Developing the whole student: leading higher education initiatives that integrate mind and heart

Stimulus paper

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Stimulus Paper Series

The Leadership Foundation is pleased to launch its new series of ‘Stimulus Papers’ which are intended to inform thinking, choices and decisions at institutional and system levels in UK higher education. The papers were selected from an open tender which sought to commission focused and thought-provoking papers that address the challenges facing leaders, managers and governors in the new economic environment facing the UK.

The themes addressed fall into different clusters including higher education leadership, business models for higher education, leading the student experience and leadership and equality of opportunity in higher education. We hope these papers will stimulate discussion and debate, as well as giving an insight into some of the new and
Foreword  Professor Craig Mahoney, 
Chief Executive, Higher Education Academy

Higher education in the UK is one of the great success stories of the past 20 years. It has expanded in line with government policy and provided individuals, companies and UK governments’ access to knowledge for the creation of wealth in many forms, to change opinion and to enable economic growth. However during the early part of the 21st century we have also seen huge pressure on education, government funding and the personal circumstances of individuals, families, companies and the UK.

Perhaps now, more than ever, this publication, Developing the Whole Student: Leading Higher Education Initiatives that Integrate Mind and Heart by Kathleen Quinlan provides us with an opportunity to reflect on what constitutes the development of a well rounded student learning experience. As leaders in institutions and as educators, we must ensure that knowledge acquisition, together with personal growth and development, remain a central part of students’ education - to create lifelong learners not only possessing higher level academic skills and discerning information literacy skills, but also excellent transferable skills and appropriate graduate attributes. Higher education must also be clear about how it supports the relationship between students and the wider society in which they live and this report provides useful insights into how a holistic student experience can be created and led, particularly drawing on research evidence in the US. There is a need to build such an evidence base in the UK. This is a timely and well written report that I strongly commend to those interested in higher education and in student learning and development.

“Higher education must also be clear about how it supports the relationship between students and society.”
Professor Craig Mahoney
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**Executive Summary**

In addition to influencing students’ knowledge base, thinking abilities and skills, higher education offers the opportunity to promote other aspects of students’ growth as people. Higher education has an important role in shaping our future society because today’s university students will be tomorrow’s doctors, engineers, business managers, teachers, faith leaders, politicians, citizens, activists, parents and neighbours. While they need to be able to demonstrate key skills and knowledge to enact those roles effectively, they must also demonstrate personal and social responsibility in carrying them out. A focus on holistic student development may be particularly timely in addressing the current challenges the sector, and society, faces.

While much of the current political discourse about higher education is instrumental and economic, this paper aims to lay the foundation for a discourse focused on student development. It puts forward a conceptual framework for leadership of learning and teaching in higher education, assuming we need to contextualise leadership, by focusing specifically on leadership of something for something. In this case, the argument is for leadership of teaching and learning for the purpose of promoting students’ holistic development. To support leaders’ understanding of the key issues in holistic student development and the leadership implications of embracing such an educational purpose, the paper synthesises literature from a variety of spheres that answers five key questions. A brief summary of responses to each question is provided here.

**What is meant by ‘developing the whole student’ and how might this general aim fit within the current UK higher education context?**

The notion of holistic student development encompasses not only learning academic knowledge and skills, such as problem-solving and analysis, but also other aspects of students as people who are growing and maturing affectively (emotionally) and morally. Across a variety of related literature, a few common themes emerge:

- Going beyond knowledge and skills to include other aspects of being a person in society (such as emotion, spirituality, moral judgement, embodiment).
- An integrative view of learning and development that emphasises the connections and relationships between thinking, feeling and action, rather than separating cognitive dimensions of education from affective or moral dimensions.

In advocating a broader view of the educational process, they also challenge – either explicitly or implicitly – the purposes of education. While several different studies are referenced that offer language around character, virtues and personal and social responsibility, a tight definition of holistic development might be counterproductive to opening a conversation about alternative ways of conceptualising higher education’s role in relation to its students. Different aspects of development may be more important in different contexts. Opening a conversation enables a community to choose the concepts and associated language that best capture its values and priorities.
To what extent does a university experience influence students’ holistic development?

There is a rich tradition of research in student development in higher education in the USA, although there is very little in the UK or other anglophone countries. In American higher education, students’ attitudes and values change in many ways, including greater cultural, aesthetic and intellectual sophistication; greater openness and ‘other-person’ orientation; greater humanitarian and altruistic values; greater likelihood of civic involvement and more positive attitudes toward racial equality and tolerance; greater understanding of other cultures and more egalitarian sex-roles. Students also make significant gains during the university years in their level of principled moral reasoning. Additional research is needed in the UK to determine the extent to which the UK’s educational systems foster these kinds of effects on students.

What educational activities support this type of development?

The same kinds of educational activities that are known to support traditional dimensions of academic understanding are even more important in helping students to develop their values, sense of self, identity and purpose. A key ingredient is the use of active pedagogies such as service learning, problem-based learning and discussion of moral dilemmas in the discipline. Interaction with diverse peers is also a vital aspect of the higher education experience. Exposing students to new experiences and perspectives – whether in the classroom, community, halls of residence, field trips, study abroad – and providing opportunities to reflect on those in dialogue with others offer powerful learning experiences that shape people’s development. Specialised curricula such as women’s studies and ethnic studies courses also influence students’ attitudes and awareness of self-in-society.

What leadership is required?

This paper proposes that there are three main spheres of leadership that are needed to promote holistic student development, which are illustrated visually. First, leaders are in a position to create supportive environments for student development by helping to foster organisational conditions in which students can grow holistically. To do so, they need to attend to and align the culture of the institution, the curriculum, the co-curriculum and the sense of campus community. Second, leaders need to focus on their own inner lives – their senses of self – so that they are modelling lives of purpose, meaning and integrity. Third, returning to a key assumption underpinning this paper, knowledge of and involvement in the specific curricular and teaching strategies that can promote holistic student development (as discussed in the previous section) is an essential, although under-discussed, aspect of leadership in higher education. This paper follows Robinson et al.’s call for linking educational leadership to evidence of effective learning and teaching. The leadership model presented in this paper integrates the various aspects of leadership needed to create universities that intentionally promote holistic student development. The paper highlights the content and context of leadership, emphasising not leadership or even leadership in higher education generally, but leadership of learning and teaching (by explicitly including knowledge and evidence related to this core business) for holistic student development (a proposed purpose of higher education). These three components link organisational development with the development of leaders as people who are in relationship with other members of the community and educational development. These aspects of leadership interact and mutually reinforce each other; congruence among them is vital. The model also acknowledges the larger context within which universities are embedded.

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2 Pascarella and Terenzini (2005)
4 Mezirow and Taylor (2009)
5 Robinson et al (2008)
What are the likely leadership challenges, pitfalls and lessons for those wishing to implement programmes with these goals in the UK higher education context?

Each of the aspects of leadership highlighted in Section 3.4 throws up potential challenges. In addition, the wider socio-cultural and political contexts of higher education also present challenges. Higher education is currently a contested and conflicted sector; while these difficult times present us with an opportunity to re-examine our values, the values underlying this paper run counter to the current climate. In addition, making major changes in times of resource constraint is difficult. Leaders may encounter resistance couched in a variety of different critiques and must be prepared to bring conversations back to a learning and student development focus. This paper tries to introduce a different discourse, but if that new discourse is used in service of marketisation pressures to further commodify higher education, we risk corrupting the very heart of the idea. The best rationale for promoting holistic student development may be quite simply that it is a right and good thing to do – yet, such an argument is difficult to sustain on its own against a rising tide of external demands on the sector.
Introduction

Today’s university students will be tomorrow’s doctors, engineers, business managers, teachers, faith leaders, politicians, citizens, activists, parents and neighbours. While they need to be able to demonstrate key skills and knowledge to enact those roles effectively, they must also demonstrate good character in carrying out their responsibilities. The role of higher education in developing character was affirmed in each of the University Grants Committee Reports in 1948, 1952 and 1964. The Dearing Report emphasises the development of people and a ‘learning society’ as central to the aims of higher education, though the language was shifting. In recent history, the terminology of ‘character’ or ‘morals’ has rarely been invoked in higher education. While there tends to be greater commitment to these educational purposes in secondary and primary education, the acculturating role of higher education in ‘civilised society’ has been given only passing reference in the past decade. Instead, as Barnett and Coats have argued, moral and social aims of higher education have been overshadowed by emphases on instrumental and economic goals, including employability skills and preparation for the workplace.

With a few notable exceptions in the academic literature there is relatively little discourse in the UK about the ways that higher education can support not only intellectual development, but the development of the whole student. In contrast, there has been increased attention in the USA in the past 15 years to the effects of university education on such aspects of student development as students’ values and attitudes, personal and social responsibility, civic responsibility, holistic student development, responsible judgement, wisdom, moral formation and service learning.

UK context

The current climate of higher education in the UK may offer opportunities for innovations in educating for whole student development. Universities are under increasing pressure to demonstrate their value: to students and their families who are paying higher fees, to governments in an era of increasing accountability and to the public at large. In the current UK higher education landscape, value justifications are usually sought in economic terms. Yet a focus on ‘returns on investment’ and increasing employability (while undoubtedly important) do not adequately capture the broader and, arguably, more important social contributions higher education can make. The economic discourse is often disheartening for academics as many of them feel pulled away from their own personal value centres by the priorities that seem to dominate the current context. Simultaneously, increased attention is paid to the ‘student experience’, although this notion is still underdeveloped, particularly in the UK.

A focus on holistic student development may be particularly timely in addressing the current challenges the sector faces. Recent interest in university ‘branding’ can be redirected from a marketing exercise to an opportunity for a university genuinely to articulate core institutional values. Institutions can take this opportunity to clarify how they help students create meaningful lives that integrate interests of the head with passions of the heart. In the competitive American higher education market, small HEIs have created niches and pockets of excellence in unexpected places, gaining national attention through guidebooks such as those by Pope, which extols the virtues of 40 colleges that ‘change lives’. Several small colleges are noted for their roles in instilling values. All are highly student-centred. With over 100,000 copies of Pope’s book sold, it appears that initiatives...
that focus on whole student development are attractive to students and their families. Indeed, research on school choice in both Europe and the USA also shows that parents choose faith-based schools because they provide a strong foundation for whole student development through clear, distinct commitments to a set of well-articulated guiding values, rather than for the religious content per se. Thus both faith-based and secular universities could use this opportunity to articulate their commitments to students on their own terms.

Using this historic moment in UK higher education to refocus attention on holistic student development may also boost academic morale. Creating an institutional environment aligned to students' holistic development (however defined) would enable academics to reconnect with the core values and interests that brought them to teaching and reinvigorate commitment to a common cause. Palmer has been a leader in calling for 'renewal' of the academy through attention to integrative education that helps students 'become more fully developed human beings'. He focuses on changing the academy through collegial conversation; it is central to how the academy works and can be an essentially humanising process. In the UK, Maxwell has been a long-standing proponent of an orientation to academic work which ‘... puts the mind in touch with the heart, and the heart in touch with the mind, so that we may acquire heartfelt minds, and mindful hearts.'

Questions to be addressed

If universities take the lead in re-articulating their core commitments and their relationship with students and society, they can communicate their value in broader terms and, potentially, assert their moral authority as a sector. This paper lays the foundation for a new discourse of student development and offers a framework for understanding how to create rich student experiences by briefly addressing five key questions:

1. What is meant by ‘developing the whole student’ and why would higher education embrace this educational purpose?
2. To what extent does a university experience influence students’ holistic development?
3. What educational activities support this type of development?
4. What leadership is required?
5. What are the likely leadership challenges, pitfalls and lessons for those wishing to implement programmes with these goals in the UK higher education context?

This approach, and the substantial focus in Questions 1 to 3 on educational processes, is based on the assumption that we need to contextualise leadership, by focusing specifically on leadership of something for something. In this case, the argument is for leadership of teaching for the purpose of promoting students’ holistic development. Drawing on the notion of instructional leadership in school settings, this paper assumes that leaders need an understanding of learning processes and must be involved actively in leading educational enhancement efforts.

In the following sections, we consider each of these questions in turn to build a solid foundation upon which leaders can work alongside their colleagues in creating learning environments that take a broader view of the student learning experience.

The paper synthesises and interprets existing, but often unconnected, literatures, including the large body of literature on student development in higher education in the USA (because there is very little research focused on student development in the UK and other English-speaking countries) and some research on leadership in primary and secondary schools (because research on schools leadership is much more extensive than on higher education leadership).
Responses to key questions

What is meant by ‘developing the whole student’?

The notion of holistic student development encompasses academic learning and the development of skills such as problem-solving and analysis while simultaneously recognising other aspects of students as people who are growing and maturing affectively (emotionally) and morally. There are a number of different terms associated with this educational philosophy, including character education, values education, moral education/formation, educating for citizenship, affective education, and educating for social and personal responsibility, as well as holistic education. Thus relevant studies may focus on values, attitudes, beliefs, virtues, character, moral, spiritual or affective outcomes. Despite differences in terminology and nuances of meaning, there is a set of common principles underlying these terms. All of them emphasise going beyond knowledge and skills to include other aspects of being a person in society. Most authors espouse an integrative view, emphasising the connections and relationships between thinking, feeling and action, rather than separating cognitive dimensions of education from affective or moral dimensions. They all emphasise moral dimensions of higher learning, arguing that the academy has an obligation to guide students in developing a sense of personal and social responsibility. In advocating a broader view of the educational process, they also challenge – either explicitly or implicitly – the purposes of education, typically protesting against economic and managerial discourses. Such discourses reduce students to consumers or to packaged products with a set of specifications (‘graduate attributes’). While promoting holistic student development is likely to help students gain ‘transferable skills’ that will make them better employees, the discourse of employability alone is insufficient and threatens to undermine attention to students as people. Instead, a discourse that focuses on students’ development of personal and social responsibility – central to most of the various terms mentioned above – reminds us of the much broader responsibility of universities to society.

Why holistic student development in higher education?

There is wider interest in and support for this type of educational philosophy within primary and secondary schooling than within higher education, for a variety of reasons, including that it is generally easier to accept the socialising role of education when dealing with children than with adults. But there are good reasons to focus on it in higher education, too.

Authors in this tradition appeal to a broader set of societal needs, pointing to the litany of social problems the world faces, ranging from poverty to war to climate change to social injustices. Graduates of higher education are tomorrow’s leaders and the troubled world needs ‘leaders for good’.

Higher education is a time of transition and change for all its students. Developmentally, young adulthood is a time of change, in which students are grappling with identity and
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37 Erikson (1959)
38 Baxter Magolda (2009)
39 Parks (2000)
40 Grootenboer (2010)
41 Some educational philosophers argue cogently that moral instruction is not synonymous with indoctrination: Tan (2004), Merry (2005)
45 Peterson and Seligman (2004)
46 Seligman (2003)

intimacy and shifting from relying on others to self-authorship. Students in higher education confront new ideas and ways of thinking as they interact with students from other backgrounds. Mature students may be at a different developmental stage, but they are still in a turbulent transition period in which existing views are challenged and identities are re-made. Indeed, it is plausible that higher education is even more disruptive because established adults have made bigger investments in their pre-university identities, life choices and beliefs. No matter their age, the focus on critical thinking in Western higher education prompts students to question received wisdom, including value positions taught by their families, and practised in their home communities or workplaces. So students are in a time of change, in which they must not only deconstruct old meanings and ways of making meaning, but reconstruct a sense of purpose in their own life that integrates expanded perspectives and worldviews. In this sense, there is also a dimension of spirituality involved in holistic student development insofar as spirituality is defined broadly as connection with something larger than oneself.

Finally, it is argued that higher education does pass on values, whether we acknowledge it explicitly or not. Each subject has its own set of operating assumptions and standards that define what is better or worse or valid or invalid from a disciplinary viewpoint. It is better to be explicit about the values we are seeking to instil, as these can then be subject to the kind of questioning that is the hallmark of higher education.

Building a vocabulary

Attention to values in higher education often provokes dispute from academics because it seems to suggest teaching students a particular right way of doing things or thinking. Such an educational goal is objectionable because: 1) a respect for pluralism and cultural diversity makes it difficult to advocate one particular value over another; 2) it smacks of indoctrination, which seems to contradict the sine qua non of higher education, critical thinking.

Rather than teaching a set of rules, principles or standards of behaviour, virtue ethics might be a more fruitful way of thinking about moral development in higher education. Virtues ‘focus on the character of the individual (and) are the excellences of character that enable one to achieve the “good” life. Thus the terms “virtues” or “character strengths” locate the qualities in the people, which is more consistent with the overarching theme of holistic student development. To UK students and employers, good character is about “good morals and right behaviour” and includes the virtues of empathy, tolerance, care of others, capacity for friendship, honesty, reliability, sincerity, trustworthiness and integrity. Peterson and Seligman identified a common set of six ubiquitous virtues across the world’s major religions and philosophies: wisdom and knowledge; courage; love and humanity; justice; temperance; and spirituality and transcendence. Each of these six broad, abstract ideas has several routes to it (which they call character strengths) through which we achieve the virtues. Character strengths, as learnable (acquirable) moral traits (ie enduring over multiple situations) which are measurable and voluntary (ie we choose whether to practise them), have the potential to be influenced by higher education. The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) sees personal and social responsibility as one of the major groups of learning outcomes essential for twenty-first century university graduates. They define these outcomes as:

1. Striving for excellence: developing a strong work ethic and consciously doing one’s very best in all aspects of college.
2. **Cultivating personal and academic integrity**: recognizing and acting on a sense of honor, ranging from honesty in relationships to principled engagement with a formal academic honor code.

3. **Contributing to a larger community**: recognizing and acting on one’s responsibility to the educational community and the wider society, locally, nationally, and globally.

4. **Taking seriously the perspectives of others**: recognizing and acting on the obligation to inform one’s own judgment; engaging diverse and competing perspectives as a resource for learning, citizenship, and work.

5. **Developing competence in ethical and moral reasoning and action**: developing ethical and moral reasoning in ways that incorporate the other four responsibilities; using such reasoning in learning and in life.

In this section, I illustrated several meanings of holistic student development, largely by appealing to the language of virtues and ethics to define more concretely what a well-developed young person might look like. Holistic student development is a broad term encompassing many aspects of student growth as a person. Its core notions are contestable, though it is beyond the scope of this paper to explore this. Following Palmer et al’s (2010) lead, a tight definition might be counterproductive to opening a conversation about alternative ways of conceptualising higher education’s role in relation to its students. The intent is to invite a community – whether national or local – to choose the concepts and associated language that best capture their values and priorities.

The next section offers a brief introduction to the empirical evidence about the effects of university on particular dimensions of students’ holistic development.

**To what extent does ‘a university experience’ influence students’ holistic development?**

The experience of university affects students in many ways, including prompting changes in attitudes, values and beliefs associated with character or greater personal and social responsibility.

In US studies undertaken from 1970 to 1990, university students showed increases in:

- Cultural, aesthetic, and intellectual sophistication;
- Interest in the visual and performing arts;
- Placing intrinsic value on a liberal education and exposure to new ideas, while attaching less value to the instrumental and extrinsic outcomes of education;
- Importance of the intrinsic benefits of employment (e.g., creativity, job autonomy and intellectual challenge) and reductions in most extrinsic benefits (except money itself);
- Openness and ‘other-person’ orientation;
- Humanitarian and altruistic values;
- Political and religious tolerance;
- Individualisation in religious beliefs (less doctrinaire views);
- Support for egalitarian sex-roles.
Studies in the 1990s focused more on civic engagement and racial/ethnic attitudes.

University-educated citizens:
- Vote more and are more knowledgeable about democratic processes and socio-political interests;
- Engage in more political activities, social activism and support for civil liberties;
- Are two to three times more likely to engage in community service than non-university-educated citizens\(^5\).

There are also increases during the university years in:
- Positive attitudes toward racial equality and tolerance;
- Awareness and understanding of other cultures;
- Interactions with people of different cultural or ethnic backgrounds;
- Commitment to fostering racial understanding\(^3\).

Based on longitudinal studies, students also make significant gains during the university years in their level of principled moral reasoning. In their first year, students are more likely to rely upon authorities in deciding what is right (ie conventional moral reasoning), whereas by graduation they are more likely to apply universal moral principles (ie principled moral reasoning)\(^4\).

Two major studies we have located which address student development in the UK are both based on students’ or graduates’ perceptions of the contributions of their higher education to their character\(^6\) or general development\(^7\). In Belfield et al’s (1999) survey of 12,000 UK graduates, graduates perceived that the strongest contributions of higher education were to getting an interesting job and securing a good income, as well as to increasing their self-confidence. Further analyses showed that arts and humanities degrees led to greater reported contributions to general personal skills (communication and self-confidence) than job-related variables (income and interesting jobs). The opposite pattern was true of science graduates. Meanwhile Arthur’s interviews with higher education students in 2009\(^8\) indicate that they do not see higher education as having a strong contribution to student character. Thus, while a reliance on graduates’ views suffers from some methodological difficulties with respect to establishing the impact of higher education, together these two studies imply that UK higher education does not currently have a strong impact on students’ holistic development.

Yet it would appear that university education has the potential to impact on some key aspects of students’ holistic development; but, how and under what conditions? The answers to these questions are crucial for leaders who wish to create university environments that lead to holistic student development. I turn to these questions in the next section.

What educational activities support this type of development?

Active, engaged pedagogies, such as experiential education, service learning, problem-based learning and collaborative learning are all effective not only in supporting academic learning, but also learning moral and civic engagement. All share a foundation in basic principles of learning\(^9\). Colby et al\(^\text{\textsuperscript{10}}\) argue that the development of values and goals, moral and civic identity, and a sense of efficacy, hope and compassion is even more...
dependent on active engagement, complex and authentic contexts, social exchange, regular practice, and informative feedback than in the development of more traditional dimensions of academic understanding.

Service learning, a pedagogy that uses student community service as an instructional tool to achieve particular academic learning outcomes, has a significant influence on a number of aspects of student development. These include:

- Their commitment to social activism and to changing the political system;
- Their commitment to community service, to helping others, to understanding community problems and to volunteer work in the future (Note: Voluntary community service is more effective than mandatory service. Voluntary community service increases ‘other-oriented’ attitudes and values);
- Their perceptions of social and economic inequities;
- Their inclination to attribute those inequities to the system rather than to individuals;
- Their sense of social responsibility.

Moral development interventions in which academics teach philosophical methods of ethical analysis and facilitate discussions of moral dilemmas have a positive effect on principled reasoning. Integrating moral and ethical decision-making into existing curricula seems more promising than stand-alone ethics courses. But, in UK universities, few students reported explicit ethical dimensions to their coursework (outside theology, philosophy, psychology or the study of literature). They saw informal support structures and tutors who offered additional support as more influential than formal support structures.

Women’s studies and ethnic studies

Participation in women’s studies and ethnic studies courses and in racial, ethnic and cultural awareness workshops appears to promote movement from the conservative to the liberal end of the socio-political spectrum, including increased gender-related egalitarianism and awareness of discrimination, knowledge of diversity issues, feminist consciousness and willingness to adopt new gender role attitudes. Courses focused on diversity-related issues also promote students’ development of principled reasoning.

Diverse peer interactions

Peer interactions influence a number of socio-political variables. Living in on-campus residences appears to promote more positive and inclusive racial-ethnic attitudes. Diverse intellectual and social networks foster moral development. Similarly, simply moving away from home, with its attendant freedoms and responsibilities, was seen as character-building by the UK university students in Arthur’s 2009 study and led to moral gains. Interestingly, after controlling for other variables, the structural features of a higher education institution (size, type of control, curricular mission) have little effect on student development. Where it does have an effect it is indirect, via the interactions students have in more diverse campus settings.

Institutions with honour codes or honour systems that are enforced by students tend to have lower levels of student self-reported academic dishonesty. The direction of causality with honour codes is not clear, however.

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61 Jones and Abes (2004)
62 Dey (2008)
63 Larrey and Larrey (1999), Pascarella and Terenzini (2005)
64 Pascarella and Terenzini (2005)
66 Pascarella and Terenzini (2005)
67 Kuh (1995)
68 Pascarella and Terenzini (2005)
72 Pascarella and Terenzini (2005)
Study abroad experiences seem to promote intercultural and international awareness, knowledge and understanding and a greater growth in principled reasoning. In the UK, students often take a gap year before entering university. Well-structured gap years that involve substantial periods of immersion in volunteer service in developing countries can also prompt significant personal growth.

An underlying pedagogical theory

Holistic student development assumes there will be some personal growth or change. Thus a model of learning that focuses on personal transformation is particularly helpful. In addition to the principles of learning cited in the previous paragraph, transformative learning theory offers a specific theoretical lens for explaining the educational conditions that foster student development. The model from these authors consists of three main ingredients:

1. Transformative learning starts with an experience (e.g., a project in the community; a conversation with someone from a different background in a hall of residence; an encounter with a patient or a student; or a client);
2. Students critically reflect on that experience;
3. Students engage in dialogue with others about it.

Their model of learning is holistic in that it explicitly acknowledges the role of emotion in the experience and reflection on it. They characterise learning as a process of ‘see-feel-consider-change’ rather than ‘analyse-think-change’. Authenticity to self and in relationships is important in the reflection and dialogue steps and diverse peer interactions are most effective in the dialogue process. Transformative learning requires a supportive environment or context for student learning; time pressures or assessment pressures can militate against it. This model helps thread together the empirical findings described above and can be used to design other student learning experiences that are likely to lead to holistic student development.

What leadership is required for such initiatives?

The preceding sections have focused on understanding holistic student development and identifying specific curricular and teaching strategies aligned with that goal, which university leaders might choose to promote. In this section I propose that there are three main aspects of leadership that are needed to promote holistic student development, as illustrated in Figure 1 below. First, leaders are in a position to create supportive environments for student development by helping to foster organisational conditions in which students can grow holistically. Second, leaders need to focus on their own inner lives—their sense of self—so that they are modelling lives of purpose, meaning, and integrity. Finally, returning to the thesis put forward in the introduction and underpinning this paper, knowledge of and involvement in the specific curricular and teaching strategies that can promote holistic student development (as discussed in the previous section) is an essential, although under-discussed, aspect of leadership in higher education. Taken together, these three components address both the inner and outer lives of leaders and show how these aspects of leadership work interact and mutually reinforce each other.
Congruence among the elements is vital. The model also acknowledges the larger context within which universities are embedded. The broader environment will be discussed in the section below.

The first leadership dimension I examine is that of creating organisational conditions for successful educational change in higher education. This dimension focuses more on organisational characteristics than individual leaders’ characteristics.

Creating organisational conditions: The socio-cultural environment

This section draws primarily on three major studies, each based on case studies of universities with programmes in place relevant to holistic student development. Braskamp, Trautvetter and Ward studied 10 faith-based higher education institutions in the USA with a stated commitment to holistic student development. Their conceptual framework is the strongest of the three studies and I use it to summarise this organisational sphere of leadership work which encompasses culture, curriculum, co-curriculum and community.

Culture indicates the general ethos of the institution, reflected in a clear mission and vision articulated both by leaders and all other members of the institution, and includes the physical environment of the campus which can be used to foster interactions that bring students and academics together. All the campuses had programmes for induction and ongoing development of their faculty to support them in being role models and using the kinds of educational processes described in the preceding section.

They argue that the curriculum is the most significant aspect of the socio-cultural environment. They found curricula that challenged and supported students in questioning their own worldviews. Typically this was done through liberal arts education, developmentally tailored experiences such as first-year seminars or final-year projects and seminars and the kinds of engaged pedagogies described in the previous section.
The co-curriculum is concerned with creating intersections between living and learning, for example by encouraging students to engage in extra-curricular activities that connect and extend their classroom learning. Other authors have also found out-of-class experiences (such as interactions with peers and leadership opportunities) to be important contributors to student growth.

Finally, Braskamp’s campuses emphasised creating communities among various constituents of the university and between the university and its larger contexts. Such campuses had considered what it means to be a community and participants spoke about it as an ‘embodiment’ of the campus. Student breakfasts with the president, involving students in campus governance and involving staff in the educational experience are all examples of promoting a sense of community.

Colby et al. also emphasise the importance of intentionality in creating a culture, curriculum, co-curriculum and community, although they do not explicitly use this ‘4C’s’ conceptual framework. They studied 12 diverse American universities with successful programmes of moral and civic responsibility. While Braskamp’s campuses were all faith-based, only four out of Colby’s 12 campuses were. Furthermore, while all of Braskamp’s campuses were liberal arts colleges (1,800 to 6,500 students), Colby’s sample includes a range of institutional types and sizes from 650 to more than 20,000 students. Colby et al. found that across the institutions studied, leaders at the highest level made ‘intentional efforts’ including serving as champions for, dedicating resources to and enacting a variety of strategies to create and support a university-wide culture around a particular set of shared values. Thus their efforts went not simply on promoting particular curricula, but on emphasising the values that underlie certain teaching approaches. Learning outcomes and curricular and co-curricular reform were then based upon these shared values.

Other studies also support the importance of reviewing and making explicit the university’s core values and creating a distinctive mission and character. In the third key study, the King’s Warwick Project reports on a large project analysing the curricular innovation process at more than 20 research universities in five countries, through which they highlight a number of points related to leadership. First, it is important that leaders articulate a clear agenda with consistent messaging. Leaders must be strong champions for a chosen strategic direction. The agenda and messaging also need to be backed up with rewards, such as teaching relief, small implementation grants or alignment in promotion and tenure decisions. Rewards are not enough, however: leaders must find reasons why departments would want to engage with the initiative. There were a number of drivers of change identified across their study, including financial pressures, student learning, government mandates or a focus on graduate attributes. Leaders need to be able to communicate how their agendas support departmental concerns and address larger drivers of change. Relatedly, leaders in central administration must respect departmental autonomy, allowing and encouraging departments to determine what the initiative might look like in their own discipline. In most cases, the innovations were part of the vice-chancellor’s mission and vision, while a pro-vice-Chancellor actually led the initiative. Typically, the major players had experience with curricular change at a lower level, such as a department, faculty or school. Building a consensus and a vision was important across the university, including collaboration with student unions. Although all of the universities met a set of predetermined inclusion criteria, each had a unique institutional context that was important to the process; appreciating that context was vital to success.
Modelling a Meaningful Life: Leadership and Self-reflexivity

In this section, the focus moves away from organisations and towards the characteristics and behaviours of the leader as a person and the processes they use to integrate head and heart in their own lives. Leaders may be people in positions of formal authority or informal influence distributed across the organisation. To be successful in bringing others along with them no matter where they are situated in the organisation, leaders must be credible, demonstrating clarity of values, building unity of vision among the community and holding these values intensely themselves. These ideas are represented in literature on values-based leadership, authentic leadership and higher education leadership.

While leadership characteristics such as personal integrity and trustworthiness are important to leading any initiative, they are particularly important to holistic student development insofar as such an educational approach is highly personal and people-oriented. Just as this paper argues for a more human, people-centric learning experience, it also argues for a more human, people-centric approach to leadership.

Authentic leadership is focused on creating processes that value people and ethics and are based on principles of stewardship and service. The four qualities of authenticity, intentionality, spirituality and sensibility are the threads which can be woven together into the fabric of leadership in organisational settings to make it more authentic. Intentionality was also highlighted in the three studies described in Section 3.4.1 above. Spirituality, generally refers to a ‘sense of deep and enduring meaning and significance’ that is rooted in interdependency and connectedness and ‘being connected to something greater than the self’. Sensibility entails respecting cultural differences.

Self-reflexivity also appears to be the key to authentic leadership. It involves ‘questioning our ways of being and acting in the world; questioning our ways of making sense of our lived experience and examining the issues involved in acting responsibly and ethically’. To encourage university staff, academics and students to challenge previously held beliefs and to explore connections between their values and actions and find meaning and purpose in their lives, leaders must, themselves, be authentic and model associated behaviours. Thus, leaders must nurture their own inner lives, being reflective and hopeful and enabling others around them to do the same.

Promoting holistic student development requires that teachers help students form their own value commitments in a pluralistic world. In part, this means academics must be willing to critically examine their own and their discipline’s assumptions, inherent values and worldviews. Insofar as this goes against the prevailing academic ethos, it requires courage on the part of academics and academic leaders; they need explicit support from the institution for this difficult and risky endeavour. Leaders must be willing to model this and encourage it.

Leaders can do so, in part, by creating and participating in spaces that practise particular forms of dialogue and thought to create a supportive mentoring community for students and other members of the university community. Such spaces enable people to reflect, imagine and envision possibilities for meaningful lives. In addition, leaders can help create and sustain ‘commons’ where people experience a sense of belonging and ‘shared participation in creating the common good’.
To the extent that holistic student development focuses on students’ becoming authentic, creating intention in their own lives, developing a sense of deeper meaning and respecting cultural differences, higher education can be seen as developing authentic leaders for the future. To create the conditions that support such student development, leaders must, themselves, strive to model a meaningful, authentic life.

Leadership of learning for holistic student development

There is very little systematic research on leadership effectiveness in higher education. In the preceding sections I have drawn primarily on broader studies of campuses that are focusing on holistic student development or on more general leadership studies. In this section I draw on some of the much more substantial body of literature on primary and secondary school leadership and then link it to recent arguments about leadership in higher education.

In the schools sector, where there are considerable policy pressures to enhance student learning, there is both more attention paid to the role of the leader in turning around school performance and more research linking leadership with student outcomes. The key debate seems to be whether leaders (principals) primarily have a direct effect on students through instructional leadership or whether their influence is primarily indirect, by using transformative leadership to create positive relationships and environments in which teachers can positively affect students. The transformative theory of leadership is more closely aligned with the notion of authentic leadership, while the instructional leadership model is more focused on tasks and technical involvement in teaching.

To resolve conflicting evidence in the empirical literature on the effects of leadership on student outcomes, Robinson et al re-analysed 27 studies of leadership in schools, breaking down leadership into types and specific leadership dimensions. They found the instructional leadership type has three to four times more effect on student outcomes than a model of transformative leadership. Of specific leadership dimensions associated with enhanced student outcomes, the strongest effect was found for leaders promoting and directly participating in formal and informal teacher learning and development alongside teachers (mean effect size .84). Two other key dimensions (each with mean effect sizes of .42) were a) establishing goals and expectations and b) direct involvement in planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum through such actions as coordinating across classes and years, regular classroom visits and giving feedback to teachers. They conclude that “the more leaders focus their relationships, their work and their learning on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater their influence on student outcomes” and further argue for ‘leadership research and practice to be more closely linked to the evidence on effective teaching’.

Nonetheless, although the model and results are drawn from schools, recent writing on leadership in higher education arguing for the importance of intellectual leadership in higher education suggests support for this theory. Each explores how scholars are positioned as leaders, rather than as professional managers, arguing for their leadership authority because of their strong knowledge of the content of what is being led and their context knowledge.

My model proposes that leaders need to pay attention both to modelling meaningful lives through a focus on people and relationships and creating an intentional culture rooted in self-reflection and ethical action (ie transformative leadership), which has an indirect effect
on students through teachers. However, Robinson et al.\textsuperscript{114} rightly argue that attending only to relationships is not enough. Leaders, especially those who are closest to teaching, such as department heads, also need to focus on what they are leading, including curriculum and teaching\textsuperscript{115}. They need to be learning about models of engaged pedagogies alongside those who are doing the teaching and setting goals and expectations that are consistent with supporting holistic student development. Finally, they need to be involved in aligning feedback and evaluation and reward systems with those goals. Ultimately, based on the studies of universities with successful programmes\textsuperscript{116}, leaders have a key role to play in creating the other organisational conditions for success of such initiatives, including attention to the culture, co-curriculum and community.

In sum, in this section, I have constructed a model integrating the various aspects of leadership needed to create universities that intentionally promote holistic student development. From this analysis, I conclude that leadership in higher education needs to be contextualised, with consideration of leadership of what for what. Recent shifts toward distributed leadership and hybrid models of leadership\textsuperscript{117} suggest that these leadership processes may occur at a variety of levels and locations in the university. This emphasis on the socio-cultural conditions and, in particular, a sense of shared campus ethos implies commitment and congruent action across the university.

What are the likely leadership challenges, pitfalls and lessons?

The previous sections have called for higher education as a place that nurtures students’ growth as people and has analysed the organisational and relational elements that need to be in place to make that a reality. However, there are many challenges leaders are likely to face in implementing such an agenda.

First, higher education is currently a contested and conflicted sector. Pressures to demonstrate economic value in the current climate run counter to the values underlying this paper and to the values most academics hold dear\textsuperscript{118}. While I have argued earlier that the current challenges in the higher education setting could provide an impetus for a re-examination of core missions, it is no small task to generate optimism and tap into academics’ authentic selves in the current context. Meeting government mandates and responding to increasingly demanding accountability and cost pressures create value conflict as people experience tension between internal and external motivations. While these value conflicts include the frequently discussed tensions between managerialism and collegiality and between accountability and autonomy, many of these tensions are more subtle. Many of the pressures academics and academic leaders feel may be between two good values\textsuperscript{119} – such as privileging past achievements versus providing opportunities for developing future potential in admissions decisions or balancing compassion for an individual’s unique circumstances versus equal treatment of all students in deciding assessment-related matters. In such trying decisions, there are laudable goals with strong feelings attached on both sides of the issue.

As resources constrict, people are called upon to do more with less. Workload accounting is heightened and time pressures are felt more keenly\textsuperscript{120}. Such demands seem, on the surface, to be the antithesis of creating the spaces for dialogue, self-reflection and the identity work that is needed to foster growth and change as individuals and as a
community. Nurturing a growth culture requires that leaders and participants commit to being changed by the process. Growth and change are difficult under the best of conditions, but can be particularly difficult when stressed, as people tend to ‘hunker down’ and withdraw. Ironically, it is such stress – when people are feeling values conflicts that challenge what brought them to the field in the first place – that they most need a supportive community. These competing value pressures, together with workload pressure, can conspire against authenticity.

Underlying resistance to change may be voiced in a variety of ways, including resistance to the idea of teaching students values (as discussed in relation to Question 1 above) and concern that ‘content’ coverage will be sacrificed by introducing engaged pedagogies. Leaders need to be prepared to bring conversations back to a learning and development focus and to be aware that these voiced concerns may be masking a deeper discomfort with challenging assumptions about university purposes, the relationship between personal and professional lives and the way academic work has traditionally been conceived. The campuses in the studies highlighted in Section 3.4.1 all provided for academic development, sometimes focusing directly on the intersection of personal and professional values and how that is expressed in the classroom with students. As the policy discourse in higher education has shifted to one of economics and consumerism, we risk losing a language for conversation about holistic student development. One of the first challenges is to reintroduce a discourse that includes character, ethics, values, virtues, meaning-making, feeling and spirituality, as well as problem-solving and critical thinking. Sometimes the language is enticing – ‘graduate attributes’, for instance, is appealing in its focus on students and a broader range of what is learned. However, it lulls us into thinking of graduates as products, with certain specifications. It also lulls us into thinking that graduates are ‘completed’, when in fact, they leave us as more mature people than when they arrived, but still facing huge questions about how they will craft a meaningful life in a complex world. As we adopt the language of bureaucracy, we need to be wary of its de-personalisation. The danger in the argument I put forth in the Context section of this paper is that we will ‘sell’ the language of holistic student development in service of marketisation agendas and corrupt the very heart of the idea in the process. The best rationale for promoting holistic student development is a moral high ground – that it is a good and right thing to do – yet such an argument is difficult to sustain on its own.

121 Parks (2000)
122 Bhindi and Duignan (1997)
124 Wyatt (2011)
125 Colby and Sullivan (2009)
126 Parks (2000)
127 Chun (2010)
Conclusion

In short, each of the three main aspects of leadership highlighted in Section 3.4 present possible barriers to the success of leadership of learning for holistic development. First, leaders need to influence the organisational processes, shaping the socio-cultural environment of the campus. Secondly, they need to be willing to examine their own inner lives and put themselves as people (not just a role) into the process. Thirdly, even as they are promoting communities and dialogue, they must focus not just on the process, but on the content of that dialogue (learning) and its purpose (holistic student development). Finally, as emphasised in this section, they need to do so with consideration for the broader socio-cultural, political environments within which their universities operate. Our students, as people in transition making their way in the world, deserve to be treated as whole people. The world that they will make needs us to do so.

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Kathleen M. Quinlan
Bibliography


Developing the whole student: leading higher education initiatives that integrate mind and heart


Biography Dr Kathleen M. Quinlan

Kathleen M. Quinlan is Head of Educational Development in the Oxford Learning Institute, University of Oxford and a Research Fellow with the Department of Education, University of Oxford. She was recently appointed as a Supernumerary Fellow at St. Anne’s College. She oversees the University’s suite of educational development offerings and directs the Postgraduate Diploma in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. She provides policy and practical advice on educational development matters to relevant committees, divisions, departments and colleges across the collegiate university and supervises postgraduate students of higher education in the Department of Education.

Prior to her appointment at Oxford in 2009, Dr. Quinlan held academic and leadership positions in educational development at The Australian National University and Cornell University’s College of Veterinary Medicine. She also has five years of government consulting experience in the United States, contributing to curriculum development, action planning for national and state projects, and planning and evaluation of large-scale biomedical research. She holds a Ph.D. in education from Stanford University and a B.A. in psychology from the University of Maine.

Learning – and collaborative processes for supporting learning – have been enduring themes in her research publications and presentations. Her current research interests are in learning and teaching in higher education, with a particular focus on integrating students’ intellectual and personal development. She seeks to understand how higher education can best support the development of students’ sense of personal and social responsibility. Past research has included projects on educational development in higher education, the use of teaching portfolios and peer review of teaching, problem based learning in medical/veterinary education, and consultancy projects related to various aspects of public health and large scale biomedical research.
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