

Strategic leadership in academic development

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The nature of academic work is changing rapidly, with moves towards professionalisation taking place against a background of fragmentation. Indeed, some aspects of professionalisation may have a fragmenting effect. It is suggested that there remains considerable value in the idea of an integrated faculty role. Noting that leaders in staff development face similar pressures to professionalise, the writers consider what expertise is required for the leadership in academic development role, and how role holders and those aspiring to the role may best develop their professional capabilities. They argue for an integrated conception of academic development, and a correspondingly integrated view of the developer's professional identity and role. It is suggested that this will put leaders in academic development into a position that is more congruent with faculty self-perceptions, and enable them to support those in faculty roles more effectively.

Introduction

The current trend towards 'professionalisation' of the teaching and management aspects of the faculty role must surely focus attention on academic developers' own claims to professionalism. Here we explore how academic work is changing and fragmenting and how professionalising initiatives relate to those changes. We argue that there is immense value in an integrated conception of the faculty role, and that academic development can and should assist faculty in managing their work in an integrated way.

Against this background we consider institutional leadership in academic development. We note what role holders say about their work, and consider how that work may change and what might be the prospects for professionalisation. We draw parallels between their situation and that of faculty, and ask how academic developers' identity and approach can best be developed to support those engaged in academic work. We argue for an integrated conception of academic development, and a

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correspondingly integrated view of the developer's professional identity and role. It is suggested that this will put leaders in academic development into a position that is more congruent with faculty self-perceptions, and enable them to support those in faculty roles more effectively.

Academic work and professionalisation

We begin with a brief contextual review of the work of faculty. This is an essential background to the discussion, since it is what academic development aims to assist. Many studies across a number of education systems show that the faculty role is in flux (Halsey, 1992; Coaldrake & Steadman, 1998). At an institutional level, academic work is increasingly managed, reducing the autonomy that has often marked the role (Halsey, 1992; Trow, 1994). Broadly, academic work is becoming more pressured and less secure (McInnis, 1992, 1996, 2000a,b,c; National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education, 1997). Academic work is tending to become more fragmented, with increasing specialisation and casualisation (Altbach & Finkelstein, 1997). Boundaries between academic and other staff are now more permeable. Much academic work is undertaken by those who are not formally labelled as faculty. The tripartite faculty role of teacher, researcher and administrator is being eroded, although in some institutions it is an ideal that was often not attained.

There is a growing resolve on the part of some central governments to increase the perceived level of expertise of those doing academic work. This has been reflected in a number of attempts to professionalise academic activity, in the sense of defining required expertise, providing development opportunities and formally recognising proficiency. The formation of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and the Leadership Foundation in the UK (Department for Education and Skills, 2003), and the establishment of a National Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education in Australia (Nelson, 2003) partly express this official interest. However, not all such professionalising initiatives are simply 'top-down' mandates. The Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (ILTHE), one of the constituent parts of the HEA, was arguably an attempt to combine a 'top-down' initiating impulse with 'bottom-up' development and control, through individual membership and representative structures that aimed to professionalise the teaching role (see Bucklow & Clark, 2003). The subject centres of the HEA, which it inherited from the Learning and Teaching Support Network, appear to have been largely successful in fostering academic ownership (Allan *et al.*, 2003). Also, the work of the Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) in the UK, on which ILTHE built, is a long-standing 'bottom-up' movement to construct a professional identity focused on teaching.

However, professionalisation is not an easy project, for its conception is problematic. The benefits of professional status have often been described (e.g. Parsons, 1954). These have to do with the achievement of high standards through self-regulation in complex areas where considerable autonomy is necessary. Others have argued that professions may be a form of protectionism, working against the public

interest (Perkin, 1989). Often, professionalisation is advocated as a means of ensuring minimum standards in an occupation. Whilst this may be a means of ensuring that the interests of client groups are safeguarded, it may be in tension with the idea of autonomy. Further, standards may be very hard to define, because they are bound up with complex situations, and may be enacted in very different ways.

Some of these tensions are present in relation to the professional status of academic work. Universities are complex social structures: some faculty are already members of external professional bodies (e.g. in engineering, law, and medicine); others have an allegiance to a less formal notion of being professional, and view attempts to codify academic expertise as a form of proletarianisation (Wilson, 1991; Hyland, 1996), particularly if the initiative is perceived to be predominantly top-down. The simultaneous processes of increasing managerialism, fragmentation and specialisation, outlined above, may make professionalisation technically easier as the role becomes 'unbundled' but they also make it politically more difficult.

We have noted elsewhere (Blackmore & Blackwell, 2003) that the idea of the holistic faculty role is an enduring one that is attractive to many of those in academic life. It coheres around the idea of a disinterested pursuit of knowledge, collegial approaches to organisation, the centrality of academic discipline as a source of purpose and allegiance, and a belief in the interrelatedness of the various aspects of the role. However, there is little in higher education systems that is positively working towards its sustenance. Current trends towards specialisation and casualisation place it under increasing pressure, even in the (mainly research-led) institutions where it has had its fullest expression.

In conceptualising academic work, we advocate an explicit concern with the whole faculty role, including teaching, research, knowledge transfer and civic engagement, leadership, management and administration, and with their interrelationships. We argue that, precisely because of the pressures we have noted, a holistic conception is even more important to retain. We are not alone in this. It has been suggested that overcoming faculty role fragmentation is the major task for academic developers (Rowland, 2003). We argue that a cohering approach would bring a number of benefits. Some aspects of the faculty role, particularly teaching and research, can inform and reinforce each other, if firm links are deliberately made (Blackmore & Fraser, 2003).

More significantly, from the point of view of the role holder, a well-conceived holistic approach may reduce some role tensions. Many faculty feel they carry an unreasonable burden, because they are required to be increasingly expert in teaching, research, administration and a range of other duties simultaneously. A holistic academic development approach would accept that the balance of activities may well change through an academic career, so that the proportions of research, teaching, knowledge transfer, management and so on might vary markedly. Yet all would be regarded as making a valuable contribution to the academic enterprise. A holistic approach would, therefore, offer faculty the possibility of release from an increasingly unrealistic requirement for continuous excellence on all fronts, whilst avoiding a permanent 'unbundling' and fragmentation of the role into entirely separate jobs.

Nevertheless, we acknowledge that, for many staff, increasing specialisation is inevitable, and this has to be accommodated in any conception of academic work. Threshold standards of competence or proficiency may need to be contemplated in each area.

Leaders of academic development

In this context, we examine leadership in academic development and its professionalisation prospects. Heads of academic development centres (hereafter referred to as heads) are very much involved in dealing with the many tensions in faculty roles that have been outlined; they have to shape development provision to fit the context. The challenges are substantial: the client group is increasingly disparate and under continual pressure to be more productive in all areas. Heads may find themselves mediating between the 'realities' of institutional life on the one hand, and the beliefs and values of faculty on the other. There may be a similar mediating role within the academic development centre. The trend towards organisationally focused or strategic staff development is in tension with many developers' preferred ways of working with individuals, and with their expertise and values. It becomes necessary to consider how organisational learning can be facilitated, a rather different set of processes from those involved in assisting individual learning (see Blackwell & Blackmore, 2003). The professionalisation agenda, in teaching at least, requires academic developers to take up some position in relationship to it, and inevitably calls into question their own credentials in delivering accredited programmes (Hicks, 1997; Fraser, 1999).

Here we draw extensively on UK and Australasian studies of heads, exploring the complexities of defining and attempting to professionalise the leadership role. We note that some of the issues facing leaders in academic development in the formation and articulation of their own professionalism are remarkably similar to those of faculty.

A picture of UK staff development leadership today

A Higher Education Staff Development Agency funded study (Blackmore *et al.*, 2003, 2005) invited leaders in staff development to explore the nature of their roles. Eleven heads from the M1/M69 regional grouping of universities in the English Midlands were interviewed, with additional material drawn from discussion with a further nationally-based sample of seven heads. The total sample therefore represented almost a fifth of those in post, and was drawn randomly from old and new, large and small, research- and teaching-focused institutions. Critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954) was used to explore less formal aspects of roles. Interviewees were invited to focus on incidents when they believed they had been particularly successful, or otherwise. A fascinating picture emerged. Heads came from a wide range of academic and work backgrounds: there was no common pattern. Some, but not all, had Ph.D.s, usually in disciplines only loosely related to the staff development role. Some, but not all, were trained to teach, but often for another sector. Few had experienced formal management development and there was little evidence of

structured reflection. Their positions and job descriptions were also very diverse. Heads reported that they shaped their job, partly because of the kinds of expertise they brought to it. The space they had to work in was a product of their reputation, bought by previous actions. Relationships across their institution were extensive, but could be ambiguous, often a result of positioning between the formal management of the institution and the rest of the staff. They felt subject to tensions among a range of expectations, including staff within their own unit. In short, their role was a shifting product of many interactions. On the whole, interviewees believed that they performed a role that was more complex than many of those outside it understood. A subsequent study (Blackmore & Wilson, 2004) has tested that view by seeking the views of a range of interested 'outsiders'.

Aspects of the role that had been reported were reflected back to the interviewees. There was a high level of agreement about the key aspects and the capabilities required, and this made it possible to construct a picture of a proficient head. Typically, a head requires:

- a range of abilities, including the ability to be analytical and to choose from a number of possible actions;
- political awareness, together with an ability to communicate ideas in various ways;
- to have been in the organisation a long time, with good personal contacts and knowledge of interpersonal dynamics;
- the ability to see beyond a frame of reference and to work at a higher level of abstraction;
- pragmatism in decision making;
- awareness of a range of techniques, such as stakeholder analysis, risk analysis and action planning;
- project management skills;
- clear goals, often setting targets;
- the ability to work at a national level.

In learning, a head:

- learns informally and 'socially';
- seeks and uses feedback, usually of an informal kind;
- is not currently engaged in formal learning;
- does not draw extensively on educational and organisational literatures in reflecting on practice;
- does not often make use of an informal coaching and mentoring relationship.

The findings have many similarities with those of a study undertaken of 25 directors of Australasian faculty development units (Hicks, 1997). Hicks described the role as 'emergent'. He noted that the average age was 51, that first degree disciplines were evenly divided between humanities and social sciences on the one hand and sciences on the other. Just over half the sample had completed PhDs, but only three of them in education or a related discipline, whilst a quarter had no formal qualification of any kind in education. Half of the sample had begun working life as school teachers,

almost all in secondary teaching. The majority had spent most of their working lives in academic positions, three quarters of them in more than one university, but most had only worked within one staff development unit. Roughly half had been academic developers previously and a third had moved from academic work in another discipline. Hicks concludes that, although many came into the job by a circuitous route, it was not an 'itinerant' one.

A study of 71 Australasian academic developers—not just heads of units (Fraser, 1999) also shows considerable variety. A relatively high proportion (63%) had a teaching qualification (although often not in higher education). Those interviewed in Fraser's study (22 people) showed that many came into the field largely without planning to do so, and after gaining much work experience in other areas—only three were under 41. Significantly, most had 'moved into the field primarily through a long interest in and talent for teaching', a common feature in the UK. Fraser's study also revealed that respondents had little time allocated for personal professional development, and that their development came through 'the ways in which they worked', underlining the social and informal nature of learning. A minority engaged in research, and four reported that their centre or unit provided a supportive environment for scholarship.

A professional basis for practice?

It has already been suggested that the growth of credentialism in the practice of faculty is likely to focus attention on the credentials of those who support its development. Put bluntly, how credible are heads, or their staff, in the formal preparation of faculty, if they themselves have taken no part in formal learning?

The professionalisation of leadership in academic development would be a complex project. The shared knowledge or practice base of the group is hard to define, despite a common commitment to teaching. Practitioners seem to draw eclectically on a range of disciplines, ideas and experiences. While there are some common approaches, it is obvious that leaders work in varying circumstances, and conceive of their role differently.

Role holders have a range of positions and relationships in institutions. Many heads do academic work, in that they teach, research and engage in educational management, but many are not formally faculty. Many are located within the administrative structure of a university, yet most would see themselves as distinct from the majority of staff in university administration. Some have a clear affiliation to human resource development, and identify themselves with a personnel function; most do not. Some, particularly those delivering accredited programmes, are within academic departments, but most are not.

Many, particularly those who deal only with teaching and learning, identify themselves with educational development communities. Educational development has been a growth area in UK institutions in recent years (Gosling, 2001). It has a growing pedagogic research component, influenced by Boyer's work on scholarship in the USA (Boyer, 1990), that provides an increasingly influential knowledge base for teacher professionalism.

This variety, in positions and relationships, is reflected in what heads and their staff actually do at present, in aligning themselves with existing professional frameworks. Fraser's study reveals a wide range of professional association membership in Australasia, the only unifying factor being membership of the Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia (HERDSA). Some possible frameworks already exist. In the UK, SEDA offers a fellowship scheme for staff developers that seems to have had considerable success in post-1992 universities, but made rather less headway in pre-1992 (i.e. 'research intensive') institutions. The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) has detailed standards, backed by a programme of continuing professional development (CPD), including the requirement to keep a CPD record and to make annual plans, backed by spot checking (see www.CIPD.co.uk/professionalstandards [accessed 9 June 2005]). Interestingly, most of those interviewed in the UK study had taken up neither of these opportunities, although there were members of both SEDA and CIPD in the sample. This is paralleled in the position of UK faculty, where many are members of professional or subject bodies, but where the ILTHE had made limited headway before it was subsumed into the HEA.

Neither are academic developers wholly convinced that they need professionalising. The US Professional and Organisational Development Network in Higher Education explored the possibility of developing a professional framework in 1996 (Mintz, 1997). There was no agreement on the basis of the framework—whether it should be a body of knowledge, a way of working or the recognition of others. There was widespread rejection of the idea of a gatekeeping role or 'licence to practise'. Many role holders, perhaps reflecting their own varied backgrounds, did not seek exclusivity. More fundamentally, one subscriber wrote, 'it is not clear to me what problem you are trying to solve'. Many others held that view, saying that they did not feel that they lacked credibility and respect, and that accreditation would not provide raised status in others' eyes. Similarly, a professionalising route was discussed in Australia, and apparently rejected in the late 1990s (Hicks, 1997), although HERDSA has now established a Fellowship Recognition and Development scheme, which has similarities to the SEDA scheme in the UK, and could yet develop into a professional standard (see www.herdsa.org.au/randdscheme.php [accessed 9 June 2005]).

At first sight, then, uniform professionalisation looks unlikely. Just as in mainstream academic life, there are many tribes and territories, based on disciplinary background, type of institution and orientation (Land, 2001). Noting the range of issues that interest educational developers in general, Fraser concludes that an accreditation scheme would need to recognise 'the diverse career paths which people took to enter the field, the wide range of areas in which members work, and the subsequent diversity of professional development needs that members have' (Fraser, 1999, p. 97).

Leadership in academic development

Here we bring together the two main components discussed so far. On the one hand, there is an opportunity to revitalise a holistic conception of faculty role and thus to interact with the academic community in productive ways that have eluded many staff

developers. On the other is the highly applied and situated nature of the head's expertise. In the light of this, what might a leadership role in the development of academic practice look like? We consider what leadership practices might be appropriate in an academic development approach, what knowledge base might sustain it and what beliefs and values might inform it. We also suggest how one might prepare for it and remain proficient in it.

Understanding academic expertise

It has been argued that achieving change in higher education requires a detailed understanding of academic perspectives (Ramsden, 1998). To take a holistic academic practice approach is to work with the grain of preferred faculty self-identity, with obvious benefits for those engaged in academic development. Staff developers miss a huge opportunity in not capitalising on this conception of academic life. Some in academic development do take this approach. However, it is not a dominant view—the 'default' position in the minds of many academic developers, and others in universities, is that academic development for faculty is wholly or mainly about teaching and learning. Often, academic development engages with research only in the form of pedagogic research. A recently published book on the scholarship of academic development (Eggins & MacDonald, 2003) implicitly takes such a view. An editorial in the inaugural issue of the *International Journal for Academic Development* also makes clear that academic development is about teaching and learning (Baume, 1996). The dominance of the conception is perhaps unsurprising, given the history of staff development and especially the backgrounds of developers in teaching, sometimes in another sector altogether, as revealed in the surveys discussed.

Instead, leadership in academic development requires an understanding of research, teaching, management, consultancy and a range of other aspects of academic work, and of how they do and might interrelate. It requires also an understanding of the variability of faculty roles. Differences may come about through the nature of academic disciplines and their social organisation in departments and faculties. Fluctuations may occur through the varying stages of an individual's career for a large number of personal and professional reasons. A generic approach that assumes that all have the same concerns and motivations, and that these are unchanging over a career, is not likely to be successful.

One of the most powerful ways of ensuring that leaders in academic development understand the worlds of those they seek to assist is by offering them similar combinations of experiences. This is an argument for expecting all role holders to teach and to research (and to make connections between the two!), to manage and to lead and to engage in their own form of knowledge transfer beyond their own community of practice, the focus and balance varying over a career in common with faculty. There will inevitably be specialisation—one might expect many academic developers to spend most, perhaps all, of their 'delivery' time on teaching and learning support, for example—but they should have a real appreciation of all the aspects of faculty roles, and be able to make appropriate connections.

It can, of course, be argued that many support staff in higher education perform immensely valuable services for faculty, without themselves needing to experience a full faculty role personally. For example, staff in research offices do not need to know a great deal about teaching in order to offer valuable advice on the gaining of grants and contracts. Academic developers are, however, a special case, made more so by the specialisation of other support staff, who are not generally obliged to consider the impact of one academic activity on another. Academic developers are also distinctive in that their concern is with faculty and their departments' broad capabilities, as well as with the ability to undertake specific activities.

Learning organisations, social learning and 'communities of practice'

Leadership in academic development is also about facilitating social or group learning, often at an organisational level, beyond the individual focus of many staff developers. The learning organisation literature, from its early days (Pedler *et al.*, 1991; Senge, 1993), stresses the need for organisations to create the conditions in which reflexive, flexible individuals may constantly learn and develop, and thus enable the institution to develop. At the organisational level it seeks to go beyond 'single loop learning', that is, improvements within existing paradigms, to 'double loop learning', challenging the assumptions of existing paradigms and theories that are embedded in practice (James, 1997), and finally to 'triple loop' learning that radically questions the principles on which the organisation is founded, particularly appropriate during dramatic change, when the organisation may need to transform itself (Tann, 1995, pp. 48–51). Many have suggested that this literature has particular relevance in a university, where much that is learnt is complex and unpredictable (Tann, 1995; James 1997; Duke, 2002). It is a long-term approach, welcoming variety, diversity, contradiction and paradox.

The most significant unit within institutions remains the academic department, where the principal loyalties and sense of identity of many faculty are rooted (Henkel 2000; Becher & Trowler, 2001). It is a highly significant site of faculty learning about academic practice. The literature on organisational learning overlaps with what is fast becoming the orthodoxy in workplace learning, the notion of 'social learning' embedded in everyday practice, initially through 'legitimate peripheral participation' by apprentices in daily practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991). This conception emphasises situated learning and sensitivity to contingencies and context. Opportunities for learning in everyday practice can arise from seeing, reading, doing and disturbing assumptions (Knight, 2002). Learning is conceived as tacit in nature, located in 'theories in use' and distributed across the community.

At the institutional level, supporting informal learning processes and bringing together socially distributed learning into explicit discussion at departmental level and below (with research teams, for example) assumes much greater importance. Moreover, since most institutions are constellations of communities (Knight & Trowler, 2001), there is a role in working horizontally across these communities to make connections and spread ideas and practices, and to broker inputs and

exchanges, to promote ‘double loop’ learning. There may also be a role in avoiding local ‘reinventing of wheels’ and in easing the path of innovation. Finally, there is a role in ‘horizon-scanning’ for future challenges, perhaps arising from policy developments or social changes beyond the direct interest of particular communities to predict and prepare for.

Duke (2002) has developed an approach from a senior management perspective in his notion of the ‘ideal seeking’ university, in which ‘delegation, trust, valuing of local expertise down the line, nurturing teams and giving credit’, characterise management (Duke, 2002, p. 66). In his view, staff development:

will support learning on the job and in teams through work. It will provide mentoring, formal training and reflective evaluative review and planning (away day type activities) which allow learning and tacit knowledge to be identified, shared and extended in pursuit of the university’s objectives. (p. 118)

These approaches suggest a strong strategic role at organisational level in higher education institutions and at academic unit level in maintaining and developing healthy communities of practice locally. This literature makes a central contribution to establishing a knowledge base and a purpose for the leaders of academic development.

Evidence-based practice

Universities are remarkably untheoretical about their own practice; the lack of formal management or teaching development in many national systems until very recently attests to this. Yet, paradoxically, a fundamental component of academic identity is to be intellectually rigorous and analytical. A central aim for institutions might, therefore, be to strive for decisions at all levels to be made on the basis of the best available evidence at all times. This gives the academic development function the possible role of researching aspects of the institution’s practice, and providing data and proposals based upon them. It also offers the role of helping various key groups, with decisions to make, to know what data to look for, how to gather and analyse it and so on. The tension in terms of practicality has to be thought about—decisions have to be taken quickly and cannot always wait for a major study, so ‘quick and dirty’ is often the only feasible way. Even better is successfully to predict the need for data before anyone else does!

Evidence-based practice is particularly complex and problematic in universities. Disciplinary communities have very different ideas about what constitutes research, about the nature of evidence, about methodologies, truth and proof. Much of the academic developer’s work is in encouraging the uptake of (applied) social science approaches, although traffic need not be entirely one-way. One particular area of difficulty is in relating theory and practice, because ideas about what those terms mean and how they can be related will differ so widely across an institution. As an illustration of this, Rowland, in considering the basis for professional development in teaching in higher education, dismisses both untheo-

retical ‘training to teach’ approaches and those where theory is generated by educational experts and handed down to practitioners (Rowland, 2003). However, the alternative, of personal and practice-created theory, would be a highly contentious concept in many parts of a university. Therefore a leadership role requires not only expertise in evidence-based practice, but the ability to interpret what it might mean in order to work effectively within and across disciplinary communities.

Evidence-based practice is a field where the professionalism of academic developers and of faculty is closely linked. Leaders in academic development must surely base a part of their claim to be professional upon an expertise in evidence-based practice. They can thus make a major contribution to the professionalisation of academic practice by promoting its uptake.

Orientations and values

Effective leadership in academic development requires a clear and inevitably values-based view about purposes, ways of working and relationships with others in the institution. Land (2001) has identified a range of orientations distributed on four dimensions.

A development function may be orientated towards assisting individuals or the institution. We suggest that, overall, leadership involves moving away from a person-centred orientation towards a systems orientation, in Land’s continuum. This was reported by role holders in our study, who commented on the institutionally orientated nature of their ‘outward facing’ role, and the resultant tension in relation to the beliefs and values of some colleagues in the unit. Land suggests a further

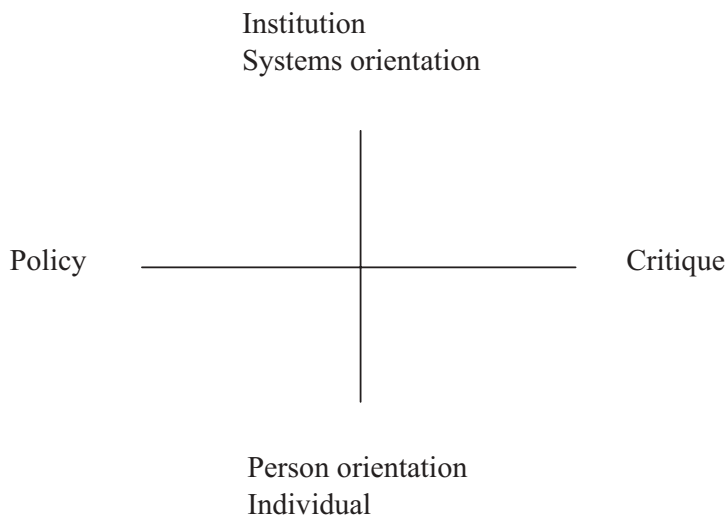


Figure 1. Staff development orientations (based on Land, 2001)

continuum between policy and strategy on the one hand, and critique on the other. We suggest that leadership implies a movement towards policy and strategy. However, such a movement need not mean the adoption of compliant managerialism, and indeed it should not, if it is to encourage double and triple loop learning, notwithstanding the managerial role and responsibility that heads have within their own unit (to ensure high quality in all its provision). The learning organisation literature suggests the need for a questioning and critical component to the leadership role, and one could argue that having the capacity and permission to critique practice is a fundamental component of any fully professional role. Thus, a leader in academic practice will be engaged with the 'centre' of the university, and committed to the attainment of institutional objectives, but will be able to articulate a reasoned alternative view about the processes that will achieve them and an ability to critique the objectives if necessary.

Conclusions

Pressures to professionalise the faculty role and, in turn, the academic developer role, are likely to increase. This article has argued for an approach that offers prospects for professionalising both of them in parallel. We seek neither to restore a Humboldtian ideal nor to endorse the 'unbundling' of the faculty role into specialist jobs. Instead we advocate a holistic approach, accepting that not all activities can be performed excellently at once, and that the combination of activities will and should change over a career. We acknowledge that the difficult and problematic task of defining threshold standards that recognise the interactions and interdependence of different areas of faculty work may need to be contemplated, but this needs to be done keeping in mind the ideal of holistic integration.

We have sketched an academic development profession that understands and supports an integrated faculty role, that can engage with communities as well as with individuals, that can enhance understanding of academic work, and that can support the development of evidence-based practice. The head's role in academic development requires a deep understanding of and connection with faculty roles, as well as an increasing engagement with organisational needs for continuous learning and improvement. The expertise of the head includes a detailed understanding and appreciation of all aspects of academic and associated roles. It includes knowledge of applied research at institutional, departmental and individual levels. An appreciation of the varied nature of learning, including situated and tacit learning, is necessary. It involves an ability to work ethically in complex situations. These qualities begin to outline what heads could be expected to possess, at least at a threshold level, although defining such levels would, in common with the equivalent task for faculty, not itself be easy or uncontroversial.

A challenge is to bring informal processes of learning into the development of leaders in keeping with findings of leaders' preferred ways of learning, reported earlier. This might be approached through personal support and shadowing. Reflection may be assisted through peer mentoring, coaching, co-facilitating events and activities,

action learning sets and 'critical friend' support. There may be a need to embed informal processes within or around formal, in-context, 'work-based learning' qualifications, that embody the qualities outlined above, probably at Master's level.

Accredited professional development is controversial, just as it is for faculty. It is likely to be increasingly required to underpin the expanded role we have advocated, to demonstrate the connectedness we have argued for, and to maintain faculty and public confidence in quality. Developing such accredited provision is a difficult task but one that cannot now be delayed if heads wish to maintain and enhance their standing with their faculty and organisations.

Note

The authors write in a personal capacity. They are solely responsible for the analysis and views expressed which should not be taken to represent the positions of their organisations.

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