

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Edited by Alasdair Blair, Darrell Evans,
Christina Hughes and Malcolm Tight

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES
ON HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH

VOLUME 15

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EDUCATION

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH

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EDUCATION RESEARCH VOLUME 15

**INTERNATIONAL
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LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER
EDUCATION**

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INTRODUCTION

Alasdair Blair, Darrell Evans, Christina Hughes
and Malcolm Tight

Universities and colleges are increasingly large and complex institutions with responsibilities, accountabilities and ambitions. Higher education is now provided on a mass scale in many parts of the world. Universities and colleges are often among the largest employers in the towns and cities in which they are based, forming major hubs in the local transport networks and supporting local economies. They are engaged in knowledge exchange with their local – and global – communities and with industries and organisations of all kinds.

They present, therefore, a major leadership challenge which raises many questions. What is the nature of leadership for the twenty-first century? Should universities continue to rely predominantly on recruiting from within or should university leaders be drawn from wider professional fields and industries? How should such leaders be developed and supported? And what does the existing research tell us about all of these questions, and what further research needs to be done?

This book, *International Perspectives on Leadership in Higher Education*, addresses these and related issues. With chapters authored by researchers from Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States, both local and global perspectives are provided.

The book is organised in three parts. The first part, *Insiders, Intruders and Newcomers*, offers a systematic review of existing research, plus discussions of the impact of academic inbreeding on leadership, the advantages of appointing external leaders and the continuing challenges to progression of gender and class.

The second part, *Developing Leaders*, contains chapters that contrast leadership with management; explore the selection, development, evaluation and recognition of leaders; consider the roles of coaching and mentoring; focus on the department chair and the stresses they experience and discuss the growing importance of research leadership.

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The final part of the book, *Alternative Perspectives*, looks at the role of professors as academic leaders; considers how higher education leaders can deal with new disruptions; argues the need for a more collaborative and distributed approach to leadership and discusses the key leadership skills needed to help create the higher education of the future.

PART 1

INSIDERS, INTRUDERS, AND
NEWCOMERS

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RESEARCH INTO LEADERSHIP IN HIGHER EDUCATION: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

Malcolm Tight

ABSTRACT

Leadership in higher education has become of increasing importance as the size of the enterprise has grown, and this has naturally led to a growing research interest in the topic. Using systematic review methods, this chapter interrogates and synthesises the research literature on leadership in higher education in terms of its meanings, application and practice, and the issues and critiques raised. It concludes that research into leadership in higher education has been both extensive and global in nature, identifying a variety of understandings, practices and approaches adopted, and the continuing dominance of white men in senior leadership positions. There is clearly scope for more research on this topic, which could both emphasise different issues and give greater recognition to the particular nature of higher education and higher education institutions.

Keywords: Higher education; higher education research; leadership; systematic review; higher education institutions; leadership approaches

INTRODUCTION

Leadership in and of higher education has become an increasing concern as the scale of the enterprise has expanded. Once universities and colleges might have had at most a few thousand students and a few hundred employees, and could be adequately run by their senior academic members on a part-time or seconded basis, with the support of a handful of administrative staff. They are now typically major businesses with tens of thousands of students, thousands of employees and a complex and diverse portfolio of teaching, research and other missions. As

such they require the dedicated attention of hundreds of professional and managerial staff, overseen by a cadre of former academics who have moved into full-time senior leadership roles, who will typically have differing careers and skills sets.

It is not surprising, therefore, that leadership in higher education – as well as other aspects of higher education (Tight, 2019, 2020) – has attracted increased attention from researchers. The focus of this chapter is on identifying and synthesising what that research has to say. What guidance does it give on the nature of leadership in higher education, how to organise and deliver it, its impacts on those working and studying in higher education, and the issues and problems that it raises?

The remainder of the chapter is organised in several sections, beginning with a discussion of the methodology that was used in putting it together. This is followed by sections focusing on the global interest in researching leadership in higher education, the meanings attached to leadership in higher education, the different approaches taken to leadership and the issues and critiques that have been raised. Finally, some general conclusions are drawn.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology underlying this chapter is systematic review (Jesson et al., 2011; Torgerson, 2003), an approach which seeks to identify and synthesise the findings of all the relevant published research on a particular topic. It is a primarily qualitative approach, unlike meta-analysis, its quantitative equivalent, which focuses on published studies that report numeric findings. Both meta-analyses and systematic reviews, but increasingly the latter, have recently become popular in higher education research as the quantity of relevant research published, and thus in need of synthesis, has expanded (Tight, 2020).

While systematic reviews aim to be as comprehensive as possible, it is normal to set some limiters, such as on date and language. Here, the focus is on the literature on the topic that has been published in the English language. While English is currently the lingua franca for academic publication, and higher education (and other) researchers seek to publish in it to get international attention and repute, this does mean that the research of those publishing solely in Chinese, French, German, Russian, Spanish or other languages will have been overlooked.

Relevant articles, books and chapters were identified using keyword searches in the Google Scholar and Scopus databases. For example, a search using Scopus carried out on 13/3/22 for articles containing the words ‘leadership’, ‘higher’ and ‘education’ identified 11,794 articles with all of those words in their title, abstract or keywords, and 655 with all of them in their title, which is taken as indicative of a likely focus on the topic under consideration. A further search on Scopus using the keywords ‘leadership’ and ‘university’ identified 20,383 with both words in their title, abstract or keywords, and 1,020 with both in their title.

All identified publications were checked for their direct relevance, duplicates were removed, and copies of relevant publications were then obtained for scrutiny and analysis. The references in the selected publications were also examined for other relevant sources missed by the database searches. In total, 108 relevant publications were identified: these form the basis for the analysis in the remainder of this chapter, and are marked with an asterisk in the references list.

There have, unsurprisingly, been a number of previous reviews of the research literature on leadership in higher education. Thus, [Bryman \(2007\)](#) carried out a literature review of research on effective leadership in higher education; [Dopson et al. \(2019\)](#) present a literature review on leadership development; [Esen et al. \(2020\)](#) provide a bibliometric and content analysis of published research on leadership from 1995 to 2014; [Badillo-Vega et al. \(2021\)](#) present a systematic review of leadership research on university presidents; [Sanchez-Carrillo et al. \(2021\)](#) provide a systematic review of research on higher education leadership in sustainability; while [Rocha et al. \(2021\)](#) offer a thematic review of research into leadership challenges in the context of digital transformation. There have also been a number of edited (e.g. [Jameson, 2019](#); [Jarrett & Newton, 2021](#); [Su & Wood, 2017](#)) and other books published on the topic, which has been the focus of several journal special issues as well.

[Esen et al. \(2020\)](#), based on an analysis of the outputs of five leading higher education journals over a 20-year period, identified only 80 relevant articles and argued that research into leadership in higher education needed development. [Sanchez-Carrillo et al. \(2021\)](#), focusing on articles published since 2015 that related to sustainability leadership in higher education, came up with a smaller sample of just 56 relevant articles. As we shall see, however, the relevant published literature is rather broader than either of those reviews suggest.

GLOBAL INTEREST

The database searches carried out for this chapter clearly showed that research into leadership in higher education is a truly global interest and/or concern.

Relevant articles were identified with authors based in or studying Australia, Canada, China, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Ghana, Greece, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Mexico, Moldova, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Palestine, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Taiwan, Tanzania, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, the United States and Vietnam (for further details see [Table 1](#)). As well as including the obvious English-speaking nations (for producing publications in English) of Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States, this impressive listing also features a dozen or more countries from both Asia and Europe, as well as a few from Africa and Latin America.

Table 1. National Locations of Those Researching Leadership in Higher Education.

Nation	Selected Publications
Australia	Bebbington (2021), Beckmann (2017), Bosetti and Heffernan (2021), Calma (2015), Croucher and Lacy (2020a, 2020b), Croucher et al. (2020), Ford et al. (2018), Patton (2021)
Canada	Azizi et al. (2021), Povey et al. (2021b)
China	Huang et al. (2021), Latif et al. (2021), Lu and Smith (2020, 2021), Zhu and Guo (2021)
Ethiopia	Gollagari et al. (2021), Hundessa, (2021)
Finland	Morley and Lund (2021)
France	Hamlin and Patel (2017)
Germany	Badillo-Vega et al. (2021)
Ghana	Addy and Adabor (2021)
Greece	Antonopoulou et al. (2021)
India	Gandhi and Sen (2021), Sinha (2020), Srivastava et al. (2020)
Indonesia	Gaus et al. (2020)
Ireland	Fahie (2020)
Israel	Shaked (2021)
Italy	Spanò (2020)
Kazakhstan	Kuzhabekova and Almukhambetova (2021)
Kyrgyzstan	Kuzhabekova and Almukhambetova (2021)
Lithuania	Alonderiene and Majauskaite (2016)
Mexico	Badillo-Vega and Buendía-Espinosa (2020)
Moldova	Dawson et al. (2020)
New Zealand	Branson et al. (2016), Povey et al., (2021a)
Nigeria	Akanji et al. (2020), Igiebor (2021)
Pakistan	Bhatti and Ali (2021), Khan et al. (2021), Latif et al. (2021), Mukaram et al. (2021)
Palestine	Aboramadan et al. (2020)
Russia	Gerashchenko (2021)
Saudi Arabia	Alessa (2021), Bin Bakr and Alfayez (2021)
South Africa	Herbst and Roux (2021), Makoe and Olcott (2021), Menon and Motala (2021), Seale et al. (2021), Walters (2020)
Spain	Latif et al. (2021)
Sweden	Ekman et al. (2018), Puaca (2021)
Taiwan	Chen and Hsieh (2019)
Tanzania	Mgaiwa (2021)
Thailand	Charoensukmongkol and Puyod (2021)
United Arab Emirates	Yaghi and Yaghi (2021)
United Kingdom	Ameijde et al. (2009), Barnard et al. (2021), Bolden et al. (2014), Bolden et al. (2008, 2009), Jameson (2018), Lumby (2019)
United States	Apkarian and Rasmussen (2021), Chance (2021), Gasman et al. (2015), Klaus and Steele (2020)
Vietnam	Maheshwari et al. (2021)