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## Chapter 3

# Leadership for art and design higher education

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### Abstract

Proceeding from the assumption that there is, and has been, inadequate emphasis on appropriate leadership development and support, at all levels since incorporation; this chapter examines contemporary evidence and experiences to test those assumptions. The 12 case studies underpinning this chapter were conducted during and after the GLAD Conference at Cambridge in 2007. They were conducted using a template of questions and their sources remain confidential to the authors of this chapter. Direct quotations from the interviews illustrate or evidence claims and commentary in the text, and are anonymous. Those selected for interview as case studies represent a balance of gender and age. They are drawn from a range of academic backgrounds including research, teaching and learning and professional practice. They currently hold, or have held, a range of posts considered appropriate to this study, including; module leader, course tutor, head of department, associate dean, dean, pro-vice-chancellor, reader and professor. The individuals interviewed work in specialist art and design colleges, universities in the UK and overseas.

The case studies provide evidence of experience and perceptions of the nature of the challenges and demands faced by those in roles from entry to higher education, through to senior art and design leaders. They are used to identify future challenges whilst examining the experience of leaders and managers at



different points in their careers and key issues, which are associated with entry to and progression through the various levels.

Whilst a growing amount of research in pedagogy explores discipline-related differences and identities, most of the available literature on leadership and management development in higher education is generic. This chapter considers some aspects of the alignment of a discipline-oriented identity with leadership and management characteristics and capabilities, in order to characterise the nature of effective leadership and management in art and design higher education.

The chapter is organised around an exploration of context, followed by three sections aligned to the life cycle of a typical leadership and management career: early years, mid-life, and senior professional. The concluding section features key considerations and recommendations.

## Introduction

In his keynote address at the Group for Learning in Art and Design (GLAD) Conference held at Cambridge University in 2007, Sir Michael Bichard stated that *'leadership and management talent in the sector is shallow and there is insufficient formal development. Good leadership is not about bureaucracy, but about increasing energy at all levels and energy is really needed now Energy, passion and belief are really important'*.

This observation was offered as part of what Sir Michael described as an emerging 'golden age' for art and design higher education in the UK. He placed this in the context of significant change which has seen art and design higher education in the UK move from peripheral, small scale and specialist, into a mass provision with the largest numbers of art and design students concentrated in the modern universities.

In his description and analysis of the challenges and opportunities of this golden age, Bichard identified the need to develop leadership as one of the keys to future success. It can be argued that some aspects of the relatively poor outcomes of the recent National Student Survey (NSS), which placed art and design near the bottom of the subject league tables in terms of student satisfaction, might be attributed to deficiencies in the management and leadership of our discipline at all levels. This is not particular to the UK, as art and design features in similar positions in surveys of students conducted in other countries; New Zealand and Australia being two examples. However, the position of art and design in the NSS is not in line with the claims we make as providers for a high quality and specialist provision which we like to identify as world class. Especially pertinent are levels of student dissatisfaction with elements of course organisation, management and delivery, the availability of teaching staff, the transparency of assessment procedures and criteria, and arrangements for placements.

The challenges to those responsible for the leadership and management of art and design higher education are complex and urgent. Whilst the sector is still in a state of transition, some things are becoming clearer. Several of the ex-polytechnics' faculties of art and design have moved from the edge into the very heart of new corporate institutions - 'from the showroom to the engine room'. In these universities the role of senior art and design managers has also shifted. These individuals are no longer general managers of the art and design 'small factory' model of provision, but are supported by professionals within faculty executive teams, including accountants, human resource experts and business development managers. Senior managers of art and design are now expected to work 'from' and 'in' their discipline at a corporate level, using lateral thinking to operate within interdisciplinary teams inside and beyond their institutions. They may be required to work with external partners to bring to bear art and design expertise and capabilities that span the design and delivery of educational courses to the recreation of new or evolved cities in which higher education is the dominant industry.

Alongside this the tight definitions of 'new' and 'old' universities have been blurred as the ex-polytechnic directors who became vice-chancellors in 1992 have retired, taking with them the last vestiges of local authority thinking and have been replaced by a less

clearly defined set of leaders and managers who have moved between old and new institutions and between industry, research and academia. The same period has seen the emergence of the large art and design monotechnics, significantly, the University of the Arts London, and colleges of higher education who have achieved university status, plus the demise of the small independent art and design colleges through merger or integration into other institutions. In addition further education colleges now have the capacity to award foundation degrees, a development which comes on top of the rapid increase in further education colleges offering full degrees validated by partner universities, often with little experience of art and design higher education.

In this context Sir Michael Bichard identified the positive aspects of the value currently being given to vocational qualifications, the apparently buoyant demand for art and design higher education provision and the current success of the creative and cultural industries which has greatly benefited from the strength of art and design provision in the UK. He identified key challenges as being the need to extend the boundaries of knowledge and embrace the potential of interdisciplinarity whilst remaining strongly rooted in practice, alongside the need to achieve internationalisation, foster a stronger base for art and design in schools, and develop more effective leadership capacity. Bichard argued that bad leaders waste energy but good leaders release energy, and that effective leaders are passionate about their subjects, endorse success and slim down bureaucracy.

In considering issues of leadership we were aware of the relationship and the differences between leadership and management. Much has been written on the topic and in relation to exact definitions of the two. We do not see the value in rehearsing this work, but do believe that the following quotes reflect something of the art and design approach to such matters.

*'Organisations need both managers and leaders to succeed but developing both requires a reduced focus on logic and strategic exercises in favour of an environment where creativity and imagination are allowed to flourish.'*

(Harvard Business Review, 2004)

In referring to leadership and management we include any academic in an informal or formal role working in art and design higher education.

Leadership: 'It's when you know that the people who are working for you or with you, you can sense their respect. And you can sense that they want to work with you, they know you are doing something good and you can sense that you are energising them and taking them with you.'

'Good leadership is actually very simple, it's about allowing people to grow, to know they will be supported so that they can make difficult decisions and gain the confidence to feel that if they fail it is not the end of the world and thus be able to learn from failure.'

CASE STUDY  
1

CASE STUDY  
2



## Context

In June 1970 the Department of Education and Science published a report entitled *The Structure of Art and Design Education*. The report commissioned by the then Secretary of State for Education and Science, Margaret Thatcher, was compiled by a joint committee of the National Advisory Council of Art Education and the National Council for Diplomas in Art and Design under the Chairmanship of Sir William Coldstream (Coldstream, 1970).

The purpose of the report was to map out the future direction and structure of art and design education at a pivotal moment in the development of the higher education sector in the UK, at a time when the independent and autonomous local authority funded and focused art schools began to be absorbed into the new polytechnics alongside local technical colleges and teacher training provision.

The report that runs to 55 pages and some 166 paragraphs, when read with hindsight, makes for instructive reading and a sense of considerable déjà vu for anyone who has been engaged in the higher education sector for art and design during the last nearly 40 years. The then new diplomas in art and design (DipAD) introduced in 1965 are reviewed in depth and a series of far reaching educational proposals made for their further development to achieve parity and ultimately conversion to Bachelor of Arts qualifications in the early 1970s. The report focuses on much that is familiar to those who have followed the debates around fitness for purpose; employer engagement, widening participation, regional and national development, the value of creativity and innovation to the national economy, the arts as regional and national economic generators, cultural intervention for the wellbeing of society alongside the need for greater interdisciplinarity, the need for vocational and technical educational training and much more. The nomenclature has changed but the thrust of the report and the strategic imperatives identified are little different today from those identified by Coldstream in his 1970s report. This was at a time when fewer than 7,000 students in the whole of the UK were enrolled on the diploma for art and design, see Table 1 below.

Table 1

Source: National Council for Diplomas in Art and Design, 1969 (Cited in Coldstream, 1970)

<b><u>Fine art</u></b>	<b>2,987</b>
<b><u>Graphic design</u></b>	<b>1,578</b>
<b><u>Three dimensional design</u></b>	<b>1,293</b>
<b><u>Textiles and fashion</u></b>	<b>1,014</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,872</b>



What has changed out of all recognition is the context within which the education process envisaged by Coldstream is now delivered. The following numbers were enrolled on art and design BA programmes in the UK in 2005/2006. See table 2 below.

**Table 2**

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency Data (2005/2006)

<b>Fine art</b>	<b>18,015</b>
<b>Design studies</b>	<b>55,625</b>
<b>Crafts</b>	<b>1,635</b>
<b>Others in the creative arts</b>	<b>5,965</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>81,240</b>

The Coldstream report makes reference to the far-reaching changes that might result from independent art schools becoming founding members of the new polytechnics but is ambivalent on what that would really mean. It assumes a continued place in the sector for the independent art school as specialist provision that would continue more or less unchanged, alongside new hybrids that might emerge within the new polytechnic sector. The report speaks of expansion but has no foresight of the size and breadth of provision that would so rapidly emerge in the polytechnics in the 1970s and 1980s and the resultant pressure on resources to support the expansion of a complex resource intensive system where learning by doing and making remains a central tenant of art and design education in the UK.

In 1984-1985 a National Advisory Body was established under the Chairmanship of Tom Bromley OBE. This body was tasked with, among other things, coming up with a rationalisation of a system of art and design education that was now large, complex and a major part of the polytechnic sector whose very success was creating evermore pressure on finite resources. The National Advisory Body's solution of differentiating provision between that which was to be designated as specialist and therefore limited, and that which was to be non-specialist and thus open to expansion, was a solution that addressed the questions of constrained resourcing. However, it significantly failed to address the ever-expanding and developing educational context.

In 1992 Kenneth Clark, the then Secretary of State for Education and Science, having recognised the success of the polytechnics in delivering their mission and also recognising a public perception of a two tier higher education provision where the university title was perceived as superior, legislated for all higher education institutions who met appropriate criteria to use the university designation.

Alongside this change of title, incorporation also freed the polytechnics from local authority control and funding and the close scrutiny of the Council for National



Academic Awards (CNAAs), which had national oversight and responsibility for the maintenance of the quality of all the degree awarding programmes in the non-university sector.

The *move* to incorporated status had an arguably greater effect on the independent and specialist colleges in terms of impact on leadership and management issues. At relatively short notice all the institutions assumed responsibility for many of the functions that had previously been provided from the Local Education Authorities. These functions ranged from leadership *advice* and guidance through directors of education and education committees, through human resource and finance functions to staff development. The leaders of the independent colleges spent time that might *have* been better utilised in strategic consideration, making good deficits in basic functions and time that should *have* been *devoted* to real leadership was often *devoted* to managerial compliance. On the other hand, some lecturers and middle managers had their first experience of thinking about the necessary management functions for their colleges in implementing these new services, and this led some of these people to consider management issues formally for more or less the first time.

Now, in 2007, the art and design disciplines are delivered mainly within the post-1992 university sector, a tiny and ever-diminishing handful of independent art schools, mostly in some form of partnership with a large university organisation and the UK now has two art and design universities, in the University of the Arts London and the soon to be University of the Creative Arts at Canterbury, Epsom, Farnham, Maidstone and Rochester – both of these *themselves* being conglomerates of a number of previously separate art and design institutions.

This context of change within the higher education sector *over* the last 40 years has been mirrored by significant change of the *values* of an education through the art and design disciplines to, not only the national economy, but also social cohesion and the cultural wellbeing of the nation. *Over* the last 10 years and particularly since the millennium, numerous reports from a variety of government ministries and agencies *have* highlighted the importance of developing the creativity and innovation of our population as being one of the nation's fundamental strengths and the attribute most valuable to our future national economic success and social wellbeing.

The Creative Industries Task Force (1998), Robinson (1999), Clark (1998), the Cox Report (2005), the NESTA report (October 2006), The Leitch Report (December 2006), all lay great emphasis on the importance to our future economic health and wellbeing of the internationally pre-eminent areas of the British economy now referred to as the *creative* industries. These industries, ranging across all aspects of the mass media and innovative design-led UK and global companies serving a sophisticated urban consumer society which is now highly conscious of brand and design identity, are populated, *served* and enabled by graduates of the British art and design education system. These industries, which are mainly composed of dynamic, fast-moving small and medium sized enterprises, express *views* on the quality of these graduates and how that quality might be improved yet further, but none suggest that they would be more successful without



this continuous supply of talent which is now not only driving this important sector of the UK economy, but also being employed by our global economic competitors.

In broad outline this is the context for the golden age for art and design education that Bichard identified. This context of change has led art and design higher education from peripheral small scale activity, catering to a separatist student community who would characterise themselves as outsiders or educational misfits who found the free-flowing, largely anarchic culture of an art school environment with fine art at its centre, a natural and supportive environment in which to grow, to a context of mass higher education of large, resource intensive, technologically sophisticated university faculties of art and design, where a greatly expanded design provision now predominates and fine art is no longer at the apex of the pantheon. The challenges for the delivery of the art and design disciplines in this context are numerous and complex but the challenges to leadership and management of these disciplines in this new context are particular and derive from the success that the sector has enjoyed.

Reference in numerous government reports can be found for the need for improved management and leadership of the design process and its interface with business communities using design, alongside the requirement for artists to lead and manage the interface of artistic practice with communities and agencies which commission their activity. However, very little has been written about the need for the development of the leadership and management skills of those now heading the educational provision for art and design. Sir Michael Bichard and others have indicated that leadership and management in the sector is shallow and there is insufficient formal development for those who wish to pursue their academic career in this direction. This is probably true for the whole of higher education, but is particularly stark in a sector where professional development has always been seen as subject specific and practice related and where a large proportion of academic staff prefer an associate or part-time relationship with the academy.

The 1970 Coldstream Report says nothing of the need for development in this area. It implicitly assumes that the artist teacher may need pedagogic assistance through attendance at short courses, to improve their teaching skills, but offers no recommendations for the development of the future leaders. The assumption is that the dedicated artist, or more rarely, design practitioner, with a love of subject and commitment to the value of education through art as intrinsically good, is all that is required. At that time this was probably true and there have certainly been some very charismatic educationally and artistically sophisticated eccentric and innovative art school principals in the history of the British art schools. All those characteristics are important and should continue to be valued but now a broader range of high level leadership skills are required. The educational process that art and design embraces from which our leaders are drawn, alongside the corporate environment of a modern university, creates particular tensions for which leaders need to be well prepared and enabled. It is no longer sufficient for strength of character and individual will, coupled with passion and belief in the value of our subjects, to be the only attributes that a leader and manager has to deploy.

## Early years

Good departments are the main training ground for young academics, establishing codes of academic behaviour, acculturating them into what constitutes good performance, providing them with the professional equipment to succeed in an academic career, and giving them an identity, which ensures that they make their mark in the wider world of scholars in their field.

The department plays a vital role in sustaining institutional academic success because it provides the nursery for academic talent and creates the next generation of academic leaders by nurturing their early academic successes (Shattock, 2003).

Within the context of the increasing internationalisation of higher education, our current students are the potential leaders for the future. There is a need to develop future academic leaders, encouraged into positions of power and influence that are representative of society as a whole and able to influence decision making within our universities for the benefit of tomorrow's students. Despite the recent expansion in higher education and an increase in the home and overseas student population, there are marked variances between the different social groups and subjects studied. People from lower social classes and ethnic minorities are not entering higher education in significant numbers. Social barriers relating to class, ethnicity and gender prohibit participation in education and therefore from achieving educational success, this prevents people from some social groups entering teaching as a profession and therefore contributing to the academic decision-making and institutional governance of our universities.

Widening participation in higher education is critical so that we can recruit academic staff representative of society generally who can then be involved in the development of the curriculum, teaching and learning and research strategies of our universities. Widening participation remains high on the government agenda and is likely to be a priority for the new Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and new guidance from Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) requires universities to develop outreach strategies which prioritise young people from *'communities currently under-represented in higher education'*.

Whilst senior organisational leadership is understood throughout institutions, there is a need for a model of 'distributed leadership' (Middlehurst and Kennie, 1997).

As the role of the academic in a modern university shifts from that of the individual or team engaged in the advancement of the subject to a position which is increasingly focused towards the needs of students, funding bodies and stakeholders, acknowledging and nurturing 'distributed leadership' is a means of developing future leaders from within course teams where leadership skills are initially acknowledged in roles such as module leader or year tutor. 'Distributed leadership' requires the development of new skills recognised and nurtured early in an academic career, developed at induction, and supported through mentoring. Early career academics will be better served by a clearer understanding of the needs of client groups and the



balance required between teaching, research and administration.

'I think mentoring is important. We are not particularly good in terms of enabling people to understand the tools that are needed in educational management — we have a lot of leaders and managers who have just fallen into leadership roles'.

### CASE STUDY 3

The senior leaders in the study all felt that they had progressed with little formal training and almost without exception had wished for some intervention early in their careers. Most said that they needed an induction and would have benefited from mentoring, coaching, and training. Many early career art and design academics seek part-time teaching or technician roles in higher education as a regular source of income whilst maintaining their own practice. The role of the practitioner teacher is still valued in art and design and cited in its ability to maintain currency within the curriculum and to respond to industry needs.

'I trained at art school, where a common expectation was to teach part-time. I wanted to work part-time so that I could develop my own work in my studio. Because part-time teaching was hard to find I took a job as a technician in the first instance'.

### CASE STUDY 4

'I was offered a job doing a day or two's teaching. I came in as part-time teacher and was also a practitioner. It was very nice because I was able to be certain about having a regular income, such as it was ... I was able to produce collections and then go out and sell them, and also do some teaching. The one day went to two days; the two days went to three days...'.

### CASE STUDY 5

The Dearing Inquiry into higher education recommended that '... all institutions should identify and remove all barriers which inhibit recruitment and progression for particular groups and monitor and publish their progress towards greater equality of opportunity for all groups' (Dearing, 1997).

The legislative framework for racial equality in the UK is the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. Another significant piece of relevant legislation is the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations as well as other European race equality laws. The Commission for Racial Equality has also published a non-statutory code of practice. HEFCE's statutory duties to promote equality in disability and gender are the Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Equality Act 2006. Currently, The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 requires higher education institutions to monitor staff equal opportunities on the grounds of race and the Commission for Equality and Human Rights requires further staff monitoring within other diversity strands. There are a number of organisations that work at a national level to promote equality. HEFCE with support from the Equality Challenge Unit, Equal Opportunities Commission, Action on Access, the Higher Education Academy and the Leadership Foundation, aims to support universities by developing a diverse staff and student body and improving employment

policies to assist higher education institutions to create future leaders from minority ethnic groups. Although some progress has been made on gender equality within the sector this is not the case for racial equality. The percentage of all home ethnic minority students is not reflected in the composition of teaching staff and those in senior administrative positions and there is a need to close the gap.

There is an expectation that academic staff will hold higher postgraduate qualifications. The 2008 research assessment exercise will impact on the research profile and therefore career opportunities of individual members of academic staff. There is a need to challenge stereotypes about who studies art and design. The lack of diversity in the curriculum is particularly important because of the significance of the creative industries to the economy. Universities will need to do more than comply with legislation. The responsibility for improving equal opportunities lies with individual institutions working with the funding councils and national agencies to make progress on issues of under-representation in the workforce.

The 2005/06 Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data indicates that although 36.6% of full-time academic staff are female, the percentage of female staff in more senior roles decreases to 31% of senior lecturers and researchers, and 16.5% of professors. Ninety one per cent of full-time academic staff declared their ethnicity, and of those 11.5% full-time academic staff were from an ethnic minority. The percentage of ethnic minority staff in senior roles also decreases to 30.8% senior lecturers and researchers, and 16.5% of professors.

The case studies revealed evidence that the attitude of senior managers to new and younger staff is a crucial factor in the key decision about whether to get involved in leadership and management or to stay with the safer option of remaining in a teaching team led by someone else. Several of those interviewed gave examples of more senior managers 'talent spotting' possible leaders and encouraging them to move forward.

CASE STUDY 6 'I was identified quite early on by the head of department, and subsequently a new dean of school, as somebody who was interested in moving things on, and was made course leader for the new fine art course.'

However, other interviewees described blocks at this early stage, which were often only overcome by moving institutions.

CASE STUDY 3 'Yes, I think there were barriers. I had a profound sense in one institution that women did not progress. I think it's very difficult to put your finger on it, but a sense that you get close to something and then somebody would undermine you.'

Again at another point, when they were looking at the annual reward review and they suggested that a male colleague had an upgrade for doing what I had been doing for the last three years and no-one had ever spoken to me about an increment reward.



I had been knocked back for promotion and within a year I had made two jumps, by moving institutions. At 'X' I only wanted to be an old university senior lecturer but 'Y' wanted to make me a professor.'

'I was approached again and accepted the role of course leader, but I was told by the vice-principal that I would have to remain as a lecturer. I knew all the other course leaders were on a senior lecturer scale. I thought it was such an awful thing to do and decided to move.'

CASE STUDY  
4

Other interviewees took the decision to move forward and lead a team because they are ambivalent about being managed by someone else in the team, indicating a preference to manage rather than be managed, or because no one else wished to take that responsibility.

'I suppose I became the year 1 tutor because no-one else wanted to do it, or would do it, but I wanted to do it because I wanted to be in charge. I wanted to change things.'

CASE STUDY  
2

'I thought it would be more of a challenge but it was boredom more than anything else, and my head of department was very positive about it. That was when I moved to become a senior lecturer.

CASE STUDY  
7

I took it over because there had been someone acting, looking after textiles, and was hopeless. I was so frustrated and I just felt that I could do it better.

My head of department just trusted people to do things and would let you get on with them, and he was always very approachable. I think the thing I learnt most from him was the way in which he dealt with people. He was very encouraging about management and about women in management.'

Growing into a leadership position from the first hesitant steps has similarities to the teenage years where a mix of emotions and experiences direct an individual in their outlook on life, and in the case of higher education, their management and leadership skills and approaches. A self-conscious approach to being the manager and leader means that feelings associated with this position relate to finding out about oneself, self-belief and being aware of the need to remain within the discipline and draw upon skills of a self-reflective practitioner. These characteristics are often stumbled upon, and reflected in the case studies, where more often than not there is a lack of self-confidence identified.

'I suppose that some people would say I had no personal ambition, which in terms of climbing the career ladder within higher education is absolutely spot on. There is a bit of self doubt that will always be with me.'

CASE STUDY  
5



The process of becoming a leader and its identity has been a crucial development in higher education over the last few years, when the former Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown was openly critical of higher education leadership and led to the formation of the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education. Added to this he commissioned the Cox report on the creative industries (Cox, 2005) which gave a much-needed impetus to put leadership of creative education into the heart of the higher education agenda. Developing leadership skills in the current environment is possibly more acceptable than it was in the past as the case studies demonstrate. The growing need for design education has not diminished since the municipal art colleges were first introduced in the Victorian era, and as a consequence there is a growing skill set emerging for leadership development.

#### CASE STUDY

5

'I now became more interested in the organisation of the curriculum; the management of people, making the best of the limited resources that were available. I realised that I needed to know about other things, and at that point my practice started to suffer because I did not know enough to do the job.'

The process of becoming a leader is full of growing pains as the boundaries move and change and experience becomes an essential part of development. Institutions conscious of this need have put more management and leadership training in place for newly appointed staff in positions regardless of the role they play as it is now widely understood that *'leadership not just happens at the top, but is integral to the whole organisation and practised at a variety of levels'* (Elvidge, 2005).

Art and design practitioners in education however, seem to adapt to the changes and realisation that impact is possible by drawing on a range of skills developed within the discipline. A general criticism of higher education management and its difference with the highly polished private sector is that it is often regarded as 'untidy' (Elvidge, 2005) with too many self managed professional academics who have little regard for the sense of unity and organisation as it has little to do with them personally. It is probably a real strength that characteristics of art and design educators fit well in a system that relies on people being able to constantly embrace change, instability and ambiguity.

#### CASE STUDY

5

'I have been able to recognise the changes that have affected me in relation to the roles I have taken on. I have loved it all really, it's got harder and harder and I think it is the responsibility that makes it hard.'

A major realisation when entering a leadership role is the power of the organisational culture and the impact this has on an individual's ability to manage change. Making changes now becomes a complex issue with often a set of conflicting priorities. A set of discipline cultures in art and design and within the institution itself refers to the cultural web in which managers operate (Johnson and Scholes, 1997). Strategic decision making becomes more difficult to implement as responding to different cultures within and through the institution can have a significant impact on the growing leader and their ability to adapt to change and the realisation that the external world is looking at what you do.



'It also alerted me to the fact that a lot of people on the outside were going to be looking at what I was going to do in terms of working in this institution, and in particular within this department.'

CASE STUDY  
5

However, through this process the leader grows in ability and forms a dedicated set of attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that begins to set them apart from junior colleagues and moves towards a growing relationship with senior colleagues. *'Managers rely heavily on frames of reference which are built up over a period of time and which are especially important at a collective organisational level'* (Johnson and Scholes, 1997) and a realisation that leadership is between people at all levels and the sense of responsibility grows as the leader moves into more generic areas.

*'Concepts of effective management and leadership might be contingent on the academic discipline involved, lack of affiliation or sense of belonging to university may have been fostered by the management in which academic careers are constructed.'* (Elvidge, 2005)

'I first became aware of letting go of my students when I read a paper in the early 90s by Biggs on deep and surface approaches to learning, and I became really interested in the wider context of the student experience.'

CASE STUDY  
4

But it is the contention that within art and design the skills base should not be seen to be lost or irrelevant to more senior roles because of the developing importance of creative subjects being mainstreamed within large institutions.

'In a large metropolitan university they become an enormous force for change and creativity across all the subject disciplines within those organisations.'

CASE STUDY  
2

A changing approach to management and leadership training might be developed using core competencies from art and design to manage this transition. One of the biggest requests from the case studies was to have a mentor, someone to work with, to share ideas, to discuss concepts and ambitions, rather than a set of traditional management training sessions. Active learning sets were also described as being of extreme importance in developing skills and relationships. This fits neatly with methods of work in which we are familiar, critiques, reflective practice, ideas development and implementation and problem solving.

'As an artist you embrace uncertainty, you follow your imagination, you seek out your creativity, you think laterally and you are a problem solver, and you always have to have a strategic view on where you wish to go. So apart from being a change agent I know that these are attributes that some of my PVC colleagues value in me.'

CASE STUDY  
2



These attributes lead to a clear career trajectory and the ability to be responsible for change and to manage our own destinies to improve the academic excellence and student experience necessary for today's society.

CASE STUDY 2 The vision embodied a dynamic energetic form of education that put the student at its very centre and valued learning through doing and making.'

Interestingly few of our case studies had ambitions to be the first vice-chancellor from an art and design discipline. As the impact of leadership in institutions is changing the nature of the top jobs change, but there is great scope for the traits of entrepreneurship and creativity forming the basis for strong leadership at the top. However, there is clearly a need to be more explicit as the subject grows in importance against other sector disciplines.

CASE STUDY 5 'Your actions can actually affect a lot of people. I think that everybody in a senior position within an institution has to think very carefully, not be risk adverse, but you do have to think, you do have to know what is going on, and you do have to be informed not only about your own immediate job, but informed about the bigger picture too. You need to know about initiatives that will change our industries, and the initiatives that will change the way in which we work within universities.'

## Mid-life

The term 'mid-life' has been adopted to describe a career stage characterised in a number of different ways, broadly speaking this is the point in an academic career involving progression beyond the role of course tutor or programme leader. In terms of an academic management route, this stage is identifiable by titles such as head of programmes, head of department and associate dean, although these titles are not exclusive. More recently, in art and design opportunities to progress to what we describe as a 'mid-life' career stage now exist through other routes for staff with specific expertise, for example, research or knowledge transfer.

Although this definition is not precise and finite it parallels that of the 'middle manager' in higher education (Handcock and Hellawell, 2003, Clegg and McAuley, 2005) and the assumptions and perceptions about 'mid-life' identified from our discussions and the case studies evidence this.

One of the perceptions about moving to 'mid-life' is that it inevitably means an increasing disassociation from the subject; immersion on a daily basis becomes impossible and the 'mid-lifer' has to learn to 'let go'. For staff involved in creative practice this can be a tension and potential deterrent to taking this next 'career step'.



'I worked extremely hard but my practice actually suffered because I needed to become a different type of person to do a very different type of job, I could actually feel the change happening to me.'

## CASE STUDY 5

The 'change' described here requires some consideration. Traditionally, much academic practice and pedagogy in art and design is practice-based and it is through their 'own work', however articulated, that staff establish credibility with both their peers and students. Cultural capital is developed and maintained through this process. Consequently, moving forward potentially threatens academic status and involves increased isolation from the peer group or 'tribe' with no apparent new 'tribe' to join.

Existing literature defines the 'middle management' role as potentially alienated and marginal, with a loss of personal and professional freedom, coupled with an exclusion from decision-making (Handcock and Hellawell, 2003, Clegg and McAuley, 2005). Our own discussions added the following, an apparent increased workload and responsibility, little additional financial reward, possible lack of support. In all, powerful deterrents for the prospective art and design leader moving forward to 'mid-life'.

Induction to the role typified as 'mid-life' appears to be virtually non-existent; there is little formal staff development or management training evident from the case studies. However, there was evidence of support and this was usually in the form of a key individual in a more senior position, an informal, unacknowledged mentoring. It would appear that their approach, 'hands either on or off' enabled the newly appointed 'mid-lifer' to adapt and develop in the role.

'He was a great confidence builder... he let me run my department and supported me and what he also did was fight your corner in the wider university. All the time you felt that if push came to shove, he would be there to support you and that was great. I learnt a lot from him.'

## CASE STUDY 2

'I've had three managers who have developed me — because I've been useful to them and they've needed me, but nonetheless they've been quite careful they haven't just used me.'

## CASE STUDY 6

I always took every opportunity to attend anything that I thought would be useful. I have never been knocked back in my career for a request to attend a conference or an event, and I don't think that is untypical because I run staff development for my faculty and I very rarely refuse any request, but people don't come forward, they say "I haven't got time" or "I do not want to do any extra". I was eager to network, I found it supportive in times of difficulty in my institution or my career, to have a peer group to call on, and then mid career I evolved a female peer group which I call on now'.



Being allowed to 'do the job' and feeling empowered is a thread throughout the case studies. Through this 'mid-lifers' appear to gain satisfaction from their new, demanding roles. There is recognition that mistakes do happen and this forms an important part of the learning process. This concept has much in common with 'learning by doing' as articulated by Schon, which is intrinsic to art and design pedagogy and is perhaps equally significant in developing leadership capabilities. The observation here indicates this is fundamental, even more important than the 'supportive' senior manager.

**CASE STUDY 8** 'In my new job I had lots of freedom and responsibility and I thrived on it. I did some international collaboration and recruitment and some engagement with the centre. There was no formal support and I had the worst dean I ever encountered'.

Engagement with the 'centre' brings an increasing awareness of the institutional contexts within which art and design operates. In addition, the extended remit of mid-life roles, engaging with the wider community, external agencies, national and international collaboration develops a strong sense of responsibility.

It is the broader remit of these roles, which can make this stage interesting and challenging. For the new mid-lifer this rapid introduction to the wider context is a steep learning curve requiring new skills and the ability to adapt quickly. In addition to this exposure, the mid-life role still includes day-to-day operational activity, quality assurance, and human and financial resource management. In discussion, there was acknowledgement of the transferability of 'creative skills', particularly 'creative thinking' to different contexts, beyond the discipline and subject. Arguably, at this stage this becomes crucial to both job satisfaction and survival.

**CASE STUDY 2** 'I learnt a lot about how to be an entrepreneur from him, how to make money for your school and department something that I hadn't been able to do in [institution A]; there wasn't any money or opportunity. But [institution B] has opportunities, and that is part of my present job I enjoy, so in other words being able to use my entrepreneurship has been something that has been nascent from way back in my career.'

For some, this stage is the first opportunity to develop individual interests and demonstrate leadership in particular areas, such as learning and teaching, marketing or international development. These opportunities are empowering, coupled with the successful adaptation to increased responsibility and understanding of the 'bigger picture' may be just the motivation some 'mid-lifers' need to progress their careers further. For others there may need to be a little prompting.

**CASE STUDY 5** 'My predecessor (as dean), who I had a great deal of respect for said to me "you are going to have to think about what you are going to do". It was like someone dragging a stick along a bird cage and I thought "don't say that I am busy doing this ... don't say that, don't myther me with that, I have things to do here."'



## Senior professional

We are using this term to describe individuals in posts such as pro-vice-chancellor, dean, rector, pro-rector and head of college.

At this level leaders of art and design higher education appear to have far greater autonomy, and possess the means to realise their vision through the management of staff, physical resources and longer term strategic planning. They are also required to contribute to institutional missions and strategies, and thus work with the art and design team as a leader, whilst also operating as a leader at an institutional level. Here they can contribute to the ethos and culture of their university, and are empowered to develop and realise their own style within the context of a team of leaders drawn from a range of backgrounds which normally include the humanities and science. The particular make up of the senior team impacts strongly upon the art and design leader and can either enable them to work to personal and discipline strength or mitigate against that, often because of hierarchical perceptions of subjects and the value those have in the academy.

'I'm in a senior team with three people — we've all got complementary personalities. You have to have the strength of character to say this is what I believe in and this is how we should do it, because that's leadership and that's what people are looking for. But you've got to listen and pick out what you think is a valuable comment and then adapt it and go back to people and consult again, otherwise you don't take people with you.'

CASE STUDY  
1

'I'm not the logical data driven scientific kind of leader — I'm an emotional leader. I lead through a passion for art and design education, and people want to follow me.'

CASE STUDY  
2

It is worth noting how the shift of focus from subjects and knowledge, to students as clients, within universities has impacted onto and the hierarchy of value associated with different disciplines. This has allowed for greater recognition of so called 'softer' subjects such as art and design, media practice and the performing arts within the unified sector. This is exemplified by the rise in art and design applications as opposed to the demise of engineering courses, and the resultant hybrid design engineering courses that have arisen as an attempt to use the attractiveness of design to support endangered engineering disciplines. However, the impact of this shift is restricted to the modern universities, as opposed to old universities, where the growth of art and design student numbers has had little appreciable impact. In addition we must recognise that networking outside of one's own institution or the art and design professional bodies, at a senior level is severely hampered by the dominance of the old universities (where art and design is extremely small) in many for, and on national committees. This imbalance of representation can make operating at this level a more isolated experience, and can also mean that government agendas can impact negatively into art and design provision.



CASE STUDY 1 'Since I became pro-rector, I joined the pro-vice-chancellor network and the HEA pro-vice-chancellors network and I find that quite interesting, speaking to people at the same level as me but in other contexts.'

Working at a senior level is increasingly demanding the capacity to work with external agencies; city councils, RDAs and industry, both in terms of art and design initiatives, but also multidisciplinary projects in such as areas as health technology design, life long learning networks or civic regeneration. A breadth of understanding across art and design and beyond, for instance, into built environment, computing or engineering is demanded. Individuals at this level need to be confident in communicating the virtues of art and design to colleagues from other backgrounds both within and beyond their institution.

*'Pro-vice-chancellors are increasingly perceived as senior executives, not colleagues, in the corporate world of the university and to realise this change academic or disciplinary orientation may need to be relegated behind other priorities.'*

(Smith, Adams and Mount, 2006)

[www.lfhe.ac.uk/publications/newsletters.html#engagement](http://www.lfhe.ac.uk/publications/newsletters.html#engagement) 7.pdf

There is a generally held myth in art and design that moving up through the leadership route equates with leaving your subject behind, the notion of 'the stained glass ceiling' - and that the specific nature of the art and design disciplines as practice, makes this a particularly difficult decision.

However, the case studies reveal that the reality of experience of some of those in senior positions, is that as a dean or pro-vice-chancellor you are enabled to work from art and design on a very large canvas, and that far from leaving their subject behind senior leaders from art and design are increasingly able to take their subject with them, and locate it centrally within the modern university sector. This offers the current and upcoming generation of leaders the opportunity to enhance the higher education sector through the essential characteristics of art and design; learning through making, a positive approach to change and to risk, and achieving the manifestation of ideas as artefact or image. Given the power of images and of branding within contemporary society, art and design brings potent capacities to enhance our 21st century higher education institutions.

There is a clear move away from the notion that higher management means general management. It is arguable that in the move from specialist colleges into the polytechnic sector in the 1970s, that 'safe pairs of hands' were selected as leaders of art and design to ensure that the natural volatility characteristic of our disciplines did not threaten the new arrangements. It is because of our history within specialist colleges that many still speak of art and design as a young subject within the university sector. This is most often quoted in relation to research and postgraduate qualifications. However, the last 25 years have seen significant growth in art and design, as described in the context section of this paper. In addition the period between 1998 and 2002 can be viewed as a critical moment in the coming of age of our disciplines within the modern university

sector. From 1998 to 2000 art and design in the UK underwent a process of review as required by higher education funding bodies and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). There was evidence of strength across the art and design providers with the majority getting high or excellence ratings. In the 2001 Research Assessment Exercise, art and design did well in securing funding both through the achievement of 4 and 5 grades, but also through capability funding for 3a graded returns, by returning relatively healthy numbers of researchers.

'In the 1980s I became aware of the possibilities for research in art and design. I anticipated a growing role for research as polytechnics became closer to, and then merged with universities. At that point I began planning my career towards participating in the emergent field of research. I was ambitious and expected that leadership would come as part of a successful career but it was not a goal in itself.'

## CASE STUDY 9

The QAA and RAE results together offered senior colleagues from outwith art and design, forms of evidence of the health and credibility of art and design, and established a platform of trust and acceptance from which senior managers are now able to operate, and forms the underpinning for Sir Michael Bichard's claim that we are entering a 'golden age'.

## Conclusion

The following emerge as key considerations for successful leadership in art and design higher education:

- mentoring - both informal and formal, is particularly key at early, 'teenage' and mid-life points
- a capacity to continue to learn from others who either have other skills or are more experienced
- the confidence to take risks within a supportive environment
- feeling empowered to take on full responsibility to 'do the job' and to make and learn from mistakes without fear of censure
- a passion for, and real connection with the disciplines
- a capacity for lateral thinking
- the ability to foster one's own creativity and that of others
- an understanding of the complex interrelationship of physical and human resource management required in an art and design provision
- experience and knowledge of the creative and cultural industries sector
- the desire and the ability to take your discipline with you and to apply discipline capabilities in unfamiliar contexts.



Key traits, practices and capabilities include:

- depth of knowledge of the discipline through a strong grounding in practice as a teacher
- extensive experience of the practices of making and doing and the accompanying reflective processes
- knowledge and understanding of the higher education environment and wider contexts including regional and community agendas, government policies and international trends
- the confidence to work from experience and use one's intuition
- the capacity to work within as well as lead a team, understanding one's own and others' roles
- the ability to construct strong effective teams; to be a good judge of character, and to appoint exceptional people
- the confidence to work to strengths reinforcing success at both personal and group levels
- the ability to challenge other's actions and thinking - not being easily intimidated
- the capacity to balance focus and flexibility in order to negotiate shifting policies, needs and goals
- the capacity to articulate and demonstrate respect for staff and the particular contributions they can make
- a strong interest in people and an understanding of what motivates colleagues in the art and design disciplines
- integrity, and transparency of processes
- a strong sense of commitment to opening opportunities for staff and students
- a capacity to harness creative energies and use discipline volatility as a positive force; passion in action
- a genuine interest in students and an understanding of their desires, needs and motivations
- a high degree of self awareness and recognition of the impact of one's decisions on others, and a willingness to take responsibility for one's own and others' actions and directions.

The case studies revealed that in order to progress, individuals often have to move from one institution to another, key triggers to such a move included:

- financial; working in higher education where resources did not meet an acceptable threshold for effective delivery or a positive student experience
- issues of integrity; an institution moving in a direction, which is unacceptable to an individual
- problems with a line manager; blocking progress, exclusion.

Other key factors, which emerged, are the shallowness of the pool of new staff entering art and design, and thus those who can be developed on to leadership and management roles. Some of those at entry level display inappropriate expectations of progress in relation to performance and are prone to disengage and become disillusioned at the level of course leader or head of department, regressing into a 'them and us' position. In addition, greater consideration by younger staff of the work/life balance, and a perception that more work does not equate with appropriate levels of more pay, seem to inhibit progression from lecturer grade to senior spine positions.

In order to address the challenges of leadership for future success in art and design higher education, those currently in positions of leadership must work in the sector and in their own institutions to alter the perceptions of leadership and management by those operating at lower levels. Some of this will involve questioning myths about progression, for example, that management equates to administration – all meetings and paperwork that it puts you at a distance from students, and most importantly takes you out of your own community of practice. In addition there is an incorrect perception that is not borne out by RAE returns that senior staff cease to be *active* in their own discipline.

Managers at all levels need to make visible and articulate the process of moving from team to team and the excitement of creating new networks which this affords if they are to act as role models.

Alongside this, we in the art and design sector should desist from our historical separateness – the 'art and design is different' argument of the polytechnic era and specialist providers – to demonstrations of how art and design is better, and offers an appropriate model to other disciplines, through its deep understanding of methods of learning by doing. It is important for art and design staff at various levels in universities to work with colleagues from other disciplines and not rely on senior managers to network across disciplines. Leaders must feel confident in sending staff to central committees, working parties, and development units, and resist the protective paternalistic approach of sheltering colleagues in art and design from the educational worlds beyond their own.

Skills of delegation and empowerment are essential, as is the articulation of vision at a senior and institutional level. These three capabilities come together with a deep understanding of learning by doing to form the creative process which will be essential to the new generation of senior art and design leaders.

We recognise that there is much work to be done to strengthen leadership potential in our discipline and recommend that key bodies such as GLAD work with the Leadership Foundation to establish an art and design mentoring and development scheme to bring forward the next generation of leaders.



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