


Learning by higher education association in Australia and the UK: Peter Karmel Project 2018 Report



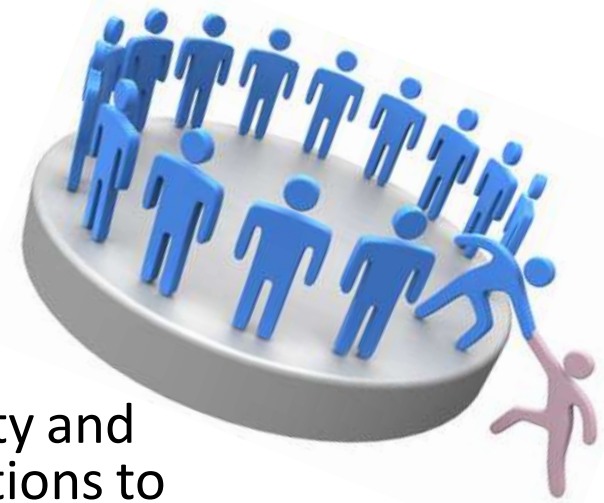
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In this presentation:

- Background
 - Literature
 - The Project
 - Research Design
 - Drilling down to reflections upon learning and leadership—participants of study and by audience today
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- **Funding:** 2018 Peter Karmel International Travel Grant (ATEM) \$10k
- **Endorsement:** ATEM and AUA leadership
- **Project Page:** www.researchgate.net/project/Learning-by-association-in-higher-education-a-comparative-analysis-of-Australian-and-UK-membership-associations-for-university-administrators
- **Ethics Clearance:** Obtained at University of Huddersfield and The University of Melbourne
- **Presentations:** AUA 2018 and TEMC 2019

Membership associations in HE—why now?



- In a current climate of global volatility, complexity and transformation, what are the roles and contributions to learning that professional associations make.
 - As an ‘anchor’ point in a sector in a period of unceasing transformation, NPM led restructuring, casualisation etc?
 - As a ‘safe harbour’ for professional identities in times of flux, understood as ‘gig’ economy and ‘portable selves’ (Petriglieri et al, 2017)?
- Beyond Brexit, how might we successfully sustain our professional learning, knowledge and voice as university managers?
 - through our associations to demonstrate personal and professional impact nationally and internationally?

Membership associations

—a missing link?

- as sites of inquiry, they remain under-represented and under theorised within organisational and management studies (Greenwood et al, 2002; Knoke, 1986)
 - No known research into professional associations in HE
- occupy a middle ground between public benefit and mutual benefit for their members and member institutions (Nesbit & Gazeley, 2012)
- play an important role in theorizing change, endorsing local innovations and shaping their diffusion (Greenwood et al, 2002)
- key role is as ‘learning agents’ (Rusaw, 1995)

Research Questions

We were interested in Board members' lived experiences to elicit:

- How they assign value, for themselves and their institutions, regarding the learning and knowledge gained from volunteer work for their association?
- How are these experiences synthesised for learning opportunities for themselves and their institutions
- How might these experiences contribute to a 'shared and mature sense of leadership identity'? (Gentle, 2014)

Methodology

Interpretive inquiry informed by Anne Cunliffe's *radical reflexivity*
Max van Manen's *action sensitive pedagogy*

A radically reflexive researcher is...a mediator of meanings throughout the whole process of research...[and] culturally grounded with embedded views and presuppositions (Cunliffe, 2011 p. 415).

van Manen's *action sensitive pedagogy* is a way to explore lived experience, practice and reflection, paying attention to:

1. turning to a phenomenon which seriously interests us and commits us to the world;
2. investigating experience as we live it rather than as we conceptualize it;
3. reflecting on essential themes that characterize the phenomenon;
4. describing the phenomenon through the art of writing and rewriting;
5. maintaining a strong oriented pedagogical relation to the phenomenon; and,
6. balancing the research context by considering parts and whole (van Manen, 2016 pp. 30-31).



Methods and Analytic Frame



Sites of Inquiry:

Board Members of the Association for Tertiary Education Management (ATEM) in Australia and the Association of University Administrators (AUA) in the UK

Data Collection: Semi-structured Interviews

Qualitative Analysis: Qualitative analysis using conceptual framework to guide thematic analysis, serving to reduce data and identify patterns in the data to allow researchers to produce 'evidence-based images' from the interplay between literature, analytic frames, evidence and analysis (Ragin, 1994).

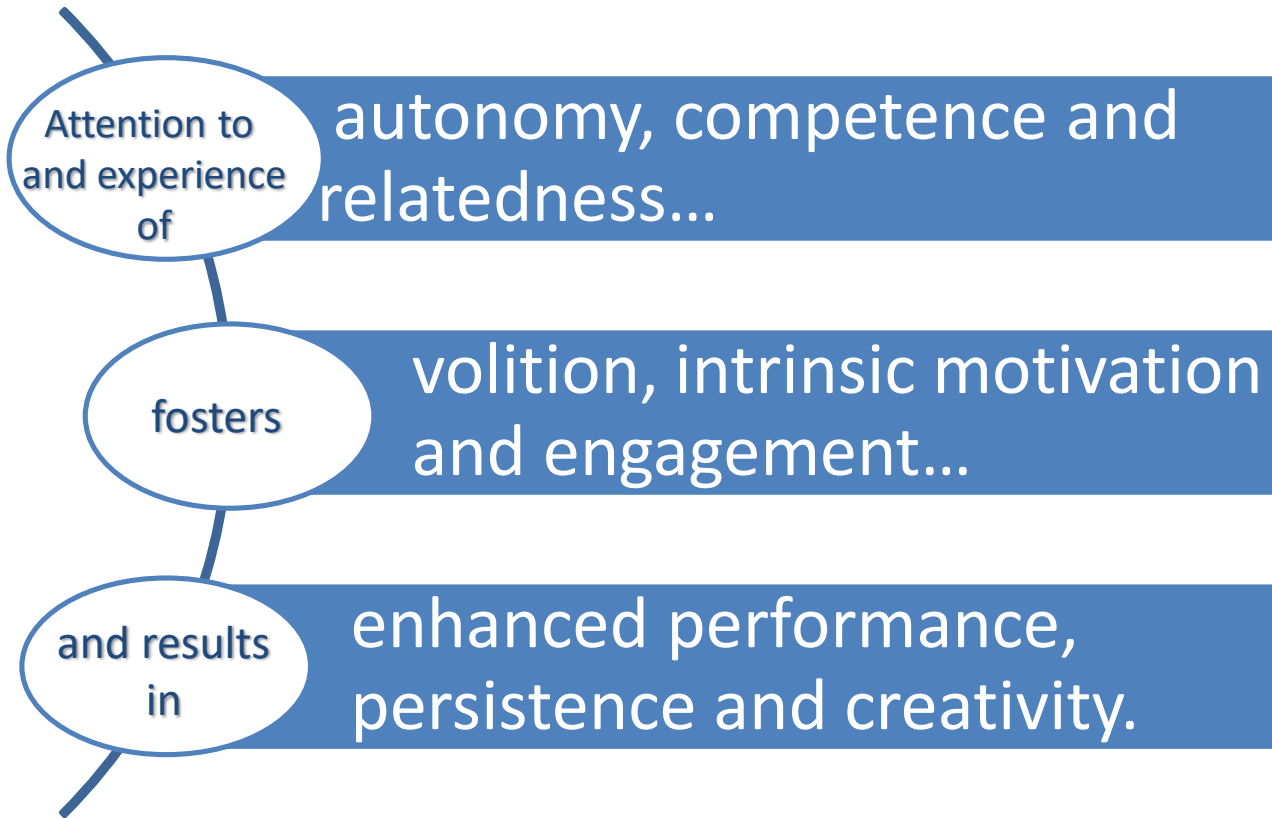
Roles:

Heather interviewed AUA board members and Julie interviewed ATEM board members, all three (Carole Elliott) conducted qualitative analysis

Ethical clearance from The University of Huddersfield and The University of Melbourne approved.

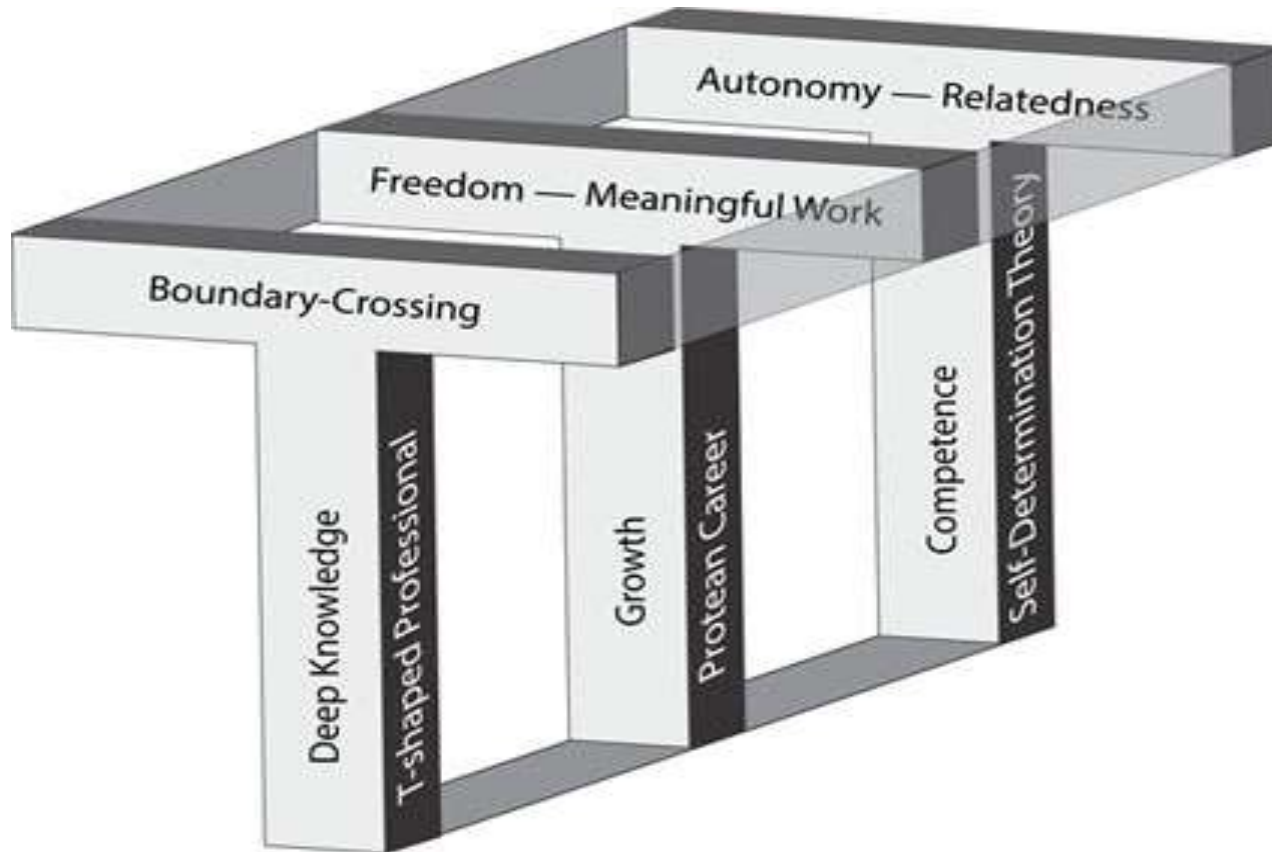


Theoretical Frame: Self-Determination Theory (SDT) - a well regarded theory of motivation



Ryan, R.M. & Deci, E.L. (2000) Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being. *American Psychologist*, 55, pp. 68-78.

Conceptual Framework: Self Determination Theory of Motivation



Davis & Graham (2018) T³ model for TE management practice

Davis, H., & Graham, C. (2018). Navigating a career in tertiary education management in an era of unceasing transformation. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, 40(2), 97-106.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/1360080X.2018.1428932>



Sector Management Professional Associations

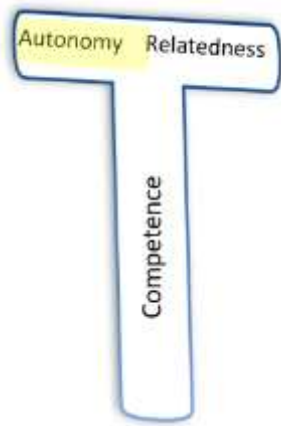
ATEM (Assoc for Tertiary Education Management) Australasia

- Est 1976, pre-eminent professional body in Australasia for Tertiary Education administrators and managers
- Vision: ATEM connects, supports and challenges individuals and institutions to recognise and advance the professionalism of TE management in Australia and New Zealand
- 1700 individual and 70-80 institutional memberships
- Board Structure: 5 executive office bearers and 7 regional chairs, led by President

AUA (Assoc of University Administrators) UK

- Est 1961, as the professional association for HE administrators and managers
- Vision: to develop and support the talent and ambition of HE professionals to assist the advancement of the sector
- 4,000 individual members
- Board of Trustees Structure, 14 members led by Chair

Mapping reflections to SDT: Autonomy



Regional Committee Member

Managers do tend to get support for learning and development as they have autonomy. Lower level clerical staff may have variable support from their managers.



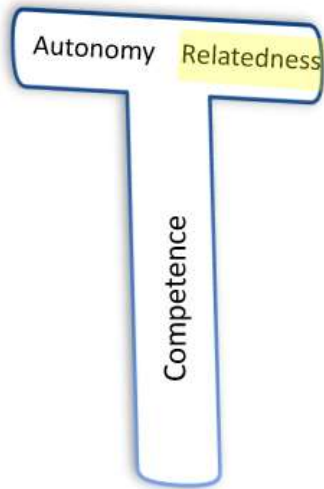
Board Member

There are 27 of me around the university doing department management roles and we all approach these roles quite differently. I feel I'm in a strong position in terms of strategic skills, those networking skills and certainly the work we do around professional development [on the AUA Board]. I certainly think [serving on the AUA Board] has influenced my work a great deal, actually.

Defining autonomy: People need to feel in control of their own behaviors and goals. Being able to take direct action encourages intrinsic motivation leading to a strong sense of self-determination.



Mapping reflections to SDT: Relatedness



Regional Chair

I've got a great peer network across Australia. If ever I need a policy I know where to find one from someone in the network. I've purposely networked in ATEM and moved jobs to get to where I am now which is really exciting.



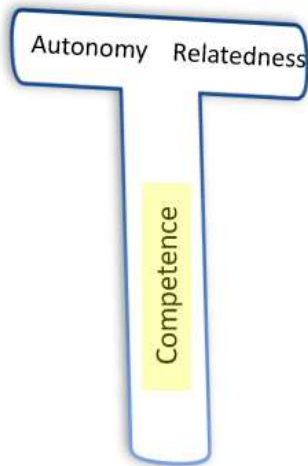
Chair

I think for a lot of institutions they don't place enough value on external networks for building and developing people as fully rounded employees. I suspect there is an element where they take it as a given that they get those benefits, but they don't explicitly talk about them.

Defining relatedness: The experience of a sense of belonging and attachment to other people and/or to something bigger than themselves.



Mapping reflections to SDT: Competence



As noted by EO and a Regional Committee member

Likely support from institutions is for competency based training—note taking is the most popular professional development offered by ATEM



Board Member

In my opinion, regarding management selection in HE institutions, if you have an AUA membership it implies that you engage and are committed to PD. You look at best practice and you have a certain approach you follow, and you prescribe to a certain set of values. These competencies are fantastic for HE. There is something I really like about my own AUA development, all Board members have a willingness to give back. I think that has helped to create an atmosphere and an ethos of development and a place where people can grow quite significantly.

Defining competence: Gaining mastery of tasks and learning different skills. When people feel that they have the skills needed for success, they are more likely to take actions that will help them achieve their goals.



AUA: Questions about leadership...

- 1. How have your volunteer experiences with the AUA contributed to a ‘shared and mature sense of leadership identity’¹?**
- 2. Do you think expectations of HE leaders has changed over time? Are they different to 10-15 years ago?**

¹ Gentle, P. (2014). *Engaging leaders: the challenge of inspiring collective commitment in universities*. London: Routledge.



Thinking about leadership in HE in times of flux...

Fletcher's (2014) post-heroic typology:

- Leadership as practice: shared and distributed
- Leadership as social process: interactions
- Leadership as learning: outcomes

Bolden et al (2015) Shared Leadership in Higher Education

1. How have your volunteer experiences with the AUA contributed to a 'shared and mature sense of leadership identity'?

It has helped me be mindful to others ideas and listen more. This helps me lead back at my institution where I feel that I can talk with authority with this wider knowledge, and therefore people develop a trust in what I say.

I think that helps with leadership because even if staff don't understand why I am going in a particular direction or action, they at least trust in that I'm doing it with particular knowledge, and their best interests at heart.

The realisation that the roles I am in at work and on the AUA board are sector leadership roles.

I find it personally fulfilling to mentor junior colleagues who seek me out for assistance with job applications, etc.

These experiences remind me that there is a level of insight I can bring to these things and the AUA has really helped crystallise my understanding of that.

I think it has certainly given me a wider perspective on different viewpoints that has made me not necessarily change my style but adapt it as necessary for different audiences.

This role has given me access to a wider range of people from different organisations than my own, and you get a wider perspective on different styles of leadership, different types of organisations.

2. Do you think the context of HE leadership has changed over recent times?

When I first joined HE it was expected that leaders would ensure continuity, maintain standards, embody values and keep the ship sailing.

I think what we expect of leaders now is pretty well impossible, we expect them to articulate values, then create strategies and help steer the ship to actually operationalise that strategy, to create financial stability, create job stability, to deliver high quality. I mean we really expect Gods out there!

I've definitely seen a shift from what is sometimes described as a heroic leader model, to a more collaborative leadership style, this has shifted in the last decade. I have witnessed the tussle where you still had people in that heroic leadership standpoint and you could start to see some resistance and tension between the two models.

It may have always been the case, but I wasn't close enough to see it...that there is an expectation of leadership to be more outwardly focussed in the sense of developing networks and insights as to what is happening in the external environment and then being able to translate and bring that back in for the benefit of the institution.

2. Do you think the context of HE leadership has changed over recent times?

The pace of change has quickened, bringing with it more complexity, with a sense of more things happening all at once.

In the early 2000s there was a sense that institutions could kind of decide which agendas they were going to engage with and prioritise them, whereas now, everybody has to be across everything.

One challenge is that after years of benign positivity in the press we are now in an era where universities are being challenged, almost continually harangued, about many things (VC salaries, superannuation).

It's almost like Brexit has caused people to query things in a way they hadn't before. It's kind of upset the norms and along with it a lot of age-old assumptions...

The obvious one are the new commercial pressures that university leaders face today. The student cap had prevented true market forces from entering HE and now the removal of it has effected a kind of *sorting hat* that moves around applicants, until all institutions have as many students as they want—whether or not they are quite the calibre they want is a bit of an unknown quantity.

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