

**REPERTOIRES OF GOVERNANCE
AMONG
MEMBERS OF
AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITY
GOVERNING BOARDS**

Jeanette Heather Baird

BA (Hons), University of Melbourne
BLitt, University of Melbourne
Master of Business Administration, RMIT

**A thesis submitted for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy
of the University of New England**

March 2004

CERTIFICATION

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

....

Jeanette Heather Baird

1-3-04

ABSTRACT

Recent corporate collapses have focused public attention on the roles and responsibilities of governing boards. These issues are also significant for Australian universities. This research examines the repertoires of ideas that public university governing body members use to make sense of their governance functions. Through a qualitative study of the language of members of five university governing boards (councils), it identifies the repertoires, or 'regimes of justification' (Boltanski & Thévenot 1991), used by board members to interpret the principles and practices of university governance.

My thesis is that board members of university councils in Australia use several distinct repertoires - of business, of the community, of traditional university values and of professionalism - to express their ideas about university governance. Analysis of these repertoires, each of which implies a different 'logic of action' (Bacharach, Bamberger, & Sonnenstuhl 1996), illuminates our understanding of why board members interpret governance functions in different and sometimes contradictory ways. It also provides a means to assess the influence of 'managerialist' ideas on Australian university governance and the extent to which Australian university governance is yet to become professionalised. The theoretical basis for the research is drawn from the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu, coupled with the discourse analytical method of interpretative repertoires (Wetherell & Potter 1988). By viewing board governance as a locus of discursive struggles over differing systems of value, it becomes possible to analyse the impact on 'practical politics' (Heffernan 1997) of the repertoires of key ideas revealed in discourse by governing board members.

This research affirms the significance of organisational and wider societal values in non-for-profit governance. Broad concepts of the public good, participation and the university ideal are used to counterbalance an extreme managerialist view that universities are no more than a particular type of business. It is noted that certain repertoires may be more commonly employed in particular institutions such as regional universities. Reflexive consideration of these differing repertoires by council members could contribute to more effective university governance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the support of my supervisors, Associate Professor Kay Harman, Professor V Lynn Meek and Dr Fiona Wood, through the process of conducting the research and preparing this thesis. As well as offering ideas and advice, they have provided encouragement and understanding, especially when other demands retarded my progress. I am particularly grateful to them. I would also like to thank Emeritus Professor Grant Harman for sharing his insights and knowledge of governance issues and international developments in higher education. I thank my family, friends and work colleagues for their positive reinforcement over several years.

I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of those members of university governing boards whom I interviewed. They generously shared their views with me and provided numerous suggestions for ways in which I could further my understanding. As well, I acknowledge a number of former council members and colleagues in university administration who provided informal comments and recollections drawn from their own experiences.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Abbreviations	ix
List of Tables and Figures	xi
Key to Transcripts	xii
CHAPTER 1 UNIVERSITY GOVERNING BODIES IN AUSTRALIA: ISSUES AND CONTEXT	1
Focus of the study	1
Aims and significance of the research	8
Methods of data collection and limitations imposed	12
Context for the study: the Australian university system and the agenda for governance reform	12
The international context	22
Structure of the thesis	25
CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	29
Introduction	29
Major theoretical approaches in board governance	30
<i>Power relationships on and around boards</i>	33
Current issues for corporate boards	36
<i>Agency versus stakeholder models</i>	36
<i>Power and effectiveness</i>	37
<i>Qualitative and interview research</i>	39
Public sector governance	41
Not-for-profit boards	43
<i>Board member roles and power</i>	44
<i>Differences in culture and ideology between corporate and not-for-profit boards</i>	45
<i>School governing boards</i>	48

Issues for university governance and governing bodies	50
<i>Writing on university governing bodies in Australia</i>	58
Conclusions	64
CHAPTER 3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	68
Introduction	68
Identification of a theoretical framework	69
Bourdieu's sociology: field and habitus	73
Bourdieu's sociology: forms of capital and strategies of power	77
Bourdieu's sociology: domination and challenge	79
Bourdieu's sociology and governing bodies	82
Critical Discourse Analysis	86
CDA and interpretative repertoires	89
Power over and in discourse	94
Summary	97
CHAPTER 4 METHOD OF CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH	98
Introduction	98
Research design: interpretative repertoires and interviews	98
Sampling and structure of interviews	100
Interview questions	101
Context of the research interviews: universities in Victoria	105
Approach to participants and ethical considerations	107
The interview process	109
Characteristics of the interviewees	113
Interview transcription, analysis and evaluative criteria	116
Succeeding chapters and conventions used in extracts from transcripts	120
CHAPTER 5 DIFFERING IDEAS AND INTERPRETATIVE REPERTOIRES	122
Introduction	122
Descriptions of council	123
Managing the concept of council as 'corporate board'	124
Size of council, remuneration of council members and intrinsic rewards	126

Council roles	127
Relationship to Academic Board (or Academic Senate)	131
Accountabilities	132
Expectations of council held by others	134
The Vice-Chancellor's expectations of council	136
Council structures and processes	137
More effective councils and expectations of the Chancellor	138
Discussion: ideological dilemmas and competing discourses in university governance	141
The four repertoires	145
CHAPTER 6 THE BUSINESS REPERTOIRE	150
Governance model and ownership (business repertoire)	151
Size, membership and remuneration (business repertoire)	153
Council roles (business repertoire)	156
Individual roles on council (business repertoire)	157
Accountability (business repertoire)	159
Expectations of council held by others (business repertoire)	162
Role of Academic Board (business repertoire)	164
The Vice-Chancellor's expectations of council (business repertoire)	165
Attitudes to management and the performance of council functions (business repertoire)	166
Summary of the business repertoire	170
CHAPTER 7 THE COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER REPERTOIRE	171
Governance model and ownership (community stakeholder repertoire)	172
Size, membership and remuneration (community stakeholder repertoire)	175
Council roles (community stakeholder repertoire)	179
Individual roles on council (community stakeholder repertoire)	180
Accountability (community stakeholder repertoire)	183
Expectations of council held by others (community stakeholder repertoire)	186
Role of Academic Board (community stakeholder repertoire)	187

Attitudes to management and the performance of council functions (community stakeholder repertoire)	188
Summary of the community stakeholder repertoire	191
CHAPTER 8 THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY REPERTOIRE	193
Governance model and ownership (university community repertoire)	195
Size, membership and remuneration (university community repertoire)	196
Council roles (university community repertoire)	199
Individual roles on council (university community repertoire)	202
Accountability (university community repertoire)	204
Expectations of council held by others (university community repertoire)	206
Role of Academic Board (university community repertoire)	208
Attitudes to management and the performance of council functions (university community repertoire)	209
Summary of the university community repertoire	212
CHAPTER 9 THE REPERTOIRE OF PROFESSIONALISATION	214
Governance model and effectiveness of council (repertoire of professionalisation)	216
Council roles (repertoire of professionalisation)	217
Individual roles on council and selection of members (repertoire of professionalisation)	220
Attitudes to management and the performance of council functions (repertoire of professionalisation)	223
Induction of members and evaluation of council performance	226
Expectations of the Chancellor	229
Summary of the repertoire of professionalisation	232
CHAPTER 10 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS	234
Australian university council governance as presented in language	235
Which interpretations of a university are significant in terms of board governance?	236
Relationship of the repertoires to theoretical models of governance	240
The influence of managerialism	242
Political implications of differing regimes of justification	245

Improving the 'culture of governance' within Australian university councils	249
The outline of a process	253
Conclusions and future research	254
BIBLIOGRAPHY	259
APPENDIX A: National Governance Protocols for Public Higher Education Institutions (Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee)	318
APPENDIX B: Summary of Good Practice Benchmarks (Scottish Higher Education Funding Council)	321
APPENDIX C: Interview questions	324
APPENDIX D: Categories of council membership for Victorian and Australian universities, May 2003	326
APPENDIX E: Letter sent to Chancellors of the eight Victorian universities	327
APPENDIX F: Letter sent to individual council members	329
APPENDIX G: Informed consent form	331
APPENDIX H: Similarities and differences among the three repertoires (business, community stakeholder and university community) on particular issues	333

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACCT	Association of Community College Trustees (US)
ACCU	Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities (US)
AAUP	American Association of University Professors
AGB	Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (US)
AGWA	Auditor-General, Western Australia
ANAO	Australian National Audit Office
AUQA	Australian Universities Quality Agency
ASX	Australian Stock Exchange
ATII	Association of TAFE Institutes Incorporated (Australia)
AVCC	Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee
BHP	Broken Hill Proprietary Ltd (now BHP Billiton)
CAE	College of Advanced Education (Australia)
CAPA	Council of Australian Postgraduate Associations (Australia)
CDA	Critical Discourse Analysis
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CHEMP	Centre for Higher Education Management and Policy, University of New England (Australia)
CUC	Committee of University Chairmen (United Kingdom)
DDIAE	Darling Downs Institute of Advanced Education (Australia)
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training (Australia)
DEETYA	Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (Australia)
DETYA	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (Australia)
ECGI	European Corporate Governance Institute
HBR	Harvard Business Review
HECS	Higher Education Contribution Scheme (Australia)
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
IOG	Institute on Governance (Canada)
MWCNL	Midwest Centre for Nonprofit Leadership, University of Missouri - Kansas City (US)
NBEET	National Board of Employment, Education and Training (Australia)

NUD*IST	Non-numerical Unstructured Data by techniques of Indexing Searching and Theorizing. (Software from QSR.)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
SA	Standards Australia (Australian Standards Organisation)
SADETFE	South Australian Department for Education, Training and Further Education
SHEFC	Scottish Higher Education Funding Council
TAFE	Technical and Further Education (Australia)
TAMU	Tertiary Advisory Monitoring Unit (New Zealand)
UHK	University of Hong Kong
UNAS	University of Newcastle Academic Senate (Australia)
VDET	Victorian Department of Education and Training (Australia)

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figure 1	Typology of theories relating to the roles of governing boards	Page 31
Table 1	Membership categories of council members interviewed for my research	Page 113

KEY TO TRANSCRIPTS

Conventions used in the presentation of research findings and extracts from interview transcripts are as follows:

203	The third interviewee from University Two (Members of the governing boards of five universities were interviewed.)
external	External member of council, i.e. not a staff or student member or the Vice-Chancellor
staff	Member of council who is a member of the university staff, either academic or administrative. Academic staff members may be either ex officio or elected members.
student	Member of council who is a student, either undergraduate or postgraduate. Student members may be either ex officio or elected members.
Vice-Chancellor	The executive head of the university (president, CEO). Vice-Chancellors in the universities where my research was conducted are ex officio members of council.
Chancellor	The Chairman of the university council (governing board).
...	Transcript material has been omitted.
[University] or [xx]	The name of a university, faculty, Department or other features that might identify an institution or person have been omitted.
[other text]	Text in square brackets has been added by the researcher to provide clarity or an explanation of an omitted name or number.