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INTRODUCTION

'What does it mean to be a professor?' asked Malcolm Tight (2002) on the occasion of his professorial inaugural lecture at the University of Warwick. Well over a decade later I doubt we have made much progress towards a definitive answer. I should begin by clarifying – for the benefit of an international readership – that Tight's (2002) question is perhaps complicated by its relating to the UK's higher education sector, where (as in many other European national contexts) the title 'professor' is applied much more selectively than in North America[1]. At the time of writing, the terms 'professor' and its etymological derivatives, such as 'professorial' and 'professoriate', are reserved for reference only to those at the pinnacle of the academic staff hierarchy (full professors), and my use of them throughout this article is consistent with such current UK-specific usage. Yet their distinction – the fact that they have effectively been singled out for a promotional title to which the majority of their academic colleagues are, literally, not entitled – makes professors, as a category of academic personnel, much more of an enigma than if they were ubiquitous across the academy, for it brings us back to Tight's question; posed slightly differently and more expansively: what purpose(s) do (or should) professors serve, and, in particular, what is the basis of their distinction? The complexity lies in Tight's asking not what it means simply to be an academic, but what it means to be a member of this still relatively exclusive (albeit decreasingly so) category or 'cadre' (a descriptor whose potentially ironic application to the professoriate I examine in the course of this article) of the highest grade of academics.

Though not its key focus, this question of professorial being - framed by Tight (2002) to incorporate rather more of a purpose- or function-related, than an ontological, slant – remains central to this article, for the discussion presented below is built around consideration of academic leadership as a key component of being a professor. The need to demonstrate a track record of, and/or the potential for, academic leadership now appears to be a standard

requirement in most British universities for appointment to this most senior academic grade (Evans et al., 2013; Macfarlane, 2012). Professorship is thus examined in this article as a putative specific category or form of educational leadership. Set against this backdrop, in addressing whether or not UK-based professors are adequately prepared for professorship, this is effectively a leadership development and preparation-related article.

My key purpose is to present and discuss the findings from a funded study of academic leadership preparation and development for UK-based professors. Incorporating brief consideration of conceptualisations and interpretations of academic leadership, preparation and development, I outline details of the research design, before drawing upon selected findings that highlight the paucity of such 'official' preparation and development provision in the UK's higher education sector, and the impact on professors' working lives of their having to grope their ways through a fog of uncertainty about precisely what, and how much, is expected of them as academic leaders. I begin by tracing the contextual background to the research project.

AN EMERGING SKETCH OF PROFESSORS AND THEIR ROLES: JOINING UP THE DOTS

Since the professoriate is almost entirely unresearched (Evans et al., 2013; Rayner et al. 2010; Tight, 2002), most of what is known about professors is anecdotally-derived. European research that is focused exclusively on professors seems confined to a small number of UK-based studies: my own (one of which is reported below, and the others in Evans [2014a, b] and Evans et al. [2013]), and three smaller scale studies (Hoskins, 2012; Tight, 2002; Macfarlane, 2011; 2012). These have all appeared within the last twelve years, and with the exception of one of them (Hoskins, 2012, which examined the motivation and career trajectories of a small sample of female professors), are all broadly focused on the

professorial role and what being a professor involves or should involve. The relatively expansive (in terms of focus) field of academic working life or academic practice is represented by a growing number of studies to have accumulated steadily over the last two or three decades (e.g. Becher, 1989; Enders, 2001; Enders & de Weert, 2009; Fanghanel, 2012; Henkel, 2000), but in most such analyses (e.g. Ball, 2007; Bolden et al., 2012a; Enders, 2000; Halsey, 1992; Kogan, 2000; Skelton, 2005), if they are distinguished at all, professors and the professoriate feature only marginally or incidentally within consideration of wider issues. Indeed, the paucity of research into professors as leaders prompted Rayner et al., (2010, p. 619) to identify the 'mysterious case of the absent professor and the missing professoriate' in higher education leadership research. What this knowledge base amounts to, as a research-informed depiction of the UK's professorial landscape, is clearly a work in progress that is still far from being a colourful, detailed illustration that conveys a sense of the scale, shape and form – as well as the proximity and relationship to each other - of key features and landmarks. As yet it does not represent even a monochrome sketch; it is but a rudimentary outline of dots – of which there are still too few to join up into a recognisable shape.

It was in fact one of these 'dots' – one of my own UK-based studies of professorial academic leadership[2], conducted 2011-12 - that provided the impetus for the study reported here. In an online questionnaire completed by over 1,200 UK-based non-professorial academics (i.e. those on academic grades equivalent to assistant and associate professorships), an anonymous respondent had made the comment: "Leadership development is not generally offered to new [full] professors - an omission, given the focus of their work - and something that could make the role more effective". This theme was taken up by the then editor of the UK's Times Higher Education, where that study's preliminary findings were reported:

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What it means to be a professor - and more importantly what others think it means -

is magnificently opaque. There's plenty of advice on how to get there, but little once

you've reached your destination. There's no global job description, no template, no

handbook, only the example of those who have gone before (Mroz, 2011).

More significantly, this 2011-12 study uncovered quite a startling degree of negativity on the

part of non-professorial academics towards their more senior colleagues. The questionnaire

data in particular had included many critical comments about professors who were variously

described as arrogant, self-centred, self-obsessed, and whose academic leadership was

reported as falling short (see Evans et al., 2013 and Evans 2015a for more expansive

presentation of the findings, and details of the design, of that study). Whilst appreciating the

implications (discussed in Evans et al, 2013) of my recognising these as subjective

viewpoints that represent only one narrative within what must inevitably be a complex story

of human relations and interaction, I could not discount the possibility that such apparent

negativity may – at least in part - be symptomatic of a need to develop professors' academic

leadership skills, and indicative of inadequate preparation for professorship. There was

mileage, I decided, in researching professors' own perspectives on their development needs

and preferences and the extent to which these are met. The focus of this paper - the project

that resulted from this decision - is described below.

THE RESEARCH

Funded by the British Educational Leadership, Management and Administration Society

(BELMAS), Leadership preparation and development for UK-based university professors

was a year-long study carried out 2012-13.

Conceptual focus

It is important to emphasise that the focus of this study was specifically academic leadership - a term whose meaning is worth exploring. As I point out elsewhere (Evans 2014a) the American – and, in some cases, Australasian – literature has for the most part tended to interpret academic leadership as denoting recognised 'formal' leadership and management roles within higher education, such as dean of faculty, head of department, or graduate school director, but the term has been interpreted somewhat differently in the UK, where for the most part it tends to be understood as informal - often ad hoc – supportive development- or even empowering-focused leadership, such as mentoring or role modelling, which may occur independently of formal, designated leadership or management. This conceptualisation is summarised in Bolden et al's (2012) outline of the findings of their UK-based study of academic leadership:

> Findings reveal a high degree of consistency in perspectives on, and experiences of, academic leadership. In particular it was observed that much of what could be considered as *'academic leadership' is not provided by people in formal* managerial roles. Instead, leadership arises through engagement with influential colleagues within one's own academic discipline, especially those who play a pivotal role in one's transition and acculturation into academic life. PhD supervisors, current and former colleagues and key scholars were all described as significant sources of academic leadership, exerting substantial influence throughout one's career, whether or not they were part of the same institution (Bolden et al., 2012a, p. 6, emphasis added).

As for what 'could be considered as "academic leadership"' – to repeat these authors' words - theirs is the only published stipulative definition that I have found: 'a process through which academic values and identities are constructed, communicated and enacted' (Bolden et al., 2012a, p. 17).

Implicit in its being consistently referred to across the UK's HE sector in job specifications and promotion criteria relating to all except early career academic or research posts is recognition that academic leadership should be an aspiration or goal of any academic, irrespective of whether s/he holds a designated leadership and management role. Applied specifically to professors, academic leadership generally connotes their leadership of junior colleagues' development as and into successful academics, and since professors are usually distinguished researchers, then the academic leadership they are considered best equipped to provide involves 'creative', scholarly, research-focused and intellectual-related development through, typically, guidance, advice and example – incorporating much of what Macfarlane (2012) calls intellectual leadership.

So interpreted, academic leadership has only recently begun to attract scholarly attention from what, as yet, remains a very small group of researchers (e.g. Bolden et al., 2012; Evans et al., 2013; Juntrasook et al., 2013; Macfarlane, 2011, 2012). This broad - and admittedly somewhat nebulous - connotation of academic leadership reflects my own interpretation of it, which shaped my research design (though, as I outline below, I also used the study to uncover something of how the professorial participants interpret academic leadership). My focus was principally on the leadership practised by or expected of all professors; more specifically, it was on professors' leadership preparation or development.

Much of my work has long been centred on professional learning or development and its more specific sub-fields such as teacher development (Evans, 2002, 2014c) and researcher development (Evans, 2012), and I have been particularly interested in examining how such development occurs in individuals. Consistent with this focus, I define professional development as:

the enhancement of individuals' professionalism, resulting from their acquisition,

through a consciously or unconsciously applied mental internalisation process, of

professional work-related knowledge and/or understanding and/or attitudes and/or

skills and/or competences that, on the grounds of what is consciously or

unconsciously considered to be its/their superiority, displace(s) and replace(s)

previously-held professional work-related knowledge and/or understanding and/or

attitudes and/or skills and/or competences (Evans, 2011, p. 864).

Space restrictions preclude the presentation here of either the basis of my

conceptualisation that underpins this definition or my associated conceptual model of the

componential structure of professional development – these may be found elsewhere (e.g.

Evans, 2011, 2014c). However, a point worth highlighting – and that I draw upon in my

discussion below - is that I identify as a key processual component, or stage, of professional

development in individuals their recognition of something as a 'better way' of 'doing' things

(applying a broad interpretation of 'doing' to include mental as well as physical activity):

better that what preceded, and than what is superseded by, the newly-accepted and adopted

professional practice (again, applying a similarly broad definition of practice to include

mental activity). To be most effective, then – to result in what I call attitudinal development,

rather than simply behavioural development (Evans, 2011, 2014c) - professional development

initiatives or opportunities must lead to participants' recognising what currently, for them, is

potentially a 'better way' of doing their work.

Professional development and preparation need not, of course, always be objective in

focus (i.e. effected or attempted on one person by another); they may just as easily be

subjective in focus (i.e. involving self-preparation or self-development). Incorporating

consideration of this ambiguity, four different perspectives on and interpretations of

preparation and development were applied to the study:

- preparation and development as 'training' or enhancement of skills for and capacity to carry out the professorial academic leadership role (this could occur pre- and/or post-appointment or promotion);

- preparedness for professorship and its requirements/demands (this may, for example, include mental preparedness, or preparedness in terms of understanding what professorship involves);

- preparation as a strategy or tactic (e.g. for securing promotion to a chair; for achieving a long-term career goal or ambition);

- development as change in how professorship is perceived and enacted.

Consistent with Martineau's (2004, p. 4) observation that '[t]he process of evaluating leadership development begins at the beginning – with needs assessment', my study was designed with a view to uncovering the extent to which professors identified a need for academic leadership preparation or development provision that correlates with one or more of these four perspectives.

Research design

To meet the study's objectives of examining the extent and nature both of a perceived need for, and any provision of, professorial academic leadership preparation and development, the following research questions shaped the research design:

1. What level and quality of academic leadership preparation and development – if any - is available to university professors?

2. What professorial leadership preparation and development-related lacunae and shortcomings exist, and with what consequences?

3. What – if any - models of good practice (of professorial leadership preparation and development) exist, and what are the bases of their effectiveness?

Two data collection phases were distinguished by the method employed. In phase 1 data were gathered through a short online questionnaire that was piloted twice before its design was finalised. In addition to biographical-related questions that sought information on, inter alia, gender, subject specialism (as defined by the subject categories used in the UK's 2008 Research Excellence Framework audit), and length of professorial experience, questionnaire respondents were asked the following questions, which are expressed below precisely as they appeared on the questionnaire:

- Do you understand what your institution requires of you as a professor (i.e. are its expectations of its professors in general - or of you specifically - clearly articulated)?

- How much guidance have you received within your institution to help you fulfil your professorial role?

- What has been the quality of any guidance and support you've received within your institution to help you fulfil your professorial role?

For the purpose of identifying any implicit need for guidance and/or support in carrying out their roles, respondents were also asked about the extent to which – if at all – they experience pressure in carrying out their professorial roles and if they have ever felt the need to modify their behaviour in order to meet other people's expectations of them as professors. Analysis of questionnaire data has so far been confined to the generation of descriptive statistics (effected automatically by the online questionnaire), illustrated by the findings presented below. The final questionnaire item invited respondents to leave their contact details if they were willing to participate as interviewees in phase 2 of the study.

Directed at delving deeper into, and elucidating the factors underpinning, some of the issues that emerged from the questionnaire findings, phase 2 involved face-to-face semi-structured interviews. These were conducted with a sub-sample of 20 professors, selected to represent a range of biographical variables (including subject/discipline, gender, and length

of professorial experience) and institutional affiliation across the UK's four national contexts, as well as a range of perspectives on and reported experiences of learning to be and developing as a professor, as implied in the written comments that many respondents chose to leave in the questionnaire. In relation to this last variable, my hopes of identifying a range of professorial development and preparation opportunities and provision across institutions – and hence of selecting an interviewee sub-sample representing correspondingly diverse development experiences - proved forlorn; it became evident from the questionnaire responses, as revealed by the findings presented below, that there is a paucity of such institutional provision. The outcome of interviewee selection was that ten institutions were represented by this sub-sample, some by multiple (2-4) interviewees – in some (but not all) cases I deliberately selected two or more interviewees from a single institution with a view to gathering and comparing multiple reports and perceptions of institutional culture and provision.

Interviews were audio recorded, with interviewees' permission, and the recordings were transcribed to facilitate analysis. The process of data analysis was inductive and involved several levels of coding, each of which related to a specific research question. First-level coding simply identified data that were relevant to the selected research question. Subsequent levels of coding were directed towards identifying and/or considering: patterns, similarities and atypical cases; the bases of commonality, disparity and atypicality; potential interpretation of and/or explanation for incongruence and correlation; and theoretical perspectives that provide universally applicable, and hence general, rather than specific, explanations for why or how something appears to have occurred.

PROFESSORIAL PREPARATION AND DEVELOPMENT PROVISION IN THE UK: AN OVERVIEW OF KEY FINDINGS

Using the study's three research questions as organisational categories, I present key findings below.

What level and quality of academic leadership preparation and development – if any - is available to university professors?

Addressing this question presents a fundamental conceptual problem, for although I try, above, to convey something of how it is generally or typically interpreted in the UK, in fact academic leadership is ill-defined and its meaning remains rather vague. I was aware of this conceptual lacuna when I planned the study, for in an earlier (2011-12) study of professorial academic leadership as perceived by 'the led'[1] - to which I refer above - it had become evident that, whilst most interviewees and questionnaire respondents had interpreted academic leadership as it seems most frequently or typically understood in the UK, a small minority had interpreted it more narrowly: as associated with formal leadership and management roles and responsibilities. When it came to planning the more recent BELMAS-funded study reported here, I therefore built into the data collection opportunities to explore participants' understandings of the term.

Data derived from responses to a questionnaire item that asked respondents to select as many as they wished from a list of potential features of academic leadership (posed as: 'What *do you understand by the term "academic leadership"*?') indicate that only half of the professorial respondents who chose to respond to this item associated academic leadership, in part, with substantial administrative roles – though a large proportion (80%) selected institutional citizenship as a feature of it. Most frequently, academic leadership was equated to development- or empowerment-focused activity – specifically, contributing to supporting or developing others by mentoring- or guidance-related interaction or influence. Teaching-related activity was less frequently considered representative of academic leadership than was

research-related activity, with pedagogical development being identified by less than half of the respondents as a form of academic leadership.

In terms of preparation interpreted as preparedness for a role – that is, knowing and understanding what is required or expected of one as the role-holder - my questionnaire data suggest that most respondents felt prepared for professorship. As is indicated in Figure 1,

Figure 1: Questionnaire responses to the question: Do you understand what your institution requires of you as a professor (i.e. are its expectations of its professors in general - or of you specifically - clearly articulated)?
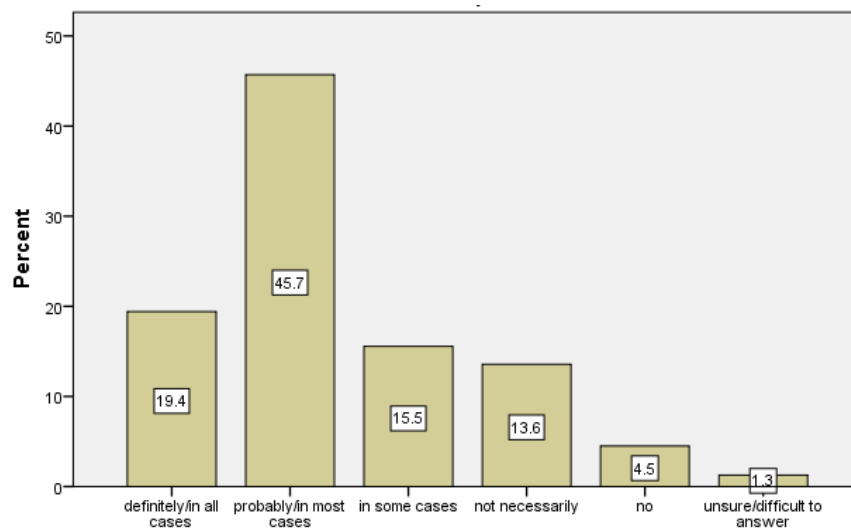
over 65% of responses to the question: Do you understand what your institution requires of you as a professor (i.e. are its expectations of its professors in general - or of you specifically - clearly articulated)? were positive. Yet it is important not to overlook the fact that this leaves over a quarter (who selected the response options: 'in some cases', 'not really' or 'no') reporting varying degrees of uncertainty about what is expected of them. A similar proportion of the item's respondents responded negatively to the question: Do you feel that, in your earliest days as a professor, you were adequately prepared for taking on the professorial role? Over 28% of these respondents (see Figure 2) selected 'not really/not entirely' or 'not

Figure 2: Questionnaire responses to the question: Do you feel that, in your earliest days as a professor, you were adequately prepared for taking on the professorial role?
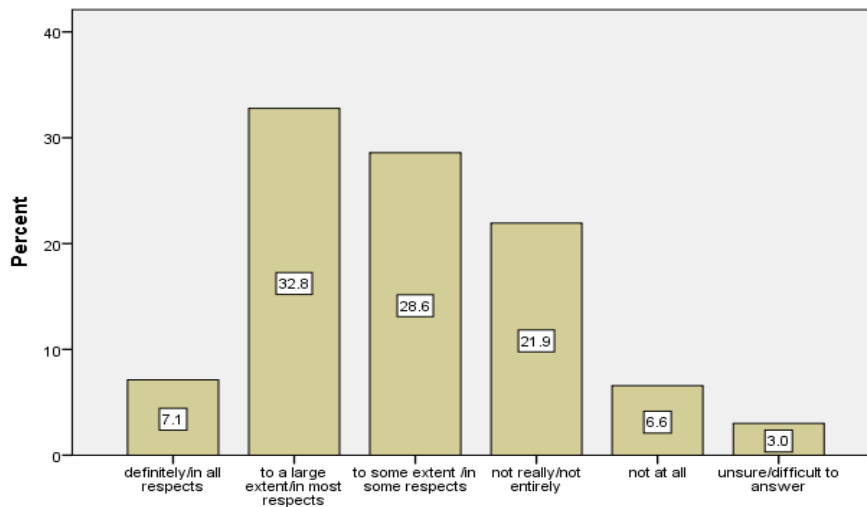
at all', and well under half of the item's respondents, collectively, selected either of the two most positive response options.

The most negative findings derived from questionnaire data relate to universities' roles in developing and preparing academics for the professorial role. Figure 3 presents responses to the question: Has your current institution done all that you would want or need it to do to prepare you for the professorial role at that institution? Over one-third of this item's respondents selected negative responses ('not really/not entirely' or 'no'), and

Figure 3: Questionnaire responses to the question: Has your current institution done all that you would want or need it to do to prepare you for the professorial role at that institution?
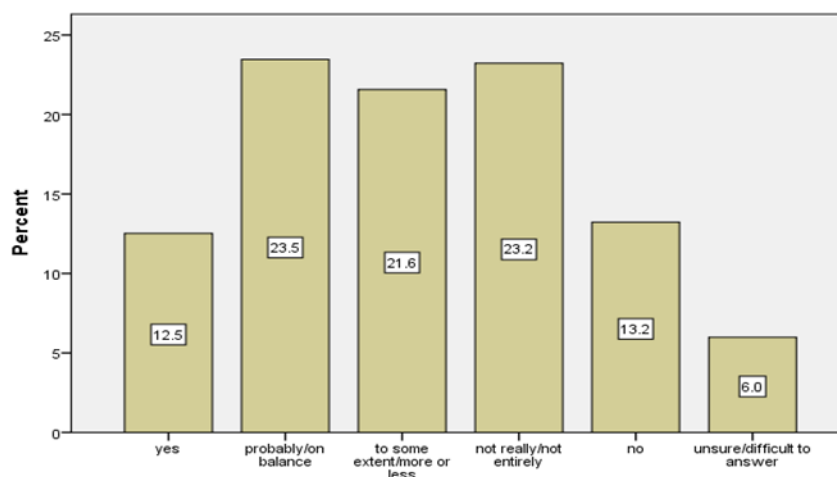
only 12.5% selected an emphatic 'yes', leaving slightly more than one-fifth selecting one of two response options that represent qualified positivity ('probably/on balance' and 'to some extent/more or less'). Comments that many respondents chose to leave (there were opportunities for them to do so at several points in the questionnaire) included:

a) There is no training and no safe space for sharing experiences (except this survey). You can train to become an academic leader (i.e. a manager) but there is nothing on being a chair. b) I'm asked to mentor various members of staff and every time that happens I think, 'But where is my mentor?'. Where's the person to guide and assist me?

There is certainly no handbook on how one is meant to behave as a professor, or exactly what is expected of us!

Bad training courses are the bane of universities. The training courses I've been on to prepare me for academic leadership have been dreadful, containing dumb platitudes delivered by people unqualified to speak.

Interview-generated data broadly corroborated the questionnaire data, with interviewees indicating that their institutions had offered no form of preparation specifically and exclusively for professorship. In response to being asked about their preparedness, many interviewees responded unhesitatingly that, on taking up their first chair, they had felt ill-prepared for the transition. The following quotes are indicative of such responses:

[I was] totally, totally unprepared! I remember my first faculty meeting, and I thought, "Well, I've been appointed to a chair here; everyone will be looking at me in the room and thinking, 'Who is this guy?' I need to speak". So I…I

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spoke, and I learned, and I spoke, and I learned. I was active. I did a lot of
stuff wrong, but I did some stuff right, and I learned on the job. There was no
induction. And there was no help from my current head of school at that stage.
So, I learned the hard way. And I think, in some ways, it's the only way to
learn (interviewee: male linguistics professor).

I did feel under-prepared, and I was worried about expectations, but I
persuaded myself that it would be a role that I would grow into, and that if you
lead by doing, you learn by doing, and that I didn't believe that I wouldn't be
able to work it out. I didn't get any induction when I arrived at all, at either
university or faculty level. Absolutely nothing! And the first term I just
wandered round in a fog, having no idea what I was supposed to be doing.
…So, how to be a professor: no (interviewee: female humanities professor).

Yet despite sharing their recollections of unpreparedness, interviewees were, for the
most part, relatively unenthusiastic about the notion or prospect of any form of institutionally
organised preparation or development provision for professors. Asked for his views on such
provision, the linguistics professor quoted above responded:

The problem is that, unless you're going to start normalising, I find a lot of
training partly coming out of the science model, but also, so generic as to be
… er…not directly useful for me. So, I am the person that I am; I reacted in
the ways that I reacted, and I…I'm not sure what sort of induction processes
there should be for a professor. I can certainly see the need for induction
processes for younger members of staff – for a professor, I'm not sure. I think
people assume that you have cut your teeth, and you may make mistakes, but,

basically, you are what you are, and whatever contribution you can make,

you'll make it.

A key issue is that professors, having attained the highest achievable academic grade, are by definition very successful as academics. For the most part they will have manifested relatively high degrees of competence, self-confidence, intelligence and resourcefulness – elements or manifestations of what Sternberg calls 'successful intelligence' (Sternberg, 1999, 2008), and which he (Sternberg 2008, p. 152) explains:

According to the proposed theory, successful intelligence is (a) the use of an integrated set of abilities needed to attain success in life, however an individual defines it, within his or her socio-cultural context. People are successfully intelligent by virtue of (b) recognizing their strengths and making the most of them at the same time that they recognize their weaknesses and find ways to correct or compensate for them. Successfully intelligent people (c) adapt to, shape, and select environments through (d) finding a balance in their use of analytical, creative, and practical abilities.

Indeed, successful intelligence so-described is particularly evident in one of my interviewee's accounts. Reflecting Sternberg's observation (1999, p.298) 'intelligence involves not only modifying oneself to suit the environment (adaptation) but also modifying the environment to suit oneself (shaping) and, sometimes, finding a new environment that is a better match to one's skills, values, or desires (selection)', an arts and humanities professor admitted to having applied strategic resourcefulness to preparing for – in the sense of equipping herself for procuring - her current prestigious named chair. Having set her sights on it, her tactical preparation for this specific professorship involved developing her career – including the management and leadership responsibilities that she took whilst holding a chair at a different Russell Group[3] university – to ensure that she would be a serious contender for it. When I

asked if her whole career path had been planned with a view to securing the chair, she

responded:

No, I think that's too instrumental – and there's a huge amount of luck involved in a

chair not only coming vacant but being released when you're at the right moment.

…But it was released at absolutely the right moment for me!

…I was ready, and I had…I had accepted administrative responsibilities in [names her

previous institution]…for entirely instrumental purposes. So, two things occurred to me

quite early, that my route out – you publish your way out, but also I raised a big grant

and I did administrative service, so that I had the boxes lined up ready, that when the

chair that was for me…then I could do that. And, yes, I did strategize for that – though

there were other chairs that I would also have had an interest in.

As is implied by the interviewees quoted above, professors are generally able to 'find

a way through', and to cope with, whatever challenging situations they face – including how

to be, and how to present themselves effectively as, professors. That they should be sceptical

about formal training or development is therefore unsurprising; in many respects they are

likely to consider such provision unnecessary, and, aware of such sensitivities – and of the

need to tread carefully with what have been described, somewhat sensationally, as 'prima

donna professors' (Grove, 2011) - universities and their academic development staff may be

similarly wary of offering it. Moreover, the implication of the widely held interpretation that

promotion to professorship is a reward or form of recognition for having performed

successfully as an academic is that professors will carry on in much the same vein as before

their promotion.

My findings show that many professors develop as, and – if they do so at all - prepare

themselves for becoming, professors by modelling themselves and their professorial practice

on what they consider effective academic leadership manifested by professors with whom

they have interacted; this, for them, seems an effective way of recognising – albeit often unconsciously - the potentially 'better ways' of doing things that I highlight above as a key stage in the professional development process in individuals. An anonymous questionnaire respondent left the comment: 'I am a new professor; I see it as largely my own responsibility, in conversation with senior colleagues, to work out my role and public demeanour, rather than to undertake any kind of formalised training'. More specifically, interviewee, Joanne[4], spoke of an inspirational mentor who had influenced her development:

> I had a wonderful mentor…she was a professor…very renowned, an incredible – just a very wise person. And she did my appraisals…and, you know, we chatted after I'd got the promotion, and she said, "Where do you want to go?" …I admired what she was doing…how she operated.
>
> **Interviewer**: Is it going too far to say that your own views, your own ideas about what a professor should do – how a professor should behave – have *been influenced by people like her, and other people whom you've observed* and thought positively of during your career?
>
> No, it's not going too far, and, you know, I mentioned my long-term research collaborator from the University of [X]…er…I admire her enormously – not just her research but, again, the way she conducts herself. She's now head of school, but, again, I know that she's someone that just takes on so much at her own expense, but, you know, she's been very positive; she's always looked to bring people in. You know, if we're putting a grant application in: "Who can we involve that's an early career researcher, or post-doc, or whatever?" So, yeah, I think it is very much looking to people I admire…the way they've conducted themselves (Joanne, business and management professor).

A small number of interviewees recalled having explicitly asked professorial colleagues what the role involved. Whilst their recollections were delivered with slight amusement, conveying a sense that this was considered a rather light-hearted approach to gaining insight into the mysteries of professorship, they nevertheless indicate something of the evident widespread ignorance – even amongst those who are ripe for professorship - about the precise nature of the role:

> I remember asking [names a professor], on the day that I got the news [of my promotion], and I said, "What is it to be a professor?" And he said, "You won't really understand for a couple of years – and it's how you change yourself". And now…I mean, for the last four or five years…six, seven…I've undoubtedly felt a professor, in the sense that I know I'm a leading academic (male education studies professor).

> I can remember asking my predecessor a year or so before – we were discussing whether I'd be a candidate [for a specific named chair] or not – saying, slightly tongue-in-cheek, "What is it you do all day, actually, [X]?" [laughs], knowing what the day is like. I didn't know that, in the sense that there wasn't a single answer to that… . So I didn't know quite what life would be like (male humanities professor).

Whilst some of my interviewees spoke of specific professorial role models or exemplars, most implied having assimilated impressions of good 'professorialness' from multiple examples, accumulated throughout their careers, and of fashioning their own professorial academic leadership on similar lines, avoiding replicating unimpressive behaviour. A recently promoted male mathematics professor, for example, observed:

I think there are some people that you very much respect, and they do things in particular ways that you very much like. Er…not, I think, in a way of saying, "This person is my role model and I'll consciously follow them"; I mean, I don't feel I have that – although, maybe, I mean, you take aspects of people, more…and some people you take more aspects of…people that give very good lectures that are, sort of, consistently impressive. …I mean, I've got, kind of, very much anti-role models…people that you've heard certain kinds of behaviours that I just don't want anything to do with: you know, talk to someone for about 30 seconds and you think you should be an author on their paper!

Developing as a professor within the role thus seems to incorporate a large element of perpetuating, consciously or unconsciously, the kind of practice that one's professorial predecessors – and in some cases contemporaries – manifested or manifest, and which was or is considered acceptable or effective and hence is recognised as the 'better way' of doing things that I refer to above as a key element of the professional development process in individuals. In a sense it involves constant comparison, using colleagues or former colleagues (not necessarily within one's own institution) as a yardstick, measuring one's own enactment of professorship in relation to one's attitudinal and emotional responses to how others appear to be enacting it. This represents acculturation as it is most often practised, but since it is essentially a mimetic or imitative process the danger is that in perpetuating the status quo it may militate against change and against the development of the professoriate to incorporate new, or a wider or more diverse range of, professorial roles and remits that some analysts prescribe or anticipate (e.g. Macfarlane, 2012; Middlehurst, 2004) and that some observers perceive to have evolved or to be evolving (Evans, 2015a).

Yet I was struck, too, by the evident concern of many questionnaire respondents and interviewees to fashion their professional practice to conform also to what they perceived as the expectations of others – not only expectations of senior management, but also of junior colleagues: those for whom professors are implicitly expected to provide academic leadership. An anonymous questionnaire respondent had commented: 'Better preparation [for] how colleagues will view you would have been valuable. Most don't cut you any slack now', and a female education studies professorial interviewee spoke of her perpetual concern to publish more papers than junior colleagues, in order to justify her promotion and senior status: 'I think I'm always anxious about what...y'know...about...like, have I done enough publications? …and I think, as a result of that, I do...over-achieve in the things that I'm supposed to do'. Other interviewees spoke of being constantly aware of the need to act as role models, and to be above reproach in their professional behaviour, and in many ways their development within the professorial role – their developing a niche for themselves – was strongly influenced by what was identified as the unrelenting pressure to perform and to prove oneself. This snapshot of interview-generated findings is corroborated by the questionnaire data; in response to the question: Since becoming a professor, have you ever felt the need to change any aspect of your practice to meet other people's expectations? over 40% of professorial respondents to this item selected 'very much so' or 'quite significantly so/in most respects', and a further 66.9% selected 'to some extent/in many respects'.

What leadership preparation and development-focused lacunae and shortcomings exist, and with what consequences?

Perpetuated by universities' senior management, through person specifications and job descriptions relating to professorial posts, academic leadership has become accepted as an integral part – if not a key purpose - of being a professor in the UK. My research participants

were very conscious of expectations that they should provide academic leadership, and most gave the impression of being most willing to do so. But, evidently unclear about precisely what academic leadership entails, and particularly of where lie the parameters of acceptability in relation to the extent and comprehensiveness of their academic leadership, this constituency – one that is extremely achievement-focused and prides itself on its capacity to perform and to deliver - reported experiencing considerable, and in some cases, unrelenting, pressure that stemmed from having taken on excessive workloads in order to meet what they imagined were other people's expectations of them.

A clear lacuna, then, is lack of clarity about what professorial academic leadership involves, for universities effectively convey an expectation that their most senior academics will perform an activity that is unclearly delineated. A recurring complaint from research participants was that the job of being a professor is extremely demanding, and in many respects unmanageable. One questionnaire respondent wrote: 'It is an all-encompassing fluid role that has to be flexible. The problem is that it's just too big, and doing any of it requires compromises elsewhere'. How much of this unmanageability stems from self-imposed excessive workloads may only be conjectured, but with no clear guidance that stipulates what their academic leadership role ought to involve – or that offers quantitatively expressed indicators of expected academic leadership-related output or activity - many professors seem to be trying to be all things to all people, finding themselves chasing unachievable targets and struggling to cope with the diffuseness of a job that is determined by competing demands imposed by what may seem an ever-expanding array of expectations. I return to the wider developmental implications of this issue in the discussion section below.

What – if any - models of good practice (of professorial leadership preparation and development) exist, and what are the bases of their effectiveness?

There appears to be no shortage of general leadership preparation and development in UK universities; institutional academic development units offer an abundance of diverse programmes and workshops that focus on preparing future and serving leaders and managers - of staff groupings at all levels - for their roles. Much of the take-up of such provision will undoubtedly come from professors since it is they who, as the most senior academics, often take on middle and senior management roles such as faculty dean, head of department, and pro-vice chancellor. But the point is that such leadership development provision is not directed specifically or primarily at professors, nor is it focused exclusively on the kind of academic leadership that, consistent with the interpretation of the term that I apply to my discussion here, is generally expected of professors without portfolios: those who hold no designated formal leadership roles and whose only academic leadership responsibilities stem from their simply being professors.

Heralding my choice of label as potentially ironic, in the Introduction to this article I refer to professors as a 'cadre' of academics. The irony stems from the disjuncture between the dictionary definition of a cadre as 'a nucleus or core group especially of trained personnel able to assume control and to train others' (Merriam-Webster online dictionary, retrieved 21.01.15, emphasis added), and the almost universal lack of what may broadly be categorised as 'training' provision in the UK for professorial academic leadership. I found only one university (a research-intensive, Russell Group[3] member) that has recently (within the last three years) made available professorial development and support provision, in the form of a programme offering workshop-type meetings to a small cohort of its professors, who share responsibility for determining the programme agenda. (My sample of interviewees includes a member of this programme's cohort, but in the interests of preserving his/her anonymity I do not identity her/him as such.) With the exception of this one programme, there seems to be no 'official', designated, preparation and/or development provision in the British higher

education sector for professorial academic leadership – nothing that offers help in being, or developing as, first and foremost, a professor who is expected to provide academic leadership to others.

The interviewee who had been a participant of the programme assessed it as 'good – but it could've done more', summarising the nature of the guidance that it offered:

> The main message I got from the course was that there are all kinds of ways to be a chair…but it was a fairly strong message that you weren't to be just a stellar prof who never...whose feet never touches the ground and never sees a student. So they weren't so keen on that...so that was a bit of the university message. It was a bit of a message of…you need to do everything, but... you've obviously got to take care of your own mental health and your work balance... . They weren't too clear about how you did that.

For this interviewee, the basis of its effectiveness lay in the programme's capacity for offering insight into, and bringing to life, the realities of professorship from the perspectives of others - professorial colleagues with whom she would not otherwise have engaged - through the sharing of problems, discussions of issues that were impacting upon people's working lives, and collectively working through solutions to problems or exploring 'better ways' of doing professorship.

DISCUSSION: LIFTING THE LID OFF THE ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP 'BOX'.

Officially and formally, then, professorial academic leadership development provision in the UK is almost non-existent. Professors themselves, my research has revealed, are quick to acknowledge this, and so too are many of the junior academics who hope or expect to benefit from professorial academic leadership.

Good leadership development – whether focused specifically on academic leadership or on leadership more broadly or narrowly interpreted – must address stakeholders' needs and priorities. Martineau (2004, p. 5) makes the important point: 'Identifying leadership development needs involves discussing with stakeholders where change is needed… : What do individuals or groups need to do differently? In what ways do they need to think or interact differently?' (original emphases). The problem with professorial academic leadership is that in the British academy there is no consensus on what professors should do, so it is very difficult to consider what they need to do differently. Differences of viewpoint prevail not only between, but also within, different categories of institutions in the UK; so, for example, in the research-focused pre-1992[5] university sector, professors are generally regarded and acknowledged as high-achieving academics with distinguished research profiles, whereas in some (but by no means all) of what are variously labelled the 'new' or 'modern' post-1992 institutions, it is not unusual for professors to undertake no research, but to hold significant administrative or managerial roles, and to have been promoted to chairs simply because it is considered fitting for the incumbents of such roles to be professors. Yet even within the pre-1992 sector, generally there is no clearly defined role for the professoriate – an issue that appears to have been first addressed by Malcolm Tight (2002), and has more recently been echoed by Bruce Macfarlane (2012, p. 65): '…while universities publish guidelines about how someone might become a professor, institutions pay comparatively little attention to what professors are expected to do' (original emphases). Indeed, whilst the 'professorial role' is a term that seems to have securely lodged itself within the UK's 21st century academic lexicon, it is not universally accepted that professors have a distinct role (see Evans, 2015b, for an examination of different views on and perceptions of the professoriate and its purpose); a different – admittedly, minority – perspective is that professorship is simply a mark of

recognition in the form of the most senior academic grade achievable and, as such, carries no distinct role implications.

For those who adhere to the notion of a distinct professorial role, the consensual default perception is that such a role is, or should be, that of academic leader – for despite what is anecdotally recognised as the changing nature and constitution of the UK's professoriate (Evans, 2014a, 2015a; Macfarlane, 2012), little attention is directed at reconsidering its purpose within the academy; Bruce Macfarlane (2012) is one of the few analysts to have addressed this issue. Since the meaning of academic leadership remains relatively unexplored and obscure – as Bolden et al. (2012b, p. 8) observe: 'a moderate amount is now known about formal leadership processes at the institutional level, yet far less is known about informal leadership within academic faculties and departments' - those expected to perform it are uncertain of where its parameters lie. So, rather than risk tarnishing their reputations and denting their self-esteem by failing to meet other people's unarticulated expectations of them, professors often take on ever more demanding workloads and expansive arrays of tasks, evidently hoping that this constitutes adequate academic leadership.

Professorship thus emerges from my study as the Cinderella of educational leadership: as a category of higher education leadership whose existence is implicitly acknowledged (professors have long been labelled leaders – most often of research or research agendas), but one that nevertheless remains overlooked and neglected, particularly from a developmental perspective. This neglect may well stem from universities' not really knowing precisely how they want or expect professors to lead, other than their wanting them to take on designated management roles and responsibilities - asked in his research interview if he knew what his (Russell Group) university wants of its professors, a linguistics professor responded: 'I don't think the university knows! I think the university only cares about the

professors that're doing the managerial jobs, and…I don't think they look to us for any sort of leadership outside the managerial'. It may be that, lacking the imagination to think outside the managerialist-shaped box that gives every formal leadership role a designation and accompanying job or role description, universities simply cannot cope with the vagaries and imprecision that reflect ad hoc, opportunistic, flexible, unpredictable and often boundary-less support and guidance that one person may offer another – and that, within academic contexts, is what may be considered the essence of academic leadership. The highly visible and easily identifiable – and quantifiable – elements of professors' performance, such as publications and research income capture, are easy to list as institutional expectations or requirements; the more nebulous output that represents what I call professors' relationality (Evans, 2014a) is much more susceptible to lurking under the radar of accountability, and so, unsure how best to deal with it, institutions throw it all carelessly into a separate box, fasten down the lid tightly, and stick on it a label that reads 'academic leadership'. But because the box remains, for the most part, out of sight, undisturbed and unopened, few are willing or able to have a go at listing – much less describing – its contents. And for their part, professors - as much in the dark as anyone about the box - overestimate its capacity and imagine it filled to the brim with an incalculable miscellany of every conceivable academic activity.

It is surely time to lift the lid and take stock of the box's contents – de-cluttering and tidying, where necessary. One of the most useful ways in which universities may support professors' development as leaders is to be explicit in defining and articulating how – if indeed they see it as a key professorial role and purpose - they interpret academic leadership: what it should, and what it need not necessarily, entail; what professors may reasonably be expected to take on, and what they may justifiably say 'no' to – and why. Most importantly, such clarity should be communicated not only to professors, but also to those most likely to be on the receiving end of their academic leadership, and whose expectations evidently

impact, to varying degrees, on professorial attitudes, behaviour and work rates. The preparation of academics for the professoriate, and development of them as professors once they are promoted, should be informed by such articulation.

My research revealed at best ambivalence, and at worst cynical opposition, on the part of professors towards the idea of any kind of formal, designated 'training' programmes focused on how to be a professor. Yet it also revealed them to derive particularly useful guidance on professorship and 'professorialness' from the examples and shared experiences of others. Perhaps universities can take a lesson from academics' evident predilection for communicating more openly and frankly with, and learning from, each other in the workplace in this way. The effectiveness of implicit, situated workplace learning and professional development is now widely recognised, and universities could tap into such research-based knowledge in supporting their professors through preparation and development initiatives that involve peer interaction – through initiatives such as support groups, mentoring schemes, and semi-social gatherings that facilitate the kinds of work-related exchanges that might allow one professor, through listening to another, to discover what s/he recognises as a 'better way' of going about the business of being a professor.

NOTES

[1] In the UK professorships are conferred only on a minority (currently less than a quarter [HESA, 2013]) of UK-based academics – distinguished on the basis of research, and occasionally teaching, excellence – who equate to the North American full professor. At the time of writing, junior academics in the UK are generally referred to not as professors but as 'lecturers' – which denotes a specific academic grade equivalent to assistant professor, but, rather confusingly, may also be used (both within and outside the academy) as a generic label for an academic of any grade employed in a university. This tradition may be destined to be eroded away, as increasing internationalisation seems to be continuing to push the global academy towards the Americanisation of norms and conventions – including nomenclature.

[2] *Leading professors: professorial academic leadership as it is perceived by 'the led'* was funded by the UK's Leadership Foundation for Higher Education and reported in Evans et al. 2013.

[3] The Russell Group is a group of 24 of what are considered the most research-intensive universities in the UK. It equates broadly to the USA's Ivy League, and to Australia's Group of Eight.

Acknowledgements

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