

COURSE LEADERSHIP IN SMALL SPECIALIST UK HIGHER EDUCATION – A REVIEW

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Abstract

Research Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to review the literature with regards to the role of the course leader in small and specialist higher education institutions in the United Kingdom.

Research Design

First, the role of the course leader is explored, followed by an evaluation of the barriers to effective course management. This is then followed by a discussion of mitigating solutions to the barriers identified. Course leadership is then reviewed in the context of small and specialist higher education. Finally, areas for future research are suggested.

Research Findings

Course leadership in UK higher education is a role with wide ranging responsibilities, but is underappreciated by the higher education sector. Uncertainty regarding the scope of the course leader role, managing other staff, administrative burden and recognition and appreciation of the course manager role have been identified as barriers to effectively performing the course leader role. A clear course leader role descriptor, opportunities for relevant CPD, empowerment of course leaders and recognition of course leadership as a valid academic path are proposed as solutions in the current literature. However, even though these solutions are proposed in the literature, course leaders continue to experience problems.

Research Conclusions

Course leadership is an underappreciated and under-researched area, even though issues have been reported since the 1990s. This paper critically evaluates and summarises these issues, and shows that they are still current. It also proposes solutions and areas of further research so that issues can be resolved for the betterment of the higher education sector.

Key words: Higher education; course leadership; small specialist education

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