



Catalysing Change: Development of Higher Education International Leadership

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Small Development Projects

Small development projects (SDPs) were first launched in 2004 – shortly after the creation of the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education, now Advance HE. Since then they have proven to be very popular and have introduced a range of innovative activities of benefit to higher education.

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1 Executive summary

The UK's decision to leave the European Union has brought with it an era of uncertainty about what Britain's final exit will look like. Given the current absence of a political 'roadmap' (Whitman, 2016), and the potential ramifications for the education sector, leaders have been left asking what the future role of higher education in an international market might be. At a time when the majority of university strategies have embraced the internationalisation of both teaching and learning (Wit et al, 2015), universities are now faced with political change that may inadvertently constrain the very universality of higher education, by restricting the opportunities for UK students to study with European and International students at both home and abroad.

Within the context of these uncertain times this project focuses its inquiry on three internationally active post-1992 universities to understand better the leadership attributes and competencies they deem to be important for international managers working at university, faculty and school level, while noting that there are currently no leadership development programmes available to international staff. This report presents findings and recommendations from a Leadership Foundation for Higher Education Small Development Project, with accompanying frameworks and case studies.

The aim of this report is to explore the views of staff with international responsibilities at university, faculty and school level across three universities to:

- + Examine the leadership needs at each of these three levels within each university, specifically contextualised to the contemporary environment.
- + Identify examples of effective international leadership at all three levels, given the current situation.
- + Produce guidance and case study exemplars of how generic leadership literature and training materials may be adapted to resonate with international managers' needs.
- + Produce case study examples of international leadership practice that are deemed important by the respondents within each of the three universities to meet the challenges of the current environment.

Data was collected using semi-structured interviews and focus groups. Three interviews were held at each of the participating institutions with international managers working within the university's international office, a faculty and a school. It was anticipated that this strategy would capture both synergies and differences not only across each university but also at each level of management within a participant university.

The reader should note that while this report is presented in a logical sequence, it was formed through an exploratory research approach that allowed the theory and subsequent frameworks to emerge from the data. We make no attempt to re-present the narrative of an individual international manager or present a single over-arching model from the data as this would not only over-emphasise the generalisability of what we report but also position the leadership development of an international manager as a narrow uncomplicated, scientific problem, rather than one that is undoubtedly multi-faceted, complex and situated. Instead, the research team developed four theoretically diverse frameworks from the data. While we recommend all four could be used together by universities to facilitate a multi-lens interrogation of their international leadership developmental needs, we also advocate that institutions, academics and administrators are free to use, adapt or discard one or more of these frameworks according to their needs. The four diverse frameworks the research team drew out of the data are: Lave and Wenger's (1991) and Wenger's (2000) communities of practice; William's (2010) role and competencies of boundary spanners; Hogan and Warrenfeltz's (2003) domains of managerial competencies and, finally, Adair's (1973) action-centred leadership Venn diagram.

Analysis of the data across each university identified that:

- + University staff with international responsibilities were unperturbed by the potential impact of Brexit, as the environment they worked within has always been fluid and, at the time of writing, the terms of the UK exit are still unknown.

- + Experience within the role was seen as the key determinant to envisioning and implementing a successful international strategy.
- + Internal inconsistencies were found in their preferred experiential approach and subsequent institutional implementation of operational strategy. In addition, each institution had adopted a different approach, be it task-focused, team-focused or individual leadership-focused (Adair, 1973).
- + There is a strong emphasis on interpersonal skills within the roles. Being able to communicate effectively, as well as build and maintain relationships, was deemed to be a key part of the role.

This report recommends the development of a holistic leadership programme that integrates the four frameworks outlined within this report, in order to strategise, analyse and then support international leaders and managers with targeted leadership development training and associated support.

For those international leaders and managers recruiting new staff into their offices, the approaches and competencies identified in this report will be helpful in informing relevant job specifications and a subsequent CPD framework for the successful applicant.

2 Background

2.1 The contemporary context

The UK's decision to leave the European Union has brought with it an era of uncertainty about what Britain's final exit will look like, along with a move towards more conservative national policies. Given the current absence of a political 'roadmap' (Whitman, 2016), and the potential ramifications for the education sector, leaders have been left asking what the future role of higher education in an international market might be. At a time when the majority of university strategies have embraced the internationalisation of both teaching and learning (Wit et al, 2015), universities are now faced with political change that may inadvertently constrain the very universality of higher education, by restricting the opportunities for UK students to study with European and International students at both home and abroad... Even before this change the international market was complex, continually shaped by ongoing political and demographic changes (Shepherd, 2013), while contributing over £5.6bn to the UK economy (Kelly et al, 2014).

Returning to the contemporary situation, UK universities are faced with greater uncertainty as they seek to set strategy that both maintains and expands existing overseas links to meet the growing demand of the international market, where student mobility is set to rise by more than 60% to eight million students per year by 2025 (University of Oxford, 2015). Against this background there appears to be a distinct lack of direct leadership and management training, with associated support, available to both managers and staff with international responsibilities within universities. While there are a number of differing communities of practice, such as the Universities UK International Unit; the British Universities' International Liaison Association (BUILA); Association of UK Higher Education European Officers (HEURO); and UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA), it is difficult to identify leadership and management developmental training or support specifically aimed at international managers and staff.

This project seeks to draw on the insights of staff with international responsibilities across a university's international office, faculty and school. This small-scale research project will focus on three universities that are internationally active and capture data that can be used to start to inform what leadership development might look like for those with higher education international responsibilities.

2.2 Internationalisation and Brexit

During the referendum campaign, the theme of 'take back control' unfolded through political speeches and discourses, signalling a strong appetite for Britain to preserve its borders and take a more nationalistic approach (Cummings et al, 2016). Just how this affects higher education institutions is highly relevant, as higher education is an institution that bases its work around collaboration, networks and partnerships, working both at a national level and across borders. In fact, approximately 50% of European universities have an internationalisation strategy (Sursock, 2015). Universities see internationalisation as an opportunity to promote the concept of a 'global citizen' but, instead, it could be argued that the current political climate presents educational leaders with challenges around the key principles of equality, inclusivity and belonging.

UK universities have an important level of commitment to engagement in internationalisation through their recruitment of non-UK citizens as students and staff. The outcomes of political negotiations are therefore a cause of concern for university leaders who are keen to maintain a global and competitive edge. There are also benefits for universities from the contribution of European funding – in some academic disciplines up to a third of all research funding is from European programmes (Centre for Global Higher Education, 2018). However, not all UK institutions are so heavily reliant on this funding as their main source of income. Nevertheless, if the elite universities are at risk of losing research funding then this may be a concern for all, resulting in further competition among UK higher education institutions.

2.3 Theories underpinning this study

Given there is very little written on the focus of this research project, the team set their approach as an exploratory one from the outset. This approach allows the theory and subsequent frameworks to emerge from the data and suggests a starting position for further research and/or professional enquiry. The reader should note that the team makes no attempt to re-present the narrative of an individual international manager, or, indeed present a single over-arching model from the data as this would not only over-emphasise the generalisability of what we report but also position the leadership development of an international manager as a narrow, complicated, scientific problem rather than one that is undoubtedly a multi-faceted, complex and situated. The following three sub-sections: situated development; boundary spanners; and Hogan and Warrenfeltz's (2003) competency model, provide a brief introduction for the reader of the theories that emerged from the data.

2.4 Situated development

Given the challenges facing universities, outlined in the previous section of this report, the team felt it appropriate to adopt a situated developmental lens to explore the responses of participants taking part in this study across three universities. This approach recognises that both managers and staff with international responsibilities work within a complex and adaptive learning environment, where both learning and leadership is fluid. Indeed two participants argued that staff working within an international role at university, faculty and departmental and their associated relationships should be viewed as a professional and experiential 'community of practice' (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 2000). However, the research team prefer the pluralistic term 'communities' not 'community' at this point, as we did not want to assume that all three levels within a university were homogenous; indeed subsequent findings indicated that this was indeed not the case.

A community of practice requires the following three components:

- 1 A domain of interest, the profession's focus.
- 2 A community, a team engaged in structured activities, assisting and sharing information with each other, building both relationships and learning.
- 3 Shared practice, where individual members are seen as practitioners, interacting with each other within hierarchies to share resources, stories, celebrations and challenges.

Wenger (2000) emphasises the educative and training aspect of a community of practice and the impact this can have on a participant's meaning-making through their social participation within these professional settings. While it can be argued that the leadership and learning development formation which Wenger identifies within these communities is primarily constructionist in nature (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1969), it can be countered that such a constructionist position, where institutional sameness and conformity is encouraged, could fail to fully inspire a culture that will readily and openly critique contemporary practice.

We now turn towards the importance of the constructivist notion of learning, one that privileges cognitive dissonance as a catalyst for learning, rather than one purely gained through engagement or experience. Constructivism encompasses two schools of thought; the first is attributed to Piaget (1972) who rejects the idea that individual learning is simply the passive assimilation of knowledge. He advocates it is a dynamic process where individuals acquire knowledge by cognitively meaning-making through two or more conflicting thoughts and then testing out the interpretation they arrive at. The second school of thought focuses on social constructivism and rejects Piaget's (1972) egocentric interpretation, by placing a structural emphasis on finding answers to hermeneutic puzzles via a collective that acquires learning through dialogue (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1990). A position where the power of language and the welcoming of different perspectives, and perhaps an individual's place within a commune, are key components in order to gain

traction and legitimacy within the 'community of practice' (Gadamer, [1975] 2004; Wiggerstein, 1958). This report views the contrast between these individual and collective alternate positions on leadership and learning formation not as dualisms but as pluralistic in nature, each vying for position within different situations. We are now at a position where we would like to proffer a conceptual framework which seems to fit our interpretations of the readings thus far, see Figure 1. This model is drawn from Harris (forthcoming thesis).

Figure 1: communities of practice



We revisit the above model within the findings of this report.

This framework incorporates the three components required by an educative and training community of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 2000), woven into a Venn diagram to represent the complexity of such relationships. The three components do not operate in a vacuum, they are surrounded by a porous boundary which facilitates flow from and to the external environment. Within the Venn there are areas of homogeneity whose borders, à la Sartre (1996), represent points of acceptance and deliberative decision-making. It is at this precise point the research team start to make the link between this framework and Adair's (1973) 'action-centred leadership' Venn diagram, where his task, team and individual appear to have synergy respectively with domain, community and shared practice. We will return to this potential later within the key findings of this report.

2.5 Boundary spanners

So far we have argued that international staff within higher education work within a complex environment. While the focus on Lave and Wenger's (1991) 'community of practice' was useful in envisioning the practice within a singular professional setting, subsequent findings from participant interviews acknowledged the complexity of the international role, particularly where it is required to span different internal stakeholder expectations and multiple external socio-cultural communities, organisations and nations. It is for this reason we now turn to Williams (2010) thought-provoking paper that offers a literature review on 'boundary spanners'. Williams recognises the need for 'boundary spanners' (individuals with specific competencies) to span and collaborate across boundaries both internally and externally within public, private and independent sectors. This hermeneutic practice requires the individual to adopt a synergising interplay between collective structure and individual agency, across not only a range of institutions, but, also the demands of the contemporary environment in which they are situated.

William's (2002) identifies, in an earlier paper, three roles associated with a boundary spanner operating within the public sector alongside competencies that underpin each (see Table 1).

Table 1: the roles and competencies of public sector boundary spanners

Role	Competencies	Comment
Reticulist	Networking Managing accountabilities Appreciates different modes of governance Political skills and diplomacy	Competencies that respond to the challenges inherent in managing within and across networks, hierarchies and markets. (Williams, 2010, pp12-15)
Entrepreneur	Brokering Entrepreneurial Innovative and creative Tolerates risk	Competencies that recognise the need for innovative ideas and approaches which challenge traditional practice (Williams, 2010, pp15-18)
Interpreter	Interpersonal relationships Communication, listening and empathising Framing and sensemaking Building trust Tolerance of diversity and culture	Competencies that demonstrate the ability and sensitivity to manage difference (Williams, 2010, p19) across different communities of practice

As with the communities of practice Venn diagram (Figure 1) identified earlier, we will also return to Williams' (2002) public sector boundary spanner roles and competencies within the key findings of this report. However, before we do this, we linger on competencies a while longer.

2.6 Hogan and Warrenfeltz's (2003) competency model

Following on from the literature relating to boundary spanners, which identified boundary spanners as individuals with an array of diverse competencies, we now explore the latter a little more by now focusing on management and leadership competencies. The need for specific competencies within an international leadership/management setting was again reinforced within participant's replies to our questions. Therefore, post-data collection we turned to Hogan's and Warrenfeltz's (2003) four domains of managerial competencies to map the behaviours the participants felt were influential in the delivery of desired outcomes (Bartram, 2005). The four domains are:

- + The intrapersonal domain, encompassing self-esteem, resilience and self-control. These competencies are also described as having important consequences for career development in adulthood.
- + The interpersonal domain enables the ability to build and sustain relationships.
- + The technical (business competencies) domain develops from the first two domains. These tend to depend upon cognitive ability, rather than interpersonal skills, tending to be the last to develop and the least dependent upon dealing with other people.
- + The leadership domain can be categorised as the sum of the intrapersonal, interpersonal and technical skills.

The competencies associated with each of the four domains are illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Hogan and Warrenfeltz domain model**Intrapersonal domain:**

Sample competencies include:

- + Courage and willingness to take a stand
- + Career ambition and perseverance
- + Integrity, ethics and values
- + Core self-esteem and emotional stability
- + Patience
- + Tolerance of ambiguity

Technical [work] domain:

Sample competencies include:

- + Business acumen
- + Quality decision-making
- + Intellectual horsepower
- + Functional technical skills
- + Organising ability
- + Priority setting
- + Developing and effective business strategy

Interpersonal domain:

Sample competencies include:

- + Political savoir-faire
- + Peer and boss relations
- + Self-presentation and impression management
- + Listening and negotiating
- + Written and oral communication
- + Customer focus
- + Approachability

Leadership domain:

Sample competencies include:

- + Providing direction, support and standards for accomplishment
- + Communicating a compelling vision
- + Caring about, developing and challenging direct reports
- + Hiring and staffing strategically
- + Motivating others
- + Building effective teams

While there appear to be some synergies with the competencies Williams (2002) identified in the previous section, Hogan and Warrenfeltz (2003) offer an alternative lens from which to examine the data. Within the 'Key findings' section both will be used.

3 Aims and objectives

The aim of this report is to explore the constructions of staff with international responsibilities at university, faculty and school level across three universities to:

- + Examine the leadership needs at each of these three levels within each university, specifically contextualised to the contemporary environment.
- + Identify examples of international leadership at all three levels deemed effective given the current situation.
- + Produce guidance and case study exemplars of how generic leadership literatures and training materials may be adapted to resonate with International managers' contemporary needs.
- + Produce case study examples of international leadership that are deemed important by the respondents within each of the three universities to meet the challenges of the current environment.

4 Research methods

This inquiry started with an overarching question, given the ongoing uncertainties regarding Brexit, which focused on 'what will the future role of higher education in an international market look like?' To answer this question, we adopted a phenomenological interpretivist approach (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2012; Moustakas, 1994), interviewing staff with international responsibilities at university, faculty and school levels within three different universities. The tenant of social phenomenology is to demonstrate the reciprocal interactions among the processes of human action, situational structuring, and reality construction (Orleans, 2008). Rather than recognising that any aspect is a causal factor, phenomenology views all dimensions as constitutive of all others, where its focus is based on a rigorous emphasis of participant's subjective experiences (Benner 1995), where consciousness, acceptance or resistance, is formed in relationship with the professional community of practice they are engaged with (Merleau-Ponty [1945] 2012).

Once ethical approval had been secured, an introductory letter and consent forms were sent out to participants in international roles across the three universities. They are regarded as "privileged witnesses or people who, because of their position, activities or responsibilities have a good understanding of the problem to be explored" (LaForest, 2009 p.26). Semi-structured interviews are designed with a fairly open framework to allow for focused, conversational, two-way communication. They were used to both give and receive information, while allowing the interviewer to change the order of the questions or the way they are worded or to leave out questions that may appear redundant. This allowed both the interviewer and the person being interviewed the flexibility to probe for details or discuss issues. Eight interviews were considered as an optimal number to prevent data saturation and this proved to be the case (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). As well as the individual interviews, a focus group was also conducted to meet a time constraint within one setting.

An audio recording was made of each interview and later transcribed for analysis. Transcripts were examined, with the researchers compiling initial thematic categories. Through several iterations and discussion, these categories were refined and amended. Categories were selected on the principle of 'allowing the data to speak' and to avoid setting narrow deductive pre-ordained categories which emanate from the researchers' experiences rather than from those of the respondents. However, in recognising that a researcher's own understanding and experience will influence data collection and analysis, the research team took time to reflect on and record interpretations. In so doing we aimed to protect the validity of our interpretations by demonstrating how they were reached (Boulton and Hammersley, 1996).

Key questions

The key questions that this research paper aimed to address were:

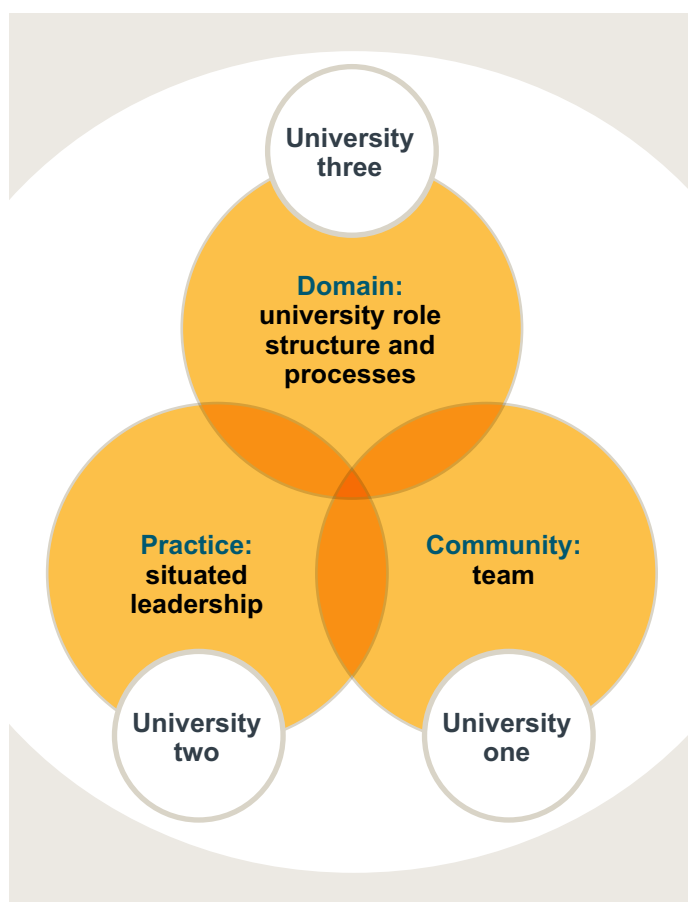
	Indicative question areas
Introduction	<p>Tell us more about your role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + How long in higher education? + How long at institution? + How long worked in international role? + What attracted them to the role? <p>How was the selection process, how did you find out about the role you are currently in?</p>
Internationalisation and identification of how their role is performed	<p>Why do you feel internationalisation is important for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Yourself? + Your institution? + Higher education in general? <p>In terms of internationalisation, what do you consider are the important aspects of your role?</p> <p>Capture and dissemination of international good practice, can you identify elements of such practice?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Institutional good practice and how does the institution's culture and practice inform international practices + What about the communication and coordination between the school, faculty and international office
Challenges within higher education with an international context	<p>What are the current challenges facing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Yourself? + Institution? <p>How is the university strategy brought to life at faculty/school level?</p>
Identification of competencies, and training needs for higher education staff with International responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> + Given the contemporary situation what knowledge, skills and attributes do you feel are needed by someone fulfilling your role? + How is performance measured? + Where do you see the role taking you in the future? + Are there areas where you feel training and development would be valued to support an individual entering your current role?

5 Key findings

Communities of practice: leadership and learning

Returning to our first conceptual framework (see Figure 1), we commenced analysis by focusing on the transcripts of university international managers working within each of the universities' central international offices, with the aim of identifying synergies, differences, as well as areas of good practice. We produced a Venn for each university and then cut and pasted sentences and paragraphs from the interview transcripts onto the associated framework, with the aim of keeping the data as rich as possible. The results gained from this approach for each university were strikingly different, it was apparent that each international office preferred a different strategic approach.

Figure 2: Mapping of universities' preferred operational approach



University one. Within the international office of university one a great deal of time was spent focusing on team goals and maintaining the motivation of and discipline of the team, this was the clear strength for this university. The narrative within the transcript pointed to a trail-blazing approach within the international office at university level. Unencumbered to a large degree by structure and processes, it was clear that individual leadership and relational management were a favoured approach for this institution. Clear commitment to working as a team was evident: *“obvious examples of working together is collaborative work across the university. I think it is very positive, and we sometimes think I am not good, or we are not good at it – but we really are. There is a lot of goodwill and this is quite motivating really”*.

In contrast to collaborative motivation there was recognition that the university's team-focused strategy could, at times, compromise the speed of decision-making, *“It is knowing your market and it is understanding what innovation is required, and some universities are much quicker at this”* and *“I would like to see more changes, though I think the university needs to stabilise itself a little bit, but attention is needed here”*. There was clear recognition that there is a need to look beyond individual roles and hence comments such as *“I think our structure is not too supportive”* illustrates where the emphasis should be. Equally, the participant explained how the international office responded to the demands of their role by stating, *“We learn by experience, it's very much on the job learning”*. Such an insight suggests that, due to a lack of strategic direction, staff are having to work out themselves how to deliver relevant aspects of their roles. In summary, most of comments within the transcript were heavily weighted towards community within the Venn framework, with some falling across into practice. There was very little comment that fell within the Venn's domain area.

University two. The international office of university two valued collaboration across the university, with the transcript revealing that individual leadership at all levels was considered to be the glue that holds both emergent strategy and the team together. Here the approach

centred on the person and the university's brand.

The value in investing in developing international students was a significant theme that ran through the narrative. Comments continually demonstrated the international office's commitment to a collective approach:

"I think we have got buy in. I think we've managed to get everybody in the organisation to understand the importance of this activity [...] The volume of work coming through now means training others (programme directors,) it means we've got to share, more people have got to get involved."

The need to respond to external changes quickly was also evident during the interviews, *"Literally we are trying to push programmes through, and I suppose, one of the things I am trying to do is accelerate that, to get better and quicker at it"*. Attitudes that emerge from these comments suggest structures and processes should not hamper your progress in international markets; the ability to make things happen is a mindset that dominates the approach to leadership at university two. In summary, most of comments within the transcript were heavily weighted towards practice within the Venn framework, indeed this was the dominant circle. While a few comments fell into the community component, very few comments fell into the domain circle.

University three. The transcript from the international office of university three reflected a leadership approach that emphasises a dominant top-down domain approach: *"associate heads drive the international agenda, targets are set by the dean and there is a push for progression on numbers, recruitment, progression of partners, that sort of thing, so it is very much a top to bottom relationship"*.

The approach focused on a strategy that measures both institutional and individual performance through metrics to drive growth and meet targets *"[we are]committed to making sure there is a good service level agreement between us and the partner in terms of responsiveness, service, and communication and so on"*. The narrative within the transcript gave insight into the buy-in at the international office level to such an approach *"I need to make sure we've got the right things in place to achieve aims. Whether it be open days, international recruitment, cold calling and communications or videos, so yes targets are very much part of the role [...] So we have got clear metrics of what we want to achieve as part of our internationalisation, you know; we have broken that down into different pillars, and then against this we have got key targets"*. Such insights paint the picture of a leadership approach driven by metrics, adjusting their structure and processes to meet the demands of the task, where priority is seemingly focused on addressing the complicated rather than the complex.

The implications of working where there is a substantial focus on the domain element of the Venn framework were clear, *"I mean most of the team that we have, work you know around the clock so to speak, because that is how we work"*. In summary, the domain was the dominant narrative within the Venn framework, with very few comments falling solely into community and [individual] leadership practice. We now analyse each of the international offices' operational approaches further, at each of the three levels: international office, faculty and school. Firstly, focusing on role and competencies associated with a public-sector boundary spanner (Williams, 2002), before moving onto Hogan and Warrenfeltz's (2003) managerial and leadership domain model.

The role and competencies boundary spanners

The following key was used to map our findings against the role and competencies of a public-sector boundary spanner identified by Williams (2002).

	The role and competency was referred to numerous times, and the participant(s) identified the competency as key/a major component of how they perform their management/leadership role.
	The role and competency was mentioned occasionally, and the participant(s) identified the competency as playing a part in how they perform their management/leadership role.
	This role and competency was identified either briefly or not at all. It was not referred to as a key competency within the management/leadership role of the participant(s).

The analysis below, considers each of Williams (2002) three roles and associated competencies at university, faculty and school level. It is important to note that while some competencies for a particular university may be classified as red, this does not infer that these competencies are not valued by an institution but that, within the resulting narrative, little or no emphasis was placed on that particular aptitude. Nevertheless, the approach the research team proffers within this section may prove of use to universities who wish to carry out a gap analysis prior to designing and developing an international leadership/management development programme.

The reticulist role and associated competencies

Reticulist	Networking (N)	Managing accountability (MA)	Governance (G)	Political skills (PS)
University level				
University one				
University two				
University three				
Faculty level				
University one				
University two				
University three				
School level				
University one				
University two				
University three				

University one. Compared to any other level, networking and political skills were most evident at university level *“we do a lot of networking and make sure that we stay up to date, in terms of any changes, but as I say there is an excellent network of communities’ of practice across the UK that we can rely on and that does help a lot”*. At faculty level, there was evidence of a commitment to external networking but a need to invest more time on internal networking was highlighted. In terms of departmental level, the appetite to network was strong but compromised due to the lack of space and time given to this activity.

As pointed out by Wenger, (2000, p214) *“a well-functioning community of practice is a good context to explore radically new insights without becoming fools or stuck in some dead end”*. Bearing in mind the pace of change within the higher education sector, continued engagement with such communities of practice could prevent institutions becoming ‘stuck’, and hence avoid being left behind.

The importance of the difference between boundary spanners and boundary spanning, as pointed out by Williams (2010), is worth reflecting on at this stage. Whereas the latter can be seen as a set of activities, processes and practices, the former is people who engage in the ‘doing’ of boundary spanning. Boundary spanning as an activity appears to feature within the university. However, at faculty and departmental level, the absence of effective boundary spanners suggests the lack of individuals being able to fully engage in these practices. Participants interviewed at this university at departmental level did reflect this view: *“we have set up processes and activities but space and overlap of accountability limit our ability to contribute to this role”*.

University two. All three levels displayed convincing evidence of a strong networking culture internally, externally, vertically and horizontally. Accountability at university level emphasised a commitment to achieving growth in numbers but it was clear that this should not be at the expense of compromising the quality of the product. At faculty level, we found the strongest understanding of rules on governance/technical knowledge being displayed. As suggested by Williams (2010), individuals displaying boundary spanning tendencies use their interpersonal

skills and relationships to keep pathways open at all levels within the hierarchy. From the data, it was evident good networking was reflected through all three levels of the organisation: *“we are good at building partnerships, collaborating and working with others, externally we are aware of where to go”*.

University three. Networking across all levels was consistent and strong political skills at university level demonstrated their ability to operate with clearly defined rules and structures. However, this emphasis did not continue as we move to departmental and faculty level. The absence of autonomy and encouragement to explore relationships at departmental and faculty level was limited due to the decisions being pushed down from the top. The tension of such an approach was captured several times in the transcripts. Here are two examples:

“But I think a lot of policies, a lot of direction comes from above – I think there is definitely a need for more sharing of student experience and staff experience.”

“The main challenge is getting those capabilities across the different stakeholders internally, I don’t think the challenges are only external, some work to do with our own processes.”

In particular, what stood out within this institution was accountability being measured and driven by metrics and this view was expressed a few times during the interviews: *“we have clear metrics of what we want to achieve as part of internationalisation.”*

Such an approach highlights their alignment with a more task style of leadership as reflected in Adair’s model (1973).

The entrepreneur role and associated competencies

Entrepreneur	Brokering (B)	Entrepreneurial (E)	Innovative and creative (IC)	Tolerates risk (TR)
University level				
University one				
University two				
University three				
Faculty level				
University one				
University two				
University three				
School level				
University one				
University two				
University three				

University one. Entrepreneurial spirit was present at university level but was limited due to the changes in the structure of the institution. Such changes limited the degree of risk and innovation being explored. Participants were able to confirm this position during their interviews, stating:

“We are subject to a new VC and changes at the top, where international work is being positioned does not sit comfortably with me at present and it is difficult to introduce new approaches when I’m looking for buy in.”

Creativity and ideas are considered part of working in the higher education sector. However, a cautious approach was apparent due to implementation of new ways of working and changes from above. Unable to negotiate this freedom to experiment, the international staff were very aware of the issues and keen to ensure student experience remained at the heart of new opportunities being sourced.

The impact of this did limit growth of an entrepreneurial mindset, at both faculty and departmental level, and participants acknowledged this during our interviews: *“it is the goodwill of staff that helps promote the international agenda and this is done in addition to their day role”*.

Although individual levels demonstrated a strong team spirit, this was also expressed as being strained at times due to unclear structures being used. Participants were able to reflect this position, stating: *“I think our structure, sometimes, is not a bit supportive and can affect our progress”*. Additionally, participants highlighted that their ability to engage with new ways of working and risk-taking were limited due to internal structures. One respondent stated:

“There has been a shift in our communication of internationalisation due to change of leadership. I see internationalisation as a very academic issue and not just about recruitment. Before academic leaders would join the strategy team to mobilise international issues but now the communication sits elsewhere in the university and this has an impact on getting the message across.”

Clearly, decisions about the structure appear to be impacting on the opportunity to fully engage and consider risk.

University two. Accustomed to working in an area of uncertainty, leaders at university level seemed unaffected by external changes and dismissive of the risk element. Instead, they believed the bigger challenges were from within the institution. The attitude from leaders at university level reflects this point well as participants stated:

“I’m being opportunistic, and for example through one of our professional groups we have an opportunity to develop a XXX programme with a French institution, externally our door is being knocked”.

Although at university level the ability to function in an era of uncertainty prevailed, there was less emphasis placed on this at faculty and departmental level. Staff at faculty and school level sought clarity and reassurances. One participant captured the impact on staff: *“To be fair to the institution things have moved so quickly that, I think, individual skills are the last priority. We don’t have staff development anymore”.* Lots of sense making still seems to be on going as the sector is learning to cope with the new demands being placed upon it. A senior leader at the institution firmly believes: *“The appetite to try new things is present, however internal processes are at times challenging as they need to move at same pace as demands”.*

University three. The vision and commitment to working differently and experimenting with new initiatives was apparent within the international office, and this point was highlighted by one of our participants. However, when it came to translate this approach into practice at faculty and school level the message appears to be a little distorted and lost. Such distortion was expressed clearly by a participant during the interviews: *“A vision of what the university wants to achieve in five years is within the corporate plan, but then dissemination, and then communication, and also working towards that is challenging”.*

Both faculty and school staff with international responsibility felt innovation and creativity was decided at the top and then imposed upon them. They felt they had very little opportunity to contribute to change and, again, this reflects the impact on recipients within a task-based culture. The emphasis is on the customer and seeing the sector through an entrepreneurial lens was a model that emerged within the international office, and one participant clearly expressed the business nature of their approach, stating: *“[we are] committed to making sure there is a good service level agreement between us and the partner in terms of responsiveness, customer service and communication”.*

The interpreter role and associated competencies

Interpreter	Inter-personal (IR)	Communication (C)	Listening and emphasising (LE)	Framing and sense making (FS)	Building trust (BT)	Tolerance of diversity and culture (T)
University level						
University one	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Dark Blue
University two	Dark Blue	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Dark Blue
University three	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue
Faculty level						
University one	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red	Dark Blue
University two	Yellow	Dark Blue	Red	Yellow	Dark Blue	Dark Blue
University three	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
School level						
University one	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red	Red	Dark Blue
University two	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Dark Blue
University three	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow

University one. From the findings, it was apparent that there was a strong commitment to equality and diversity at all levels, as this was a key feature emphasised by all as the main attraction to working within an international role within higher education. Comments that reinforced this point were made by participants: *“I am international myself; my own experience and my desire to ensure others’ experience is good is what draws me to this type of work, I see the role of the university as giving society competent global citizens”*.

While the international office felt external partnerships and collaborations were a particular strength, there appeared less emphasis placed on this at faculty and school level. Only the interpreter competency of ‘tolerance of diversity and culture’ was referred to consistently at faculty level, and school level, while there was more work to be done

around the areas of trust, communication, listening and sense making.

University two. Given the international office’s focus on collaboration and community, discussed earlier, it is perhaps not surprising that the university seemingly fared better within the interpreter role. At faculty level trust and communication was emphasised strongly along with a clear desire to embrace and practice these qualities. However, the current climate made this challenging and concerns suggested that there was still work to be done internally in order to be operating in a joined-up fashion. One participant made clear their commitment to diversity: *“we need to understand different markets so we recruit experts from that local area; this brings us closer to understanding the market and customer’s needs and making sense of the situation”*. The university decides the

market it wants to move into and then invests in their resources, buying in expertise and knowledge by bringing in staff familiar with the socio-cultural aspects of that particular segment, rather than training and developing existing staff. Participants expressed this view clearly during interviews, for instance: *“yes, so somebody that understands the market and understands the culture, barriers to entry, those kinds of issues”*.

University three. At the international office level, perhaps indicative of the institution’s top-down approach discussed earlier, there was little said regarding communication. However, across the university, there was evidence of a strong commitment to tolerance of equality and diversity. This desire to work across boundaries and collaborate appeared to be the main motivation for staff within higher education international roles. A leader at university level shared their motivation for working in an international role: *“I had a decision to make to stay in pure academia role or pursue a professional role within higher education and the international team. International was where my heart is and my background in this area made the choice easy”*. Findings indicated that communication, listening and trust between departments and divisions needs more focus, although key messages are shared. Nevertheless, it is the way they are actioned and shared that may need further attention; one participant captured this well: *“Management at the top need to listen and share staff and students views more”*.

What emerges from these findings is the acknowledgment that position, power and status does not impact on the ability to employ the practices of boundary spanning. While there was evidence of this practice taking place across the three levels, it is worth reminding ourselves of the distinction made by Williams (2010) between boundary spanning and boundary spanners. The data suggests more opportunity to be a boundary spanners exists at university level, whereas at faculty and departmental level more time is dedicated to activities of boundary spanning. There was a strong theme across all institutions at international office level that leaders placed emphasis on their learned experience to shape the delivery of their international strategy, and thus suggests the lack of an

effective leadership/management development programme leaves individuals with only their experience to rely on. This was a view expressed by a number of individuals: *“I taught myself a lot of the processes and knowledge needed to work in the sector, learning by doing – nobody told me”*.

Hogan competency model

We now turn to identify how many of the competencies identified by the Hogan and Warrendfeltz (2003) model were recognised by the participants as key to the role(s) they were performing. Interestingly, when conducting this activity post-data collection, the research team found that the intrapersonal domain of competencies were not explicitly considered by participants, either across universities or within the three levels of each. This is not to say that participants do not think of this domain as relevant to the international role, but may be a result of using the Hogan and Warrenfelz model post-interview to analyse transcripts. In essence, this could be a gap in our findings and moving forward there may be value for universities to incorporate all four domains overtly within their training needs analysis prior to developing an international leadership development programme.

The following key was used to map findings against the competencies from the Hogan model:

	The role and competency was referred to numerous times, and the participant(s) identified the competency as key/a major component of how they perform their management/leadership role.
	The role and competency was mentioned occasionally, and the participant(s) identified the competency as playing a part in how they perform their management/leadership role.
	This role and competency was identified either briefly or not at all. It was not referred to as a key competency within the management/leadership role of the participant(s).

The interpersonal domain

Interpersonal	Politically aware	Peer and boss relations	Self-presentation	Listening and negotiating	Written and oral communication	Customer focused
University level						
University one						
University two						
University three						
Faculty level						
University one						
University two						
University three						
School level						
University one						
University two						
University three						

University one. The findings of the interviews indicate that interpersonal skills, particularly communications skills such as listening and negotiating are considered key competencies by participants at all three levels of the university. At faculty and school level there was less explicit evidence of interpersonal skills being key to the role that the participants undertake. However, the ability to communicate and listen was identified as being a vital competency across all three levels. In addition to the interpersonal skills identified in the table above, the ability to be adaptable and flexible within their approach was also recognised as being a core attribute – *“When you go international – you have to be adaptable and flexible”*. This was stated as being key to the development of the individual, as being both malleable in mind and approach resulted in an increased ability to work with others successfully. A further competency narrative revealed was

that of citizenship – *“You have to want to be a good citizen, both for colleagues and students”*. This does link with the intrapersonal skills domain suggested by the Hogan and Warrenfeltz (2003) model.

University two. The results for university two are consistent with the other two institutions in terms of communication skills being identified as core competencies and important skills. However, there was also an emphasis on being customer focused, which was replicated at school level. The responses at faculty level for university two were generally similar to those at faculty level at university one. At school level, the notion of selling and being able to market and sell the product was again a theme which came out of the responses from the respondents at departmental level. Competencies that were also discussed included being able to sell, being financially aware, understanding the market needs and

knowing your customers. A lot of these could be linked with the business acumen categories within the technical and leadership domains. Therefore, there is a correlation beginning to build between competencies and domains. There seems to be an overlap between how competencies within the different domains can impact upon an individual's leadership abilities within the role they are undertaking.

University three. Communication was again identified as being key alongside being customer focused at university level. However, there was less emphasis placed on the latter at both the faculty and school levels. It could be argued that the nature of the role at university level, with the development of strategy and the building of new commercial relationships, lends itself more to this category. This link can be strengthened further with analysis of the technical domains below, with all three institutions showing business acumen and developing effective business strategy at university level as key competencies. Across all three levels there was a strong emphasis placed on communication.

The technical domain

Technical	Business acumen	Quality decision-making	Intellectual horsepower	Technical skills	Organising ability	Developing effective business strategy
University level						
University one	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
University two	Dark Blue	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Dark Blue
University three	Dark Blue	Yellow	Red	Dark Blue	Red	Yellow
Faculty level						
University one	Yellow	Red	Dark Blue	Yellow	Red	Yellow
University two	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Dark Blue	Red	Yellow
University three	Yellow	Red	Red	Yellow	Red	Yellow
School level						
University one	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red
University two	Dark Blue	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Dark Blue
University three	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red

University one. The technical domain highlights there were differing approaches at the different levels, with technical skills being highlighted as more key at university level, although at both faculty and school level there were similar comments made by the respondents. Business acumen and understanding the sector came out as being important competencies. In the responses, this manifested itself in several areas but this strong sense of business acumen led to the ability to understand the customers, to build new relationships and to in turn help to meet targets such as student recruitment. The wider knowledge that was deemed to be necessary was knowledge of the external environment, such as *“what are the challenges, what are the opportunities? Why are we engaging with this business?”*

University two. At university level, there was a strong emphasis on the development of the strategy. Business acumen and commercial awareness were highlighted as being important – *“I think there are a lot of sales and marketing skills associated with the job.”* At faculty level the strategic nature of the role also came across within the findings, with negotiation skills identified as a key attribute within the responses, as indicated by the interpersonal domain earlier in this report. Competencies relating to

emotional intelligence, which may not directly map against the Hogan and Warrenfeltz model, were also highlighted as important, including *“resilience, self-awareness and not being afraid of failure.”* This was also evident with the responses from university one, with one respondent actually quoting emotional intelligence as an important characteristic of the role – *“if you listen, you try to observe, your emotional intelligence will gradually improve.”*

This highlights the fact that although the competency model can be used to map core competencies, it must still be noted that there are a range of competencies which can be demonstrated by leaders within the context of internationalisation. This is also particularly true given our findings on boundary spanning and the different roles played by individuals. This is also consistent with the findings of Spendlove (2007) which shows that university leadership is *“fundamentally different from leadership in other contexts, and demands additional competencies”*.

University three. As with the other two institutions, the key technical competencies that came out of the research were business acumen, the possession of the technical skills and knowledge, and also the ability to develop effective strategy. The latter competency was particularly evident at both university and faculty level.

The leadership domain

Leadership	Setting direction	Managing employee performance and building teams	Vision	Decision-making and taking initiative	Delegation	Resource management
University level						
University one	Dark Blue	Yellow	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Red	Yellow
University two	Yellow	Yellow	Dark Blue	Yellow	Red	Yellow
University three	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Dark Blue	Red	Red	Yellow
Faculty level						
University one	Red	Red	Dark Blue	Red	Red	Red
University two	Red	Red	Yellow	Red	Red	Yellow
University three	Red	Red	Yellow	Red	Red	Red
School level						
University one	Red	Red	Yellow	Dark Blue	Red	Yellow
University two	Yellow	Yellow	Dark Blue	Yellow	Red	Yellow
University three	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Red	Red	Yellow

University one. At university level, there was strong evidence of leadership competencies identified within the role. The ability to be flexible also came across through the responses, with the respondent stating that being able to “*manage relationships*” is also key to leadership at university level. As mentioned within the business acumen at technical domain, vision at university level across all three institutions was identified as being a core competency. Linked with the business acumen, another skill that was stated by one of the respondents was “*entrepreneurial skills*”, with the individual stating their belief that that particular area is the “*next big thing*” with regards to leadership development. This commercial element to the role therefore seems to be gaining traction with regards to being one of the key competencies that

leaders feel is important to the role. Linking back to the boundary spanners analysis conducted earlier in this research, the entrepreneurial role and competency was particularly relevant at university level. While it cannot be stated that delegation does not take place within the institution, particularly given the hierarchical structures in place within the institutions, one interesting finding was the fact that delegation was not suggested by the respondents as a core competency. This was the case at all three levels of the university.

University two. The results for the leadership domain are again relatively consistent with the findings for university one. Vision and understanding the landscape was identified as being important. An interesting observation was the results at both university and departmental level

were consistent, with results at faculty level showing slightly different findings. Achievement as a competency was also identified as important, with metrics being used to identify and measure performance at all levels of the institution. At university level this was apparent from the responses, and this was also the case at school level.

University three. At faculty level the findings for the leadership domain were consistent with the responses from the other institutions. At school level there was again mention of the commercial element of the role in terms of the approach taken to internationalisation and the competencies demonstrated. Understanding and possessing vision around the student experience was again discussed as being a core competency – which was in line with some of the comments from university two; *“empathy towards the student experience, so they can recognise they get a good deal when they come here – it is not just about taking money, it is about providing a good experience at university”*. Again, this emphasises the ethical and intra-personal domain of competencies as highlighted by the competency model.

Across the different institutions, there was strong indication of interpersonal and technical skills, although leadership skills were less identified. However, it could be argued that leadership skills are the sum of the other domains suggested by the Hogan and Warrenfeltz model. This was apparent at university level. With the exception of delegation, all the other competencies were identified by the mapping of the results.

Overall, the responses indicate there is a strong emphasis on interpersonal skills within the positions. Being able to successfully communicate, as well as building and maintaining relationships, was deemed to be a key part of the role. The findings in table one also support the findings of Spendlove (2007) who investigated the competencies for effective leadership in higher education. She found that good leaders demonstrate a strong knowledge of not only university life, but also of how the university system and academic processes work. Being trustworthy was also consistent with the findings of Murray and Stauffacher (2001) who found that it was an important characteristic

across all levels of the university leadership team. This also tends to overlap with the ability to communicate well with others, which was identified as a key interpersonal skill.

A common theme in the interviews was experience. The experiences included lived experiences of having worked in academia, and/or experiences of having worked within industry or business. This experience assisted in developed an understanding of the role, and assisted in the development of the commercial knowledge required for the role. This particular competency is particularly important as a lack of experience of academic life can make the transition to university culture difficult (Spendlove, 2007), although one respondent did discuss recruitment and identified how an individual’s background can impact upon their effectiveness within the role – *“associate deans can be appointed from a non-academic background...as long as this person has clear understanding of the academic life”*. This also adds further to the debate as to whether or not leaders in higher education, should have an academic background, or have a professional business administration background.

Business acumen and vision as competencies were identified by a range of participants at all levels at all institutions as key. The development of knowledge of the sector, the institution and international cultures were all themes which were highlighted by the interviews. An appreciation of business and commercial environment was also a significant competency highlighted by the findings.

The findings are also consistent with the literature relating to boundary spanners. Interpersonal skills were identified, at all three levels, at all three institutions, as key competencies within the role that was being conducted. The ability to communicate, listen and negotiate was seen as key in the development of new and existing relationships with international partner institutions, and the link back to business acumen is apparent. The findings indicate the complex nature of leadership, and the range of factors and competencies that need to be considered when developing an international leadership programme.

6 Resources and tools

To meet the aims and objectives of this report the narratives collected were analysed through three alternative lenses, using the following theoretical frameworks, to examine international leadership at university, faculty and school level, as well as illustrating how generic leadership literature may be adapted to resonate with the contemporary needs of international managers:

- 1 A Venn diagram (Figure 1) portrays the complexity of the three components of a ‘*community of practice*’ (see Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 2000). Using this framework to locate sentences and paragraphs from the transcripts from each of the universities’ international offices, proved enlightening. The findings, mapped and pasted directly onto a separate Venn framework for each university at international office level visually indicated that each university was focused on three very different strategic approaches. If we now turn to the synergy that the research team made between the ‘*community of practice*’ Venn (Ibid) and Adair’s (1973) ‘*Action-centred leadership*’ Venn, where domain = task, community = team, and practice = individual, we can add a further dimension to the framework through the inclusion of Adair’s theory:

Key actions	Task	Team	Individual
Define objectives	Identify task	Involve team, share commitment	Clarify objectives, gain acceptance
Plan	Establish priorities/Check resources	Consult, encourage ideas and actions	Assess skills, set targets, delegate
Support, monitor, progress	Report progress	Coordinate, brief and feedback	Advise, assist, recognise effort, counsel
Evaluate	Review objectives, adjust if required	Recognise success, learn from mistakes	Appraise, guide, train, feedback effectively

Adair (1973) advocates that a leader should not focus on only one or two elements of the Venn, thereby neglecting the other(s). Adair argues that by focusing on all three elements, ensuring they are considered of equal importance, will enable the leader to meet the contemporary challenges of situation. From our findings it is apparent that each university is primarily focusing on only one element out of the three, thereby potentially negating the overall effectiveness of their international operational strategy. For instance, our findings indicate that university three at university international office level focuses primarily on a top-down approach within the domain/task element of the Venn. The apparent neglect of the other two elements within the Venn, it could be argued, may have resulted in comments such as *“a lot of policies, a lot of direction comes from above – I think there is definitely a need for more sharing of student experience and staff experience”*.

- 2 Analysing retrospectively the competencies of staff with international responsibilities using the boundary spanner framework developed by Williams (2002) again proved fruitful. By aligning this with the traffic light system, deployed within this report, the research team felt that, with even more focused inquiry, this would prove a useful tool for universities to:
 - a. Firstly, decide which boundary spanner roles and competencies are appropriate for staff with international responsibilities at university, school and faculty level.
 - b. Secondly, carry out a gap analysis at each level.
 - c. Thirdly, construct a staff development intervention that addresses the gaps identified at each level.

- 3 Using Hogan's and Warrenfeltz's (2003) domains of managerial competencies enabled the team to consider the skills and aptitudes required by those staff with international responsibilities across the different levels of the university. Once more aligning this with the traffic light system the team deployed enabled a visual indication of the analysis conducted. As per the boundary spanner resource we recommend a more focused inquiry supported by the three steps identified within the previous paragraph.

7 Conclusion and recommendations

The research team began this small-scale research project from very much an exploratory stance, searching for patterns and shared assumptions. Following an interpretative path, we let the data determine the frameworks we would then use to analyse each transcript further.

Overall, our research found that university staff with international responsibilities were unperturbed by the potential impact of Brexit, as the environment they worked within has always been fluid and, at the time of writing, the terms of the UK exit are still unknown. Experience within the role was seen as the key determinant to envisioning and implementing a successful international strategy. This is perhaps somewhat unsurprising bearing in mind there are currently no leadership/management development programmes available to staff working within a higher education international role. The result of purely focusing on interpretative experience, borne from this inquiry's findings, meant that there was not one best practice approach found. Indeed, the results indicated that each university at international office level focused separately on just one component of Lave and Wenger's (1991) and Wenger's (2000) three components that form a '*community of practice*'. If we align these domains to the task, team and individual leadership domains of Adair's (1973) '*action-centred leadership*' Venn diagram, from our findings we start to see the weaknesses of operating primarily across one domain.

The research team therefore recommend the development of an international leadership analytical tool that explicitly integrates the four frameworks proffered within this document, to strategise, analyse and then conduct associated leadership enhancement in line with IPR requirements. Additionally, during the recruitment of new staff the approaches and competencies identified across these frameworks can be used to inform relevant job specifications and a subsequent CPD framework for the successful applicant.

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