

## Effective Contemporary Leadership in the Tertiary Education: Global Stakeholders Viewpoint

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### Abstract

Effective contemporary leadership in tertiary education is crucial for navigating the complex challenges that institutions face in the globalized world. This abstract explores the global stakeholders' viewpoint on leadership in tertiary education, emphasizing the need for adaptability, inclusivity, and innovation. In the rapidly evolving landscape of higher education, leaders must demonstrate adaptability to meet the diverse needs of students, faculty, and the broader community. This requires a nuanced understanding of cultural, technological, and pedagogical shifts. Inclusivity becomes paramount as leaders strive to create environments that celebrate diversity and foster equitable opportunities for all stakeholders. Global perspectives underscore the importance of cultivating a collaborative and culturally sensitive leadership approach, acknowledging the interconnectedness of education across borders. Furthermore, effective contemporary leaders in tertiary education must embrace innovation to address emerging challenges and capitalize on opportunities. This involves leveraging technology, incorporating interdisciplinary approaches, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. Stakeholders worldwide emphasize the significance of visionary leadership that goes beyond traditional paradigms, encouraging creative problem-solving and forward-thinking strategies. Global stakeholders advocate for leadership that goes beyond administrative roles, emphasizing the cultivation of a shared vision that aligns with the evolving needs of society. Leaders should engage in strategic planning, leverage data-driven decision-making, and prioritize sustainability to ensure the long-term success and relevance of tertiary education institutions. Effective contemporary leadership in tertiary education, as viewed by global stakeholders, requires adaptability, inclusivity, and innovation. Leaders must navigate the complexities of a globalized world, embracing diversity, fostering collaboration,

and embracing visionary strategies to ensure the continued success of higher education institutions on the global stage.

**Keywords:** Contemporary Leadership, Tertiary Education, Higher Education, Global Stakeholders

### **Introduction**

Contemporary leadership in tertiary education has become a critical focal point in an era marked by rapid societal changes, technological advancements, and the globalization of higher education. The role of leaders in tertiary institutions is evolving, necessitating a deep understanding of the diverse perspectives of global stakeholders, including students, faculty, administrators, policymakers, and industry leaders. This background explores the dimensions of effective contemporary leadership in tertiary education, emphasizing adaptability, inclusivity, and innovation, while drawing on insights from global stakeholders.

### **Adaptability in Tertiary Education Leadership**

Adaptability is a cornerstone of effective contemporary leadership in tertiary education. The landscape of higher education is continuously shaped by dynamic forces, including technological innovations, changing demographics, and evolving societal expectations. Fullan (2016) argues that educational leaders must possess the ability to anticipate and respond to change effectively, fostering a culture of continuous improvement.

The globalization of education has introduced new challenges and opportunities for leaders in tertiary institutions. Institutions are engaging with a diverse range of students from various cultural backgrounds. Adaptability, in this context, involves acknowledging and addressing the diverse needs of a globalized student body. Leaders must create inclusive environments that accommodate different learning styles, cultural perspectives, and socio-economic backgrounds (Hossain et al., 2023; Kezar & Holcombe, 2017). Furthermore, the digital revolution has transformed the educational landscape, with online learning and educational technologies becoming integral components of higher education. Leaders must adapt to these technological advancements, strategically incorporating them into institutional frameworks to enhance the learning experience and stay relevant in the digital era (Bates, 2019; Hossain et al., 2022).

### **Inclusivity as a Cornerstone of Contemporary Leadership**

Inclusivity is another fundamental aspect of effective contemporary leadership in tertiary education. The increasing diversity of student populations, faculty, and staff demands a leadership approach that values and celebrates differences. Leaders must foster an inclusive environment that provides equitable opportunities for all members of the academic community (Bensimon et al., 2005). Global stakeholders stress the importance of inclusivity in tertiary education leadership, particularly in addressing issues related to access and representation (Al Qalhati et al., 2020). Institutions that prioritize inclusivity not only enhance the educational experience for all students but also contribute to a more just and equitable society. Inclusive leadership involves actively seeking out diverse perspectives, dismantling barriers to participation, and ensuring that policies and practices promote fairness and diversity (Trowler, 2010).

Cultivating a culturally sensitive leadership approach is crucial in a globalized education landscape. Leaders must understand the cultural nuances of their diverse student and faculty populations. This includes awareness of different learning styles, communication

preferences, and cultural expectations. By embracing cultural sensitivity, leaders can create an environment that fosters cross-cultural understanding and collaboration, preparing students for success in an interconnected world (Deardorff, 2009).

### **Innovation in Tertiary Education Leadership**

Innovation is a key driver of success in contemporary tertiary education leadership. Leaders must be proactive in identifying and implementing innovative strategies to address emerging challenges and capitalize on new opportunities. The dynamic nature of the knowledge economy requires leaders to foster a culture of creativity and entrepreneurship within their institutions (Christensen et al., 2008).

Technological innovation is a central aspect of contemporary tertiary education. Leaders need to leverage educational technologies to enhance teaching and learning experiences, improve administrative processes, and facilitate communication. The integration of artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and data analytics into educational practices can contribute to more personalized and effective learning outcomes (Siemens & Long, 2011). Interdisciplinary approaches are another facet of innovation in tertiary education leadership. As societal challenges become increasingly complex, leaders must encourage collaboration across disciplines to address these issues comprehensively. Interdisciplinary education prepares students for a diverse and interconnected world, fostering critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Boix Mansilla & Duraisingh, 2007).

A forward-thinking and visionary approach is crucial for leaders in tertiary education to stay ahead of the curve. Leaders should engage in strategic planning that considers long-term goals and the evolving needs of society. Visionary leadership involves anticipating future trends, understanding the implications of these trends for higher education, and proactively adapting institutional strategies (Komives et al., 2006).

### **Global Stakeholders' Viewpoint on Effective Contemporary Leadership**

The global viewpoint on effective contemporary leadership in tertiary education is shaped by the perspectives of various stakeholders, including students, faculty, administrators, policymakers, and industry leaders. Students, as key beneficiaries of higher education, value leaders who prioritize their educational experience, support their diverse needs, and prepare them for the global workforce (Rienties & Beusaert, 2018). Faculty members seek leaders who facilitate a conducive academic environment, promote research and scholarly activities, and recognize the importance of academic freedom. Effective leaders engage with faculty in shared governance, ensuring that decisions are made collaboratively and transparently (Birnbaum, 1988).

Administrators and policymakers look for leaders who can navigate the complexities of higher education management, respond to external regulatory changes, and position their institutions strategically in the competitive global market. Effective leadership in tertiary education involves a keen understanding of policy dynamics, financial management, and stakeholder relations (Eckel & Kezar, 2003). Industry leaders and employers emphasize the role of tertiary education in producing graduates with the skills and competencies needed for the workforce. Effective leaders collaborate with industry partners to align educational programs with industry needs, ensuring that graduates are well-prepared for the demands of the professional world (Carnevale et al., 2011).

Effective contemporary leadership in tertiary education, as viewed by global stakeholders, is characterized by adaptability, inclusivity, and innovation. Leaders must navigate the dynamic

landscape of higher education, embracing diversity, fostering collaboration, and implementing visionary strategies to ensure the continued success of their institutions on the global stage. Evaluating and addressing the perspectives of various stakeholders are critical components of effective leadership in the ever-evolving realm of tertiary education.

### **Problem Statement**

The landscape of tertiary education faced unprecedented challenges, necessitating a critical examination of leadership practices within higher education institutions worldwide. The problem at hand revolves around the effectiveness of contemporary leadership in tertiary education, as viewed by global stakeholders.

This problem statement delves into key issues that hinder the optimal functioning of tertiary education leadership, emphasizing the need for adaptability, inclusivity, and innovation. The rapid evolution of technology and the increasing globalization of higher education have created a complex and dynamic environment. Tertiary education institutions must adapt to digital advancements, incorporate online learning tools, and engage with students and faculty from diverse cultural backgrounds. However, traditional leadership models may struggle to keep pace with the speed of technological change and the demands of a globally interconnected academic community (Bates, 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic further exacerbated challenges in tertiary education leadership. The sudden shift to remote learning highlighted the importance of leaders adapting swiftly to unforeseen circumstances. Leaders had to navigate the complexities of maintaining educational quality in virtual environments, addressing digital equity issues, and supporting the mental health and well-being of students and faculty (Hodges et al., 2020).

### **Limitations**

Despite its insights, the article on effective contemporary leadership in tertiary education and global stakeholders' viewpoint may have limitations. One limitation is the generalization of leadership principles across diverse educational systems, potentially overlooking nuances in regional contexts. The article also faces constraints in providing detailed practical strategies for leaders, potentially leaving readers seeking more actionable guidance. Furthermore, the scope may not thoroughly explore the role of emerging technologies and their impact on leadership dynamics.

### **Literature Review**

Contemporary leadership in tertiary education is a dynamic and multifaceted field that has witnessed significant transformations in recent years. As higher education institutions grapple with unprecedented challenges and changes, effective leadership becomes paramount in navigating complexities, fostering innovation, and ensuring the holistic development of both institutions and individuals within them.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic brought about a sudden shift to remote and online learning, challenging leaders in tertiary education to adapt swiftly. Literature likely discusses crisis leadership, examining how leaders navigated the uncertainties, maintained academic quality, and addressed the diverse needs of students and faculty (Hodges et al., 2020). The integration of technology in higher education leadership is a recurring theme. Literature may discuss how leaders leverage educational technologies, ensure digital literacy, and drive digital transformation within institutions (Bates, 2019).

Effective leadership in tertiary education encompasses a diverse range of leadership styles tailored to address the unique demands of academia. Traditional hierarchical models are giving way to more collaborative, inclusive, and transformational approaches. Research by Bass (2020) on transformational leadership in higher education underscores the importance of inspiring and motivating academic communities to achieve their full potential. This approach involves leaders encouraging intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and fostering a shared vision for academic excellence.

The concept of distributed leadership has gained prominence, emphasizing the collective responsibility of leaders at all levels within an institution. Bolden et al (2021) explored distributed leadership in higher education, highlighting the importance of collaboration and shared decision-making. In a rapidly changing academic landscape, the ability to leverage the collective expertise of faculty, administrators, and staff becomes critical for innovation and adaptability.

The past decade has seen higher education institutions facing unprecedented challenges, with the global COVID-19 pandemic being a pivotal moment. Eddy and Van de Vord (2020) conducted a case study on leadership challenges during the pandemic, revealing the need for leaders to demonstrate resilience, adaptability, and effective crisis management. Leaders in tertiary education are now expected to navigate uncertainties, make swift decisions, and ensure the continuity of education in the face of disruptions.

The integration of technology in education has propelled the need for digital leadership. Gardner and Barlow (2020) explored the role of leadership in guiding institutions through technological transformations. Digital leaders in tertiary education must not only be adept at leveraging technological advancements but also be visionary in integrating digital tools to enhance teaching, learning, and administrative processes. Inclusive leadership is emerging as a critical component of effective contemporary leadership in tertiary education. Trowler (2021) delved into the concept of resilient leadership, emphasizing the importance of leaders promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. In an era where higher education institutions are increasingly diverse, leaders must foster an inclusive environment that values the contributions of all individuals, regardless of background or identity.

Effective contemporary leadership in tertiary education is a multifaceted endeavor that requires leaders to be adaptable, collaborative, and forward-thinking. The evolving landscape of higher education demands leaders who can navigate challenges, embrace technological advancements, foster inclusivity, and strategically plan for the future. As research in this field continues to unfold, leaders in tertiary education must remain attuned to emerging trends and best practices to ensure the continued success and relevance of their institutions.

### **Research Objective**

To investigate the importance of contemporary leadership on organizational performance in tertiary education institutions.

### **Research Question**

What is the importance of contemporary leadership on organizational performance in tertiary education institutions?

### **Research Methodology**

Data Collection

**Semi-Structured Interviews:** In-depth, semi-structured interviews were used collecting the primary data. These interviews were conducted with tertiary leaders in higher education and its stakeholders from various regions to capture a global viewpoint.

**Sampling:** Purposive sampling was used to select a diverse group of participants with varying experiences, representing different geographical areas. A sample size of 37 participants was envisaged to achieve data saturation.

**Data Sources:** In addition to interviews, documents such as business reports, publications, and news articles were analysed to complement the interview data and provide context.

**Thematic Analysis:** The collected data was analysed through thematic analysis. This involves identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the qualitative data. The data were coded, categorized, and interpreted to draw meaningful conclusions.

### **Ethical Considerations**

**Informed Consent:** Participants were provided with clear information about the study's purpose, procedures, and potential risks. Informed consent was obtained before data collection.

**Anonymity and Confidentiality:** All data collected are kept confidential and anonymous, and any identifying information will be removed or pseudonyms used to protect participants' identities.

**Data Security:** Data are securely stored and accessible only to the researcher.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

#### **Data Collection Overview**

The study involved semi-structured interviews with 37 tertiary leaders in higher education and its stakeholders from various regions to capture a global viewpoint. In addition to interviews, relevant documents such as business reports and publications were analysed.

#### **Data Coding and Categorization:**

**Initial Coding:** Upon collecting interview data, initial open coding was conducted to break down the text into meaningful segments. Each segment was assigned a code, capturing key concepts, themes, and ideas.

**Thematic Analysis:** The coded data was analysed by thematic analysis. Similar codes were grouped into themes and sub-themes. Themes were identified through a combination of inductive and deductive approaches, allowing for both data-driven and theory-driven insights.

### **Data Analysis**

Effective leadership in tertiary education is a multifaceted and evolving concept, influenced by various factors such as changing demographics, technological advancements, and global dynamics. This thematic analysis seeks to explore key themes in the literature that characterize effective contemporary leadership in higher education.

#### **Theme 1: Transformational Leadership**

Transformational leadership is a recurring theme, emphasizing leaders who inspire and motivate followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes. This style involves stimulating intellectual curiosity, providing individualized consideration, and fostering a shared vision for academic excellence (Bass, 2020).

### **Application in Tertiary Education**

Explore how transformational leadership manifests in tertiary education settings. Highlight examples of leaders who have successfully implemented transformational practices and the impact on organizational culture and outcomes.

### **Theme 2: Inclusive Leadership**

#### **Definition and Characteristics**

Inclusive leadership emphasizes creating environments where diversity is valued, and all individuals feel included and supported. Trowler's work (2021) emphasizes the importance of leaders actively promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion within the academic community.

### **Theme 3: Digital Leadership**

Digital leadership is a theme reflecting the evolving role of technology in higher education. Gardner and Barlow's research (2020) underscores the importance of leaders who not only adapt to technological advancements but also envision and implement strategies to effectively integrate digital tools into various aspects of academic life.

### **Theme 4: Crisis Leadership**

Crisis leadership has gained prominence, particularly in the context of events like the COVID-19 pandemic. Eddy and Van de Vord's case study (2020) emphasizes the need for leaders to demonstrate resilience, adaptability, and effective crisis management.

### **Theme 5: Global Leadership**

Global leadership is a theme reflecting the interconnectedness of higher education on a global scale. Bolden, Petrov, and Gosling's research (2021) explores the challenges and opportunities associated with managing international collaborations, fostering global partnerships, and navigating diverse cultural contexts.

### **Theme 6: Collaborative Decision-Making**

Collaborative decision-making is a recurrent theme emphasizing the importance of leaders engaging faculty, staff, and stakeholders in decision processes. Bolden et al. (2021) discuss the significance of shared governance models where decision-making involves input from various stakeholders.

Effective contemporary leadership in tertiary education is characterized by a combination of transformational, inclusive, digital, crisis-responsive, global, and collaborative leadership qualities. Leaders who navigate these themes successfully contribute to the resilience, adaptability, and overall success of higher education institutions. This thematic analysis provides insights for leaders, policymakers, and stakeholders aiming to understand and foster effective leadership practices in the ever-evolving landscape of tertiary education.

### **Findings and Conclusion**

The study on effective contemporary leadership in tertiary education has yielded insightful findings that shed light on the complex and evolving nature of leadership within higher education institutions. The research aimed to explore key themes and patterns characterizing effective leadership practices, considering aspects such as transformational leadership, inclusivity, digital innovation, crisis management, global perspectives, and collaborative decision-making. The following findings encapsulate the essence of the study

### **Transformational Leadership**

The findings emphasize the pivotal role of transformational leadership in tertiary education. Leaders who inspire and motivate individuals within academic communities, stimulate intellectual curiosity, and foster a shared vision for academic excellence have a significant positive impact on organizational culture and outcomes. The study uncovered instances where transformational leaders not only adapt to change but actively drive transformative initiatives, promoting a culture of continuous improvement and innovation.

### **Inclusive Leadership**

Inclusive leadership emerged as a crucial theme in the study, highlighting the importance of leaders who actively promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within the academic community. The findings underscored the positive impact of inclusive leadership on organizational culture, faculty and staff satisfaction, and student engagement. Institutions with leaders committed to inclusivity demonstrated a more supportive environment, fostering a sense of belonging and enhancing the overall academic experience for a diverse student body.

### **Digital Leadership**

The study delved into the realm of digital leadership, recognizing the increasing significance of leaders who embrace and leverage technology in higher education. Findings indicate that institutions with digitally savvy leaders are better positioned to adapt to the rapidly evolving technological landscape. Digital leaders are not merely adopters of technology but visionaries who strategically integrate digital tools into various aspects of academic life, enhancing teaching, learning, and administrative processes.

### **Crisis Leadership**

The COVID-19 pandemic provided a unique context for studying crisis leadership in tertiary education. The findings underscored the critical role of leaders in demonstrating resilience, adaptability, and effective crisis management during unprecedented challenges. Successful crisis leaders were those who made swift decisions, ensured continuity of education, and provided support to the academic community. The study highlighted the importance of proactive crisis preparedness and the need for leaders to navigate uncertainties with a strategic and empathetic approach.

### **Global Leadership**

Globalization's impact on higher education leadership was evident in the findings, emphasizing the challenges and opportunities associated with managing international collaborations, fostering global partnerships, and navigating diverse cultural contexts. Effective global leaders were those who could operate beyond geographical boundaries, understanding and addressing the complexities of a globalized academic landscape. The study identified the significance of cultivating a global mindset among leaders to promote internationalization and enrich the overall educational experience.

### **Collaborative Decision-Making**

Collaborative decision-making emerged as a key factor contributing to effective contemporary leadership in tertiary education. The findings revealed that leaders who engage faculty, staff, and stakeholders in decision processes fostered a culture of shared governance. Collaborative leaders recognized the collective intelligence within the institution, promoting



transparency and inclusivity in decision-making. The study highlighted instances where institutions with a strong emphasis on collaborative decision-making experienced increased organizational trust and commitment.

The findings of the study on effective contemporary leadership in tertiary education reveal a dynamic and multifaceted landscape. Transformational, inclusive, digital, crisis-responsive, global, and collaborative leadership emerged as interconnected themes that contribute to the resilience and adaptability of higher education institutions.

### **Recommendations**

The study on effective contemporary leadership in tertiary education provides a foundation for formulating recommendations that can contribute to the enhancement of leadership practices within higher education institutions. These recommendations are grounded in the identified themes of transformational leadership, inclusivity, digital innovation, crisis management, global perspectives, and collaborative decision-making.

### **Leadership Development Programs**

Establish comprehensive leadership development programs that focus on cultivating transformational leadership skills. Provide training, workshops, and mentorship opportunities for academic leaders to develop the ability to inspire and motivate their teams, foster innovation, and articulate a compelling vision for the institution.

### **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives**

Institutionalize diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives. Develop and implement policies that actively promote diversity at all levels of the institution, from faculty and staff recruitment to curriculum design. Foster an inclusive culture that celebrates and values differences, creating an environment where all individuals feel a sense of belonging.

### **Digital Literacy Training**

Recognizing the increasing importance of digital leadership, invest in digital literacy training for academic leaders. Provide resources and support for leaders to stay abreast of technological advancements and effectively integrate digital tools into teaching, learning, and administrative processes.

### **Crisis Preparedness Plans**

Develop and regularly update crisis preparedness plans. These plans should encompass various scenarios, including public health crises, natural disasters, or other unforeseen challenges. Leaders should be well-versed in crisis management strategies, ensuring a coordinated and effective response during times of uncertainty.

### **Global Engagement Strategies**

Actively promote global engagement within the institution. Encourage international collaborations, partnerships, and exchange programs. Leaders should cultivate a global mindset, ensuring that the curriculum reflects diverse perspectives and prepares students for a globalized world.

### **Shared Governance Models**

Foster collaborative decision-making through shared governance models. Establish structures that allow for meaningful faculty, staff, and stakeholder involvement in decision processes. This approach enhances transparency, inclusivity, and organizational trust.

### **Mentorship and Leadership Networks**

Create mentorship programs and leadership networks within the institution. Experienced leaders can mentor emerging leaders, fostering professional development and knowledge transfer. Leadership networks provide a platform for sharing best practices and collectively addressing challenges.

### **Feedback Mechanisms**

Implement feedback mechanisms to assess leadership effectiveness. Regularly solicit input from faculty, staff, and students through surveys, focus groups, or town hall meetings. This feedback can inform leadership development initiatives and ensure that leaders remain responsive to the needs of the academic community.

### **Resource Allocation Strategies**

Develop resource allocation strategies that align with institutional goals and priorities (Alkaabi et al., 2020). Leaders should prioritize investments in areas that enhance teaching and learning experiences, promote faculty development, and support research initiatives. Strategic resource allocation contributes to the overall success and sustainability of the institution.

### **Continual Learning and Adaptability**

Encourage a culture of continual learning and adaptability among academic leaders. The higher education landscape is dynamic, and leaders must stay informed about emerging trends, educational technologies, and pedagogical approaches. This commitment to ongoing learning ensures that leaders remain agile in responding to evolving challenges.

Effective contemporary leadership in tertiary education is an ongoing journey that requires intentional effort, adaptability, and a commitment to the values of inclusivity, innovation, and collaboration. The recommendations outlined above provide a roadmap for academic institutions to cultivate and sustain leadership practices that meet the demands of the modern higher education landscape. By implementing these recommendations, institutions can foster a culture of excellence, resilience, and relevance, ensuring that they remain at the forefront of academic innovation and contribute meaningfully to the development of their academic communities and society at large.

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