

Manipulating the dead to control the living

There has been a tendency to consider changes in burial practices as further social change in society, rather than catalysing it. Such a view fails to acknowledge the power that death can have over individuals who witness it; forcing them to restructure their social relations to account for the death of an individual. Violence, as is attested on many bones from this region, may also have played a part in reinforcing bonds between people, with human sacrifice being a powerful means of doing so. Certainly by the final centuries of the Iron Age we find individuals buried with an assortment of objects ranging from ornate headdresses, decorated weapons and tools which appear to denote a distinct role within their communities. The approaches which Iron Age communities in the British Isles and those of the continent employed towards death show many commonalities, such as the ways of disposing of the dead, comparable choices in burial locations, and similar, if not nearly identical, grave goods. In an age when death was common – famine was only a failed harvest away and child mortality high – the ability to manipulate the cosmological and

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spiritual world which governed life would have provided those who could do so with power. To do so, however, required one to have access to a medium through which to communicate with the otherworld; the dead.

Crown from Grave 112 Mill Hill, Deal, Kent c.250BC. During the final centuries of the British Iron Age a variety of ornate objects, including headdresses, mirrors and so called “divination spoons”, were included in graves. In addition to this crown, the individual from Grave 112 was buried with an ornate shield, sword and coral decorated brooches. Based on similarities with later Roman priestly headdresses, it is generally thought that individuals like this belonged to some sort of religious class.



Bronze clad bucket from a cremation burial at Aylesford, Kent, c.75–50BC. The use of cremation in southern England is observable in the archaeological record from the 2nd century BC onward, and appears to have been introduced from northern France, where it was common beginning in the 3rd century BC. The use of buckets in graves is attested in southern Britain, France and western Germany, with the Aylesford bucket showing strong stylistic links with examples from the Ardennes and Lower Rhine.



Andrew Lamb is a 3rd Year PhD student in Archaeology, who has specialised in mortuary archaeology in his undergraduate degree. In terms of broader research impact, he hopes to demonstrate that links between Britain and the continent were closer than is often thought for this period.

To fit or not to fit – that is the question

Wherever they are based, academics have a complex and often solitary work environment. Citing her work in Cyprus, **Dr Irina Lokhtina**, a DSocSci graduate from the **School of Management**, explains why encouraging engagement within academic communities could improve academic careers in Cypriot higher education

Each one of us is involved in professional communities crucial to our learning and development, such as colleagues at conferences and in the workplace. In a similar way, academics need multiple and often overlapping communities to develop their own identities, as well as to form a better mutual understanding of common practices. However, there are cases where academics are restricted from these communities, depriving the academic of feedback and impacting their development.

Higher education has seen big changes in recent times, such as a rapid growth in temporary contracts. This means that budding academics have to learn how to tackle heaps of paperwork, balance their research with teaching responsibilities, cope with the uncertainty in getting funding and progressing their career as well as with externally imposed accountability requirements. Hamlet's famous dilemma, ‘borrowed’ for this article's title, aptly summarises the torments that academics often experience in their workplaces, such as a lack of support. It is as if many do not properly ‘fit’ in their academic work environment.

‘Learning the ropes’ in academia

As an academic myself in a private university in Cyprus with a professional background in social psychology, my personal interest was always about the learning processes embedded in academic workplaces and how they affect academic career development. With this DSocSci project, I aimed to address the issue of academics feeling isolated and unsupported in their jobs, how this affects their learning and career progression, and how policymakers can facilitate the community participation of these academics to improve higher education as a sector. Based on interviews with academics and other sources, my research essentially acts as an intermediary between academics and policymakers, with a strong interest in academics' learning experiences in light of the existing attempts to modernise higher education.

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The role of academics worldwide has undergone significant changes over the last decade and the Cypriot public higher education, where my research is based, is no exception. I chose public higher education in Cyprus as a case study firstly due to my personal interest in the subject, and secondly because it began comparatively recently; the first public university was established just 27 years ago in 1989. This short history means that there is a research gap in understanding the influence of the working environment on academic career development.



The coast of the Mediterranean Sea, Cyprus

The role of the community in academic learning

In my study I draw on the theory of learning as participation in a community of practice. This has implications for the way in which academics develop their career by being more actively engaged in social relations with others and thus moving from novice to full practitioners in the relevant community. Academics engage in different types of activities in everyday situations, whether formally or informally. As a result, they come together in communities where they share a common concern about a topic, mutually talk and learn about the shared practices through active co-participation. The relational nature of participation amends the way they behave and speak about the practice and how they perceive themselves.

To provide a context of the discussion on academics' career development, I argue that we need to acknowledge the complexity of community relations, especially the aspect of unequal access to resources and differences in status. Poorly funded and inexperienced academics are likely to be at risk of becoming marginalised or excluded from co-participation and negotiation of meaning, restricting their development within the community. Ignoring the nuances of academics' participation within academic communities of practice leads to assumptions about their development that can result in an inadequate support of their career progress.



The metaphor of an academic "spiral staircase" career path

“Embarking on an academic career means a constant struggle in finding the way through inflexible and isolated working practices”



Academic communities: isolation or 'being thrown in at the deep end'

Cypriot academics under stress

To gauge the opinions of academics in this project, I interviewed twenty Cypriot academics about their participatory practices in the workplace and how the 2012–2013 financial crisis affected their professional lives. I list here a selection of quotes from the interviewed academics:

“By the end of the third year you have an evaluation and you have to have research and publications; and then what you only do is just work. You forget about private life, your family life.” (Lecturer – R10)

“I found out how to survive in Cyprus as an academic just by trial and error.” (Lecturer – R2)

“What they would have liked me to do is to shut my mouth, become a ‘good girl’ and do what they want me to do and then move on as a slave in academia.” (Lecturer – R17).

“I think mentoring will definitely speed up both the advancement of research and the ground-breaking ideas coming about; you will get a more friendly and welcoming environment.” (Lecturer – R12)

As the debate continues on how higher education can help societies meet the challenges they face today, these quotes signal that the academy neither considers the problems academics experience in workplaces nor listens to their voices. In truth there is a distinct difference between the perception of academics within public universities and the reality of being an academic. Embarking on an academic career means a constant struggle in finding a way through inflexible and isolated working practices and living with the uncertainty of career progress. We need to reconsider the support systems in place for academics' development.

Views of the officials

Having seen academics' experiences up close, it's also important to consider policymakers' attitudes towards higher education. Mr Costas Kadis – the Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Cyprus – has expressed his view on the current state of higher education in the country by emphasising that: “Cyprus's active participation in the Bologna Process since 2001 (designed to ensure that higher education standards are comparable across European countries) has helped our country to modernise its higher education system.”

“The results of my research challenge ideological stances held in Cypriot society about academics who work in the public sector, by heightening awareness of the possible problems that they face regarding their career development”

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“[Mr Kadis] seldom acknowledged the role of active academics and their efforts to place Cypriot higher education on the international map”

This vision by Mr Kadis acknowledges that the strategy to develop a knowledge society for Europe's future prosperity goes hand-in-hand with constructive dialogue among the relevant stakeholders of higher education in Cyprus. Interestingly though, in line with my findings, he seldom acknowledges the role of active academics and their efforts to place Cypriot higher education on the international map. Instead Mr Kadis cites the development of new academic programmes, investments in high-calibre, ambitious graduates and increasing contributions to the resolution of economic, educational and health problems through research as the main areas for growth in Cypriot higher education. However, who is likely to make such a desirable future materialise? – Obviously academics!



One of the university buildings, Cyprus

Changing policies

The testimonies from academic staff collected in my study highlight the importance of ongoing support to both novice and experienced academics by responding to their learning needs and preventing isolation at workplaces. This investment is likely to make all stakeholders, including academics, commit to the real implementation of the reforms that have been agreed by all members of the European Higher Education Area. Moreover, the results of my research challenge ideological stances held in Cypriot society about academics who work in the public sector, by heightening awareness of the possible problems that they face regarding their career development. Thus, researchers and institutional leaders need seriously to consider nurturing collaborative academic communities. Knowledge development is a key aspect of higher education, and this is best achieved through the participation and mutual negotiation of old principles of communities through new perceptions and practices.