

The two pillars of higher education and the lack of equality between them



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Abstract

COVID-19 and the associated changes in patterns and approaches to hybrid and remote work, have highlighted inequalities between workers in many industries. Trevor Brooks from College London's Audio-Visual Services met with Dr Ricardo Twumasi, Lecturer & Organisational Psychologist from King's College London to discuss the lack of equality between academia and professional services: The two pillars that support teaching and research within Higher Education.

CRedit (Contributor Roles Taxonomy)

Trevor Brooks

Conceptualization; Writing – original draft

Ricardo Twumasi

Conceptualization

Ricardo

So, let's start off by talking about recognition and the difference between recognition within academic roles and recognition within professional service roles of designers, editors, developers and administrators.

Trevor

Sure, I'll start from a professional services perspective. So, for myself, a lot of the work I do, I am contributing to work by video editing, producing PowerPoint slides, I also do a bit of audio editing, and for all of them jobs; I am building or creating the overall concept of what we are producing. At the end, the acknowledgement goes to the department that I work in, rather than the person that's worked on the project. A lot of the time it's only one person from that department that's worked on the job, but there's no recognition given. In academia, and I'm sure you can agree with this, anything you do, anything you've contributed to your name goes on the paper, and you'll get points with, what's the number thing you have? The I-index?

Ricardo

Oh, the h-index?

Trevor

The h-index, so all of that will follow you through life. Whereas if I go to another job and said I've done video editing, because this is only in a higher education setting, I won't be able to show a portfolio because Kings College own the IP to all of what I've worked on. We're stuck at a crossroads in terms of showing what we do.

Ricardo

Yeah, so actually there's two things that, you've kind of unpacked the difference within recognition in my type of academic role, where I would never really be part of a project or a team that did something and then [the team] only be named. For stance to say, my department of Psychosis Studies did this thing because that

would just be silly. We would want to know who is responsible for doing this? who actually, did this work and we would always want our individual recognition and then I guess the other thing you've alluded to is the openness as well, of the things that you create. So, there's a big push to have things Open Access like Stolen Tools the journal, is going to be free and Open Access, and it's important that anyone can read and access what we're publishing. But there are some things within academia that are proprietary, like some of the lessons. Some of the slides that you're creating, things like that, and obviously that makes it really hard for you to take those proprietary things and have a portfolio of stuff that Trevor has done. Whereas the stuff that I've done. At all the different institutions I've been at, during my career. Is all quite accessible and will always follow me around as, these are the things that I've published. Yeah, that's actually such a big difference in the way that we do things. Why do you think that comes about?



*'London BLM March' by Jai Toor, 2020
Backshot of a gathering at the BLM protest*

Trevor

Usually because there's maybe, a leading academic that is asking for this work to be done. It could be because, we're just a professional service department. There isn't another professional service department who receive recognition for their contribution to teaching. For instance, cleaners and security. If they don't work, the building cannot open, but you wouldn't say Oh, thanks to the security team or thanks to the cleaning team for keeping the building open. There's a big disconnect through all the different departments, that adds to teaching, and research. Again, you can't come in to do your research if the building isn't open. During the pandemic it was highlighted even more so. Everyone was working from home, myself included, but security and estates and the cleaners were still coming in because they had to keep the building open. There were safety checks like the water checks that they had to do, there's so much that they're doing, but no one sees. They are the Unsung heroes, essentially.

Ricardo

They are because then their risk factors were much higher.

We've seen from COVID that people who work in more front-line jobs. People that were key workers and weren't able to go and work from home and shield and protect themselves have had worse outcomes from COVID they've died more. They've got more cases of long COVID. In doing those jobs, these. Key workers have risked their lives to keep our buildings and things open and maybe as a society, we've slowly started to give more recognition to key workers in general members of the NHS in particular. And not just the doctors and nurses but also the other support staff, the administrators, the cleaners. You're calling this paper the 2 pillars. I think there is just a clear divide between types of jobs that are supporting and types of jobs that are the more academic roles. And the types of jobs where we would recognise the contributions and the types that we wouldn't, and I don't know that it can be. It can be justified at all. While being personally critical in the times where I have had people support me with my work. Like you have, for instance and when that person support hasn't necessarily been acknowledged and I think actually, just from this conversation alone will make me from this point onwards say OK, everyone that's contributed to this should be in some way recognised and there are so many different ways to recognise someone's contribution to work like I think an important one is if you're putting the department's name on it, why? Why do that? Why, why not? Say Trevor Brooks, who was instrumental in creating this.

Trevor

Yes, and an easy way, credits for video editing. In film credits, every little job, you could just be an extra that has one word to say, but if you said a word, your name goes on the credits. You may not get royalty payments for it, but you can.

Ricardo

You can show it. It will go on your IMDb.

Trevor

There you go. You can show that you've worked on this project, et cetera. When people say, the department, they are marrying up everyone in that department because there's a lot of different skill sets within the department AV, Audio visual services. Not everyone can video edit, but you're giving everyone the plaudits for only a minority of people's work. Are you bringing down their value? Or are you raising the departments value? You're making it equal in terms of the actual department, but that's not equal in terms of the actual person's work rate and input.

Ricardo

Yeah, I totally agree, and departments don't work like that. If I think of my academic department, there's a whole bunch of stuff that we can do, but it's all very specific to individuals and their little groups within the department. Yeah, there are experts in machine learning. There are experts in psychosis, in neuroscience in workplace psychology, but they're actually all quite disconnected. You can't just say oh, psychosis studies would do this thing. You would say no. You know this person in psychosis studies can do this or that or that person would be very specific about the skill sets and the abilities and the types of projects that each individual has within our department and. Actually, it's interesting that that you talk a little bit about this whole citing a department rather than citing an individual, we have this as a common critique, so often there'll be a research study. Let's say some researchers at Harvard University, they have done an alumni study and have shown whatever thing in the in their publication it will say, Professor Lee, Harvard University or whatever and in kind of the more popular media or a newspaper article or something they will say 'Harvard University researchers' they will instantly take out the person's name, who actually did the work and just say the name of the university and It's an often cited critique because a university or department doesn't do research, individuals do.

It's the individuals that, especially when it's about responsibility, because if that research is unethical or something like that happens, then. We will hold the individual responsible, who made the mistake or did something wrong.

Trevor

Yeah, so in my eyes the institution is gaining a lot without giving a lot. So, like you said, the academic would be held accountable if anything was defunct. whereas the university or the institution will automatically just push back and distance themselves from that academic, even though they've commissioned the research and they've paid the bills.

Ricardo

That's really interesting as well. Just taking all of the positives and not any of the risks. Yeah, not ideal at all. I think there's something here that's also related to class, potentially as well. Surrounding, supporting versus academic jobs or professional service versus academic jobs and some of it might even be traditional, and I think we could actually change that if the traditions around who we name, who we recognise and acknowledge for doing work changed. Could we improve things?

Trevor

I would say so, we mentioned class, but by creating a contribution class so you have major contributors. You have people that have contributed a little bit. You may have had people that haven't contributed but it's a bit like when you cite someone's work, they haven't contributed, but you've used their knowledge to add to or to not add to your statement of facts or your opinion. So that's one way to do it. Again, simply creating something like the h-index, why can't professional services people be put onto that.

Ricardo

You could yes.

Trevor

I don't see why they shouldn't be put onto it the same way, but then when you're going into the professional world. Does that count? Because no one's going to look at your h-index.

Ricardo

Yeah, this is the thing you could have these changes where, this would be a way to do this. So, for every big project there's always going to be a lot of supporting staff. Even administrators and secretaries' things like this. For any particular paper It's going to have all of these other staff that helped with the funding application with the administration. And yeah, there isn't any clear recognition publicly of that. But if you had some sort of recognition then you could create these databases of these are all the people that contribute to this project. This is what they did in the same way as you mentioned with credits.

Trevor

Yes, most other industries have some form of recognition or portfolio type systems. You have IMDb for the film industry again, you have your h-index, even Footballers you've got transfer market or Opta stats. There's always something where you can see their work history. For someone in professional services, you have only got your CV and as research has shown a lot of people lie on their CV, so how can you get a true reflection of your capabilities or the job you've done? If it's not recognised beforehand.

Ricardo

And actually, that's where these public things are so much better than I, I think. I think it is true that there are people who will lie in their see these. I think it's much less likely you'll get people lying on LinkedIn or something much more public or IMDb or something like this. I mean, I think it's still will happen. You will get like gift authorships or recognition that's above and beyond what someone has done is always going to be that dynamic, but I think it would be better if. It was openly recognised and that was just the accepted thing to do. I think a lot of this is about respect and what we value, and I would find it really disrespectful if I'd work with some people on some stuff and done some objective work, and then they said actually we're just going to say this was your department or it was Kings College. I mean yeah, put the Kings College logo on, put my department under my name because I did this stuff.

Trevor

Exactly from Kings College audio visual department. Exactly that. There's just a slight disconnect there. I feel the gap needs to be bridged moving forward. The way the world's turning. We're turning back to academia more or vocational courses. You've got a lot of vocational courses and the people that are teaching these courses are professionals. How did they get into that position if their work was not validated or recognised?

Ricardo

Yeah, and I think there's a talent recognition element as well. When you see like looking around this room, there are so many really interesting graphics and things that people have done. Sometimes you see a really nice piece of art, a piece of graphic design or something, and that's normally going to be 1, two or three people who have done that thing and, being able to say oh great that artwork that graphic was done by this person. Just having their name on something that they've produced, I think, is quite a respectful thing and maybe we've turned things to corporate because, we have a certain corporate view of what, things should look like in terms of graphic design or something like that, so we then make it possible to say, oh no, we can just put the King's College logo on this because this thing has come from King's College and. Within what I do, I have a lot of individual freedom If I write a paper on something I don't actually have to send that. I do send it to colleagues, but I don't have to send it anywhere before it goes to be published. Obviously, it will be peer reviewed and there is a process that we go through. I definitely have that freedom and I don't what it's like in terms of freedom to create things in your job.

Trevor

I have creative freedom in the fact that I'm given a brief and I deliver the brief the way I see fit, but I have to get sign off from the end user without that, they won't publish it or upload it. So, I do have freedom in terms of the way I deliver the job, but overall sign off goes back to the end user, which is not collaborative, that's just their work.

Ricardo

Yeah, I guess that relates to the way that a support staff helps

Trevor

Is service driven? Isn't it?

Ricardo

Yeah, so actually that's where maybe some of the duality comes from. I think we could just have more elements of respect and valuing contribution that come from other areas. Have you spoken? To other stuff about how they feel about putting having their names put on things and recognition.

Trevor

My colleagues in IT, keep everything running because everything is run by technology these days. A customer or end user saying thank you, it means a lot, but it doesn't help you progress in your career, so I guess yes. A short answer is yes, because like I have said there is no recognition at all.

Ricardo

So, we just talk about the differences in recognition. I wonder how we could change that so we talked about. Creating different traditions, different ways that we tend to acknowledge. Maybe even different systems of responsibility. Putting more of the responsibility on the individual because.

Trevor

I believe the responsibility is already there, they just don't get the recognition for it. You've got times where, and I can only speak for myself, but I've been asked to do something at the last minute because there's no one else to do it. You've got all the responsibility of running we'll say event in this situation, and so if it goes wrong, it's you. It falls on. They may try and blame the technology. It's easy to blame technology, but if it fails, ultimately it falls on you. However, if the event goes well, who do you thank? AV.

Ricardo

This difference in working style working conditions I think goes beyond recognition, right? We've talked about working from own policies that. People that have been forced to work on. Work in on campus during the pandemic. There are really just two very different ways that we approach managing and designing people's jobs and. It seems like. That's the way those jobs are, but it doesn't always necessarily have to be. For instance, you were able to work from home during some of the pandemic.

Trevor

Yes, for some of the pandemic because everything went online. So, for teaching we were now supporting software rather than the hardware. We were supporting teams live events, that was the main thing because everything went online. We didn't use zoom here so it was only teams live events. We were supporting the academics' lack of knowledge in terms of using the software. Sometimes they struggled with their own hardware, so you're trying to sort them out remotely without actually having any remote accessing tools. It was a very strange time. The work conditions now, we're returning to ways of normal life in inverted commas. I have to be onsite, but academics can still deliver their lectures from home. I had an academic book support and then when I turned up, there was no academic there. Only a student or administrator saying yes, the person is online. Can you set up the equipment? I mean, is that fair? I don't know.

Ricardo

I mean, it's a change. I think the thing that perhaps isn't fair is

that not everyone is able to benefit from the fact that we're now much more flexible in the way that we've been able to work. The truth is, in academic roles, we've always been able to work remotely. Ever since I've been all my years in academia. Working from home has always been an inherent part of. Yeah, the way we organise our working lives and. I think the big difference is since the pandemic, more and more jobs where people would just expected to come in and a lot of like call centres and support roles that, could have been designed remotely if it wasn't for this view that people need to be seen and like actually physically seen in order to be managed or in order to know that they're doing their. Job, I think that's just never been the case in academia. I don't think any academic managers have ever wanted to have face time or wanted to know that someone is or not in my experience.

Trevor

But as you mentioned there's certain tasks that can allow you to work from home, but do you not think that when you're delivering teaching, it should be in person?

Ricardo

I don't know how much I can comment on that. It depends on where the students are. I mean, I find it quite amusing if a lot of the students are online, then I think it makes sense. for everyone to be online. I think it could be quite problematic if there are very few people in an actual room and then the majority are online. I think at that point you should just switch to everything being online because hybrid technology isn't yet there that it can balance that, but when it gets close to 50/50, when that you have more people in the room and et cetera. So, it depends on the situation.

Trevor

I agree with you on that. We have all these buildings that are populated with professional services staff, i.e., the security, the support staff, cleaners, estates, and facilities, audio, visual services. Which can lead on to sustainability. We have all these pledges from institutions about sustainability and work life balance. And all of these things, but in my eyes it's all geared towards the academic and academia rather than support staff and professional services. That's where I think there's the inequality and that's what needs to be bridge.

Ricardo

Yeah, I. I definitely think there is. I mean I have noticed when I first came to Kings, I noticed that the IT being based in Cornwall was really interesting. And I don't know what it's like for them. That would probably be a really interesting case study on. Obviously, they've realised that they don't actually need to be in London to support a London University.

Trevor

All to do with money, I feel the bottom line is always money for institutions.

Ricardo

I think generally they're doing a good thing because I am against us, overly focusing all of our economic effort on. Big industrial centres like capital cities, which are probably going to do all well, economically anyway, and any way that that we can try and help other nearby areas is generally a good thing. But if we're doing it purely to save money versus...

Trevor

You touched on it. You said nearby areas. Do you think a 5 hour car drive is nearby?

Ricardo

In in the grand scheme of the of the world, that's relatively close.

Trevor

There are so many other places, Kent for instance, you have Margate. Or Essex. Jaywick is in Essex, it is just outside Clacton. Now it's one of the most deprived places in Britain. They've done benefits Britain TV shows on it but they're not trying to produce jobs in places that were close to home, which you probably could have some employees that commute to here that probably live close to Jaywick.

Ricardo

I think maybe why they chose Cornwall was that they wanted it to be far enough, that they probably didn't want people commuting from London to Cornwall. They wanted it to be a totally separate thing. Because I don't think anyone's commuting that kind of distance. I think there was probably some logic to that, but when these decisions are made, if they're made. Out of uh, we can help this area. We can do more. We can do more good. I think that's great, but if it's purely oh we can just save money, get put people on different contract.

Trevor

I definitely believe that's the driving factors. I'm talking opinion here, but I believe that it is one of the driving factors behind it. They're taking jobs away from here, it's not like they're creating more jobs. So, a job that was once here gets moved down to Cornwall

Ricardo

Yeah, but then it would. The one good thing economically it was it. It would then support a. More deprived, we probably shouldn't use this phrase. It just, has less big businesses and in the same way that the DVLA moving to Swansea meant that it's not that Swansea was a small place, it just didn't have a massive employer. It made a massive difference and I think this is the logic that they were trying to use that the government have realised many years ago that actually isn't a good idea to put all of these, really big roles related to government and government registration all in London and to centre power all in London because it becomes expensive its.

Ricardo

So, when it comes to working from home as an academic. There are some. General principles where it's kind of generally expected that I'll be in two or three days a week, but even there it's generally accepted. And if I decide one day that I'm I, I want to work from home. For instance, I usually work from home on Fridays. I don't actually have to cheque with anyone or I don't like. It's just the thing that it's just known that and I kind of know that the people that I work with the days that they work for me, but there's no. I'll ask this person and need to get a thing signed off, although actually, officially our PhD students do need to get a form signed off, but I in advance I've just signed off them to work remotely for the entire year. That's what, yeah, whether they do or don't want to use that, that's just my laissez-faire attitude towards working from home and remote working flexibility. But I get the feeling it's not the same in most.

Trevor

Support roles definitely not. From when the pandemic was ending. There was a mandate that we had to be on site five days a week. I argued because of the fact that cases were still rising

and other departments were still working from home. Why do I need to be in, especially as we've had no students and my job is around supporting, the teaching spaces.

Ricardo

Which was happening online at that point mostly.

Trevor

It was, yeah it. Well, at the time when we first came back it was definitely online. I was then told OK, fair enough, you can work three days a week, so this is. September 2020 no. It was before then because that's when they made us come five days a week. So, September 2020 was when we started coming in five days a week height of the pandemic. That was ridiculous, right?

Ricardo

September 2020 I can't believe it. Like now you've said that that blows my mind. I don't think I was allowed to come in September 2020. We had to request coming in. Yeah, we were like no. You have to be at home.

Trevor

So, I pushed back to my manager and was met with a brick wall. I had to then get support from other departments to kind of enforce my grievances around coming on site. IE that black people are disproportionately affected by it and the fact that we had no teaching going on. There was a lot of factors So like I said for a period of time until the demand picked up I was allowed to work 3 days on site. What I found interesting was that managers in the same roles were not coming in on site, so I understand they're not front facing as much, but you would think that you'd lead by example. It kind of just showed that, touching again on classes that majority of the managers or supervisors that are were working from home are from a middle class, whereas the people that were coming in, the people that are more likely to catch COVID are from a working class background. The equality didn't weigh up for me.

Ricardo

I think some of this circles around to who we're willing to put in front of the coal face, and that's where we could split the class divide that it's still even though that's just a visualisation. It still happens where we choose some class of jobs where we've decided we will put these people at risk and actually. This can happen within academia as well. I was thinking of some examples that not everyone has the same freedom and flexibility to work from home that I do. If people work in a lab facing position or for a lot of the medical students and people who teach the medical students a lot of that work. Has had to continue to be face to face. A lot of medical and dentistry stuff just. We don't have the technology to teach that remotely and to do that practical stuff remotely, which is we're not very will we ever be who? Who knows and that'll be a long time away. I think we could split this into. Groups of jobs where. People can see the ways that it is possible to do that job remotely, and there's definitely an area within there where people just need to be explained that no, this job can be done remotely, and I think the most obvious historical example is the call centre up until. We're all calling call centres all the time and up until relatively recently you would never have a call centre where you could tell the person was just at home and then from the pandemic onwards that is just the standard thing. Every call centre employee can just do their work remotely.

Trevor

It saves the company money again. There are so many benefits to making things equal, but I think that companies fail to see it. They don't have to foresight to say, well, if we make everything equal then. I think they feel they'll be losing. Their companies

will be losing, maybe is it productivity, but I personally think you're more productive at home because you're only thinking about the work...

Ricardo

It depends on the individual as well, when it comes to working from home, for some people with like caring responsibilities and stuff like that, it's actually worse because if you have children around, it's really hard to work from home.

Trevor

Although now that most schools are back to normal and that's all gone, they've got between 9:00 or 10 and two. For instance, they've got that that. Period of uninterrupted time.

Ricardo

Yeah, and you're right, I was thinking in terms of during the pandemic when schools were closed. So yeah, it just depends what's going on in terms of society generally. Let's move on to talking a bit about pay structures and. And the kind of grade structures, and in some ways within academia. For instance, as far as I know, the grade system and the pay structures officially are technically supposed to be the same between, so the grades that they pay academics and the grades that they pay support staff. It's the same tiered system. Or is it not?

Trevor

There are two separate pay scales. You have academic pay, scale and then you have the professional.

Ricardo

Oh, so there were different pay scales. OK, so I didn't even know that.

Trevor

So, they may have the same grading structure.

Ricardo

Yeah, but they're different.

Trevor

And I find it I'm not sure about academic, but in professional services you have your spine points and then you have discretionary points. For you to get them discretionary points near on Impossible.

Ricardo

Oh, that never happens. Yeah, yeah.

Trevor

It's the carrot that is a carrot. I know a colleague that has been working for kings for 14 years. They've been on grade 5 for 14 years. So, for 9 years, yeah, for 9 years they've been stuck at the same point. Does that say that they need more training? They need to put in more motivation and effort or. Is it a thing where now they're stuck and there is no progression for them?

Ricardo

Yeah, I think the difference is especially with five is a relatively low grade. A kind of middle to low. I think the difference with an academic role is. The things that a person is expected to do around the early grades, which is basically being a PhD student, is like the first grade of academia technically thinking it's not even great because it's separate from that system. But by completing that task. They it's like an up or out situation. They would either fail to complete it and then leave academia or they would complete their PHD and if they want to stay in academia, they would go into a postdoc and a postdoc pays stay as a postdoc and do some absolutely great research like that, but then generally, by being a postdoc, the things that a

person produces in postdoc, which is more research papers, more projects, sometimes even funding. That would then give them enough to move to the next role. Yeah, and. That inherent. Just doing your job will lead to promotion. Is a big part of the way we organise jobs around the academic side of things. Does that happen within professional services? If you just do your job well?

Trevor

For the first five years, yes.

Ricardo

OK.

Trevor

If you turn up for five years. Every year, your pay will go up

Ricardo

Oh, you're talking about increments I was talking about a whole move to a new role.

Trevor

Oh, well no there isn't much progression. In EUS, which is a department within IT. Base entry is an apprentice, so they work on the tech bar that we have here at kings. They're all apprentices, that's a two year course. After that we have grade 3 EUS analysts. These roles were created because they didn't have a progression route for the apprentices after they qualified. Grade 3 is a very big jump you're on maybe 25K. Top end.

Ricardo

So, it's just about the living wage.

Trevor

Just about the living wage. Then there's a big jump from grade 3 to 5 in IT. Grade 5 is what all IT engineers are on. Above them is a senior position at grade 6, but there's only one position on most campuses, so, essentially you would have like 4 IT engineers at grade 5 and then only one Grade 6. So, the chances of progression are very small. Facilities assistances, start on a Grade 2. You're a Grade 2 for the entirety of your career unless you become a team leader. There is no progression after that. You're stuck unless you reinvent yourself qualify train, go elsewhere into other departments.

Ricardo

So, I think the difference here, as you're describing this, I'm understanding, I think what the difference is that. In academic roles, we are lucky enough and we're privileged enough that what we actually do for our jobs is inherently professional development. So, a lot of the things where someone in a supporting role needs to in their own time or managed to convince their employer to give them the time to go out and do an additional qualification or write an academic paper or start a new project. That's an additional thing for someone in a supporting role. That's just my job that that's just what I'm supposed to do. So, because a lot of my not all of it. But a lot of maybe 40% of my role is things that are development. That feeds in well to every few years. Being able to say OK, look, I've done all these things can I? Can I move up and. If you're in an Estates role where you're not able to build these new skills. You're only ever really going to be able to do the job that you were employed to do, and then you'll be. I don't know if she used the term stuck cause some people will be really happy to do that job really well for their whole career. And I totally respect that. But if a person wants to move up in a more supporting role, generally I get the feeling that they would need to really work hard to find time.

Trevor

You have to invest in yourself by, like you were saying, training.

Sometimes you have to leave the position because you are stuck. I know people in other departments that have left their supporting role because there is no way for them to progress without moving. It's like a funnel. You've got so many people at the top. It's the hierarchy structure, isn't it? As you go up, there's less and less people. And that's how I feel the progression is in supporting roles. You've got all these people fighting to get into that small space of promotion and then it continues as you go up.

Ricardo

Yeah, but it is definitely very siloed or pillared. It's a different world in terms of. What we do day-to-day. And how that impacts our individual careers. Yeah, and it's not necessarily fair. I don't think to. You could design jobs in such a way that they have much more inherent development and inherent progression, and I think they would be much more fulfilling jobs. But I think a lot of supporting roles have just been designed to facilitate other peoples' progression or other people's projects.

Trevor

I didn't look at it like that, but yeah, in a way that's true because you're supporting this person. You're giving them your knowledge. It's knowledge sharing, but it's only one way.

Ricardo

Yeah, if you're supporting, let's take an administrator for it's a product administrator. Supports that project really well, then the project runs well and then it is able to be successful and the project will be successful, but. Will within that success that administrator be recognised.

Trevor

So, they're usually products. Administrators are usually the coordinator, so the project manager gets all the plaudits. The jump in pay between a coordinator and manager is so far, but the duties are very similar.

Ricardo

It's like just such a Marxist split. Marx called this the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. You could call it the owner class, and then the more working class.

Trevor

It's the Upstairs Downstairs mentality.

Ricardo

Yeah, and I think there is a bit of a bilateral split between are you there? Doing things for the good of your not necessarily your own, but will you get recognition for those things? Are you responsible for? The smooth running and when things go well will you be promoted based on those things versus are you here to just support the general activities of the organisation? As an academic I do a lot of work that just supports things that go on in our department. I've never really felt like, oh, I'm just here to make. I'm just here to make this machine run and like I am just a cog in this entire machine, but I never really think, oh yeah, I'm just like I'll go to work and to make that little thing run so a student can get their degree.

Trevor

Like literally being an engine, you've got your own ambitions and your job is allowing you to explore them.

Ricardo

It does it. It's a massive privilege that. Actually, over the holidays. This is why holidays are so useful. I'm able to just come up with ideas and think I'm going to do this thing because I came up with an idea and a lot of that's related to the autonomy that we have because I have quite a good like, not full autonomy within the realms of King's aim to be good society, I have quite a lot of autonomy to try and. Do things that are in that direction and if I have an idea I just go and attempt to try and do it and get the funding to do it and I don't really even have to like go and. Cheque with someone. To be like is this I probably should ask people more because I have some pretty wacky ideas. But if you think about this journal and Sohail's setting up [Stolen Tools], it's the exact same thing as a postdoc at the time. He was just like I've had this idea. I want to do this thing and he went out and just did it. Yeah and.

Trevor

There is no way, even when you see e-mail circulars that come around. They're always asking for ideas. There's funding for this. There's funding for that. I don't think there's actually a pool of money to fund any of a professional service idea. There's nothing like that and you'll find a lot of the best ideas come from the people that are on the ground doing the work. They don't look to them and or ask them. They don't consult them, the only time we're consulted is when it becomes an issue

Ricardo

I never really thought of that as well. Like pots of money for changing things and improving things. And yeah, we have lots of different opportunities to apply for either internal or external funds to do stuff, and that's it's a big part of our job. It's like getting money to support making a positive difference. Whereas I think, when they're putting together those funding application things, they're probably not thinking. That these would even come from professional staff members. Which, yes, that's a mess of duality so. Yeah, it's just the difference between supporting and. And maybe executing or. It's probably a better word than that for you need both elements, but one of these gets all of the recognition and all of the yeah, all the positives, whereas the other one doesn't. I think we should strive to just make both job progressions and the way that we traditionally support those jobs more similar. We just take things out of what we do and say, hey, yeah have more autonomy. Have more recognition. Have all of these things you could. I mean as an organisational psychologist; this is what I think in terms of job design. You could just design most of these jobs differently and there probably will be jobs. Professional services that do have elements of that. Probably a more senior roles. Some of them do, but the difference is the average role and almost all roles within the academic side of things have quite a lot of this. Yeah, even as a PhD student, probably that's the first academic job you do really as a PhD student. Depending on your supervisor, you actually have quite a lot of autonomy, the bottom run. You're still told hey, this is this problem. Here are some ways I would fix it. Go ahead and fix it.

Trevor

We have that in terms of like creative control and but overall, the end solution is always owned by the academic and I guess in some ways it has to be. Obviously, we're here for research and for teaching so I can understand that, but even consulting. A lot of professional services staff are specialists in their area, so. It's funny when you have an academic who has, all the knowledge in the world, especially subject, but when it comes to turning on a computer and projecting their presentation, they're stumped.

Ricardo

You might have a Nobel Prize winning academic. who can't work

a PowerPoint. I spend almost all of my time thinking about the way organisations work, that's like. My specific bit of that is how we discriminate against people within organisations and getting into organisations and stuff and that's where I can give some insight. I have some other random bits of. Areas that I've read a little bit about, but other than that I don't really, really know anything about. These other things I'm not a generalist at all and that's the way academic jobs tend to be. Created that we have these very specialist interests. Then we teach a module in that very specialist thing and other tangential tasks, No. Doing very basic other things there are some things that I'm amazed that I can't do, especially during the pandemic. Actually, I really struggle with this. I very quickly learn how to record and like. Like online PowerPoints and do like online presentations rather than in person and I realised I had no idea how to. Do any of that stuff.

Trevor

It's so different, but you think you know how to do it because it's similar to what you do already.

Ricardo

It's just different enough that I probably needed to sit down and be trained on doing this thing this way differently and using all of these different tools.

Trevor

But you were given the freedom to develop this online style of teaching the way you wanted. There was no process you had to follow.

Ricardo

They created one at a certain time.

Trevor

Halfway through the pandemic. We were told what we had to do. The best way to serve our academics.

Ricardo

And that's the difference with autonomy, though that that I've mentioned before that. And actually, this can be important for job satisfaction. Having a high amount of job autonomy tends to be really good for job satisfaction and as you take away people's autonomy, they tend to be less satisfied. But there are some types of roles, like if someone is in a production line. You actually probably don't want them to have high levels of autonomy. You want to do things really specifically, and sadly people in those jobs, which I would hope would eventually become automated aren't going to have high levels of satisfaction. That satisfaction might come from the completed plane or car or boat, that they make at the end, but they might not even see that they might just be welding certain rivets in place and, I think that we could use that as a really good visualisation that we should try and avoid situations where all we focus on is our little rivet that we weld on and step back and say Oh yeah, actually we had this positive impact in the society. We taught these people and I was a part of the thing that taught those people and using that same example. On the front of that car, you'll just put Ford or Tesla or whatever. You wouldn't put the names of all the people that ripped it. Another thing that we mentioned earlier was we talked about pay and then pensions and unions. So, these being separate that. How do you feel that reinforces these two pillars having separate. Pensions and unions.

Trevor

Well, it just shows that the two pillars are again separated and

kept in their own little silos because. if we both work in the same company, why could we not have the same pension? Yes, I earn slightly less than you or a lot less than you, but surely the rate on return from the pension will still be the same whether I put in £10 or you've put in 100 pounds. It's the same because it's the investment. I don't understand why that is. I don't know which ones performing better. It might be my ones performing better, but I won't know that because I've not been given the chance, or maybe you should be given the chance to choose in terms of pensions. Again, with unions we have three unions here at kings and they're all aimed at different departments. UCU are just for academics and although they say anyone can apply, they won't approach a professional service staff member unless it's just to get them to support their strike action. Which I think is weird. Talking of unions, there's a gulf and an inequality between the fees. Someone earning £60,000 for UCU will pay £25 in fees, someone earning £30,000 will pay £20 in fees. You earn double what I earn, but I'm only paying 1/5 less. It shows inequality.

Ricardo

Do you know what all of these things? The different pension organisations? The different unions, that we have. Just kind of reinforce this separation of, rather than being all kings employees, all academic employees are all part of university. They kind of reinforce this difference of, there's this type of role that we're giving this support to. Or we're creating these organisations that support these types of work, and another that support another type of work and it's not very inclusive. I understand the reason for it specialisation. There are different things that people do and different things that people care about because they do those different types of jobs.

Trevor

Is that fair? That's the word I want to highlight. Fairness, because we're still adding to the same thing.

Ricardo

I think there's not fairness and recognition of contributions, even if, and this is just playing like Devil's Advocate that even if supporting a project wasn't as important as running the project there should still be a tiered level of recognition.

Trevor

Look at what we mentioned at the beginning of this conversation, about If you had the major contributors. Yeah, the major contributors the minor contributors and then your acknowledgements. Maybe they didn't, contribute but they helped. The man that held the door open whilst I carried my camera through. Thank you very much because without that I wouldn't have got the shot that made this film

Ricardo

We can also think of the deconstructions can think the other way that some. People might say. Oh wait, when will this stop that? They might think OK should we recognise every person that put every brick of this building together or the companies that? Produce the microphones that we're recording with and every. Every detail and I would say OK, that's a bit absurd. We should probably just recognise up to the point where people have objectively contributed their own labour to this particular project.

Trevor

And that's it, their own labour because time is money. When using your time, you can't do anything else. We can't multitask in terms of if, we're having this conversation. I can't be talking to someone else right now because I'm talking to you so therefore, I've spent my time with you. I can't get that back you if I spend money, I could get money back but I can't get my time back and

and that's the key point.

Ricardo

This is one of the cruxes of a capitalist system, though, because yeah, you're exactly right that that time is money, and people put their time and their labour. Into certain things, but. When people are in the ownership class, let's call it. They actually don't need to put their time into things so, and we even have this within academia that if someone is running lots of projects, for instance, there is an accepted thing that their name will go on last author to all sorts of different papers. Whereby which they? They might not have even looked at these. I mean, they might have had some general idea of what's in this paper. But there is a level of achievement within academia and there is a level of achievement within the working world generally where actually a person doesn't need to put their time in. They are just that powerful in that particular thing that's happening that they will always have recognition. Anything that their company does that they own a certain number of shares of or that they run. or that they're in charge of. Gives them an automatic ownership of the thing.

Trevor

Is that class or is that their notoriety? Is that because they've obviously got to that point in life where they're known and they're there? Like you said, their name holds the weight rather their reputation. Sorry holds the weight rather than the actual time that they're given.

Ricardo

I think it is class actually, so there's a really interesting writer called Yanis Varoufakis who talks about this new system that we might have moved into. He argues that we have moved into what he calls Neo techno feudalism, it's the old feudal system of serfs and Lords, but in this modern world he argues that the feudal system we have is all about technology, and these large companies that own technology that really allows us to do the majority of jobs that allows us to do the majority of things in the modern world. Yanis really argues that the split in class is whether people own those companies, whether people are in charge of companies that are in charge of all our data and the technology that we use. The technology that we're using to have this conversation today. And people who use those technologies or aren't, so it's the haves or the have nots. I think it is a class thing because I think you can draw any divide in a system of who's in control of this thing who's benefiting from the system and who's being exploited by the system. And I think that's a lot of what's going on within these two pillars that we have. A group of people who are supporting this system but being much more exploited and a group of people who benefit more from the system.

Trevor

Because they own it.

Ricardo

Yeah, it's all about the ownership of who's actually in charge of these decisions? Who's controlling this? And more people who I would argue are benefiting come from the academic pillar. Some do come from the professional service support. There are a group of people that you would argue are in control but it's a smaller percentage.

Trevor

Yes, because they are department leads and heads. I can use the analogy of a house slave against the field slave. There was a void between them because one had the privilege of working in the house and the other had tougher conditions working in the fields.

Ricardo

Yeah, i think that's a great conclusion