

Becoming a Third Space Leader in the Context of EAP

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Outline

- Introduction
- What is Third Space?
- Third Space managers
- Going from teaching to leadership
 - freedom in the margins
 - collaborative learning as leadership tool
 - leading-edge professionals
- Conclusions

English Language Centre at Lincoln



- Part of Student Services (with Student Wellbeing Centre and Student Support Centre)
- Part of Academic Registry (professional services)
- Unit devoted to supporting international students (anyone for whom English is no first language)
- Offering in-sessional and pre-sessional courses*
- A small team of EAP practitioners, all with PG degrees

Third Space professionals

The concept is used as a way of exploring groups of staff in higher education who do not fit conventional binary descriptors such as those enshrined in 'academic' or 'non-academic' employment categories. (Whitchurch 2015: 1)

Whitchurch 2008: 4

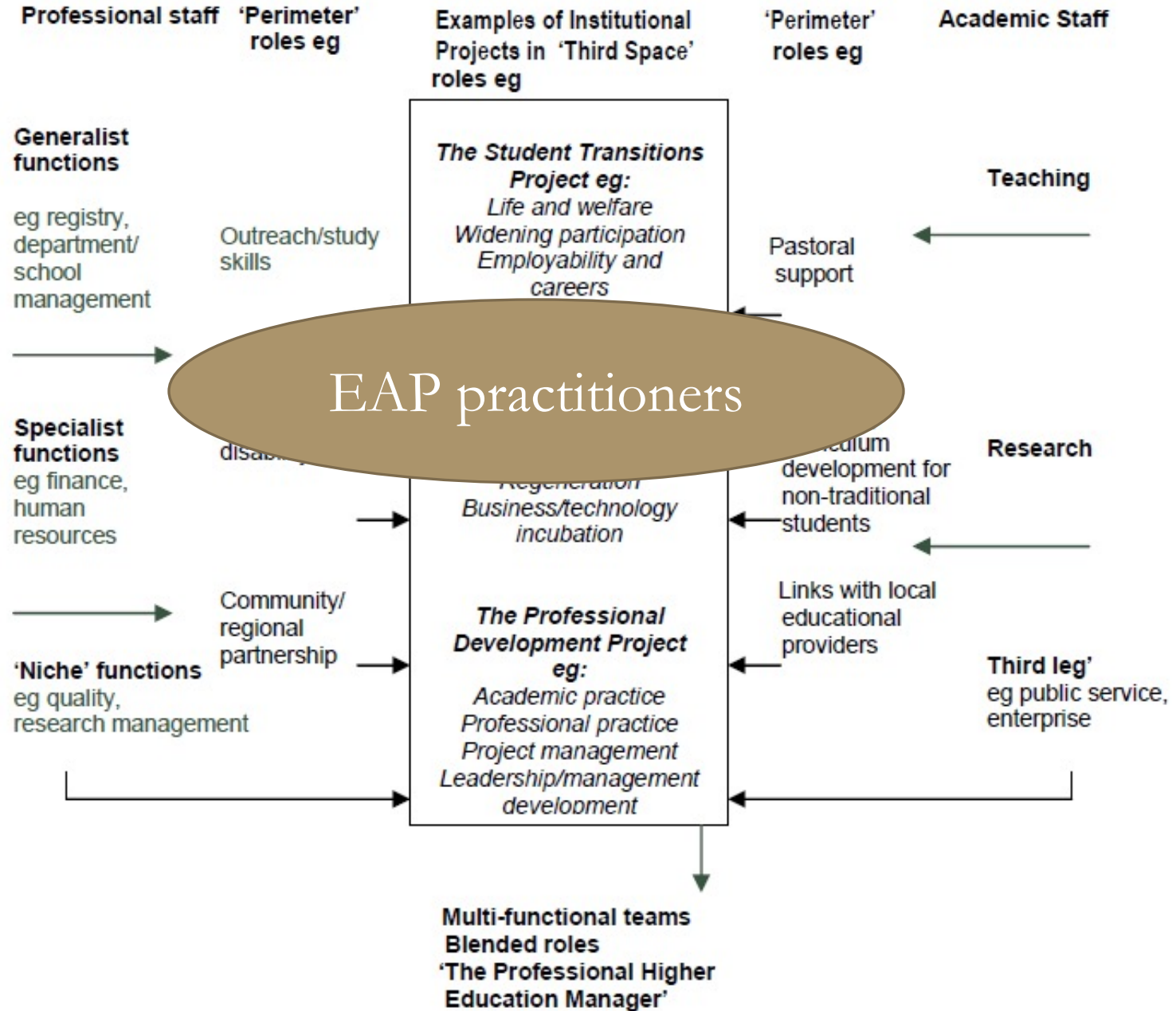
Categories of Professional Identity

Categories of identity	Characteristics
<i>Bounded professionals</i>	Work within structural boundaries (eg function, job description)
<i>Cross-boundary professionals</i>	Actively use boundaries for strategic advantage and institutional capacity building
<i>Unbounded professionals</i>	Disregard boundaries to focus on broadly-based projects and institutional development
<i>Blended professionals</i>	Dedicated appointments spanning professional and academic domains

McDonald (2016), quoting Evans (2008)
Restricted / extended professionals

Whitchurch
2008: 5

The Emergence of 'Third Space' between Professional and Academic Domains



Shifting Identities, Blurring Boundaries: Third Space Managers

How to describe staff who:

- Have academic credentials (MA, PhD) or a teaching or research background
- Work in teams dealing with institutional initiatives that require a range of specialist, academic, and policy contributions
- Undertake quasi-academic functions such as conducting study skills sessions for access students, speaking at outreach events, or conducting overseas recruitment visits
- Have the possibility of moving into an academic management role -e.g. a pro V-C with a portfolio such as quality, staffing or institutional development

(Whitchurch 2008: 2)

Shifting Identities, Blurring Boundaries: Third Space Managers

‘Bundles of activity’ in areas such as:

- Student life and welfare
- Widening participation
- Learning support
- Community partnership
- Research and business partnership
- Institutional research

Going from teaching to leadership through the Third Space lens

- Freedom in the margins
- Collaborative learning as leadership tool
- Leading-edge professionals

Freedom in the margins

- Ability to decide about ourselves and set boundaries
- Easier access to key contacts and teams
- Sharing expertise across institutional boundaries

BUT

- Safe AND risky space
- Possible disconnect between formal responsibilities and actual authority

Collaborative learning as leadership tool

- ‘Collaborative learning (CL) is a personal philosophy, not just a classroom technique... a way of dealing with people which respects and highlights individual group members’ abilities and contributions. There is a sharing of authority and acceptance of responsibility among group members for the groups’ actions.’ (Panitz 199, quoted by Girgersohn 2018: 15)
- Caring ‘about communication opportunities with other stakeholders’ (Girgersohn 2018: 19), using conversations with academic colleagues as opportunities to gain legitimacy’ (ibid. 18), speaking on an equal footing.

Collaborative learning as leadership tool

- ‘the building of communicative relationships and networks as more significant than the observance of organisational boundaries’ (Whitchurch 2008: 4)
- Relationships more critical than structures and processes
- Taking initiative ‘in entering fora that might be uncomfortable or challenging, in order to promote understandings among their colleagues of opportunities arising from new modes of learning (Whitchurch 2015: 13).

Leading-edge professionals

- Multi-disciplinary and multi-professional environment or team
- Building up new form of expertise
- Representing ‘new space’ and requiring ‘a blend of academic and professional inputs’
- Contributing to the development of their institutions for the future
- Free thinkers
- With a portfolio career
- Mobility within and between different bundles of activity

Leading-edge professionals as multi-specialists

‘[I]t is essential that universities embrace third space professionals, those who are already out there navigating multiple life-worlds and creating connections, and work with them to move the university beyond specialisation to foster a culture of resilience and agility through polymathy.’

(Manoharan 2020: 58)

*polymathy - the ability to have proficiency and expertise across multiple fields.

Conclusions

Third Space – useful way to look at leadership

freedom in the margins

fluid identity

leading-edge

- ‘[I]nstitutions are still trying to figure out what EAP is, where it fits, what EAP practitioners do, and how to work with us. Those of us who teach and oversee EAP programs must take the lead’ (McDonald 2016: 114).

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