Exploring the Contribution of Professional Staff to Student Outcomes: a comparative study of Australian and UK case studies

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Abstract
This paper reports on the second stage of a comparative study between two higher education institutions, one in Australia and the other in the UK, which explored the contributions of professional staff to student outcomes. The first stage acted as a scoping exercise to ascertain how the contributions of professional staff to student outcomes could be investigated. The second stage of the study aimed to undertake a more in-depth exploration of self-reported behaviours in a range of professional staff roles, within the two case studies. The main finding of the comparative study is the broad similarities between the case studies, in self-reported behaviours that contribute to successful student outcomes. Four key factors were identified, which enable or inhibit the contributions of professional staff to successful outcomes. Three of the four factors were found to be the same in both case studies, whereas technology was more important in the Australian case study.

Keywords
Professional staff; student outcomes; student retention and success; student experience; collaborative working; institutional behaviours

Introduction

This paper reports on the second stage of a comparative study between two higher education (HE) institutions: one in Australia and the other in the UK. The study explores the contributions of professional staff to student outcomes. The first stage acted as a scoping exercise to ascertain how the contributions of professional staff to student outcomes could be investigated. Graham (2010) established that ten of the thirteen propositions found by Prebble et al. (2004) to contribute to successful student outcomes, were also relevant to professional staff. This first stage was then replicated in a UK institution and the propositions were also found to be applicable in the UK context (Regan, Dollard & Banks, 2014).

The second stage of the study aimed to undertake a more in-depth exploration of self-reported behaviours in a range of professional staff roles. This was necessary in order to gain more understanding about how those behaviours might contribute to student outcomes. As professional staff constitute over 50% of the higher education workforce in both countries, understanding their impact on student outcomes is crucial in these times of heightened accountability and public scrutiny. Once this contribution to student outcomes is better understood, strategies to develop and enhance the knowledge and skills of the workforce can

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be more efficiently and effectively targeted. Such understanding will also make an important contribution to more targeted recruitment, ensuring that the attributes of the recruits match the skills and values needed to support positive student outcomes. The ultimate aim, of course, is to promote student retention and success.

We recognise that the term 'professional staff' is not universally used but, due to a growing interest in this broad range of higher educational professionals, we feel it will be generally understood by the readership of this journal (Sebalj, Holbrook, & Bourke, 2012). This term loosely describes a range of roles included in this staff group. For the purpose of this research, the whole range of professional staff was invited to participate but responses to that invitation can be categorised by the following broad sub-groupings: administration, management, learner support and facilities (Case Study 1 only).

Literature review

We have commented in previous papers about the dearth of literature exploring this area of higher education practice (Graham, 2010, 2012, Regan et al. 2014) and the situation remains unchanged. Whilst acknowledging the growing body of literature about the changing identity of professional staff, the focus of this literature has not been on their contribution to student outcomes. This body of literature goes back at least a decade (Whitchurch, 2006) and records the growing professionalisation, as well as the changing roles, of professional staff (Szekeres, 2011). Later work by Whitchurch (2008) suggests a typology of professional roles, ranging from the 'bounded' (or traditional) to the 'blended'; which many others have utilised and developed (Graham, 2013a; Middlehurst, 2010; Winter & O'Donohue, 2011). However, some may argue that the concept of a 'blended' higher education professional is nothing new (Gough, 2014). Indeed even in the early nineties Barnett (1993) was discussing the fact that the work of professional services was inherently linked with academia, while Moodie (1993) was discussing the blurring of distinctions between academic and professional staff resulting from changing technologies. But whilst the relationship of academic and professional roles is well represented, the relationship between student and professional staff is strangely absent from that body of work.

Even with an increasing emphasis on student satisfaction, student retention and success, and more recently student resilience, the contribution of professional staff to these issues has been largely overlooked. Although institutional processes have long been acknowledged as a contributing factor to retention and success (Thomas, 2002), and were well represented in 'Prebble's propositions' (Prebble et al. 2004), specific reference to the contribution of professional staff to those institutional behaviours is not made. This is in sharp contrast to aspects of the academic factors, to which the role of academic staff is specifically linked. Even in more recent work, Thomas (2012) makes only a passing comment on the important role professional staff play in student retention and success.

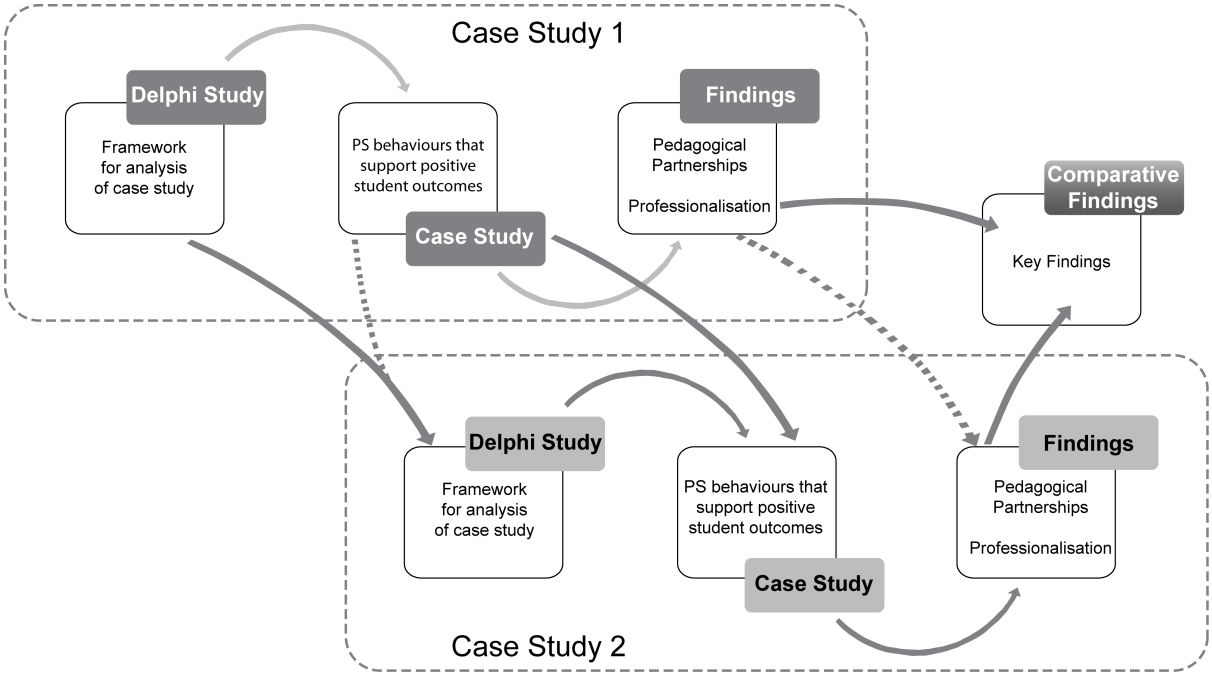
Methodology

This stage of the study sought to answer the following research questions:

- What behaviours do professional staff report that contribute to positive student outcomes?
- How do these behaviours compare between an Australian case study and one in the UK?
- What factors, in each case study, enable or inhibit these behaviours, potentially impacting on student outcomes?

The diagram below represents the design of the comparative study as a whole. It can be seen that each stage was initially carried out in the Australian institution (Case Study 1), and then replicated in the UK institution (Case Study 2).

Figure 1. Project design



This stage of the study took a qualitative approach in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the behaviours identified in the first stage. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews, which were informed by the first stage, but not restricted by it. All interviews were digitally recorded and fully transcribed. A semi-structured interview guide based on Patton's (2002) framework for designing interview questions was used. This allowed participants to guide the direction of the interview, and to describe their experiences across five domains: experience and behaviours, opinions and values, feelings, knowledge, and sensory. Background and demographic information was collected using a pre-interview survey. Fourteen participants were interviewed in each case study institution, representing a wide range of roles within the broad spectrum of professional staff. Efforts to replicate the roles represented in the two samples proved impossible, despite targeted invitations based specifically on role. The key difference is that we failed to recruit from departments collectively known as 'Facilities' in the UK institution. This includes student accommodation, housekeeping, estates management and catering. It remains unclear why recruitment failed in that group of professional staff. Whilst beyond the scope of this article, further investigation is recommended into perceptions of that group regarding their contributions to student outcomes.

Participants had to be 'experienced', which was defined as having three years or more experience of working in higher education. Participants were invited to complete a short questionnaire prior to the interview to facilitate a greater appreciation of the participants' experience to date. To minimise the risk of interviewer influence, interviews were conducted by the first author in both case studies. Table 1 below provides the demographic data collected from the pre-interview questionnaire. On average, Case Study 2 (CS2) participants were slightly more experienced and more highly qualified, in terms of academic qualifications, than those in Case Study 1 (CS1). Nevertheless the profile of the two samples is largely similar. For CS2, the percentage of females is slightly higher than in the study

population as a whole. However, in real terms that only equates to one female participant too many.

Table 1. Participants' demographics

Descriptor	CS1	CS2
Total number of participants	14	14
Female participants (%)	64	71
Minimum experience in HE* (years)	3.0	3.8
Maximum experience in HE (years)	24	19
Average experience in HE (years)	9.9	12.4
Average experience at case study University (years)	8.1	11.0
Participants with other HE experience (%)	50	43
Number of different work units	12	10
Minimum HEW/OS level	5	5
Maximum HEW/OS level	>10	11
Median HEW/OS level	7	8
Number participants with Bachelor degree	9	14
Number participants with postgrad qualifications	6	7
Number participants with at least a Master degree	4	6

* HE = higher education

Data was analysed with the aid of a software package called *Dedoose* (SocioCultural Research Consultants, 2015). This had the advantage of being web-based, which facilitated collaborative analysis internationally. 'Prebble's propositions' (Prebble et al. 2004), which describe organisational behaviours contributing to successful student outcomes, were populated as initial codes, with positive and negative child codes. In this way, behaviours that contributed to the propositions were categorised as 'positive' and those that ran contrary to the propositions categorised as 'negative'. As the transcripts were subjected to an in-depth analysis, additional themes related to factors which enabled (or inhibited) behaviours described by Prebble et al. (2004) were identified, each with a 'positive' and 'negative' category. These formed the basis of analysis in CS2, with additional themes (codes) and categories (child codes) being added as necessary.

Results

Of the propositions that contribute to successful student outcomes (Prebble et al. 2004), the two which capture the majority of behaviours reported by professional staff are:

1. Institutional behaviours, environments and processes are welcoming and efficient (PP1).
2. A comprehensive range of institutional services and facilities are available (PP8).

It was clear that professional staff contribute to these propositions largely through activities with others: other professional staff; academic colleagues; outside agencies; and of course, students. Their ability to work with this wide range of 'others' is therefore essential for their contribution to be effective in supporting positive student outcomes. From the transcripts we were able to identify factors that enable (or inhibit) staff to work effectively with others, in order to contribute fully and positively to the propositions for successful student outcomes. In

CS1, the four factors most strongly identified were technology, staff knowledge, attitudes of colleagues and supervisors, and job satisfaction. In CS2, technology was not specifically identified as enabling or inhibiting. In this case study communication was identified, along with the other three factors identified in CS1. The most striking point of these comparative results is the close similarity between the two case studies. With the exception of the 'technology/communication' difference, the results were closely replicated, as discussed in detail below.

These results are represented diagrammatically below, which highlights their similarity. The term 'pedagogical partnerships' in the model below was described by Lee, Dunston and Fowler (2012), then applied by Graham (2013b) to the results of CS1. Its significance will be discussed in the next section.

Figure 2. Results for Case Study 1

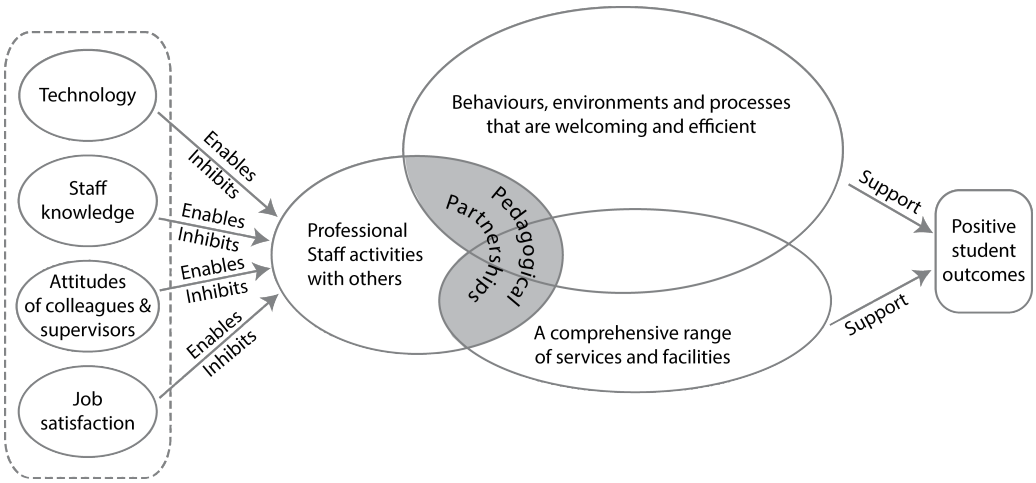
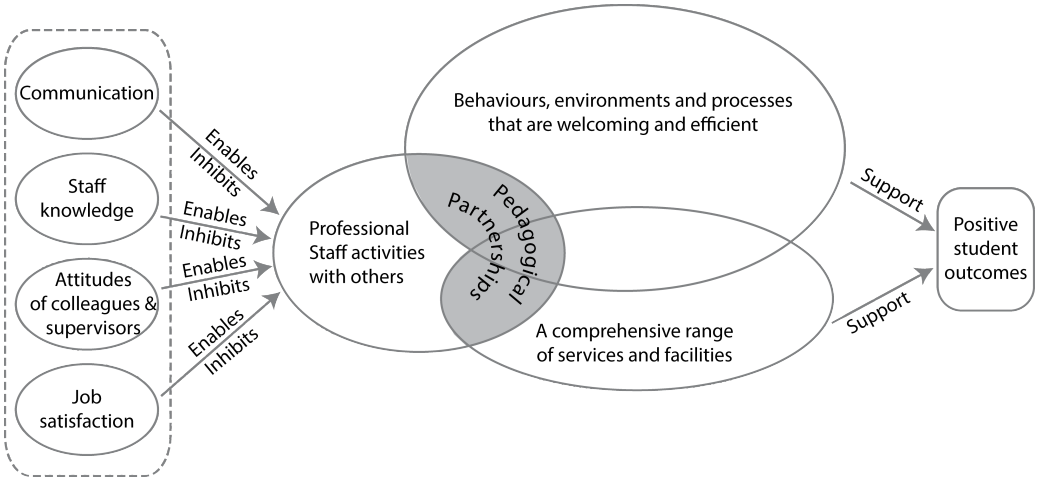


Figure 3. Results for Case Study 2



Discussion

Whilst it is perhaps unsurprising that PP1 captured the majority of behaviours reported by participants, the prevalence of PP8 is particularly noteworthy in terms of student satisfaction, as well as retention and success. Although much emphasis is placed on the role of academics in promoting successful student outcomes, academics contribute to a relatively small number of services and facilities compared to professional staff. If we are to be concerned with the total student experience of HE, the emphasis on the academic contribution to successful

student outcomes may overlook other important factors. Although authors like Fowler and Boylan (2010) acknowledge the non-academic issues that impact on student success, they do not stipulate the role of professional staff in addressing some of those issues. On the other hand they discuss at length different approaches to academic advising. Fowler and Boylan (2010) specifically point to a student's difficulty in understanding and complying with university policy and procedures, as having a possible impact on retention. From our data it is clear that expertise in this area lies primarily with the professional staff and that many of their academic colleagues also rely on their expertise.

Technology/communication

The factors identified as enabling or inhibiting positive contributions to the propositions were remarkably similar in the two cases, with the notable exception of technology versus communication. CS1 has 'technology' in the institution title, as well as being an important aspect of their reputation and the brand associated with studying there. When it is working well and 'fit for purpose' it was viewed as a strong enabler for professional staff to support students.

> I think a lot of it is due to, I guess, technology — to be able to reply to them instantaneously through emails; it's great. (CS1)

But there was also a great deal of frustration and criticism:

> Our call logging system is web based, and so it screws up a lot and that affects our job. (CS1)

It is surprising that technology was not mentioned by participants in CS2, given that anecdotal evidence from meetings and other fora might have led to expectations of similar frustrations. Equally it might have been anticipated that communication would feature more in CS1. On closer examination, many of the technology examples given, were concerned with how technology helped or hindered communication with students. In CS2, it might be that the term 'communication' encompasses technology to some extent, or perhaps that other types of communication are deemed important in order to overcome challenges with technology. The following typifies the importance placed on this factor by participants in CS2:

> The job is 99 percent communication. There's no getting away from that; whether it's our own staff, another site, or students or staff trying to use our services. (CS2)

CS1 is primarily a single sited campus whereas CS2 has multiple sites with a large geographically spread. Often participants described the challenges of establishing and maintaining communication with colleagues on other campuses. There appeared to be relatively few opportunities for professional staff to meet colleagues outside their department, or across the wider institution, in both case studies. This was more noticeable in the transcripts of participants based in faculties rather than central services.

Staff knowledge

'Staff knowledge' was viewed as an extremely valuable resource for enabling participants to support successful student outcomes. This was the case for direct support of students, as well as indirect support. The level of knowledge appears typically to relate to long service in both case studies.

> But to retain staff that have been here a while, that know about the whole university, [means] we can provide a more in depth support for students. Not just fix the technical problem . . . Whereas, someone who's only been here six months can fix the email problem, but might not know what the ramifications are, or what to do to make things okay. (CS1)

> That sort of knowledge and contacts that I've built up, or tacit knowledge I have, is often quite useful; so quite often people tap into that. (CS2)

The level of knowledge was also strongly linked to the complexity of the job roles and responsibilities; often those roles were unique. This raises cause for concern on two counts. First, the exact nature of participants' roles is poorly documented and most of that knowledge resides with the individual. People's job descriptions were viewed as totally inadequate for describing the day-to-day activities of the roles being occupied. Secondly, if this knowledge is poorly understood by others, as was reported, then any movement or absence of staff can have serious impacts on the quality of the service provided. Time taken for a replacement to become effective in a role, as opposed to the time taken to fill a post, could have serious implications for students. Rather than professional staff being interchangeable extras from 'Universal Casting', the unique context of HE, together with complexity of the roles described by participants, means that careful succession planning is needed and strategies need to be developed to document the roles more accurately. However, it is acknowledged that the complexity of some roles is such that accurate description is extremely challenging, especially with the fast pace of change in today's HE.

> The other thing that makes it challenging is the fact that I don't know what's going to happen on a daily basis and we've had things that you could never anticipate or plan for that have just been utterly horrendous. And that's really hard because there is no template to follow, there is no 'this is what you do in this sort of scenario'. (CS2)

Attitudes of colleagues and supervisors

Attitudes of colleagues and supervisors were viewed as an extremely important enabler. Supervisors or immediate line managers were generally reported very positively. Generally the attitudes of other professional staff were also reported to be enabling. Being 'helpful' was often, but not exclusively, linked directly to helping students. There were many examples cited of colleagues who had directly impacted on a student's resilience to 'things going wrong', or influenced their decision to continue their studies.

> I'm not saying these two are exceptional shining lights or anything like that. They're not at all. This is what goes on in the admin office. There is this pastoral role, which is generally unacknowledged. (CS2)

> We try really hard to reach all students and be there when they need assistance. (CS1)

> So we'll do what we can to help them stay, but also, like I said before, some students who may just be too unwell to stay at the university, we'll support them to leave in a way that's positive rather than hopefully, you know, just failing and falling off the radar and incurring lots of debt along the way. So we'll do our best to make it a positive experience. (CS2)

Participants in central departments cited more examples of 'unhelpful colleagues' than participants based in faculties. This might be due to the broader viewpoint, gained by observing many departments and faculties, or an enhanced sense of loyalty within the smaller teams. The concept of being 'unhelpful' was most often related to direct interactions with students, particularly associated with a negative contribution to PP1, as described above.

> Where there isn't that kind of recognition that there is a human story behind things or that, you know, you might treat somebody or not deal with their problem in the way that is quickest or most effective and it actually could have a major impact on their experience here as a student. (CS2)

> I guess what frustrates me sometimes is that policy around these things is saying that 'the student isn't a person', so when the policy loses that sense of the student being a person, the student becomes a number, and of course it's inevitable. You can't deal with 30,000 students without ending up with the numbers thing. But I think that really is something that I find really frustrating – it's not exactly a policy, it's more of an attitude. (CS1)

Attitudes of senior management to professional staff were more widely reported as inhibiting than that of immediate line managers. Participants perceived a lack of understanding, and sometimes a sense of being undervalued, by colleagues identified as 'senior managers'. There was a perception that colleagues in academic roles were more highly valued by those in a senior position and making strategic decisions about the institution.

There was also evidence of some tension between academic and professional staff:

> I think academics think that professional staff are somehow less intelligent, less capable, or just don't care about their work. (CS1)

> There is inevitably this, them and us attitude. (CS2)

Having equivalent academic qualifications seems to improve confidence and lead to a more equal relationship between academic and professional staff. This may be a motivation for some of the more senior professional staff to undertake higher degrees.

> I think that I used to perceive a kind of 'them and us' between academic staff and support staff. And having started the [study program] myself with academic staff and being able to do just as well as them, it's actually really helped my confidence and broke down some of those barriers that I perceived were between the two. (CS2)

Nevertheless there were also many examples of good working relationships between academic and professional staff. It was notable that some participants expressed surprise that this would be the case, implying that professional staff may have preconceptions about their academic colleagues, which could impact on their joint activities. From the literature exploring roles and identities, it is clear that professional staff often report being undervalued or under-appreciated, particularly compared to academic colleagues (Allen Collinson, 2006; Dobson, 2000; Szekeres, 2004). This is something that might be improving but, as usual, cultural shift is slow to implement.

In attempting to analyse the perceived divide between professional and academic staff, Bess and Dee (2014) point to the different employment and reward structures as one source of tension between the two staff groups. In an academic role, employment and reward are closely linked to personal individual achievements such as research, successful bids for research grants and good student evaluation. There is, therefore, little incentive for putting energy into institutional-wide initiatives. On the other hand, professional staff are usually judged by their success on institutional priorities, rather than personal goals. The drive of professional staff to promote institutional priorities can sometimes be perceived as interfering with the individual goals of their academic colleagues. Bess and Dee (2014) also highlight the inherent distrust, by academic staff, of the marketisation of higher education and a perception that this has led to an increased power for professional staff. It certainly has coincided with an increase in that part of the sector's workforce. In contrast, academic colleagues may perceive that they have lost many of the privileges they had, 'or are imagined to have had' in the past (Esterberg and Wooding cited in Bess and Dee, 2014, p. 5). Despite these possible underlying

tensions, the relationships between academic and professional staff were mostly positive in the two cases examined.

Job satisfaction

High levels of job satisfaction were found to enable professional staff to work effectively with others to support successful student outcomes. Many participants expressed this in terms of 'doing a good job'. If they were enabled to undertake their role to meet their own standards and expectations, they derived job satisfaction. This indicates that intrinsic motivation, based on the inherent satisfactions of the behaviours themselves (Deci & Ryan, 2004), is closely linked to job satisfaction for the participants. Conversely, if the participants were inhibited from performing their role to their own satisfaction, they became frustrated and de-motivated. 'Policies', 'processes' and 'systems' were cited as inhibiting their ability to 'do a good job', as well as unhelpful colleagues who did not meet deadlines. In addition, pro-social motivation — the desire to benefit others — was strongly apparent. Overwhelmingly the most common factor creating a sense of job satisfaction was the ability to impact positively on students' journeys through HE.

> What I love is that the work you do in universities just has such profound impact for the rest of their life. (CS1)

> Making a difference to someone's life, at I think a crucial time for them, is what I'm in it for, yeah. (CS2)

Graham (2013c, p. 14) concluded from CS1 that participants were 'cognisant of the importance of their work in relation to student outcomes, which provided these staff with pro-social and intrinsic motivation, leading to significant job satisfaction'. This finding was also evident in CS2.

In CS2, there was a strong link between job satisfaction and further study, a finding not reported from CS1 perhaps due to more restricted access to further study at CS1. As participants in CS2 were more qualified, in terms of academic degrees, most participants had studied alongside their roles in HE. This appears to enhance participants' satisfaction with their role and motivate them to continue working in the sector.

> Starting that [further study] and doing it alongside my work, and really developing my interest more in what I do and… why we're doing it. It's really kept my interest in staying in higher education. (CS2)

Although undertaking academic qualifications appears to be motivational for some participants, clearly it is a significant undertaking and may not appeal to all professional staff. While other 'training' opportunities exist, perhaps it lacks status in itself as it not accredited in any way. Willis and Jennings (2015) noted that the impetus for their project was the 'realisation that the role of middle-level university administrators is often undervalued and they usually have little access to training opportunities, especially accredited training' (p. 15). This is perhaps an important part of developing the professionalisation of these higher education roles, as well as for promoting mutual respect between academic and professional staff.

'Blended' roles

> I think one of the advantages of my role is that I'm actually going into the academic sphere. (CS1)

> And I teach . . . I get let out once a year, and I'm a work-based learning tutor. (CS2)

There was evidence of 'blended' roles in several of the participants: that is, a blending between a professional role and a teaching role. In other cases, individuals created a 'DIY' blended role by undertaking teaching activities in addition to their (full-time) professional role. In CS1, such 'DIY' blending was rewarded through using appropriate pay scales for the different activities. This was not the case in the participants of CS2.

In CS2, participants were undertaking teaching duties either through voluntary interest and/or to enhance career prospects. Where the aim was to enhance career prospects, advancement was expressed in terms of moving *from* professional services *to* an academic role. Having binary pay scales dividing professional staff and academic staff can give the message that staff are either in one camp or the other. This divide could inhibit the development of blended roles and deny institutions the benefits that have been reported from such roles (Middlehurst, 2010; Schneijderberg & Merkator, 2013; Whitchurch, 2009).

There was frustration reported by some participants in CS2 that, even though they were undertaking roles and responsibilities typically associated with the role of an academic (teaching, supporting learning, assessment), they were not viewed as equals.

> Sometimes I feel it's a little bit like working at a law firm, but not being a lawyer. (CS2)

Willis and Jennings (2015) also found that administrators studied in their project were viewed as occupying roles of a lower status than academic colleagues, 'despite comparable skills, qualifications and contributions' (p. 17).

Pedagogical partnerships

'Pedagogy' is recognised as a contested term, for which the conceptualisation has become more complex over time. It has moved beyond simply *teaching of children* and has developed to include 'any conscious activity by one person designed to enhance learning in another' (Watkins and Mortimore, 1999, p.3). Indeed, the term 'pedagogical partnership' has been used in other contexts to indicate a move from a hierarchical relationship between teacher and learner, to a more collegial or collaborative one (for example Totterdell, Hathaway & La Velle, 2011, Lee et al., 2012). We use it here to indicate a partnership between all higher education (HE) staff to collaborate for the purpose of supporting successful student outcomes. It is a recognition that pedagogy in higher education does not occur only in the academic sphere, but that interactions with all members of staff can contribute to learning. Lee et al. (2012, p. 268) point out that 'pedagogical work' involves 'developing capacities' and is 'often embedded in activities and relationships not formally designated as educational'. Bess and Dee (2014) suggest that academics may assume professional staff are only involved in extra-curricular experience of students and 'have little to contribute to student learning' (p. 25). This also suggests that the inter-relationship between extra and co-curricular activities with student retention and success is not fully appreciated.

By using the term 'pedagogical partnership' in our model (Figures 2 and 3) we are promoting the notion that successful student outcomes are not the result of a hierarchical activity involving academics merely being supported by professional staff. It also recognises that the activities and behaviours of professional staff, although not normally labelled 'educational', do indeed lead directly, or indirectly, to building student capacity to succeed in HE. The successful outcome is achieved by all HE staff, working in a collegial and collaborative way, with the student as a co-contributor to that outcome.

Institutional initiatives to promote retention and success inevitably involve collaborative partnerships, such as described above. However, it is noted that official responsibility for such initiatives usually lies with a member of academic staff and the collaborative nature is often not recognised in subsequent reporting. As far back as 2003, Blackwell and Blackmore noted that the changing role of professional staff raised possibilities for 'communities of practice around such collaborative teamworking' (p. 9). They go on to say that it is likely to result in 'important gains to the individuals concerned and their organisations' (Blackwell and Blackmore, 2003, p. 9). Yet, professional staff barely get a mention when such initiatives are discussed in the literature a decade further on (Thomas, 2012).

Limitations of the study

As with any study on professional staff, it is challenging to represent the myriad of roles grouped within that term. Nevertheless, participants occupied wide-ranging roles, either in faculties or in central departments. Recruitment could be limited by professional staff views of their contribution to the student outcome. If they perceive their role to be tangential to the student outcome, they may not have felt the study was aimed at them.

The comparative study could now be developed by studying another institution, but this time from a culture that is less similar to Australasia-Britain. Informal discussions at a conference in Singapore, for example, suggest that the contribution of professional staff to student outcomes might be perceived quite differently. Even though the two institutions in this study were far apart geographically, socially they are relatively similar and, in terms of this discourse, these countries have contributed substantially to the literature from the professional staff perspective (for example, Allen-Collinson, 2006; Birds, 2015; Dobson & Conway, 2003; Graham, 2013c; Szekeres, 2011; Whitchurch, 2009).

Conclusion and Recommendations

From the data collected and analysed, in this stage of the study, we have concluded that professional staff exhibit a range of behaviours known to contribute to successful student outcomes. These behaviours can be linked primarily to two of the propositions described by Prebble et al. (2004), which are:

1. Institutional behaviours, environments and processes are welcoming and efficient (PP1).
2. A comprehensive range of institutional services and facilities are available (PP8).

There is a large degree of similarity in the findings from both case study institutions and the analytical model, derived from CS1, is largely applicable to CS2. The 'enablers' to effective behaviours for successful student outcomes are the same for both case studies, with the exception of technology (CS1) versus communication (CS2). The three common enablers are staff knowledge, attitudes of colleagues and supervisors, and job satisfaction.

However, the concept of 'pedagogical partnerships', proposed in our model, may not be perceived in practice at this stage. A cultural shift, both within and between academic *and* professional staff groups, may be needed if achieving successful student outcomes is truly to be viewed as a partnership.

In response to these conclusions, the following recommendations are made:

- Professional staff role descriptors need to make clear the nature of their contribution to student outcomes, to ensure smart recruitment of people with the right set of skills and values.

- Creating more *overtly* collaborative initiatives between professional staff and academic colleagues for retention, persistence and success, to promote and raise awareness of pedagogical partnerships.
- While middle managers (immediate supervisors) were viewed as positively valuing their staff, that was not the case with senior management. Care must be taken to recognise and value the pedagogical partnerships that promote successful student outcomes.
- The binary divide of pay scales and other rewards and benefits need to be reviewed, not only to take account of emerging blended HE professionals, but simply to remove a significant barrier to true partnering.
- The implications of rapid expansion and increasing geographical spread in CS2 need careful management to preserve valuable working relationships and communication.
- Length of service makes professional staff an important resource, but consideration is needed to ensure succession planning and sustainability of service.
- Equality of opportunity for development and scholarly activity for professional staff is beneficial to student outcomes, and the institution, as it enhances job satisfaction and retention.

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