Status and conditions of employment at the University of Sydney 1850-1985

Bruce Williams

In 'University Values and University Organization', a paper written for a meeting of Commonwealth Vice-Chancellors in 1971 in Ghana, and later published in *Minerva* (Vol. X, No. 2, April 1972), I wrote that the evolution of major differences in status in the academic profession deserved further study; I thought it likely that financial constraints had been influential and that with the increase in the size of the academic profession judgements had been made 'that scholars not of the highest class would have to be appointed and that this should be reflected in status and responsibility'. I pointed also to the need to re-examine the roles of hierarchy, which had increased in large universities, and collegiality.

Recently David Wood and I completed a monograph on *Status and Leadership in the University of Sydney, 1850-1985*, and my paper today is based on that monograph.

The University of Sydney started with three Professors chosen by the best academic judges in England. As the number of students increased they were given part-time assistance by suitably qualified graduates resident in the colony at the time. They were given a variety of titles, including Reader. In 1866 a full-time position of Reader in Geology and Mineralogy and Demonstrator in Practical Chemistry was created. Then in 1880 two full-time Lecturers were appointed, another in 1884, and a fourth in 1888. The first Reader became a Professor in 1870, one of the Lecturers became Registrar and the other three became Professors in 1890 or 1891. Thereafter, until 1909 there were only three categories of full-time academic staff — Professors, Assistant Lecturers and Demonstrators.

Assistant Professors

In 1909 the Senate (the governing body of the University) decided to provide a grade of Assistant Professor as the culminating position for Assistant Lecturers and Demonstrators. This improvement in status and salaries was designed to make an academic career more attractive. Promotion to Assistant Professorships was to be based on both years of service and merit. At least some who had sufficient years of service were not judged by Senators to have sufficient merit, and in 1913 Senate decided that in future the title of Assistant Professor would be conferred only after a recommendation by the Professorial Board. Pressures to promote on the basis of seniority alone carried so many problems that in 1933 Senate decided to make no more promotions to the grade.

Associate Professors and Lecturers

Between 1910 and 1919 enrolments increased by a factor of five and prices by a factor of two. That greatly reduced the proportion of expenditure financed from the Government Endowment and private benefactions such as the Great Challis Bequest. There was pressure on the University to increase and keep staff, pressure to appoint cheap grades of staff, and pressure to maintain a high proportion of short-term contracts given the uncertainty of government grants decided annually. Professors had declined from about 50 per cent of full-time staff in 1900 to 25 per cent by 1919.

In 1919 the University received the McCaughey Bequest, and used a substantial part of the income to establish from 1920 four Chairs and five Associate Professorships. Four other Associate Professorships were also created in 1920.

The creation of Associate Professorships followed a report of the Professorial Board which proposed five grades of teaching staff — Associate Lecturers and Demonstrators, Lecturers and Demonstrators, Assistant Professors, Associate Professors and Professors. Senate agreed to establish the two extra grades of Lecturer and Associate Professor. The Associate Professors were to be used to retain exceptionally good teachers when no Chair was available or to appoint a person to take charge of a branch of a subject which would have a full Chair were funds available, or to help the Professor where there were very large enrolments in a subject that was incapable of exact division.

Associate Professors were to be regraded as *proxime accessit* to full Professors and to be members of the Professorial Board. But 13 years later, the Senate adopted a Board recommendation that there be no more appointments to the grade. Whereas in 1920 the Board had not faced squarely the tradition that the number of Chairs be not more than the number of subjects taught, it did so in 1933 when it recommended that if the needs of a Department warranted a Professor and an Associate Professor it should have two Chairs.

The financial position of the University precluded action on that recommendation until after World War 2.

In 1936 the grade of Reader was established, though it was not until after the Second World War that promotions to the grade were reserved for those eminent in research.

In 1954 Senate referred to the Board a proposal from The Faculty of Law that the grade of Associate Professor be re-established to retain highly qualified teachers or to attract staff capable of taking responsibility under a Professor for the teaching and development of a particular field of study. The Senate adopted the Board proposal that the grade be re-established and that Associate Professors not be members of the Professorial Board. That decision reflected the increase in hierarchy that accompanied the growth of managerial problems in large Departments.

Senior Lecturers and Tutors

Enrolments started to increase even before the end of the Second World War, and to provide for the retention and recruitment of suitable staff the Senate in 1944 created the grade of Senior Lecturer for all who had been Lecturers for 10 years or more, and provided for the possibility of the promotion of others on the initiative of the Vice Chancellor.

Finance was expected to be a barrier to the appointment of staff to expensive grades, even if people of sufficient ability and experience were available. So in 1944 in preparation for the postwar growth in numbers the grades of Tutor and Teaching Fellow were created, to be appointed annually for a maximum of three years. Then following the comment in the Murray Report on the need to strengthen teaching activities by the appointment of more experienced graduates than could be expected to apply for Tutorships, in 1960 the grade of Senior Tutor was introduced.

So from the Professors and their Assistant Lecturers and Demonstrators in the 1880s, by the 1960s there were Professors, Readers, Associate Professors, Senior Lecturers, Assistant Lecturers and Demonstrators, Senior Tutors, Principal Tutors, Tutors and Teaching Fellows. The range was reduced in 1974 when, at the request of the Universities Commission, Demonstrators, Tutor-Demonstrators and Teaching Fellows became Tutors.

University government

When I arrived at Sydney in 1967 I found that the formal arrangements for University government had changed very little since 1861 when the Act was changed to include three Professors on Senate, though that later became five, and 1886 when the Senate created the Professorial Board. But by 1967 Professors were only 10 per cent of the staff, and the role of the Faculties, which embodied the concept of collegiality, had been considerably reduced by the growth of departments which had no place in the Act or Bylaws.

The sub-professorial staff were not contentetd with their lot, which was not surprising, and it seemed clear that to improve their status and satisfaction the Act and the Bylaws would have to be changed. I wanted to change the Act for another reason — that the embodied doctrine of *in loco parentis* was outmoded and gave the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor responsibilities that they could not possibly meet. The Chancellor warned me against seeking a change in the Act on the grounds that when the University of Queensland asked for a change in its Act all it got was two Archbishops on its Council. However Senate agreed to recommend a change, and in 1973 Parliament changed the Act to provide for the election to Senate of three sub-professorial academic staff and one member of the general staff.

Two years later the Minister approved amendments to the Bylaws to substitute a more representative Academic Board for the Professorial Board, and new Bylaws on Departments to ensure meetings and a report to Faculty of any proposals passed by a majority but rejected by the Head of Department. The Bylaw also provided for the periodic appointment of Heads of Departments by the Vice-Chancellor, normally from among the Professors and Associate Professors.

Tenure

The first Professors were appointed for life. If a Professor were on leave, or unable to act, Senate could use half his salary and all the lecture fees to employ a substitute. There was originally no provision for pensions, but a pension scheme was introduced in 1898 and then Senate took the power, which it still has, to pension off a Professor 'without cause shown' from the age of 60. In 1935 Senate introduced a retiring age of 70 for those in post, and 65 for those appointed subsequently.

Despite his 'life appointment' several attempts were made to dismiss Professor G A Wood during the Boer War. Wood, as a good Manchester Liberal, was very critical of the role of the British Government, helped to found the Anti-war League and became its Chairman. War-time hysteria led to a demand for his dismissal on the grounds that as Civil Servants should take no active part in political gatherings neither should Professors, who were paid from public funds. Although he was a Challis Professor, and McCallum and Edgeworth David were giving strong public support for British Government war policies, Wood was publicly censured by the Senate in February 1902. Later in 1902 there were moves to dismiss him, and on two occasions before the end of the war Senate did not reject but deferred further action on him.

In *Happy Highways* Portus reported Wood's view that he was saved by McCallum's threat to resign if Wood were dismissed. The more likely explanation is a letter from Edmund Barton, preserved in Chancellor MacLaurin's papers in the University Archives. As Prime Minister, Barton was on leave from Senate and in his letter of May 2 he asked whether Wood had not 'the right of free speech on his side of the controversy?' And how, he asked further, could Senate justify taking action on Wood while holding its hands in the cases of 'our friends McCallum and David'?

In 1922, Irvine, the first Professor of Economics, resigned. According to the entry in the Australian Dictionary of Biography he was forced to resign when his adultery was brought to the attention of the University Senate. There is no direct evidence of this in the archives. The Senate Minute is that his resignation was accepted 'not on grounds advanced by Professor Irvine . . . but by reason of other matters that he had disclosed to the University solicitors and brought under the notice of Senate'. At that time students were younger than now, views on divorce were very different, and the University took its role *in loco parentis* seriously. That adultery — or public knowledge of it — could be regarded as grounds for dismissal was made clear when Associate Professor Brennan was dismissed. The Vice-Chancellor advised Senate that Brennan had been 'guilty of the breach of sacredness of marriage (which) must affect the minds of our young people'.

In 1931 John Anderson was censured by the Senate for his remarks at the University Free Thought Society — to the effect that 'the State, the Country and Nation are superstitious notions', and that 'war memorials are idols' and 'religious celebrations connected with them are fetishes' — on the grounds that 'he used expressions that transgress all proper levels'. There was however no threat to his tenure.

In 1943 a lecture on 'Religion and Education' outside the University was criticised in both houses of the NSW Parliament, but on this occasion the Senate 'remembering as it does the results which have followed from the regimentation of universities in other parts of the world' made a robust defence of 'the spirit of free inquiry'.

Only Professors had *de jure* tenure. Chapter XXVIII of the Bylaws introduced in 1888 provided that any appointment other than a Professor could be terminated by six months notice by either side. Despite that Bylaw, which was not repealed until 1988, a tradition of continuity of employment was gradually established for Lecturers and Associate Professors. In 1917 a rider, which I am not sure how to interpret, was added to Bylaw XXVIII that it did 'not apply to Lecturers and Lecturer Demonstrators appointed as assistants to Professors', and then in 1920 Senate adopted the Professorial Board proposals for five grades of staff which included the recommendations that the appointment of Lecturers be renewable indefinitely if their duties were satisfactorily discharged. More importantly, in 1916 the University requested the State Government to include staff of the University other than Professors in the State Superannuation Scheme, and from July 1918, 'members of the academic staff who were expected to remain in the employment of the university' were required to be members of the Scheme. That scheme established 65 for men and 60 for women as normal retiring ages.

However until well after the Second World War Bylaw XXVIII continued to be quoted in conditions of employment sent to applicants. Then in 1964 the University published an 11-page booklet on *Permanent Academic Appointments at Sub-Professorial Levels* which stated that the Registrar's letter of appointment constituted a contract of employment. There is no evidence for Senate approval of the booklet. De facto, Bylaw XXVIII came to apply only to resignations.

Study leave

From the beginning, Senate was very reluctant to grant leave to keep in touch with overseas developments. In the early years it was not surprising that Senate only gave leave where there was a suitable person to stand in for the Professor. In 1895 the Senate resolved that leave would be granted only after seven years, that the person on leave would be placed on half salary and that the maximum leave would be two terms plus the preceding or following long vacation. That remained the position until 1919.

In 1919 Senate acted on a submission from the Professorial Board to the effect that Australia's geographical isolation made study leave more important than it was for academics in England, that the greater speed of advances in knowledge had increased the need for study leave, and that Canadian and American Professors were given 12 months leave of absence on full pay after six years of service. Senate agreed to grant sabbatical study leave on full pay so long as proper arrangements could be made for the conduct of a Department during the absence of a member of staff. However in 1922 the Finance Committee reported to Senate that American Professors only received full pay when on six months leave and half pay for 12 months leave. When asked to comment on a suggestion that similar arrangements apply at Sydney the Professorial Board protested strongly, but to no avail. In June 1922 the Senate rescinded the resolution of 1919 and decided that in future each application for leave of absence would be considered on its merit. (Shortly after, G A Wood was given 12 months leave on full pay — in Australia — to study Australian history and to prepare lectures and a book.)

In December 1947, Senate clarified leave conditions by approving an advertisement for Chairs in Chemistry and Architecture

which promised one year of sabbatical leave on full pay 'to encourage research and maintain the standard of teaching', but that move towards accepting a right to study leave was not formalised until April 1953 when Senate approved formal conditions proposed by the Acting Vice-Chancellor, A. D. Trendall. In February 1955 because of the implications for tax, Senate resolved that for staff on study leave one half of salary would be paid as travelling allowance, and then in 1958 Senate decided to pay travel grants for overseas study leave.

That remained the position on study leave until the Commonwealth Minister requested the Universities Commission and the Commission on Advanced Education to investigate study leave schemes. The result of that investigation, which was not completed until the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) was established, was published in August 1978. The TEC announced that the speed of travel and the increased sophistication of Australian institutions had reduced the need for long periods of study overseas. It proposed that time spent outside their institutions should not exceed 7 per cent of available man years of staff time of the grade of Lecturer and above, and that the terms 'sabbatical leave' and 'study leave' should be discontinued. The Sydney Scheme became Special Studies Programme (Study Leave) Scheme! That intervention was one of an increasing number of unsought actions by the Government to restrict university autonomy. There were many actions by Governments that were sought by universities, as after the Second World War for the determination and support of salaries.

Salaries

The first professors were paid a salary of around £900 and half the class fees in their subjects. In 1889, when such class fees ranged from 30 per cent to 40 per cent of salaries, the salary for the new Challis Chairs were set at £900 without participation in class fees. That made the emoluments of Challis Professors considerably less than those of the other Professors. The decline in the proportion of expenditure that could be financed from the State Endowment and income from investments was making student fees much more important in the general finance of the University. However in 1898, Challis Professors aged 50 or more were given the right to an annual pension of £400 after 20 years of service.

That salary of £900 was not increased until 1920. Prices had come down between 1853 and 1900 by 25%, but doubled between 1900 and 1920. In 1920 salaries were increased from £900 to £1100, but even after that increase the salaries of Professors when corrected for price changes were only 60 per cent of the level in 1900.

Salaries were increased in 1938, which raised real salaries to 80 per cent of the level in 1900, but they were not raised again until 1947 when real salaries had fallen back to the level of 1920.

The capacity of the Universities to improve salary levels was transformed by Commonwealth Government action on the Mills Report of 1950 and the Murray Report of 1957. Between 1950 and 1960 real salaries of Professors increased by 60 per cent and were back to the level of 1910. Between 1960 and 1975 real salaries increased by a further 33 per cent, but then fell back by around 3 per cent between 1975 and 1985.

Consideration of changes in real salaries should of course be related to movements in production per person. In *Status and Leadership*, David Wood and I have shown that the real salaries of Professors fell sharply relative to real GDP per person (as calculated by Noel Butlin) between 1900 and 1920, rose relatively between 1929 and 1940 but lost that relative rise between 1940 and 1950, more than kept pace with the increase in real GDP per person by 75 per cent between 1950 and 1975, and then fell by 3 per cent between 1975 and 1985 while GDP per person rose by 12 per cent.

What of the other ranks? At the turn of the century Assistant Lecturers and Demonstrators received 39 per cent of a Professor's salary. By 1920 that had fallen to 32 per cent.

After 1920 the Lecturer category became the key category, and the Lecturer salary became 45 per cent of a Professor's. By 1985 the midpoint of the range (introduced in 1950) was 55 per cent of the professorial salary.

The midpoint of a Senior Lecturer's salary rose from 42 per cent of a Professor's salary in 1944 to 70 per cent in 1985. The Associate Professor grade when re-introduced in 1954 was 78 per cent of a Professor's salary, and by 1985 it was 85 per cent.

Professors in the Law School at Sydney sometimes complained of their lot by comparing their salaries with those of District Court Judges, to which they claimed their salaries used to equal. In fact they started 10 per cent higher, but by 1900 they were 40 per cent less. After the Commonwealth responses to the Mills and Murray reports they recovered to 85 per cent by 1960, but then declined to 77 per cent in 1975 and to 73 per cent in 1985.

Status in the Community

In *Power, Privilege and Prestige*, Dr Ann Daniel gives the results of her survey of the public rankings of occupations. She asked the people in her sample to give rankings from 1 to 7. Judges came top at 1.2 followed by Medical Specialists and Barristers at 1.5. These products of the universities were ranked above their teachers. Professors had a rank of 1.8, along with Church leaders and General Practitioners, and Lecturers 2.5, below professional Engineers, equal to Vets though above Chartered Accountants.

There were very different responses from social groups. Trade Union officials and students ranked Professors and Lecturers closer to Judges. Public servants in NSW ranked Professors near the average of 1.9. By contrast, Commonwealth public servants gave Professors a lower rank than did any other social group. Why that ranking of Professors by Commonwealth public servants?

1. This article was delivered as an address to a history seminar on university histories at the Australian National University, Research School of Social Sciences, 26 March, 1990.

Reforming research and higher education — the example of the Federal Republic of Germany

Bernd Hüppauf
University of New South Wales

This essay consists of three parts, an introduction in which I try to locate my argument within the current debates on the future of research and higher education, a second part which addresses three aspects of the ongoing restructuring of the system of research and higher education in the FRG, and a conclusion in which the concept of time is used in an attempt to draw together various international tendencies in the reconstitution of research and higher education.[1]

The future of research and higher education

My choice of topic was influenced by the current debate in Australia and my approach is a selective one that does not aim at mirroring the tendencies in the FRG but rather at presenting a few select issues and tendencies in the light of current changes here. This leads to my first general hypothesis: at present, research and higher education are in a state of flux not only in Australia but internationally, and — despite certain national specificities — the general tendencies of change are shared by most western societies.

Within the Australian context this is a relevant point to make, because the view that most of the changes proposed or already in operation are the products of a young and agile Minister and will therefore disappear once he has changed portfolio or the other party has formed government, is still widespread. Looking at the White Paper in an international context, it soon becomes apparent that this is an illusion. Also, the common habit of perceiving and analysing the situation in purely national terms demonstrably tends to lose the opportunity of looking behind the symptoms and more often than not is caught up in short term considerations characteristic of the domestic debate. The aim, expressed in a few recent conferences on the future of research and higher education in Australia, to analyse the White Paper and then fight the Minister is the result of an oversimplification of highly complex issues and will inevitably lead to frustration. International developments make it clear that approaches reminiscent of actions and leftist slogans of the sixties are incommensurate with the current situation. It is no exaggeration to say that the Minister's major objectives had already been achieved during the early phase of the public response to the Green and White Papers. It will take some time before the landscape of research and higher education in Australia will make visible the full extent of the changes. However, despite a number of compromises and minor alterations, it is only a matter of time before the fundamental reconstitution of the system becomes visible.

It has been argued that Australia is once again following the British model and that the iron lady is approximately 18 months ahead of John Dawkins' schedule. It seems to me that this is only half the story. In the UK certain trends are being pushed through with more rigour than elsewhere and often with less or even no consideration at all given to detrimental effects which implemented changes will possibly have in the long term on research and teaching. In an attempt to understand the Australian scene, it is clearly important to monitor English developments. It seems to me, however, that a number of points become much clearer by looking at societies and universities which are to a greater extent dissimilar to the Australian situation.

The international debate is characterised by a striking absence of philosophical, educational and general academic issues, and by a predominance of arguments from and the language of economics. It is not necessarily the 'human capital' approach of the early seventies, so central to John Dawkins' plans, but there is no doubt that it is economic theory which provides the framework within which the current worldwide debate about the future of higher education is being conducted. In *La condition postmoderne*[2] Jean François Lyotard puts this very clearly in the appropriate philosophical context, namely the collapse of metaphysics, the deterioration of the concept of truth and the decline of teleological systems of history. The only criterion left for the 'relevance' of research and higher education, he argues, is that of its economic applicability for which he introduces the term "performativity". On the other side, philosophers such as Habermas and Wellmer continue to emphasise the importance of maintaining a concept of the modern university with an integrated structure and universalistic mission, which would have to play a central role in modern society's way into a more rationally structured future.[3] Mittelstrass recently reinforced the view of a university committed to the ideals of an enlightened society: "Education means the gaining of full orientation and recovery of a complete ego. It is the future other of the modern world."[4] I shall not pursue the philosophical line here but make a few concrete observations in relation to current changes in the Federal Republic which will have, I am going to argue, serious implications for the very idea of the university. My historical points of reference will be the emergence of the 'modern university' as a direct result of Wilhelm von Humboldt's contribution to the reform movement following the collapse of the Prussian state (the University of Berlin was founded in 1809), and the reforms introduced during the late sixties and early seventies of this century.

To begin with, public debates concerning research and higher education in Germany (or in France for that matter) seem to differ fundamentally from those in Australia. If we imagine for a moment a conference of departments of English, French and German held at a university and devoted to questions concerning the future of the humanities in general and language and literature in particular, it seems highly likely that such a conference in Australia would attract a handful of participants and be passed over in silence by the rest of the community. At Bonn University, where such a conference was organised earlier this year,[5] it attracted large numbers of participants, some papers drew several hundred, it was widely covered by the printed and electronic media and government representatives cared to comment publicly on some of the suggestions made concerning the future of the study of languages and literatures. Apart from such rather exceptional occasions, issues of research and higher education regularly find their way into papers and periodicals, and there is a public discourse fed by politicians from all parties, university representatives, and professors from various disciplines, in particular social and political philosophers and sociologists. Glotz, Eppler, Maier, Biedenkopf, Habermas, Mittelstrass, Lübbe, Ellwein, Leggewie, to name only a few, have all published their often substantial reflections on general and philosophical problems of the future of research and higher education. It has been argued that the Australian public sphere is characterised by an extreme pragmatism and complete absence of a philosophical and moral discourse.[6] The FRG appears to be at the other end of the spectrum where the smallest political move seems to provoke an abundance of philosophical reflection often of an apocalyptic nature. However, looking at the situation in practical terms will easily lead to disillusionment: differences to Australia in the current restructuring of research and higher education are often minute (but not in every respect, as I shall illustrate), and for all the sophistication of the debate, it seems obvious that it always comes too late, making itself a cultural decoration of an increasingly economy-driven system. In the face of stiff international competition, scientific, technological and economic, the intense debate within and outside the universities concerning their future role is often reduced to ritualised lament and immaterial reflections after the interests of the economy and business have been realised. The most recent slogan calls for a relaxed relationship (*entkrampftes Verhältnis*) between universities and the economy.[7]

One of the targets of the reforms of the late sixties was the privileged position of the university. Removed from the ordinary life of its time, it seemed to enjoy a prestige inherited from a pre-modern period, incongruous with the principles of a democratic society. The aim to open up the university and make it an element within egalitarian structures of public discourse was directly related to Kant's idealist concept of a liberal bourgeois society with an open market for competing ideas. Dahrendorf, then a professor of sociology at the University of Konstanz and later Secretary in the Federal Ministry for Science and Education, propagated the "civil right to education" without, however, relating it to the structure and capacity of the labour market. Habermas, von Friedeburg, Deninger and Wiethölter[8] were the most prominent representatives of the attempt to 'democratise' the universities. Their model has attracted much criticism and by now the large majority of professors seem to consider it a complete failure.[9] In the meantime the age of the electronic media has taken care of this project and reduced the university, once it was stripped of its aura, to yet another theatre for staging sensationalist happenings, and the systems of research