Submissions Abstract Book - All Papers (All Submissions)

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Leadership in a Changing Landscape

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Research Domain: Management, leadership, governance and quality (MLGQ)

Abstract: The purpose of this panel session is to examine different dimensions of, and perspectives on, leadership in the changing landscape of higher education. Drawing on a range of research projects and practice initiatives, the panel will explore the career trajectories, motivations, challenges and identities of senior leaders in both research intensive and teaching focussed universities. These projects seek to understand why people aspire to or take up senior leadership roles, how they manage different aspects of the work and the different approaches that are taken to the role. Aligning with the theme of this year's conference, the session will also consider the potential for critical and creative leadership within the academy. In the increasingly measured and managed higher education sector, is it possible for leaders to develop distinctive approaches to leadership and/or to challenge the ideological underpinning of managerialism?

Paper: The purpose of this panel session is to examine different dimensions of, and perspectives on, leadership in the changing landscape of higher education. Drawing on a range of research projects and practice initiatives, the panel will explore the career trajectories, motivations, challenges and identities of senior leaders in both research intensive and teaching focussed universities. These projects seek to understand why people aspire to or take up senior leadership roles, how they manage different aspects of the work and the different approaches that are taken to the role. Aligning with the theme of this year's conference, the session will also consider the potential for critical and creative leadership within the academy. In the increasingly measured and managed higher education sector, is it possible for leaders to develop distinctive approaches to leadership and/or to challenge the ideological underpinning of managerialism?

Contributors:

Jane Creaton and Claire Gordon,The Role of Heads of Departments: This project explores the working practices of heads of academic departments (HoDs) and the institutional policies and practices required to support them. Through interviews with HoDs across the sector, we analyse the key factors impacting on how the role is experienced and enacted, including disciplinary context, institutional structure and type of university. The project is also concerned with the extent to which current leadership and management programmes provide adequate preparation and support for a role which may be particularly vulnerable to work related stress (Floyd & Dimmock, 2011; Creaton and Heard-Laureote, 2019). The initial analysis of interviews has produced a rich mix of metaphors and analogies to describe the role which have the potential for a more creative approach to leadership development.

Alan Floyd, Exploring notions of "good" academic leadership in challenging times: Due to the nature of academic work it is accepted that leaders cannot be effective without the support of their departmental colleagues (Floyd & Fung, 2017). Consequently, academic leadership is seen more as 'the property of the collective rather than the individual' (Bolden, Petrov, & Gosling, 2009, p. 259). Arguably, 'distributing' and sharing leadership is even more important in universities than in other organisations as academics are well educated, largely autonomous and trained to be highly critical and so are more likely to oppose and challenge more traditional leadership models and behaviours and may need a subtler form of leadership than other occupational groups (Bryman, 2007). This paper will draw on data from projects that have explored more flexible 'distributed' and 'collaborative' models of leadership, crucially focusing on data from both leaders and the led, to explore academics' expressed notions of 'good' academic leadership in times of change and challenge.

Fiona Denney, What I wish I'd known" - Academic Leadership in the UK, Lessons for the Next Generation: This presentation discusses results from a research project funded by the UK's Leadership Foundation for Higher Education's Innovation and Transformation Fund in 2015.18 academics in leadership positions were interviewed about their leadership experiences and what they wished they had known before taking up their leadership posts. Eight themes and information about the context within which they lead were identified and are presented here with a discussion of how this contributes to our understanding of the development of those who aspire to leadership positions in higher education. Literature has focused on the importance of prestige for promotion which can leave academic leaders unprepared for the other challenges of their role (Blackmore 2015, Kandiko-Howson and Coate 2015). This paper identifies challenges and themes which can be used to better prepare the next generation of academic leaders.

Julie Hulme and Deborah Lock, Professors in Preparation: Supporting 21st century professorial leaders: Becoming a professor is not easy but for some reason becoming a professor in teaching and learning appears to be harder than most. Part of this is because there is no consensus about what a pedagogic professor looks like, and part of this is linked to uncertainty about appropriate selection criteria, and the type of evidence required to demonstrate professorial behaviours and activities (Evans, 2015). There is a lack of guidance and role (and real) models that aspiring professors (education, scholarship and/or professional practice) can turn to for advice about teaching and learning career pathways (Evans, 2017). The professors in preparation network is aimed at providing aspiring professors with a supportive community through which the pooling of knowledge through the sharing of 'lived' experiences, and identity stories aids successful applications (Waddington, 2016;

Macfarlane & Burg, 2019). The network is based on the premise of a virtuous circle in which members that achieve professorship continue to contribute feedback and provide support to the next generation of professors. We will explore what we should expect from the 21st Century professoriate and how we could we reposition the status of educational and scholarship professors and help them become leaders of Trojan Mice instead of Cinderella followers.

There are a number of key themes running through this diverse set of presentations, including what constitutes good leadership, how leaders can be supported and developed and the affective dimensions of leadership. Some initial questions to start the discussion include:

Discussion questions

1.

   2.   What might "creative leadership" or "critical leadership" look like in higher education?

3.

   4.   How can we challenge dominant discourses of leadership based on predominantly managerially based models and explore new, more flexible, human-focused and compassionate approaches to academic leadership?

5.

   6.   How might aspiring professors be better prepared for professoriate leadership challenges?

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