

Alienated Academic Labour as a Consequence of Academic Capitalism

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Abstract

Academic capitalism has progressed in the most developed Western countries, such as the USA, the UK, Australia and New Zealand, and this trend is also penetrating other parts of the world. The connection of universities with the economy, the formation of joint projects and global research have led to a situation where the academic system has become part of a hegemonic economic field in which scientific knowledge is often not the primary goal (Münch, 2011). One of the consequences of academic capitalism is alienated academic labour, the occurrence of which, according to research findings, is growing rapidly (Poutanen, 2022). For example, some of the major issues university teachers and scientists are facing in the field of social sciences refer to the increase in the number of pointless papers (quantity dominates over quality), believing that they cannot influence the current policies and the “rules of the game”, the increasingly common problem of extreme working hours, etc. (Alvesson, Gabriel and Paulsen, 1917), which often leads to a disconnection with their own identities as academics, i.e., to academic alienation. The paper analyses the characteristics of academic labour under academic capitalism and links it to the Seeman's theory of alienation (1959), which is largely based on Marx's and Durkheim's insights. The paper also discusses the characteristics of academic labour under academic capitalism that contribute to different dimensions of alienation (powerlessness, meaninglessness, normlessness, isolation and self-estrangement).

Keywords: academic capitalism, academic labour, Seeman's theory of alienation, social sciences field