

Towards a Professional Development Framework for Leaders of Degree Programmes

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Aims

1. Investigate how CL roles are allocated and defined by HEIs
2. Explore professional development needs of course leaders
3. Propose a professional development framework for educational development aimed at supporting CLs



Context - institutional

- ▶ Sector-wide initiatives to review and develop the CL role
- ▶ The CL leadership role has previously received little attention
- ▶ The role is central to student experience and teaching quality
- ▶ The role is complex and bridges multiple stakeholders



... programme leadership has become more significant for that layer of university experience currently high on the UK agenda – the student experience. Academics who lead programmes tend to be much closer to this experience than other academics, particularly those who occupy ‘middle’ management positions. They often have significant input into aspects of support and pastoral care as well as aspects of pedagogy and curriculum design, placing them in a unique position from which to reflect on the relationships between both sets of imperatives (Murphy and Curtis, 2013).



Context - individual

CLs report that:

- ▶ they were unaware of the remit when they took up post
- ▶ their role lacks clarity, status and agency to effect change; accountability but not authority
- ▶ there are inequalities between workloads even within the same institution
- ▶ administrative burdens overshadow the academic leadership aspect of the role



- ‘If there is a job description, I don’t think I’ve read one [laughs].’
- ‘I don’t have any control over anything. Until something goes wrong, and then because I’m programme leader the buck stops with me.’
- ‘I’m an administrator – I just fire fight and respond to problems. My post has nothing to do with leadership.’
- You have to encourage people to work together and support each other.’

(Mitchell, 2015; Murphy and Curtis, 2013)



Theoretical framing

- ▶ Conceptual framework for designing courses for professionals that aims to account for the different elements that can be applied to any possible professional or vocational qualification; a tool for mapping out the various categories of professional agency and their relationships with each other. (Winch, 2015)
- ▶ Learning how to be a professional: informal learning, reflection in and on action, skilfulness, fluent performance. (Schön, 1983 & 1991; Eraut, 2008)



Learning trajectories (Eraut, 1994)

Working processes with learning as a by-product

Learning activities (within work or a learning process)

Learning processes at or near the workplace

Professional development framework (Winch, 2015)

Aim of the qualification

Knowledge

Know-how

Personal characteristics

The role

The purpose of the role

The professional agency it requires



Method

- ▶ Review of job descriptions (where available)
- ▶ Focus groups (two at each university)
- ▶ On-line survey (two-monthly for one academic cycle)
- ▶ Follow-up phone interviews
- ▶ Workshop to share and situate findings



What will be the outcomes?

- ▶ Generic CL role descriptor
- ▶ Educational development framework that addresses elements of the role (what is a professional course leader?) and takes account of learning trajectories



Job descriptions

- ◆ Some institutions have role descriptors
- ◆ Preliminary review of 7 (2 post-92 and 5 research intensive)
- ◆ List key responsibilities of the role/responsibilities & duties (between 10 and 46)
- ◆ Larger list are broken down into categories:
e.g. Oversight and leadership
 - Liaise and consult with colleagues
 - Monitoring, assurance and enhancement
 - Student progression and achievement
- ◆ Nothing about skills required



ual:

Educational development framework

- ▶ Focus groups at 3 institutions
- ▶ First round of longitudinal surveys
- ▶ 3 follow-up interviews



Systematic knowledge

- Systematic
- Technical theory
- Normative theory
- Social Science theory

• Professional
bod
requirements
and external
regulations

Basic pedagogy on
course and
curriculum design
and teaching.

Understanding different cultures –
especially in a multi-cultural city.
Students and lecturers.



Non-systematic knowledge

- Contingent facts (e.g. local conditions)
- Local procedures
- Materials

Who people are in the faculty and university; what services there are, know who to go to (i.e. make friends with someone in timetabling)

- Local knowledge - Know everything! Know the rules and regs and where to find them. Know about the institutions. Know when, where and why things have to happen. Know where to direct people to find further info to answer their questions. This is difficult for new course leaders who are new to the institution. Important for credibility.



Qual:

Teaching and Learning Exchange

Know-how

- Mastery of technique
- Skill
- Transversal Abilities
- Project management ability
- Occupational capacity

Organisation skills - Juggle many things at once. You will forget and lose things, but you have to be able to slowly get through the to-do list. Don't get overwhelmed by it. Pick up on things, chase people, don't be afraid to delegate and ask for help.

Problem solving

Picking up the pieces and gluing them back together. Problem solver.

solving other people's problems

Spending time and effort and prioritise things that matter.



Personal characteristics

Enthusiasm and optimism. Positivity around the role and maintain this. Do not get pessimistic and negative. Not too cynical about NSS and DLHE and management. Have to keep an open mind about why the managers are doing certain things.

Certain personality, having emotional intelligence, a growth mindset, being a positive 'glass half-full' kind of person, positive frame of mind.
Resilience.

- This job isn't one you get through knowledge, it is a job you get because of personality and ability to manage different people, staff, students, timetables and still able to smile at the end of the way.



Critical questions

- ▶ How possible is to generalize about the CL role when it is so varied (and how might variance be addressed)?
- ▶ How possible is it to define the CL role without reference to its position within various managerial frameworks?
- ▶ How might we implement the framework within our institutions (perhaps alongside other management training provision)?

