

Middle Management in Higher Education: Challenges and Ways Forward

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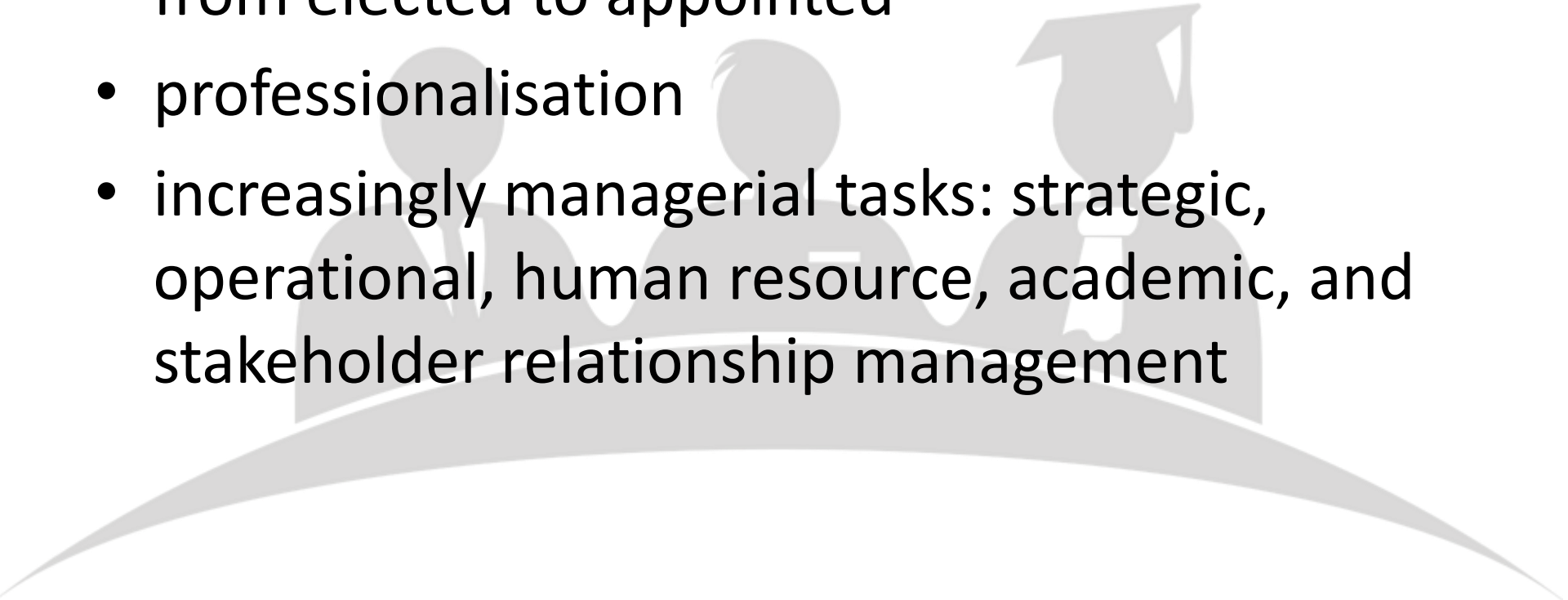
Who Are Academic Middle Managers?

- ‘own agenda’, ‘faculty interests, private interests, career’
- ‘one time they’re opposing and one time they’re supporting, it depends on their interests’
- ‘you cannot count on support of the deans’

What Has Happened to Higher Education?

- 'managerial revolution' (Amaral, Meek, & Larsen, 2003)
- changes in power structures and governance arrangements
- traditional / collegial vs. knowledge enterprise / managerial university

What Has This Meant for Academic Middle Managers?

- ‘centralized devolution’ (Meek, Goedegebuure, Santiago, & Carvalho, 2010)
 - from elected to appointed
 - professionalisation
 - increasingly managerial tasks: strategic, operational, human resource, academic, and stakeholder relationship management
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Appointment of Head of School of Education

The Head of School of Education is appointed as a full-time position as such. The appointment is appropriate academic contribution whilst serving as Head.

Person specification

The post-holder will be expected to evidence:

- a good first degree together with a higher degree such as a PhD in a relevant field;
- **strategic management** at School level and an accompanying awareness of resource and coordination issues;
- ability to develop teacher education programmes that have a strong emphasis on research;
- experience of liaising with centres for **learning and teaching** on staff development;
- **expert knowledge** of the complexities of practice in relation to education and learning;

- familiarity with educational and **academic management processes**;
- **leadership** and organisational skills as demonstrated through the ability to inspire others, prioritise workloads and work autonomously as well as part of a team;
- extensive experience of undergraduate and postgraduate teaching and **supervision** to doctoral level;
- skills in managing projects and working collaboratively with fellow scholars;
- extensive experience of fostering academic **collaboration** across disciplinary boundaries;
- experience of working within and leading **internal and external networks**;
- a record as a **"good citizen"** who recognises the need to foster **collegiate** endeavour and a sense of academic **fellowship**;
- relevant **professional experience**;
- engagement with external bodies to enhance national or international standing of the discipline;

- a record in advising colleagues, students and external bodies (e.g. government bodies);
- commitment to and success in the promotion of **research**;
- experience of **mentoring research** activity of junior staff;
- successful collaboration with other **universities and industry**;
- experience of **resource planning** and management;
- ability in **strategic planning**, showing effective implementation and evaluation;
- ability to implement the **mission** of the School, College and University;
- commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities;
- identification of new areas of research and teaching;
- a record of organising effective, new and original research programmes;
- ability to solve problems **creatively** and **effectively**.

Multiplicity of Academic Middle Managers

- ‘shielders’, ‘co-ordinators’, ‘agenda setters’ (Degn, 2013, 2014)
- ‘representing core organisational values’, ‘self-interested agents of control’, ‘corporate bureaucrats’, ‘transmitters of organisational wisdom’ (Clegg & McAuley, 2005)

Stuck-in-Betweenness

- pressures from below and above
- academic vs. managerial / organisational values
- representing their academic discipline(s)
- personal interests and principles



Training and Development?

- rarely takes place
- inappropriate, unhelpful methods, i.e. 'blanket management approaches' (Floyd, 2016)



<http://www.tortal.net/company-needs-training-development>

Good Practices

- formal courses:
 - ‘individualised training programmes’ (Floyd, 2016)
 - courses involving role play (Deem, Hillyard & Reed, 2007)
- organic, informal activities:
 - shadowing or talking to those in similar roles (Floyd, 2016)
 - apprenticeship (Floyd, 2016)
 - ‘informal mentoring’ (Preston & Floyd, 2016)
 - ‘informal peer group learning’ (Preston & Floyd, 2016; Seale & Cross, 2016)



Example: Learning Group on Heading Your Department

- ‘everyone is asked to /.../ give one specific case that he struggles with. And then we discuss it, how would you do it.’
- ‘one-off initiative /.../ also wrote a note with recommendations for the central administration to optimise interaction with and between departments, and assist department heads but after a year we did not receive a reaction ...’

What Should Be Done?

- ‘pre-prepared training courses’ + ‘experiential training’ (Deem, Hillyard & Reed, 2007)
- ‘individually tailored training’ (Floyd, 2016)
- ‘informal learning and support networks’ (Preston & Floyd, 2016)
- ‘practice-based learning’ (Preston & Floyd, 2016)
- ‘peer learning’ (Preston & Floyd, 2016)

What Should Be Done? cont'd

- 'promoting opportunities for self-critical reflection' (Johnson, 2002)
- continuous learning and 're-skilling' (Johnson, 2002)

Criticism?

- distributed leadership (Macfarlane, 2014)
- ‘controlling mechanism’ or ‘means of developing and empowering middle leaders’ (Floyd, 2016)?
- knowledgeable academic managers or ‘perpetuate a culture of amateurism’ / ‘hand power over to non-academic professional managers’ (Deem, Hillyard & Reed, 2007)?

Questions, reflections?

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