

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

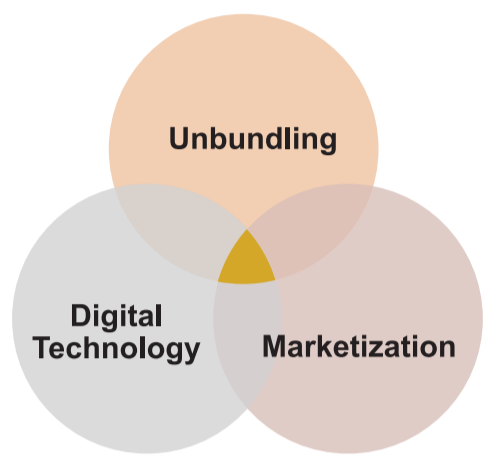
Laura Czerniewicz, Rada Jancic Mogliacci, Sukaina Walji  
 Centre for Innovation in Learning and Teaching, University of Cape Town, South Africa  
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## 1. ABOUT THE PROJECT

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?

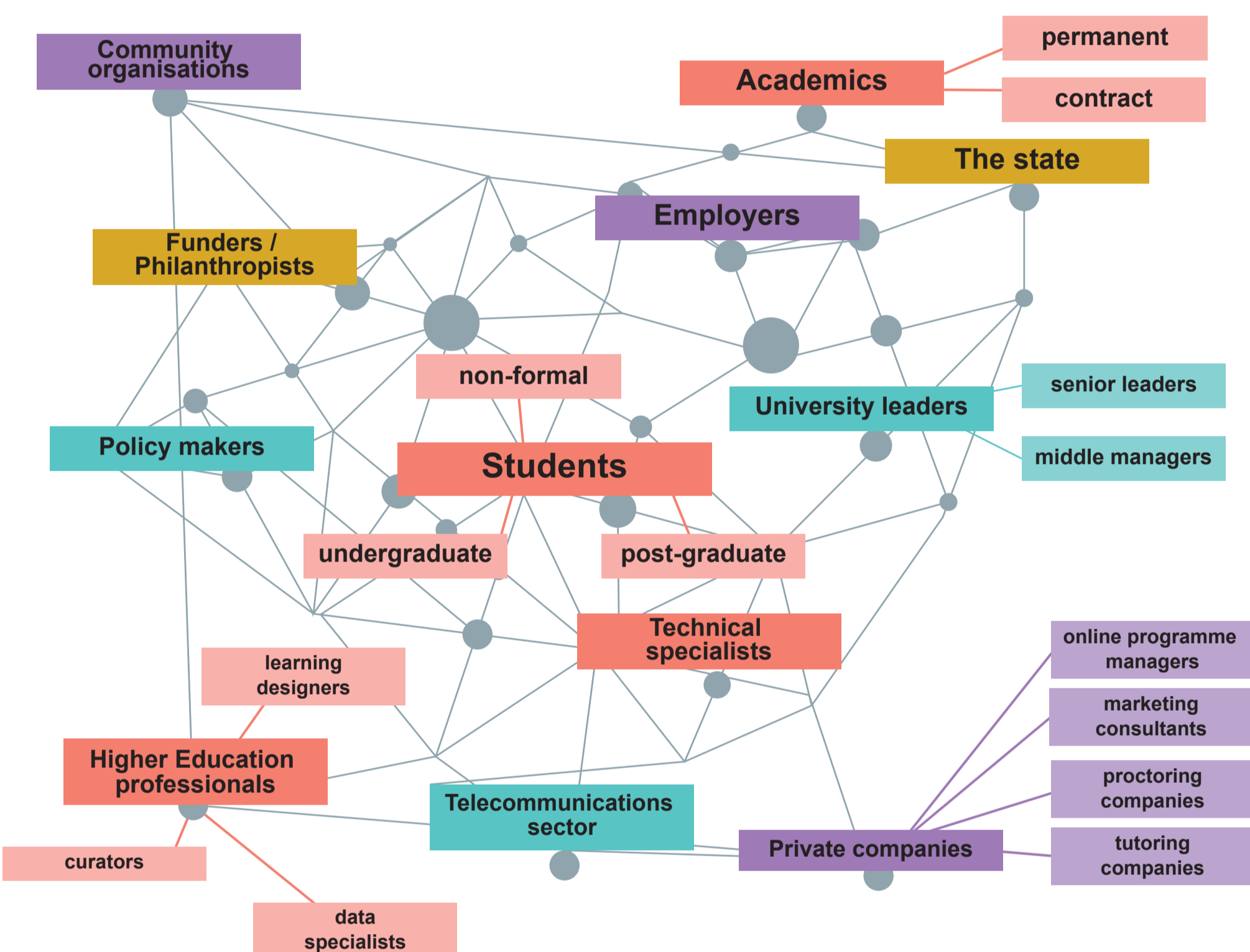
## 3. DATA & ANALYSIS

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

