‘Someone I can rely on’: Stories of leading and being led in a research-intensive university

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Introduction

As the higher education landscape continues to rapidly evolve, senior university leaders are reflecting on whether their organisational structures and leadership models are fit for purpose (Flumerfelt and Banachowski 2011, Holt et al. 2014). Several external pressures, such as globalization, international league tables, changes to institutional funding, and an increasingly competitive research and knowledge transfer environment, have impacted on how higher education institutions are organised and managed. These pressures have led to a call for more flexible leadership models, based on notions of collaboration and shared value systems, to be explored (Floyd and Fung 2015). By drawing on qualitative data from a recent Leadership Foundation funded project exploring the newly formed role of “Academic Lead” at a research-led institution in the UK (see Floyd and Fung 2013), this chapter will explore how one university has implemented a new distributed leadership model, and look in particular at academics’ expressed notions of ‘good’ leadership in times of change and challenge.

Unlike most previously published work exploring higher education leadership, the research presented here will crucially examine the impact of the model on both those who are leaders *and* those being led and show how both parties have attempted to develop positive and collaborative relationships to achieve their professional goals. The chapter is organised over seven sections. Following this introduction, we outline the paper’s theoretical framework.

Next, we give contextual background to the leadership model being examined and the case study university. Then, we describe the study's methods, present the participants' stories of leading and being led and, in the concluding sections, discuss the implications of our work for professional practice.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Underlying this inquiry is the concept of distributed leadership which has arisen as a response to the traditional 'heroic' or 'great man' theory of leadership (Northouse 2013, Gronn 2008). Rather than viewing leadership as falling under the remit of just one person, distributed leadership envisages leadership as a process which can, and should, be shared throughout the organisation (Bush 2011). Thus, when applied to higher education, academic leadership is seen as more of a collective responsibility (Bolden, Petrov, and Gosling 2009). In this way, the notion of viewing leadership as a vertical process between leaders and followers is challenged (van Ameijde et al. 2009). This perceived shift in traditional leadership power, moving from people in formal positions to the whole academic body, is important for universities, not least because it has been shown that the leadership activity of academics outside formal leadership roles can be very influential in effecting organisational change (Kezar, Bertram Gallant, and Lester 2011). Such a power shift may also allow academics to discuss and decide on leadership issues in a more collegial manner, a practice more in line with the shared value systems of the academy (Floyd and Fung 2015). In addition, there is evidence to suggest that if academic leaders do not take the views of other academics into account in their decision making they can expect to encounter a lot of resistance, which can prove extremely damaging (Bryman 2007).

Also underpinning this inquiry are questions about the nature of the modern university in general, and the characteristics, missions, values and practices of research-intensive universities in particular. Recent studies have shown that changes are beginning to take place in UK research-intensives (Fung and Gordon 2016, Fung 2016) and also more widely across European research-led institutions (Fung, Besters-Dilger, and van der Vaart 2017).

These studies highlight the creative possibilities associated with breaking down the separation between 'research' and 'student education' as areas of activity: can these established divisions, which lead to differences in esteem and opportunity for those who take leadership roles in each area (Fung and Gordon 2016), be constructively challenged? We argue that research-intensive universities need to re-cast themselves so that 'students, academics and others who work in universities progressively work towards the development of inclusive scholarly knowledge-building communities of practice' (Brew 2006, 180). University leadership roles, at all levels of the organisation, therefore need to promote an inclusive, holistic eco-system of scholarly activity (Fung 2016) – research, teaching and learning, and leadership itself – which enables universities to make the fullest possible contribution to the global common good (Fung 2016, UNESCO 2015).

Using these ideas, the stories presented here explore how academics in different roles (both leaders and 'the led') attempt to develop a mutually respectful relationship by undertaking productive dialogue and working collaboratively to achieve shared professional goals.

Context

The case study University where the research took place (hereafter called Sunnyside) is a research-led University in the UK. As part of institutional restructuring, a new Academic Lead (AL) role was introduced to help build leadership capacity. The idea was that ALs would work closely with Directors of Education and Directors of Research to provide leadership, guidance, support and advice to a group of individual academic colleagues in their discipline or subject grouping (normally a group of about eight staff who we term here *Assigned Academics* - that is, academics who had been assigned to ALs). ALs would also be members of the senior management group of the faculty so that they were kept well informed about priorities and strategies and able to engage with faculty wide decision-making. Alongside the introduction of the AL role, a new Performance and Development Review (PDR) system was launched to facilitate the translation of institutional and discipline strategies into individual objectives, while at the same time accommodating personal goals

and ambitions. One of the key ideas underpinning distributed leadership and the PDR process at Sunnyside was that ALs, Directors of Research and Directors of Education would co-ordinate their actions so that personal goals agreed through the PDR process were holistic and proportionate, and that individual academics were well supported. Since the launch of the scheme, more than 130 academic staff have been appointed to the AL role.

When the initial structures were implemented, a Head of Discipline (HoD) role was also created. This role was mainly envisaged as providing a point of reference for external interactions; indeed, the Head of Discipline did not have formal budget or HR responsibilities. In practice, however, Heads of Discipline, together with the Directors of Research (DoR) and Education (DoE), have become an important part of the faculty governance arrangements and this role has recently been formalised across Sunnyside.

At Sunnyside, there are two different job 'families': *Education and Research* and *Education and Scholarship,* with each having their own contracts and slightly different focus within the Institution. Academics in the *Education and Research* group, who are actively researching in their field and required to meet targets in relationship to research income and academic publications, outnumber their more education-focused academic colleagues by approximately 3:1, although this proportion varies considerably in different parts of the institution. The *Education and Scholarship* academics are typically not (currently) actively researching in their field, but have a significant teaching load. They may take on Director of Education roles as they progress in their career, although DoE roles are also taken up by the 'research active' academics. It is possible in principle at Sunnyside for all academics to gain promotion to full Professor, if they meet certain criteria in relation to research, success and impact in their field and/or the scholarship of teaching and learning in higher education.

Methods

A brief overview of methods is given here; for more detail on the research design, please see Floyd and Fung (2013). To address our research questions, we used an exploratory,

sequential mixed methods design (Creswell 2014) where qualitative data are gathered and analysed first, before quantitative data are collected from a larger sample size. First, we interviewed 15 Academic Leads (ALs) and 15 Assigned Academics (AAs) about their experiences and perceptions of the role. It is these data that we draw on in this chapter. The interview sample contained male and female staff with a range of ages, levels of experience and discipline backgrounds (See Table 1). To ensure anonymity for respondents, pseudonyms were used throughout and all disciplines have been grouped into the umbrella terms of natural sciences, social sciences and humanities.

Table 1 – Interview Participants

Academic Leads			Assigned Academics		
Name	**Age**	**Domain**	**Name**	**Age**	**Domain**
Arthur	30s	Natural Sciences	Amy	30s	Social Sciences
Brandon	60s	Natural Sciences	Bert	30s	Natural Sciences
Chris	50s	Social Sciences	Clare	50s	Humanities
Diane	40s	Social Sciences	Harold	30s	Natural Sciences
Evelyn	50s	Social Sciences	James	30s	Social Sciences
Francis	60s	Humanities	Jane	40s	Social sciences
George	30s	Social Sciences	John	30s	Social Sciences
Howard	40s	Humanities	Katherine	50s	Natural Sciences
Ian	40s	Natural Sciences	Matthew	30s	Humanities
Jack	30s	Humanities	Nick	40s	Social sciences
Kendra	50s	Humanities	Ruth	20s	Natural Sciences
Lisa	50s	Social Sciences	Sophie	30s	Natural Sciences
Martin	60s	Social Sciences	Sylvia	40s	Social Sciences
Nel	40s	Humanities	Tobias	30s	Humanities
Oliver	60s	Social Sciences	Terry	50s	Social Sciences

Following ethical approval, participants were identified and invited to take part via email. Each participant was interviewed for approximately one hour and interviews were recorded and transcribed. The interview data were analysed using established thematic analysis techniques. These data were supplemented with the analysis of key strategic documents linked to governance arrangements and working practices that helped to determine the overall culture and working practices at Sunnyside, and the individual faculty culture within which each participant worked.

The whole study was framed within a humanistic philosophical framework (Newby 2014) which puts human experience firmly at the centre of data collection and analysis, and recognises that "…experiences are socially constructed and experienced differently by individuals depending on a range of cultural, historical and situational factors" (Floyd and Fung 2015, 6). This approach is congruent with the principles of philosophical hermeneutics espoused by Gadamer (2004), which seek not to objectify human experiences but to create opportunities for dialogue and the shared constructions and explorations of meanings in order to enhance understanding.

Stories of leading and being led

What were the participants' expressed views on 'good' academic leadership? Here, we consider first the data from the stories of the Assigned Academics, who are typically in the early years of their career, then present the perspectives of the Academic Leads, who are established academics assigned a specific leadership role within a department.

The Assigned Academics' stories

> 'It's a tricky job. I have great sympathy for people who do it.' (Harold)

The Assigned Academics' interview transcripts paint vivid verbal pictures of what 'good' leadership in an academic setting might be. Many of the participants are sensitive to the complexities faced by those running a multi-faceted organization in a rapidly changing national and internal policy context, and perceive that there is no simple, 'one size fits all' set of descriptors for a 'good' leader, but their narratives and reflections on what they would want to see in any academic leader provide an illuminating starting point for our analysis of their perspectives on Sunnyside's new Academic Lead role.

Common ground in relation to desirable characteristics of university leaders in general is seen in the personal qualities of the leader, such that they command respect from more junior staff. For Tobias, for example,

> ‘you have to feel there’s someone you *respect,* and that’s why you take advice from them.’

For Toulouse, it’s very much about ‘integrity’ and the leader’s ability to ‘stand up for you when you feel you want them to fight your corner’. For Sylvia, leaders should be ‘role models for the junior member of staff to look up to’, and a good leader is someone who ‘makes everyone feel valued’. Jane talks about the need for fairness, open-mindedness, impartiality, and ‘willingness to take on these big admin responsibilities, rather than being just a power trip’.

For Ruth, good leadership is characterized by having a good understanding of the group for which you’re responsible and of how the wider organizational structures and processes operate:

> ‘I think [a leader] has to … know the processes, to understand the management structure - so you know who to go to with your concerns. If you’re leading a group, it’s really important you know your group and you understand how your group works.’

Ruth also looks for realism in a leader:

> ‘If you’re not realistic as a leader, then you can get people possibly feeling that something could happen when really there is no chance … and it’s just going to lead to disappointment.’

For Bert, that realism should have a positive dimension; he argues that good leaders should not become embroiled with ‘negative spin’, but rather ‘concentrate on how we can make the teaching better, how we can research better’. We see here an example of a repeated emphasis on leaders’ needing to find a more productive and more connected relationship between research and student education.

For the academics interviewed, leaders also ideally need to create a balance between flexibility and being directive. Some stress the importance of leaders' being able to take steps to address situations where their assigned academics are not, in Matthew's term, 'pulling their weight'. However, Matthew also talks at some length about the challenge for younger members of staff when more experienced staff are 'pulling against' the institution, and observes:

> 'I think there needs to be … a lot more engagement and a lot more openness in terms of *what* we're doing and *why* we're doing it, at every level. But if people aren't prepared to get on board with the process, perhaps there does need to be a little more ability to rein them in at times.'

The use of language here – 'pulling their weight', 'pulling against', and 'reining them in' - connotes an active struggle across several dimensions. There are parallel tensions: the assigned academic may not be contributing fully to the institution's work and goals, but some of the more experienced academics may not be doing this either. The proposed solution is more 'engagement' and 'openness in terms of *what* we're doing and *why* we're doing it', with some possibility of 'reining in' those who 'aren't prepared to get on board with the process'.

Constructions of the ideal do vary, however, with respect to the extent to which the leaders should or should not be directorial in their leadership styles. The context for this for many interviewees in the study is consideration of the extent to which academia needs formal leadership roles at all. Academic work is often characterized as essentially an individual pursuit, for example in Matthew's sporting analogy:

> 'Fundamentally, I think this job is one where you stand or fall largely by your own efforts. … I'm not sure it's a team game in the way that other professions perhaps are. … The analogy I use is that academia is more like a cricket team, say, than a football team. Everyone has their own role, they go out, they bat,

they bowl … and occasionally they'll have to field together, but basically you have your own specific role and you perform that role.'

However, almost all of the interviewees talked about the increasing need for clear and effective leadership in the new era of higher education league tables and the formal measurement of research outputs. Amy has seen this in her own department:

'I think until now there almost hasn't *been* leadership in the departments … It very much seems that people tend to work in silos [and] I think you almost have to have been self-sufficient. … But now … our head of department has changed and we've realized that to be competitive … we need to start working together.'

Others, including Bert, emphasize the importance of a having leaders with a clear group strategy in an increasingly competitive environment:

'Ideally [leadership] is driving research in your particular groups so that everyone is … as productive as possible.'

However, there remains a tension between the need for leaders to manage and direct and the desire for them simply to allow academics to get on with their academic work, as Harold suggests:

'People in my discipline often regard leadership as being taking the pressure off their underlings, which is all very noble of them and very good. [They] have to fight the political battles and get the money and that leaves us underlings free to do the science.'

For James, the key is to have 'somebody to rely on':

It's the idea of having somebody, a kind of mentor - I consider him as a mentor - and I don't want to think of him as, as part of the management. I would like to … consider him more as somebody I can rely on, instead of somebody who was here to control what I'm doing - *that* would be the case in a company, for

> instance. … The top management, I think, wants to be sure that people are working in the way they want people to work and they are productive enough. But I would prefer having my academic lead as somebody I can rely on instead.

Yet James also calls for leaders who can balance two demands. They must be 'available to discuss and to understand the concerns of the people', and yet also able to

> 'reconcile the independence or autonomy of everyone [with] trying to show everybody that they have to do their duty as part of a team.'

There appear to be some notable differences in ideals here related to whether or not the participant makes any reference to experience of leadership outside of UK higher education (for example, within the compulsory education sector, in industry and/or in a non-UK context) as a touchstone for comparison. Those who compare leadership models inside and outside the academy tend to describe academic leadership as being relatively 'light touch', and perhaps too *laissez faire*, by comparison with the more clearly defined and directorial styles of leadership (or management) experienced outside, although a number in that group also appreciate the relative freedom afforded to them by this more open and individualized tradition.

Harold, who has prior experience of working in research in the civil service, notes these differences as he reflects on his previous place of work:

> 'The culture of that place in contrast to the University was very hierarchical… There was much less freedom. [But] if you wanted something done it was always somebody's job to do it and it would get done. … The thing about being an academic is that in contrast to a proper job it's very rare that anyone tells you what to do. … Universities are really confederations of the self-employed and every academic is really working for themselves; although in an ideal department, people get along and collaborate where they have to.'

Toulouse, coming into academia after a long career in industry, feels that the leaders inside the university should have ‘more accountability’, and should be required to report back more systematically to their own leaders on the progress of the academics assigned to them. He continues,

> ‘Then you could understand where you’ve got a gap, a development gap in the department… [The problem is] there’s never any interim review… Sloppy, isn’t it, you know? … Good leadership … is being fair and strong and being directive.’

Amy, who also has experience of leadership in industry, elaborates on what for her a good leader should be. She emphasizes, as do a number of other participants, the importance of their making time for career-related guidance:

> ‘An academic leader should be … almost like a career counsellor, so should be discussing your aims and objectives, where you want your career to go, … helping you shape where you want to be on one, three or five years’ time, and then giving you suggestions on how to get there and supporting you in that process.’

Clare, who has many years of experience of teaching in the compulsory education sector, has a similar perspective, suggesting that an academic leader should:

> ‘really get to know [the assigned academic] and where they’ve come from, where they are and perhaps where they want to go. I think that’s the most important thing, to find out whether they’re content with what they’re doing, whether they have aspirations, to set some goals and objectives, something to work towards in the coming year.’

The theme of the need for effective communication is the most frequently repeated motif across the set of interviews; there are many allusions to the need for leaders who are willing to engage in genuine dialogue, rather than simply conveying information. For Amy, this is about being ‘open’ and ‘communicative’; for Bert it is about

‘approachability’ and having the skills needed ‘to be able to get people to discuss issues’. Clare gives an impassioned account of the need for leaders to be able to listen and to interpret the needs and perspectives of the academics assigned to them:

> ‘I think they’ve got to be very good listeners and offer the opportunity for the person that they’re working with to really express openly how they are feeling about the whole work situation and their role and their post. It’s not an occasion … to be talked at. I think it should be a much more open and communicative opportunity.’

Clare, having experienced what she perceived to be a very poor relationship with her Academic Lead, goes on to speak at length about the communicative attitudes needed to be an effective leader:

> ‘Academic Leads should have a great deal of sensitivity towards the person that they’re working with. [They need to learn] to communicate if they’re not naturally good communicators, because not all Academic Leads are going to be naturally good communicators and communicating is listening as well as speaking.’

Communication in leadership here is represented as much more than a set of skills characterized by particular actions; effective communication requires a set of attitudes towards the academic colleague, including a genuine interest in and respect for that person. Clare argues that leaders need to:

> ‘have have a real focus and show real interest in the person that they’re working with [and to show that by doing] their homework … so that they don’t come into [a meeting] cold and are well prepared.’

Amy, among a number of others, considers the issue of who should be appointed to a leadership role in the first place, and again emphasizes the importance of communication as a necessary quality:

> ‘I think it’s really important that we have academic leadership [but] I do think we have to make sure that they are the *right* leaders, because sometimes we judge people by how much money they bring in – generally it’s money we look at from the research side – or how long they’ve been here, and I think sometime you have to look a bit more closely at leadership *qualities*: can they communicate? Will they work with a team of people?’

Amy, like a number of the interviewees, emphasizes the need for leaders and their colleagues to be ‘coming from the same page’, and would like to see the university attempt to match up academic leads with those on the particular career path they’ve gone through themselves:

> ‘So if they have a teaching background, then have teaching academics. If they’ve come from a research background, then have research academics.’

The suggestion repeatedly in the interview data is that a good leader, the ‘right’ leader, necessarily has a range of attributes that enables genuine dialogue to occur. Ruth refers to the impact on individuals of university leaders not getting the communication right:

> ‘We’ve seen examples recently where we haven’t had that communication from leadership, not just [academic] staff, but professional services staff as well, and senior management. When the communication’s not there, that makes people unhappy and other things just start going wrong. I think communication is the really big, important issue.’

This communication needs not just form but authenticity, Katherine feels; a genuine desire to engage on a number of levels. Katherine looks for leaders who are:

> ‘people with whom you can discuss your morality, your ethics, your way forward, the way you work with undergraduates, with postgraduates, with post-docs.’

Sylvia’s summary seems to echo the words of many of the interviewees:

> ‘I wonder whether in *good* leadership you might want to understand exactly what individuals need to help them fulfil *their* needs, because that makes them happy and they will stay and do a good job.’

Taken as a whole, the interviews with assigned academics in this study construct ‘good’ leadership predominantly in terms of understanding and supporting others, empathy, the ability both to act with integrity and as a role model, and the willingness to engage in genuine dialogue. Academics in our study want to see in their leaders all of these personal qualities *and* knowledge and understanding of the whole ecosystem of higher education and the ability to make tough decisions to make that successful when needed.

The Academic Leads’ stories

There was broad agreement among the Academic Leads (ALs) interviewed about the characteristics of what ‘good’ academic leadership is - in principle. In their personal accounts, some ALs stress the importance of a leader’s having the right set of skills, while others emphasize a set of underpinning values. There is some difference in emphasis between those whose roles are predominantly focused on research (these are the majority by a ratio of around 3:1, both in the sample and in the institution as a whole) and those whose main focus is student education, but interviewees typically construct a sense of needing to respect both research and teaching as vital strands of academic practice. Most also see academic leadership as necessarily negotiating the sometimes-differing needs of the institution itself and the individuals being led.

The personal characteristics needed for good academic leadership are typically described by George, an Academic Lead (AL) who emphasizes the importance of ‘listening to the individual’ and of being led ‘in terms of where they are and where they want to go’. For George,

> The worst kind of academic lead … has a set idea about where they think an

individual should be heading. … I could wholeheartedly disagree with some of the things they want to do, but I don't necessarily see that as my role. I can see, having listened to them, it makes sense in terms of what they are doing… So my role, then, I feel, is to facilitate that and be a good listener.'

Howard speaks similarly about the 'human' qualities of listening and empathy:

'The coaching side, the mentoring side – that, to me, is about being a human being. It's actually about sitting down, talking to somebody, understanding where they're coming from, obviously understanding the expectations of the university and then just seeing and talking through with them how they can maximize their potential. It's just human skills, really. With the other side of the role you do need to implement various university policies and so forth.'

Arthur echoes the importance of leading by consent:

'It's much better to bring staff with you than to try and wield a stick all the time.'

The most repeated motif is that of balance - or being, as Brandon describes it, 'even handed':

'You don't tell people what to do, but on the other hand you have to be prepared to tell people that they need to tell themselves what to do.'

Brandon explains further:

'You have to be able to set targets … but at the same time … inspire people to do what they want to do within the framework of the expectations that are around. And to bring out the best in people. I think that communication role is extremely important.'

Howard talks of the need on the one hand to be 'very patient, but understanding… and supportive', but on the other hand, he says, 'if you've got somebody who's underperforming you've actually got to be quite firm. … You've got to have a split personality [*laughter*].' So

some kind of balance needs to be struck between the personal and the strategic:

> ‘People are going to be good at [being a leader] because they’re good listeners *and* they’ve got strategic oversight.’

Diane talks of the need for good leaders in academia to balance the demands of research with those of the teaching and learning in that they must:

> ‘anticipate the needs of both the REF [Research Excellence Framework] and also the NSS [National Student Survey], so that we actually balance what research staff need to do [with] the demands of the students, and try to steer a way through that.’

Brandon, too, feels that leaders should recognize and promote the importance of teaching as well as research. We see here reference again to the relationship between research and education (or teaching and learning): are they separate, competing endeavours, or part of the same scholarly culture? What does balancing the two look like, and how can leaders help create that balance (Fung, Besters-Dilger, and van der Vaart 2017)? For Arthur, leadership on the teaching-focused academic track includes ‘leading strategically important [education-related] projects across the faculty and so helping to improve the student experience’. He also refers to the need ‘strategically to lead on innovation and in the curriculum’. In this role, at Sunnyside, you can rise ‘all the way up to professor’: this is an example of developments in the sector whereby in some institutions greater reward and recognition are being given to academics who commit to student education (Fung and Gordon 2016), or to building on the synergies between research and education (Fung 2017), rather than prioritising research.

In this complex institutional culture, with its potentially competing priorities, there is, for some, a sense of difficulty for the university in making sure that all academic leaders have the necessary skills and attitudes. Brandon notes:

> ‘Some of it is the intrinsic skills, I suppose, of the individuals who you choose for

> the job, but sometimes you don't have a lot of choice, because you need a certain number of people to be ALs and they don't all have the right skills set.'

Howard also notes that not all ALs appointed are, in his view, ideal:

> 'There are some people I've met and found out they're ALs and my jaw has dropped… They're just not on message; some of our ALs are so anti-establishment, it's absolutely staggering.'

Here we can see evidence of a tension between the value frameworks of individual academics, who become leaders, and the espoused goals and values of the institution in which they lead. It is interesting to consider what being 'on message', as Howard calls it, is in these times of complexity and change. How can leaders negotiate this kaleidoscope of complex processes, cultural subtleties and strategic priorities?

Discussion

What can we learn from these stories? The data from those being led suggest that academics understand the need for strong academic leadership in the current higher education landscape and there is a lot of empathy for the complexities of leadership practice in these turbulent times. In addition, academics were clear that individuals could not just 'plough their own furrow' without considering the overall needs of the department or institution overall. Thus, academic leadership was seen as being a collective act (Bolden, Petrov, and Gosling 2009). Shared understandings of good academic leadership included words like 'respect', 'feeling valued', 'fairness', 'being realistic', and being 'open' and 'communicative'. In relation to distributed leadership practice then, it seems that academics are happy to work with leaders in achieving shared institutional goals as long as they perceive the decisions taken to be in the best interests of the group, that all people involved (those whose roles are teaching-focused as well as those who are research-focused) are treated fairly and with respect, and that leaders show effective communicate skills and engage in genuine dialogue with academics rather than just transmitting information.

There were many similarities in our findings between the two groups. For example, from the leaders' point of view, good academic leadership was characterised by holding 'shared underpinning values', 'good listening and communication skills', being 'understanding', 'supportive', and 'even handed', and 'human' in their relationships with academic staff. There also appeared to be a shared understanding of the need and difficulty in 'balancing' institutional and individual needs.

One key theme that emerged from our data was the perceived need for appropriate career support for academics in relation to their chosen career path. This finding suggests that the focus of development training and support activities for academics who take on leadership roles may need to be widened from traditional activities (for example, linked to managing conflict and finance) to include more discussions on individual staff development needs. Such a finding reflects the move towards more portfolio based careers for academics, with career development responsibility seemingly shifting from the institution to the individual (Floyd 2012), and an accompanying shift in associated developmental needs for academic leaders (Floyd 2016). More fundamentally, it also suggests the need for academic work, including research and education, to be seen as a scholarly whole (Fung 2016), and for university leadership to be seen as a special form of academic endeavour directed at strengthening the synergies between these different area – for the good of both the individuals themselves and their institutions. The tensions between what is deemed good for the individuals (both leaders and those who are led) and what is good for the institution lie at the heart of the challenge, and our data suggest that all parties appreciate explicit discussion about these tensions, so that shared solutions and indeed shared values and goals can be developed.

Conclusions

To conclude this chapter, we identify five questions arising from our study in relation to the practice of distributed leadership for other institutions to consider:

- Are academic staff members at all levels actively enabled to participate in dialogue focused on meeting the institution's complex challenges?
- Through that dialogue, are all parties able to explore shared values and thereby create shared goals and strategies?
- Is the institution providing sufficient spaces, both temporal and physical, so that academics within and across departments can meet, share, collaborate and create?
- Do institutions provide individually tailored leadership development opportunities for leaders that include career development strategies for staff?
- Do the policies on distributed leadership and the ways in which they are implemented promote equality of opportunity and foster a culture of dialogue, inclusion and recognition?

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