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**Abstract**

This paper portrays the fragmented nature of higher education, experienced in terms of a number of fractures. I have chosen to concentrate here on five of these fractures or fault lines: the diverse assumptions about the nature of higher education; the separation between teachers and learners; the separation between academic staff and those who manage them; the split between teaching and research; and the fragmented nature of knowledge itself. Policy initiatives have tended to aggravate these fractures. I suggest that the task for academic development is to work within these fractures, to attempt to create coherence in academic practice. To do this, we need to develop a series of critical conversations between teachers and learners, between academics and managers and between the disciplines. Such conversations might be seen as contributing to the development of a new academic professionalism. The first and foremost subject of this thinking together must concern the purposes of higher education itself. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)