

Leading with direction and uncertainty: change within an online education team

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Question

In one word...

What does 'change' mean for you?

[Vevox responses below]



Context



The growth of fully online education provision will realise the University's ambition to support the global demand for higher education and lifelong learning, and to meet the pressing global economic, environmental and social challenges facing society.

This will be achieved via a range of flexible online learning opportunities to support individuals seeking academic qualifications and professional certificates, to enable upskilling and reskilling in an uncertain global employment market.



Growth of Fully Online Education Provision, University of Leeds Senate Paper, S/20/42, March 2021

Online Learning Team

- Learning design
- Instructional design
- Platform build
- Accessibility
- Project management

Supported by teams with expertise in:

- Media production
- Learning technology
- Digital graphic design
- Course support





Leading an online learning team

“

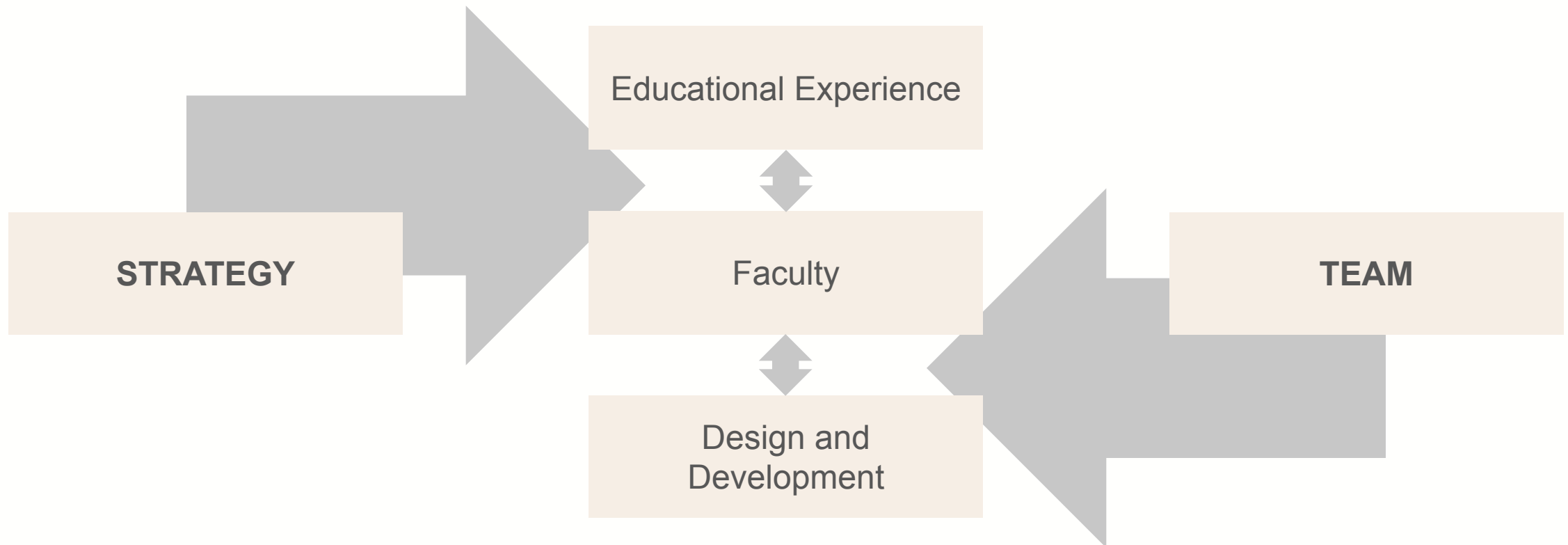
Each individual brings to the [team] experience and intelligence fitting for their roles, but as a team, each individual must share a common desire to enhance the education experience for students and faculty as well as to support the online learning initiatives of the university.

”

Leekang (2020, p.42)

Leadership as a bridging role

Leadership activity bridging institutional strategy and team interests, bringing each into decisions for online education.



Towards partnership

“

One advantage of working in a third space where boundaries and roles are ambiguous was the flexibility and even unspoken authority which learning designers found they could attain.

”

White, et al. (2020, p.167)



Change for growth

Change agenda

Build upon success of short course portfolio and initial learning from online degree programme design and development.

Aim to increase the capacity within the learning design team for sustainable growth of fully online education.



Shifting our approach



Design



Accessibility and innovation



Discipline and online pedagogy

Consultation and engagement

Briefing and feedback on methods

Initial workshop: Current approach

Ideas workshop: processes

Ideas workshop: roles and responsibilities

Proposal and feedback

Change plan and individual consultation

Updated change plan

Opportunities for feedback

Individual
meetings

Team
briefings
Q&A
Feedback
sessions

Feedback
form

Written responses, proposals, recordings

Change Engagement Facilitators

The mind map is a comprehensive overview of the VUCA world and its impact on business. It is structured as follows:

- Introduction to the VUCA world**
 - VUCA World**
 - Volatile: Rapidly changing and unpredictable environment.
 - Uncertain: Lack of clear direction and future.
 - Complex: Interconnected and multifaceted challenges.
 - Ambiguous: Lack of clear meaning and purpose.
 - Impact of VUCA World**
 - Business: Increased risk, uncertainty, and complexity.
 - Individuals: Increased stress, anxiety, and uncertainty.
 - Society: Increased polarization, conflict, and uncertainty.
 - Strategies for Success in the VUCA World**
 - Adaptability: Ability to change and grow.
 - Resilience: Ability to bounce back from setbacks.
 - Agility: Ability to move quickly and efficiently.
 - Collaboration: Working together to achieve common goals.
 - Continuous Learning: Staying up-to-date on the latest trends and technologies.
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Framework for reflection

Awareness: How do I ensure I am bringing external ideas into local context sensitively?

Professionalism: How will I demonstrate accountability alongside enabling autonomy?

Care and Community: How do I enable change through open dialogue and mutual understanding?

Values: How have I positioned learners in the focus of change?

Framework for Ethical Learning Technology (FELT)



Outputs from participatory approach



Ways of working



Responsibilities



Shared values

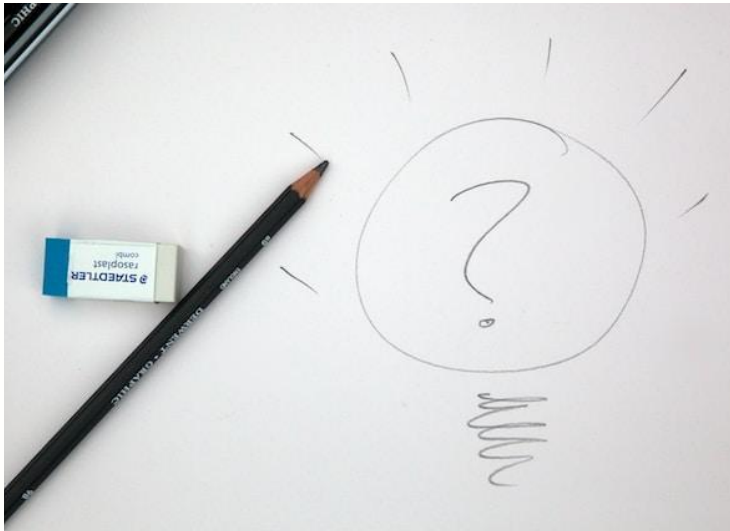


Successful leadership appears to demand the **preparedness to listen** to different viewpoints, appreciating that people come with different experiences, understandings and approaches and that these can result in **a richer outcome**. Beyond this, where that leader has the authority, responsibility and accountability to **make the decision**, once the consultative stage is completed and the decision is made, it is productive to **explain why** contrary viewpoints cannot be accommodated so those people are not simply ignored.

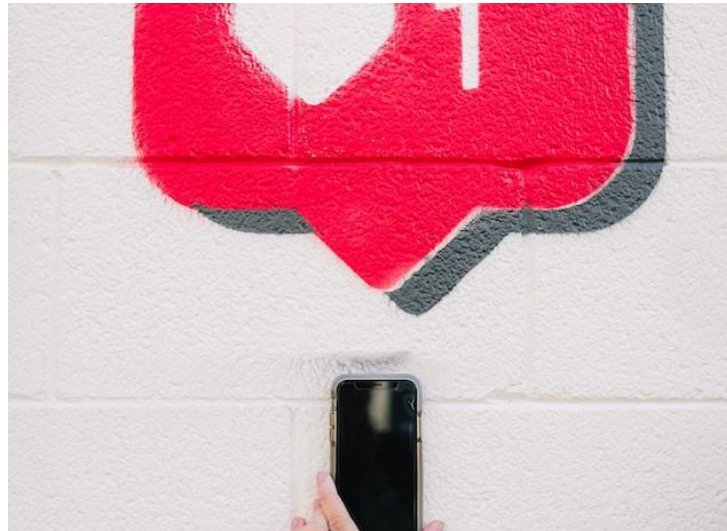


Holt, et al. (2014, p.390)

Reflections on leadership



Open agenda and uncertainty



Alignment to values



Communicating



A leadership approach for uncertainty



Question

How certain are you of what will be expected from you in your role in 6 months time?



Question

How equipped are you to address something currently unknown that will significantly impact your ways of working?

Distributed leadership for change

“

...tapping the ideas, creativity, skills and energies which initiate and **sustain change** and which exist throughout an organization, thus unleashing a **greater capacity** for organizational **responsiveness** and **sustained improvement**.

”

Woods and Gronn (2009, p.438)



Leading with uncertainty

**Empowerment
and
Agency**



Motivation



**Culture
of
Learning**



Design for change

“

Change is continuous, not periodic, episodic, or generational... **Our ability to respond to the need for continuous change is cultural.** So, any change management work in higher education must build and cultivate a culture that enables it.

”

Grabill, et al. (2022, p.92)



Online Learning Team at the University of Leeds

In the Digital Education Service, we enable the University's 10 year strategy for the growth of fully online education, through the provision of specialist online learning design and development expertise. Our focus is on engaging, accessible and inclusive learning experiences, underpinned by innovative digital pedagogies and technologies. We work collaboratively with academic partners, learners and across our teams through an evidence-based, solutions-focused, design-led approach.

We are a large team, with a commitment to quality online education and learning from each other. We work flexibly to understand learners' needs and academic colleagues' aims and work in partnership to achieve the shared goal of an effective and enjoyable online learning experience that enables our students to succeed.

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