

Factors associated with advisor perceptions of their work being understood and valued are not what they seem

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People sit at the heart of digital transformation in Higher Education. Often, they are ‘Third Space’ support staff, including Learning Designers, Education Technologists and Academic Developers, broadly defined here as ‘advisors’ – educator-advisors. Advisors share their expertise of pedagogy and technology to support, guide and lead change in teaching practices but they can be hampered by numerous factors that diminish their ability to contribute meaningfully. While the work that some types of advisors – largely academic developers and learning designers – do is well represented in research, there has been little consideration of these underlying challenges. This paper reports on a survey of 58 advisors in 24 Higher Education institutions in Australia relating to their perceptions of how their work is understood and valued by their direct managers, advisors in other roles in their institution, academics and other managers in the institution. The data were analysed to look for variations by role type, job title, academic/professional classification, gender, and qualifications. Results show that advisors feel their work is more valued than understood overall but relationships between different advisor role types can be more fractious than those they have with academics. Improving understanding and valuing of advisors is vital to their contribution to transformation.

Keywords: learning designer, instructional designer, learning technologist, academic developer, Third Space, advisor, Higher Education

Introduction

Educational technologies and associated Technology Enhanced Learning and Teaching (TELT) practices offer opportunities to make Higher Education (HE) richer, more accessible and more engaging to learners everywhere. These opportunities are being embraced by the sector as part of a general strategic push sometimes referred to as digital transformation. Fullan (2016) reminds us that for this level of change to be meaningful, it must be holistic, extending beyond simple adoption of new educational technologies to also incorporate new pedagogies, teaching strategies and designs. Systemic change of this kind adds complexity to the lives of already time-poor academics, and a need for them to expand their understanding of technologies and pedagogy, on top of existing disciplinary and research knowledge and skills.

To facilitate this, a class of learning and teaching specialist advisors has emerged, including Learning Designers (LD), Educational Technologists (ET) and Academic Developers (AD). For convenience, we will refer to them as ‘advisors’ (educator-advisors). As specialists, they are often highly experienced and qualified (Bird, 2004) in areas ranging from curriculum and learning design to resource development, educational technology use and implementation. In spite of this expertise, many advisors report that they do not make the kind of contribution to positive changes in HE that they feel they could (Winslett, 2016), and this may lead to poorer outcomes for learners, teachers and the institution as a whole. The separate work that these three types of advisors do in Higher Education can collectively contribute significantly to digital transformation initiatives in these institutions however the sum of their efforts, as well as the ways they interact with each other, academics and institutional leaders are rarely addressed in HE research. This paper aims to fill this gap in the literature.

This paper draws on a survey of advisors in Australian Higher Education undertaken in early 2021 to examine how advisors perceive their work to be valued and understood by the people they work with and the extent to which factors including role type, academic/professional classification, qualifications, alignment of role title with role identity, work unit location (central/faculty based) and work unit names relate to their perceptions.

Background

Edvisors are employed by HE institutions to support and enhance learning and teaching in a number of different capacities. While there is a plethora of titles used for them (Mitchell et al., 2017), they can essentially be placed into one of three main categories. Academic Developers (ADs) commonly have a heavily pedagogical focus on curriculum design and developing pedagogical skills and understanding in academics (Leibowitz, 2014). They are also more likely to engage in educational research as they frequently hold academic positions. This engagement with research means that their work is well represented in research literature. They largely work with academics in the institution and have less contact with other types of edvisors and managers of other units.

Learning Designers (LDs) also have a strong pedagogical focus but engage more with educational technologies as they work with academics to design and develop learning resources and activities (Altena et al., 2019). LDs are often also involved in training academics in TELT and often report providing more technical assistance with institutional learning technologies (McDonald et al., 2021). The general pedagogical orientation of LDs means that their work is also somewhat well represented in research literature. LDs commonly work with academics and also other edvisors as the more mixed pedagogical/technological orientation of their work necessitates collaboration with the wider community.

Educational Technologists (ETs) provide educationally focused advice and support to academics on the use of educational technologies and also work behind the scenes to evaluate, implement and support these technologies with an enterprise-level institutional focus (Ritzhaupt & Kumar, 2018). They work with academics, other edvisors and also managers of other units such as the institutional IT teams that operate the educational technologies. While the use of educational technologies in learning and teaching interventions commonly appears in research literature, the work of educational technologists in HE is largely researched in studies of HE organisational management.

Edvisors occupy what is known as a 'Third Space' in Higher Education (Whitchurch, 2008), often overlapping administration and education in the institution and not entirely belonging to either. While they frequently hold professional staff positions, some hold academic roles; but the 'othered' nature of all edvisor roles frequently means there is a lack of understanding among academics and institutional leaders around exactly what edvisors do and what their value is to the institution (Palmer et al., 2010). This gap in understanding of the work that edvisors do can mean that people in need of support with their TELT practices do not know where to find it or that it is available. This in turn can mean that academics wanting to improve their teaching take on additional burdens in solving their own problems and may even adopt suboptimal solutions. The extent to which working partners value the work that edvisors do is also important as it shapes the extent to which edvisors are able to use their expertise to suggest more effective uses of technologies and pedagogies that may represent change to existing practices. Crebbin (1997) notes that teaching approaches can be closely tied to an educator's identity and change can require significant risk-taking. It is possible that a working partner can understand what an edvisor does but at the same time believe that this work holds little value to their needs, which will mean that they can be reluctant to engage with the edvisor. For this reason, this paper examines both the ways that edvisors believe their work is understood and the ways they believe it is valued by the people they work with by considering a number of factors relating to working as edvisors in HE that may shape these relationships.

The liminal nature of edvisor roles and their titles is highlighted by Mitchell et al. (2017), who examined 37 job advertisements for edvisor roles and identified 25 different titles. The lack of clarity around edvisor roles is widely noted in the literature (Fraser & Ling, 2014) as a significant barrier to understanding and valuing of the work they do. Another regularly identified barrier relates to the notion of a cultural divide between academic and professional staff working in HE. Keppell (2007) notes a perception that professional staff are unable to fully understand the needs of academics and thus may not be equipped to offer appropriate support in learning and teaching matters.

Less widely reported are tensions between centrally based units and divisions and those located in discipline-based faculties and colleges. This is partially fueled by competing priorities, with central units commonly needing to take an institution wide perspective while faculty-based units work to serve the needs of academics in a single disciplinary cluster. Wider perceptions among some academics that edvisors serve as agents of managerialism, serving corporate or financial interests over learning and teaching (King & Boyatt, 2015) are thought to inflame some of these barriers. Sweetman et al. (2014) also discuss cultural differences within disciplinary areas that may shape the attitudes of academics.

The qualifications held by advisors in the relevant fields of education, communications/design/media and educational technologies, are also discussed in research literature (Gray & Radloff, 2006; Graham, 2012). These speak to the expertise and experience of all types of advisors in supporting and enhancing TELT practice in HE, particularly given that there are no consistent requirements for the academics they work with to have these kinds of qualifications. The contribution these qualifications make to advisors' credibility would seem to relate directly to way the work of advisors is valued, however this is seldom discussed in advisor related research.

Research Questions and Methods

This paper aims to explore some of the factors that may be associated with the apparent gap between advisors' expertise and their impact on educational transformation. The research questions underpinning this work are:

What factors influence the working relationships between advisors, academics and institutional leaders in Australian Higher Education institutions?

What actions might be taken to improve these working relationships?

Sixty-six advisors from 24 institutions offering Higher Education qualifications in Australia were surveyed about their roles, titles, qualifications, experience and other demographic and work life factors. They were recruited via a discussion forum post in the ASCILITE TELadvisors Network community site. In the survey, the advisors were asked to self-identify as either an Academic Developer, Education Technologist or Learning Designer, regardless of their actual role title. They were also asked about the extent to which they felt that their work as an advisor was understood and valued by their direct managers, advisors in other roles, academics, and other managers in their institution. Those questions used a seven-point Likert scale, offering a choice of Strongly disagree (1), Disagree (2), Somewhat disagree (3), Neither agree nor disagree (4), Somewhat agree (5), Agree (6) and Strongly agree (7). A seven-point scale was used to capture a wider range of nuance in responses than a five-point scale (Lewis, 1993). Assuming that respondents would consider the seven points of the Likert scale to be approximately continuous, it was decided for the purpose of comparison to focus primarily on the mean value of responses to describe the strength of perceptions of being understood and valued (Sullivan & Artino, 2013).

A reliability test looking for Cronbach's Alpha was conducted on the responses checking for internal consistency which returned a value of .781. These data were considered as a single set of items in line with the idea that perceptions of being valued and understood in the workplace are connected (Cahn, 1986). According to Goforth (2015), "many methodologists recommend a minimum α coefficient between 0.65 and 0.8", indicating that this data is reliable. Chi-square testing was also conducted on the data relating to these perceptions and the factors that may influence them, to see whether the observed relationships differed from what might be expected at random. Approximately 10% of the data has statistical significance ($p \leq 0.05$) and this informs the majority of the findings. Where statistically non-significant differences in data are of interest, this status is noted.

Data for several of the factors were open ended and required additional thematic analysis and coding for meaningful interpretation (Saldana, 2014). Where this occurred, it is noted in the relevant section.

Results and Discussion

Overall Advisor Perceptions of their Work Being Understood and Valued

The general trends of the results suggest that the closer people working with advisors are to advisors' day-to-day work, the more advisors perceive them to understand and value it. Overall, respondents are more likely to feel valued than understood by all working partner types. The extent to which they feel either valued or understood indicates that there is room for improvement in advisors' working relationships, given that, at best, advisors only somewhat agree that their work is understood or valued.

Table 1: Overall advisor perceptions of their work being understood and valued

	Mean	SD
Your direct manager <i>understands</i> the work you do	5.48	1.89
Edvisors in other roles in your institution <i>understand</i> the work you do	5.36	1.31
Academics in your institution <i>understand</i> the work you do	4.10	1.52
Managers outside your unit <i>understand</i> the work you do	3.41	1.4
Your direct manager <i>values</i> the work you do	5.86	1.73
Edvisors in other roles in your institution <i>value</i> the work you do	5.41	1.12
Academics in your institution <i>value</i> the work you do	5.09	1.35
Managers outside your unit <i>value</i> the work you do	4.21	1.27

Key of mean values: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Somewhat disagree, 4 = Neither agree nor disagree, 5 = Somewhat agree, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly agree

Factors Associated with Edvisors' Work Being Understood and Valued

As indicated by the literature, a wide array of factors may contribute to the way edvisors and their work is understood and valued in Higher Education by the people they work with and for. Responses to the questions about feeling understood and valued were compared with responses to other survey questions relating to demographics and work conditions to determine whether any patterns might be seen. This was undertaken both at an overall edvisors level and then divided by edvisor role types.

Role Type: Learning Designers Feel More Understood and Valued than Other Edvisors

Different edvisor role types contribute in different ways to digital transformation in institutions. The statistically significant results from the survey show that Learning Designers ($M = 5.83$ $SD = 1.73$) on average agree that their work is understood by their direct managers, more than Education Technologists ($M = 4.63$ $SD = 1.69$) and Academic Developers ($M = 4.93$ $SD = 2.25$), who are more neutral. In terms of feeling valued by direct managers, the difference between role types is more notable, with LDs agreeing ($M = 6.39$ $SD = 1.25$) and ETs more neutral ($M = 4.25$ $SD = 1.83$) with ADs in between the two ($M = 5.31$ $SD = 2.18$). When it comes to managers outside their units, they are seen as understanding and valuing all types of edvisors the least. ADs ($M = 2.92$ $SD = 1.38$) are more negative than ETs ($M = 3.00$ $SD = 1.41$) and LDs ($M = 3.72$ $SD = 1.37$) about the extent to which they are understood by external managers. All feel more valued than understood but this perception that their work is valued only to the extent that edvisors feel neutral at best (AD $M = 4.31$ $SD = 1.65$; ET $M = 4.88$ $SD = 1.25$; LD $M = 4.03$ $SD = 1.11$) that they are valued. This is the only time that LDs feel less valued by anyone in the institution than ADs or ETs

The statistically non-significant ($p > .05$) differences in the findings suggest that LDs feel more understood and valued by other edvisors and academics than ADs or ETs do. A possible explanation is that work perceived as more education/pedagogy focused is respected more by edvisors and academics overall but other managers in the institution have operational priorities that are more served by technology, such as student management and scheduling.

Alignment of Role Title with Edvisor Self-Identification: Academics Prefer Titles to Match

The diversity of role titles in the edvisor domain may mean that people wanting to be part of digital transformation don't know where to find the advice and support they need. Thematic analysis of edvisors' official position titles was undertaken to code them as either matching or clashing with their self-identification in one of three edvisor role types (AD, ET or LD) or as ambiguous. Matching titles for Learning Designer include Education Designer and Digital Learning Designer. Clashing titles for Learning Designer included Senior Educational Developer and Manager: Educational Technology. Ambiguous titles for Learning Designer included Academic Consultant, Digital Education Specialist and Learning Manager. Matches, clashes and ambiguities for Academic Developers and Educational Technologists followed similar patterns.

It is noteworthy that LD titles match their role self-identification (77.8%) at more than twice the level of ETs (37.5%) and ADs (33.3%). Considering that LDs also tend to feel more understood by all of the four stakeholder groups than ADs and ETs do, it is worth exploring whether this alignment of role title with role self-

identification has an impact across the three roles on perceptions of being understood and valued. Results relating to perceptions of work being understood and valued were then analysed based on alignment with role title for each of the advisor types.

There were a number of statistically significant results for this question. For advisors overall, independent of role type, feeling understood and valued by direct managers and also feeling valued by academics did vary as the alignment between role title and identity changed. With direct managers, advisors overall with ambiguous role titles felt less understood ($M = 4.53$ $SD = 2.42$) or valued ($M = 5.07$ $SD = 2.37$) than those with titles either matching (Understood $M = 5.91$ $SD = 1.63$; Valued $M = 6.29$ $SD = 1.34$) or clashing with (Understood $M = 5.5$ $SD = 0.55$; Valued $M = 5.5$ $SD = 1.38$) with their self-identified roles. In terms of academics valuing the work of advisors, advisors with titles that matched ($M = 5.31$ $SD = 1.39$) their self-identification or were ambiguous ($M = 5.2$ $SD = 1.08$) felt notably more valued than those whose titles clashed ($M = 3.83$ $SD = 1.33$) with their self-identification. This may suggest that academics have a broad understanding of the purpose of advisors but find it harder to connect those with titles they don't understand.

When we look at these findings by role, there are several other significant results. The first of these is that there is a marked difference for ADs in feeling valued by direct managers (Matches $M = 6.25$ $SD = 0.5$ vs Clashes $M = 5.0$ $SD = 1.41$) and valued by academics (Matches $M = 5.5$ $SD = 0.58$ vs Clashes $M = 3.0$ $SD = 0$) when title matches their role self-identification than when their titles are ambiguous or clash. Interestingly, it is the opposite when it comes to other advisors for ADs. ADs with ambiguous titles ($M = 6.50$ $SD = 0.55$) felt notably more valued by other advisors than those with titles that matched ($M = 5.0$ $SD = 0.87$) or clashed ($M = 3.5$ $SD = 0.71$) with their self-identification. The most common titles for ADs in the ambiguous category included a variation of lecturer, so this may be tied to the overall higher status of lecturers in HE institutions and advisors' sense of where they sit in the hierarchy.

In the statistically non-significant ($p > .05$) findings, for advisors overall, whether a role title matches or clashes with role self-identification or is ambiguous has little bearing on feeling either understood or valued. This defies expectations but as these results were statistically insignificant, suggests a need for further research into this question.

Learning Designers feel that their work is more understood and valued than other advisor types overall, which may suggest that they spend more time with their various working partners. It may also be that their work is positioned in a 'sweet spot' between pedagogy and technology, with their pedagogical expertise being more highly regarded in institutional culture while their technological knowledge is at a sufficient level to meet their partners' needs. The fact that LDs have a much clearer sense of professional identity than ADs or ETs, as seen in the alignment of role title with role self-identification may also contribute to this. This does support the broad idea that the lack of clarity around who advisors are and what they do overall negatively affects their ability to affect change. Title clarity has some value for academics to some degree both in terms of the advisors they work with and the names of the units that those advisors work for.

Name of Unit: Put a 'Design' in There, Academics Love That.

The names of advisor units in HE institutions may also contribute to the understanding and valuing of advisor work because this is commonly where academics will seek pedagogical, design or technological support for learning and teaching. Thematic analysis was undertaken on the names of units provided by respondents to see what would emerge in the way institutions describe advisor units and, by association, the work they do or the purpose they serve. Fifteen unit names were found to include a variation of an aspirational term like transform, innovation or future and 11 included more descriptive, functional terms such as design or develop. Twenty eight unit names included variations of education - either learning and teaching (or teaching and learning), learning, teaching or education. There were also overlaps where unit names included words from several of these groups.

The mean values for feeling work was understood and valued were compared for advisors working in units with names with a variant of education against those working in units with a variant of innovation/future. We also compared these values for units with a name containing design/develop against those with a variant of education, as well as doing a third comparison of these values between units with a variant of innovation/future and those with a variant of design/develop. Within each of these comparisons we also looked at whether a unit name included a term on its own, included both terms or included neither.

There were no statistically significant results in terms of perceptions of working being valued or understood relating to advisor units with names having or not having variants of innovation. There were results with

significance for advisors overall working in units with names including a variant of education feeling their work was slightly more valued by other managers (Includes education $M = 4.0$ $SD = 1.3$; Does not include education $M = 4.25$ $SD = 1.15$) and also for ADs' work being valued by other managers (Includes education $M = 4.64$ $SD = 1.43$ Does not include education $M = 2.5$ $SD = 2.12$). Advisor units including a variation of design/develop in their name had the most statistically significant results of the three, indicating that advisors feel academics have a greater understanding of their work overall if design/develop is included in their unit name (Includes design $M = 4.55$ $SD = 1.51$; Does not include Design $M = 4.0$ $SD = 1.52$). Meanwhile, advisors overall perceive that other advisors value their work less if their unit's name includes design/develop (Includes design $M = 4.73$ $SD = 1.35$ Does not include design $M = 5.57$ $SD = 1.02$). When looking at these significant findings divided by role types, we see that an LD's sense of their work being valued by other advisors when in a unit with design/develop in the name is also reduced (Includes design $M = 4.75$ $SD = 1.39$; Does not include design $M = 5.68$ $SD = 0.86$). This changes dramatically for ADs in feeling their work is understood by academics in these units (Includes design $M = 7.0$ $SD = 0$ Does not include design $M = 3.92$ $SD = 1.73$) and also valued by academics (Includes design $M = 7.0$ $SD = 0$ Does not include design $M = 4.83$ $SD = 1.03$). So while academics are perceived to like advisor units with design in the name, other advisors do not.

The remaining statistically non-significant ($p > .05$) results don't offer any notable insights into the impact of the naming conventions of advisor units. The fact that academics seem to better understand the purpose of advisor units when they include functional, task-oriented language may connect in some way to the previous observations that learning designers have stronger alignment between their self-identification as advisors and their titles than academic developers or education technologists, and also that LDs overall feel that their work is better understood.

Role Classification (Academic/Professional): This Matters to Other Advisors But Not Academics

The perceived cultural divide between staff in academic versus professional roles in Higher Education is discussed widely in the literature (Bird, 2006; Fraser & Ling, 2014). The one statistically significant result in this category sees professional staff LDs ($M = 6.7$ $SD = 0.53$) feeling much more strongly that their work is more valued by their direct managers than academic LDs ($M = 4.83$ $SD = 2.4$) feel their work is valued by their direct managers.

In the statistically non-significant ($p > .05$) results, it is not a significant factor, with advisors in academic roles feeling largely the same as their professional colleagues about how they are understood and valued by direct managers, academics and managers of other units. The most sizeable gaps are seen in the perceptions of advisors in other roles, with professional staff feeling ($M = 5.52$ $SD = 1.22$) that they are understood by them while academic staff are more neutral ($M = 4.75$ $SD = 1.48$). Similarly professional staff feel ($M = 5.57$ $SD = 1.05$) that they are valued by advisors in other roles than advisors in academic staff roles ($M = 4.83$ $SD = 1.27$).

Based on this, the academic/professional divide is actually most strongly felt within the advisor community itself. Again, the lack of statistically significant findings suggests the need for further research, as these results contradict expected findings.

Work Unit Type (Central/Faculty): Surprisingly Irrelevant

Another recognised locus of friction among advisors in Higher Education is between faculty/college-based units and those in centrally based ones (Fraser & Ryan, 2012). The one significant result in this section indicates that for LDs, there is no real difference in being understood (Central $M = 5.79$ $SD = 1.86$; Faculty $M = 5.89$ $SD = 1.69$) and only a small difference in terms of feeling valued (Central $M = 6.21$ $SD = 1.47$; Faculty $M = 6.78$ $SD = 0.44$) by direct managers based on the location of their work unit. Results for LDs on being understood by academics in this instance came close to being significant ($p = .054$) and similarly showed no real difference. This was somewhat surprising as we had assumed that faculty based advisors may have closer relationships with academics as they are more likely to be physically co-located and come into more frequent contact with them. Of the statistically non-significant ($p > .05$) results, similar themes could be seen.

Institution Grouping: ETs Feel Understood by Academics in the Go8 but the Rest Doesn't Matter

Another idea being explored in this survey is that institutional culture influences the ways that advisors are understood and valued. Differences between different disciplines in HE institutions are well documented in

research (Movahhed, 2021; Tierney, 1988) as shaping teaching practices and wider organisational culture.

Results relating the institution respondents work in was coded to the known HE institution groupings (e.g., Group of Eight or ATN universities). A separate category was created for unaligned universities and an 'Other Higher Education Provider' category was created for institutions that offer HE qualifications but which are not classified as universities. Results for understand/value ratings were compared based on these categories to determine whether there may be cultural differences at an institutional level as well as those at a discipline level. The distribution of respondents in these groups in the survey is not even, with only one respondent from the RUN group but the advisors from Go8 universities are well represented (41.9%).

The only statistically significant result is found in perceptions of how academics understand the work of ETs, with ETs in Group of Eight institutions being the only ones to agree that they are understood ($M = 6.0$ $SD = 0$), which is 2-3 points higher than those in other institution groups. It is possible that this speaks to a greater engagement by academics in Go8 institutions with educational technology support.

The statistically non-significant ($p > .05$) results did not offer any trends of note. The responses do not tend to support the initial belief that a strong research culture in Go8 institutions may see advisors feeling that their work is less understood or valued than in other institutional groupings.

Faculty Unit Discipline: Arts and Law ADs Feel More Valued by Academics than Central ADs

While institutions may not have an impactful culture at a university wide level, personal experience and anecdotal evidence suggests that academics in different disciplinary clusters can be very different to work with. The faculty/college-based units were coded by discipline area and their mean understand/value results were compared, including those for central units. While some of these discipline areas represent small samples (Health $n = 3$ respondents, Law $n = 2$ respondents), there were still several statistically significant results suggesting that further exploration of this as a factor is worth considering.

Perceptions of being valued by other managers were relatively consistent across all disciplines but there are some large differences for between disciplines when it comes to feeling understood by academics, with advisors somewhat disagreeing that their work is understood ($M = 3.5$ $SD = 2.12$) by those in Health but agreeing that they are understood ($M = 6.0$ $SD = 0$) by academics in Law. Results relating to perceptions of other managers understanding the work of ETs and LDs was also statistically significant, with ETs feeling dramatically more understood by other managers when they work in an Arts faculty ($M = 6.0$ $SD = 0$) than when they work in a Central unit ($M = 2.57$ $SD = 0.79$) and LDs in Business faculties ($M = 4.8$ $SD =$) feeling more understood by other managers than LDs working in Central units ($M = 3.59$ $SD = 1.31$), Health ($M = 3.5$ $SD = 2.12$) and Arts ($M = 3.0$ $SD = 2.83$). ADs also indicated that those in Arts (Understood $M = 7.0$ $SD = 0$ Value $M = 7.0$ $SD = 0$) and Law (Understand $M = 6.0$ $SD = 0$; Value $M = 6.0$ $SD = 0$) felt notably more understood and valued by academics than those working in central units (Understand $M = 3.38$ $SD = 1.77$ Valued $M = 4.75$ $SD = 0.89$). Interestingly, ADs in Business faculties felt understood ($M = 4.0$ $SD = 0$) and valued ($M = 4.0$ $SD = 1.41$) by academics at largely the same level as those in central units.

The differences between these findings and the previous section about central vs faculty units indicates that this more nuanced perspective may be more informative and that cultural differences at a disciplinary level can run deep. The nature of relationships between ADs and academics in some faculties but not others particularly highlights the value of further research in this space.

Gender Identity: Female ADs Feel More Valued by Academics

Of the respondents, 46 identify as female, 18 identify as male and 2 prefer not to say. Given the small sample of the latter group, I will focus on women and men.

The significant findings here relate to overall perceptions associated with gender identity of being valued by other managers as well as ADs being valued by direct managers, academics and other managers. For advisors overall there is little difference in perceptions of being valued by other managers (Female $M = 4.15$ $SD = 1.19$; Male $M = 4.56$ $SD = 1.26$) and this largely holds true for ADs in feeling valued by other managers (Female $M = 4.5$ $SD = 1.07$; Male $M = 4.75$ $SD = 2.06$). When it comes to academics though, female ADs feel somewhat more valued ($M = 5.5$ $SD = 0.76$) than male ADs ($M = 4.25$ $SD = 1.5$) and the gap in feeling valued by their direct manager is dramatically larger (Female $M = 6.63$ $SD = 0.52$; Male $M = 3.0$ $SD = 2.45$).

In the other results, there were not major differences to be seen in perceptions of being understood or valued by gender identity. It's difficult to know what conclusions to draw about the differences in perceptions of ADs being valued by direct managers on the basis of gender identity but it is worth noting for further study.

Qualifications – Have Minimal Bearing on Advisors' Work Being Understood or Valued

A common theme in research literature and discussions in the advisor community is about the extent to which advisors often have extensive formal qualifications when it comes to education and technology, but this does not enhance their credibility. Thematic analysis of survey responses about these advisors' qualifications was undertaken and results were coded as education and educational technology qualifications. This showed that 70% of respondents hold formal education qualifications and 31% have education technology related qualifications. These results were then examined to see what relation they might have to perceptions of the work of advisors being understood and valued by their working partners.

Education

There was no statistically significant link between perceptions of work being understood/valued and holding an educational qualification. The statistically non-significant ($p > .05$) results suggest that advisors holding an education qualification across all role types felt that their work was only negligibly more understood or valued in all their working relationships than those who don't. Surprisingly, LDs with no educational qualifications reported feeling slightly more understood ($M = 6.0$ $SD = 0.76$) and valued ($M = 5.36$ $SD = 1.34$) by their advisor peers than LDs with these qualifications.

Educational technologies

There was no statistically significant link between perceptions of work being understood/valued and holding an education technology focused qualification. Perceptions of being understood by direct managers approached significance ($p = .057$) and suggest that advisors with no education technology related qualification felt their work to be slightly more understood by them than those that do have one. Of interest among other statistically non-significant ($p > .05$) results, the most unexpected is that ADs with ed tech qualifications have a higher sense of their work being understood ($M = 5.25$ $SD = 2.87$) by direct managers than ADs without ($M = 4.78$ $SD = 2.11$), which merits deeper investigation given that conventionally AD roles are seen as less technology oriented. It is also interesting to note that across the role types, academics are perceived to value advisors with qualifications in education technology more highly (AD $M = 5.5$ $SD = 1$; ET $M = 5.67$ $SD = 2.31$; LD $M = 5.64$ $SD = 1.29$) than advisors without an ed tech qualification (AD $M = 4.79$ $SD = 1.2$; ET $M = 3.6$ $SD = 1.95$; LD $M = 5.16$ $SD = 1.11$).

The qualifications the advisors hold in relevant fields has long been assumed by them to bolster their professional credibility and this finding was somewhat surprising. One possible explanation is that working partners are unaware of the qualifications that advisors hold and may even be uninterested, particularly when advisors are in professional roles and aren't considered to be academic peers. Another explanation is that some academics see this simply as 'book learning', unrelated to actual teaching practice. Further investigation and discussion of this question is certainly needed.

Conclusion

This paper has highlighted some of the complexities of the human side of supporting digital transformation and enhancing TELT practices and technologies in Higher Education. The working relationships that different types of advisors have with academics, managers and with each other, expressed in their perceptions of how their work is understood and valued by these people, are more nuanced than expected. Factors such as qualifications or academic/professional classification that have long been assumed to shape these perceptions may not be as influential as expected and others including disciplinary cultures had barely been considered at all are potentially more influential. Perhaps the least surprising finding is that someone's proximity to the work that advisors do strengthens the advisor's sense of their work being understood and valued by that person.

It might be expected that the location of advisors in faculty-based units or centrally based ones would have shown greater differences, due to underlying tensions linked to competing priorities for advisors of all types. The effective absence of this as a factor in terms of this relationship suggests the need to explore whether advisors in central teams feel their work is understood/valued by advisor peers in faculty teams and vice versa.

Another assumption was that institutions might have discernible cultures at an institutional level that affect the

way advisors' work is valued. For example, academics and managers in universities in Group of Eight universities might value the work of advisors to a lesser degree because research might be valued over education. This was not seen to be the case. The results relating to the differences between disciplinary areas in institutions suggest that culture may actually be more closely aligned with an academic's identity as a disciplinary expert and it is these differences should be considered more seriously when undertaking digital transformation institutionally.

Something else that was unexpected was the complexity of the differences in the working relationships between advisors and academics and managers. Academics and managers were not seen by advisors as having consistent attitudes to advisors as a whole, rather their working relationships with LDs, ADs and ETs varied significantly depending on context. The relationships between advisors and advisors in other roles stuck out as being the most different to the relationships between advisors and managers (their own and others) and advisors and academics. One potential factor that was not examined in the survey was the organisational structures in which different advisor units work. Drysdale (2018) notes that there can be differences in leadership styles (hierarchical vs distributed) and also in terms of which types of advisors are co-located in advisor units. This is another area for further research.

The role classification of advisors as academic or professional staff was expected to have a much larger impact on how advisors felt their work was understood or valued by academics than it did. This may be because, as with institutions, it is wrong to think of academics as a monoculture. The difference between an advisor holding an academic or professional role did seem important to other advisors which suggests an alternate possibility – that there may be a tacit hierarchy in HE institutions, and advisors of either classification occupy a level below researching and teaching academics, who have little interest in whether an advisor is one or the other. It may also be that advisors are not sufficiently aware of the attitudes held by academics about advisors' classifications.

The contributions that advisors can make to digital transformation in Higher Education are significant. Their place in these institutions and the way that their work is understood and valued determine the effectiveness of these contributions. Their relationships with the people they work with are more complicated than might have been expected but understanding this and working to answer some of the new questions this study has raised could lead to greater outcomes for everyone.

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