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Sue Shepherd, University of Kent

SDF Staff Developers Conference 2015

HE in 2020: Will we have the
leaders we need?



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Presentation Outline

- Current profile of typical HE 'core' leadership team
- What might this team look like in 2020?
- Why might this be the case?
- Implications for HE leadership/management development: will we have the leaders we need?
- Challenges for staff and organisational development professionals

HE Leadership Teams: Who are they now?



Current Profile of DPVCs

	Pre-1992 Universities (Census 2013)	All HEIs (Equality Challenge Unit data 2013/4)
White	96%	97%
Male	76%	65%
Professors	90%	-
No declared disability	-	98%

Age: 70% of senior academic staff are 51 and over

Gender Balance:

- Registrars and Senior Directors: 67% and 70% male
- VCs: 80% male (89% at pre-1992 universities)
- Professors: 78% male

HE Leadership Teams in 2020?



Why So Little Change?

- Exclusionary approach to senior appointments
- Professional closure: posts framed in such a way that excludes non-academics/those from outside sector
- Homosociability: tendency to recruit ‘people like us’
- Conservatism: as importance of making good senior appointment increases, so HEIs become more risk averse, leading to appointment of ‘safer’ candidates
- Fixation on experience, rather than achievement or potential
- Re-circulation of existing post holders as part of a “self-perpetuating hierarchy” or leadership elite

Implications for the Sector

- Quality of HE leadership is becoming more important than ever, so will we have the leaders we need?
- Hard to envisage increased leadership capacity
- Despite social justice and business case for more inclusive leadership teams, failing to attract and appoint the ‘best’ candidates from widest possible talent pool
- Roles are more managerial and demanding, yet entry route/preparation remain largely unchanged
- Danger of buying in, rather than nurturing home-grown talent: a “sticking plaster” short-term solution that fails to address longer-term leadership development problem

Challenges for Staff/Organisational Developers

- Overcoming scepticism from VCs and other senior staff about the value of training and development
- Challenging the view that leadership/management skills can be taken for granted in academics
- Ensuring that internal staff development and succession management remains a priority
- Retaining ambitious and talented professional services managers whose progression opportunities within HE are limited
- Arguing the case for, and supporting, the development of a more diverse group of future leaders

Find out more

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