The Impact of Higher Education Professionals on University Structure

by

Erica J. Jung

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Abstract

With technological innovations, financial constraints in the education sector, and fewer academic positions available to candidates with various educational qualifications, higher education is going through a major change. Increasing numbers of qualified individuals with graduate degrees find their jobs in academic support positions straddling both the academic and administrative domains. This growing cadre of professionals within a university context faces different challenges in terms of *what* and *how* they do the work for the university. The study explores the emergence of higher education professionals (HEPROs), specifically at Teaching and Learning Centres within the Canadian higher education landscape and their impact to the structure of the university. In higher education, the logic of managerialism is competing with the professional logic of academia. It is HEPROs that are filling the gap within the organizational configuration of these two competing logics in Canadian post-secondary education. Using a phenomenological approach, this qualitative inquiry was focused on the experiences of higher education professionals bounded within the context of Teaching and Learning Centres in universities. Findings from this study revealed the challenges that many HEPROs in leadership at Canadian teaching and learning centres encounter as they deal with the tensions that exist in their often hybrid roles – as a professional and management. These findings can inform universities on how to best situate HEPROs and capitalize on their qualifications and abilities to support the operations and structure of our institutions.

Keywords: higher education professionals, third space, teaching and learning centre

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the definition and emergence of higher education professionals at post-secondary institutions in Canada. It explains the context of this group within higher education, presents the research questions, demonstrates the significance of this group and shows the impact of their presence.

Definition of Key Terms

The term HEPROs (Higher Education Professionals) aptly refers to and encompasses roles that span the different academic and administrative units across our campuses. Kehm (2015) recognized this group to represent professionals who may not be engaged in the work of teaching or research directly, but are tasked to provide support in the implementation or execution of organizational change and decision-making at our institutions of higher learning.

The idea of a *Third Space* in higher education is a concept coined by Whitchurch (2008a, b) representing the growing cadre of professional staff who hold administrative roles throughout our higher education institutions and often have the equivalent credentialing of many of their tenure-track colleagues. Whitchurch (2008a, b) delineates four classifications for professional identity within academia based on the context of the space and knowledges required: 1) a bounded professional who works within clear structured boundaries; 2) a cross-boundary professional who is able to strategically use boundaries to build institutional capacity; 3) an unbounded professional who disregards boundaries in order to focus on the assigned projects; and 4) a blended professional who has designated roles that span the boundaries of academic and professional responsibilities.

Building on Whitchurch's *Third Space* conceptualization, Kehm (2015b, p. 103) proposes that "the phenomena of a (growing) culture of management and a more traditional academic culture within universities open the realm for a discussion of the interface between management and academics which is exactly inhabited by higher education professionals".

Professional positions within academia are sometimes also referred to as "*professional"* (Behari-Leak & le Roux, 2018; Gray, 2015; Sebalj et al, 2012; Szekeres, 2004; Veles & Carter, 2016), "*non-academic"* (Collinson, 2006; Graham, 2012), "*para-academic"* (Macfarlane, 2011), or "*alt-ac"* (Bowness, 2015). These terms quite often represent temporary or project positions rather than permanent or continuing positions thus perpetuating an unstable work life for the incumbents in those roles. This proliferation of professional staff in academia are now taking on responsibilities and space that at one time were designated solely for academics (Bassnett, 2005). For the purpose of this study, the term *academics* refers specifically to faculty members who hold a continuing, tenure-track position at their university of employment.

The term higher education professional will therefore exclude the members of the university community who fall under the employment categories of *academic* (specific to faculty members) or *support staff.* All other employment categories will be acceptable as long as they meet the other criteria for participant selection. To narrow the scope of the study, preference will be given to *administrative, professional or non-academic/alt-ac/para-ac* employment categories with specific attention to professional staff within the Student Affairs and Teaching and Learning areas. In order to maintain a study that does not go beyond the scope of a doctoral dissertation, there is a focus on the variables that have an impact on the conceptual framework of legitimacy of higher education professionals at our institutions.

According to Daft & Weick (1984, p. 285), the "knowledge, behaviours, mental maps, norms, and values over time" are the remnants of the individual actors who have moved on and may no longer be a member of the organization. Within post-secondary education, the current trends and demands necessitate a look at the history as well as the current environment that surrounds them. The past and existing forces combine to shape the future of an organization.

Context of the Study

Historically, higher education has been a system of education reserved for the families of the elite (Berdahl et al., 2011; Geiger, 2011a). However, as the demographics of those pursuing higher education began to shift in the mid-nineteenth century, education evolved from an exclusive privilege of the elite to an avenue for social mobility for the plebeian. After the Second World War, the higher education sector in Europe and the United States focused on increasing access and the impact of that remains today (Trow, 2000). According to Trow (2000), the move towards massification and the universal higher education that we see today began around the mid-twentieth century. The diversification in student body and the concomitant growth of higher education institutions resulted in a demand for reform of the traditional hierarchical structure, and the elitism of the students and those in the professorial ranks (Altbach, 2011), within the existing collegial culture that dominated the higher education landscape. Collegial culture can vary from one organization to another, however, it refers here to a governance or decision-making model that strongly weighs the interests of academics. Although the collegial culture still has a strong presence in academia, it now competes with a managerial culture that only surfaced in the 1960s in response to the ever-increasing need for efficiency (Berquist & Pawlak, 2008), as the numbers of institutions increased and with it, the development of more processes, policies, and management of people. There was a greater need for administrative support units and

resources to assist in maintaining the operations of the institutions. In the current era of financial constraints and increasing accountability, higher education institutions are looking at ways to streamline, collaborate, reduce, and establish more parsimonious measures of providing high quality education with less resources. While the proportion of university budgets dedicated to faculty salaries has dropped, the growth of the administrative positions has been steadily increasing (Giroux, 2021; Srigley, 2016). While Trow (2000) attributes the decrease in student-staff ratios to the continued reduction of government support for education and the increase in enrolments, staff growth – specifically referring to faculty – is not commensurate with this increase. Some critics believe that there is an uneven emphasis on financial constraints and minimizing resourcing on the academic front whereas there are new administrative positions in academic and student support areas continuing to crop up at institutions across North America (Mintz, 2021; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Srigley, 2016). Srigley (2016) posits that the corollary of the steady reduction of academic programs has been financial resources being redirected to administrative units such as communications, student services and the registrar's office. The managerial culture has shifted the emphasis from the academic work of universities to the administrative supports and responsibilities. The introduction of the neoliberal ideology to higher education has been translated into a market and efficiency-focused organizational culture which has had an impact on the functioning of our universities.

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism has a distinct connection to economic and market-driven ideology and an underlying focus on capitalism, privatization, and efficiencies (Austin & Jones, 2016; Giroux, 2002, 2010). Harvey (2005) asserts that the neoliberal idealogy has focused its attention on privatization and commodification of fields that have traditionally not emphasized profitability.

The neoliberalism of our day has seeped into higher education and converted what was a knowledge-based focus to one of service and competition for students now often seen as customers. With this neoliberal basis underpinning of our higher education system, it has informed many of the institutional policies and procedures that support the operational structures at our universities as an answer to the marketization and privatization of our higher education institutions (Mintz, 2021). Every university has their own agenda and institutional priorities that determine where resources are allocated and in the case of the neoliberal university, the markets, competitions, performance data, and management are often areas of interest. According to Geiger and Sá (2008), economic relevance is seen as important in the functioning of universities and is often a consideration when determining the institutional-level priorities – once institutions set their higher-level priorities, it can result in the emergence of new resourcing needs, requirements, or units to operationalize the goals. Extensive organizational change is difficult to manoeuvre in universities, however, change can still occur at a more innocuous pace and magnitude than compared to in other organizations. As neoliberal ideology became entrenched in our universities, the new units and staffing that were required supported the managerial culture that had developed a strong presence on our campuses. The massification of universities due to the growth of enrolments has significant implications on the financial, organizational, governance, and diversification of student demographic as never been experienced in previous generations (Trow, 2010). It can impact the decisions of where resources are allocated, what the institutional priorities should be, and the structures that will best accommodate this growth.

As new initiatives are undertaken, it results in change at a systems level or organizational level for the university that now operates under a neoliberal underpinning. Traditionally in a university setting, decisions were made on consensus-based structures whereas it is now more of

a centralized power base, often found at a Senior or Executive level of Administration (Bruckmann & Carvalho, 2018). The once collegial approach to leadership is in stark contrast to the managerial approach that comes from the private sector which gives strong weighting to the decisions made at a managerial level.

Higher education with its core mission of passing on knowledge has been inundated with pressures to accomplish this via research and innovations. The knowledge triangle refers to the relationship between education, research, and innovation. Its popularity is closely tied to the growing symbiotic relationship of the three fields, particularly in higher education (Unger & Polt, 2017). With the massification of universities, the focus seems to have shifted from a focus on the more traditional ideas of dissemination of knowledge(s) to one on knowledge, technology, and innovation (Maassen & Stensaker, 2011) as influenced by the political and economic situations in a given nation. Trow (2010) outlines the development of education intended for the elite, expanded to the masses, and further extended to universal access. He concludes with the inevitability of massification in higher education due to the growth of technical and skills development needed in society; to the universal access due to the increasing numbers of students accessing this level of education as never seen before. The ability to provide services and supports to the student populations has become more challenging with the increasing enrolment numbers. World War II was a significant event in the world, but specifically in higher education, it was a watershed moment that began a growth trajectory that had never been experienced up until that time. For the following 50 years, in Europe alone the enrollment levels in higher education grew from 5 per cent to over 30 per cent (Trow, 2010). This astronomical growth cannot help but have an impact on the administration – of any services and operations; governance – regarding the structures and leadership; and even the relational dynamics – with

declining student-teacher ratios; a larger new populace with new hires in administration and governance roles thereby less institutional knowledge amongst the incumbent actors who are now the minority in number (Geiger, 2011a; Maassen & Stensaker, 2011; Trow, 2010). In particular, even as the financial ability to attain an education has become more difficult, the needs for innovations and technologies continue to expand (Geiger, 2011b). Increased levels of student enrolment, but less access to the upper echelons of higher education (top-tiered schools and/or middle-upper class populations) limited by financial constraints has caused some levels of inequality in our education systems (Teichler, 2010). This has left higher education as a less tenable goal for the average person seeking ways to advance their social and educational capital for the future – even though more people are getting an education.

The ubiquity and continued rise of IT in the world has intensified the commercialization of teaching, learning, and research in the higher education context (Geiger, 2011b; Trow, 2010). It is this technological advancement that has been a tremendous aide to universal access in higher education. The idea that anyone with a desire to pursue further education only has to access it through technological means and can do so in the convenience of their preferred location and time. With this freedom of time and space comes the ability to offer more courses to the growing student populations – thus creating the need for example, to hire more contract faculty or professionals in their fields, to allow for flexibility of staffing and course offerings. In Rhoades' (1998a) work, he attributes a new power dynamic at play within universities whereby the higher education professionals are taking over more responsibilities in overseeing or collaborating in the creation or development of academic work which previously was the sole responsibility of faculty.

The melding of the economy and higher education loosely defines academic capitalism whereby market considerations now play a role in grant funding, industry partnerships, tuition and more (Rhoades & Slaughter, 1997; Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). As these areas develop, there is an increasing need for professionals to help navigate and manage the associated responsibilities.

The evolution of the internet and the world wide web has also opened the doorway for academe to reach outside of the normal limitations of physical borders and capitalize on this globalization in opportunities for research, scholarship, and collaborations. In a sense, there is an access to higher education that has only been made possible due to the ubiquity of the internet, technologies, and connectivities that now exist in our world today.

Higher Education Professionals

The seismic change of demographic in the student population (Matkin, 2011) and the staffing of the higher education institutions has not been without its tensions and criticisms. Perhaps at the extreme end of the spectrum are faculty members like Srigley (2016) who suggests that students are no longer receiving the true value of their education by being taught by *lesser* and incompetent, but somewhat credentialed professionals, who have wandered into or crossed over into an academic terrain that was never intended for them. In his unapologetic criticism of the cultural shift and the increasing presence of professionals at our institutions, he opines that education is becoming a laughable enterprise (Srigley, 2016).

With a clear focus on financial, institutional and organizational efficacies, quality assurance, and competencies, the managerial culture has taken a prominent place within the higher education setting. Over time, when individual actors in an organization depart, certain practices and norms that have become entrenched in the culture of that organization become

orphaned in terms of its heritage or origin. As those with the historical or institutional memory of the organization have left then all that remains are the norms and practices that were established by those who have left. Within post-secondary education, the current trends and demands necessitate a look at the history as well as the current environment that surrounds them. The past and existing forces combine to shape the future of an organization. A watershed moment in higher education can be political events like World War I and II; economic events such as the financial crisis (U.S., or Asia) or the more recent worldwide Coronavirus pandemic; or a technological change such as the development of the Worldwide Web or smartphones. These moments have contributed to a different level of access to citizens of all ages, socioeconomic histories, and racial backgrounds. Historically, academia was replete with freedoms – of speech, job management, and autonomy – and noticeably devoid of overseers or a managerial ethos (Ward, 2012) and now, this managerialism has become embedded and operationalized in the higher education context. An example of this can be found in both Canadian and American government regulations that have had an impact on human resource practices (hiring/firing/performance reviews), employment equity, accessibility and other policies in higher education institutions (Berquist & Pawlak, 2008).

At a time of fiscal constraints within academia, many newly minted PhDs are finding it challenging to acquire a permanent, tenure-track position and in the United States, the fewer than 15% who do manage to secure such a coveted prize are the lucky ones (Cyranoski et al., 2011; Larson et al., 2014). So where does this leave this group of highly educated and talented crop of doctorate-holding prospects? It is becoming the norm to see applications from this group of individuals, for positions that are not tenure-track and quite often outside of the scope of their specialization or research field. However, the familiarity of post-secondary environments can

seem comfortable and still allows them to apply their knowledge and experiences to an area that may have an academic component or touch-point. Or in extreme cases, the position may be completely different, but these candidates are able to effectively use the skill sets acquired during their doctoral programs in their new roles. The practices born out of the neoliberal university have changed what knowledge is, how it is disseminated, and where it is created (Ward, 2012) to the point of significantly altering the organizational and institutional landscape. In fact, it has resulted in opening up space for new layers of higher education staff positions, still connecting to academia in a loose sense, and providing well-credentialed persons with opportunities to utilize the skills acquired during many long years of graduate studies. As efficiency and competence are the focus of the managerial culture (Berquist & Pawlak, 2008), it is not surprising to see this group of qualified personnel taking on more of these positions and promoting the legitimacy and establishment of a *Third Space* within the walls of academia.

As there is limited data on who those professional staff are that occupy this Third Space in higher education in Canada, we look to the U.K., and Australia. As per Whitchurch (2008a), those with management roles but not an academic contract in the U.K. study were represented by

- Managers in faculties, schools, and departments, and functional areas such as student services
- Specialist professionals with accredited qualifications such as those in finance and human resources offices; and
- 'niche' specialists who have developed functions such as research management and quality audit specifically in a higher education context (p. 380).

According to Kehm (2015b), the roles that HEPROs take on have been developed based on evolving needs, challenges, and newly implemented policies at the institution often beginning "in

an incremental and ad hoc form" (p. 107). Precisely for this reason, the in-between space that Behari-Leak & le Roux (2018) describe is not positioned in one area alone, but rather, it touches multiple areas including but not limited to "academic support, leadership and advocacy and other roles at the periphery" (p. 30).

The continued expansion of work for faculty members has contributed to an increase in roles that provide academic support in the areas of research and teaching. Examples of roles such as technology transfer specialists (dealing with intellectual property) or educational developers (dealing with pedagogy) have become more mainstream at many institutions along with other administrative positions that require advanced degrees (Macfarlane, 2011). The increasing involvement in academic capitalism in higher education has necessitated the additional staffing and skills that HEPROs are able to provide at our post-secondary institutions (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2011). This is directly the result of the competitive nature of higher education. As more faculty members seek the financial interests from their own research and life work such as patents, licensing, start-ups, royalties, copyright, engineering and research innovations, and other marketable activities, it creates a gap that HEPROs are able to fill (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2011). Clark (1998) looked at the entrepreneurial university with a focus on the organizational and management lens without devaluing the academic values and goals. The entrepreneurial university was creating need in these areas that did not exist before the introduction of neo-liberal ideology into higher education.

The pressures that universities face in today's world is considerably different than what they faced previously in terms of *what* and *how* they do the work of the higher education institution. Traditionally, these institutions functioned differently than the private sector

(Bruckmann & Carvalho, 2018; Hyde et al., 2013; Smeenk et al., 2009) where efficiency, evaluation, accountability are commonplace in that working culture. Due to the adoption of these business models and priorities, universities find themselves expanding the work they undertake in order to advance the university whether in research, fundraising, quality assurance, online learning, etc. There are new positions created to fill those gaps and HEPROs are the natural solution to filling those roles. The growing diversification of the academic role and managerialism (Hyde et al., 2013) can be found in various new positions. One such example can be found in the *Research Grants Facilitator* (or similarly titled) roles that are becoming ubiquitous at many institutions (Macfarlane, 2012; Moran & Misra, 2018). The intricacies of grant applications and funding is an arduous and time-consuming process. The support of HEPROs in the organization and coordination of each application can be of tremendous help. Armed with a PhD, these research grants facilitators assist faculty members as they prepare their grant applications – in particular to the Tri-Council funding agencies. These types of roles, along with many other professional roles, are continuing to increase as is evidenced by the growing number of professional positions within the higher education landscape. Another example can be found in situations such as with online learning – where previously academic staff developed courses with slight adjustments made to accommodate certain student needs if requested (Hyde et al., 2013), now require support of professionals with technical and pedagogical expertise who help produce a final product (course) worthy of a stamp of approval from all involved stakeholders.

In Canada, there is a growing presence of higher education professionals verified by the postings for job opportunities in the various categories mentioned throughout this paper. However, to date, much of the literature comes from outside of Canada.

Employment Category

Although there was little information in the literature concerning the employment status of many higher education professional roles, there was a distinction made between a traditional *Academic* position and that of a non-academic professional. As previously mentioned, since there is not a lot known about the Canadian context, a preliminary scan was conducted as an initial look at Canadian universities. After conducting an informal environmental scan of several institutions and their job postings of professional positions, it brought to light the repeated inconsistencies found in the categorization of these roles. Some are under 'professional' and others 'other academic' and yet still, others are found in the support staff category. Included in the environmental scan were University of British Columbia, Dalhousie University, McMaster University, University of Calgary, University of Manitoba, University of Toronto, and Western University. Rather than a full scan of institutions that comprise the U15, a random selection was made to be representative of several provinces, not just one province or one region, from across Canada. This disparity in categorization may be attributed to the relatively new nature of these roles or the inability to clearly identify the nature of the job. For instance, an Educational Developer is typically found at teaching and learning centres, doing the academic support work toward enhancing teaching and learning for faculty members and anyone with a teaching appointment. This position requires a Masters and quite often, a PhD is preferred, if not required. Although there can be a teaching component involved with this role, with the exception of the University of Manitoba, many of the other institutions have a research component to the role of Educational Developer as well. If research and teaching are elements in the role of an Educational Developer and these are also key components of an academic position, why is one (Educational Developer) categorized into a professional group while the other (traditional

academic) is considered a faculty member with an academic appointment? The issue is not whether this position is an academic position or not, but rather, that there is a lack of consistency or clarity concerning this type of role. Again, this could be attributed to the newness of this category of positions or the lack of importance placed on these roles in higher education, which was examined in this study.

Shifting of Power

DiMaggio & Powell (1983) identified the process by which an organization starts to resemble other organizations in its organizational field as isomorphism. Institutional isomorphism emerges from an organization's tendency over time to look like other similar organizations within the context of the political and/or ritualized aspects of the institution. If an organizational change occurs, it can bring in new elements or actors to the field, or it can shift the power from one entity to another, possibly disrupting the structure of the institution. Higher education institutions may resemble one another in terms of output, but the process and who is involved in those outcomes can vary. With the existing isomorphism in the higher education system, it behooves our institutions to acknowledge and create space for the higher education professionals who are able to bring their expertise to spheres outside of academic disciplines. By allowing space for an entirely new layer of staff, we are changing the organizational structure as it has previously existed in academia. Depending on where these new roles are situated in the institution's structure determines the influence or level of power. Still relatively new, this change is not necessarily a problem but perhaps the impact still needs to be unpacked or fully realized. Kehm's idea of "new configurations of power" (2015b, p. 109) within our institutions speaks to the changing nature of the structure of higher education. The work of HEPROs tends to be positioned to support institutional priorities by providing expertise to facilitate the work load of

academics and the management. However, when that involves increasing bureaucratic paperwork or added accountability measures, these mechanisms are no longer received favourably and begs the question of who is accountable to whom? It appears that in the world of academia, the market logic of managerialism has encroached on the more established professional logic of academia. In light of the shift from a collegial to a managerial culture in academia, the higher education professionals are filling a gap within the organizational configuration in Canadian post-secondary education.

Competing Logics

"Much of existing body of literature assumes that the emergence of HEPROs also entails a de-professionalisation of the academic profession and that this leads to conflicts. Interestingly this is not the case generally" (Kehm, 2015b, p. 108). This goes against what some might believe to exist as a prevailing sentiment among academics that HEPROs are taking on responsibilities that have traditionally belonged to the academic side of universities, namely, faculty members holding tenure track positions. The competing logics at play are that of professions i.e., academia and the market i.e., managerialism. The academic side of universities remain in tact however, there is now more demand for support of the work of the institution alongside any new initiatives and priorities. This engenders the competing logics (academia vs managerialism) which continue to promote the academic profession's views that HEPROs are part of the controls that they would like to diminish for the sake of academic freedom.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the emergence of higher education professionals (HEPROs) within the Canadian higher education landscape as it relates to the existing (institutional) logics and the institutional structure at universities.

Research Questions

Given the stated purpose above, the study seeks to address the overarching question of **What role do Higher Education Professionals play in changes to structure when universities face *competing logics* of professions (academia) and market (managerialism)?** The following sub-questions are aimed at answering this main research question:

- How does the emergence of HEPROs at a Teaching and Learning Centre within the Canadian research universities relate to the structure (organizational and/or power) of a university?
- What is the relationship between HEPROs at a Teaching and Learning Centre and (Canadian) higher education's move to a managerial culture?
- What agency (e.g., decision-making) do HEPROs at a Teaching and Learning Centre have at our universities?

Positionality of the Researcher

The study developed from a personal observation made as a higher education professional facing various obstacles and barriers that hindered my ability to contribute fully or to my optimal abilities. This led to a series of self-reflections about the nature of my lived experiences in my professional workspace. Meaning making and understanding the significance of the role that I hold within the walls of a higher education institution were part of this journey.

As the researcher, it is difficult to disassociate myself from the study since my occupational status lies within the realm of higher education professionals – the very group of people whose experiences are surfacing through this study. The notion of bracketing myself (Creswell, 2007) out in a study makes logical sense, however, it is a difficult concept to actualize as a member of the group who is at the core of this research. Although my positionality can be a

strength to the study, it is important not to impose my own lens and experiences to that of the participants since they bring their own stories that will inform this research. The suggestion to deal with bias directly (Willis, 2007) bodes well for the researcher who can use the transparency to build trust with the audience/readers. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) argue against the idea of piecing together a picture of something that is already familiar to the researcher(s) when collecting the data but rather, constructing the picture from the information acquired during the data collection process.

Of the past 16 years working in higher education, I have spent the last nine years as an administrator of a unit, at a management level. It was during this time that I completed a master's in education, became an associate director then a director of a growing teaching and learning unit – to now pursuing a doctorate degree. The area that I work in is one that does typically require graduate degrees to advance in the field. While most Director level positions in similar units across Canada require a PhD, my situation was less common whereby I gained a leadership position prior to having a doctoral degree. Of note, is that my appointment to the Director position was not contingent on obtaining a doctorate – even though I decided to pursue one in the end. The reasons for pursuing a doctorate were twofold. Firstly, I have always genuinely enjoyed learning and for me, I believed that a PhD would provide a level of challenge and interest that cannot be obtained through any other learning opportunity. Secondly, the realities of my work situation and the observations I have made over the years led me to believe that a PhD was necessary as a baseline for credibility, legitimacy, and to get my foot in the door at the most basic level of leadership to be able to contribute meaningfully within a higher education setting.

In a higher education context, specifically working with academics, there have been countless encounters where credentialing was important to the beginnings of a conversation or an

initiative. Quite often, the content knowledge required was not the most important factor, but rather, the educational qualifications, or lack thereof, would open the door to affirm my position or potential contributions.

It has become more common, especially in education, to encounter other educators who have had significant time gaps between degrees. There was 17 years between the completion of my undergraduate degree and beginning a master's program. By the time I complete my PhD, I will be 53 years old. As a young child, I had only been acquainted with one way to pursue a PhD – doing all three levels of degrees consecutively without a break in between. Although I knew people who had obtained doctorates, I had never known anyone who had returned to school as a mature learner, until I began working in higher education. My own cultural background was strongly influenced by a patriarchical philosophy and genderized roles. As a woman, I was responsible for child-rearing. Any educational and career pursuits should be completed prior to starting a family. Fortunately, my own family did view education differently and fully embraced the lifelong learner mindset. For HEPROs like me who have a later start in pursuit of a doctoral degree, the available employment opportunities can be limited. This would not be of any consequence except for the fact that if certain management positions are contingent on obtaining a terminal degree, the possibilities of career advancement can already be delayed significantly due to the much later in life start of such a program.

Rationale for the Study

Despite the increasing numbers of higher education professionals employed at higher education institutions in Australia, Europe, and the United States (Kehm, 2015, Whitchurch, 2015), there is less research on this emergence of new administrative professions in the Canadian context. Studies by Kehm (2015a, b) and Whitchurch (2006, 2007, 2008a, b) reveal that

HEPROs' roles have been created as the result of evolving needs, challenges and newly implemented policies that begin with informal and gradual changes to the work at higher education institutions. Although institutional isomorphism has played a role in some of the changes that have occurred at our institutions, this study will expand the scope of interest to include the competing logics at play.

Whitchurch and others have conducted studies in Australia and the U.K., however, little research has emerged from Canada in the area of *Third Space* in higher education. Also, to limit the scope of the study to a manageable size, it will be focused on professional staff in positions of leadership within their respective units specifically in the area of teaching and learning. The Canadian context will contribute to the growing literature on higher education professionals especially in teaching and learning centres.

Significance of the Study

In terms of the significance of this study, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, there is less research in Canada around *Third Space* professionals. This study will be an empirical contribution to the fields of educational administration and higher education as it explores the role and impact of higher education professionals on the structure of our university systems. Attention to this emerging group of staff on our campuses is warranted because the financial constraints and reduced funding models at Canadian institutions is likely a situation that will continue and so, it will warrant restructuring, repurposing, and reconceptualizing existing and very established roles, functions, and efficacies. The findings from this study can inform management and leadership practice at our institutions of ways to reconceptualize the function and positioning of those who occupy the *Third Space*. So who exactly are these higher education professionals? What is the scope of the work that they do in our institutions? What kinds of

conflict or support arise from their presence in the higher education landscape in Canada? These are but a few of the answers we seek in this research study.

The results of this research could be of particular interest to university administration and even government, as both seek to have more PhD graduates find employment once they complete their programs. The limited options outside of academia are not always due to a lack of available tenure-track positions, but also could be a preferred career shift, in which case, universities would be a natural context to situate highly credentialed employees who have a fundamental understanding of the learning process for students from undergraduate to graduate studies. It could provide insight and career options in post-secondary settings alongside the private sector, government, or industry which have become the popular options outside of academia.

Organization of the Dissertation

This dissertation is comprised of six chapters. This first chapter introduces the context of the study and subsequent purpose, research questions, and significance to the broader audience. **Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**. This chapter offers an overview on the literature related to the emergence of higher education professionals and the underpinnings of institutional logics that exist in academia.

Chapter 3: Methodology. This chapter provides a rationale for the data collection methods and explains the methodology of the study.

Chapter 4: Findings. This chapter presents the findings using the collected data and a qualitative approach to answer the research questions of the study.

Chapter 5: Discussion. This chapter provides a discussion on the study's findings from the previous chapter and data collected; recommendations for practice and further research; and implications for future practice.

Chapter 6: Conclusion. This chapter presents the importance of the study and the final conclusions.

Chapter Two

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter will review the current literature related to the emergence of higher education professionals within the context of the post-secondary education landscape in Canada. Also, this chapter will present the theoretical lens found in the institutional logics perspective from the work of Th ornton et al. (2012), which originated from the work of Friedland and Alford (1991) that informs this study. The competing logics of academia versus managerialism resulting in the emergence of HEPROs is the underpinning of this study.

Canadian Context

The educational landscape is different in Canada than in Australia, the U.K., or the U.S. One such difference lies in the fact that, unlike in Australia, the U.K., or the United States, there is no governing body such as a Ministry of Education at a federal level over higher education. The British North America (BNA) Act was established in 1867 under which the Dominion of Canada was created. This was the beginnings of the Canadian constitution until the Constitution Act was established in 1982. Having been witness to the American civil war and having an aversion to its imperialism, those who penned the constitution created two distinct levels of government in Canada – federal and provincial. The federal government would be responsible for priorities such as trade and defence. Education, however, was not viewed with the same level of priority and thus placed under provincial jurisdictions (Jones, 2014). Without federal level oversight of higher education, universities operate as autonomous institutions where education is governed in a decentralized manner. As such, the considerations of unionization, tenure and promotion possibilities, funding opportunities, and governmental mandates can have an impact

on the organizational structure, roles, strategic initiatives, and the units responsible for operationalizing and implementing new policies and processes. Therefore, the emergence of HEPROs and their role and experiences at Canadian institutions may be distinct from other countries.

According to Jones et al. (2001), the bicameral governance model is the most widely used among Canadian universities. It is comprised of an academic senate which is responsible for the academic decision-making and a corporate board which is responsible for the administrative decision-making at the university. The governance model may have an impact on the presence of HEPROs at our universities.

Not uncommon at many Canadian universities is the concept of unionization that is the result of faculty's desire for "a stronger voice in the decision-making process" (Austin & Jones, 2016, p. 139). Austin and Jones (2016) suggest that the majority of faculty in Canada belong to a union. This could have bearing on how higher education professionals are viewed and positioned in terms of the work they do in relation to the work of faculty on our campuses.

Those Who Occupy the Third Space

A new layer of administration has resulted from the introduction of staff who have equivalent credentialing but with a different focus than their academic peers. Those who fit this categorization fall into the realm of *Third Space* (Whitchurch, 2008) professionals who have responsibilities that lie in both the academic and administrative support spheres. What was traditionally the three pillars of teaching, research, and service that academics were bound to, has for those who occupy this *Third Space*, become four pillars with the addition of management responsibilities. The concept of Third Space can be found in the work of Homi Bhabha (1994)

who defined it as the intersection of two cultures, the "in-between spaces" (p. 1) that help us to find our identity and place.

In the broadest sense, those who occupy the *Third Space* on our campuses can easily be found in a broad spectrum of roles across various units and disciplines ranging from student affairs to academic support units which include Teaching and Learning Centres, Libraries, Faculties, Information Technology departments, Research Services, Advancement, and (administrative) support for the senior level positions such as a Director of a Vice-President or the President's office who oversees the administrative support positions.

Globalization, technological changes, and diversified knowledge pathways are pressure points that are driving organizations to rethink and double their efforts in their attempts for growth and survival (Huy, 2002). It is a challenge for organizations to remain nimble and adaptable in order to weather the changes and the impact of many, if not most of these external environmental triggers. Any living organism breathes and grows at some level. Similarly, an organization that can 'live' on is evidenced by its continued adaptation to the changes it faces resulting from a number of variables both internal and external. The corollary of survival of this kind is isomorphism at its finest – the homogeneous nature of institutions whereby new rules are established and practiced, eventually mirroring other institutions in structure and organization. With the increase in regulations – for research, quality assurance, risk management and security, environmental health, accessibility, technology, and more – there is a demand for experts in these fields (Marcus, 2014).

The emerging cadre of professionals within our institutions are referred to in the literature by a slew of terms which include but are not limited to *Third Space* professionals (Whitchurch, 2008), para-academic staff (Macfarlane, 2011), non-academic staff (Graham, 2012), support

professionals (Sebalj et al., 2012), and higher education professionals or HEPROs (Kehm, 2015). In the past 25 years or so, the scholarly work around this group of staff has grown because their presence has been more pronounced due to the increase in the type of roles and positions these staff members have begun to occupy on our campuses.

Categorization of HEPROs

The research around Higher Education Professionals seems to fall into two main areas – the identity of this group and their impact on organizational change within the academy. With a shift in nomenclature from general or support staff titles to professional staff occurring with more regularity (Sebalj et al., 2012), the identity of this group is beginning to surface and become familiar on our campuses. Macfarlane (2011) posits that what was traditionally the responsibility of academics has been parsed out into individualized arenas of specialization in the areas of research, teaching, and service. The HEPROs who take on such a responsibility can then reconfigure their roles to wholly devote their energy to specializing in one of these arenas. According to Gornitzka & Larsen (2004), the development of these types of new administrative tasks has resulted in a change in qualifications and competencies required of these professional staff. Up until the 1990s to early 2000s, professional staff were still relatively unknown and somewhat invisible (Gray, 2015; Sebalj et al., 2012; Szekeres, 2004, 2011). Scholars such as Gray (2015) and Whitchurch (2008, 2013) address in their work that although staff may be assigned to a more academic or administrative role, the titles often do not fully encapsulate their responsibilities, nor do they reveal the boundary-spanning nature of their roles on our campuses. The literature reveals the identity of those who are assuming the higher education professional roles by their qualifications, education, disciplinary backgrounds, and even gender (Kehm, 2015b; Whitchurch, 2013). It also categorizes the type of work that these professionals are

undertaking – some of it borne out of the evolution of new(er) roles that are the result of government legislations, technological advancements, and innovations (Boffo & Moscati, 2015).

As a growing entity, the presence of Higher Education Professionals on our campuses has resulted in some organizational change. Due to their expertise and commensurate educational qualifications, some HEPROs are able to take on management level positions by combining the content knowledge and professional experience to their work. Still others find themselves on projects that cross boundaries across different spheres at a university. For example an initiative in the student affairs portfolio focusing on student retention could involve multiple stakeholders from career services, financial services, outreach, recruitment, and others. Many institutions are facing pressures from external entities such as governmental reforms (Austin & Jones, 2016; Gornitzka & Massen, 2017) which further supports the move toward a growing concern with efficiency and accountability (Kehm, 2015; Kehm & Lanzendorf, 2004; Ryttberg & Geschwind, 2021; Smeenk et al., 2009). It is these types of neoliberal notions of managerialism, performance, and corporatization that Veles & Carter (2016) believe are opening up new roles and growth opportunities for professionals. The increased credentialing for higher education professionals gives way for them to effectively straddle between the academic and administrative domains (Hyde et al., 2013; Kehm, 2015; Schneijderberg & Merkator, 2013; Whitchurch, 2009). Azaghouagh-El Fardi (2021) focuses on professionalization, adding to the idea propagated by DiMaggio and Powell (1991) whereby the legitimation of a group occurs through the establishment of their knowledge, experience, and skills over a period of time. Those who hold a rank and title have power due to their positions, however, professional staff can often yield power through their influence thus becoming change agents within the organization (Karlsson & Ryttberg, 2016).

The initial dive into the literature started with a query of 'Third Space', 'Higher education professionals' and 'HEPROs' on the University of Manitoba Libraries search, followed by a google scholar search with the same words which yielded 217 results. On the ERIC – ProQuest database, there were 80 scholarly journals that surfaced from a search of the words 'higher education professionals and third space'. Of the 80 articles, only 14 were relevant to this research study. Four of these articles were already part of the chapter two literature review. The number of scholarly articles that address the Canadian context for HEPROs or Third Space professionals is still relatively small compared to some of the more established research topic areas in the field of education.

Developments in the Last Two Decades

As recently as ten years ago, as higher education professionals were becoming recognized in the UK, they remained an unknown entity in many Central and Eastern European countries (Kehm & Lanzendorf, 2006). More literature is emerging on the topic of higher education professionals, however, the Canadian context has much to be explored. A recent narrative inquiry by Smith, Holden, Yu & Hanlon (2021) speaks to the lived experiences of the authors as *Third Space* professional staff at a Canadian post-secondary institution. The preponderance of literature was from Australia, UK, Europe, and the United States of America (Gornitzka & Larsen, 2004; Gray, 2015; Kehm, 2007, 2013; Macfarlane, 2011; Veles & Carter, 2019; Whitchurch, 2008).

Third Space professionals occupy the spaces that help to bridge the needs of both the academic and administrative sides of our universities. And it is these in-between spaces that give reason to pause and consider new roles and positions resulting from a new initiative or required implementation which according to Kehm (2015) are often filled by HEPROS.

Career progression of professional staff varies from one person to the next. There is no one trajectory that is common to all professional staff. Unlike tenure-track careers with its established pathway to promotion, professional staff often find their career track and advancement to be relatively unique. Many come from various backgrounds and experiences that may not be directly related to their current roles. In addition, if the unit is dynamic and undergoing rapid growth or organizational change, as is the case at many institutions, individual roles can also evolve in a parallel growth pattern (Schroeder, 2011).

In any organization, roles that exist within a specified career structure and can be placed in a reporting line are easiest to manage (Whitchurch, 2013). The more recent proliferation of professional academic staff in higher education has made it difficult for those in academia to understand and situate these professionals within the framework of their own functions and roles. The facets of teaching, research, and service are embedded in the description of most academic tenure-track positions. However, within each of these areas – teaching, research, and service – lie a breadth of work that can be provided by professional staff who have the credentials and academic knowledge to provide supports specific to those areas. Numerous roles that exist in this capacity are recognized as professional staff or more specifically, under the category of *Other Academic*. An example that highlights this type of position can be found in a relatively newer role at our institution, that of a research grants facilitator. This position tends to be filled by professionals with terminal degrees, whose sole focus is supporting faculty members in securing their research grants. Also, at our teaching and learning centre, professional staff known as educational developers and academic researchers support faculty members and Faculties in a broad range of teaching-related topics ranging from instructional strategies, curriculum mapping, accreditation, assessment and evaluation, pedagogically sound implementation of technology

into courses, educational research, and scholarship of teaching and learning. Additionally, at many institutions, writing centres employ professional staff with advanced degrees, who provide academic support for students in their writing skills and for faculty members regarding the design of writing assignments for their courses.

Work life and careers have evolved to look quite different in this new era of technological advancement and organizational changes across different fields. Ashforth (2001) asserts that organizations are deviating from the more traditional hierarchical structures that have been the standard model in many work environments across many fields. In the university domain, this can be seen in the career pathway for the professoriate – assistant professor to associate professor to full professor status. This is also seen in the academic and administrative or management binary within our universities. Within the workforce in general, vertical advancement involving step increases, promotions, and job grades within a single employer or field have been the typical career pathway for many people. Role transitions, however, are more common than fifty years ago when individuals were employed at a single organization for the entirety of their adult working life or remained in a specific line of work from the start to the end of one's career (Maurer, 2001). A change in career is no longer unusual and in fact, has become an accepted practice for many during the span of their working life. The reasons for this shift may include but are not limited to: the challenges in the economy which have decreased the employment prospects across a variety of sectors; or a rise in mature students pursuing further education. Other possible reasons could involve the increase in gender equality in the workforce whereby more women, who were previously homemakers, are now occupying positions that were primarily filled by men. Another reason could be the emergence of a delay in starting

families, as young people are establishing their careers first which could account for this shift in careers.

The concept of a 'boundaryless career' encompasses a variety of meanings but for this study, the focus is on the shift from a hierarchical structure of advancement in organizations (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996) to a more fluid one. There are individuals whose entire working careers may be in the field of higher education, but perhaps within that, they assume different roles across various units over the course of their working life. For example, in order to advance one's career, an individual might move from one unit to another in progressively senior roles within an institution. For professional staff, a shift from IT to student affairs to teaching and learning is simply an accumulation of work experience which can lend a rich lens to any position they hold. Rather than deficit thinking by only focusing on the lack of specialization or educational credentialing, seeing a diverse background as value added can bring a wholesome perspective to the broader teaching and learning community. As evidenced by the progression and advancement of many professional staff, this category of professional staff is fast becoming a growing field of experts and leaders at their respective institutions. There are many professional staff who have designations, advanced degrees and even possibilities of attaining positions in Senior Administration (Whitchurch, 2008a), often in the areas of student affairs, human resources, marketing/communications, or philanthropy. At some institutions, even the presidency of a university has now had a change of criteria. What was traditionally only an academic route to the highest level of office in academia has now been accessed via a strong business acumen and a corporate background. The role of the President in higher education has been plagued by institutional level financial challenges that some feel can be mitigated by a President with experience in the corporate sector rather than academia. The professional

background and business experience in some cases may be viewed to have equal weighting to the academic background and qualifications of a prospective, university presidential candidate (Tamburri, 2008).

Challenges

Concepts such as active learning classroom design and ever-evolving academic computing issues are challenges that face professional staff who are tasked to re/solve and actualize these potential solutions within the walls of our institutions. Twenty years ago, these concepts did not exist or were in their infancy. The constant change and complexity of the work of professional staff across the disciplines does not leave room for boredom. In fact, it allows professional staff to continually engage in innovative learning and develop new competencies which equip them with the appropriate tools to be successful in their roles (Graham, 2012). Whitchurch (2015) attributes the changing and complex nature of the work to the need to cross the boundaries of units and the fact that the work is no longer limited to a singular unit. New projects and initiatives are often warmly embraced by professional staff who look to these as positive factors when measuring levels of interest and contentment in their work. As Graham (2012) aptly states,

> As global conditions continue to transform, universities will face continuing and accelerating rates of change and, increasingly, higher education institutions will need to operate in a competitive, market-driven environment. In such an environment, universities will have to nurture and use the potential of all their staff in order to be able to deliver quality education and research. (p. 448)

Capitalizing on the strengths and expertise of professional staff will allow for universities to function at a higher capacity which can open the door to more effective service and supports for both faculty, staff, and students.

Theoretical Framework

This study was informed by the concept of 'Third Space' found in the work of Homi Bhabha (1994), which Whitchurch (2008) situated in the higher education context. It was then refracted through the theoretical lens of institutional logics perspective of Thornton et al. (2012), which originated from the work of Friedland and Alford (1991). "Third Space" defines the intersection of two cultures (Bhabha, 1994) and within the higher education context, appropriately frames the space that is occupied by university staff who have responsibilities in both academic and administrative domains. To further answer the research questions, we will draw upon the research on institutional logics.

Meyer and Rowan (1977) assert that "institutionalized products, services, techniques, policies, and programs function as powerful myths, and many organizations adopt them ceremonially." (p.340) In other words, the practices and processes that are embedded into an organization can over time become institutionalized whereby they are so entrenched in the cultural, social, and operational processes that they evolve into established rules or status. In the context of post-secondary education, the professoriate is such an institutionalized rule maintaining a unique level of social status and the role of passing knowledge onto the next generation of the learned. The changes that occur in higher education can often be related to external pressures that can come from government, market needs, or the needs to stay relevant and current against other comparable schools (Austin & Jones, 2016). As a result, organizations eventually become homogenous at some level due to the coercive, mimetic, or normative

isomorphism that occurs (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). Some of the changing educational landscape can be attributed to these institutional isomorphic changes that DiMaggio and Powell (1983) first identified over 40 years ago, which continue to exist and impact organizations. Each of these changes has its unique antecedents: "1) coercive isomorphism that stems from political influence and the problem of legitimacy; 2) mimetic isomorphism resulting from standard responses to uncertainty; and 3) normative isomorphism, associated with professionalization." (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 150) As post-secondary institutions continue to experience the internal and external pressures from stakeholders, it continues to build a dominant presence of actors who fill in the gap and simultaneously work in academic and administrative spheres.

In both isomorphism and an institutional logics approach, the cultural, social, and operational processes are believed to influence the structures in an organization (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). However, in the literature, the institutional logics approach is more an evolution of the original focus on isomorphism – as there are limitations to the extent of isomorphism - to one on individual and organizations in a broader setting (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). So rather than the emphasis on homogeneity, the institutional logics approach surfaces the competing logics that exist in various contexts. Understanding the university context, one can see that despite the layers of structure and an historical divide between the academic and the administrative work, there is a connection among and between the different entities that exist in such a complex organization. The slightest change to one part of the functioning of a university can then have implications for other parts. According to Weick (1976), loosely coupled systems often refer to these types of impact where at times the existing demands dictate the level and availability of resources; or the lack of coordination across a system; or the slow progress or movement despite the connections across the networks. If one

were to explain these connections in terms of a loosely-coupled system, it would reveal why a university is resistant to change and speaks against universities being very open to changes and having immediate effect across the institution, if even one part changes. Eventually, this necessitates a forced collaboration of units working to justify their existence or to support a new reason for their usefulness to the greater university. According to Austin & Jones (2016), governance is established as the organizational method of a field and the scripts within communicate the practices and structures in that field which are unavoidably influenced by external variables. The professionals who have begun to infiltrate the ranks of leadership and governance committees have not gone unnoticed and their presence has been felt. It stands to reason then that the growing numbers of higher education professionals at our universities can inadvertently impact the governance structure.

The rise of the higher education professionals within academia has prompted a serious consideration of what roles are valued and legitimated. While the demands of external forces have overloaded many roles at our universities, by corollary, the gap has been filled by the higher education professionals whose function and responsibilities have spread out, crossing the existing administrative and academic boundaries.

An Umbrella of "Institutional"

Before delving into the institutional logics literature, it would behoove this study to define the nature of an 'institution'. However, according to Buchanan (2020), there is a humorous understanding amongst those in the field of organizational institutionalism that it is a pointless endeavour to try and define the term 'institution' due to the vast range of definitions from "*expansive"* to "*vague*" (p. 251) that exist. As a singular definition does not actually exist, we can look to Scott (1995) who asserted that "Institutions consist of cognitive, normative, and

regulative structures and activities that provide stability and meaning to social behaviour. Institutions are transported by various carriers – cultures, structures, and routines – and they operate at multiple levels of jurisdiction." (p. 33) This baselines the nature of an institution as we examine the theoretical lens of institutional logics and the concept of institutional complexity within the context of competing logics, as it pertains to this study. The mechanisms of isomorphism, along with rational myths, legitimacy, and other considerations of the social behaviours in an organization all fall under the umbrella of institutional theory. There is a strong influence by the actors involved to follow the path of what others are doing rather than decipher how to capitalize on effective structure and practices within the organization regardless of what others are doing.

A common example of institutionalism can be found in medical schools, where the physicians are esteemed highly and given respect and status based on their jobs. Even though nurses make significant contributions and partner in the medical care of patients, they are not, however, elevated to the same status levels nor are esteemed by the patients or by society in the same manner. In the medical field, a physician is often the one who holds the most power – both implicit and explicit – as ultimate signing off on medication, treatment, and program of care rests with the attending physician and/or specialist. A medical team consists of various staff, each with a specific role and expertise. However, the physician or nurse roles have become institutionalized in the medical fields, often resulting in a physician being given more power or status than a nurse. When new(er) roles emerge such as a physician assistant or a nurse practitioner, there can be confusion, as the responsibilities of these positions often fall somewhere between that of a physician and a nurse. In a parallel context of educational organizations, universities are also rife with examples of existing institutionalism. The

professoriate has long been acknowledged as the upper echelons of academia. It is not necessarily the result of salary or position status, as there are other positions that have higher salaries and also have permanent status, but it is those who belong to the professoriate who seem to yield a level of respect. This institutionalized position of an academic, or professor, is not that different than the institutionalized nature of physicians' roles in the medical field. The Higher Education Professional roles have emerged due to coercive and normative isomorphism in academia. The coercive isomorphic impact of the mounting pressures of government cutbacks and new legislations along with the normative isomorphic impact of the growing crop of professionals successfully applying for positions in post-secondary education, begs the question of legitimacy of this group of actors and how to position them appropriately in this field. The lens with which we view this group can determine how to situate them and the bearing that their positioning will have on the structure of the larger institution.

The work of Lawrence et al. (2011) examines the idea of individuals or actors being the drivers of "institutional creation, maintenance, disruption, and change" (p. 53). It highlights the belief that all action is embedded in institutional structures. The authors believe that intentionality and effort are critical to understanding how the concept of work might usefully be connected to institutions. Lawrence et al. (2011) assert the importance of transforming the role of an individual from sidebar to one of influence whose actions can be the driver of future change. An example of such institutional work might be that of professional and support staff who are creating a new tier of employees which disrupts the accepted hierarchical institution in academia where support staff have long been considered subordinate to the traditional Academics, also referred to as the professoriate. With the developing levels of professional staff who now straddle both administrative and academic responsibilities (Schneijderberg & Merkator, 2013), it

has created a new level of institutional work that may be disruptive to the existing order of functioning. When a new group or level emerges, it can re-shift responsibilities and roles, which has an impact on the structure or organization of the larger entity. In such situations, having a cohort of like-minded colleagues – those who may have similar job responsibilities – would be the most ideal scenario when creating new pathways to accomplish tasks and identifying efficiencies as a new and emerging field of actors.

Institutional Logics

The institutional logics perspective derives its roots from institutionalism but at its core sits the role of culture in an institution. The definition of institutional logics has long been demystified as the accepted patterns of behaviour and practices, values, beliefs, and rules of actors whose lived realities have become a baseline or standard of living, working, or existing in a given institution (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999). Further, Thornton (2004) defined institutional orders into the following categories: family, religion, state, market, professions, and corporation.

Previous to the above, Friedland and Alford (1991) determined that at their core, each of the institutional orders have a logic which an organization or individual can decide to take on that ultimately dictates how they conduct and construct their routinized practices.

> "The institutional logic of capitalism is accumulation and the commodification of human activity. That of the state is rationalization and the regulation of human activity by legal and bureaucratic hierarchies. That of democracy is participation and the extension of popular control over human activity. That of the family is community and the motivation of human activity by unconditional loyalty to its members and their reproductive needs. That of religion, or science for that matter, is truth, whether mundane or transcendental,

and the symbolic construction of reality within which all human activity takes place." (p.248)

Certain actions become routinized and in time, become the underpinning of that specific institution. "Voting and inaugurations; the signing of contracts; marriages and divorces; the issuance of budgets and plans" (Friedland and Alford, 1991, p.250) are all examples of behaviours that become ritualized.

The basic tenets that buttress the various orders can vary, possibly resulting in conflict and/or interdependence (Thornton, 2004). In higher education, the institutional logic of professions, which includes the *professoriate/academia*, has had to make room for market logic, which embraces *managerialism*, to exist side-by-side but also at times, in conflict with one another. One such example would be higher education professionals who have taken on work that touches the academic domain (e.g., the field of educational development) which necessitates both the academic qualifications and pedagogical knowledge. However, it can prove problematic when these same individuals are asked to sit on a committee and contribute to the conversation around student evaluations and assessment practices which is seen as the work of the professoriate only.

In educational institutions, professional schools for example, which must adhere to accreditation requirements for licensing, have to pay attention to external influences and changes to their fields that come from the profession (Dunn & Jones, 2010) and not directly from academia. This can have an impact on the organization because they are still contending with the existing paradigm of universities (and colleges) being the place for the erudite to expand their knowledge base and learning. However, in some of the professional programs such as Nursing, Engineering, or Medicine, any licensing or accreditation parameters are usually embedded within

the academic programming requirements. The students must successfully complete the program of study – which should cover the material required for licensing within their respective fields. In many situations, higher education professionals within a teaching and learning centre may be asked to help support the accreditation process by incorporating good pedagogy and relevant educational practices such as equity, diversity and inclusion or Indigenous perspectives into their programs and curricula.

Within the traditional setting of higher education, the dominant and sole logic of *academia* has prevailed for centuries. As mentioned earlier, more recently, the influence of external variables has allowed another logic to surface, that of *managerialism* resulting in an environment where competing institutional logics exist. Adapting the model of Reay & Hinings (2009) four mechanisms for managing competing logics, we can identify the necessity of:

1. *Separating* academic and managerial decision-making.
2. *Seeking informal opinions* of academics (faculty) as part of usual decision-making routines.
3. *Working together against the government* e.g., fiscal challenges, granting agencies' diminishing funds – SoTL or research grants (HEPROs and faculty collaborating).
4. *Jointly innovating in experimental sites* e.g., experiential education; Indigenous perspectives; creating equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives.

The focus on similarity in the literature belies the existing differences in organizations. If the underlying basis of institutional logics reveals the understanding "that organizations *will* exhibit differences" (Greenwood et al., 2014, p. 1212) then the field or organization under study can benefit from a more balanced approach. It can elucidate the nuances that are not always captured by a focus on similarities only.

Dunn and Jones (2010) remind us that the research on institutional change in logics commonly view "change as replacement" (p. 114) where the dominant logic is usurped by a new dominant logic. At the institutional levels, there are various stakeholders and actors thus the possibility of producing multiple, co-existing, and often competing logics. A natural progression of these competing or co-existing logics leads to what is known as institutional complexity. From the research findings, we will surface these competing or co-existing logics in today's higher education context.

Not unfamiliar to an organization is the prevalence of more than one logic. It is this notion of multiple competing logics that defines institutional complexity. Institutional complexity highlights the conflicting relationships that exist in an organization (Besharov & Smith, 2014; Greenwood et al., 2011; Toubiana & Zietsma, 2017) whereas in paradox theory, there is more focus on the negotiation and interdependence of the prevailing tensions (Smith & Lewis, 2011; Smith & Tracey, 2016). The latter – paradox theory – allows for a co-existence among the competing logics that are present in the organization. It is a possibility that the findings of this research will reveal dual institutional logics or institutional complexity involving several logics. Even if the findings of this study bring to light the existence of specific competing logics, since this study is specifically exploring the views and experiences of higher education professionals in leadership positions of administrative units, the proposed existing logics may be viewed to be different by other stakeholders (Shields & Watermeyer, 2020).

Institutional complexity applied to the current university context highlights the academia and managerialism binary. We are in an era of education where accountability and quality assurance are measures that are expected and mapped out. Evidence-based practice along with measurable outcomes are often the baseline of many disciplines within higher education. What

has become a buzzword in the Canadian post-secondary context is performance-based funding criteria from government. If, as Kerr (2001) asserts, power has shifted from “inside to outside” (p. 20) then it is important to examine where the power truly lies within the structure of our university campuses. Many of the higher education professionals who come from outside of our universities have decision-making roles or significant influence on institutional level decisions. In particular, one has to keep in mind the variables that have had the greatest impact on this change.

The Historical Context

The research focus at the university level is the result of the German university model that continues to influence American institutional structures to this day (Berquist & Pawlak, 2008; Clark, 1983), while Canada has its formation modelled after the Scottish university system (Berquist & Pawlak, 2008). Universities were only established in Canada once it became an official British colony (Jones, 1997). Despite societal and cultural differences and changes, universities still retain much of their more formal structure and organization. In *The Uses of the University,* Kerr (2001) reminds us that,

> Heraclitus said that "nothing endures but change." About the university it might be said, instead, that "everything else changes, but the university mostly endures" - particularly in the United States. About eighty-five institutions in the Western world established by 1520 still exist in recognizable forms, with similar functions and with unbroken histories, including the Catholic church, the Parliaments of the Isle of Man, of Iceland, and of Great Britain, several Swiss cantons, and seventy universities. Kings that rule, feudal lords with vassals, and guilds with monopolies are all gone. These seventy universities, however, are still in the same locations with some of the same buildings, with professors and

> students doing much the same things, and with governance carried on in much the same ways. (p. 115)

This speaks to the enduring nature of the educational system over time; however, the inner workings may be experiencing some change as isomorphism comes into play.

Historically, most of the colleges had religious foundations whereas the universities were secular from the start (Berquist & Pawlak, 2008). A growing interest and commitment to higher education emerged during the mid-nineteenth century, which led to a keen interest in the accomplishments of German research universities (Cohen, 1998). Since Canadian colleges and universities followed the University of Edinburgh more than Oxford or Cambridge, there was a stronger influence and characteristics that resembled the Scottish educational traditions with more (faculty) autonomy, less elitism and more democratic (Berquist & Pawlak, 2008). It is however this emulation of German universities' focus on research that turned the direction of university to emphasize the scholarly work of its professoriate and thus the seeds of collegial culture were planted. It is only two centuries later that this collegial culture is being challenged by a culture of managerialism (Kehm, 2015a, b; Pietsch, 2013; Rhoades & Slaughter, 1997).

It is difficult to break into a system whereby the control and power have been entrenched in a structure for such a very long period of time. When a newly formed group or field is first established, it takes time and also the support of others to legitimize their formation. Even the development of teaching and learning centres or a newer (less than 50 years old) area of research such as women & gender studies reflect the legitimacy that they are able to engender within the institution. Clark (1983) gives the example of history professors only securing their place and power within the university through the recognition of others while differentiating themselves just enough to create a new department dedicated to their specific area of study e.g., Historians

of medicine. Specialization is a means to avoid possible conflict and overlap. It is in separating tasks that more specialization emerges, and the work grows for those who are qualified to do it.

Where administrators were at one time more in the background and less visible, their profiles have become more prominent (Kerr, 2001). Critics of the hidebound practices of academia will see that the growing needs of post-secondary institutions have resulted in the elevation of responsibilities of those who lead support units across the campuses. It is the middle management roles that often fill this gap and promote the boundary-spanning (Lüscher & Lewis, 2008) that is required to successfully navigate the needs of the many versus the needs of an individual.

Although at the time predictive, Kerr (2001) posited directions for a 25-year period from 1990-2015 which included heightened attention to resource allocations and "more pluralistic leadership" (p 190). As the needs of the university continue to increase, some of the *changing* areas (funding sources, student enrollment, resource allocation, etc.) will necessitate the effective use of administrative and professional staff to capitalize on their strengths and skill sets in their respective arenas.

Identity Within the Institution

Much of the research in social identity theory has a connection to the concept of 'self' however Brewer (1991) conceptualized the model of optimal distinctiveness which bring together the needs for assimilation and differentiation from others, which are in opposition to one another. In an academic environment where roles have been institutionalized for centuries, individuals who have membership in groups that are not yet acknowledged or recognized by the established powers tend to have difficulty with their identity. Whitchurch (2009) believes it is

through relational and knowledge powers that the *Third Space* professionals gain their authority rather than through a title or positional power.

According to Tajfel & Turner (1985), social identity theory finds that people situate themselves and others categorically in a variety of ways within the context of their lives. Organizational identification is one area in which to understand newly formed groups, especially in the university context. Smith et al. (2021) highlight that many who occupy the *Third Space*, find fulfilling work that goes beyond or is not necessarily defined by their job descriptions, allowing their reputations and relationships to aid in developing their identities across the university.

With less similarity and familiarity, actors may find lower trust levels for new(er) roles/positions which can have bearing on the work environment (Kezar, 2014). In similar fashion, the emergence of a growing group of higher education professionals may find this to be true in their context at their universities.

Legitimacy

An organization that can identify and incorporate not only the commonly held practices and beliefs of their immediate environment but also the larger existing societal views, has the capacity to legitimize their status (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). To gain the acceptance of the established group – which is often the dominant group either by quantity or power – it is significant, as DiMaggio and Powell (1991) contend, to see that the process of isomorphism plays out thus solidifying and legitimating the status of the new(er) institutional entity. With respect to this research study, this new(er) institutional entity refers specifically to those who occupy that *Third Space* on our campuses. Academia has long perpetuated prestige and status to the actors in that field, so the belief that the expertise and knowledge belong only to the

professoriate has gone uncontested thereby threatening the legitimacy of new(er) actors to the field such as higher education professionals. Riaz et al. (2016) found that in studies around maintaining institutions, "… that following a disruption, incumbent actors engage in institutional maintenance primarily through defending or repairing the legitimacy of institutionalized practices." (p. 1536) As HEPROs continue to vie for legitimacy in their emerging roles, they are up against academics who are defending their long-held status of knowledge keeper, expert in their field of research, and teacher. It is not that the established actors in the field of higher education are being usurped but rather, the presence of this emerging group of professionals allows existing institutionalized practices to be shared by others or adapt to form new ways of practice.

In a study on building international legitimacy in universities in Estonia and Kazakhstan, Tamtik and Sabzalieva (2018) suggest that legitimacy is not built overnight or by a singular action, but rather, it is a layered process with a successful outcome reached only when the final phase of consensus is established among the core stakeholders – government, universities, and the public. Instead of accomplishing all the stages simultaneously, the idea of phases of legitimacy building makes sense and further to that, the importance of the consensus among stakeholders at the end of the process for true legitimacy to be actualized. It is only then that the new norms become accepted practice. With the emergence of the *Third Space* presence on our campuses, their legitimacy too will be confirmed by the acceptance of the university community at large and those external stakeholders who will support the positions that these HEPROs occupy.

As experienced by Lüscher and Lewis (2008) in their research at Lego, using the paradoxes of performing, belonging, and organizing can be disruptive to the existing systems and

tensions. Herein lies the discrepancy concerning the emergence of the *Third Space* professionals within academia. There is much criticism about the disproportionate growth of employees in non-academic administrative units compared to faculty members (Marcus, 2014; Schneijderberg & Merkator, 2013; Srigley, 2016). As the numbers of those in the *Third Space* continue to increase, it is a new balance of professional and academic staff working together with the tensions in our university settings.

Structure of Universities

According to Huy (2002), organizational structure provides middle managers more access to employees compared to executive level management which then primes them to have greater influence. In the case of HEPROs, many of whom occupy the middle management positions, they have an opportunity to take on new initiatives or move agendas forward with the power of their influence. An example of this is seen at universities and colleges where the teaching and learning centres are profiled and their services utilized to create communities of practice and cross-disciplinary networks for faculty members. These campuses are then better positioned to make effective changes around pedagogy or assessment practices across the campus (Kezar, 2014) since they have buy-in from those who use their services.

If those who yield power on our campuses are no longer merely those with the rank and titles, but those who have the relational capital to influence, then it positions the HEPROs to become the ones to contend with and ensure their involvement on projects. They are used to collaborating with multiple stakeholders as their roles have often been created as a need arose.

Technological advances continue to change the landscape of our working environments. The more recent understandings of the consequences and implications to organizations and their effective functioning remain limited. Some of the greater technological developments lie with

the accessibility to information via the internet and the ubiquity of the computer and cell phone. This has an impact on the organizational structure as the mechanistic and social dimensions of an organization alter and develop a new way or adapt, technology can then push out and antiquate the functioning and design of the existing roles within the organization. At one time, the solution to personnel and resource constraints was thought to be the replacement of what was believed to be more of the layer of professional staff (Gray, 2015). However, in a turn of events, those professional staff are demonstrating their worth in ways that have elevated their status and cemented their value – becoming the bridge in more collaborative working relationships across the board.

According to Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), effectiveness is "how well an organization is meeting the demands of the various groups and organizations that are concerned with its activities" (p. 11). Within the higher education sector where a culture of managerialism has become more established, the professionals who occupy the *Third Space* may be a key to the effectiveness mentioned.

Dealing with Disruption

During such unprecedented times as what the world has been experiencing as a result of the coronavirus, every segment of our society has been impacted by the changes that have taken place to ensure the safety of peoples of all nations. Higher education is no different in the sense that the brick-and-mortar buildings on all our campuses remained empty as Canadian universities and colleges abruptly pivoted to remote learning and continued in that modality for a year-and-a-half, and for some, even longer.

The shift to remote work and learning has been difficult for various reasons starting with but certainly not limited to the suddenness of the transition with little to no preparation time.

Instructors who had organized a course for in-person instruction were expected to convert their work to offer the course in an online format. The courses that were intended to be taught in-person could not be offered in a truly online format without considerable re-working of the assessments and teaching strategies. In addition, many may not have been familiar with the learning management systems and the tools that would allow for a smooth delivery of their courses. The complexity of the issues that stemmed from the disruption to post-secondary education had a direct impact on students' learning.

Interestingly, the pivot also resulted in certain units spearheading the transition efforts that would not normally have been leading the charge at academic institutions. Information Technology departments, Student Affairs, and Teaching and Learning Centres were thrust into the limelight and were at the crux of the pivot. Technology and teaching in an online modality were key to the successful navigation of education on our campuses. These important elements were the mandate of these units. The HEPROs working in these departments are only but a sampling of those working at our institutions. However, their mention here, is more the involvement of these areas during a disruption that required considerable time, expertise, and resources that were managed by these individuals during that period.

Since none of these units are academic units, it was imperative that they work closely with the academic units to ensure a smooth and successful transition. The leadership of these administrative units are often staff with advanced degrees who are able to understand and bridge the gap between academia and the mandate of their units. That said, during disruptive events (e.g., employee strike, natural disaster, or worldwide pandemic), an organization is required to respond quickly and create business continuity. The organizational structure can be greatly influenced by this and the roles and positions that take front stage can be different than those that

typically assume those responsibilities. Existing institutional complexity as a result of competing logics may lead to conflict between HEPROs and academics when facing disruptions (Battilana & Dorado, 2010).

The disruption of higher education institutions during this time necessitated supports from all sides. On the student side, the supports came from Student Affairs units; supports for the academic/teaching side came from Teaching and Learning Centres; and the support linchpin to bring everything together on available online platforms came from IT departments. These were the units that informed Senior Administration of the best solutions for the direction they needed to head as a university or college and how to best support the needs of the students, faculty, and staff. Suddenly, unit heads in these areas were catapulted to the decision-making tables or at least close(r) to those sitting at those tables. The forces of mimetic isomorphism surfaced as every university and college began looking to others in order to make informed decisions but also to stay on pace with how the others were adapting to the uncertainty of the months and years ahead.

The untimely shutdown that schools experienced was even further exacerbated by the lack of technology supports in some places. One post-secondary institution had scheduled a migration to a new learning management system at the start of March 2020 that severely impacted their pivot. They survived but endured hardships that could not have been anticipated.

A well-known concept in the field of business is the idea of red and blue oceans. Red oceans represent industries that currently exist while blue oceans represent the unknown and yet to be discovered industries (Kim & Mauborgne, 2004). In red oceans, there are clearly defined boundaries and institutionalized practices and competition to acquire a larger piece of the pie within a particular industry. In contrast, in blue oceans, “demand is created rather than fought over” (Kim & Mauborgne, 2004, p. 2). Quite often, blue oceans are a result of an organization

altering the boundaries of an existing industry. Although it may seem a bit of a stretch, the *Third Space* professionals are a phenomenon that grew out of a demand for individuals with the technical or educational expertise combined with an advanced degree. In an environment where a high number of the teaching side of the organization hold doctorates, it appears that the academic pedigree has become important – whether it is for credibility or relatability – to enable this cadre of professionals to adequately fill the increasing workload gaps that were developing in higher education. In many cases, there was a need within research services, institutional analysis, intellectual property, teaching and learning, student services, and even information technologies units to hire individuals who had the required skill sets but also could communicate at a level that would be understood by colleagues who had doctorates and speak, think, and communicate accordingly.

Teaching, research, and service continue to serve as the trifecta of academic activities, however, there are pieces of those activities that have now begun to be distributed to others outside of the traditional academics. The overflow of responsibilities in these activities have slowly been shifted to those who occupy that *Third Space*. The emergence of this group of higher education professionals at our universities has become a salient research topic. The competing logics of academia versus managerialism resulting in the emergence of HEPROs is the underpinning of this study.

Chapter Three

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The basic tenet of qualitative research begins with a question that examines the unique experience(s) of an individual or group (Merriam, 1998).

In consideration of the proposed research questions, the proposed methodology is a qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews as its method. This chapter will outline the research methodology, the participant recruitment, data collection, analysis of data, and the processes involved.

Research Design

This study requires participants within the Canadian post-secondary context who fit the inclusion criteria as follows: 1) currently serves as Academic/Executive/Senior Director or Director of a Teaching and Learning Centre in a Canadian university 2) holds a PhD or currently enrolled in a doctorate program; 3) consents to a video recording of the interview.

The decision to use a qualitative methodology was a result of the answer to the question of what the end goal was – which was ultimately to seek understanding of the lived experiences of the participants in their work roles. The study utilizes a qualitative inquiry through a phenomenological approach. Phenomenology originated from the work of Edmund Husserl, but his ideas were based on Immanuel Kant's study of phenomena. The *noema* is the phenomenon of what is experienced and the *noesis* is the act of perceiving, feeling, thinking remembering, or judging (Husserl, 1964). This phenomenological approach will allow for the gathering of data around any shared experiences of the participants and surfacing common themes that can help to bring meaning to the experiences of a particular phenomenon.

Rationale for a Phenomenological Approach

An important aspect of a phenomenological study involves Moustakas' recommendation to use "systematic data analysis procedures of significant statements, meanings, themes, and an exhaustive description of the essence of the phenomenon" (Moustakas, 1994, p.89). A significant element of the proposed study is the desire to understand the role, experiences, and impact of higher education professionals within higher education institutions – knowledge which can only be acquired by the perspectives and experiences of this demographic.

A phenomenological approach seemed to best allow for the participants' perceptions and narratives to surface and become the underpinning of how we can better understand the participants' work lives and their impact on the community around them. As Willis (2007) points out, interviews and questioning bring out the data that is needed to understand the phenomenon, not to point to an "external reality". A unique feature of phenomenology is the focus on the "descriptions of experiences" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 61) – perceived or real – of the subjects rather than the typical data sources found in quantitative research methods. In fact, Moustakas (1994) posits that "perception is regarded as the primary source of knowledge, the source that cannot be doubted" (p. 56). This supports the pursuit of understanding the phenomena of HEPROs, specifically Directors of teaching and learning centres at Canadian universities.

A key element of the study is to identify the themes and draw conclusions from the lived experiences of the Higher Education Professionals from their respective contexts and situations. Also important is how they perceive themselves at their institutions. As this group is still emerging in the Canadian post-secondary landscape, this may be an opportunity to process their own work identity in ways that they may have not articulated in words or even realized up to this point in their careers. This will provide a scholarly base of connection for others who are

members of this Higher Education Professionals phenomenon in the context of post-secondary education in Canada.

Two considerations of a phenomenological study involve the experiences of the participants and the context or situation that has affected the participants' experiences of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). These considerations align with the research questions and therefore seem to best support the use of a phenomenological approach to this study.

Bounded in a Case Study

As defined by Merriam (1988), a case study is "an examination of a specific phenomenon such as a program, an event, a person, a process, an institution, or a social group" (p. 9). In addition, a case study involves a bounded context containing the study within a timeframe or a specific setting. The participants in this study are bound within the framework of a university, at a teaching and learning centre, and in a leadership position. The leadership scope and responsibilities may vary by institution, however, there is a specific context of the participants that situates them in this case study. In Merriam's (1998) work, two determinants of whether to conduct a case study are found in the restriction to the number of participants or a limitation of time in the data collection process.

Identifying what the case or unit of analysis can be challenging, so Yin (2014) recommends soliciting input from colleagues in selecting a case. During the course of a PhD, the research proposal phase is ideally suited to garner this type of input and direction of the research, and it was at this stage that the doctoral committee unanimously recommended that the study broaden the methodology to incorporate a case study. The case for this study were the directors of teaching and learning centres at Canadian universities.

Methodology

The methodology used in this study was a qualitative approach comprised of semi-structured interviews; collection of official university documents; publically available government documents or notices; and relevant website information. Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological approach informed the collection of data within the case study bound by teaching and learning centres in Canada.

A case is the broader context of a study whereas a phenomenon is the concept that is being explored. To reiterate, this study is examining the lived experiences of the directors of teaching and learning centres as its case, bounded within the context of Canadian universities, who summarily and categorically fit under the phenomemon of HEPROs.

Methods

The main method of data collection in this study was an individual, 75-minute semi-structured interview with nine participants. In addition to the interviews, participants were asked to share a copy of the job description of their current position with confirmed reporting lines and educational qualifications and direction to any website resources they were aware of that could provide support documentation for this research. In particular, I searched the websites of the post-secondary institutions represented by each participant, for publically available agendas, meeting minutes and motions from Senate, Board of Governors, or Faculty Council; current university-wide working group committees at each participant's university of employment; website scan of institutional priorities and initiatives that relate to the incumbent's current role; and each participant's suggestions of any relevant and accessible provincial government notices or mandates regarding budget or new legislation.

The research questions were the underpinning of the study and the interviews along with any pertinent documentation provided insight into any direct or indirect impact or change to the university structure and operations. The first point of contact with potential participants was the introduction to the study through the recruitment call for participants in the form of a formal recruitment letter sent via an email (see Appendix D). Purposeful sampling was used to target the potential participants. Once the base requirements and criteria were confirmed to have been met, the participants were scheduled for a meeting. Prior to the initial interview, there was an email sent out to confirm details of their career trajectory. Participants were given an option of a virtual interview via either a Teams or Zoom platform. At the end of each interview, the participants were asked to provide a job description of their current position or the equivalent information. The 75-minute semi-structured interview involved open-ended questions and some probing if necessary to flesh out any unclear statements or comments.

Ethics protocol approval for this research study was confirmed on November 2, 2022 for project number HE2022-0247. The recruitment letters were emailed to potential participants on November 2, 2022 and data collection occurred between November 5, 2022 – December 13, 2022.

Participants

As a doctoral candidate in the Faculty of Education, I fall under the Research Ethics Board (REB 2) for the ethics review process. Once I received ethics approval from the REB 2 (Appendix C), I began the process of participant recruitment. Through purposeful sampling of potential participants, the research study narrowed the focus to the heads of administrative units specifically teaching and learning centres at universities in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia, who held a doctoral degree or were enrolled

in a doctoral program. The study targeted a total of 8-12 participants from institutions across the country ranging in size and varying levels of research (e.g., U15 or Universities Canada). This target would then allow for a healthy representation of institutions to be represented in the study.

Across Canada, there exists a formal network of Teaching and Learning Centres which offer connections to potential participants from other units or across various areas at their respective institutions. However, a more targeted, formal recruitment call and recruitment letter was sent to potential known participants. Also, a scan across Canadian Teaching and Learning Centre websites provided names and contact information of Academic/Executive/Senior Director and Directors who could potentially be sent recruitment information, to ensure that the participant pool reaches the targeted 8-12 participants. This is where I anticipated the participant pool to be generated from. As well, a more informal process transpired simultaneously by which I reached out to connections made from past conferences to individuals who might have an interest in this type of study. Of the nine participants recruited, six came from personal connections and three came from a list of directors of Canadian TLCs.

Additionally, there are suggested internal mechanisms of communication that exist in many professional organizations within the field of teaching and learning. If recruitment numbers were to be inadequate, then the call for participants would have been distributed to any network that had their own email listserv or community of practice e.g., Society of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education and the Educational Developers Caucus.

In total, there were nine participants selected who met the criteria for the study, representing nine unique institutions across Canada.

Data Collection

Aligning with the research questions, purposeful sampling was utilized as the method of data collection. The focus is to understand and learn about the impact of Higher Education Professionals, specifically how the Teaching and Learning Centre Academic/Executive/Senior Directors relate to the structure – both governance and agency – within their university. An interview questionnaire was developed based on the literature on higher education professionals (see Appendix A).

Once the participant selection was confirmed based on the criteria presented – 1) occupied a role as head of a teaching and learning unit or its equivalent, at a university; 2) held a terminal degree or enrolled in a doctoral program and 3) consented to a video recording of the interview – then each participant was contacted to schedule an interview timeslot. The interviews were conducted in a virtual format via UM-licensed Zoom. The data was collected through an in-depth, semi-structured interview format with each of the nine participants. The interviews were approximately 75 minutes in duration and a questionnaire (Appendix A) guided the discussion. Along with a recording of the interview, there were additional handwritten notes that captured additional thoughts, questions, points of clarification needed, and highlights of any comments that were emphasized or given special attention. Each participant was provided an Individual Consent Form (see Appendix E) that included a summary of the research study and informed verbally and in print, of the option to withdraw from the study in its entirety or to withdraw certain statements at any point up until the presentation of the final oral defence.

Rather than higher education professionals in general, the selection of the heads of the teaching and learning centres was determined in order to mitigate any potential challenges with data at the institutional levels e.g., institutional level committees. No incentive was provided to

the participants whose role as head of a teaching and learning centre often includes promoting scholarly work in the field and supporting graduate students. Participation in research, particularly in the field of education and teaching and learning are often viewed as an extension of the work that they do.

Transcription

Every interview was transcribed by Zoom auto-transcription using Multi-Factor Authentication and recorded to the cloud. Zoom is approved by the University of Manitoba Human Ethics Office. To ensure proper security protocol, the supervisor of this doctoral research project, who is external to the University of Manitoba, was asked to sign an Oath of Confidentiality non-UM personnel form which was submitted to REB 2 with the rest of the documentation, but in the end was viewed as unnecessary for this project. The auto-transcribed interviews were de-identified during the initial transcription review and coded to adhere to the strictest confidentiality measures as possible and ensure that the participants' personal information remained anonymous in the dissertation. To keep details of the interview as fresh as possible, interview transcriptions were reviewed by the researcher within three weeks of the interview before then sending it back to each participant for review, input and edits/deletions.

The participants' names and institutions were altered to protect their identities. Any details that surfaced during the interviews that may have revealed the identity of the participant were altered accordingly. In Gornitzka & Larsen's (2004) study on the professionalization of the administrative work in universities, more than fifty percent of university administrators were found to identify as female. The directors of teaching and learning centres would fall into this category of university administrator and if one were to peruse the websites of Canadian teaching and learning centres, there would be clearly a higher proportion of directors who identify as

female gender. In order to ensure anonymity, the decision was made to anonymize the participants by assigning gender neutral pseudonyms and avoid the use of pronouns altogether whenever refering to a specific participant in the dissertation. Even pronouns can be identifying markers in a field or discipline that may already have high numbers of one gender or is a particularly genderized field, as can be found in the field of teaching and learning in Canada (as per website information).

According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), even if the interviews are recorded, taking additional notes is helpful to the researcher in the event that something happens to the recording and it can bring clarity to sections of an interview that may be more difficult to understand and transcribed incoherently possibly due to speech volume or pronunciation or some other relevant reason.

Validity and Trustworthiness

The validity and trustworthiness of data are notable considerations in the collection of any data in a research study. Unlike in quantitative research where the idea of validity is founded on the desire to find universal laws that can be translated into generalizable and replicable findings (Willis, 2007), in qualitative research, there is exploration of meaning and understanding found through unique themes and experiences. It is therefore, important for participants of the study to be reassured that member-checking allows for participants to check the accuracy of the findings by reviewing the transcription and confirming that it is representative of the interview (Creswell, 2007; Willis, 2007). A shared understanding of the importance of trust in the data in qualitative research is reiterated by Bloomberg & Volpe (2019) who emphasize the significance of direct quotations “to build the reader’s confidence” (p. 252) in the accuracy of the data presented. The participants were provided with a 10-day timeline to

respond with any revisions and if no notice of changes was given then the transcript was presumed to be accurate and used for analysis. Only once this was complete were the common themes and sub-themes determined.

Coding

Although there are a multitude of ways to analyze qualitative data, for this study, coding was the selected method of analysis. Saldaña (2016) asserted that "coding is not a precise science; it is primarily an interpretive act" (p. 4). This leaves room for the researcher to interpret the data. Again, the researcher's interpretation of the data was informed by disciplinary knowledge, personal life experiences, philosophical orientations, and chosen conceptual frameworks for the study (Saldaña, 2016). This means that if two researchers were to collect the same data then there might be discrepancies in the interpretation of the data, as well as some overlap or similarities since some data points may be very explicitly associated to a specific word, theme, or idea. As a researcher, I operate in a digital world where articles, notes, and relevant documents are stored electronically. However, in coding and analyzing, I prefer to print off the interview transcripts and cut out the sections that correspond to a specific theme, and group them together so that I can visually see the sections plotted together.

According to Merriam (1998), "Categories should reflect the purpose of the research" (p. 183). With this in mind, the research questions were kept at the forefront of the iterative process and final selection of themes and sub-themes for the study. It is easy to get distracted by fascinating or unexpected data that may not be usable for the purposes of this research or at this point in time.

For this study, a combination of deductive and inductive coding was utilized. Initially, deductive categorization was used in the development of a codebook based on what the literature

had yielded in terms of potential codes and the research questions for the study. A preliminary codebook had been created prior to data collection in the event that the data were to be unmanageable or overwhelming in magnitude. There were ten provisional codes based on the research questions and the literature review with the expectation that once the data was collected, these codes could evolve or change completely. Once the data had been collected, an inductive categorization was then used to code the raw data for analysis. From the data collection, there were 14 categories that were whittled down to the 10 major themes and 8 sub-themes of this study. The process of inductive reasoning to analyze the data allows categories to emerge (Miles et al., 2020). The segments of transcript that were categorized were also entered into an Excel spreadsheet to allow for easier re-arranging if needed at a later date – even after initial write-up or subsequent drafts. I looked for words or phrases that pointed to a specific idea or concept and coded them accordingly. Also, since quotes from participants can be rich text that speak to an idea or point, it was italicized or highlighted in the print version so not to lose the power of the spoken words. According to Saldaña (2016), there is a continual refinement and quite often several attempts to narrow in on the data to highlight the "categories, themes, and concepts…" (p. 8) that will formulate meaning or point to a theory. This iterative process of analysis provides ample opportunity to deepen understanding of the data (Creswell, 2008) and pull out the most salient ideas or categories of thought. There were some coded data that at first seemed to fit into more than one category which were duly noted. After the initial coding, the data that seemed to fit in more than one category were re-evaluated for clarity and placement. The coded data was then grouped into relevant and applicable themes. The data structure model developed by Gioia et al. (2012) illuminates the importance of the progression of turning raw data to terms and themes in the analysis phase of a qualitative research study. It begins with "1st order concepts"

which lead to “2nd order themes” which then are narrowed down further into “aggregate dimensions” (Gioia et al., 2012, p 21). Once the selection of quotes were highlighted following the initial analysis, the next steps were to surface the themes that were germane to the literature. It was at this stage of the study that the search for the similarities, differences, and any new themes that had not previously surfaced in the extant literature base began. The themes that emerged informed the findings of this study.

Bloomberg & Volpe (2019) state that even though something stands out in the data, it does not mean that it is noteworthy or necessary to include – especially if it is not relevant or does not answer the research questions writ large.

Limitations

Even with the efforts to be self-aware and disclose any bias on the part of the researcher, it continues to be a limitation. Remaining unbiased is difficult when listening to stories of experiences that are all too similar to what the researcher may have previously experienced. Personal bias can have an impact on the interview process.

An interview process can be impacted by a few variables, one of which could be the bias of the researcher. Every effort has been made to be self-aware and disclose any biases that comes from the participant interviews and data from this study. Despite efforts to remain neutral and without judgement, the human in us may prove this to be challenging. It is difficult when listening to stories of experiences that are all too similar to what we may have previously experienced. It is not possible to completely forget experiences that we have had in our lives, but then in the data collection stage of this study, the stories and experiences of the participants may likely resonate with me since I too may have experienced something similar being in the same line of work. It was Husserl (1964) who first coined the term *bracket out* which means to take

oneself out. Following the basis of this concept, Moustakas (1994, p.33) then developed the epoché idea which calls us to refrain "from judgement, to abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things". Moustakas' definition of epoché is often used interchangeably with the terms bracketing and phenomenological reduction. On the other end of the spectrum is Martin Heidegger, a student of Husserl, who was of a different opinion and did not believe that prior conceptions and knowledge could truly be bracketed (Heidegger, 1962). Keeping in mind both viewpoints, I commit to suspending my own biases and prejudices to the best of my ability, but in complete acknowledgement of the difficulty of attempting this as the primary researcher of this study.

Another limitation was related to the challenges of participant recruitment for this study. As the teaching and learning community is not large in Canada, it resulted in difficulty soliciting the participant recruitment numbers that would suffice for this study. Eight to twelve participants was optimal in acquiring rich, thick description data from the in-depth, semi-structured interviews. If data saturation did not occur, then further recruitment would have been needed. The initial six participants responded within the first week after having sent the recruitment letters out. The size of the teaching and learning centre, the size of the institution, and the different university structures were noted but were not accounted for in determining participation in the study.

Also, even though all the participants are in similar roles, as heads of teaching and learning units, there is the possibility that there could be perceived power-over situations (e.g., a director of a large teaching and learning unit vs a director of a smaller teaching and learning unit) that could prevent participants from being honest and truthful during the interview.

Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggest that electronic recording of interviews can be disadvantageous to the researcher if they become too reliant on the recording and thus diminishing their capacity to recollect the interview conversation. To counter-balance the limitation of over-reliance, notes were also taken during the interviews.

Finally, given the research on higher education professionals is a relatively new(er) area of study, the methodological limitation of the timeframe and literature available is reduced to approximately less than 20 years of data.

Ethical Considerations

It is important to consider the implications of impact to the participants and the researcher in any research study where the study site is the location of their workplace. Although recruitment was from institutions across Canada, it also included the home institution of the researcher. If there is any perceived power relationship dynamics at play, then the candidate would be excluded from the pool to avoid any potential ethical issues that could arise in future. The primary home of the researcher is a teaching and learning centre (TLC). The mandate of the TLC is to support faculty and graduate students in the mission of teaching and learning. Any faculty members participating in the programming at the TLC would not likely hold a primary or even secondary administrative position but would be seeking out support due to the teaching aspect of their roles. These faculty members were not potential candidates for this research study. However, individuals who oversee a unit where there was an ongoing project or initiative tied to the TLC at the time of interviews would be disqualified from participating due to the potential of a conflict of interest.

All participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study through a written letter of informed consent presented once it had been determined that the recruitment criteria had

been met. Also, the right to withdraw was mentioned verbally at the time of interview. There was no issue to withdraw from the study in its entirety or to withdraw certain statements collected from the data, at any point up until the presentation of the final oral defense. The preliminary data analysis was sent to each participant to confirm the accuracy of the statements made during the interview process. This member checking (Creswell, 2007; Willis, 2007) also provided an additional opportunity for the participants to review the data and analysis and make any corrections or remove any statements that they did not feel comfortable being shared or had changed their mind about including in the data presented. The researcher did not need to know the reasons for withdrawal unless the participant wished to share that information.

Any concerns around confidentiality were mitigated by anonymizing the participants and removing any identifying markers from the data e.g., institution. The data collection was done via audio recording and analyzed electronically along with any additional written notes. All data will be deleted or destroyed five years from the date of the final oral examination where this research will be presented.

The Ethics Protocol dated August 30, 2022, was submitted to REB 2 with the following documents:

1. The recruitment email (see Appendix D) for all potential participants outlining the research study, the timeline for data collection, the option to withdraw at any point in the study, the name of the researcher, the name of the PhD supervisor, and the contact information for the Ethics Board.
2. A letter of informed consent (see Appendix E) which was collected from each participant and stored in a secure environment for a period of five years.
3. An oath of confidentiality non-UM personnel form (not required).

4. An oath of confidentiality UM personnel form (not required).
5. The interview questionnaire (see Appendix A).
6. A certificate of completion (see Appendix B) of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Course on Research Ethics (CORE).
7. Research Ethics Board 2 approval (see Appendix C).

Summary

This chapter summarizes the rationale for utilizing phenomenological approach and a case study methodology for the research. Included are the method of data collection, participants, the positionality of the researcher, limitations of the study, and any ethical considerations.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine the emergence of higher education professionals, specifically within Teaching and Learning Centres in the Canadian university landscape and how HEPROs have impacted the organizational structure of universities. This chapter draws on the data, specifically nine 75-minute participant interviews, institutional website scans, and documents from publicly available governance meetings at the universities represented in this study.

All quotes used in this study are examples taken from the data. However, in the interest of space and brevity, certain words and phrasing have been edited with the use of an ellipsis to denote the omission of words that were not germane to the support of the themes and sub-themes presented in this chapter.

Participants' Profiles

An environmental scan of Canadian university websites was conducted in search of potential participants to whom a recruitment letter could be sent. Given the relatively small number of teaching and learning centres affiliated with Canadian universities, a purposeful sampling was used based on the fulfillment of the criteria set out in the initial recruitment process.

In total, nine candidates were selected to participate in the research study after confirming that they met the criteria. They represented nine different institutions that are all members of Universities Canada from across six provinces. Three of the participants had been hired into the director position without a terminal degree but had been enrolled in a doctoral program at the

time of hire. All the job descriptions stated that a PhD is a required qualification for the director position.

The participants' experience in their roles ranged from one and a half years to fourteen years, however it is important to note that two of the participants had been the Associate Director or Director at the teaching and learning centre prior to assuming the Director or the Academic/Executive/Senior Director position. This was particularly relevant to the networking and relationship-building themes that emerged from the data collection. The additional period spent as Associate Director at their current teaching and learning centre, even before taking on the Director role, or the Director role before assuming the Academic/Executive/Senior Director position, allowed for a continued building of their relationships across the institution.

All but one of the participants were able to share their job description. However, since any questions around reporting lines and qualifications for the position were answered in the interview, the job descriptions only supported what had already been shared by the participants. As a result, the one participant who was unable to provide their job description, was still able to provide the equivalent data that was collected for this study.

The interviews of the participants for this study have given us a glimpse into the demographic data of who some of the HEPROs are at our institutions. A summary of the participant profiles is listed in Table 1 below.

Table 1 – Participants' Profiles

Name	Institution	Years as Director	Previously Associate Director	Academic Qualifications	Appointment Category	Reports To	Faculty Appointment	Staff #s	Seat on Senate*
Frankie	**University of Everest**	4.5	No	PhD	Academic	Associate Provost, Teaching and Learning	Yes	80	No
Flynn	**University of Yaletown**	2	No	PhD	Professional Staff	Executive Director	No	2	No
Grayson	**University of Zamora**	13	Yes	PhD	Professional Staff	Associate VP Academic	No	25	No
Harper	**Zeus University**	14	No	PhD	Professional Staff	Associate Vice-President, Academic	Yes	12	Yes**
Oakley	**Patton University**	9	Yes	PhD	Professional Staff	Associate Provost, Teaching and Academic Programs	No	35	Yes
Quinn	**University of Veston**	8	No	PhD	Professional Staff	Vice-Provost, Teaching, Learning, and Student Experience	No	14	No
Quentin	**University of Flanders**	8	No	PhD	Academic	Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning	Yes	50	No
Valery	**Granite University**	9	No	PhD	Professional Staff	Associate Vice-President, Academic	No	16	No
Winter	**University of Denton**	1.5	No	PhD	Professional Staff	Vice-Provost, Learning Initiatives	No	21	No

*Or equivalent governing body

**Elected seat not ex-officio

The data for this research were collected between the period of November 4, 2022 to December 5, 2022, from first to last interview. To keep the information fresh, the transcription review of the interview was completed within a week of the interview date – although three weeks was the timeframe that was set to account for any contingencies or unexpected life events

on the part of the participants or in my life. The concept of progressive analysis allowed for writing preliminary results while still collecting data (Kirby et al., 2006). The decision to not wait until all the interviews were completed to begin the analysis section of this study was in large part due to the extended timeframe and delay of the data collection (six weeks) and the time-sensitive nature of the final date of submission of the dissertation.

Participant Anonymity

For anonymity in this study, pseudonyms were assigned to each participant and their institution. However, in what is a relatively small field of teaching and learning in Canada, pronouns can be revealing and unintentionally disclose non/gender. Considering this, and to ensure anonymity, no pronouns were used when referring to the participants. The assigned pseudonyms were used repeatedly in place of any pronoun usage. Confidentiality was more important than literary eloquence where it concerned the identities of the participants.

In the criteria for participation, the candidates had to hold the title of Academic/Executive/Senior Director or Director of a Teaching and Learning Centre. However, to ensure anonymity, from this point forward, the head of the unit will simply be referred to as "Director". This will decrease the possibility of revealing a participant by the specific title that they hold. One point of interest is that the titles themselves can indicate a specific hiring criterion associated to the role or responsibilities. For example, for a seconded faculty member, the title "Academic Director" may be familiar or comfortable due to their faculty status and academic background. A secondment is not a visible identifying marker and is known primarily from a human resources standpoint whereas a title of a position is distinguishable and publicly available on emails, websites, etc. Also, the responsibilities of a director can be quite nuanced whereby one Director may assume full operational oversight of a teaching and learning centre whereas

another Director can be more focused on institutional level work and still yet, another Director may be more restricted in terms of their ability to make decisions that have an impact on the greater university community.

Another criterion for participation in this research study was that the primary appointment was at the teaching and learning centre. All the participants' full responsibilities lie within the teaching and learning centres, however, there are three participants who hold a tenured academic position in conjunction with their position as the director of their unit. Frankie is a faculty member whose passion and interest in teaching prompted the move to apply for a five-year secondment to oversee the teaching and learning centre. There is a possibility of renewing for another five-year term, however that is still undetermined. Harper also holds a faculty appointment; however, this appointment came after already having been the director of the unit for many years. The faculty appointment runs parallel, in conjunction with the appointment as Director of the teaching and learning centre. The end of one appointment would have no impact on the other appointment. Quentin's director position is an academic appointment with tenure, situated full-time at the teaching and learning centre and not in an academic faculty. After consideration of the other criteria and the priorities of this study, the exclusion of faculty members seconded to the director position has been changed and included in the data collection. The initial rationale of not including seconded members of faculties was due to the perception of temporary status in the role of director. However, after other situations emerged where a director held the position of faculty in conjunction with their primary role at the teaching and learning centre, it became clear that the many forms of appointments can also influence the view that others hold in the university community of who is truly a HEPRO.

Thematic Analysis

During the initial descriptive coding of the transcripts, there were words and short phrases that were salient (Miles et al., 2020) and seemed to capture some important insights that could lead to relevant themes. Nowell et al. (2017) provided a helpful guide to thematic analysis in order to ensure the trustworthiness criteria. Every Zoom interview was viewed twice and the full transcript for each participant was reviewed three times. An audit trail was kept with each quote, line number and page number categorized by theme, sub-theme and participant. An important aspect of review was to also go over highlights or notes made during the interviews, as well as additional comments made by the participants – either during the interview or in their feedback of the transcripts. It was an iterative process whereby the preliminary findings were checked against the raw data to see if there was any missing element or undiscovered theme. To establish credibility, transcripts were sent to all the participants for review and feedback. The findings and its interpretations must come from the data (Creswell, 2008; Merriam, 1988; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The themes and sub-themes that were generated were mainly the ones that had the highest frequency mentions throughout the interviews. In some cases, the theme may not have had a high frequency mention, but due to the intensity with which the theme was talked about, it was analyzed and determined that it should be included as one of the themes. The one unique theme was included for the reason just stated, however, any other themes that appeared only one time were eliminated from the potential list of themes and sub-themes. The singular appearance of a theme may not constitute enough relevance for inclusion in this study, but may be a potential future research topic. After determining the themes and sub-themes, again, there was a return to the raw data to check for anything that might have been missed. There were four themes for which no sub-themes surfaced. This led to a return to the data for a fourth review.

HEPROs and the Structure of the University

The following findings have surfaced to address the first research question: How does the emergence of HEPROs at a teaching and learning centre within Canadian universities relate to the structure of a university? An initial scan of the content on the university websites revealed the positioning of the teaching and learning centres in terms of the website architecture. Once the positioning and access to the TLC website was determined, the next search was to confirm the teaching and learning centre director's membership on governance committees, working groups, and ad hoc committees via the publicly available documents on the university's governance landing pages of the website. After coding the interview transcripts, themes were generated to answer the question. The main theme that emerged was 'having a seat at the decision-making table'. However, under the theme of having a seat at the decision-making table, four sub-themes were found to be relevant: a) committee work; b) website positioning; c) who I report to matters; and d) power begets power. The second theme that surfaced is 'restructuring opens up possibilities' under which there were two sub-themes: a) changes due to senior administration or government; b) positioning of the TLC. There are many factors to consider when thinking about the relationship between HEPROs and the university.

Role or Shift in Governance Structure

The Senate is an established entity in many Canadian post-secondary institutions. It is the governing body of the university responsible for decisions on academic matters (Austin & Jones, 2016). The Senate body may have a different name, but its function is the same across the institutions represented in this study. In many ways, the Senate is a means to keep the administration from having full power over all decisions and counter-balancing decision-making in areas such as "curriculum, promotion, tenure, and academic standards" (Austin & Jones, 2016,

p. 133). For all but one institution included in this study, the Senate is a governing body that determines decisions for the university on academic matters. The one exception in this study is an institution with a slightly adapted governance model; rather than the typical bicameral Board of Governors and Senate structure, there is an additional existing governing body that makes decisions for the university on their academic matters.

Other than a seat on Senate, the teaching and learning centre directors may also sit on other governance committees that are either Ad Hoc (e.g., COVID Response) or Standing Committees (e.g., Teaching and Learning) through which they may wield some decision-making power. The ultimate decision rests with Senate, however, these committees form the recommendations that are presented. Flynn, Grayson, and Frankie do not sit on any of the governance committees at all. In Grayson's case, the reason for this is tied into the fact that there are very few governance committees at Grayson's institution.

A growing belief that university governance is becoming more managerial and power shifting from faculty to Administration and Boards (Taylor, 2013) is consistent with visible changes to a focus on financial feasibility, efficacies, quality assurance, and management practices (Rowlands, 2013).

Oakley strongly believed that the teaching and learning centre at their institution is "inter-woven into the governance structure".

Notwithstanding pre-existing structures, Covid and the resulting pivot to remote teaching catapulted many teaching and learning centres across Canada to the limelight.

An interesting observation made by Quentin was that,

> we are a non-academic unit with academic staff, so that comes with its complexities. We are a non-academic unit within the context of an academic structure, where there are 13 academic units that have incredible influence over governance and decision-making.

In what has been a traditional hierarchy and structure whereby the power and voice has belonged to academic units, Quentin's institution was now beginning to include non-academic units such as the teaching and learning centre.

Grayson shared a comment that has been made in Grayson's presence on more than one occasion, that "academic support units in general have too much power". Perceived or real, units such as the teaching and learning centre have been viewed to have power at their institutions.

A Seat at the Table

When speaking of HEPROs in the field of teaching and learning, "the 'table' is a metaphor for those activities that influence the decisions surrounding teaching and learning and conditions of faculty work as well as the work itself" (Schroeder, 2011, p. 49). The proverbial "seat" is occupied by those who are in positions to make the decisions in these significant arenas. At the institutional levels of leadership and decision-making, the actors typically involved are senior administrators, heads of units, and members of the university community with the relevant expertise needed (Schroeder, 2011).

Grayson's institution does "not have a lot of standing committees". As such, Grayson was only one of two participants who did not bring up the numbers of committees, working groups, or task forces that they sat on. It was not a matter of complaining, but unlike the other seven participants, it did not even surface as a topic of interest. It appears that neither felt committee work was overwhelming or the need to mention it. The corollary of this was that Grayson thought "the HEPRO influence is not really so much on the structure of the institution,

as it is on the decision-making". Grayson believed that "being able to contribute ideas whether you're at the table or not, knowing your ideas are going forward, you have to have a really good working relationship with your higher up…" Essentially, Grayson believes that HEPROs *do* have influence that has an impact on the decision-making at Grayson's institution but it is contingent on the positive nature of the relationship with those to whom one reports. As "structure" in this study is referring to either organizational or power, Grayson's comment about HEPROs' not influencing structure belies the power that HEPROs can hold with their decision-making influence regardless of whether they have a seat at the table.

Reviewing the Senate meeting minutes at each of the institutions, it confirmed what was shared during the interviews. The terms of reference and membership clearly outlined the involvement or non-involvement of the teaching and learning centre director. Also standing committee agendas and minutes were available to the public, through which one can gauge the strong presence or lack thereof in terms of the Director of the teaching and learning centre.

Oakley was the only Director in this study who had an ex officio seat on Senate and proudly announced that,

> It certainly has changed over the years, and I think a watershed moment for us was when the Director of *teaching and learning centre (specific name not disclosed)* was appointed ex officio to be a member of Senate. So that was big, that was a big deal for us.

For Oakley, it seems that the formal recognition of being given an ex officio seat on Senate was a significant marker of status and achievement for the Director of the teaching and learning centre. This was viewed as an opportunity to have greater impact, be perceived in a positive light and perhaps equal footing with the academic colleagues across the university.

Although Harper had previously held a seat on Senate for a number of years, it was an elected seat, not ex officio, which meant that there was no guarantee each year for Harper or any future Director to have a seat. And if Harper's election to Senate was attributed to Harper's existing connections or relationships and established credibility, then any future Director would have to earn the same degree of trust in order to win an elected seat on Senate. At Harper's institution, Zeus University, there are a number of elected seats on Senate that are open to the wider university community. There were members of Harper's teaching and learning centre who fell under the category of HEPRO, who occupied these elected seats. Even though these HEPROs from the teaching and learning centre had representation on Senate, they were elected representatives rather than fixed positions, so again there was no consistency or guarantee of a seat at this table. Given the role of the Senate body at a university, having a vote on academic matters that impact the entire institution was significant.

In Valery's mind, even without a seat on Senate one can have power and a seat at the table.

> I think, for… my role, it's just being able to have a voice at the table. It's not about, because we're not voting members, so it's not that direct power. It's this ability to say, "Hey, did you think of this?" And to be there to say it.

Along the same vein of thinking as Valery, Winter posited that despite not holding a seat in the Senate body, the relationship that Winter had developed with the Vice-Provost, to whom Winter reports, had allowed an indirect influence and voice to be heard at the higher levels of decision-making. An example of this can be found,

> a couple of times when there have been larger suite of proposals going through Senate, I've been on *google* chat and on the Zoom call for the large meeting, in case my boss had

> questions or wanted to pick my brain or something, that I was kind of there, you know, like a bug in the ear kind of thing for that, but not formally.

The above example illustrated the indirect impact that a HEPRO such as a director of a teaching and learning centre can have on university decision-making by providing invisible or hidden support. Even though their expertise is in the background, it is essential in helping inform those who may be in positions of decision-making power. Winter did not have an official seat at the table but still managed to "have a seat at the table" unbeknownst to those present at the discussions.

Committee Work

The lens and perspective of individual directors can vary considerably, and this was evident when the conversation turned to the committee work that they were involved in. Quinn, for example, when asked about the number of committees, task forces, working groups that Quinn was involved in, replied, "I wouldn't say that many. I would say, like in terms of formal committees, I'd say there's not that many actually". When pressed for a ballpark number, the 'not that many' turned out to be approximately twenty. Without knowing the specifics and obligations of each committee, it was hard to gauge whether the feeling of it not being 'that many' was tied into the amount of work versus the actual numbers of committees that Quinn sat on.

Valery sat on the opposite end of the spectrum and believed that there was too much committee work for just one person. When asked about the numbers of committees, task forces, and working groups, Valery responded with,

> I'm just gonna double check I didn't miss any. I'm on so many. I counted. In fact, my VPA said, "you are on an awful lot of committees. Why don't you make a list of them,

> and then we can get a good handle… which committee should be where", and I think it was twenty-six different committees and meetings.

Despite this, Valery also understood that many of these committees can wield some power because "it's an influential body."

The belief and the pressure to accept all committee invitations to participate was quite strong among the participants. Harper believed,

> It is important that you say 'yes' to as many committees as you can, and that you actually do work on the committees you're on, because it is from the committees that I was on, where I did work, that got me invited to other committees. …And that is a bit of a catch-22, because you also reach a point where you're on too many committees to do anything effective.

Active participation in the work of committees allowed for one's voice to be heard. This was key for teaching and learning directors who were advocating and advancing teaching and learning initiatives that can significantly impact student learning at their institutions. Harper reinforced this idea.

> So, I do think it's important to have built up relationships, because if you're not written in by-laws to be required to be at the table, you have to have the relationships and the credibility that we've been talking about built up, so people think to ask you. It would be nice if it were built into the policy so that no matter who was in the position, they would be invited to the table. As it is, I think each person might have to build up their own reputation and their own credibility and their own relationships, and that takes time. So, it would be nice, it would be important to have it in the by-laws, and the policies, and the

> terms of reference, but if it's not, which I think in many cases it isn't, then it's important to have the relationships and the credibility built up.

When Frankie was asked about Frankie's ability to contribute to conversations at the decision-making levels of the university, the response was mixed, "I think I can contribute at the university level. I don't feel I have a lot of authority or say, but I'm on a number of different university-wide committees because of my role". This sentiment of lacking authority for Frankie's own role was different than what Frankie felt about the power a committee yielded.

> However, I actually think the committees, in some respects, may have more power, because they're the ones who decide to bring, what to bring to Senate. I mean Senate has to approve, and they don't always approve. But the committees are sort of shaping what ends up on the Senate agenda, and I have to say, through that... Well, the Senate is so big and there's not enough time to really talk things through in the big Senate. And so, they just, I mean they talk, but they vote on things that are brought to them right, so like you can affect, at least where things are maybe going to move, if they vote for it.

In the end, Frankie expressed that although Frankie did not have a seat on Senate, it did not impede the work that Frankie did, "Because everything happens on the committees…The work happens on the committees".

Quinn saw the role of Director as one that collaborated across the institution through a Senate sub-committee and worked "on devising what the strategy or direction will be for the institution, and then either having it approved through Senate, or having it resourced and endorsed through things like Deans' Council or other kinds of groups like that".

Flynn was the only participant who did not sit on any committees. Flynn's institution will be undergoing an external review in 2023. Flynn was hopeful that this review along with

reporting to a new administrator may open an opportunity for Flynn to be invited to sit on some committees, something that was not a possibility with a previous administrator to whom Flynn reported. That administrator sat on all the teaching related committees herself. Even after the administrator left the institution, the structure and processes remained intact. A review and overhaul will be a welcome change for Flynn.

It seems that despite the overwhelming numbers of committees that most of the participants were a part of, there was a common understanding and acceptance of the necessity to engage in this type of work to have an impact. Their membership on these committees was viewed as a means to have a voice in important decisions and/or boost their reputation and credibility at the university as HEPROs working in the field of teaching and learning.

Positioning of the Teaching and Learning centre on University Websites

A popular focus for web designers and administrators is the goal of getting a website to be at the top of a search engine thus facilitating ease of access and priority status. It is believed that the top results are indicative of the most popular companies or products on the market. To follow suit, what then appears on the home page should be representative of the best-selling products or services of the organization. By *positioning* teaching and learning centres on the university's website, the aim is really to promote higher visibility and traffic for both internal and external stakeholders.

After conducting an environmental scan of the websites of the institutions represented by each participant, the positioning of the teaching and learning centres could be perceived to be indicative of the value and importance that they have within the context of their institutions. For example, how far into the architecture, in terms of layers or clicks, to find the teaching and learning centre is an interesting discovery. When confronted with the difficulty of locating their

web page, the best bet is to enter “teaching and learning centre” into the search. Without knowing the name of a teaching and learning centre, one would be relegated to search on the website of their home institution provided that is known information. When typing in “teaching and learning centre” at the institutions represented in this study, one of the first hits that appear were the centres however, there were institutes or academic department listings that also appeared. The search engines pick up on ‘teaching’ or ‘learning’ which are not uncommon words in universities. Some teaching and learning centres are named after people, so the words “teaching and learning” may or may not be present in their unit’s name. So, if one were to search on a university website, it can be a muddied search process. Another route that is likely to yield a positive result is to hunt through the reporting lines of the Provost and Vice-President Academic or equivalent, as most teaching and learning centres are situated in this portfolio. Also, one must consider that there are still many people who are unaware that ‘teaching and learning’ is a field of study and that ‘teaching and learning centres’ are actually a thing, in which case, it might not occur to them to input ‘teaching and learning centre’ into the search engine of a university website.

In a previous conversation with a senior administrator from a university not represented in this study, there had a been significant push to have the visibility of their teaching and learning side equal that of the research side at their institution. The result is that that teaching and learning centre is one click from the home page and is now highly visible and accessible to the broader university community. After years of being hidden in layers of a website architecture that was extremely frustrating for those searching for teaching supports, this was a welcome change and perhaps a foreshadowing of future shifts in priorities for this institution.

The universities of the participants in this study had their teaching and learning centres listed on their websites but only one was on the institution's actual home page. The participant whose teaching and learning centre was on the home page of the university website was effusive in praise of the decision to prominently place the TLC on the introductory web page for online views. For the other eight institutions, it would take anywhere from two to five clicks or layers of pages to go from the university home page to the landing page of the teaching and learning centre. Of the five institutions that had 1-2 clicks to the teaching and learning centre web page, the participants of four of those universities perceive their schools to be focused on the teaching and learning side of the university.

Although a website listing may seem inconsequential or something that occurs by happenstance, but in fact, there is intentionality and much prioritization of what occupies space on a university home page. The fact that a teaching and learning centre had a spot on the home page of a university was significant and could reflect the level of priority it had at that institution. Access to a TLC within 1-2 clicks of its university's home page is still relatively easy to navigate. The closer the teaching and learning centre landing page is to the university home page may also signify the priorities of the institution. If one were to scour a university home page even 15 years ago, research would have had a presence, but teaching was not necessarily visible despite the trifecta of *teaching, research, and service* that is a recognized mantra of academia.

Who I Report to Matters

All the teaching and learning centres reported to a member of the provost team, having direct access to the highest decision-making level of the university. In the last past decade, numerous universities have created a Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning or an Associate Vice-President, Teaching and Learning position whose portfolio includes the TLC.

In the case of one of the institutions represented in this study, the director reported to the Executive Director of the teaching and learning centre, who reported to someone within senior administration. The decision to include Flynn in this research, was largely in part because Flynn did meet the basic criteria for this study. What Flynn's participation did was also highlight the nuanced nature of this title and role. Flynn was responsible for the teaching and learning unit which sat under a larger umbrella that included other units. Additionally, at meetings for national teaching and learning centre directors, it was Flynn and not the Executive Director of the larger unit who attended and participated in activities. This hinted at the complexity of this role.

At Valery's institution, the previous director "she reported directly to the Provost. And when she left, she said to me, "Whatever you do, don't lose that direct line to the Provost."" For Valery, this warning were words that had little meaning until Valery assumed the directorship of the teaching and learning centre. After the director left, a new position was created at the provostial level, an Associate Vice-President role, to which the teaching and learning centre would now report. This distance from the Provost resulted in a heightened awareness of the importance of the relationship between the Director and the Associate Vice-President in order to actualize new initiatives and priorities.

On the other end of the spectrum were those participants who at the time of the interview expressed that they had a great working dynamic with their Senior Administrator, and their concerns of what might happen with the next incumbent to whom they will report. Winter advocated that,

> you need like-minded allies and accomplices to do this as well. I am afraid and I don't use that word lightly, but I am afraid of what's going to happen when my Provost finishes his term, because he's in his second term, and isn't eligible to continue for a third. And so,

> I'm hoping at that point, I'll have been here for four years, and I'll have developed four years of things, and you know, a culture and partners. But if my vision doesn't align with the newly appointed one, I'm outranked, right. Like, I have to, you know, shift and change, or risk being insubordinate. And so, I have this fear around, if I don't have an ally or accomplice as my direct boss, no matter how strong my voice is, it doesn't matter.

Power Begets Power

A consistent theme that came out during the interviews was that the people who occupied senior administrative roles were key to the advancement and positioning of HEPROs. Harper shared that "aside from the org chart, the actual power and ability to make change and talk to people changes dramatically depending on the Administrators that are in that role". In Harper's experience, there were times when Harper "had a very good relationship" and a direct line to "call up the provost". While other times, Harper's experience was "to go through three layers before I'm allowed to, and I will *never* be allowed to speak to them (provosts)".

In Winter's observations from previous teaching and learning centres, *who* was in power or in Administration was extremely important to the work of a HEPRO. The work of a teaching and learning centre can only advance as far as the relationship of the director with the senior administrator. So much so,

> … that when that relationship doesn't exist, it can be very difficult or even backward, to do some of those pieces from the Director's chair because they may not even get advanced, or they may not even be considered at that Provost level...

For Valery, over a very short period of time, there have been multiple changes in leadership of the position to which the teaching and learning centre reports, making continuity and being a known entity no longer viable. Without a strong connection to those with a seat at

the decision-making tables, the ability to wield any power was made difficult or dramatically limited. Valery said, “we work with the Associate Vice-President Academic (AVPA), who had a very close relationship with the Provost, so that worked because of who was in the positions.” But with a new AVPA, who does not have much connection with the Provost, and little knowledge of the teaching and learning centre, it was proving to be a challenge for Valery to build a meaningful and effective working dynamic.

Quinn also felt strongly that *who* was in Administration – more specifically “the President and Provost” – made a difference for the role of the director and the teaching and learning centre. Harper referred to “The constellation – the President, the Provost, and I report to the Associate Vice-President Academic” and voiced uncertainty concerning the longevity of the role of teaching and learning.

> I don't know what it would be like in the next person. What I don't know is, how much is it enduring, like a change in conception at the institutional level of my role, and the role of teaching and learning and the importance of the university, and how much is dependent on the people as they rotate through.

It may be debatable, but quite often, money was associated with power. Within higher education this can be the crux of what and who gets things done. It is much easier to move an initiative or agenda forward if the university provides the appropriate funding. The financial support can be the deal breaker or maker concerning a project or priority of the institution. Quentin believed this to be true and shared,

> We have, you know, quite a robust budget compared to many other centres for teaching and learning. We have resources… We have a very robust staff compliment compared to other institutions, even though we'd always need more people. I know that all of those

things impact our ability to influence change. That we are written into and given a seat at many institutional committees related to teaching and learning and are able to influence.

Since much of the work of a teaching and learning centre relies on relationships, it is a common belief the direct relationship between director and who they report to is significant in terms of having power to make change or move an agenda forward.

Restructuring Opens Up Possibilities

At multiple institutions, the re-structuring of the teaching and learning side of the university or a change to the senior administrative level portfolio prompted changes to the teaching and learning centre. Each of the participants shared that there was restructuring at their university and name changes to their teaching and learning centres in the past dozen or so years, and the resulting changes have enlarged the size and responsibilities of their respective portfolios. The scope of this study did not allow for us to know with certainty the catalyst for the re-structuring of teaching and learning portfolios at any of the institutions discussed, however, it would not be unreasonable to believe that the increasing demands and attention on the teaching side of the university may have been a trigger to re-imagine the centre structure and its positioning within the university in terms of reporting line, responsibilities, etc.

Restructuring was an opportunity, though not always the case, to make a change in where the teaching and learning centres were located on campus. For many TLCs, their locations have often been far from ideal – often situated in basement or remote parts of the campuses (Schroeder, 2011). Career advancement is often met with a progression of titles, roles, and responsibilities. Similarly, the progression of the physical location of teaching and learning centres from less accessible or remote locations to more centrally located buildings are often indicative of the progress in how they are viewed or valued at our institutions (Schroeder, 2011).

As stated earlier, Flynn's university underwent a restructuring of the teaching and learning centre which prompted a change to Flynn's title and role that coincided with Flynn's completion of a doctoral degree. From what Flynn understood, the goal of the restructuring was to elevate the TLC and reorganize the structure and reporting. It involved an amalgamation of multiple units under a broader teaching and learning mandate. The result was the creation of a higher level Executive Director position that sat on the Dean's Council and a new director position which Flynn assumed. Had the restructuring not happened at that specific time, Flynn might not have had that transfer of role without some other impediments. It was only seven years prior that Flynn's institution had had a restructuring.

> So, the structure, I'll explain to you, was put in place, now I guess that was just about seven years ago. And what happened was prior to that, we were a centre, a *teaching and learning centre (specific name not disclosed)* and the provost office decided that they wanted to elevate the centre and sort of re-envision the structure of it.

According to Oakley,

> … the Provost created a new position at the provost level… And at that point, *the teaching and learning centre* (*specific name not disclosed*) switched from (one Provost) to the new Associate Provost area… There never was a place for the teaching and learning centre. Everybody knew. Can't report directly to the Provost because the Provost is just overloaded and has all the deans and has everything else.

Similar to Flynn, Harper also did not have to apply for the position of Director. In Harper's words, "I did not have to reapply when they re-organized my position. They submitted my job for re-evaluation, but they did not require me to reapply".

The re-structuring that occurred at Harper's institution was at "a time of cuts, and they thought that they could, and clearly, they could, save money by cutting the position" resulting in the elimination of the Vice-Provost level position. This was in stark contrast to the development of this level of leadership in teaching and learning at other institutions across Canada.

In the past fifteen years, universities began to create a new provostial level position with a focus on teaching and learning. For many teaching and learning centres, this was a new reporting line that allowed for teaching and learning issues to be dealt with at an institutional level much quicker due to the direct line of reporting. This resulted in structural changes which then created new positions such as what Harper, Quentin, and Flynn all experienced and took over. Harper sees these types of positions as affecting the organizational structure and more importantly, adding to it "because it didn't exist" previously.

Positioning of TLC

It seems that the Director of a teaching and learning centre has a distinct role and is a key player in the teaching and learning initiatives at many institutions, however, the significance of the role is not commensurate with the logistics and operationalization of the director role or the TLC within the institution. In Valery's eyes,

> It's basically an HR administrative group they've put us in because we don't belong anywhere else. We're not allowed to belong in a group, so we're in a group by ourselves. But HR apparently has never got around to defining that group in any way other than…

The idea of positioning the TLC and its director within the architecture and structure of the university can ideally be done during a phase of restructuring at the university. The teaching and learning side of many of the universities represented in this study have already undergone a restructuring or even multiple changes in the past 15 years as acknowledged by the participants.

At Flynn's university, the director position is part of a professional union, but Flynn shared that "one of the changes that we're looking at, to make the Directors of our units, part of the academic agreement union…". Flynn's position is that a more academic employment category would be "an asset" and better aligns with the academic staff that teaching and learning centre staff work with regularly.

Relationship Between HEPROs and Managerialism

The following findings have surfaced to address the second research question: What is the relationship between HEPROs at a teaching and learning centre and higher education's move to a managerial culture? After coding the interview transcripts, three themes emerged; 1) leading from the middle; 2) ability to get the job done; and 3) job insecurity.

Leading From the Middle

In academia, the traditional hierarchy was structured in a way that clearly announced who had power and who had less or no power. As some of the participants have shared, the idea of being able to influence the higher ups was a key to having power. If you do not have a seat at the table – and even if you do – then it is important to be able to have the ear of someone who does, so that one can have influence on those at the decision-making table. Oakley has experienced times where this sentiment has come to life:

> I think this notion of leading from the middle is key because I think if you're at a teaching and learning centre, and you want to be centre stage, you're in the wrong place. You can be incredibly influential, but you have to let somebody else take the credit for it. It has to be the Provost's idea. It has to be the Dean's idea. It has to be… That's just what it is. It's not… it's not personal. It's the role.

For Oakley, it had taken many years to accept this, but was feeling much more resolved about this type of leadership at their centre. Oakley was quick to point out that,

> … it's understanding the culture and the structures within your institution. And figuring out where you need to be paying attention, where you need… as I say, where it has to be the Provost's idea, where it has to be the Dean's idea, where… not my idea.

It is important to recognize that Oakley and others are not advocating to steal ideas or take credit inappropriately. In fact, the directors of teaching and learning centres must be able to effectively promote teaching and learning at the university in an efficient and fiscally responsible manner, as is expected in the existing managerial culture of our universities. That may involve this type of thinking that results in leading from the middle. There seemed to be an acceptance of whatever it takes to further the teaching and learning agenda – and if that was the road less taken but the need of the hour, then that was what would happen. Leading from the middle was necessitated by the need to get things done. The tension between HEPROs wanting to assert more influence and having to relinquish some acknowledgement and power to actualize a desired outcome had come out in the data across multiple institutions.

Quinn purported that,

> a lot of the work I do with *committee X*, I do present to Senate directly. That's probably been something that's evolved over the last five years as we've had changes in Vice-Provosts. Some previous Vice-Provosts have wanted to present my work and so, they've done that. And more recently, I've presented my own work at Senate. But now, I don't go to the Board. Somebody else presents my work at the Board. So those are the kinds of weird complexities.

The reality of having your work presented by someone who sat at these decision-making tables was seen by several of the participants as the sole vehicle through which the work can be actualized.

When asked by Flynn's boss to revise or develop a new award, program, or evaluation, there was some tension for Flynn, who

> designed it all, you know, and gave it to her, and then she negotiated, you know with the Vice-President Academic's office on that. So certainly involved, you know in a lot of that, informing a lot of that, but not directly related because she would take it. And that's not just with me,… one of us should have been there…

Valery has witnessed the evolution at Valery's institution commenting that,

> we really did, like all that literature that said, 'coming out from the margins to the centre'. We completely represented that literature. You know, we were physically on the margins. We were brought into the library and then we were made physically central (referring specifically to the geographic location of the TLC).

Grayson had been at Grayson's institution long enough to have witnessed many changes to leadership and saw that there were many roads that can lead to the outcome desired by the larger group or senior leaders. Grayson believed, "And being, not always leaders, sometimes co-leaders, sometimes just a member of a committee…" was what it might take. It can be seen as a resigned acceptance. However, it might also simply be the understanding that whether you lead from the front, back, or middle, the end goal is to accomplish the desired outcome that is laid out at the outset.

> And so, it's kind of what I would call like, we came from the middle, right. Where you're not the official leader, but you're definitely influencing the information that people are

> then making decisions on and providing your own input on that, based on what you understand about the information that you're most familiar with. Right? So that's sort of one piece, is that sort of institutional level work.

In the conversation, Grayson communicated a comfortability with providing support as long as it was needed and appreciated.

> I'm not always in a formal leadership position, but I am a relied upon voice at the table. And I often find myself providing, again that kind of leading from the middle piece, where I am, my expertise is required, and they know it, and they listen to it. Thank goodness.

Of all the participants, Oakley was the only one who had “never felt dismissed because I’m a professional rather than an academic who’s risen up”. This could be attributed to the culture at Oakley’s university, Oakley’s age or gender, Oakley’s credentialing, Oakley’s personality, or some other unknown factor.

> That being, said I'm very conscious of that line, and I try to respect it as much as possible. So, I have a pretty good understanding of the politics of the University and the dynamics. So, I've really tried not to overstep my bounds.

Additionally, Oakley commented that “I've always been very conscious of my place in the hierarchy”. Perhaps this consciousness had allowed Oakley to be able to lead effectively from the middle and not always from the front.

Although Winter did not use the terms ‘leading from the middle’ and did not reference the literature as some of the other participants had, there was an indication that it was important that the teaching and learning centre and Winter’s role not be perceived as a mouthpiece of Senior Administration nor an adversary to the work of the Senior Administration.

> …depending on who the Executive Director happens to be, they could be an active scholar and teacher, like I am, or they could be more of an administrator, and that would be fine. My personal approach is look like an academic; walk like an academic; talk like an academic kind of thing, so that I appear to faculty as an equal partner, not as, you know, a senior admin enemy, and not as a junior colleague…

Higher education's move to a managerial culture has resulted in an emphasis on how to best operationalize any initiative efficiently. For many of the participants in this study, their experiences have led them to an understanding that leading from the middle can in fact assist them in executing the appropriate measures to arrive at a desired outcome or deliverable. Not heading up a project or not getting recognition allows HEPROs to bring in their expertise to do the work with less exposure or blame during the challenging times of the process.

Ability to "Get the Job Done"

There had been numerous comments from the participants about their teaching and learning centre having become the place to go to if 'you need to get the job done'. For some teaching and learning centres, they had become a catchall for initiatives that may not have had a natural home and so ended up situated at the TLC because there was nowhere else to place them. Quinn's portfolio had been expanding since the beginning of Quinn's tenure. The continued additions seemed to be more the result of Quinn's ability to take on additional responsibilities rather than being the right fit under the teaching and learning centre umbrella.

> I joined the institution when there was quite a significant review going on of all kinds of activities across the university. And within the first year, I'll just say of my appointment, my role changed dramatically, and I moved into overseeing, not only the teaching and learning centre, which is what I was hired to do, but also another unit called *XYZ*. And I

> oversaw both of those units for a year… And then after that happened, I ended up taking on two more units immediately after that. I think some of it was about a capacity that I think was identified that I could take this on.
>
> … And then there was another unit that because of changes that happened higher up, needed a home… And so, it was "Oh, I think Quinn, you could probably figure out what to do with this unit." And so, I ended up inheriting that unit.

In Quinn's case, there have been additions to Quinn's portfolio almost yearly since year one of being hired into the position of Director of the teaching and learning centre. More recently, the newest addition to Quinn's portfolio included an Access and Equity Service, which in Quinn's estimation was the result of "more changes higher up and that this unit needed a home". Additionally, the teaching and learning centres have proven that they are able to come through and deliver results, especially during the pivot to online learning for all universities during Covid. But was that the best solution? It is no surprise that this has taken an emotional and physical toll on HEPROs. Harper made a very compelling argument about how the university functions and the implications of this type of attitude and problem-solving of just give it to the teaching and learning centre mentality.

> I think of the University and the way we function, a little bit like a body under stress. And so that's where the biology and the physiology sides come in - circulatory failure. Our body is designed with all sorts of fallbacks and ways to resolve itself, to protect itself. So, for example, when you're losing blood, you're under circulatory problems, or if you're dehydrated, you don't have enough liquid in your blood, so your body starts to pull from other places, so that it can continue to pump. You can continue to get oxygen. Your brain can stay alive, and it's really good. Your body has all these backup systems that it pulls

> from to keep you going, but they're not systems that should be giving up that water. And if you continue that, you will actually appear normal and then suddenly fail. And I see our university as functioning that way. We are functioning because we are pulling the resources and time and the energy from pockets of people who are willing to donate, and they work, and they work, and they work, over... and so our system appears okay, we can function, but when those break down, we have no gradual decline. Our system shuts down and we die.

With this understanding that the teaching and learning centre might be able to support or operationalize a project, it had become a catchall for the agenda items or initiatives that did not have a natural place to be housed or have their needs met. Even when the TLC may not have been the right fit, other units reached out because they may have had a pre-existing relationship or were aware of the work that the TLC did. As Winter shared,

> So, when it comes to the co-op advisors, the writing centre advisors, the career advisors, the residence advisors, you know, all of those other kinds of student-facing pieces, we often don't work closely with them unless there is something like the larger strategies of Indigenizing or equity or accessibility…. And if the Residence is wanting to do some equity training, we often are the first place they'll stop because we have those branded expertise here. And we are often, ironically, the wrong people to be doing that because we're supposed to be working with the instructors… we end up then getting involved in the indirect ways where, when they're hiring an equity advisor for Residence, someone from my team would sit on the hiring committee. You know, those kinds of pieces, so it's connected there as well…

According to Oakley, “volunteering to help goes a long way. So that's how. And I think getting a reputation for getting things done. I mean, I think our unit has a reputation for getting things done. And that gets you to the table”.

For Valery, being a HEPRO was “exhausting”.

> It's exhausting because everybody wants a piece of you. Everybody wants something from you. And I very rarely feel like anybody gives anything back. And I don't mean by that, by like the work that they do, I mean that emotional, psychological support that I think all human beings look for. I don't really get it from anywhere.

It seems that the corollary of being perceived as the one to “get the job done” was that the physical, emotional, and psychological sides of the role can be drained or inadvertently neglected. The HEPROs at teaching and learning centres who are able to “get the job done” are tasked with additional work that may be sandwiched between the level of work of an entry level role and that of a more senior leader. In essence, truly leading from the middle goes back to the idea of that betwixt and between situatedness of HEPROs.

Job Insecurity

Although there are many unions represented at a higher education institution, there are also non-unionized categories as well. It is the latter category that many HEPROs find themselves in thus leaving them to feel the effects of job insecurity. With the exception of the one director who is in a seconded five-year term Director position, the remaining have dual, Professional and Faculty appointments, or belong soley to the Professional employment category.

Harper expressed that,

> Our centres are very vulnerable. They... a faculty and a department is very hard to close. They are enshrined, there are processes in by-law and in collective agreement that make it very hard to make changes to them quickly or easily, without multiple levels of approval. Centres for Teaching and Learning are not. They're very easily changed. And a Provost is under a lot of pressure to appear to have made change. So, by changing the structure or the name, configuration, or the location…

From previous experience, Harper had a heightened awareness of the precarious situation many teaching and learning centres found themselves in – without the necessary support of administration, financial resources, personnel and sometimes even physical space or locale. At one time employed at another institution, Harper shared that,

> I was never sure if our Centre was going to be closed down, or we were going to be walked out. So, that started when I got here. It was similar. There was a lot of upheaval, we were in middle of a strike. People in the strike actually said, "If you want teaching to be better, you should take the funding of the centre and hire new faculty." …So, there was a lot of uncertainty, job insecurity, and the need to say things to people that didn't always like to hear them. And when I first started, a lot of need to protect the people who reported to me. There was a lot, so I would say, some fairly abusive behaviours from Admin, senior people and so I needed to be able to stand up and protect them, which means I needed to be confident that I would do it and could be walked out if necessary.

The degree to which a teaching and learning centre was able to take on projects was directly connected to the resource and support allocations that they were provided. However, the challenge of not wanting to be seen as dispensable by taking on everything that was demanded of

the unit at the cost of taking on more than physically able, brought out a level of instability that made it very difficult. As Harper aptly shared,

> Now, if there is a constant tension between overwork and fear of not being seen as useful, that the insecurity of the centre, the ease with which you can shut the centre down or reconfigure, has been in our face repeatedly with each Provost, so there's a lot of uncertainty in my position in terms of how to manage that because we are exhausted, but as soon as we don't do everything, plus all the new things people are suggesting, people say, you know, “Why should we have the centre do X for me?” So, whatever that X thing is. So that tension and worry. And figuring out how to balance the workload, but still be seen as useful and effective.

This fear of being walked out or fired also appeared in conversation with Winter. Although it was specifically in speaking up and having supporters and allies, however it did reveal a level of uncertainty concerning HEPROs’ jobs and the underlying fears that can exist.

> …only goes so far when you're a HEPRO non-unionized person, leading the teaching centre, and you don't get to say, "I'm not doing this, and I won't because..." Right? I mean you can, but you know, watch how quickly 'cause' is found to get rid of you, kind of thing.

The instability for those whose employment categories were limited or without union support presented added complexity and concern for teaching and learning directors. As Winter found,

> The Excluded Academics have no representation. So, I'm part of a small group of leaders who could be disrupted or interrupted or fired at any point, because I have no representation. So that's part of the challenge as well, is my relationships matter so much

> more, than if I had a kind of unionized or a representation, or I was part of a group that had each other's backs, as we were doing this.

Similar to Harper's views, Winter suggested that some of the university structure around employment categories can have a negative effect on teaching and learning centres and their directors.

> It hinders. It absolutely hinders, because I need to almost do two jobs to keep this job going. I need to be on my "A" game with the relationships and partnerships to protect me in my role in the centre. But I also need to be doing all of the work that has to be done so the centre stays viable and worth funding and kind of moving those things forward as well.

In the end, Winter was adamant that the work was too much for one person.

Frankie's position was unique from the others as it was the only secondment. A different insecurity that surfaced with Frankie's role revolved around the unfamiliar elements of an academic support unit that was situated in a central services unit, such as a teaching and learning centre, as opposed to an academic faculty. According to Frankie,

> … to move from a faculty position into a role like this, because there was so much I didn't know, and still today, I mean, even literally, today, you know, came across something that I just messed up because I didn't know. Because if you grow up in a faculty role, for lack of a better term, like that's where you've spent all your professional time... and suddenly you're leading a unit with a lot of staff and students, and HR things and finance things, and you know, strategic plans, and... like what?? I just felt quite out of my league. I feel better now, but occasionally still feel a bit out of my league.

However, even Harper was familiar with this insecurity about one's own ability as a HEPRO director of a teaching and learning centre. Harper said, "It's a bit, it's a lot of that imposter syndrome. I'd say feeling you're not good enough, you don't know enough, uncertainty, especially before becoming part of the faculty union, uncertainty about the job".

In one particular interaction, Flynn reflected on the comment that "as the Director of the teaching and learning centre, like you know, everything basically (re. teaching), right?" Although Flynn did not agree with the sentiment, there was also a semblance of the insecurity that came with these types of occasional assumptions. The job title itself can give a status or attribution of knowledge that may or may not be warranted thus engendering some level of insecurity around the position.

The directors of teaching and learning centres seemed attuned to the notion of keeping in step with faculties and ensuring that their needs are met in order to justify their (TLC) existence. Fittingly, Winter shared "I'm doing the job I have to do to keep the *teaching and learning centre* (*specific name not disclosed*) viable".

Despite the precariousness of the situation for many HEPROs at teaching and learning centres, leading from the middle is likely not going to change as most TLCs report to a senior administrator and therefore will remain situated in the mid-range of higher education leadership.

HEPROs' Agency

The following findings have surfaced to address the third research question: What agency do HEPROs at a teaching and learning centre have at Canadian universities? After coding the interview transcripts, three overall themes emerged: 1) influence; 2) boundary-spanners; and 3) credibility. Under the first theme of influence, there were three underlying sub-themes: a) impact of Covid; b) relational power; and c) having a presence. Under the third theme of credibility,

three sub-themes surfaced: a) significance of a PhD; b) importance of the title; and c) qualities needed.

Influence

Some of the teaching and learning centres had seats at the decision-making tables prior to Covid. However, it was a unanimous sentiment among the participants that the pandemic either increased their agency or for those who were perhaps still not at the table for strategic institutional decisions, elevated their status significantly. The added trust that has been built over time has helped to enhance the reputation of the TLCs thereby increasing their level of influence at our universities.

Even though Oakley felt that the teaching and learning centre was "interwoven into the governance structure", there was still a further recognition that,

> The pandemic did a lot for our status and because it was clear, like every other teaching and learning centre in North America, certainly, all of a sudden, we had to do a lot. We were given a lot of trust and autonomy from the senior leadership in terms of everything from making certain kinds of decisions about how things were going to happen, to financial ability to spend, things like that. And that that was really good for us in terms of we earned trust during the pandemic.

Oakley firmly believed,

> And one of the reasons we were given a lot of responsibility during the pandemic was because we had a reputation for delivering, and we delivered in spades. I mean the pandemic was our finest hour. We did... as it was for many centres at many universities. And there isn't anybody on campus now, who doesn't know who we are.

Resulting from the pivot to emergency remote teaching and everything since that time, the teaching and learning centre at Oakley's institution had "got very high visibility". These were clearly opportunities that earned more trust which then afforded their TLC the ability to have more influence in their work at the university.

At Winter's institution, the "pandemic absolutely remodeled what the teaching and learning centre was going to be".

Quentin was one of the directors who was already satisfied about the ability to contribute to significant institutional level planning and decisions but still felt the added boost to the teaching and learning centre's profile because of Covid.

> The gift of the pandemic is that everybody was having meaningful conversations about teaching and learning and thinking critically about their teaching and learning… The other thing I think the pandemic did is teaching and learning centres and institutes were taken a lot more seriously. Folk really saw their value. We were, our work was really recognized as foundational to helping the entire academic community pivot or shift to an online context.

In summary, Quentin appreciated that,

> … the pandemic has really focused additional conversation on teaching and learning; it's caused greater involvement and influence of folk across the teaching and learning centre in decision-making; and it's resulted in an incredible workload and exhaustion for our faculty and staff within the institution as well.

The theme of relational power was consistent throughout the data collection as evidenced in the information gathered from the interviews and further supported by the documents from

governance committees, sub-committees, and working groups, as well as from the university website scans.

> In a conversation with a colleague just prior to our interview, Quinn recounts that,
>
> I said that I felt like I had relational power. That's the thing, so I don't have a lot of decision-making power other than of course over my own portfolio. But I do build relationships. I build respectful relationships and that comes over time.

In Quinn's mind, this was the best way to influence those individuals and committees that made the institutional decisions.

> I think that it is building up trust over time. And that trust comes from a respect, in not only what you know, I think actually what we know doesn't take us very far. I think how we present what we know, the kinds of ways that we use that knowledge to ask questions and coach people, not to come in and say, "I know the right answer, we need to go this direction", that never works. And it doesn't work for anybody, whether you're in higher education or in industry. People don't like to be told what to do. So, you know our expertise is important, but it's more about how that expertise is enacted and the relationships that we build, and the trust that we build, and that capacity to not only bring that expertise appropriately in certain contexts, but also to listen to the concerns and perspectives, and try to find context specific ways to move change forward that are going to be tenable and get us where we want to get to. So yeah, I'd say relational power.

Despite changes to reporting line organizational structure, Harper did not necessarily see the emergence of HEPROs having a direct impact on the structure of the university, either in the organizational and/or decision-making processes. According to Harper,

> I don't know that it actually changes the decision-making except through relationships and communication. So, by building reputation, you get involved in the committees. And when you're involved in the committees, then you make decisions, you have an impact on decisions. But as of right now, you're not written into by-laws that, for example, we must be there or that this process must include us... But we don't have the power to say 'No'. We just give advice... But otherwise, we're not really written into anything. So, it is almost entirely on reputation and relationship building that you have impact. So, it's not the org structure, per say, it's the relationships you've built, and whether or not people want you to be involved in that decision…

Quentin felt differently and saw "visible shifts" in this area. Quentin commented that during the pandemic, a team was assembled to manage the crisis and,

> I was invited to be a critical member of that table, and we met weekly, if not more. And during the pandemic, we were *writing* new policies. We were the team that was actually preparing the new policies.
>
> …we were preparing, but… decision-making for those policies still sat with the Provost, the team managing the crisis, and the appropriate governance committees.
>
> …we were actually influencing exactly what went in there…

When one holds an official seat on a committee, particularly a governance committee, there is an expectation to contribute feedback or input. However, for Quentin, opportunities came in other forms.

> … because of my role in the teaching and learning centre, the Provost consulted directly with me, not in terms of any formal governance process, but was like, "Quentin, we're starting to talk about the teaching expertise framework. We're starting to talk about the

> scholarship of teaching and learning. Could you just have a look at these policies and change the wording where you see a need to?"

This was, in Quentin's words, "the hidden work of HEPROs" and though not official or necessarily visible, it was the necessary work of HEPROs, and evidence of the behind-the-scenes influence they can yield. "Folks that are in my role, because you do have advocacy and influence in ways that might not necessarily be seen by the institution". It highlighted the importance of "It's not, it's not just the formal structures that have, it's also the informal networks that help to, and knowledge sharing, that helps to influence how decisions are made".

The idea of relational power resonated with Valery, who observed that a previous Executive Director "was invited to the table because of who she was, and people really liked working with her". Obviously, the ability to influence was directly connected to the amount of relational power that one held.

Winter commented, "So I don't, as the Director, I don't have any actual voice, or say there, which then creates the really interesting dynamic of the trust and relationality with my Vice-Provost and the Vice-Provost Office". From previous experience, Winter has observed,

> that when that relationship doesn't exist, it can be very difficult or even backward, to do some of those pieces from the Director's chair because they may not even get advanced, or they may not even be considered at that Provost level for it. So yeah, very technically, *no voice*.

The important takeaway for Winter was that if there was no direct decision-making power for a director then it was key that you had the ear of someone who did, so in essence, there was some sort of influence. However, from Winter's perspective, although this type of influence can occur, it was highly dependent on the individual players involved rather than positionality.

Consistent with the idea of power through influence, Frankie shares,

> Informally, so because I report directly into the provost office into the Vice-Provost, Teaching and Learning, I have some say there... And we have a helpful working relationship where I can say, "you know what, I see this is a real problem. What can we do about X?" And sometimes those things will trickle out, right.

According to Flynn "these long-standing relationships, you know, with the chairs that has a major influence" and regardless of the teaching and learning centre's positioning, or lack thereof, on committees, Flynn saw the value of influencing some of the key players in decision-making at Flynn's institution.

Overall, there was agreement among the participants that there is more indirect impact than direct but that as HEPROs in their roles, they are essential in informing the decision-makers at their respective institutions.

Having a Presence

Having a *presence* at an institutional level can be accomplished through a variety of different avenues. Oakley said, "showing up is a big part of it". This is not just to invited activities and events, but to make a concerted effort to attend "meetings and gatherings that are optional".

Winter was insistent that, "I do think you need to make sure people can't forget that you're here". This can be accomplished from a scholarly approach via presentations and publications to being vocal and intentionally contributing something at every meeting. For Winter, this meant that a meeting

> doesn't go by without each of them (referring to Deans) knowing, 'Oh, yeah, there's a director of the teaching center.' And oh, yeah, they're going to contribute to the

> conversation. So, you can't just be a powerful behind the stage, behind the scenes manager, you do need to be a powerful on-stage talent as well.

For Frankie, that presence was materialized "in terms of direct connections with people, I guess, like I mentioned, showing up, being on the committees, reaching out where it would make sense, bring open to listening to, you know, what folks need, and seeing, you know, what we might be able to do to help".

For Flynn, establishing presence began at the introduction so rather than introducing oneself simply by role as staff at the university as was customary for Flynn, Flynn changed and began by introducing Flynn's area of research first – all in the name of establishing legitimacy. In addition, Flynn felt it was important to have ongoing research in the job of director of a teaching and learning centre.

At Harper's institution, the teaching and learning centre annual report was presented at Senate annually and then published not just on the teaching and learning centre website, but also on the University Secretariat website which allowed for more visibility and a presence, as well as the coveted credibility that was needed from Harper's perspective.

Boundary-Spanners

The idea of partnership has repeatedly surfaced. Winter believed it was necessary to "partner with anyone at the University of Denton with instructional capacities in their roles". Winter described the nature of the relationship of the TLC director to other units and members of the university community as one of "collaborator and partner". In fact, Winter further elaborated that, "We don't support faculty. We don't serve faculty. We partner and we collaborate". Further on in the interview, Winter gestured quotations in reference to the idea that the teaching and

learning centre "support and serve" our faculty, acknowledging that that is by and large how the teaching and learning centre might be viewed by others across the university.

Harper observed that the role of HEPROs was to be seen as "collaborators, co-instigators, co-troublemakers with almost every unit on campus".

For Quentin, the key word was "partners". Quentin felt strongly that "we work in partnership with students. We work in partnership with academic units. We work with, in partnership with the student union and the graduate student association. We learn from each other. It is reciprocal".

A key to the success of building relationships across the university at Grayson's teaching and learning centre lay in the idea of a distributed model where not everything ran through the director.

Oakley commented that Oakley's teaching and learning centre worked "with every single faculty". This sentiment was shared by a number of the other participants.

For Flynn, "those kinds of relationship building on campus at that level" was a welcome acknowledgement of the type of work that the teaching and learning centre and its director did to legitimate the work of the unit. Like many of the other participants, Flynn spoke to the relationships across the university: "we've had these partnerships, you know, with almost all departments on campus for a long time". This was especially important in Flynn's case, as Flynn's reporting structure impeded the direct involvement on committee level structures at the University of Yaletown.

Credibility

The academic credentialing of having earned a doctoral degree was unanimously believed to be part of legitimating the role of teaching and learning centre directors. However, where it sat on the scale of importance varied from one participant to the next.

Significance of a PhD

All the participants agreed that a doctoral degree did add credibility to their roles and often impacted how they were positioned at their institutions. Although they all agreed that they have encountered leaders who did not hold a doctoral degree and were competent, there was consensus that it was an unnecessary hurdle to overcome in not having the designation of “Dr”, comparable to most faculty members and senior leaders. The PhD helped get their foot in the door, but after that once they could demonstrate their expertise and competency then the issue of credentialing was no longer relevant.

Grayson recounted an interaction with a faculty member,

> I was in a consultation with a faculty member, and I don't know what or how it came up. I kind of forget, but it was the, you know, ‘well, you have a PhD, of course you know what this is about'. And I said, actually, really, I don't. Because I didn't at that time. And they're like, 'well, you have expertise that I don't have and so, that's great. Let's just move forward'.

That particular faculty member may have come into the meeting with the assumption that Grayson was equally or appropriately in their mind, credentialed, but in the end, what mattered most was that Grayson could provide the support that they were looking for. When questioned about the importance of a PhD for credibility in the role as head of a teaching and learning centre, Grayson responded that,

> I think it is important. It's important partly because of what I would call the professionalization within our ed development area now, so comparatively, you pretty much have to have one now to be a director, or be, at least you know, as you are, in the process of completing that.

Concerning the credibility factor of a doctoral degree, an important consideration for Grayson was the idea that as the field grows, so too does the expectations around credentialing. With the professionalization of a field, there will be associated qualifications, credentialing, and other indicators that will determine membership or designation.

In one unique situation, Flynn had responsibilities of a director of the TLC, however, did not have a doctoral degree at the time of hire. Just as Flynn had completed a doctoral degree, the university was re-organizing the structure of the TLC and the timing worked out so that Flynn was able to assume the director title simultaneously with the title of "Dr". It was a concerted effort on the part of many to convert Flynn's existing role and "…the way they did it, was that they had to get HR and the union, and everybody in agreement to transfer this position title into a director…" The implication was that Flynn had previously been overseeing a director level portfolio but had not been given the title because it could only be given with a doctorate. This meant that the responsibilities were not commensurate with pay due to the missing educational requirement of a doctoral degree.

According to Oakley, Oakley's institution "would not have hired somebody without a PhD in this (role)". In fact, at Oakley's teaching and learning centre, "They would not have done so... and it's very different at every, you know, at different institutions. We have all of our, any hires since... so since I've been here, which is since 2008, all of our hires into academic positions have had PhDs". The only existing academic staff who do not have their doctorates were hired

prior to Oakley's directorship and were "grandfathered" in. It was important to add that, Oakley spoke highly of these staff members who did not have a doctorate and emphasized that they were extremely competent and highly regarded by their peers and across the institution regardless of their credentialing or lack thereof.

The credibility factor is increased by having a doctorate but the corollary is that there are limitations for a director without the credentialing that can have a negative consequence to legitimating the work of a TLC.

Importance of the Formal Title

In the literature, the titles that HEPROs held did not necessarily adequately reflect their roles. It uncovered the need for titles to change if they were to have any semblance of any significant power at our institutions.

Some teaching and learning centres may have multiple director roles as the title is directly associated to pay scale whereas other centres may only have one director role. The size of the unit did not necessarily bear any weight on the number of directors the unit had or did not have.

At Winter's institution, Winter believed that part of reason for the switch from a more academic title such as Academic Director to an Executive Director "…was in order to have an Executive Director who was doing the strategic pieces, they couldn't be in the faculty union". Oakley, however, was on the other end of the spectrum when it came to the identification of the director of a teaching and learning centre. Oakley felt that,

> There is a difference between HEPRO and having a prof as director because profs tend to identify with their disciplines first and their particular administrative position second. As a HEPRO, my identification is as the Director of the Teaching and Learning Centre.

> Although I have an appointment in the Faculty of Education, it's not the same as other academic administrators who introduce themselves as "I'm a prof in XX and also the whatever role." … it struck me when reading (the transcript) and think it's an important difference.

The challenges around the title of the head of a teaching and learning centre lie in human resources related issues such as having certain responsibilities contained within certain titles within certain union or non-union categories. However, there are also political reasons to the titling of any higher education professional position.

Ironically, Harper held both an academic appointment and a full-time, non-unionized position as director of the TLC, but saw the value in the directorship being a non-academic appointment. Harper expressed,

> I think the fact that we are not required to be an academic seconded, which is a model some universities use where the Director is an academic who's seconded for a term, usually somewhere between three to five years. The fact that we're not that, I think it's good on one level, because there is a serious body of knowledge. And someone who is seconded with no background except an interest in teaching, which is usually the case, the learning curve is massive. And when you change, the kinds of changes that I think need to happen at a university level are often long term. They take time, and when you're only in for three to five years, you don't have time to learn enough to figure out the change, let alone implement the change, and see it to a sustained point. So, I think that's good that the fact that we're not seconded faculty members is helpful for the long-term vision and change management and knowledge base.

Neither a title nor the type of appointment of a director actually equate to the decision-making power that the position holds. However, it is important to note that the title can be perceived to yield some power. In any university, there is a finite number of deans or directors and thus perception of power to positions at that level of leadership. But it is not uncommon to see a discrepancy in the size of the various units – small faculty versus a larger faculty or a small administrative unit versus a large administrative unit. For Flynn, the title can represent real or perceived knowledge "But at the same time, so what that does, you know, I mean, that's fine, you know, the pressure and the responsibility that comes with that. But it also, for example, positions..." This slight positioning was valuable to Flynn, who had few human resources, and little say at an institutional level.

In Quentin's mind, "if institutions really want folks in leadership roles, that we're identifying within the context of HEPROs in this conversation, to have influence, they need to really think about how they can break down barriers for that influence to happen". And this meant that there needed to be some consideration of how they are classifying these (HEPROs) within the leadership context.

Credibility was certainly important when establishing legitimacy as HEPROs on our campuses. When asked about this, Quentin shared,

> The first thing that came to mind is actually, have a seat at the table. Like, honestly, be named in the terms of reference as a credible and important partner and/or chair too, or co-chair I think where appropriate. And it is appropriate within the context of many committees that are focused on teaching and learning.

Some were involved when the committee work was teaching and learning focused. Sadly though, this was not always the case, and some HEPROs found themselves outside of the circle of trust

and excluded from these types of committee work despite the fact that their portfolio included the teaching and learning centre or was exclusively the teaching and learning centre.

Both Winter and Quentin reflected on the added challenges that many colleagues who would identify as marginalized HEPROs faced at our institutions in gaining legitimacy and demonstrating credibility. Quentin saw that "there are certain systemic barriers that we need to overcome at decision-making tables". Unfortunately, the HEPROs who identify within equity deserving groups needed to demonstrate their credibility even more so as they confronted these systemic barriers. Power and privilege continue to exist at our institutions. And HERPOs will come up against this as they attempt to influence their colleagues and the decisions being made at their universities. The outspoken nature that both Winter and Quentin claim to possess is part of what they use to legitimate their roles at their institutions.

Winter has a strong sense that both an "on stage talent" and "the behind-the-scenes management" sides were integral to the building of legitimacy. The former would involve the more visible elements of a director's leadership of a teaching and learning centre such as presentations, publications, and participation or interactions at meetings. The latter would involve the less visible elements of a director's leadership of a teaching and learning centre such as managing the budget or personnel within the unit.

The academic staff position that Quentin held did "help to build credibility and legitimacy". It has afforded Quentin,

> the ability to be present at many decision-making tables that others may not be. It allows me to be part of search committees for academic staff positions, where it allows me to chair certain committees and co-chair committees and establish that sense of legitimacy. I also am afforded and provided resources to engage in scholarship related to teaching and

> learning and my own leadership and educational development consultant practice. So, I build credibility by publishing research. And that does certainly legitimize my role here. I think, speaking to the scholarly nature of our work and continuing to disseminate and share knowledge whether that be locally, nationally, and internationally also helps to build legitimacy and credibility. I think so does being invited keynotes at different spaces.

Qualities needed

Aside from the action items that a HEPRO can take on to demonstrate credibility, there are also qualities and/or characteristics that can provide legitimacy to the director of a teaching and learning centre. According to Grayson,

> I think as a leader, you have to have credibility. And there's different kinds of credibility from my perspective. There's the credibility with the other senior leaders at your institution, which I think comes from, it comes from being able to provide, yes, some evidence that what you're saying is useful. I think, me personally, a lot of my credibility comes from being authentic and being somebody who gets stuff done.

In addition to that, Grayson shared,

> So, there's that kind of credibility at that level. I think, within your own unit, there's credibility there, too, that you have to establish from being, in my case, again, it's the authenticity. It's the transparency. It's the honesty, and the kindness.

The word ‘patience’ appeared in the interview with both Oakley and Grayson. Oakley was convinced that it was a “lesson in patience in doing this kind of work” referring to HEPROs and the challenges they faced straddling the academic and administrative sides of their

universities. Grayson has “learned to be patient”. At times, when faced with a stonewall response, Grayson has held firm to the understanding,

> And just sometimes out-waiting people, right? I mean, I came to this work fairly young, and yeah, there've been some senior administrators where I thought, I'm gonna be here longer than you. I'll just wait till you're gone, and I'll try again.

Quinn also believed that it was important to have “been transparent and authentic and working with integrity. You start to gain trust…” Again, not unfamiliar to other teaching and learning centre directors, was the sentiment that they were “known across the institution as somebody who gets things done”. These qualities for Quinn were essential to build the trust needed for success in the role of a director of a teaching and learning centre.

Interestingly, some of the directors felt their contributions at a national or international level have given them some clout and enhanced their credibility at their home institutions. Valery acknowledged this,

> But one thing I haven't spoken much about is the external knowledge that I bring to the University, and the various research pieces that I've done. And you know I'm Associate Editor for *Journal X*. Like, all of these things, give me access to people or connections, actually access is not really the word, connections with people and places beyond *Granite University* that give me a much broader understanding of educational development, of universities, how universities work in different places, how centres fit in those, how centres change over time in those. So, I think... And you know, actually, maybe it's something in that 'demonstrate credibility piece', you know.

In the end, Valery felt confident that the work external to *Granite University* was something that can help in Valery’s work at the teaching and learning centre. The work builds confidence and

adds to the legitimacy of the director's positioning in teaching and learning, and "I think that allows me to demonstrate credibility".

Harper shared an interesting insight about the nature of the director role:

> You have to be willing to go with the ups and downs. There are internal, daily ups and downs. There are also, over time, massive ups and downs. So, you will be re-configured. You will be challenged. You will be budget cut ten percent and have to lay people off. And then, suddenly you will be the sunshine child, children, and you will be given money. And you're the same people doing the same basic work, maybe changing some of the focuses.

Due to this cycle of up and down importance that can plague a teaching and learning centre, the perseverance and ability to forecast the coming tide are essential qualities of a director.

> So, it's not just me, and I'm not just a failure or a great person, and highly awesome. I am the same. And the context changes, and you need to do your best to foresee the context changing, get things in place, and when they're not enough, or you don't foresee it, then you have to be ready to watch that role.

The scope of responsibility on a very general level was similar across all the institutions involved in this study, however, the focus of the directors varied. While Frankie, Quentin, and Quinn had large portfolios with multiple sub-units and the teaching and learning centre being but one unit, their overall responsibilities lay with the broader teaching and learning mission of their universities at the institutional level. Harper and Quinn still maintained a certain level of involvement with the broad teaching and learning centre initiatives, but on a day-to-day, their focus seemed to be on institutional projects and collaborative partnerships with other units. Flynn had a very internal focus on the operations of the teaching and learning centre proper and no real

involvement in institutional matters. At Valery's university, the Director position "is in a nether world between the two" so the question remained, "is the Director position in the centre and directing the Centre? Or are they directing something more outwards… the culture of teaching and learning at the university and therefore, the structure of the way things work…" It was easy to take a broad stroke at a position and believe that a similar title constituted the same status, power, role, and responsibilities. This was not necessarily true especially when crossing institutions, as institutional culture and context played a big role in determining *what* the Director of a teaching and learning centre was focused on and responsible for.

In conclusion, the findings that surfaced revealed the thinking that many universities have toward HEPROs that is reflected in their positionality within the institution. There are those HEPROs who may view themselves as an academic with administrative responsibilities whereas others see them as an administrator who has a doctorate degree. Even in the case of Frankie who was a faculty member with a secondment to the teaching and learning centre, colleagues who were unaware of Frankie's academic background or employment category, might have assumed that Frankie was an administrator with a PhD. The sentiment shared by Frankie is one that resonated with those who occupy a Third Space, that is neither fully in administration nor purely academic.

> … then there's the administration side, but I'm not fully in administration. So, I'm still in the Faculty Association, our union, right, whereas some administrative positions are not. So, I'm in this really interesting, like I'm still faculty, but I'm also admin. And it's this really interesting space sometimes.

Valery expressed a similar sentiment that, "I have to work really, really hard now to get people to see me as a colleague, not as an Admin person making them do stuff through policy".

The findings suggested that the university community still has a long way to go in terms of situating HEPROs in the appropriately suited roles at our institutions.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the emergence of higher education professionals (HEPROs) within the Canadian higher education landscape as it relates to the existing logics and the institutional structure. This chapter will map the themes and sub-themes of the study with respect to how they relate to the research questions and also against the relevant literature reviewed that helped frame the study.

Based on the findings, the study revealed that higher education professionals are a relatively newer group of staff at Canadian universities, who are creating a different layer of managerialism. The nine participants in this study self-identified as HEPROs with a managerial component to their positions at their respective universities. This study was anchored in insights based on both the collected data and the literature. The findings of this study brought to light the challenges that many HEPROs in leadership face in Canadian universities and the tensions that exist for them in their often hybrid roles – as a professional and management.

Research Question 1. The first research question was aimed at understanding how the emergence of HEPROs at a Teaching and Learning Centre within Canadian universities related to the structure of a university. By structure, it included either governance or power structure, as perceived and experienced by the participants.

In Line with the Literature

The theme of "having a seat at the table" was consistent with the literature and reinforced the idea and importance of HEPROs having an identity within the institution. The participants shared their strong beliefs that they needed to have a role in institutional-level committees, projects, and decision-making. HEPROs possess the academic credentialing and professional

knowledges that make them ideal for the collaborative nature of institutional level initiatives (Veles & Carter, 2016; Veles et al., 2019; Whitchurch, 2009) and ideal to sit on committees that do this work. Interestingly, what emerged from the data was a common understanding that the purpose of having a seat at the table was to have their voices heard and be able to have influence. In the end, the data revealed that it was more important to establish a chain of connections that would allow for that to happen. The Senate body is the highest level of governance and though two of the participants did have a seat in the Senate, the other seven participants did not. Prior to data collection, there was an assumption on my part that the status and power of a HEPRO was related to their membership at the highest levels of decision-making, which is often believed to be the Senate body. The invitation to be a member of the Senate body, the terms of reference and membership are usually tight and limited. The data, however, revealed that a seat at the table was significant, but that it did not have to be a seat in the Senate body. In fact, to sit on institutional level committees held equal significance in the opinion of the participants since much of the work of these committees was seen as having the power of presenting recommendations that they deemed worthy to put forward for a vote. Apart from one participant, the other eight were active members of working groups for institutional initiatives (eg., EDI); Senate sub-committees (e.g., Program Development/Review Committee); ad hoc committees (e.g., COVID response); or standing committees (e.g., Teaching and Learning). The sentiment was clear that sub-committees and the like, can be more significant than the Senate body since they do the work and bring the recommendations to Senate for a vote. What is brought before Senate comes from the work of the members of these sub-committees.

The one participant whose influence was limited by the inability to engage in committees and other cross-institutional projects, primarily attributed the situation to the existing leadership

dynamics and politics that had been in place for many years. Although opportunities were beginning to open for this participant to engage differently, it was still a relatively new situation for this individual and that teaching and learning centre, at the time of the interview. The constraints of not being able to engage at an institutional level has been an impediment to the work of this participant – trying to have a pulse on priorities and needs within the institution. It is important to consider that an individual can decide on the level of engagement they wish to have concerning their work however there are situations when this may not be the case and may be determined by external variables or persons or extenuating circumstances. When selecting committee members for institutional level initiatives (e.g., equity, diversity, and inclusion; experiential education; digital strategy; accessibility mandate implementation; and academic integrity), it would behoove universities to consider a seat for the HEPROs who have the capacity to contribute to the work in meaningful ways with their knowledges and their network of relationships.

The data presented the idea of the reporting line as a significant indicator of the level of importance that a HEPRO has and the clearest pathway to secure a seat at the decision-making tables. Though not a certainty, the person to whom the participants reported seemed to best be able to push forward the teaching and learning agenda and elevate the HEPROs who are involved in this type of work. The literature highlights the importance of the support of such a person and/or position (Ackerman, 2020; Whitchurch, 2008a), which can be helpful to advance the work of a TLC and possibly the career of the HEPRO. Since the presence of HEPROs is still relatively newer within higher education, it can be challenging to break into an organization that has had very little change to the structure of governance and universities. If a Senior Administrator at a university comes into the position after having been a HEPRO themselves

then they may be more open to future HEPRO candidates for leadership positions. The committee memberships for higher level university priorities will be determined by Senior Administrators, thus, seeing or acknowledging the work of a HEPRO or wanting to hear from them regarding institutional priorities is significant. It is difficult to consider potential committee members if one is not acquainted with them or heard about their reputation through others. As one participant noted, it is *who you know* that helps you get invited to be on a committee and as revealed from the data, this level of committee work is integral to having a seat at the decision-making tables. This is related to the significance of the reporting line whereby if the unit and therefore its director reports to someone in Senior Administration, their profile is elevated which provides unique opportunities. The findings revealed that there was a connection between having the ear of a Senior Administrator and being invited to a seat on an institutional level committee. The barrier to a seat at the table is much higher if those who are organizing the committees do not know who you are in terms of ability or worse yet if they are completely oblivious to the existence of your role or your unit.

The theme of 'restructuring opens possibilities' identified the challenges that the participants faced as HEPROs in institutions of higher learning that have been fixed entities for such significant lengths of time. As far as institutions, universities are seen as having had the least amount of change or transformation in Western society due to the historical nature of their organizational and physical structures that remain, some dating back to the medieval era (Kerr, 2001; Smeenk et al., 2009). According to Smeenk et al., (2009), universities however are now beginning to experience transformations in both identity and structure for a variety of reasons, one of which is the managerialism that has surfaced in higher education.

At many Canadian universities, the creation of a new provostial level position has created a direct link for HEPROs at teaching and learning centres to have that connection to decision-making powers at their institutions. This is of importance however it is even more essential to be reporting to this provostial level position so that if one is not on the higher-level committees then they will at least have the ear of the Administrator. A positive relationship between a HEPRO and their Senior Administrator is highly contingent on who the actors are in these positions, as their ways of relating, interacting, and communicating all play a role in the outcome of this work dynamic. Consistent with the data, a great working dynamic can be advantageous to a director of a teaching and learning centre and to the centre itself. However, if the relationship is fraught with challenges, then ultimately, it can have a negative impact on both the director and the teaching and learning centre's capacity to move the teaching and learning agenda forward at the institution. The teaching and learning agenda can include but is not limited to decisions on: the learning management system; enterprise technologies that have pedagogical implications; different delivery modalities; student ratings of instruction; a teaching excellence framework; and other teaching and learning considerations. Who makes the decisions at our institutions? It is not just the senior leadership of a university. Many decisions are made by committee. By sitting on a committee that makes decisions in these areas or being able to influence those who sit on these committees, HEPROs, such as the directors of teaching and learning centres, are able to contribute to the important decision-making and embed themselves into the structure of the university.

The findings revealed that the development of employment opportunities for professionals to be selected for managerial or leadership positions has repositioned higher education professionals, specifically directors of teaching and learning centres. HEPROs are

positioned to take on institutional level work due to the nature and breadth of the projects they are involved in (Berman & Pitman, 2009; Whitchurch, 2008b). By establishing a seat at decision-making tables, these HEPROs have opened up a pathway for their influence on institutional level priorities. In recent years, teaching and learning has become more of a focus within higher education, thus, enabling directors of teaching and learning centres and the aforementioned provostial level administrators to be invited to be significant contributors to the priority decisions at their universities. The committee work as mentioned earlier along with the increase in leadership positions has provided HEPROs at teaching and learning centres the ability to impact the leadership structure within universities.

Research Question 2. The second research question sought to understand the relationship between higher education professionals at a teaching and learning centre and the move to a managerial culture in higher education.

The findings revealed that the participants spent a considerable amount of their time and energies navigating the senior administration, to whom most of the participants reported, and the faculty/students that they served. There seemed to be a concerted effort made by the participants to find the balance in meeting the needs of both constituents. As one participant aptly noted, the teaching and learning centre is a non-academic unit with staff whose work is of an academic nature, situated within the context of an academic structure. The complexity of this must be dealt with care and diplomacy.

According to Veles and Carter (2016), the move to a more managerial culture has links to the neoliberal ideologies that have entered our universities that focus on expansion and access to education creating needs for more efficiency and accountability. The corollary of this focus is that the managerial approaches that higher education has embraced has had an impact on

university governance (Kehm & Lanzendorf, 2007) and created opportunities for HEPROs to be part of the conversations, influence, and decision-making. The data revealed that, in particular, the pandemic and resulting pivot to emergency remote teaching for all universities in Canada profiled teaching and learning centres in ways that were unprecedented. The traditional hierarchy and structure of our universities where the power for decision-making and voice to influence had belonged to academic units, were now beginning to include non-academic units such as the teaching and learning centre.

The competing logics of managerialism and academia still exist (Veles & Carter, 2016; Gornitzka & Larsen, 2004; Szekeres, 2004; Whitchurch, 2006) but are making way for a more collaborative way to co-exist within the walls of our institutions. Just as important as academics are to a university, so too now the higher education professionals are playing a significant role as they "hold much of the systemic knowledge, the intellectual capital, required to ensure the functioning of the university" (Graham, 2012, p. 439). The HEPROs who occupy some of the managerial positions on our campuses are working to exist in a system that was not made for them. Some of the roles that HEPROs hold are in units that have expanded from the growth of accessible education and the accountability and efficiencies required to maintain quality education at our universities. Teaching and learning centres are prime examples of units that have become profiled and grown in significance in the past two decades as evidenced by Senior Administrative Teaching and Learning positions at the Vice-Provost or Associate Vice-President levels across Canada.

The theme of leading from the middle was particularly important for those who have had leadership positions such as the directors of teaching and learning centres. Even though the literature showed an increasing level of responsibility and power (Berman & Pitman, 2009;

Whitchurch, 2008b), the directors of the teaching and learning centres who were interviewed for this study strongly implicated there was a need to lead without always getting the recognition or acknowledgement for their work. The data supported the idea of having one's work presented by a more senior level leader for the purposes of garnering support or making a decision on an important matter. At no point was there any accusation of impropriety or integrity breaches, rather the necessity of doing the work required to push an agenda forward but having a more senior level administrator present the ideas to ensure the successful outcome or acceptance.

Although the theme of 'having a seat at the table' appeared to be consistent with the literature, it was also divergent in that there was a strong sense of *influence* that in some ways became more significant for the participants in terms of getting the work that needed to be done and accomplishing the goals they set out for their units. There was no argument that having a seat at the table gave a discernible authority to the HEPROs who had it. However, for those who might not have it, the data also revealed that HEPROs had a powerful influence that was comparable to that seat at the table due to the network of relationships that they have built across the various units in their institutions. Consistent with the literature was Whitchurch's (2009) belief that it is through relational and knowledge powers that the *Third Space* professionals gain their authority rather than through a title or positional power.

Research Question 3. The third research question focused on comprehending the perceived or real agency that higher education professionals at a teaching and learning centre have at our universities.

Consistent with the literature

The idea of influence as inherent in the work life of HEPROs was strongly expressed by all the participants in this study. Whitchurch (2008a) posits that those who occupy the third space

at our universities are experiencing the opportunities to develop new levels of authority by asserting their relational power and institutional knowledge resulting from their collaborative work across the university.

More than the positional power that comes with a title, third space professionals have a relational power that is expressed through the expertise and networking that they are involved in (Smith et al., 2021; Whitchurch, 2009). The third space that Birds (2015) describes is experienced "through personal connections rather than organisational frameworks" (p. 641). One of the criteria to be eligible to participate in this study was holding the title of an Academic/Executive/Senior Director or Director of a teaching and learning centre at a Canadian university. This title indicates a leadership role – presumably in title, power, or both depending on the participant and their respective institution. Although there was mention of the title in reference to professional versus academic appointments, it was not a point of contention where it concerned HEPROs' abilities to have influence across a university. In fact, the underlying theme of influence pointed to the relational capital of the HEPROs. The power of their influence situates the directors of teaching and learning centres in places that directly impact decision-making. The more public and profiled work of a HEPRO can elevate their status and result in what can be perceived to be an increase in power, confirmed by increasing opportunities to sit on institutional level committees and initiatives.

Behari-Leak et al., (2018) speak to the multi-dimensional aspects of universities today which now require additional skill sets that were not necessarily previously in an academic's wheelhouse – but resonate with higher education professionals whose skills do align well. The cross-boundary (Whitchurch, 2008) nature of HEPROs demands attention for the collaborative projects and the cross-pollination that are encouraged in academia. The findings establish the

boundary-spanning that happens in the course of HEPROs' work as they connect with units across the university on projects that may cross multiple fields or sectors. An example of such a project would be the acquisition and implementation of a new learning management system (LMS) for a university that would involve student affairs units, the Registrar's office, the teaching and learning centre, and the information systems and technology unit to name a few. There was consensus among the participants that their teaching and learning centres had worked in collaboration with most units across their universities in some capacity or another. It was believed that these opportunities to work across units enabled the directors of the teaching and learning centres to be profiled and considered when those units had to consider partnerships for new projects. The boundary spanning is what allows HEPROs to straddle both the academic and administrative domains thereby reducing financial overhead by having a single person be able to occupy two distinct spaces (Ackerman, 2020).

Tied into the theme of credibility was a sub-theme of credentialing that surfaced from the data. The importance of having a doctorate degree as a HEPRO was viewed as a point of credibility and a way to get one's foot in the door of conversations and work among colleagues with the same credentialing.

Scholars such as Ackerman (2020) and Whitchurch (2008a) suggest that the credentialing that comes from a doctorate plays a role in the ability of HEPROs to gain legitimacy in their roles. All nine participants agreed that a doctorate was important, or at least helpful to begin conversations or open the door to conversations. The opinions around holding a doctorate, however, seem to vary. One participant was in a seconded position and having come from a faculty where almost all academic positions required a doctorate, the question was irrefutable – a doctorate was a must. Another participant was very adamant about the necessity of a doctorate

and that there was no consideration of hiring someone without the equivalent credentialing. The rationale was the need to have equal footing which meant that the academic qualifications were very necessary in order to truly understand the work required and to have the respect of the faculty members with whom HEPROs work side by side.

Although HEPROs have not been established as a professional organization, most of the group of directors of teaching and learning centres in this study have come into their roles from the field of education or educational development. Apart from the seconded faculty member who was from a purely academic background, the other participants in this study had all been educational developers or worked in the field of teaching and learning in a previous life. The isomorphism that DiMaggio & Powell (1983) and Meyer & Rowan (1977) delineate in their work speaks to professional legitimacy whereby a group such as HEPROs will seek the equivalent qualities that render another profession legitimate. In this case, it is around academic qualifications. As more HEPROs seek the terminal degrees, often a doctoral designation, the credentials gap is decreasing or in some cases, becoming equivalent. There may also be situations where an academic may choose to become a HEPRO due to personal reasons or perhaps a slight change in career trajectory. The highly credentialed group of HEPROs are qualified and emerging in our universities as the staff who have been able to legitimate themselves (Azaghouagh-El Fardi, 2021; Gornitzka & Larsen, 2004).

The blended professionals that Whitchurch (2009) identifies are the HEPROs of this study. They are the ones who straddle the academic and administrative domains seamlessly (Schneijderberg & Merkator, 2013; Smith et al., 2021). As these HEPROs advance in their leadership roles, it can open the door for them to hire more HEPROs and for them to be given similar opportunities of advancement. The participants in this study were all directors of teaching

and learning centres so they already held leadership roles. However, if they were to continue on the leadership career trajectory and advance to more senior positions, these HEPROs would already be familiar with the knowledge, skills, credentialing, and network of relationships that other HEPROs are capable of bringing to their institutions. This is an opportunity for continued employment growth potential for HEPROs in Canada.

Divergent from the Literature

Battilana & Dorado (2010) asserted that during times of disruption, the competing logics may lead to conflict between HEPROs and academics. However, the data showed a different outcome divergent from the literature. Seven participants noted that the pandemic had brought about positive regard for the teaching and learning centres as they were at the centre of the pivot to emergency remote teaching at every university. Despite the emotional and cognitive workloads that had substantially increased during this period, it seems that the participants saw this more as an opportunity for the work of the teaching and learning centres to receive the acknowledgement and recognition that is normally absent for the teaching and learning activities that occur during the regular academic year.

As recently as 2021, Smith et al., purported that the literature on higher education professionals or third space professionals is still not representative of the Canadian higher education context. Numbers are not always indicative of what is right or true, however, in an environment that is fraught with financial constraints (Azaghouagh-El Fardi, 2021; Gray, 2012; and Kehm & Lanzendorf, 2007) and focused on evidence-based data to inform decisions, the lack of data for the Canadian context can have implications to hiring, restructuring, or on the ability to accomplish institutional priorities.

The concept of job insecurity both at the individual level (Director) and the unit level (teaching and learning centre) surfaced during the data collection. Interestingly, it is not an uncommon phenomenon to experience the instability of the job market in higher education. However, what made the findings more divergent from the literature was that the job insecurity was not at the personal level (the actual person in the position) but more at a micro level (the role or position itself) and macro level (the unit). Gray (2015) asserts that HEPROs are perceived to be "a financial drain and representative of a bloated bureaucracy" (p. 548). Considering these types of opinions, the situation for directors of teaching and learning centres can be viewed as precarious. The circumstances can be unstable since the fluctuating Administrations can have an impact on the support of the teaching and learning side of the university. Senior Administrators' terms are typically for a period of five years with a possibility of renewing for a second term of five years. If the administration is supportive of teaching and learning then it can have a direct impact in a positive way, but if they are not particularly invested in teaching and learning then the impact is negative.

Invisible in the Literature

All the findings have been aligned to the research questions presented at the outset of this study, highlighting those that were consistent with the literature and those that were divergent. Of specific note, however, is something that did not appear in the literature at all – the higher education professionals who are representative of marginalized groups and the barriers they face. This would include but are not limited to women, members of the LGBTQIAS2+ community, racialized persons, and hearing, visually, and physically challenged persons. The added challenges that the directors of teaching and learning centres who hold identities within these marginalized groups face can add complexity to their roles and opportunities to advance. One

participant was emphatic in acknowledging that, as a female identifying leader in a male-dominated institution, there were still certain systemic barriers that needed to be overcome at decision-making tables.

As evidenced in the news and by the implementation of new policies and positions at many Canadian universities, there is a heightened focus to advance the equity, diversity, and inclusion agendas. For the directors of teaching and learning centres, this can pose additional challenges if their roles as HEPROs are not fully acknowledged at our institutions thereby hindering the optimization of their knowledge and skills that they bring to our institutions. Coupled with the barriers of belonging to an under-served or marginalized community, the HEPROs who find themselves in this situation must be able to effectively advocate for themselves.

Although only two participants mentioned EDI in terms of their roles and their personal identities, it is a topic that is worth teasing out because it did not appear in the literature on HEPROs. It seemed to be more than divergent from the literature, it seemed to be an important "aha" moment due to the very current and significant role EDI plays in higher education at this juncture. As Canadian institutions of higher learning embrace the role of higher education professionals and the value they add to the operational functions of a university, there should also be recognition of those HEPROs who face additional barriers to being effective in their roles.

The other participant who identified as part of a marginalized group stressed that one aspect of the role of a HEPRO especially as a leader and TLC director, is that of an EDI advocate. This part of the job is emotionally taxing and "including being emotionally overburdened with being an "EDI" tokenization but always bearing the weight and pain of our

equity-denied and multiple-marginalized students, staff, and instructors here." (Winter, p. 20, 858-859)

As more research is conducted on higher education professionals in the Canadian context, it would behoove our universities to pay special attention to those who face additional barriers and burdens in their roles as leaders.

Implications for Future Research

The findings from this study identified the many aspects of higher education professionals' roles and the highly nuanced nature of the work that they take on. For the directors of teaching and learning centres, the positioning of the unit and the direct reporting to a Senior level were elements that supported a seat at the decision-making tables.

The following are recommendations or areas that could be researched in the future:

1. Explore any change to the work of higher education professionals [types of jobs, levels (unit or institutional), intensity, etc.] since the return to campuses post-pandemic. As evidenced by this study, HEPROs such as the directors of teaching and learning centres are already strained by a cognitive and emotional load with their current work. It would be of interest to see the impact on work since or due to the pandemic.
2. Provide the opportunities for the development of credentialing (micro, certificate, diploma) specific to the work of higher education professionals. The roles that HEPROs fill at our universities continue to exist. As demonstrated by this study, credibility is important if HEPROs such as the directors of teaching and learning centres are to have support across our universities.
3. Increase the impact of HEPROs in university structures by earmarking a place in the membership to ensuring their presence on institutional level committees. This can help

diversify a committee with those represented in the larger university community who are not on the academic side of the house.

4. Examine higher education professionals' abilities and attributes that enable or hinder their ability to work across institutions and provinces. Unlike fixed titles and occupations that are categorically similar such as that of 'professor/associate professor/assistant professor', higher education professionals can cross multiple fields in terms of their jobs.
5. Examine whether gender plays a role in choosing a career as a higher education professional. The data revealed the challenges faced by HEPROs such as the directors of teaching and learning centres from marginalized groups.
6. Explore the relationship between higher education professionals and the Senior Administration of a university. As evidenced by this study, the relationship between HEPROs and the Senior Administration is complex and fraught with its own challenges that can be studied further.
7. Examine the reasons for a change in career trajectory of HEPROs who previously held an academic or faculty position. This would be an opportunity to examine the demographic context of HEPROs and their decisions to shift from a faculty to a professional context.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

The study of higher education professionals was important for several reasons. First, the data collected for this study were from across Canada. Although significant insights on this group of professionals have been brought forth through studies conducted in Europe, Australia, and the U.S.A., there has been little understanding within a Canadian context. This research is a contribution to the extant literature base on higher education professionals and expands the research findings to an even more global context. With the rise of senior administrative positions with a specific teaching and learning portfolio, teaching and learning centres and their directors have been elevated to a level of leadership that has provided many of them with opportunities to have a seat at decision-making tables at our universities.

Second, higher education is projected to continue a trajectory of fiscal constraints, accountability, and efficiency. The growing need for roles that can support the operations of a university in these areas will necessitate the creation or continuation of staff with the professional skills to do this work. The increase in attention to the teaching and learning side of academia at Canadian universities has been in conjunction with a student-centred approach in higher education. For example, the corollary of more student success and retention efforts is attention to enhancing teaching and learning from the faculty side of the house. The directors of teaching and learning centres are prime examples of HEPROs who have the capacity to increase their leadership in an area that universities have set their attention.

A third reason is that this research generates data that can support universities and administrators to be aware of and possibly seek out higher education professionals to fill a gap

that may exist such as the expertise required in areas such as pedagogy; technologies; intellectual property; and others. Until recently, other than the academic positions at a university, most roles did not have a graduate degree requirement much less a doctorate. In filling the gap of workload on the academic side of a university, the need to have academic qualifications seems to have become more of a priority in these types of roles that HEPROs are taking on. The university has increasing numbers of staff who have a doctorate but are not in academic-specific roles. The corollary is that it frees up an academic to do the trifecta of academia – research, teaching, and service – without allocating the additional time to the needed work which can range from research grant support to pedagogical support to student affairs to technology transfer (intellectual property). In these areas as well as others, higher education professionals are often appropriately suited to do the work and able to provide the supports with their expertise and credentialing. The experience of having gone through a doctoral program allow HEPROs the ability to understand the work of academics at the basic level and then combine it with professional expertise from outside academia.

A fourth reason for the importance of this study is due to the unique nature of how many higher education professionals are positioned so that they are able to straddle both academic and administrative domains. There is a growing expectation for academics to have expertise in their field of research, but to also have the pedagogical expertise to teach their content accordingly. However, it is commonly understood that most doctoral programs do not include pedagogy in the curriculum, so it would be above and beyond the program requirements. Similarly, the concept of scope creep can manifest at universities whereby the nature of academic work has extended beyond teaching and research. The original workload of an academic begins to extend beyond the scope of what was agreed upon or assigned – teaching expertise or content knowledge has

expanded to include expectations of pedagogical knowledge. Some of the academic work that is required has been supported by higher education professionals who have the skills, qualifications, and the experience in the field to do the work. In Whitchurch's (2008b) work, she highlights the distinction between "activity that relies on given structures and activity that is more developmental" (p. 376) in describing the nature of the work that professional staff take on at our institutions. Regardless of the positioning of HEPROs, they can navigate both sides and work within the structures that are in place or work around those structures in an organic and evolving manner according to the need.

Throughout the data collection, coding process, and thematic analysis, there were many *aha* moments because the sentiments, comments, and experiences so deeply resonated with me. As a higher education professional, my lived reality was reflected in the data in ways that were quite unexpected. In the daily grind of working life, it is easy to get caught up with all that needs to be accomplished and managed, but in what is still a relatively newer entity within higher education, HEPROs have established themselves as enough of a presence to warrant research in this area. In more ways than one, HEPROs have availed themselves of positions that were not previously open to them. The data revealed that HEPROs still traverse a difficult terrain when it comes to their abilities to successfully navigate and advance in their careers at our universities. Although not yet part of the mainstream of employment categories in higher education, the higher education professional positions are less contested than what it might have been even 20 years ago. The participants in this study offered ideas to support the career trajectory and the best use of their skills to the university community in their areas of expertise.

If provided with more agency at our institutions, HEPROs may be better equipped to fill a gap in areas that require both administrative and academic skills, knowledge, and experience. It

does not have to be an either/or situation. Instead, the solution can be found in the talent pool of higher education professionals that are looking for meaningful work that taps into both the academic and administrative domains allowing them to leverage their unique skill sets, abilities, and qualifications.

In summary, the higher education landscape can be fraught with policies, procedures, and institutionalized patterns that place barriers to change or the evolution of current practices. Concerning the HEPROs such as the director of teaching and learning centres at our universities, it is particularly problematic because there is not an existing mechanism for career advancement in their roles. As demonstrated by the participants in this study, there are HEPROs who are in leadership positions, however, there was not a direct pathway to those positions. The research from this study can engender more support of other higher educational professionals in finding clearer pathways for advancement to more senior roles in their respective areas at our institutions. It would be a valuable use of resources for universities to invest into not just the hiring but the development of HEPROs and to capitalize on the skills and experience that they can bring to our institutions.

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Appendix A

Interview Questionnaire

Who are the HEPROs at Canadian universities?

1. What is the name of your unit, type of unit (e.g., academic support, student support, etc.) your title, and portfolio (e.g., one unit or multiple units)?
2. Is your primary appointment, the position of (Academic/Executive/Senior) Director of a Teaching and Learning unit?
3. How long have you been in your role?
4. Do you have a PhD or are you currently enrolled in a doctoral program? (a criterion to participate in the study)
5. Is a doctoral degree a requirement of your current position of employment? Or is your employment contingent upon the completion of a doctoral degree?
6. If a doctorate was not a requirement of your position, do you feel that it would be an asset to someone in your position (or your role)? Why or why not?
7. What is your academic disciplinary background and how has it helped you in your current position?
8. How many people are in your unit? Describe the growth of your unit over the past decade and any changes resulting from COVID?

How does the emergence of HEPROs within Canadian universities relate to the structure of a university? [*structure can be governance or power or both]*

9. How do you see your role and responsibilities (individual and unit level) fit into the structure of your institution (e.g., reports to Senior Administration, Libraries, or Faculty of Education, etc.)?
10. Has your role previously reported to a different position/unit other than the current position/unit? If so, why did the reporting line change?
11. How would you describe your ability to contribute to conversations at the decision-making levels of the university? Please provide an example.
12. What types and levels of committees do you sit on at the university? What is the highest level of committee you sit on or have sat on previously?
13. What is the relationship between the organizational structure of your university and your role in overseeing a Teaching and Learning Centre as a higher education professional? *Does it hinder or promote the role of HEPROs?*
14. This research is exploring the role of HEPROs, specifically (Academic/Executive/Senior) Directors of Teaching and Learning Centres at Canadian universities. Reflecting on your role and that of colleagues with similar roles that meet the definition of HEPRO, to what extent do you believe that the emergence of HEPROs has a direct impact on the structure of your university – either in organizational and/or decision-making processes? Please provide examples.
15. The literature identifies that HEPROs work with constituent groups on campus (e.g., faculty, support staff, students, and senior administration). Describe the nature of your

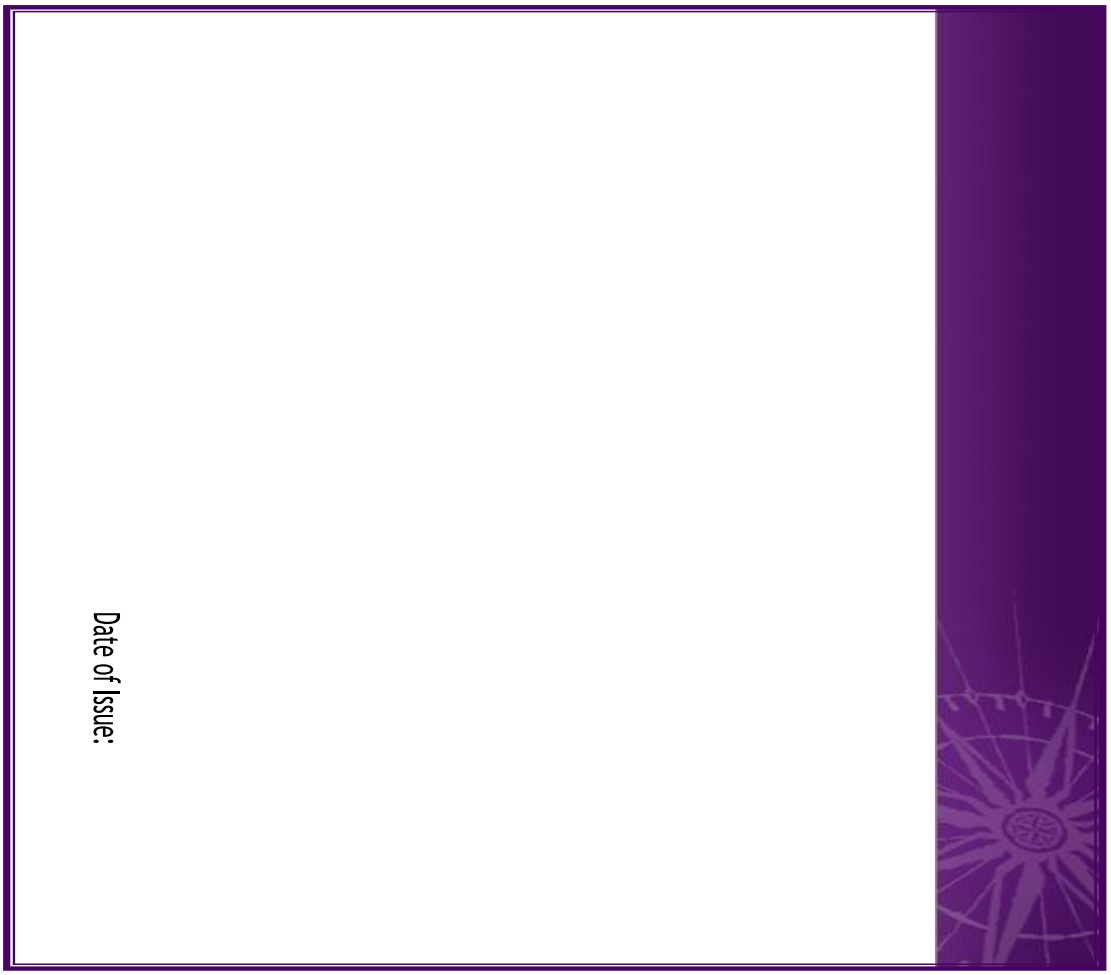
relationship as a Centre (Academic/Executive/Senior) Director to other units and members of the university community.

How do HEPROs at Teaching and Learning Centres gain legitimacy in their roles?

16. In what ways do you as a HEPRO, in the role of a Teaching and Learning Centre (Academic/Executive/Senior) Director, establish your presence at the university?
17. Do you see a need for HEPROs at Teaching and Learning Centres to demonstrate credibility in their roles? Why or why not?
18. How important do you believe it is to have a PhD for credibility in your role as the head of the unit? Please explain.
19. Describe your personal experience as a HEPRO at a Teaching and Learning Centre at your institution.
20. What do you see as important for HEPROs at a Teaching and Learning Centre to do or to have, to be included in the decision-making conversations, committees, and work of your university?

Appendix B

TCPS 2: CORE



Appendix C

REB Approval

Human Ethics - Fort Garry
208-194 Dafoe Road
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2
T: 204 474 8872
humanethics@umanitoba.ca

PROTOCOL APPROVAL

Effective: November 2, 2022 Expiry: November 1, 2023

Principal Investigator:	Erica Jung
Advisor:	Jerome Cranston
Protocol Number:	HE2022-0247
Protocol Title:	*The Impact of Higher Education Professionals on University Structure*

Andrea L Szwajcer, Chair, REB2

Research Ethics Board 2 has reviewed and approved the above research. The Human Ethics Office (HEO) is constituted and operates in accordance with the current *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*- TCPS 2 (2018).

This approval is subject to the following conditions:

i. Approval is granted for the research and purposes described in the protocol only.

ii. Any changes to the protocol or research materials must be approved by the HEO before implementation.

iii. Any deviations to the research or adverse events must be reported to the HEO immediately through an REB Event.

iv. This approval is valid for one year only. A Renewal Request must be submitted and approved prior to the above expiry date.

v. A Protocol Closure must be submitted to the HEO when the research is complete or if the research is terminated.

vi. The University of Manitoba may request to audit your research documentation to confirm compliance with this approved protocol, and with the UM *Ethics of Research Involving Humans*Ethics of Research Involving Humans policies and procedures.

Appendix D

Recruitment Letter

Education Graduate Programs
Room 203 Education Building
Winnipeg, MB, Canada R3T 2N2
T: (204) 474-9004
F: (204) 474-7551
Email: GradPrograms.Education@umanitoba.ca

November _, 2022

Dear Dr. X,

I am reaching out to you to ask if you would be willing to participate in a research study on Higher Education Professionals as part of my PhD program. Currently, I am a PhD Candidate at the University of Manitoba in the Faculty of Education. My research study explores the emergence of Higher Education Professionals within the Canadian context and their impact to the structure of the university. This study will focus specifically on the experiences of Academic/ Executive/Senior Directors and Directors of Teaching and Learning Centres across Canada. My advisor is Dr. Jerome Cranston (Jerome.Cranston@uregina.ca).

The concept of a *Third Space* (Whitchurch, 2008) represents a growing cadre of professionals with advanced degrees within higher education. Kehm (2015) built on Whitchurch's work and coined the term HEPROs for Higher Education Professionals within our universities. This group is made up of staff who straddle both the academic and administrative domains, which is precisely where Teaching and Learning Centre leadership are situated.

The study will explore the following overarching research questions:
Research Question 1:
How does the emergence of HEPROs within Canadian universities relate to the structure of a university?
Research Question 2:
What is the relationship between HEPROs and higher education's move to a managerial culture?
Research Question 3:
What agency (e.g., decision-making) do HEPROs have at universities?

Participation criteria are as follows:

1) Currently in an Executive/Academic/Senior Director or Director role at a Teaching and Learning Centre or equivalent.
2) Holds a PhD or EdD
   OR
3) Currently enrolled in a doctorate program.
4) Consent to video record the interview.

Agreeing to participate in this study will involve a 75-minute semi-structured, video recorded interview via UM-licensed Zoom or TEAMS. All interview data will be anonymized, and transcriptions will be provided to you for review and edits. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw at any point up until the presentation of the final oral defence. Additionally, you will be asked for a job description or job posting for your position.

You will find attached a Participant Consent Form that provides information regarding the study. If you are interested in participating, please respond to me directly at erica.jung@umanitoba.ca. Once we confirm your interest, I will contact you to arrange an interview date and time via UM-licensed Zoom or TEAMS and collect your informed consent.

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba, as of November 2, 2022.

I believe your insights and experiences would add great value to this research. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Erica Jung

References

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Whitchurch, C. (2008). Shifting identities and blurring boundaries: the emergence of *third space* professional in UK higher education. *Higher Education Quarterly*, *62*(4), 377-396.

Appendix E

Consent Form

Education Graduate Programs
Room 203 Education Building
Winnipeg, MB, Canada R3T 2N2
T: (204) 474-9004
F: (204) 474-7551
Email: GradPrograms.Education@umanitoba.ca

Research Project Title: The Impact of Higher Education Professionals on University Structure
Principal Investigator and contact information: Erica Jung; erica.jung@umanitoba.ca; xxx-xxx-xxxx
Research Supervisor and contact information: Dr. Jerome Cranston; Jerome.Cranston@uregina.ca

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

1. This study explores the emergence of Higher Education Professionals and their impact on the organizational structure of Canadian universities. Higher Education Professionals are university employees who hold advanced degrees, often terminal degrees, and whose work often falls into both academic and administrative domains.
2. Participants will be asked to take part in an approximately 75-minute-long semi-structured interview that will be conducted via either Zoom or TEAMS.
3. The interviews will be video recorded via Zoom or Teams.
4. Direct benefits for the participant: Participation in the study may provide participants the opportunity to reflect, process, and share their experiences about working in higher education.
5. Data will be collected by the PI via the semi-structured interviews, transcribed, and anonymized to remove any identification to the individual or the university they work at. Electronic data will be stored on a password protected external hard drive that will be kept in a locked cabinet for a maximum of five years, which is until December 2027.
6. Participants will be provided a summary of the research study and informed verbally and in print that they can withdraw from the study in its entirety or have certain statements redacted at any point up until the presentation of the final oral defence.
7. Participants will not be coerced to remain in the study and may withdraw from the research without negative consequences.

8. Direct quotations from the interviews will be presented in the final dissertation but any associated participant information will be de-identified.
9. Research results will be disseminated in the final dissertation and during the final PhD oral examination and may further be disseminated at academic conference presentations and/or journal articles.
10. Once the data collection phase is complete, a brief (1-3 pages) summary of results will be available by December 2022 to the participant if desired.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

The University of Manitoba may look at your research records to see that the research is being done in a safe and proper way.

This research has been approved by the Research Ethics Board at the University of Manitoba, Fort Garry campus. **If you have any concerns or complaints about this project, you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Officer at 204-474-7122 or** HumanEthics@umanitoba.ca. **A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.**

Participant's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix F

Definitions

Academic freedom
"Practiced differently in different parts of the world or at different universities… relates to the individual and the conduct of his or her research and teaching, without fear of sanction and reprisals…" (Austin & Jones, 2016, p. 129)

Bicameral governance
A common governance model in Canadian universities whereby two, separate but parallel legislative bodies exist – "a corporate board and an academic senate" – that govern the university's administrative and academic affairs (Jones et al., 2001)

Board of Governors
The most senior administrative decision-making body in university governance (Jones et al., 2001)

Senate
The governing body that determines decisions for the university on academic matters in areas such as "curriculum, promotion, tenure, and academic standards" (Austin & Jones, 2016, p. 133).

Tenure
(tenure-track position: academic appointment with potential for tenure)
A mechanism of job security and protection of academic freedom for those who hold an academic appointment at an institution (Austin & Jones, 2016).

Tri-Council funding
Three distinct research granting councils in Canada: Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CHHR); the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC); and the Social Sciences and Humanitites Research Council (SSHRC).

Faculty Union
An organization made up of individuals who hold an academic appointment at their institution, "to improve the welfare and economic conditions of their membership, as well as to provide academic leadership" (Anderson & Jones, 1998, p. 440).