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People, Partnerships and Pedagogies

Re-imagining women's leadership in the third space

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The role of the third space woman leader is a blurry one (Denney, 2021). While making a difference for students is at the heart of our work, creating and leading teams in a direction often not of our choosing and from a position that crosses many boundaries is a challenge and is often invisible or unrecognized (Tay, Huijser, Dart, & Cathcart, 2023).

No two third space women leaders arrived in this role by the same path, but all have a **diverse** range of skills and personal attributes to draw upon – formal qualifications, teaching experience, technical skills and experience, growth mindsets, resilience, flexibility, creativity and not afraid of change. Yet there is no model of leadership that encapsulates this eclectic range of personal expertise which enables us to work with a **diverse range of people** and varying digital fluencies in the tertiary teaching and learning space.

We therefore propose a new model of leadership for women working in professional staff third or liminal space roles (Loftus, 2018). A model which moves away from Servant Leadership (Smith, 2005), one of invisibility, nudging, persuading, to a more visible form of leadership - leading change from the front as well as alongside others in **partnerships**. A coaching and leadership style which empowers others and ourselves by flipping perceived weaknesses (no PhD, casual contracts, imposter syndrome, inability to articulate our own worth) highlights our strengths (our passion, our empathy, our problem solving ability, our practical and technical skills), diminishes the threats (seen as a support or an admin role in the rapidly changing digital landscape) and raises the importance and credibility (Kouzes & Posner, 2007) of the role and the work that we do promoting and enhancing **digital pedagogy** in higher education. It is precisely the work undertaken as third space professionals: implementing strategy as agents of change, working effectively with **diverse people** and disciplines, that develops the skills required to be leaders in higher education today (Denney, 2022, pp11; Pontefract, 2104 as cited in Loftus, 2018).

The proposed model highlights the value we bring to our institutions and pinpoints where we can and should take the lead in designing and supporting **digital pedagogy**. The model also benefits those women in and aspiring to be in leadership by illustrating that the strengths and opportunities as well as perceived threats and weaknesses of the third space female professional, place us well for contemporary leadership in higher education.

This digital poster will be interactive, inviting other women leaders to reflect on their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and to contribute to our model.

Keywords: leadership, third space, learning designer, educational technologist, partnerships, co-design, women, authentic leadership, student experience, blended professionals.

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