

5 Signs You Are Already Leading Educational Change

(Even if you do not see yourself as a leader yet)



Introduction

In higher education, many people influence teaching and learning without ever formally calling it leadership.

They start conversations. They support colleagues. They create connections. They keep educational initiatives moving forward.

Very often, this work begins informally and gradually.

This short reflection resource is designed to help you recognise some of the early signs of educational leadership and educational change already present in your own practice.

Not as a checklist. Not as a job description. But as a way of recognising how educational change often begins in universities.

1. Colleagues increasingly come to you with teaching questions



At first, this often seems small.

A colleague asks for advice about assessment. Someone wants your opinion on a teaching activity. A programme team asks whether you can help think through a curriculum issue.

Over time, these moments become more frequent.

Not necessarily because you have a formal role. But because people trust how you think about teaching and learning.

Educational leadership often begins exactly here: becoming a trusted conversation partner around education.

Reflection question

What kinds of educational questions do colleagues most often bring to you?

Small next step

Start paying attention to recurring educational questions colleagues bring to you. Very often, these questions reveal where others already see expertise and trust in your educational thinking. You do not need to have all the answers. Listening carefully and helping structure educational conversations is already valuable leadership work.

2. You keep noticing patterns across courses, teams, or programmes



You no longer only focus on your own teaching.

You begin noticing broader educational patterns: recurring student difficulties, disconnected assessment practices, similar questions emerging across courses, or tensions between curriculum intentions and student experiences.

This shift matters.

Educational change often starts when someone begins connecting individual experiences into larger educational questions.

Reflection question

What educational patterns keep returning in your own context?

Small next step

Try writing down one recurring educational pattern you keep noticing. Not a complete solution. Simply the pattern itself. Educational change often starts when recurring experiences become visible and discussable.

3. You start connecting people around teaching and learning



You recommend colleagues to one another. You introduce people working on similar questions. You create spaces for educational conversations.

Sometimes informally. Sometimes intentionally.

This connecting work is often underestimated.

And yet educational cultures rarely grow without people who help relationships, ideas, and conversations develop across teams and disciplines.

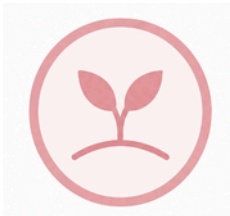
Reflection question

Where are you already helping educational conversations or collaborations emerge?

Small next step

Introduce two colleagues working on similar educational questions. Small introductions and shared conversations are often the starting point for stronger educational communities.

4. You care about sustaining change - not only starting initiatives



Educational enthusiasm is important.

But over time, you may notice yourself becoming increasingly interested in sustainability.

How do we keep this going? How do we involve others? How does this become part of wider practice? What support structures are needed?

That shift often signals movement from individual educational innovation towards broader educational leadership.

Reflection question

Which educational initiatives in your context need more support or continuity?

Small next step

Choose one educational initiative you care about and ask: “What would help this continue six months from now?” That question often shifts thinking from short-term enthusiasm towards sustainable educational development.

5. You are already influencing educational culture - even informally



Very often, educational leadership in higher education is not visible in organisational charts.

It happens through conversations, encouragement, curiosity, creating space for inquiry, helping others feel confident enough to engage with teaching and learning differently

Informal influence still shapes institutional culture.

Even when it remains largely unrecognised.

Reflection question

Where might your influence already extend beyond your own formal role?

Small next step

Reflect on one moment where something you initiated influenced colleagues, conversations, or teaching practices beyond your own work. Educational influence is often easier to recognise in hindsight.

Closing reflection

Many people working in higher education are already contributing to educational change long before they describe themselves as leaders.

Very often, leadership begins through curiosity, relationships, shared inquiry, and small initiatives that gradually expand.

These themes are explored further in:

Routes to Change - Strategic Leadership in SoTL

An open-access edited book by Irma Meijerman and Andrea Webb.



Further reflection and support

Many educators and educational developers are already contributing to meaningful educational change long before they formally describe themselves as leaders.

You do not have to figure this out alone.

If you would like support in taking the next step in your SoTL work, educational development, or educational leadership journey, I would be very happy to think along with you.



In my work, I support educators, educational developers, and teaching & learning professionals in higher education through coaching, SoTL guidance, and ongoing support around evidence-informed teaching, educational change, and building sustainable educational cultures.

✉ Feel free to contact me at: info@irmact.com

Further information:

[Support for educators](#)

[Support for educational developers and Teaching and Learning Centres](#)

I always enjoy connecting with colleagues who care deeply about teaching, learning, and educational change in higher education.