Chapter 4
Trust in the Informal Leadership of UK Higher Education in an Era of Global Uncertainty

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Introduction

This chapter argues that greater recognition and exploration of the inherent distributed informal academic leadership of UK higher education is needed to build collegially-focused trust in an era of global uncertainty. The chapter distinguishes between formal, top-down, visible leadership exercised by authoritative individuals at or near the top of institutional hierarchical management positions and informal, more invisible leadership interactively practiced by the larger mass of academic staff. The chapter adopts a deductive approach, drawing on prior research literature, combined with selective inductive data derived from ongoing long-term research surveys (n = 130), a focus group (n = 6) and interview responses (n = 24) collected in 2010–19 on trust and leadership in post-compulsory and higher education. It argues that the current unhelpful emphasis on hierarchical managerialism in the UK as an arguably necessary approach to the management of large-scale higher education institutions has tended to overlook the underestimated yet quietly influential presence of collegial academic leadership that already exists in higher education amongst the mass of staff.

From this analysis, the chapter puts forward a recommendation for greater recognition of and trust in informal collective leadership, with reference to self-reflexivity (McKenzie, 2000). Drawing on the data, successive findings (Jameson, 2012, 2018) suggest that, paradoxically, 'less is sometimes more' regarding leadership visibility and trust-building. To examine this, it is necessary to consider the definitions and prior literature relating to trust and higher education leadership.

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Definition of Trust in and of Higher Education Leadership

Trust is a complex interactive relational concept. It is the subject of much previous literature in many disciplines, including philosophy, economics, psychology, education, business and computing. Research on trust has grown since the 1980s (Kramer & Tyler, 1996), during which time hierarchical models of institutional authority have been critiqued in favour of flatter, more consensual, egalitarian structures in which all staff are seen to have both leader and follower roles in creating and sustaining trust. Given this context, the following definition of trust is useful:

> The willingness of a person to be vulnerable to the actions of another … based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that action (Mayer et al. 1995).

This defines trust as a relational psychological state involving confident expectation, despite vulnerability, that others will behave in benevolent rather than harmful ways. Trustors invest belief in those trusted, despite risks of problematic trustee actions. Estimations of 'trustworthiness' are based on cognitive, social and affective perceptions of the competence, benevolence, reliability and integrity of people or institutions trusted. Trust therefore involves the possibility of betrayal. As a result, although 'stranger trust' exists, on the whole trust tends to be built slowly, but is quickly lost. It can be neither 'bought' nor forced, and the benefits it brings are priceless.

In higher education, and elsewhere, building and maintaining trust is essential for the achievement of quality leadership situations in high trust environments in which staff feel valued and fulfilled. Given the challenges of higher education institutions facing increasing change, complexity, competition and uncertainty, high trust collegial institutional cultures fostered by good leadership are essential for survival to cope with the unprecedented emergence of global changes and increasing inequalities.

Formal Management Versus Informal Leadership: 'Less Is More' in High Trust Cultures

The concept of 'less is sometimes more' recognises the paradoxical complexity and elusive quality of leadership as a necessary influencing process for creating and sustaining high trust environments. But what is leadership? Despite more than 3000 attempts to define 'leadership' in prior literature, there are as yet no universally accepted definitions, although, as Fairholm notes (2015), many theorists clearly distinguish between leadership and management. Kotter's (2001: 4) definition is that, "Management is about coping with complexity", whilst "Leadership, by contrast, is about coping with change". While management is focused on control and organisation of operations, tasks and structures, leadership directs, influences and motivates people through the vision, mission, values and human-centred culture of an

organisation (Kotter, 2001; Jameson, 2008; Jameson & McNay, 2007; Jameson & Andrews, 2008).

Leadership may therefore reside within the responsibilities of those in positional authority and is sometimes effectively practiced by formal managers, but it may also be exerted by those without formal position or status in any hierarchy. There is a significant gap in the literature on informal leadership. Although Bolden et al. (2009) discuss the complexities and difficulties of distributed notions of informal emergent leadership, they acknowledge that their data does not really deal with informal leadership, as all their participants held official positions with devolved authority. In one of few works on informal leadership, Pielstick (2000) compares formal with informal leadership, concluding that although informal leaders cannot rely on powers of authority from any position, they tend to be more effective at authentic leadership than managers with formal titles. In his study, informal leaders performed well across the leadership themes of "shared vision, communication, relationships, community, guidance, and character" (Pielstick, 2000: 99).

Ideally, senior managers will function effectively as leaders as part of their official 'manager' roles, acting as leader-managers. However, there is a general tendency in higher education to confuse management with leadership, and to assume that managers are automatically leaders. Yet this is far from the case in many organisations, as Pielstick demonstrates. Some managers lack leadership capabilities and neither positively influence nor attract voluntary followers, positioning themselves as task-focused transactional, problem-solving and controlling managers, with little interest in inspiring followership or in taking up the demanding communications role of leading and supporting staff. If such managers behave fairly to staff, they may attract cautious levels of trust for instrumental purposes, to get tasks done, monitor work systems and ensure compliance, but are unlikely to inspire high trust in staff, particularly if a social breakdown or crisis of confidence occurs.

Trust Culture Leadership

Amongst the models of leadership that may inspire staff trust in higher education, complex adaptive systems perspectives and servant leadership models (Greenleaf, 1977; Obolensky, 2014; Wong & Page, 2003) seem particularly aligned to the spontaneous collective emergent properties of informal leadership. These perspectives tend to see leadership as a dynamic flow of interacting relational processes occurring amongst social actors in uncertain, organic, somewhat paradoxical ways, rather than as fixed traits of one or more authoritative individuals. Recognition of leadership as an organic process in which less control is both necessary and more effective is by no means new. The following quotation from the ancient Chinese Tao Te Ching (C. 600 BC) notes this paradoxical situation, whereby the least visible, most subtle and least heavy-handed leaders are also those who are carrying out the best forms of selfless leadership as part of a natural process:

> The best of all rulers is but a shadowy presence to [his/her] subjects. Next comes the ruler they love and praise; Next comes one they fear; Next comes one with whom they take liberties. When there is not enough faith, there is lack of good faith. Hesitant, [s/he] does not utter words lightly. When [her/his] task is accomplished and [his/her] work done, the people all say, 'It happened to us naturally' (Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching, Trans. Leu, XVII).

Formal, effective leader-managers, by this account, are best placed quietly to stimulate an effective distribution of leadership (Obolensky, 2014) to encourage the sharing of influence throughout an organisation by trusting, making space for and summoning up the collective leadership of the mass of staff. In high trust situations, the power of well-orchestrated collective academic leadership, where the term fits correctly as a designation, is invested in the authenticity and moral authority with which many staff in higher education continue to undertake their work in a conscientious but understated form. Fairholm's definition of 'trust culture leadership' is helpful here:

> Trust culture leadership is a process of building trust cultures within which leader and follower (in an essentially voluntary relationship) relate to accomplish mutually-valued goals using agreed-upon processes from a variety of individual cultural contexts. Some key elements of this perspective include: unified, effective, harmonious culture of mutual trust; planned actions to create trusting environment based on common values; volunteerism based on trust … and trust as the "organizational glue" that allows unified collective activity (Fairholm, 2015: 29).

Trust culture leadership recognises the often-understated reality that interactive bottom-up and horizontally distributed leadership already exists amongst the wider body of academic staff in UK higher education, which is populated by large numbers of talented, knowledgeable, highly qualified academics who may have no official management positions but act as academic leaders as part of their roles (Bacon, 2014; Parr, 2013). These staff continue in under-celebrated but usually effective ways, to lead the teaching of students, of research fields, disciplinary knowledge-based teams, academic and enterprise ventures that make up the greater proportion of work in higher education institutions in the UK, in one of the highest performing systems in the world (Hazelkorn, 2015).

The shared common purposes of this wider group of academic staff, who are both larger than and often also include academic managers, form a relatively 'invisible' collective form of higher education leadership, distributed extensively amongst staff. This intrinsic but largely under-recognised form of leadership continues, mostly in trusting and trustworthy ways, to sustain and motivate the common values and purposes of UK higher education institutions, often without positional leadership roles or formal authority (Hickman & Sorenson, 2013). For the most part, while those in formal positions of power and authority are both nominally and officially designated as the only recognised hierarchical 'leaders' and 'managers' of the institution, this wider academic group are assumed to be 'followers', with few or no appointed leadership roles.

However, it is becoming evident that the normative UK 'managerial template' (Lea, 2011), a model of hierarchical management with leadership perceived to exist only at the top or upper tiers, based on traditional principles of oligarchic power, is

too primitive, outdated and insufficient to handle the complexity of higher education in an increasingly competitive mass global environment. Increasingly, it seems that those who are meant to be merely 'followers' tend to exert as much or more influence and understated power at various levels and in as many ways as those at the top management levels of institutions. The problem is that the growth of a 'managerial template' approach leads to progressive undervaluing and misrecognition of the power and importance of informal academic leadership.

This chapter therefore proposes that we modify and expand our existing understanding of the power dynamics of leadership in UK higher education. There is a need for increased recognition and exploration of the influential role of distributed informal academic leadership amongst the wider group of academic staff, who arguably carry between them, at different levels, a large share of the weight of tasks in higher education, notably as regards the practice of a, "shared vision, communication, relationships, community, guidance, and character", the key themes in Pielstick's comparative analysis of formal and informal leadership (2000: 104). In this respect, we can learn from Harris's research on school leadership (2003: 317), in which she draws attention to the power of informal teacher collective leadership in school education as a shared form of agency, drawing from Gronn's (2000: 334) views on leadership "as a flow of influence in organizations which disentangles it from any presumed connection with headship."

In summary, to create high trust cultures, it is necessary to have both good leadership and effective management, operating smoothly in the kind of 'flow of influence' that Gronn identifies (ibid.). The functions of aligning people, direction-setting, inspiring and motivating staff are those of leadership rather than management. For the establishment and maintenance of trust, it is therefore particularly important not only that managers are observed to be trustworthy, but that they act as capable, skilful leaders in inspiring and sustaining trust in concert with informal leadership during changing situations. For this, self-reflexive capability is needed.

Self-Reflexive Capability in an Uncertain Higher Education Landscape

This chapter argues that notable numbers of academic staff who form the wider group of academic post holders are increasingly 'doing' many of the tasks of leadership, but in under-recognised, frequently invisible ways. This is in recognition of a duty to continue to perform their roles in a professional way for the sake of students and the integrity of subject knowledge. This is effected without expectation of additional reward, status, institutional recognition or additional pay, and often despite problems or difficulties with management. Simultaneously, in some cases, such academics may endure the relative ignominy of being regarded as lower level minor 'followers'. These academics are positioned as 'less important' people in comparison to the sometimes less qualified higher paid bureaucratic managers in the hierarchies above, regardless of informal academic leaders' expertise, multiple

qualifications, many years of study, dedication to students and unrelentingly hard work. Such academic leaders, positioned at various levels amongst senior research, professorial, academic, middle and junior levels of research and lecturer grade staff, tend, furthermore, to be highly skilled in critical analysis and self-reflexive awareness. To lose the trust and cooperation of such staff is therefore potentially a serious problem for management.

In effect, self-reflexive capability may be amongst the key qualities that enable academic staff to cope with the supercomplexity of higher education environments (Barnett, 2000). Reflexivity here is defined here as a steadfast thoughtful capacity to examine and critique instinctive reactions to resist the 'false necessity' of performative 'quick fixes', building long-term trust in coping proactively with ambiguity and change (Simpson & French, 2006). This complex attribute promotes more subtle ways of thinking about the motivations of academic leadership and management than zero-sum conceptions of managerialism and collegiality, while simultaneously resisting the 'false necessity' of deterministic solutions (Unger, 2007: 134; Jameson, 2012, 2018).

Although 'strong' and 'visible' top-down formal leadership in higher education management is frequently lauded in policy documents, this chapter argues that quieter forms of relatively 'invisible' bottom-up distributed informal leadership amongst the mass of academic staff may be, paradoxically, as much if not more effective in maintaining quality high trust institutions than visibly dominant forms of corporate managerial authority. These two kinds of institutional leadership: the formal/senior management, high status, visible form; and the informal, lower status, collectively distributed, invisible form, participate in an ongoing interactive relationship that is complex and indeterminate. It is difficult exactly to quantify the ways in which these differing leadership forms interact and the effects on institutions deriving from each.

Fluid Emergence of Patterns of Leadership

These leadership forms are melded together and separated out from each other in continuously interweaving local patterns of social, cultural, power, influence and authority dynamics in particular contexts, as in Engeström's activity theory (1999), discussed by Harris (2003) regarding the fluid, emergent nature of informal distributed leadership. Observing these patterns is similar to watching a shoal of fish veer suddenly from following one leader to following another, for complex reasons of persistence, predation or hunger rather than solely dominance (Ward et al., 2013). In similar ways, human actors may nominally give transactional allegiance to managers, while at the same time being influenced informally by colleagues to act collectively in different ways to lead staff initiatives. Therefore, to analyse a constantly shifting highly complex kaleidoscope of differing interactive leadership forms, findings from prior literature on UK higher education and from empirical data provide selected insights into some of the dynamics that may be occurring.

From prior literature, it is clear that UK new public management institutional systems are now mostly based on economic, marketized concepts reliant on notions of self-interest amongst people playing active roles within them (Brown & Carasso, 2013). These ambitious performative concepts do not sit well with trust-based systems. As Goldspink (2007: 33–34) explains in relation to general notions of educational reform across international public sector education systems:

> …. structuring contracts on the basis of assumed opportunism and subjecting the agent to close scrutiny signals lack of trust. Assuming self-interest may diminish a felt sense of responsibility and professionalism … and make opportunism more likely. … Christensen and Laegreid (2001: 89)… argue that such approaches have: "… replaced a system based on mutual trust …. with a system which potentially furthers distrust….. This is particularly concerning given that both public and private sector organizations are increasingly realising that where complex services are to be delivered high trust is an essential characteristic of the relationship.

Given the complexity of higher education institutions, if Goldspink is correct, high trust is essential for the effective functioning of such institutions. In considering this issue, this chapter analyses findings from respondents to trust and leadership surveys, interviews and a focus group during 2010–19 who overwhelmingly agreed that high trust was essential for their institutions but was not necessarily being achieved in environments facing global competition and many challenges.

Global Changes and Inequalities in Higher Education

Global higher education has been changing over the past few decades. One significant trend is the emergence of technological and managerial changes within massified higher education systems. Higher education is now affected more radically by innovations in technology than ever before (Dziuban et al., 2005). Marketization, globalisation, government policy intervention, and new public management-led governance have accompanied a worldwide technological shift. Systematic ranking of institutions in global league tables has accelerated massive competition amongst universities and colleges for more status, money, prestige and students.

These developments, linked with global competition in higher education have, arguably, led to a growing local emphasis in the UK on managerial 'command and control' solutions imposed on staff by university managers (Deem, 1998; Deem et al., 2007) in a performative, sometimes seemingly desperate, drive to try to 'be the best amongst the best' at all cost, or at least appear to be (Cribb & Gewirtz, 2013). A resultant lack of diversity in provision is linked to the impetus for all institutions to charge the same level of high student fees. This chapter's focus on developments in the UK notes similarities with trends in North America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, although global higher education reform trends of the last 20-30 years have arguably led to divergence in leadership and management practices in other countries with differing systems such as Norway and the Netherlands (Amaral et al., 2002, 2003; Maassen, 2003).

Loss of Trust

In the UK, the uncertainties unleashed in this maelstrom of tensions have widened gaps between senior leaders and collegially-focused academic staff. Many UK researchers have argued that trust in the top leadership and management of higher education institutions has been eroded, as 'command and control' managerialism has increased in a growing audit culture (Allen, 2003; Deem, 1998; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Deem et al., 2007; Elton, 2008; Winter, 2009). Simultaneously, global trust in authorities has declined, as reported by 33,000 respondents in 20/28 countries participating in global surveys on public trust (Edelman, 2017, 2018). The 26 Edelman trust-building mandates, including guardianship of fairness and equity, taking care of and educating people, are measured using a robust long-term methodology (ibid.) that aligns with definitions of trust in this chapter, based on cognitive, social and affective estimations of the competence, benevolence, reliability and integrity of people or institutions who are trusted (Mayer et al., 1995).

Later editions of the Edelman Trust Barometer have revealed that elite groups and authority figures across sectors are regarded by the public as out of touch, too controlling, untrustworthy, greedy and arrogantly self-interested (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009), with 7/10 respondents stating that the major role of top managers is to establish trust in organisations (Edelman, 2018). Where trustworthiness is absent, anger about inequality has focused on excessive high pay for executive management (Carnell, 2018), exacerbating unrest and distrust in authority. A sense of injustice is linked to the growth of a global 'superclass' with vastly more power and status than anyone else on the planet (Rothkopf, 2009). Dorling's work on UK social inequality, injustice and education critiques wealth and power inequalities undermining social mobility and well-being. He records that by December 2014, the average CEO pay of UK FTSE 100 firms was 342 times greater than that of their staff on minimum wage levels, increasing by 243%, three times faster than employees' pay, since the introduction of the minimum wage in 1999 (Dorling, 2015). As Brown notes on the growing 'inequality crisis', the causes for this arise from financial markets, institutions and neoliberal political and government policies favouring the 1% and .01% wealthiest classes (Brown, 2017). The perceived injustice of such levels of inequality is gradually eroding the complex social fabric of trust.

Higher Education UK National Senior Management Survey

In some UK higher education institutions, related inequalities can be observed regarding senior management and their relationship with their staff, where some top levels of managers appear to have lost the goodwill of many staff. Reisz (2017) reported on initial results from a UK Survey on Senior Management (SMS) in higher education with responses from more than 2000 staff: "Early data from the National Senior Management Survey, which is being developed by academics at

eight universities, find that barely one in 10 (10.4 per cent) respondents is satisfied with the way their institution is managed; 76.5 per cent are not."

Cuthbert has argued that this survey provides 'leading questions', that there is, "something wrong with the methods' and that it has only collected responses from a 'self-selecting sample … of those who want to complain" (Cuthbert, 2017). Nevertheless, confirmatory evidence from the literature on managerialism from UK researchers (Avis, 2003; Davies, 2003; Deem, 1998; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Elton, 2008; Nixon, 2008; Lea, 2011; Winter, 2009) and even from critics of the survey itself (Cuthbert, 2017) acknowledge that much is adrift in higher education 'command and control' managerial systems, in which those in charge are sometimes unsympathetically regarded as exploiting the higher education environment and their staff to enrich themselves (Lea, 2011).

The final results of the above University National Senior Management Survey, reported in October, 2017, were based on the responses of 5888 staff in higher education. Only 8.8% of respondents felt their senior managers deserved to be paid at the level of their salaries, while only 15% felt valued and respected by institutional senior managers. A massive 78% were dissatisfied with the way in which their institution was managed (SMS, 2018). Given the discrepancy in numbers between the 5888 survey responses and the total number of 206,870 full time plus 135,650 part-time academic staff in higher education, in addition to many staff on atypical contracts whose numbers are almost impossible to report (HESA, 2018), it is difficult to estimate how accurately these views reflect the whole sector. Nevertheless, the authors contend that the survey results do continue to represent the realities of UK HE (Erikson et al. 2021).

UK Managerial Template

In view of the above, despite counter-arguments about the need for tough corporate management in mass higher education systems, an ultimately inestimable but significant number of UK staff seem to be more or less dissatisfied with top management in the sector. Institutional management has changed to embrace corporate approaches, with marketization and 'institutional branding' at their core. Although policy rhetoric in theory embraces student-centred, staff-supporting values, in practice institutions emphasise the management of economically rational targets, performance measurement and control of staff at the expense of leadership of people through collegiality and relations of trust. Prior UK literature on new public management, neo-managerialism and neo-liberalism has criticised this trend for a long time (Clarke & Newman, 1997; Deem, 1998; Deem & Brehony, 2005; Elton, 2008; Lea, 2011; McNay, 2005), leading to calls for neo-collective leadership (Bolden et al., 2008), nostalgia for and restoration of collegiality (Elton, 2008; Tapper & Palfreyman, 2002; Bacon, 2014), despite recognition that the dichotomy of managerialism versus academic collegiality is not necessarily as fixed as is often assumed (Tight, 2014).

In recognition of the difficulties involved in large scale management of higher education institutions with massive student numbers, Lea noted in 2011 that a pragmatic UK 'managerial template' has become the dominant organisational structure, in which a "discourse of quantification" is the norm, linked to "performativity indexing and accountability" (Lea, 2011: 816–835). This 'managerial template' can be traced to the economic rationalism of industrial models of corporatisation, which are arguably inappropriate for charitable public sector higher education institutions with higher purposes in fostering both public and private good (Marginson, 2011). Lea identifies in this 'managerial template' potentials for a decline in critical academic thought and an increase in moral risk (Lea, 2011: 835–836). Although Tight (2014) argues against an over-simplified divergence of views on managerialism and collegiality, Lea (2011) cautions against blind trust of management, suggesting managerialism should be subordinate to academic leadership. Bacon (2014: 1) takes such arguments further to propose that collective academic leadership could operate in a structural 'neo-collegiality' to restore more "collegial decision-making processes to create a professional, efficient and appropriately 21st century management approach".

Most critical of all are analyses which conclude that NPM regimes have so undermined the character of the university as to change its purposes completely. Cribb and Gewirtz (2013), for example, argue that UK higher education is at risk of being 'hollowed out' into a marketized entity without 'intrinsic value', in which 'gloss and spin' have replaced 'academic substance' (ibid.). However one positions oneself in relation to this critique, it seems evident that overt forms of hierarchical top-down UK institutional management emphasising economic rationalism, measurement of performance to target and social control are now dominant in UK higher education.

Research Findings on Trust and Leadership

Having considered the above literature, a snapshot of selected empirical findings from UK trust and leadership surveys (n = 130), a focus group (n = 6) and interviews (n = 24) develops and begins to concretise the above trends through analysis of individual respondents' feedback. A fuller analysis of this data is also available in other prior and forthcoming publications (Jameson, 2012, 2018).

In response to the survey on trust and leadership, a representative academic lecturer wrote with some cynicism and disdain regarding his views on senior management in his institution:

> I have absolute trust that senior management will achieve the set targets for student/client satisfaction – however this will come at the cost of staff and more importantly trust in staff. Performativity will reign supreme…. Trust is an issue. Staff do not trust those above. And the actions of managers, not their rhetoric, however, is that of no trust – rather audit. Even at the same level, there is always a perception of others not pulling their weight. (Q10 and Q13: Respondent #104, Male, FT Lecturer, 30-40 age group).

Echoing the findings from the literature review on the economic drivers and self-interested nature of managerialism as it operated in his institution, this respondent felt that university management situations and actions that reduced trust in the organisation were the following:

> They [top managers] get bonuses while we get larger class sizes, less research funds and teach in under-resourced Schools. Sure they achieve nice budget bottom lines, but numbers only impress the uninformed …" [Trust-reducing behaviours are:] "Neo-liberal performativity. Measurement of performance by numbers and simplistic reading of data. Management forget what it is like to be at the other end. (Q12 and Q24: Respondent #104, Male, FT Lecturer, 30-40 age group).

From this quotation, which is representative of survey, interview and focus group responses from academic staff at lower levels in situations in which there was low or no trust in management, it seems clear that the characteristics of trust-reducing behaviours by managers in UK higher education institutions include overly-controlling, narrowly focused monitoring through performance management, unequal and unfair treatment in which management are seen as self-serving. A further response, this time from a part-time lecturer in a university, is illustrative of the complexity of trust in and from leadership or the lack of it. This lecturer had 'a total lack of trust' in senior institutional managers but high trust in his line manager and immediate team for their 'honesty, candour, participation, consultation, communication, fairness':

> ***Q9*** *How far do you trust the senior leadership and management team in your institution to achieve the following? (Rate your level of trust between absolute trust and total distrust)*:
>
> - *Good management standards* – A total lack of trust
> - *Student/client success* – Low level of trust
> - *Well-being of staff* – A total lack of trust
> - *Success of the institution* – A total lack of trust
> - *Good financial management* – Low level of trust
> - *Comment*: Senior leadership seems self-serving, self-interested, and out to shaft everybody!
>
> (Q9: Respondent #9, Male, PT Lecturer, 61–70 age group).

This kind of open-ended written response is complemented by quantitative data in response to the closed questions in the trust and leadership surveys.

In Table 4.1, quantitative data are reported from 101 respondents in one of the surveys who ticked the various options relating to Question 9: *How far do you trust the senior leadership and management team in your institution to achieve the following?* Mixed responses on trust and leadership here include positive replies from a very high number of participants in management and administrative positions (87) and only a smaller number from lecturer level staff (5). In this context, the fact that 80% of respondents had an absolute or high level of trust in good financial management and 73% in success of the institution needs to be interpreted with caution, while the 18% low trust or total lack of trust in the well-being of staff, with 17% responding with low or total lack of trust in good management standards can be drilled down to relate to individual postholders mainly but not exclusively at subordinate levels.

Table 4.1 2010–18 Trust and Leadership Survey Responses (n = 101) to Q9: How far do you trust the senior leadership and management team in your institution to achieve the following? (Rate your level of trust between absolute trust and total distrust)

	Absolute trust	High level of trust	Medium level of trust	Low level of trust	A total lack of trust	N/A	Total	Weighted average
Good management standards	18%	38%	28%	10%	7%	0%		
	18	38	28	10	7	0	101	2.50
Student/client success	16%	54%	21%	6%	1%	2%		
	16	53	21	6	1	2	99	2.21
Well-being of staff	8%	42%	33%	12%	6%	0%		
	8	42	33	12	6	0	101	2.66
Success of the institution	21%	53%	18%	6%	2%	0%		
	21	53	18	6	2	0	100	2.15
Good financial	23%	57%	11%	6%	3%	0%		
	23	58	11	6	3	0	101	2.09

Amongst the responses were those from institutions in which there was a relatively high level of trust and a consciousness of the importance of this. Interestingly, some of the more thoughtful replies came from those in management roles who were clearly concerned to ensure that they acted in a trustworthy way. The following respondent, at DVC/PVC level in a higher performing modern university reported that it was essential to establish high trust to underpin her work with staff:

> … [It is n]ot possible to operate in an environment where trust is not in place. I work on the basis of trust and would wish this to always be my starting point. Once this breaks down there can be serious consequences for an organisation … Would not be able to function effectively if staff did not trust my judgement and actions (Q6 and Q22: Respondent #98, Female, DVC/PVC, modern university).

Within the responses of this senior manager, the characteristics of both trust-building and trust-reducing behaviours were identified as the following:

Q23 *What kinds of leadership behaviours have built trust in your team and/or organisation generally? Can you give examples?*

- Be seen to listen and hear what is being said
- Delegate and trust those to whom you delegate
- Clear vision and understanding of how to get there
- Clear messages 'walk the walk' and 'talk the talk'
- Lead by example

Q24 *What kinds of leadership behaviours have reduced trust between staff in your team and/or organisation? Can you give examples?*

- Lack of communication
- Lack of transparency
- Lack of inclusivity
- Failure to hear messages

(Q23 and Q24: Respondent #98, Female, DVC/PVC, modern university).

Conclusion

The above responses indicate that trust is much valued by those in higher education: 98% of participants indicated that it was vitally connected with leadership in their institutions. Participants recognised that trust is also not easy to build once lost in higher education. Those giving low trust responses in all phases of data collection were particularly negative about distrusting senior levels of management but generally more positive about lower level managers. They tended also to narrate stories about restructuring, redundancies, bullying or other forms of unfair procedural conduct from managers in which trust was definitively lost.

What is interesting, also, is that many of these respondents appeared to have remained silent in their institutions about this issue, neither complaining nor carrying out any retaliatory action. Therefore, it is possible that the managers involved in these situations may never have known that a loss of trust had occurred. These situations hence provided subterranean unarticulated reasons for related poor performance or breakdown in communication in the organisation. However, in general, participants tended to pick up the pieces of low trust situations and carry on working despite this, demonstrating an enduring strength of informal leadership through restraint and silence.

While 'stranger trust' may be easily acquired and serendipitously occurs in many work situations in the first occurrence of setting up new employment relations, once that early bond is broken, for example, by over-controlling, unfair and/or otherwise poor management practice, it becomes increasingly hard to rebuild the shattered confidence and faith of staff. Unfortunately, as in the cases above, since trust is an underpinning relational socio-environmental phenomenon that is seldom accurately observed or even noticed before it is lost, higher education managers may unwittingly lose the trust of their staff without realising what has occurred until it is too late to do much about it easily. Some survey and interview respondents were at a point of no return as regards distrust in management. There is a huge loss of well-being, collegial relations, higher work performance and effective outputs that potentially accompanies this kind of loss of cooperation.

To rebuild trust in senior leader-managers, it is therefore important to consider greater formal recognition for the role of informal distributed academic leadership across the greater part of UK higher education institutions, in contrast to a more routine focus on formal positional leadership. Informal leadership is already occurring in wide-ranging ways within institutions and frequently functioning effectively even when taken for granted. Since trust in the formal senior leadership and management of higher education institutions appears to have been diminished in a significant if inestimable number of institutions, there is a need to consider widening out institutional and policy conceptions of leadership to include informal leaders distributed right across institutions.

The adaptive self-reflexive authentic leadership capabilities of academic staff are needed to develop more effective trust-building behaviours, including assurance of moral authority, competence, benevolence, integrity and reliability in leading higher education institutions. The evidence from the literature and data indicates that trust in some UK management situations has broken down. The 'invisible' informal distributed leadership of academic staff is vital to re-establish trust. From the snapshot of deductive and inductive evidence considered here it is clear that trust-building potentials of informal collective academic leadership, particularly at non-managerial levels, needs to be further researched, more understood and valued. The 'managerial template' approach has undervalued the power and importance of informal academic leadership. This chapter therefore proposes an expansion of understandings of the power dynamics of leadership in UK higher education to increase recognition and further explore the influential role of emergent distributed informal academic leadership amongst staff. In summary, to create high trust cultures, both good leadership and effective management are required. Senior managers need to be recognisably trustworthy, acting as capable, subtle leaders to inspire and develop trust in natural, skilful ways in concert with informal leadership during changing situations.

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