



Recognising Entrepreneurial Leaders

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Academic Enterprise leaders are ambitious and passionate about developing real impact for their chosen interest; they have often worked out a clear and underlying strategy for delivering improvements in the 'real world' and demonstrate an ambition to contribute something tangible from their work as academics. They are particularly sensitive to contextual and socio-political issues; recognise the importance of relationships with others, including external partners, colleagues in their own institution, and the teams they work within; draw upon their own experiences; and are driven by underlying values and beliefs that encourage them to seek out collaboration with the wider community.

The Importance of Ambition and Autonomy

Our study shows successful Academic Enterprise leaders are driven by a strong sense of *intrinsic motivation*; as one Director of Enterprise put it, *'it's intriguing leading academics through change...helping empower them on a day-to-day basis... It's also extremely fulfilling to my team, and I...I get a real buzz from it'* (DAE). These are academics who want to do – and lead – Outreach. Those we interviewed have had to take risks, including risks with their careers, to achieve what they have in Outreach. Rarely, to date, have universities provided necessary motivation to make this area a career focus – *'we recognize the needs for a Reward's scheme to reinforce progress and are developing criteria centrally for this...but it is difficult'* (AS). Typically, Academic Enterprise has not been forced upon them through university mission statements or even individual career ambition. Rather, they have a desire to add 'real meaning' to how they help people better their own lives, particularly in the way they experience and engage with external partners in order to enable them to flourish; they also often want to maintain a strong ethos that their university has an important role to play in shaping how the world is and could be or become; *'I recognize what universities can offer to*

the local context and then facilitate this happening with effect' (DAE). Providing, or 'growing', intrinsic motivation is a difficult task for universities to achieve for Academic Enterprise, so it is important for senior academic managers to recognize where this occurs in their own academics, and to support and build on it where it occurs – *'the VC encouraged me to be proactive in enterprise and to become a leader in my own right... she's a sort of informal coach'* (AS). Furthermore, simply telling academics to 'do Outreach' is **not** sufficient to enable effective Outreach: they need to want to do it themselves and the University must therefore recognise those who want, and can do, Academic Enterprise and empower them to do so.

Leaders talked of their passion about their chosen area of Academic Enterprise, their leadership of it, and their determination to achieve something 'real'; *'I know what I am doing and trying to achieve and am in no sense afraid of change... in fact I thrive on its ...and know what needs to be done'* (DAE). This includes ideological commitments gained through life experience: *'passion for fair play and helping others from my early heritage when living in a council house on the wrong side of town'* (PH, 2010); *'I'd always been bothered by social issues and the things happening to communities.... I needed to do something about it* (AEPL); *as a working class boy in the war I got the opportunity to get out... I believe in the power of collective action and how it can achieve remarkable things'* (VC). Displaying or actualizing this passion need not be some grandiose objective or large in scale, and many of leaders related stories of small-scale, seemingly mundane and quite localized projects, or activities, that were particularly influential in driving their current activities and decision-making. Clearly, thinking and acting at a small-scale is not necessarily seen as a bad way to conduct Academic Enterprise.

Academic Enterprise leaders succeed because, in their terms, they are 'left to get on with things'; *I am left to get on with Outreach, encouraging good ideas of others and protecting my team* (Dean). Of course, they are not literally left alone, and they increasingly have to account for their actions by their University and society. Rather, the views they express simply implies their need for autonomy – including being able to pursue their own personal vision, getting on with activities that they believe will yield success, and being able to access or identify unusual pockets of funding which others may consider inaccessible. As in other academic activities (Benneworth, 2011), key motivators are freedom and autonomy to pursue the development of their chosen area of activity in their own way as they strive for the highest excellence and supreme stewardship; *'the university allows me to develop effective programmes which reflect aboriginal needs in my own way and am also building up financial independence of the project and its processes for the future'* (AEPL). However, there was also a sense that much Outreach

activity is allowed to take place 'under the radar' and so long as it "does not get too big". In this sense, there are clear links here to the importance of the success of small scale projects with clear outcomes as providing intrinsic motivation to successful leaders; *'I am allowed to develop the programme because its small in scale and doesn't cut across anyone'* (AEPL). However, within engaged universities, senior staff attempt to raise the game of their staff with respect to Reach-out; *'I act with honesty and empathise with staff... inclusiveness and collaboration through listening... and staff really listen to me because they know I take them seriously'* (VC). Leaders at 'lower-tier' university institutions, in particular, considered themselves as caught between wanting to follow their desires, while recognising that they do so only in so far as they can contribute to wider good university publicity/rhetoric.

Perhaps because Academic Enterprise leaders are driven by personal motivation, and are seen to be so by their superiors, extrinsic rewards and incentives may be seen to be unnecessary, or at least of limited demand; *'it has taken me a long time to get on in academe as someone interested in Reach-out... whereas in industry you grow your talent, incentivize it and promote it universities don't seem to do that'* (AEPL). Furthermore, there may also be a sense that not all institutions are in a position to be able to reward Outreach, though where this idea comes from, is unclear and we are still exploring it as an issue. Nonetheless, there is a perception among some senior university leaders that it will take a long time before universities realize the importance of Outreach or for others that it is less important than other university activities. Furthermore, Outreach must not just be seen as being about economic developments or adding to the bottom line (for example with regard to opportunity for patents, profiteering or gaining research monies), but should be about the importance of making Academic Enterprise a 'noble academic art' which ensures an active, real and sustainable difference; *'it's becoming a very good reputational benefit, helping make the university internationally renowned, and providing credible evidence of social impact'* (PVC). Senior leaders who are getting on with it, have recognised their own role in being part of the 'rhetoric' of university mission statements regarding Outreach and its importance to the university: *'I am building an alternative set of values around the talented in the University and basing the future on what is actually happening here... I enable and celebrate success.... creating a new reputation'* (VC). The best leaders have learned to articulate the full nature of their Academic Enterprise. Where financial impact can be assessed, it is used; where the impact is for social or public good then short sharp case studies have been used to articulate success, and its full impact is broadcast locally, regionally and nationally. The Leadership Foundation would do well to strengthen leadership capability to enable the development of relevant performance

indicators for this area, not only in senior staff, but in all academic leaders, coaching them to articulate such a mission and its implementation/impact more thoroughly and coherently.

Most leaders we interviewed recognized the personal context within which their leadership has developed. They had typically sought out opportunities where others had not be looking; *It's about understanding the culture... it's not about authority and power, but acting as a 'channel of authority'... it's about trust and enabling people... it's about becoming a servant leader'* (VC); *'understanding the context well and then developing actions to the right goals'* (DAE). They recognise Outreach as a different type of academic activity – not about 'looking', 'seeing' and 'writing', but 'looking', 'seeing' and 'doing' something.

The Importance of Context

Institutional Values: Successful Academic Enterprise leaders see themselves as following an 'alternative' path to the 'conventional academic role/career'. Those interviewed discussed an inability to gain rewards through publishing and research; indeed most of them so far promoted had done so through traditional routes. This is compensated for (to a degree) by their own motivation; 'I got the leadership bug at the youth club I managed, where I helped shape exciting programmes for about 60 young people' (AS). However, while it may be difficult to promote 'passion' and ambition among those who have little interest in Outreach, it is possible for those senior in Higher Education Institutions to de-motivate those with only a fledgling passion. If it is perceived that Academic Enterprise is less-important than, say, teaching or research, academics may turn away from the activity, preferring to go for promotion following more 'conventional' career routes. Given that project Reach-out leaders cannot normally determine institutional values and mission, value and leadership capabilities of Academic Enterprise leaders has to be recognised somewhere else at higher levels in the University.

Financial Resources: Leaders, by and large, stressed financial difficulties, caused by a lack of readily available funding to pursue Outreach, as a real barrier to progress. This is despite attempts (e.g. by HEFCE) to offer at least pump priming financial support to universities. The limited financial rewards made available internally in Universities were often insufficient to promote a greater uptake in Academic Enterprise. However, those interviewed also discussed their own success as resulting from their ability to find money, where others have not necessarily thought to look: *'finding the resources to make the enterprise work just became one of the challenges, but increasingly a very important one'* (AEPL); *'leaders take on the pain*

and marshal the resources to actually get to our required destination' (PVC). Successful leaders see funding as just another challenge, and not a barrier to progress, and many had worked with senior colleagues earlier in their careers to develop the skills necessary to acquire continuous funding; this is rather than them being reliant on the system to provide the necessary resources. It is therefore important to coach junior Academic Enterprise leaders in the processes of funding acquisition to enable their successful future developments.

The Environment: There is a need to develop supportive contexts where academics feel they are able to do Outreach well: a place where enterprising academics feel comfortable to innovate with external partners; and where those with a passion can feel they can develop their skills: *I tried to create the right environment and focus where young staff and students could explore exciting futures* (DAE); *'the Innovation Forum is a place where local people come together with University colleagues to discuss potential projects in a supportive environment, and it really works'* (PVC). This includes, not only creating supportive institutional environments, but also recognising the importance of face-to-face contact within, and beyond, the university through what might be termed 'facing up to' or 'facing outwards' leadership: *"My staff and I meet with civic and business groups and societies to work out the best interactions with the university....I find an action learning approach encourages the best collaboration for mutual benefit"* (Dean). Providing spaces for dialogue, both within and beyond the institutions is one way that universities can facilitate the 'right' contexts for successful Out-reach.

Relationships with others: The leaders we talked to felt they had been fortunate to have been promoted to their current positions because they had been nurtured, mentored and supported. They found themselves in (or placed themselves in) social and inter-relational contexts where they felt rewarded. This may also be why so many we talked to were purposefully creating similarly 'rewarding' social contexts and relationships – if they could – in their own institutions, with their own projects: *'the Change Academy gave eight of us the confidence to develop an enterprise vision, strategy together, to build up the collaborative relationships between us and it also gave us a game plan for the future which worked because it came from the "body of the kirk", who also felt involved in the decision making'* (AS). There is a clear need for good interpersonal leadership: Good leaders also need to feel supported and recognised by others, not simply through 'reward', but also endorsement, encouragement, access to resources, and active support from superiors.

The Importance of Interpersonal Relationships

Leaders rarely achieve success by acting alone. Those we spoke to recognise this and highlighted the importance of working in good teams with the support of senior academics project leaders, their Heads of School/Department and Deans; *'it's about developing a collective and collaborative vision for the future... and then working with highly committed people to embed enterprise across the University'* (AS). The problems and obstacles they have dealt with are complex, fluid and normally go beyond any institutionalised barriers or university mission statements; *'I recognise people are set in their ways, so cultural change is needed... and to encourage staff to take part in new enterprise developments'* (AS). Those we spoke to preferred to work with those whom they had built trusted and sharing relationships, often developed through open, and honest, conversations: *'I try to build up trusted relationships by being approachable, listening and acting as an ambassador'* (AS).

Successful leaders are social beings, and have been influenced by, just as they are influential to, those around them. They have an empathy with the teams they lead, are open to new ideas in discussion and are also extremely committed to finding good solutions through collaborative co-creation. They pose a skills-set developed through experience which enables them to cope with different and difficult contexts: *'on an educational working trip to Nigeria, early in my career, I learned about different cultures and ways of engaging which total changed my life, directing me towards adult education'* (Dean); *'I ran a demo well, after reading "Catcher in the Rye" and I saw how powerful collective action could become'* (AS); *'I witnessed community protests against the university and it made me think how I could help the community, especially the poorer do things for themselves'* (JG, 2009)). These 'life chances', 'cross roads' and 'turning points', contributed to the development of broader philosophy of, for example, 'needing to make a difference', or providing confidence to lead others. Consequently, success in Academic Enterprise is not simply a matter of 'luck', but is also about the leader recognizing the contexts supporting any such development – including their histories and relationships with other individuals and other institutions; *'I have the rather naïve belief and trust that people working together can achieve anything'* (VC).

[1] The words 'Reach-Out', 'Outreach' and 'Academic Enterprise' are used interchangeably in this paper to represent what is called, in Britain, the 'Third Stream' of a University Mission. You will realise from the text that we see this as an equal 'First Mission' for Universities and not a lower level activity. For us it represents a rich form of relationship between Universities and their external partners from business, industry, the civil and voluntary services and the community. We prefer the term Academic Enterprise as the key term for this activity because it suggests universities becoming more enterprising in their ways of Reaching-Out/Outreach, where knowledge sharing between all parties in any partnership is virtuous, so Academic Enterprise is the main one used this through the text, but Reach-out & Outreach are also used in the writing for variety and to add colour

[2] Eleanor Jackson, a doctoral student of Professor Powell's, has provided significant thinking in this paper and her findings are appropriately referenced later