



The University of Manchester

Effective research and professorial leadership

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Plenary panel presentation at GS15, 18th June 2018

Linking effectiveness and leadership

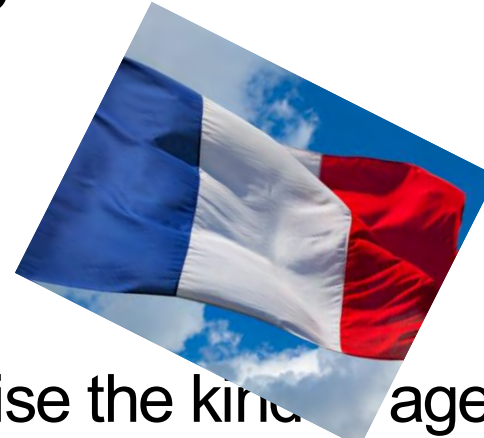
- Do we accept that:
 - Leadership is a key ingredient of effectiveness
 - effectiveness of people
 - effectiveness of activity (e.g. research, teaching)
 - effectiveness of organisations?
- If so, on what evidence?

‘Today’s leadership obsessed culture’*

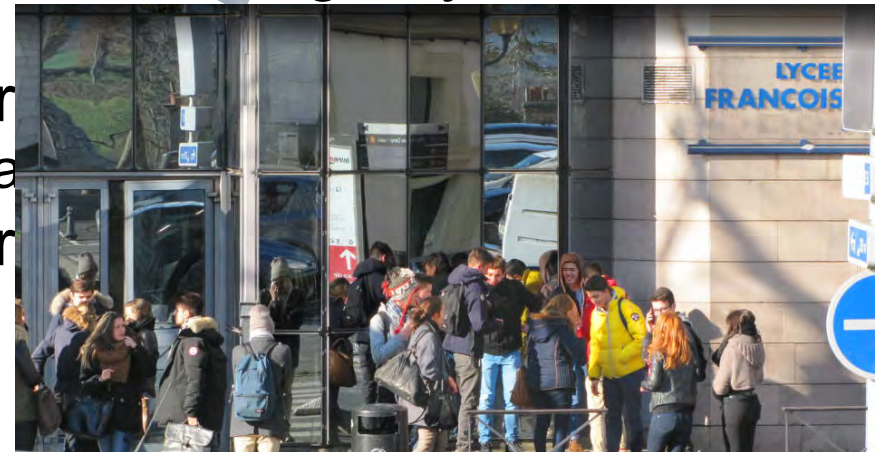
- ‘Leaderism’ has caught on.
- Leadership is ‘seen as a catch-all solution for nearly any problem, irrespective of context’
- ‘The quest to find leadership that is distributed throughout the organization has only made matters worse. It means that nearly anything and everything can be viewed as leadership’.

*This quote is from: Alvesson, A. and Spicer, A. (2012) Critical leadership studies: the case for critical performativity, *Human Relations*, 65(3): 367–390.

France



- France doesn't do leadership
- No word for leader:
 - le leader; le leadership
- French culture doesn't recognise the kind of agency that we (the 'non-French') call leadership
- French headteachers are administrators
 - Some primary schools have no headteacher
- Higher education doesn't do leadership
 - Managers & administrators only
- Are the French missing a trick?
- Or is it a semantic issue?
- Are we, the 'non French', making far too much of leadership?
- Is the French educational system degenerating into chaotic failure?
 - What influences French education practitioners?



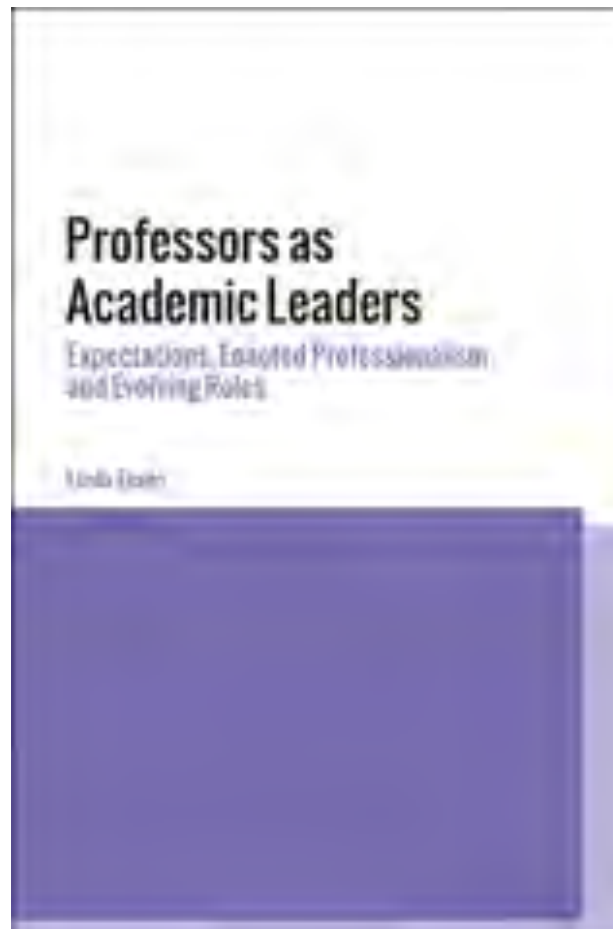
Critical leadership scholarship

- ‘The last 75 years have seen a massive effort to identify the essential elements of leadership. Tens of thousands of studies have been conducted and an endless amount of data has been collected. In spite of this, a commonly accepted, empirically verified, understanding of leadership eludes us. Nor do we have any real understanding of what distinguishes leaders from non-leaders. The field is a quagmire of competing concepts and theories’. (Krantz, 2015)
- ‘Leadership itself has outlived its usefulness’. (Miner,1982)
- ‘Leadership is a process, not a person’ (Hollander,1992)

Perpetuating the myth?

- ‘We do not know how important leadership is; only that people often believe it to be so’ (Lumby, 2012)
- ‘Whether or not leader behavior actually influences performance or effectiveness, it is important because people believe it does’ (Pfeffer 1977)

Evans, L. (2018) *Professors as academic leaders: Expectations, enacted professionalism and evolving roles*, London, Bloomsbury



How professors influence research activity

- ‘Certain professors stand out as clear role models - initially they are the sort of professor you want to work *for*, then work *with*, and then they are the sort that you would like to *become*.’
- ‘He taught me to write’
- ‘He showed me really what poetry was for, and what it was about.’

How professors influence research activity

- ‘I suppose it all boils down to the analytical insight that led me to make my own findings, and also...pursue ideas that he himself had about the material, but which might not have occurred to him if we hadn't been working on the thesis together.’

How professors influence research activity

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Reciprocal influence



