

CHAPTER ONE

THESIS OVERVIEW

1. Introduction

The literature on management and leadership in higher education in Australia and practice by Vice-Chancellors. In this vein, criticism of these roles contends that the Vice-Chancellors are becoming ever more distant from the academic heartland of their institutions. Criticism of Vice-Chancellors in the higher education press and national newspapers has been common. The current research argues these views should be empirically examined, based on extensive time spent with two Vice-Chancellors during the course of their day-to-day activities. By examining the processes of role-enactment (the day-to-day behaviours) this research has observed significant activity that challenges existing views. This thesis focuses on the issue of “how” Vice-Chancellors act in their roles on a daily basis. This is in contrast to the existing literature, which essentially examines the “what” they do and “why” they do it aspects of Vice-Chancellor role-enactment.

In light of the preceding discussion, a significant gap has therefore, been identified both from an empirical perspective and from a conceptual perspective. In the higher education literature the term “role” has been referred to in a Presidential or Vice-Chancellor context, yet virtually no effort had been made to define the term “role”. This seems a surprising omission given the body of research examining “role” in other organisational management contexts (Carlson, 1951; Hales, 1986; Hales & Tamangani, 1996; Marples, 1967; Martinko & Gardner, 1990; Mintzberg, 1973, 1975, 1989, 1994; Noordegraaf & Stewart, 2000; Spender & Grinyer, 1995; Stewart, 1989; 1991, 1996; Whitley, 1989).

A number of critical arguments have emerged from the managerial role literature suggesting shortcomings in this domain. Noordegraaf and Stewart (2000) identify four broad areas of shortcomings in the managerial role literature. Firstly, they argue there is little theoretical or conceptual definition of management role. This can be highlighted by the lack of definition of the ubiquitous term “role” as an example.

Secondly, they note there has been too little focus on managerial effectiveness. Specifically, they note that empirical work on investigations of the "...demands, constraints and choices of managerial work" (Noordegraaf & Stewart, 2000, p.431) need to be understood. Third, contextual issues must be addressed in examining what influences may impinge on roles. What are the differences between public and private sector entities, for example, in determining role performance? This question is critical to the higher education debate given increasing concerns of the encroachment of managerialism into university management (Coady, 2000). Their fourth concern relates to methodological shortcomings. Here, much previous research has suffered due to small sample sizes and validity problems. They argue that methods, either quantitative or qualitative, must be rigorous and seek to find a balance between reliability and validity (Noordegraaf & Stewart, 2000, p.432).

1.1 The Research Problem and Questions

The major focus in this thesis is the exploration of role-sending signals that influence vice-chancellor behaviour in Australian universities. This focus identifies a significant gap in understanding the strategies vice-chancellors employ in order to carry out their day to day activity. No Australian research has devoted sufficient attention to this issue and thus perspectives gained at a relative distance from actual role-performance dominate the literature. The importance of the approach in this thesis is to inform human resource management practice and to better position both prospective vice-chancellors and universities in their recruitment and selection processes involving these roles.

In light of an extensive literature review of higher education management it was decided to adopt Katz and Kahns' role theory model (Katz & Kahn, 1978) as a focus for the conceptual framework of study. The choice of this model was based on its capacity to allow a close inspection of multiple influences on role behaviour. Thus, complex internal and external dimensions of organisational role behaviour were encapsulated within the theoretical framework. This is discussed further below and in chapter four.

From the literature review the following questions emerged. These are further explained in chapters four and five.

1. To what extent do personal characteristics influence the enactment of Vice-Chancellor roles?
2. To what extent do inter-personal characteristics influence the enactment of Vice-Chancellor roles?
3. To what extent do organisational (contextual) factors influence the enactment of Vice-Chancellor roles?
4. To what extent do extra-organisational (for example, government policy) factors influence the enactment of Vice-Chancellor roles?
5. To what extent do Vice-Chancellor role behaviours/patterns of role enactment have reciprocal influences on aspects of university systems?

Chapter five also discusses one of the major limitations of this thesis in that only two case study institutions were covered in depth. This has important implications for the transportability of the conclusions that emerge from the research findings. This point is taken up further in the final chapter of the thesis. It is acknowledged that the methodology has other limitations as well and these are the short-term participative involvement at each institution and access to more internal perspectives than external perspectives in the data gathering process about each Vice-Chancellor. This is discussed in detail in chapter five.

The following chapter summaries highlight the specific framework and perspectives for addressing the criticisms discussed above.

1.2 Chapter Two – Australian Higher Education Context

A common theme associated with the higher education literature, in the past 20 years in particular has been that of dramatic changes within the sector. Significant growth in student participation rates, reduced government funding, more competition, technological advances, and greater government interference in the ways universities are run, such as quality audits, permeate the literature. In Australia, these changes appear to have escalated around the late 1980s when the Federal Labour government introduced profound structural changes to the sector by restructuring the three-tiered system of universities, colleges of advanced education (CAEs) and technical colleges

(TAFEs) into two systems. The result of over 50 CAEs becoming subsumed within existing universities or becoming universities in their own right had a dramatic impact on the sector (Harman, 1996).

Throughout the turbulence of the past decade in higher education, much attention has been devoted to improving the management of our universities, including calls for greater accountability and efficiency. The Dawkins reforms of the late 1980s heralded a significant shift towards so called mega universities and a destruction of the binary system of university and CAE systems that had existed since the time of the Martin Report (1964).

Aitkin (1993), however, is one of the few observers of these trends to have challenged the orthodoxy that change has been dramatic and recent. For example he showed compelling evidence in 1993 that in historical terms the changes of the late 1980s and early 1990s were arguably less profound than earlier periods of growth in the sector.

Where we are in the process of growth in higher education is not clear to us. There have been periods where the rate of enrolment change has been much faster. In Australia, eg, it doubled from 1950-1960, trebled from 1950 to 1966, quadrupled from 1950 to 1970 quintupled from 1950 to 1976. It has less than doubled since 1983. On the whole, the last few years of growth has probably been more worrying to us in Australia than at earlier times because growth has been accompanied by structural change (Aitkin, 1993, p.88).

Aitkin draws the reader back to a substantive reality check in the higher education debate. He is not alone on this issue. Noted American writer on higher education William Tierney explored the perceptions of academic staff during his Fulbright sponsored visit to Australia in 2000/2001. Tierney certainly encountered people in higher education who felt in some way disenfranchised by a reduction in so-called academic freedom, yet their arguments were met by those who believed that the situation was not nearly as bad as many portray. Academic freedom as a principle

has been a problematic and contested notion for many years according to Tierney (Tierney, 2001).

It should be noted these observations have some precedents from decades past. Rowe (1960) bemoaned the state of Australian higher education, with its burgeoning student numbers, lazy academics, and increased government interference. He likened universities to factories, an analogy he was not completely happy with, but one he was prepared to accept. Rowe felt that academic control and influence on university Council was a bad thing. Rowe's view here was that the governing body required people of sound management experience, preferably from outside the academy, to assist in the prudent running of a university (Rowe, 1960, pp23-24). Rowe pointed out that Oxford and Cambridge, frequently cited as bastions of academic power, in fact had many outside appointments to their councils at that time (1960, p.24).

Marginson (Marginson, 2002; Marginson & Considine, 2000) has provided considerable empirical support for a perceived shift in university governance and management reflecting a neo-liberal philosophy. It is hard to contest the reality of smaller government support and greater market driven operational practices by universities. The universities agree this is the reality of their current and likely future landscape. Marginson and Considine have also noted a centralised shift of power in universities in Australia and Aitkin agrees with this assessment.

The corollary of the imperative to develop higher education systems driven by neo-liberal and instrumentalist imperatives is that expectations of the university leaders become handcuffed to them. They are perceived to be the people responsible for the implementation of these major strategic changes and are expected to be competent to do so. This has resulted in Vice-Chancellors being placed under more public scrutiny than in previous times. For example, reports on their salaries and packages have recently been published, exposing corporate like packages that have previously been withheld from general public knowledge (Lawnham, 2002).

As in times past, Vice-Chancellors can attract public criticism for their failure to take appropriate action to protect the heritage of university traditions. Yet the

changes in higher education imply a need for a new management-savvy CEO who may well mirror the corporate role model dissected in publications such as *Business Review Weekly* (James, 1998). Gallagher (1994) likened the role to that of the Australian Public Service Senior Executive. Gallagher should know, having been both a bureaucrat and close associate of Vice-Chancellors for many years. University of Queensland Vice-Chancellor Hay's role is described as "the equivalent of the chief executive officer of a substantial multinational company. He provides strategic leadership, advises his Senate on all policy issues and represents the University in a range of national and international forums" (University of Queensland, 2002).

1.3 Chapter Three – University Leadership – Australia, UK, and the USA

This chapter provides additional context, together with a review of the leadership and governance literature in higher education. It identifies the lack of research on role in Australian universities and highlights the critical literature emerging from the UK and USA.

Research into the role of Vice-Chancellor in Australian universities has been paid too little attention. While there have been few studies specifically examining the role of Vice-Chancellor in Australia (Ramsden, 1998; Sloper, 1994a) there have been numerous publications on broader policy and management issues (Coady, 2000; Coaldrake & Stedman, 1998; Marginson & Considine, 2000; Reid, 1996; Sharpham & Harman, 1997). Of the latter, Marginson and Considine have contributed most in recent times to informing the university community on the complexity of the current higher education system and the nature of the task of managing and leading universities. As discussed, Rowe (1960) recounts his experiences as an Australian Vice-Chancellor and his English university experience in an intimate and compelling portrait of a time long past. Matheson's account of his time as Vice-Chancellor of Monash University (Matheson, 1980) is supportive of Rowe's observations of the uncertainty associated with the role, combined with the difficult political realities of heading a large and nebulous organisation.

The nature of research into university leadership, particularly at the Vice-Chancellor or Presidential level, has been based on a relatively narrow range of conceptual

frameworks. One example is the self-reflective report. In this style, a small number of current or former Australian Vice-Chancellors provide anecdotal or more detailed accounts of their times as Vice-Chancellors. As discussed below, Rowe (1960), Matheson (1980), and Aitkin (1998) have provided detailed accounts on the daily life of some Australian Vice-Chancellors. These insights are always interesting but in practice provide a one-sided account of the story. We get a glimpse of the action from behind closed doors but find it difficult to form a sense of the whole picture. As will be argued in Chapter 4 this is a critical point when attempting to determine “role” in a conceptual sense. The higher education literature emanating from the USA provides similar personal accounts of the Presidential role in those universities (Birnbaum, 1988; Kerr, 1963, 1984).

A more common mode of analysis has been to examine these roles in terms of leadership theory (Bargh, Boccock, Scott, & Smith, 2000; Bensimon, Neumann, & Birnbaum, 1989; Green, 1997b, 1997a; Middlehurst, 1993). In this context, survey or a combination of observational and interview data have been the usual methods undertaken to evaluate the kind of leadership theory relevant to the system under scrutiny. For example, Robin Middlehurst conducted numerous studies in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Middlehurst, 1991, 1993; Middlehurst & Elton, 1992; Middlehurst & Gordon, 1995) into the role of Vice-Chancellor and she has contributed much to our understanding in that context.

Middlehurst’s focus has been primarily in the leadership domain and reflects many similarities to Bensimon’s work in this area (1989). Peter Scott has also been involved in researching leadership in UK universities and is currently making a major contribution through UNESCO funded research on university leadership in a number of European countries in conjunction with a number of colleagues (Bargh et al., 2000; Smith, Bargh, Boccock, & Scott, 1999).

The United States provides most of the research literature into governance and leadership in higher education according to Bargh et al (2000). The US higher education system comprises approximately 3500 institutions of higher learning, although only about 100 are true research and teaching universities in the sense understood in the UK or Australia (Rosenzweig, 1998).

There have been a number of notable contributions over many years in the United States. Veblen (1918) offers a compelling synopsis of American higher education with insights as relevant today as they were at the time of writing. For example, he identified a problem with the encroachment of business management principles into university governance as "...uncritically, taken to be conclusive evidence of wisdom even in matters that have no relation to business affairs" (1918, p.69). Others have focussed more recently on the phenomenon of university or college leadership.

While this list is far from exhaustive it illustrates a relatively homogeneous perspective from the authors in focussing on leadership theory as the predominant paradigm of analysis (Bensimon et al., 1989; Bess, 1988; Birnbaum, 1988, 1992; Bowen & Shapiro, 1998; Clark, 1995; Creech, 1997; Kerr, 1984; Mayhew, 1971; Neumann, 1990; Rosenzweig, 1998; Shapiro, 1998; Trow, 1985; Vroom, 1984).

Neumann (1990) provides an in-depth analysis of roles through interviews of university Presidents. Birnbaum and Clark offer perspectives from personal experiences in Presidential roles. Bensimon's work reflects considerable attention to the roles of Presidents over a number of rigorous empirical studies. One criticism of these studies is they frequently adopt a top-down focus on the roles of university chief executive officers (CEOs) and as such can attract criticism for being relatively one dimensional in their approach (Gillies, 2000).

A further frame for analysis of these roles adopts a critical third person stance, frequently taking issue with the presumed change in the way universities are being managed as businesses rather than traditional collegial institutions (Coady, 2000; Coady & Miller, 1993; Considine, 1988). This domain of literature adopts a perspective of organisational loss and grieving for better times gone by. This literature has gained popularity and support because its basic thesis argues for a return to better levels of government funding and a reduction in administrative or bureaucratic interference in higher education. "Universities are not businesses" is a frequent catch cry of this group of commentators.

Another field of empirical endeavour focusing on Vice-Chancellors is demographic or descriptive data. Sloper (1994a) captured educational and university backgrounds of incumbent officers. In 1993, 95% of Vice-Chancellors had academic backgrounds

with the remainder coming from government service (1994a, p.86). Research by Bargh et al. (2000) has also investigated demographic backgrounds of incumbents in university headship roles. They found that less than 4% of UK Vice-Chancellors came from outside the university sector, with a further 8% coming from the civil or public service (2000, p.50). Approximately 85% had higher education backgrounds prior to taking on the role of Vice-Chancellor. The basis for much of these data is derived from respective Who's Who publications in the UK and Australia. The data suggest, contrary to views of a changing business focus in universities, that traditional academic career paths still apply to the office of Vice-Chancellor.

This thesis steers away from the leadership domain as a theoretical cornerstone for a number of reasons. Empirical writing in the leadership domain is extensive. Perhaps upwards of 9000 published works have been reported (Bensimon et al., 1989). Craig and Yetton (1995), in an overview of leadership theory noted at that point, for all the effort devoted to leadership research, the reader was still in a relatively ambiguous state as to how to interpret or apply the findings. Indeed they comment that all we really know about successful leaders is that they are perceived to be successful (1995, p.1125). While this comment should not dissuade continued research into the leadership domain, it highlights the problematic nature of the task.

1.4 Chapter Four - Conceptual Framework

Chapter Four of this thesis introduces the conceptual framework of the research. The fundamental cornerstones of the research are informed by role-theory, systems/cybernetic theory, and human resource theory. The framework does not seek to predict behaviour in a normative sense but rather to illustrate a number of role dimensions that may allow the researcher to map role behaviour in its complexity.

The human resource theory perspective is linked to the principles and practice of job analysis (Nankervis, Compton, & McCarthy, 1999) which argues any successful implementation of human resources in an organisation requires a fundamental understanding of the nature of roles in that organisation. Failure to analyse the nature of the positions in the organisation will compromise subsequent activity such as recruitment, selection, performance appraisal and staff development.

The link between this approach to human resource management and the topic of this thesis is crucial. Our understanding of the nature of the role of Vice-Chancellor is extremely limited. It is limited for a number of reasons. First, prior to the changes to higher education as a result of Dawkins in the late 1980s, there were only 19 Vice-Chancellors in Australia. During this time, the scrutiny of university management and operation was relatively benign. This lack of scrutiny was partly a consequence of the steady state of growth in the sector and partly due to the differentiation of university and colleges of advanced education in the funding allocation. Vice-Chancellors were not required to undertake the level of public relations and fund-raising activities of their American colleagues and thus remained somewhat shadowy figures, at least to the outside world.

Complementary to this view, role-theory (Katz & Kahn, 1978) provides further theoretical relevance in attempting to understand the nature of the role of Vice-Chancellor. Role-theory, as determined by Katz and Kahn, provides a comprehensive systems approach to better understanding how roles work in an organisational context. For example, these authors present a model of role that highlights the multi-diversity of influences including organisational, personal, and interpersonal that operate in a dynamic and complex environment. In a sense this model suggests a form of job analysis by illuminating the various influences on the behaviour of the occupant of the role. Conceptually, the human resource model and that of Katz and Kahn, argue for an understanding of the underlying factors impacting upon the nature and carriage of a job role in an organisational setting.

Human resource management perspectives and role-theory both require an acceptance of the influence of non-linear system factors in their operationalisation. The third corner of the conceptual frame-work for this thesis, therefore, is informed by research in the domains of systems and complexity science (Ashby, 1956; Beer, 1959; Boulding, 1956; Cooksey, 2001; Vancouver, 1996; von Bertalanffy, 1950, 1968; Wiener, 1948). Vancouver, for example, has specifically called for an integration of systems and role-theory in order to better represent the dynamics of organisational role interaction. Vancouver further argues that domains such as organisational behaviour and systems theory have been operating independently for too long when in fact there is much scope for overlap. To this end, the work of

Cooksey (2001), Cooksey and Gates (1995) and Priesmeyer (1992), among others, is referred to as a way forward in this context.

1.5 Chapter Five - Methodology

The methodology adopted for this research is linked to the arguments developed in the conceptual framework. The ontological perspective in the current research is 'constructivist/participatory' and the epistemological design of the methodology is 'subjectivist' (Charmaz, 2000; Guba, 1978, 1990) whereby the individual's interpretation of their world is sought rather than the imposition of outsider perspectives, as may be the case with normative research approaches. To this end, hypothetico-deductive methodologies based on quantitative or experimental designs, where control and artificial constraints are imposed, are not regarded as sufficiently effective to gain the deep level of insight of the social processes under examination (Cronbach, 1975, pp. 123-124).

Thus, a design that allows for the capture of immediate context such as observations of human behaviour (Becker & Geer, 1970; Bogdan & Taylor, 1975; Charmaz, 2000; Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, & Steinmetz, 1991; Patton, 1990; Slack & Rowley, 2000; Smyth & Holian, 1999; Vidich & Lyman, 2000) is considered essential. According to these authors, this allows the researcher to capture a living context and to compare interview data relating to role performance and expectation.

In-depth, semi-structured and open-ended interviews form a second source of data to inform role expectations and performance. These interview formats allow the participant more scope for flexibility and to be able to tell their story as opposed to an imposed framework of the researcher's own making. This, therefore, adds legitimacy to the data gathering process in minimising researcher bias and influence, according to Glaser and Strauss (1967; Glaser, 1992, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This principle is reinforced by grounded theory as developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967).

Document data in the form of strategic plans, public commentary, published speeches, and articles by Vice-Chancellors and other media or university commentators are also included in the data gathering and analysis process. For example, university statements pertaining to the role of the Vice-Chancellor

(University of Queensland, 2002) or position descriptions, are also incorporated to provide information for confirmation or contrast to observed role performances.

The thesis does not seek to generate highly transportable results but seeks to develop a greater understanding of the role of Vice-Chancellor from within a clearly defined theoretical framework. A quasi-grounded theory approach, based on ethnographic principles, has been implemented (Van Maanen, 1995) to meet these objectives. Two universities have been selected to participate in the design. One represents a post Dawkins CAE that became a university and the other a much larger, pre-Dawkins university based in a capital city. The researcher's university was not chosen to participate in this research due to expected problems maintaining a dispassionate researcher focus.

1.6 Chapter Six - Within Case Analysis of Case Study One – University A

This institution has approximately 9000 students and the Vice-Chancellor had been in office for a period greater than five years. Interviewees included the Vice-Chancellor and his partner, most of the senior executive, the Chancellor, student body Presidents, general staff representatives and Vice-Chancellor support staff such as the Personal Assistant and Executive Officer. Interviews were conducted over a period of three weeks and lasted between 45 minutes and two hours. The researcher also implemented a "Vice-Chancellor shadowing" method over a period of two separate week-long visits.

The data from this case study reveal a significant reassessment of the role-sending model devised by Katz and Kahn. Two major areas were revealed by the research that required a reconceptualisation of Katz and Kahn. The first issue is that this Vice-Chancellor, rather than being the recipient of role-sending signals from the extensive and diverse role-set, acted predominantly as the role-sender. This is important for a number of reasons.

The data suggest this Vice-Chancellor occupied a position more central to the University's day to day operations. This means that his approach was more prescriptive and proscriptive in shaping other people's behaviour and action in the institution. His style of keeping close to staff, irrespective of level or role (academic and general staff) created a highly involved leadership role. This constant style of

“sticking to the knitting” (Peters & Waterman, 1982), was possible, in part, because of the structure and size of the institution. Nevertheless, the Vice-Chancellor’s values, exemplified by his wearing of a name badge, that had his name but not his title, sent a very important message to staff of his openness to them.

This Vice-Chancellor was extremely active in going out to his internal stakeholders. That is, meeting them on their turf. Thus, impromptu visits to staff, ‘campus walk arounds’, departmental visits, were all part of a set of strategies of keeping in touch with people. These opportunities allow a multi-directional role-sending process to occur, but the evidence suggests it was mostly coming from the Vice-Chancellor.

This Vice-Chancellor was also characterised by his capacity to engage the local community that the University lives in. His capacity and knowledge of local important people was partly facilitated by his bringing people onto campus for regular gatherings at the Vice-Chancellor’s residence. Indeed the residence played a significant role in this Vice-Chancellor’s strategy to enhance the reputation of the University to its advantage. Numerous functions, such as cocktail parties and formal dinners, are held at the residence and observing these events led this researcher to conclude that they served as important opportunities for role-sending signals out to the wider community (this is what this University does) and allowed feedback, albeit informally, from outside the institution back in to the University via the Vice-Chancellor and his partner. This engagement with the external community is an area that was largely neglected by the Katz and Kahn model.

Thus, role-sending direction has been seen to emanate more significantly from the Vice-Chancellor, an observation that was not fully recognised by Katz and Kahn, and external relationships are a significant factor in the role-enactment of the Vice-Chancellor, again highlighting a gap in the Katz and Kahn model.

1.7 Chapter Seven - Within Case Analysis of Case Study Two –University B

This institution has been in existence for over 40 years and currently enrolls approximately 44,000 students. Staff interviewed included the Vice-Chancellor, most of the senior executive, the Chancellor, student body Presidents, academic and general staff representatives and Vice-Chancellor support staff such as the Personal Assistant and Executive Officer. Interviews were conducted over a period of three

one week site visits and lasted between 45 minutes and two hours. The researcher also implemented the “VC shadowing” method during these visits.

The dominant feature of this case study analysis was this Vice-Chancellor’s reliance on informal role-enactment processes and role-sending and receiving opportunities. As was the case with Vice-Chancellor A, Vice-Chancellor B was actively engaged in getting close to his internal constituency. The major point of digression here was that Vice-Chancellor B invited people to come to him. Thus a significant amount of role-sending and receiving occurred within the Chancellery (the building holding the Vice-Chancellor’s office and senior staff).

Based on interviews and extensive observation, this strategy appeared to serve a number of important purposes for this Vice-Chancellor. As he noted in his 5th interview, the strategy of having people come to him was a far more pragmatic exercise than his visits to the various departments on campus (which he nonetheless engaged in). The observational data demonstrates a significant degree of multi-directional role-sending opportunities occurring with this Vice-Chancellor.

The size and complexity of this organisation was probably a key factor in the Vice-Chancellor adopting these strategies. The evidence from this case study suggests a situation closer to the Katz and Kahn model, but, clearly this Vice-Chancellor undertook significant prescriptive and proscriptive role behaviours that add complexity to the Katz and Kahn model.

This Vice-Chancellor’s engagement with the external constituency was usually undertaken off-campus. There was little opportunity to observe that part of the role as the Vice-Chancellor frequently did that business over lunch in the city with business and political leaders.

The multi-directional role-sending activity observed in this research has been important in unpacking internal staff management issues such as resource allocation in a highly devolved institution. Competing internal tensions are examined and some insight into the processes of managing those tensions emerges.

There is greater evidence here that a number of key players provide role-sending signals to the Vice-Chancellor. For example, the Director of Communications plays a significant role in assisting the Vice-Chancellor in his media and public relations roles. This is welcomed by the Vice-Chancellor and is important given this university's aggressive entrepreneurial focus. Further, the new Chancellor appears to have a very firm view of the role of Vice-Chancellor and that relationship has proved to be "interesting" as it has developed.

This Vice-Chancellor appears to share similar values to Vice-Chancellor A in terms of his commitment to his internal constituency. His leadership style is heavily oriented towards a concern for people, but he does not tolerate unacceptable behaviour within his institution. Staff must value each other and numerous examples are provided in the observational and interview data.

1.8 Chapter Eight - Between Case Comparisons

This chapter illustrates the degree of similarity that emerged through the data analysis process, and the key areas of difference that emerged. This chapter is heavily reliant on matrix display tables to facilitate data comparisons for the reader.

There were a number of aspects to the Vice-Chancellor roles that were similar. Interviewees from both institutions were consistent in stating they expected the Vice-Chancellor to undertake a visionary role. This suggested he was expected to set the vision and their job was to help bring the vision to fruition. Further, the Vice-Chancellors were expected to lead in raising additional revenue for their institutions. Fund raising or entrepreneurial activities were a major concern for interviewees. The Vice-Chancellors were also expected to be the public face of the institution. They were expected to play a key public relations role or a selling the virtues of the institution.

The Vice-Chancellors acted out these role-prescriptions, probably as a consequence of their perceptions of their role requirements, based on staff expectations, but also in response to their own evolved thinking on the role.

Both Vice-Chancellors demonstrated a significant commitment to maintaining close links to their internal constituents. Their roles were characterised by their getting out

and about to meet staff on their turf. Vice-Chancellor b, however, was more likely to have people from the various departments or divisions come to him. Much of this activity was practiced in relatively informal modes of operation. For example, Vice-Chancellor A was likely to pop into a staff member's office for a chat unannounced. Vice-Chancellor B, on the other hand, held regular, weekly informal meetings in his suite, largely to allow people to get to meet him and exchange information in a relaxed and open way.

In summarising the roles observed in this research, both Vice-Chancellors demonstrated a significant propensity to engage in human relations building activities, characterised by personal values that reflected a high concern for staff.

The strategic directions of the institutions were markedly different and this had an influence on the various roles the Vice-Chancellors undertook. Vice-Chancellor A devoted much of his institutions energy into shoring up local and regional support for the institution. As an emerging university, this strategy was understandable, given the proximity of prestigious long-standing institutions nearby.

Vice-Chancellor B had set his institution on a course of growth and leadership in the international student market and this was held as a defining characteristic of this university's achievement in the time of this Vice-Chancellor. Thus, the energy and action this Vice-Chancellor was engaged in was decidedly internationally focussed, with strong national and regional strategies supporting its risk taking operational style.

1.9 Chapter Nine - Conclusions and Implications

The research sought to explore the day to day role-sending and role-enactment processes in the office of the Vice-Chancellor. The exploratory methodology allowed the researcher to gain access to important processes and behavioural contexts in the day to day activities of two Vice-Chancellors.

The outcomes of this research have provided an insight in to the understanding of the role of Vice-Chancellors in two Australian universities. The key findings from this research include:

The two Vice-Chancellors engage in significant role-sending and role-shaping behaviours that create a major challenge for the lack of complexity in the original Katz and Kahn model in terms of the directionality of these factors. These Vice-Chancellors, through self-role determination and in response to organisational contextual (including historical factors) and prescriptive role-signals are far more proactive in the role-enactment and role-sending processes than previously articulated in role theory research.

Personal and interpersonal components of the role-model of Katz and Kahn are dominant factors in much of the role-sending and role-enactment processes observed in this research, shedding light on the practical value of the model.

Boundary spanning role-sending factors (from Council and the Chancellors) and extra organisational factors such as the changing nature of internationalisation and Australian government policy changes exert significant influence in a more complex role model than Katz and Kahn had articulated.

Contrary to some literature suggesting Vice-Chancellors are losing touch with their internal constituents (or academic heartlands), the current research reveals two Vice-Chancellors significantly pre-occupied with internal communications and human relations behaviours. Indeed, their appreciation of maintaining these links is consistent with the findings from research in the UK and Europe (Bargh et al., 2000). Furthermore, this convergence of research outcomes with Bargh et al. supports the conclusion that, contrary to previous research suggesting university leaders are operating in chaotic anarchic systems, some Vice-Chancellors are able to shape and enact their roles in ways which provide coherence and focus within their organisational systems. In short, Vice-Chancellors have an observable, but powerful influence on the self-organising capacities of their institutions.

Some key implications of the present study include:

1. A Human Relations framework can be a relevant organisational management practice in assisting Vice-Chancellors to maintain effective internal relations with staff and students.

2. Effective communication and networking strategies can be incorporated within these organisations, irrespective of the organisational constraints of size, and structure.
3. Role-sending behaviour observed in this research is multi-directional and operating at different layers of awareness for the role-participants, and the Vice-Chancellor has a major role-sending capacity in these institutions.
4. The notion of role-theorising and its application to organisational behavioural analysis has been supported and extends the understanding of role-enactment in these contexts.

CHAPTER TWO

THE AUSTRALIAN HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT

2. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of a relatively young higher education system by world standards highlighting the critical changes to the system with particular emphasis on the past 15 years. This discussion seeks to take the reader through a system that has seen an increasing emphasis on accountability expectations from government illustrating changes to university management and the consequent implications these have for Vice-Chancellors. This discussion will also review literature relating to the move to corporate or managerial models of management and governance in universities. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the nature of Australian universities in 2005 and implications for their leadership and management. Specifically, discussion links the lack of role analysis in higher education literature to the role-theory model that proposes that research needs to engage role in the ‘lived experience context’.

2.1 Birth and Growth: 1851 to Present

Higher education, in the Australian context, is a relatively recent phenomenon. Australia’s first university, the University of Sydney, opened in 1851. By way of comparison, the first American university, Harvard, opened in 1636, over two hundred years earlier. Competition in Australian higher education really started when Melbourne University opened in 1853 and by 1911 Australia had six universities: Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide (1874), Tasmania (1890), Queensland (1909), and Western Australia (1911).

It should be noted that full-time Vice-Chancellor appointments did not commence in some institutions for many years. Melbourne, for example, did not make a full-time appointment until the 1930s and the University of Queensland until the 1950s (Harman, K, 2006. pers.com). Indeed, for many years Queensland was lead by a part-time Vice-Chancellor from the Queensland public service.

By 1939 the sector had grown to eight universities with the addition of New England University College (1938) and Canberra University College (1930). Total student enrolments in the sector amounted to 14,256 Effective Full-Time Student Units (EFSUs) (Gallagher, 1993), equivalent to a small to medium sized institution in today's environment.

By the year 2005 Australia had 38 universities with 37 of those primarily publicly funded. Student enrolments totaled 828,871 according to Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) data (<http://www.dest.gov.au/highered/statistics/students/03/tables.htm>).

2.2 The Murray Report (1957)

Following a period of relative stability the Australian tertiary education sector underwent a significant change as a consequence of the Murray Committee report (Murray, 1957) which found: "...Australian universities to be short-staffed, poorly housed and equipped, with high student failure rates, and weak honours and postgraduate schools" (Gallagher, 1993, p.9). This view was firmly supported by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Adelaide at that time, A. P. Rowe (Rowe, 1960).

During this review the Murray Committee noted many shortcomings in Australian higher education. Specifically, it identified very high failure rates among students with only a 57% graduation rate across all universities at that time (Murray, 1957, p.35). An extremely low level of honours and postgraduate enrolments was also identified. This contributed to a poor research profile compared to international standards such as the United Kingdom, a point also acknowledged by Rowe in his account of his time at Adelaide University (Rowe, 1960). Rowe was scathing of the lack of research activity or ambition to do research at Adelaide during his initial time there. He was of the view that Adelaide was no different than other Australian universities on this matter. Murray (1957, p.93), like Rowe, identified the imperative to marry sound academic expertise and needs with appropriate sound business principles and good sense.

The Committee recognised the special problems faced by Vice-Chancellors in leading these institutions. Part of the problem, according to the Committee, was the

unique Australian custom of not having the Vice-Chancellor chair the Professorial Board. Murray believed this marginalised the Vice-Chancellors by removing them from the key academic leadership role. The Committee felt this would lead to continued fragmentation of policy in universities. In reality, this feature of university governance has eventually led to criticisms that modern Vice-Chancellors are less concerned with academic matters than they should be (Marginson & Considine, 2000). Rowe's disdain for the treatment and responsibilities of Australian Vice-Chancellors was significant. His views were unofficially acknowledged by the Murray Committee. Rowe's personal account of his time at Adelaide is consistently scathing of academics impeding his attempts to progress the University towards a higher academic and professional standing. Not all universities adopted a policy of excluding the Vice-Chancellor from chairing the Professorial Board. Monash University specified this role for the Vice-Chancellor (or their delegate) and this remains in its constitution today (Monash University Calendar Statutes, 2005). This view was strongly supported by Rowe (1960) and others (Gallagher, 1994, p.86).

2.3 The Martin Report (1964)

A further review, the Martin Report (Martin, 1964), led to the development of the so-called binary system of higher education in Australia with the emergence of teachers' colleges (later colleges of advanced education) due to a rapidly escalating demand for higher education places. Martin was convinced that Australian universities should take on the role of their esteemed British counterparts and thus be principally focused on research and research training. Increased demand (and participation) for non-university places was such that in 1968 participation rates for university places (from the national population) was 7.2% and colleges 3.5% but by 1976 they were almost equal - universities 9.6% and Colleges 9.5% (Williams, 1978).

By 1977 "...over 100 institutions were classified as colleges of advanced education..." (Gallagher, 1993, pp13-14). This number was trimmed to 70 by 1979 as a result of forced amalgamations due to a declining demand for teacher education and various economic factors. The Martin Committee recommended further structural change to the system by having universities significantly reduce the

number of sub-degree programs they offered. The Committee recommended a consequent rise in the standard of programs offered by the technical and teacher education sectors and other tertiary institutions (Williams, 1978, p.2).

The Federal Government did not adopt all of the Martin Committee recommendations but did substantially increase funding to promote colleges. In effect this created a new form of college entity (the Advanced Education Colleges) that accounted for much of the system growth through the 1970s.

The Martin Committee also recognised that with rapid system growth and changing expectations of universities, the role of Vice-Chancellor was becoming more problematic.

Flaws in the university administrative structures have become apparent in many areas, but the most serious are the heavy burdens being placed on the most senior officers – in particular, on the Vice-Chancellor. The University of Sydney was the first to become aware of this and to take active steps to enlarge the central administration by appointing permanent senior officers (deputy Vice-Chancellor, assistant principal, etc.) to assist him. In the present period of academic stress the area in which the Vice-Chancellor most urgently needs help is usually in academic planning and policy making and their concomitant financial implications (Martin, 1964, p.88).

Thus, continued growth and change saw increasing awareness of the need for structural review and consideration for long-term management responsibilities and accountabilities of universities.

2.4 The Dawkins Revolution (1987)

Throughout the period of expansion in the sector from the mid-sixties to the late seventies, the so-called binary system of higher education in Australia remained, at least in terms of access to research funding from the Commonwealth Government. The continued tensions between the Commonwealth responsibility for funding and the State-based legislative control of operations played a significant part in the Commonwealth Government's post-secondary policy and planning directions.

Perhaps the most significant changes in post-Martin times occurred through the publication of the Green Paper (Dawkins, 1987) and the White Paper (Dawkins, 1988) during the so called ‘Dawkins Era’. The loss of traditional institutional distinctions (University/CAE) in the binary higher education system as a consequence of the Dawkins reforms resulted in the reduction of the number of institutions from 78 in 1982 with an average size of 4,300 students to 38 in 1991 with an average size of 14,000 students (Gallagher, 1993).

An immediate consequence of this was a significant shift and increase in responsibility for the management and leadership of these institutions. Not only were the institutions, on average, now significantly larger but they were also significantly more complex. The amalgamations of former CAEs with universities, for example, meant that very different organisational cultures were now forced to work together for the common good of the new institutions. Large numbers of former CAE staff, who in previous times had extremely limited access to research funding, were now part of a research-dominated culture with a potentially larger funding pool. This may well have led to conflicting expectations with research oriented university staff now working side by side with teaching-oriented CAE staff, adding further complexity to the role of Vice-Chancellor.

During the early 1990s the culture clash of the mergers inevitably led to some problems in the sector. For example, the University of New England and its new partners (1989) found it almost impossible to cope with these changes. The metaphors of marriage and divorce were popular at this time (1991) and UNE engineered a divorce from its partners, Orange Agricultural College and Northern Rivers CAE (now Southern Cross University) by 1994. The path had been set, however, for an increasing emphasis on public scrutiny and demands for accountability in the sector. Universities (and therefore Vice-Chancellors) were no longer free to go about their business relatively invisible to the rest of the world. Universities were now expected to be entrepreneurial, and they were now more accountable to government and non-government stakeholders (Shattock, 2003). As Williams (1992) noted:

The Task Force added another condition for admission as a University to the Unified National System, namely, 'an effective and efficient management system with appropriate procedures for institutional planning, staff development, research support and academic programme review, and taking account of relevant national priorities concerned with community liaison, access and equity' (p.16). In its Green Paper of Higher Education (1987) and its White Paper Higher Education (1988) the Government had given clear indications of support for the views of the Jarratt Report on efficiency studies in British Universities. That report proposed an increase in hierarchy, and a decline in academic autonomy. The Government made it clear that it expected Councils to give the Vice Chancellors more power, and, inter alia, power to negotiate agreements with the Commonwealth, and to be held responsible for implementing the agreements (Williams, 1992, p.10).

In addition, the Commonwealth introduced other wide ranging policy changes to the sector. These included a drive to create greater access to the higher education system for students. A specific target of 125,000 graduates per annum was predicted by the year 2000 compared to the then 88,000. Funding for this growth saw a return to student fees for undergraduate courses in the form of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS), in effect a loan to be repaid by students after graduation and after obtaining employment above a certain income level. A more dramatic change also occurred in the way universities were to be funded.

Under the Government's arrangements for a unified national system of higher education, institutions will be funded on the basis of merit and achievement rather than the historical precedent and arbitrary classification. The distinctions made between the university and advanced education sectors which have determined Commonwealth funding arrangements for the last 20 years will be removed (Dawkins, 1988, p10).

Universities were now told that their programs would also be funded with the greater good of the country in mind through their meeting national goals and priorities in “...an environment of productive competition between higher education institutions” (Dawkins, 1988, p.11). The ground rules had been changed significantly as they continue to change to this day. By implication Vice-Chancellors have needed to adjust the way they perceive their capacity to support their fundamental goals of teaching and research, but in a more competitive and demanding environment.

2.5 The Hoare Report (1995)

Following a period of almost unparalleled structural change, the Federal Government sponsored a further review of higher education. The Hoare Report (1995) undertook a comprehensive review of higher education management. The Terms of Reference for this review included: (a) accountability arrangements and reporting requirements for public funds; (b) effectiveness of organisational structures; (c) effectiveness of governance structures; (d) employment and personnel practices; (e) financial management; (f) asset management; (g) division of responsibilities between State and Federal governments (Hoare, 1995a, p.24). This review made over 60 specific recommendations regarding four major aspects of university management: “...governance; strategic management; workplace reform and financial and asset management” (Hoare, 1995a, p.2).

The Hoare Report noted the escalation of competition in higher education at that time and the increasing demands on accountability. Further, this Committee noted the specific implications of governance and the role of Vice-Chancellors in that context:

The relationship between the Vice-Chancellor and the governing body is a key element of the link between governance and management. The Vice-Chancellor has a stewardship role on behalf of the governing body and acts as its chief executive officer. The 1988 White Paper set out the Commonwealth Government's expectation that clear responsibility and authority would be delegated to Vice-Chancellors and that they would be held responsible for executive implementation. An agreed set of delegations, performance

criteria and arrangements for formal appraisal should be established between the Vice-Chancellor and the governing body to ensure that this can occur (Hoare, 1995a, p.5).

The Vice-Chancellor should undertake a “stewardship role” according to the report recommendations, being accountable to the board for performance according to criteria agreed between them. Further, the report recommended the governing body regularly review the role and performance of the Vice-Chancellor.

The Hoare Report argued that a governing body that included membership from outside bodies was important so they could bring considerable input from internal and external stakeholders to the university (Hoare, 1995a, p.3). However, recent times have seen an escalation of pressures from some external stakeholders to interfere with the day-to-day management of the universities. For example, pressures came to bear on at least three Vice-Chancellors, Mary O’Kane at Adelaide University (2001), Don McNicol at Sydney University (Scott, 1995) and Ruth Duncan (RMIT) (ABC, 2003). More recent resignations have been evidenced at Newcastle, New South Wales, and Melbourne universities. All faced serious pressure from their governing bodies, and ultimately appear to have received little protection or support from the internal stakeholders.

The Hoare Report acknowledged that the role of the governing body in universities was not consistent and often ambiguous. Thus, Vice-Chancellors have faced increasing scrutiny, often in an environment of uncertainty of governance roles. As a consequence, the Hoare Report recommended greater transparency in the State-based legislative requirements of governing bodies in order to produce more effective governance.

The Report also signalled a concerted move to further embed performance management of academic and general staff, including senior administrative staff. The Vice-Chancellor would be expected to be accountable for the satisfaction of stakeholders and staff, according to the report (Hoare, 1995a, p.8).

Hoare also recommended a series of initiatives to more tightly link financial practice to university strategic goals practices. Thus, financial management was expected to

move beyond accounting standards to demonstrate appropriate strategic management of the university at the highest level. This tied in to an earlier recommendation that directed that governing bodies be responsible for the strategic planning of the institutions.

Given the significant changes suggested by the Hoare Report, it could be expected that universities would need to take a strategic focus on the way in which they nurtured and managed their staff. This focus should have emerged as a major plank in the quality improvement agenda within the higher education sector, particularly given the recommendations contained in a number of previous reports which advised universities to become more strategically focused in their approach to staffing issues (Hoare, 1995b, p.14). There has been little evidence to indicate this has occurred, however.

Hoare noted the need for universities to focus very carefully on their management and leadership, particularly at the highest level. “This array of changes will require strong and sustained leadership at all levels and, in particular, at that of the Vice-Chancellor” (Hoare, 1995b, p.16). More specifically, the report made the following recommendations:

11.a. The alignment of people practices with the vision and strategic objectives of the institution should form part of the performance objectives agreed between the Council and the Vice-Chancellor.

b. Stakeholder and employee satisfaction should form part of the assessment of the performance of the Vice-Chancellor and leaders at every level of the university.

c. Senior management must find appropriate opportunities to involve all staff in the continual realignment of the university to changing demands, and in the concomitant redesign of the services it offers to the communities

d. As a prerequisite, senior management should review all current communication processes for their effectiveness in building shared vision and commitment (Hoare, 1995a, p.16).

As the following discussion on the research of Meek and Wood (1997) indicates, however, universities seemed unable to recognise the value of staff management practices suitable to the times, and university system-wide staff morale, one indicator of organisational performance, suggests that structural and policy change, by themselves, may not guarantee successful transitions from traditional to market driven institutions. These issues receive further attention in this chapter.

2.6 Meek and Wood (1997)

In light of perceived shifts in university management practice, Meek and Wood undertook a comprehensive study of higher education management and governance in Australia (Meek & Wood, 1997a, 1997b). This study sought to investigate:

...such issues as: decision making structures, characteristics of management practices, external influences on governance and management, staff supervision, research and teaching management, and higher education policy at the national level. The survey results question several commonly held views regarding university management, such as the perceived unwillingness of academic managers to engage in staff appraisal. It is also evident from the survey that the introduction of more corporate style management practices is quite strong in Australia (as elsewhere), but it appears that this is not at the expense of academic autonomy in setting the teaching and research agenda (Meek & Wood, 1997b, para. 3 Executive Summary).

Meek and Wood (1997a, 1997b) were particularly interested to gather information on how the managers viewed the management practices in their own institutions, particularly following the upheaval of the post-Dawkins era of higher education reforms. In addition, this report was produced partly in response to a perceived criticism of management in the sector, according to the authors.

The authors found two overriding issues, as reported by survey participants. These were: (1) institutions perceived they were operating under inadequate financial support; and (2) they were experiencing unnecessary government interference in their institutional affairs (Meek & Wood, 1997b, p.108). This latter finding undermined one of the specific objectives of the White Paper (1988) that stated universities would experience “greater control over their own resources, enhanced revenue-raising options and decreased (researcher emphasis) intervention by governments in internal funding and management decisions” (Dawkins, 1988, p.27). Meek and Wood noted the difficulties universities were experiencing in moving from a former collegial model of management to an environment that demanded a greater emphasis on professional management. This reflected a broader trend in Australian business and government, the authors acknowledged, and would have been inevitable even if the binary system had not been dismantled (Meek & Wood, 1996, p.106).

The authors surveyed 2229 Vice-Chancellors, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Deans, and Heads of Department with a response rate of 794 useable surveys (35.6%) from the Australian higher education sector. Their conclusions suggest a number of ramifications for the role of Vice-Chancellor as evidenced by their concluding comments (a lengthy but important extract):

Mass higher education systems require professional management if they are to fulfil their functions and meet the expectations of the different stakeholders. However, there is little evidence to indicate that the higher education management paradigm is acceptable to all parties concerned. Supposedly, such a paradigm existed in the past in the form of a 'dynamic of consensus in a community of scholars'. While the collegial approach to running universities is under challenge by what some have termed the 'new managerialism' in higher education, it certainly has lost none of its normative potency as a defence of past practices. On the other hand, dramatic changes in higher education institutions, not the least of which are growth in size and complexity, have made many past management practices obsolete

if not indefensible. But whether a consensus will emerge on how the modern university should be run remains to be seen.

As with any transition, changes in higher education management have produced a number of tensions. These tensions are evident both within and between institutions as well as in the relationships between the higher education sector and the government and private sector. Within institutions, much of the tension centres on the collegial versus the managerial approach to running the enterprise. In terms of external relations, a good deal of the debate involves institutional autonomy versus new forms of government control through quality assurance and other accountability measures. As pointed out ... the conflicts and debates are far more complex than the terms - collegial, managerial, autonomy and government control - used to label them would imply. While there is some doubt about whether a consensus on higher education management 'best practice' can or even should be reached, one conclusion to be drawn from this study is that much more rigour needs to be introduced into the debates themselves if they are to be productive (Meek & Wood, 1997b, para.1&2 Conclusion).

The above comments were couched in an environment very much similar to today. For example, large scale student enrolment numbers, dramatically increased competition both within and between universities for diminishing financial resources, significantly more pressure to be accountable (both to students and government), and more pressure to satisfy national policy imperatives at the possible expense of traditional discipline mixes of institutions are now common place (Meek & Wood, 1997b).

The tension between university and government intervention was examined in a 1998 study undertaken across 20 countries, including Australasian, UK, Caribbean, and Asian regions. The data from the surveys indicated that Australian respondents believed government authority to intervene was limited but that government intervention was actually quite extensive.

Within the overall results from the present study there are topics where Australia is above the average. These are Governance in the case of authority to intervene; and Governance, Research and Publication, and Students in the case of actually exerting influence. It is about average on Administration and Finance and below average on Staff, Curriculum and Teaching, Academic Standards.

Despite reporting that their government has relatively little legal authority to intervene in university affairs some of the comments from Australian respondents to the open-ended questions indicated a belief that authority should be even less than it is. This is consistent with the findings from the CFAT survey of academics in which, relative to other countries, Australians asserted that government should not have authority to define policies, but, like the respondents to the present survey, perceived actual intervention to be high (Anderson & Johnson, 1998, p.25).

Meek and Wood also noted a fairly clear indication that executive management priorities and practices had taken precedence over collegial decision-making. The majority of respondents agreed that the trend towards central management was at the expense of collegial processes; that the values of staff and management goals were in conflict; and disagreed that collegial decision making took precedence over executive management in their institutions (Meek & Wood, 1997b, para.19 Report Conclusion).

Smyth (1989) held a very cynical view of the encroachment of managerialism. “Organisationally speaking, we have AIDS! This new disease that is sweeping higher education in this country takes the form of corporate management, a particularly nasty virus which has the potential to slowly but surely cripple and destroy the fabric of the social relationships of our organisations”(Smyth, 1989, p.143). He and others (Considine, 1988) argued that one of the appeals of this trend (for government) is that it can appear to be both a “vigorous” and “comprehensive” means to help reduce uncertainty.

Meek and Wood (1997a, 1997b) uncovered a number of other issues in their study that are worth discussion for contextual purposes. Overall, they found alarmingly low levels of staff morale across the system; presumably as a consequence of the context discussed above, but also, they speculated due to the dramatic system changes of the Dawkins era. Somewhat confusingly, respondents believed that decision-making at three levels, Head, Dean, and Executive were relatively effective. Further, respondents perceived a reasonably positive picture of institutions that seemed to be devoting energy to research and teaching. Decision-making was found to be increasingly devolved. Marginson and Considine (2000) found the opposite to be the case and their data were derived from roughly the same timeframe (mid 1990s). Meek and Wood also reported concerns about the effectiveness of governing bodies, lending support to previous findings, and indeed, to later reviews of the sector that argued for an overhaul of governance practice in universities (1997b, Report conclusion).

2.7 The West Review (1997)

The West Review sought to further push university management and governance towards a model characterised by business practice. It is clear from the terms of reference of this review that self-sufficiency would be the order of the day. Financial management, new sources of funding, and internationalisation were some of the key elements identified in the scope of this review. The West Review avoided focusing on the specific type of person required to manage the universities over the next 20 years but the implications were clear: entrepreneurial, Asian focused, business strategists, and technologically literate. Contrast this to the university sector of previous decades. Universities are business enterprises, the government implied. In a sense they probably always had been, but the focus on accountability had taken a further step in forcing universities to acknowledge and perform in more business-like ways.

West was particularly concerned with management quality as noted in the final report:

Our current regulatory framework does not encourage or facilitate good management within universities. Outdated governance

arrangements, which emphasise representation rather than experience and skills in the management of large enterprises, hinder many institutions in pursuing their objectives.

Centrally determined funding rates and guaranteed funding levels provide few incentives for universities to be cost aware. Consequently, Australia's universities lack information about costs and do not have a good understanding of cost structures.

Poor management can escape unnoticed because current funding arrangements lack transparency in some crucial respects:

- the opportunity cost of the resources tied up in university assets is not explicitly identified; and
- subsidies for teaching and research are not differentiated (West, 1998, p.20).

As discussed, others had recognised these system related imperatives (including Hoare). One issue emerges from this shift in expectations and this relates to the preparation and development of Vice-Chancellors to effectively deal with these demands. McNicol (1991), a former Vice-Chancellor at the Universities of New England, Sydney and Tasmania, predicted two major areas administrators would need to deal with if they were to assist their institutions through the changes that they would experience. These were: a focus on task rather than structure (traditional hierarchies would not be effective but team based problem solving would - a trend back towards collegiality perhaps?); and a goals versus procedures orientation. That is, a focus on policy rather than bureaucratic entanglements that could complicate and slow down decision making. Simplifying procedures and determining the relationship between the governing bodies would be critical.

According to McNicol, universities would need to respond quickly and effectively to change. The systems and procedures at that time had the opposite effect (1991, p.138) according to him. Further, McNicol argued "Your opinions should be shaped by data and by external comparison rather than by internal reference and self-

assertion” (1991, p.139). Here McNicol expressed a view that Vice-Chancellors must be looking at their external radar screen to determine what best to do in their roles. This shift in emphasis from internal to external stakeholders has gradually encroached on their roles and this point is examined further in this thesis.

Reading McNicol’s comments along side those of Meek and Wood (1997b) one is struck, not only by the overlap, but also the contradictions evidenced by desire and reality. For example, how can one simplify procedure and minimise response times when government places ever increasing impediments on institutions as reported by Meek and Wood (1997b, para.16 Report Conclusion)?

Given these shifts in organisational form and operation, Bessant (1995) signalled a possible way of the future for Vice-Chancellors. His paper on “Corporate management and its penetration of university administration and government” (Bessant, 1995, p.59) provides an insightful account of the trend of university senior management to follow the career structures and reward systems of the Commonwealth Senior Executive Service (SES). Gallagher (1994) has also noted this trend towards a more explicitly determined range of roles and accountabilities for Vice-Chancellors beyond traditional academic leadership contexts. He suggests that corporate behaviours, for example, Levinson’s 20 item executive behavioural and personality dimensions (Levinson, 1980), are similar to current Vice-Chancellor job descriptions. Gallagher also suggests the selection criteria for the Senior Executive Service (SES) of the Federal Government provides descriptions of corporate management skills that would not look out of place in a Vice-Chancellor’s job description (Gallagher, 1994, pp.100-102).

Change has not only occurred due to bureaucratic imperatives but also in terms of institutional size. Shattock (1997) noted that academic participation rates had grown significantly across western societies in recent times. Mostly government driven, higher education had become a mass market rather than an elite system according to him. In responding to government pressure to improve performance and accountability many universities were tending to copy each other. Inevitably, Porter (1985) would argue this would lead to a system with low cost - undifferentiated education providers. As a consequence, universities were losing their individuality.

Economic rationalism and managerialism were forcing universities to aspire to an almost totally unrealistic vision of “World Class” status. Shattock called for universities to turn towards their particular areas of strength; to develop their differences rather than waste time and money trying to copy something else which may have no relationship to the culture and strengths of their own institutions. Moodie (1995) was pessimistic about the ability of universities to truly diversify. He believed the trend in “managerial prerogative” (1995, p.23) would increase, a view subsequently supported by Marginson and Considine (2000). Moodie called for the development of a theory of academic administration, because he perceived there was a lack of a paradigm or model to guide staff charged with academic administration (1995, p.23).

2.8 Implications for Senior Staff in Universities

In all of the research reported above one aspect is either missing or frequently downplayed. That is, the recognition of the importance of the complex interactions between individual senior staff in the ongoing management and leadership of universities. It was as if there was a pervading belief that policy or structure, if implemented correctly, would necessarily enable universities to move forward successfully. The focus was very heavily on issues pertaining to structure, to process, to procedures, to policy. Better policies, better procedures, quality assurance measures, and the like seem to dominate current thinking in terms of managing universities. These researchers imply that managing universities in the current climate would require skills in a Vice-Chancellor of an order previously not considered necessary.

As outlined above, a strong emphasis on linear thinking (Levinson, 1994) can be observed in these reports. Thus, the logic argues to get the structure right, then the policies, then the procedures, and then the quality measures and then the universities will be able to manage themselves. How effectively this kind of thinking translates to practice is problematic. Levinson (1994) has been scathing in his analysis of corporate CEOs and their capacity to deal with complex and seemingly chaotic decision making requirements. To its credit, the previously discussed Hoare Report acknowledged the importance of people “The key resource of universities is their staff, both academic and general” (Hoare, 1995b, p.14). However, Hoare pointed

out the singular lack of evidence to indicate university leaders were demonstrating the people management skills required in today's organisations.

It is difficult to discern how much notice universities have taken of the imperatives outlined above. There is little evidence of research devoted to improving the quality of management in universities in Australia. Certainly, there is an ongoing debate about the quality of management and the Nelson reforms (2003) are a reflection of the perception that universities need to do better in their management practice. A critical area of debate has emerged, however, and this has loosely been categorised under the banner of 'managerialism and competition', and this is discussed now in relation to ongoing system changes.

2.9 Managerialism and Competition

Subsequent to the reforms of the late 1980s and early 1990s, a number of commentators of Australian higher education have bemoaned the encroachment of processes associated with loosely defined terms such as managerialism or corporatisation. Following the Dawkins reforms the Hawke and Keating governments (throughout the late 1980s to the early 1990s) continued to push through sector reforms. Their higher education "Quality Review" (Piper, 1993) agenda was but one such example. The language and practices of managerialism such as "devolution and decentralisation; corporate and strategic planning; mission and goal orientation; outcomes; customers; benchmarking; best practice; enterprise bargaining; contract employment; performance pay...and so on became a part of university management language" (Kimber, 1997, p.3). This language, this new philosophy of government and work has been forced into the culture of universities according to Bessant (1995).

Saul (1997) argues that as a consequence of the creep of corporatism into our culture and indeed our unconscious acceptance of this culture, that universities are now in a state of crisis. Short-sighted corporatist driven interests, self-interest, self-destructive, and socially irresponsible practices have now damaged our universities, according to Saul. A recent example of a university practicing this way is Newcastle. This medium sized institution (established in 1965) has been publicly exposed as an institution prepared to sacrifice academic integrity in order to not

jeopardise funding income from full-fee paying overseas students (Burke, 2005). The University has acknowledged that it engaged in unacceptable academic practices relating to “soft-marking” of assessment tasks in its Business School. As a consequence there has been a significant public relations fall-out for this University to deal with.

A consistent argument against the new managerialism (as defined by Kimber previously) in higher education is that it will destroy the history of collegiality that has served universities well for centuries. “The corporate model does not sit well with most academics that see the core values and purposes of the academy as fundamentally at odds with corporate style management” (Green, 1997b, p.139). Green acknowledged however, that the mounting pressures in this context will make it increasingly “...difficult for academic leaders to be simply first among equals” (p.139). Karmel (1990) is more explicit in articulating the tensions between collegial and managerial approaches.

...authority within the university is intellectual authority. This is necessarily dispersed among the senior academic staff. The Vice-Chancellor and senior administrators may administer the resources and may, subject to the governing body, determine the broad policies, but intellectual authority does not reside in them. Moreover, the quality of a university comes from the work of many autonomous academics or groups of them.

It follows from this that a university cannot be run like a business enterprise with a chief executive in command, seeking to maximise relatively simple variables. Consultative processes are essential and, while leadership is of great importance, such leadership must be consensual. Notwithstanding this, the modern university is usually a large complex organisation. As such it needs to be “managed”. Thus tension between collegial and managerial styles is bound to be chronic. (Karmel, 1990, p.332)

Charlesworth (1993) was not convinced that the concept of collegiality was valid or for that matter practiced anyway. “At all events, I for one do not look back – as some of my colleagues unfortunately do – to some kind of pre-Dawkinsian ideal of the university characterised by that much invoked but mythical ‘collegial spirit’ (sometimes I think that university ‘collegiality’ is simply another name for ‘collective neurosis’) and scholarly and administrative amateurism” (Charlesworth, 1993, p.10).

Marginson (1997) believed “...the original collegial tradition, shaped by the British experience, was grounded in self-governing institutions with minimum management, a hierarchical profession which selected itself and determined its own incentives and rewards, and self governed programs of work subject only to peer validation” (Marginson, 1997, p.69) described a 1950s context. He argued that the subsequent decades of change (probably from Murray, 1957) have seen a gradual erosion of these practices but there had been a retention of the “symbolic power” of collegiality.

Tapper (1998) noted the concept of collegiality stems from the traditional Oxbridge model where the colleges were the centre of academic activity and which were defined by their physical space. The colleges were small academic communities. Further, Tapper noted, “...integral to the idea of collegiality is that nothing can be achieved unless it has the formal blessing of the collective membership”(1998, p.145). This may or may not have been the process in those early days of small academic communities. It remains questionable, however, as to whether the ideal thus defined would possibly be considered practical in today’s large and complex universities.

Smyth (1989) argued the case against myopic managerial encroachment in university practice. He made an important distinction in relation to unhealthy managerial practice and healthy practice which may be beneficial to people and organisations. Smyth (1989, p.147) argued that organisations which have introduced management practices based on principles of industrial democracy and inclusiveness (perhaps resembling a close affinity to Tapper’s definition of collegiality) tend to be far more successful than alternative centralised, exclusive, top-down styles of management.

Pfeffer (1998b) found that management practices common to highly successful companies were decidedly non-managerial in nature. For example, employment security was regarded as a significant factor in determining organisational success. He produced evidence indicating bottom line management practices such as outsourcing and downsizing had a very negative effect on the viability of many organisations. Preceding discussion suggested universities were attempting to adopt managerial practices and thus, how could a Vice-Chancellor possibly expect loyalty, commitment, enthusiasm, and creativity from his or her staff if employment security was threatened through downsizing and outsourcing strategies?

Other successful practices identified by Pfeffer included inter alia:

- the use of self-managed teams and a move towards decentralisation of decision making;

- extensive sharing of financial and performance information;

- extensive training or development activities;

- and reduced status distinctions and barriers (1998b, p.96)

These are practices universities appear to be moving away from, according to Professor Peter Coaldrake, in his assessment of the likely implications arising from the recommendations of the West Review Committee. He acknowledged in a 1997 AVCC Bulletin article that the West Review of Higher Education was likely to contribute to an acceleration of market pressures and thus a greater level of change on academic practices if the report was implemented in full (Coaldrake, 1997). Researchers noted similar trends in the United Kingdom (Barry, Chandler, & Clark, 2001) particularly following the 1985 Jarratt report on higher education. According to Barry et al. evidence of managerialism is best exhibited by an increased emphasis on (inter alia) government setting student target numbers, increased monitoring and control requirements, external peer reviews, and an increased emphasis on assessment and appraisal of staff, students and institutions. As discussed, Australian higher education has been at the forefront of similar changes and these continue to impact today as outlined by discussion below.

2.10 The Nelson Review (2003)

Following a period of relative stability imperatives for dramatic system change re-emerged through the Nelson Review (Nelson, 2003). As the final report from this review noted:

In 2001, the higher education sector employed approximately 80,000 people and generated total revenue of \$10.2 billion, contributing 1.5 per cent to Gross Domestic Product. Many institutions, particularly those in regional areas, play a significant role in the economic and social life of their communities which goes far beyond their traditional educational activities (Nelson, 2003, p.8).

The review panel received over 730 submissions from stakeholders, during approximately 18 months of consultation and investigation. Approximately 800 interested people attended a number of information forums as an additional feedback process. According to the report, the review panel identified a number of problems within the sector, including. These are illustrated to further contextualise the impact on senior management, including Vice-Chancellors:

- course provision costs have increased considerably;
- the sector requires access to increased resources in the longer term, including from additional income streams;
- significant duplication in some university activities and course offerings and far too many units have very small enrolments;
- students from disadvantaged backgrounds remain under-represented in higher education;
- a large proportion of students (approximately 30 per cent) do not complete university;
- many institutions are over-enrolling students, which has an adverse impact on quality, including contributing to overcrowding; and
- the governance arrangements of some institutions do not provide the appropriate balance of capability, experience and business acumen

needed to manage a large and complex organisation with oversight of budgets of millions of dollars. The average Council size is 21 with up to as many as 35 members in some cases, with some including no representation at all from industry or the community (Nelson, 2003, p.9).

According to the review, regional universities would be particularly well supported during the implementation of the proposed funding changes - an extra A\$122.6m from 2004 (Nelson, 2003, p.16). Further, institutions would be able to charge up to 25% of students' full-fees (except medical students) in order to increase income independent of Commonwealth supplementation. Finally, on matters of university governance, Nelson signalled pressure to change the structure of the governing bodies:

Universities are not businesses but nevertheless manage multi-million dollar budgets. As such they need to be run in a business-like fashion. Anachronistic governance arrangements, in which universities have up to 35 Council members and an average of 21, are not conducive to sound decision making (Nelson, 2003, p.15).

In addition the review recommended that changes to governance (an area discussed in detail in the following chapter) practice take on the following protocols:

The Protocols were developed on advice from both the university and business sectors having regard to current best practice models. The Protocols will require universities to specify the duties of their Council members, and have in place a formal programme of professional development for Council members. Members will be required to be 'trustees' of the institution and act solely in the interests of the university rather than as a delegate or representative of a particular constituency. Councils will not exceed 18 members and will have at least two members with financial expertise and one with commercial expertise. The majority of members will be external to the institution (Nelson, 2003, p.16).

This review seemed to acknowledge that the changes in management and governance recommended in both the Hoare and West Reviews needed to be more completely bedded down. Objectives to modify or streamline governance membership and practice are not that recent. The Dawkins White Paper (1988) also specified proposals for more effective management and governance practices. Concerns about university boards being too large, and cumbersome were of interest not only to the Government. At that time (late 1980's) Wood and Smith noted, in a review of 26 Australian Universities, that most university boards were considerably larger than those of corporations with similar size budgets (Wood & Smith, 1992, p.62). The Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee released a detailed summary of all Australian university governance structures (AVCC, 2000) that illustrated the diversity within the sector. Governing boards (Councils or Senates) generally ranged in number between 20 to 25, but academic boards ranged between 30 to over 200 in membership. It seemed clear that while issues of governance had been on the agenda of Government reform for some time, Nelson specified that these changes were to be embedded in future funding arrangements with the Commonwealth linking dollars to performance outcomes, thus forcing the system to change in this area or risk financial penalties.

2.11 2005-6 Federal Government Context

Further Government pressure for universities to reform their management has come as a consequence of the new industrial relations requirements as outlined by recent Federal Government announcements of "enhancements" to the Higher Education Workplace Relations Requirements (HEWRRs) (Fullerton, 2005). The industrial relations changes are directly linked to the other reforms outlined in the Nelson Review and constitute a concerted effort by the Federal Government to drive change through the sector by linking funding to outcomes.

The new employment relations requirements are proposed to amend the Workplace Relations Act of 1996. The new guidelines are designed to provide more flexibility and choice among employers and employees, according to the Australian Federal Government. In a joint press release with the Minister for Workplace Relations, Dr Nelson stated "These changes will expedite the necessary workplace reform to ensure that universities can become more competitive nationally and internationally

and offer career opportunities to attract, retain and reward the best people” (Fullerton, 2005, p.1). Universities will be required to introduce the industrial changes to allow all employees the opportunity for negotiating individual Australian Workplace Agreements (AWAs) with the deadlines for introduction of offers of AWAs “to all new employees employed after 29 April 2005 and to all other employees by 31 August 2006” (DEST, 2005, Section 7.25.1). Federal Government funding increases on top of basic grant allocations will be set at 5.0% in 2006 if the institution meets requirements by November 2005 and further funding of 7.5% in 2007 and beyond for future compliance.

Predictably, antagonistic reaction from industrial unions has been vigorous. According to some media reports, up to 200,000 university and TAFE staff faced pay cuts and the abolition of employment conditions. TAFEs faced a \$1.2 billion funding cut if workplace policies were not met. Concerns about the viability of some regional universities were also raised upon the Government announcements, with Lismore and Coffs Harbour campuses of Southern Cross University threatened (ABC, 2003). Illing (2005) reported industrial action by a number of universities, including RMIT, Deakin, Ballarat and Central Queensland protesting the proposed changes.

The major implications attached to the changes revolve around removing or limiting staff union power. This has potential benefits to the administration of the institutions as industrial processes long conducted in adversarial climates and occupying extensive time and energy may become a thing of the past, thus freeing up Vice-Chancellors and their managers to run more flexible and dynamic institutions. According to the unions this would come at considerable costs to staff in relation to their salaries and conditions. This landscape shapes to become one of the more significant issues for Vice-Chancellors in the near future.

2.12 Summary

In summary, this chapter has tracked changes in the higher education sector from the small, relatively autonomous sector of universities virtually unimpeded by government regulations or accountability demands, through the period of rapid

expansion in student and staff numbers, to a point where the system is again under review with implications on much promised but now realistic system diversity.

System growth and diversity has meant that Vice-Chancellors are now faced with larger and more complex institutions to manage. Competition between institutions in a relatively small sector by international standards has created new tensions for Vice-Chancellors. Competition for resources within institutions has also created additional tensions as student demand on a range of subject areas has shifted dramatically in the past two decades. Greater demands on accountability by government and the wider community are now exposing Vice-Chancellors to issues of quality management and openness. Reduced government financial support has forced Vice-Chancellors to look elsewhere for funding and this has shifted the emphasis on their role to external partnership development to an extent that requires new skills and thinking. A critical issue relevant to the current research, therefore, asks just how these changes across the sector are impacting on the role of Vice-Chancellors and senior management in universities. Chapter Three now examines the body of research devoted to Vice-Chancellors, their office, and their roles, with a specific focus on the Australian context.