

How a university really works: some deep insights

(All characters appearing in this work are fictitious. Any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.)

Professorial responsibilities

‘As the Professor of Macroeconomics put it: “The University President called me in and asked me what I did, exactly. Have you ever heard of such a thing? What sort of question is that? This is a university!”’

(Pratchett, T. 1998, *The Last Continent*, London: Corgi Books, p. 24, slightly adjusted).

Professors and students

‘Many things went on at Unseen University, and regrettably, teaching had to be one of them. The faculty had long ago confronted this fact and had perfected various devices for avoiding it. But this was perfectly all right because, to be fair, so had the students.’

(Pratchett, T. 1994, *Interesting Times*, London: Corgi Books, p. 21).

Teaching methods

‘And therefore education at the University mostly worked by the age-old method of putting a lot of young people in the vicinity of a lot of books and hoping that something would pass from one to the other, while the actual young people put themselves in the vicinity of inns and taverns for exactly the same reason.’

(Pratchett, T. 1994, *Interesting Times*, London: Corgi Books, p. 22).

The university library

“‘But we’re a university! We have to have a library!’ said the University President. “It adds tone. What sort of people would we be if we didn’t go into the library?” “Students,” said the Professor of Macroeconomics morosely.’

(Pratchett, T. 1998, *The Last Continent*, London: Corgi Books, p. 31, slightly adjusted).

Sharing duties among academics

“‘I am sorry we seem to have loaded you down a bit. I’m sure it was not deliberate,” said a colleague to the Professor of Macroeconomics, who answered: “I’m sure it wasn’t, too, sir. Very little around here is.” The Professor of Macroeconomics sighed. “I’m afraid that unthinking delegation and prevarication and procrastination are standard practice here.” He looked expectantly at the other members of the academic council. He wanted to be disappointed, but he knew he wouldn’t be.’

(Pratchett, T. 2009, *Unseen Academicals*, London: Corgi Books, p. 278f, adjusted).