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Neglected on the front line – tensions and challenges in the first-line manager-academic (FLMA) role in UK Business Schools

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Abstract
Purpose - to investigate the first-line manager-academic role against a guiding hypothesis that ‘The first-line manager-academic role is not clearly defined or understood; there is great variety of practice and of recognition of the role across the business school sector’.
Methodology - a descriptive, deductive approach through three linked (internet) surveys of Deans of UK Business Schools, FLMAs in UK Business Schools and UK University Human Resource Directors.
Findings – The FLMA role in UK Business Schools is important to organizational effectiveness, personal development and career progression yet is poorly defined and supported, inconsistently enacted and perceived. FLMAs struggle to balance academic and management demands, with line management a particular issue and HR support and development systems are inadequate. Differences between chartered ‘old’ and statutory ‘new’ UK universities provide an additional layer of complexity.
Implications for practice – FLMA roles need to be better defined and FLMAs better supported to ensure that FLMAs are effective in role contributing to organizational performance and personal development.
Originality/value – The paper throws light on a neglected aspect of management in UK business schools that has potential value for University HR Directors, University Managers and Business School Deans.
Keywords First-line manager-academics (FLMA), HRDs, Deans, Business Schools
Paper type Research paper

Introduction
This paper investigates the role of the First-Line Manager-Academic (FLMA) in UK University Business Schools. Research from three linked surveys of UK FLMAs, Deans of Business Schools and University Human Resource Directors (HRDs) is presented to investigate the challenges faced and the extent to which those in the FLMA role are enabled and supported to fulfill their responsibilities as both academics and managers. UK Higher Education (HE) operates in an increasingly challenging and competitive contemporary environment where funding constraints, internationalisation, government policy, technology, demography, competition, rankings, reputation, income pressures, and student fees are priority drivers of activity and performance evaluations. Consequently, underpinning this study is the premise that HE Institutions (HEIs) require effective management to compete successfully and that academics play a part in this management process. However, this premise is highly contested by administrators and academics alike.

Much research has investigated the challenges faced by manager-academics at more senior levels in the UK university sector, e.g., Goode and Bagihole (1998), Jackson (1999), Deem
et al. (2001), Barry et al., (2001), Smith (2002, 2005), Sotirakou (2004), Smith and Adams (2008), Floyd and Dimmock (2009), Mercer (2009) and Winter (2009). However, very little research exists in the context of the FLMA role, leading to “an untold story” (Mercer, 2009:348) that needs to be told. Hales (2005) describes the ‘first-line’ manager as the first level to which employees report who do not themselves have people reporting to them, while Deem (2000) uses the term manager-academic as an academic who has taken on a management role within an academic institution. A combination of the two describes the ‘First-Line Manager-Academic’, which is the point at which academics first take on managerial responsibilities. A working definition of the FLMA role utilized in the research is:

The level at which academics first take responsibility and have accountability for the line management of staff, budgets, resources, product/service portfolios and are therefore recognised as a part of the management infrastructure of a business school.

The paper is structured as follows. A brief context to the study of the FLMA role in UK Business Schools is presented, followed by a consideration of extant research into key issues affecting manager-academic roles in academia. The research process is outlined, research findings are presented and discussed and key issues are summarised.

Chartered and Statutory UK University context
The Jarratt Report (1985) into UK HE was a catalyst for change in terms of the role of manager-academics through the reorientation of the role of Head of Department (HoD) as both manager and academic leader, with the emphasis on the managerial role. The report was influential and part of a number of legislative reforms in the late 1980s and 1990s, including the creation of a single UK university sector in 1992, the introduction of new funding regimes, quality assurance frameworks and bidding systems for resources such as the Research Assessment Exercise. These changes, alongside the broader influence of New Public Management, necessitated much greater institutional and managerial attention to financial, performance and people management leading to a “heightened recognition of the importance of effectively managing staff… and particular consequences for the university equivalent of the ‘line manager’ ” Jackson (1999:142).

A major review of pay and conditions (BETT, 1999) established a national framework agreement covering all HEIs, but allowed each UK HE institution to locally design its own pay and grading structure. In the development of role profiles the absence of ‘management’ as a consistent element within institutional job evaluation frameworks has served to reinforce resistance to ‘management’ within HEIs.

The creation of a single university sector in the UK brought the cultural differences between the old/pre ‘92 ‘chartered’ institutions and the new/post ‘92 ‘statutory’ institutions into sharp focus and created different challenges for each (Deem, 1998). Many of the chartered sector universities operated on the basis of a “collegiality of academics of equal status working together with minimal hierarchy and maximum trust, and the rather ‘hands-off’ but also ‘gentlemanly’ governance practices” (Deem, 1998:48), as opposed to the necessary “explicit management practices” already present and more accepted in the statutory sector. (Smith, 2005) reported that the “different emphases on research and teaching in the two departments are reflected in almost every aspect of the way in which they are organized, managed and led” (2005:454) and that in the
chartered university department, research “permeates every aspect of the way in which the department operates.” The cultural and practical differences in orientation and focus between chartered and statutory universities have been a key feature of the UK HEIs in the intervening years and in the context of research into the role of the FLMA, are relevant, influential and enduring.

Manager-Academic Role Issues

Role definition, recognition and appointment - Smith (2002) found that only 40% of HoDs in the chartered university indicated they had a formal job description compared to 68% in the statutory university, and that the job descriptions, even where they existed, “were not very useful” (Smith, 2002:300).

Jackson (1999) and Smith (2002) highlighted differences in the chartered and statutory sectors in terms of the nature of appointment to manager-academic roles: chartered university roles were largely temporary, not necessarily career-related, appointed by election and described as “more one of chairing a group of colleagues than managing a department” (Jackson, 1999:147). In statutory universities the roles were more likely to be formal, substantive appointments, with explicit line management expectations. These cultural differences in respect of formality and permanency imply different outcomes for how manager-academics perceive and enact their role.

Role acceptance - The increasingly managerial nature of the HoD is problematic. Bolton (2000:56) suggests that “institutions cast the head in the role of line manager - a concept not accepted by many of the managed, nor by the managers!” and, in referring to “those who run academic departments or units,” Palfreyman and Warner (2000:1) comment “many of the former have accepted the title of ‘manager’ only with some reluctance.” Many academics in management roles did not see themselves as managers; “most were at pains to point out that they regarded themselves first and foremost as academics” (Deem and Johnson, 2003:11). This was less so in the statutory universities.

Work pressures - The impact of the changes on UK HE following Jarratt was significant in terms of the loss of control and autonomy hitherto afforded to academics and manager-academics, alongside increased volumes of administrative work (Deem et al, 2001) leading to diminution of status and power, weakening of academic authority (Goode and Bagihole, 1998) and pressures on time, workload and morale (Caudrake et al., 2005).

Managerial Issues - Smith (2002, 2005) found that although they both had a significant managerial element, the dual roles of academic leader and line manager were perceived quite differently by chartered and statutory HoDs. In the statutory sector the two elements were considered equally important, but in the chartered sector were “identified as a key source of tension for Heads” (Smith, 2005:296). In both sectors, the challenges of dealing with poor performance aligned to a lack of power and institutional support were seen as particularly difficult alongside excessive workload. Other concerns included role conflict in terms of representing “the university to the department and the department to the university” (Smith, 2002:296), particularly in the statutory sector, coupled with a lack of training and development (T&D) and inadequate job descriptions. Sotirakou (2004) similarly found that HoDs suffered from ‘Janusian’ conflict derived from having too little time to complete academic work alongside the incompatibility of balancing institutional and departmental demands.
Smith (2002) looked at the causes of stress, the most difficult things HoDs had to deal with and the tasks that took the most time. Chartered manager-academics found staff management especially stressful, compared to their statutory counterparts for whom coping with administration and paperwork was more stressful. The sectors demonstrated much greater similarity over the most difficult aspects of the role, where ‘Staffing issues’ were rated most highly by both, particularly discipline/poor performance with neither sector providing HoDs with a better framework within which to deal with the issues. The challenge of managing people was at the top of both sector responses as a time-consuming activity. A key difference between the sectors was ‘personal research,’ with chartered HoDs spending significantly more time on research than those in the statutory sector.

HoDs were constrained in managing performance by the limited choices and mechanisms available to either reward good performance or deal with poor performance (Jackson (1999:148) and also by the academic culture of “professionalism and collegiality which often challenges the right of the Head of Department to judge” (Jackson, 1999:146).

Career alignment - Research into the impact of manager-academic roles on individual careers is contradictory. On the one hand there is evidence that senior positions are conditional on an academic background, so that “academics continue to lead academics” (Smith and Adams, 2008). On the other, Floyd and Dimmock (2007) suggest that it is the ability of individuals to balance and manage conflicting identities and tensions between being a manager and an academic which determines attitudes to, and impact upon, their current and future careers. Using ‘academic career capital’, Winter (2009) refers to the ‘identity schisms’ experienced by Heads, arguing that Heads experience a loss of career capital as a result of difficulties in maintaining their academic profile due to the work demands in the role. However, there was increasing recognition that individuals need to develop broader academic career capital, otherwise, “continual re-structuring and re-organisation of HE institutions could mean that an academic who is in a position of relative power one day, is no longer in that position the next.” (Winter, 2009:394).

HRM practices and influence - A key strand in the HRM literature has been the role of HRM in improving organizational performance and the direct role that line managers can play in implementing effective devolved HR practices (Brewster and Larsen, 2000:412). However a series of reports (Jackson, 1999; Archer, 2005; Guest and Clinton, 2007; Shenstone, 2009; HEFCE, 2010 and PA Consulting, 2011) are broadly critical of the pace of HR change in UK HEIs and the ways in which specific issues of line management, performance management, and management development are addressed.

Jackson (1999) described the HoD as rarely having the skills, training or levers to manage performance while Smith (2007) highlighted “the lack of [HoD] preparedness for the role in the chartered universities and the lack of management or leadership training for heads once appointed in both types of university” (Smith, 2007:6). In relation to appraisal processes, according to Deem (2001), few of her HoD respondents felt that they received adequate feedback on their own performance, while Barry et al. (2001) found instances in both chartered and statutory sectors where middle ranking academics simply “declined, neglected or refused to put it (appraisal) into practice”.

These manager-academic role issues contextualize an investigation into the role of the FLMA. The majority of extant research into the manager-academic role has focused on university wide HoD or more senior roles and not the FLMA. Further, there is a lack of research into how
‘management’ happens in practice in UK Business Schools and HEIs. This study addresses this gap and attempts to better understand the FLMA role.

**Research Approach**

The research takes a descriptive, deductive approach and draws upon findings from three linked (internet) surveys of Deans of UK Business Schools, FLMAs in UK Business Schools and UK University Human Resource Directors, structured around a guiding hypothesis that ‘The first-line manager-academic role is not clearly defined or understood; there is great variety of practice and of recognition of the role across the business school sector’.

Response rates to the three surveys are shown in Table 1. While the response rate for the FLMA group is low, from the non-anonymous responses it is clear that at least 15 different institutions are contained within the FLMA response group and can be partially explained by the survey being distributed via Deans.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Survey response rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No of responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chartered (pre-'92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statutory (post-'92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not used</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The questionnaires deliberately allowed respondents the opportunity to add comments via the use of open ‘adjuncts’ and open ‘other’ (Cameron and Price, 2009) as a deliberate authorial strategy. This provided significant qualitative feedback used as “power quotes” and “proof quotes (Pratt, 2009:860).

Findings are presented through descriptive graphical representation of the findings and the use of the responses to open questions.

**Findings**

*Role importance and career* - Significant proportions of respondents from all three surveys believe that the FLMA is going to become more important in the future (Fig.1), with some minor sector variations between chartered and statutory respondents.

![Figure 1: Future importance of FLMA role? (all respondents)](chart)

However, the relationship between the FLMA role and career is perceived differently in chartered and statutory Business Schools by Deans (Fig. 2), and FLMAs (Fig. 3) supported in the chartered sector by comments which explicitly demonstrate the importance of research and
research performance to future career development, whereas the statutory sector responses highlight the importance of the research agenda alongside recognition of the potential for different career routes to more senior roles, “Promotion may be purely academic or may be managerial”. The implication is that there are (or should be) choices for career orientation as, “it depends upon how I wish to take my career forward - in management or in academia.”

**Figure 2:** Importance of FLMA role to future career (Dean respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Chartered</th>
<th>Statutory</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essential</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly important</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3:** Importance of FLMA role to future career development (FLMA respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Importance</th>
<th>Chartered</th>
<th>Statutory</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essential and Important</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential but not important</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of limited importance</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Important at all</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A necessary evil</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Role definition - HRDs (Fig.4) and FLMAs (Fig.5) were asked about FLMA role definition and clarity. The differences between the two sectors is dramatic.

**Figure 4:** Clarity of FLMA roles/expectations (HRD respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clarity</th>
<th>Chartered</th>
<th>Statutory</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varies from School/Faculty/Department</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varies in terms of levels of management</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5:** Clarity of FLMA roles descriptions/responsibilities/expectations (FLMA respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clarity</th>
<th>Chartered</th>
<th>Statutory</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depends</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comments from FLMAs provide insight into the nature of role definition, irrespective of sector, “I have made things up as I went along. A defined role profile is on the cards however”, a situation also experienced by another, who states, “this is something that evolves really, and (one) carves out for oneself.”

A lack of role authority in the FLMA role is perceived as more of an issue by the FLMAs than by Deans or HRDs (Fig.6) and to a greater extent by more junior FLMAs (Senior Lecturers and Principal Lecturers) than by HoDs and Associate Deans (Fig.7).
Two comments provide some insight into the challenges FLMAs face, “I have the responsibility, but no official authority - this means I have to rely on my line manager for his support. It can be slow and frustrating at times to get things done” (statutory FLMAs) and “Managing Academic colleagues can be very difficult, if those colleagues are unwilling to be ‘managed’ ” (chartered FLMAs).

HRDs from both sectors agree that it is not only FLMAs that do not understand their role and that what is needed is, “Recognition above first-line management level of the important role FLMAs fulfil in improving the business” and a need to “position the role as part of career progression for academics”. Going to the heart of the legitimization and acceptance issue, one HRD sums up the size of the challenge as “Taking the management role seriously as we have scoffed at ‘managerialist’ approaches for so long . . . it will be difficult to engender respect for those skills in short timeframes.”

Role appointment - FLMAs and HRDs were asked about the importance of the use of management/leadership experience in the appointment of FLMAs. For both groups the results confirm the tendency for management and leadership skills to be considered as significantly more important in statutory than chartered institutions, particularly by the HRDs. The temporary nature of management roles in the chartered sector is highlighted, this HRD comment representative of others, “There is a rotating system of headships of schools, whereby senior academics are expected to ‘take their turn’ and will rarely do more than two stints each of three years.”
process of determining these leadership roles is somewhat lacking in rigour, “FLMA roles are nominated. Those felt to be lacking in skill or aptitude are not nominated or avoided.”

Similarly, FLMA and HRDs were asked about the importance of research publications in the appointment of FLMA. As might be expected, the importance of research is in inverse proportion to that of management in the two environments. While leadership and management skills/potential are sometimes considered in the appointment of FLMA, with this tendency being greater in statutory institutions than chartered, they are not used universally or accorded the same level of importance.

**Role preparation** - All groups were asked to what extent issues relating to ‘lack of skills’ (Fig.8), ‘lack of experience’ (Fig.9) and ‘lack of training/development’ (Fig.10) made the FLMA role problematic.

**Figure 8:** Does lack of skills make the FLMA role problematic - by respondent group/sector (all participant groups)

For both skills and experience, there is a difference between the views of HRDs (in particular) and Deans, compared to those of FLMA highlighting a potentially significant concern. The FLMA result is likely to reflect the unwillingness of FLMA to admit their weaknesses.
While there is a perception from Deans and HRDs that ‘lack of training/development’ is a problematic issue for FLMAs, the HRDs (those responsible for the provision of training) are less emphatic here. Taken together, however, these three sets of results suggest a significant lack of preparation for, and development in, the role of the FLMA.

Talent management - Continuing the theme of development and preparation for the FLMA roles, HRDs were asked whether their university has an explicit talent management system in place for academics.

The results show that talent management is not significantly addressed in the context of the FLMA role, and particularly not in statutory HEIs.
Balancing academic and management demands – All respondents were asked whether balancing academic and management demands makes the role of FLMA problematic.

**Figure 12:** Does balancing academic and management demands make the FLMA role problematic - by respondent group/sector (all participant groups)

The differences between chartered and statutory respondents and between the FLMAs and the HRDs are clear. Comments from FLMAs express frustration at the perceived lack of understanding of senior managers to the challenges in the role.

The difference in research orientation between chartered and statutory is dramatically demonstrated (Fig. 13) by the Deans’ responses to the question of what proportion of FLMAs would be counted as 'research active’, with the chartered institutions showing a far greater commitment to the research agenda than their statutory counterparts, consistent with Smith’s (2002) findings.

**Figure 13:** Proportion of research active FLMAs (Dean respondents)

*Other role challenges* - All groups were asked to what extent in the views of all participant groups ‘lack of time’ (Fig. 14) and ‘too many demands’ (Fig. 15) make the FLMA role problematic.

**Figure 14:** Does lack of time make the FLMA role problematic (all participant groups)
Figure 15: Do too many demands make the FLMA role problematic (all participant groups)

The results for both are virtually identical and show that Deans and FLMAs, to a greater extent than the HRDs, believe that ‘lack of time’ and ‘too many demands’ are significant issues. This is particularly true in chartered institutions, where there is a substantial difference between the views of the academics and the HRDs.

Managing others - HRDs were asked how well they thought FLMAs managed others (Fig. 16), while FLMAs (Fig. 17) were asked how difficult they found it. The results highlight a strikingly low performance rating. Figure 17 shows that chartered FLMAs have more concerns than statutory FLMAs. These results were consistent with other findings in the research regarding performance management.

Figure 16: FLMA performance in ‘direct academic staff line management’ by sector (HRD respondents)

Figure 17: FLMA difficulty of ‘direct academic staff line management’ by sector (FLMA respondents)

One comment from a chartered FLMA highlights the contextual ambiguity and lack of clarity in the FLMA role, which consequently makes performance management problematic:
“I cannot comment on what is ‘staff performance’ in an academic environment? Is it CV enhancement? REF returnability? Good teaching? Good admin? What exactly? I have colleagues that can't teach, can't write an exam paper and can't do research. Fortunately only a few exhibit all three qualities. Some are purely self-serving people that do not contribute to anything other than their own CV enhancement.”

**HR systems and support** - Moving to consideration of the ways in which university systems support the FLMA in role, HRDs were asked about appraisal processes (Figs 18-19).

**Figure 18:** University wide appraisal scheme in place (HRD respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>There is a university wide appraisal system</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fully agree (chartered)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially agree (chartered)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially agree (statutory)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree (chartered)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree (statutory)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 19:** All academics are appraised annually (HRD respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>All academics are appraised annually</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fully agree (chartered)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially agree (chartered)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partially agree (statutory)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree (chartered)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree (statutory)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While there are differences between the two sectors, appraisal remains problematic in UK HEIs which is reinforced by other findings from the research that performance management frameworks and feedback mechanisms are not as well developed as they should be.

**Training and Development** - FLMA were asked about the provision of T&D for FLMAs at the University and business school levels.

**Figure 20:** University/business school provision of management/leadership training for FLMAs (FLMA respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chartered - Yes</th>
<th>Statutory - Yes</th>
<th>Chartered - No</th>
<th>Statutory - No</th>
<th>Chartered - Don't know</th>
<th>Statutory - Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University</td>
<td>Business School</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Business School</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>Business School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chartered - Yes</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statutory - Yes</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chartered - No</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statutory - No</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chartered - Don't know</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statutory - Don't know</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
At both levels, the difference between the two sectors is marked, with chartered institutions providing significantly fewer T&D opportunities for FLMAs than statutory institutions. Comments suggest that, even where the university provides T&D, take-up is an issue “Our management skills programmes are comprehensive and increasingly effective, but engagement/participation levels vary because of its voluntary nature.” (chartered HRD). Cultural barriers remain in that even where “academic managers are equipped with the skills, there is still a reluctance to put the skills into practice without a great deal of support from the HR Managers” (chartered HRD).

Discussion
Results from the three surveys highlight that the role of the FLMA is perceived as important now, and will be more important in the future. In addition, the findings suggest that the FLMA role is important to the career development of individuals and that the development of appropriate managerial skills and acquisition of managerial experience in the FLMA role becomes a prerequisite for future appointment to more senior HE roles. The importance of early career exposure to ‘management’ requires institutional responses in determining the nature of, and support for, the FLMA role, not just to improve organisational performance but to influence the contribution of the next generation of senior managers as their careers progress.

Issues of role definition are complex, but the current recognition, support for, and clarity in respect of the activities of the role of the FLMA are unsatisfactory. The ambiguity of role definition and recognition aligned to the failure of HEIs to adequately prepare academics serves to reinforce the status quo rather than facilitate change. The processes of appointment to the FLMA role are subject to wide variation between institutions and sectors; are experienced differently by FLMAs and perceived differently by Deans, FLMAs and HRDs, raising questions regarding the ways in which transitions from ‘academic’ to ‘manager-academic’ take place.

FLMAs in UK Business Schools find it difficult to cope with the various demands of the role. Tension over the balance between, and relative importance of, academic work and managerial work and the ways in which FLMAs can be supported to do both is significant. People and performance management are major challenges.

The extent to which and the ways in which, both culturally and philosophically, within UK Business Schools and HE in general, ‘management’ as an activity is accepted, or considered appropriate, to be undertaken by academics, or performed by one academic over another academic or group of academics is unclear. Embedded professional and collegial cultures and traditions perpetuate resistance to ‘management’, even by academics in management roles and act as a barrier to acceptance of performance management as a legitimate activity, even when FLMAs acknowledge there is poor performance.

The results demonstrate that context plays a significant part in determining how the FLMA role is enacted and experienced. In particular, the research shows that the practices of chartered and statutory sector Business Schools/HEIs are very different, with a tendency toward a more managerial approach in statutory institutions. However neither sector appears to have a ‘better’ model more suited to a contemporary external environment, or which causes fewer problems for FLMAs. Therefore the issues raised by the research are important to both sectors but in different ways.
Conclusion
It is difficult to escape the conclusion that ‘management’ in practice in UK Business Schools requires urgent attention. This investigation of the role of the FLMA has highlighted the contradictory situation of the perceived positive value of the role to organisational effectiveness alongside the challenges faced by those in the role and the lack of support they receive. Uncertain of what they should be doing, burdened with responsibilities but lacking authority or sanctions in the role, inconsistently supported, uncertain where their priorities lie and struggling to manage those for whom they are responsible, FLMA is clearly being let down by their institutions. Consequently the organisational effectiveness of UK Business Schools, as well as the personal development and effectiveness of FLMA are compromised.

References


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