

**A Comparative Study Examining the Teaching Excellence
Framework as a Form of External Audit and how it has Affected
Pre- and Post-1992 Universities**

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the impact of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) on professionalism within UK higher education, examining how TEF has reshaped university logic, academic identity, and gendered experiences. Through a comparative study of a pre-1992 research-intensive university and a post-1992 teaching-focused university, the work draws on 47 semi-structured interviews. The analysis is grounded in Freidson's (2001) theorisation of The Third Logic, Evetts' (2009) model of occupational vs organisational professionalism and institutional theory (Shields and Watermeyer, 2020).

Findings show that TEF prompted significant "regearing" at university level, particularly within the pre-1992 university, which developed new managerial structures, quality-assurance functions, and data-driven accountability mechanisms. These shifts signify a movement away from collegial, autonomous academic culture towards organisational professionalism. By contrast, the post-1992 university experienced TEF as a continuation of established bureaucratic practices rather than a disruptive change.

At individual level, most 'jobbing academics' remained distant from, or indifferent to, TEF. Middle and senior managers, however, experienced substantial role transformation as TEF intensified expectations around monitoring, reporting, and responding to performance data. TEF's influence on curriculum was most visible in practice-based subjects, where employability-driven metrics aligned with strategic priorities. In contrast, staff in the humanities and social sciences reported pressure to reshape curricula around metrics that did not meaningfully reflect disciplinary values.

The study identifies gendered patterns in professional work. Women were disproportionately represented in TEF-related administrative roles, while men remained insulated through research-focused positions aligned with REF-driven prestige. Although TEF created spaces for some women to exercise leadership and reprofessionalise teaching-related work, research continued to dominate university status hierarchies.

Overall, the thesis concludes that TEF has strengthened organisational professionalism and data-driven governance in higher education, while leaving longstanding gendered and structural inequalities largely intact.

Table of contents

Acknowledgments	ii
Abstract	iii
Table of contents	iv
List of figures	viii
PART I: Context and Approach	1
Chapter 1: Introduction	2
1.1 Background and origins of thesis	2
1.2 The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).....	5
1.3 Aims and objectives.....	7
1.3 Thesis structure	8
Chapter 2: Literature Review I: Professionalism	10
2.1 Introduction.....	10
2.2 Professionalism: Historical and benign/functionalist accounts	12
2.3 Freidson's Third Logic	13
2.4 Deprofessionalisation	15
2.5 Evetts: Two ideal-types of professionalism in knowledge-based work	16
2.5.1 Hierarchy and structure	19
2.5.2 Authority and control	19
2.5.3 Regulation, accountability, performativity and bureaucracy	20
2.5.4 Professional identity and agency	22
2.6 Reprofessionalisation and later conceptualisations of professionalism	26
2.7 Professionalisation and occupational closure.....	27
2.8 Gender and professionalism	30
2.11 Professionalism, leadership, institutional theory and higher education	32
2.11.1 Leadership in higher education	32

2.11.2 Institutional theory and logic	33
2.12 Summary	35
Chapter 3: Literature Review II: Measuring Higher Education	36
3.1 Introduction	36
3.2 A history of higher education in the UK	36
3.3 Measuring education: The rise of the audit culture in higher education	40
3.3.1 Rising student numbers: the marketisation of higher education.	40
3.3.2 Changes in curriculum, teaching and assessment	41
3.3.3 Changing conditions of academic work	42
3.3.4 Structures of accountability and accreditation	43
3.4 Gender and roles in higher education	44
3.5 The REF	47
3.5.1 The REF: research and critique	48
3.6 The TEF	50
3.6.1 The TEF: research and critique	52
3.7 Summary and research questions	55
Chapter 4: Methods	57
4.1 Introduction	57
4.2 Methodology	57
4.3 Arriving at pragmatism	57
4.4 Research questions	59
4.5 Methods	60
4.6: Research design: The multiple case study approach	60
4.7 Method: Semi-structured interviews	62
4.8 Challenges of validity and reliability	63
4.9 Ethical considerations	65
4.10 The familiarity problem	67
4.11 Setting, sample selection and respondents	68

4.12 Interview schedule design	74
4.13 Designing and conducting the interviews	77
4.14 Limitations	78
4.14 Data analysis	79
4.15 Summary	81
Part II: Findings and Implications	82
II.1 Introduction	82
Chapter 5: Regearing the University	83
5.1 Introduction	83
5.2 Regearing: Institutional culture and logic	83
5.3 Regearing as a Service	90
5.4 Regearing: structural change	93
5.5 Regearing: professional services and leadership teams	95
5.6 Regearing: changes in bureaucracy, audit and measurement	98
5.7 The juxtaposition of research, teaching and external metrics	102
5.8 Regearing: changes to course provision	106
5.9 Conclusion	109
Chapter 6: Individual Experiences	111
6.1 Introduction	111
6.2 “TEF? Well, I know what it means”	111
6.3 TEF and individual practice	116
6.3.1 Senior management	116
6.3.2 Middle managers	118
6.3.1 Senior Lecturers and Lecturers: The ‘jobbing academic’	128
6.4 Conclusion	132
Chapter 7: TEF and Gender	133
7.1 Introduction	133
7.2 Occupational hierarchies in higher education	133

7.3 'TEF: well, it's the girls, isn't it?' TEF as the creator of boundary roles	139
7.4 'It meant I got a full-time job': Gendered perspectives from a reprofessionalisation standpoint	141
7.5 Conclusion	144
Chapter 8: Conclusion	146
8.1 Introduction	146
8.2 Key findings	146
8.3 'Regearing': What is the impact of TEF upon institutional logic for both pre-1992 and post-1992 universities in the UK?	148
8.4 Personal narratives: What is the impact of TEF upon the individual experiences and professional identities of academic professionals in those universities?	150
8.5 It's the girls, isn't it? How has TEF affected the professional work and identity of female academics of higher education in the UK?	155
8.6 Implications and recommendations	156
8.7 Further research	157
8.8 Conclusion	158
Bibliography	160
Appendices	179
Appendix 4.1: First draft aide memoire	180
Appendix 4.2: Final draft aide memoire	181
Appendix 4.3: Participant consent form	183

List of figures

Figure 2.1: Two ideal-types of professionalism in knowledge-based work .	17
Figure 2.2: Changes and continuities in professionalism as an occupational value	18
Figure 2.3: Definition of professional agency within a subject-centred socio-cultural framework	24
Figure 2.4: Strategies of Closure: A conceptual model (Witz, 1992:4)	28
Figure 3.1: A comparison of REF and TEF	54
Figure 4.1: Broad organisational charts of Olaf (pre-1992) and Newfy (post-1992)	62
Figure 4.2: Respondents in study	71

PART I: Context and Approach

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background and origins of thesis

Historically higher education in the UK operated under a classic model of professionalism and at a distance from government. Higher education enjoyed an occupational professional ideal type. For example, the earliest universities had deep royal or ecclesiastic connections with implications for both funding and curriculum. Until relatively recently, universities were broadly self-regulating and influenced the state more than it influenced them (Willets, 2017). However, during the 1980s and 1990s higher education saw the introduction of accountability frameworks e.g. the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), which later become the Research Excellence Framework (REF), a drive towards higher numbers of enrolments and the introduction of targets all managed through the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and equivalent bodies throughout the UK. Through the imposition of such external accountability mechanisms, combined with changes in government funding for higher education, the distance between government and the sector became shortened.

The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) published its first set of results in June 2017. TEF followed in the wake of RAE/REF, which was first carried out in 1986, and preceded the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) which was first published in March 2021. The KEF completes this suite of 'excellence frameworks' conducted across teaching, research and knowledge exchange with both public sector and private sector partners.

The principal aims and objectives of TEF were three-fold. Firstly, to level the playing field between 'old' and 'new' universities through celebrating and awarding teaching excellence (DfBIS, 2015; Barkas et al. 2017; Gunn, 2018; Ashwin, 2022). Secondly, to provide a mechanism for prospective students to compare universities (DfBIS, 2015; Gunn, 2018). Finally, to provide a method for universities to set (and justify) their fee structures (DfBIS, 2015). In practice, however, academics report being puzzled by TEF and confused about how it measures teaching (O'Leary, 2017; Ashwin, 2020). Prospective students are typically only made aware of a university's TEF rating through their university's publicity material (Ashwin, 2020) and most universities set their fee structure to the highest amount regardless (Allen, 2012; Ashwin, 2020).

My primary research interests, as a teaching-focussed academic professional who has moved through a series of teaching-focussed managerial positions, lie at the intersection of the student and staff experiences of higher education.

I began my academic career some 25+ years ago moving from a sales and marketing role into a teaching post at a Russell Group university. Although attempts were made to complete a subject-based thesis at the start of my career, this did not come to fruition. As my career progressed, I moved from a 'teaching and scholarship' track to a 'teaching and research' track as I was producing publications (and I was submitted to REF during this period). However, I was strongly encouraged to return to a 'teaching and scholarship' track soon after the thesis collapsed. I took on several academic administrative roles which included management and oversight of workload (including recruitment, selection and training of new employees) and later, management of a suite of degree programmes. However, I became increasingly troubled with my fit with at that university and moved to another.

At this post-92 venue I flourished, being promoted twice in two years. I became the Head of Subject for a time and later the Deputy Head of the School. I found this venue to be a much better fit, but I had no idea why. I later realised that what I was experiencing was competing professional discourse. As the theory explored during this study demonstrates (Freidson, 2001; Evetts, 2009; Shields and Watermeyer, 2020) differing professional spaces enact different models of professionalism and culture. I did not know nor understand that I was living this difference.

Secondly, I found myself moving away from subject-based work into a variety of managerial roles, moving through middle management to senior management. This meant that I had little drive to complete a subject-based study as I no longer saw a great number of students. Instead, most of my time was driven by metrics – workload metrics, continuation data, HESA data, NSS data, GOS data and increasingly how these data fitted into TEF. Managing the student experience to improve several metrics became the mainstay of my strategic and operational duties.

Through experiencing competing professional discourses (Evetts, 2009; 2012a; 2012b; 2013) and the tension between differing models of professional work (Freidson, 2001), I became curious to explore other

academics' experiences of working in higher education. My understanding of models of professional identity and agency (Eteläpelto et al., 2013) sharpened my interest, as references to the socio-cultural conditions of the workplace resonated with my own lived experience. Finally, I found that my own career pathway echoed literature on the gendered workplace, particularly witnessing gendered hierarchies and jobs (Acker, 1990) and women being pigeonholed into boundary work (Gieryn, 1983). Furthermore, through holding various positions at both old and new universities, I experienced differing institutional logics, as espoused by Shields and Watermeyer (2020). For example, I witnessed occupational closure (Freidson, 2001) and boundary work – noticing that men were undertaking the most prestigious research (i.e. publishing more prolifically at 4* level) and holding the more respected professorial posts (see also Morley, 2013 for contemporaneous data when I was in post). I also observed the *autonomous* institutional logic at the old university and the *utilitarian/managerial* logic at the new universities (Shields and Watermeyer, 2020).

As TEF was relatively new when I first embarked upon this research endeavour (mid 2010s), I felt that this presented an opportunity to explore its effects. Whilst there was generalised literature on the professional experience of higher education (Morley, 2013; Davies and Thomas, 2000; 2002), and the particular experience of REF (Leathwood and Read, 2013), little substantive research existed at the time which used TEF as a context. Published literature was commonly conceptual (French and O'Leary, 2017) and did not account for the experiences of academics in differing types of institutions. Furthermore, as noted above, I had a very clear picture of how senior management responded to TEF as it was part of my remit at that time.

Consequently, I decided to undertake a qualitative, in-depth study of TEF across both pre- and post-1992 universities. At the time of embarking on the project, no such study existed. To date, although there are several doctoral theses which examine TEF, one takes a Foucauldian perspective (Graham, 2019), another considers a narrow range of respondents (all from a new university) (Meeson, 2021) and a third takes a policy-based approach (Brown, 2019).

The next section of this chapter provides an overview of the TEF. Section 1.3 discusses the aims and objectives of the study. The final section provides the structure of the thesis.

1.2 The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) is a national assessment and rating system for higher education providers in England, administered by the Office for Students (OfS). Introduced by the UK Government in 2017 as the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework, it emerged from concerns that the quality of teaching in higher education was receiving less policy attention than research performance, which had long been assessed through a Research Excellence Framework (REF). TEF was therefore developed to provide greater accountability for teaching quality, enhance information available to prospective students, and incentivise institutional improvement in learning, teaching and student outcomes (DfBIS, 2016a; 2016b; OfS, 2024).

The policy rationale underpinning TEF reflects wider market-oriented reforms in UK higher education. Following the increase in tuition fees in England, policymakers argued that students required clearer evidence of educational quality and value for money. The framework sought to elevate the status of teaching within universities, encourage investment in pedagogic enhancement, and recognise excellence beyond minimum regulatory requirements (DfBIS 2016a; 2016b). Unlike traditional quality assurance processes, which focus primarily on threshold standards, TEF was designed to differentiate levels of excellence and stimulate continuous improvement across the sector (Ashwin, 2022).

TEF has three principal purposes. First, it aims to support prospective students in making informed choices by providing publicly accessible ratings of institutions. Second, it seeks to incentivise universities and colleges to enhance teaching quality, learning environments and student support. Third, it functions as a regulatory and reputational mechanism, recognising institutions that deliver outstanding educational experiences and outcomes while encouraging improvement elsewhere (OfS, 2024).

Operationally, the current TEF assesses providers across two core dimensions: student experience and student outcomes. Participating institutions receive ratings of Gold, Silver, Bronze or Requires Improvement

for each dimension, alongside an overall rating. Assessments are undertaken by expert panels comprising academics and students who consider multiple sources of evidence. These include quantitative indicators derived from national datasets - such as student continuation, completion, graduate outcomes and student survey data - as well as a provider submission and an independent student submission. The assessment is therefore based on a combination of metrics and qualitative judgement rather than performance indicators alone (OfS, 2024).

TEF operates primarily at institutional level and focuses on undergraduate provision. Ratings are valid for four years. Following recommendations from the independent review led by Dame Shirley Pearce (DfE 2021a; 2021b), the 2023 iteration introduced revised methodologies, separate ratings for student experience and outcomes, and the possibility of a “Requires Improvement” judgement. These changes were intended to provide greater transparency and a more nuanced evaluation of educational quality (Advance HE, 2024).

In terms of scale, the TEF is one of the largest national teaching assessment exercises in the world. The 2023 exercise involved 228 higher education providers, including 186 mandatory participants in England and 42 voluntary participants. As a sector-wide framework covering the majority of undergraduate students in England, its influence extends across universities, further education colleges delivering higher education, and specialist providers (Advance HE, 2024).

The significance of TEF within UK higher education is considerable. Institutionally, TEF ratings have substantial reputational value and are widely used in marketing, student recruitment and strategic planning. The framework has encouraged universities to strengthen evidence-based approaches to teaching enhancement, student support and graduate employability. It has also contributed to a broader cultural shift in which teaching quality receives greater prominence alongside research performance (Advance HE, 2024; OfS, 2024).

However, participation in TEF also carries notable resource implications. Preparing submissions requires extensive institutional effort, including data analysis, stakeholder consultation, evidence gathering and report writing. Universities frequently establish dedicated project teams involving senior leaders, academic staff, quality professionals, planning units and students’

unions. Ongoing monitoring of TEF-related indicators further requires investment in learning and teaching enhancement activities, student support services and institutional analytics. Consequently, while TEF aims to drive educational improvement, it also creates administrative and financial burdens that must be balanced against its perceived benefits (Advance HE, 2024).

Available evidence suggests that TEF has imposed substantial costs on both higher education providers and regulators since its introduction. A Department for Education review estimated that a provider-level TEF operating over the ten-year period from 2019/20 to 2028/29 would cost between £40 million and £105 million in total, with a central estimate of £75 million; approximately £50 million of this would be borne by higher education providers and £25 million by the Office for Students (DfE, 2021). The same analysis estimated an average cost of around £33,000 per provider submission, comprising application preparation, familiarisation activities and assessment costs (DfE, 2021). More recent evaluation of the TEF 2023 exercise found that the single assessment round cost the sector in excess of £15 million, including both institutional preparation costs and regulatory administration costs (Office for Students, 2025; Times Higher Education, 2025).

1.3 Aims and objectives

The aim of this study is to consider TEF as a form of external audit and how it has affected pre- and post-1992 universities. To conduct the study, access was granted to one pre-1992 and one post-1992 university for the purposes of qualitative data collection.

The following research questions will be addressed:

- What is the impact of TEF upon institutional logic for both pre-1992 and post-1992 universities in the UK?
- What is the impact of TEF upon the individual experiences and professional identities of academic professionals in those universities?
- How has TEF affected the professional work and identity of female academics of higher education in the UK?

1.3 Thesis structure

Following this brief introductory chapter, the second chapter reviews the theories of professionalism to frame the discussion of higher education professionals' work and identity. It opens with an historical narrative of professionalism, leading to an explanation of benign/functionalist accounts. The first of the key theories, Freidson's Third Logic (2001), is examined in depth. The chapter then moves forward to scrutinise the work of Evetts, with particular focus on her later work (2009; 2012a; 2012b; 2013), which develops her early deprofessionalised account (2003a; 2003b) toward the discourse of professionalism itself and presents her two ideal-types, namely (i) Occupational Professionalism and (ii) Organisational Professionalism (Evetts, 2009). Later conceptualisations of professionalism follow; in particular, hybrid professionalism (Noordegraaf, 2007; 2015) and pragmatic professionalism (Liljegren, 2012). The professional work of academics is considered throughout the chapter, including a deeper exploration of gender and professionalism in higher education. The chapter closes with an examination of professionalism, leadership, institutional theory and higher education.

Chapter Three moves from the review of theory to a consideration of the evolution of higher education in the UK since the expansionist Robbins Report of 1963, with specific reference to government, accountability and higher education. There are five areas in scope: (i) the rise of the audit culture; (ii) the marketisation of higher education; (iii) changes in curriculum, teaching and assessment, (iv) changing conditions of academic work; and (v) accountability and accreditation. Finally, specific consideration is given to the issue of gender in academic work in higher education. This chapter then moves to higher education excellence framework policies, firstly RAE/REF and then TEF. The section on TEF describes the objectives, design and critiques of TEF before critically evaluating research into the framework. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the resulting aims, objectives and research questions for this study.

Chapter Four describes the methodological underpinning of the research, which was derived from a pragmatic perspective (Hammond, 2013; Kelemen and Rumens, 2011). It then moves onto the research design, providing a rationale for and description of the comparative case study approach using 47 semi-structured interviews at a pre-1992 and a post-1992 university. The

chapter discusses the 'familiarity problem', the challenges faced investigating one's own professional field, before finally describing how the data were analysed.

Chapter Five is the first of three chapters describing the research findings. Using the key theories of Freidson (2001), Evetts (2009) and Shields and Watermeyer (2020), this chapter presents how both Olaf (pre-1992) and Newfy (post-1992) had to 'regear' to accommodate TEF metrics at their university.

Chapter Six describes the study findings relating to effects upon the individual academic professional and provides several narratives from key respondents across a range of roles within each university. It exposes a range of responses from strategic agentic avoidance to emphatic rejection.

The final findings chapter, Chapter Seven, portrays the gendered experience of professionalism in higher education. It takes the classic works of Acker (1990) and Davies (1996) to demonstrate that gendered roles and hierarchies still exist in this workplace, some 25+ years after they proposed these theoretical perspectives.

Chapter Eight draws together the key findings of this work and identifies implications and recommendations for policy, managers and practice. Finally, the study concludes with suggestions for further research and reflective remarks.

Chapter 2: Literature Review I: Professionalism

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to examine the effect of the Teaching Excellence Framework on structure, role, professionalism and gender within higher education in the UK. The study takes a comparative approach using a pre-1992 and a post-1992 university. The following two chapters locate the work in dialogue with literature on higher education.

Since the study is focussed on the relationship between the state (who have instituted TEF) and the academic professional, this literature review will begin by considering the nature of professional work. Professionalism is an occupational category that has emerged out of a monopoly granted to certain occupations by the state (Connolly and Hughes-Stanton, 2020). This section draws upon two overarching perspectives. Freidson (2001) is used to illustrate a recent articulation of a functionalist account of professional work, where he suggests that professions deserve a market monopoly and insulation from the encroachment of the logics of the market and bureaucracy due to the positive role they play in society. While Evetts' early work (e.g. Evetts, 2003a; 2003b) reflected a similar position (and saw contemporary encroachments as the loss of this), her later work (Evetts, 2009; 2012a; 2012b; 2013) parked these debates to consider how and when the discourse of professional and professionalism is used. Evetts' (2009) 'two ideal-types of professionalism in knowledge-based work' has been broken down into several sub-elements: hierarchy and structure; authority and control; regulation, accounting and performativity; bureaucracy: practice and process; and professional identity and agency.

One of the criticisms of a classic functionalist account or rearticulations of such an account in the work of Freidson (2001) are their blindness to the operationalisation of power through claims to professionalism and within professional work organisations. From a feminist perspective discourses of professionalism have been used as means to protect a male cabal (Witz, 1990; 1992). Consequently, the next section reviews literature on gender and professionalism.

The chapter concludes with a more focussed consideration of professionalism and higher education, encompassing both theory and applied research.

As distinct from a 'profession' as an occupational category, 'professionalism' is used as a discourse to describe the practices and identity of workers within occupational groups. The notion of professionalism and use of the concept has widened considerably as Western society transitions from the dominance of manufacturing to service economies. Many occupations, both existing and emerging, are defined as professions (Crook, 2008). Evetts recognises this as a function of workers and workforces needing to articulate their career identity:

'The concept of professionalism has an appeal to and for practitioners, employees and managers in the development and maintenance of work identities career decisions and senses of self.' (Evetts, 2013: 783).

Whilst the definition of professionalism is much contested (Freidson, 2001; Evetts, 2013), for the purposes of this study, the definition proposed by Evetts (2013) is used:

'The intellectual field includes the study of occupations which are predominantly service sector and knowledge-based and achieved sometimes following years of higher or further education and specified years of vocational training and experience. Sometimes professional groups are also elites with strong political links and connections and some professional practitioners are licenced as a mechanism of market closure and the occupational control of their work they are primarily middle-class occupations sometimes characterised as the service class.' (Evetts, 2013: 781).

In this definition, Evetts recognises the confluence of knowledge, training, accreditation and service – key features of higher education. Higher education also is one of the occupations that have been granted a license or monopoly from state to practice. This study centres on the relationship between the professional lecturer and the state, and, specifically, the impact of TEF on that relationship.

2.2 Professionalism: Historical and benign/functionalist accounts

This section provides an overview of key theoretical developments in professionalism and discusses the occupations classified as professions, before describing the key characteristics of professions. Whilst acknowledging the critical contributions of Larson (1977) and Abbott (1988), once the key terms have been defined, the departure point of this review is Freidson's Third Logic (Freidson, 2001). In section 2.11 the discussion focuses specifically on professionalism in the context of higher education.

Many narratives of professionalism take an historical perspective charting the rise of professions such as law, medicine and teaching in both England and North America (Tawney, 1920; Elliott, 1972; Larson, 1977; Crook, 2008). Such work offers a contemporary history of the concept of the profession, which developed in the Middle Ages, and acknowledges a distinction between professional elites, traders and artisans. This distinction emerges with the need for a credential, usually a degree, to partake in professional work, where traders and artisans qualify through an apprenticeship. However, not all professions accessed with a credential were considered equal; medicine, law, theology and academia were identified as 'status professions' (Elliott, 1972). These distinctions focus on the type of person or that trait, for example, Tawney (1920) holds that someone working in industry does so to gain a profit (for themselves or shareholders), whereas a profession serves a greater good and is delivered to a (self-managed) high standard.

Freidson (2001), drawing on Larson (1977) and Abbott (1988), moves away from such trait or dispositional accounts with a categorisation of professional characteristics, echoing the concept of 'family resemblances' identified earlier by Downie (1990: 148). These professional characteristics, or resemblances, include training and subsequently an overseeing body who creates and maintains a code of ethics, supervises qualifications, pay and conditions, imposes discipline and organises an annual conference.

As the discourse of professionalism has developed over time, further occupations are included (Cronin, 1993; Xu, 2001). Watkins et al. (1992, cited in Middlehurst, 1995:35) neatly summarises this evolution as: - Pre-industrial: divinity, medicine, law; Industrial (agricultural to industrial revolutions): engineers, chemists, accountants; Welfare state: teachers,

social workers; Enterprise: business and management specialists; and Knowledge workers: information, communications and media specialists.

Throughout history, the professions have emerged as special kind of work, distinguished by their rigorous academic training and perceived social value. Professions have a 'market monopoly' that is granted by the State, with the State typically held at arm's length, as it was in universities [certainly pre-92] until the introduction of accountability frameworks for, firstly research, and the focus of this study, teaching.

2.3 Freidson's Third Logic

In 2001, Freidson provided his articulation of a third logic through which he contextualised the ideal type, through which professionals control their own work. This contrasts with the free market or bureaucratic environments which hold alternate logics. In this section, the Third Logic will be explored in greater depth because the Third Logic provide the principal framework of the occupational ideal-type which underpin this thesis. The attributes and functions of Freidson's self-governing ideal-type sit within the following areas: professional knowledge and skill, divisions of labour, labour markets and careers, training programmes, and ideologies.

Freidson (2001) posits that a professional becomes one through a rigorous formal training programme, which commonly begins at university but culminates with on-the-job training post-institution which must be completed prior to becoming formally qualified (e.g. barrister pupillage; doctor registrar or residency). Furthermore, the knowledge and skills continue to be developed through ongoing training. Further still, Freidson argues that professional knowledge is special knowledge requiring the exercise of discretionary judgement. It is only professions which possess this expertise, passing it along between them and affording them prestige and privilege in the marketplace and society. The professions control all aspects of their own marketplace through themselves delivering this training; before, during and post-qualification (e.g. those teaching law are qualified solicitors or barristers, those teaching education are qualified, former, teachers). This means that they can ensure the quality of the training. When pre-qualification of delivery is not profession-led, the profession can instead ensure consistency and content through professional accreditations.

Within an occupational account, professions exert control over every aspect of their milieu. Freidson (2001) groups this into a discussion of the division of labour. Through specialisation of knowledge and skill, professions self-organise who does what work within their field. This, at best, leads to negotiation, collegiality, efficiency and a horizontal self-governing structure. From a negative perspective, as critics suggest, it precludes interlopers gaining access to this cherished space and creates an inaccessible hierarchy or occupational closure (Downie, 1990).

Freidson's analysis of labour markets and careers expands on the idea of market divisions by exploring how jobs are structured and organised. As foregrounded above, Freidson notes that professional labour markets are self-organising. There is occupational control of how one becomes 'qualified' to do the job, meaning that the profession legally self-governs its labour market and actors within that market can be removed (struck off, disbarred) from the entire profession by decisions made by others within the profession. Not only do professions control their qualification to practice but also their own career progression and salary (to a point). This aligns with Tawney's early work on professionalism, which asserts that someone working in industry does so to gain a profit (for themselves or shareholders) whereas a profession serves a greater good and is delivered to a (self-managed) high standard (Tawney, 1920). There are critics of this: while Freedman (1976) notes that this model of professionalism creates 'labour market shelters', which protect professional integrity and security, Freidson (2001) contends that this conceptualisation of labour market shelters could be re-conceptualised as credentialism (Collins, 1979; 1981) and are a further example of occupational closure. Taking the shelter concept further, this means that professions control price and competition in their market.

Freidson completes his overview of professionalism by considering what he describes as 'ideologies.' Within this concept, are the value systems (Tawney, 1920) and philosophies of professionalism and the interplay of those alongside the political, social and economic environment within which the professions sit. Ideologically, professionalism holds to its own authority; professions are afforded privileged positioning and status in society. Therefore, such professions need to preserve that position, through maintaining their own authority over their knowledge, skills and work. This can be done via boundary work (Gieryn, 1983) or the creation of third space

professionals in higher education (Whitchurch, 2013) (see section 2.7 for a fuller discussion of boundary work and third space professionals). A movement away from that, states Freidson, would lead to consumerism (a market controlled by the consumer) or managerialism (bureaucratic control).

Professional ideology includes an understanding of the value of specialised work, a valued commitment to work, meaning that professionals do not work to live. Their work is a 'secular calling' or 'modern source of meaning and identity' (Goldman, 1988; Freidson, 2001: 108). In turn, this work commands respect and status, as mentioned above. Respect and status are elevated further because professional work is often bespoke or individualised (as opposed to uniform). Thus, specialised, individualised work means that it is more valuable financially/materially as well in esteem. Finally, the ideological position of professionals is that their work provides the whole of the community with a service. The community must place their faith in them, in the provision of that service. This conceptualisation of ideology respects Tawney's earlier typology (Tawney, 1920).

Prestigious professions often recruit learners from equally prestigious educational institutions, reflecting a link between professional ideology and venues of learning. Second, that such learners would study classics before gaining their specialised knowledge/skills/training would not be uncommon.

2.4 Deprofessionalisation

Derived from functionalist accounts, deprofessionalisation is an approach which argues that through the encroachment of the market, bureaucracy, and the introduction of accountability metrics and frameworks the professional milieu is being compromised (encroached upon in Freidman's (2001) terms). There is a parallel process where different occupations are being introduced into professional work. This, Kritzer (2001) defines, as deprofessionalisation i.e. work moving from professional employees to nonprofessional employees for example para-lawyers/para-legals doing legal work in place of lawyers. Elsewhere, deprofessionalisation refers to the loss of unique occupational qualities (Haug, 1972, 1988; Rothman, 1984). In this context, deprofessionalisation may not represent a loss of professional status in a job title, but a change to the work being undertaken. Therefore, the role stays

the same, but the duties and reputational aspects of that role lose their status. For the purposes of this thesis, status is represented and investigated through the professional mandate - the relationship between the occupation and the state. Where professionalisation views this mandate in a negative sense seeing this as permitting the occupation to perform occupational closure to protect its position; deprofessionalisation sees the undermining of this mandate as a subversion of the autonomy which is the essence of professional work (Freidson, 2001; Witz, 1990; 1992; Ball, 2003). Although, there is a wealth of literature examining contemporary higher education (e.g. Macfarlane et al. 2024; Watermeyer et al. 2024; Bolden et al. 2025) little discussion of professionalisation and deprofessionalisation exists exploring TEF. Current TEF-focussed studies are policy based (Brown, 2019) take a survey-based approach (O'Leary, 2019) or examine pre-1992 venues (Perkins, 2019). This study aims to address this gap and investigate how this professional mandate is affected by TEF.

2.5 Evetts: Two ideal-types of professionalism in knowledge-based work

As with Freidson's work (Freidson, 2001) the early theory of Evetts (2003a; 2003b) can be viewed as a contemporary rearticulation of a classic functionalist perspective which informed her account of the 'deprofessionalisation' of professional work. Evetts' later work moves beyond some of the assumptions embedded within this perspective to consider debates in relation to the professions as discursive struggles.

Early work from Evetts (2003a: 2003b) details the rise of new professions in the occupational space, reviews the normative/functionalist accounts of professionalism and concludes with a caution that the occupational space is becoming deprofessionalised. These concerns are formed through a perceived dilution of professionalism caused by the influx of new professions and professionals. Management is using professionalism not for social good but for organisational control. This is causing an occupational identity crisis and discontent among workers.

While Evetts' earlier work adopted a deprofessionalisation perspective (Evetts, 2003a; 2003b) her later work considered how competing understandings and discourses of professionalism were appropriated within

different occupational contexts. Evetts (2009) draws upon New Public Management to demonstrate that professionalism has developed a new iteration. She contends that the occupational ideal-type championed by Freidson (2001) has been superseded by a new 'organisational' ideal-type which has developed in concert with New Public Management in the workplace. This is presented in Table 2.2 below:

Figure 2.1: Two ideal-types of professionalism in knowledge-based work

Organisational Professionalism	Occupational professionalism
Discourse of control used increasingly by managers in work organisations	Discourse constructed within professional groups
Rational-legal forms of authority	Collegial authority
Standardised procedures	Discretion and occupational control of the work
Hierarchical structures of authority and decision-making	Practitioner trust by both clients and employers
Managerialism	Controls operationalised by practitioners
Accountability and externalised forms of regulation, target setting and performance review	Professional ethics monitored by institutions and associations
Linked to Weberian models of organisation	Located in Durkheim's model of occupational communities

Source: Evetts, J. (2009) 'New Professionalism and New Public Management: Changes, Continuities and Consequences,' *Comparative Sociology*, 8, 247-266

Evetts' organisational ideal-type emphasises managerial control, rational-legal authority, hierarchy, standardised practice and process, external regulation, accountability and performativity. In essence, with all these areas there is a movement from worker/employee/professional control to organisational or managerial control. Where an occupational ideal-type favours relationships, an organisational one emphasises structures.

Evetts' work illustrates how these models are aligned with and contested within differing professions: for example in law, less evident in medicine (Broadbent et al. 1997; Kuhlmann, 2006) with some reclamation of the occupational model in midwifery (Bourgeault et al. 2004) and European business (Neale, 1994). However, she does not consider this model in academia. Evetts (2009) notes that the model is relevant at the macro and meso level but recommends further analysis at micro-level to explore the

complexities found therein. Liljegren (2012) has carried out such a micro level analysis of social workers in Sweden, finding that these workers adopt a pragmatic approach, meaning that characteristics of both ideal-types are used. This pragmatic approach is theoretically aligned to Noordegraaf hybrid professionalism which argues that most professional work combines both models (Noordegraaf, 2007; 2015).

Using her model of occupational and organisational ideal-types, Evetts (2009) develops the theory further by discussing changes and continuities in professionalism as an occupational value. She notes that the changes are commonly structural (at institutional level), and the continuities tend to be relational (changes affecting the role of the individual in relation to others). This is presented as below:

Figure 2.2: Changes and continuities in professionalism as an occupational value

Changes	Continuities
Governance	Authority
Management	Legitimacy
External forms of regulation	Prestige, status, power, dominance
Audit and measurement	Competence, knowledge
Targets and performance indicators	Identity and work culture
Work standardisation	Discretion to deal with complex cases, respect, trust
Financial control	
Competition, individualism	Collegial relations and jurisdictional competitions
Organisational control of the work priorities	Gender differences in careers and strategies
Possible range of solutions/procedures defined by the organisation	Procedures and solutions discussed and agreed within specialist teams

Source: Evetts, J. (2009) 'New Professionalism and New Public Management: Changes, Continuities and Consequences,' *Comparative Sociology*, 8, 247-266

In bringing her work on her model to a close, Evetts (2009) calls for further research into professionalism, and its application to contemporary work. In particular, she emphasises the need for analysis on the links between increased organisational professionalism, decline in trust and the erosion of or changes in professional values. Secondly, she calls for consideration of whether and how the relationships of trust, discretion, and competence are being challenged, and by whom. She proposes research examining trust's

potential replacement by organisational forms of regulation e.g. hierarchy, bureaucracy, managerialism, target-setting and accountability. Drawing upon McClelland (1990), Evetts (2013) notes that it is possible to differentiate between professionalisation from within (i.e. manipulation of the market from by practitioners) or from above (power exerted by forces external to the group). However, this has not been examined in an educational context and from this perspective TEF is such an external mechanism.

Using both the model and the table, the next section will consider some of the changes identified by Evetts in detail. Relevant literature examining educational and higher education contexts will be critically reviewed as part of this section.

2.5.1 Hierarchy and structure

Professionalism has an historical class-based underpinning (Freidson, 2001). In the traditional occupational ideal-type this underpinning is what one might loosely describe as hierarchy. This was evident in terms of the relationship between profession and client, as much as within the profession itself. Such professionals were considered 'gentlemen', and they were trusted and respected higher status members of the community providing a valued (altruistic) service for that community. There were also intra-professional collegial authority and status for those with more experience and title (e.g. professors). Elton (2004) discusses this with reference to academia being self-governing until at least the 1970s, suggesting that the breakdown of hierarchy and deference and 'unwritten laws' (Elton, 2004: 124) rose with Margaret Thatcher, noting a reduced trust and movement in professionalism. Size and complexity and wider societal change affected hierarchy and structure and with the development of organisational professionalism so came less reliance on traditional class-based trust and respect. This was replaced with more formalised vertical organisational hierarchy and structure incorporating greater management control.

2.5.2 Authority and control

The occupational ideal-type takes a collegial approach to authority and an internal approach to control. As Evetts' (2009) asserts, there is not control as

much as autonomy, and discretionary judgement in concert with strong organisational identity and culture. Control is exercised by the profession itself, and it operates within its own professional body using its own code of ethics. There is a greater reliance on trust between practitioners, employers, and clients. In the organisational ideal-type control is via the managers in the work organisation. They use the various mechanisms available to them to control the marketplace and workforce, including hierarchical organisational structures, standardised process and procedures and both external and internal measurement and control, including setting targets and performance reviews. Drawing on the work of Foucault, Fournier (1999) examines professionalism as being disciplinary tools used by managers in new occupational contexts.

Evetts later work adopts this Foucauldian perspective suggesting that organisational professionalism is a tool of the government created to engender the facets mentioned above – hierarchy, bureaucracy, output and performance measures and standardised work practices. She notes that where some service sector professionals have been resistant to change, the tactic of the state has been to develop professionals as managers and use normative techniques in management e.g. performance review, benchmarking and targets. (Evetts, 2009).

2.5.3 Regulation, accountability, performativity and bureaucracy

One of the changes Evetts recognises is in relation to how professional work is regulated (Evetts, 2009). Within an occupational account regulation was from within based on professional discretion. However, Evetts identifies that increased professionalisation of occupations leads to quality control and audit, target setting and performance review 'wherever trust, transparency and accountability need to be demonstrated, then increased regulation, audit and assessment seem to follow' (Evetts, 2013: 779). However, in some traditional professions, this movement from occupational practice and process to a more rigid and organisational model is considered beneficial, though this has been debated for some time. Increasing size and complexity of organisations means that individual employees are responsible for maintaining the reputation of the organisation as well as their own. This further leads to increased performance measurement and customer surveys.

High profile examples of negligence and malpractice in the professions (e.g. the Dr Harold Shipman case, the Lucy Letby case, the senior leadership team at the Countess of Chester Hospital where Lucy Letby worked, the prosecution of Post Office workers and child abuse in the Catholic Church) have undermined public trust in the professions, leading to a drive for greater regulation and accountability.

Developing the Foucauldian critique in an educational context, Stephen Ball reframes accountability as performativity (Ball, 2003; 2012; 2015; 2016). Ball provides the below definition of performativity which shall be used for the purposes of this study:

A technology, a culture and a mode of regulation that employs judgements, comparisons and displays as a means of incentive, control, attrition and change – based on rewards and sanctions (both material and symbolic). The performances (of individual subjects or organisations) serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of ‘quality’, or ‘moments’ of promotion or inspection. As such they stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality or value of an individual or organisation within a field of judgement. (Ball, 2003: 216).

Boyle (2001) illustrates the point regarding problems with performativity, and this can be applied to higher education. That is, our environment is being increasingly measured, and yet we do not question if these measures are pertinent nor relevant.

We take our collective pulse 24 hours a day with the use of statistics. Despite all that numerical control, we feel as ignorant of the answers to the big questions as ever. (Boyle, 2001, quoted in Ball, 2003: 215)

Critical here is the dichotomy of movement towards measurement in educational policy versus that of the idealised account of professionalism. What this leads to, states Ball (2003), is extensive ‘monitoring systems’ and the ‘production of information’ and performativity. This leads to questions of whose measurements, what is actually being measured, for what purpose and how is it interpreted? Measurement often becomes an end in itself and not a means to an end.

Moving from the general to the specific, there is a body of literature which critiques the increasing bureaucracy, accountability and performativity in

higher education (Shore and Wright, 2000; Strathern, 1997; Ball, 2012; Graham, 2019). This work depicts the broad movement to greater accountability and audit in higher education, both within the UK and internationally (Shore and Wright, 2000). Later work examines the finer nuances of REF as a measure of accountability (Watermeyer et al. 2022). Most recently, pockets of literature have explored limited aspects and contexts of TEF as a measure of performativity and accountability (Graham, 2019). To avoid duplication, this work is discussed in chapter three (3.3.4 Accountability and Accreditation).

2.5.4 Professional identity and agency

Some facets of professional identity are shared across professions. According to Evetts' definition, professional identity:

'is associated with a sense of common experiences, understandings and expertise, shared way of perceiving problems and their possible solutions... shared educational backgrounds, professional training and vocational experiences, memberships of professional associations and institutes, shared work cultures and common values' (Evetts, 2013: 780)

In a meta-analysis of professional identity in an educational context Beijgaard et al. (2004) examine teachers' professional identity. The study provides a rich dataset which can assist in the definition of professional identity in higher education and in schools.

Beijgaard et al. (2004:122) note that in defining professional identity, four features are crucial. Firstly, professional identity is an ongoing process of development (formal and informal), interpretation and experience. Beijgaard et al. (2004) note that professional identity is not simply 'Who am I at the moment?' but also 'Who do I want to become?' Therefore, professional identity is dynamic, not stable nor fixed. Secondly, professional identity implies both person and context. Teachers (professionals) have their own individual values and attitudes which create their professional persona, and they are also influenced by the cultural norms of their environment. Thirdly, professional identity includes sub-identities that more or less harmonise. These relate to the different contexts and relationships held by the professional. They should be well balanced. Problems arise when there is

conflict e.g. when there are changes in the working landscape. Finally, agency is an important element of professional identity. Professionals must be active in their own development. Development activity, individual learning and collaboration create agency and identity.

The link between policy change, performativity and professional identity is made by Ball (2003) who notes particularly that it influences the relationships between teachers and their colleagues and students.

As an antidote to encroachment of bureaucracy (Freidson, 2001) and mechanisms of accountability the concept of agency has been promoted in various professional contexts, especially education (Biesta et al., 2015; Priestely et al., 2015). The concept of 'agency' in the literature of professionalism is underpinned by multiple perspectives and theories (Vähäsantanen 2015) and is considered active, not passive (Eteläpelto et al., 2013; Vähäsantanen, 2015). As Eteläpelto et al. (2013:47) notes of professionals 'they are not seen as passive carriers of their contextual conditions, but rather as capable of transforming these conditions.'

Working at the intersection of four disciplinary approaches, Eteläpelto et al. (2013) have provided a sophisticated conceptualisation of professional agency. They argue that agency is conditioned by both socio-cultural factors external to the professional (including material circumstances and work cultures) and subjective factors which include professional identity and knowledge. In drawing their conclusions, they provide this useful summary framework (displayed overleaf):

Figure 2.3: Definition of professional agency within a subject-centred socio-cultural framework



Source: Eteläpelto, A. et al. 2013. What is Agency? Conceptualizing Professional Agency at Work. *Educational Research Review*, 10, 45-65.

As displayed in the model above both the socio-cultural conditions of the workplace and professional influences (knowledge, identity and experience) need to be taken into consideration. The model proposed by Eteläpelto et al. (2013) could be expanded to include a wider suite of socio-cultural conditions, not just workplace ones, because these shape professional agency too. The model allows us to consider both socio-cultural and subjective understandings. Although this study does not explore subjective understandings explicitly, how academics react to TEF is always going to be mediated by their own subjective experiences, values and identity.

Specifically considering Finnish vocational teachers, Vähäsantanen (2015) conducted a qualitative meta-analysis and proposed three perspectives for professional agency in education. Firstly, that agency represents the teachers' opportunity to influence their own work. This includes content, conditions and decisions. Vähäsantanen (2015) raises the point that this may be as an active or subordinated professional (Sachs, 2000) and is concerned that teachers may be influenced by top-down imposition rather than the freedom to explore their own agency. Secondly, Vähäsantanen (2015) discusses agency as sense-making. Here, the paper acknowledges that the professional implements strategies and policies and that their professional agency processes that. That is, the professional is not blithely

implementing change without consideration but that their agency forms their position in light of policy and, secondly, defines if they will engage with it or not. Finally, Vähäsantanen (2015) proposes that agency is connected to professional identity during changes. This means that the professional is constantly enacting change. Agency provides the link between the professional identity and change. Change within practice potentially requires a change of professional identity and one's sense of agency is an enabler or moderator of said change. Biesta et al. (2015) further support this theory using previously gathered empirical data. They critique teacher loss of professional agency via deprofessionalisation of the teaching environment and conclude that institutional discourse and culture affect individual beliefs and professional agency.

A further way in which theorists use identity (and agency) is through the concept of jurisdictions. A jurisdiction represents an acknowledged space of professional expertise, responsibility or exclusive claim (Abbott, 1988). Taking the work of Abbott (1988) on jurisdictions as a departure point, Lybeck (2019) discusses the concept of 'ajurisdiction' which he defines as 'the absence of professional responsibility.' While many professions have a strong and coherent professional identity, within higher education there is an opportunity for confusion. If there is a professional space which an academic occupies, this jurisdiction is as a researcher, not as a teacher. He later goes on to talk about the purity of research and that teaching becomes something that sits alongside or beneath it, a 'sub-profession' (Lybeck, 2019) or a 'semi-profession' (Etzioni, 1969). Moreover, student evaluations are recognised as affecting lecturer personal identity, sense of being liked and valued and professional identity (Arthur, 2009). Lecturer professional identity and professional agency is sufficiently affected that they may perceive a loss of influence over their own professional practice. Deprofessionalisation is occurring not only in academic work but also in professional services work in higher education and that they too are facing challenges in professional identity concludes Lewis (Lewis, 2014).

More specifically researching TEF and higher education, O'Leary et al. (2019) conducted a survey of 6000 University and College Union members. The findings of the survey are largely negative with the government mandate proving 'unpopular' and 'unwelcome' to nine out of 10 respondents. They reported negative impact on both professional identity and agency through

insufficient engagement and training from management regarding the implementation of TEF. Publishing simultaneously, and drawing from 16 qualitative interviews, Perkins (2019) found that TEF caused conflict with regards to professional identity, for academics at a research-intensive university. This correlates with work by Morrish (2019) who notes TEF as one of a range of factors causing poor mental health in higher education.

2.6 Reprofessionalisation and later conceptualisations of professionalism

Whilst a deprofessionalisation perspective draws upon functionalist accounts and represents the loss of an idealised account of professionalism; reprofessionalisation suggests that the incorporation of professionalism is merely resulting in an evolved understanding of professional work. Debates in relation to school teaching, especially in England, have focussed on challenging the discourse of reprofessionalisation (see Ball 2003) where the act of teaching has changed alongside a change in culture (Ball, 2003). In higher education, there is a narrative of changing managerial practice (bureaucratic intrusion/encroachment) as one of the causes of staff attrition in the sector (Watermeyer et al. 2025).

As outlined above, Evetts offers two models. While those taking a deprofessionalisation perspective endorse an occupational account those supporting reprofessionalisation recognise new forms which incorporate both. As 'hybrid professionalism' (Noordegraaf, 2007; 2015) and 'pragmatic professionalism' (Liljegren 2012) demonstrate, reprofessionalisation can be achieved / conceptualised in ways other than Evetts' (2009) organisational account.

Drawing on the empirical work of others (e.g. Causer and Exworthy, 1999; Kuhlmann et al. 2013), Noordegraaf (2007; 2015) conceptualises the use of partial ideal-types to create 'hybrid' professionalism, although discussion of this within the academic context is notably absent. In an empirical qualitative study examining 30 social workers, Liljegren (2012) concludes that these social workers use 'pragmatic professionalism', which has a likeness to 'hybrid' professionalism where the social workers draw from different approaches to being a professional. Liljegren (2012: 309) defines pragmatic professionalism as 'where the professionals claim to stand for one form of

professionalism but, at times, fall back on the opposing form.' Going beyond 'hybrid' professionalism, Noordegraaf (2015) conceptualises 'organising' professionalism as *embedding* organising principles and professionals taking organising seriously. Meaning that the professionals move beyond managed or mandated professionalism towards embracing such principles, enfolding them into their professional space and using them to manage their increasingly complex environment. To a degree, this has been done with REF but not TEF (James, 2022).

2.7 Professionalisation and occupational closure

While functionalist or discursive accounts of professionalism adopt either benign or neutral perspectives, the term 'professionalisation' is used to indicate the social processes through which an occupation reaches the status of profession and is often associated with critical perspectives (Evetts, 2013). Professionalisation encompasses the concept of occupational closure (Noordegraaf, 2007), a process of boundary setting that protects the profession from external forces which might impact the salary, status, power and jurisdiction of its members (Larson, 1977; Abbott, 1988; Evetts, 2013). Occupational closure can also be achieved via credentialism (Collins, 1979; 1981), as increased emphasis on occupational training (now commonly called continuous professional development) and the ongoing certification, of workers regulates access to the profession.

As noted by Witz (1992), occupational closure is variously facilitated through exclusionary, inclusionary, demarcationary and dual closure strategies.

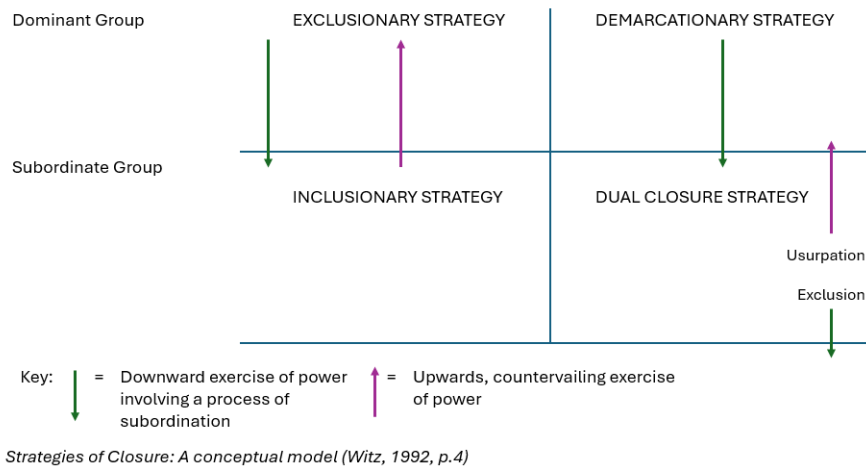


Figure 2.4: Strategies of Closure: A conceptual model (Witz, 1992:4)

In Witz's model (Figure 2.2), there are two parties involved, the dominant group and the subordinate group. Exclusionary and demarcationary strategies are implemented by the dominant group, whilst inclusionary and dual closure strategies demonstrate the responses of the subordinate group. Exclusionary strategies are deployed internally to control the access and experience of colleagues in an occupational group. Demarcationary strategies aim to control adjacent and/or related occupations and the division of labour therein, thereby creating occupational roles which the dominant group are prepared to allow the subordinate group to occupy and protecting those where they are not. Taking an example from Law, the role of a paralegal is outside the profession, with administrative and research tasks not deemed to be within the boundary of the Law profession (Kritzer, 2001). Inclusionary and dual closure strategies represent the opposing strategies of the subordinate group. Inclusionary strategies are those exercised to enter the structure from which they are currently excluded. Dual closure strategies seek to resist demarcationary strategies whilst also consolidating the positions gained by the subordinate group by using exclusionary tactics of their own. Different forms of closure have been used in different occupations and Witz (1990) uses medicine to demonstrate each of these forms. She does not apply it to higher education.

Conceptual work by the STS scholar, Gieryn (1983) explores occupational closure in terms of boundary work. Gieryn agrees with Turner (1974) that the scientific professions were looking for a similarly elevated position as the clergy. Gieryn then refers to the use of boundary-work to explain the rhetorical work done by scientists to create small institutional and professional enclaves with different 'goals, methods, capabilities and substantive expertise' (1983:784). Further, Gieryn concludes with a proposal that science is not the only occupation marking its theoretical territory.

Professionalisation and occupational closure has been examined under several guises. There are clear similarities between what some describe as labour market shelters (Freedman, 1976), credentialism (Collins, 1979; 1981), boundary work (Gieryn, 1983), professional projects (Witz, 1992) and occupational closure (Freidson, 2001). Within higher education, the occupational model dominated higher education until the 1970s (Elton, 2004). However, more recently, 'massification and marketisation' (Tomlinson and Watermeyer, 2022: 173) have led to the creation of a 'third space' in higher education (Whitchurch 2013; 2015), defined as 'an emergent territory between academic and professional domains'. The third space includes many student facing and industry facing roles, and some leadership roles. When these third space roles are occupied by academics, their work may be regarded as less prestigious than traditional academic roles focussed on teaching and research.

The ongoing encroachment of the market into academic life has led to increased credentialism which has, in turn, broadened structural inequalities and increased the third space within higher education. Externally, greater credentialism is being experienced by employers seeking to recruit a higher proportion of graduates and people with post-graduate qualifications. In agreement with this view and building on Ball's earlier work (Ball, 2003), Arthur (2009) argues that more recent sector-wide accountability measures reflect a shift towards deprofessionalisation and performativity – specifically referring to quality assurance systems and performance management as tools to monitor the quality of academics' teaching.

Thus, the literature shows how professionalism and occupational closure work together to circumscribe the professions, acting internally and externally to include and exclude diverse people, purposes and practices.

2.8 Gender and professionalism

Drawing on some of the critical perspectives above - especially a professionalisation approach - it is argued that closure was operationalised within these areas of work, not only externally (to other occupations), but internally to certain groups of people, particularly women (Spencer and Podmore, 1987; Witz, 1990;1992).

Classic works of feminist literature strongly depict the workplace being a gendered space (Acker, 1990; Davies, 1996). This is despite their being growing numbers of women going out to work and attempting professional work (Davies, 1996). The organisational structure is hierarchical and gendered (Kanter, 1977), with a 'masculine ethic' (Kanter, 1975: 43). The worker is gendered, with men holding the most senior (esteemed) positions; 'the worker is actually a man' states Acker (1990: 139) and later 'the image of the top manager or business leader is an image of successful, forceful masculinity' (Acker, 1990: 146). Even further, at work men are the actors and women the emotional support (Hochschild, 1983).

Professionalisation is considered a patriarchal form of control and power whereby men retain the professional roles, and women have the lesser roles, for example doctors (men) and midwives or nurses (women) (Witz, 1992). Through a feminist lens Witz (1990) proposes the notion of 'professional projects' as these lesser roles. 'Professional projects' are a mechanism of occupational closure which have been successful in excluding women from the more esteemed roles and giving them supporting duties instead. This perspective is akin to Gieryn's (1983) boundary work. Such professional projects, occupational closure or boundary work allow the dominant men to prevent access of women to the professional work.

By the mid-90s feminist researchers were still calling for further research into gender and the professions, particularly from the field of sociology (Davies, 1996). Davies' theoretical paper positions itself firstly by noting the rising numbers of women now entering the professions. However, evoking the concepts of occupational closure, boundary work and professional projects, Davies proposes a further iteration of this closure of work. Not only are women restricted by men (a form of closure) to certain support roles (demarcationary closure and/or boundary work), but that this work facilitates and reinforces masculine definitions of professional practice, including

appropriate professional behaviours. In the meantime, the women are working on the other side of a boundary, practicing roles which have been demarcated as separate, whilst not allowed to become the professional practitioners themselves.

Considering the professions specifically, within medicine there is evidence of ongoing challenges to occupational closure through, for example, the creation of advanced nurse practitioners breaking into the field to prescribe, where traditionally nurses cannot (Parry and Parry, 1976; McMurray, 2010; Evetts, 2012)

Women lawyers find themselves channelled into certain roles, rightly or wrongly, based on gendered assumptions by the courtroom, employer and client (Ballakrishnen, 2017). Women are considered most appropriate for certain types of law work because of their capabilities or potentially because that work is 'safer' for them (Ballakrishnen refers to the benevolence of clients), or in some cases because the client demonstrates a form of stereotyping in expecting men to deal with certain types of law work (e.g. where they would need to be aggressive) and women others (e.g. where they would act as 'polite negotiators'). Whilst there may still be gendered attitudes and behaviours in the workplace (both within the organisation and client) this does not mean that all women are disadvantaged. For some types of work, women are perceived as better than men by both client and employer and have experienced career opportunity and advancement because of it. These findings echo earlier work examining the position and advancement of female sales professionals because they possess certain traits/behaviours (Lane and Crane, 2002). The danger here being that research needs to be mindful not to fall into the trap of exacerbating gender stereotyping and binary oppositions by documenting lists of occupations where one gender is perceived as being better than the other at doing the job. Further, that theory has moved beyond that of simple male/female binary oppositions (Davies, 1996).

Not only can the men prevent access to the professional roles, they can pre-empt this at university. Universities represent a double tiered form of occupational closure because, in the first instance, women were until relatively recently barred from receiving the education required to take on a professional role. For example, it was not until the late 19th/early 20th century

that women challenged institutional practice and received an education in medicine and licence to practice (Larson, 1977; Witz, 1990). Furthermore, universities, as a locus of male power, were able to exercise occupational closure internally in order to steer women away from prestigious roles to those professional projects or boundary roles that men considered appropriate (Larson, 1977; Freidson, 2001).

Whilst the literature continues to endorse tales of occupational closure and boundary roles in professional occupations, Evetts (2009) moves the position forward by proposing that women are undertaking more management roles. However, the management role itself is becoming standardised and moving away from an idealised account towards an organisational ideal type. Evetts (2009) implies that men are leaving management because of this change and moving into roles which have a more idealised occupational professionalism. She notes that further research is needed in this area.

“Women are increasingly becoming managers, but management itself is being changed and standardised. It might be that men are leaving this (less interesting and powerful) field and moving upwards, where they can, and sideways (for example into consultancy or private practice) when they cannot.” (Evetts, 2009: 256)

2.11 Professionalism, leadership, institutional theory and higher education

The concept of professionalism has been subject to considerable analysis within the context of higher education. This section seeks to integrate the theoretical perspectives on professionalism, as previously outlined in this chapter, with relevant aspects of institutional theory, highlighting areas of convergence.

2.11.1 Leadership in higher education

Approaches to professional work have been framed in higher education leadership as traditionalist, reformist and pragmatist approaches to leadership (Macfarlane et al. 2024). These bear strong resemblance to aspects of professionalism considered in this literature review. The first is

traditionalist, aligned to occupational accounts, which endorses a functional status quo organised and self-governed by the academic professional.

A fundamental encroachment aligned with Freidson's bureaucracy are internal and external forms of quality assurance which are often resisted because they erode academic autonomy and collegial culture which is seen in an occupational approach to leadership (Evetts, 2009; Macfarlane et al. 2024: 1384).

The second approach is the reformist perspective, which, taking a social justice perspective, argues for a new democratic style of leadership (with nods to other non-traditional leadership styles). The reformist perspective notably recognises under-represented groups (those who may have experienced occupational closure, for example). This approach marks a movement away from a traditionalist functionalist or occupational account of professionalism and leans towards an organisational or even reprofessionalisation standpoint (Evetts, 2009; Macfarlane et al. 2024).

The final leadership approach espoused by Macfarlane et al. (2024) is the pragmatist perspective. The pragmatists favour identification of capabilities, skills and competences necessary for leadership and take a more managerial approach, aligned with organisational professionalism (Evetts 2009; 2013) and the hybrid and pragmatic approaches discussed by Noordegraaf (2007; 2015) and Liljegren (2012) respectively.

2.11.2 Institutional theory and logic

Institutional theory produces a similar triad of competing models in higher education which are useful when drawing upon relevant theory for this thesis (Shields and Watermeyer, 2020). Before considering this, new institutionalism will be discussed. New institutionalism is commonly attributed to John Meyer (Meyer, 1977; Meyer and Rowan, 1977) with Hall and Taylor (1996) providing oversight of new institutionalism and explaining that new institutionalism consists of at least three independently formulated sub-approaches; historical institutionalism, rational choice institutionalism and sociological institutionalism. Furthermore, that each of these approaches attempts to answer the following questions: how do actors behave? What do

institutions do? Why do institutions persist over time? (Hall and Taylor, 1996: 939)

Historical institutionalists define institutions as formal or informal procedures, routines, norms and conventions embedded in the organisational structure (Hall and Taylor, 1996). This might include rules, standard operating procedures or conventions within an organisational or otherwise formal structure (for this thesis the structure is a university). They take a structural rather than functional approach.

Rational choice institutionalism developed concurrently with historical institutionalism and is borne from an analysis of North American congressional behaviour. Rational choice institutionalists take a transactional approach to institutional theory (Williamson, 1975) and attribute such an approach to actors within a structure. Furthermore, they take into consideration the creation of an institution through its actors.

Sociological institutionalism developed from the field of organisation theory. This approach is most interested in the cultural aspects of institutions, noting that institutional practice does not merely form through a set of transactional and rational approaches to procedures or conventions. In fact, the most bureaucratic processes can be explained culturally (Meyer and Rowan, 1977). As well as culture, sociological institutionalists draw upon symbols, scripts and other 'moral templates' to create 'frames of meaning' for institutional logic (Hall and Taylor, 1996).

Although parallels can be perceived between theoretical developments in professionalism and new institutional theory, it is the recent developments which consider institutional theory specifically in higher education by providing competing models of university institutional logic – autonomy, utilitarianism and managerialism which are most pertinent to this thesis (Shields and Watermeyer, 2020). Demographic factors have no influence over academic definition of their employer logic, nor does academic discipline. However, there are other institutional factors which do, and which highlight differences in institutional logic across the sector. For example, research intensive universities are more likely to perceive themselves as autonomous. By contrast, universities with a higher intake of state school students (which are usually post-1992s) are considered less autonomous and more managerial (Shields and Watermeyer, 2020).

2.12 Summary

This chapter began by defining professionalism and then provided a historical account of its functionalist development. It defined professionalisation, occupational closure, deprofessionalisation and reprofessionalisation plus other critical perspectives. The principal theoretical foci were Freidson (2001) and Evetts (2009) with each aspect of Evetts' (2009) model broken down and examined in detail. The penultimate section considered the position of women and professionalism. Finally, the chapter identified theory from institutional theory and institutional logic and demonstrated that this theory has been used to highlight differences in the application of institutional logic across the sector (Shields and Watermeyer, 2020). Extant research on professionalism in higher education is threaded throughout the chapter.

The occupational model – in higher education and more widely – is challenged not only by the encroachment of bureaucracy and markets, but by the introduction of accountability and metrics. This has reframed the arm's length principle and seen the rise of an organisational model, which has caused increasing tensions across the sector. The next chapter considers higher education and the development of TEF in greater detail.

Chapter 3: Literature Review II: Measuring Higher Education

3.1 Introduction

This second chapter of the literature review considers the evolution of measurement and metrics in higher education. The first section critically examines higher education since the Robbins Report (1963) to identify how the context has changed with relation to higher student numbers, marketisation, the implications of this for curriculum and practice, increased accountability, and the creation of an audit culture.

The second section briefly discusses REF before moving on to examine TEF. The third section describes how TEF was developed, what it is, and how it was implemented within the UK. The literature review concludes by framing TEF in relation to wider debates around academics as professionals and professionalism.

3.2 A history of higher education in the UK

The oldest universities in the UK are many hundreds of years old; Oxford and Cambridge received their royal charters in the 13th century. Scottish universities (St Andrews, Glasgow, and Aberdeen) were founded during the 15th and 16th century via papal bull. No new universities were created in England until the first colleges of the University of London were formed in 1827. This was broadly because of political and religious tensions not experienced in other areas of the UK (Willetts, 2017).

The 19th century saw a growth in the numbers of universities across the UK with the notable creation of secular educational establishments (e.g. University College London, 1827 and King's College London, 1829) and the formation of regional universities in significant cities outside London and the surrounding areas (e.g. Durham; 1832 and University College, Bristol; 1876) (Willetts, 2017). In Wales and Northern Ireland the universities founded during the 19th century joined together as federations before dividing again into their individual universities, many over 100 years later (e.g. Cardiff, Bangor and Aberystwyth were federated to the University of Wales and then

returned to Cardiff, Bangor and Aberystwyth at a later date) (www.cardiff.ac.uk, 2025).

The first wave of civic universities, the Redbricks were granted their university charters prior to the First World War, with a second wave between the First and Second world war. The Redbricks were built in large industrial cities outside of London (e.g. Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds and Sheffield) (Willetts, 2017). Following the Robbins Report, during the 1960s the number of universities swelled from 22 to 45 (Perkin, 1969). Post-war expansion during the 1960s and 70s saw the creation of those dubbed the 'plateglass' universities. These were broadly located on campuses on the edges on cathedral cities or towns (e.g. Brighton, Canterbury, Norwich, Stirling and York) and were perceived to be a 'breath of fresh air' in contrast to the existing 'stuffy' universities. (Perkin, 1969; Tight, 2009).

Concurrent to the growth in universities in post-war Britain was the creation of colleges of advanced technology (CATs) and polytechnics. CATs were created to give technical education a similar standing to academic university education. Although founded not to compete with universities during the 1950s, by the mid 1960s the majority of CATs had become universities – such as Bath, Aston and Loughborough (Tight, 2009).

Regarding polytechnics, although some date back to the 19th century most were created during the expansion of higher education in the 1960s. Like CATs, polytechnics were created to deliver technical and vocational tertiary education (Tight, 2009). Unlike universities, polytechnics were indirectly monitored partly through the CNAA (Council for National Academic Awards), which was an intermediary organisation established by government post Robbins Report (Tight, 2009). This body oversaw all polytechnics via its various subject boards and ensured the quality and parity of awards across polytechnics and universities. Rather than being independent they were governed by intermediary Local Education Authorities (LEA) which resulted in kinds of bureaucracy, oversight and organisational accountability absent from self-governing universities. Some commentators celebrate the polytechnic for broadening horizons and widening participation (Booth, 1999), whilst others are more critical, labelling the polytechnic interjection into higher education as academic or pluralistic drift (Donaldson, 1975; Tight, 2009).

The 1980s saw higher education in a vulnerable position as the recently elected conservative government pledged to cut spending and put higher education in the firing line (Fulton, 1990). This led to government instigated interventions including the creation of the Research Assessment Exercise in 1986, discussed in section 3.4 (Hoare, 1991). Further intervention came via the Education Reform Act 1988, which removed polytechnics from LEA control and designated them free standing corporations. In 1992, because of the Further and Higher Education Act, polytechnics became universities and were granted the right to award their own degrees (Bligh et al. 1999). This led to the expression of 'old' universities for the pre-1992s and 'new' universities for the post-1992s (Read et al. 2003).

As this historical overview demonstrates, the differing histories and institutional structures of universities in the UK resulted in differing models of governance. Historically some universities are heavily influenced by religion, whilst others are secular. Some are more internally bureaucratic whilst others have had more external oversight. Finally, there is a perception that the older universities held greater academic integrity, whilst the newer universities were more teaching focussed (Tight, 2009).

Alongside the creation of universities, CATs and polytechnics, the bodies with oversight for quality and funding have evolved. Although universities were self-governing a series of intermediary bodies were introduced which limited their autonomy. The Audit Commission (with a remit to audit value for money and quality, wider than simply higher education) was created in 1983. The below accounts for the key tertiary educational bodies from 1992 to the present day.

The University Grants Committee (UGC) was an advisory board for the distribution of funding formed in 1919. It was dissolved upon the formation of the Funding Councils. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) and Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) were created in 1992 via a 1991 government white paper. Their remit was to ensure the quality of teaching and learning in higher education institutions in England and Wales respectively. Universities received funding from these councils based on bids and declarations of standards. The UGC introduced the RAE in 1986. Subsequent measurement models created by HEFCE/HEFCW included the Academic Audit (AA) in 1991 and the Teaching

Quality Assessment (TQA) in 1992. The RAE became the REF in 2014. The HEFCE later merged with Office for Fair Access to become the Office for Students. The HEFCE closed in April 2018 (<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/>, 2025).

The Office for Students was created in 2018 and took over responsibility from HEFCE (<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/>, 2025). The Office for Students is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Department for Education. They regulate higher education in England and are responsible for TEF. Wales has its own body called Medr – the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research created in 2024 (<https://www.medr.cymru/en/>, 2025) and Scotland is covered by the Scottish Funding Council created in 2005 (<https://www.sfc.ac.uk/>, 2025).

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), formed in 1997, creates quality assurance frameworks to ensure that degrees (i.e. undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral) all have a common level and nature. Furthermore, that there are an agreed set of benchmarks and standards to guarantee that degrees with the same name contain consistent specifications and outcomes. Previously, the QAA provided a panel of experts to review programmes on a regular basis to further guarantee this consistency on an ongoing basis. However, since the inception of the Office for Students, this review process is no longer in play (<https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/>, 2025).

The Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILT) was formed in 2000. It later became the Higher Education Academy (2003) and in 2018 merged with the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education to become AdvanceHE. AdvanceHE is a professional body for academics and labels itself as “from the sector, not for profit and our work is driven by our belief in the transformative power of higher education for people, places, and society. We help higher education organisations be the best they can be by unlocking the potential of their people.” Thus, they are the self-governing professional body for higher education institutions who accredit academics to varying levels of fellowship (advance-he.ac.uk, 2024).

3.3 Measuring education: The rise of the audit culture in higher education

The UK higher education sector has undergone immense change since the Robbins Committee made their recommendations in 1963 (Robbins Report, 1963; Nixon; 1996; 1997 Nixon et al., 2001). Nixon (1996:6) distils these changes into three areas: 1) a dramatic rise in student numbers, alongside no such rise in resources; 2) changes in curriculum, teaching and assessment, and 3) changes in the conditions of academic work. Nixon (1996; 1997) notes that these ongoing changes are complex and overlapping and, most importantly, that they are having a profound effect on the structures and practice of higher education. Accordingly, Nixon et al. (2001) introduced an extra, fourth, facet; the structure of accountability and accreditation.

3.3.1 Rising student numbers: the marketisation of higher education

The Robbins Report's recommendation for a 'modest' increase in student numbers and subsequent neoliberal political policy, including Tony Blair's pledge to see 50% of young people in higher education (Blair, 1997; Goddard, 2005; Gingrich, 2015) saw student numbers swell from 216,000 in 1962 (Robbins, 1963) to approximately two million in 1998/9 - the year after Blair made his pledge (HESA, 2000). Although Enright, Alfrey and Rynne (2016) caution an automatic assumption that neo-liberalism is the cause of academic discontent. The latest available HESA data shows that in academic year 2023/24 the total number of student enrolments at UK HEIs was 2,904,425 which represented a decrease of 1% from 2,937,155 in 2022/23 (HESA, 2025). However, that number of applicants is unstable at present due to the geo-political environment and ongoing challenges caused by Brexit (Papatsiba and Marginson, 2025) and Covid (Bolton, 2024).

As well as increasing numbers in higher education, the composition of the student body has changed significantly since the Robbins Report. The rise in numbers includes higher numbers of women, international and part time students, with a larger proportion of mature students. Students from working class backgrounds and some minority ethnic groups remain under-represented. Analysis of the data shows that it is not simply that more women are applying to go to university, now more women than men apply to study (Bolton, 2024).

However, more recently the marketisation and massification of higher education has reached a crisis point. Brexit has meant that EU students are no longer classed within the same fee structure as home students. Fees have risen from £9,250 to ca£22,00 pa (Papatsiba and Marginson, 2025: 2). Therefore, fewer EU students want to study here and the sector witnessed a 40% drop in undergraduate applications (Papatsiba and Marginson, 2025:2) . They are now classed as international students and this is significantly more expensive for them, making our higher education system less attractive in turn. This has increased competition in the UK sector as universities fight for fewer students (Papatsiba and Marginson, 2025). Non-EU/International student numbers continue to rise. Part-time applications have fallen. Applications from underrepresented (widening participation) groups have increased (HESA, 2025).

3.3.2 Changes in curriculum, teaching and assessment

A more diverse student body has led to the creation of a wider range of degree programmes, differing structures and course content to meet the educational needs of the student. Changes in curriculum, teaching and assessment have been required to meet the needs of a more diverse student audience (Willetts, 2017), whilst some are critical that the nature of assessment has changed to reflect merely performance outcomes and not the incoming credential of students or staff (Jankowski and Provezis (2012) . Structural changes have included the introduction of semesterisation, modular degree programmes and mechanisms to enable credit accumulation and transfer. Delivery now includes face-to-face, blended and online teaching, and there has been an increase in courses offering a placements and internships (traditionally called sandwich courses). Assessment methods have transitioned from a traditional critical essay and exam-based approach, still seen at many of the oldest universities, towards a variety of assessments including 100% coursework approaches, live/consultancy approaches, presentations and the inclusion of artificial-intelligence. In some contexts, the use of in person tests (also known as open book exams) and oral examinations (vivas) has been increased to try to mitigate the inappropriate use of AI.

3.3.3 Changing conditions of academic work

Nixon's third aspect of the changing higher education landscape, the changing conditions of academic work has significant potential to impact the professional role, identity and agency of academic professionals.

Pre-1992 universities were insulated from many elements of organisational professional practice and post-1992s experienced organisational professionalism partly as a hangover from their earlier funding model (Tight, 2009). The encroachment of the logic of the market (Freidson, 2001) has seen higher education perceived by many as becoming a marketised economy with the resultant models of accountability emerging after introduction of a new fee payment/student loan structure and greater emphasis on the economic benefit of and for graduates in terms of employability (Barkas, et al., 2017).

One of the outcomes of the encroachment of the logic of the market and a reframing of professional work towards organisational professionalism has been an erosion of traditional structures often with perceived negative implications for academic professionals. Early work, which immediately followed the change of polytechnics to universities, describes 'a caste distinction emerging between "have" and "have-not" groups', (i.e. academic groups) with the have-nots comprising 'an underclass... with limited prospects for advancement or employment stability' (Kogan et al., 1994: 62). One group of academics are producing high-profile research and high-profile courses, with another group undertaking the more mundane teaching and day-to-day tasks, often in insecure contracts Kogan et al. (1994).

This picture is one which has continued to be supported by Davies and Thomas (2000), Shore and Wright (2000) and, from a woman's perspective, Leathwood and Read (2013). Although in theory, academics can advance (be promoted) via several routes, i.e. research, teaching or management, both the literature and personal experience would suggest that it is still the case that most promotions are secured via the research route. The ongoing prominence of the REF continues to affect academic identity and working conditions (Watermeyer and Tomlinson, 2022) and the changing conditions of work lead management and staff at universities to 'hold differing views on the ultimate purpose to which they are contributing' (Shields and Watermeyer, 2020).

3.3.4 Structures of accountability and accreditation

Reflecting the movement from occupational professionalism to organisational professionalism and the rise of the third logic, the most pertinent change to the educational landscape relevant for this thesis is the development of audit culture, or, as Shields and Watermeyer (2020) demonstrate a movement from an idealised university to an institutional one with competing logics at play: autonomy, utilitarianism and managerialism. This is Nixon's fourth facet of the changing higher education landscape, and with changing conditions of work, the one that has the greatest potential to impact academic identity and professionalism.

Earlier work on professionalism has demonstrated an encroachment on professional spaces (Freidson, 2001). This has been contextualised within higher education through a movement from a traditional model of professionalism towards organisational professionalism embodied particularly through audit and accountability (Macfarlane et al. 2024; Tomlinson and Watermeyer, 2022). Shore and Wright (2000: 57) state

*'Few processes have had such a profound impact in re-shaping academics' **conditions of work** and conditions of thought since the post-war expansion of the university sector in Britain'* (emphasis added).

Shore and Wright (2000) note that the term 'audit' has been widened from a purely financial term to be applied to higher education in the context of performance, quality assurance, quality control, accreditation, accountability, transparency, efficiency, effectiveness, value for money, responsibility, benchmarking, good practice, peer review, external verification, stakeholder and empowerment. There has been an application of greater accountability transferred from the private sector to the public sector.

Using *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (Pirsig, 1974; 2011) Shields and Watermeyer (2020) draw startling parallels between Pirsig and reality and contextualise this change:

The real University... has no specific location. It owns no property, pays no salaries and receives no material dues. The real university

is a state of mind... The real University is nothing less than the continuing body of reason itself.

In addition to this state of mind... there's a legal entity which is unfortunately called by the same name, but which is quite another thing... Confusion continually occurs in people who fail to see this difference... They see professors as employees of the second university who should abandon reason when told to and take orders with no backtalk, the same way employees do in other corporations. They see the second university but fail to see the first. (Pirsig [1974] 2011, 138).

For Pirsig, it is the academic work which truly constitutes the university. The fact of the university as a legal entity employing people is seen as a separate issue, and one that is not relevant to the work of thinking.

Shields and Watermeyer (2020) then go on to demonstrate how the university as an institution differs from university(ies) as organisation(s) with differing logics underpinning their shared rationalisations. Further, these institutional logics may not be shared/endorsed by the academics employed therein, creating opportunity for tension.

What this section of review has shown is the changing nature of the relationship between universities and state. It illustrated how, through a series of intermediary bodies, the state moved away from the liberal laissez-faire model which framed the relationship between the 'old' university sector and government. With the introduction of new forms of management and, latterly, the encroachment of market logics, especially following the introduction of tuition fees, universities were exposed to increased external scrutiny.

3.4 Gender and roles in higher education

Within education women had only been welcome as the educators of young children, at primary level, or as governesses for the upper classes until into the 19th and 20th Century (Barker and Chalus, 1997; Shoemaker, 1998). Moreover, women have not been particularly welcomed as scholars at higher education level and the struggle for acceptance into this masculine domain has been well documented within the historical literature (Barker and Chalus,

1997; Halsey, 1992; Shoemaker, 1998) and more recent studies (Morley, 2013; Santos and Dan Van Phu, 2019). Women were admitted as students to the Universities of Cambridge, London and Oxford in the 1860s and 1870s, where they often received segregated tuition from their male counterparts. They were appointed as lecturers in 1893, professors in 1894 and most startlingly the first vice chancellor in a pre-1992 university was not appointed until 1995 (Hearn, 2001). Latterly women are entering academia in increasing numbers, although compared to women in other professions (e.g. policing, the armed forces) they sat behind their male peers as leaders and managers for some time. Whilst the ratio of men to women became more aligned to a 50% split, higher education shows significantly less female senior managers than in policing and the armed forces. (Morley, 2013). Within the UK where women take an increasing share of academic roles, they continue to undertake the majority of teaching and teaching-related activities and are positioned subordinate to their male counterparts in terms of rank/seniority (AdvanceHE, 2024; Santos and Dang Van Phu, 2019).

Higher education has been hitherto governed by masculine discourse (Acker, 1990; Hearn, 2001) and it might be hoped that the feminisation of the profession seen in other areas e.g. medicine (McMurray, 2010) and law (Ballakrishnen, 2017) could see a movement away from the imagery of men in their 'ivory towers' (Campbell, 2019) to something more equal and diverse. Early radical feminist tracts report marginalisation, powerlessness and estrangement (Acker, 1980, 1994; Coser, 1981; Currie et al. 2000; Morley and Walsh, 1995, 1996; Spender, 1982; Webb, 1988). Unfortunately, however, more recent research documents that academia has not been afforded the potential feminisation of the organisation which one might have hoped for. In interviewing women academics from three universities, two 'old' pre-1992 and one 'new' post-1992, Thomas and Davies (2002) found that the university is still considered a masculine environment. Women felt marginalised, referred to informal male networks, masculine symbols and identities when interviews about organisation and management practice at university. One respondent said it was 'amazingly male dominated... stepped back 20 years... like an exclusive men's club' (Thomas and Davies, 2002:379).

If new professional discourse creates opportunities to feminise institutional culture, a second route of investigation should examine creates opportunities

for increased or changed roles and responsibilities within the higher education sector for women. Are there more women working in higher education and do they have better jobs, with greater responsibility?

Although the statistics show that women are employed in higher education in greater numbers, it is well documented that women have been marginalised into lesser esteemed 'caring' roles. Women spend a greater proportion of their time than men teaching undergraduate students (Halsey, 1992). Women are found in a narrow range of 'feminine' and caring roles within academia; commonly in arts, social sciences and medical sciences (but only in the feminised areas) whilst men are found in physical sciences and technology (Heward, 1996). Overall 'there is general tendency for professional and domestic roles to be assimilated to each other' (Halsey, 1992: 227). In a 2002 study, although women academics comprised 30% of the workforce and although they did not report feeling excluded nor marginalised they did report that senior posts were almost exclusively male. Women felt there was a gendered and age-based division of labour and that they were second class citizens, undertaking the less glamorous roles (Thomas and Davies, 2002). This is supported by studies in North America, where Allan (2003) concludes that women are underrepresented in important areas of the University. Allan (2003) cites evidence from the University of Michigan that demonstrates that numbers of women decrease as levels of hierarchy are progressed. Women are excluded from formal positions within the University and also from informal networking structures (the exclusive men's club), where important decisions are often made.

With the introduction of the RAE/REF, and if they are fortunate enough to be considered 'active researchers', women academics have not found this empowering but have found themselves having to fight harder and are under great pressure to be the 'good girls' of the academic community because of the nuanced adoption of the RAE/REF framework favouring male academics (Leathwood and Read, 2013). Women have a more difficult time juggling their dual roles, their private and public milieu (Thomas and Davies, 2002; Leathwood and Read, 2013; Morley, 2013). This often means that they find themselves working even harder, sleeping less and this competitive research environment has a deleterious effect on their wellbeing. Furthermore, if they are prepared to 'play the [research] game' they feel even more under the scrutiny and gaze of the academic community, carrying more risk than their

male counterparts. (Leathwood and Read, 2013). That some barriers have been lifted, that this professional context has become more open to women, is a positive thing, but that this approach to research is having deeper and more grave implications for women than for men is not. Particularly as the dualisms of women's public and private spheres are more complex than those of their male counterparts (Thomas and Davies, 2002; Leathwood and Read, 2013; Morley, 2013; Gilbert et al. 2024). Juggling a difficult work life balance is not exclusive to higher education and further evidence for this drive towards the long hours and competitive 'greedy organisation' culture (Morley, 2013) can be found in policing, social work and other areas of education (Davies and Thomas, 2002; Thomas and Davies, 2005).

3.5 The REF

An additional layer of external audit and the encroachment of market logics was instituted through the introduction of quality-linked research funding (Tight, 2009). The Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), now the Research Excellence Framework (REF), has become familiar territory for the higher education professional. The RAE started in 1986 and was carried out approximately every five years until 2008. Subsequently the RAE was changed to the REF. The last REF was REF2021 with the next scheduled for 2029 (2029.ref.ac.uk). The purpose of the exercise is threefold:

1. To provide accountability for the investment of public funds (i.e. so that the outputs for funding are publicly available.)
2. To provide a mechanism through which to allocate further public funding.
3. To provide benchmarks information for sector and public use (i.e. the creation of research league tables). (2029.ref.ac.uk).

The REF has variously changed the metrics used since the creation of the RAE and the terms for REF2029 have yet to be fully presented. Consistent aspects through most iterations include; Individuals submitting several papers, which contribute towards a collective score/ranking for the subject area, school and/or university. The number of papers submitted per person has changed through various iterations. To date, universities must submit 2.5 papers per FTE member of staff. There is no minimum per person and a maximum of five per person. However, the REF states that it is continuing to shift the focus from the individual to assessing institutions and the guidance

on how this will be actioned is due to be finalised in 2026 (2029.ref.ac.uk.) In more recent rounds of REF, universities prepare impact case studies in support of their applications to the unit of assessment (subject area). The balance of weighting between output and impact quality has changed in recent REFs with rumours that the next REF will have a 50/50 split between the two. Similarly, it is anticipated that from REF2029 staff will no longer be able to port their papers should they change employer during the REF return period.

3.5.1 The REF: research and critique

There is a purchase in discussing the REF as an example of an audit and consider its impact upon academics. Shore and Wright (2000) point towards the REF as an auditing mechanism by which universities are 'scored' on their research, and government funding is based upon the success of the exercise (on a university level, not an individual basis). From a deprofessionalisation perspective, Morley (2003: 87) states that 'scholarship has been reduced to income generation'.

When the RAE was first launched, many academics, drawing on Evetts' discourse of occupational professionalism, resisted what they perceived as a reduction in their professional autonomy. Whilst many were vocal in their disapproval of the RAE/REF with Henkel (1999: 106) calling it a 'vehicle of professional and personal humiliation' and Morley (2003: 87) referring to it as a form of 'post-modern torture' it remains the benchmark of academic success, with academics being forced to play the 'research game' (Lucas, 2006).

Taking a deprofessionalisation perspective, studies identify three typical responses to REF, characterised as contestation, compliance and complicity. Some academics demonstrate resistance or contestation (Halford and Leonard, 1999; Leathwood and Read, 2013); most opt for adoption, compliance or conforming (Halford and Leonard, 1999; Leathwood and Read, 2013; Thomas and Davies, 2005); and there is a middle ground of ambivalence or complicity (Halford and Leonard, 1999; Leathwood and Read, 2013).

The responses of contestation, compliance or complicity are defined by Leathwood and Read (2013) through interviews with academics. In the case of contestation academics describe using their position to openly discuss their issues with the RAE/REF at school level. However, despite discussion, there is little active resistance. In complying with the impact and work of the RAE/REF academics report personal cost in terms of overwork, stress and sleeplessness. They note management pressure and praise are factors in play and consider conformity to be part of the job. The preservation of professional identity can be found through the agency of moving onto a different type of role (teaching only contracts) or leaving academia altogether. Whilst these are forms of agency, they are to the detriment of the profession if good quality staff are leaving their jobs (Leathwood and Read, 2013).

Issues with competing priorities outside of the workplace (particularly among female respondents), have even wider reaching implications than contestation, compliance or complicity (Leathwood and Read, 2013; Thomas and Davies, 2002). Whilst academics might like to comply, they are unable to dedicate the time to research, which often requires longer hours to satisfy the 'greedy organisation' (Currie et al. 2000; Morley 2013). Consequently, they find themselves limited in their ability to comply and are potentially sidelined to lesser roles. This represents a fourth response, 'cut out.' This supports Nixon's earlier assertion of the 'have' and 'have-nots' (Nixon, 1996) and the proposals of Archer (2000) regarding the interplay between the personal and the social in the formation of professional identity and agency.

Taking a deprofessionalisation perspective and critiquing the encroachment of market logics, the third option proposed by Leathwood and Read (2013) is that the academic might be complicit, i.e. by entertaining the RAE/REF academics are complicit in its proliferation and upholding its status in the academic community. Despite the status and reward afforded to those who achieve academic excellence through 4* publications, many are showing signs of 'exhaustion, stress, overload, insomnia, anxiety, shame, aggression, hurt, guilt, feeling out of place, fraudulent and fear of exposure' (Gill, 2010: 229).

Continued deprofessionalisation perspectives agree that the REF remains a strong influence upon academic identity, dominating daily activities (Watermeyer et al. 2022). Academics feel they are being exploited by their

universities, they are being subjugated, their work is being used competitively for institutional gain and the institutional emphasis on REF scores and related metrics detract from any civic contribution (Tomlinson and Watermeyer, 2022; Watermeyer and Tomlinson, 2022). The introduction of impact case studies (ICS) has done little to reframe academic anxiety (Watermeyer and Chubb, 2019). These implications are being felt not only by research faculty but also by mid-level to senior-level managers (Watermeyer et al., 2022). This reinforces earlier literature on performativity (Ball, 2003) and Freidson's Third Logic that emphasised the altruistic nature of professionalism (Freidson, 2001). As altruism appears to be sidelined by other institutional imperatives, this impacts on the academic's sense of professional identity.

Research has shown that the introduction of these audit mechanisms has a gendered dimension. Davies and Thomas, for example, suggest many female academics find themselves compromising their agency and identity because the audit culture creates a divide in the academic community (Davies and Thomas, 2002; Thomas and Davies, 2005). This divide highlights gendered barriers to the generation of quantifiable research outcomes and some women find themselves sidelined into marginalised roles as a result (Leathwood and Read, 2013).

3.6 The TEF

While the RAE/REF introduced monitoring, accountability, sanction and reward in relation to university research, the government was concerned that there were no mechanisms for sanctioning or rewarding teaching with British universities. Existing mechanisms for monitoring teaching included university-led internal review and student feedback surveys. Metrics focussed on volume (admissions) rather than quality. There were no mechanisms for responding (i.e. sanction/reward) to teaching quality - the government had no direct control. Funding bodies used student numbers, and funding envelopes to manage recruitment and but had limited influence over teaching quality.

Political interest in quantifying teaching quality in higher education is demonstrated through the number of publications, papers and reviews published between 2000 and the eventual *Higher Education and Research Act (2017)*. These include: '*The Future of Higher Education*' (DfES, 2003),

The Higher Education Act (2004), ‘*Securing a sustainable future for Higher Education: An independent review of Higher Education funding and student finance*’ (Browne, 2010), ‘*Students at the heart of the system*’ (DfBIS, 2011), ‘*Higher Education: Teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice*’ (DfBIS, 2016a) and ‘*Success as a knowledge economy*’ (DfBIS, 2016b). Government funded agencies like the Higher Education Association published their own quasi-independent reports; for example ‘*Excellence in teaching and learning: A review of the literature*’ (Little et al. 2007) and ‘*Considering teaching excellence in higher education 2007-2013: A literature review since the CHERI Report 2007*’ (Gunn and Fisk, 2013). The ‘*Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework*’, was proposed by the Conservative coalition Secretary of State as a green paper ‘*Fulfilling our potential: teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice*’ in 2015, becoming more fully formed in the white papers mentioned above (DfBIS, 2016a; 2016b). The framework later became known as the ‘Teaching Excellence Framework’ or ‘TEF’.

The objectives of TEF when it first commenced related to informing student choice and raising the profile of teaching at HEIs (Barkas et al. 2017; Gunn, 2018; Ashwin, 2022). Later these objectives were amended to enhancing quality and informing student choice (Gunn, 2018; DfE, 2021a; DfE, 2021b; Ashwin, 2022).

TEF1 (2015-16) was opt-in by universities, with the payback being that the universities were permitted to increase their fees in September 2017. However, the link to fees was subsequently dropped. TEF2 (2017-18) was also opt-in and performance was measured using student satisfaction metrics from the National Student Survey (NSS) in relation to teaching, assessment and feedback, and support; Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) data, which included employment statistics and if students were in ‘highly skilled’ employment plus HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) continuation data. Institutions supplement the survey metrics by submitting a supporting narrative. Between the publication of TEF2 outcomes in 2018 and the third iteration of TEF in 2023 ‘TEF2023’, the DLHE survey changed to the Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS) and the OfS was formed. This period also saw the Covid pandemic and national lockdowns which placed enormous pressures both on the government and the higher education sector. Covid affected every aspect of higher education including

teaching (Crick et al. 2020) and logistics (Watermeyer et al. 2021). Statistics show a consequent blip in data which feeds into the TEF as both satisfaction and continuation data was adversely affected (ONS, 2020) and students vented their frustrations in the NSS (OfS, 2021).

A formal review of TEF was carried out by Dame Shirley Pearce in 2021 (DfE, 2021a; DfE, 2021b). Recommendations were made to improve the statistical analysis and reporting, amendments to change subject level TEF to a subject level exercise, standardisation of structure, a changed rating system (away from gold, silver, bronze to a four-tier version) and to rename the framework the Educational Excellence Framework. In response proposals to introduce subject-level TEF were shelved by government. Ahead of TEF2023, the weightings of the NSS metrics were amended and TEF became a condition of registration with the OfS. The name was not changed, and universities continue to be awarded gold, silver or bronze as an outcome of their TEF submission but with the addition of 'requires improvement'.

3.6.1 The TEF: research and critique

Ashwin's (2022) study of TEF and its precursor, the Teaching Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF), describes how the earlier TQEF took an exemplar approach whilst the TEF takes a mapping approach. The exemplar approach seeks to celebrate teaching by example i.e. individual teaching excellence (Gunn and Fisk, 2013) or centres of teaching excellence. The TEF takes a mapping approach; this is a system-wide approach, which maps teaching excellence across the whole of higher education. Ashwin proposes the system-wide approaches have very little impact upon day-to-day teaching practice (Trowler et al., 2014; Ashwin 2022). Furthermore, this has prompted calls for policymakers to recognise the expertise of accomplished teachers and to engage with educationalists' evidence and recommendations when designing new educational frameworks and policies (Cornford, 2026; Fregona, 2024).

One of the keys to understanding the design of TEF and why a system-wide has little impact, proposes Ashwin (2022), is that it is not measuring teaching excellence through examples of excellent teaching, but via an examination of outcomes i.e. the results of excellent teaching. Notionally, because of

excellent teaching, fewer students will drop out of university during their course, they will report high satisfaction scores, and they will get jobs (highly skilled jobs). However, in Ashwin's (2022) critique he problematises that this means there is no specific definition of teaching excellence and that this may be a case of correlation not causation. This is a view previously proposed by Wood who notes 'teaching excellence now resides in a fundamentally ambiguous position in higher education' (Wood, 2017: 50). Furthermore, TEF does not measure teaching excellence at all, but uses performance indicators across universities to derive proxy measures of teaching quality (Ashwin, 2022; Cornford, 2026; Graham, 2019).

Engagement with TEF is at a managerial level, argue Ashwin and Graham, – with substantial institutional effort devoted to managing the metrics – and not at teaching level – with changes in the classroom (Ashwin, 2022; Graham, 2019). In this context, TEF might be seen as being used by government to monitor universities and by universities to monitor academics. Internally, universities are using TEF as a tool of 'dataveillance' (Graham, 2019) to monitor performance, rather than prospective students using it to aid decision making. In fact, students are more likely to hear about their prospective university's TEF rating via the university itself than their own research (Vivian *et al.*, 2019). Contrasting with Ashwin and Graham, Yulug Tigin Balci (2022) uses Foucault's concept of 'pastoral power' (Foucault, 2007) researching in a post-1992 university to contend that individual responses to TEF are shaped by 'pastoral practice' and that the absorption of TEF arises from the application/use of this power between the managers and individuals.

The findings of O'Leary *et al.* (2019), who conducted a survey of 6000 members of the UCU (University and College Union), demonstrate a mixed awareness of and response towards changes in procedure because of the first two rounds of TEF. The procedures they identified as changing include learner analytics, programme evaluations, student evaluations, teaching observations, standardisation of assessment templates and requirement for academic staff to gain qualification or accreditation. Arguably these are changes in measurement and standardisation of practice, not anything of substance in the classroom. An alternative survey of respondents finds a similar triad of responses to TEF as seen to REF (contestation, compliance, complicity) discussed earlier in this review. For TEF the responses are described as 'true belief, pragmatism or alienation' (O'Siochru *et al.*, 2023),

with others calling into question the impact of TEF on ‘Eudaimonia’ or ‘happiness’ of staff members at a post-1992 university (Fregona, 2024).

Very limited comparative material exists examining the effects of REF and TEF. Early discursive work recognises the challenges in creating research and teaching excellence in tandem and the problematic juxtaposition of two (more recently three with KEF) frameworks in play. (Goldschmied, 2018; Kaner, 2020). Further discussion centres on five aspects of comparison and provides some explanation regarding why REF is potentially more positively received, or at least actively engaged with. As seen in table 3.1 below, the assessment criteria, purpose, assessor engagement, assessor personnel and ‘epistemology’, unit of analysis, and legitimacy and validity are all perceived as more congruent and valid for the (well-established) REF than for the (relatively new) TEF (James, 2022).

Figure 3.1: A comparison of REF and TEF

REF and TEF compared		
Aspect	REF	TEF
Assessment criteria	Explicit, mainly consistent over time, operationalised by nominated people	Implicit, no shared definition, almost constant change/evolution. No nominations process.
Purpose	Quite focused: To measure quality to inform resource allocation, accountability and benchmarking	Quite diffuse: To facilitate a more dynamic market across higher education institutions by providing clearer market signals to ‘consumers’
Assessor engagement	Mainly direct	Almost entirely indirect (e.g., no direct attempt to measure the quality of teaching! – Ashwin 2022)
Assessor personnel & ‘epistemology’	Experts from the field. Mainly criterion-referenced. No norm-related constraints on scoring	Process opaque. Metrics selected by government agencies rather than experts. Strong norm-referencing (e.g., limited ‘Golds’ available)
Unit of analysis	Clear, and with high congruence to (or compatibility and intelligibility with) most institutional structures	At odds with purpose. Teaching quality is centred on programmes/courses, so an institutional award of e.g., ‘Gold’ at best distant from students, at worst irrelevant.
Legitimacy and validity	Expert peer review & bureaucracy, measures what it says it measures. High validity	Institutional case-making and indirect proxy data. Dubious connection to actual quality of teaching. Low validity. Serious statistical shortcomings (RSS, 2019)

Source: James, D. 2022. Reading the REF: Reflection and implications for the discipline. Unpublished plenary presented at the annual conference of the British Educational Research Association. Liverpool. September 2022.

Throughout the history of RAE/REF, longer established and more research-intensive institutions have consistently performed more strongly than post-1992 universities. This is in part because RAE/REF was designed to promote the types of research behaviours that were already well established (and well-funded) within older institutions. TEF results are expressed as a three tier raking from Gold to Bronze. In contrast to REF outcomes, and hugely significantly for the sector, in both TEF 1 and 2 pre-1992 institutions

performed less well in comparison to the new universities with some very well-respected institutions gaining only a bronze ranking in the 2017 results (London School of Economics, University of Southampton and the University of Liverpool). Of the 45 top-ranking gold universities, the majority were new, post-1992 universities. The simple message from this exercise is that the teaching quality in new universities is, broadly speaking, better than in old universities and that the government is (finally) ready to recognise and reward excellence in new universities.

3.7 Summary and research questions

The beginning point of this literature review was Freidson's Third Logic (2001), which attempts to offer an account of what distinguishes professions as an occupational category, demonstrates professions are a special kind of work and identifies how these are being reframed by the introduction of alternative logics. The 'Third Logic' which Freidson identified, was facilitated through the state. With the encroachment of alternative logics contemporary professional work has changed. The reaction to this has been varied from rejection through to endorsement.

Evetts' early work adopted a deprofessionalisation perspective which rejected these changes (2003a; 2003b) but later took this theory forward and extended Freidson's (2001) earlier ideal-type to propose a more discourse based comparative model 'Two ideal-types of professionalism in knowledge-based work' (Evetts, 2009).

Evetts' approach has provided a framework through which to consider how the role and identity of the academic professional are affected by both changes and continuities. Further, it enables consideration of the use – by actors such as institutions and government agencies – of discourses related to occupational and organisational understandings, and their impact on academic work.

The literature tells the story of how higher education flourished independently under a classic model of professionalism until the mid-twentieth century. Polytechnics operated within an alternative model, with greater external influence. During the mid/late 1990s, with the rise of New Public Management and increased government intervention, higher education

experienced radical change. This included revolutionised financial models, the creation of 'new' universities in 1992, and increased scrutiny through the creation of the HEFCE/HEFCW and OfS. Subsequently, the sector has been led by government (abetted by institutional management) towards an increasingly organisational model of professionalism, with increased emphasis on externally audited metrics culminating in the introduction and refinement of TEF.

The aim of this study is to consider TEF as a form of external audit and how it has affected pre- and post-1992 universities.

The following research questions will be investigated:

- What is the impact of TEF upon institutional logic for both pre-1992 and post-1992 universities in the UK?
- What is the impact of TEF upon the individual experiences and professional identities of academic professionals in those universities?
- How has TEF affected the professional work and identity of female academics of higher education in the UK?

The next chapter discusses the methodology and methods for this thesis.

Chapter 4: Methods

'You need to know who you are and what you are doing there'

Lareau, 1996: 207

4.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with a consideration of the ontological underpinnings for this study of professionalism in academia. It outlines a pragmatic approach in which a range of contrasting perspectives are explored, principally through the theoretical lens of Evetts' (2009) model of professionalism. There follows a detailed description of the research design and methods, including a justification for the use of a methodological choice to conduct multiple case studies, followed by a breakdown of the qualitative methods used to conduct and analyse semi-structured participant interviews.

4.2 Methodology

In considering which research methods to use, one must consider one's disciplinary perspective. I come from the field of Marketing, whose ontology is generally rooted in positivist principles, with leanings towards quantitative, empirical, scientific methods and a statistically, data-driven view of the world. But the world does not live by statistics alone; people and their surroundings create their own truths. My philosophy, that statistical analysis cannot reveal the truth of any lived situation, aligns with the more qualitative approach of Education research, designed to capture the nuances of lived experience. By giving people their voice, in this case through semi structured interviews, a depth of knowledge can be gained which outstrips the insights of a data driven approach. This awareness led me to the belief that the qualitative method was appropriate for the questions to be investigated.

4.3 Arriving at pragmatism

This section considers the ontological, epistemological and methodological perspective of this study, outlining the context which informed the detailed research design and methods.

In the field of business and management, and through my personal work experience, the positivist paradigm – with its emphasis on empirical

knowledge generation – is seen as the “received view” and best approach to research (Guba and Lincoln, 1998). In Denzin and Lincoln’s (2018) field-defining handbook on qualitative research, Lincoln et al. (2018) reflect upon paradigm challenges faced by researchers over the past 25 years. Although they are experts in qualitative research, they rigorously discuss and acknowledge the merits of the positivist approaches before moving onto discuss the alternatives. Similarly, driven by my business school heritage, the decision making for this research started with positivism and moved through it to alternative paradigms. While my previous work drew on positivist traditions, I did not believe that the world could be understood via that framing. I needed to understand why this was, to arrive at pragmatism and embrace a qualitative approach.

Positivist researchers, most commonly working in the natural sciences, adopt an objective, empirical stance leading to a definitive outcome. This is not appropriate for my study for three reasons. Ontologically, the study is not seeking to demonstrate a single universal reality, nor to test a hypothesis. Epistemologically, this research is not independent from the researcher and the potential for bias is acknowledged and considered. Finally, methodologically, there is not a need for synergy between perspective and method required by positivism. There is not the orientation towards measuring causality that is a feature of positivist research (Guba and Lincoln, 1998; Bryman, 2012).

A second position that has influenced the approach to this study is the ‘paradigm war’, which has dogged Social Science for some years (Teddle and Tashakkori, 2003; 2010.) The legacy of my early training in Social Science Research Methods (2000-2001) and my 20+ years of employment in a Business School, was a sense that no approach was considered as robust as positivism, and particularly positivism grounded in statistics. Implied in the training was a view that all research must adhere to a single paradigmatic approach and, that if qualitative methods must be used, logical, ordered and impartial methods of analysing the data (i.e. NUD*ST or NVIVO) must be implemented to validate the work. It has not gone unremarked that using such packages risks undermining the intent of a qualitative approach (Denzin, 2010). Teddle and Tashakkori (2003; 2010) provide support for rejecting such decision-making; their work on multi-method research argues that the legacy of the paradigm wars is an acknowledgement that research

is constrained by trying to marry a paradigmatic position with a methodological approach. They note that this is commonly untenable.

Pragmatism lends itself to providing a solution to this battle between the different philosophies not least because it favours and supports a multi-paradigmatic approach (Kelemen and Rumens, 2011). Pragmatism acknowledges that the truth is subjective and that there are multiple frames of reference, or truths. One's reality is formed by one's experience of the environment (Dewey, 1916; Hammond, 2013). Pragmatism bypasses a priori arguments around epistemology and suggests that one's epistemological perspective is, even implicitly, embedded in one's research questions. Therefore, methods are the practical decisions around how to answer those questions. Thus, Kelemen and Rumens (2011) propose that pragmatism holds great value for the purposes of critical management research with Hammond (2013) endorsing a pragmatic approach for educational research. Pragmatism offers the solution that not only are multiple methodological approaches possible, but that they should be supported. The question is the heart of a pragmatic paradigmatic approach, not the rigidity of method.

A pragmatic stance has been adopted to inform the approach to this study, specifically because of its emphasis on the experience and perspectives of individuals. The study will explore multiple points of view, and a range of interpretations of the impact of TEF on the experience of people working in higher education.

4.4 Research questions

The following research questions will be answered:

- What is the impact of TEF upon institutional logic for both pre-1992 and post-1992 universities in the UK?
- What is the impact of TEF upon the individual experiences and professional identities of academic professionals in those universities?
- How has TEF affected the professional work and identity of female academics of higher education in the UK?

4.5 Methods

Designed from a pragmatic stance, the research questions lend themselves to qualitative study. The study undertaken is an investigation incorporating two principal case studies and 47 semi-structured interviews, focusing on the experience of staff members in four departments at two contrasting universities. This section describes how the study was conducted and provides a rationale for key aspects of the research design and methods.

Qualitative methods lend themselves to investigating the research questions at hand, allowing as they do for consideration of a single question from multiple vantage points. Qualitative approaches can, if used correctly, give voice to the interviewees (Oakley, 1981) and generate the richness of data sought here (Geertz, 1973). Qualitative data collection methods suit the type of questions being asked; open questions, looking to hear stories and experiences from the interviewees within their own milieu.

4.6: Research design: The multiple case study approach

This study uses a multiple/comparative case study approach to investigate the effects of TEF upon professionalism within the higher education context. The study focusses on how TEF is perceived to have affected the structure of the organisation and the role, identity and agency of individuals working within it. A multiple case study approach considers a range of institutional contexts.

There are several key facets, which make up a case study (Hartley, 1994). In using a case study methodology, data will be collected over a period, a case study is likely to study one (or sometimes more) organisation, and potentially more than one group in that organisation. A case study can be used to study the context and processes of one or more social phenomena, and understanding of them is gained through the wider lens of the case (Kitay and Callus, 1998). An instrumental case study seeks to go beyond the case itself to investigate the broader context. By contrast an intrinsic case study is where the main interest is the case itself (Stake, 2006). Extending this further, Stake (2006) frames a multiple case approach, whereby the grand overarching phenomenon being studied is called the 'quintain'. The quintain is the thing that one seeks to understand more thoroughly in several

comparative case contexts. Stake (2006) confesses that he created this name himself and humbly proposes that he doesn't think it will catch on. I can confirm many don't understand what I am talking about when presenting this information 20 years later. However, it is useful to have a word for the larger phenomenon under scrutiny, so that 'case' is not being used to describe two facets at the same time.

A multiple case study approach suits this research because the impact of TEF upon professionalism supplies a clear social phenomenon, or quintain (Kitay and Callus, 1998; Stake, 2006) to underpin the study. The context or case for this study is the university. For the basis of this thesis there are two cases, which will be compared; these are Olaf University (pre-1992) and Newfy University (post-1992). The pseudonyms given, merely reflect 'old' and 'new'.

Olaf University (pre-1992)

Olaf University is a pre-1992 Russell Group University. It was established in the late 19th century. Olaf has approximately 7,500 employees servicing in excess of 30,000 students across a range of undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes. As a research-intensive institution Olaf celebrates its research successes and achieved a top 20 ranking in REF2021. Furthermore, Olaf sits inside the top 200 in the QS World University Rankings 2027. In terms of teaching quality, although hard to find on their website, Olaf achieved TEF Silver in the two most recent TEF evaluations. Olaf's financial position is currently difficult (as it is across the sector) and although they are operating at a deficit, their income for 2023/2024 was reportedly ca £650m with almost 25% of this from research.

Newfy University

Newfy University is a post-1992 Alliance Group University. It was established as a polytechnic in 1970 and as a university in 1992. Newfy has over 4,000 employees servicing over 35,000 students. As Newfy is not a research-intensive, finding their definitive ranking proved elusive. Their website notes that they were in the top 50 for 'research power among modern universities' in REF2021 which appears less categoric than the data supplied by Olaf. Newfy sits in the top 800 in the QS World University Rankings 2027. In terms of teaching quality Newfy achieved TEF Gold in the two most recent TEF

evaluations. Newfy's income was just over £400m for 2023/24 with almost 75% of this income generated through student fees/educational income.

Within each of the case universities, experiences of different departments by a range of colleagues have been examined. This is outlined in figure 4.1 below:

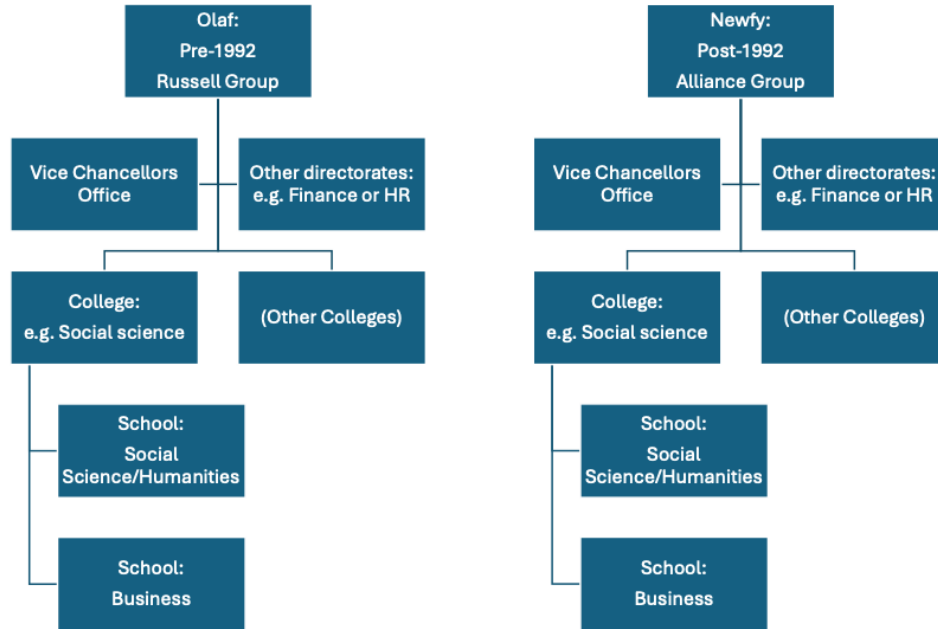


Figure 4.1: Broad organisational charts of Olaf (pre-1992) and Newfy (post-1992)

4.7 Method: Semi-structured interviews

The semi-structured interview is appropriate for this study because it provides the facility to go deeper with the participants and find out more than can be achieved within the structured interview. Semi-structured interviews are used in qualitative research to conduct exploratory discussions not only to reveal and understand the “what” and the “how” but also to place more emphasis on exploring the “why” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2000). This style of data gathering allows the interviewee to talk and should proceed like a conversation (Webb and Webb, 1932; Burgess, 1984). A (strictly) structured approach is not used, so that each interview can flow organically and generate rich data (Geertz, 1973). Semi structured interviews are the halfway house between unstructured interviews and structured interviews (which are almost surveys) – semi-structured interviews are essentially guided conversations.

The logistics of the interview process are explored at length in the literature (Braun and Clarke, 2021; 2022; Brinkman and Kvale, 2015; Brookfield and Lewis, 2025; Miller and Glassner, 1997; Oakley, 1981). Positivists suggest that a distance should be maintained between the researcher and the researched, whilst those from less traditionalist and quantitative research philosophies present the contrasting view (Saunders et al., 2000). In her classic work, Oakley (1981) rejects what she terms the 'textbook' approach and posits that the researcher cannot help but partake in the conversation during the research process. Oakley argues that it would be very hard for her to refuse to answer some of the questions asked of her by her participants in her public health research studies, particularly when the questions reveal a serious misunderstanding of pre-supposed medical knowledge. In this context input from the interviewer is needed. Thus, for Oakley engaging in a two-way discussion leads to the collection of richer, and more robust data (Oakley, 1981).

One cannot avoid issues of bias which arise from conducting interviews, however within the critical paradigms, like pragmatism, these issues are acknowledged (Hammond, 2013). Furthermore, the approach suggests that the researcher should be reflexive about their research, that is, to openly acknowledge their bias and how this influences the collection of data. Regardless of the data obtained the researcher cannot help but be biased through their positionality (Dewey, 1916; Hammond, 2013). To mitigate this I was cognisant not to lead participants in the questions, and the interviews were conducted in a conversational manner (as endorsed by Oakley, 1981). Furthermore, if the interview is to be like a conversation as suggested by Webb and Webb (1932) to operate otherwise will be a very one-sided conversation and can leave the interviewee left having given an awful lot to the research but having received little or nothing in return (Fontana and Frey, 1998).

Based on the above and underpinned by a pragmatic approach this research will use semi-structured interviews.

4.8 Challenges of validity and reliability

Yin (2018) and Hantrais (1996), working over two decades apart, note two issues in the investigation of contrasting cases using identical methods. The

object of study may be located in contrasting cultural, and often national, contexts. What is being examined is not only the concept/model/theory, as per the instrumental approach cited above, but also the location or backdrop to the findings. Both Ragin (1987) and Ackroyd (2009) acknowledge this search for differences and similarities across a range of cases sharing a particular issue.

To answer these challenges, in this thesis, the examination is of accountability techniques, the TEF in particular, representing the 'instrumental' aspect of the case (i.e. the wider issue affecting all cases). The two universities represent the comparative contexts. Ackroyd (2009) recommends sensitivity to the patterns in the contexts, which I assumed would be found here. Two very different organisational types have been chosen as cases to explore how the phenomenon unfolds in contrasting contexts.

Whatever their paradigm or perspective, the researcher faces several issues of validity and reliability. Stake (1995) and Yin (2018) raise the issue of validity and generalisability within case studies and overcome them very successfully. Firstly, as Stake (1995) asserts, the case study is not the method, it is the design. The method sits within it and commonly consists of more than one unit of analysis (e.g. semi-structured interviews.) Problems arise for the quantitatively minded because, from a statistical perspective, a case study can be considered a sample of one. With a sample of one it is obvious that any generalisations would be dubbed sweeping and unsubstantiated. However, qualitative research explicitly seeks representation rather than generalisation. Through this lens, a case study can be seen as diverse a body of data, rather than a single unit of data (Hartley, 1994).

To mediate for these potential problems although there are only two cases within this study – Olaf (pre-1992) and Newfy (post-1992) – the individual interviews are carried out across two different schools within each university and from 47 members of staff within those two schools. Attempts were made to make the data even more robust by gaining access to both natural and social science schools and although access was gained at one university it was denied at the other. I decided to ensure that to make comparison as

robust as possible to discount the natural science department. Upon reflection, I acknowledge my previous positivist experiences creeping in here.

For a researcher from the positivist tradition, perceived validity is an issue with case studies because the role of the researcher (including their background, beliefs and methods) will inevitably affect their interpretation of the data. The reader must trust that the researcher has mitigated the impact of their individual perspective. Several suggestions as to how this can be achieved are offered. Hartley (1994:226) proposes that the researcher can ensure the internal validity and reliability of the study by ensuring a “clear conceptual framework rather than a narrative will help to relate theory to literature.” Kitay and Callus (1998:111) consider that validity can be enhanced within a case as a function of the depth of probing into the unit of study undertaken. Flick (1998) offers different methods of triangulation to cover different aspects of validity and reliability.

I addressed the challenges of validity, reliability and generalisability faced in this study in the following ways:

- This is a comparative case study, in as much as the two separate universities are deliberately selected from different parts of the sector to enable comparison between them.
- The quintain (Stake, 2006) is TEF. This is the common issue which I will investigate in each of the two contrasting contexts.
- The two contrasting cases will be investigated using identical methods; semi-structured interviews focusing on institutional leadership and staff in schools of social sciences.
- Across the two case schools, 47 interviews were carried out. This provides robust and deep, but not generalisable, insights and data (Geertz, 1973).
- I am and was mindful of my pre-existing perspective and experience of TEF and sought to maintain a neutral stance in the interpretation of data, including through the triangulation of results within and between the two case studies.

4.9 Ethical considerations

The research was submitted for ethical scrutiny and approval by the university and after a round of queries, was signed off. Research venues

were approached by contacting Executive Dean level or higher. Once approval was received by research venues, a written invitation to participate was issued and informed consent was secured to confirm the involvement of specific participants in the interview elements of data collection.

Ethical considerations are important within research. In investigating a potentially contentious and sensitive issue I was mindful to protect both the research venue and the respondents and reassure them that this was the case (Christians, 2000; Bryman, 2012). Several respondents (including R1, R2, R3, R20, R34 and R39) required reassurance during their interview. R20 checked several times that nothing they said could/would be attributed back to them or make them discoverable in any way.

A second line of issues pertinent to this study centred upon confidentiality, anonymity and protection of data. Employees at both Olaf (pre-1992) and Newfy (post-1992) were concerned that disclosing unpopular or negative views might be attributable to them. For this research, the institutions were both given pseudonyms. Furthermore, some respondents were concerned that if their departments or job titles were revealed this would make it easy for the reader to identify them. Within the research itself, all respondents were referred to by number only and it was ensured that none of the reporting mechanisms (e.g. tables of respondent information) would provide links back to the people within them). Job titles were made as generic as possible and an overall categorisation based upon teaching, research and/or management was created. This helped to reassure respondents that their data would be as anonymously presented as possible. Although reference by number only may make the presentation of data slightly clunky, it means that no further assumptions can be made in terms of gender or race which would occur if using pseudonyms. Gender is included only where pertinent to the findings themselves. In terms of protecting the data itself, all interview data was held in password protected files on university servers. No data were held locally, nor on any form of portable drive. It was agreed that all data would be retained for the period specified and then destroyed in accordance with Cardiff University ethical research guidelines once the research was concluded.

As part of the informed consent process, respondents were briefed verbally and in writing regarding the confidentiality of their participation and reminded

that they can withdraw from the study at any time. All transcribed interviews were offered for review by the respondent as a true account prior to data analysis (Oakley, 1981; Abbott and Wallace, 1997).

4.10 The familiarity problem

This section addresses the familiarity problem found in qualitative research within social science. This is acutely relevant given that my research is on higher education and that I am employed within that field. Hence, it requires a deep and meaningful consideration. In doing so it will begin by examining pertinent literature to define and describe what the familiarity problem is. Secondly, strategies which can be used to make the familiar strange will be explored. Relevant literature and examples both from within and outside the research setting (education) will be drawn upon throughout.

The issue of strangeness and familiarity is given prominent treatment by Atkinson et al. (2003). They reflect upon the importance of 'making strange' the setting in which they have chosen to conduct their research, which is one likely to be familiar to them. Consequently, the researcher is challenged with overcoming their own knowledge of a research settings, what preconceived notions they might have about this setting and analysing it through a fresh lens (Atkinson et al. 2003). They must remove themselves enough from their entrenched culture to make the familiar unfamiliar to observe and collect data. As Geer (1964:379) notes of her student subjects 'I could not imagine becoming interested in their daily affairs.... I had memories of my own college days.' This notion of making the familiar strange forms a clear first definition of the familiarity problem.

Delamont et al (2010) posit that the familiarity problem is not just an issue of making the familiar strange but is also an issue of producing a good working hypothesis/ses or foreshadowed problem(s) to form the basis of the research question. If a good working hypothesis or foreshadowed problem is unforthcoming this leaves the researcher open to reporting familiar settings and failing to 'see' what occurs within the environment (Parman, 1998) or, potentially, reporting problems defined by respondents or reporting what is known and taken for granted (Young, 1971). This is very simply and pertinently supported by Lareau (1996:207) who says 'you need to know who you are and what you are doing there'.

This issue became relevant during my interviews, some of which were with academic contacts made during my 20+ year academic career. In some circumstances, I had to pretend I did not know what they were referring to or I had to explicitly ask them to imagine I didn't know what they were talking about. Not only did I need to know who I was, but I needed my respondent to know and to be reassured that they were safe talking to me, meaning that they knew what I was doing there. This resonated with Oakley's (1981) stance in favour of a conversational approach, in that I would sometimes answer interviewee's questions to encourage further dialogue. For example, some respondents did not know what TEF measured and wanted me to introduce it to them; they would process this with me in front of them before answering the question in relation to their own situation.

4.11 Setting, sample selection and respondents

The study considers the experiences of staff in two UK universities. Working from the decisions made above i.e. investigating TEF within a multiple case context, to examine not simply the construct but also the institutional implications of the setting (Hantrais, 1996; Ackroyd, 2009; Shields and Watermeyer, 2020), I chose contrasting venues. This choice was based upon old and new universities and the respective institutional logics, visions and missions commonly attributed to these university types. (Institutional logic is discussed in chapter 2.11 and the history and distinguishing features of old and new universities can be found in chapter 3.2.) I gained access to two universities in the UK. One university (Olaf) was a pre-1992 institution and a member of the Russell Group. The second university (Newfy) was a post-1992 institution and a member of the Alliance Group. See section 4.6 and figure 4.1 above.

In creating an appropriate sample, I considered all universities in the UK. Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling where researchers intentionally select participants or cases that are most relevant to the research questions being explored (Bryman, 2012). A purposive approach was used to select one pre-1992 and one post-1992 university. This would provide the necessary contrasting-case approach. Beyond that, the universities were selected based on geographical convenience.

Direct like for like comparison is difficult between universities, particularly pre- and post-1992s. As their organisational structures break down, different practices and nomenclature are used. A variety of terms; college, faculty, department and school are used and there is no consistency of approach. Consequently, my best efforts were made to cross-match 'schools' by subject area. A match was made in natural science (one subject) and social science (two subjects). Unfortunately, as the study progressed, access to the natural science department was lost at one of the universities. However as it transpired, dropping this subject area made it possible to obtain a greater depth of data across the other two, in both institutions.

In terms of respondents, my aim was to gain access to a wide variety of staff across roles in the universities. My participant recruitment criteria included length of service, experience, managerial position and contract type ie primarily teaching (often called teaching and scholarship), or balanced/research focussed (often called teaching and research) or research focussed (research contracts). I wanted a range of levels in each of these areas meaning lecturer, senior lecturer, principal lecturer, reader and professor as necessary. Again, job titles may imply different types of roles in different universities; for example, a senior lecturer at a pre-1992 and a post-1992 are commonly paid differing sums and have different responsibilities. Post-1992 universities may have principal lecturers, which pre-1992 institutions rarely have. Managerial structures and grades also tend to differ; for example, a new university will often consider a post managing a set of programmes to require a higher pay band, whereas an old university may not. Broad categories of staff were selected to gain a suitable cross section in each context. Using network contacts and website/departmental information, I used purposive sampling to recruit respondents who are lecturers (both those who primarily teach and those who are research active), those with managerial responsibility (e.g. managing programmes or managing teams) and others in senior management roles.

Initially, I intended that the sample should have a fair and even representation of gender and age to reflect the general population of the UK. However, extant research demonstrates that more men than women hold roles more associated with research (Davies and Thomas, 2002) and women undertake pastoral duties (Leathwood and Read, 2013) whilst women are vastly underrepresented in professorial roles (Morley, 2013). Consequently, I had

to try and get the best spread of gender and age as possible but prioritised diversity of role and job title above these factors. Similarly, logic dictates that career progression takes time and that there is more likely to be a skew of age for more senior posts. Respondents were ascribed a number and not a pseudonym to avoid any unconscious bias in the interpretation and analysis of results. Respondents were attributed with the pronouns 'they/them' for the same reason. This was except for the gender section of findings where gender was the focus of analysis. A table showing the respondent information for this study can be found below.

Figure 4.2: Respondents in study

Respondent Number	Venue	Position	Primary function	Relationship to TEF (perceived by them)
1	Newfy (post-1992)	Professor	Research	None, primarily research focus.
2	Newfy (post-1992)	Senior Lecturer	Teaching/ Middle Management	Middle, programme leadership
3	Newfy (post-1992)	Senior Lecturer	Senior Management (Faculty)	None, module leadership and principally PG related role
4	Newfy (post-1992)	Senior Lecturer	Teaching	None, module leadership
5	Newfy (post-1992)	Senior Lecturer	Teaching	None, module leadership
6	Newfy (post-1992)	Associate Professor	Research	None, focus elsewhere
7	Newfy (post-1992)	Professor	Senior Management (Faculty)	High, heavily TEF focussed
8	Newfy (post-1992)	Professor	Research	None, research focus
9	Newfy (post-1992)	Senior Lecturer	Teaching/ Middle Management	High, heavily TEF focussed
10	Newfy (post-1992)	Senior Lecturer	Teaching/ Middle Management	Mid/high TEF focussed
11	Newfy (post-1992)	Senior Lecturer	Teaching	None, focus elsewhere
12	Newfy (post-1992)	Professor	Central Senior Management	High, heavily TEF focussed
13	Newfy (post-1992)	Senior Lecturer	Teaching	None, module leadership
14	Newfy (post-1992)	Senior Lecturer	Teaching	None, module leadership
15	Newfy (post-1992)	Professor	Senior Management (Faculty)	High, heavily TEF focussed
16	Newfy (post-1992)	Senior Lecturer	Teaching	None, module leadership.
17	Newfy (post-1992)	Senior Lecturer	Teaching and research	None, module leadership.
18	Newfy (post-1992)	Associate Professor	Teaching and research	None, research focus, module leadership
19	Newfy (post-1992)	Senior Lecturer	Teaching	None, module leadership
20	Newfy (post-1992)	Senior Lecturer	Middle Management	Mid/high, TEF focussed
21	Newfy (post-1992)	Senior Lecturer	Middle Management	None, focus elsewhere
22	Newfy (post-1992)	Senior Lecturer	Teaching/ Middle Management	Mid/high, TEF focussed
23	Newfy (post-1992)	Senior Lecturer	Middle Management	High, TEF focussed
24	Newfy (post-1992)	Senior Lecturer	Middle Management	High, TEF focussed

Figure 4.1 (cont): Respondents in Study

Respondent number	Venue	Position	Primary function	Relationship to TEF (perceived by them)
25	Olaf (pre-1992)	Senior Lecturer	Teaching and research	None, more research focussed
26	Olaf (pre-1992)	Professor	Central Senior Management	High, TEF focussed
27	Olaf (pre-1992)	Lecturer	Teaching and research	Little, some perceived restrictions on freedom as ML
28	Olaf (pre-1992)	Lecturer	Teaching and research	None, research focussed
29	Olaf (pre-1992)	Senior Lecturer	Teaching and research	None, research focussed
30	Olaf (pre-1992)	Reader	Teaching	None, did not perceive links
31	Olaf (pre-1992)	Reader	Teaching and research	High, TEF focussed (and self-interest)
32	Olaf (pre-1992)	Reader	Research	None, research focussed
33	Olaf (pre-1992)	Lecturer	Teaching and research	Little, some perceived influence on work
34	Olaf (pre-1992)	Lecturer	Teaching and research	None, research focussed
35	Olaf (pre-1992)	Senior Lecturer	Teaching and research	High, TEF focus (and self-interest)
36	Olaf (pre-1992)	Reader	Teaching and research	High, although role related, not self-interest
37	Olaf (pre-1992)	Lecturer	Teaching and research	None, teaching focussed
38	Olaf (pre-1992)	Reader	Research	None, research focussed
39	Olaf (pre-1992)	Lecturer	Teaching and research	None, teaching focussed; although self-interest high
40	Olaf (pre-1992)	Senior Lecturer	Teaching and research	None, research focus
41	Olaf (pre-1992)	Professor	Senior Management (Faculty)	High, TEF focussed
42	Olaf (pre-1992)	Senior Lecturer	Teaching and research	None, research focussed
43	Olaf (pre-1992)	Professor	Senior Management (Faculty)	None, research focussed
44	Olaf (pre-1992)	Reader	Senior Management (Faculty)	Limited, teaching/management focus
45	Olaf (pre-1992)	Professor	Senior Management (Faculty)	None, management focus, conscious avoidance
46	Olaf (pre-1992)	Professor	Senior Management (Faculty)	None, management focus, conscious avoidance
47	Olaf (pre-1992)	Professional Services	Senior Management (Faculty)	None, teaching/management focus

Access to the universities was gained by approaching the Executive Deans of Faculty or Heads of School through prior association or mutual contacts. This was viable because I have been an academic for over 20 years and in management positions for almost half that time. I have a strong network of contacts through the sector, and I was able to utilise them when approaching partner institutions. In one instance, one contact was able to make an introduction to another so my experience with potential gatekeepers was largely positive.

Access to the respondents themselves was trickier because they act as their own gatekeepers. The first wave of respondents was made up of professional contacts whom I already knew and could be described as warm leads. I was often able to make contact with this first wave through professional connections with them or their peers. This was usually done via email but underpinned by networking at HE events and conferences. From that, I commonly asked at the end of interviews if there was anyone in the school who met the participant recruitment criteria for the research and highlighted if I was looking for a person with a particular role or level of experience. As a result of this approach, there was an element of snowball sampling, as well as purposive. Snowball sampling is a non-probability technique in which the researcher first connects with a small group of individuals relevant to the study and then uses those initial participants to help identify and introduce additional participants (Bryman, 2012). At each stage in the process I was endeavouring to ensure I was achieving this cross-section of academics in both junior and senior positions ranging across differing contract types (from heavily teaching focussed to heavily research focussed) and with managerial/non-managerial responsibility. Finally, I sent cold emails explaining the nature and purpose of my research to additional prospective participants who I did not know and had no connection with.

Retrospectively, I think that the sample could have been smaller. In trying to satisfy my desire for a representative sample of both experience and responsibility the numbers grew larger and larger. I should have focussed on one school alone across the two universities and considered focus (i.e. teaching or research), role (lecturer, senior lecturer, reader, professor and/or head of subject, programme leads), gender and length of service. By removing one of the schools, I would have been able to reduce the sample size by half and still had the same level of depth of analysis across the two university types, which was crucial for my research questions. Research literature advises to stop collecting data at saturation point (Bryman, 2012). However, one can only recognise saturation through analysis which is after collection. After my analysis I realised that I had reached saturation and was a little overwhelmed by the amount of data to sift through and analyse.

4.12 Interview schedule design

An aide memoire of questions and topics aligned to the research objectives was prepared to guide the interview process (Silverman, 2000). Whilst the interviews are semi-structured and conversation should flow naturally, this schedule would remind me to stay on topic, and to use open questions to get as much relevant detail from interviewees as possible. As such the interview schedule contained the following broad areas for discussion; role, role specifics, identity, agency, REF and TEF. In preparation for the full interviews the questions were edited, with follow-up questions added (see appendix 4.1). Demographic information was collected through the participant consent form, saving a little time and formality in asking the questions.

Once ethical approval was received via Cardiff University, two pilot interviews were conducted. My first interview took place in a management office and was with a junior academic (less than five years' experience, under 30 years old, with programme leadership duties). The interview lasted around 40 minutes. Prior to the interview, the respondent and I discussed the consent form. The respondent read this through and agreed that this is what they would expect on a consent form. They agreed for the interview to be recorded both verbally and as part of the form. They signed the form, and we began the conversation.

The first aspect of this interview was that it was interesting speaking to someone who had not been a lecturer for very long. Their thoughts and opinions were unsurprisingly different from some of their peers who have 20+ years' experience and that I have spoken to in the corridors during my own academic career. I made a note that it will be important to ensure that I get a broad cross-section of respondents who are both early and late career. This is a specific example of how I managed researcher bias during the project.

My gut instinct for the interview was that it hadn't gone very well, that the respondent hadn't made any particularly revealing statements. However, in transcribing the data I noticed some comments which fit with my theoretical standpoint and that would be useful for my findings. This led me to consider a) how I would be transcribing my data and b) how I might analyse the data. Transcribing the data is much more than a technical concern; it is both mentally taxing and time consuming. However, I think conducting this

interview demonstrated to me that transcription enables being closer to the source and being able to read and re-read it. By transcribing the data myself, I would be even closer during the analysis phase.

The next observation I made was a concern regarding the relationship between the researcher and the researched for this interview. I've known this junior academic since they started work at their employer and I became acutely aware of this during the interview process. There were a couple of questions which I asked them and they physically squirmed. It appeared to me that they felt like they were being tested because I was asking about procedure. I had to reassure them that this interview was nothing to do with work and that they wouldn't be told off if their perception of procedure wasn't how it was carried out, nor if they were critical about their employer. It appeared that they had no issue with giving an opinion about something but explaining it made them fearful. See section 4.10 for a discussion on insider position and the familiarity problem.

When reflecting on this at the time, I felt that the issue of my relative seniority to many of my interviewees was insurmountable. To mitigate this, I noted that I would need to reiterate at the start of the interview why I was conducting the research and that this had no implications for their work. This would also need to be considered as part of my sampling strategy because it may be possible to use respondents with whom I have a very limited relationship.

Towards the end of the interview, I was worried that the respondent may have perceived the interview to have dragged on, although as part of the debrief they said they didn't feel this was the case. When I reviewed the material, I thought that I could include some of the information about role and length of service as part of the demographic data appended to the consent form. This would save time during the interview for them to discuss the issue at hand.

The second pilot interview took place with an academic who had had slightly more experience. They had moved from research to teaching and similarly held programme leadership duties. The interview lasted around 50 minutes. For this interview I amended the consent form to include some demographic data, including length of service and current position held. This meant that I did not have to do quite so much scene setting at the start, although I did find myself asking them to tell their story anyway, this made for an excellent ice breaker and settled the interviewee in.

For this interview the gut instinct about success or failure was different; I could tell it had gone well. The respondent was much more confident in giving their answers and more candid in the answers they gave. They were more relaxed about giving opinions than the first respondent and did not appear to 'fear' the relationship of management to employee which I observed in the first respondent. This interviewee seemed to have a clearer view or was more able to express themselves in response to the questions to consider what the job means to them and how it might have changed.

Upon reflection, in this instance, I was worried about the flow of the questions. Listening back to the interview, I felt I needed to improve my skills in terms of follow up questions. I was moving through them too fast, without further probing on the points that the respondent made. I was still unsure about the quality and relevance of the data I was collecting.

One issue which arose during the gathering of data was the relationship between me as researcher and respondents where there was a perception that I was management, or friends with management. The issue of the power dynamic and the implications for data collection needed consideration before moving on to the full data collection. The 'familiarity problem' (Atkinson et al. 2003) is discussed in greater depth in section 4.10.

After the two pilot interviews were conducted, the final iteration of questions was formulated into the *aide memoire*, and these were taken to each of the interviews. The aide memoire is included in appendix 4.2 and the participant consent form is in appendix 4.3.

In practice, the interview schedule was only relied upon heavily for the first couple of interviews and they became much more iterative. Earlier in this chapter I discussed that the interviews centred on broad areas for discussion; role, role specifics, identity, agency, REF and TEF. Although this looks like TEF was the last in a sequence of topics, in practice this was not the case. What would often happen would be that the interviewee would move swiftly through their role and then consider identity and agency in the context of REF and TEF. This would allow for a broad discussion around the implications of TEF for their professional identity and practice. Furthermore, I didn't want to go straight into an interview with very targeted questions. I wanted to interviewees to consider their professional standpoint and then bring in aspects of the higher education landscape which affected that. Therefore,

ordering the questions in this way allowed the interviewees to lead the way and for them to bring in their appraisal of TEF without prompting. Through this mechanism, there was less likelihood of respondent bias and their giving me the responses that they thought I wanted.

4.13 Designing and conducting the interviews

As discussed earlier, Oakley's (1981) conversational approach resonated most with my position towards research and therefore I conducted my interviews in a more conversational style and allowing for two-way interplay. As such, maintaining the comfort and engagement of respondents was paramount.

Although some respondents were known to me, they were initially approached via email, personally written for everyone. It was important to me not to send approaches like a mailshot because a personal invite sets the tone and demonstrates respect for the potential interviewee and their time. Once consent was given, the interviews were carried out in the venue of the respondent's choice. This usually amounted to meeting at their office although some preferred a meeting room. The final twelve interviews (which took place between March and November 2020) were carried out via Teams or Zoom due to Covid restrictions.

Conducting all interviews myself ensured consistency of questioning and, potentially, response (Bryman, 2012). I sought through multiple mechanisms to mitigate bias in my collection of the data, and I was not aware that any bias towards me was evidenced. I gained permission to audio record (digital Dictaphone) all meetings, apart from one. As mentioned above, some meetings were held via Teams or Zoom. However, I audio recorded those meetings in the same way as face-to-face for consistency and none were video recorded to avoid potential privacy concerns via those platforms. When taking these Teams/Zoom meetings I was concerned that participants might feel awkward or uncomfortable but in practice this was not the case. I think this was because academics were already used to holding meetings online.

Participants were advised that the interviews should last between 30 and 60 minutes with most of them lasting approximately 60 minutes. In addition to the audio recording and a short demographic questionnaire completed as

part of the consent form, I took brief handwritten notes as the interviews progressed to highlight the most salient points and so that I could return to these quickly and easily. This notetaking was carried out whilst being mindful of maintaining appropriate eye-contact and a conversational style.

4.14 Limitations

In this study there were some limitations concerning the methods used for data collection. It was not possible to gain access and undertake participant observation in departmental meetings. Given that TEF and NSS scores are important at institutional level and those with TEF Gold use it as a selling point, the departments approached were not always keen to have their meetings and daily interactions observed in case something sensitive might be revealed and leak to their competition. If I were to do this work again, I would look to gain access to attend policy/management meetings and spend periods of time in situ. However, this, again, would be subject to gatekeepers preventing access.

I had initially intended to analyse publicly available documents, as well as some internal documents e.g. job descriptions. However, when it came to data collection, access to such documents (even those deemed public) was very poor. One of the universities had an archive department through which documents were supposed to be made available to the public. However, I was advised that the documents requested were not held in that office or, in some cases, they were not prepared to release them. Documents that were available had a 30-day turnaround time once requested via email and the public were discouraged from visiting (even though the website stated such visits were permitted.) Due to these barriers, documentary analysis was reduced in scope, though some documents have influenced the analysis. This was unfortunate as documentary analysis typically forms a strong element of case study analysis (Prior, 2003). In relation to difficulty accessing publicly available meeting minutes, R47 (Olaf, pre-1992) noted how, in an era of electronic communication and storage, the result was loss of information rather than gatekeepers or availability of such information. As a consequence, the results of the research drew heavily upon interviews with 47 staff members holding a variety of different posts within the case universities and departments. This was a sizeable undertaking and produced

rich insight but also came with some drawbacks, particularly the scale and complexity of the interview data to be analysed.

At times, the sample size became unmanageable. My primary aim was to capture a good cross-section of role, gender and experience. This, I feel, I achieved, but it did make data analysis challenging in terms of managing the volume of data accrued. If I were to attempt a study of this nature again, I would still transcribe the data myself because this does provide the immersion into the data suggested by the literature (Braun and Clarke, 2021), but I would consider using analysis software such as NVivo to support the presentation and management of the data.

4.14 Data analysis

The data were analysed using a reflexive thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2022). This suited the pragmatic perspective taken for the research. Reflexive thematic analysis is underpinned by design thinking, and the use of 'empathetic insight' (Braun and Clarke, 2021). This resonated strongly with me because I use design thinking in my daily work, drawing on the tools and methods of organisations such as Ideo (www.ideo.com). Aspects of design thinking adopted during the analysis phase included trying to put myself in someone else's shoes and think, see, feel and/or hear what they are and do, in order to understand them.

The earliest themes were based around hierarchy, control, institutional logics at the university level, as well as issues of identity and agency at the individual level. These themes were closely aligned to the issues discussed in my literature review, viewed through the theoretical lens of Evetts (2009) and Shields and Watermeyer (2020). They were generated with the development of my conceptual framework and did not merely emerge from the literature. The concept of themes emerging is much discounted both anecdotally by learned colleagues (Dr Yvette Morey) and the literature alike (Brookfield and Lewis, 2025). This study used the six phases of reflexive thematic analysis, which were; Phase 1: familiarising yourself with the data set; Phase 2: Coding; Phase 3: Generating initial themes; Phase 4: Developing and reviewing themes; Phase 5: Refining, defining and naming themes; Phase 6: Writing up. Although, the analysis was more cyclical than linear.

As part of familiarising myself with the data it was important that I transcribed all the data myself. As I am an audio-typist I purchased a digital recorder, transcribing machine and software so that I could transcribe using a foot pedal (in a traditional audio-typing sense). I transcribed into Word documents which I was then able to store securely on the Cardiff University drive in compliance with ethical regulations. The transcripts were prepared as verbatim as possible, but I did not use conversation/discourse analysis notation. I did note long pauses, laughter and any other pertinent reactions or emotions. Transcribing the data became phase one of the analysis.

This first phase was important because through transcribing, I was able to fully immerse myself in the data and begin thoughts of coding. I made a note of particularly striking respondents (R1) and responses (e.g. from R11 and R26) as the transcription proceeded. Once the data were transcribed I personally carried out the initial coding, to further facilitate closeness in the data analysis (Dembrowski and Hammer-Lloyd, 1995; Weitzman, 1999). This was done by reading and re-reading the printed transcripts and using colour coded highlighters and Post-its to mark up the transcripts. Printed materials were kept in a locked cabinet to be retained and destroyed in accordance with Cardiff University ethical guidelines. Through this process of reading, re-reading and marking up the transcripts, I took the coding forward identifying initial themes. The next stage saw the mapping of the themes towards a broad structure of university/structural responses, individual responses and gendered responses through the model used for this research (Evetts, 2009), institutional logic (Shields and Watermeyer, 2020) and other pertinent literature and theory from the earlier literature review. This process was not linear, but organic, cyclical, and iterative to ensure consistently deep engagement with the data and the research questions. Again, this was all done in hard copy, without the use of software to fully ensure immersion in the data.

A further challenge in processing and analysing the data was the volume of data gathered. The number of interviews to be conducted was determined by ensuring a sufficient cross section of respondents by field, role (i.e. research or teaching), seniority, experience and less so by gender and age, though this was still a factor. In practice, this led to a large and diverse sample which became amorphous and difficult to process, particularly as I was doing all the coding manually. By transcribing and coding the data myself

I was able to highlight key respondents and comments for analysis as I worked through the data. Retrospectively, collecting a smaller sample and using software to help code the data may have made the process more manageable.

4.15 Summary

The objective of this research was to examine the impact of TEF on professionalism within higher education. This chapter has considered the methodology and the method for this research and described the research design in depth. Taking a pragmatic approach, this research used a multiple case study approach and semi-structured interviews. Across a pre-1992 and a post-1992 venue 47 interviews were carried out. These interviews were transcribed personally and subsequently analysed via reflexive thematic analysis. The analysis was conducted through the lens of Evetts (2009) model of two ideal-types of professionalism. The findings are discussed in the following chapter.

Part II: Findings and Implications

II.1 Introduction

The aim of this research is to examine the impact of TEF on professionalism in higher education with a view to making recommendations for both policy and practice. The findings from a comparative case study of the experiences of staff at a pre-1992 Russell Group university and a post-1992 Alliance Group university are analysed through the theoretical lens of Evetts' model 'Two ideal-types of professionalism in knowledge-based work' (2009: 263). A detailed explanation of this model can be found in chapter 2.5.

My analysis – of if and how structure, role, identity and agency in higher education have changed subsequent to the implementation of TEF – takes into consideration Evetts' notion of the 'changes and continuities in professionalism as occupational value' (2009:257), which informed her model of the two ideal types. Using these frameworks around professional work this chapter analyses the response to TEF by individuals in pre-1992 and post-1992 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) based upon type of university, both in terms of institutional structure, pedagogic practice and understandings of professional work and professional identity. The following three chapters, present and analyse the findings.

Chapter Five examines how each university regearred in response to TEF. The chapter demonstrates how TEF highlights ongoing differences in philosophical, strategic and operational approaches to education between pre-1992 and post-1992 universities.

Chapter Six considers individual responses to TEF and shows that, despite TEF's aims or objectives, most academics have remained both distant and insulated from its implementation or effect.

Chapter Seven demonstrates that the experience of TEF by academic professionals is markedly different for women than for men.

Chapter 5: Regearing the University

5.1 Introduction

In the seven sections of this chapter, the findings are analysed through institutional logics (Shields and Watermeyer, 2020). This first section introduces the concept of 'regearing' before the examination of how Olaf (pre-1992) and Newfy (post-1992) have adjusted. Broader institutional changes are covered in sections 5.2 and 5.3. Section 5.4 considers and compares TEF-related structural alterations (such as departmental reconfiguration) at Olaf (pre-1992) and Newfy (post-1992). Professional services departments, an area that has experienced such reconfigurations, are discussed in more depth in section 5.5. Sections 5.6 to 5.8 discuss the domains of bureaucracy, measurement and metrics, culminating with the modifications to course provision.

Regearing was a description repeatedly used by one of the interviewees at Olaf and which has provided a conceptual frame for this chapter of findings. Regearing is a management metaphor invoked at times of changing logics i.e. rapid organisational and cultural change. Used here, it broadly covers the movement of pre-1992 universities towards more organisationally oriented structures (Evetts, 2009). It evokes the need for an organisation to make rapid, deliberate, often structural shifts to realign its strategies, operations, and culture with new objectives, changing markets, or evolving stakeholder expectations. Much like changing gears in a vehicle to adjust speed and power in response to changing road conditions, institutional regearing involves reassessing an organization's current gear (e.g., its pace, resources, processes, and alignment) and in response to significant changes in the external landscape of higher education, such as REF, TEF, KEF, and evolving geopolitical and socio-economic demands. The resulting operational change has a significant, but often unacknowledged impact on institutional culture.

5.2 Regearing: Institutional culture and logic

The introduction of TEF has presented institutional challenges for universities, requiring them to reexamine how they operate. As evidenced by the interview data, this challenge has fed into widespread organisational change, or regearing.

It was clear during data collection that the different responses offered by participants from Olaf (pre-1992) and Newfy (post-1992) reflected differences of institutional logic (Collini, 2012; Shields and Watermeyer, 2020). As interviews progressed, participants provided examples that Olaf's (pre-1992) institutional culture was very much aligned to Shields and Watermeyer's depiction of autonomous research intensives, and Newfy's (post-1992) was more aligned to the managerial logic of the less research-intensive institutions that Shields and Watermeyer note are most likely to take students from state schools.

In the context of this study, the most significant element of contrast between Olaf and Newfy is found in the extent to which TEF has initiated change at a university level. New measurement and metrics, brought about by a transformation of the political landscape, forced Olaf (pre-1992) to respond by changing gear to address them. R26 discussed 'regearing' within their university:

'I feel, as a leader, a senior leader, in that time, the impact on me has been really significant and I think the impact on the institution has been significant. You know, institutions have had to regear... I think possibly less so for the post 1992s.' (R26, Senior Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 25+ years' experience.)

Initially, R26 hinted at the challenges faced by pre-1992s in response to TEF, before addressing them more explicitly, as discussed below. The requirements of regearing, as identified by R26, could be financial, time-based, efficiencies, skill-based and quality.

R26 continued by stating that Olaf (pre-1992) tackled change with research quality well:

'We had the research, you know, the RAE, which had started to think about research excellence, had started to think about how we judge research quality' (R26, Senior Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 25+ years' experience.)

but asserted that some universities had to '*regear*' in response to TEF. The collection and publication of TEF data created an institutional imperative not only to improve the quality of teaching but also to understand and respond to how quality would be measured. This meant developing skills in data

collection and interpretation, as well as creating and implementing strategies to improve the aspects of teaching quality being measured:

'I think at that level there's a real sense that actually those roles and people within those roles are being held to account. They're being held to account and data driven. I think being more data driven, being more open to scrutiny, being held more accountable in terms of performance of things so I think it's changed that level of middle and senior leadership.' (R26, Senior Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 25+ years' experience.)

Furthermore, R26 was cognisant that this process of change is likely to have been different at the pre-1992s than the post-1992s:

'the gearing that's needed to happen in the research intensives is very different from the gearing that had to happen in relation to the post 1992s. They've [the pre-1992s] had to really regear in terms of making sure that they've got the skills and the capacity to deliver on that quality landscape.' (R26, Senior Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 25+ years' experience.)

In the above quote, R26 described the challenging consequences of TEF for Olaf (pre-1992) in respect of skills and capacity. TEF is not only a third-party accountability measure, as depicted by Graham (2019), but an event which caused a shift in the mindset of some universities to acknowledge other aspects of their work such as teaching and teaching development. The regearing at Olaf (pre-1992) demonstrates a potential blurring of the institutional logic of 'autonomy' previously held there towards a position of greater 'managerialism' (Shields and Watermeyer, 2020).

However, R26 was also keen to stress that this does not mean that their teaching was lacking in the first place:

'I don't think the landscape has meant that suddenly we've seen a jump in quality because I think that would assume that we didn't have higher quality provision before, and I don't think that was the case.' (R26, Senior Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 25+ years' experience.)

It should be noted that R26's perception of teaching quality at Olaf was not shared by all respondents. In particular, R31 (also of Olaf) stated clearly that: "if I'm brutally honest, I think the quality of our provision is pretty poor."

According to Gunn (2018), pre-1992s predicated their offering primarily on high-quality research rather than on the quality of their teaching. This was partly because comparative research metrics were readily available, and research intensives tended to score better in them than their non-research-intensive competitors. Gunn implies that TEF was designed as a mechanism for raising the teaching agenda among research intensive universities. R26 acknowledged and refuted the implication, defending Olaf (pre-1992) by stating that teaching quality was already in a high gear pre-TEF. R26 recognised that outsiders may assume a research-intensive university like Olaf to take a low geared approach to teaching but emphasises that the lack of a mechanism for evidencing teaching quality is not the same thing as a lack of high-quality teaching. R26 noted that prior to TEF the post-1992s were already regulated regarding their offerings – they were already required to demonstrate their teaching quality - and therefore already in the appropriate gear. This evokes the literature examined in chapter 3 which demonstrated how these universities were not subject to external audit and thus the logic was occupational validation of practice not through vertical mechanisms and data (Tight, 2009; Willetts, 2017). On the other hand, the post-1992s were already familiar with an organisational discourse and the next interview extract explains this explicitly.

The apparent contrast in TEF readiness between pre- and post-1992 institutions observed in R26's interview is supported by the perceptions of R12, a senior leader at Newfy (post-1992). Like R26, R12 works in the Vice-Chancellor's office and has been an academic for over 25 years. Rather than pointing towards the 'regearing' witnessed in by R26 at Olaf (pre-1992), R12 noted that at their university they were already aligned (philosophically, strategically and operationally) to the provision of teaching excellence:

*"quality was actually a centralised process for modern universities."
(R12, Senior Management, Newfy (post-1992), 25+ years' experience).*

Thus, in the post-92 context, TEF provides a more formal mechanism for evidencing this ongoing area of work. R12's observations are contextualised by a discussion of their entry into academia in the early 1990s when Newfy (post-1992) was a polytechnic. Having been in post as Newfy (post-92) made the transition from polytechnic to university, R12 reflected upon how degrees

were awarded at polytechnics, noting the role of the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) in validating awards:

'It was still CNAA degrees, so the quality was actually a centralised process for modern universities so that has changed quite radically. I think what's interesting is that the post-1992s all really mimicked the CNAA process and if you look at the quality that was put in place for post-1992s in all cases it was very, very tight in terms of how it was managed, which isn't necessarily a bad thing... we need to prove to you that we're worthy of being universities and that we're not allowing any of our standards to drop because we're not centrally managed and I think what you've seen over the years is a recognition that that was a very bureaucratic process very modelled on, kind of, local government bureaucracy.' (R12, Senior Management, Newfy (post-1992), 25+ years' experience).

There are several points of interest to draw from this extract. Firstly, R12 acknowledged the differences in quality processes and management between pre- and post-1992s. Unlike the older universities, before they were awarded their royal charters post-1992s were commonly polytechnics without degree awarding powers. Their degrees were validated via a third party, the UK Council for National Academic Awards. Rather than seeing an 'encroachment' of bureaucracy, R12 illustrated how the history of this part of the higher education sector and its relationship to government framed its structures. For R12, governmental regulation through arm's length bodies (the LEA and CNAA) generated a model of bureaucratic work from the outset. R12 argued that this model was adopted and even intensified post-incorporation.

R12 noted the significant amount of teaching related bureaucracy in the post-1992s prior to the introduction of TEF. Evetts (2009:257) includes increased bureaucracy as one of the '*changes in professionalism as an occupational value.*' Furthermore, Evetts notes that organisational underpinnings involve a more controlling managerial approach and greater alignment to external governance. Older (i.e. pre-1992) universities were self-governed, and many had long established civic roles – both characteristics aligned to an occupational ideal type. However, polytechnics - the precursor to new universities - were constrained by the CNAA process to award degrees and

were less likely to be able to foster logics aligned to an occupational approach. For R12, when the polytechnics became universities, they retained a more managerial approach, evolving institutional identities, structures, and policies that remain more organisational than occupational.

To operate successfully in the higher education marketplace, post-1992 universities needed to demonstrate their capability. R12 stated '*we need to prove to you that we're worthy of being universities*'. This is what would be expected when applying the professionalisation thesis – i.e. that the sector successfully closed its doors to newcomers for a long time, and that newcomers are attempting to establish themselves. Post-92s did this offering vocational degrees, taking an opposing institutional logic to established competitors; and focussing their energies on teaching, applying a contrasting organisational perspective (Evetts, 2009; Shields and Watermeyer, 2020). The post-92s, despite being less highly regulated than they had been as polytechnics, did not abandon the more vertical structures and accountability mechanisms partly because they need to justify their position. They established themselves in a more managerial way than the pre-1992s and have justified this because, again, as R12 said, '*we have to prove to you that we're worthy of being universities*.' Part of this has been done via external management i.e. the Further and Higher Education Act 1992 which awarded new university status. Therefore, the post-1992s retain the local bureaucracy philosophy and bring organisational professionalism to a previously occupational space.

The inference is that the newer universities are more likely to embrace the regulatory and reporting requirements of TEF and of the bodies governing the sector because, firstly, it is what they are used to and, secondly, because they must prove themselves to extant practitioners and can use these mechanisms to do so. TEF aligns with the institutional logic which is partly a legacy of the external monitoring which existed prior to degree awarding powers. TEF did not result in a perceived encroachment of bureaucracy on post-1992 universities, as they were already bureaucratic organisations whose practices were already rooted in accountability frameworks.

Furthermore, and even more critical, is Gunn's (2018) proposition that TEF was, in part, designed to support the newer universities and propel their teaching excellence into a more positive light, thus gaining them ground to

establish themselves within the higher education sector. R12 supported Gunn's proposition. R12 said:

'I would say that actually really turning around the TEF was a huge thing because I think it gave staff real confidence. I think when we got TEF gold that was a real boost to people because people kind of felt that they did care about students, that teaching and learning was really important, but they didn't feel anyone knew that about us and I think that helped.' (R12, Senior Management, Newfy (post-1992), 25+ years' experience.)

Here, the 'regearing' was aimed at acknowledging, recording and celebrating teaching excellence. Gunn (2018) states that one of the aims of TEF is to provide a mechanism to show the high-quality teaching within institutions and, second, to raise the profile and value of teaching against its research counterpart. For R12 at Newfy (post-1992) TEF has done this. By raising the profile of teaching quality, TEF raises the profile of post-1992s to a standing more equivalent to their pre-1992 counterparts. It is evident here that both R12 and R26 considered the teaching quality at their venue to be high, prior to TEF. As a mechanism, TEF is reaffirming and quantifying that knowledge by demonstrating (and endorsing it) through data. An assumption might be that staff at Olaf (pre-1992) would not champion teaching as much as research because Olaf (pre-1992) is a research-intensive university. A further supposition might be that teaching is not high quality there. However, R26 (Olaf, pre-1992) refuted these assumptions, contradicting Gunn. The perspective supplied by R12 at Newfy (post-1992) was broadly more supportive of Gunn's proposition because, in R12's view, the teaching there was already good and TEF solidifies this into public record.

An alternate perspective on TEF across both pre- and post-1992s was provided by R1. R1 has been at Newfy (post-1992) for 25+ years and was nearing retirement. R1 was very forthright in their general commentary about the sector, making their own comparisons between pre-1992 and post-1992 venues in relation to TEF:

"On TEF, my top line on it is that it's a bloody good thing. It's a bloody good thing for the following reason, that it gives the post 92s a chance at a genuine redistribution of league tables to nail the fucking lie that the Russell Group are good teachers and that their teaching is

somehow superior to the post 92s. It's not even at the same level. If they had to deal with what we have to deal with they'd totally fall down..." (R1, Newfy (post-1992), Professor, 25+ years' experience)

In direct contrast to R26, R1 provided their interpretation of how TEF is influencing the 'regearing' (and, indeed, subsequent reordering) of universities and, insight into their interpretation of institutional theory/logic (Shields and Watermeyer, 2020). For R1, the Russell Group (comprised of research intensive pre-1992s) are going to need to adjust their practice or 'regear'. R1 was forceful in their position that the pre-92s will need to 'regear' by improving teaching quality, a view which is aligned to Gunn's (2018) proposed objectives for TEF. This is in opposition to R26 who earlier asserted that high quality was already being delivered in Olaf (pre-92) prior to TEF but there was no public record of this. R1 expressed anger about the disparity in teaching quality between the two types of university and the fact that that this was not publicly documented prior to TEF.

A notable characteristic of this extract was how animated R1 became when making their point. There was significant profanity here, and throughout R1's interview. Few other interviewees used language in this way during their interview. This passionate defence reflects the ingrained hierarchy in UK higher education which both Gunn and R1 hoped TEF would ameliorate.

All the respondents mentioned in this section (R1, R12 and R26) agreed that the TEF had institutional implications for universities. The data shows that some of this has been overarching, philosophical and cultural change via the 'regearing' mentioned in this analysis. Data drawn from other interviews demonstrates that this has been literal change, through restructuring of departments and the creation of new posts.

5.3 Regearing as a Service

In addition to considering regearing from an institutional perspective, other participants re-conceptualised higher education as a service. The discussion of a marketised higher education, as a service and students as consumers is something which has received attention within the extant literature and is a contentious issue (Ashwin, 2020). Secondly, the profession as a service is something which is characteristic in the literature defining a profession

versus an occupation. A profession as being something akin to a service, in as much as the profession gives back to society, it serves the people, it is altruistic (Abbott, 1988; Freidson, 2001). Alongside this earlier work, Evetts' (2009) ideal-type for occupational professionalism includes discretion, status, knowledge and power and is trusted by the client. Within a 'reprofessionalised' or occupational discourse, service is reframed through the encroachment of the market and the emergence of a consumer.

In their interviews, participants described 'higher education as service' from the altruistic perspective theorised above. However, they also included discussion about higher education in a marketized context. In this context, the service is not altruistic; it is a service market, and education is the service product.

R31 works at Olaf (pre-1992) but holds a specifically teaching-focused role at middle management level. They came from a schools background and moved into the higher education sector specifically to take this role, being in it for approximately seven years. R31 maintained that:

'we do need to become much more realigned, refocused on students because they are who we should serve, and I use that word deliberately. Our job is to serve the students, it's not to give them something, our job is to enable and explain to students how to do that.' (R31, Senior Lecturer, middle management, seven + years' experience, Olaf (pre-1992).)

What is interesting in this extract is that R31 deliberately and provocatively invoked an organisational discourse emphasising the word 'service'. R31 alluded to a different form of 'regearing' from that discussed earlier in these findings. They proposed that university should be providing a service. R31 did not frame quality from the perspective of the academic. R31's definition of service provision included enabling and explaining to students, as educators, that lecturers are facilitators not providers. The data illustrates how a competing institutional logic is emerging (Shields and Watermeyer, 2020). This differs from Evetts' identification of the logic of altruism which is often drawn on in idealised discourses of occupational professionalism (Evetts, 2009).

The notion of higher education as a service provision was discussed at length by academics at Newfy (post-1992). Like R31 at Olaf (pre-1992), R20 at

Newfy (post-1992) considered the position of the student and of the university and the function of service provision. R20 is in a similar position to R31 in as much as they are a Senior Lecturer, but they are about to enter a middle management role, which will take them out of the classroom for a significant part of their contract. They entered the debate about service provision:

'I think students are very aware of the cost and the debt that they are going to encounter by doing higher education. That therefore does make a degree more of a product, that therefore does make us more of a service provider rather than an enabler or a facilitator.' (R20, Senior Lecturer, middle management, 10+ years' experience, Newfy (post-1992).)

Both R31 and R20 referred to higher education as marketised. R20 recognised explicitly the regearing that was taking place and acknowledged the shift away from occupational discourses of 'facilitation and enabling' to organisational discourses of service where a degree itself is recast within a consumerist logic as a product. R20 extended the consumerist discourse by referencing the degree specifically as the product element of the service offering. R31 moved on to qualify the 'regearing' as being necessary, using the language of organisational professionalism; that is that measures, accountability and targets are necessary to meet the objectives of the changed marketplace:

'And part of me thinks that's right, I really do think that's right and I do think that the model had to change. You know, it was broken, you can't shove half the nation through university and expect the government to pick up the tab but it does change the way we do things. You know, things like the NSS have become increasingly important, you know, the birth of the TEF and now the subject level TEF pilot are obviously increasingly important and, you know, I get why. I understand why. You know, the unistat ¹ figures that pop up on the website any time anybody looks at your course. You know, some

¹ Unistat (now Discover Uni) provides comparative information about undergraduate programmes (both full-time and part-time). It is operated by the Office for Students and is prepared for prospective students.

students and some staff live and die by them.’ (R20, Senior Lecturer, middle management, 10+ years’ experience, Newfy (post-1992).)

The contrasting perspectives explored in this section indicate very different philosophical starting points for a conceptualisation of teaching as a (newly regulated) service, which is at the same time a public good and a marketised product. The history and traditions of the universities offering the service affect the way it is conceptualised by the staff delivering it and suggest a deeply ingrained set of attitudes towards teaching and teaching quality which are peculiar to the two contrasting segments of the higher education sector. It is perhaps for these reasons that the introduction of TEF has affected the institutions of pre-92 and post-92 universities differently.

These contrasting cultural and philosophical standpoints are also reflected in the universities structural (or operational) responses to the introduction of TEF, which will now be explored.

5.4 Regearing: structural change

The interview data indicates that respondents believed university structural changes have occurred in response to TEF. The respondents discussed the operational/staffing changes experienced since the introduction of TEF. In their narratives, several participants described how universities have restructured, with the creation of new posts and roles or the reorganisation of existing roles. This has been observed by them at both academic and professional service level, particularly in the creation of senior and middle management jobs with teams of colleagues being restructured below these post-holders in the hierarchy. Evetts (2009) refers to hierarchical structures as being typical of organisational professionalism and increased governance and management as a representation of movement and change within professionalism, what R26 referred to as ‘quality agendas’. The findings of this research support Evetts’ view.

R26 considered how TEF has specifically affected the leadership and organisational structure at Olaf (pre-1992):

‘It’s had a huge impact on leadership in higher education and in the professional service, professional and technical support of education as well, in terms of support for senior leadership to deliver on the quality

frameworks. From where I'm sitting, I feel that over the last 10 years a lot of what I've done and more often what I've been involved in has been shaped by the quality agendas. I feel as a leader, a senior leader, in that time I've been head of an academic department, I've been a Dean for education, I've been a PVC student experience so the impact on me has been really significant, and I think the impact on the institution has been significant.' (R26, Senior Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 25+ years' experience)

R26's narrative, specifically their career path, including job titles and relationships with others, all point towards their role having been shaped by institutional responses to the changing quality measures. They held a role specifically centred on education and a second role centred on student experience. Both roles were newly created within their institution. The inference is that neither role would have happened without TEF and the quantification of teaching.

As seen in the next data extract, R26 described the positions affected by TEF as being from '*middle management up*', as previously discussed, and expanded upon the way these positions are being affected through '*responsibility and accountability*'. That is to say, the job descriptions for these roles now include analysing and responding to TEF data to improve future iterations of that data.

R26 mused further:

'Where I have seen changes in others and people that work for me is that it has changed the job, I think from middle management up. So, I think by the time you get to things like academic heads of school or heads of department, faculty deans or PVCs, head of college and then into those other thematic roles, like the roles that I've had, student experience roles or DVC roles. (R26, Senior Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 25+ years' experience).

Here, R26 provided a clear picture of organisational change at their university (Olaf, pre-1992). They observed that those from middle university management up have seen a change in their roles which have been caused both by the creation of new jobs and changing workloads within existing posts, all the way up the hierarchy through schools and colleges to central senior management level. R26's data indicates that the higher up the

organisational structure one travels, the more change there has been, with new thematic management roles being created. In this way, R26's evidence illustrates how external metrics reframe both the role of the academic and the institutional structures. As R26 revealed, management is reframed by quality assurance and becomes hierarchical, moving away from the more horizontal structures of occupational models of professional work and towards the organisational ideal-type.

This narrative resonates with much of the data from lecturing staff, whom R26 referred to as *'jobbing academics'* and who consider that they have not seen their day-to-day activities change in response to TEF. The response of these academics is discussed further in chapter six. Let us first consider the impact upon Professional Services.

5.5 Regearing: professional services and leadership teams

The analysis indicates that TEF is perceived to have changed the dynamic of the relationship between academics and professional services. Previously, professional service roles were framed within the logic of bureaucracy with hierarchical management structures and limited claims to professional discourses. As the work of professional staff has increased in complexity and strategic importance, the balance of power has also shifted. Professional staff in modern universities have greater authority than previously, and as R26 noted, professional staff are no longer considered support but now act as partners, and, in some cases, as leaders.

As touched upon by R26 earlier in these findings:

'It's had a huge impact on leadership in higher education and in the professional service, professional and technical support of education as well, in terms of support for senior leadership to deliver on the quality frameworks.' (R26, Senior Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 25+ years' experience)

Expanding specifically on professional services, this has led to professional services being able to make stronger professional claims, not least in the terminology used: what once were 'administrative,' or 'support' teams have typically been rebranded 'professional services'. Furthermore, there is

greater recognition of the specialist skills required to deliver on these roles and increasing numbers in professional services teams.

'Increasingly I would see my colleagues as being professional service colleagues. It's changed their jobs because we rely on them much more as institutions, I think than we ever did on professional and technical service colleagues. They are genuine partners in what we deliver. In the olden days university admin was not seen as being very important and also was playing much more of a kind of support role, whereas what we've actually seen is the changing landscape. The recognition that we need highly skilled professionals in the higher education sector who aren't academics who bring different kinds of skills and that's where we've seen the shift.' (R26, Senior Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 25+ years' experience).

Consistent with R26, R12 (Senior Management, Newfy (post-1992), 25+ years' experience) drew on the experience with professional services as being something which was integral to the introduction of TEF. They perceived the adoption of an organisational discourse of professional practice as well as increasing centralisation of the role. R12 stated that at Newfy (post-1992):

'I had an institutional wide responsibility around quality and standards and... it was a time where the university was very de-centralised and we were trying to create much greater consistency and then during that period I also took online management of student and academic services and recruitment and that also enabled me to look across not just the faculties but also the service areas.' (R12, Senior Management, Newfy (post-1992), 25+ years' experience).

This example reinforces the point made earlier by R26, that the size, work, and status of professional services increased in response to the introduction of TEF. University professional staff are no longer there to support academics. They are part of the professional leadership of the university. This is reflected in increased numbers, with new departments and roles created to undertake data analysis at both university and departmental level (observed in my own operational practice). In turn, the accounts endorse the proposition made by Evetts (2009) that one of the changes that has been seen in professionalism

is through changes in governance and management to support further change in audit, measurement, targets and performance indicators.

R47, is a senior member of a School professional services team at Olaf (pre-1992) and has worked there for over 10 years. Permission was not granted to record this interview, therefore extended direct quotes are not included. They were though able to give further insight into Olaf (pre-1992) from a structural perspective. Their interview offered two key insights – firstly, how the structure of the school has developed over time and under different Heads of School, and, secondly how the structure of the school is influenced by the central university management.

Firstly, R47 described the internal factors that have influenced changes to the school structure over time; the main factor was increased student numbers and, to a lesser extent, the decisions made by Heads of School. They observed that the restructuring of their senior management team had been influenced by growth in student numbers driving up the volume of work over the last 40+ years. Beyond that, R47 was unclear on the rationale for the change. Initially they said that these new jobs titles or roles ‘didn’t really mean anything’ but then clarified that they were retitled to ‘emphasise a flatter structure’ and to ‘re-empower programme teams.’

One of the changes to the logics and structure of an institution through increased external audit is a drive towards standardisation and increasing centralisation which, from a deprofessionalisation perspective, undermines the professional autonomy of horizontally organised schools. R47 explained that there are several activities which staff members are directed to carry out as part of their roles and responsibilities and that this direction comes from ‘the centre’, meaning the central organisational and managerial structure of the university, via the college system. The other characteristic of staffing arrangements at school level, they stated, is that they often ‘mirrored’ what is occurring centrally. What made this distinctive, observed R47, was that this mirroring created ‘thematic leads’ which were addressing current issues, part of wider university-wide strategic objectives. The ‘thematic leads’ created included several additional director posts addressing feedback, student experience, international mobility, and external relations. Subsequent iterations of ‘thematic leads’ (this time following the centre’s direction) included a director for the PhD programme, ethics and public value. Analysis

of these themes and job titles shows a link between national issues such as feedback and student experience and, therefore TEF, because they are all TEF measures.

According to R47, the most recent Head of School phased out the thematic leads on the grounds of them having evolved centrally (at the macro level). A locally-derived structure would, they believed, enable greater emphasis on the needs of the school (at the micro level) and 'the re-empowerment of the programme teams.' There were new posts responsible for space, estates, and data and technology. There was no mention of TEF or any other external or central agenda driving this. The notion of re-empowering the programme teams leans towards an occupational idea type, contrasting with the wider university leaning towards the organisational ideal type.

Analysis of R47's interview generates the following observations. At the most rudimentary level, student numbers, or size of school dictate structure. The more students, the more work, the more people required to manage the work. That work can be distributed in several ways; as R47 observed, they have seen work distributed thematically (both from the school and from the centre) and in a way to empower the teams within the school. However, in terms of the research question at hand, R47 attributed none of these changes to TEF. They acknowledged change driven both centrally and locally but not change driven externally, nor by TEF. In analysing the data, the links between external drivers, including TEF, appear obvious, however, R47's perceptions remain markedly opposed to the theoretical and empirical work read in preparation for this thesis. R47's interpretation of the evolution of academic professionalism at Olaf was evidently influenced by their own personal experience, values and views. While their contrasting perspective provides a useful insight into the complexity of lived experiences within the higher education sector, their one voice does not outweigh the balance of evidence generated from other sources.

5.6 Regearing: changes in bureaucracy, audit and measurement.

At Newfy (post-1992), there was evidence to show that a consequence of TEF has been a 'regearing' (and reordering) in bureaucracy, and this change can be represented not only through regearing structure but also, as in this case, role. One interviewee at Associate Dean level within Newfy (post-1992)

said that they thought their role had changed since the inception of the NSS and TEF, pointing specifically to the introduction of a task force as evidence of a more systematic approach:

R7: We've become more systematically focussed on first the NSS and then TEF. In a more systematic way.

A: What do you mean by systematic? Have processes changed in response or..?

R7: I think there's been an added layer, I mean the task force is a relatively recent invention. Well actually the task force dates back to Professor X becoming DVC and, I suspect, from them discovering that that's what AN Other University had done. (R7, Associate Dean, Newfy (post-1992), 25+ years' experience)

R7's use of the word 'systematic' and the mention of an 'added layer', meaning the task force, point towards bureaucratic regearing and increased managerialism. The task force is evidence of increased managerialism and internal regulation of performance in response to the external metrics. These are all seen in the more organisationally organised environment modelled by Evetts (2009) and applied studies (Arthur, 2009).

The task force has not created any new roles; rather it has added to and changed the duties of several existing roles. The word 'systematic' implies this has been cascaded out as part a central organisational directive and the creation of the task force represents an alternative managerial approach. That is, a movement from an occupationally-oriented account to an organisationally-oriented account. This data indicates that TEF has changed the roles of many employees in situ. Further, this can be perceived as a movement from an occupationally oriented account to an organisationally oriented account (as discussed in Chapter 2.5) as these employees see their jurisdiction move from being responsible to their own internal occupational professional quality measures to external measures. All this points towards new models of managerialism under an organisationally-oriented model of professional work (Evetts, 2009), particularly governance, management, external forms of regulation, audit and measurement, and targets and performance indicators.

R26 reflected extensively on the changes to bureaucracy within the higher education landscape throughout their career, which began in 1990. R26 had always worked in pre-1992 venues and related their experience to that academic space. They discussed a variety of changes, including those to the 'accountability landscape', which they specified as government intervention and fees. Their perception was that government intervention in the administration and financial management of universities, expanded with the national approach to research assessment and funding and was now extending into teaching. They explained that:

'when I joined higher education there was, just a start, I guess of what we now see in terms of the kind of accountability landscape... that had just started to think about research excellence' but that 'we were still in the heady world of no fees and students being able to attend university and that being covered centrally through university finances.' (R26, Senior Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 25+ years' experience).

Prior to fees, the government had an arm's length relationship with higher education in a 'classic' model. Within this, the model of accountability was an occupational model 'by the sector for the sector' (Evetts, 2009), with the introduction of tuition fees in 1998 there was an 'encroachment' (Freidson, 2001) of the market into higher education, which, along with the rising student numbers and the RAE/REF resulted in the 'regearing' R26 asserted. They argued that TEF is a corollary of that.

R26 continued to discuss accountability and control in relation to TEF at length. Their historic reflection provides a detailed account of teaching and learning pre-TEF; for example they mentioned that:

'we've always had kind of periodic reviews and some notion of quality frameworks that's mainly been ran internally by the sector for the sector.' (R26, Senior Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 25+ years' experience).

This reflection of the management of higher education resonates very strongly with Evetts' occupational ideal-type of professionalism. Historically, Olaf (pre-1992) demonstrated collegial authority, internal/institutional control, and monitoring of ethics with an overarching sense that this discourse of higher education was constructed within the sector and the institution.

This 'regearing' could be assimilating more organisational professional practice (according to Evetts's (2009) ideal types), which seeks the more managerial and externally driven focus:

'What we started to see over the last five to 10 years is much more external scrutiny, and with that again, really heightened levels of accountability in relation to teaching excellence, teaching quality and TEF is one manifestation of that.' (R26, Senior Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 25+ years' experience).

This external scrutiny and accountability sit within the domain of the changes in professionalism that Evetts (2009) mentions. This is an explicit recognition of how external monitoring is reframing this pre-92's institutional logics. R26 saw TEF as the latest manifestation of a gradual process away from the occupational and towards the organisational model.

R26 made further observations regarding the changing nature of data and its role in higher education accountability processes. While a substantial amount of teaching quality data has been available for a long time (e.g. percentages of 'good degrees', data on 'progression' and data on 'graduate outcomes'), it is only now that it is being measured and rated. Those in middle and senior leadership roles are the staff who are accountable because the data is generally only made available at programme level or above:

'It's changed that because actually there is more, I guess there's more of a perception now that that's a job with responsibility but with responsibility comes accountability and actually I think at that level there's a real sense that actually those roles and people within those roles are being held to account. They're being held to account and data driven. I think being more data driven, being more open to scrutiny, being held more accountable in terms of performance of things so I think it's changed that level of middle and senior leadership.' (R26, Senior Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 25+ years' experience).

R26 described how the increased scrutiny on externally reported metrics recalibrates the logic of the institution. R26 portrayed how data generation requires a layer of middle managers whose role is to validate quality through the analysis and reporting of data. Accountability has been reframed from collegial to hierarchical where these managers are 'being held to account'.

5.7 The juxtaposition of research, teaching and external metrics

During this study, the relative standing of research and teaching emerged as a key differentiator in the comparison of the old and new universities. This was evident in discussions of research and teaching management, administration, resourcing and strategy at each establishment. Several participants expressed the view that at a managerial and institutional level research was seen as more important than teaching, and therefore that REF was more important than TEF.

R28 is a Senior Lecturer at Olaf (pre-1992) with 5+ years' academic experience. They previously worked in a post-1992 so they were able to compare the logics at the two types of university, based on their own observations and interpretation. At their post-1992 former institution, R28 considered that with teaching metrics:

'it was much more important, and we would push it. High scores for a course were great for the next year.' (R28, Senior Lecturer, Olaf (pre-1992), 5+ years' experience)

By contrast, R28 felt that at Olaf (pre-1992) the management 'didn't really care about' TEF because they rely more on more traditional approaches to reputation building. These approaches include word of mouth among external partners and the metrics used to drive research rankings and league tables. R28 said the TEF results in summer 'were certainly a talking point' but little more than that.

Data from other pre-1992 based respondents echoed these sentiments:

'Every meeting that I've been to, if I hear the word REF one more time. It just makes me feel inadequate as a T&S member of staff. It's constantly research, research, research, REF but I never, ever hear the word TEF.' (R39, Senior Lecturer, Olaf (pre-1992), 10+ years' experience).

'Around the time of the NSS there's a little bit of pressure but it's nothing like the horribleness of REF and how I can see it being a huge weight on people's shoulders.' (R30, Reader, Olaf (pre-1992), 15+ years' experience).

These excerpts demonstrate the contrasting relationships that the old (pre-1992s) and new (post-1992s) have with external metrics relating to research assessment and teaching quality assessment, i.e. REF and TEF. These external metrics shape and frame institutional priorities, logics and structures in different ways, as a function of institutional history and mission. That is to say, the institutional relationship with research and with teaching reflects their status as a pre-1992 or post 1992 university.

While some participants, as above, commented on their employer's approach to TEF and REF, R4 below, gave a more developed commentary on their view of the outcomes of institutional priorities and logics. R4 (Newfy (post-1992), senior lecturer) said:

'I guess my understanding has been that to make progress as an academic, publishing is crucial and I guess the level of other activities that I've been involved with has meant that hasn't been possible and I guess there is a question in my mind about, well, hang on, where's that going? I still, I have a philosophical belief, I guess it comes from being a practitioner as well as an academic, that academic research is of little value unless it is being communicated and used. Having been in the position of employing graduates, their knowledge of business often has been woeful and one of my personal motivations for coming back was to try and help students to be better prepared for going into a business.'

R4 is a Senior Lecturer at Newfy (post-1992) with module leadership responsibility but no programme leadership duties. R4 has been an academic for 3+ years since rejoining higher education after a senior managerial career in the private sector. They had previously worked in a Russell Group institution for 3+ years.

In offering an overview of their career, R4 provided a synopsis of their perception of professionalism within higher education, including comparison between pre- and post-1992 venues. Perhaps the most striking aspect of their interview was that they were keenly aware of the politics of the higher education landscape. They were aware of differences between pre- and post-1992 venues, and the implications of this for policy and practice:

I believe being front heavy is a bit old fashioned these days, which I suppose in the world of REF, certainly what I was seeing at [Russell Group University] was almost a division of the teaching and the research

space. So [Russell Group University] was very much looking at the REF and trying to get in place individuals who were star performers at publishing in three-star journals and build up its REF submission because of that, while you had the others who were the ones who got the teaching. That slightly goes against my beliefs of what academia should be about.' (R4, Senior Lecturer, Newfy (post-1992), 3+ years' experience).

R4 shared their perception that the pre-1992s work to the external influence/authority of the REF and, consequently, use that to underpin their institutional focus that research is more important than teaching. This contrasts with R4's personal philosophy of higher education, which prioritises teaching over research. There is an inference to be made here that R4 moved from a Russell Group university to Newfy (post-1992) because there was an alignment between R4's and Newfy (post-1992)'s institutional focus upon teaching and research.

In addition to R29, R39, R40 (each from Olaf) and R4 (Newfy) cited here, these views were echoed by R19 and R23 (Newfy), both of whom highlighted the 'status' and 'significance' of research compared to teaching within their institution.

For some, neither TEF nor REF was their greatest concern; other external bodies had influence over academic work. These discipline-specific bodies represented external accreditations rather than external metrics. This influence was perceived as coming from above, i.e. the managers were influenced by a desire to be accredited by these external bodies. However, even though there was a perception that managerial influence was driving this process, the fact that these external accreditation bodies were profession based made them more creditable to participants.

As well as extensively comparing pre-1992 and post-1992 attitudes to the importance of research, R4 highlighted that there were additional influencers they felt held greater sway. They first mentioned REF, before discussing AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) accreditation and related this back to ISO9000, a practitioner-based business standard for management quality. They referred to AACSB very positively from a macro perspective:

'One thing I think that is going to be very good about AACSB is bringing more of a (and I've always described this as being a bit like the ISO9000 experience that businesses went through in the 1990s) in that to start with when that came in everyone thought they had to write huge new manuals with the idealistic process and measuring systems and all the rest of it but as businesses became more understanding of it, it was much more about being very clear what are you going to do, make sure you're doing it and make sure that you're showing that you're doing it and so I think that is driving some quite useful changes around clarity about learning objectives, clarity then about well we've said we're going to do this, how are we going to do that and how are we going to show we've done that?' (R4, Senior Lecturer, Newfy (post-1992), 3+ years' experience).

Two points are worth expanding here. First, R4 was referring to an internal (within the profession) accreditation and body. This was reflective of the conceptualisation of self-governing professions seen in occupational perspectives. Occupational professions are defined as having self-governing properties and ongoing professional development (Freidson, 2001; Evetts, 2009). AACSB accreditation is illustrative of this form of self-governance. It is significant that R4's attitude to the adoption of new metrics was positive, where the change is driven internally, from within the profession. Second, the extract indicates that R4 has reflected upon the changes driven by AACSB accreditation from a wider, school-based structural and policy-based perspective, not merely the implications of this for their own individual practice. Their perception was that the AACSB, an internal mechanism, is driving change. Throughout their interview, there was little indication that R4 considered that TEF was driving organisational change within the sector.

Another respondent, a senior manager at Olaf (pre-1992), R43, reflected on their position regarding third party influence, noting the significance of external drivers of change:

"So, that's been quite a change as well and generally just more bureaucratic in a way... it kind of links back to CMA which I think is a bigger driver of university behaviour than academic quality and standards." (R43, Senior Manager, Olaf (pre-1992), 20+ years' experience)

R43's narrative and language echo the literature in this area (Freidson, 2001; Evetts, 2009; 2012). In observing that the CMA (Competition and Markets Authority) is the 'bigger driver of university behaviour' R43 evoked Freidson's (2001) description of the encroachment of market logic. R43 depicted a movement from self-organisation to external forms of governance, audit and measurement (Evetts, 2009; 2012). This is yet another type of logic, an external influence acting on a profession.

TEF has influenced both types of institution and required pre-1992s to regear, because they weren't well set up to report on teaching quality. However, it really hasn't penetrated to the level of university identity. They are still mostly motivated by REF and accreditation and have set up extra units and roles to manage TEF - because it must be done - but it hasn't really changed the underpinning philosophy and operation of the venue. Mechanisms to manage TEF are an addition, rather than a transformation.

5.8 Regearing: changes to course provision

Several interviews highlighted how degree offerings have altered in relation to the transformation of the sector due to TEF. In response to employability measures the sector has seen a significant rise in practice-focused courses aligned to specific industries and jobs. The expansion of such programmes was broadly viewed as positive.

'What has it meant for me? It's meant, you know, yes, our courses are much more practice led. I mean, the very fact that I was made full time in 2012 because we went from a studies-based course to a practice-based course, seeking accreditation from our industry accreditation body meant, for me, it meant I got a full-time job and great. And I've got another exciting job to look forward to in the next few weeks that, that's come out of all this. It's also meant that I can bring my own experience from industry and from being a journalist for almost 20 years and put it into practice, much broader in a transferable way so it's exciting.'

It's been an opportunity for me, absolutely, a really good opportunity and for others too. A lot of people that we employ now in the journalism team you might not have taken on a few years ago. On the flip side of that, what that's also meant is that accountability, that living and dying by the

sword of the NSS and the TEF.’ (R20, Senior Lecturer, Newfy (post-1992), 10+ years’ experience).

The inference from this data is that the expansion of practice-based and vocational courses is aligned to the drive for higher numbers, increasingly centralised regulation, and, latterly, metrics. Without a balance of each of these ingredients, higher education cannot have the wider array of topic areas and greater marketisation. Metrics are part of a framework to help shape and manage the vast expansion of higher education since the Dearing Report (1997) and, former UK Prime Minister, Tony Blair’s drive for higher student numbers. Furthermore, all of this is driven by a greater organisationally oriented environment, through government intervention.

An alternate perspective on reprofessionalisation came from several academics based in the social sciences and humanities at Newfy (post-1992). These are respondents who deliver non-vocational, academic subjects in a post-1992 setting. The first, R13, is a Senior Lecturer and has worked at Newfy (post-1992) for over 15 years. In their field of expertise, which they described as the humanities, they have seen their subject on a list of programmes to be closed. They blamed this, in part, on TEF and the impact of it upon the landscape of higher education. They claimed that they were being driven by senior management to respond to TEF metrics that have little or no relevance to their subject area. That is, the management of their university wants them to work towards target areas which they cannot make work in the humanities:

‘We’re constantly reading reports about employers who feel that our, not ours specifically, that graduates more generally are not work ready. So, I think we have to be very careful about that, we have to be mindful of that and we need to try to be responsive to. I mean, I think, I think our managers in this institution are very, very mindful of that and I think that has led to all sorts of pressures to reform our provision over the last say eight or so years. I think the problem is that none of us really know where any of this is leading, you know, can say categorically and there is the argument which you mentioned earlier on that, yes, we produce people that are rounded. It may take them a few more years to find a job, a graduate level job but at the end of the day they’re better citizens for having taken a, studied history at university or English or whatever it

is. I would tend to agree with that wholeheartedly.’ (R13, Senior Lecturer, Newfy (post-1992), 15+ years’ experience.)

R13 was referring to the ‘graduate outcomes’ aspect of TEF, which was introduced via the Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS) in 2017/18. GOS records what the graduate does next i.e. further study, travel, employment or unemployed. A second element is whether the graduate is in ‘highly skilled’ employment. In this case, because these humanities graduates are not providing the best responses to the GOS for the university to obtain TEF gold, the subject area is under scrutiny as underperforming and potentially will be discontinued as a degree offering as a result. However, as R13 noted, these graduates are still getting good jobs, highly paid jobs. They just might take a different and/or longer path than their counterparts from more vocational courses. The way that the survey data which feeds into TEF is obtained means that these graduate responses don’t rank so highly in the way the data is constructed and therefore university senior management consider the programmes to be performing poorly and put them at risk.

As Onora O’Neill (2002) argues, metrics can corrupt the practice they are attempting to measure (the classic example is teaching to the test in education). R19, another senior lecturer at Newfy (post-1992) with over 15 years’ experience of teaching English Literature, demonstrated this by noting how TEF affects their professional landscape through management influence of course offerings. They said:

‘I suppose the big difference is that our faculty senior management over the last few years have taken it upon themselves to be strongly directive in the kinds of things they want us to teach in ways that I think often don’t work very well with our subject.’ (R19, Senior Lecturer, Newfy (post-1992), 15+ years’ experience.)

R19 found senior management responded to TEF metrics by trying to make the curriculum more employability focussed. Again, as R13 has already noted, they believed that this does not work with their subject areas:

‘They want us to be really practice based. We’ve just been ordered to change a lot of our, change our curriculum quite a lot so that it involves some, you know, some things to do with, I mean there’s a new module called ‘Literature and the Marketplace’ and thinking about sort of publishing and going on field trips and that kind of thing. It might work, I

think this is coming from somebody who doesn't really know anything about it very much and I think that I'm a bit sceptical about it... in one module students produce a book cover using desk top publishing as one assessment. We do lots of oral presentations because that's just sort of a good general skill and there's lots of opportunities for creative writing and some kind of more professional writing like speech writing, for instance.' (R19, Senior Lecturer, Newfy (post-1992), 15+ years' experience.)

For academics such as R19, it is reading the humanities at university and becoming articulate, critical thinkers that makes English students employable. However, this approach is at odds with the current pressure to make higher education teaching more vocationally focussed. R19 explained this by saying:

'I have, I think I've got mixed feelings about those because I would feel I still think that our students, fundamentally, are really interested in the traditional subject and I think that teaching the traditional subject has all kinds of good things about it, one of which is that you produce well rounded multi-skilled graduates who will be very good people to have in organisations and I feel that sometimes the practice based side of things get over-emphasised.' (R19, Senior Lecturer, Newfy (post-1992), 15+ years' experience.)

It can be seen through each of these data extracts that TEF is clearly affecting curricula and course provision through the introduction of performance metrics, which are used to drive organisational strategy and decision making. Some (e.g. R20) have seen positives in changes to higher education meaning that course provision has widened in their subject area. However, whilst R13, R19 and their peers in the humanities and social sciences agreed that these metrics have had a transformative effect upon course provision, this is not seen as positive. These interviewees saw that the state is using metrics to regulate course offerings, with programs that are not performing well facing punitive measures, potentially being removed from the portfolio or seeing a reduction of course fees (DfE, 2023).

5.9 Conclusion

As the interview data has illustrated, TEF has implications for institutional logic (Shields and Watermeyer, 2020). The benign metaphor of 'regearing' is used to describe this institutional re-alignment. Regearing is required not only

for the institutional mission, focus and discipline mix, but also at a structural level, affecting job roles and relationships between academic and professional function. Using Evetts this is a move to organisational professionalism and this has been more evident in the pre-1992 which had a strong occupational underpinning. Higher education is shifting from a largely self-regulated profession to an increasingly externally regulated organisation, driven by central government and managed through statutory data reporting and related metrics, including data submitted directly by students and graduates.

At the post-1992 university, analysis of the interview data demonstrates that there was already a more organisational structure and policy approach in place, not due to TEF but to the specifics of the pre-1992 tradition of these organisations, being a 'new' university in 1992 and a need to justify that position. The creation of TEF cemented that approach.

This chapter has reconfirmed earlier work on the acceleration of regulation, accountability and performativity in higher education (Strathern, 2000; Ball, 2015); and studies which track a movement from occupational to organisational professionalism within the focus of professionalism at both pre- and post-1992 universities (Graham, 2019; Hanlon, 1998). Respondents made clear observations regarding increased accountability in their workplace. Although some academics perceive there being a rationale for such changes, and a minority observe opportunity for new courses, few consider the new TEF metrics and greater accountability to be a positive change for their university.

The next chapter moves the analysis from the institutional to the individual and by comparing the differing individual perspectives and narratives of the effects of TEF on academics in a variety of roles across both Olaf (pre-1992) and Newfy (post-1992).

Chapter 6: Individual Experiences

6.1 Introduction

This chapter moves from a focus on the impact of TEF on the structures of the institution to its perceived impact on academics. Evetts (2009) reminds us that professional identity involves not only the experiences and expertise specific to the profession but also shared cultures and values. Furthermore, professionals are not passive carriers of contextual conditions but can transform said conditions (Eteläpelto et al. 2013:47).

The focus of this chapter will be on the professional work and identity of the academics interviewed, and their perceptions of the ways TEF may have affected the experience and behaviour of people working in higher education. The data indicate that despite TEF's stated aims of elevating the status of teaching, most academics have largely remained both distant from TEF's implementation and insulated from its effects. Section 6.2 demonstrates that some academics have not even heard of TEF yet alone perceived any implications for their work. Section 6.3 explores the perceived effect of TEF on a variety of academic roles at both Olaf (pre-1992) and Newfy (post-1992).

6.2 "TEF? Well, I know what it means"

Before discussing the content of the interviews; responses to the invitation to take part in the research², and some of the opening interview comments by respondents are worthy of analysis themselves.

As discussed in the methods chapter, sampling was purposive, and respondents were selected across Olaf (pre-1992) and Newfy (post-1992) from a cross-section of roles from Junior Lecturer to central senior management. Respondents' contracts ranged from professional services, teaching, research, and management (see Methods chapter for a full breakdown of respondent role.) At Olaf (pre-1992) there was a leaning towards being distant and isolated from TEF. Some participants (mainly but not exclusively from Olaf) were initially very reluctant to take part in the research for a variety of reasons, ranging from total ignorance of the purpose and operation of TEF, to a deliberate detachment from it, or a complete avoidance of it. Some said that their perception was that TEF was something

² Note: permission was gained to use these responses.

which was very remote from them, lacked relevance as an accountability measure, and they were not invested in it. Others stated that they were aware of it but did not consider it to be part of their job, or that they were focussed on other reporting frameworks (e.g., REF, professional accreditation, and even the CMA [Competition and Markets Authority]), or that they were strategically ignoring it. Fewer people responded positively to the initial invitation, discussing opportunities in terms of roles and new types of courses. This range of responses aligns with the three typical academic reactions to REF discussed in the literature (Halford and Leonard, 1999; Leathwood and Read, 2013; Thomas and Davies, 2005).

Positive responses were mainly, but not exclusively, from Newfy (post-1992) and included individuals with limited knowledge of TEF. Specifically, one interviewee expressed reservations:

'I'm happy to talk to you as part of your research, but I must confess I don't think I know much about TEF and its implication to my (and the school's) teaching practice. Perhaps an interview where someone knows nothing is just as valuable though?!' (R34, Senior Lecturer, Olaf (pre-1992), 10+ years' experience)

R34 is a Senior Lecturer at Olaf (pre-1992). For R34, they were simply unaware of TEF, of what it meant for them. The excerpt clearly indicates the remoteness of the measure for this member of staff and implies that someone else managed the response to TEF. For R34, TEF as an accountability measure has a limited impact on teaching at Olaf (pre-1992). R34 acknowledged the possible value of their limited perspective to the research. This suggests that they were aware that an academic might be expected to be more engaged with or aware of the detail of TEF:

Other respondents from Olaf (pre-1992) showed this to be the case for them too:

'It's something I'm entirely ignoring until someone says I have to do something in or about it' (R46, Professor/Senior Manager, Olaf (pre-1992), 25+ years' experience).

This respondent was doing their absolute best to avoid TEF, almost at all costs. R46 is a professor with line management responsibilities for a group of staff. They have 25+ years' experience. They were aware of TEF but not

invested in it and clearly have other priorities. These sort of responses, which depict an extremely limited awareness of TEF, with little understanding of what it does and measures, or totally deliberate agentic avoidance, were rife in the responses from Olaf (pre-1992):

'I don't think of that as something I feel weighs on me... To be honest, I don't really care about it... I honestly have no idea [and finally] It's not something that I'm going to jump out of bed in order to do really well with. It's a good job these interviews are anonymised, right?' (R28, Senior Lecturer/Teaching and Research Contract, Olaf (pre-1992), 5+ years' experience)

'I never hear anything about TEF really. I know what it is, it's sort of like a REF for teaching, isn't it?' (R29, Reader/Teaching and Scholarship Contract, Olaf (pre-1992), 15+ years' experience)

'There's NSS and stuff, obviously, but that, I feel that's so far removed from me.' (R30, Reader, Olaf (pre-1992), 15+ years' experience).

These extracts show that the consequences of TEF for these academics were varied. At Olaf (pre-1992), this may be because as members of a pre-1992 university the staff hold an occupationally-oriented account of professionalism, mirroring their institutional logic (Evetts, 2009; Eteläpelto et al., 2013; Vähäsantanen, 2015; Shields and Watermeyer, 2020). TEF had minimal impact on the institutional logic and academic culture, and therefore most colleagues retained the occupational aspects of Olaf and typical of other research intensives, including 'identity and work culture' and 'collegial authority'. Their institutional status, and that of their departments has been measured for 40 years almost exclusively on their commitment to research. REF was an external audit mechanism around which they built their professional work and framed their professional identity. It is possible to interpret these responses as coming from people who felt somewhat threatened by TEF, because it was forcing them to move away from the single-minded focus on research which was essential for their career success to date. Consequently, academics found themselves either ignoring or rejecting TEF as a mechanism.

By comparison, the expectation might be that from a post-1992 the response to TEF would be more positive. Particularly if, as Gunn (2018) notes, TEF is designed to 'level-up' research and teaching focussed universities. It was

anticipated that at Olaf (pre-1992) there would be apathy, but that at Newfy (post-1992) where there were already teaching quality related procedures and accountability in place, there would be acceptance. However, there were many responses to the contrary in the post-1992, that were very similar to that of the pre-1992. As with Olaf (pre-1992), some at Newfy (post-1992) said that they did not know what TEF was, or that it did not affect their practice:

'TEF? Well... I know what it means.' (R2, Senior Lecturer, Newfy (post-1992), 5+ years' experience.)

'I've been to lots of things where I've been told about TEF, and I've tried to concentrate. I know it's the Teaching Excellence Framework and I think it's something that's very important for us. I know it's something we should be heading for because we're an alliance group university, because we're teaching intensive and that to me is our bread and butter. So, I think it's something that's really important that we go for, but I can never remember what the measures are, because I'm not involved at a programme level, I think it's something that sort of passes me by because I've been too busy with other things really to focus on it.' (R3, Senior Lecturer/Middle Management, Newfy (post-1992), 20+ years' experience.)

'I don't really feel as an individual that I spend much time thinking about that [TEF] or adapting what I'm doing because I think the other agendas are more rigorous.' (R11, Senior Lecturer, Newfy (post-1992), 10+ years' experience.)

'The TEF, quite honestly, I know it's there, does it influence? If TEF wasn't there, would I change the way I do things? Umm, probably not... So, yeah, if TEF wasn't there I'd still do things the way I do them. Obviously, if TEF wasn't, now that TEF is here, there are more frameworks there is a more detailed framework and that is influencing what I do but as I say even without that framework, umm, I would want to hit my minimum requirement, well go beyond my minimum, I don't think of minimums of what do I need to do to do a good job and I will do that regardless, so.' (R18, Associate Professor, Newfy (post-1992), 9+ years' experience.)

These excerpts indicate that for these Newfy academics, reflections on TEF were made knowing that there was already a wider organisational

institutional logic in play and that TEF priorities were dealt with by others. R3 explicitly recognised the importance in relation to the university mission, and yet still didn't get personally involved. This attitude left these academics to maintain their current gear and focus on their own work (Eteläpelto et al., 2013; Vähäsantanen, 2015) and work in an occupational fashion within an organisational structure. This is evident through emphasis on how they prioritised their own work "I've been too busy with other things" (R11), "I don't think of minimums of what do I need to do to do a good job" (R18). Following Shields and Watermeyer's (2020) work on institutional theory and logic, it might have been expected that participants would deliver occupational accounts at Olaf (pre-1992) and organisational accounts at Newfy (post-1992). However, the responses from Newfy (post-1992) were much more complex and nuanced than such a simplistic and binary assumption.

R18 maintained they were aware of TEF as a framework, however, that their own individual standards were such that TEF had little implication for them. Their own internal professional standards were higher than those of TEF anyway. Although it may be anticipated that the post-1992 venue might be more accepting of TEF because it is potentially a more organisationally professional environment, R18 demonstrated that *individually* they were more occupationally oriented than organisationally influenced. While the higher education sector is evolving in response to TEF, these individual academics maintain attitudes typical to their profession despite the pressure to adapt their working practices.

The most positive response from a Newfy (post-1992) respondent was that they knew what TEF was, and it did have an impact upon their activities, but that they felt that this impact was 'justifiable' (R22, Newfy (post-1992), Senior Lecturer/Middle Management, 10+ years' experience) and did not encroach on their identity or agency (Eteläpelto et al., 2013; Vähäsantanen, 2015). R22 said 'Those sort of things don't fuss me.' Similarly, although R24 said that the TEF kept them awake at night, they saw the rationale behind it:

'There is pressure on me to be REFable but it's not something that keeps me up at night. Whereas the TEF does.' (R24, Newfy (post-1992), Senior Lecturer/Middle Management, 10+ years' experience)

What could make TEF more pertinent to both R22 and R24 was their programme leadership posts which held them accountable for and

responsive to specific TEF measures such as progression rates, student satisfaction scores and employability outcomes. The substance of TEF was their day-to-day practice and their KPIs were dependent upon it. TEF has created roles responsible for TEF metrics not accountability for those metrics by those teaching. The next section will explore this in greater depth.

6.3 TEF and individual practice

This section will examine if and how the respondents feel TEF affects their individual practice. The data demonstrates that individual responses to TEF are variable, largely by role. Lecturers and Senior Lecturers with no additional programme management responsibilities, those referred to as 'jobbing academics' by R26 (R26, Senior Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 25+ years' experience), are found to be largely distant and insulated from its implementation or effect. Some 'jobbing academics' observe changes in practice or procedure but don't always realise that these changes are due to TEF. This section will discuss at least one example at each level; senior management, middle management and the 'jobbing academic'.

6.3.1 Senior management

For the purposes of this study senior management includes members of staff who work at central university level (i.e. the Vice-Chancellor's office) or at Faculty or College level (e.g. Deans and Associate Deans). Almost without exception, all senior managers described change to their roles and environment over time, and attributed this to developments in their professional space, including TEF.

R26 (a senior manager in the central Vice-Chancellor's office at Olaf (pre-1992) with high level responsibility for student experience) expressed views about day-to-day practice across a range of roles in higher education and their university. Their senior role was recently created to lead a portfolio with major responsibility for teaching quality, a point which will hugely influence their attitude to TEF. Starting with their own work they observed that it is not merely teaching quality that has been impacted by TEF (across Olaf (pre-1992) and the sector), but the value-added activity that sits alongside and supports the practice of higher education:

'Actually, what I think it has done is that it's had a huge impact on leadership in higher education... So, I mean from where I'm sitting, I feel that over the last 10 years or so, I mean my everyday practice and my, I guess a lot of what I've done and more often what I've been involved in has been shaped by the quality agendas.' (R26, Senior Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 25+ years' experience.)

R26 said that their work has been 'shaped' by the quality frameworks, this relates again to the concept of the changes in professionalism described by Evetts (2009). This extract illustrates how TEF has created senior and middle manager roles and changed roles to meet third party targets and objectives, which externally measure that landscape.

R26 reflected upon their individual practice and TEF positively. They maintained:

'I'm a fairly unusual academic in some ways, because I think the impact that it's been on me has been really positive. I mean I like frameworks; I like systems, I like process. I like kind of order and being able to be held to account in ways that I can see and that are measurable'. (R26, Senior Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 25+ years' experience.)

R26's affirmation that they like "frameworks", "systems", "processes", and "order", as well as being "held to account" talks to oppositionality of the organisational and occupational ideal-types of professional work seen in the literature. R26 identified that their perception of the popular view of the pre-1992 professional space is of an occupational one. By approving of the changes in higher education to have a more organisational account, for example external forms of regulation, audit and measurement, and targets and performance indicators, R26 categorised themselves as atypical among their peer group. They saw organisational understandings of higher education as atypical.

Based on their own view of self and of others, R26 said that they were an atypical academic. They aligned with an organisational professional identity and recognised that this misaligns with the professional identity of other academics. Several other interviewees also self-identified as atypical and shared a perception of TEF as a positive change. A further characteristic of atypical academics was their unusual entry routes into academia (commonly via a non-academic role or this being their second career) and/or not having

a doctoral qualification. Other atypical academics provided similar responses to R26, that they found TEF to have had positive consequences. They considered not only that TEF had provided new opportunities for them, but also that higher education needs the metrics and measures that TEF provides. Atypical academics appeared to be more organisational than occupational in their outlook, an observation which aligns with the earlier finding that TEF is supporting a more industry-engaged approach to higher education, by introducing processes that align with the expectations of higher education teachers who have come to academia from other professional backgrounds. A more detailed analysis of atypical and unconventional middle-tier academics follows in section 6.3.2.

The regearing outlined by R26 earlier in these findings involved the restructuring of Olaf (pre-1992) and the creation of middle tier posts with specific responsibilities around the management of teaching. This led to Olaf, a pre-1992 research-intensive university, hiring a teaching-focused academic leader whose description of their own professional identity and professional values had a distinctly occupational orientation but with the academic emphasis on teaching rather than research. This made them distinctive among their peers, who typically have an occupational orientation grounded in research.

6.3.2 Middle managers

For the purposes of this study, middle managers are defined as those who have responsibility for degree programmes, or a particular area of responsibility within a school (e.g. a suite of degree programmes, feedback and assessment, or a research project). Like the senior managers, the middle managers interviewed identify clear change within their practice and identity. Whilst this change is caused by a few factors, they identified TEF as being one of them.

At Olaf (pre-1992), R31's middle-management role is highly distinctive in as much as it oversees the changes in practice and process felt necessary to respond to the introduction of TEF and TEF measures. R31 described their appointment to the role:

'They asked me to do a kind of 360 review of practices, processes, attitudes, perceptions, staff perspectives, student perspectives so I did quite a substantial piece of work with a big report and recommendations for the school... In terms of a cultural shift, I have to say whilst Professor X was Head of School... we got some traction, we got some real movement and that was positive... when we had a change of Head of School that went backwards, I felt. In some ways, if I'm honest, part of my stepping away from the role was twofold, one that I'd done the initial tenure that I'd been asked to do, so that was fine, and secondly I felt that the direction of travel in the school was less aligned to change than it had been.' (R31, Senior Lecturer/Middle Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 5+ years' experience)

A key aspect of the extract is the recognition of a movement within the school and some positive response to this. Equally important is R31's observation that with a change at the top, the movement reversed. (Although one must be wary that a Head of School is directed by senior management.) R31's experience indicates that despite the pressure of external metrics, at that time within Olaf, individuals had more autonomy than at Newfy (though this may have changed in the intervening years). Their work was aiming to improve the position of the teaching-focussed academic professional albeit via organisational means (review, report, recommendations). Further, by elevating the profile of the teaching-focussed academic professional the cultural shift would be engendering the acceptability of some of the government's organisational aligned agenda (metrics and measures) to be adopted into Olaf (pre-1992)'s occupational culture and making them more acceptable – as seen previously with REF.

Having considered what a teaching academic might look like in their university, R31 reflected directly upon the impact of TEF in their workplace and as part of their role. It is clear from the interview that R31 is a strong advocate for the spirit of TEF, but that they have reservations about the effectiveness of TEF and NSS in their current form. They said:

'I think TEF and the NSS are blunt instruments. They don't really get to the lived experience or to the heart of student experience, but at the same time, they bring a level of transparency, and they give us a set of data from which we can ask questions, good questions.'

'It's tick boxy but there's no real valuable qualitative data that helps you shape your understandings... they're blunt because they're quantitative data and we haven't got the qual to go with it... I think we can use it in that helpful way, and it can also shine a light on when things are very good.'

'I think they're too simplistic and I don't think they necessarily ask the right questions or privilege the right kind of things... Would I want to refine them, yes? They can be improved but I wouldn't go back to a time without them.' (R31, Senior Lecturer/Middle Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 5+ years' experience.)

This quote is at the crux of R31's perception and attitude regarding TEF. From this quote one can observe that R31 was not taking an organisational perspective on TEF and teaching and learning but trying to overlay occupational ownership on the results of the data and how the results can be used to organise in an occupational way. R31 noted that the quantitative data is flawed, but, in their words, 'there is no qualitative data' to underpin it³ and even using the data they have, universities can own teaching and learning as a profession. For R31, although the TEF and its proxy measures are flawed, they are the best that is available, and as such, they should be embraced. In summary, academics can create the discourse, generate the status and prestige, and respond to this. All of this resonates with Evetts' (2009) definitions of occupational professionalism.

R25 is a senior lecturer at Olaf (pre-1992). They have been an academic for over 10 years, spending the last two of them at Olaf (pre-1992). They are employed on a teaching and research contract. Their opening reflections were about their contract type, which is supposed to be 40% research, 40% teaching and 20% administration:

'We're on contracts as T&R which is 40:40:20. I have to say nowhere I've ever worked has ever remotely resembled that. I think it's just complete nonsense. I would say I spend perhaps 70% of my time on teaching and teaching related stuff. I suppose in a good year it might be 60... my research time last year was swallowed to an admin job doing a review of the postgraduate programmes across the school and now I

³ Although, of course, there is qualitative student feedback within the NSS.

have quality and standards which is an admin role... it is a substantial admin job even though it's still only supposed to be 20% but that fluctuates throughout the year. So, I would say, I guess I would be happy if I could get to 60% teaching, 20% research, 20% admin but that's not what I'm supposed to be doing.' (R25, Senior Lecturer, Olaf (pre-1992), 10+ years' experience.)

The professional identity of this respondent, as with many in Olaf, is grounded in their research. They recognised how the encroachment of market logics has reframed their work away from a focus on research and towards the organisationally-aligned processes of quality verification. This jars with their professional identity as they said, 'that's not what I'm supposed to be doing'. The data demonstrates that teaching related administrative/citizenship tasks can encroach into the allocation of research time for some academics. Thus, research becomes 'swallowed up' by other duties. However, the REF is perceived to be more important at Olaf (pre-1992), leading R25 to call research:

'The sword of Damocles [is] hanging over us' (R25, Senior Lecturer, Olaf (pre-1992), 10+ years' experience.)

and:

'We all know all of the time we should be more productive on research'. (R25, Senior Lecturer, Olaf (pre-1992), 10+ years' experience.)

The extracts highlight a tension between what research active academics expect to do: "what I'm supposed to be doing", which implies a certain level of occupational autonomy, and how their time is actually allocated in ways which are perceived to be outside their control: "my research time last year was swallowed".

R25 further considered how this has changed over time:

'There used to be this idea that you did research in the summer, oh the mythical summer, and I think a lot of that is just getting eaten up more and more by teaching and admin. A lot of that work is done on an annual basis or with admissions, you know, it's quite heavy in the summer.' (R25, Senior Lecturer, Olaf (pre-1992), 10+ years' experience.)

Again, R25's lack of control was expressed when they describe their summer as "just getting eaten up." This represents a change in day-to-day practice and the nature of the yearly cycle within higher education that has arisen during R25's career. A melting pot of changes including rising student numbers, the administrative approach to degree management, increases/changes in assessment methods have all contributed to the erosion of the academic rhythm. Whilst this is not all down to TEF, it is perceived that TEF contributes to this, requiring additional tasks to be completed within already busy workloads. This leads to the loss of '*discretion and occupational control of the work*' seen in Evetts' (2009) ideal-type of occupational professionalism. More time is required to carry out teaching and teaching-related activities which, previously might have been spent doing research.

Later R25 described some of the responsibilities perceived to be driven by TEF:

'I'm responsible ultimately for making sure that the school... adheres with the central requirements of quality which come down from the university which in turn of course come down from on higher still from HESA and, you know, quality standards overview but on a practical basis what that means is things like every new module, every new programme has to go through this horrendously complicated and bureaucratic procedure for getting approval. It's my job to oversee that and try and push things along and try and get things up to the required standards. It is a very bureaucratic job of trying to maintain that quality and standards are adhered to. I have oversight, the key word in my job description is oversight, and it's just, it's oversight for the personal tutoring, making sure that that's we're responding to our students. It's oversight for feedback and assessment, it seems to me that if they don't really know where else to put it, they put it under quality and standards because ultimately, I suppose everything that the university is trying to do is about maintaining quality and standards.' (R25, Senior Lecturer, Olaf (pre-1992), 10+ years' experience.)

R25 very clearly illustrated their responsibility in terms of responding to external and central policy level requirements with regards to quality and standards. They explicitly critique the encroachment of bureaucratic logics, recognising how external audit and measurement reframes their professional

practice. Despite the bureaucratic and increasing vertical structures they refrain from managerial discourse. The sentiment that runs throughout this extract is a very benign response to compliance with standards. The nuance is that either R25 or 'they', (The University), are not overly wedded to this compliance. Details like repeated use of the word 'oversight,' 'pushing things along', and 'don't really know where else to put it' connote a lack of respect, support or even empathy for the standards and compliance with them. This resonates very clearly with the three types of response to external quality frameworks; contestation, compliance and complicity (Leathwood and Read, 2013).

R20 acknowledged increased emphasis on accountability in higher education reflects the expectations both of state and of students. R20 is a Senior Lecturer with middle management responsibility at Newfy (post-1992). They have 10+ years' experience. They said:

'I feel whilst the accountability is a good thing, I think, you know, the old days of academics and their ivory towers taking long vacations may well have been a bit of a myth and may not have happened at Newfy (post-1992), umm, doesn't sit with today's society but I have noticed a sharp increase in accountability both from the university which is probably driven from government policy and also from the students themselves.'
(R20, Senior Lecturer, Newfy (post-1992), 10+ years' experience).

R20 initially referred to the 'old days' and 'ivory towers,' as being a thing of the past in the higher education sector (Etzkowitz et al., 2000; Watson and Watson, 2013) but noted that it never really existed at Newfy. This extract demonstrates how professional identity at Newfy is often developed in opposition to Olaf and their projection of an occupational ideal onto academics (Connolly and Hughes-Stanton, 2020). This fits the recurring finding of this study that professional identities at pre-1992s are principally occupational and post-1992s are principally organisational. The quote echoes the comments made by R25, evoking the "myth" of a more relaxed approach to academic workload. What R20 referred to as "the old days of academics and their ivory towers taking long vacations" echoes R25's comment that "there used to be this idea that you did research in the summer, oh the mythical summer and I think a lot of that is just getting eaten up." Thus,

the fallacy of abundant research time ever being available is called out by academics in both parts of the sector.

The atypical academic has previously been discussed from a senior manager perspective in section 6.3.1. This section reflects on the atypical middle tier academic. R31 was recruited into a middle management post at Olaf (pre-1992) (the same university as R26) and has recently stepped back from this role into their substantive academic post. They are an academic with over seven years' experience in post at Olaf (pre-1992), prior to which they worked in a senior position in schools and formerly a career in a private sector occupation:

'I often introduce myself either an unconventional academic or not a proper academic, which is really interesting and probably says a lot about a lot of things but I have been at Olaf (pre-1992) for the last seven years and I was recruited into Olaf (pre-1992) because of my professional expertise as an ex senior leader and head teacher and specialist in terms of education practice.' (R31, Senior Lecturer/Middle Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 5+ years' experience)

Like R26 who described themselves previously as 'atypical', R31 introduced themselves as 'unconventional' or not 'proper'. Several self-determined 'unconventional' academics feature in these findings. When isolating facts about them, the 'unconventional' academics in this research are usually women and are over 40, they feature equally across both Olaf (pre-1992) and Newfy (post-1992), they have degrees but don't always have doctoral qualifications and came to academia after a first career as something else (often, but not always, teachers). They hold teaching-focussed roles (or have held proportionally more teaching than research focussed roles). They are not apologetic for this, whilst acknowledging that this made them different from their peers. Analysis of their interview data shows they perceive a conventional academic to have a research-focussed philosophy. There is a clear link between them being 'unconventional', 'not proper' or 'unusual' because they have a teaching focus. Having summarised the 'unconventional' academic, this examination of R31's interview will analyse some of these aspects in greater depth.

R31 described what makes them unconventional among their peers:

'I often feel like I don't particularly fit very well within academia although I'm an active researcher, I'm published, [...] [but] I haven't grown up in an institution and I don't have a PhD yet. I'm internationally published so there's all sorts of things and ways in which I don't fit the normal mould so that's why I, I'm kind of not sure what I'd term myself.' (R31, Senior Lecturer/Middle Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 5+ years' experience.)

In R31's view, their recently created role ran against the grain of the more traditional occupationally-oriented positions which one might anticipate in a pre-1992 university. R31's expertise is in teaching excellence, not research excellence, but they work in a research-intensive university. R31's critical self-portrait as a successful, but unconventional and therefore awkward academic, evokes the changing profile of professionalism proposed in extant literature (Evetts, 2009; Freidson, 2001). The awkwardness of the quote is echoed in other parts of the interview and highlights an ongoing process of change within the profession.

According to R31, colleagues see them as a different/new type of academic and this has implications for R31's professional identity. During their interview, R31 stated they are seen by their peers as 'being from outer-space' and, whilst many are supportive, some are 'terrified' by them and perceive the new role as 'lifting the lid' and that colleagues 'can't see beyond [R31] wanting to change things.' This confusion illustrates resistance to both philosophical and practical changes in the academic professional milieu, which is demonstrated through peer response to R31's professional identity. Where earlier in this chapter, respondents said that their peers might be scared or fearful of TEF, not really because of the additional workload or emphasis on metrics, but because it might take them away from research, analysing R31's interview leads to the impression that it's not so much the emphasis on teaching that they fear but change itself.

Further examination of the data reveals what R31 thinks a 'proper' academic might be versus what type of academic they are. R31 confirmed their lack of 'fit' and discussed the 'normal mould' being an 'active researcher' (which they said they are), 'growing up in a university' (which they said they did not), 'having a PhD' (which they said they do not) and being 'internationally published' (which they said they are).

Elsewhere in the interview they discussed their historical reflection of what ‘proper academics’ were including concepts like ‘autonomy’, ‘academic freedom’ and being ‘experts’.

‘Academics needed autonomy and academic freedom and they were the experts in their field.’ (R31, Senior Lecturer/Middle Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 5+ years’ experience)

In providing a list of factors of a ‘conventional’ or ‘proper’ academic possess R31 critiqued their own professional environment and provided their own perception of the ideal-type professional academic. Their perceptions resonate strongly with the ideal-type of occupational professionalism provided by Evetts (2009). Table 6.1 illustrates this point, by overlaying Evetts’ model (2009) of the ideal type of professionalism and the continuities of professionalism as an occupational value:

Table 6.1: A comparison of the qualities of R31’s ‘proper’ academic with those of Evetts’ occupational ideal type

R31’s ‘proper academic’	Continuities	Occupational ideal-type
Active researcher	Authority, Legitimacy, prestige, status, competence, knowledge	Discourse constructed within professional groups Discretion and occupational control of work
Growing up in a university	Legitimacy	Collegial authority
Having a PhD	Legitimacy, prestige, status, competence, knowledge Credentialism (Freidson)	Discretion and occupational control of work
Internationally published	Legitimacy, prestige, status, competence, knowledge	Discretion and occupational control of work
Autonomy	Competence, trust, discretion	Collegial authority, occupational control
Academic freedom	Trust, discretion	Collegial authority
Experts in their field	Prestige, status, identity, culture	Discourse from within, occupational control, trust

R31 does not have discipline expertise in theories of professionalism, however their characterisation of a ‘proper academic’ resonates strongly with the occupational ideal-type articulated by Evetts. As the table demonstrates, R31’s reference to being an active researcher, growing up in a university, having a PhD and so on clearly align with the diverse continuities (forms of

legitimacy, prestige etc) and characteristics of the occupational ideal-type (nuances of discourse, autonomy and control etc) described in the model. The table reconfirms the applicability of Evetts model to this analysis and illustrates the extent to which an 'ideal-type' of academic is embedded within the discourse and culture of higher education.

Having established they are not a 'traditional academic,' R31 moved on to explain what type of academic they might be and considers the professional space in which they work. Specifically, R31 said that what they feel was missing were:

'Checks, balances and measures' [and the understanding that] the practice of teaching and learning is an area which you can develop in, in and of its own right.' (R31, Senior Lecturer/Middle Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 5+ years' experience.)

In this data extract, the discussion of 'checks, balances and measures' might lead the reader to assume that R31 was looking for a more organisationally oriented discourse. However, from the latter part of that extract it can be inferred that R31 was suggesting that the academic profession is multi-faceted and that one can be a 'proper academic' in the field of teaching and learning whilst also possessing subject expertise (e.g. computer science, biology, marketing, literature). R31 referred to this being 'missing from people's understanding.' What R31 implied here is that 'teaching excellence' is something which a 'proper academic' can have within a portfolio of highly-regarded subject expertise. In their view, an academic can be *both* an expert in computer science and teaching excellence, marketing and teaching excellence, literature and teaching excellence. Yet their perception is that the two are still considered to be mutually exclusive. Later R31 reinforced this point:

'I'm fascinated at why it's ok not to understand about the science and the latest research we have about good learning and teaching.' (R31, Senior Lecturer/Middle Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 5+ years' experience)

There is a contrast here in R31's language. 'Checks, balances, and measures' are very managerial words, which would be more connected to organisational professionalism, whilst referring to the 'practice' of teaching and learning, in which one can 'develop', and a consideration of 'people's

understanding' are words which point towards a more occupationally oriented account. Using the work of Abbott (1988) and Lybeck (2018; 2019) one can examine this to show that R31 perceived skewed jurisdictions within academia. R31 illustrated that there is a subject-based jurisdiction, which academics commonly perceive they have i.e. a member of academic staff is a lecturer/reader/professor in a subject area. However, R31 further added that there is an 'ajurisdiction' in as much as a member of staff does not necessarily perceive that they are a teacher or educator.

R31 was not suggesting that the teaching element of being an academic is a sub- or semi- profession or ajurisdiction, they espoused that it is a profession or jurisdiction, dually important to a subject expert, and often overlooked. This is demonstrated through R31's consternation 'I'm fascinated as to why it's not ok...' that colleagues do not want to know nor be experts in teaching as they are in their subject areas. What is being seen here is not necessarily a binary of an organisational or an occupational account of professionalism but that there is a duality of professions here to be perceived/recognised i.e. the academic is both 'subject expert' and 'teacher' and that currently the recognition of the 'teacher' as professional in higher education can only be established via organisational means. R31 was frustrated by this and looking for the professional teaching academic to be treated and esteemed as are their subject expert researching peers. Finally, the testimony of R31 pointed towards the occupational ideal type as being the preferred ideal type. Therefore, that the teaching-focussed academic professional can only be esteemed via *organisational* professionalism provides a second means to relegate them below the research-focussed academic professional who is esteemed through *occupational* professionalism. What R31 strived for is a cultural shift to professionalise the teaching-focussed academic professional into an occupational ideal-type. Chapter seven considers this shift in more detail, from a gendered perspective.

6.3.1 Senior Lecturers and Lecturers: The 'jobbing academic'

Earlier in this chapter, R26 was quoted as referring to lecturers and senior lecturers as 'jobbing academics' (R26, Senior Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 25+ years' experience.) For the purposes of this research, the 'jobbing

academic' is a lecturer or senior lecturer on a teaching-focussed or teaching and research contract. They may have module leadership responsibilities, but they do not have programme level responsibility nor additional responsibility at school or faculty/college level. This section opens with R26's commentary on the 'jobbing academic' before analysing the interview data supplied by these academics themselves.

From a senior manager's perspective, R26 offered the following comments on the academic staff who deal with students day-to-day:

'I think it's had very little impact on what I would refer to as your jobbing academic. I think colleagues that are working in academic schools and departments who are delivering teaching, supporting learning and delivering on research agendas as a whole, I think that the impact on them, in terms of their everyday practice, in terms of how they do things, in terms of the external pressures that are placed on them, my sense is that's fairly minimal.' (R26, Senior Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 25+ years' experience.)

R26 believed that 'jobbing academics,' experienced minimal negative impact from the creation of TEF, and the interview data indicates that many such 'jobbing academics' agree with this interpretation. However, this is not exclusively the case. Some held strong opinions to the contrary and several described their day-to-day work being affected by new activities and requirements introduced by the university to enhance their TEF scores.

R4 discussed the impact of TEF on their role in relation to the policy context. R4 is a Senior Lecturer at Newfy (post-1992) with module leadership responsibility but no programme leadership duties. They have been an academic for 3+ years, having returned to academia after a spell in the private sector. When asked what they think TEF is, they replied:

'An attempt by government to try and redress some of the things we've talked about, actually.'

I'd welcome and I do welcome the attempt to redress the balance. You know, we've already talked about what REF has done, now and I do feel perhaps that the teaching side had become the poor relation so great that they've tried to do this. You know, I think there is obviously a desire

to improve what we do but I'm not clear about how much that's being driven by TEF.

I do wonder if there should be a bit of a step back and say, well hang on, what actually are we trying to do here? You might find that through a combination of EPAS and AACSB coming along, we make sure that well we start thinking more holistically about exactly what we are and what we're trying to do.' (R4, Senior Lecturer, Newfy (post-1992), 3+ years' experience).

Here, R4 took a reprofessionalisation perspective, shown by their reference to “redressing” the balance. They reiterated their endorsement of an organisational form of accountability (Evetts, 2009), with the positive allusion to REF, and welcomed the attempt to raise the profile of teaching (Gunn, 2018). However, their support for the policy machine was not wholehearted, and they questioned whether measures of accountability created and managed from within the profession (i.e. those provided by EPAS and AACSB) might do a better job in fulfilling this function.

R16 at Newfy (post-1992) presented a deprofessionalised perspective:

'I came into this job because I like freedom and, within reason, I like being able to do my own thing and work on my own, so I tend to, unless I have to, I just do that, I just work on my own.' (R16, Senior Lecturer, Newfy (post-1992), 20+ year's experience).

As they are at Newfy, it was anticipated that R16 might be more organisational in their attitude towards professionalism. However, they were very much the opposite. The freedom they referred to speaks to the occupationally oriented professional. *'Doing their own thing'* speaks to the discretion and trust of the occupational ideal type. This presented challenges to them as they are an occupational ideal-type in an increasingly organisational space.

Having situated themselves in the occupationally-orientated academic space, R16 referred specifically to TEF:

'I don't have much time for TEF. It's basically a paper exercise. I don't think, I think if you said to people, oh we've got a TEF gold, but did you know no one at any point came in and watched anyone teach. It's just some paperwork, I think they'd be quite shocked. So, I think it's again,

it's a bureaucratic exercise. I don't feel like, I just, I just come to work, try and make my lectures interesting, try and be kind and engage with the students and try and set assessment that's fair. And that's it, everything else, the TEF, the NSS, not really that bothered with. Bad answer!' (R16, Senior Lecturer, Newfy (post-1992), 20+ years' experience).

R16 suggested that TEF does not measure quality, because there is no classroom observation. R16 matched teaching excellence with quality of teaching but perceives that TEF is not grounded in practice and not grounded in teaching but rather a judgement and assessment of 'paperwork'. Who completes the entry submission the 'best' gets gold, rather than who teaches 'best'. TEF is 'bureaucracy' and 'paperwork'. R16 observed that teaching quality is not measured. Nobody 'came in and watched' any teaching, which, by inference, is clearly important in measuring teaching quality to this respondent. Whilst it may be that teaching quality is evidenced through the supporting narrative, this is not something which is cascaded out to the general staff population.

R16 felt that the changes in their working environment encroach on their practice in a negative way, although they do not always make the links between the changes/requirements and those initiatives being in response to TEF (or other teaching metrics). For example, this person did not perceive the uniform use of assessment brief templates and marking rubrics, which was made faculty-wide at their school in Newfy (post-1992) as something which was done to improve TEF scores. Instead, to them, it is something which impedes their academic integrity and autonomy.

At one stage, R16 became very heated and exclaimed rather shockingly '*Are we living in North Korea?*'⁴ when discussing the bureaucracy used within their institution and how constricted it makes them feel. This emotive rhetorical question underlines the frustration academics feel when change is imposed upon them by what they perceive as external bureaucrats. It is notable that academics often exhibit the same attitude in respect of central government bureaucracy and central university bureaucracy, recognising only discipline-specific entities such as faculties or accrediting bodies as

⁴ I acknowledge that this quote could be perceived as offensive and note that it was not my personal view.

'internal' to their occupation. They do not understand nor agree that the new measures are supposed to be enhancing the student experience, but instead they are seen as encroaching on their academic (and disciplinary) agency and integrity. As R16 demonstrated, lecturers and senior lecturers who take a deprofessionalised perspective do not readily recognise or acknowledge the relationship between practice and metrics, nor the accompanying narrative which they are not always party to.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated responses to questions about day-to-day academic teaching practice and professional identity and agency. The data revealed a range of perspectives, from complete lack of awareness of TEF through compliance to support. Narratives were provided from both a deprofessionalisation and a reprofessionalisation perspective at both study sites, indicating that academic's views of academic professionalism are not solely shaped by the venue in which they work. Both universities experienced change in day-to-day practice and process, although some academics did not perceive that changes were in response to TEF measures.

Outside of management, many academics appeared to be largely unaffected by TEF in terms of professional identity and agency. Others (approximately a third of all respondents), more commonly at Newfy (post-1992) felt that TEF affected their career direction and trajectory. At Olaf (the pre-1992) the prevalence of an occupational ideal-type meant that professional identity and professional agency were more greatly impacted by research and REF than teaching and TEF.

At the middle to senior level, the effect of TEF on practice, process, identity and agency was more profound than among 'jobbing academics', through the creation of new roles and changes to extant ones. At Olaf (pre-1992), there was some resistance to the work brought about by these changes. At Newfy (post-1992), this work was more readily (although not universally) accepted. New and changed roles were often mediated by gender, and this will be explored further in the next chapter.

Chapter 7: TEF and Gender

7.1 Introduction

Women continue to wrangle with the gendered experience of professional work in higher education. While changes to professional work have been widely critiqued from a gender-neutral perspective through the theoretical frame of deprofessionalisation, some studies have also examined occupational closure, boundary work and reprofessionalisation from a feminist standpoint.

The first part of this chapter considers the gendered dimension of occupational closure, the occupation-specific hierarchies which prevent women from becoming practicing professionals in some areas of higher education (Larson, 1977; Witz, 1992; Ballakrishnen, 2017). The second part demonstrates the establishment of gendered boundary work, which yokes women to specific roles or duties as a demarcation of male and female spaces (Leathwood and Read, 2013). This cements male academics' positioning in the more esteemed spaces (Gieryn, 1983; Acker, 1990; Davies, 1996). The third section examines female narratives of the reprofessionalisation of higher education. Through TEF based enclaves within the university, senior roles are created and embraced by women, even if they are rejected by men. These gendered developments parallel documented patterns of employment in the health sector (McMurray, 2010) and law (Ballakrishnen, 2017). In this way, sector-wide recognition of the strategic importance of teaching excellence has created new opportunities for female leadership in higher education.

Note that in other chapters the gender of interviewees has been deliberately removed and the pronouns they/them have been used throughout to ensure no bias. In this chapter gender is included as it is relevant to the findings. Participants self-identified their gender as part of a short demographic survey embedded in the participant consent form prior to the interviews taking place.

7.2 Occupational hierarchies in higher education

The study found that women in both pre- and post-1992 universities continue to experience occupational hierarchies and occupational closure. Multiple female interviewees described feeling inferior working alongside, or even supporting their male counterparts (Hochschild, 1983; Acker, 1990; Davies,

1996; Wharton, 2009; Leathwood and Read, 2013). Their accounts reflect the traditional gendered occupational closure seen in the literature (cf Davies, 1996; Thomas and Davies, 2005 and Ballakrishnen, 2017). The literature and the study findings indicate that both REF, and more recently TEF, perpetuate gendered occupational hierarchies (Acker, 1990).

One respondent directly called out the issue of gendered hierarchies, describing the issue as ‘broader structural inequalities:’

‘I also think, and you know, I need to say this because I think it needs to be part of your research is I think there’s broader structural inequalities around gender that are rife. I think there’s particular ways to perform as a good academic and they tend to be based on white men. So I think if you don’t do that for whatever reason, either because you can’t or because you reject it, I think it’s harder to get credit in terms of those metrics. Well, I think it’s very interesting yeah to look at the gender breakdown of REF, you know, and I think within our school anyway, so stuff like I do is seen as like frivolous.’ (R34, Female, Senior Lecturer, Olaf (pre-1992), 10+ years’ experience)

R34 was animated in describing her environment. In the first instance she was keen to illustrate the gendered nature of her working environment. That is, to excel in being an academic, one’s activity must be based upon that of a white man. Not only that, but she was cognisant that if she does not adhere to the stereotypical white male performance measures, which are generated through research and REF, she is seen as ‘frivolous’. She continued to explain:

‘Yeah, and you know, is it really even sociology? And then you know, people who are doing like science and technology studies, that’s seen as very, well that’s real. (R34, Female, Senior Lecturer, Olaf (pre-1992), 10+ years’ experience)

Firstly, it is work which is largely carried out on women; secondly it is located in an area of her field which (she said) her male counterparts consider insignificant, and finally, that her methodological approach and methods sit outside the remit of the received/approved approaches (again, by white men.) Within her environment, she believed the white men define the ‘good academic’. Institutionally, academics are typically promoted based upon the

number of REF quality publications⁵ and various models exist in the sector which accord research-active staff greater remission from teaching duties as a reward for publication in high-ranking journals. Whilst the REF was introduced to measure research quality and impact, and to fund further research accordingly, one can infer from R34's evidence that it has largely been adopted by universities and used by them as a credentialing mechanism for advancing and promoting academics or preventing the advancement of teaching focussed staff. Broadly speaking, a higher proportion of research active academics are male than female.

Further aligned to the earlier work of Acker (1990) R34 lamented that the internal work allocation and performance measures are based on REF metrics, which, in her eyes, are all gendered. The introduction of the TEF has done nothing to improve (or alter) her position. She said:

'it's definitely not a stick that's used to beat us yet' (R34, Female, Senior Lecturer, Olaf (pre-1992), 10+ years' experience).

Another female employee at Olaf (pre-1992) mentioned this, specifically in relation to PDR (Performance/Personal Development Review):

'I think there's still a feeling that the priority has to try and be the research side of things, quite frankly, in terms of your PDR and all the rest of it.'
(R27, Female, Lecturer, Olaf (pre-1992), 5+ years' experience)

The inference from R34 and supported by R27's comment (also from a pre-1992) is that REF perpetuates the gendered occupational hierarchies that are already well established in pre-1992 (occupational) spaces and that the fear among women academics is that TEF is going to do nothing to rectify this. The REF metrics have influenced university structures and are used to manage personal research performance, providing a route to personal recognition and career advancement, but TEF has not had the same impact on individuals, or created the same opportunities.

⁵ The use of REF metrics to inform promotion decisions can be seen in internal promotion documents which were viewed as part of this research but that had to remain confidential to both universities. Other routes to promotion are available. However, it is a commonly held view that it is harder to get promotion via a teaching route, than a research route. At time of writing there were only two professors at Olaf who had achieved their chairs via the teaching route versus multitudes who were professors on a research basis.

Furthermore, R34's narrative is an excellent example of women's experience attempting – and failing – to overcome occupational closure within higher education (Leathwood and Read, 2013). Academic history shows that women were precluded from being university educators (professors) and even students for many years (Larson, 1977). Latterly, the statistics show that there are fewer women in senior management, professorial and research focussed roles (Leathwood and Read, 2013; Morley, 2013; Macfarlane and Burg, 2019; Gilbert et al. 2024). The most recently available data notes that 69.2% of professors are male (AdvanceHE, 2024) and the academic gender pay gap is 13.7% with men earning an average of £48,925 and women trailing with an average of £42,203 (AdvanceHE, 2024). R34 purported that such gender inequalities might be because women are commonly unable to work as men do:

'I didn't travel for probably four years... I work truncated hours... it's not all the boys, but there's definitely a group of boys in this department who I love dearly but who work 12 hours days and work Saturdays. On one level, on both levels, on every level, I'm like, you nutters, but also I'm just like how is it comparable that my work is being judged against these people who, you know, obviously work very hard for what they get but are able to do that. You know? And also want to do that, which I don't want to do. (R34, Female, Senior Lecturer, Olaf (pre-1992), 10+ years' experience).

The reference to travel is because REF encourage papers of 'international excellence' and because R34 has caring responsibilities that require her to be at home. REF serves to perpetuate such occupational closure because the only way that academics can hit REF targets is through producing papers at a certain level. To deliver on teaching and research goals, academics need to work additional hours. Therefore, not only do men allocate the internal resource and external rewards; men are free to work long hours and don't have the caring responsibilities experienced by their female peers – meaning that they continue to dedicate time to research 'out of hours' that women cannot. This concurs with the findings of Thomas and Davies (2005), Leathwood and Read (2013), Macfarlane and Burg, (2019), and Gilbert et al. (2024) that women's careers in higher education do not keep pace with men's.

For most of the male interviewees, TEF was having little, if any, effect upon their practice. This was the case at both Olaf (pre-1992) and Newfy (post-1992). It was a male professor at Olaf (pre-1992) who declined to be interviewed on the basis that he was 'intending to avoid TEF until he was told he had to do something about it'. Another male respondent echoed this sentiment:

'I have to say I've been at very arm's length from that... So, I'm management and it's been talked about in a very broad sense but that's been housed under learning and teaching and so far, I haven't felt it. It might well be happening at learning and teaching committees and boards of study but again I'm not privy to that and that hasn't fed back into my group directly' (R45, Male, Professor, Olaf (pre-1992), 15+ years' experience.)

The inference drawn from this commentary in terms of occupational closure is that firstly, male established staff are closing against TEF and TEF based work rather than embracing it. In this case, these two male professors were resisting and pushing against having to do work related to TEF. They hold positions and the cultural capital that they feel allows them to ignore it.

There are some small pockets of interest in teaching (and TEF) from male academics. These come from those who very specifically engage with the teaching function, either by choice or design and take a Lybeckian perspective on their jurisdiction as both subject focussed professional and teaching focussed professional. One such example is R35 (M, Olaf (pre-1992), 10+ years' experience) who holds a senior teaching-focussed position, shortly to come to the end of their tenure but who says "I get the feeling that it might stretch a little longer though because it's kind of the role that nobody wants" thus nodding towards Olaf's research-focussed occupational outlook.

A further example of this being his scene setting of attitudes at Olaf:

you have a small group of ultra privileged professors, the rock star professors, pulling £100k a year and they don't teach much... they're riding the wave. And then you have some people who teach because they have to teach but they'd rather do research and that's fine and they do an ok job. And then you have some people who really enjoy that relational aspect, they really enjoy the mission of higher education, they really believe that education is not about just going through hoops and

getting a qualification so you can into a job and be more socially mobile. They believe in change. You see a lot of those people, the ones that are involved in this industrial action, and ideas for trying to get the university to be more egalitarian in its approaches to its student and its employees (R35, Male, Senior Lecturer, Olaf (pre-1992), 10+ years' experience.)

R35 argued that at Olaf “instead of being proactive about how we organise teaching and approach it, we’re being more reactionary than proactive.” This further reinforces the conservative view of Olaf painted by other interviewees. Like his peers, R35 doesn’t think TEF is working. Although he is invested in teaching, he does not believe TEF is doing anything to promote it:

‘the TEF isn’t measuring the quality of teaching. It’s not a teaching excellence framework. It’s the same as the National Student Survey, which isn’t concerned with actual student experiences. It’s a ridiculous notion to say that you can start putting universities together on a league table because of 13 or whatever questions... questions that don’t really represent anything that’s actually happening’ (R35, Male, Senior Lecturer, Olaf (pre-1992), 10+ years' experience.)

A male respondent who takes such an active interest in the philosophy of education, teaching at his institution and the measurement of that teaching (via TEF) is rare in this study and even rarer at Olaf.

This theme is exemplified further at Newfy (post-1992) where R4 declared a stronger affinity to teaching than research, thus placing him outside the closed male research based occupational space alluded to by R34 earlier in this research:

‘I believe being front heavy is a bit old fashioned these days, which I suppose in the world of REF, certainly what I was seeing at Oak Uni⁶, was almost a division of the teaching and the research space. Oak Uni was very much looking at the REF and trying to get in place individuals who were star performers at publishing in three-star journals and build up its REF submission, while you had the others who were the ones who got the teaching. That slightly goes against my beliefs of what academia

⁶ Here, Oak Uni is a pre-1992 Russell Group university.

should be about.’ (R4, Male, Senior Lecturer, Newfy (post-1992), 3+ years’ experience).

He later added:

‘I sometimes feel that the teaching side gets a less emphasis than perhaps it should’. (R4, Male, Senior Lecturer, Newfy (post-1992), 3+ years’ experience).

Despite his self-positioning as a rare male teaching focused academic, he acknowledged the limited impact of TEF:

‘I think there is obviously a desire to improve what we do but I’m not clear about how much that’s being driven by TEF.’ (R4, Male, Senior Lecturer, Newfy (post-1992), 3+ years’ experience).

This illustrates the gendered responses to both REF and TEF reported in both pre and post-1992 universities.

The data in this section exemplifies, through a specifically gendered lens, the bifurcation of research and teaching which is referred to throughout the study. It demonstrates the isolation of women from the more prestigious domain of research and their acknowledgement of and frustration with this. The data clearly demonstrates the remoteness of TEF and TEF metrics for male academics. It highlights the rewards and career progression opportunities for men of being (able to be) research focussed, and the lack of rewards for the women who are unable to perform as strongly in research.

7.3 ‘TEF: well, it’s the girls, isn’t it?’ TEF as the creator of boundary roles

The rise of accountability and marketisation culminating in the creation of TEF saw the creation of new professional, academic and management roles with responsibility for teaching quality and metrics. Analysis of the data finds that these are boundary roles that exacerbate occupational closure. (See Chapter 2.7 for a comprehensive discussion of boundary roles and occupational closure.) This resonates strongly with the literature, which consistently finds that women do the teaching and men do the research (Leathwood and Read, 2013; Macfarlane and Burg, 2019; Gilbert et al. 2024). Some of these roles and tasks relate to middle or senior management roles,

well paid roles, but there is a sense that a consequence of them being TEF based roles finds them less well respected i.e. the men simply don't want them.

At Olaf (pre-1992), women reported they find themselves doing the TEF related tasks, be it the teaching or the managerial and administrative work around it. Several respondents declared this:

'I did wonder if you would talk about gender because again it's something that does come up in relation to teaching that again for those of us who are spanning both, there's often, I mean I end up reading a lot about it, how the female contingent end up being the ones being given the more teaching focussed or heavy or admin roles.' (R27, Female, Lecturer, Olaf (pre-1992), 5+ years' experience)

'On one hand the change of government focus on teaching is a good thing as it has elevated the importance of teaching in HE... As a female academic I have always been offered management/leadership/pastoral roles, so I don't think this has changed significantly due to the TEF focus' (R30, Female, Reader, Olaf (pre-1992), 15+ years' experience).

These two quotes demonstrate the women's awareness that they are experiencing occupational closure in respect of research-focussed roles. Instead, they continue to cover the teaching, as they always have, and take on TEF based roles, which are sometimes new and sometimes well-paid, but which are boundary roles nonetheless. R30 acknowledged that TEF work aligns with the 'management, leadership, pastoral' roles which have been earmarked for women, on the periphery of the academic professional context.

At Newfy (post-1992) R2 (Female, Senior Lecturer, 5+ years' experience), R23 (Female, Senior Lecturer/Middle Management, 5+ years' experience) and R24 (Female, Senior Lecturer/Middle Management, 10+ years' experience) referred to a variety of roles and tasks carried out for TEF. Both R23 and R24 considered everyone as being *responsible* for TEF but several specific roles being *accountable* for it. Both women identified a list of jobs at their university which they would consider TEF roles. All but one of the seven posts identified are held by women. When asked to reflect on this a little more, R23 said after a long sigh and laughter 'well, it's the girls isn't it?' During her interview, R2 said, 'it's because we like a lot of thankless tasks, isn't it?' R2

was clearly stating that women are typically given the less popular, or 'thankless' tasks.

By contrast, R24 discussed the nature of the work involved:

'I think it's because these roles rely on a lot of goodwill and they rely mostly on a lot of emotional labour and relationships, forging relationships and that labour tends to fall predominantly to women.' (R24, Female, Newfy (post-1992), Senior Lecturer/Middle Management, 10+ years' experience)

Here, there is another reference to women being given the pastoral roles as mentioned by R30 (Olaf pre-1992), above. There appears to be no surprise among these women that this gendered pattern of work allocation has continued with TEF based roles. This, again, echoes the conceptualisation in the literature of boundary roles (Gieryn, 1983), pastoral roles, as those requiring the most emotional labour (Hoschchild, 1983; Wharton, 2009), and third space roles (Whitchurch, 2013).

Considering her earlier response in more detail R23 added:

'If you were to take a positive view on it, there are more pastoral care, thankless tasks those sorts of things, but those sorts of roles come with a degree of flexibility in terms of when you deal with things that allow people to write their own calendars which is generally useful to women who may have caring responsibilities, dogs, children.' (R23, Female, Newfy (post-1992), Senior Lecturer/Middle Management, 5+ years' experience)

These data show that female academics at Newfy tend to perceive TEF-related work somewhat more positively than their counterparts at Olaf in that they have found a way to use TEF-related roles to facilitate a flexible, carer friendly working environment. However, that it is women who require this flexible working represents a further nuance to occupational closure and boundary work.

7.4 'It meant I got a full-time job': Gendered perspectives from a reprofessionalisation standpoint

The final theme encompasses women in specific TEF related roles and their reflections on their own work and position. It seeks to establish whether

women consider themselves to be held on the boundaries or if they are carving out their own space as professional academics because of TEF. Such a shaping of professional roles would be considered reprofessionalisation.

R31 is a female Senior Lecturer, in a middle-management position and has 5+ years' experience. During her interview, she makes it clear that she considers her role no less important than her colleagues', nor that other opportunities are closed from her. She said:

'Responsibility for quality and standards and all of that... my whole kind of raison d'être if you like, in terms of higher education is teaching and learning and student experience, that's what excites me, that's what's important to me' (R31, Female, Senior Lecturer/Middle Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 5+ years' experience)

She provided her views on the positioning of her employer which provides some insight into her feelings on occupational closure and boundary work:

'[Teaching] we don't do it well enough; I don't necessarily think Olaf (pre-1992) is radically different to other research-intensive institutions but it's less high priority. And many academics will articulate that, very honestly, you know, we're a research-intensive institution and people will say, you know, research is first, that's the most important thing, that's the thing that drives everything else, whether it's promotion, whether it's esteem, you know, all of those things are tied up with research and there's very clear and transparent processes around that for research. The processes in terms of promotion or esteem or those kind of drivers around teaching and scholarship are much less transparent and well understood so there isn't parity in terms of that and I think, if I'm brutally honest, I think the quality of our provision is pretty poor. And little appetite to do anything about that because we are brilliant from a research perspective.' (R31, Female, Senior Lecturer/Middle Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 5+ years' experience)

Whilst this extract points towards the potential of occupational closure and boundary roles existing at this venue, it does not demonstrate a respondent who feels that their work is available to them because the higher priority roles are taken by men, nor that they are being held back. She was clearly

passionate about what she does and although she acknowledged she is at a research-intensive institution, her teaching focussed work is still important.

However, the final quote from this participant was somewhat less positive. Here she discussed the work that she has done for her school within the university. She commented on a change of management from a woman to a man, and what happened after this change. She said:

'that went backwards I felt'

and

'I felt that the direction of travel in the school was less aligned to change than it had been.' (R31, Female, Senior Lecturer/Middle Management, Olaf (pre-1992), 5+ years' experience)

She implied that the change in leadership may have caused the change in philosophical direction for the school. It appears that the regressive attitude occurred when the senior management role moved from a woman to a man. While correlation is certainly not causation, such a philosophical shift within the school leadership would align with the tendency observed within the interviews and within the literature for male academics to prioritise research over teaching.

At Newfy (post-1992), an interview took place with a woman who had recently been promoted. R20 is a Senior Lecturer with 10+ years' experience of academia and 20 years in industry. She discussed her previous posts as being responsible for various aspects of teaching (programmes) and staff (a particular subject group). She reflected on the general landscape of higher education:

'I think there was a need to change the way things were done, particularly if more than 50% of young people are now going to university. The old business model did not work anymore, so I understand why it happened but the consequence of that has meant that higher education now means something completely different.' (R20, Senior Lecturer, Newfy (post-1992), 10+ years' experience).

Reflecting on her own career, she made no mention of constraints on her academic career path. In the first instance she said, *'for me, it meant I got a full-time job and great'*, followed by:

'I've got another exciting job to look forward to in the next few weeks that, that's come out of all this. It's also meant that I can bring my own experience from industry for almost 20 years and put it into practice, much broader in a transferable way so it's exciting.' (R20, Senior Lecturer, Newfy (post-1992), 10+ years' experience).

The new job that she mentioned here is related directly to TEF and she does not perceive that as being a lesser role or a woman's role. For her, this is not occupational closure, nor boundary work. She said it is 'exciting' and 'a really good opportunity.' This is in contrast with R35 (male, Olaf, post-1992) who stated earlier that they were going to extend their teaching-focussed role because 'nobody' wanted those jobs. Is it that no men want the jobs, or nobody in the pre-1992 sector want the jobs? Here is evidence of a woman in a post-1992 who very clearly wants the job.

R20 is clear that TEF has brought opportunity for her and that this opportunity is not bound by any gender challenges. The opportunities have arisen because higher education has become more marketised, while also becoming more measured and controlled. The opportunities which have arisen from this changed business model have been positive for her. They are not on the periphery nor are they less respected. While some female participants in this study recognised the low status of teaching historically, others drew on a reprofessionalisation perspective to argue that TEF provided them with opportunities and have drawn upon this to get promoted themselves.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter identified evidence of clear gender-based differences in response to TEF. Male respondents almost entirely bypass TEF, with it having little impact on their careers or day-to-day practice. Female respondents were divided. Many female respondents reported evidence of occupational closure with respect to research roles, as seen in the 'old' model of occupational professionalism. They found themselves excluded from prestigious, often professorial, research roles (Morley, 2013). Women reported their pre-TEF experiences saw them pigeonholed into teaching and pastoral roles (Leathwood and Read, 2013). Moreover, their post-TEF experiences changed little – there is a sense that women academics continued to be relegated to boundary work, albeit with opportunities to

access more prestigious roles on the boundary. Despite TEF aiming to enhance the profile of teaching within the academic community, this aim was not realised. Teaching (and TEF) remain inferior to research in the eyes of the higher education establishment (and particularly among male academics) and, women remain in teaching-related positions. There is one exception: where TEF-related senior roles were created, it was commonly women who took them. Some women took on these roles gladly – despite a male participant claiming that “nobody” wants them. Other female respondents perceived these roles as boundary roles, keeping them at arm’s length from more high-status roles. Those who embraced these TEF-related duties used them to professionalise their own space and pursue career advancement. Evetts’ (2009) claim that women are sometimes able to take more senior roles because the men don’t want them points to an opportunity for women to take the lead in reprofessionalising academia, by working around the occupational closure that bars them from career progression through research. Since this thesis was originally produced and submitted, Hardacre (2025) successfully defended her thesis which drew broadly similar conclusions in as much as TEF produces three dimensions of gendered inequalities:

‘1) the privileging of ‘objective’ measurement practices, making them both easier to embed and harder to disrupt; 2) the devaluing of feminised practices and spheres, continuing to undervalue work where women are disproportionately situated; 3) the homogenising of HE spaces, excluding or marginalising a wider array of identities and knowledges. (Hardacre, 2025: 263-64).

The next chapter will discuss the conclusions, implications and recommendations of this study.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

The aim of this research was to critically compare the effect of TEF upon pre-1992 and post-1992 universities in the UK. The study examined the impact of TEF on academic and professional roles, practices and institutional structures in higher education, as perceived by 47 interview participants. While previous studies have considered TEF from a deprofessionalisation or a Foucauldian perspective (Graham, 2019) or have provided either a pre-1992 or post-1992 institutional focus (Fregona, 2024; Hardacre, 2025; Cornford, 2026); this comparative study uses theories of professions, and notably those of Freidson (2001) and Evetts (2009) to demonstrate that despite TEF's aims or objectives, with few exceptions, most academics have remained both distant and insulated from its implementation or effect. TEF highlights ongoing differences in institutional, strategic and operational approaches to education between pre-1992 and post-1992 universities. Unlike REF, involvement in TEF provides no direct benefit to individual academic careers, and the experience of TEF is markedly different for women than for men.

The analysis was carried out through the lens of Evetts' (2009) model, 'Two ideal-types of professionalism in knowledge-based work'. Semi-structured interviews were conducted across two case-study universities. The first, presented as 'Olaf', was a pre-1992 research intensive, and the second 'Newfy', was a post-1992 university. This chapter recaps the main findings of the study, before considering their implications for theory, policy and practice. The chapter concludes with suggestions for further research.

8.2 Key findings

The key findings of this study highlight the impact of TEF and resultant regearing of universities in response to the rebalancing of academic priorities imposed by the government. This regearing focused primarily on upward-facing accountability structures aligned with TEF metrics, with little impact on everyday practice. Ongoing disparities in institutional strategies, educational priorities, and operational practices were revealed, between pre-1992 and post-1992 universities. Despite TEF's intended aims (to enhance teaching

quality and inform student choice), most academics remained largely detached from both its implementation and outcomes. This was consistent in both study sites, notwithstanding the greater emphasis on teaching quality that was in evidence at Newfy. The evidence showed that in contrast to REF, TEF offers no direct personal benefit to academics, and its effects are experienced differently by women and men.

TEF acts as a boundary object (Star and Griesemer, 1989) within universities by bridging diverse stakeholders perspectives especially between pre and post 1992 universities. TEF offers a shared framework that different university groups—such as administrators, faculty, students, and policymakers—can engage with. Each group may view TEF from distinct angles: professional service staff often see it as a tool for benchmarking and attracting students; academics may view it as mechanism for judging or controlling their personal approach to teaching; academic managers (e.g. Heads of Faculty or Department) might view it as a gateway to better resource allocation and strategic autonomy whilst senior management perceive it as a performance measure that has the potential to improve the university standing, and by extension its financial position. This makes TEF a versatile boundary object, facilitating cross-functional dialogue and strategic alignment within the university, while still allowing each group to apply its own priorities and expectations.

Furthermore, this study highlights the inequalities and inconsistencies which remain prevalent between pre-1992 and post-1992 universities; some of which it was the very aim of TEF to overcome (Gunn, 2018). This thesis highlights what is valued in higher education in the UK and illustrates the prestige economy operating within (Guzmán-Valenzuela et al. 2022). This work illustrates that culturally within academe, the status of teaching remains lower than its research counterpart, despite any efforts by senior leaders or junior academics to change gear. Although, it is appreciated that all cultures take time to change and that many academics work in universities with a long heritage of research esteem, there is little drive to move culture. Finally, the prestige economy is such that while the audit culture is pervasive, its levers have unequal power, and academics are more responsive to changing gear for research than for teaching.

8.3 'Regearing': What is the impact of TEF upon institutional logic for both pre-1992 and post-1992 universities in the UK?

This research found that TEF has had an impact upon universities in the UK. This was seen through themes generated around the regearing of institutional logic, service, structure, teams, bureaucracy, measurement and metrics. However, the changes were not uniform, and the interviews demonstrated that changes were often dependent on the type of university and their institutional logic (Shields and Watermeyer, 2020). This difference was defined by me by using an actor concept from one of my interviewees and transforming it and applying it as an analyst concept as 'regearing'. This research demonstrates many of the anticipated changes and continuities in professionalism as an occupational value as espoused by Evetts (2009) across both types of university.

Regearing was adopted as a conceptual framework for interpreting the findings. Regearing operates as a management metaphor invoked during periods of rapid organisational and cultural change. In this context, it refers to the strategic shift observed in pre-1992 universities as they move towards more organisationally driven structures. The metaphor captures the need for institutions to undertake rapid, deliberate, and often structural transformations to realign their strategies, operations, and cultures in response to shifting objectives, emerging markets, and evolving stakeholder expectations. Much like changing gears in a vehicle to adapt to new driving conditions, institutional regearing involves reassessing an organisation's current "gear" — its pace, resource deployment, processes, and overall alignment — in the face of significant external pressures, such as the REF, TEF, KEF, and broader geopolitical or socio-economic developments. These *shifts* result in substantial, yet frequently unacknowledged, changes to institutional culture. In some scenarios universities can be perceived to "stall" where they are unwilling or unable to change gear in time.

At Olaf, the pre-1992 university, respondents discussed regearing in terms of an institutional and structural movement from the occupational ideal-type to the organisational ideal-type (Evetts, 2009) as attempts to respond to TEF. This was further reflective of a movement from an autonomous institutional logic toward a more managerial logic (Shields and Watermeyer, 2020). In the

post-1992 university, Newfy, there was evidence that the university was already operating under the organisational ideal type and taking a more utilitarian and managerial institutional approach. At both universities, attempts at regearing appeared to manifest in bureaucratic structures rather than having a direct impact upon teaching. Further, the pace of change differed with each university operating in different gears dependent upon their institutional priorities.

At Olaf (pre-1992), this 'regearing' was apparent physically and structurally, with impact visible at senior management level and within professional services. However, it was less so at lecturer (teaching) level. Although participants in the study witnessed changing roles, new roles, centralised and decentralised roles, and the elevation of status of roles (e.g. service/administrative), there was little evidence of effect upon teaching directly. Whitchurch (2013; 2015) referred to third space professionals as characteristic of new or changes roles. The data in this research supports existing theorists who propose that such roles and duties can represent both examples of occupational-closure (Spencer and Podmore, 1987) and a positive extension to the professional environment, both in education (Whitchurch, 2015) and other professions (McMurray, 2010; Ballakrishnen 2017).

At Newfy (post-1992), there was a lesser need to regear. Respondents evidenced that Newfy was largely in the appropriate gear (for TEF). The organisational ideal-type was already in evidence, but TEF Gold provided the opportunity to lock-in staff understanding that their university was credible and celebrate their success. Further, despite Newfy (post-1992) being in gear, there was still room for change and interviewees discussed the rise of third-place professionals (Whitchurch 2013; 2015) as their Olaf (pre-1992) counterparts did.

One such institutional implication has been in terms of the nature of the business of a university education, with academics at both Newfy (post-1992) and Olaf (pre-1992) referring to a movement in higher education toward service provision and a more marketised environment. This represents a classic demonstration of encroachment of the marketplace (Freidson, 2001), but is specifically acknowledged as marketisation of higher education (Ashwin, 2020) and that TEF supports this drive (French, 2017). This thesis

reports that there are few respondents who support such marketisation of their environment and resonates more with the ongoing struggle to define, redefine and transform what university education represents (Ashwin, 2020).

Overall, this study broadly supports Evetts (2009) conceptualisation of a movement from an occupational ideal-type to an organisational ideal-type in knowledge-based work, in this case, higher education through the introduction of TEF. For Olaf (pre-1992) this has constituted a greater change than Newfy (post-1992s), for whom this was a continuation of a movement that was already in play. This raises a question regarding whether HEIs are on a continuum moving away from being wholly autonomous units, as they once were.

As noted by Evetts herself (2009), Freidson before her (2001) and others since (Noordegraaf, 2015; Liljegren, 2012) these ideal-types are fluid, can change subject to environment or context. This leads to hybrid (Noordegraaf, 2007; 2015) and pragmatic (Liljegren, 2012) applications. Furthermore, this study demonstrates that higher education continues to grapple with what it should represent and professional practice, with or without government intervention (Ashwin, 2020.)

8.4 Personal narratives: What is the impact of TEF upon the individual experiences and professional identities of academic professionals in those universities?

This study has demonstrated that TEF has reinforced the already established organisational account of professionalism at the post-1992 university. Further, the more senior the position, the more likely this organisational account of professionalism was accepted. Participants from the post-1992 university normalised the language of Evetts' (2009) organisational model. Their testimonies were littered with anecdotes concerning standardised procedures, managerialism, and the influence of accountability mechanisms. As an extension to this, a small minority of post-1992 respondents considered TEF to be beneficial as a mechanism for proving their worth to themselves, to the government and the broader educational sector. This took them somewhat further than Gunn's (2018) assertion that TEF would facilitate external recognition of post-1992s excellent teaching practice

toward a more internalised affirmation for those employed at post-1992 venues.

By contrast, the data from the pre-1992 university demonstrates that the occupational ideal-type is dominant. Here, there was often a subtle and sometimes explicit rejection of the mechanisms that organisational professionalism might champion. For those working at the pre-1992 university, control was driven more by REF mechanisms than TEF. Many respondents observed that the pre-1992 university considered REF to be more important. Comparing the two - as seen in James (2022) - this may be because REF displays more characteristics of the occupational ideal-type than TEF, which is more organisationally aligned. Specifically with reference to resourcing, REF is overseen and assessed within the professional group, from a panel of expert peers, which is occupationally driven. TEF is not, it is overseen by an external third-party body, which is more organisational in its outlook. Additionally, TEF uses several proxy measures for quality, which are more aligned to student outcomes and student experiences. Therefore, Olaf – the pre-1992 university – is more predisposed toward research, the occupational ideal-type and REF. By contrast, Newfy - the post-1992 university - is less research driven, demonstrating an organisational ideal-type that does not favour either REF or TEF.

REF has a higher status within pre-1992 academia, above the significance of TEF as a measurement tool and subsequently is more embedded in academic life. This is not to say that REF is not without its own measure of criticism from the literature (Watermeyer and Chubb, 2019; Watermeyer and Tomlinson, 2022).

Respondents from both the pre- and post-1992 university drew on various other organisations or measures, which they felt held greater esteem than TEF. For example, At the post-1992 venue, participants in business disciplines referred to the AACSB accreditation as being more relevant to their professional practice than TEF. The AACSB may be considered more esteemed because it is perceived as an internal metric/mechanism and therefore aligned to the occupational ideal-type. Therefore, I conclude that there has been movement in perceptions of authority and control by academics at both types of university. Some of this change is attributed to occupational authority and others organisational. Generally occupational

authority is more positively received than organisational. TEF is not credited with a great deal of professional authority over many academics at the pre-1992 venue and, commonly, is relegated below other metrics.

Organisationally, respondents at both universities noted additional staffing and responsibilities which they attributed to TEF. This created an additional layer of authority and management in many cases. Furthermore, it created additional duties for incumbent academics and new or enhanced professional services roles. Responses to these changes in authority and management were variable and with many merely noting the change without appraising it. Additionally, respondents felt that there had been a shift in authority and control of the student body with the intention of managing student behaviours and responses to TEF surveys (NSS and GOS).

Attitudes expressed by respondents at both universities resonate strongly with the changes in governance and management reported by Evetts (2009) and a movement from internal self-governance to externally enforced authority, management and control. What is more finely nuanced in the findings of this research is that some respondents perceived that TEF has not necessarily imposed regulation and accountability upon higher education but has locked in internal accountability measures that have long since been in place and moved them from internal/occupational quality measures to external/organisational and government led measures. This, respondents suggested, is not necessarily a negative, because surely the sector wants to see students progress from one year to the next, gain good degrees and get good jobs. However, because this scrutiny is now externally managed it has become more competitive, open to gamification (Scott, 2015; Ashwin, 2020; Cornford, 2026), and has put pressure on middle and senior management. This has led to the perspective that (for some) TEF has not raised the profile of teaching as per its original aim (Gunn, 2018) but has driven higher education through an organisational ideal type, beyond mere accountability, target-setting and performance review and toward the model incorporating the 'tyranny of numbers' proposed by Ball (2003) and 'dataveillance' purported by Graham (2019). The respondents' narratives are broadly supportive of some measurement/metrics, which can be used as a means to promote quality but most (regardless of university and seniority) felt that TEF is not delivering on the brief and that the measurements and metrics have gone too far. This potentially has a looping effect (Hacking, 1995) in terms of

what is recorded becomes how the performance is measured, but how performance is measured determines what can be recorded.

At the pre-1992 university, academics at senior level commented on increased process and management and the implications of this to both them and professional services teams. This was largely increased bureaucracy, the language of paperwork, driven by TEF accountability measures and data management. There was disagreement between some senior managers who perceived that there was little impact on academics involved in delivery, middle managers (e.g. programme leaders) who felt an impact on their work and module leaders/lecturing staff whose responses ranged from a complete unawareness of TEF to indignation at the perceived restrictions on their work. Similarly, there were a range of perspectives on whether this language of paperwork created by TEF was justifiable or useful. Overwhelmingly at the pre-1992 university, academics who were involved in delivery and on a standard teaching and research contract (i.e. where 40% of their time was supposed to be devoted to teaching, 40% to research and 20% administrative/other tasks) found that TEF added to the teaching/teaching administration burden causing a significant conflict in managing their time. Furthermore, that most pre-1992 academics were occupationally-oriented and that TEF is an organisationally oriented measure, this only added to their frustration.

Most individuals reflected upon how institutional logic has affected the professional identity and practice. Across both types of university some were very astute in demonstrating their understanding of the motivations of their employers. This is explained in some cases by the fact that they had worked at both pre- and post-1992 venues during their careers. Either way, unprompted, some participants made the links between a pre-1992 being research-intensive and having occupational ideal-type characteristics, which would be negatively impacted by TEF. They subsequently described post-1992s as being the teaching dominant, organisational ideal-type, which would be unaffected or positively impacted by TEF. Furthermore, they made their career choices (used their professional agency) and moved from one type of venue to the other to suit their professional identity and understanding of workplace culture. In terms of individual professional identity and agency, this is a positive narrative because they were able to structure their careers aligning their professional identity to that of their employer.

However, for others, TEF created a narrative of deprofessionalisation which had an extremely detrimental effect upon their professional identity and professional agency. In one extreme circumstance, changes caused internal conflict because the interviewee created a strong deprofessionalisation account by virtue of their employer displaying a deeply organisational ideal-type which did not align with the respondent's own ideal-type that they had been working to for the last 20 years. What made this case doubly novel was that the respondent was an occupational ideal-type in a post-1992 - currently and historically organisational ideal-type – setting. It was surprising that this academic could talk fondly about their academic career whilst being in a setting which so profoundly contradicted their professional identity and infringed on their professional agency.

Some more nuanced narratives demonstrated the varied effects of TEF on professional identity and professional agency. Respondents who worked at the pre-1992 university were united in their description of the university being research-intensive and resistant to TEF. However, their comments about the effect of this on their professional identity and agency varied. Some depicted an understanding of their employer's professionalism but indicated that they were able to work within both that and the organisational parameters afforded by greater external accountability and regulation. They were able to excel on a teaching pathway (rather than in a combination of teaching and research). Others were aligned to the pragmatic professionalism described by Liljegren (2012) or the hybrid professionalism theorised by Noordegraaf (2007; 2015). Several found the tension between being a teaching-focused academic professional in a research-intensive university considerably challenging and reported that this had negatively affected their professional identity.

Although Olaf (pre-1992) exhibited an occupational ideal type oriented toward autonomy, this autonomy was structured through a collegial, research-focused authority. As a result, participants reported limited agency in their own work, as they were unable to devote time or effort to developing innovative teaching practices. Independence was framed in autonomous authority only as long as research objectives were met, and that teaching took a back seat. Teaching work was further framed with the caveat that changes could only be made which would not negatively affect TEF measures.

Drawing from Evetts (2009) and Eteläpelto et al (2013), this study concludes that TEF did influence individual experiences and professional identities at both pre-1992 and post-1992 universities. Where the individual employee's professional identity is aligned with that of their employer this effect is mediated or positive. Where they are not aligned, this can cause problems with both professional identity and agency.

8.5 It's the girls, isn't it? How has TEF affected the professional work and identity of female academics of higher education in the UK?

This research found that TEF did little to improve the position of women in higher education and found evidence to support TEF being used to reinforce occupational closure (Freidson, 2001), the creation of boundary work (Gieryn, 1983) and third space workers (Whitchurch, 2015). One interviewee noted that TEF reinforces 'broader structural inequalities'. There were small pockets of opportunity at senior level where TEF based roles were created and women took such opportunities. However, there is evidence that women took them in some cases because men were not interested (Evetts, 2009). One male respondent stated that "nobody" wanted these roles.

Interviewees across both the pre-1992 and post-1992 provided narratives describing boundary roles (Gieryn, 1983) or third-space roles (Whitchurch, 2013; 2015) in as much TEF created new roles and opportunities, however, that women were more likely to be offered these roles and that they experienced gendered hierarchies (Acker, 1990). TEF has elevated the importance of teaching, but women have always been given teaching roles anyway. By contrast, a not uncommon response from senior male academics was to do all they could to avoid TEF until work dictated otherwise. This concurs with the findings of Thomas and Davies (2005) who found that men undertook and controlled the research work, leaving women working to lead on more teaching-focussed work. This is a demonstration of occupational closure from research roles.

For a small minority of interviewees, TEF offered an opportunity to reprofessionalise the teaching dimension of academic work. In particular, it provided a space - most notably for women - for whom research primacy was not taken for granted, to assert and professionalise teaching on their own terms. TEF's emphasis on teaching and learning, provides some traction for

female academics. However, in one instance, only when supported by a female head of school, with the situation regressing when a male head of school later came into post. Although these interviewees championed their opportunity to professionalise, the query remains that were they being given these opportunities because women were considered suitable for it (Ballakrishnen, 2017) or were they merely conducting boundary work (Gieryn, 1983)? In this context the boundary work is teaching related, gendered (Acker, 1990) and creates occupational closure around the research work.

The study found jurisdictions (Abbott, 1988) and a jurisdictions (Lybeck, 2018; 2019) present in higher education. The elite jurisdictions are research related and the lesser esteemed jurisdictions are teaching related. Furthermore, jurisdictions are gendered. Research is predominantly the province of male academics with a greater proportion of women involved in teaching and teaching related roles. TEF drove teaching briefly into an accepted jurisdiction (albeit through two senior female members of staff), but once one of those senior positions returned to a male, teaching becomes an a jurisdiction once more. This lack of a jurisdiction for teaching, causes an ongoing, potentially gendered, professional tension.

In summary, this thesis concludes that TEF has affected the gendered experienced of professionalism. Although classic works on boundary work (Gieryn, 1983), gendered hierarchies (Acker, 1990) and gendered professionalism (Davies, 1996) are over 25 years old, this study proposes that each of these theorised perspectives remain current. The acknowledged movement from an occupational to organisational model has, in some cases, facilitated gendered feminised professionalisation of TEF-based roles. However, that this has commonly been done with the connivance of male colleagues who have fled this space (Evetts, 2009).

8.6 Implications and recommendations

As a result of these findings, academics should consider being more flexible in their jurisdictions. They might consider adopting the new opportunities that are emerging as a result of increased prestige of teaching and reconsider teaching as a jurisdiction alongside research. If they do endorse this position, they might push to keep this moving. Alternatively, if their professional identity is firmly established as research-focussed academic professionals, they may

benefit from developing greater understandings of the institutional logics and professional ideal-types that they are working within. By doing so, they will be able to marry their professional identity with the institutional logic and ideal-type of their employer to ensure a harmonious and satisfying career trajectory and professional pathway.

Universities should acknowledge that the academic profession is changing and facilitate open conversations about this. The sector should welcome discussion about occupational vs organisational ideal-types and identify where these philosophies fit in relation to different aspects of institutional strategy, management and operation. Attempts should be made to understand how different personalities contribute in different ways to teams and complex organisations. University strategy needs to give sufficient direction to employees so that managers and employees develop clearer understandings of their own work. This will ensure institutional and personal discourses of professionalism are aligned. This research has shown that there is potential detriment to individual job satisfaction if this alignment is mismatched.

8.7 Further research

From a theoretical perspective, this research largely endorses the work of both Freidson (2001) and Evetts (2009) who both describe and theorise a shift from an occupational professionalism to an organisational professionalism. The limited scale of this study leads to a recommendation for a larger study looking at the evolving relevance of organisational and occupational ideal-types in academia. Secondly, for further research into the gendered impact of TEF through the lens of boundary work and occupational closure - across the sector as a whole. Whilst this study has gone some way toward filling this gap, further theoretical work in this area may assist academic understanding of higher education and where it is going. Such theoretical investigation may help to inform the future direction of our education system.

Earlier studies (Graham, 2019; O'Leary et al. 2019), and government reports (DfE, 2021a), demonstrate that academics are uncomfortable with the ramifications of TEF upon higher education and the lack of perceived links between TEF and teaching excellence. Recommendations in the Pearce

Report calling for the framework to be rebranded as an 'education excellence framework' which might overcome some of these challenges - specifically regarding the link between the measures of TEF being based upon student outcomes - were rejected (Cornford, 2026; DfE, 2021b). This research demonstrates the continued failure of academics to see such links. Further work is needed to acknowledge the outcomes of the Pearce Report and either align the detail of TEF with aspects of higher education teaching or to clarify that this is an exercise in educational outcomes, not teaching delivery. This work needs to be undertaken in partnership, with policy makers and practitioners working together to develop a coherent framework.

Not only do policy makers need to reconsider TEF, but they also need to take a wider view of government intervention into the higher education sector and the benefits and pitfalls of the greater marketisation of this space. As can be seen in the fluctuation of intake numbers at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, the higher education market has reached saturation point. Intakes for the last few years have seen significant reductions, resulting in some universities facing financial difficulties (Adams, 2024) and redundancies (Foster and Gross, 2024). Further investigation is required into why and what to do about it to stabilise the sector.

8.8 Conclusion

For me, this study has constituted a sustained journey of professional and intellectual navigation. At the outset, I deliberately chose to pursue a professional doctorate in education rather than a PhD within my original disciplinary home of Marketing.

Along this route, I became aware of the extent to which I had previously travelled with limited understanding of institutional theory and institutional logics within the academic terrain I had been navigating for over 25 years (Shields and Watermeyer, 2020). Equally, I had not fully engaged with the discourse of professionalism (Freidson, 2001; Evetts, 2009) that was continuously being regearred around me - at times driving progress forward, at others causing hesitation or stalling. Undertaking this journey has significantly enhanced my understanding of my professional context, and I am indebted to each of the interviewees who shared their own routes, explaining what propelled them forward and what impeded their progress. In investigating the impact of TEF through the lens of professionalism, my

jurisdiction was firmly located within education, rather than business or marketing.

The study highlighted the gendered nature of individual responses to TEF. Several male respondents demonstrated resistance or complicity, with a greater proportion of female respondents adopting a compliant stance. In addition to these three typical response types, initially identified in the context of REF, a fourth stance was identified in the evidence of a small number of responses, most of them women, adopting management responsibility for TEF. In embracing and leading the “unrewarding” boundary work associated with TEF, some female academics have taken the opportunity to reprofessionalise a segment of academe, leveraging the government’s stated intention of raising the profile of higher education teaching. That these roles are available to women is seen as a function of the enduring prestige of research and resultant occupational closure, and the absence of any direct reputational benefit to individuals of participating in TEF. In the absence of personal rewards, TEF has introduced a collegiate model of teaching quality assessment that contrasts with the individualistic model of REF. The study found evidence that while women have begun to enact the reprofessionalisation of higher education within this boundary space, progress has been frustrated by the ongoing pre-eminence of research.

With the benefit of hindsight, if I were to embark on this research journey again, I would likely design a markedly different study. It would adopt a more explicitly gendered and feminist orientation and might incorporate auto-ethnographic elements. It would likely explore my own professional identity and agency in light of my understanding of professionalism.

One of the outcomes of this research (and the consequences of the geopolitical and economic challenges across the sector) has been my departure from the academic community. My enhanced understanding of discourses of professionalism and sector changes have led me to taking voluntary redundancy and retraining. Whilst I would happily embark on associate lecturing positions and I would never say never to full-time re-engagement, this seems increasingly unlikely as I struggle with the competing priorities and values afforded to research and teaching.

It was my own lived experience of this frustration that inspired this thesis.

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Appendices

Appendix 4.1: First draft aide memoire

Role:
Ask interviewees to tell me about their academic career. This will give an overview of their role. Ask them to identify how they chose or came to do certain roles within their career. Were there any mediating factors which affected those choices? What might they have done differently? Why? What might they like to do next? What factors, if anything, have created issues for their potential career path? NOTE: This type of general conversation will help to settle the respondent into the interview and relax them.
Role specifics:
Follow up the conversation about themselves by asking them what they know about TEF. Include a visual of the TEF Gold logo to jog the memory. Find out if they know when it started, if they know what the future might hold. If they don't know what TEF is, provide an explanation. Then move on to ask if they think that the TEF has influenced their role?
Identity:
Ask interviewees to say what they think their identity is. Allow for a free response and then fine tune by asking them to narrow this down to a professional identity. How different are they? What influences their identity? Ask about role, REF and TEF. What, if anything, has influenced what they do and how they do it?
Agency:
Ask interviewees to describe the concept of professional agency to gain an understanding of what they think it means. Provide an image with words associated with agency. Finally, clarify back to them your definition of theirs to ensure that you have listened correctly. Once a mutual agreement is gained between you, ask how much agency they have in their role? Ask them for a historical perspective, what did it used to be like? What is it like now? Why might this be? Once they have completed their description, ask more specifically about how their employer may have affected their agency, or the government, or REF or TEF. Storytelling? Ask the interviewee to tell a story about how something at work has changed for them and why. NOTE – this needs greater clarity?

Appendix 4:2: Final draft aide memoire

Repeat details of participant agreement and reconfirm intention to record interview. Gain permission to record and start recording. Open with thanks for agreeing to take part and start with a very open question:

How long have you been in HE? Tell me about your academic career so far?

Would you give me a sense of what you do now? Role, responsibilities

What do you enjoy? Why? What don't you enjoy? Why not?

What drove you in the direction you have travelled in HE?

Tell me about a typical day or week for you? How might this have been different five or ten years ago?

How do you plan/construct your activities? Your modules? Your teaching? What frameworks do you work within?

How do you think HE has progressed or changed since you started here? What do you think of these changes? How might structures have changed for you? How do you feel about those changes?

You've mentioned xxx, would you say that this change has given you more opportunity or less opportunity? Why?

Thinking about accountability within HE – do you think this is the same as when you first started, that you are less accountable, or more accountable now? What do you think is in place or has changed which is causing this? How do you feel about these changes?

You've mentioned xxx, would you say that this change has given you more opportunity or less opportunity? Why?

What impact has this had on you and your professional practice?

I've asked lots of questions about work-based factors which may have affected you and your professional practice, have I missed anything which you think has impacted on you in a positive or negative way? What? Tell me about it? What was the impact?

I'm particularly interested in TEF. What do you know of it? How has it changed the business of your department? What effect, if any, has this had upon you?

Finally, if you were to undertake your career again, what might you have done differently? Why?

Thanks and close.

Appendix 4.3: Participant consent form



Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project. You are participating in a recorded interview in order to examine your role, identity and agency as an HE professional. All opinions given will be treated in the strictest confidence and no data will be attributable to you. If you wish to be contacted regarding the research findings, please include your email address at the bottom of this consent form.

Andrea Beetles

Postgraduate Student (SOCSI)

Senior Lecturer in Marketing

I understand that my participation in this project will involve participating in a recorded interview and discussing my professional role.

I understand that participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason. I understand that I can omit or decline to answer questions which I do not wish to answer.

I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time. If for any reason I have second thoughts about my participation in this project, I am free to withdraw or discuss my concerns with Andrea Beetles.

I understand that the information provided by me will be held confidentially and securely on a server and in such a format that only the researcher can trace this information back to me. The information will be retained for up to 24 months and will then be destroyed. I understand that if I withdraw my consent I can ask for the information I have provided to be anonymised/deleted/destroyed in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), 2018.

I, _____ (*NAME*) consent to participate in the study conducted by Andrea Beetles, Postgraduate student (SOCSI), Senior Lecturer in Marketing (beetlesac@cardiff.ac.uk).

I wish to receive a copy of any published works as an outcome of this participation and I can be contacted on _____ (insert email address).

Signed:

Date:

Demographic information:

What is your current job title?

How long have you worked in Higher Education?

How long in your current post?

Please circle your age:

18 – 24

25 – 29

30 – 34

35 – 39

40 – 44

45 – 49

50 – 54

55 – 59

60 – 64

65+