

ARTICLE

Leadership development in Higher Education: A literature review and implications for programme redesign

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Abstract

Leadership development (LD) activity and its effectiveness has not been explored rigorously across changing university settings globally. As Higher Education settings change radically throughout the world, Higher Education professionals are operating in more uncertain environments, and leaders are taking increasingly complex and diverse approaches to their leadership roles. LD activities therefore become important in supporting this highly complex context, yet little is known in the literature about LD and its impact in Higher Education. We examine peer-reviewed work on LD in Higher Education settings globally to understand what may be learned about its content, processes, outcomes and impact. Our results suggest the current literature is small-scale, fragmented and often theoretically weak, with many different and coexisting models, approaches and methods, and little consensus on what may be suitable and effective in the Higher Education context. We reflect on this state of play and develop a novel theoretical approach for designing LD activity in Higher Education institutions.

1 | INTRODUCTION

Universities globally are facing novel challenges, as they become larger, more complex and multi-functional organisations. In many countries they are moving beyond their traditional core of teaching and research and old assumptions of public funding. They may be becoming increasingly 'entrepreneurial' (Etzkowitz, 2004; Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000), especially where they have strong science and technology departments.

A recent literature review on new organisational forms in the current UK Higher Education sector (Ferlie & Trenholm, 2017) noted marketisation and globalisation as key meta-level driving forces. Developing competitive behaviours and skills, therefore, becomes important for senior leaders. Within a globalised order, however, managing across to new partners and across traditional national boundaries is becoming more important. Digitisation within the 'virtual university' is emerging as another major trend, dependent on strong information and communications technology (ICT) capabilities. Alongside greater competition also lies collaboration, with more strategic alliances, joint ventures and managed networks. These latter developments call for a distinctive, more cooperative and lateral leadership style than traditionally seen within the management of a single vertically integrated Higher Education institution (HEI).

These long-term developments in the field raise questions about the ability of Higher Education senior leaders to respond to increased institutional complexity. Our specific concern here relates to exploring whether or not senior Higher Education leaders are being well-supported in addressing these current developments by leadership development (LD) programmes that may need, in our view, to consider issues raised by these broader field-wide developments and if necessary, refresh their content and approaches.

2 | OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

This paper draws on a literature review carried out by the authors for the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education (LFHE) that examined peer-reviewed work on current Higher Education LD programmes. By LD programmes we mean tailored training and development programmes, not including structured degrees such as MBAs. The study design was a structured review of international work published up to 2016. The finer details of our methodology and research design are presented in our report (Dopson et al., 2016) and briefly outlined in Figure 1.

To summarise, the authors met with a library team to devise an overall search strategy and specific search terms (see Table 1) then applied to review Higher Education publications across four databases: ProQuest ABI/INFORM, Business Source Complete, IBSS and ERIC. The search was an iterative process, with terms progressively refined to increase the relevance of results. The initial results were appraised through a review of abstracts, each undertaken by a minimum of two academic team members. Abstracts were filtered for their relevance for the objectives of the review; with descriptive and atheoretical papers excluded. They were reviewed for quality, defined as with a reliable empirical base and/or being theoretically sound. Given very few high-quality papers were returned initially, the search was supplemented by an additional review of 12 journals rated highly by five-year Impact Factor scores (three and above) using the same search terms.

The filtered papers were read and scored by team members (where possible, in pairs) across four core domains, namely, relevance to the objectives of the review; appropriate methodology; sound theoretical base; and novelty/interest. Each paper was given an overall score of one to three (three being the highest). Papers with scores of two or higher were included in the final review. Only 15 papers were included for full review following this process; another 17 were identified from searching references and citations of those selected papers, bringing the total to 32. Citations were searched using Web of Knowledge, Scopus and Google Scholar.

A review of these papers revealed some limitations; one was a lack of sources exploring the impact of LD specifically in Higher Education. As this was a key domain of interest to us, we then conducted a second, broader

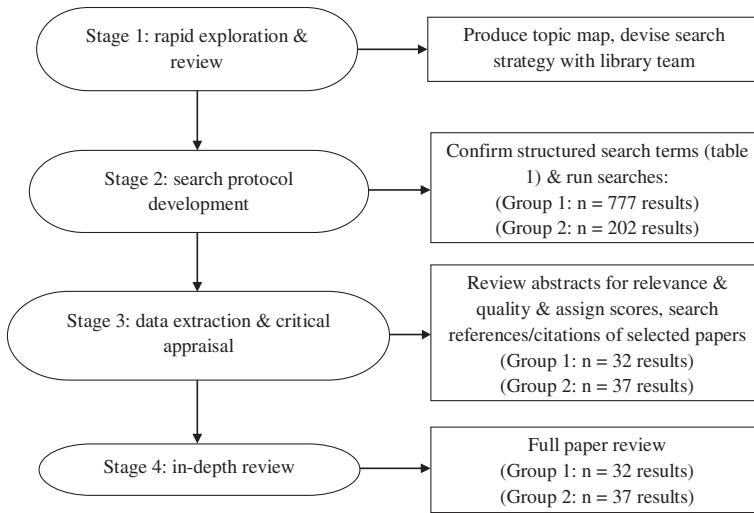


FIGURE 1 Structured review methodology

search of peer-reviewed work on the impact of LD in general (and not specifically in the Higher Education arena—see Table 1, group 2), which yielded 37 additional papers.

Our core purpose here is to examine both these sets of international peer-reviewed sources to discover what we may learn about the content, process, outcomes and impact of LD in Higher Education settings. Although our search was global, the full papers reviewed came from a few countries, namely, Australia, Canada, France, Germany, New Zealand, Portugal, South Africa, Turkey, UK and USA. The research base uncovered was small-scale, fragmented and non-cumulative, revealing a paradox—although the Higher Education sector is a knowledge-based industry, it has not studied its own effectiveness rigorously, at least in the LD field examined here. As we were interested in examining peer-reviewed publications on LD programmes in Higher Education (as per the project scoping process), the analysis that follows excludes some seminal core but non-reviewed texts on leadership in Higher Education.

The paper is organised as follows: we present a summary of 32 international studies on LD in Higher Education that survived our quality sift first (clusters 1–3 below), followed by results from the second, broader review of peer-reviewed work on the impact of LD in general (cluster 4). We then offer some broader reflections on Higher Education LD and propose a holistic model of leadership in Higher Education to inform the design of future LD. Using the UK Higher Education landscape as an illustration, we conclude by offering an agenda for building up a more robust research base.

3 | LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION: KEY THEMES

Only a small number of key papers offered clear accounts of methods, data sources and theoretical contribution and survived the analysis of a larger number of papers initially identified in our search. Only 32 papers met our criteria, repeating Bryman's (2007) earlier finding of a very limited research base. The literature also suggests few promising leadership interventions in the sector that have a reliable evidence base and/or are theoretically well-informed. The material reviewed often uses 'leadership development' interchangeably with 'leader development', creating confusion. Apart from Day (2000), we rarely found any considered discussion of differences between these two distinct concepts. Leader development is associated with the development of the organisation's human capital (individual skills, knowledge and abilities) yet leadership development is associated with

TABLE 1 Structured review search strategies used at stage 2 of structured review process

Group	Search strategy	Search terms	Higher Education	Sources
1	S1	Leadership	Higher Education	(1) Databases: ProQuest ABI/INFORM, Business Source Complete, IBSS and ERIC (2) Additional review of 12 high Impact Factor journals (three and above)
		Interventions Developments Programmes Activities Training		
		Results Impacts Effectiveness Outcomes Evidence		
2	S2	Leadership	Higher Education	
		Interventions Developments Programmes Activities Training		
		Metrics Tools Quantitative Qualitative Systematic reviews		
3	S3	Leadership	Higher Education	
		Interventions Developments Programmes Activities Training		
		Metrics Tools Quantitative Qualitative Systematic reviews		
4	S4	Leadership	<Not limited to Higher Education>	Databases: ProQuest ABI/INFORM, Business Source Complete, IBSS and ERIC
		Interventions Developments Programmes Activities Training		
		Metrics Tools Quantitative Qualitative Systematic reviews Evaluation		

the development of its social capital (building networked relationships among multiple individuals, thus improving organisational effectiveness) (Day, 2000; Kark, 2011). This ambiguity presents challenges for assessment and measurement (Bolden, Petrov, & Gosling, 2008).

The 32 papers fell into three clusters discussed below. A fourth cluster of work (37 studies) emerged from a follow-on search which specifically focused on leadership metrics as a distinctive topic, also discussed below.

3.1 | Cluster 1: LD content

3.1.1 | Content specific to Higher Education settings

This sub-cluster contained 11 studies with implications for LD content in Higher Education settings, including literature reviews, empirical work and novel leadership theories.¹ Bryman's (2007) structured review of peer-reviewed studies on effective leadership in Higher Education in the UK and USA suggests 13 aspects of effectiveness, including: (a) a clear sense of direction and a strategic vision; (b) preparing departmental arrangements to facilitate the direction set; and (c) being considerate. The generic nature and mutual tension between these indicators lead Bryman to conclude that converting them into a list of competences and teaching them within an LD programme is difficult. In a subsequent empirical study of 24 UK-based leadership researchers, Bryman and Lilley (2009) find their research participants as sceptical of generic leadership competency frameworks, and focused, instead, on the context that shapes leadership styles. They found the following Higher Education characteristics as key for generating LD content: collegiality; the desire for autonomy; individualism; a prime loyalty to the discipline rather than the employing organisation; and tensions with difficult colleagues resistant to management. Debowski's (2015) commentary adds two more core values, namely: consultation and respect for staff.

Bolden, Gosling, Maturano, and Dennison's (2003) review of leadership theories and competency frameworks notes that 'a somewhat limited version of "transformational" leadership is being promoted' (p. 37), and that there should be a greater focus on how leaders interact with followers within Higher Education (also see Brown, 2014, on transformational leadership). Yet Angawi (2012) proposes 'Neo Charismatic Leadership', closer to the transformational rather than transactional model, which involves: projecting a vision and enrolling others into it; being sensitive to other people's needs; risk-taking; unconventionality; and altruistic/ethical behaviour. Bryman suggests a participative leadership style can be effective in Higher Education as it 'fosters a collegial atmosphere and [advances] a department's cause' (Bryman, 2007, p. 706). Bolden and co-workers' later paper (Bolden, Gosling, & O'Brien, 2014) offers a broader, bottom-up and societally engaged model of academic leadership where the academic profession as a whole has a role in self-governance and outreach. We believe that an empirically grounded study of alternative leadership styles (e.g., see Franco-Santos, Rivera, & Bourne, 2014) and approaches such as lean leadership and management could offer significant contributions to new LD content for Higher Education.

Bolden et al. (2003) acknowledge the present weak evidence relating to the proposed Higher Education competences and the need to develop more robust evidence-based frameworks. Hamlin and Patel (2017) build on Bryman's (2007) work within a French university and similarly stress that empirically based behavioural indicators (such as those reported in their study) could develop 'evidence-based LMD [Leadership and Management Development] initiatives [as they] would likely be more effective than conventional LMD programmes' (p. 308). Parrish's (2015) review and subsequent empirical work on Australian academics suggests that emotional rather than just rational intelligence may be an important leadership competence to nurture in the sector.

3.1.2 | Content on gender and diversity

A second sub-cluster of six studies² examined gender and diversity in Higher Education leadership: three studied leadership experiences, styles and contexts specific to women: Collings, Conner, McPherson, Midson, and Wilson (2011) explored women's own perceptions of how formal and informal experiences influence their professional

development in New Zealand; Deem (2009) applied a feminist perspective to analyse the possible tension between the principles of excellence and diversity in UK Higher Education, and DeLourdes Machado-Taylor and White (2014) explored the role and leadership style of senior women leaders in universities in Australia and Portugal. The other three studies examined leadership programmes specifically designed for women. DeFrank-Cole, Latimer, Reed, and Wheatly's (2014) mixed methods evaluation explored a women's leadership initiative in one American university, designed as facilitated group coaching sessions to enable women to 'hone their leadership skills, develop concrete strategies to address their individual leadership challenges, and create an engaged leadership community and network' (p. 54). Harris and Leberman (2012) studied the impact of an LD programme for senior women in New Zealand universities that aimed to 'examine leadership attributes and reflect on strategies; [and] increase knowledge of a range of management competences' (p. 33) relating to tertiary education and research funding.

Although the studies lack rigorous and cumulative empirical findings, they highlight the need to consider implications of greater diversity—a factor that now may be affecting the uptake of LD programmes in Higher Education. These papers also raise the question of follow-up work in supporting and sustaining a more diverse leadership grouping in Higher Education. One interview-based study of a cohort of eight women in an Australian university concluded:

the mid-career women academics are facing workplace relationships that have been institutionally inherited. They are attempting to build on these as they aspire to leadership, which is not leading to vertical promotions. The unconscious gendered views are discussed as a block in developing their leadership agency. (Gallant, 2014, p. 214)

An implication is that formalised leadership and skill-based programmes may be more helpful in unblocking such unconscious gendered views rather than experiential methods which do not shift these gendered notions.

3.2 | Cluster 2: LD design

This second cluster comprised 11 empirical studies³ in Higher Education settings with the potential to inform LD programme design. These studies reflect an overall felt need for LD opportunities in Higher Education (Deem, Hillyard, & Reed, 2007; Morris & Laipple, 2015; Scott, Bell, Coates, & Grebennikov, 2010; Wolverson, Ackerman, & Holt, 2005), alongside a recognition that their lack can result in negative effects, for example, leader ineffectiveness and burn out (Morris & Laipple, 2015).

Scott et al.'s (2010) Australian study suggests programmes should be based on principles of 'just in time and just for me' learning; and include face-to-face and online access to highly performing role holders for comparative learning; alongside case studies and workshops which address situated knowledge and carve out time to do so. Tolar's (2012) US study suggests using mentors as a key design component, while Turnbull and Edwards' (2005) UK study concludes that leading academics is challenging. They suggest programmes need to be attentive to distinct leadership needs at different levels of seniority. They support designing programmes that focus on the adoption of transformational rather than transactional models of leadership.

Haddon, Loughlin, and McNally's (2015) work on an American academic institution suggests that combining continuous communication and decisiveness may be an effective style in crisis situations (such as funding cuts) in Higher Education. Deem et al. (2007), who similarly explored the impact of New Public Management reforms in UK universities, recommend specific domains for the design of development programmes, namely, financial management; culture change; acting as a change agent; dealing with assertive consumers; entrepreneurship; performance management of academic staff and risk management (p. 147).

Rowley and Sherman (2003) consider the issue of hybrid roles in academia such as research/academic and leadership/management, suggesting it is important to distinguish 'willing hybrids' from the 'incidental hybrid'

(McGivern, Currie, Ferlie, Fitzgerald, & Waring, 2015), and design leadership programmes that enable them to undertake a longer-term transition to these dual roles and identities.

Akbulut, Nevra Seggie and Börkan's (2015) survey of 700 faculty members examined the leadership effectiveness of departmental heads in a Turkish university by comparing the 'compete' and 'collaborate' functions, indicating the 'integration of complex leadership functions is useful for understanding how department heads respond more effectively to varied situations' (p. 458), given awareness of such roles 'might provide leaders with a profile of effectiveness that can be used to prepare leaders for future challenges' (p. 459). Vilkinas and Ladyshevsky's (2012) study of the perceived effectiveness of academic programme directors in Australian universities found directors as weak on integration aspects of their role (learning, change, systems working) and suggest LD activity should seek to increase self-awareness for achieving greater balance between the roles and responsibilities that leaders put their energies into. Wolverton et al.'s (2005) needs assessment informing the design of an LD programme for incoming departmental chairs similarly stressed the need to incorporate learning around role balancing and preparing departmental chairs in advance of taking up posts.

Spendlove's (2007) well-cited paper explored leadership competences at senior managerial levels in British universities, finding leaders needed to retain a self-identity as an academic. An implication, then, was LD models should be designed around sectorally related characteristics such as academic credibility and visibility rather than by borrowing from other fields (such as business). Incorporating succession planning processes and strategies into LD was also key.

3.3 | Cluster 3: LD outcomes

This cluster comprised four studies⁴ that addressed the outcomes assessment of Higher Education LD programmes. Only one mapped outcomes in a longitudinal evaluation; while the others looked at short- or medium-term outcomes. Chibucos and Green (1989) assessed the impact of the American Council on Education Fellows programme on the long-term career outcomes of participants. They found that 56 per cent of participating fellows achieved the position of Dean or higher, while a significant number became university presidents. In McDaniel's (2002) later short-term evaluation of an updated version of the same programme in 2000, both content (e.g., 'demonstrates understanding of issues of academic administration') and communications (e.g., 'articulates and communicates a vision') related leadership competences were included in a self-administered and self-assessed learning outcomes framework completed by participants before and after the programme. We believe, however, that such competency-based outcomes evaluations could become unreliable to senior leadership and the complex work typical of the Higher Education sector. Ladyshevsky and Flavell (2011) examined the medium-term impact (6- and 12-month outcomes) of an LD programme in an Australian university for mid-level programme coordinators by interviewing 10 participants and found one key outcome, sustained up to 12 months, was an increase in confidence and empowerment.

Our analysis of this cluster suggests an extremely small set of peer-reviewed work addressing outcomes assessment of LD in Higher Education. This literature lacked both consistently defined measures clearly linked with different aspects of LD, as well a clear analysis of the time frames within which different kinds of outcomes might best be measured. We therefore decided to undertake an additional search specifically focused on leadership metrics in general, rather than as a distinct topic specific to the Higher Education sector. The key messages from this extensive search are discussed in cluster 4; but are expounded further in Dopson et al. (2016).

3.4 | Cluster 4: LD impact

Thirty-seven additional papers were examined in this cluster. Their predominant themes included: exploring the impact of different leadership styles (distributed and transformational) on individual leaders and subordinates;⁵ changes in leader traits, skills, behaviours, knowledge and networks from leadership training;⁶ and evaluating

complex LD outcomes.⁷ The methods of evaluation included: summative and formative,⁸ 360-degree evaluations;⁹ and analysis of return on investments.¹⁰

3.4.1 | Impact of leadership styles

The literature evaluating the impact of leadership styles extends beyond individual leaders to consider subordinates (Dvir, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002; Kelloway, Barling, & Helleur, 2000). While a valuable starting point, a more nuanced evaluation of the relationship between LD and the impact on the performance or growth of subordinates is often missing. Some authors reflected that transformational leadership behaviours should be studied as separate sub-dimensions rather than a unified whole (Hardy et al., 2010; Martin, McCormack, Fitzsimons, & Spirig, 2012). This literature recognises that leadership is a contextual, processual, relational, social, political and temporal phenomenon (Bolden et al., 2008; Bolden, Petrov, & Gosling, 2009). We also argue that there is a need for a broader set of theories and methods because the outcomes of LD are not always linear or progressive. This goal may be achieved by studying team and organisational development and effectiveness (Harris, Leithwood, Day, Sammons, & Hopkins, 2007; Martineau, Hannum, & Reinelt, 2007; Spillane, Halverson, & Diamond, 2001, 2004), understanding leadership in different cultural contexts (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009), as well as the variable impact of male versus female leaders (Avolio, Mhatre, Norman, & Lester, 2009).

3.4.2 | Impact on leader(ship) traits, skills and leader networks

Reflecting the prevailing leader-centric focus, the studies examined tried to measure changes in individuals' traits, skills and behaviours (Avolio, Walumbwa, et al., 2009; Cummings et al., 2008; Ely, Boyce, Nelson, Zaccaro, & Hernez-Broome, 2010), including values, mindsets and (self-)perceptions of self-efficacy (Amagoh, 2009) and how superiors think subordinates developed following leadership training (Abrell, Rowold, Weibler, & Moeninghoff, 2011). Day (2000) and Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, and McKee (2014) additionally emphasise leadership rather than leader development as an organisational activity and collective accomplishment. They seek to link 'process models with relevant outcomes' (Day et al., 2014, p. 79) by defining the functions that are expected to develop because of LD.

Some studies suggested that measuring or evaluating leadership traits is difficult. Orvis and Ratwani (2010) examine the recent movement towards self-development to supplement formal LD. They show how leaders may grow on a personal and voluntary basis beyond formal requirements through self-development activity (e.g., structured reflection) and also acknowledge that evaluating such activity can be challenging. In evaluating leadership programmes promoting reflection as a skill, Blackler and Kennedy (2004) find evidence of their overall usefulness but also note difficulties with measurement. Hoppe and Reinelt's (2010) framework for conceptualising (bonding, bridging) and evaluating (connectivity, health) various leadership networks notes that few techniques have been developed to evaluate outcomes and impact. Ely et al.'s (2010) literature review on evaluating leadership coaching suggests that very diverse outcome measures, each different for individual clients, makes it difficult to aggregate, compare and evaluate the overall impact of programmes.

3.4.3 | Evaluating complex LD outcomes

Avolio, Mhatre, et al. (2009) note that LD programmes indirectly affect followers, organisational learning, cultures and communities and suggest that this extreme complexity makes impact difficult to explain. Leskiw and Singh (2007) argue that LD evaluation may not be measurable in quantifiable terms and therefore those evaluating LD programmes need to ask the right questions, including whether or not the metrics used to evaluate LD reflect organisational aims and whether or not these aims can indeed be measured. These studies raise questions about whether or not the leadership models that LD programmes are based upon, and the measures chosen to assess impact, influence reported outcomes more than the real-world impacts of LD courses themselves.

Yet our review reveals some models that could facilitate evaluation of complex LD programmes. Kirkpatrick and Kirkpatrick's (2006) four-stage model of responses to learning is recommended by Leskiw and Singh (2007). It incorporates a concern for: immediate response, learning, behaviour and impact as part of its wider evaluation framework that can be applied with diverse participants on a variety of issues. McAllan and MacRae (2010) use this model to evaluate learning from an LD programme in a large, local authority social work service, employing various techniques such as: knowledge tests on taught inputs; semi-structured questionnaires; one-to-one interviews with participants, peers and managers; and focus groups. Yet King and Nesbit (2015) are critical of the Kirkpatrick model as such evaluations are superficial. Comparing the results of the Kirkpatrick model in a quantitative post-programme evaluation with their own longer-term qualitative approach, the latter uncovered the emotional impact of the learning experience and explored, more deeply, links between the behavioural and cognitive changes reported.

A second model, suggested by Bolden et al.'s (2003) review, draws on Rodgers, Frearson, Holden, and Gold (2003) and considers leader(ship) development initiatives along two dimensions—processes (individual or collective) and approaches/models (prescriptive or emergent). They find an almost exclusive emphasis on the individual-prescriptive type, but not enough attention paid to the collective-emergent type. Russon and Reinelt's (2004) third model emphasises the usefulness of 'programme theory' (p. 105)—a description of how and why a set of activities is expected to lead to outcomes and impacts. Given this 'theory of change' (p. 105), evaluation seeks to gather evidence to prove or disprove it.

3.4.4 | Evaluation methods

Ely et al.'s (2010) review of how leadership coaching might be evaluated suggests both summative (final outcomes) and formative evaluation (interim processual and developmental markers) methods as beneficial. Their three recommendations for undertaking such evaluations (p. 35) are: (a) using multi-source data (from subordinates, peers and superiors and measures of business impact); (b) measuring changes in the attitudes, performance and retention of clients and their subordinates; and (c) 'distal outcomes', observable months or even years after the intervention. Other authors also support using multi-source data, particularly 360-degree feedback, in evaluating leadership and LD outcomes. Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe (2004) investigate how to maximise development opportunities for head teachers in an LD programme and find 360-degree feedback as extremely valuable. Day et al. (2014) and Solansky (2010) support using 360-degree feedback to enable leaders to understand their strengths and weaknesses, instead of only self-reports. Finally, Avolio, Avey, and Quisenberry (2010) seek to evaluate the return on investment in LD, finding it ranges from negative up to 200 per cent, depending on organisational climate. However, we remain sceptical about the value of such approaches, given the complex nature of Higher Education leadership.

4 | LESSONS FOR LD INTERVENTIONS FOR THE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR

The Higher Education empirical papers reviewed operate at different levels of analysis, preventing ready aggregation. However, the collective insights yielded by our review are, in our view, disappointing. These studies are too often small-scale, non-cumulative and only weakly theorised (apart from a few interesting studies in cluster 1). They often have idiosyncratic concerns rather remote from the bigger challenges facing HEIs addressed in the introduction. They are often disconnected from a social science base.

What is particularly striking is the lack of reference to the (arguably, rapidly changing) purposes of Higher Education in designing LD programmes. The leadership tasks of university leaders, along with the skills, behaviours and values needed, should be driven by core purposes. These, in turn, will vary by different country contexts. In the UK (the context we are most familiar with), Higher Education organisations have different purposes, given

increased institutional variation after the post-2010 policy to liberalise the sector. New private and not-for-profit providers are entering the system and novel organisational forms such as networks, consortia, hybrids or mergers/acquisitions are appearing. Entrepreneurial skills will be critical in leadership work in these settings, while for leaders in traditional research-intensive settings, recruiting, retaining and motivating academic research talent will be key. In financial constraint and crisis, more command and control leadership approaches may be required (Grint, 2010), whereas more collaborative and 'adaptive leadership' styles (Heifetz, 1994) are needed in growth-based modes and contexts.

Teasing out long-term effects of policy and organisational shifts since 2010 on UK Higher Education management purposes, tasks and LD needs, is an important future task which these papers do not really address. One should recognise and work with these meta-level trends and recognise increasing differentiation within the sector in designing and tailoring LD programmes. Senior managerial competences in commercially oriented areas (such as globalisation, strategic management, brand building, marketing and quality assurance) are likely to be of increasing importance in more market-oriented contexts, but these need to be strongly balanced with leadership practices capable of supporting academic 'talent management' and securing effective collaborations with many external players (Ferlie & Trenholm, 2017), including globally as well as locally.

Leadership theory is clearly a contested space (see a recent thorough review by Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2015). While early theories took an individualistic perspective by focusing on the characteristics of successful leaders, later theories considered followers and wider situational circumstances. The literature suggests a shift towards distributed leadership, seen as a group activity that works through and within relationships rather than individual actions. Accordingly, a broader reconceptualisation is needed of what leadership and LD involves in Higher Education, moving beyond a historical focus on individual leaders (narrow career outcomes) to considering wider leadership processes in Higher Education settings as inherently distributed, relational and contextually influenced (Bolden et al., 2008, 2009; Bryman, 2007; Day et al., 2014). Thus, the accomplishment of leadership (rather than a focus on identified leaders) should be the core focus of LD, raising questions about the relationship between LD and 'followership' (Uhl-Bien & Riggio, 2014).

Bolden et al.'s (2008) five dimensions of leadership (personal, social, structural, contextual and developmental), developed within the UK Higher Education context, help us reconceptualise leadership in Higher Education. Whereas leadership clearly includes individual leaders' personal attributes (such as academic credibility and knowledge, vision, values and ethics), it significantly also includes social and developmental processes (mentoring, role modelling, teambuilding, networking, developing trust, delegating and succession planning) (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Hoppe & Reinelt, 2010; Jarvis, Gulati, McCrick, & Simpson, 2013; Spendlove, 2007), together with considering organisational structures and contexts intrinsic to leadership practices.

Leadership and LD may produce outcomes that only become apparent at a distal point (Ely et al., 2010). Indeed, HEI leadership typically involves organisational stewardship that seeks to enhance and preserve HEIs for future generations. Potentially, the consequences of HEI leaders' initiated changes may come into fruition only after those leaders have moved on from their positions.

To increase the theoretical and practical connectedness of the literature, we suggest an alternative theoretical perspective that views HEIs as knowledge organisations and academics as knowledge workers. This perspective relates to literature in organisational studies on the knowledge-based sector, involving management consulting firms, law firms, think tanks, universities, governments and other knowledge-intensive settings (Fischer et al., 2016). HEIs are here a talent management business whose knowledge workers are mobile and hard to control: the nature of their work is hard to specify and monitor; they operate with broad autonomy and discretion (including leaving organisations if they are unhappy); and they dislike being directly led (Alvesson, 2001; Goffee & Jones, 2007). To provide effective leadership here, individual attributes play a significant role in eliciting academic credibility and intellectual and personal respect. However, another crucial HEI leadership skill is the ability to create organisational environments in which knowledge workers can thrive by shaping the culture, incentives, systems and resources that they need (Goffee & Jones, 2007). Here culturally laden forms of control are indicated

where academic knowledge workers may discipline themselves and self-regulate (Kunda, 2006). Alvesson and Spicer (2012) suggest leaders in such settings may accord much operational autonomy to knowledge workers, but only given a strong and positive corporate culture (and, one would add, strong incentives) shaping what they do.

4.1 | What implications does this theoretical approach have for designing LD activity in HEIs?

We suggest, firstly, that effective LD design needs to better navigate the inter-relationship between HEIs at an organisational level and the individual needs, roles and careers of individual academics. In their ethnographic study of LD programmes for senior leaders, Fischer and White (2014) found more effective examples of LD programmes reflecting a similar binocular focus which combined intended organisational outcomes (including intended strategic trajectories over time), with LD participants' personal motivations, expectations and experiences (including leadership ambitions). Such LD programmes should reflect the distinctive organisational settings. We suggest that they also need to develop participants' future strategic and academic leadership capability by establishing strong coherence and complementarity between HEIs' (necessarily changing) purposes and eliciting individual academics' confidence, respect and support for HEIs' intended wider developments.

Secondly, distributed, networked and team-based leadership abilities become increasingly important, strategically, given the need to lead complex stakeholder relations, collaborative ventures and partnerships. Thus, distributed leadership models imply that LD design should seek to develop participants' collaborative leadership skills across traditional organisational boundaries and departmental silos. Governance systems could also be likely to include greater representation from senior academic but non-managerial staff than apparent in UK universities today, which have adopted the governance model of the Anglo-Saxon PLC (Buckland, 2004). These rebalanced governance systems may also need to be supported by LD programmes. Studying such novel Higher Education settings emerging with liberalisation (Ferlie & Trenholm, 2017), their governance systems and associated leadership sources and styles to see whether or not they do act as 'disruptors' of a highly institutionalised sector, along with exploring any implications for generating novel LD content is also key.

Thirdly, LD design should draw more strongly on social science knowledge which regards leadership and LD as inherently situated and embedded within particular work settings and contexts. Overall, we were struck by the absence of studies that engaged with adult learning and wider literature on the impact of leadership education. While the papers reviewed focused on the content of formal programme curricula and post-delivery metrics, there are further insights to be gained through engaging with social-science-based studies. In particular, we suggest LD design could take account of the significant inter-relationship between LD and wider organisational development (OD) strategies within HEIs.

Practically, creating learning forums and offline spaces (such as action learning sets) that informally debate and draw upon leadership knowledge within particular contexts could stimulate innovative and alternative approaches to leadership work. Whereas such forums are best when expertly facilitated, there are also examples of self-managed forums (Dopson et al., 2013). Indeed, the relatively informal dynamics of forums in relation to coaching, mentoring and informal supervision work provide an arena in which to share and off-load concerns about difficult and often stressful day-to-day professional work; such forums emphasise subjective 'formative spaces' where less dominant narratives and perspectives can be articulated, reflected upon and worked through (McGivern & Fischer, 2012). To establish such LD resources in ways that complement and support HEIs' long-term future, they should support multi-professional (rather than uni-professional) learning forums. By bridging the boundaries between different epistemic communities and knowledge paradigms, they embody the more blended focus we advocate to explore interactions between organisational and real-life work issues.

Finally, a more 'sustainable leadership' (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006) approach indicates a form of distributed leadership in Higher Education which implies: role modelling, delegation and succession planning, together with senior-level mentoring and support. Designing-in sustainable leadership to contribute to longer-term career

pathways is critical; so, LD programmes should be responsive to and help navigate various career stages. A progressive LD approach would address a gap concerning staff members' varying desires for career advancement in HEIs (Storey, 2004). In particular, it should be flexible and responsive to participants' transition points, including possible 'crucible moments' (Bennis & Thomas, 2002) that provide critical moments for potential learning and development. Such designs require careful calibrating and monitoring to balance formal theories and constructs, practice-based techniques and subjective dimensions of leadership within 'sense-making' approaches to LD (Fischer, Morris, & Dopson, 2015). This approach would provide sufficient space to explore developing leadership identities, emotional responses and personal reactions important in longer-term processes of LD (Fischer et al., 2015). For similar reasons, while the literature on the impact of coaching in organisations remains embryonic (Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2015), it is our experience that leadership work is a lonely activity and that targeted executive coaching that encourages such reflection and experimentation can prove highly developmental.

Thus, the designers of LD interventions in Higher Education should engage with some core questions (see Figure 2). Reflecting on these questions will also be useful for Higher Education researchers, providers of LD for Higher Education and the top management of universities who wish to think about LD in Higher Education alike. This would entail, firstly, to consider the purposes of a HEI (which will inevitably vary), drawing upon these reflections to determine the models of leadership most appropriate for each organisation (rather than promoting a single model of leadership and LD). Having defined a HEI's purposes and determined appropriate models of leadership, we can then design and embed LD programmes that will support such leadership capacity over time. Such LD work can be specifically evaluated in relation to the HEI's specific purposes. Both LD activity and its evaluation are likely, in turn, to raise new questions that should help HEIs to refine (and even re-determine) their purposes, leading to further iterations and adjustments between LD and OD over time.

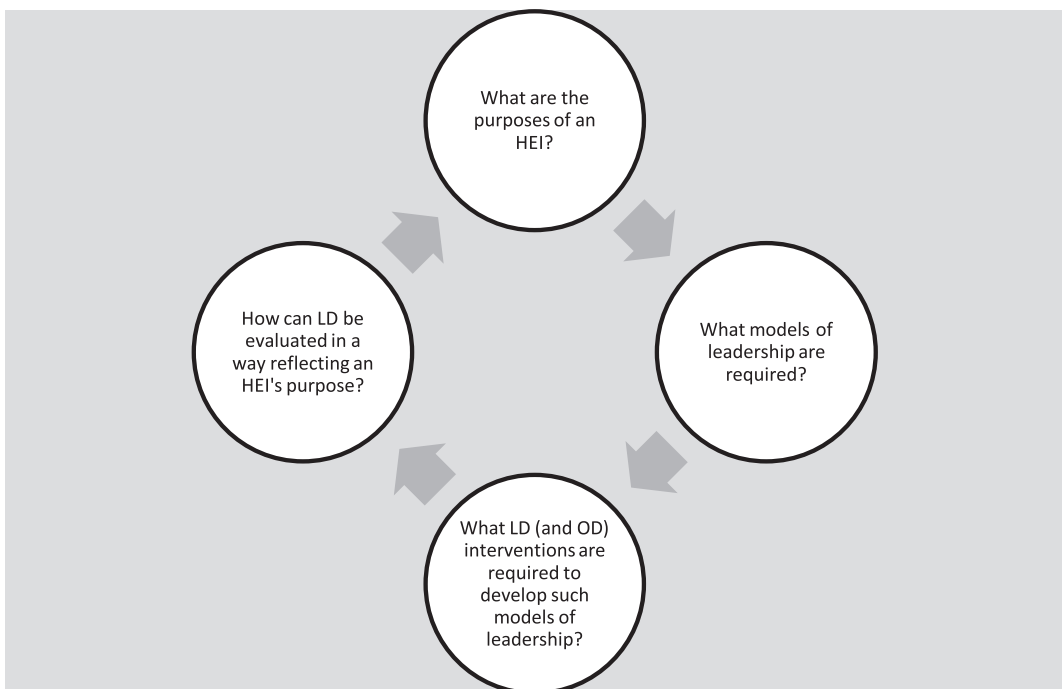


FIGURE 2 Key questions for leadership development interventions

5 | CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEARCH AGENDA

Higher-Education-based LD programmes are absorbing substantial time, attention and resources so they should be better investigated than at present. Our search suggested the current literature base is small-scale and fragmented. Notably, there are few published, large-scale, empirically informed studies which explore the practices, content and (more ambitiously) the long-term impact of the many LD programmes in Higher Education. Moreover, the studies reviewed were often localised, weakly theorised and disengaged from wider or recent sectoral developments. We now suggest candidate research projects exploring LD programmes in UK Higher Education in greater depth, mindful that in the long term they should lead to more international research.

One research project should be an initial stocktake of the state of the national field as a ground-clearing exercise. This early study should collect available web-based texts from all UK HEIs that outline their LD activity and subject them to content analysis. Figures on LD spend and a list of LD providers would be useful, where available. A set of semi-structured interviews with LD leads in local HEIs could unpick and explore the core models in use.

Secondly, we found little literature that explores the impact of LD programmes at different career stages for UK Higher Education leaders and longer-term implications for career advancement. The national ambition of Chibucos and Green's (1989) American study stands out as a rare and laudable example. A longitudinal UK cohort study (perhaps using surveys, focus groups and interviews) tracking individual career and wider personal outcomes over time after participation in LD programmes is a second suggestion. We understand that the UK's LFHE is now supporting such studies.

Thirdly, we call for more processual, team-based and relational studies of LD programmes which would be consistent with some academic and social science literature. Some papers reviewed did generate argument about the still distinctive nature of leadership in academic settings (Bryman, 2007; Bryman & Lilley, 2009). Other authors developed a model of leadership that went beyond simple individualistic and charismatic accounts. Day et al's (2014) recent review, highlights LD activity as multilevel and longitudinal in nature. Yet few UK Higher Education studies explore leadership processes in multilevel fields. We assert that Higher Education leaders often operate within teams, relate to different followers and have to be understood within wider organisational and historical contexts.

A further study should take a longitudinal, processual and comparative case-study-based approach in tracking a desired strategic change or organisational transformation in a HEI that has been supported by a large-scale investment in LD activity. The study should ask: how do we assess the long-term impact of such programmes in their wider organisational context within a concrete case of desired major change? Methods might here include documentary analysis, observation at meetings and semi-structured interviews with multiple stakeholders. There should be a systems-level perspective used and attention paid to how LD programmes interact with other forces for change/inertia/resistance. The study should have a national level of ambition with a large group (8–10) of purposively sampled HEIs (for a comparator study in UK healthcare, see Pettigrew, Ferlie, & McKee, 1992). One dimension for HEI selection might well be different local approaches to LD activity. Geographical variation (as Scotland and Wales are seen as less market-minded than England) would be important.

Finally, exploring the nature and impact of LD programmes in some novel and still emerging organisational settings highlighted earlier would be interesting. Do the slowly growing number of for-profit and not-for-profit HEIs display distinctive leadership styles? Is there a growth of a professional partnership model? Do these new settings create or buy-in distinctive LD programmes (or do they still use standard and public-sector-oriented programmes)? How does one lead in a network, consortium or a virtualised and international alliance and how are leaders in such novel academic settings developed? If we see academics as knowledge workers, we must examine the implications for senior-level leadership styles at the top of HEIs, especially in research-intensive universities where academics may have substantial external research reputations which they can use as intellectual capital.

ENDNOTES

- ¹Angawi (2012), Bolden et al. (2003, 2014), Bryman (2007), Bryman and Lilley (2009), Debowski (2015), Hamlin and Patel (2017), Jarvis et al. (2013), Owusu-Bempah (2014), Parrish (2015), Zuber-Skerritt and Louw (2014).
- ²Collings et al. (2011), Deem (2009), DeFrank-Cole et al. (2014), DeLourdes Machado-Taylor and White (2014), Gallant (2014), Harris and Leberman (2007).
- ³Akbulut et al. (2015), Deem et al. (2007), Haddon et al. (2015), Morris and Laipple (2015), Rowley and Sherman (2003), Scott et al. (2010), Spendlove (2007), Tolar (2012), Turnbull and Edwards (2005), Vilkinas and Ladyshevsky (2012), Wolverton et al. (2005).
- ⁴Chibucos and Green (1989), Ladyshevsky and Flavell (2011), Marshall (2012), McDaniel (2002).
- ⁵Avolio, Mhatre, et al. (2009), Avolio, Walumbwa, et al. (2009), Bolden et al. (2008, 2009), Dvir et al. (2002), Gentry and Martineau (2010), Hardy et al. (2010), Harris (2008), Harris et al. (2012), Kelloway et al. (2000), Martin et al. (2012), Militello and Benham (2010), Spillane et al. (2001, 2004).
- ⁶Abrell et al. (2011), Amagoh (2009), Avolio, Reichard, Hannah, Walumbwa, and Chan (2009), Avolio, Walumbwa, et al. (2009), Blackler and Kennedy (2004), Cummings et al. (2008), Day (2000), Day et al. (2014), Ely et al. (2010), Hoppe and Reinelt (2010), Lopes, Fialho, Cunha, and Niveiros (2013), Orvis and Ratwani (2010).
- ⁷Avolio, Mhatre, et al. (2009), Bolden et al. (2003), King and Nesbit (2015), Leskiw and Singh (2007), McAllan and MacRae (2010), Russon and Reinelt (2004), Simmonds and Tsui (2010).
- ⁸Ely et al. (2010).
- ⁹Alimo-Metcalfe and Alban-Metcalfe (2004), Day et al. (2014), Solansky (2010).
- ¹⁰Avolio et al. (2010).

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