accountability management mechanisms. This scenario revealed in the finding, which is noted as a
change that is impacting on academics, is visualised in Figure 8.3. The next section presents recommendations for issues that emerged from the findings of this study.

9.3. Recommendations

Four significant recommendations with the aim of minimising the impact of the changes on academics and providing a conducive work environment in Australian universities are listed in this section. The recommendations are built on the evidence provided by the 16 academics who shared their lived experience and perceptions as participants in the study. These recommendations emerged from and are linked to the newly formulated model of this thesis, the academic predicament model (APM), which is the visualisation of the framework of academics’ responses (see Figure 8.3). The four recommendations presented here are (a) Strategies for enhancing respectfulness and collegiality, (b) Strategies for resisting influences and further application of ideologies in Australian universities, (c) Strategies for resolving work intensification, and (d) Strategies for improving existing processes and procedures relating to academics.

9.3.1. Strategies for enhancing respectfulness and collegiality

Findings of the study noted that respect for academics is diminishing and has become a deteriorating fundamental value. Lack of respect and disrespectfulness, which are emphasised as issues evident in academics’ narrations, are more obvious in two specific areas of their lived experiences. These areas are (a) how some Senior Managers interact with academics, and (b) how some students respond when they get the opportunity to comment online in student surveys about academics’ work. These surveys are considered as creating detrimental effects on academics.

Interaction with Senior Managers:

It was noted that some current Managers in Australian universities devalue academic professionalism, and instead of exercising respectfulness they treat academics inappropriately: intimidating, harassing, and bullying. Participants’ responses indicated that four types of individuals are directly or indirectly involved in situations of inappropriate harassment: (a) victims subjected to harassment, (b) witnesses of
harassment (c) Senior Managers who harass academics, and (d) university leaders who “turn a deaf ear” and are indifferent to taking action in situations where harassment occurs.

Therefore, it is recommended that

- these four types of university personnel need to have a greater understanding and awareness relating to the inappropriate behavioural patterns of senior staff who are inclined to harass others. Ways of avoiding and handling such situations and treating all colleagues with respectfulness need to be part of the professional development for all staff, so that repetitions of harassment in university work environments will not occur, and

- academics need to be assertive and react to the expression of non-professional behaviour from senior staff members who harass others, and universities need to develop an effective reporting and complaining mechanism for staff who are affected.

Another factor that was highlighted related to the relationship between Senior Managers and other academics: now a change of culture is evident within academia. It was noted that a *managerial culture* is evident in university work environments instead of a culture of collegiality, because now some Senior Managers behave in a controlling and indifferent manner towards academics instead of, in a cooperative and collegial manner. One of the reasons emphasised for this change was the changes apparent in the appointment of Senior Managers. In Australian universities, an increasing number of non-academic staff are appointed as Senior Managers and are given generous remuneration packages. Participants considered that such appointments and packages may cause the change of behaviour—an arrogant, controlling manner—from Senior Managers towards academics. Participants argued that when non-academic Senior Managers are appointed to the University Council, they are more focussed on adhering to processes and procedures and on fulfilling corporate norms to ally with the changing trends, in order to maintain their continuance in office. Therefore, they show minimal interest in communicating or cooperating with academic staff in a collegial manner. Participants commented that, according to the traditional collegial model, university Managers were elected to the University Council by the academic community,
Managers were eventually answerable to their colleagues, and they treated their colleagues with respect. Participants of the study further recommended that,

- a higher percentage of academic staff members needs to be appointed to the University Council, and

- strategies need to be developed to eradicate managerial culture from academia. Some suggestions for strategies are

  - avoid appointing non-academics, and appointing only academics to positions of Senior Managers,
  - grouping academic staff members together to bond as collegial teams supporting each other, developing a collegial environment, and eradicating the currently evident managerial culture from academia, and
  - carefully considering appointments to leadership roles to avoid appointing candidates who display bullying tendencies.

**Student surveys:**

Findings of this study highlighted the urgency for, and significance of, evaluating the existing online student surveys, which are creating detrimental effects upon academics’ morale. Current surveys have been reported to be unfair and false, showing power imbalance with online disinhibition effects. It is therefore recommended that

- an effective and authentic student survey model, which is not an online survey so as to avoid disinhibition, is formulated, and

- the existing online surveys discontinue because they are unjustly causing academics distress.

### 9.3.2. Strategies for resisting influences and further application of ideologies in Australian universities

From the emerging categories and themes of the findings, influences of political and economic ideologies, including neoliberalism, corporatisation, managerialism, commodification, commercialisation, and marketisation are considered as causing
changes in the academic work environment in Australian universities.
Recommendations to resist constraining ideologies are presented in this section.
The findings of the study recognised that the application of neoliberalist characteristics in Australian universities have instigated changes in the academic work environment that detrimentally affect academics. According to neoliberalism, notions considered as attributes that benefit academics in the current university environment include working as competitive and economically self-interested individuals. However, it can be argued that this is not an applicable norm for a collaborative and collegial university learning environment. These neoliberalist characteristics are incompatible with the purpose, goals, and objectives of focusing on the public good present in public universities in Australia. It is recommended that,

- management in Australian universities refrain from promoting the neoliberalist view specifically relating to academics as competitive and self-interested individuals and the notion of free market that places universities in the marketplace, and
- university management develops and promotes collaborative and collegial activities in universities. They further need to be consistent with the social functions of a university and be dedicated to its primary and original mission of teaching, research and truth-seeking.

It was noted in the findings that the current governing structure of Australian universities, which is similar to the structure of corporations, is incompatible with the traditional aims and objectives of a university. Participants argued that corporatisation, which is a characteristic that is evident in Australian universities, can be considered as an infringement of academic autonomy and academic freedom. According to the relationship between universities and the Australia’s federal system—commonwealth and state and territory governments—, current universities are characterised as “trading and financial corporations” with reference to judicial decisions which are now governed by the ‘Corporations Act 2001’ (Harris, 2014, p. 66). It is recommended that

- university management refrains from allowing universities to operate in the same style as corporations. Findings of the research noted that because universities are complex learning institutions, continuous attempts to corporatise public universities in Australia may create further confusion and failure.
9.3.3. Strategies for resolving work intensification

Findings of this study indicated how rapidly increasing student numbers are creating situations of workload intensification for academics, which was also termed by participants as labour intensification. Previous research studies indicated that although workload allocation models (WAM) are used to resolve this issue, it has not been successful, and workload models are used in some instances as management tools to control academics and reduce their autonomy. Therefore it is recommended that,

- new strategies be developed in addition to WAM to minimise work intensification. New strategies for academics may include (a) resisting pressure from Senior Management when new workloads are added to their existing workloads, (b) developing assertive behavioural patterns to interact in such situations instead of conforming to Senior Managers’ commands, (c) when workload issues, or working condition issues are discussed, developing transparency by involvement in the discussions, (d) reviewing models used for enrolment of students and allocation of resources that consequently affect academics’ work intensifications, and (e) appointing experienced academic colleagues, in Senior Managerial positions. They may have better understanding and empathy relating to academic-work, including teaching, research and other activities, and they may not coerce academics into accepting excessive workloads, and

- managers to be mindful of the workloads, roles and responsibilities of full-time-equivalent academic staff when appointing new sessional (casual) staff because coordinating, training, and allocating work for sessional staff was noted as a hidden, additional burden for academics that usurped their time and energy. Research findings noted that sometimes issues relating to sessional staff seemed mentally and emotionally draining on academics in situations when sessional staff members were not treated appropriately—specifically relating to their remuneration, hours and conditions of work, appointment processes and procedures, inadequate professional development and research opportunities, and
work intensification is reduced for academics and that their administrative work is allocated to other general staff with expertise in specific administrative tasks.

9.3.4. Strategies for improving existing processes and procedures relating to academics

The findings noted participants’ dissatisfaction with the existing mechanisms of accountability management that are used to evaluate academics’ teaching, research, and other academic work-related activities. It is recommended that,

- the application of current accountability management mechanisms and research policies and procedures is reviewed. Such a review would enable Senior Managers to better understand the structure of the existing priorities that do not work favourably in academics’ accountability management mechanisms. It will enable academics to obtain support they require. It is also suggested that academics are provided with an opportunity to discuss and contribute their views and strategies during the review processes, and
- the following five strategies are used to resolve areas of frailties that relate to ways research activities are monitored: (a) eminent researchers are appointed to management positions of research, (b) all managers display sound understanding of research measurement metrics, (c) academics enjoy the freedom to conduct the type of research they are interested in and not allow commodification of research—that is, not to value the research because of the income it brings to the university, (d) a review of the Australian Research Council (ARC) grant application process is conducted to make it more simple for applicants and, (e) a review of the funding model of research is undertaken, and
- a clear definition and understanding of the purpose of the University and the structure of the University Council is recommended so that State and Territory Acts can be amended or formulated accordingly. This recommendation will enable the enhancement of academic autonomy and institutional autonomy without the interference of any political influences into the day-to-day running of universities, which is considered incompatible with university independence. It is further recommended that a majority of the University Council must be elected by the academic staff.
9.4. Contributions of the study

When reviewing and comparing existing literature related to this research topic, and to the findings of this research study, it can be ascertained that the current study contributes to knowledge in the field in many ways. However, four most significant points are highlighted here.

1. This study contributes to existing knowledge, with two most significant findings about the changing academic work environment in Australian universities. One of these findings is presented with the formulation of the academic predicament model (APM), which is a representation of the changing nature of academic work in Australian universities since the 1980s—according to the history of Australian higher education, revolutionary changes commenced with the Dawkins reforms from the end of 1980s. The APM model can be utilised to understand and enhance academic professionalism and avoid situations of de-professionalisation of academia. The other contribution of the study is the argument relating to the paradoxical nature of the two categories—massification of higher education and influences of political and economic ideologies—that operate as conflicting forces creating a scenario of stressfulness to academics. On the one hand, academics are faced with the challenges of fulfilling high expectations of innovative creativity in the changing learning environment. On the other hand, with the changing university governance and accountability management mechanisms, academics are controlled, and academic freedom, academic autonomy, and academic identity are threatened and undermined, thereby creating pressure and stress for academics.

2. This study is a representation of the voices of academics speaking up. It creates a deeper understanding of the phenomenon through narratives of lived experience of academics, promoting awareness of what is happening in academia. The two categories and all other themes that emanated from the findings are a great contribution of this study because they provide insights while alerting and exposing readers to experiences and predicaments encountered by academics.

3. Chapters 4 to 7 present emerging themes supported with rich thick data of participants’ verbatim quotes. They provide evidence of attributes of academics who voluntarily participated in this study. These attributes enable the author to identify the cohort of academics as reflective, well informed and articulate, which further
enhances the significance, validity, and reliability of the study. As such, the findings raise awareness of academics’ experiences in a profound way, increasing the value of the study. For example, the categories and themes that emerged from the data of this study successfully captured problems in the phenomena with their complexities and intricacies, and with strength of voice of a cohort of Australian university academics, highlighted its impact on them. The recommendations emphasised the necessity and urgency of improved workplace processes and practices. Through the inductive nature of this study, university leaders and managers will understand better the challenges academic staff confront in relation to the changes in the academic work environment in Australian universities.

4. This study may be used as an example for successful application of IPA as a methodology in Educational research, specifically when exploring lived experiences of participants. In the past, IPA has been mostly used in areas of Applied Psychology and Nursing. This study chose the IPA framework of Smith and colleagues (Reid et al., 2005; Smith et al, 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2008) because of its phenomenological, hermeneutic, idiographic, inductive, and interrogative nature (Smith, 2004) and its suitability when researching in areas in which little is known (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005), such as lived experiences of academics relating to this topic (see Chapter 3 for further details on IPA).

9.5. Limitations of the study

The current study explores lived experience of 16 university academics from eight Australian universities, which is a small number compared to the 120,000 full-time equivalent staff in the 37 public universities in Australia (DoE, 2018). The limitations of qualitative research studies such as this, with small numbers of participants, are generally recognised as an inability to generalise to other populations and situations (Creswell, 2007). However, this study focused on gathering “rich thick data” (Marx, 2008, p. 795) from a small group of academics. Gathering rich thick data may not be effective or pragmatic with a large group of participants, according to the application of the principles underpinning the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) used in the study. Smith et al. (2009) referred to the concept of ‘transferability’ regarding studies using IPA, where the reader can re-live the experience of the
participants in the study and determine the applicability to other populations and situations they encounter. In such instances the participant number may be irrelevant. What is significant is the transferability of the depth and quality of the lived experience of the 16 participants.

The current study does not gather data from all or even a very large number of academics in all 37 public universities in Australia. As such it may be argued that is a major limitation in this study because the findings do not expose comments by all university academics in all Australian public universities. However, such an argument holds little ground in this instance because this study is an exploration of lived experience of a cohort of university academics who represent the wider community of Australian university academics. Gathering data from large numbers of participants would have been impractical and ineffective for this type of study. Data saturation was evident even before all participant interviews were completed, which indicates that all other academics would have commented on similar categories and themes if more academics were given an opportunity to voice their experiences.

9.6. Implications of the study for future research

The findings of this study identified many significant opportunities for future research in the fields of university education and academic work environment, exploration of lived experience, and methodological and theoretical approach as used in this study.

- The academic predicament model (APM), which is a finding that emerged as a result of the inductive nature of this study, points towards the potential of six areas of future research: (a) the Australian university environment prior to the initiation of change in the 1980s, with more detailed investigation of mimetic isomorphism, (b) an analysis of literature examining the changing university environment in Australia affected by government reforms and infiltration of ideologies, (c) massification of higher education and its effects on Australian universities during the past four decades, (d) a detailed investigation of predicaments academics encounter in their university work environments, (e) investigation of the notion of a decrease or collapse of collegiality and
professionalism in the academic work environment in Australian universities, and (f) an exploration of the concept of de-professionalisation and what the future holds for academia. In addition to the above-mentioned future research, the APM can become fertile ground for more research studies, as future research can be developed on each aspect of that model.

- The research findings of this thesis could be used for future research studies of comparative analysis to highlight similarities and differences of the nature of change experienced by academics in the US and the UK—countries that are noted to be similarly influenced by political and economic ideologies, including neoliberalism, corporatisation, managerialism, commodification, commercialisation, and marketisation—as well as comparative studies relating to changes of academic work in universities of other countries.

- The use of the current study’s methodology can generate more insightful and significant future research. By building on the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) characteristics—phenomenology, hermeneutics, idiographic, interrogative, inductive and interpretative—future research can effectively explore studies of lived experience.

- The current study can be considered as an example when using the standpoint theory in future research that explores lived experiences of participants. The standpoint theory has been previously used more prevalently in research studies to investigate situations and topics relating to feminist groups, multicultural groups, and marginalised, vulnerable groups subject to social exclusion, such as indigenous groups. However, although participants in this study do not represent any of these groups, in this study standpoint theory is appropriately used to understand university academics’ standpoint on the topic explored.

9.7. Summary

The findings of the study identified that the nature of change in the academic work in Australian universities is transformational and demonstrates paradigm shift. The changing university learning environment, which is influenced by massification of higher education, and the changing university governance and accountability management, which is instigated by political and economic ideologies, were the two
categories that emerged from the data. Two original, unanticipated findings that are significant contributions to the field emerged from the data of this study. First, the findings of the current study explained the development of the conceptual model that was formulated from the data and named as the academic predicament model. Second, it argued how the two categories are paradoxical in their goals, objectives, and expectations, and how the complex, conflicting nature of the two conflicting categories are detrimentally impacting on academics, causing uncertainty and confusion.

It is anticipated that the findings of the study and the recommendations will lead to implementation of strategies for a conducive working environment for academics in Australian public universities.
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Appendices

Appendix A  Map of Universities in Australia

Australian Government (2018)
# Appendix B

## Grouping of Australian Public Universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Universities</th>
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<tr>
<td>Group of Eight (Go8)</td>
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<td>The University of Queensland</td>
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<td>The University of Western Australia</td>
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<td>University of Wollongong</td>
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(Australian Education Network, 2018)
## Appendix C  Systematic Quantitative Literature Review Protocol

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<th>Protocol</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<td>Review Question</td>
<td>What themes emerge from research studies and scholarly articles internationally and in Australia identified to be impacting on university academic work?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion Criteria</td>
<td>Title: Changing university work, and its impact on university academics Abstract and full text of journal article or book</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusion Criteria</td>
<td>Book reviews; non-English publications.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature search</td>
<td>Sources: academic, education online platforms (Emerald full text; A+ Education; Google scholar; SAGE journal online; Taylor and Francis journals), citations in identified literature <strong>Preliminary search phrases:</strong> “Changing university work”; “Changing academic work”; in title and abstract with limitation to publication year from 2008 to 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Information including specifications of publication, scope of publication, and results of publication were extracted from the publication and transferred into an excel document</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Tarne, Traverso, & Finkbeiner (2017)
## Appendix D  The Development of Australian Public Universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1850s to 1950s</td>
<td>1850 University of Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1853 University of Melbourne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1874 University of Adelaide</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1890 University of Tasmania</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1909 University of Queensland</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1911 University of Western Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1946 Australian National University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1949 University of New South Wales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1954 University of New England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s to 1970s</td>
<td>1964 Macquarie University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1965 La Trobe University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1965 University of Newcastle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1966 Flinders University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1970 James Cook University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1971 Griffith University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1973 Murdoch University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1974 Deakin University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1975 University of Wollongong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s to 1990s</td>
<td>1987 Curtin University of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1988 Northern Territory University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1988 Queensland University of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1988 University of Technology Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1988 University of Western Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1990 Charles Sturt University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1990 University of Canberra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1991 Australian Catholic University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1991 Edith Cowen University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1991 University of South Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1992 Central Queensland University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1992 RMIT University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1992 Swinburne University of Technology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1992 University of Southern Queensland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1992 Victoria University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1994 Southern Cross University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1994 University of Ballarat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1999 University of the Sunshine Coast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Australian Education Network, 2018)
### Appendix E  Classification of Australian Public Universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Sandstones** | The University of Sydney  
The University of Melbourne  
The University of Adelaide  
The University of Tasmania  
The University of Western Australia  
The University of Queensland |
| **Redbricks** | Australian National University  
The University of New South Wales  
Monash University |
| **Unitechs** | University of Technology Sydney  
RMIT University  
Queensland University of Technology  
Curtin University of Technology  
University of South Australia |
| **Gumtrees** | University of Newcastle  
Griffith University  
James Cook University  
Flinders University  
Deakin University  
Macquarie University  
University of Wollongong  
La Trobe University  
Murdoch University  
University of New England |
| **New** | University of the Sunshine Coast  
Central Queensland University  
Edith Cowan University  
University of Western Sydney  
Charles Sturt University  
Victoria University  
Swinburne University of Technology  
University of Ballarat  
University of Southern Queensland  
University of Canberra  
Charles Darwin University  
Australian Catholic University |
Appendix F  
Research Study Interview Schedule

School of Education and Professional Studies

The changing work of Australian academics: An exploration of lived experiences

Interview Schedule

Participant Information

Name……………………………………………………………………

Place of work…………………….Gender (Male/Female)………………..

Telephone 1……………………….Best time to call…………………

Telephone 2………………………Best time to call…………………..

Email 1: …………………………………………………………………

Email 2: …………………………………………………………………

Interview Location: ……………………………………………………..

Interview Date: ……../……./……. Interview Time:………………..

Interview Booking

☐ Phone the participants to:
  • Confirm that the participant has read and understood the Information Sheet.
  • Advise that the research team member has received participant’s Consent form.
  • Confirm that the participant is still prepared to participate in the interview.
  • Arrange a mutually convenient time and place for the interview.

☐ Visit the participant at the appointed time and place and confirm that the duration of the interview is still convenient before proceeding with the interview.

Interview

☐ Consent for the interview to be recorded
  Confirm that all participant responses will be kept confidential.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Question 1:</strong> What influence and impact have changes in the university had upon academics in Australian universities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-up questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Question 2:</strong> What opportunities and barriers do academics see and experience in relation to those changes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-up questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Question 3:</strong> How are university academics responding to opportunities and barriers they see and experience in relation to the changing landscape of Australian universities?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-up questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Question 4:</strong> What outcomes do academics seek to achieve through such responses?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Follow-up questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inform about a possible follow-up interview.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you for your participation. Your responses to the interview questions have been most valuable. You will be sent a summary of the findings on completion of the project.
Appendix G  The Project Description (GU ref no: 2016/738)

School of Education and Professional Studies

THE PROJECT DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH STUDY

The changing work of Australian academics: An exploration of lived experiences

The purpose of this research study is to explore academics’ lived experiences and perceptions of the changing work in Australian public universities, and investigate the effects of those changes on academics, and their work. There has been only limited research on academics’ experiences on this topic. This empirical research study will examine the participating academics’ accounts of their experiences with a view to understanding the opportunities and barriers they are encountering, the ways in which they are responding to those opportunities and barriers, and outcomes they are expecting to achieve for a conducive work environment.

The following research questions then, frame the study: (1) What influence and impact have changes in the university had upon academics in Australian universities? (2) What opportunities and barriers do academics see and experience in relation to those changes? (3) How are university academics responding to opportunities and barriers they see and experience in relation to the changing landscape of Australian universities? (4) What outcomes do academics seek to achieve through such responses?

An interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach is be used to investigate how academics report their lived experiences. The data collection method consist of in-depth, one-on-one, face-to-face, interviews with academics employed at public universities located in southeastern Australia. The interviews are audio recorded, transcribed and analysed to identify participants’ discursive constructions of their experiences. Findings from this research are expected add to knowledge of the nature of the changing work in Australian public universities. It raises awareness of an academic’s lived experience in the currently changing university work. Such knowledge enables academic stakeholders to consider ways of possibly implementing improved processes and practices to better cater for academics’ needs.
Appendix H  Research Study Information Sheet (GU ref no: 2016/738)

School of Education and Professional Studies

INFORMATION SHEET

The changing work of Australian academics: An exploration of lived experiences

The Researcher
Sureetha De Silva
PhD Candidate
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Griffith University (Gold Coast Campus)
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sureetha.desilva@griffithuni.edu.au

Research Supervisors
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Gold Coast Campus G23 Rm 3.19
Griffith University
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Mobile: 0466 535 801
Email: c.klopper@griffith.edu.au

Professor Donna Pendergast
Head and Dean
School of Education and Professional Studies
Arts, Education and Law Group
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176 Messines Ridge Road, Mount Gravatt, QLD, 4122, Australia
Phone: +61 7 3735 1082
Email: hosdeaneducation@griffith.edu.au

Why this research is being conducted

The purpose of this research study is to explore academics’ lived experiences and perceptions of the changing work in Australian public universities, and investigate the effects of those changes on academics, and their work. The research is a Doctor of Philosophy study at Griffith University that is being undertaken by the researcher. The findings of this research are anticipated to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of the opportunities and barriers experienced by university academics in the changing workplace; the ways academics are responding to them; and the ways in which academics could be better equipped in responding to them.

What you will be asked to do

You will be invited to contribute to the research by sharing your experiences with the researcher; specifically focusing on the changing work in universities, opportunities and barriers you may have experienced in these changing environments, and their impact on your current work, and upon you as an academic. Sharing of your experiences and your perceptions will be obtained through a face to face, one-on-one, discursive in-depth
interview of approximately 60 minutes. The interview will be recorded and transcribed for research purposes.

**The basis by which participants will be selected**

Participants will be selected based on their having not less than two years of experience as academics, and holding a continuing appointment in Australian public universities. The selection criteria will require participants from different current academic levels, a range of academic disciplines, and as far as possible equal number of men and women. Sixteen participants will be selected based on these criteria. Prior to the main study, a pilot study will be conducted by interviewing two academics. They will be selected based on the selection criteria mentioned above and who have expressed interest in voluntary participation in the study.

**The expected benefits of the research**

Participation in this research will provide data that will eventually, it is hoped, add to knowledge and understanding of the nature of the changing work in Australian public universities. The study will raise awareness of any relating issues, enabling academic stakeholders to consider ways of possibly implementing improved processes and practices to better cater for academics’ needs.

**Risk to you**

There are no foreseeable risks associated with participation in this project. The questions you will be asked will not touch on personally sensitive matters. You may, however, decline to answer any question. However, there will be a potential inconvenience of taking time to participate in the interviews. In order to minimise any inconvenience, the researcher will collaborate with you in choosing mutually convenient locations and times for the interviews.

**Your confidentiality**

All identifiable information collected from you will be regarded as confidential and stored securely for a period of five years. Information will be de-identified following the interview process. Audio recordings of the interviews will be transcribed for research purposes and then erased following transcription. You will not be identified or identifiable from the thesis or in any publications related to this study.

**Your participation is voluntary**

Your participation in this research will be entirely voluntary and you will be free to withdraw your consent and discontinue your involvement at any time.

**Questions / further information**

If you require additional information about this research, you can contact the researcher.

**The Ethical Conduct of this Research**

Griffith University conducts research in accordance with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the research project you should contact the University Manager, Research Ethics to 07 3735 4375 or researchethics@griffith.edu.au.
Feedback to you
You will be sent a summary of the findings of the research on completion of the project.

Privacy statement
The conduct of this research involves the collection, access and/or use of your identified personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties without your consent, except to meet government, legal or other regulatory authority requirements. A deidentified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University’s Privacy Plan at http://www.griffith.edu.au/about-griffith/plans-publications/griffith-university-privacy-plan or telephone (07) 3735 4375.

The conduct of this research involves the collection of personal information. The information collected is confidential and will not be disclosed to third parties. A deidentified copy of this data may be used for other research purposes. However, your anonymity will at all times be safeguarded. For further information consult the University’s Privacy Plan at www.gu.edu.au/ua/aa/vc/pp or telephone (07) 3735 5585

PLEASE RETAIN A COPY OF THIS INFORMATION SHEET
Appendix I  Research Study Informed Consent Form (GU ref no: 2016/738)

School of Education and Professional Studies

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

The changing work of Australian academics: An exploration of lived experiences

The Researcher
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Research Supervisors
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Deputy Dean Learning & Teaching
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Mobile: 0466 535 801
Email: c.klopper@griffith.edu.au

Professor Donna Pendergast
Head and Dean
School of Education and Professional Studies
Phone: +61 7 3735 1082
Email:hosdeaneducation@griffith.edu.au

By signing below, I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet, and in particular have noted that:
I understand that my involvement in this research will include participation in an interview and sharing with the researcher my experiences as an academic within the currently changing work context in Australian universities;
My views and experiences will be obtained through an approximately 60 minute face-to-face, one-on-one, in-depth interview. The interviews will be recorded and transcribed for research purposes;
I have had any questions answered to my satisfaction;
I understand the risks involved;
I understand that there will be no direct benefit to me from my participation in this research;
I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary;
I understand that if I have any additional questions I can contact the research team;
I understand that I am free to withdraw at any time, without comment or penalty;
I understand that I can contact the University Manager, Research Ethics to 07 3735 4375 or researchethics@griffith.edu.au. if I have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the project; and I agree to participate in the project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Signature</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>