

Academic citizenship behaviour: a bibliometric analysis and research agenda

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper provides a rigorous bibliometric analysis of academic citizenship scholarship development. Academic citizenship has seen a long-term decline, and despite a recent surge in research interest, the field still lacks comprehensive studies and data.

Design/methodology/approach – Bibliometrics consists of a series of analytical procedures which are used to objectively assess a field of published outcomes by statistically analysing bibliographic datasets, normally focused on various citations and co-citations of publications. Using the Web of Science Core Collection database of academic citations, bibliometric methodologies were used to identify and analyse academic citizenship (behaviour) literature through the assimilation of a nascent dataset of research outputs and presenting the results in the data visualisation software, VOSviewer.

Findings – The study reveals the recent surge in interest in academic citizenship (behaviour) research. The prominent authors engaging with this method of research, their impact and the key topics arising from these studies are also revealed.

Research limitations/implications – The analysis undertaken can be time sensitive, as the nature of bibliometric analysis is backward looking and so can be viewed as being retrospective, as literature only appears after a period of time has lapsed and is under constant flux.

Originality/value – The study identifies areas where assimilations have occurred. Prospective opportunities for the further empirical development and research of academic citizenship behaviour are considered to rest in the areas of academic identity and the potential importance of the constructs of psychological contract, psychological climate and psychological capital.

Keywords Academic citizenship behaviour, Bibliometric analysis, *Higher Education*, Workload, Collegiality
Paper type Research article

Introduction

This paper is set in the context of the *Higher Education* landscape, which relies on the willingness of academics to be collaborative and good “academic” citizens (Johnston, 2025). However, academic citizenship remains a disputed concept, as there are alternative views on its meaning and value. Research by Macfarlane (2007) identified four views: (1) membership of a learning community; (2) contribution to society; (3) contributing to academic knowledge and (4) willingness to work with and support others. This article adopts the stance that academic citizenship relates to the individual and collective behaviours of academics and so “refers to the duties, responsibilities or virtues of academic faculty” (Macfarlane, 2007; p. 261). Academic citizenship behaviour (ACB) has its grounding in organisation citizenship behaviour (OCB) (MacFarlane, 2007), with Islam *et al.* (2018) classifying activities of OCB which take place within an academic environment as ACB.

Anxiety remains amongst academics over the changing nature of academic work and the pressures applied to academics to do “more for less” under the auspices of quality, efficiency and value for money. There is a general acceptance that higher education institutions are reliant on their successes due to the goodwill of academic staff and a key element of this is academic



citizenship. However, there is a perception that academic citizenship has been in decline for the past 20-plus years. This paper therefore seeks to map the academic citizenship scholarly publications and identify a route map for further empirical research. Using an academic database, this paper presents a rigorous bibliometric analysis of the current state of published scholarly activity. In doing so, the paper addresses two research questions.

RQ1. What scholarly outputs have emerged on the topic of academic citizenship?

RQ2. What opportunities exist for the empirical development of academic citizenship literature?

The paper is split into the following sections in order to answer the two research questions. Firstly, a brief literature review is provided in order to set the bibliometric analysis in context. In this review the concept of academic citizenship behaviour is considered in the context of the academic role, and its importance is discussed. The research methodology outlines the approach used to undertake the data collection and analysis following the 3 R's model (Coombes, 2024). The Results and Discussion section is then able to draw attention to the key findings of the bibliometric analysis, making use of the data to identify and outline key trends and linkages from within the dataset. The paper then concludes by outlining a potential research agenda for further empirical study into the area through two lenses – education and management.

Literature review

Albia and Cheng (2023) suggest that ACB has been customarily associated with service and not necessarily related to the teaching or the research aspects of the academic role. However, Davids (2022) challenges this, arguing that ACB should and does encompass the full spectrum of the academic role and is tied to only nontraditional academic activities. There also remains links to discretionary effort (Davids, 2022; Oleksiyenko, 2024). The “Janus-faced” role (Bathmaker, 1999, p. 275) of academics (teaching, research and service) generates further complexity, as the plurality of roles dictates alternative foci for individual academics forces selections to be made (Johnston, 2025). This may afford some rationale explaining the argued diminishing of ACB within institutions (Beatson *et al.*, 2022; Smith and Walker, 2024a). Alongside this, Albia and Cheng (2023) highlight the growth of the performative culture as a key factor which has perhaps contributed to the reduction of ACB.

This perception of declining ACB is not a recent trend, having been noted by Burgan (1998), while MacFarlane (2005) pointed to an increasingly disengaged workforce. This degeneration has further deteriorated to become central to the ecosystem within academia (Beatson *et al.*, 2022), resulting from increases in managerialism (Deem and Brehony, 2005), marketisation (Bryson, 2004; Mampaey, 2018) and competition (Vardi, 2009). These have resulted in increased measurement and efficiency-based models within the pretext of quality. Academics, however, would argue that instead they have manifested as reductions in levels of autonomy, increasing workload and additional pressures (Beatson *et al.*, 2022). Smith and Walker (2024b) highlight in particular the growing use of work planning models within the managerial toolkit as a means of managing academic activity, which has resulted in reluctance by many academics to be collegial and perhaps focus on undertaking activities which may be considered highly visible and countable (Albia and Cheng, 2023). The issue is highlighted further by the reduction of involvement in external citizenship activities within the peer review process, either through reluctance to do or reluctance to spend as much time doing (Tomaselli, 2020). He also acknowledges the publish-or-perish culture has pressurised academics towards a quantity-of-outputs system as opposed to a quality-based system, which has subsequently resulted in more needed to be reviewed but less academics being willing.

ACB can be subdivided into informal and formal, with the formal and therefore visible activities being linked with promotion criteria (Smith and Walker, 2024a). Reed (2017), however, suggests that successful academics concentrate their work and efforts on personal

priorities. This may not necessarily be a selfish or self-centred approach, but rather more of an acknowledgement of what they feel is important in their role and where they place importance. [Beigi \(2023\)](#) suggests that academic should do what they think is important, worthwhile and makes them happy. As such, [Adamska et al. \(2015\)](#) point to academics choosing where and to what they apply effort. This may therefore lead to what may be perceived as and considered selfish and self-centred behaviour, coupled with a reduction in collegiality and citizenship ([MacFarlane, 2007](#)).

The study of and research into ACB is therefore timely and crucial for ongoing development and performance of the sector. Academia continues to remain a sector reliant on collegiality, citizenship, co-operation, teamwork and goodwill. The notion of ACB incorporates each of these through participation in activities, contribution to decision-making, shared values and norms, supporting colleagues, commitment and engagement to the discipline and the institution and altruistic values ([Smith and Walker, 2024b](#)).

Research methodology

This research adopts a quantitative approach to measuring bibliographic data, commonly known as bibliometric analysis, which is becoming an increasingly common approach to analysing literature. Its key purpose is to complement traditional approaches to undertaking literature reviews and to evaluate the trends that may be visible through analysing the historical background to the literature and, in many cases, project to the future ([Mathew et al., 2024](#)).

Database selection criteria

Web of Science (WoS) is accepted as one of the two main databases for citation indexing ([Yan and Zhiping, 2023](#)). Several other authors including [Chen \(2017\)](#), [Dzikowski \(2018\)](#), [Ellegaard and Wallin \(2015\)](#), [Shonhe \(2020\)](#) and [Zhou and Kwon \(2020\)](#) have made use of WoS as the key database, as have [Su et al. \(2019\)](#) and [Janmajaya et al. \(2018\)](#). The research followed the pattern of [Coombes' \(2024\)](#) 3 R's protocol, following a retrieve, review and report approach. Firstly the data were gathered following a search of the WoS database, followed by the results being screened and subsequently reported in this article within the results and discussion section.

Data collection

Data were collected (Retrieve) using the WoS Core Collection database using the criteria of topic, with the generic search terms used "academic citizenship". The search was further refined to just include journal articles only and also confined to being written in English. The time span for the search was 1970–2024, and the search took place on 2nd November 2024, as such including all papers published and indexed on WoS by the end of October 2024 (see [Table 1](#)).

Table 1. Summary of search outcomes for articles in the WoS academic database

Criteria	Filters	Documents
Keyword search	"academic citizenship"	62
Restriction	Topic	
Restriction	Journal articles only	47
Subject area	All	
Language	English	46
Period	1970–2024	
Document type	Journal articles	
Source(s): The author		

Method, analysis and presentation

This bibliometric analysis aims to conduct an objective study of published research on “academic citizenship”, drawing data and statistics from the WoS database. The use of bibliometric analysis allows for the analysis of bibliographic materials through objective and quantitative methods (Yan and Zhiping, 2023). As such, the method makes use of historical data and tracks academic publishing, citations and development of knowledge across thematic areas (Dzikowski, 2018).

Data were analysed (review) using the WoS internal analysis tools and VOSviewer to map the data and relationships drawn from the WoS search. VOSviewer also provides visualisations of the connections between differing variables. This allows for further discussion and consideration of the outputs drawn from WoS. Data are presented in a variety of forms consisting of visual illustrations consisting of labels (words), nodes (circles) and links (lines) to form a bibliometric network. The weight (or importance) of a label or node is determined by its size, with the larger the weight (importance), the larger the label or node (Van Eck and Waltman, 2010). The links are used to demonstrate the connectivity between different nodes. These will often be colour-coded in order to represent different clusters. The distance between labels and nodes provides an indication of the relatedness of the links, with the closer the link (the shorter the line), the greater the relatedness, and the further apart (the longer the line) the weaker the relatedness. In some instances heatmaps (known as density visualisations in VOSviewer) have also been provided to demonstrate the density and importance of some of the findings.

Results and discussion

Having retrieved the data through the data collection and reviewed it through the analysis, the third stage of Coombes’ (2024) model is to “report”, which allows the data to be visually represented for dissemination.

Overview

According to WoS (Figure 1), the first published articles on the topic of academic citizenship were in 1983 and 1984 (one in each). After this, there were only ten further subsequent publications before 2018. Since 2018, there has been a growth in publications, with four each in 2018 and 2019. Significant interest and articles have been published since 2021 with seven in 2021, three in 2022, six in 2023 and nine in 2024. As such, 46 articles have been published on the topic of academic citizenship over a 41-year period, however, 54.34% (25) of the

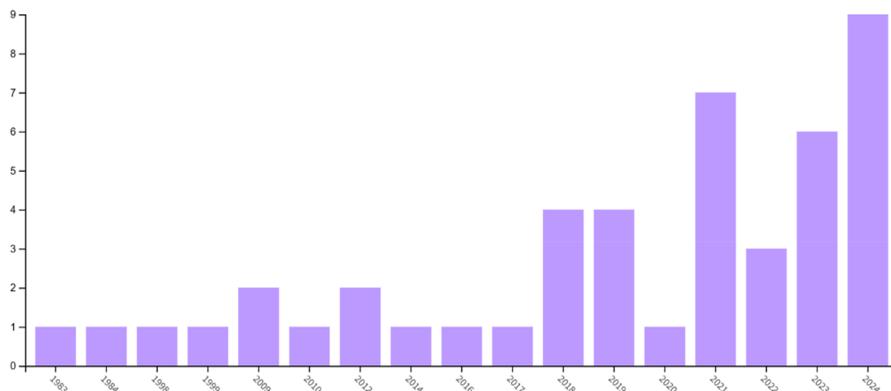


Figure 1. Publication by year. Source: Web of Science

publications have occurred in the last four years and 34 (73.9%) since 2017, which evidences the suggestion that academic citizenship has become a topic of high interest within the sector and which may be considered ripe for further research and investigation.

Discipline distribution and journal citation

An analysis of the WoS categories (Table 2) highlights that the key areas of investigation have been centred within the discipline of Education Educational Research, with 22 of the 46 publications (47.8%) published within this area and seven (15.2%) within Social Sciences Interdisciplinary. Combining the areas of business, management, business finance and industrial relations labour also accounts for six (13.04%), however, there is a general spread across a range of categories.

Of the 22 papers published under the category of Education Educational Research, 17 (77.2%) have been published since 2019, although there is no specific focus that has been related to any specific journals, with a spread across the spectrum, with the highest single publication source being *Higher Education Quarterly*. In a similar vein, there is no clear publication source within the management/HRM fields with no source offering more than a single item. Table 3 outlines the five journals which have published two or more articles within the field of academic citizenship. These five journals represent 25% of the outputs as of the date of data collection and analysis.

Table 2. Publications across categories

Rank of categories	Web of Science categories	Record count	% of 46 articles*
1	Education Educational Research	22	47.826
2	Social Sciences Interdisciplinary	7	15.217
3	History Philosophy of Science	3	6.522
4	Psychology Multidisciplinary	3	6.522
5	Business	2	4.348
6	Management	2	4.348
7	Music	2	4.348
8	Political Science	2	4.348
9–28	Other categories	1 (per category)	2.174 (43.48)**

Note(s): *Some publications appeared in more than one category

**20 categories with 1 publication within each equating to 43.48%

Source(s): The authors

Table 3. Summary of top five journals that published academic citizenship behaviour research

Rank	Journal	No of articles	Weight %
1	<i>Higher Education Quarterly</i>	3	6.25
2	<i>Minerva</i>	3	6.25
3	<i>College Music Symposium</i>	2	4.17
4	<i>Higher Education</i>	2	4.17
5	<i>Higher Education Research Development</i>	2	4.17
6 =	Other journals	34	74.99
	<i>Total</i>	46	100

Source(s): The author

It would appear that there is a significant gap in the market for research within, but the question may be whether academic citizenship is an area of concern within the education or the management field, or both, and therefore which journals are the most appropriate to take up the challenge.

Author co-citation

Author co-citation reveals the key authors in the disciplinary area. Co-cited papers tend to share common themes and may be considered as forward-looking. Often the analysis of co-cited papers may be deemed sensitive to current themes and emerging topics. This was set to a requirement of four citations, and out of the 1,667 authors cited within the dataset, this resulted in 46 meeting the threshold. As anticipated, Macfarlane received the largest number of citations (46) with a link strength of 454. Other key authors included Norgard with ten citations and a link strength of 119, followed by Wright with nine citations and 108 link strength and Lawrence with seven citations and 101 link strength. [Table 4](#) outlines the top-ranking authors by link strength, identifying them as the leading authors in the field and emphasise the impact they have had on the development of the research base.

Using the clustering detection profile, the data are segmented into six clusters ([Figure 2](#)). From this clustering we can see that there are 17 items in cluster 1 (red), eight in cluster 2 (green), seven in cluster 3 (blue), six in cluster 4 (yellow), four in cluster 5 (purple) and only two in cluster 6 (cyan). An interesting feature however is the closeness of the clustering between clusters 1, 3 and 4. As expected and in line with [Table 4](#), Macfarlane dominates the clusters and shows a linkage to all six clusters, which highlights the seminal nature of Macfarlane's work within studies on academic citizenship.

Similarly, the heatmap ([Figure 3](#)) of the author co-citation supports this notion of the dominance of Macfarlane in the disciplinary area. This can be identified as the single most important article in the field and which, perhaps, could be argued as the key paper which gave formation to the study of academic citizenship behaviour. In particular, the heatmap outlines the significant brightness exposed by the paper. The use of the heatmap provides a greater visualisation of the strength of Macfarlane and his importance to the field of study, providing a highly visible brightness to the item, which is clearly stronger than the other authors' glow.

Source co-citation

Source co-citation demonstrates the linkages between different publications. Of the 1,303 items in the dataset, the threshold was set at seven citations from a single source. This gave a set

Table 4. Summary of key authors

Rank by link strength	Author	Citations	Total link strength
1	Macfarlane, B.	46	454
2	Norgard, R.T.	10	119
3	Wrights, S.	9	108
4	Lawrence, J.	7	101
5	Oleksiyenko, A.	5	95
6	Abramo, G.	6	91
7	Bandura, A.	8	85
8	Bonaccorsi, A.	6	81
9	Blackmore, J.	5	80
	Oleksiyenko, A.V.	4	80
	Tagliaventi, M.R.	6	80

Source(s): The author

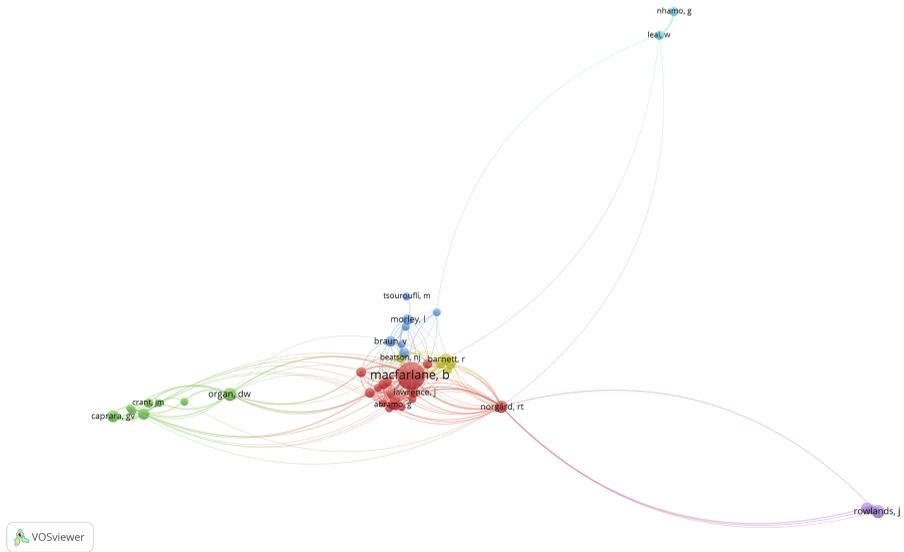


Figure 2. Author co-citation. Source: VOSviewer

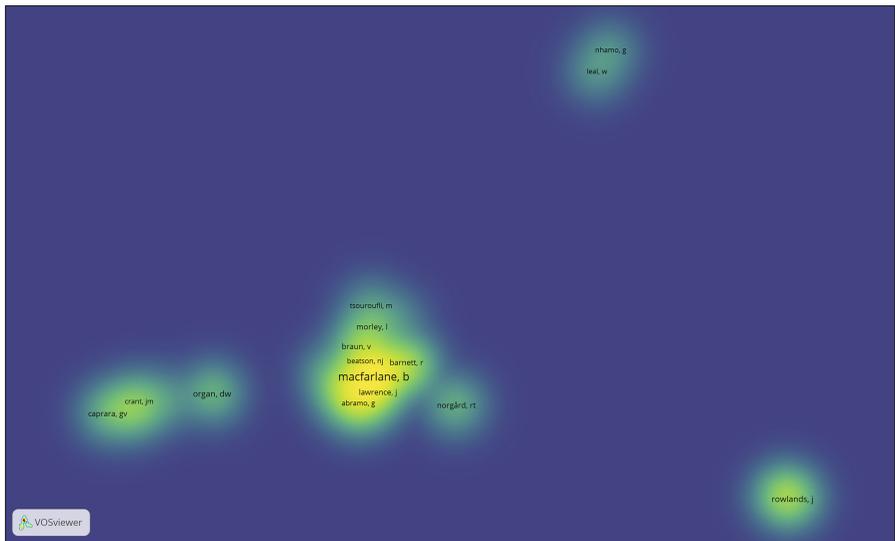


Figure 3. Author co-citation density visualisation. Source: VOSviewer

of 40 sources meeting the threshold. This provided a telling coupling map with three journals dominating the picture. *Higher Education, Research Policy and Studies in Higher Education*. The cluster process (Figure 4) identified three clusters; cluster 1 (red) with 16 items, cluster 2 (green) with 13 items and cluster 3 (blue) with 11 items. An interesting feature here was the close connectivity within the clusters. This would appear to contrast with the information in Table 4 taken from WoS and does not include *Minerva* or *College Music Symposium*. This is likely due to the lack of impact being made by the particular journals, and although they may

identify areas for future developments (Donthu *et al.*, 2021). This analysis (Figure 8) identifies eight clusters, with Cluster 1 (red) identifying Tharapos' (2022) article as the only one of any notable coupling strength. Cluster 2 (green) not only identified Müller's (2014) article from Minerva as a having a particularly high coupling strength but also recognised Macfarlane and Burg (2019), Beatson *et al.* (2022) and Norgard and Bengsten (2016) as particularly strong also. Cluster 3 (blue) highlighted Barbaranelli *et al.* (2019) as having a high coupling strength. Cluster 4 (yellow) include Tagliaventi *et al.* (2020) and Tagliaventi and Carli (2021) as the two highest, but neither are particularly strong. Cluster 5 (purple) contains both Corazza and Saluto (2021) and Dean and Forray (2018) as particularly strong, while cluster 6 (cyan) includes two 2024 articles by Smith and Walker with only limited strength between them.

From the bibliographic coupling analysis, various emergent topics are clearly identifiable. These include analysis of academic citizenship within the context of collegiality and the importance it has to academic practice. Included in this is thinking about how do, early-career academics develop the skill and know-how of the academic role. Secondly, there is a clear linkage between academic identity, perception of the academic role and how individual academics manifest academic citizenship through their activities. Finally, there is a distinct leaning towards a belief that academic citizenship is in decline. Therefore, it is critical for academic managers and institutions to consider the cause of this decline and how to arrest it. This in itself raises the view that academic citizenship needs to be researched through a managerial lens and not purely through an educational one.

Conclusion and limitations

The underlying rationale for this article was to consider the concept of academic citizenship and provide a bibliometric analysis of the literature which would offer a road map for future empirical research. From a theoretic standpoint, the findings within the article contribute to academic citizenship through the assimilation of a dataset of published works that have assessed academic citizenship as a topic area. The bibliometric analysis has, subsequently, identified existing research and provided prospective directions for future research. Having undertaken the analysis, it is apparent that there is a lacuna of research centred on academic citizenship. Therefore, there appears to be considerable scope for investigation and research to examine academic citizenship in greater depth and in particular link it to other key concepts.

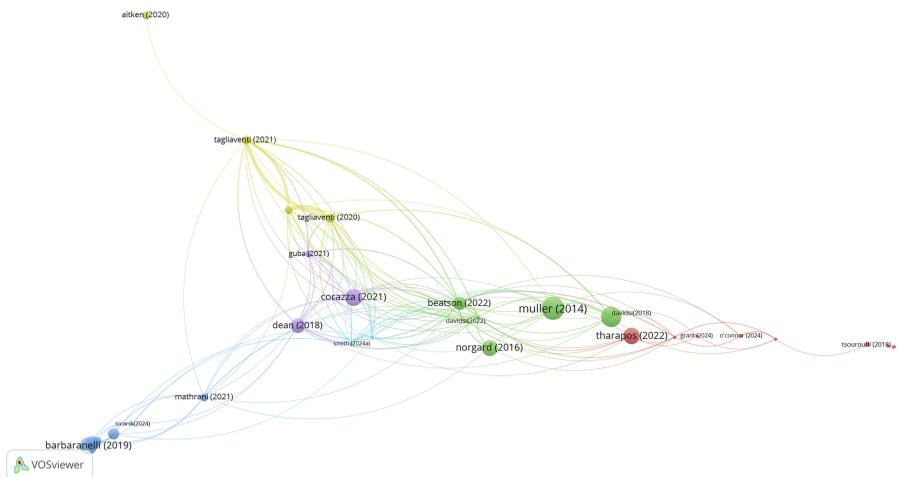


Figure 8. Bibliographic coupling of documents. Source: VOSviewer

The nature of this paper brings with it a number of limitations, caused in part by the methodological decisions and constraints that have ensued from the design of the research and the compilation of the dataset. The use of the WoS to generate the initial data results in it only being a snapshot at that moment in time due to the regular updating of the database with new content. Therefore, we cannot be reassured that new journal articles have not been added since the dataset was drawn. In addition, the research only made use of journal articles, and as such, alternative publications, including books, reports and conference, were not taken into consideration within the data and subsequently within this article. The research also used a single search term, “academic citizenship” and designated it as TOPIC. Selecting different words or categories change the outputted results. That said, given the use of “academic citizenship” and the breadth of TOPIC, it is arguable that these were not the key journal articles. Secondly, the flaw in the bibliometric analysis of the dataset is that citation analysis is retrospective, which means that published article only appear in the citation data after a time lapse, which could sometimes be considerable. Regardless of this, the article not only contends that it is of benefit to both researchers and academics with an interest in academic citizenship *per se* but also in understanding why academics behave in the way they do and provides an interesting insight into the HE context, providing a level of originality that should spark further interest and research.

Further research and development

The use of co-citation analysis and bibliographic coupling has allowed the analysis to capture both the established research field and the emerging trends that are coming out of it. This therefore provides a more comprehensive overview of the discipline area and provides a clear picture of the research landscape and where it is moving. The data and findings would seem to suggest that although there is a growing interest and research capacity in the concept of academic citizenship, given its first exposé was in 1983, there have only been 46 articles published within the topic band “academic citizenship” within the Web of Science Core Collection database up to the end of October 2024, which would suggest a lacuna of research in this area and suggesting that perhaps it is an area that is ripe for investigation. At the same time, this is a challenging time, as it has been for many years, for the *Higher Education* sector globally, with an ever increasing pressure on staff to meet targets. As targets increase, the question of goodwill becomes more testing, and this willingness to be good citizens becomes a greater challenge, and many academics may turn to a more self-centred approach. Therefore, the opportunity to further investigate academic citizenship is both timely and needed.

Therefore, it is of great importance for individuals at a variety of levels, managers, academics/researchers/practitioners moving forwards, including those involved in the design, development and implementation of workplace policies and procedures, to consider empirical research placing academic citizenship as a central concept. Through empirical investigation and research-informed implementation of practice and policy might the issues be addressed. Therefore, it is suggested that there are key areas that are open to investigation and review, which can be divided into two distinct research streams (management and education), while accepting that there may be overlap between them (see [Figure 9](#)).

Overlapping themes

There is a clear linkage between academic identity, perception of the academic role and how individual academics manifest academic citizenship through their activities. This can be studied through both an education and management lens, with differing perspective being able to be taken both from a personal and career development stance. The opportunity to fully understand the concept and how it links to development will enhance the opportunities for the academics of the future and may assist in the development of support packages, training and mentoring for individual development.

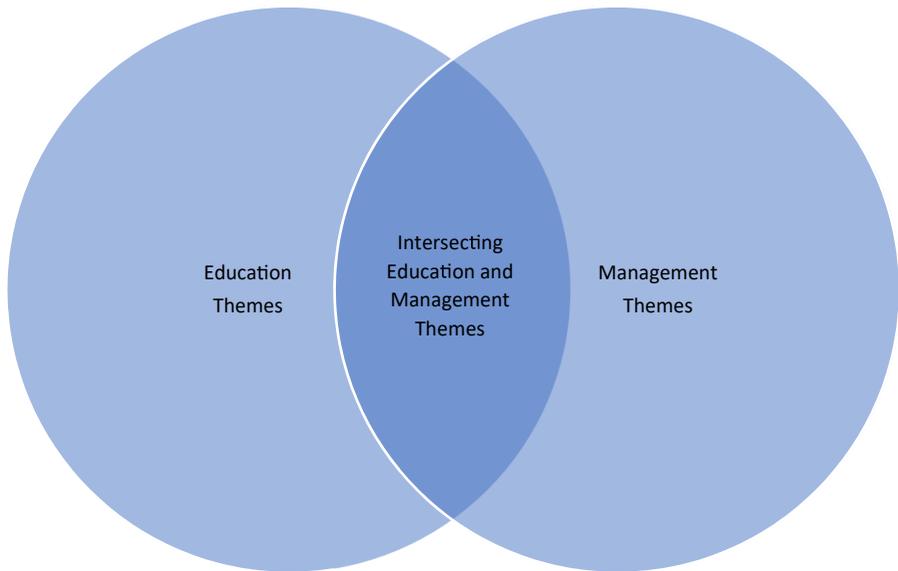


Figure 9. Emerging themes for future research. Author's own work

Education themes

A key aspect of academic citizenship lies within the context of collegiality and the importance it has to academic practice. Included in this is thinking about how do, early-career academics develop the skill and know-how of the academic role, how they develop their teaching and research foci to meet the ever-changing demands of the sector. Academia is reliant on goodwill and on the pipeline of talent coming through the system. It relies on late- and mid-career academics supporting early-career academic in their development, perhaps showing the way, the tricks of the trade and helping them through supportive networks. For example, how does Research Leadership support the development. If, as we perceive that academic citizenship is in decline, how does this affect the future for academia? One area of anecdotal evidence lies in the peer review process, as journals are finding it increasingly difficult to find reviewers willing to undertake reviews, slowing down the review process.

Management themes

Similarly, if we accept the belief that academic citizenship is in decline, it is critical for managers of academic and institutions to consider the cause of this decline and how to arrest it. This in itself raises the view that academic citizenship needs to be researched through a managerial lens and not purely through an educational one. Research into concepts such as the psychological contract has started to consider areas such as attachment and prioritisation. These linkages are influenced between academic citizenship and managerial activities, including performance management, leadership and motivation, are clearly in need of consideration, as are the links between academic citizenship and psychological constructs such as psychological contract, psychological capital and psychological climate.

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