

THE RELATIONSHIP OF LEADERSHIP ROLES TO THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE: INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

Prof. Jan Bamford and Elena Moschini

London Metropolitan University

International Perspectives on Innovative Pedagogy, HERG Symposium September 7th 2022

Email: j.bamford@londonmet.ac.uk

Our present education is based on disordered attitudes; it is not clear at all if our intent is to teach what is useful in life, to aim at moral excellence or to expound the superfluous; for all these have been advocated.

Aristotle, Politics 1337a.39



wider project seeking to further understand approaches to improving the student experience in higher education



broadened by the inclusion of international perspectives from third space professionals (Whitchurch 2008)

CONTEXT



THIRD SPACE

- Whitchurch, 2008, p.3)

... blurring of boundaries between, for instance, functional areas, professional and academic activity, and internal and external constituencies has been fostered by the emergence of broadly based, extended projects such as student transitions, community partnership, and professional practice (Whitchurch, 2006a).

These have contributed to the creation of a third space between professional and academic domains, requiring contributions from a range of staff. In this space, the concept of administrative service has become re-oriented towards one of partnership with academic colleagues and the multiple constituencies with whom institutions interact (Whitchurch 2008, p.3).

Traditional university
administrative roles =
management

*The blurring of boundaries
between ... functional
areas, professional and
academic activity, and
internal and external
constituencies ... fostered
by the emergence of
broadly based, extended
projects such as student
transitions, community
partnership, and
professional practice.
(Whitchurch 2008, p3)*

LEADERSHIP VERSUS MANAGEMENT

Relational and dialogic
discourse



LEADERSHIP



METHODS

- 21 international semi-structured interviews with colleagues who have led student experience projects in UK, Canada, Australia, Netherlands, France, Germany, Italy (sample selected through snowballing)
- Undertaken online over a period of three months
- Video recorded
- Thematic analysis
- Case study of a change management project
- Autoethnography (triangulated through shared diaries)

INTERVIEWS BREAKDOWN

Respondent ID	Country	Grade	Currently Teaching	Years teaching	Change management lead	Profile/summary of key aspects
1	France	Professor title, mid-range teaching staff	Yes	20+	Yes	French/US citizen, Leader of student conference and other student led projects
2	UK	Highest grade teaching staff with administrative responsibilities, Masters Course Leader and researcher	Yes	20+	Yes	Acted as project lead on research projects and student enhancement projects (over 20 years' experience)
3	Australia	Assoc. Prof, Project Lead, Researcher and practitioner	Yes	20+	Yes	Acted as project lead on research projects and university wide student enhancement projects, (over 20 years' experience)
4	UK	Professor, researcher, Head of Department, project lead	Yes	20+	Yes	Led a number of university wide projects, (over 20 years' experience)
6	UK	Highest grade teaching staff with administrative responsibilities, researcher, Head of Department	Yes	20+	Yes	Led a number of university wide projects (over 20 years' experience)
7	France	Head of Department	Yes	15+	Yes	Head of dept and involved in student enhancement projects
8	France	Course Leader and practitioner, project lead	Yes	5+	Yes	Full-time practitioner and master's CL, lead for student employability projects (over 20 years' experience)
9	France	Professor and practitioner	Yes	30+	Yes	Full-time practitioner and master's CL, lead for student employability projects
10	Italy	Professor, researcher, CL and international network lead	Yes	30+	Yes	Masters CL and learning and teaching led for international master's network (over 20 years' experience)
11	UK	Head of Department and researcher	Yes	20+	Yes	(over 20 years' experience)
12	UK	Senior manager		20+	Yes	Senior manager, led student experience projects, founding member national research group for assessment and feedback practice
13	Australia/UK	Professor, Senior Management Role		20+	Yes	Senior researcher and senior manager, led national research projects on the student experience
14	UK	Highest grade teaching staff with administrative responsibilities, Teaching and Learning Centre lead	Yes	30+	Yes	Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching Lead, founding member national research group for assessment and feedback practice (over 30 years' experience)
15	Germany	Dean, professor	Yes		Yes	Elected Dean of Faculty, led student experience projects
16	UK	Median grade teaching staff, led student projects	Yes	10+	Yes	Led student projects with industry involvement
17	UK	Campus Director, led numerous student projects		20+	Yes	Responsible for student body, led learning and teaching projects across School and university, researcher, implemented student improvement projects
18	France	Former Faculty Director		30+	Yes	Led numerous projects and developed international networks, implemented student improvement projects
19	Canada	Vice Dean	Yes	30+	Yes	Led numerous projects and contributed to the development of international networks, implemented student improvement projects
20	Netherlands	Former Dean and senior leader	Yes	30+	Yes	Led numerous projects and contributed to the development of international networks, implemented student improvement projects
21	Canada	Elected Head of Department, led student projects	Yes	30+	Yes	Led student improvement projects as a head of department

THEMES

- Nomenclature - leadership
- Leadership skills and knowledge
- Fluid space
- Agency
- Creativity
- Metrics



LEADERSHIP

- *So the responsibility goes down to the teachers again, without an intermediate management team. Because it's not needed any more. Systems are taking over that role more and more.*
- *There was so much time that was spent in the Netherlands on let's say the whole planning, the whole scheduling but now you have your laptop or your phone, you see if the room is empty, if it's reserved, you enter in the room. Nobody needs to be managing the scheduling of that room any more, that's a whole department that can be taken away. (Academic 20, Netherlands)*

LEADERSHIP SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

- *I'm always worried when I see that the, you know, the relative lack of training, where lack of experience or very limited experience of some of the people that are running, you know, academic development units or where, you know, sometimes they've come from a technical side (Academic 14, UK)*
- ***I truly believe the only type of leadership that actually empowers people is the shared leadership model where all the leadership are servant leaders ... I think that's when you get people moving and people really ignited with enthusiasm and when you've got a vibrant environment, you're going to be financially viable because people work hard...(Academic 3, Australia).***

FLUID SPACE

- *So, the way that some of the projects I described earlier were implemented were bottom-up rather than top-down. So, a lot of staff being engaged in the implementation and feeding in ... whereas now what we're doing because yeah, in a much more collaborative way and involving staff from the word go really in developing strategies (Academic 14, UK).*
- *A project is given credibility by having an academic leading the project, we earned respect by working on the project as academics ... we were on the coal face and learnt by our mistakes ... we were there ... I think when you have an academic leading a project it brings a different sense of credibility especially if it is an academic that is still teaching or has taught a lot (Academic 3, Australia).*

AGENCY

- *I talked about, you know, my value set and the way the institutions work, but the way my institution works when they were moving forward to ... be leading a department where all we were going to do was tick boxes and collect data and see that that was a good quality student experience...*
- *I think there's quite a lot of people that just suck it up because they want to go up the corporate ladder and get the pay rises and whatever ... they are a proxy for the student experience. Yeah ... the view I have is that senior management are ... looking at the way the wind blows and that's a proxy for the student experience. ... yes, not the student experience itself (Academic 4, UK).*

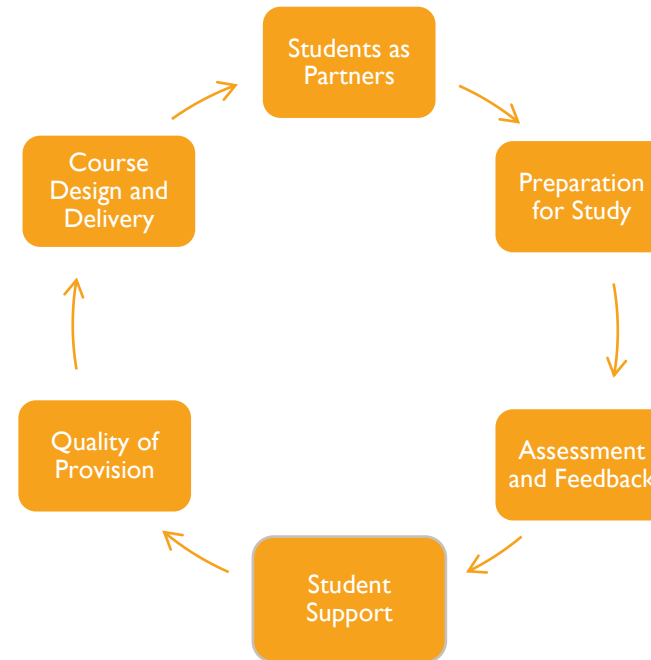
- *These are my classes and I can assess the way I want to. I have got a lot of freedom (Academic 1, France).*

There is also an article in the Italian Constitution: nobody can say a university Lecturer what to do ... This is to save the democracy of the freedom of research and of teaching (Academic 10, Italy).

... you can have five professors teaching and all the exams are also different. So, all the curricula could be different the actual content that is being taught in class can be completely different within the same program, within the same subject, within the same examination format because you've got three or four different professors teaching it (Academic 15, Germany).

CASE STUDY OF LEADERSHIP IN POST-92 HEI

- 6 project workstreams – Head of Student Experience responsible for each workstream across the institution (each came from an academic background with an NTF, SFHEA or PFHEA)
- Implemented a process of change management in 6 key areas related to the need for metrics improvement – both the NSS and TEF
- Impact measured through metrics and implementation of change
- *... the traditional 'binary' between academic and professional roles is breaking down... formal employment categories no longer reflect reality. Whitchurch (2018, p.2)*



METRICS

NSS 2018 TEF metrics	Post-92 institution					All UK Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)				
	% Agree (NSS 2017)	% Agree (NSS 2016)	% Agree (NSS 2015)	% Agree (NSS 2014)	Change Since NSS 2016	% Agree (NSS 2017)	% Agree (NSS 2016)	% Agree (NSS 2015)	% Agree (NSS 2014)	Change Since NSS 2016
The teaching on my course	82.39	82	81	78	0.39	84.63	87	87	87	-2.37
Assessment and feedback	71.53	72	71	66	-0.47	73.39	74	73	72	-0.61
Academic support	75.92	77	75	71	-1.08	79.91	82	82	81	-2.09

NSS 2019 post-92 institution	% Agree (NSS 2019)	% Agree (NSS 2018)	% Agree (NSS 2017)	Change Since NSS 2018	% Agree (NSS 2019)	% Agree (NSS 2018)	% Agree (NSS 2017)	Change Since NSS 2018
The teaching on my course	81.34	81.42	82.39	-0.08	84.17	84.21	84.63	-0.04
Learning opportunities	82.37	81.8	84.13	0.57	83.16	83.14	83.55	0.02
Assessment and feedback	73.05	72.85	71.53	0.2	73.33	73.28	73.39	0.05
Academic support	76.51	76.59	75.92	-0.08	79.72	79.58	79.91	0.14
27. Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course	78.64	77.87	78.22	0.77	83.56	83.48	84.18	0.08

REFLECTIONS

- Management versus academic freedom
- Some international contexts there is more focus on academic focus
- Need for distributed leadership model (Jones et al, 2016)
- Need for more recognition of third spaces roles and the relationship with the improvement of the student experience

Understanding and Improving the Student Experience in Higher Education

Navigating the Third Space



Jan Bamford, Elena Moschini
and Cécile Tschirhart

