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From 'ECR' to 'Strategic Academic': Reconstructing personal narrative as institutional text

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Abstract

In response to a report that universities focused more on research performance than teaching performance, the Australian government in 2003 introduced a number of policy initiatives including the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund. To establish their eligibility to bid for allocations from this fund, many universities introduced teacher training programs as an integral part of their probation and promotion practices for new academic staff. As an 'Early Career Researcher'[1] I am currently participating in such a program, in which I must familiarise myself with institutional policies on governance, compliance, and strategic direction, and develop a career plan to position myself to achieve my personal career goals while advancing the organisational and strategic goals of my institution. This paper uses an institutional ethnographic analysis of my experience to explicate the processes by which an Early Career Researcher actively participates in developing new ways of knowing that construct how I think, talk and write about myself, my goals and my professional work. I argue that developing the required career plan involves producing a text based account that renders selected parts of my work and professional identity visible in terms that ultimately connect them to government policy.

Vignette 1: I do not *choose* to do this

I sit at my computer, in my newly-tidied office. I am an Early Career Researcher (ECR), and throughout my first year as a member of academic staff I struggled to control a steady accumulation of 'bits of paper'. When I took up a teaching and research position in an Australian university I found myself in an unfamiliar institutional context where I had no frames of reference for determining which bits of paper to keep and which to discard. The filing cabinets inherited from my predecessor were already filled with several years' accumulation of paper filed in a system that I found unworkable. I arrived in the university just a few weeks before the teaching period began, so I had no time to sort through the historical records and establish my own filing system. Over the ensuing twelve months the bits of paper steadily colonised my entire desk, piled themselves upon every bookshelf, and eventually occupied so much floor space that there was only a narrow path left from the door to my desk. As the piles of paper grew, so too did my sense of being completely overwhelmed. Simply opening my office door made my heart sink.

Enough. *For two whole days I carried out the administrative equivalent of an archaeological dig – working downwards through the layers, classifying increasingly ancient relics. I kept only a small proportion of what I found, creating my own filing system as I worked. Most of the paper (the 'spoil' of my dig) went into a bin for recycled office paper. I have taken control of my workspace as the first step in taking control of my work, and I sit here eager to get on with the business of being a Lecturer (Level B) in Education.*

Not so fast. *As a condition of my employment I am required to complete the Graduate Certificate of Higher Education. Throughout the past twelve months I happily ignored the enrolment forms that mysteriously appeared in my pigeonhole at regular intervals. But I can't put it off any longer. If I don't make a start this semester I'll be in trouble.*

*I do not **choose** to do this. I have nearly 20 years experience working with adult learners, and I hold a variety of qualifications in education ranging from vocational certificates to a PhD. I have very limited time available after completing my teaching duties, and I really want to spend that time on research. I came to this role having published a number of papers as a PhD student, but the only papers I have published as an academic were already substantially written before I took up the position. I want to do Institutional Ethnographic research, and instead I sit here reading an assignment specification that instructs me to write a personal career plan 'grounded in [my] reading of university information on governance, compliance, teaching, leadership and strategic direction', and advising me to ensure that my personal plan 'is advantaged by the institutional one rather than being in any conflict with it' ('EEE712 The Strategic Academic – Semester 1 2007: Assessment Details', p.2). I fight back tears of frustration. **I do not choose to do this!!!** I feel that I am being compelled to complete a qualification simply to allow my institution to report compliance with government funding requirements.*

***What was that??** Stop – rewind – replay that last paragraph. I'm saying that I feel frustrated because I want to use institutional ethnography to explore how ruling texts organise and coordinate work processes in my field, but I'm being required instead to spend my time identifying and analysing the internal and external forces that impact on the university, and developing a career plan to position myself strategically within this context.*

How did I miss the congruence there?

What if I approach this assignment as an institutional ethnographic analysis of how my experiences as an Early Career Researcher are coordinated by ruling texts? I could satisfy the assessment tasks, and at the same time embark on an initial analysis of the context in which I am now working.

And I could probably even argue that in doing this I am being 'strategic'.

The above vignette illustrates the dual purposes being served by this paper. As a response to a set of formal assessment instructions, the vignette provides a required account of a situation in which I have been 'strategic' in the sense of being astute to my environment and the opportunities it offers, and taking advantage of those circumstances to position myself better (*EEE712 The Strategic Academic – Semester 1 2007: Assessment Details*, p.1). As the starting point for an institutional ethnographic analysis of how my experiences as an Early Career Researcher (ECR) are coordinated by the texts and discourses of higher education, the vignette allows me to begin my account 'on the ground', revealing 'the actual stuff' of my everyday experience as a new member of academic staff in an Australian higher education institution (Rankin & Campbell 2006, p.16).

What is happening here?

The task that I am confronted with in Vignette 1 would not appear to be particularly demanding or unreasonable. I have been employed by an organisation whose goals and targets are specified in the form of strategic and operational plans. As a new member of academic staff I must familiarise myself with these plans and other related

documents (policies, guidelines, procedures etc), and develop a personal career plan that will allow me to achieve my own goals while also achieving the goals of the university and faculty (*EEE712 The Strategic Academic – Semester 1 2007: Assessment Details*, p.1).

How do I approach this task as an institutional ethnographic analysis? Institutional ethnography is not simply an ethnographic approach to the study of institutions (Smith 2006d, p.2), it is an approach to sociological research that 'directs empirical investigation toward connections among local settings of everyday life, organizations, and translocal relations of ruling' (Holstein 2006, p.293). Institutional ethnography was introduced by Canadian sociologist Dorothy Smith, and continues to be developed through the ongoing work of scholars in a range of contexts (see, for example: Campbell & Gregor 2002; Campbell & Manicom 1995; McCoy 1998; Rankin & Campbell 2006; Smith 1987, 1999, 2006a, 2006c).

Institutional ethnography sees power as being pervasively structured through a 'complex of organised practices' which Dorothy Smith called the 'ruling relations':

> A mode of ruling has become dominant that involves a continual transcription of the local and particular activities of our lives into abstracted and generalized forms. It is an *extralocal* mode of ruling. ... It involves the construction of the world as texts, whether on paper or in computer, and the creation of a world in texts as a site of action. (Smith, D.E. 1987, p.3 [emphasis original])

In institutional ethnography, the term 'texts' refers to a wide range of material forms including print, film, television, photographic images, audio, computer, musical scores, mathematics, architectural drawings etc (Smith 2006a , pp.165-166). A key characteristic of such texts is their replicability; people engaging with the same text in different situations and environments can read, see or hear the same words (Smith 2006b, p.66).

> The material text creates a join between local and particular, and the generalizing and generalized organization of the ruling relations. It is the materiality of the text itself that connects the local setting at the moment of reading into the non-local relations that it bears. (Smith 1999, p.79)

An institutional ethnography typically identifies an area of experience or everyday practice and explores or 'explicates' the institutional processes shaping that experience (Campbell & Gregor 2002, p.59; DeVault & McCoy 2006, p.20). Marie Campbell and Frances Gregor described the notion of explication as the 'analytic core' of institutional ethnography: 'researchers begin in the everyday world, collect data about it, and proceed to explicate a problematic by going beyond what can be known in any local setting' (Campbell & Gregor 2002, p.59). Dorothy Smith described this as a process of 'looking up from where you are' and argued that:

> … it's that looking up and into as a process of investigation, of progressive discovering, and assembling what you've got as a base from which to move into investigating further and more widely that's the key to institutional ethnography. (Smith 2006d, p.5)

Institutional ethnography is committed to discovering 'how things are actually put together' or 'how it works', and what is discovered can be represented in the form of words and diagrams or 'maps' (Smith 2006d, p.1).

To return to Vignette 1, the experience or everyday practice that I am engaged in is the initial work towards completion of a unit of study. This is represented in diagrammatic form in Figure 1.
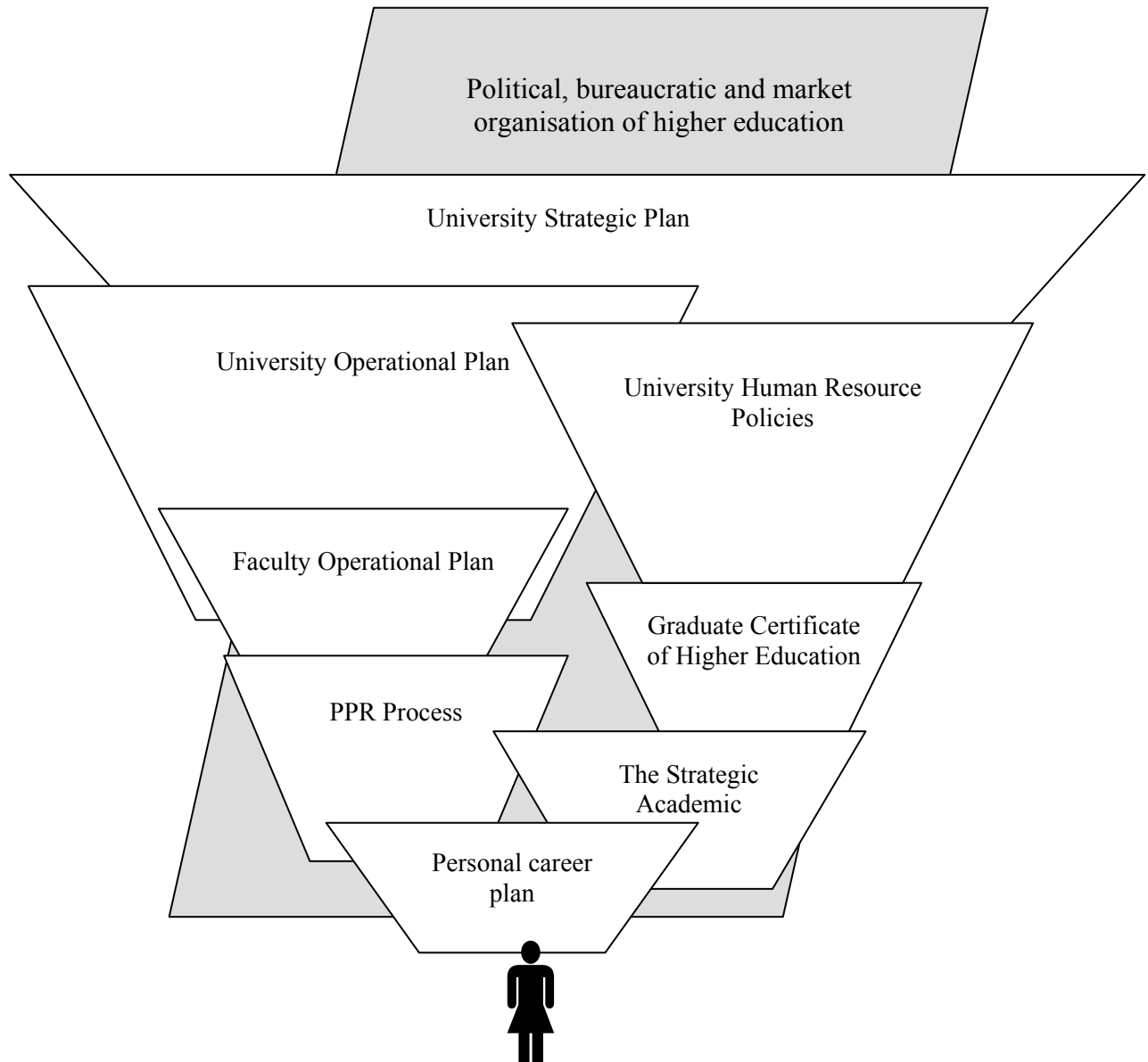
Political, bureaucratic and market organisation of higher education

University Strategic Plan

University Operational Plan

University Human Resource Policies

Faculty Operational Plan

Graduate Certificate of Higher Education

PPR Process

The Strategic Academic

Personal career plan

Figure 1 (Adapted from Smith 2006d, p.3)

'Looking up' from my position in this diagram, I see that the organisational context for the task confronting me arises from two separate but overlapping processes.

The right side of the diagram represents a teaching and learning process. The university's human relations policy relating to probationary staff requires academic staff appointed to teaching positions to complete the Graduate Certificate of Higher Education (Deakin University 2004). A graduate qualification which prepares teachers for work in the tertiary education sector, course participants in the Graduate Certificate (GCHE) include academic staff both from within the university and from other tertiary institutions. The course consists of four units of study that 'help

participants to situate themselves and develop in relation to the multiple roles of academics in teaching, research and development, administration and community service' (Deakin University 2007b). The personal career plan that I am working on is an assessment requirement for the unit of study entitled 'The Strategic Academic', and my completion of the assessment tasks will ultimately be represented in the university student record system.

The left side of the diagram represents a university planning and performance process. The University's Strategic Plan and Operational Plan (Deakin University 2007a; 2007c) set out a range of goals and targets relating to: Teaching and Learning; Research and Research Training; Internationalisation; Recruiting and Retaining Staff; Community Responsibilities – Rural and Regional Engagement; Communication, Marketing and 'Positioning'; and Resources, Infrastructure and Services. Consistent with the university-level framework, the Faculty Operational Plan (*Faculty of Education Operational Plan 2007*) defines a range of specific objectives and targets, accountabilities, and actions for each of the goals identified in the strategic plan.

The university and faculty plans define the context in which I am required to develop what might be seen as my individual 'operational plan', in the form of a Performance Planning and Review (PPR) document. Shortly after my appointment I was prompted to download and familiarise myself with the Guidelines and Forms for the PPR process. The Guidelines advised me that the PPR meeting with my supervisor would provide 'the opportunity to discuss work priorities and key accountabilities … and to jointly develop objectives and standards for the review period' (Human Resources Services Division 2005, p.2). The PPR Form requires my supervisor and I to agree on and document performance objectives and standards relating to my performance in Teaching, Research, and Service (Deakin University 2006). The Guidelines explicitly require that my own performance objectives and standards align with the university and faculty operational objectives and strategic priorities (Human Resources Services Division 2005, pp.1-5). One of the performance objectives outlined in my first PPR meeting was to commence the Graduate Certificate of Higher Education. In addition to being part of the teaching and learning process, the personal career plan that I am developing for 'The Strategic Academic' is, therefore, also a component of my engagement with the PPR process.

'Looking up' from my position in Figure 1, two connections in particular become visible. Closest to my position is the intersection between the 'Strategic Academic' assessment tasks, the Graduate Certificate of Higher Education, and my PPR process. Somewhat removed from my immediate field of vision is the connection between both organisational processes represented here and the wider context, in particular national government policy. Beginning from my own position, Figure 2 draws on Dorothy Smith's work on intertextual circles to represent the relationship between the assessment tasks, the Graduate Certificate and my PPR.
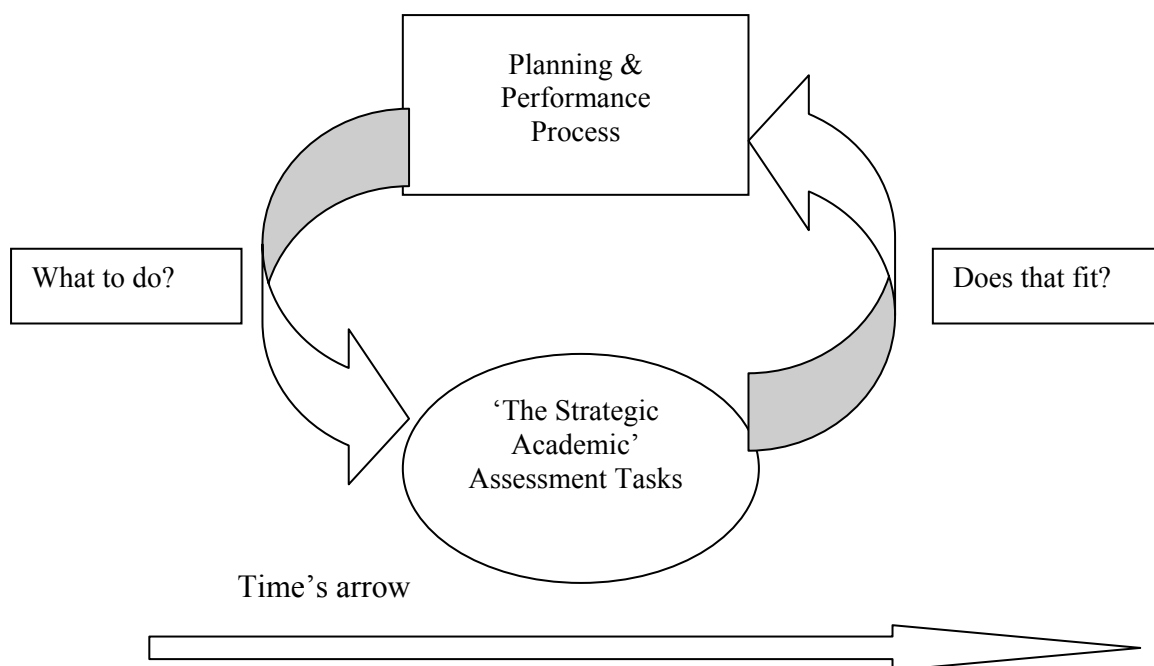
Figure 2: Intertextual Circles (Adapted from Smith 2006b, p.85)

The work in Figure 2 begins at the top of the diagram. As a probationary staff member with teaching duties, one of the performance objectives agreed in my first PPR meeting was that I would commence the Graduate Certificate of Higher Education in 2007. To achieve this objective I enrolled in the unit 'The Strategic Academic'. The moment captured in Vignette 1 arises from my 2006 PPR in the sense that it represents my thoughts and feelings as I commence that first unit of study. But it also foreshadows the work I must undertake to prepare for my 2007 PPR, when my progress in 'The Strategic Academic' will provide evidence of my progress towards the performance objective set in 2006. This is the first level on which this intertextual circle exists. On another level, the work again commences with the planning and performance process, when the various texts of the university and faculty planning processes provide the framework to which I must align my personal career development plan for 'The Strategic Academic'. This work will once again feed back into the PPR process because the personal career plan that I develop will become the basis for my next PPR discussion, in which my supervisor and I will agree future performance objectives and standards. In both cases university performance and planning texts define requirements to which I must respond in developing my personal career plan.

Taking a step back from my immediate view, Figure 1 reveals that both organisational processes are connected to a wider economic and policy context. The text that underpins the planning and performance process is the university strategic plan, which explicitly positions the university in relation to the higher education environment. The strategic plan opens with a statement in which the Vice Chancellor makes explicit reference to government policies (not limited to higher education policy, but also

policy on workplace reform), deregulation, competition, market forces such as globalisation and internationalisation, the Research Quality Framework, and the Australian Universities Quality Agency (Deakin University 2007c, pp.1-4).

The right side of Figure 1 similarly represents the teaching and learning process that I am engaged in as being directly connected to government policy and funding arrangements. The Graduate Certificate of Higher Education was launched by Deakin University in 2004, in response to the introduction of the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund (Rosenberg 2004). Following a review which concluded that Australian universities tended to place more emphasis on research performance than teaching performance, the government introduced the Fund to encourage an increased focus on teaching and learning. For individual institutions to be eligible to bid for an allocation from the Fund they are required to provide 'evidence of systematic support for professional development of teachers and evidence that probation and promotion practices and policies include effectiveness as a teacher as a criterion for academics with a teaching load' (Rosenberg 2004). The human resource policy requiring academic staff appointed to teaching positions to complete the Graduate Certificate of Higher Education will provide part of the evidence which establishes my university's eligibility to submit bids to the Learning and Teaching Performance Fund.

In Vignette 1 I am responding to an institutional text ('The Strategic Academic' assignment instruction) within the frame of my immediate activity. Applying an institutional ethnographic analysis results in a map (Figure 1) which reveals sequences of texts from two organisational processes as instances of what Dorothy Smith called 'intertextual hierarchies', in which 'Higher-order texts regulate and standardize texts that enter directly into the organization of work in multiple local settings' (Smith 2006c, p.79). Through the alignment of all other performance planning and human resource policies to the university strategic plan, the immediate work of completing assessment tasks for 'The Strategic Academic' ultimately connects me with the wider context including government policy.

Vignette 2: Keeping my options open

Institutional ethnography (IE) provided the conceptual framework for my PhD study, but based entirely on my understanding of published literature. In 2005 I became aware of a transnational network of IE scholars through the Institutional Ethnography Division of the US based Society for the Study of Social Problems (SSSP). I joined SSSP and read the regular IE Division newsletters with great interest. I was particularly interested to read accounts of the IE activities conducted as part of the SSSP 2005 Annual Meeting. At no stage did I anticipate that I would have the opportunity to participate in such activities.

In late 2005 I received a newsletter announcing the 2006 Annual Meeting to be held in Montréal Quebec. Although I could not imagine that I might actually be able to attend, the first step was to submit a proposal to present a paper, so I did that. I was keeping my options open – with my PhD research drawing to a close I had no clear plans for the future.

In January 2006 I was appointed as a member of academic staff in a university faculty of education. By the time my proposal to SSSP was accepted, I was employed in a position that carried expectations relating to both teaching and research. I began

work on my full paper. While I was prepared to fund my own participation in the meeting if necessary, I did not know whether my request for leave would be approved or even whether I could afford an overseas trip in my first year of employment after four years on a scholarship. Once again, I was keeping my options open.

My initial enquiries suggested that to have any chance of receiving funding from my faculty I would need to ensure that my conference paper was subject to a peer review process. While the SSSP meeting did not have an established review process, the IE Division did offer an Award competition for graduate students and recent PhD graduates. I submitted my paper for the competition, treating it as a form of peer review.

In my first PPR discussion I told my supervisor about my desire to attend the SSSP meeting. At the time I was struggling to find the language to link my request to the funding and research priorities of my faculty, and I resorted to simply describing my participation in the meeting as 'strategic'. Fortunately my supervisor agreed that there would be value in me attending and presenting at SSSP, and he approved an allocation of funds to help cover the costs.

I had been thinking of the Award competition primarily as a peer review process. To my delight, my paper was selected as the recipient of the 2006 George Smith Award. I attended the meeting, participated in the IE Division activities, attended as many IE sessions as possible, and met with a number of IE scholars. The conversations I participated in reaffirmed my sense that IE is a powerful approach for explicating the educational policy issues that I want to research, while at the same time they confirmed just how much I need to learn about IE.

As I enter 2007 I am on the selection panel for the 2007 George Smith Award, and I have had a paper proposal accepted for the SSSP 2007 meeting in New York. I am now on my faculty's 'Active Researcher list', which provides access to funding that will help cover my costs. Conversations that began at the 2006 meeting in Montreal and continued after my return to Australia have culminated in the Educational Futures and Innovation Research Cluster within my faculty and the Institutional Ethnography Network jointly hosting a transnational IE conference at my university in November 2007. I am actively involved in planning this conference, and I am also convenor of a symposium of IE papers at the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) conference, which follows later in November.

All of which affirms that my participation in the 2006 SSSP meeting was indeed 'strategic'.

Career planning as personal narrative

Vignette 2 represents my usual way of working, and there is little evidence here of the carefully crafted career development plan anticipated in 'The Strategic Academic'. In this vignette I follow my instincts, consider each opportunity as it arises, and do what I need to do to keep my options open. My actions and decisions are aligned to my own research interests and not to any organisational goals and priorities.

My PPR requires me to develop performance objectives and standards in the areas of 'Teaching', 'Research' and 'Service'. Prior to taking up an academic position I had

already been working in adult education for nearly 20 years, most recently developing and delivering pre-service and in-service professional development programs for adult educators who worked in workplace learning settings and vocational training colleges. The 'curriculum' frameworks for these programs were provided by vocational Certificate and Diploma qualifications. I am now working in a university faculty of education, teaching in a range of pre-service and professional development programs for educators who work in schools and vocational settings. The 'curriculum' frameworks I now work within are provided by Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma and Masters qualifications. The 'Teaching' component of my current role is not, therefore, entirely new. There are certainly differences between the work I am currently doing and that which I was doing in my previous role, but there are also significant resonances. Similarly with my 'Service' activities. As a highly experienced vocational educator I have for some years been actively involved in a number of professional networks, associations and communities of practice within my field. I have regularly attended and presented at (and on occasion organised) conferences and professional development activities, and I have held positions on various professional organisations. Having relocated across the Australian continent to take up an academic position, I am in the process of re-establishing my local professional networks, but much of the 'Service' work that I will include in my career plan and PPR is a continuation or extension of the sort of 'Service' work that has been part of my professional practice for some years.

The significant difference between my role as an academic in higher education, and my previous role in vocational and workplace education lies in the opportunity to conduct research. Over the last 10 years most of my involvement in research has been associated with my engagement in postgraduate study over and above my work activities. As I neared completion of my PhD studies, I was already fielding offers of employment in vocational education teaching positions, and invitations for further involvement in service activities in my profession. But I was confronted with the imminent prospect of having my involvement in critical research severely curtailed. It was this prospect that prompted my career change to the higher education sector. Of the three areas that I must address in my personal career plan, I will focus in this paper on my goals relating to 'Research' rather than those relating to 'Teaching' or 'Service'.

My PhD thesis (Grace 2005) used institutional ethnography to explore the text-based regulatory framework of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector. I argued that national texts such as Training Packages and the Australian Quality Training Framework represent multiple levels of ruling texts that socially organise the content and delivery of local learning and assessment activities and connect the everyday work of vocational education practitioners to government agendas. This research project was firmly grounded in my own disquiet as a vocational education practitioner with many years experience. As my PhD research drew to a close I had a sense that I had barely scratched the surface of the research possibilities in this area. I also have a longstanding hunch, unsupported by any research, that national government regulatory practices which become established in VET pave the way for similar approaches to be progressively introduced in schools and higher education. I see a clear need for a strong research based critique of VET policy, but it is doubtful whether such a critique is possible within a VET environment in which research agendas are seen to be closely aligned to existing government priorities (Kell 2001,

p.4). My strong interest in pursuing these research issues prompted me to make a career move to higher education, and my desire to conduct this research underpins both the frustration I express in Vignette 1 and the desire expressed in Vignette 2 to learn more about institutional ethnography.

Vignette 1 suggests that my career change did not immediately bring the research opportunities I had been hoping for. Yet every level of the strategic, operational and individual performance planning process within my university identifies 'Research' as a key area of performance. If I can connect my research interests with those of the faculty and university, perhaps I can significantly increase my opportunities to pursue that research. Reflecting on my PhD research I realise that I drew heavily on my familiarity with the VET regulatory framework. I had worked in the sector through the evolution of this framework, and in several roles I was directly involved in developing organisational responses to it. As a knowledgeable reader of VET texts I was able to use language to describe my activities in ways that aligned them to the regulatory framework. But with my career move from VET to higher education I find myself working in a different regulatory framework with priorities expressed in unfamiliar language. My new role feels at times like a new pair of shoes – overall the fit is pretty good, but in some places they still feel a bit tight. This is represented in Vignette 2, where despite my sense that my desire to attend SSSP aligns with the goals of my faculty, I lack the specific language to clearly establish that connection.

Can I resolve this by becoming a 'Strategic Academic'?

Career planning as institutional text

My major career goal for the next 5 years is to establish an international reputation as a researcher who uses institutional ethnography to explicate issues of educational policy. This goal supports the university strategic and operational goal to 'have a vibrant culture of research with a critical mass of researchers associated with each major discipline providing every student with the experience of being taught by leading researchers, and to foster internationally competitive research groups in areas of strategic importance (Deakin University 2007a, p.4; 2007c, p.8).

My operational objectives in support of this goal will include:

Research:
- Attend and present papers at SSSP and AARE conferences in 2007.
- Further my knowledge of institutional ethnography by participating in workshops presented at SSSP in New York and also at the Australian institutional ethnography conference in November 2007.
- During 2007, commence a pilot project using institutional ethnography to explore implementation of the Australian Quality Training Framework.
- During 2008 document the completed pilot project as the basis for an external research funding application.
- Submit one paper from my PhD research for publication in a refereed journal during 2007.

Service:

Contribute to the following research and education conferences in 2007:

- Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association – as a member of the organising committee and paper review team.
- Australian institutional ethnography conference – as a member of the organising committee.
- SSSP – as a member of the IE Division George Smith Award selection committee.

Contribute to the Vocational Education and Training profession by:

- Participating in and presenting at least two VET conferences during 2007.
- Participating in at least two local VET practitioner networks during 2007

I will formalise these (and other) operational objectives by including them in my 2007 PPR.

Reconstructing how I think and write

I approached this analysis as an Early Career Researcher with a strong personal goal to pursue institutional ethnographic research. The analysis begins in the everyday world, in which I struggle *first* to find time to pursue my research goal amidst the other expectations of my teaching role, *then* to find the language to connect my personal research objective to the research priorities of my faculty and university. As the analysis proceeds it reveals two organisational processes, both of which connect the development of my personal career plan through a hierarchy of ruling texts to the university strategic plan and wider higher education policy and economic context.

My operational objectives set out above align (to varying degrees) to university and faculty goals relating to research activity and the Research Quality Framework, research income, maintaining 'Active Researcher' numbers, establishing research partnerships, promoting the university to local, national and international audiences, and nurturing positive relationships with industry, government and professional bodies (Deakin University 2007c). At the time of writing I have documentary evidence of having completed more than half of the above operational objectives, and progress towards achievement of several others is well underway. The ease with which I am able to present this evidence of progress reflects the simple fact that the objectives broadly reflect activities that I had already commenced. Most of these objectives actually have their basis in my established approach of following my instincts, pursuing opportunities as they arise, and keeping my options open. What has changed is that I am now able to express my objectives in ways that establish connections to the 'higher order' texts which regulate and standardise my PPR (Smith 2006c, p.79). In Vignette 2 my instinctive and somewhat reactive approach succeeded in helping me attain a personal goal which, at the time, I described as 'strategic' in the sense that I felt it was compatible with the goals and priorities of my faculty. Now I am able to retrospectively reconstruct the account and present the activities and opportunities which arose from it as PPR operational objectives that connect to the strategic and operational goals of my organisation.

In institutional ethnographic terms, this has been a process of learning to coordinate my own consciousness with managerial agendas (Rankin & Campbell 2006, pp.21-

22). I have learned to produce a text that will render my personal career goals visible in relation to organisational relevances and concepts, enabling my goals to be 'authoritatively known and evaluated' (McCoy 1998, p.397). 'The Strategic Academic' has provided structure and guidance, and an opportunity to rehearse how I position myself in relation to university and faculty strategic and operational goals, and ultimately to a wider higher education context in which government policy features heavily. My 2006 PPR was used at the time to represent a 'future activity', but now that I have become more familiar with the organisation's strategic and operational planning texts I can reconstruct an account of my research and service activities as a historical record in which I show that I have learned to speak and write about my actions with reference to organisational strategies (McCoy 1998, p.411). I rehearse this new way of speaking and writing in my 'Strategic Academic' assignments, and at the same time I prepare to participate in my 2007 PPR and the review of my progress towards goals I outlined in 2006. As I move from being an 'Early Career Researcher' completing an assignment to being a 'Strategic Academic' participating in my 2007 PPR discussion, I move from rehearsal to performing my new ways of knowing in a process that makes selected parts of my work visible and connects them to organisational goals and processes. The challenge now will be to use organisational relevances and concepts to further my research opportunities without becoming 'captured' within the 'virtual knowledge' that I am creating (Rankin & Campbell 2006, p.21) so that I lose the ability to plan and conduct institutional ethnographic research that begins in the everyday world and investigates the coordinating role of ruling texts.

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[1] 'Early Career Researchers' are 'researchers within their first five years of academic or other research-related employment, allowing for uninterrupted, stable research development, following completion of postgraduate training and/or equivalent research qualification or experience' (DEST 2007, p.2)