Being a university professor and learning leadership?

Finding a way forward ...
In the review (Rayner et al., 2010)

The subject of the professor as leader stands out as an almost Arctic-like area of little or no activity ....

... there was a notable silence on the range of issues that should surely surround recruitment, appointment, productivity, value and succession planning for the role, engagement, operation and work of the professor and the professoriate.

AND SO  Three parts to my talk:

1] contextualising the topic;
2] theme clarification;
3] implications for the future.
The Professor? Advancement in The New Millenium

A GATHERING CLOUD OF ISSUES: A CONCEPT, ROLE AND POSITION

DEFINITION

IDENTITY

PASTS

PRESENTS

FUTURES

- censorship
- funding
- career identities
- revenue
- commodification
- teaching
- corporatisation
- computerisation
- research
- credentialism
- consumerisation
RIGHT NOW:

The title and position of ‘full’ professor in UK universities usually describes an individual situated in a subject discipline as a ‘professing’ expert or ‘leading’ academic in a particular domain of knowledge.

It is and has long been esteemed as a position marking the pinnacle of an academic career (Tight 2002; Bassnett 2004).

An academic leader is expected to demonstrate competences in the area of scholarship, and intellectual skills often associated with active research and an international profile, reflecting high academic esteem and reputation (Boyer 1990; Middlehurst 2004).
A professor

- Is paid a salary that varies widely which, as Tight (2002, 20) comments, is ‘one of the less transparent areas of academic life’, and professors are also valued according to a quasi marketplace or the perceived status of the discipline in which they are located.

- May be appointed as a career decision and have previously served in a similar role in several institutions or realised promotion within the same institution (reflecting a distinction between appointment and promotion and, as Tight suggests, appointment need not necessarily be a reflection of success or quality, but rather of serial failure).

- Can be head-hunted and / or approached as a REF transfer prospect and invited to apply.
The Professor? A breed apart or a part of the collegiate!

Key Questions on the contemporary role of the University Professor?

What is a Professor?
Who are Professors?
What does a Professor do and/or should do?
What is and should be the future role of the professoriate?

How can or does a Professor lead?

AND SO: Why be a Professor? How do I become a Professor?
AND THE SUB-TEXT: what makes a good Professor?
A diversification of a professorial professional and redefining of the professoriate is further identified as a consequence of the widening participation agenda (Currie 1998)...

... expansion of the higher education sector, stratification of academic work and, perhaps ironically, the new pedagogic needs and technological developments in teaching and learning in the UK university sector (Eddy and VanDerLinden 2006; Bolden, Petrov, and Gosling 2008).

(1) Issues of Diversity  (2) Succession and Career Pathways

(3) Hybrid Management  (4) Organizational /Institutional Priorities

(5) Integration  (6) Brand
Being there as a professor: to lead or not to lead? Be seen or not seen? Living the role spec?

Expectations
Responsibilities
Integrity
Mentoring
Subject Expert
Research
Writing
Boy er (1990, 23–24), identified four ‘new’ principles for academic leadership required of a successfully working university. These include:

- The scholarship of discovery – being the first to find out, to know, or to reveal original or revised theories, principles, knowledge or creations.
- The scholarship of integration – creating new knowledge by bringing together otherwise isolated knowledge from two or more disciplines or fields, thus creating new insights and understanding.
- The scholarship of application – bringing knowledge to bear in addressing significant societal issues, and so using knowledge or creative activities for development and change.
- The scholarship of teaching – Boyer is insistent that this is a ‘dynamic endeavour’ that involves developing the knowledge, skill, mind, character or ability of others. It ‘means not only transmitting knowledge, but transforming and extending it as well’.
Further Research: McFarlane (2011)

- Perceptions of the role of a professor (by rank order % agree/strongly agree)
  - Helping other colleagues to develop 100
  - Leadership in research 98
  - Being a role model 98
  - Upholding standards of scholarship 96
  - Influencing the work and direction of the university 88
  - Influencing public debate 84
  - Representing the department in the university 76
  - Leadership in teaching 84
  - Income generation 49
Recent Research: the professoriate in the UK university Rayner (2011)

INSTITUTIONS INCREASING THE SIZE OF THE PROFESSORIATE (>10) 2008-10
HESA (N=206)  (Column A = Staff Total (fte); Column B = Staff Starters)  TOTAL = 15

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Recent Research: the professoriate in the UK university Rayner (2011)

INSTITUTIONS REDUCING THE SIZE OF THE PROFESSORIATE (>10) 2008-10  HESA (N=206)

(Column A = Staff Total (fte); Column B = Staff Starters)  TOTAL = 22

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Taking a lead: Professors & the professoriate? Implications, Issues and the future .... Means we do need to know more

**UCU OPINION POLL (2010)**

Over a third (35%) of professors polled said they would consider pursuing their academic career abroad if the plans were introduced.

The poll further warned that more than one in five (22%) professors already knew a colleague who was also considering leaving the country over the issue. The survey gives a stark insight into the likely impact the new proposals would have on jobs. Half (49%) the professors polled said they thought the changes would influence their department's hiring and firing plans. Over two-thirds (69%) said they opposed the changes, which will limit government funding for curiosity-driven research.

UCU said if researchers had been operating under the new guidelines many crucial discoveries would have been missed.
Rayner & Fuller (2011) Current Research
Investigating the professional experiences of working professors

Semi-structured interviews (Cross disciplinary, pre/post 92 sample in 3 universities:
N=12)

1. Please outline your current role and responsibilities as a Professor?
2. Please tell me about your ‘life journey’ to arrive at your current position as a professor?
3. What training for the current job, if any, have you received?
4. Describe the way in which being a professor works in the current context?
5. Please describe the day to day experience of being a professor?
6. Are there any major differences in being a professor for a second time?
   [For those who have had a Chair in more than one institution/ dept./discipline]
7. Please describe what you consider are the key aspects of leadership required of you as a professor?
8. Please tell me about how you actually go about fulfilling the role of being a professor!
9. Please tell me what you think the next decade holds for you and then others when working as a professor in this context (faculty, institution, discipline area/field)?
10. Finally, please tell me what makes a good professor?
Professor in Education

The big buzz from being a professor comes with going to conferences, and presenting, and seeing people sit up and listen. It’s about professing publicly and saying something that makes a difference. And being recognized as someone who has intellectual and critical capacity and can write and speak about education to move things forward.

A big difference in now in the so-called role for a professor is my having to engage in an adversarial role in a managerial sense: I have to behave like a dog with a bone to ensure research activity is valued, that scholarship is valued. Being a professor, being a champion for writing, for bid writing, I have to be in on the senior meetings to flag up research, to defend a corner.

In this role I have to develop tenacity to influence the management of integrating strategic and operational elements when implementing policy and developing the provision within the department. To do this I need to build and share in team-making skills, which is essential for leading and managing and the professorial role is central to this work. But the balance here is difficult. If I think back to days working in a traditional university I might not see a professor for six months and not even think about it – I think that this is almost inconceivable in 2010, I can’t envisage it.
The role is three- or four-fold: one is teaching the subject; two is researching and writing on my chosen field; the third is making sure the research centre is doing its work in continuing research in the border field of Methodism, art history, and the related collections of the Methodist church located here; the fourth is political really, making sure the relationship between the Methodist church and the university is a good one.

I hope people think I am a hard working professor with a particular set of specialisms— but this is the same for every academic. I am pretty lucky to be a professor and get time to do what I enjoy. But I don’t really think there is anything special about being a professor. There are many more talented colleagues than me here, senior lecturers, good academics. Becoming a professor is really about being in the right place at the right time and luck. Ultimately, its about quality of published work.
Commissioned by the LfHE as a small 12 month research project:

Leading Professors: examining the perspectives of ‘the led’ in relation to professorial leadership.

The aim of our project is to examine the nature and quality of academic leadership provided by the UK HE sector’s professoriate, as perceived by ‘the led’, for the purpose of highlighting and disseminating models of good practice, identifying weaknesses and lacunae, and making recommendations for improved policy and practice.

The project comprises three main strands:

1. survey based data collection and data analysis,
2. targeted interviews (individual & group based) for a case study;
3. formulation of recommendations, and dissemination.
Taking a lead: Professors & the professoriate? Implications, Issues and the future …. we need to know more!

- **Higher Education**: whither scholarship and the University? *Purposes and practices in the Academy?* See the cluster of issues around global corporatization and the commodification of education. What do we value?
- **Academic Management**: *What role should the working professor play now or in the future within the administration and management of a University? Policy? Provision?*
- **Intellectual Leadership**: *what should working professors be expected to do in terms of scholarship and the subject discipline, knowledge production and the associated parts of the collegiate?*
- **Career pathways**: *changing structures, differing directions and uncertainty in the professional organization of the University and Academy? What should aspiring academics do? Is there any real future in an academic career?*
- **Recruitment & Appointment**: who is, has been or should be appointed a Professor: what do we know? For example - no data collection currently for professorial appointments by ethnicity and gender? And more?
- **And the 64 million dollar question**: what is the future for University funding and the continuing construction of a quasi-global university market place? Will QR receive the same re-structuring as the teaching grant in the UK funding arrangements for HE? Implications for private research etc
Being a professor: leadership, coffee or tea, empathy and an open door?

Because of his ongoing ability to increase office productivity, the “Employee Of The Month” award again goes to Mr. Coffee.
KEY REFERENCES


