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Troubling the concept of the 'academic profession' in 21st Century higher education

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Abstract

Concern has been expressed about the vulnerability of the 'academic profession' as a consequence of threats from productivism, managerialism and the like (Beck and Young, Br J Sociol Educ 26(2):183-197, 2005). I question the apparent self-understanding of academe as a profession. Referring to thinking from higher education (Barnett, High Educ 40:409-422, 2000a; Educ Phil Theor 32(3):319-326, 2000b; Realizing the University in an age of supercomplexity, 2000c; Stud High Educ 25(3):255-265, 2000d; Lond Rev Educ 2(1):61-73, 2004a; Piper, Are professors professional? The organisation of University examinations, 1994; Taylor 1999), and from the sociology of the professions (in particular Evetts, Int J Sociol Soc Policy 23(4/5):22-35, 2003a; Int Sociol 18(2):395-415 2003b; Curr Sociol 54(1):133-143 2006a; Curr Sociol 54(4):515-531, 2006b), I propose that significant shifts in self-understanding and practice are needed for academe to claim a social role as a 'profession'. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Williams, Kevin, E-Mail: kevin.williams@uct.ac.za