

**Leadership
Foundation**
for Higher Education

University Leadership in Turbulent Times:

An Exploration of 'Urban and Edgy' Institutions

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2. Executive Summary

This project investigates the leadership issues surrounding the revitalising of organisations in turbulent environments. In particular the project aimed to explore the experiences of higher education leaders who operate in universities that can be characterised as “urban and edgy” organisations.

The participants were drawn from English Universities where the Universities seemed to fit the characteristics of Urban and Edgy. All the interviews took place with Senior Leaders at Pro Vice Chancellor level and above. The research method was semi-structured interviewing.

The results showed that there were three key themes emerging: that of accepting the current turbulence as an “ongoing” issue in which to find new ways of leading; that of taking issue or agreeing with the terms of Urban and Edgy; and, noting the time is ripe for new forms of leadership which take into account the newly reformed UK higher education arena. There was a genuine interest from the respondents to this work, and recognition of the need for newer, refreshed modes of leadership to meet the changing demands of higher education stakeholders.

3. Introduction

The last two years have seen remarkable changes in the higher education sector. The legal and political framework is new and at the time of writing is still open to interpretation and change. Two major new parliamentary papers, “Students at the heart of the system” (BIS, June, 2011) and “Innovation and research strategy for growth” (BIS, Dec, 2011), both pave the way for radical changes in the way in which HE is funded, structured, and governed and innovation is addressed at local, national and international levels.

The White Paper, 'Higher education: students at the heart of the system' (ibid, 2011), signals the Government's intention to establish a more integrated and transparent regulatory framework for higher education. The Coalition plans a rapid and far-reaching reform of HE. David Willets, Minister for Universities and Science, states that they will reform funding of the sector, promote and deliver a better student experience, foster social mobility, reduce regulation, and remove barriers for new providers. The overarching goal is to ensure that the sector responds to the needs of students in new ways. This will place power firmly in the hands of the consumer. This comes as part of a wider programme to transform and modernise the public sector by cutting waste and providing choice, encouraging competition, and opening up the market by bringing opportunity to new providers.

Vince Cable, Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills states:

“Our university sector has a strong history with some world-class institutions attracting students from across the globe. Higher Education is a successful public-private partnership, combining Government funding with institutional autonomy.”

“This White Paper builds on that record, while doing more than ever to put students in the driving seat. We want to see more investment, greater diversity, including innovative forms of delivery from further education colleges and others, and less centralised control over

student numbers. But, in return, we want the sector to be more accountable to students, as well as to the taxpayer.”

There is concern that, by opening the market up to new private sector providers, the Government has either failed to recognise the value of higher education in general or seeks to establish a model of higher education with a ‘fundamentally different learning relationship’ (Durigan, 2011). It is also felt that the new measures will delete almost all public funding for higher education and provide potentially easier access to the university title and access to publicly funded loans, essentially threatening academic integrity of the higher education sector. Further, there is concern that treating higher education as a marketplace consumable is an impossible notion due to the multifaceted nature of HE and the incompatibility with market orthodoxy.

Providing choice and encouraging competition from this new positioning may actually restrict choice for students and market forces could push institutions to compete against each other (Durigan 2011). However, this would not be for the benefit of quality; rather, for survival in the flood of HE institutions and businesses. Moreover, there could be major implications for social mobility, as a squeeze on student numbers will inexorably intensify relative disadvantage.

The newness that will come out of these changes will require an interesting kind of leadership: will the leadership that has prevailed so far still be relevant useful and successful?

This research project arose out of an earlier pilot based on Universities in the North West (Burke, 2008). The pilot study found that the notion of Urban and Edgy was a relevant label for universities with a different set of characteristics from the standard corporate type of organisations.

4. Aims and Objectives of the Research

Aim

This research aimed to address leadership issues surrounding the revitalising of organisations in turbulent environments, and in particular to explore the experiences of higher education leaders who operate in those universities that can be characterised as “urban and edgy organisations”.

Objectives

Out of the aim, there arose a set of eight objectives:

- To further explore the major characteristics of urban and edgy universities
- To identify effective leadership skills of those leading in urban and edgy organisations
- To disseminate findings into academic practice
- Create a model of best practice of relevant leadership skills which is flexible enough to map onto the management and governance needs of individual organisations
- To inform higher education of potential new ways of managing and analysing organisations
- To contribute to the Leadership Foundation key priorities, such as organisational development, by the wide dissemination of findings and recommendations across the higher education sector
- To promote a culture of organisational learning and reflection by the establishment of a new online community through the website “Urban&EdgyNet to be located at” www.urbanandedgy.com or similar.
- To run workshops in order to disseminate the results

It was interesting to note that, during data collection, respondents who were asked about the need for a website considered there to be existing avenues for information exchange already in place. The recommendation was not to

set up the Urban&EdgyNet site at present, although this will be revisited in the future.

5. Context and Rationale

This research is contextualised by the notion that organisations possess an identity, or set of characteristics, that defines them and communicates to others who they are and what they are about. Though leading scholars in the area of corporate identity have decided not to agree on a formal definition, they do agree it is something to be treated with a multidisciplinary approach and viewed as distinct from brand management (van Riel and Balmer, 1997). The management of corporate identity takes into account an organisation's historical roots, its corporate strategy, and the three parts of the 'corporate identity mix': the behaviour of its members, communication, and symbolism to internal and external audiences. Leading theorists agree that it is the behaviour of an organisation's members that form the basis for its unique characteristics (van Riel and Balmer, 1997).

The aim of corporate identity management is to establish a favourable reputation with its stakeholders; it is they who will buy their products and services, work for them, and invest in them. A favourable corporate identity gives an organisation a competitive advantage (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990). However, it is not only internal factors that contribute to an organisation's identity: reputation and performance are also influenced by external developments such as changes in the behaviour of competitors, personnel, and customers, as well as changes in government policy (van Riel and Balmer, 1997). At the time of this research, policy changes in higher education have created an environment of uncertainty and unpredictability in the sector; yet, the issues of corporate identity are likely to become more salient and relevant to the climate in which this research has taken place.

In addition to policy change, there is a broader context underpinning the rationale for the research. As changes in higher education institutions have become more frequent and challenging, questions have arisen about the nature of leadership in higher education institutions: no matter how leadership is looked at, there is no universal panacea for all types of institutions. The

focus for this project was to consider the universities that did not fit the model of the standard corporate organisation and to look instead at those organisations which were diverse, did not unify strategy (deliberately), open and loose (yet successful), willing to take risks, and difficult to classify as a particular type of organisation. The characteristics of these organisations seemed to fit the description of being both Urban – in every meaning of the word – and Edgy in terms of different, new, on the edge, and at the cutting edge. From this initial idea, a pilot was undertaken which was concerned with defining “urban and edgy” organisations (Burke, 2008). The results showed that there was an engagement with the term Urban and Edgy and leadership traits associated with these kinds of organisations.

5.1 Defining Urban and Edgy

In times of constant shifting change, organisations can become “tired”. Tired in the sense of feeling that nothing is really new; that the organisation has changed so much that it is difficult to focus; and, that the messages embedded in the visions are so deeply buried they are difficult to communicate clearly. These organisations are usually operating in an environment that is unstable, turbulent, and difficult to forecast.

However, organisations that identify with this analysis often try to solve difficulties by creating an image, a culture, a type of organisation, which is seen, as “smart and corporate” i.e. a textbook image of success. While this can be successful, there must also be consideration of an alternative that of an organisation characterised by diversity and controlled chaos. This type of organisation can be labelled as “urban and edgy”: it thrives on change and does not endeavour to unify the culture, the outlook, or the overarching vision.

Urban and Edgy organisations succeed through acceptance, tolerance, respect, and by the creation of a strong sense of belonging. Success in this type of organisation can depend on many variables, but rests on two critical axes: the way in which knowledge is managed (shared and open); and, the particular type of leadership prevalent in that organisation (empowerment and encouragement).

The aim of this project was to build on the pilot work and address issues surrounding the revitalising of organisations in turbulent environments. Results from the pilot suggested a new identification of revitalised organisations, distinct from the standard, traditional image of organisational success. While all the traditional models identified by Quinn and Rohrbaugh (1983) have their place, the model of universities that operate in controlled restlessness does not seem to have a close fit with any of these structures. These new “urban and edgy organisational models” thrive on change, celebrate differences, and do not fit into any of the standard model categories.

What then are the specific characteristics of urban and edgy organisations? They are not labelled as such in the literature, yet the brand of “dangerous, maverick, different, unstable” organisations has always been around. Organisations are now so competitive externally and internally for scarce resources that they rely heavily on the ability of leaders to empower others, to organise processes, and to manage change. It is the reaction and the response which is changing, rather than the problems. As an alternative to opting for a streamlined and controlled approach, organisations are choosing a more radical path. For example, an analysis of urban and edgy organisations would include the following: an organisation where: the “product” is knowledge; the organisation is well-established and in a mature phase of organisational growth; there are attempts to extend the product portfolio but rival competition for new markets; customers are paying clients; there are signs of poor infrastructure; remuneration is low; staff have autonomy; and, the organisation is not just reacting to changes but also has planned responses. Often the organisation is undergoing harsh pruning and finds it difficult to influence external environment, but there is freedom that encourages creativity.

Because performance depends on a variety of factors, identification of the kind of leadership relevant to the organisation would help to address some of the difficulties raised by Bolden (2008). It is the issues connected with this “new” type of leadership that were explored and defined. The research presented a new way of considering leadership and one that will be of potential benefit to the whole of the higher education sector. The work built on

previous and ongoing Leadership Foundation projects such as those dealing with leadership among the Professoriate (Macfarlane, 2008) and interdisciplinary work (Blackmore, 2009). This project helped to focus strategic staff development and to further define and rationalise the leadership, governance, and management of UK higher education institutions. Inevitably, as new partnerships emerge in the future and as the Global Citizen, the Global Student, Global Clusters and no doubt Global Universities increase, then this work may also become of relevance on an international scale.

6. Leadership in Higher Education: A Review of the Literature

In order to put the work in to context, a brief outline follows of the relevant leadership theories: trait, behavioural, contingency-situational, transformational, and transactional. This is followed by a section on leadership in education in general, leadership in higher education and theories regarding ongoing current developments and reforms in higher education.

6.1 Trait Theory

An early theory of leadership is trait theory: it contends that individuals are born with certain personality criteria including qualities that establish them with the abilities to lead others. Examples of traits are 'assertive', 'cooperative', and 'decisive'. However, researchers have now concluded that there were no consistent characteristics that distinguish individuals as leaders and that traits could not be inborn and unchangeable (Wright 1996).

6.2 Behavioural Theory of Leadership

Behavioural theorists also offered an early account of leadership and considered in greater depth the relationships between managers and workers. Prominent among these was McGregor's (1960) research into theory X and theory Y styles of management. Both make fundamental assumptions about human nature: theory X managers consider that the average person dislikes work and requires coercion; theory Y assumes that people seek responsibility and are committed to achieving their objectives. Depending on their view of their workers, the manager will then adopt either an autocratic style (X) or a participative style (Y). Like the trait theorists before them, behavioural theorists pursued relatively simplistic explanations of leadership style and, as thinking in the area developed, their ideas were superseded by ones that took account of environmental factors.

6.3 Contingency-situational Leadership

The contingency-situational models gave rise to different aspects of leadership in varying situations, as it was understood that a particular leadership style is not suited to all leaders in all circumstances. Rather, these models indicate that the adopted style is dependent on certain factors such as the situation, people, task, type of organisation, and an array of environmental influences. The effectiveness of leadership is dependent on the imposed demands of the situation. Though these models furthered the understanding and complexity of leadership, they were insufficient because situational theories could not predict the particular leadership skills that would be most effective in particular situations and contingency models could not sufficiently clarify which combination of characteristics, leader behaviours, and situational variables would be the most effective.

6.4 Transformational Leadership

Leadership theory was developed further when the concept of transformational leadership was introduced. In this model, leadership is viewed as a process whereby the leader takes firm control of a situation by conveying a clear vision of followers' goals, presenting a marked passion for the work, and enabling followers to feel recharged and energised (Burns, 1978). The leader possessed high morals and ethics and both leaders and followers are inspired to higher levels of motivation.

6.5 Transactional Leadership

One final leadership theory of note is transactional leadership theory: it is a style commonly adopted by managers who focus on the basic management process of controlling, organising, and short-term planning (Weber, 1947; Bass, 1981). The follower obeys the leader, who has a formal authority and responsibility within the organisation. The leader invokes motivation through a reward and punishment system: obey equals reward; disobey equals punishment. This is an exchange between the leader and follower, which achieves more routine type performance goals. Transactional leadership has been criticised for its potential to create an environment permeated by position, power, perks, and politics.

6.6 Leadership in Higher Education

Critiques of leadership in higher education have arisen in recent times due to complex and turbulent organisational environments. In 1987, two significant reports were published by Handy, and Constable and McCormick, which suggested the UK was experiencing a shortage of effective leaders to ensure global competitiveness. This spurred a renewed interest in leadership with educational reform paralleling the trend. The Further and Higher Education Act (1992) placed greater emphasis on effective leadership, not only within higher echelons but also at all levels within the university. As a result, heads of faculties, departments, and schools have taken on the responsibility of leadership, strategy, and budgeting. This model of leadership is found to be more effective than traditional models where leadership is the domain of a single person (Jackson and Schuler, 1999; Gronn, 2002; Muijs and Harris, 2003).

Much of the leadership in education settings has concentrated on situational leadership and transactional leadership. These theories have a leaning toward the field of scientific management being concerned with structures and purpose of the organisation rather than with the people, much like Taylorism (1911).

Other work in higher education leadership has focused on: cultural leadership, which suggests that leaders create organisational cultures (Southworth, 1999); instructional leadership, which is about developing strategies to promote effective teaching and learning (Hopkins, 2000); and, transformational leadership, which focuses on managing change and outcomes (Foster, 1986, 1998; Gronn, 1999). The emphasis here is on the potential for leaders to change the cultural context within the workplace, and rather than power hierarchies between leader and follower, emphasis is placed on mutual benefit.

There have also been interesting examples of shared leadership during the mid 1980's. Then in 1996, C. McInnis-Bowers and E. Byron Chew undertook the role of dean-partners at Birmingham-Southern College, which spanned six years. Individually they were not interested in the role of dean but together

they felt they could bring a creative approach. They wanted their collaborative method to be different to any other shared leadership model in HE. Not only did they take on the shared role but they also rolled out the model by actively encouraging collaboration throughout the institute. This saw staff sharing workspace, telephones, and even a single business card. McInnis-Bowers and Chew insisted on equal compensation for their part and mutually agreed on a date to begin serving and a date to end the role. Both staff and students alike received the partnership positively. The culture of joint decision making, discussions, and administration were embraced by the school with an obvious understanding of the benefits. Chew suggests four main elements to successfully implement the model: build the partnership on an existing relationship, clearly define the nature of the partnership, agree an end date, and commit the partnership and communicate the model to others.

More recent conceptions of leadership include post-transformational leadership (Harris, 2003). The two main elements here are to, first, continuously manage the many challenging tensions and dilemmas and, second, be predominantly people-focused (Harris 2003). This approach sees a power shift from managing *over* toward a more collective position of managing *with*, which is achieved by engaging followers while increasing their levels of consciousness about the importance of goals they are pursuing for their organisation (Muijs et al., 2006). There are opposing views about this approach. The theory suggests that the organisational culture can be moulded and changed when the leader engages with followers. However, Dimmock and Walker (2002) argue that organisational culture can just as easily change and mould leadership. Muijs et al., (2006) suggest this to be the case in higher education institutions, where a strong subject-based culture exists, which influences any proposed organisational change.

In addition, there is the emerging concept of distributed forms of leadership (Gunter, 2004; Rayner and Gunter, 2005; Muijs et al., 2006). Traditional leadership is intently concerned with top-down leadership; however, innovators in knowledge intensive industries exhibit a type of leadership that is not associated with the top-down direction of followers. This perspective on leadership is important because it advocates dispersing leadership throughout

organisations rather than monopolising it at the top. This is more appropriate where there is a strong subject-based culture. An opportunity is provided for staff to learn to lead, which helps them to develop both in their career and professionally. Authoritarian leadership styles have been found to be less effective than those which encourage collaborative decision making processes (Knight and Trowler, 2001; Muijs et al., 2006).

However, studies of distributed leadership have also revealed its 'shadow side'. Petrov (2008) concluded that this style of leadership is "long on rhetoric but short on interaction" and warns that in some cases it may be a cloak for disguising the abolition of collegiality and consensus decision-making. In an environment where most UK universities are rationalising, if not eliminating, their main formalised mechanism for bottom-up influence and decision-making, he argues that:

"Distributed leadership may be used by those in positions of real power to disguise power differentials, offering the illusion of consultation and participation while obscuring the mechanisms by which decisions are reached and resources distributed."

Petrov found that there was a 'silo mentality' toward decision-making within Schools, where problems revolve but don't resolve. This was attributed to decentralised budgets and the dispersion of committee structures.

The final area of research relevant to the current project is that of organisational culture, which is regarded as a key determinant in whether a higher education institution is successful or not (Warner and Palfreyman, 1996). For Wilson (2007), organisational culture can be categorised into two contrasting typologies: the functionalist and the dynamic-unbounded.

The functionalist approach views culture as 'glue' which homogenizes the organisation through a sense of unity, interdependency, shared values, agreed norms, and a common sense of purpose drawn from both shared wider societal values (Hofstede, 1991). Leaders can be proactive in strengthening these norms and values, and in bringing about intentional change in the interests of maintaining or creating, through a process of "normative re-education" (Stoll, 1999).

However, the functionalist perspective is played down; although cultural homogeneity is typical of 'strong' organisational cultures, the feasibility (or even desirability) of achieving such cultural homogeneity in diverse organisations is open to question. Shields et al (2002) argue that, "a community of difference ... begins, not with an assumption of shared norms, beliefs, and values, but with a need for respect, dialogue, and understanding" (p. 132).

The dynamic-unbounded typology emphasises that organisational culture is organic and ever changing. Leadership challenges are about managing flexibly in order to cope with complexity, diversity, social inclusion, and uncertainty arising from externally driven change. Managing organisational change is therefore understood from an open systems perspective (Wilson, 2007). It is perhaps these typologies that can best provide a backcloth to the two key concepts in this research: smart and corporate institutional characteristics may be indicative of the functionalist perspective; urban and edgy characteristics reflect a dynamic-unbounded organisational culture.

6.7 Conclusion

There are ever-increasing changes and demands in the higher education sector: resources are low but expectations are high. The market is highly competitive and institutions have become more business-like in competing for business, financial support, and accreditation. As noted by Burke (2008), 'organisations that have been subject to so much change become 'tired' to the degree that it is difficult to focus and visionary messages become so deeply buried they cannot be clearly communicated.'

Due to the challenges presented by uncertainty, unpredictability, and changeability in HE, new models of leadership are emerging which challenge the more traditional theories that have been applied to individual university leaders. Much of the leadership and HE research has focused on transactional and transformational leadership theories. Educational leaders would need to be both transactional and transformational to be authentic in their efforts to inspire both teachers and students and to stimulate them while displaying individualised consideration (Bass, 2000). In addition, teacher and

student performance should be rewarded but also poor performance should be corrected. This requires a proactive leader who avoids shirking the responsibilities of leadership, envisions themselves as change agents, and juggles the plethora of problems of twenty-first century educational institutions.

Leadership in higher education continues to evolve and adapt to a changed environment, a changed infrastructure, new landscapes, and to new local, national, and international challenges. It is within this setting that the study of urban and edgy organisations took place.

7. Research Methods and Data Collection

After careful consideration, the research approach was interpretivist; the research context was ethnographic and semi-structured interviews were used as the method of data collection. Ethical Approval was sought and gained from the relevant bodies.

A list was drawn up by the research team of higher education institutions in England considered to fit the characteristics defined as Urban and Edgy. Letters were sent to senior leaders of these institutions and eleven positive responses were received. All eleven interviews took place at each individual's institution in late 2010/early 2011. The interviewees operated at the levels of Vice Chancellor, Deputy Vice Chancellor, or Pro Vice Chancellor. All interviewees were assured of confidentiality and anonymity; therefore, the names of those institutions and individuals are omitted from this report as well as any other easily identifiable details. The interviews lasted for about forty-five minutes on average (see Appendix 2 for the interview areas). Nine interviews were recorded using an audio recorder and later transcribed in full. Two interviewees declined the use of an audio recorder and so handwritten notes were taken instead. The results were analysed using NVIVO software and a thematic analysis of the data undertaken. The key themes which emerged are discussed in section 8 below.

7.1 Leaders' Backgrounds

Eleven leaders were interviewed, including five Vice Chancellors, four Deputy Vice Chancellors, and two Pro Vice Chancellors.

The VCs had been in post for between a month and ten years. They had previously held positions as Deputy VCs, Pro VCs, and Deans. They had been higher education leaders for between seven and twenty-five years. In the Findings section, the VCs assume the anonymous initials of JD, BV, KC, MG, and OL.

The Deputy VCs had been in post for between two and six years. They had previously held positions as Pro VCs and Deans. They had been higher education leaders for between nine and twenty years. The Deputy VCs in this report have the initials of FM, EL, JC, and HM.

The Pro VCs had been in post for four years. One had held a Deputy VC post previously and both had been Pro VCs in other institutions. They had been higher education leaders for eleven and twenty years. For the Pro VCs, the initials of LT and NN have been used.

8. Findings and Discussion

Three key themes emerged from an analysis of the interview data and these are discussed below. The three themes are turbulence in higher education, leadership in higher education, and the characterisation of institutions.

8.1 Turbulence in Higher Education

Leaders differed in their views about the notion of turbulence in higher education. Some considered that turbulence has always existed in the sector in some form, while others have experienced it in discrete periods. Turbulence may be a consequence of external forces such as changes in the political landscape; there are instances of institution-specific turbulence, too. Some leaders have not experienced turbulence in the sector.

8.1.1 The Persistence of Turbulence in Higher Education

JD (VC) argues that the sector always has been turbulent and, what is more, the pace of change is increasing. Externally, fee levels and the removal of science funding is driving turbulence. Internally, it can depend on the location of the University itself: a city challenged by a poor image and reputation contributes to internal turbulence. FM (Deputy VC) agrees with the assertion that turbulence was the result of poor local economic and social conditions. Even though other Universities in the region were growing throughout the 1990s, his was not and this was because of the image of the city as well as the fact that some of their stronger courses were in decline, either because demand was decreasing for those courses or because the industries that those courses fed were in national decline. Therefore, the University had to undergo significant change.

“In the 1990s, when you look at the statistical analysis of [the university] it was the only university in [the region] that wasn’t growing in size... Apart from various amalgamations that took place, the base student number wasn’t growing. There was also a declining RAE performance.” (FM, Deputy VC)

The problems experienced internally were combined with adverse external factors caused by changes in funding, student demand, and industrial decline:

“[T]he funding council was reviewing different types of funding for the courses and parts of the university that were very large in the 90s. Modern languages have declined and have been subsequently closed because there was no demand. Computing went through a price-band change, which meant that the amount of money we got per student reduced significantly and the other big area in [the university] was engineering, which was in major national decline.” (FM, Deputy VC)

For NN (Pro VC), there has always been a degree of turbulence in the sector and this can be characterised by changing political agendas over progressive decades. During the Thatcher administration of the 1980s, higher education was reorganised to expand and diversify polytechnics and teacher training colleges. In the 1990s, an increase in student numbers was coupled with cuts in student resources. And during New Labour’s tenure, institutions benefited from increased resources, but were constrained by regulation and monitoring.

OL (VC) agrees that turbulence in the 2000s has been mainly positive: it has increased the capacity for occupational and institutional growth to maximize academic and financial value; league tables have provided the opportunity for institutions to become positively appraised; and, funding has enabled a period of growth for opportunism and entrepreneurialism.

8.1.2 The Absence of Turbulence in Higher Education

Some leaders argue that there has been no turbulence in the sector at all. There has been growth for the previous twenty years because it has been predominantly public sector funded (BV, VC). Others contend that there has been turbulence, but this is no different from the changes that have taken place in the public sector:

“There has been the normal up and down that you would expect in any public sector organisation with changes of government and changes of policy, but I wouldn’t say routine, it’s not routine, but it’s part of the

expected environment, it's not, I don't think we've had anything that has been particularly unusual" (EL, Deputy VC)

Some leaders agreed that other changes in the sector such as the introduction of tuition fees and the RAE have not significantly changed universities:

"Most universities have had it very gentle. The RAE, there's a slight change there, testing with the public, but not very huge changes those. Fees going from one thousand to three thousand, a bit of testing there, but not a lot. So actually higher education's had it really quite gentle and it's all been growth as well. Money's been coming in. Very few of my colleagues have been managing in a downturn situation, you know, which I've done several times, but not many have done it. Managing a bull market's dead easy." (KC, VC)

LT (Pro VC) compares turbulence in higher education to other sectors and concludes that universities would have to close down before changes could be considered turbulent (akin to other national industries which have shrunk by as much as twenty per cent).

8.1.3 Turbulence in the Future of Higher Education

Many leaders recognise that the future of higher education can be characterised as turbulent and uncertain. An expected change in the sector is an increase in competitiveness, but otherwise there is only speculation. To some degree, universities have already evolved to respond to market conditions and policy changes:

"I think it's become much more accountable, so I think universities are now accountable to a whole set of external groups. So they're accountable much more to government, they're accountable much more to students, but there's also market accountability as well, so we're having to respond to changes in the market we operate in. But I think there's another, in that twenty-five years ago, thirty years ago universities were really only involved in the worlds of teaching and research, whereas now they're very much involved in the full spectrum

of business environment.” (MG, VC)

The key change that leaders expect is increased competition. For FM (Deputy VC), this means that the sector, which has always been collegiate, will become ‘cut throat’, similar to the private sector. JD (VC) has begun to see splitting between universities; they will be less inclined to work collectively with other institutions because they will be seen as competitors. Leaders expect to see increased privatisation in some professional areas such as accountancy and law, for example. There may be entirely new providers, too.

The future of higher education institutions will also depend on the institution itself, including its current strengths and potential for specialisations. For some, historically high numbers of UCAS applications means that those universities will feel more confident than those institutions that do not receive as many. Similarly, some universities are in stronger financial positions than others: those with significant financial reserves will be stronger going forward than others. Institutions may also begin to differentiate themselves, too, by specializing in areas of education such as medicine, for example.

However, leaders recognise that perhaps the future will not be as turbulent as expected because the government will retain an interest in regulating universities:

“I think there's a strong tendency in this government, a rather sort of libertarian tendency, which is to say, ‘We don't intervene. We leave this to the market to decide’. At the same time, there's probably a much more cautious element in the government, which is saying ‘These are still UK universities and they are the government's concern. They're not private institutions and therefore we should be regulating them in particular ways’. And I think the jury's out on that.” (NN, Pro VC)

8.2 Leadership in Higher Education

Leaders discussed the forms of leadership that they currently see being utilised in the sector. They also talked about their own leadership style, how that style has evolved, and how their own style, or those of other leaders, may change in the future.

8.2.1 Current Leadership Styles in Higher Education

The role of leadership in higher education has evolved in the last twenty-five years. In the past, leaders were responsible for ensuring that institutions simply kept operating, albeit on a slow timescale. Academics were not perceived as leaders or managers. Current leadership now exists even at junior levels of the organisation in terms of managing resources, and senior staff are involved in administration, strategy, and making challenging decisions. These changes have occurred in line with developments in leadership theory which has begun to emphasise distributed forms of leadership in an organisation.

In contrast to a distributed leadership style, NN (Pro VC) contends that VCs in recent years have been able to adopt a style of soft managerialism in times of growth, which can be characterised by rewards, praise, and endorsements in return for extra effort; but, in turbulent times, there may be fewer opportunities to adopt this style of managerialism. The style of leadership that NN describes is closely associated with transactional leadership: the leader invokes motivation through a reward and punishment system. Perhaps in times of growth this has been an effective style because leaders have had the resources to reward followers with; in more turbulent times, however, the style becomes defunct because of the shortage of rewards available.

Leaders state that mixed forms of leadership are necessary to lead universities. Universities have a range of different products and objectives, such as research, enterprise, teaching, student satisfaction, community engagement, and socio-economic impact. There cannot be one single model of leadership to suit all of these objectives. The need for a mix may also arise from the size of the university: some may be small enough for a Vice Chancellor to know most of the staff by name and sight, whereas in larger institutions they will be closer to heads of department.

An institution with mixed leadership styles is also associated with a distributed form of leadership. Rather than an individual, leadership is expressed through a team capable of dealing with a range of issues. Yet, the Vice Chancellor is the person who must communicate the direction and vision:

“The leadership thing is right across, so for me it’s distributed and you expect to see strong leadership skills throughout your institution. But, whoever’s at the top sets the tone and the style and the ethic of what he or she does.” (JD, VC)

“It’s more about shared, distributed leadership, so I see myself much as the sort of the conductor of the orchestra, or the hub at the centre of the wheel, but that actually works because of all the other people in the organisation. Okay, I’ve got to have some sort of sense of direction and vision and leadership, but it depends much more upon what the other people bring to the party, what they contribute.” (MG, VC)

Some leaders, however, maintain that while leadership is a joint enterprise, there is also top-level driven change. Sometimes, the traditional model of leadership prevails and there can be tensions between consensus and collegiality and effective leadership and management:

“On the one hand, you want things to be collegial; you want to get consent from people and use people’s skills and opinions. On the other hand, there’s also very clear top down management of particular things, mainly from the vice-chancellor, but also from the board of executives.” (JC, Deputy VC)

JC, perhaps, alludes to what Petrov (2008) described as the ‘shadow side’ of distributed leadership: the abolition of collegiality and consensus decision-making is, in some cases, disguised by the cloak of distributed leadership.

The Vice Chancellor works within the boundaries and expectations that are set by the institution’s management group (its Council and Board of Governors). For some leaders, it is important that an element of realism remains embedded in these expectations. Leaders must understand their institution and be set targets which are achievable:

“You’ve got some councils who are very clearly dysfunctional. I can think of three very good examples... [University one] is just a disastrous council and [university two], catastrophic, and that’s partly the VC, but it’s also unrealistic expectations or the failure to manage by a council.

So I think the institution failure isn't down to individuals. It's down to the management group." (JD, VC)

Governors are also responsible for selecting the Vice Chancellor and, for LT (Pro VC), this decision can be a mistake because they sometimes place greater emphasis on prestige than they do on managerial capabilities; an individual may represent the public face they intend to give to their partners, but they may not always have had a background in substantive change management. This view is perhaps echoed by KC (VC) who states that higher education leaders make only incremental changes and avoid taking hard decisions. A final criticism of current leadership is that they usually plan only for five year periods, and they can sometimes be distracted by a need to climb the league tables. Large scale institutional changes, it has been suggested, requires looking at what needs to be done over twenty to thirty years, argues LT (Pro VC).

8.2.2 Leaders' Personal Leadership Traits

Leaders identified two key traits in their personal leadership style: that they are collegial and consultative. Consulting with others on a wide range of agendas offers a way forward and encourages debates among others. This can also inspire leadership among colleagues. What is more, making a decision, says MG (VC), is always better for having somebody else's view on it or giving their opinion. However, leaders were also clear that this does not mean they avoid driving issues forward if they need to do so. Leaders are also firm with direct non-cooperation or resistance.

Leaders also recognise the need for flexibility in their management style. As they begin to move away from traditional methods of leadership, they consider their role to be about context-setting. It is about avoiding micromanaging people by setting an infrastructure that manages the university and supports the staff and students; it is about providing the structure and direction for the motivation that exists among the staff. In order to create the right culture, leaders have to demonstrate what they believe with their own actions:

“The most important job that I think the leader does, and that includes the vice-chancellor, the chief executives, is creating the right culture. That doesn’t mean writing it down. That means actually demonstrating it so people copy you, because if you don’t do it, they ain’t going to believe you.” (KC, VC)

Leaders used a variety of other terms to describe their leadership style in terms of their relationship with colleagues, including ‘non-managerial’, ‘persuasive’, and recognizing the importance of signalling. ‘Non-managerial’ describes leaders who are not pompous or stuffy, but approachable, laid back, and different from very traditional universities. ‘Persuasive’ was highlighted because of the importance of recruiting others to take ownership of particular issues and tasks. Leaders cannot create change alone so they need to persuade others to do things for them. And ‘signalling’ is relevant because leaders have to rule which options the university is able to consider and those which they are not: leaders must give clear messages to their staff about the parameters they are working within.

There are other skills and attributes which leaders must develop, too. One of these is an ability to balance competing interests within, for example, a political environment:

“I want as many international students here as possible to enrich the education experience and to enable a lot of cultural mix, but at the same time I have to manage the relationship with UKBA and make sure that we play by the rules. So there's a grey area in the middle of where the rules fall and where our academic departments want to be to get the students engaged in their courses and there's a culture change issue there. So I have to abide by the letter of the law whilst being flexible enough to enable, you know, to protect the departments from the UKBA, to enable the students to come and to explain to the UKBA that we’re playing by the rules.” (FM, Deputy VC)

Additionally, leaders also become accomplished at representing their institution, both internally and externally:

“My job is much more about representing the University, explaining to people internally and externally what the university is about, what it is that we think we’re trying to do.” (EL, Deputy VC)

8.2.3 The Evolution of Leadership Style

Some leaders believe that their style of leadership is something that has evolved as they have gained more experience; often, this is the result of a change in the institution or the role of the individual as they have gained promotions or led different parts of the university.

A key aspect in developing leadership style has been in the way that they relate to others. For one leader, the evolution of his style was characterised by an increase in confidence. In the beginning, he was keen to keep other people happy, which he states is not necessarily a bad thing but not always a good thing either. But, he has become more confident in knowing what actions he needs to take and does not worry about things as much as he used to do. Another leader also spoke about the need to not try and be a friend to all his colleagues. Some colleagues can be quite challenging and he stresses the need to express direct, clear leadership.

One current Vice Chancellor described the changes in his leadership style as he progressed from Pro Vice Chancellor to Deputy Vice Chancellor to Vice Chancellor. He recounts the change of being firm in one’s opinion to increasingly considering the views of others in a more balanced way:

“It changes when you go from being a number three [Pro VC] or a number two [Deputy VC] to a number one [VC]. When you become number one you probably have to, in a big institution, you have to step back a wee bit. When you’re number two and number three, you can be very firm about what ought to be done and how it ought to be done. When you’re number one you’re very conscious about that you’re holding a ring in which there are competing views about direction and so although it’s your job to say, ‘I think we should be going that way’, you shouldn’t exclude the competing voices and put them at the margin within the debate.” (OL, VC)

Another current Vice Chancellor highlighted the need to be surrounded by those that will challenge one's own opinion because of the tendency to avoid self-criticism:

“You can get to a position when you're a VC where you start to believe your own rhetoric and that's a very dangerous position to be in. I'm sure we all get into that position, you know, after three years. You think, “I know the institution.” So I think you have to keep looking in the mirror and having a family with you is quite useful. Your wife'll tell you to stop talking bollocks. That's really helpful. There's not many people in an institution who will say that to a VC. I'm quite lucky. Certainly my DVC and some of my directors are, you know, pretty robust and will say, ‘Look, that's just nonsense.’ You do need that and I think the longer you're in a job, you have to keep interrogating yourself and saying, ‘Look, hang on. Am I talking management bollocks? Is my view of the institution a million miles removed from the reality?’” (JD, VC)

Other leaders believe that their leadership style has not changed because they currently have attributes that have been with them since they first became a higher education leader. One said that he has always been an approachable leader, and another says that he has always had a style based on talking and listening. Finally, organisations may deliberately appoint people with leadership styles that suit the needs of the university, rather than asking leaders to adapt their style to meet the needs of the organisation.

Leaders considered that their style of leadership may continue to evolve in the future, too. One stated that he is always changing because of the context that he finds himself in. When he changes universities there are different structures, systems, and ways of working. Another leader, though retaining a basic approach to leadership, believes that he learns something every time there is a process of decision-making or leading or developing policy or strategy. A final point is that to avoid the tendency of becoming cynical over time, he will continue to self-reflect and have a senior management team that refreshes itself.

8.2.4 The Cultivation of Leadership Style in Turbulent Times

In turbulent times, there are attributes that leaders consider important to cultivate. The most important of these is to remain confident and, secondly, to maintain clarity in communicating a vision for the university's direction.

For JD (VC), leaders ought to be confident about their institution and to transmit it. The communication of confidence is important, even if the leader is experiencing uncertainty, and the confidence of others must be kept, too:

“You may not know what the hell is going on really, but you mustn't show it. An ability to keep people's confidence up so they don't panic as well and actually keeping an eye on the main goals.” (KC, VC)

“Being confident in the organisation going forward is particularly important. Any wavering on behalf of a leader will get magnified ten times as it percolates through the ranks.” (HM, Deputy VC)

Leaders must also retain a sense of stability and competence. For one leader, it is important to present a balanced view of the challenges and the position that the university is in: they must share with colleagues what the issues are. But, they can also offer them reassurance that leaders have the skills, abilities, and the ambition to cope with the challenges, as well as involve staff in contributing to the search for solutions.

In addition to confidence, leaders must also be able to offer a vision in turbulent times. Having a vision includes being able to read situations, particularly as many drivers are external ones, and leaders must have the courage to change their organisation in light of these. They must be able to communicate what the university is about to those outside and inside the organisation. Moreover, the credibility of the individual's message remains important, as does a sense of what the university can achieve over a given timescale. But, leaders are role models, too, and it is not just what they say that is important, but how they are observed to behave by others:

“If you say one thing and do the opposite, your reputation is shot. You've got to actually behave how you believe and ask other people to

behave in the same way.” (KC, VC)

Finally, an interesting paradox for universities in turbulent times is that to become more competitive, they may need to collaborate more with other institutions. Universities may need to consider sharing services and offering dual degrees with others in order to reduce overhead costs; therefore, leading joint ventures may be another attribute that leaders may need to cultivate.

8.3 The Characterisation of Institutions

The universities selected for the research were chosen because they seemed to share urban and edgy characteristics. Many leaders agreed that there are urban and edgy characteristics of their university: they see themselves as different from some of the more traditional, older universities and some of those that have strong, corporate identities. But, they do not necessarily reject the smart and corporate characteristics, too. Universities are complex organisations and, to operate effectively, it is necessary to have some efficient corporate processes in place.

Leaders recognise that they need to have an element of ‘edginess’ among many of their academic staff, but that some academics, as well as the non-academic staff, work under conditions that are stable and predictable. What is more, the identity of universities is becoming ever more important in turbulent times. The future of the higher education landscape is unclear but leaders acknowledge that universities will become more competitive. Students do not perceive a high degree of differentiation between many universities; therefore, it will become more important to create and project an identity of the university that will reflect their aspirations. Institutions which are cutting edge and radical in their approach, and embrace change, are considered appealing to students.

8.3.1 Identification with Urban and Edgy Characteristics

There are a number of reasons why leaders identify with urban and edgy characteristics within their own university. For some, this is because the work the university does: their academics are mavericks who push the boundaries of their subject area. For others, it is the attitude of the university and how it is

differentiated from older, traditional institutions. An urban and edgy university is a rebellious university which does not do deference. One leader describes his institution in such terms:

“I think of us as... being more rebellious and not doing deference. We may be upstarts and we may not know our place, but that’s great, and we’re very, very happy to not know our place and we’re not going to stick to our place just because people expect it of us, we’re going go off and do what we want to do, within reason of course.” (EL, Deputy VC)

Some leaders recognise the role of their university in the city and the part it has played in easing tensions. One leader recognised urban and edgy in the sense that the institution possesses a varied cultural mix in the student demographic as well as the courses it offers. Finally, one commented on the radical tradition of the university in the sense of its ethics, trade, sustainability, community, and success in widening participation.

Though leaders consider their institution to have urban and edgy characteristics, they maintain that they still work within frameworks. It is possible to work within frameworks and welcome different cultures and communities, too. Moreover, an institution can be open to new ideas, but they still need to be rigorous (EL, Deputy VC).

8.3.2 Rejection of Urban and Edgy Characteristics

Some leaders reject the notion that their university can be characterised as urban and edgy. For BV (VC), urban and edgy can be interpreted as a picture of a dysfunctional organisation. In his experience, academics hate change and resist it. He also believes that the university must unify the culture in the sense that there has to be a plan, a mission, a vision, and clarity to make the best use of resources. Words like ‘dangerous, different, unstable’ describe the people that a university should want to avoid.

BV also points out that about half of the university’s staff are not academics. Many of these work best in an environment that is routine and stable and where assumptions are fixed and not up for continued debate or negotiation. Scientists and engineers work in complex environments and want to have

certain things taken for granted about the way in which their infrastructural needs are met. In BVs institution, there is also now less tolerance of behaviours which are self-defining unless they lead to the corporate goal. People can be given a huge amount of time and resource to do things which deliver their own objectives, but only whilst they're working within the context of the university's goals.

8.3.3 Identification with Smart and Corporate Characteristics

Some leaders considered that smart and corporate characteristics were better placed to describe their institution. For instance, BV (VC) believes that a corporate strategy is a powerful binding tool. It has a strong corporate framework, and within that there are style, tone, flexibility, altruism, and working positively. Alternatively, corporatism is about the university making the best use of the resources it has (MG, VC). The key scarcities are money, time, and space to do things. To create these resources for people, the university needs to be managed efficiently and in a business-like way. Resources must be channelled, rather than misdirected.

8.3.4 Rejection of Smart and Corporate Characteristics

Smart and corporate characteristics, however, were not always considered desirable. For FM (Deputy VC), needs to have a corporate strategy and corporate brands but at the heart of the institution is the people and how they relate to each other. But, a university must be careful not to attempt to control staff too much because of the problems that could cause:

“I've come across institutions that have compulsory mandatory staff development days for all staff, about learning and teaching, so there are things where you are requiring people to do things which would cause real problems here. They're alien to our culture.” (FM, Deputy VC)

8.3.5 Identification with a Mix of Urban and Edgy and Smart and Corporate Characteristics

Many leaders identified strongly with a mix of both urban and edgy and smart and corporate characteristics: the two are not mutually exclusive. For one leader, urban and edgy best describes the work the institution does, whereas smart and corporate would better illustrate their business processes:

“A university that is characterised as being urban and edgy has to also be smart in so much as all our administrative processes have got to be smart and we have tried to make them smart. We’re very careful about trying to get value for money and the biggest bang for the buck, so in that way we are smart and I suppose some of our behaviour is very corporate, because we try and present an image and an engagement that is of the university rather than of the individual or the school or the department. So we have a presence which is about the corporate identity of the university and we are smart hopefully in our business processes, but the reality of our work is better described by urban and edgy.” (HM, Deputy VC)

For another leader (JC, Deputy VC), the institution is urban and edgy in the sense of its urban location and as an appealing destination for students. But, at the top of the institution the main drivers are much more corporate and demonstrating that we are a well-run institution. Though there is a strong culture of being business-like, there is not an overwhelming sense of corporate conformity. Other leaders agreed that urban and edgy characteristics cannot be separated from smart and corporate ones and a university combines elements of both:

“I don’t think that you can divide places into urban and edgy and smart and corporate. We could describe ourselves as smart and corporate and urban and edgy, because one implies no change and the other implies almost amateurism. So we are highly professional and we’re also very edgy and we’re also in continuous change on the ambition.” (KC, VC)

8.3.6 Changing Behaviours in Turbulent Times

The higher education sector is experiencing turbulent times. Leaders considered that universities will be looking to test different behaviours in a less stable environment in order to become distinctive. For HM (Deputy VC), the time is right for some radical proposals and maverick behaviours:

“Now I think the climate is ripe for people to come up with some very different models and be distinctive and be, if you like, be more edgy and a bit maverick in their behaviour... what we might have perceived to be quite maverick behaviours in a stable environment are going to be tried and tested in this more volatile environment and that will end up with certain universities looking quite different to their neighbour, and that's one of the challenges for us at present.” (HM, Deputy VC)

JC (Deputy VC) agrees that distinctiveness is a key issue for universities at present and described it as “a kind of holy grail” for universities to find. Yet for KC (VC), testing different behaviours is not so much related to distinctiveness in the marketplace, but about the security of income to the institution:

“If you have nice easy and quiet life, so you're a university with money pouring in, why should you want to change? Life is good, you're doing well. You're getting praise for it, you're getting the money. Keep on doing it. If on the other hand things are a bit tight and you're under pressure, you can achieve change rapidly and you have to.” (KC, VC)

Universities, on the other hand, may not be so willing to test new behaviours. FM (Deputy VC) suggested that universities will become more cautious and protect their core business until they know what the political and economic climate is.

8.3.7 Corporate Identity and Differentiation

The concept of urban and edgy is important because of the increasing relevance of brand and differentiation. For EL (Deputy VC), it is important for the university to differentiate itself from “the old, boring bit of the sector”. To

be associated with change and innovation will make the institution an attractive place for students to go:

“Whether or not they would use Urban and Edgy as the term, but if we take that as the kind of general area which is you are city-based, you are at the forefront of thinking, technology, innovation, that’s the kind of student that you produce, that’s the kind of employment that the students that go through the institution go into, that you’re not pompous, not hierarchical, not stuffy, you’re constantly involved in constantly changing, constantly doing things which are new and innovative, that sounds like a really good place to be.” (EL, Deputy VC)

Similarly, HM (Deputy VC) believes that students think universities make very similar claims and that the future leaders of the sector will need to take risks in order to set themselves apart from others and attract those students. JD (VC) leads a university which has achieved a number of awards for its performance and enhanced a distinctive reputation. However, he questions how leaders can measure the effect of a distinctive reputation on the overall performance of the university:

“How some of these things translate into better students, more students, more competition, that’s what we want, but it’s quite hard to measure. But that urban and edgy, now I’ve dissected it, it’s interesting, but trying to see how that translates into a better reputation for the university or a better financial performance is quite interesting.” (JD, VC)

8.4 Summary of Key Findings

Overall, there was interest in the research as a way of raising a new and different way of looking at leadership. In addition, the timing of the work was of particular interest because it took place during massive change, reform, and restructure in the entire higher education system. These changes inevitably affected the comments, the outlook, and the interest in the term Urban and Edgy as a new way of characterising universities.

However, in terms of building a best practice model as was the original intention, there was no overriding clear “best methods of leadership”, but rather

a general comment on dealing with issues in both an active and reactive way that somehow still fulfilled the needs of stakeholders.

There was certainly agreement about the levels of “turbulence in higher education,” but some disparagement about whether this would ever cease and become a calmer environment. Most leaders identified easily with the term “turbulent” to describe both their jobs and their environments.

In terms of characterising “leadership (styles) in higher education” there were clear similarities in terms of needing to listen, needing to attempt at least to include all views, not to marginalise unpopular views or views that did not fit the ongoing consensus, and to show great confidence in his or her own leadership of the institutions.

The reactions to the term Urban and Edgy were interesting and many respondents could identify with parts, if not all, the term encompassed. Most leaders considered that there was certainly a type of university forming which needed a new label and which does not currently fit the corporate standard definitions.

8.5 Summary of Key Recommendations

Higher education is currently operating in a knowledge economy where we need to focus on global challenges and create, rather than respond to, the global agenda. The winners in future higher education will be those who recognise and act on these issues. So, the underlying concept in this work has been about asking questions, not just about leadership but about “how will institutions define their role in this new economy?” It is in attempting to answer this broader question that the key recommendations are formed.

The first recommendation is that of a need for institutions to acknowledge, recognise and identify what has changed. The context as outlined above has changed, and the issue that needs to be addressed is a need to stimulate tired organisations, to regain focus and enthusiasm within an arena of scarce resources. The environment is unstable, turbulent and difficult to forecast and the “old” or established response has been to create an image, a culture which cultivates a textbook form of smart and corporate success. A new or

alternative form of response, outlined in this report, is to identify the organisation by its characteristics – such as diversity, controlled chaos and constant restlessness. An organisation that has these traits and that thrives on change and does not intend to unify the culture, the outlook or the overriding vision can be defined as Urban and Edgy. This type of organisation succeeds through acceptance, tolerance, respect and a strong sense of belonging.

The second recommendation, after acknowledgement, centres on the question of how does the label “Urban and Edgy” help? The answer to this is that it provides an anchor point, a new community for Universities which is not, for example, Russell Group or Million+, or a hierarchical group which is tied to rankings and funding, but instead provides a new level playing field which is open and accessible by all. Although an online network was planned most of the respondents commented that this would not be helpful in terms of the time already committed to other groups. Yet there is clearly a need for some type of community to exist and investment for this will be discussed further with the funders. Ideas at the moment are around a web blog posting site, creation of a urban and edgy toolbox or use of community web sites where resources can be stored and updated such as ning.com or similar.

The third recommendation is that there is a need for new best practice models of leadership using new digital technology such as social media. That is not to say that established methods should cease to be used, but that there is beginning to be a case for a hybrid form of leadership that delivers appropriate steer for the dynamic-unbounded organisations that Universities have become today. Models which take into account the changed environment, the new legal framework, the new funding framework, and the need to address and satisfy the individual as well as the collective, are key for current and future generations of leaders.

The fourth recommendation is related to the last point and is concerned with implications for leadership training. A great deal of excellent work is already undertaken in this area and we were honoured to work with the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education who supported the research. It is appropriate

then, to consider what new patterns have emerged from this work that can be built on in the near future. The training implications as we saw them were about refreshing current ways of leading e.g. increasing use of new social media as leadership tools. The need for skills that can identify change and consider established professional responses to situations - but then to also empower leaders with the ability to move forward and articulate a new different response that takes account of the new context of the global knowledge economy.

9. Conclusion

There was considerable interest in this research and respondents were pleased the work was being undertaken. After the initial pilot, this now forms the first small national survey. This was, of course, a Small Development Project, fully supported and funded by the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education and we believe there is further work to be undertaken in the area on a larger scale. The work will be widely disseminated through conference papers, journal articles, and workshops. Currently, the work has been accepted as a filmed "Talking Head" video that will be screened and discussed at the "Going Global Congress", organised by the British Council, in London during March 2012.

Finally, we hope the work brings benefit both to the project partners and to the wider higher education community

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Steering Committee Members

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Appendix 2

Areas of Questions for the Semi- Structured Interviews

Leadership Project –Questions Areas

It is anticipated that each question will take around 15 mins to answer to allow plenty of time for discussion.

1. OPENER....

What methods do you consider that HE manager are using to cope in the turbulent environment at the moment? How successful are they (the methods). Is there room for new models/ new ideas?

2. PROBING MORE SPECIFIC QUESTIONS....

What is your own leadership style?

How would you characterise your own leadership style? Can you give me an example where you have used that?

3. ATTEMPTING TO MAP....

This is an organisation we have identified as urban and edgy – what do you think about that - What is your reaction to that?

Can you identify with the concept of corporate or are you more “at home”

comfortable with “urban and Edgy” as a way of describing/characterising this organisation?

AND /OR

If there was a spectrum from a corporate textbook standard classic organisation to a restless changing difficult “urban and edgy” organisation whereabouts would you place the organisation (today)? From 1- 10 where 1 is corporate and 10 is urban and edgy?

4. DRAWING TO A CLOSE...

In these times of turbulence in the higher education sector what do you see as the most important leadership trait that senior leaders in HE need to cultivate? Why?

Would a model of best practice in this area be useful?

Would you find a new network in this area useful (on line?)

Thanks etc