

# ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

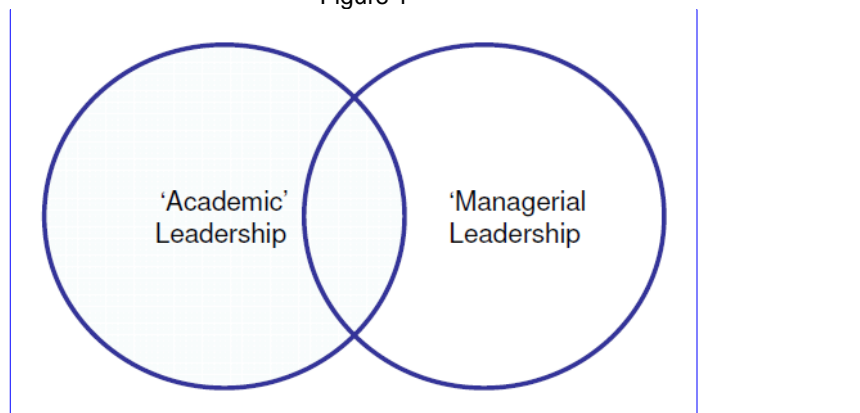
## *Dimensions, dysfunctions and dynamics*

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### 1 Introduction

In this paper I tentatively suggest some of the more distinctive characteristics and practices which are associated with the particular challenges of leading academics. My starting hypothesis is that the component dimensions and the practice of 'academic' leadership differ in a number of ways from those processes associated more with 'managerial' leadership, whilst recognising, as illustrated in Figure 1, that an area of common territory also exists.

Figure 1

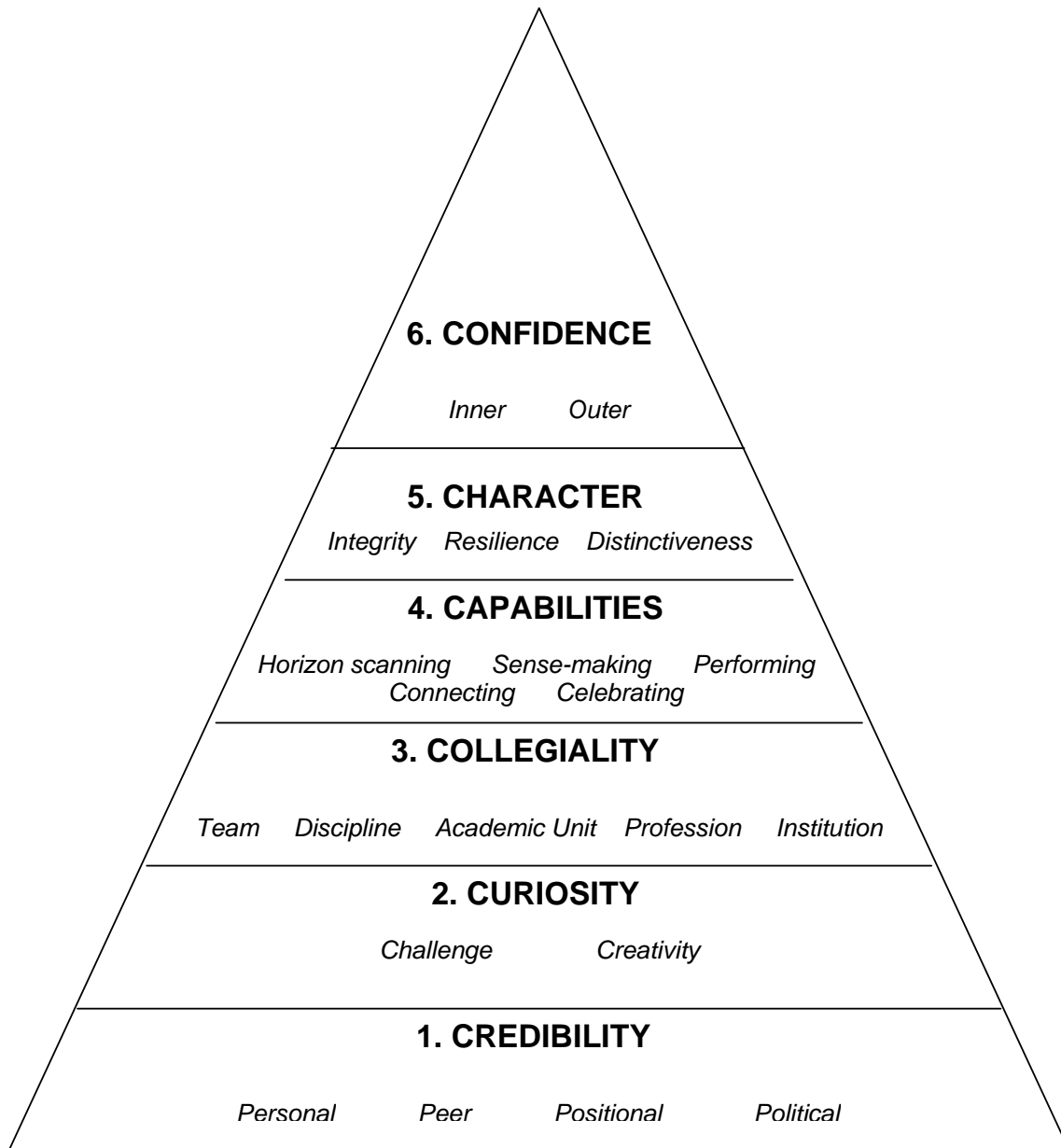


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In order to explore this assumption further I have developed a conceptual framework which builds on prior work by Andrew Munro, a fellow consultant, and Whatmore (1999) but is to a large extent based on my personal experience as an academic, a consultant and a coach working within a number of academic settings. The framework is based on the six different dimensions of academic leadership as shown in Figure 2.

The paper then develops these *dimensions* and offers examples of some of the ways in which effective leaders deploy them in an academic context. This is followed by a consideration of the other side of academic leadership – the *dysfunctions* – which can cause an academic leader to fail or temporarily derail. Finally, I conclude with some early thinking about the *dynamics* at work in the model, based on the interplay and patterns which arise from different combinations of its six key factors.

Figure 2: Some Dimensions and Domains of Academic Leadership



## 2 Dimensions of Academic Leadership

### 2.1 Credibility

A further hypothesis I propose is that academic leadership can only be truly practised if the academic leader has built a strong foundation of credibility. Without this fundamental underpinning, I suggest that the necessary conditions for leadership will be not be in place and the ability to lead is likely to be severely limited; indeed leadership may even in some situations become impossible. I suggest that credibility needs to be demonstrated and earned in four domains, namely:

**2.1.1 Personal credibility:** Personal academic credibility as illustrated through, say, the gaining of relevant qualifications, typically (but not exclusively) through obtaining a PhD and undertaking subsequent post-doctoral work, and through evidence of past and current academic achievements.

**2.1.2 Peer credibility:** Builds from personal credibility and is apparent through the opinions and positive judgments of peer members of the academic community which help build and develop the academic leader's reputation.

**2.1.3 Positional credibility:** Is an extension of personal and peer credibility and arises when, with peer support, the academic leader reaches a position of influence and authority (eg head of research group, department, school). Positional credibility develops from successfully building the reputation of the wider academic unit, well beyond that of the academic leader's personal or group reputation.

**2.1.4 Political credibility:** Particularly, although not only, at the more senior levels of academic leadership, credibility is further enhanced by being able to read and deal well with the inevitable political challenges which arise in higher education. These might include, for example, having to counter negative perception of your academic unit or deal with negative politics which may arise from the perceptions of peers, and so on.

### 2.2 Curiosity

The second dimension in the framework is premised around the hypothesis that effective academic leaders possess and demonstrate consistently high levels of academic curiosity. They have an infectious fascination for their discipline, well beyond their own personal field of interest. Single scholars or lone researchers clearly also need this in order to succeed. However, academic leaders require, I suggest, curiosity on a wider scale if they are to engage and inspire others. Whether innate or invoked, it needs to be authentic. Through this intellectual curiosity, academic leaders also exhibit two other important attributes:

**2.2.1 Challenge:** Through engagement with others academic leaders set and develop the academic agenda for their unit. Collins and Porras (2004) suggested to 'managerial leaders' that they need to articulate the 'BHAG' (a 'Big, Hairy Audacious Goal') for their team or organisation; they define a BHAG (bee-hag - I know it's an awful term) as being a goal which is "clear and compelling, serving as a unifying focal point of effort, acting as a clear catalyst for team spirit, it has a clear finish line, so the organization can know when it has achieved the goal".

In a higher education context, I contend that academic leaders do need to do this but also need to establish the Big Hairy *Academic* Goal. This becomes the challenge – whether it is to sequence the human genome or simply to incrementally analyse some new data, academic leaders use intellectual challenges to constantly set the agenda for the wider group.

Developing this culture of intellectual challenge is key. Ideas are openly challenged, no intellectual 'sacred cows' are permitted. The leader's role is to be able to clarify the challenge – and also challenge the group to address these academic questions. To do so requires the second dimension of curiosity:

**2.2.2 Creativity:** Breakthroughs in any area of enquiry typically demand a different way of looking at a problem or a different world view of a topic. To facilitate breakthroughs, academic leaders need to foster the conditions which lead to intellectual risk-taking. Creating a culture where creativity is encouraged is a key function of the academic leader. Whether through brainstorming, using in-house seminars, or arranging visits to other organisations and institutions, the leader makes every effort to facilitate and encourage new ways of thinking and the challenging of existing assumptions.

### **2.3 Collegiality**

My third dimension is a further prerequisite for effectiveness, and builds on the foundations of credibility and curiosity. Collegiality is an 'old fashioned' term which has become somewhat lost in many aspects of life in HE, and yet, I would contend, in the development of academic leadership it is of critical importance.

From an outsider's perspective, academic leadership might be perceived as being undertaken in a context which is highly competitive - a no-holds-barred, hyper-challenging environment. All of which is true. However, in addition, much of this competition over intellectual work is undertaken in conditions where there is also an open sharing of ideas, the contribution of colleagues in the field is encouraged and a willingness to offer help to others is widely practised.

Of course, academic mavericks, who plagiarise others' work, who steal ideas from (often junior) colleagues and who selfishly don't contribute to the academic unit, clearly exist. A very few become the equivalent of Nobel prize winners in their field. Most don't. The vast majority of consistently effective academics and academic leaders contribute selflessly to the wider academic context, be it at a team, discipline, departmental, professional or institutional level. They recognise the need for good academic citizenship. Without this, much of the infrastructure of academic life would collapse. Peer reviewing of papers, funding requests, providing references, mentoring junior colleagues, offering comments or thoughts on an early draft paper etc all take time and intellectual effort and this is a part of the collegial aspect of academic life; academic leaders need to demonstrate this personally and encourage the process in others.

### **2.4 Capabilities**

My fourth dimension is probably the one area where the greatest level of overlap with 'managerial' leadership exists. However, whilst the functions might be familiar, the emphasis is also slightly different from an exclusively managerial perspective. I suggest five main domains which I describe as follows:

- Horizon scanning;
- Sense-making and planning;
- Performing (including style);
- Connecting;
- Celebrating.

**2.4.1 Horizon scanning:** Success in any field requires close attention to the wider external context and an ability to adapt accordingly. Horizon scanning helps to inform the leader's approach to the future agenda. Whether it involves knowing where future funding streams will come from or knowing what other groups in the same field are doing (or planning to do), the

process is critical and similar to that in other fields. In relation to academic leadership, however, it also involves a further dimension: the ability to scan the 'intellectual horizons' to identify new disciplinary, interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary openings, new or novel problems, or new or novel applications of existing practice to new contexts. Successful academic leaders, I suggest, combine *managerial* horizon scanning with *intellectual* horizon scanning to a much greater degree than in other contexts.

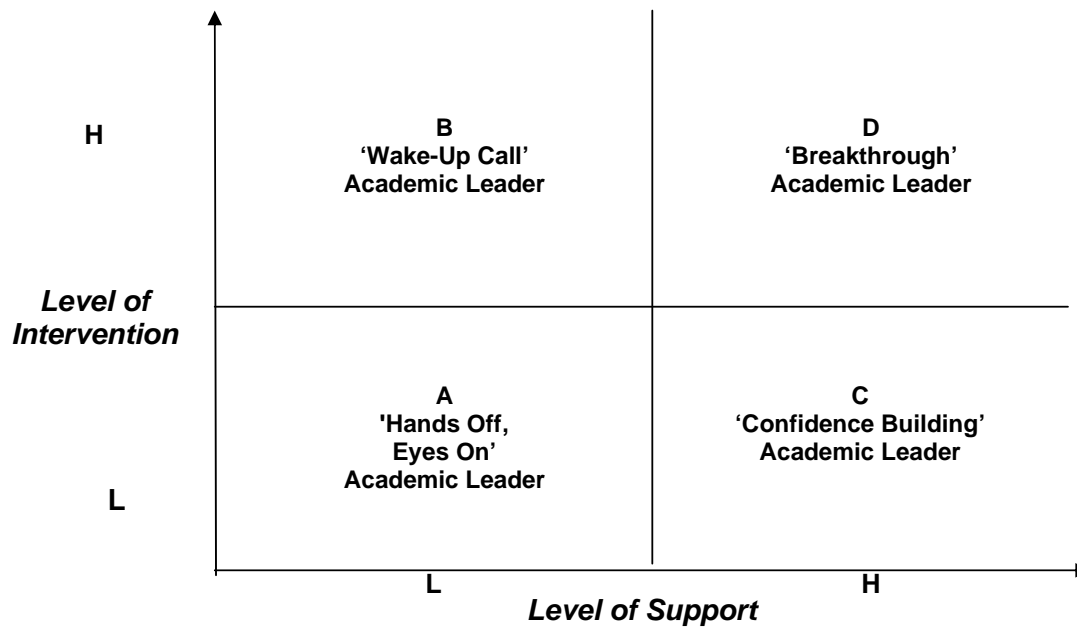
**2.4.2 Sense-making and planning:** No amount of horizon scanning can outweigh in importance the capacity to make sense of any findings and translate them into tangible plans and actions. Successful academic leaders recognise the importance of having clear plans and of preparing for possible contingencies before they become critical. Ensuring the continuity of an academic field of enquiry also requires regular infusions of new ideas, sources of funding and plans for succession when key players depart for promoted posts or the founder of the team moves on or retires.

**2.4.3 Performing:** In some fields of academic inquiry a single contribution may make such an impact that it becomes a seminal work in the field. In many other cases consistent performance over long periods of time is more likely to be key to success. To facilitate 'performing', the academic leader will need the skills to deliver high levels of output by their team. As mentioned earlier, the skills in this territory overlap very much with those required by leaders in other more managerial contexts: defining outcomes, setting standards, regular review of performance, managing conflict and so on.

There is, however, at least one area where the academic leader's approach to managing performance is more pronounced. That is in relation to protecting the individual and the team from distracting forces which may limit their ability to make progress on the *academic* BHAG mentioned earlier. The academic leader will need, on occasions, to protect the team and act as a 'semi-permeable membrane', allowing some of the internal organisation issues (the chill wind of reality) to seep through whilst at the same time shielding the team from some of these demands. Whatmore (1998) offers further insights into these processes in his work on the process of leading creative groups, as do Goffee and Jones (2009) in their more recent work on fostering and leading 'clever people'.

A further area of particular importance in the academic leader's skill set relates to the style adopted in particular, I suggest, in relation to the degree of intervention and support offered by the leader in different circumstances. Figure 3 illustrates the differing styles which the academic leader may need to deploy.

Figure 3



Style A: The 'hands off, eyes on' academic leader

I believe this style is of particular importance in the academic context – the ability to provide space for team members to explore their academic interests without interference, albeit within the constraints of some broadly agreed area of intellectual challenge. This style has similarities to the 'laissez faire' approach in 'managerial' leadership. What distinguishes it in this context is the balancing influence of 'eyes on' – a constant, at-a-distance observation of progress. Without this it will be difficult to judge which of the other three more interventionist styles might be required. Depending on the evidence which arises, the leader may respond as follows:

Style B: The 'wake-up call' academic leader

This more interventionist style arises when there is a need to provide a 'prod to action' or to enhance commitment to the project outcomes. The low(er) level of support is used intentionally to encourage the team member to reframe or refocus their current approach.

Style C: The 'confidence building' academic leader

This style comes into play when evidence of lack of progress is perceived as not to be related to a lack of effort but more related to a lack of confidence. In this situation a more supportive style is necessary.

Style D: The 'breakthrough' academic leader

Movement to this high-intervention, high-support style may arise when the academic leader has seen evidence of real intellectual progress which also has promise and which could lead to a 'breakthrough' in the work being undertaken. The leader 'raises the bar' considerably – outlining a need for, say, more data, more evidence, a deeper evaluation of the archived

material, a closer look at some outliers and so on – but within a highly supportive context. We might call it the Barack-Obama-style 'yes, we can'!

**2.4.4 Connecting:** The fourth area of capability I have identified is that of developing connections, both internally and externally. The work of academic leaders in most fields can be enhanced by the contributions of others in the wider intellectual community. Indeed it is well recognised that most academics and academic leaders typically have much stronger links with their wider external community than with their host institution. Peer collaborators, access to private and public data sources, access to instrumentation in other institutions – all of these will depend on the building of an academic network. This becomes even more crucial when leading an academic group. Academic leaders are also often uniquely positioned to connect up team members who might be working independently but who would benefit from sharing the thinking. This connecting role is a crucial skill in the repertoire of academic leaders.

**2.4.5 Celebrating:** The fifth domain is in the area of celebration. Peer influence is a major force for encouraging the right behaviours and constraining those behaviours which are less beneficial to an academic group. The positive reinforcement of success through celebration of individual and group achievements can be of real value. Not only does it act as a powerful source of individual motivation, it also builds cohesion within an academic team and ultimately builds enhanced levels of loyalty to the group. Celebrating success (a paper accepted for publication, a first conference presentation, a new grant etc) can often be perceived, inappropriately, as 'wasting' time and money which should be spent elsewhere. I suggest this view is seriously misguided.

Peer influence can also be used in situations where performance needs to be enhanced. Of course, the academic leader needs to be competent at providing feedback, but they also need to be open to using the collective force of the group to change behaviour.

## 2.5 Character

The notion of character in relation to leadership evolved from our use of this dimension in the area of managerial leadership (based on earlier work by my colleague Andrew Munro), and is based on the three sub-elements of integrity, resilience and distinctiveness. I believe they remain of significance in the academic leadership domain. However, I suggest that they play out in different ways.

**2.5.1 Integrity:** Integrity is central to all aspects of academic inquiry – integrity of data, of interpretation, of contribution or of presentation, for example. In the academic leadership domain it is equally critical. Do standards exist and are they upheld in relation to ethics, plagiarism, recognising contributions? Without high ethical standards, academic leadership can become exploitative, dishonest and ultimately toxic as minor blemishes or oversights lead, over time, to seriously flawed and unethical practices.

**2.5.2 Resilience:** If the old adage that academic success is 10% inspiration and 90% perspiration is only half true, it suggests that academic leaders require the capacity to keep going personally when they find themselves 'up an academic cul-de-sac' or with inadequate resources to complete a project. Such resilience is also crucially important in relation to leading academics. Sticking with it, not giving up in the face of opposition, or having a capacity to deal with helpful (and unhelpful) criticism and remain focused on an agreed strategy all demand the ability to call upon reserves of resilience.

Academic leaders also need the ability to inspire others to keep going, to have that inner strength when the 'doubting Thomases' are questioning their results (or lack thereof), their interpretation of results, or their opinions. All take enormous amounts of courage and intellectual resilience.

**2.5.3 Distinctiveness:** Academic reputations are demonstrated and sustained on the basis of becoming known and respected through a series of distinctive contributions. As an academic leader, building a distinctive reputation is a key function. Finding that distinctive area to explore is a vital first step. Academic leaders also hold the key to developing a distinctive reputation for their team. To achieve this requires a willingness to share some of the academic recognition by granting those who are developing their careers opportunities to, for example, present at conferences or report results to an influential funder.

## **2.6 Confidence**

The final level in our conceptual model is that of confidence. This is a dimension which one might also find shared with a more 'managerial' approach to leadership. Again, however, I sense that this process plays out in a number of different ways through a balance of '*inner intellectual confidence*' and a broader '*external confidence*'.

**2.6.1 Inner Intellectual Confidence:** All good academics need to possess a degree of intellectual strength and confidence if they are to take forward and develop their ideas. The very process of being willing to challenge conventional wisdom, the existing paradigm, the assumptions on which current knowledge is founded, takes intellectual confidence. This inner intellectual confidence also allows the academic leader to be more comfortable in the company of others who approach their work in a very different way. A lack of such 'intellectual groundedness' I believe will ultimately limit the leader's effectiveness.

In addition to that inner confidence there will also be occasions when the academic leader has to fulfil, on behalf of the group, an advocacy role or ambassadorial function. These and other role expectations will require the academic leader to exhibit a degree of confidence *externally*. This should not be confused with having an extrovert personality. How this confidence is displayed is much less important than the willingness to represent the group beyond the internal context. In some types of academic work this may become a critical skill, particularly in cases where the ability to present evidence to stakeholders or funders is central to the ongoing success of the unit.

### 3 Dysfunctions of Academic Leaders

The managerial leadership literature contains a number of studies of the factors which can cause dysfunctional behaviours and which may subsequently lead to the early derailment or dismissal of a leader. For example McCall (1998) explored this in relation to perceived 'high flyers' in executive positions, Lencioni (2003) in relation to dysfunctions in teams, and Dotlich and Cairo (2003) in relation to the derailment of chief executives.

As in other areas of research, much less has been written about the equivalent influences on academic leaders. Are they the same or do they present themselves in different ways? What leads some academic leaders to fail? As a basis for developing the idea, I will now use the initial six-'C' model in Figure 2 to offer a few examples (which are far from exhaustive).

#### 3.1 *Credibility*

One of the first signs of dysfunction in the credibility dimension arises when it becomes apparent that, despite all the evidence, qualifications and prior references, the academic leader isn't quite as good as had been expected. As with some sixth-formers who have been tutored to gain the grades to get into university, the signs of early promise fail to lead to tangible outcomes, despite ongoing support and mentoring. **Personal credibility** is being tested.

A further worrying sign occurs as the academic leader struggles to establish a clear academic plan or seems overly cautious in determining their academic territory; peers begin to feel anxious that the broader reputation of the unit may suffer, and gradually rumours grow (as might student complaints). The academic leader needs to re-establish **peer credibility**.

Worries about **positional credibility** emerge when those new to formal positions of authority begin to exhibit signs that they are 'not coping'. The signs can be many and varied and may include, for example, an inability to separate their historical allegiance to their previous research group (to which they still may remain connected) from the wider unit responsibilities, leading to concerns about favouritism. Alternatively they become overly distant and fail to maintain and retain their relationships within their research 'home', for fear of being accused of giving undue benefit to this group. They may have an overly authoritative style when dealing with problems or, conversely, an overly hands-off style where they avoid taking difficult decisions, and so on.

Derailment due to a lack of **political credibility** is probably the most challenging, and possibly one of the most common, reasons for failure at the more senior levels of academic leadership. An inability (or unwillingness) to read the political environment, to assess where the 'wind is blowing' politically and where the power lies, and a lack of awareness of how not to alienate oneself from peers and more senior colleagues, may all lead eventually to derailment.

#### 3.2 *Curiosity*

Dysfunctional behaviour in this dimension may also arise for a variety of reasons, for example from a lack of openness to the ideas and approaches to intellectual enquiry used by others. Combined with a powerful personal intellect and intellectual confidence this combination may, sadly, if not addressed, create the conditions for failure. What starts as 'intellectual groundedness' becomes intellectual arrogance, and the lack of flexibility comes across as an unwillingness to value others' contribution. Slowly the leader becomes isolated and, in time, loses the respect of the group.

A second example in this domain may arise from an overly ambitious BHAG well beyond the resources of the group (to "challenge Harvard's position in this field within the next two years") or, alternatively, from setting far too low a level of challenge which does not engage the ambitions and desires of the team.

Of course, some academic leaders do manage to succeed without great strength in this dimension. Through sheer force of personal intellectual power (and hard work) they inspire others – for a while. Ultimately, however, failure may eventually occur unless they can adapt their approach.

### **3.3 Collegiality**

The corridors of campuses across the country contain examples of ‘maverick’ academics. These are the individuals who avoid any number of work expectations; teaching, submission of routine requests for information, appraisals, committee membership (or chairing), and so on. They flaunt the rules, they appear to be impervious to peer pressure – and they can be extremely successful academically. Paradoxically they are often strongly collegial in relation to their own field and with their own team, but any attempt to elicit a greater contribution to the work of the wider department, school or institution seems to fall on (largely) deaf ears.

Promoted into positions of authority, these ‘non-collegial’ types store up problems which ultimately begin to escalate. With a limited interest in wider academic issues, their desire to invest effort in building a collective reputation remains very much a secondary (or tertiary) interest. Taking on the role as ‘head’, whether of a research group, department or school, can so often become an ego trip (“It’s the next natural step on the hierarchy of ‘success’, and by the way I’ve never failed in my career”) or more of a defensive strategy (“There is no way I can cope with Dr / Prof X becoming head”). Either way it’s a train crash waiting to happen. Thankfully there’s no actual loss of life, but sadly quite a lot of ‘life’ is lost when everyone has to deal with the consequences of either a battle of egos or a battle to maintain the status quo. (The latter is often despite the rhetoric of the new academic leader about ‘the need for change’, ‘getting rid of dead wood’, or ‘giving this place some real academic leadership’.)

The danger of losing collegiality is that it often takes as long to regain as it took to obtain. For some it can be a serious career-limiting factor.

### **3.4 Capabilities**

For those who survive the challenges of credibility loss, curiosity limitations and collegial low water, the dangerous rocks of capability gaps may now become apparent.

It’s not easy to move from being a singularly successful individual, with an international following and an adoring team at home, to miraculously become a selfless servant of a wider unit – some of whom are your arch-enemies or with whom you have ‘previous’. Personal achievement and success need to become secondary to the success of the wider unit. Well, perhaps not completely, since you still need to retain your credibility, after all, and at the back of your mind you might also need to return to the ‘back benches’.

Those in academic leadership positions face a delicate balancing act. They have to:

- Look out for the wider team, listening to others and creating a collective, shared agenda;
- Confront those who do not always comply with the collegial needs of the unit (particularly since, as leaders, they are recognising how important this discretionary effort is to the broader success of the unit):
- Work with the senior opinion formers whilst also encouraging the next generation of leaders (often trying ‘gently’ to ameliorate the next generation’s tendencies to behave as they themselves did at that stage in their careers).

Leaders who can balance these needs successfully will meet many (but not all) of the expectations which are placed on them by their colleagues.

Of course, some academic leaders manage to navigate these by working with others to cover their inevitable blind spots. They – often suddenly – see the value of professional administration (now appropriately recognised as ‘professional services’). Some cope, others find it intellectually stimulating and not the administrative backwater they expected. Thankfully some seek help, recognising that this is a territory where some leadership development might be of value (although I do sometimes wonder why it is that whilst working in the ‘education’ business some find it so difficult to recognise that education might be of value to themselves!) The brave (as seen by some peers) enlist the help of a mentor.

### **3.5 Character**

The next obstacles on the climb towards the peak of academic leadership lie in the foothills of character. With a good degree of self-insight, hard work, and an ability to work with others to cover known weaknesses or areas being developed, it should be possible to make real progress as an academic leader. Sadly this may not always be possible. The dysfunctions and derailers in this dimension are often subtle and quite beguiling.

**3.5.1 Integrity:** Any number of new temptations can now derail the successful academic leader: the limited but nevertheless available funds for travel and entertainment; the lure of opportunities to get involved in external (often international) activities too early, avoiding dealing with the harder-to-solve problems at home; the opportunity to offer help – maybe too much help – to a junior colleague in your current or ‘old’ field who you feel should be supported in a promotion round; the value of a PA who can help not only with your administrative arrangements but also perhaps with aspects of your personal life. Where do the boundaries lie in this new uncharted water? How do you judge what to do? This is where personal values and integrity become particularly important.

**3.5.2 Resilience:** Most academic leaders are hardworking and committed individuals. Indeed, it is rare that they are ineffective in this respect. Successful academics often commit themselves fully to the tasks in hand – working through evenings, weekends, holidays, they embrace the full challenges of their new academic and administrative workload. For a while the adrenalin rush of this is exhilarating, like skiing on fresh snow, making speedy progress (with the odd unexpected and somewhat terrifying black run!) However, without some form of governor or limiter on their rev counter, the academic leader may well be in serious danger of overstressing their engine and, over time, heading for a dangerous end to their period in office.

**3.5.3 Distinctiveness:** Our third potential derailer occurs, sadly, just as the academic leader seems to be beginning to actually enjoy the process. The reputation of the unit is growing, the leader has made a noticeable difference, and this is recognised by others, who can genuinely see that the collective efforts the leader has engendered in the group are having a positive effect. Sadly, however, there is a danger at this point of cruising a little, of letting go and allowing the place to run itself for a while. Perhaps the leader feels the need for that extended period of research time in order to reconnect with their personal academic interests. For a while not much happens, particularly if they have done some good work in building the team. Over time, however, unless someone guides and facilitates the process of connecting up the component parts, the distinctive reputation which was developing begins to fragment again, the dangers of ‘silos’ forming (or reforming) become greater, and boundary spats between groups may begin to emerge. When the cat’s away...

Developing a distinctive reputation for a group takes time; retaining and developing it takes even more time and effort.

### **3.6 Confidence**

I have already alluded to the potential danger signs when confidence begins to appear as arrogance, when intellectual sharpness begins to be used with rapierlike precision to ‘put

others down' or expose weaknesses in an intellectual argument being put forward by (possibly more junior) colleagues. These behaviours may be acceptable to a limited degree in private, but when they begin to dominate the public space trouble lies ahead.

When intellectual confidence is added to an overly confident external persona, the result further exacerbates the problem. The leader dominates the debates and over-eggs the success of the unit, whilst being seen by many others as being in denial about issues which need attention. These types gradually become distanced by their peer 'heads' - they are heading for a fall, but can't see that their shoelaces are undone (or have been undone intentionally by someone else!) They have just stopped listening enough to others.

An apparent lack of confidence can also become a derailer, for instance through a lack of recognition of the need to act as an advocate on behalf of the team. The leader may fail to recognise the need at times to be the servant of the team, particularly in situations where they may have 'lost' the case on a particular issue. They avoid speaking up when they should be representing their unit's position. They use the anonymous 'the university won't agree to our position' to hide their lack of courage to push the agenda.

## 4 Dynamics of Academic Leadership

In this penultimate section I consider the way in which the various dimensions may interact with each other and, in so doing, add a further dynamic aspect to the model. As a basis for exploring this I offer the following model which shows the six dimensions in a 'spidergram'. The dimensions of the model are independent factors, although some could conceivably be more correlated – say, credibility and capabilities – where it is probable that high (or low) score on one is likely to lead to an equivalent score on the other dimension. Others such as curiosity and collegiality may be correlated but could equally be quite different.

To aid interpretation, I have developed a pilot self-assessment tool to enable individuals to identify to what extent they have strengths or areas of potential weakness in each of these factors. On the basis of the relative effectiveness on each dimension, it is possible to create schematically an academic leadership profile as shown by the figures which follow:

Figure 4

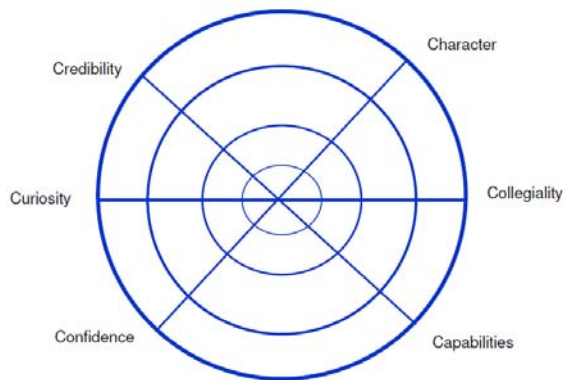


Figure 5

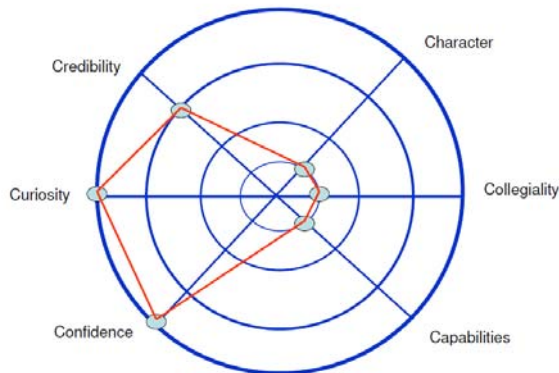
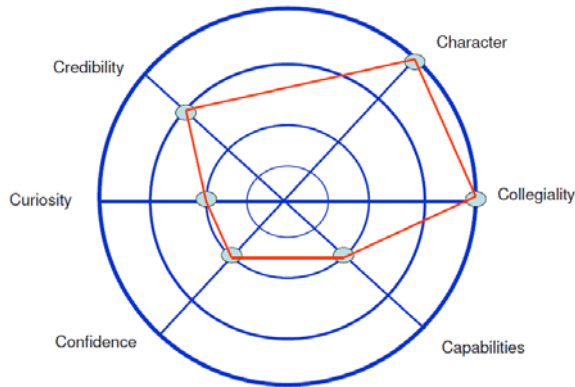


Figure 6



To reach any detailed conclusion about the issues to be resolved in each case would clearly require additional contextual information and a more detailed examination of the responses to the questions. However, even without this, one may be able to identify some interesting issues for exploration on the basis of these contrasting profiles.

For example, in Figure 5 the dangerous combination of high self-confidence with a corresponding low self-awareness on the character dimension looks somewhat worrying, particularly if the character subdimension of integrity is also low. Might this leader be in danger of pushing through changes by using their positional authority inappropriately, and 'cutting corners' in a way which would be judged by others as unethical? The high-curiosity, low-collegiality combination might also be a cause for reflection. Is this a case of a highly effective lone scholar who recognises the importance of teamworking in their academic leadership role? Or possibly a lone scholar who fails to give recognition for those who selflessly engage in being good academic citizens? Combined with the low character score, this could be a somewhat toxic mix.

The profile represented by Figure 6, on the other hand, would lead to a different set of issues for exploration. This type of profile reflects a highly collegial colleague who is considered very credible, and who is likely to demonstrate strong ethical behaviours and resilience. On the other hand they are not currently projecting a confident persona. Is this as a consequence of personal issues not associated with their role or is it more associated with anxiety about their field of intellectual endeavour? Are they feeling concerned about losing touch with their research, or feeling overwhelmed by the demands being placed on them by others (given their high level of collegiality)?

A copy of the self-assessment questionnaire to enable individuals to evaluate themselves on these dimensions is available for pilot usage.

## 5 Conclusions

This paper is intended to act as a catalyst for further exploration of the concept of 'academic' leadership and how it differs from more 'managerial' interpretations of leadership. I have suggested a conceptual framework which will be evaluated and refined in the light of experience. The paper has also highlighted the need to consider the potential dysfunctions which can arise when one or more of the dimensions is over- or underplayed. Finally, the dynamic interplay between the various high-level dimensions is highlighted as a potential means by which the relative strengths and developmental aspects of academic leadership can be explored.

The next step in the development of this work will be to gain feedback from others involved in academic leadership and leadership development. On the basis of this it is hoped that a more complete model and associated diagnostic tools may be developed, to help both new and experienced academic leaders to be even more competent in the skills and processes required 'to herd those academic cats'.

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