

Performativity in Higher Education

An Autoethnographic Commentary and Call
to Servant Leadership in UKHE

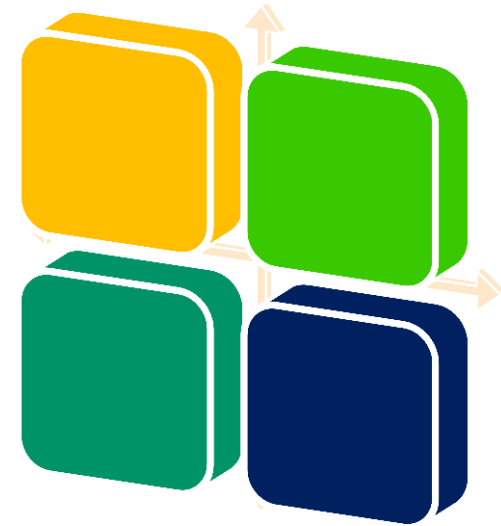
Dr Kae Reynolds

<http://dilbert.com/strip/1999-10-09>

“In regimes of performativity experience is nothing, productivity is everything” (Ball, 2012, p. 19).

Is that actually a word?

- Normativity – prescriptive norms
- Performativity – prescriptive performance



Normative matrices (Butler, 1990)

- rigid, restrictive, hierarchically-defined, frames of cultural inscription and compulsory practice.
- render a subject (e.g. teacher or learner) coherent through its reification



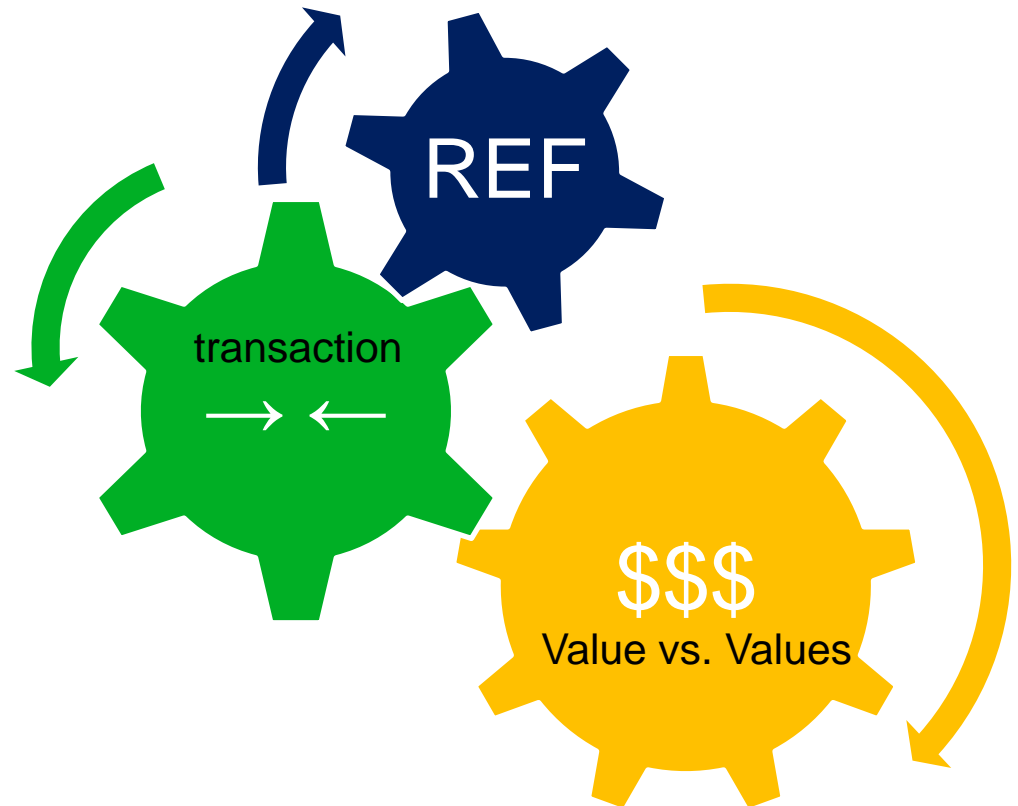
Autoethnography

- Synthesis of reflective practice with academic argumentation
 - Auto: locating the researcher as a cultural outsider
 - Ethnography: analysis of experience in a cultural context
- Describing, analyzing, and evaluating critical events
- Negotiating cultural identity and being embedded in a (foreign/different) culture (Ellis et al., 2011).

Examples of current phenomena

Academic capitalism (Lynch, 2010)

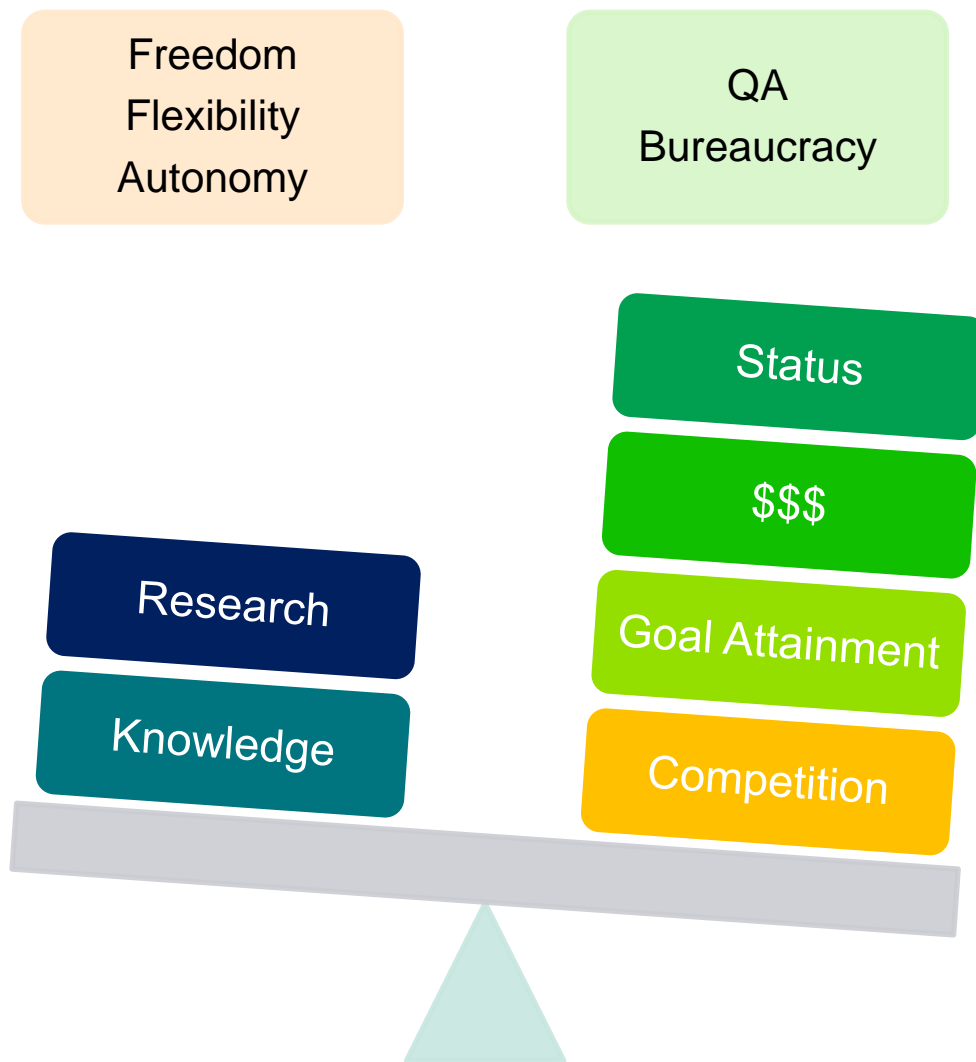
- Commodification/
Commercialization
- Massification
- “REF-ability”





Tensions in UKHE

- Values
- Objectives
- Priorities



(Adapted from Timiyo, forthcoming)



Performance v. Values

- Linear, causal vs. Holistic, values-driven



(Brenner, 2006; Elliot, 2012)

Value vs. Values



Performativity in HE

What counts as teaching and as learning?

- Performative nature of Teaching & Learning
- Subjective (solipsistic) nature of learning (Liew, 2013)
- “Objective” measurement? (Liew, 2013; Kuzmanovic et al., 2013)

The multiplicity of individual preferences in teaching, individual differences in learning styles, motivations, and objectives might well be resistant to unidirectional influence and measurement processes.



Mismatch

- Student Satisfaction

- Likeability, humor
- Good grades
- Feeling competent
- Availability
- Approachability
- Responsiveness
- Encouragement

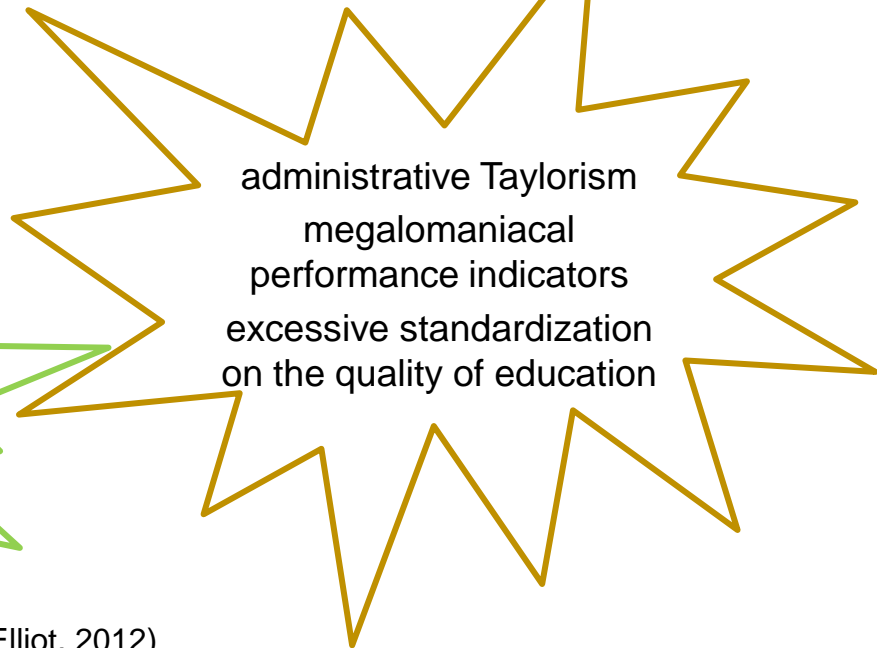
(Glenn et al., 2012)

- Desired Outcomes

- Deficit model (Macaskill & Denovan, 2013)
- Criteria driven
- Performance driven



(Power, 2014; Elliot, 2012)





Servant Leadership

- Potential for HE?

Freedom
Flexibility
Autonomy

QA
Bureaucracy



Teaching

Research

Knowledge

Status

\$\$\$

KPI

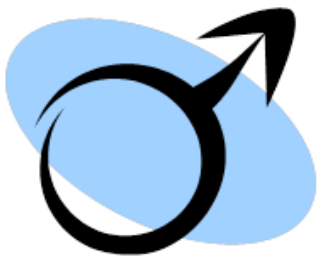
Competition





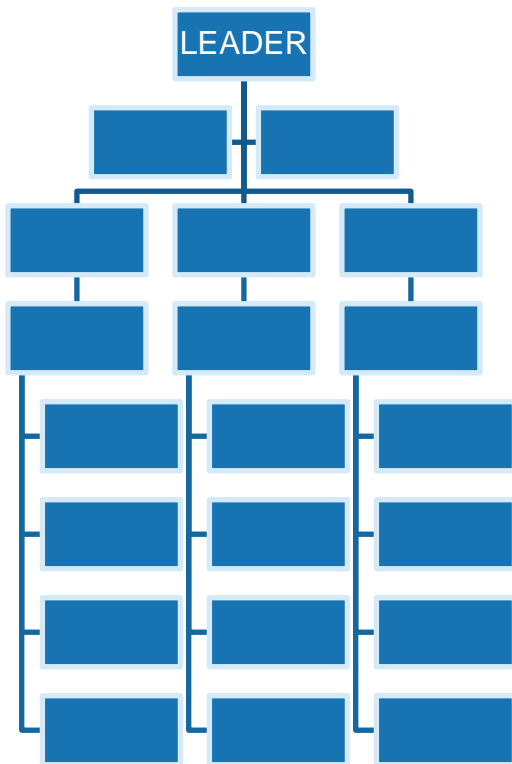
SL as a holistic approach

- Focus:
human needs
- Approach:
interdependence
collaborative
- Practice:
Integrative
- Needs determine leadership
focus and approach
- Interdependence and
collaborative processes
determine moral reasoning in
decision-making
- Integrates communal and
agentic behavior
- Student-Teacher
relationship/Staff –
Administration relationship

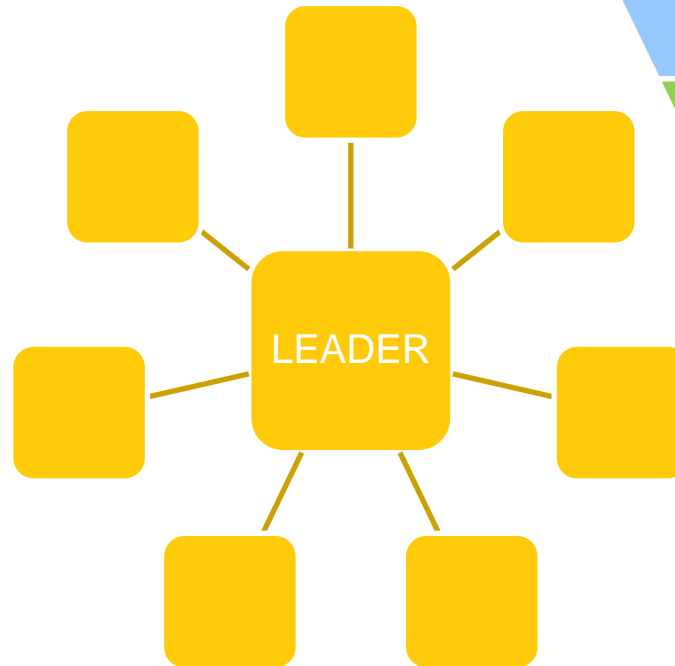


Teaching and Learning as a less monologic, more **ethics-informed, action-oriented dialogic** process through which all actors critically and reflectively negotiate curriculum, desired outcomes, and assessment.

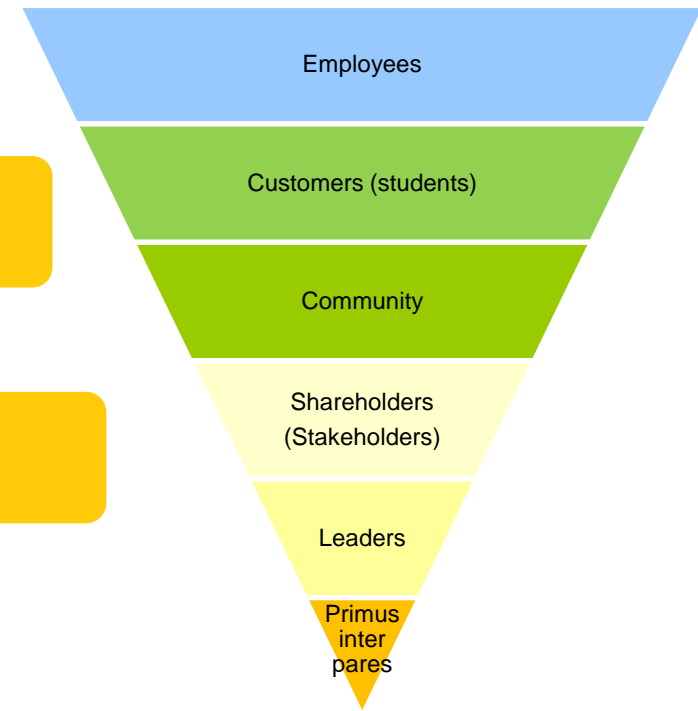
Power and Domination



Empowerment



Service



(Adapted from Page & Wong, 2000).



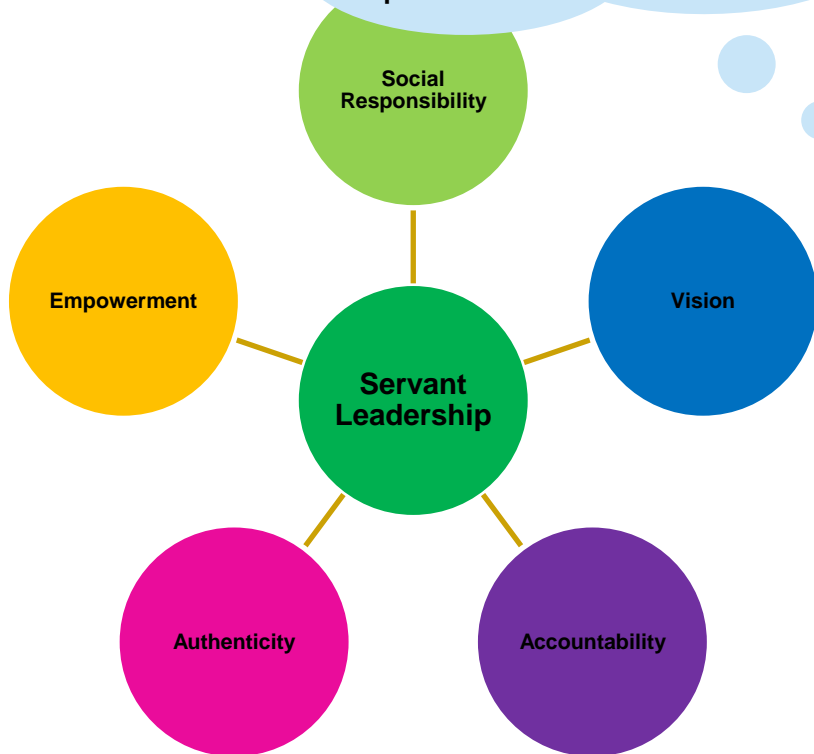
Adapted from Greenleaf, 2002; Spears, 2004; van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011

How can we adapt SL for a holistic teaching and learning process in a regime of performativity?



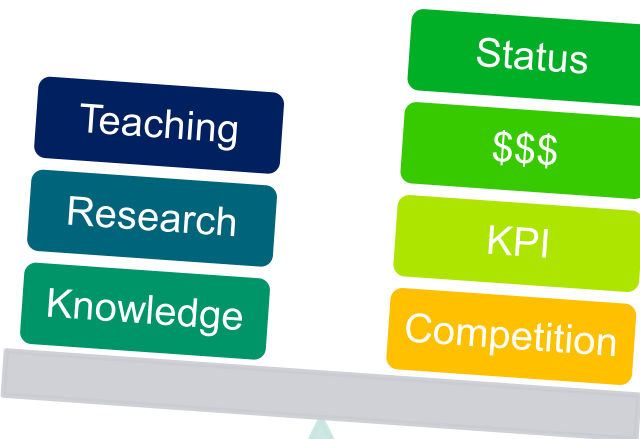
Call to SL in UKHE

The more rigid the performative framework of the UKHE environment, the more needs-focused the teacher-leadership response should be.



Freedom
Flexibility
Autonomy

QA
Bureaucracy





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