Intellectual leadership and the role of the university professor

SRHE Academic Practice Network
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Bruce Macfarlane
The University of Hong Kong
A curious silence

There is….virtually no reported research or literature exploring how a theory of educational leadership, curriculum management or pedagogy is linked to the work of a professor or the professoriate.

Key assumption

University leadership and management is almost exclusively equated with holding a formal, senior managerial roles (eg being a Dean, HoD, VC etc)
Who are the professors?

- 17,375 professors in the UK (HESA, 09/10)
- Mainly men (19% female)
- 9% (04/05); 14.5% (09/10)
- Why the increase?
Survey of professors (08/09)

- 233 responded to online questionnaire plus 20 interviews

- Regard basis of their appointment as solely based on research (60%+) or mainly research plus teaching and service (36%)

- Often in a hybridised role as a professor and a ‘manager’ (9.8% university-wide; 35% Faculty/School/Dept)

Macfarlane (2011)
### Professors in hybridised roles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role Description</th>
<th>pre-1992</th>
<th>post-1992</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University-wide role (eg PVC)</td>
<td>6 %</td>
<td>17 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty/School/Department role (eg Dean)</td>
<td>38 %</td>
<td>25 %</td>
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Based on 233 respondents

Macfarlane (2011)
Becoming and being a professor

• Heightened importance of income generation as a criteria for appointment
Income generation

‘the role and status of professors has diminished over recent years, with increased emphasis on generating external income’.

‘My university seems obsessed by external income generation rather than the quality of outputs from researchers like me.’

‘I am pressed by those who regard the justification of my professorship solely as income-generation activities.’
Becoming and being a professor

• Heightened importance of income generation as a criteria for appointment

• Sense of exclusion by ‘management’ (nb cosmopolitans/locals)
Sense of exclusion

‘…we don’t fit into the main line management structure. We are valued but not always (fully) consulted’

‘What happens in this university is entirely determined by “managers” who are not academics’

‘Often professors are not fully utilised in a strategic sense they are given management duties which are operational rather than strategic…’

‘the assumption that being a professor necessarily involves a leadership role is tenuous and conflicted with institutional practices.’
Becoming and being a professor

• Heightened importance of income generation as a criteria for appointment

• Sense of exclusion by ‘management’ (nb cosmopolitans/locals)

• Perceptions of the role of a professor
What professors think they should do

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Helping other colleagues to develop</td>
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<td>Leadership in research</td>
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What professors think their institutions wants from them

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<tr>
<td><strong>Income generation (was 9th)</strong></td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Upholding standards of scholarship (was 4th)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Helping other colleagues to develop (was 1st)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being a role model (was 3rd)</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Influencing public debate (unchanged)</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Leadership in teaching (was 8th)</td>
<td>7</td>
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Becoming and being a professor

- Heightened importance of income generation as a criteria for appointment
- Sense of exclusion by ‘management’ (nb cosmopolitans/locals)
- Perceptions of the role of a professor
- Disaggregation of role
The unbundled professor

- Star professor
- Classic professor
- Managerial professor
- Research professor
- Practice professor
The roles of a professor

- **Critic**: of ideas, concepts, theories, paradigms, etc
- **Advocate**: of new or alternative ideas, concepts, theories, paradigms, etc
- **Mentor**: to less experienced colleagues within and without the institution
- **Guardian**: of standards of scholarship and academic values within the discipline or profession
- **Enabler**: of access to networks and opportunities for less experienced colleagues
- **Ambassador**: on behalf of the university in external relations both nationally and internationally
The twin dimensions of academic life

- Academic Freedom
- Academic Duty
Academic freedom

Academic Freedom

Academic Duty

Advocate
Critic
A model of professorial leadership

Academic Freedom

Advocate
Critic

Role model

Academic Duty

Mentor
Guardian
Enabler
Ambassador
The professor as intellectual leader

• *Knowledge producer:* work within established scholarly and professional societies, research groups and departments to deepen and extend the knowledge base.
The professor as intellectual leader

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- *Academic citizen*: apply their disciplinary or professional specialism for the benefit of wider public understanding
The professor as intellectual leader

- **Knowledge producer**: work within established scholarly and professional societies, research groups and departments to deepen and extend the knowledge base.

- **Academic citizen**: apply their disciplinary or professional specialism for the benefit of wider public understanding.

- **Boundary transgressor**: challenge the norms of established disciplines and develop connections across fields of enquiry.
The professor as intellectual leader

- **Knowledge producer**: work within established scholarly and professional societies, research groups and departments to deepen and extend the knowledge base

- **Academic citizen**: apply their disciplinary or professional specialism for the benefit of wider public understanding

- **Boundary transgressor**: challenge the norms of established disciplines and develop connections across fields of enquiry

- **Public intellectual**: engage with and seek to influence public debate on social, moral and economic issues beyond the confines of their academic specialism
## A model of intellectual leadership

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Macfarlane (2012)
A model of intellectual leadership

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Macfarlane (2012)
A model of intellectual leadership: maturing directions

Exercise of academic freedom

Limited

Extended

Society

Focus of academic duty

Discipline

Academic citizen

Public intellectuals

Knowledge producers

Boundary transgressors

Macfarlane (2012)
Future challenges

For institutions:
• Developing clearer expectations of professors as intellectual leaders beyond bibliometrics. Criteria for being not just becoming

For professors:
• Balancing their role of professors as ‘locals’ as well as ‘cosmopolitans’
• Resisting pressures that narrowly define the role of a professor as a knowledge producer and knowledge entrepreneur
Further details


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