

Stakeholders in an unbundling university: negotiations and contestations for provision of online education

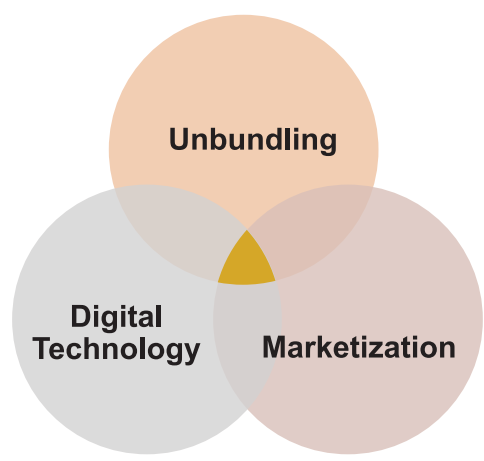
Laura Czerniewicz, Rada Jancic Mogliacci, Sukaina Walji
 Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching, University of Cape Town, South Africa
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1. ABOUT THE PROJECT

This research project **The Unbundled University: Researching emerging models in an unequal landscape** examines the notion of the **unbundling university** through

- the intersection of **increasingly disaggregated** curricula and services,
- the affordances of **digital technologies, online education and MOOCs**
- the growing **marketisation** of the higher education sector and emergence of Online Program Management companies (OPMs)



UNBUNDLING is the process of disaggregating education provision into its constituent parts likely for delivery by multiple stakeholders, often using digital approaches and which can result in rebundling

2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Who are the stakeholders, and what are their roles?
- What are the areas of contestation between them?

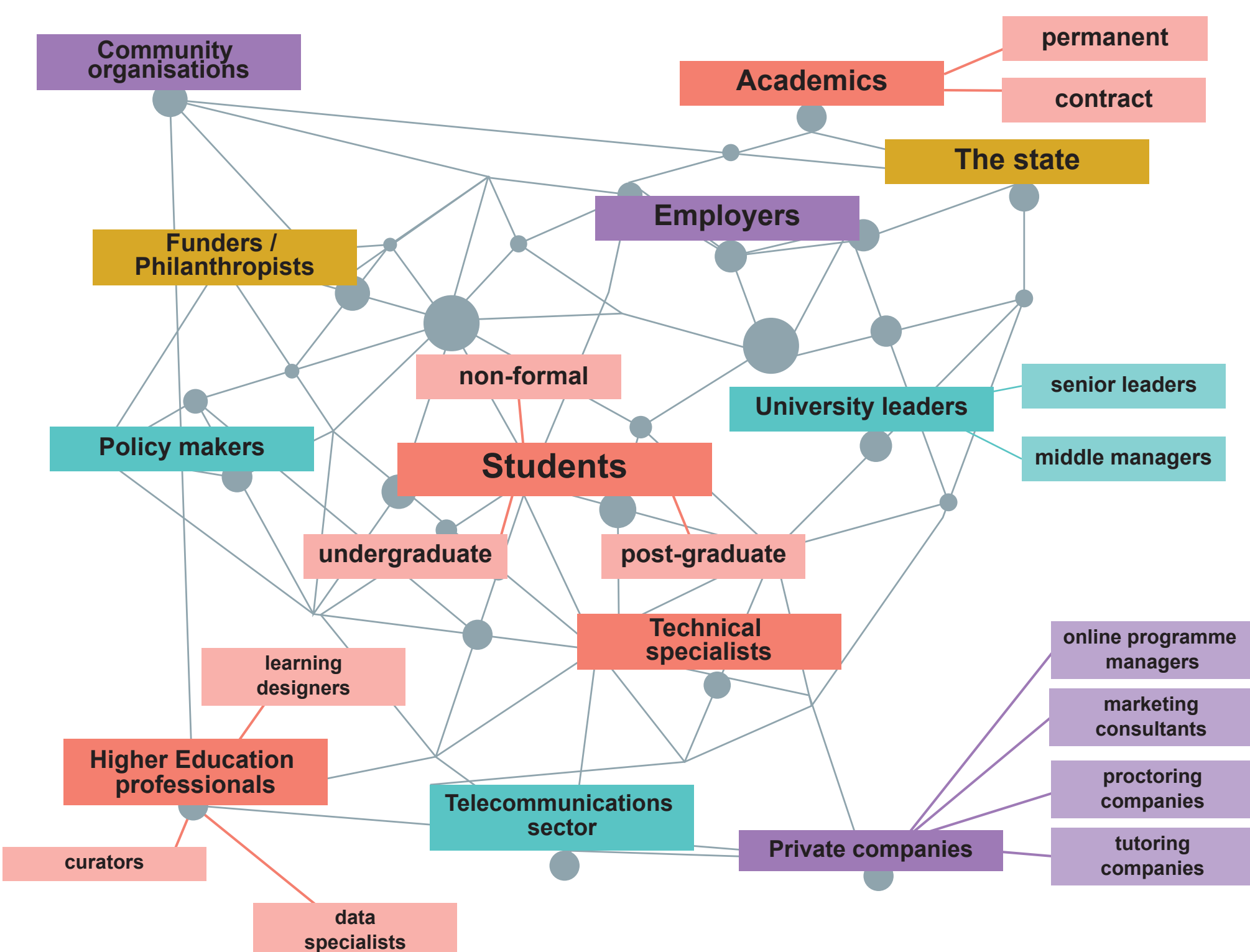
3. DATA & ANALYSIS

Interviews and focus groups with university senior leaders and strategists. Interviews with a number of senior executives from Online Programme Management (OPM) companies.

Desktop mapping of university and private company relationships captured from university websites, media and press releases.

4. FINDINGS

Stakeholders



Emerging roles inside the university



Adapted from Macfarlane, B (2011) The Morphing of Academic Practice: Unbundling and the Rise of the Para-academic, Higher Education Quarterly 65 (1), 59-73

Contestations & Tensions

- Universities are balancing competing imperatives – **‘core business’** versus **3rd stream income and revenue generation opportunities**
- Tensions as the **HE system becomes more differentiated** due to different opportunities for different types of universities
- Negotiations and some alignment between companies and university decision-makers about **opportunities and rationale for partnerships and risk taking**
- Contestations and differences between **decision-makers and academics** as well as between **companies and academics**
- Negotiations about **control of teaching and of the academic project**
- Tensions regarding the implications of **outsourcing core business**
- Manoeuvring regarding the **role of social capital** - rather than strategy - in the development of new arrangements
- Negotiations and manipulations regarding **lack of knowledge of online education provision in universities and inexperience with new contracting arrangements**

5. CONCLUSIONS

Market forces are steering decisions re teaching and learning provision. Risks of inequalities at all levels: students, academics, institutions, national HE systems and globally

