

THE CHANGING NATURE OF THE ACADEMIC ROLE IN SCIENCE

Professor Pauline Ross
National Teaching Fellow

Educational change is now the new horizon for universities

We are now facing a generational change in the academic workforce. A new tribe of academics is emerging: the education/teaching focused academic. The education-focused academic role is considered one of the 'wicked problems' facing higher education, especially for disciplines such as science that have been heavily focused on disciplinary research. An education-focused academic in science needs to build their expertise and make the journey from a novice to an expert in a new disciplinary home, one that has a focus on the student and excellence in education in science.

Project Outputs

A measure of the extent of differentiation in the academic role was assessed using the data from the Department of Education and Training. The total academic workforce grew by 6,427 roles between 2008 and 2017. The number of employees in teaching-focused roles grew 314% between 2008 and 2017, whereas the number of staff in teaching and research roles grew only 4% in this same period.

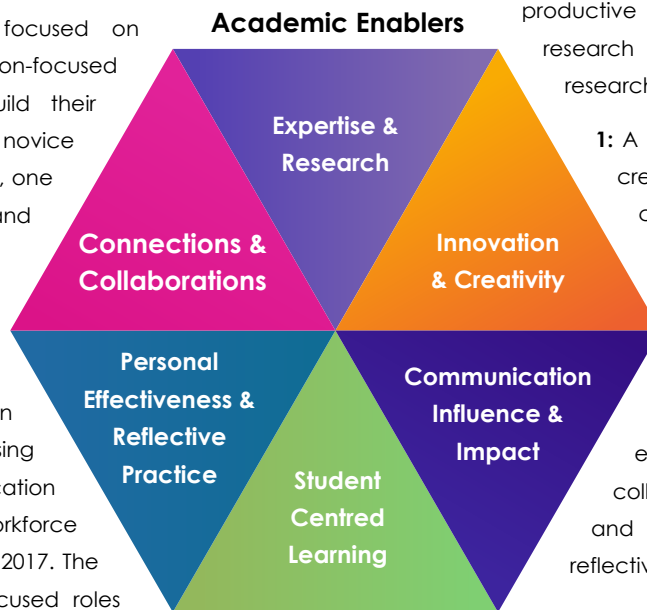
Interviews were conducted with 32 academics in education-focused roles and teaching and research roles in science from a range of institutions. Ten major themes of concerns emerged about the different academic roles in science. These were categorised as value, expertise, scholarship, reputation, funding, progress and promotion, research, community and connections, view of students, and metrics and merit.

Project Achievements and Impacts

The challenge for an education-focused academic is to retain expertise and research currency. To address many of the challenges facing the academic workforce in science, a productive partnership between education and research -focused academics and education researchers was proposed, among other solutions.

1: A professional development framework was created with standards of quality teaching categorised as knowledge, practice, scholarship and students.

2: Education enablers to assist education-focused academics include a focus on student-centred learning, innovation and creativity, expertise and research, connections and collaborations, communication, influence and impact, personal effectiveness and reflective practice.



Standards of Quality Teaching



"...we ought to be building a system which instils in people the value of what they innately bring. The right questions is what value do you bring to this place?"

-Quote from interviewee 15

Full copy of the report can be found at:
<https://altf.org/fellows/ross-pauline/>