

# Democratic Professionalism in Higher Education: Myth or Reality?

## Introduction

The poster reports on partial findings of my thesis project. 12 English language instructors teaching foundation programme students at a university in Saudi Arabia were interviewed to explore their perceptions of professionalism, specifically about:

- teaching.
- professional development.

## Question

To what extent do English language instructors have voice in decision-making pertaining to their teaching and professional development?

## Methodology

Interpretative research

- Semi-structured interviews
- Document analysis

Critical postmodern inquiry

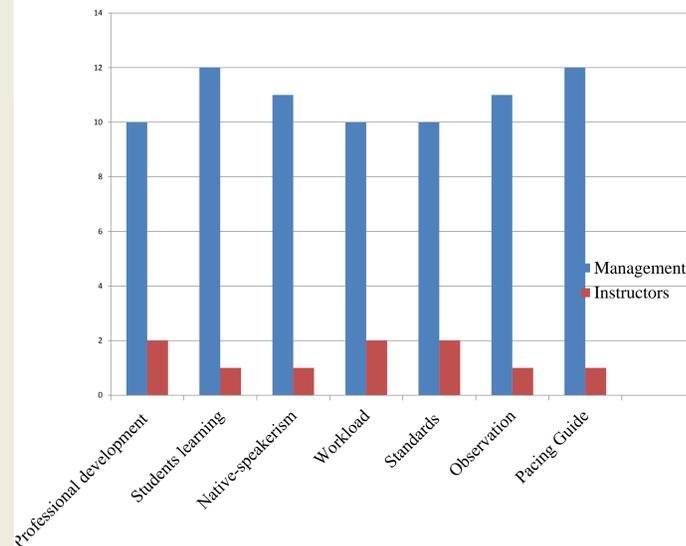
- Micro-discourses (institutional)
- Macro-discourses (global)

Purposive sampling

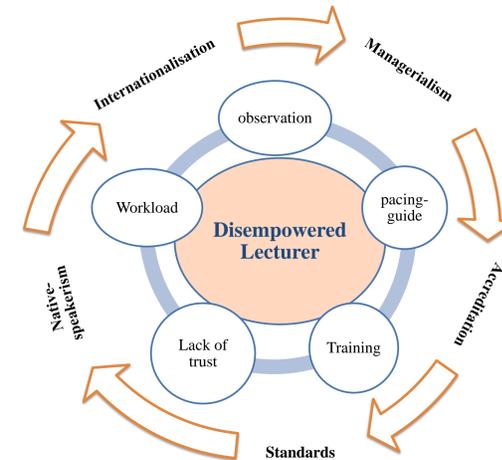
- 12 Lecturers

## Findings

Lecturers voiced negative views about being professional as professional development was perceived to be top-down and teaching was over-scrutinised. Policy document analysis confirmed the managerial rhetoric which was perceived by instructors to be de-professionalising, disempowering and disappointing. Macro- and micro-discourses played greater role in shaping the managerial orientation of professionalism.

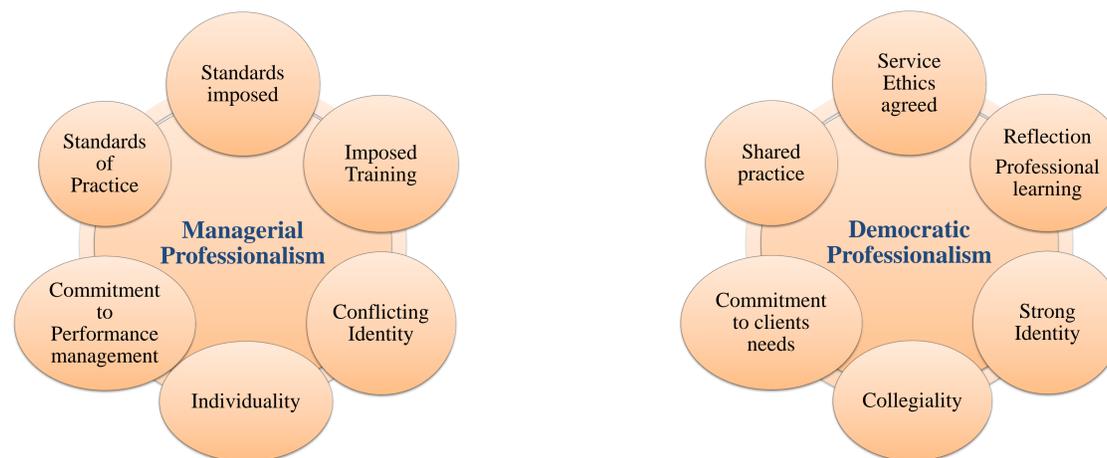


Disparity of satisfaction about key factors shaping professionalism as reported by instructors (significantly surfaced-themes in the data)



Conflicting environment (macro- and micro discourses ) shaping managerial professionalism

## Models of professionalism



With this dichotomy over professionalism dominating the literature, a recognition for a new-professionalism which calls for in-betweenness appears to be necessary (Evans, 2008)

## Conclusion

- Managerial professionalism still dominates higher education reforms despite the reported failures of this polarity in the literature.
- **Democratic professionalism, on its own as a panacea appears to be a myth.** Given the postmodern world we live in, the question should not be which model of professionalism to follow, but rather creating conditions which enhances an 'inbetweenness'; between managerial and democratic professionalism.
- Teachers are the cornerstone in the reform process; failure to recognize them highly contributes to disparity over implementation.

## Significance

Research indicates that marketization drives contested reforms in higher education to meet certain standards (Johnstone et al, 1998). As a response to this, **managerialism** dominates in universities as check to quality.

Questions abound as to **whether professionals still have voice in providing service to students.** The study bridges this gap and contributes to our understanding of professionalism within a growing global competition in higher education.

## References

- Evans, L. (2008). Professionalism, professionalism and the development of education professionals. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 56 (1), 20-38.
- Johnstone, D. Bruce, Arora, A. & Experton, W. (1998) *The Financing and Management of Higher Education: A Status Report on Worldwide Reforms*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank, Departmental Working Paper