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Article

# Academic citizenship through the lens of the psychological contract: A qualitative study of UK business schools

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**Abstract:** Many would argue that much of the higher education sector is reliant on goodwill, including the willingness to work with and support colleagues in the fulfilment of the fundamental roles associated with being an academic, this research suggests that a fundamental part of this is reliant on how the individual's psychological contract manifests into academic citizenship. Research into the psychological contract of academics is limited. Similarly, there is also limited research into the concept of academic citizenship. This paper considers the concept of academic citizenship through the lens of the psychological contract, suggesting the notion of academic citizenship is borne out of the employment in and the perception of the academic role. The research made use of an interpretivist design using a series of semi-structured interviews. Following a qualitative base the study draws on the lived experiences of eighteen Business School academics across nine Universities. Using thematic analysis to draw out key themes and linkages, the research provides an overview of the employment relationship with employers and colleagues. The paper provides an understanding of individual behaviour in the workplace which is crucial to effective performance management and employee engagement. As such this paper contributes to understanding academics within the workplace and their responses to the behaviour of others. The research brings together two constructs which have not previously been considered, noting the inter-relationship between the two.

**Keywords:** academic citizenship; psychological contract; collegiality; academics; identity

## 1. Introduction

Higher Education Institutions are reliant on the collaborative and supportive nature of academics to deliver key aspects of their ethos, mission and objectives. This collaborative and supportive environment may be considered to be reliant on the willingness of academics to be good 'academic' citizens and as such be willing to work together and share. A key element of this is underpinned by an individual's psychological contract, which determines how an individual academic perceives their role and how they undertake it (Johnston, 2024). This article therefore considers the relationship between the psychological contract of 18 academics within UK Business Schools and academic citizenship.

Little linkage has been made between academic citizenship and the psychological contract, there has been growing focus of the psychological contract within the context of higher education (Johnston, 2024) noting the turmoil of the past decade and also dating back to 1992 (Bathmaker, 1999). Notably, there is the feel that the psychological contract is no longer as relational as it was and as institutions have become more business focussed, managerial and efficiency orientated, so there has been an ever increasing demise in academic citizenship and collegiality.

The concept of academic citizenship remains a contested term in the study of academic life, and there remains conjecture as to whether it refers to students, to academics or to the institution. Bengsten and Norgard (2016) suggest that academic citizenship contains personal, academic and societal value. They argue that traditionally academic citizenship focusses on the contribution that universities make to the whole community in which they are engaged. They note the importance of “mutual engagement and integration” (p. 5), while also suggesting a disconnect between people and place. That said however, community may be more than the institution (MacFarlane, 2005).

This paper however takes the view that academic citizenship is a term that relates to academics and their behaviours and approaches and as such “refers to the duties, responsibilities or virtues of academic faculty” (Macfarlane, 2007, p.261). Others may consider this a narrow definition, not including the wider ‘academic’ community, however Macfarlane’s (2007) investigation into Academic Citizenship drew out four definitions from respondents, who were all practicing academics. All four acknowledged the individuals within the context of working with and supporting others, with three of the four using the word community.

- 1) ‘Citizenship is about belonging to a group. A learning community is what it means most and being a member of that community’.
- 2) ‘Belonging to a community with a set of values, rules and objectives with an idea of how it contributes to society at large’.
- 3) ‘Being a part of the wider academic community, contributing, via scholarly activity and/or research, to the development of one’s area of knowledge and being supportive of others in the same’.
- 4) ‘The term “academic citizenship” is used in the faculty. It’s a bit of a “catch-all” phrase. It means a willingness to work with others, take part in projects and so on’. (Macfarlane, 2007, p. 261).

Smith and Walker (2024b) identify academic citizenship as comprising of collegiality, contribution to decision making, participation in activities, shared norms, commitment and engagement, supporting colleagues and altruism. They suggest that academic citizenship can be both internal and external to the organisation and can be distorted based on allegiance to their institution and their discipline, which may be different. This paper therefore identifies the role of academic citizenship as viewed using the lens of the psychological contract and raises the argument that individuals’ psychological contact will determine their participation in academic citizenship. Although there has been a plethora of literature on the psychological contract over the past 30 years and in recent times, a growing focus related to academia, there has been little focus on the concept of academic citizenship and how these two concepts inter-relate.

Therefore, there remains a gap focussed on the manifestation of academic behaviours centred around citizenship (Albia and Cheng, 2023; Beatson et al., 2022; Oleksiyyenko, 2024; Smith and Walker, 2024b) and may be considered fundamental to the focus placed by Mathew et al. (2024) on the need for greater levels of research into organisational culture within higher education. In particular, it is argued that a key pervasive issue is the impact that the employment relationship, notably the psychological contract has.

Research Question: How does the psychological contract support and influence academic citizenship within UK Higher Education Institutions?

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Academic citizenship behaviour**

Organisation Citizenship Behaviour (OCB) provides the grounding for Academic Citizenship Behaviour (ACB) (Inelman et al, 2017; MacFarlane, 2007). Accordingly, this is defined by Organ (1997, p. 5) as “performance that supports the social and psychological environment in which task performance takes place”, and subsequently Islam et al. (2018) identify OCB within an academic environment as Academic Citizenship Behaviour (ACB). In addition, Anvari et al. (2024), consider the concept of affective organisational commitment (AOC) as a key feature of behaviour within organisations. They suggest that during periods of turbulence AOC can become dynamic, and while they focussed on the impact of the pandemic, the turbulence within the higher education sector will have similar impact, as individual academics become less emotionally attached to their institutions.

According to Gore et al. (2012, p. 2434) there are key features of OCB such as “consideration/altruism (helping individuals in the organisation), civic virtue (responsible participation in the processes of the organisation), conscientiousness (helping the organisation as a whole) and sportsmanship (tolerating inconveniences of an organisation without complaining about them)”. They further note that that these dimensions apply within the context of academia as Academic Citizenship Behaviour. According to Albia and Cheng (2023) academic citizenship is traditionally associated with service, that part of the academic role not associated with research or teaching. They associate this as a function of university traditions and the individual culture of institutions. Davids (2022) however, contrasts this this and argues that academic citizenship encompasses the whole academic role and not just those parts not involving traditional academic activity. He does however make the link to the application of discretionary effort. Oleksiyenko (2024) while focussing on Ukrainian higher education noted that academic citizenship and going the extra mile (i.e. discretionary effort) increases during times of crisis highlighting the increased support offered during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Das and Mohanty (2022) identify OCB as a crucial factor in individual performance and productivity and argue that it encompasses everything an individual does of a positive nature by their own desire. Furthermore, OCB and subsequently ACB includes a range of pro-social activities which provide benefit to fellow colleagues alongside those the organisation receives (Gore et al., 2012). Smith and Walker (2024a) note that academic citizenship can be divided into formal and informal activities, with the formal activities often associated with explicit activities often associated with promotion criteria. In contrast, Reed (2017) argues that academics who are often deemed to be successful tend to concentrate their efforts on their priorities. To note that this need not be a self-centered approach, but an acknowledgement of where they place importance. This is further supported by Beigi (2023), who contents that we should do what makes us happy and we think is worthwhile. Fox and Rawn (2018) recognise three aspects within the academic role, notably research, teaching

and service (administration and additional work not directly related to teaching and research). To the extent that membership of the team community is significant if it supports the achievement of that which needs to be attained. Within this, the contribution to Academic Citizenship may be seen using the Psychological Contract and its manifestation as a lens. This influences academics' choices of where and why they put the effort in (Adamska et al., 2015) and may lead to self-centered behaviour, as a result of ongoing changes in Higher Education which has led to falling morale (Bryson, 2004) and a reduction of community and collegiality (MacFarlane, 2007). Despite this, Academia remains a sector reliant on goodwill, teamworking and co-operation.

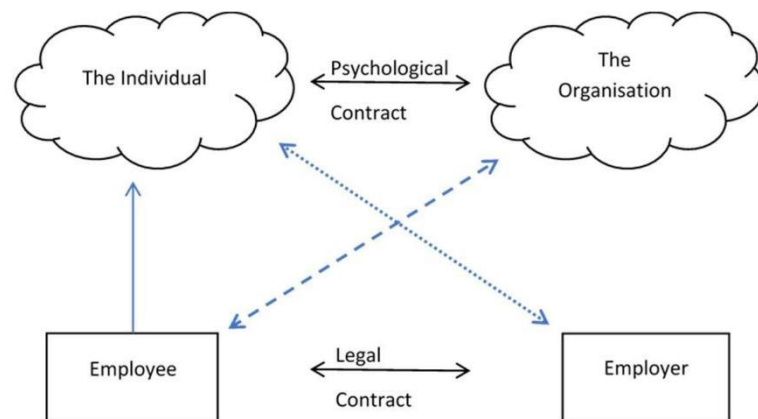
This notion of the decline in academic citizenship is not a recent phenomenon and has been a continuing process first noted by Burgan (1998), and furthermore that the academic workforce has become increasingly disengaged (MacFarlane, 2005). This decline is further enhanced by Beatson et al. (2022) who acknowledge it as a pivotal part of academia's ecosystem. Much of this has been driven by changes within the HE Sector influenced by increasing managerialism (Brehony and Deem, 2005), marketisation (Bryson, 2004; Mampaey, 2018) and competition (Vardi, 2009). The results of which has seen increasing use of measurement tools to drive up efficiency under the guise of quality, but has manifested as reduced autonomy (and academic freedom), increased workload and increased pressure (Beatson et al., 2022; Reisz, 2017), and the casualisation of the academic workforce (Vernon, 2011). This could however be a dynamic process as 'younger' academics feel it less than 'Older' academics (Bryson, 2004) and the cultural changes of the 1990s have become embedded and the norm, a new emphasis on more collegial working. Noticeably, teaching focussed institutions may be more collegiate than research intensive institutions (Inelman et al., 2017).

The issue of workload is further highlighted by Tomaselli (2020) who recognise peer review of journal articles as an example of academic citizenship which has become less attractive, as the publish or perish culture pressurises academics into publishing based on quantity and less on quality, resulting in more reviewing by less people as many academics no longer have the time or willingness to review, particularly on a voluntary basis. Sith and Walker (2024b) identify the work planning model as a managerial tool which has tried to 'manage' staff activities and results in academics being reluctant to be collegial. Instead, they start to undertake those activities which are more visible and hence can be counted (Albia and Cheng, 2023).

The previously identified "Janus-faced" role (Bathmaker, 1999, p. 275) of an academic (teaching, research and service) creates diversity and complexity in a little understood role for those outside of academia, and perhaps not fully understood by those within it but at the earlier stages of their career. This plurality of roles determines differing foci for individuals and perhaps offers awareness of decisions and selections made by the individual and may in itself provide rationale for the decline in academic citizenship (Beatson, et al., 2022; Smith and Walker, 2024a). This is further heightened by Albia and Cheng (2023) who suggest that the development of a performative culture is a significant influencer in the reducing of academic citizenship. The psychological contract (Rousseau, 1990) affords a lens through which individual decisions and behaviours can be viewed.

## 2.2. Psychological contract

Differing perceptions of the psychological contract provide alternative stances dependent on the belief as to whether it is idiosyncratic or mutual. Classically, the psychological contract was defined by Rousseau (1990, p. 391) as “the individual’s beliefs about mutual obligations, in the context of the relationship between employer and employee”, emphasising the individualistic nature of the construct. Alternatively, other see it as a shared or mutual relationship and define it as “the perceptions of mutual obligations to each other held by the two parties in the employment relationship” (Herriot et al., 1997, p.151), while Chakraborty et al. (2023) consider the nature of reciprocal arrangements. **Figure 1** highlights the inter-connectivity between the individual, the organisation (or the agent), the psychological contract and the employment contract.



**Figure 1.** The psychological contract relationship (Johnston, 2017).

The psychological contract as a construct and the importance in defining the employment relationship continues to be a noticeable area of research amongst the academic literature, and there has been growing attention on academics and the academic role of late following the presentation of a number of papers presented at the University Forum for Human Resource Development (UFHRD) conference in 2015, which were of relevance to the discipline. Subsequently, articles have started to be published with an academic focus, notably (Costa and Oliveira, 2022; Gu et al., 2021; Moussa, 2019; Sewpersad et al., 2019). Although there has been a plethora of literature on the psychological contact over the past three decades, little has focussed on academics and their institutions (Nutakki et al., 2015; Shen, 2010; Tookey, 2013) until recently, as noted above. Coverage of research into academia, notes the changing face of academia, and in the same way that the turbulence of the 1980s and 1990s sparked the rebirth of general ideas on the psychological contract, the past 30 years has made the academic domain a key area for investigation. This includes changes to academics’ perception of their role and their aspirations.

Questions have been raised as to whether the psychological contract of academics is in line with other professionals (Gillespie, 2001) and whether traditional models apply (Shen, 2010). Despite this, Shen (2010) contends that a relational psychological contract exists but with a growing transactional emphasis as the sector has become more turbulent. This follows on from the work of Bathmaker (1999), who argued

changes in the sector, particularly the post 1992 institutions, were detrimental to the employment relationship. She noted the growing insecurity and decline in identity as fundamental in shifting the institutions to being more business-like, as managerialism became increasingly prevalent, and stakeholder satisfaction became a key driver. As such, the feeling amongst academics was one of being devalued, leading to a more transactional nature. Gammie (2006) supported this, placing an emphasis on the notion of politicised control as a key feature of this 'new managerialism', with the introduction measurement and mechanisation, highlighting the introduction of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), the forerunner to the Research Excellence Framework (REF), and the introduction of an Inspection Framework. At the same time pointing to a decrease in academic influence in the decision-making process. A more recent introduction has been the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) in 2016 and the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) in 2018, however there is significant overlap in the relationship between REF and KEF both in terms of activity and funding streams.

A subsequent complexity within considering the psychological contract is the notion of multiplicity (Marks, 2001) and the different actors in the academic-institution relationship. Critical in this is whether academics feel each of these relationships are formed on the basis of how they (academics) emphasise their importance to them and their priorities, leading back to the relationship with teaching, research and administration. Johnston (2024) highlights this in discussion of the multi-faceted role of academics, particularly noting the three dimensions to the academic role (teaching, research, administration), in support of Bathmaker (1999).

In addition to traditional characteristics which impact on the development of the psychological contract such as nationality, cultural background and demographics, key features of how academics perceive the academic role, include areas such as the research orientation of the University in which they studied, educational attainment, service length and career profile, particularly if they have experience of working in an industrial (e.g., non-educational) setting (Shen, 2010). Gammie (2006) identified three lenses for how academics may perceive their role: Focus on rewards (job orientation); focus on career advancement (career orientation); working for socially perceived value (calling orientation). As such emphasis is placed on how institutions have adapted job titles and specified job roles in order to categorise individuals and create 'fit', highlighting the development of Research Fellow roles and Teaching Only contracts as a manifestation of this. While this narrowing of roles and categorisation may be seen negatively, organisations suggest it is a method of relieving the dual pressure that the 'Lecturer or Senior Lecturer' role brings in terms of teaching and research. Teaching only contracts provide opportunities to demonstrate research activity, without the spectre and worry of research ratings. Similarly, research roles (Research Fellow, Research Assistant) remove the burden of teaching, with organisations advocating it as encompassing a make strategy (Miles and Snow, 1980). However, Johnston (2017) notes the tie between publications and research funding with promotion. He raises the question of how REF influences the agenda with individual academics being pressured to produce, while at the same time, institutions overly concentrate on the availability of research funding brings with high research ratings.

A critical feature in the forming of the psychological contract is lived experiences and a key contributor is the organisation or organisations in which individuals have worked or do work in significantly influences an individual's beliefs (Parks and Rousseau, 1993). Fundamental to this is an individual's view of the organisation and the agents with whom they associate, as this may impact significantly on the psychological contract and will influence their enculturation into the organisation, particularly at an external level. Ronnie et al. (2022) highlighted the negative impact that Covid-19 had on the psychological contract and the increased removal of trust as a result.

Academics are heavily influenced by their working environment (Krivokapic-Skoko and Tipples, 1997 cited in O'Neill et al. 2010), undertaking a rewarding job role, career opportunities and development, job satisfaction and job security and these have a significant influence on the relationship built with employers as they are deemed to be fundamental promises of the institution. This is further emphasised by Myllykoski-Laine et al. (2023) who suggest that the operational environment of academics will determine their approach and attitude towards teaching and research. As such, Wang et al. (2024) suggest that there is a need for universities and university leaders to be more aware of the academics' psychological contract as the need for goodwill and academic citizen is central to university operations and success. In a similar vein, Ogbari (2024) highlights the impact that the university vision and ethos has on staff and their subsequent mindset.

### **2.3. Identity**

A key aspect of the formation of the Psychological Contract is identity (Zhang et al., 2017). According to Brown (2015) identity effectively tells us who we are, who we have been and who we want to be. There is effectively a historical, present and futuristic aspect to the notion and for many it is determined by an aspirational influenced. As previously noted by Bathmaker (1999) there has potentially been a decline in the notion of academic identity. No doubt this is often a reflection of the type of organisation academics are in (Baruch and Hall, 2004), but also the emphasis individuals place on their role. Macfarlane (2011) advocates the importance of being involved in all roles as singularity is likely to cause a decline in engagement with colleagues and perhaps a reduction in academic citizenship. Notably, Brown (2015) links the notion of identity and the type of work you do. As such the complex role of an academic will determine their priorities and focus. As such, Carli and Tagliaventi (2023), whether it is actually possible to do all the tasks required of an academic, and to do them willingly and well. They suggest choices need to be made and trade off happens which is influenced by how individuals see their role and their aspirations for their career ahead. This links to their psychological contract. However, it can often be deemed important, both by individuals and their institutions to have an external profile (Smith and Walker, 2024a)

McCune (2021) notes that there is a reluctance to identify by many academics as being teaching orientated due to the emphasis of research, arguing that this is particularly true of research intensive universities. This perhaps, links with the view that lecturers and particularly new lecturers feel a need to fit in with their community

(2008). As such ‘fitting’ in the organisation is critical (Bhatnager and Biswas, 2013), and the university environment will dictate the importance of individual aspects of the role (Honoree and Terpstra, 2009). This concept of community is further highlighted by Kynsilehto (2021) who raises the discussion of being visible in what you are doing and letting people know.

Subsequently, linked to this is motivation (Johnston, 2016) and the drivers that sit behind the individual. While it may be argued that academics in the words of Maslow self-actualise, it is noticeable that they wish to remain part of the communities in which they practice (Warhurst, 2008). There is however a contestable angle in terms of who they wish to commune with and whether allegiances lie with their institution, faculty/school/department, academic or professional body, or even research area (Johnston, 2017). This will as such lead to choices and prioritisation of activity and perhaps may influence their take on academic citizenship and collaboration.

#### **2.4. Linking academic citizenship and psychological contract**

As such there is little surprise that great emphasis is put on research productivity and outputs as drivers for most academic staff (Dean and Forray, 2018), noting a key link academic reward potentially leading to promotion opportunities and career development/advancement which often require a successful track record of research outputs, and is used often as the basis of the measurement of academic success (Bergeron et al., 2014). This builds on arguments from Macfarlane (2007) who noted the importance of individual (not necessarily single person) achievement as the reward mechanism for academics, with the predominance of research but very little recognition or reward linked to service. Since the introduction of TEF slightly more emphasis has been placed on teaching, but research remains in the predominant position. Research undertaken by Terpstra and Honoree (2009) undertaken in the US noted that 52% of academics perceived research as the main influencer for reward, with only 23% believing that research, teaching and service carried equal weighting. In addition, 20% perceived an equal weighting of teaching and research (with no inclusion of service). A mere 4% identified teaching as the main source of reward.

Dean and Forray (2018) highlight how academic life has changed in the last quarter of a century, in particular the newer approaches to running institutions in a business-like manner. In particular they note shifting academic priorities, the focus on performance management and the introduction of workload management as academics are asked to do “more with less”. This is further supported by (Anvari et al., 2024; Beatson et al., 2022), although talking about Strategic Human Resource Management practitioners within Higher Education Institutions, notes the impact that managerial strategies have on AOC, and this in turn will impact upon both the psychological contract and academic citizenship.

A key finding highlighted by Fox and Rawn (2018) was the increasing recruitment of staff on teaching only contracts. Despite these contracts being teaching only, they highlighted that many academics while employed on contracts designated as teaching only, were still actively engaged in research, with over half engaged in pedagogy based research and 40% undertaking discipline based research, perhaps acknowledging the contrast between role and career choice.

### **3. Methodology**

The data source for the paper was drawn out of a doctoral study focussing on a broader study of the Psychological Contract of academics. The study investigated the role that the psychological contract plays in influencing individuals' behaviour in conducting the academic role. As such a combined phenomenological and interpretivist (Saunders et al., 2019) approach was taken with a purpose to investigate individual self-perceptions of key factors which influence the behaviours of eighteen academics.

The 18 academics were all employed on a permanent academic contract within a UK Business School (or equivalent) environment at 9 universities. The 9 universities consisted of 3 pre 1992, 3 post 1992 former polytechnics, and 3 post 1992 former Colleges of Higher Education, which gave a broad spread of the UK higher education landscape. College Based Higher Education (CBHE) and private providers (including those with University status) were avoided as it was perceived that these had significant differences in ethos and cause. As such, contracts and expectations were likely to differ. Respondents were a mix of male and female holding either a lecturer or senior lecturer role. No attempt was used within the analysis to distinguish between perceptions based on either of these variables, beyond recognising the mix. Of the 18, 50% were on their second career having held roles outside of education previously, and 4 had worked within a Further Education (FE) setting prior to working within a University setting. Additionally 4 had undertaken their undergraduate and postgraduate studies on a part time basis as mature students. 13 had doctorates with the remaining five having a masters as a highest qualification, although two were working towards their doctorate.

Data was collected using a combined method of semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire based on the Psychological Contract Inventory designed by Rousseau (2008) and adapted by Tookey (2013) to create 18 case records. Guercini (2014) acknowledges the use of hybrid data collection as a means of adding rigour within the research process. This enabled the research, using thematic analysis, to uncover connections from within the construct and to make sense of individual's thinking, through the use of rich data. The primary data used in this study is drawn from the interviews which provided the study with rich data, which drew out key issues and allowed individuals to provide detailed views on their lived experiences (Saunders et al., 2019) with 18 being within the scope of a valid number for case based research (Saunders and Townsend, 2016) and allowed for achievement of saturation (Anderson, 2017). The interview data (transcripts) was then analysed using manual coding methods to identify key themes, which were then explored to associate meaning using thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2017). Critical to this study was the development of ideas around collegiality and academic citizenship.

#### **Interview Questions**

- 1) Could you please tell me a little bit about yourself, your experience, your role and how you came to be in the position you are now?
- 2) In higher education we can often describe our institution in a number of ways. This may be size, structure, by its history (ie ex Poly), by its focus (eg research

- intensive, teaching focussed) or even by its membership of Mission Groups (eg Russell Group, or Million+). How would you describe your institution.
- 3) How well do you feel you identify with your organisation?
  - 4) i) Does this allow you to fulfil your expectations and aspirations? ii) if so how?
  - 5) How would you rank the following in terms of your priority:  
Administration  
Research  
Teaching.
  - 6) To what extent do you feel you have the autonomy to determine and fulfil your own priorities?
  - 7) What are the key challenges in your role?
  - 8) What are your key achievements?
  - 9) i) Can you give me an example of an occasion when you have provided effort above and beyond what was expected of you? ii) Why did you do this?
  - 10) i) Do you do this sort of thing on a regular basis? ii) Why?
  - 11) Do you have any further examples of this?
  - 12) Do you believe you do things that you do not have to do for the benefits of others (staff, students, communities)
  - 13) Is there anything else you would like to tell be about the role you do?

Respondents were asked to complete the questionnaires prior to the interviews, which were then conducted using a standard approach of semi-structured questioning (Alvesson and Ashcroft, 2012). All interviews followed the process of broad questioning being narrowed to a more specified focus on key areas. Questions were devised so as to induce the thinking process, allowing individuals to reflect and consider on past experiences which may allow for interpretation of events and not necessarily provide facts. Crucial was to understand opinion, of the what, were, how and why. The alignment of the transcripts with the questionnaires allowed the data to be cut and analysed at a variety of levels, which allowed for consideration at both a personal or individual level, but also at an institutional or sector level.

Thematic analysis was used to identify key themes through a manual process. This was followed by subsequent review and reading and adopted a constant comparative model as advocated by Thomas (2013). This allowed for the identification of key phenomena through a methodical search and find process. This approach adopted a 3 step process of firstly identifying the broader themes, followed by secondly recognising the critical factors and then thirdly identifying and recognising the central themes for each aspect. The analysis recognised academic citizenship as a key broad theme, before breaking down into aspects centred around research, teaching and service with subsequent areas relating to career enhancement. Further analysis was then undertaken linking key quotes together to provide a picture of key issues and the inter-relationships.

To ensure the research approach was deemed trustworthy and credible (Smith and Sparkes, 2009), the following strategies were adopted. Effective maintenance of records to ensure an appropriate audit trail; use of reflexivity to safeguard against researcher impact; use of thick description methods to allow detail for analysis and interpretation. As a means of accuracy checking individual responders were provided

with a transcript for checking. This allowed transparency (Levitt et al., 2018), while also ensuring academic rigor and practical relevance (Johnston, 2014).

## 4. Findings and discussion

In line with previous studies, the research would seem to indicate that the psychological contract of academics is relational, however this is a contentious view in terms of the agent relationships and multiplicity (Marks, 2001) within the institutions and who or what the individual academics relate to. There certainly remains a relational relationship within discipline areas but that becomes more fractious outside of those initial boundaries.

Similarly, there is evidence of high levels of Academic citizenship being portrayed however this depends on individual perceptions of the academic nature (or not) of the task at hand, their role and the type of institution they work in, and ultimately links to their identity and perhaps their future perspective of themselves.

The study suggests that teaching provides the highest level of collegiality with research a close second, however service or administration based activities are heavily dependent on the value placed on them and the perception of relevance and importance in particular to a judgement on ‘is this an academic job’? Further findings conclude that a big influencer is related to connectedness with colleagues (who do I work with) and career aspirations and trajectory (What’s in it for me)’. One of the most notable comment from one of the participants {R13} was “*Being an academic is what you are so you like doing academic work*”. Clear linkage to their identity.

### 4.1. Teaching

Academic citizenship was highly identified within the context of the teaching process with two thirds of the respondents linking it back to their own development and support they had received. In particular “*being collegial*” {R11} was seen as being “*a big part of the role of being an academic, supporting each other and the team*” {R12}. This was prevalent in the way individuals had developed within their own careers and how they felt others had helped and supported them in their development of the teaching aspect of the role.

Significantly within the post 1992 institutions the respondents associated the teaching side of the role with their primary, what they were there for and for the benefit of the students. This included working with and supporting colleagues, in the development of materials and teaching practice. They also identified with supporting each other to provide extra-curricular activities, cover classes, and provide materials and resources (eg recordings). Notably second marking of presentations and role plays, plus moderation of assignments were prominent examples and R1 recognised that “*supporting colleagues was often for the good of the students*”.

Accordingly, R6 noted “*helping colleagues with events*” and supporting colleagues with “*additional marking*” to relieve colleagues with workload pressures, emphasising that working in a small team meant there was a need at times for them to “*all muck in*”. Similarly, R11 that they (and their colleagues) were often “*willing to share the load*”. R7 noted a willingness to support members of the team and some individuals across the institution recognising the intra and extra department

membership. Interestingly all three {R6, R7 and R11} had previously worked at (different) colleges of HE. This suggested that there remained high levels of collegiality and academic citizenship among staff within former Colleges of HE perhaps related to size, but also perhaps related to ethos. R1 highlighted the mindset, that there was perhaps the notion of a reciprocal relationship at hand and that “colleagues would do the same for me”.

All evidence of collegiality and academic citizenship supported the notion by Gore et al. (2012) that a key feature of OCB and thus ACB is altruism, the notion of supporting colleagues for no other reason than wanting to support colleagues. This also links in with and suggests that the staff concerned will have a relational psychological contract as described by Rousseau (1990).

## 4.2. Research

Academic citizenship and collegiality were significantly emphasised in the research process, with staff acknowledging the importance placed on research at an institutional level, with staff at the pre 1992 emphasising the changing importance of research at their institutions. Two areas were particularly pertinent to discussion around research. Fundamentally individuals were conscious of the importance of research from a career profile and promotion aspect, and this was prevalent when considering research as a concept, however when considering it more broadly academics identified with aspects of behaviour associated with academic citizenship.

Evidence manifested itself both internally and externally to the institution such as “*helping a colleague with statistics*” for their Doctoral studies {R2}, and helping a colleague “*prepare for a conference who had never done one before*” {R11}, and as “*reviewing for journals and conferences*” {R16}.

A key feature of R2’s interview focussed on their role in developing a research culture within his previous institution which maintained a F.E. Culture despite having University status. Now, he is trying to deliver the same agenda but without the barriers. There is no need to fight the system at his current institution, and it is far more straight forward, although he acknowledges the need to provide support for colleagues who have not really engaged in the research process beyond postgraduate study. He notes the collegial nature of staff and the willingness of individuals to work together and the lack of ego, from staff who all feel they are at the first stages. Some staff have started on doctorates and need that further level of support. This brings extra work but feels it is his job rather than anything additional.

Similarly, there is linkage to the notion of altruism (Gore et al., 2012) as academics are keen to support each other noting also that Gore et al. (2012) also acknowledge supporting the institution as a key feature of ACB. Most notably the efforts of R2 are there to generate a cultural shift for the university with little benefit for himself. However, the importance he placed on his institution (and staff) to have more focus on research was particularly important to him (and them) having recently achieved University status.

### 4.3. Service

Service (or admin duties) was the biggest potential area of conflict. Fundamentally a key area was how academics felt the activity related to research or teaching. One area in which academics were will to work together and do, was related to student recruitment. Academics generally were happy to spend the time and take up additional work, including attending open days/events, interviewing students etc. Institutions tended to hold these events at weekends, thus requiring work outside of the normal week, and while often additional leave was granted or Time off in lieu (TOIL), it was still outside of normal practice. R2, however highlighted “*we all take our share, no rota just voluntary*”, and R7 emphasised being “*happy to do interviews, open days, inductions etc*”. Staff recognised the importance of recruiting students and identified this as an academic role.

Despite suggestions in the literature that administration was likely not to have high levels of ACB, responses would suggest that academics are happy to put in the work and support each other so long as they value the work and see it as academic.

### 4.4. Other

R4 and R10 considered academic citizenship within the context of “*professionalism*” considering working with and helping colleagues to develop and achieve as being part of the role. At the same time, R5 suggested “*self-promotion*” as a driver for academic citizenship. Notably suggesting that underlying this as “*key to getting on and much of what you do is to benefit your career*”, alternatively, R12 called it ...“*CV enhancement*”. As such R12 highlights the individualistic, self-absorbed and self-interested (and perhaps, egocentric) nature of academic life. Linking back to what the individual academic sees as being important. Intriguingly, R14 argues “*teaching and administration is for someone else and you don’t see the benefits*”. R13 highlights the importance of working “*to get better satisfaction scores is for yourself*”.

This supports Reed’s (2017) notion of selfish intent which would link with perhaps a transactional psychological contract (Rousseau, 1990). Perhaps this is further emphasised by individuals looking at activities which link well with the ideas of Dean and Forray (2018) and MacFarlane who identified the reward mechanisms for academics are generally related to the individual and their outputs and negates the team ethos.

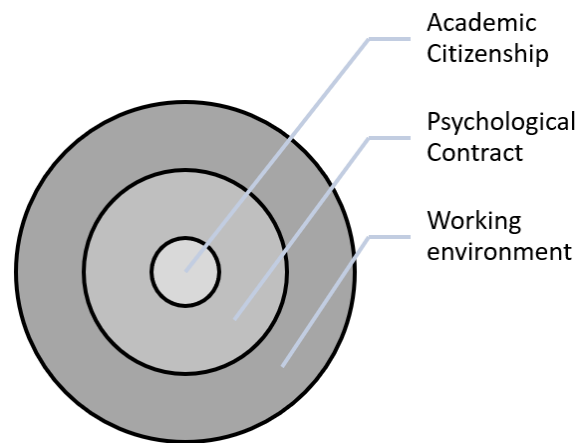
Just Rs 4 and 5 acknowledge that academic citizenship may be undertaken for the benefit of the institution. This included referring to the importance of REF {R5} and noting the values placed on it by institutions. Again this fits with notions put forward by Gore et al. (2012).

In addition, R10 relates themselves and colleagues to “*an academic and having passion*” {8} for the role, suggesting knock on consequences to “*feel good*” {R12} and “*you are contributing for the good of the world*” {R8}.

### 4.5. A conceptual model

The findings therefore suggest that if we consider the basis of the psychological contract being the fundamental representation and manifestation resulting from the working environment which includes the employment relationship, then academic

citizenship becomes a manifestation of that process, and as such is at the core of working life for most academics (see **Figure 2**).



**Figure 2.** Academic citizenship at the centre of academic work.

## 5. Conclusion

Thus, there remains a likelihood that the psychological contract on the whole for most academics is relational and as such consideration and support of colleagues is a fundamental part of academic life. Despite this increasing pressures and management techniques may be asking academics to choose their priorities more. This may be determined by factors such as reward opportunities, workload pressures or role orientation, but is significantly influenced by personal value being placed on the work, and the question of whether it is academic or not.

The relationship between academic citizenship is one of bedfellows noting that the relational nature of the psychological contract is likely to lead to active academic citizenship and collegiality. While the notion of academic citizenship may still be clearly undefined, the options put forward by Macfarlane (2007) note key words around supportive, community and helping. This leads to suggestions that while the sector may be seeing falling morale there remains a collectivist approach to doing the academic role. There is clear manifestation of academic citizenship under the guise of collegiality and in particular supporting colleagues, whether that is related to teaching or research. Helping and supporting colleagues especially related to student-facing activities (e.g., sharing resources) is a significant part of the goodwill on offer, as is helping to undertake research (distribute questionnaire or support data analysis). The area of service is often where academic citizenship has declined. That is not to say it is not present, however, academics are more reluctant to undertake activities unless they see a benefit to them (e.g., open days and student recruitment activities). Fundamentally for many, the question of academic citizenship centres around the notion of professionalism.

That said there remains the contention that a key element of academia centres around self-interest and perhaps this develops more of a transactional approach to requests for support. Fundamentally suggesting that academics opt or may opt for a strategic approach that relies in, what's in it for me, which damages notions of academic citizenship. It is clear that the notion of academic identity underpins the

thinking process and individual choices to be involved or not in activities, which is significantly influenced by individual perceptions of what is (or isn't) academic work.

Ultimately though, it appears that academics care. They care about each other and want to support each other in fulfilling the role, however time is precious, and they will only contribute and collaborate if they deem it to be relevant and important to them. This is further complicated in how they see their role and what drives them.

## **6. Implications for theory and practice**

This paper will be of interest to academics across several fields, most notably those interested in the study of the psychological contract but also to many of those interested in other aspects of academic life and the job role. With the evolving and ever changing nature of higher education within the UK (and for that, worldwide) the findings should also be of interest to individuals involved in the line management of academic staff and those in broader managerial or human resource roles within the HE sector, wishing to gain a better understanding of academics' mindsets and their behavioural traits.

There are close connections between the concept of academic citizenship, discretionary effort and workload management, which have all become prevalent discussion areas within higher education institutions. This paper provides useful insights into some of the key areas that require negotiation, and informs management practice, while also contributing to the theoretical understanding of the behaviour of academics and their approach to their work. Fundamental to this is the understanding of academics and their mindset. This is prevalent in need for further studies of academics and academic behaviour and sets in context the position that is having a potentially negative effect on performance and development of individuals, and the performance of individual organisations and the sector as a whole.

From a HRD Practice stance, understanding individual behaviour in the workplace is crucial to effective performance and employee engagement. As such this paper makes a significant contribution to understanding academics within the workplace and their responses to the behaviour of others. It has the potential to be crucial in helping institutions, develop practices and processes to help develop academics. The paper also provides insight, into the future for potential academics and the expectations of the role, and perhaps for those who are developing those future who may need to adapt their training and support mechanisms for the future.

## **7. Limitations**

The study is small scale (18 respondents) and focussed on one type of academic (Business School). As such it raises questions as to whether Business School Academics are different to other academics and whether there are patterns of behaviour or alternative responses to the findings. Tsang (2014), however suggests that a key feature of small-scale research is that it can provide analytic generalisability or in Yin's (2003) approach theoretical generalisability. Therefore, key learning and understanding can be transferred to other aspects of academia including other curriculum areas. As with all qualitative studies, there remains the concern that biases may have been brought into the thinking and interpretation, however all efforts to

ensure interpretation was bias free have been undertaken including fact checking and review.

## **8. Implications for future research**

A broader study could be undertaken, using more universities, more schools/departments and more staff. This would provide context as to whether there is durability in the relationship between academic citizenship behaviour and the psychological contract. Further development of the study can involve academics from broader areas, and may also include further delving into career aspirations, role and background. There is scope to consider the longer term implications that the changes occurring within higher education as the ‘newer normal’ becomes embedded into organisational culture of the institutions and the sector in general.

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