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9. Academic leaders and leadership in the changing higher education landscape

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INTRODUCTION

Literature on academic leadership has been growing exponentially in the last few decades. Originally, the field was defined primarily through studies on university presidents in the United States (e.g. Cohen & March, 1974; Birnbaum, 1992), that portrayed leaders as 'heroes', 'giants', 'living logos' or 'illusionists' (Hendrickson, Lane, Harris, & Dorman, 2013). By now, the interest has broadened geographically, across different organizational layers, and from various disciplinary backgrounds. Universities have grown in size and complexity, societal expectations of universities have increased, and massification of higher education has often caused financial strain. Furthermore, public management reforms in many countries have increased the formal autonomy of universities, but also exposed universities to market competition, performance targets, and accountability measures. As stated in a prominent OECD overview, universities need a strong strategic and entrepreneurial leadership to survive in the new environment (Santiago, Tremblay, Basri, & Arnal, 2008). Similarly, the *Higher Education Modernisation Agenda* of the European Union (European Commission, 2011, p. 13) emphasizes the need for "investments in professional management" of universities to be able to "provide strategic vision and leadership" for achieving its ambitious goals. Many studies argue that academic leadership is crucial for improving productivity and quality, enhancing the morale, and realizing change in academic organizations (Ramsden, 1998b).

As a result of the interest in this topic, a number of practical guides for academic leaders have been published on different continents (e.g. Ramsden, 1998a; Middlehurst, 1993; Bolton, 2000; Hendrickson et al., 2013; Altbach, 2011). In this chapter, we will try to synthesize some of the main themes in the rapidly accumulating scholarly literature in the field, focusing on three aspects in particular: (a) the effect of recent trends in higher education on academic leadership, (b) universities as peculiar organizations for leadership, and (c) empirical evidence on leadership effectiveness in an academic context.

We should first define what is meant with 'leadership', and with 'academic leadership' specifically. While there are different definitions, most studies in higher education define leadership as a purposeful activity to achieve organizational goals by influencing people to follow, and using resources such as authority, interpersonal influence, and power over finances and human resources (Bryman, 2007; de Boer & Goedegebuur, 2009). Other studies leave leadership undefined, and approach it pragmatically as the work that leaders do. They observe formal leaders and examine how and with what effect they fulfill their leadership function, i.e. positional leadership. Some scholars (e.g. Kotter, 1990; Zaleznik, 1977) feel strongly about a distinction between leaders and managers: while managers focus on daily running of the organization, leaders are there to give a direction to the organization and to open up new avenues. Another relevant distinction is between leadership 'in' organizations versus leader-

ship 'of' organizations (Hunt, 1991; Washington, Sutton, & Feild, 2006), i.e. leading people within an organization versus giving a direction to an organization.

Regardless of a specific definition, most scholars agree that leadership expresses itself in different activities, such as facilitation, coaching, mentoring, directing and delegating among others (de Boer & Goedegebuur, 2009). While the nature of activities varies considerably across organizations and layers, a large-scale survey in Australia showed that most academic leaders deal with the following tasks: policy formation, managing relationships, working with challenging staff, involvement in various aspects of planning, and attending meetings (Scott, Coates, & Anderson, 2008).

Secondly, what is meant with 'academic' in academic leadership? The term usually refers to leadership within an academic organization, and dealing with academic personnel. It is distinguished from professional managers and administrators within universities, who are in charge of many non- or semi-academic aspects of student and research affairs. Academic leadership refers to leading academic staff in the core areas of teaching, research and service. As a traditional norm, academic leaders come from an academic rank, and serve in the role on a temporary and rotating basis. As a result, their role is often characterized as 'primus inter pares', and with an image of a service to the organization, not as personal career ambition. As will be discussed below, recent changes in the higher education environment have started to challenge this picture of academic leadership. We will first summarize the traditional view of universities as peculiar organizations and a special leadership context, and thereafter describe the effect of recent changes on academic leadership.

ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL THEORY

Universities have often been characterized as a unique type of organization, which also affects its leadership (Musselin, 2006). The extent to which the uniqueness is still valid, has ever been valid, or is really unique to universities – is debatable. Nevertheless, there are prominent arguments in the academic literature on university governance and management. We focus here on universities as (1) semi-anarchic, loosely coupled systems, (2) professional organizations, (3) and collegial organizations.

Universities as Organized Anarchies

A set of classic literature in organizational studies characterizes universities as 'semi-anarchic', 'loosely coupled' systems (Cohen & March, 1974; Weick, 1976). This perspective questions the premise that organizations are rational and efficient, with clearly defined structure and goals – a necessary premise for strategic behavior and leadership. Universities as organized anarchies, on the contrary, have ambiguous goals, unclear technologies and fluid participation (Cohen & March, 1974). In other words, there are a variety of inconsistent and ill-defined preferences present, and organizational members often do not agree about the organizational goals. Organizational processes are not always fully understood and run on a trial-and-error basis. Furthermore, participants in the organization vary in the amount of time and effort they devote to the organization. This leads to the 'ambiguity' in the leadership context, as also captured in the book title *Ambiguity and Leadership* of Cohen and March (1974). For leadership this means that decision-making is not a rational problem-solving process, but a 'garbage

can' where problems, solutions, participants, and decision-making opportunities are separate entities that exist independently within an organization.

Weick (1976) develops further the idea of educational organizations as 'loosely coupled' systems. Weick defines loosely coupled organizations as organizations where sub-systems retain their own identity. While a tight organization is held together by technical coupling (interdependencies in tasks), and authority (formal positions and responsibilities), in educational organizations both mechanisms tend to be weak. Loosely coupled organizations can have their advantages, as they can be more responsive to their environment and quicker to facilitate localized adaptation. However, they tend to be resistant to top-down change and therefore are a challenge for organizational leaders (also Glassman, 1973).

The 'loosely coupled' nature is further strengthened by the idea of universities as a set of 'academic tribes and territories' (Becher, 1989; see also Biglan, 1973), i.e. a set of multiple sub-units of different professional norms and practices. Furthermore, as de Boer and Goedegebuur (2009) argue, leadership and management vary across faculties due to the diversity in value systems (e.g. Bray, 2008; Del Favero, 2006), which means heterogeneous leadership patterns within a single organization. Empirical comparative research from different countries shows clearly that academic staff identify themselves first of all with their discipline, and only secondarily with the specific organization they work for (Henkel, 2002). Heterogeneous knowledge structures of different disciplines condition the behavior and values of academics within the discipline. Such a structure may challenge organizational change, if imposed from the top. It can be argued that the 'managerial' policy reforms make loosely coupled systems more tightly coupled (de Boer, Enders, & Schimank, 2007) and strengthen the organizational identity, yet the discipline as a dominant identity for most academics seems to be persistent.

Universities as Professional Organizations

Another leadership challenge comes from the professional nature of universities. In organizational theory, professional organizations are a specific archetype (Mintzberg, 1979; Scott, 1965). Such organizations tend to have a small strategic core and few middle managers, as professionals are coordinated and controlled by strong professional norms instead of organizational policies and procedures. While power rests in the hands of professional experts, they need administrators and managers to support and facilitate them. This creates an interdependence whereby administrators need to secure the support of professional experts to be able to implement their initiatives and change. Due to these characteristics, organizational change is believed to be difficult and slow in professional organizations (Greenwood, Hinings, & Brown, 1990).

On the one hand, there are strong arguments why professional organizations should be led by top professionals, not by generic leaders. Goodall (2009, 2010) has provided convincing evidence, demonstrating the positive effect of having a top scholar as a leader for a university. Her research shows that university leaders who have a strong professional background are more successful in their job, as indicated for example by research output of the university, and satisfaction with leadership. The combination of the two roles – a professional and a leader-manager – has its problems, particularly in the light of recent managerial changes. Different individuals combine the roles differently. Floyd and Dimmock (2011) demonstrate that a new professional identity associated with the leadership role can marginalize the exist-

ing academic identity. Their research suggests three models of how department heads combine the different roles: the 'jugglers' successfully manage their different identities and are interested in applying for other senior leadership and management positions; the 'copers' could just about deal with the role conflict and they tend to keep their leadership role increasingly separate from their academic role; and the 'strugglers' find the conflicting demands too difficult and demoralizing and seriously consider stepping down from the role. What explains one or the other model, remains unaddressed in their article. According to another model, leaders can fill their role differently, with a different accent on their management and academic tasks. Sarros, Gmelch, and Tanewski (2006) observe four discrete roles: leader, manager, scholar, and academic staff developer, and individual differences in how the roles are combined in practice.

The issue of conflicting identities has probably intensified over time. While a 'traditional' academic dean dealt primarily with students and other academics, contemporary executive deans are faced with a much more complex constituency and operational tasks (de Boer & Goedegebuure, 2009). They are pushed to embrace managerial values more than traditional deans were (Deem, 2004). The schism between managerial and professional values expresses itself in 'conflicting organizational logics' present in contemporary universities (Winter, 2009; Henkel, 2000). Universities have thus become 'hybrid organizations' trying to reconcile the two logics – the managerial logic, and the professional/academic logic (Winter, 2009). As studied in other types of organizations facing such hybridity, there may be different tactics of how to either merge or compartmentalize the two logics in the decision-making structures (see Reay & Hinings, 2009).

On the other hand, universities also consist of professionals, which may require a specific leadership approach. As Bryman (2007, p. 707) summarizes the literature on leadership effectiveness in higher education, "leadership, in the traditional sense associated with leadership theory and research, may be of limited relevance, because academics' professionalism and their internal motivation mitigate the need for leadership of this kind". Referring to Kerr and Jermier's (1978) research on leadership substitutes, he argues that in certain types of organizations, the impact of leadership will be neutralized. This is particularly the case in 'professional' organizations where people have high intrinsic motivation and high demand for independence. Moreover, universities arguably attract anti-organizational types of people who value freedom and independence (Middlehurst, 2004), which makes them sensitive towards being led. Leadership in universities may therefore need to emphasize support, protection, collegiality, and managing of their autonomy (Mintzberg, 1998; Raelin, 1995). Transactional elements of management and leadership – often linked to performance targets – may have a counterproductive effect in such a context. However, it is important to emphasize that academics have proven not to be immune to management and leadership practices (Beerkens, 2013), even if the practices might produce in the end unintended negative effects. We will return to the issue of effective leadership in the last section.

Universities as 'Collegial' Organizations

The 'collegial' nature of universities is closely related to its 'professional' character, and it is often contrasted to a 'corporate' or 'managerial' organizational culture. Clark's (1998) influential presentation of the Entrepreneurial University contrasts the two value systems: a focus on trusteeship and hierarchical bureaucracy on the one side, and traditional collegial

authority of discipline, guild and profession on the other side. While collegiality is widely presented as an essential characteristic of universities, its precise meaning tends to remain ambiguous. It is often taken as granted without further explanation (Tapper & Palfreyman, 2010), and it represents somewhat different things to different people. Tapper and Palfreyman (2010) in their thorough study of collegiality are inspired by the collegial tradition of Oxford and Cambridge universities, and thereby focus primarily on the tension between the central university power and its sub-communities, observing a concerning trend towards increasing 'centrality'. According to them, collegiality should not be defined narrowly as a matter of formal governance structures, but it has a wider socio-cultural and pedagogical effect.

Another dimension of collegiality focuses on formal governance structures – how concentrated or broad-based the core decision-making bodies are. The collegiality means that members of the organization participate in the organizational decision-making. In many European countries, universities' rectors and presidents as well as departmental leaders were traditionally elected by or agreed upon with their members, via a Council or a Senate. This process gave a normative 'primus inter pares' characteristic to the leadership role. The model has changed significantly in the last two or three decades. As universities are developing into business-like corporate actors, democratic and collegial decision-making structures start to seem inefficient and ineffective (e.g. Maassen & Olsen, 2007). As a result, many countries have gone through a university governance reform, redistributing authority from collective bodies to individuals in both academic and administrative decision-making processes (de Boer & Goedegebuure, 2009). As a result, decision-making has become arguably more centralized among fewer people. Furthermore, appointing academic leaders 'from the top' rather than 'from the bottom' arguably changes the nature of the mandate that the leaders have for their leadership role.

A third angle to collegiality focuses on decision-making by an 'academic collegium', in contrast to decision-making by administrative and managerial layers in the organization. Collegial decision-making in this perspective should not be confused with democratic decision-making or an inclusive, egalitarian organizational culture. Collegial governance expresses itself rather in an academic oligarchy (Clark, 1986; Trowler, 2010), where senior professors and chairs make decisions, but ideally on behalf of the entire academic community beyond organizational (and temporary) borders. Expressions of the collegial governance in this sense are peer-review based research funding, internal ethics boards, or recruitment committees (e.g. in Dill, 2020). Collegiality is a unique organizational form that emphasizes shared ownership, and it is not by definition harmonious as the colloquial use of the term might suggest. For example, Lazega's (2001) insightful study of collegial organizations of a very different nature – partnership-based law firms – demonstrates sophisticated social mechanisms that ensure the quality and control in such flat organizations, as well as for keeping the organization together despite of the multiple centrifugal forces that push it apart.

According to Clark (1998), collegiality can create resistance to the new, entrepreneurial university mode. However, empirical studies show that the two cultures can also support each other. A study of middle managers in eight European countries showed that managerial and collegial norms can be simultaneously present, especially when new performance instruments are perceived as meaningful and having a positive effect (Marini & Reale, 2016). Shattock (2003), for example, sees the two sides as complementary but in a somewhat compartmentalized way: collegiality in his view is a conceptual ideal for the core activities of teaching and research, while management and leadership is essential for running a university.

In many sectors, organizations are believed to be losing their traditional professional or collegial nature due to various societal forces, such as deregulation, competition, technological change and globalization (Powell, Brock, & Hinings, 1999). Universities are often seen as a prime example for such a change. In the next section, we will look at how the changing environment is affecting academic leaders and leadership.

CHANGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP

The role of academic leadership has changed considerably in the last few decades. Three interlinked trends in particular can be pointed out as a source of the change: increasing societal expectations on universities inspired by the 'knowledge society' and global competition; higher education policy reforms; and a normative change linked to the reforms. These trends have brought attention to 'professionalization' of academic leadership, and its expansion on lower organizational layers.

Changing Environment

Although a causal link is difficult to establish empirically, it is widely believed that the context of contemporary universities demands effective leadership more so than ever before (European Commission, 2011; OECD, 2003; Scott et al., 2008). The higher education sector has grown considerably. Massification of higher education has increased student numbers and made the student body more heterogeneous. A 'knowledge economy' and 'knowledge society' paradigm emphasizes the crucial role of universities as an engine of innovation, growth and development, so societal expectations of universities to 'deliver' for the economy and society, grow as well (Clark, 1998). Effective relationships with industry and other societal partners have become vital for success. Furthermore, universities operate increasingly in a global competition, competing for the 'best talent' in terms of students and staff. It requires strong, strategic leadership to be able to profile a university in such a competitive environment, and to fulfill and balance the different societal and market demands.

Public policy reforms in many countries sharpen further the environment for leadership. Various reforms under the umbrella term New Public Management (Deem, 2004) have sharpened the incentive structures for universities. The set of reforms has increased performance-based incentives, competition for students and/or research funding, and performance accountability, although there is more coherence and convergence in the policy narrative than in actual policy measures (Ferlie, Musselin, & Andresani, 2008; Capano & Pritoni, 2020). Nevertheless, many universities have revised their own policies, procedures and norms to respond effectively to the changing incentives, incorporating such performance and evaluation instruments in their own internal structures (Beerkens, 2013). Implementing the change, and maintaining the performance-oriented culture requires a different kind of leadership and management.

While many argue that a strong focus on leadership is inevitable in this new competitive context, it is debatable whether the association is indeed causal. The two trends can be seen also as two sides of the same coin (Askling & Stensaker, 2002; Deem, Fulton, Hillyard, Johnson, & Reed, 2001). New Public Management reforms have not only created a need for

strategic leadership, but they have also spread the norm that leadership is vital for achieving organizational goals and creating change (Smith, Adams, & Mount, 2007). As Deem (2004) shows in her analysis, the reforms have established the idea that academics and academic work need to be managed. New Public Management reforms promote autonomy of (semi-) governmental organizations, and promote discretionary space 'to let managers manage'. University governance reforms in many countries have widened the decision-making space of universities, while at the same time transferring decision-making authority from collegial bodies to appointed individual leaders.

The Changing Role of Academic Leaders

Academic leadership is not limited to the top of the organization. Interest in middle management, such as deans and department heads has increased considerably in recent years in different types of institutions and countries (e.g. Knight & Trowler, 2001; Meek, Goedegebuure, Santiago, & Carvalho, 2010; Floyd, 2012, 2016; Graham, 2016; Bray, 2008; Smith 2002, 2005). Department heads have become a crucial leadership level as they are directly responsible for teaching and research activities in their unit, and in many countries they have received more autonomy over resource allocation. Scott et al. (2008) demonstrate in the case of Australia that deans nowadays have many of the same responsibilities that before were associated only with the top leadership – such as strategy formulation, interaction with external stakeholders, financial and performance management – arguing that the dean's position has been considerably upgraded. Similarly, de Boer and Goedegebuure (2009) demonstrate that deanship in a continental European context has become more demanding, more senior, more strategic, more complex and more managerial in nature.

Leadership does not stop at the level of department heads. Various quality assurance instruments demand accountability and innovation on a program level, and expect an effective 'quality culture' and continuous monitoring of teaching performance. As a result, important leadership functions are fulfilled also at curriculum level, such as by program directors, and chairs of various committees. Research on this level of leadership is usually concerned with the capacity to create change and implement innovation. Smith (2005) points out that research on the effectiveness of departmental leadership often ignores these less visible roles, and thereby often over- or underestimates the role of department heads. It is increasingly claimed that the attempts to improve teaching and university education are often stopped by insufficient or ineffective leadership. Particularly in Anglo-Saxon countries, this has led to several government-funded programs that encourage leadership research for higher education institutions, to fill the knowledge gap (Parker, 2008; Middlehurst, Goreham, & Woodfield, 2009).

Much of the research on deans and department heads focuses on their identity as leaders and on a conflict between their different roles. Some claim that the changing context has substantially transformed the role and norms of academic leaders: it has introduced managerial and bureaucratic values to universities' governance, which has weakened the traditional norms of collegiality, academic autonomy, and professionalism (Deem, 2004; Amaral, Meek, & Larsen, 2003). Others see the changes not as a replacement of the old norms, but as a hybridization of the governance model (Aasen & Stensaker, 2007), and an accommodation of the new values into the traditional model (Huisman, de Boer, & Goedegebuure, 2006). The combination of the 'old' and 'new' is emphasized also in the OECD (2003) report, which claims that the gov-

ernance of higher education in the twenty-first century needs to develop “a fusion of academic mission and executive capacity” (OECD, 2003, p. 75).

The persistence of traditional academic norms is reflected in the profile of academic leaders. University leaders still tend to come predominantly from an academic background (Bargh, Bockock, Scott, & Smith, 2000; Eley, 2013). Thus, managerial expertise is seen as an addition to a strong academic track record rather than a driving consideration in such an appointment (Bargh et al., 2000). The combination is not without its problems, especially in this new context. A personal conflict between being a leader and being a scholar (Sarros et al., 2006), or in other words, balancing the managerial and academic tasks (Smith, 2002; Smith, 2007), tends to be one of the most common stressors among the middle managers in academia. As combining the two roles is arguably getting more and more difficult, and expectations on leadership are increasing, it is not surprising that professionalization of academic leadership is starting to receive more attention.

Professionalization of Academic Leadership

A career path to the leadership role within universities is unique compared to most other sectors. Often leadership positions are not sought after as a career step, at least at the lower organizational levels. This seems to be a shared characteristic of a sub-set of professional organizations. They are usually a temporary side-activity, and often a result of being persuaded by superiors (Floyd, 2012). Nevertheless, there is some evidence that university leadership is becoming more professionalized. Engwall (2014) shows in a Scandinavian context, that university leaders are hired increasingly externally, particularly in newer institutions, and in those institutions it is also becoming more common that leaders are not necessarily professors. Furthermore, the term in office is getting shorter in younger institutions (Engwall, 2014), which may be linked to high risks in the market environment, or with the tendency to move quickly to a next (leadership) position.

Another important aspect of professionalization is training for the leadership role. According to Cipriano and Riccardi (2013), only 3.3 percent of department chairs in the US have received some skills training before entering their position, and about one third of middle managers in the UK have been reported to receive training in their function (Floyd, 2016). As Gmelch and Buller (2015, p. 2) put it, many leaders begin their position:

> without formal training, significant prior experience, a clear understanding of the ambiguity and complexity of their roles, a solid grasp of what it means to lead within a system of shared governance, a realization that full-time administrative work requires not a mere shift in focus but a metamorphic change from what their perspective was as a faculty member, as well as a corresponding change in their self-image (the “Who am I now?” question).

Training programs for academic leaders are becoming increasingly widespread. There is, however, no consensus on what a good leadership training would entail (Gmelch & Buller, 2015; Evans, 2017). Aasen and Stensaker (2007) argue that the leadership training rarely manages to provide an integrated approach to academic leaders: the training usually consists of either toolbox courses on budgeting, personnel management, and regulations; or courses on personal development to nurture the leader’s identity attached to the leadership position.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Considering the unique characteristics of academic organizations, what do we know about effective leadership practices? Empirical studies on this question are quite limited, probably due methodological difficulties of measuring effectiveness, leadership, and the causal link between the two (see also Bryman, 2007). Most commonly, empirical studies survey leaders themselves and inquire about practices that they perceive as effective in their role. Fewer studies attempt to create an independent measurement of success, such as estimating the growth of the organization, staff satisfaction, or at a lower organizational level success in implementing specific change or innovation.

The focus in conceptualizing leadership has shifted over time. While leadership research in 1960s focused on leaders' personality traits and thereafter on leaders' competencies, current research is more interested in what leaders do. These three different foci can be found also in research on academic leadership, though not necessarily in a chronological order. Scott et al. (2008) surveyed more than 500 academic leaders in Australia. They concluded that effective leadership requires, on the one hand, high level up-to-date knowledge of the sector (e.g. knowledge of effective teaching and learning practices), and, on the other hand, personal and interpersonal capacities such as being self-aware, decisive, cognitively flexible, and particularly deft at diagnosis and strategy formation. Kok and McDonald (2017) show, in the UK context, that openness to change and clear direction characterize high-performing departments most consistently. Bryman (2007) conducted a systematic literature review about effective leadership in universities of Australia, the US and the UK, at a departmental level. He identified thirteen aspects of effective leadership practices. Several of the practices have to do with strategic steering, such as having a clear direction and vision and communicating well the direction. Other successful practices emphasize the interpersonal element such as creating a positive and collegial atmosphere, being considerate, and allowing the opportunity to participate in key decisions. Furthermore, a perception of effective university leadership seems to be shifting over time also in practice. An analysis of job advertisements for vice-chancellors in Swedish universities showed that university top leaders in the 1990s were described primarily as "competitive, bold, strong, tough, decisive, driven, and assertive", while in the 2000s softer characteristics emphasizing communicative and collaborate skills became prominent (Peterson, 2018, p. 1).

Accumulating studies in higher education zoom in on popular leadership approaches, such as strategic, transformational, distributed or servant leadership (Wheeler, 2012). The approaches are not necessarily exclusive, or substitutable.

Strategic Leadership

Strategic leadership sees the top leaders of an organization as essential for the organization's well-being and development. Leaders adopt a strategic vision for the organization, communicate the vision effectively, and allocate resources and create organizational structures to materialize the vision (Finkelstein & Hambrick, 1996). Leadership in this framework is not limited to good strategic decision-making, but has a strong symbolic and communicative character. Neumann and Neumann (1999), for example, study different strategic leadership styles in US universities. Testing the effects of eight unique profiles, they conclude that growing and pros-

perous institutions are associated particularly with leaders who are 'integrators' and externally oriented 'net casters', as opposed to 'maintainers' or 'focused performers'.

Transactional and Transformational Leadership

Transactional and transformational leadership are two well-known leadership styles that hold contrasting views on how to motivate followers to perform well and to contribute maximally to organizational goals. While transactional leaders create incentives, rewards and punishments to align followers' personal interests with those of the organization, transformational leaders appeal to a shared vision on organizational goals and use intellectual stimulation, inspiration and attention to followers' needs as a motivational mechanism (Bass, 1985; Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003).

Studies on transformational leadership practices tend to demonstrate positive results. A study of department heads in US universities demonstrates that transformational leadership practices are associated with higher staff satisfaction, willingness to put in extra effort, and perceived organizational effectiveness (Brown & Moshavi, 2002). Zacher and Johnson (2015) show a positive link between transformational leadership practices of PhD supervisors and the creativity of their PhD students. In both studies, extrinsic incentives and rewards did not show a positive effect. Bateh and Heyliger (2014), on the other hand, observed that both transformational and transactional leadership can increase staff satisfaction in an academic context, while passive/avoidant leadership was associated with decline in satisfaction. Interestingly, academics themselves are not necessarily enthusiastic about transformational leadership in their organization. Bryman and Lilley (2009) interviewed leadership scholars in UK universities, asking what effective leadership in higher education is. Transformational leadership is not commonly associated with effectiveness by the researchers. The authors note that the 'heroic' connotation of transformational leadership may be less impressing for leadership researchers in their own work environment.

Shared and Distributed Leadership

Next to such leader-centric views, newer approaches see leadership as a group process. Leadership within organizations is rarely concentrated in a single leader. It is distributed across multiple leaders throughout the organization (Bolden, 2011; Spillane, 2006), and shared within a group more broadly (Pearce, 2004; Pearce & Sims, 2002; Bahls, 2014; Jones, Lefoe, Harvey, & Ryland, 2012). Bolden and colleagues (Bolden, Gregory, & Gosling 2008; Bolden et al., 2012) study leadership in UK universities and they observe a hybrid leadership where distributed forms of leadership exist alongside individualistic leadership forms. They report challenges to fully distributive leadership, rising from formal and social structures, access to resources, and social capital. Pearce and colleagues (Pearce, Wood, & Wassenaar, 2018) see shared leadership particularly fitting to universities, more so than a top-down hierarchical leadership. "Shared leadership provides the possibility of aligning, reinforcing, and leveraging the common interests of administrators and faculty" (Pearce et al., 2018, p. 641), given the intrinsically motivated professional staff and the tradition of shared governance structures. Empirical evidence about the effects of distributional leadership as a conscious leadership approach remains largely absent in higher education.

In sum, there are different leadership approaches and no one answer as to what works best in an academic context. There are also alternative takes on effective leadership, with a constructivist flavor. Askling and Stensaker (2002) develop a convincing argument that thinking about effective university leadership may need to give up the technocratic view that a certain set of practices leads to better performance, and that leaders need to learn the skills to be effective. They argue that universities operate in a complex, ambiguous and often paradoxical environment, so that the most important capacity of a successful leader is to create meaning in such a context and illuminate difficult dilemmas. Leadership approaches are in this perspective more about sense-making, than about a correct toolkit.

CONCLUSION

Literature on academic leadership is vast and highly diverse. Diversity characterizes scholarship on leadership in general, with a heterogeneous and constantly changing angle on what leadership is, and to what extent and how leadership matters for organizations (see Podolny, Khurana, & Hill-Popper, 2004; Parry & Bryman, 2006). Furthermore, a focus on either institutional leadership (i.e. leading an organization) or organizational leadership (i.e. leading people within an organization) creates distinct sets of literature that can be observed also in the field of academic leadership. Rapidly changing value systems and incentive structures in higher education have inspired many empirical as well as normative studies in the field. Based on the brief overview in this chapter, the main literature in the field can be divided roughly into three broad themes. First, a vast amount of literature discusses academic leadership in the context of changing values and expectations. The second theme focuses on academic leaders – their career models, preparation, role identity, and task sets, often but not necessarily in the light of changes over time. The third group of studies zoom in on what leaders actually do, and how their behavior and activities affect the organization and its performance.

Academic leaders face many challenges, and leadership research helps to conceptualize them and to seek meaningful responses. The complexity of their environment seems to be one of the main challenges of academic leaders: they have to deal with competing and incompatible demands, accommodate different stakeholders, and balance different values and perspectives (Drew, 2010). How leaders cope and succeed in such an environment requires better understanding (see van der Hoek, Beerkens, & Groeneveld, 2021). Higher education is a politicized field, and dominant perspectives are in a continuous flux. There are shifting perspectives on students, for example students as customers, co-producers, or scholars. In addition, governance ideas – from strong centralized leadership to shared governance models – shift continuously. Leaders' flexibility and resilience is therefore an important topic in the higher education context.

Innovation, creativity, and change capability is high on leaders' mind as well (Drew, 2010). How to keep up with high expectations and with technological and societal change? Change leadership is a prominent field in leadership studies. An ability to initiate change, and motivate others for change is a critical skill in a context where staff have high personal autonomy and a strong professional identity, but also high work pressure and low job satisfaction in many cases. Change capability of leaders themselves is not a lesser matter, as the continuously shifting targets can overwhelm them. An effective preparation of academic leaders for their

role – for their own good and the good of the organization – remains an important issue to know more about.

A topic of increasing interest is leadership for diversity and inclusion. As evidence shows, inclusive leaders can significantly improve staff satisfaction, motivation, and productivity in diverse teams. Furthermore, they can encourage the diversity of the team to start with. While the value of demographic diversity in an academic setting has been on the agenda for quite a while, the diversity of career paths, task division, and research approaches is starting to receive more attention. Many countries recognize an increasing division between research and teaching staff, as well as homogenization of the model of a successful academic. Inclusive leadership practices may increase the value of such diversity in the organization, as well as improve staff motivation significantly.

Universities are often perceived as peculiar organizations, due to the norms and values they embody, and characteristics of their members. These peculiarities have been a source of inspiration for many scholars to test and challenge existing leadership theories. On the other hand, the peculiarities have made universities also an interesting laboratory for scholars to develop new ideas about leadership that apply to organizations more broadly.

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