



Raminus Falcon (2008), <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sydney>

# A TALE OF TWO CITIES: THE SEQUEL



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Tagishsimon (2005), <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chester>

# CONTRIBUTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL STAFF TO THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Retention, Persistence and Successful  
Outcomes

# THE STUDY

- Focus on professional / support staff (PS)
- Virtually no literature about how these staff perceive their contribution to student outcomes
- Comparing results from a study at the University of Technology Sydney, Australia with results from a replication study at the University of Chester

# RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How do professional staff contribute to student outcomes?

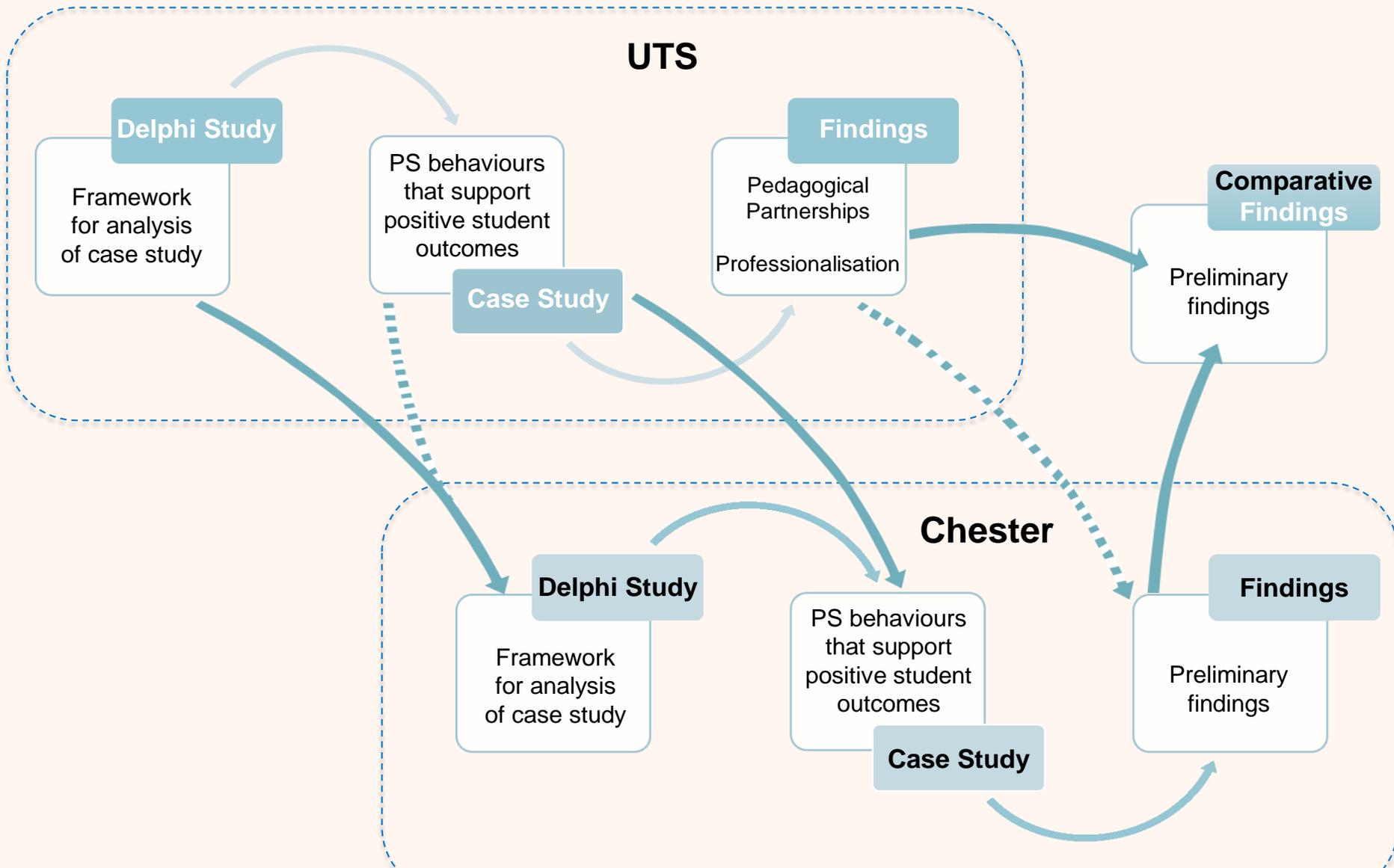
- Stage 1 – Delphi Study
  - How can the contributions of professional staff to student outcomes be investigated?
- Stage 2 – Case Study
  - What behaviours do professional staff exhibit that contribute to positive student outcomes?

# STUDY AIMS

Three key aims:

1. To investigate, by replicating the methodology used in the Australian institution, contributions that professional staff make to student outcomes at a UK institution.
2. To undertake a comparative analysis with research outcomes from an earlier Australian study.
3. To disseminate the research outcomes to foster improved understanding of the work done by professional staff, both in Australia and the UK.

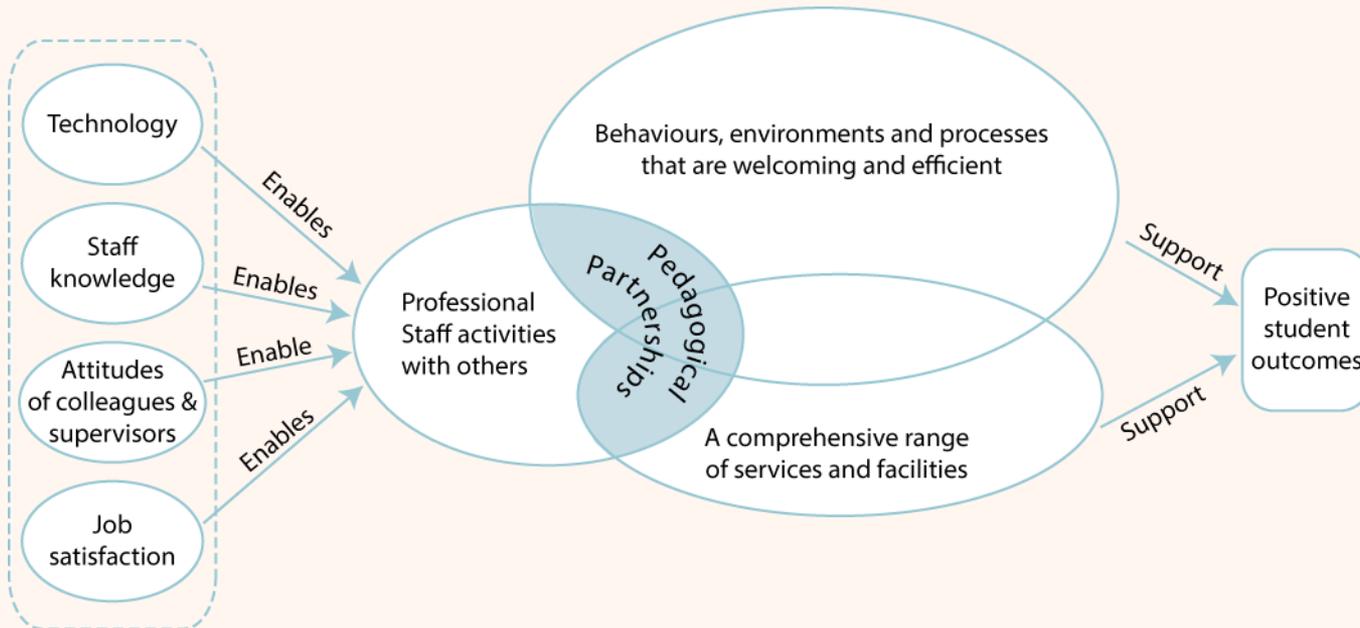
# RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY



# PARTICIPANTS' DEMOGRAPHICS

Descriptor	UTS	Chester
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

# RESULTS — CASE STUDY 1



Professional staff form relationships – for the achievement of positive student outcomes – with a range of different individuals and groups including other professional staff, academic staff, students and, at times, external stakeholders. In these **pedagogical partnerships**, learning and teaching occur through activities, undertaken by professional staff in co-operation with these partners, which contribute to student retention, persistence and achievement.

# PRELIMINARY COMPARATIVE RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

- The model developed from the UTS findings is also applicable at University of Chester.
- Enablers:
  - Technology – more overtly criticised in UTS than UoC;
  - Staff Knowledge – An invaluable resource, in both institutions, for helping students directly and indirectly;
  - Attitudes – caring, approachable, supportive, wanting to help. In both case studies some indication of tensions with academic colleagues. Difference in blended roles;
  - Job satisfaction – strong links to being able to help students in some way; whether directly or indirectly. At UTS – often associated with ‘doing a good job’. At UoC, learning alongside seems to improve job satisfaction.

# IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE CASE STUDY 1

- Growing professionalisation of PS acts as a driver and an enabler of the development of pedagogical partnerships.
- Review of recruitment and retention policies and procedures for PS.
- Reconsideration of binary divide — can we think of ourselves as higher education professionals, regardless of our roles and activities?
- Single pay spine and roles matrix.

# IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE CASE STUDY 2

- Implications of rapid expansion and increasing geographical spread
- Length of service makes PS an important resource but is this sustainable?
- ‘Accidental’ career finding has implications for Recruitment and induction policies and procedure
- Review of development and scholarly activity for PS
- Promoting a culture in which PS feel valued and their contribution to student outcomes is equally recognised
- Creating more overtly collaborative initiatives between PS and academic colleagues for retention, persistence & success to promote and raise awareness of pedagogic partnerships.

# PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

- Prebble propositions are relevant for investigating PS contribution.
- The model works for analysis in both case studies but may not be perceived explicitly as ‘pedagogic partnership’.
- PS recognise their contribution but don’t necessarily feel that contribution is recognised by management and sometimes their academic colleagues.
- Need to promote a culture of partnership to ensure others do the best thing for student outcomes.
- PS role descriptors need to make clear the nature of their contribution to ensure smart recruitment of people with the right set of skills and values.